Whether they came from Sioux Falls or the Bronx, over half a million Jews entered the U.S. armed forces during the Second World War. Uprooted from their working- and middle-class neighborhoods, they joined every branch of the military and saw action on all fronts. Deborah Dash Moore offers an unprecedented view of the struggles these GI
Jews faced, having to battle not only the enemy but also the prejudices of their fellow soldiers. Through memoirs, oral histories, and letters, Moore charts the lives of fifteen young Jewish men as they faced military service and tried to make sense of its demands. From confronting pork chops to enduring front-line combat, from the temporary solace of Jewish worship to harrowing encounters with death camp survivors, we come to understand how these soldiers wrestled with what it meant to be an American and a Jew. Moore shows how military service in World War II transformed this generation of Jews, reshaping Jewish life in America and abroad. These men challenged perceptions of Jews as simply victims of the war, and encouraged Jews throughout the diaspora to fight for what was right. At the same time, service strengthened Jews' identification with American democratic ideals, even as it confirmed the importance of their Jewish identity. "GI Jews" is a powerful, intimate portrayal of the costs of a conflict that was at once physical, emotional, and spiritual, as well as its profound consequences for these hitherto overlooked members of the "greatest generation."