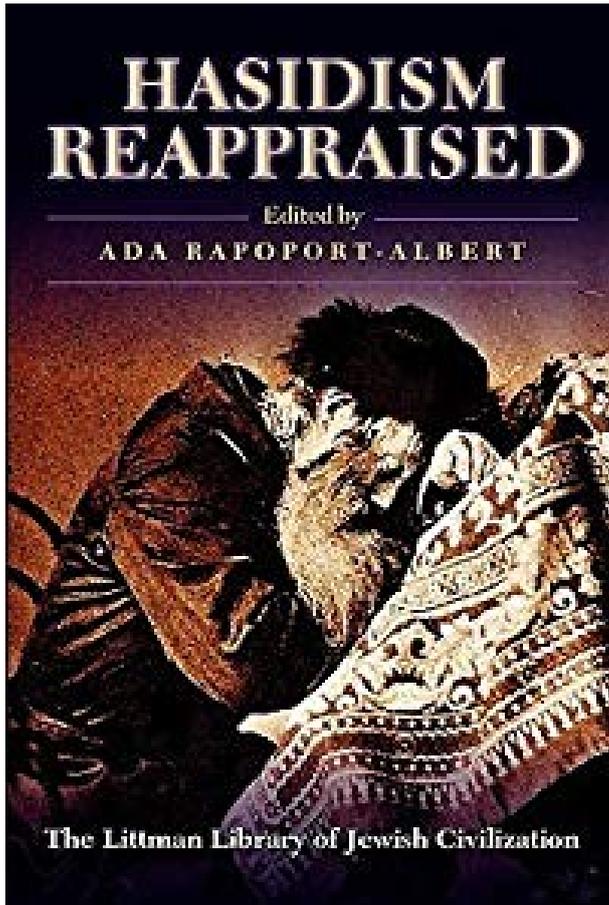


# Hasidism Reappraised



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<b>Goodreads Rating:</b>	4.75
<b>Pages:</b>	514
<b>ISBN13:</b>	9781874774358
<b>Genre:</b>	Religion
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Published:</b>	January 1st 1998 by Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in Association with Liverpool University Press
<b>ISBN10:</b>	1874774358

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Hasidism has been a seminal force and source of controversy in the Jewish world since its inception in the second half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, almost every ideological trend that has made itself felt among Jews since that time—from Zionism and Orthodoxy to contemporary Jewish feminism and movements within the yeshiva world—has claimed to have derived some inspiration from this vibrant movement.

While this is sure testimony to its vitality and originality, it has also given rise to many misconceptions as to what hasidism is about. This major work, the first comprehensive critical study of hasidism in English, offers a wide-ranging treatment of the subject in all its aspects by what is effectively the entire present generation of scholars working in the field. With contributions ranging from the history of theology and of ideas through social and economic history to contemporary sociology, *Hasidism Reappraised* encompasses a complete field of modern scholarship in a discipline that is central to the understanding of modern Jewish history and the contemporary Jewish world. The twenty-eight authors who have contributed to the main body of the book are almost without exception established scholars with international reputations. The volume as a whole is dedicated to the memory of Joseph Weiss, and its opening section assesses his contribution to the study of hasidism in the context of his relationship with Gershom Scholem and Scholem's long-standing influence on the field. The remaining contributions are arranged thematically under seven headings: the social history of

hasidism; the social functions of mystical ideals in the hasidic movement; distinctive outlooks and schools of thought within hasidism; the hasidic tale; the history of hasidic historiography; contemporary hasidism; and the present state of research on hasidism. The book also incorporates an extensive introduction that places the various articles in their intellectual context, as well as a bibliography of hasidic sources and contemporary scholarly literature. *Hasidism Reappraised* shows an intellectual world at an important juncture in its development and points to the direction in which scholarly study of hasidism is likely to develop in the years to come.