



A Song of Ilan: a novel

Jacob Paul

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"Paul's prose is skillful, almost ornate, and obsessed with the truth of the modern experience of religion. *A Song of Ilan* is a remarkable exploration of issues and experiences that are often discounted or outright ignored in American writing today." — *The Public*

"A philosophic meditation on the interplay between religion, violence, and personal faith, *A Song of Ilan* is about what it means to live in a world after 9/11, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as seen through its protagonist, Ilan's, desire for God. Through Ilan we see how a direct relationship with God (or the hope for God), divorced from the structure of religious institutions, might take the form of romantic love, and in that relationship's crisis, take on the perils, obsessions, and violence of that love. *A Song of Ilan* is necessary reading, especially against the backdrop of recent conflict in Gaza, for anyone who wishes to understand the personal, spiritual, and political impact of religious terrorism, and of the violence that seeks to suppress it."

—Mark Levine, New York City Council Member and Chair of the City Council Jewish Caucus

"Jacob Paul's *A Song of Ilan* is tour de force of structural experiment that leaves not a thread untied and moves from beginning to end with a mesmerizing if not horrifying fatality. Ilan, once an Israeli soldier, shot a suicide bomber to death in a cafe; ten years later, alcoholic, spiritually paralyzed, he turns himself into a suicide bomber, haunting the New York subway system with explosives under his coat, the only truth he knows, the only way to God. A spectacular book, beautiful in its rhymes, daunting in its ethical interrogation."

—Douglas Glover, author of *Elle* and *Savage Love*

"*A Song of Ilan* is a dizzying, rhapsodic, and thrilling book that challenges readers to think about how we live, love, and die. A breathless read that plunges us into a brilliant and tortured mind, *A Song of Ilan* will haunt your days and nights, your kitchen, your bedroom, as well as and your commute, making you wonder who your neighbor, your colleague, your lover really is. Equally elegant and compelling as Paul plumbs rock climbing and scripture, terror and survival, *A Song of Ilan* strives heroically toward, in Donald Barthelme's words, 'the as-yet unspeakable, the as-yet unspoken.'"

—Matthew Batt, author of *Sugarhouse*

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