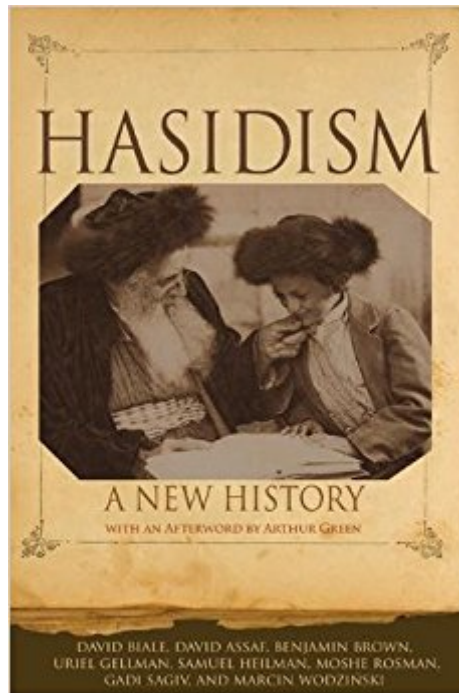




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Hasidism: A New History



Synopsis

The first comprehensive history of the pietistic movement that shaped modern Judaism. This is the first comprehensive history of the pietistic movement that shaped modern Judaism. The book's unique blend of intellectual, religious, and social history offers perspectives on the movement's leaders as well as its followers, and demonstrates that, far from being a throwback to the Middle Ages, Hasidism is a product of modernity that forged its identity as a radical alternative to the secular world. Hasidism originated in southeastern Poland, in mystical circles centered on the figure of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, but it was only after his death in 1760 that a movement began to spread. Challenging the notion that Hasidism ceased to be a creative movement after the eighteenth century, this book argues that its first golden age was in the nineteenth century, when it conquered new territory, won a mass following, and became a mainstay of Jewish Orthodoxy. World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Holocaust decimated eastern European Hasidism. But following World War II, the movement enjoyed a second golden age, growing exponentially. Today, it is witnessing a remarkable renaissance in Israel, the United States, and other countries around the world. Written by an international team of scholars, Hasidism is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand this vibrant and influential modern Jewish movement.

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"Hasidic Jews are among the most highly visible and fastest growing of all the world's Jewish subcultures. They are also among the least understood and enigmatic of Jewish communities. The veil of obscurity has been lifted thanks to this volume, which represents the very

latest and best scholarship on Hasidism—its history and culture. A cause for celebration, Hasidism is a magnificent achievement."--John M. Efron, author of *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic*"The world of Hasidism can be enthralling with just the double edge that that word implies. But how did it come into being and how has it survived, this uncanny Jewish cousin of European modernity itself? Hasidism answers that compelling question better than it has ever been answered before."--Jack Miles, general editor of *The Norton Anthology of World Religions*"A landmark book—the only one that treats the entire history of Hasidism."--Gershon David Hundert, author of *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*"This extensive and authoritative volume is unprecedented in its scope, breadth, and depth. It provides the first real comprehensive history of Hasidism that spans the entire movement from its beginnings to the present."--Shaul Magid, author of *Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Construction of Modern Judaism*

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