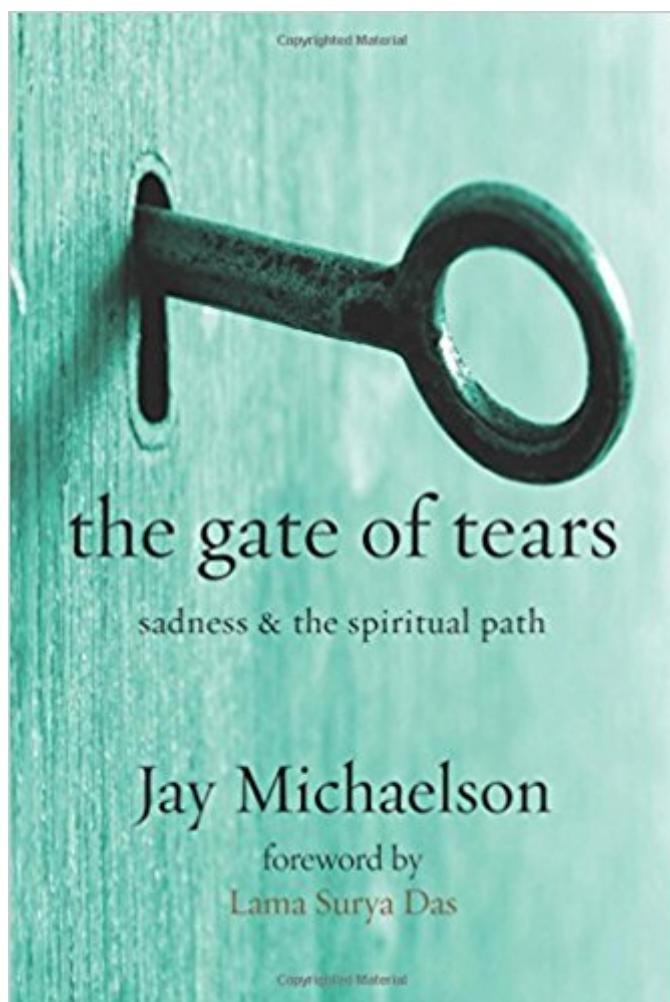


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# The Gate Of Tears: Sadness And The Spiritual Path



## Synopsis

The Gate of Tears: Sadness and the Spiritual Path explores the counter-intuitive insight that sadness and joy are not opposites - and that human capacities often suppressed or rejected can, instead, be gateways to deep joy, creativity, and liberation. Its eighty-two short, poetic, sometimes epigrammatic chapters draw on contemplative traditions, art, even pop songs. They are reflections on the path of surrender, alchemy, and the sacred. Written over a ten year period, and completed in the mourning period after the death of the author's mother, The Gate of Tears is not a self-help book. If anything, it is a self-helpless book, discovering a happiness deeper than transitory joys that emerges precisely when the resistance to sadness is released. As the contemporary Buddhist teacher Lama Surya Das says in his foreword to the book, "the only thing that prevents happiness is searching for it." The Gate of Tears draws on Jay Michaelson's fifteen years as a student, and now a teacher, of Buddhist and Jewish contemplative paths. Michaelson is a rabbi, and holds a Ph.D. in Jewish Thought, and has taught Jewish mysticism in and outside the academic world. Yet he is also a longtime teacher of insight meditation in Western Buddhist and secular mindfulness contexts, who has sat many months-long silent meditation retreats. With his usual blend of erudition and accessibility, Michaelson weaves together Hasidic tales and Dharma teachings, Leonard Cohen and Langston Hughes. The Gate of Tears is not a New Age book with easy answers; it is infused with a contemporary sensibility, skepticism, and humor. **Keywords:** sadness and spirituality, sadness and meditation, mindfulness, Buddhism and Judaism, depression and meditation

**Advance Praise**

"Jay Michaelson's incisive and exquisitely profound insights into our human condition come in full force in *The Gate of Tears*. Here we have an antidote to mindless feel-good ideology, and gentle instructions in attending to the fullness of our experience so we see the value in the downs, not just the ups. Our inner world will never seem the same." - Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*

"The Gate of Tears is a beautifully written, transformative book. Jay Michaelson guides us, instead of denying, avoiding, explaining away or resisting sadness, to go right into the heart of it. There we find open space, true love of life, and, perhaps most redeeming, one another." - Sharon Salzberg, author of *Lovingkindness*

"Jay Michaelson's writing is always bracing and brave, but *The Gate of Tears* has particular power. He guides us to explore - and accept - the truth of what he calls "ordinary sadness," and stop looking for happiness so that we might actually find it. Every chapter made me feel as if he was seeing me personally. This book will change your perspective and ease your load." - Abigail Pogrebin, author of *Stars of David*

**About the Author**

Dr. Jay Michaelson is the author of six books, including *Evolving Dharma: Meditation, Buddhism and the Next Generation of Enlightenment* (North Atlantic, 2013) and the

bestselling God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality (Beacon, 2011), as well as over 300 articles in The Daily Beast, Atlantic, Tricycle, the Forward, and other publications.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Beautiful. Contemplative. Soulful. Redemptive. I savored this book slowly over the Jewish high holidays, and then recommended it to my fellow students, mentors, and colleagues at Harvard Divinity School, as well as to friends who, like me, have journeyed through loss in some way...

Thank you, Jay Michaelson, for a book to read slowly--and then again.

Jay Michaelson's The Gate of Sadness: Sadness and the Spiritual Path seeks to create a much-needed corrective path from New Age books, talks, and seminars devoted to finding and attaining happiness through spiritual and religious pursuits. Rather than viewing sadness as an impediment to the spiritual path, Michaelson frames it, quite correctly, as integral; without dark times, we would lack the necessary cognitive and mental tools to refine our sense of being in the world. Even when the sadness appears to serve no purpose, Michaelson explains techniques to hold the sadness, to allow it to dwell within us without comment or judgement. This Buddhist technique can reveal startling results. By sitting still with the sadness, we can come to an understanding of it as a fleeting state. It moves on, just like all our emotional states. Sadness has no more hold on us than any other emotion. Michaelson writes this book in the first person, giving the work an intimate feel, revealing much about himself and the ups and downs of his quest. This book is excellent.

ballast for the scores dangerous Pollyanna spiritual guides we find today. It's OK to be sad.

The book was an easy read and quite moving.

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