A Heart Afire: Stories and Teachings of the Early Hasidic Masters by Netanel Miles-Yepez

A 406-Page Compendium Of Teachings, Stories, And Commentaries By Early Hasidic Masters

The latest book from the founder of the Jewish Renewal movement. The interpretations in A Heart Afire are as rich and meaningful as the teachings and tales themselves in this intimate guided tour of Hasidism and Hasidic storytelling led by Reb Zalman, an old-world Hasidic elder who is also profoundly connected to modern culture. As a bridge between both worlds, Reb Zalman, and his student Netanel Miles-Yepez, introduce the reader to rare and unique translations of Hasidism with their own personal reflections on their meaning. This book gives the readers the opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of Hasidic wisdom and narrative and in the teachings of a modern Hasidic master.

My Personal Review:
This long book (400+ pages) by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Netanel Miles-Yepez contains teachings from the first three generations of the Hasidic movement; especially the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezritch, and Elimelekh of Lzhensk.

But the book is much more than this as these teachings serve as a platform for the authors, especially Reb Zalman, to offer their own teachings from a modern Hasidic perspective, that of Jewish Renewal.

Although the book contains technical language from the early Hasidic literature and the Kaballah, the concepts are explained clearly and should be accessible to anyone with even a minimal background in Judaism. But there are also teachings of profound depth for those with an extensive background in these matters.

Early Hasidic masters were known for their ability to teach so that each student thought the rabbi was talking exclusively to him. This book
achieves the more difficult task of doing this in a written form. I had the strange sense that certain sections of the book were written entirely for my benefit as they spoke exactly to my current concerns and problems.

An accessible and amazing book that should be in all Jewish libraries and read by anyone interested in Hasidism. Highly recommended.

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