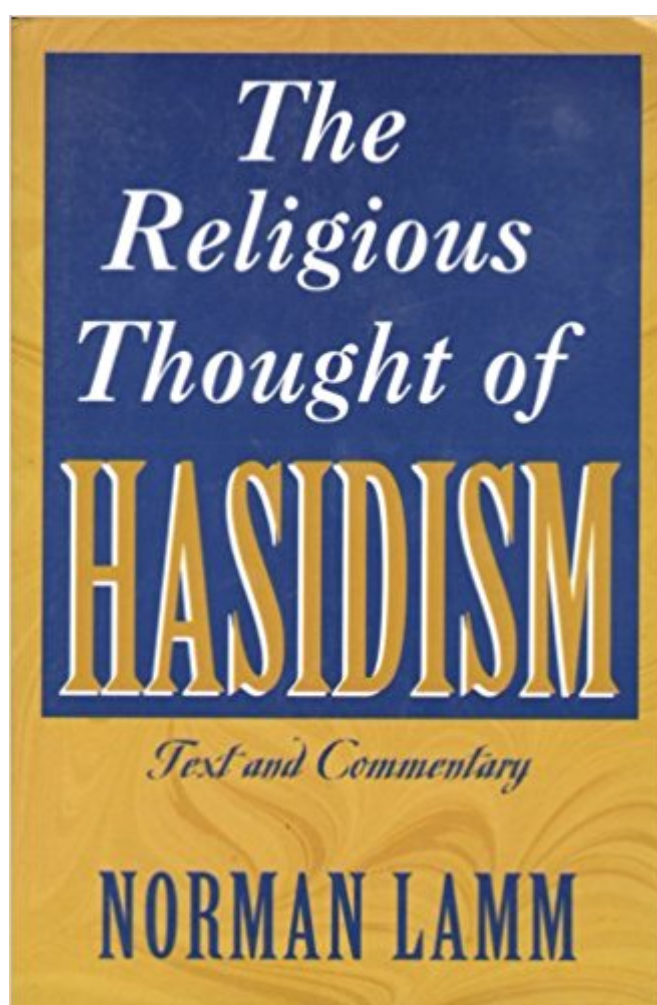


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The Religious Thought Of Hasidism: Text And Commentary (Sources And Studies In Kabbalah, Hasidism, And Jewish Thought, V. 4)



Synopsis

Book by

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Customer Reviews

Lamm, who is president of Yeshiva University, offers a monumental and magisterial history of Hasidism. When it emerged in the 18th century under the leadership of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (usually referred to as the Besht), Hasidism combined the mystical elements of Kabbalah with scrupulous observance of Torah and halakah. Because Hasidism was a strongly messianic movement, many critics accused it of not taking seriously enough halakic regulations concerning prayer and worship. Lamm's invaluable collection of primary documents narrates Hasidism's theological development. Each of the book's 18 chapters focuses on intellectual topics ranging from "God and Providence" and "The Soul" to "Evil and Suffering" and "Exile and Redemption." Lamm introduces each chapter with a brief historical and theological essay, then gathers the writings of various Hasidic teachers, from the 18th to the 20th centuries, on these topics. For example, the section on the soul opens with reflections on the "ten sefirot of the Jewish soul," by Rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1813), and includes a meditation on the soul by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1811), a grandson of the Besht, concluding with Rabbi Elimelekh of Lizhensk's (1717-1787) reflections on "the soul as wife." Included here are also the writings of the Besht and his successor, the Maggid of Mezeritch (1710-1772), who continued his teacher's emphases on asceticism and mysticism. Lamm's collection opens the pages on a fascinating chapter in religious history and

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This immense anthology of the wisdom of the Hasidic teachers and sages, with extended commentary and relevant scholarly material, is almost unprecedented as a resource in English, with the possible exception of Louis Newman's Hasidic Anthology (1934). Readers not already familiar with these teachings in Hebrew should benefit tremendously from this carefully annotated collection of advice on every subject, from the nature of the godhead to the body. Recommended for most collections. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Amazing

Rabbi Lamm presents in this work essential Hasidic writings. He organizes the material by theme, and writes an introduction to each particular subject. His grasp and understanding of the material is first-rate and he guides the reader to a deeper understanding of each particular theme written about. He too makes selections from the Hasidic teachers which are longer and more detailed than in previous anthologies. The work provides a new depth in understanding Hasidic thought.

Hasidism continues to fascinate us, and there is no lack of books on the movement, its leaders and their ideas. Most of these books have been books about Hasidism, that is, secondary or tertiary sources, wherein the reader relies on the interpretation of the author rather than on the writings of the Hasidic masters themselves. This book, thankfully, is different. The Hasidic masters speak in their own voices, in translations that bring the often enigmatic texts to life for the intelligent reader. The texts are arranged by subject, and the citations are given for those who wish to consult the original texts. Each topic is preceded by a very useful introductory essay. The footnotes are helpful. If you cannot read the Hasidic texts by yourself, you need this book. If you can study the texts by yourself in the original, you will still welcome this book, for it will make your task easier and refer you to areas of which you may be unaware. If you purchase one book on Hasidism, this should be the one.

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