Hasidisizing

Early in the eighteenth century the legendary holy man and teacher Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov launched a spiritual movement in Eastern Europe known as Hasidism. The Hasidic movement thrived on parables and stories promulgating joy, the potential for personal transformation, aspirations of the Divine, and the infusion of daily life with music, dancing, and loving exultation—and there is no Jewish institution today that has not been affected by Hasidism. Since the time of the Baal Shem Tov, generations of disciples, holy men, gurus, rabbis, and teachers have spread the Hasidic movement throughout the world. Now this book presents in one volume a collection of profound insights from the greatest Hasidic masters. Wrapped in a Holy Flame offers rare stories, new translations, and an innovative introduction to the meaning and value of these classic tales and teachings. It features the work of Hasidic masters of legendary fame and influence, including the Maggid of Mezritch, Reb Pinchas of Koretz, Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Reb Nachman of Bratzlav, all the way to the twentieth century Rebbe and artist Reb Shlomo Carlebach. The author has studied and taught Hasidic stories and teachings for over fifty years. This book contains a lifetime of experience and will stand for years to come as the basic, definitive work in the field.

My Personal Review:
Zalman Schacter-Shalomi presents in this book his own very personal view of Hasidism. He selects favorite texts, provides short biographies of figures who are personally of great importance to him. He provides one introduction which speaks in the language of what he calls, 'Jewish restoration' and another in which he speaks in the language of, the movement he himself is identified with, Jewish renewal.
He opens with a critique of the Hasidic approaches of Buber and Heschel who according to him do not go 'far enough' in their explorations. But Buber and Heschel each in his own way have a poetic power which makes
their renderings and interpretations at a higher level of feeling, a deeper level of intensity, than his.

He knows Hasidism well, and he wishes to teach it not as a doctrine but as a practice as 'Hasidizing'. In this work he provides translations of fundamental Hasidic texts, the Baal Shem Tov, Rav Pinhas of Koretz, Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Reb Nahman of Bratzlav.

He also writes movingly of Hillel Zeilin and the Piaszetner. He gives a short biography of Shlomo Carlebach who was a longtime friend, and who started outreach work with him at college campuses the bequest of the Lubavitch Rebbe.

One of the most beautiful sections of the book is his telling of his friendship with Shlomo Carlebach of blessed memory. They met as boys of eleven. Zalman Schacter Shlomi tells of two parallel sacrifices made by Shlomo Carlebach. One is that he did not stay in Lakewood and become the heir of Rabbi Aharon Kotler because it was not enough for him to worry about his own spiritual development. After the Shoah (the Holocaust) Reb Shlomo saw the Jewish world as destroyed and needed any kind of spiritual help it could get. So he went out to the world and gave it his all, though this meant in a certain way the loss of his own spiritual development. In a parallel way Reb Shlomo according to Reb Zalman was capable of much more complicated and higher music than that he gave the world. But he gave himself to writing the music which would reach others. The love of Zalman for his great friend is one of the most beautiful parts of this book.

This is a book very rich in ideas, insights, personal anecdotes and reflections.

A wonderful book and one especially so for Shabbat reading.

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Wrapped in a Holy Flame: Teachings and Tales of The Hasidic Masters by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!