Born in Belorussia in 1836, S. Y. Abramovitsh was the founding father of modern Yiddish fiction. His stories and novels depict small-town Jewish life in the Russian Pale of Settlement through the hilarious, satiric, and sympathetic tales of his alter ego/narrator, Mendele the Book Peddler ("Mendele Moykher Sforim"). This itinerant peddler, who travels the Pale collecting good stories, was so closely identified with Abramovitsh's fiction that "Mendele" became the author's pen name.

This volume—the fourth in Schocken's acclaimed Library of Yiddish Classics—brings together two of Abramovitsh's best-loved novellas: "Fishke the Lame," a bittersweet love story set in the world of beggars, paupers, and rogues, and "The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third," the comical misadventures of a Quixote-Panza pair who set off to see the world outside their town. These tales, in superb new translations by Ted Gorelick and Hillel Halkin, represent Yiddish storytelling at its best—full of heart, humor, and homespun wisdom.
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