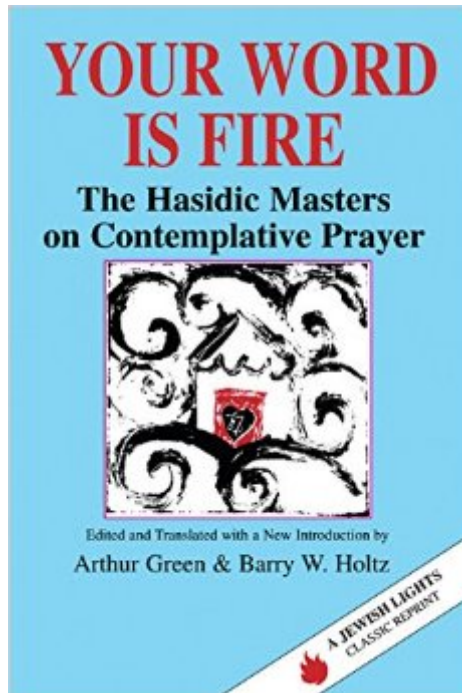


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Your Word Is Fire: The Hasidic Masters On Contemplative Prayer



Synopsis

The power of prayer for spiritual renewal and personal transformation is at the core of all religious traditions. Because Hasidic literature contains no systematic manual of contemplative prayer, the texts included in this volume have been culled from many sources. From the teachings of the Hasidic Masters—the Ba'al Shem Tov, the Maggid Dov Baer of Meidzyrzec, and their immediate disciples—the editors have gleaned "hints as to the various rungs of inner prayer and how they are attained." Hasidism, the Jewish revivalist movement that began in the late eighteenth century, saw prayer as being at the heart of religious experience and was particularly concerned with the nature of a person's relationship with God. The obstacles to prayer discussed by the Hasidic masters—distraction, loss of spirituality, and inconstancy of purpose—feel very close to concerns of our own age. Through advice, parables, and explanations, the Hasidic masters of the past speak to our own attempts to find meaning in prayer.

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Customer Reviews

The present (2012) Jewish Lights edition of "Your Word is Fire: The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer," is about twenty pages longer than earlier forms, due to an expanded

Introduction. It was originally published in "The Spiritual Masters" series from the Paulist Press in 1977; that edition would be the subject of the earlier-dated reviews on this product page. My copy of the Paulist Press edition is an undated mass-market size paperback, with a lovely cover incorporating a nineteenth-century Central European Mizrach ("East"), used to mark the direction of prayer (facing Jerusalem), with designs made up of tiny Hebrew texts -- much of it, alas, too small to read in the reproduction, even when magnified.... (The use of a Mizrach was a traditional European Jewish practice, not associated specifically with the Hasidic / Chasidic Movement.) The short book (under 120 pages of texts) provides an interesting approach to a mystical, "charismatic," and popular strain in Jewish life, whose adherents are known, in a bold self-characterization, as the "Pious Ones." (They labelled their more traditionally-minded, and rigorously scholastic, critics as "Misnagdim," "Oppositionists," as though their opponents were the ones tampering with accepted theory and practice.) This is not the only movement in Jewish history known as "Hasidim," but it is the one usually meant when the term is used without further explanation. (Two other major groups are the "Chasideans," contemporaries of the Maccabees, and the "Hasidei Ashkenaz," or "European Pietists," an elite movement in the twelfth-century Rhineland and Central Europe.

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