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Nahman Of Bratslav: The Tales (The Classics Of Western Spirituality Series)



Synopsis

The most in-depth and scholarly panorama of Western spirituality ever attempted! In one series, the original writings of the universally acknowledged teachers of the Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Islamic and Native American traditions have been critically selected, translated and introduced by internationally recognized scholars and spiritual leaders. The texts are first-rate, and the introductions are informative and reliable. The books will be a welcome addition to the bookshelf of every literate religious person. -- The Christian Century

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Hebrew

Purchased this to add to my Classics of Western Spirituality collection. When I get around to reading it, probably years from now, I'll probably review it then.

Very well translated and annotated work.

Tales the Grimm brothers would never have come near- of interest to the study of mysticism and religion and compelling images

The introductory sections of this collection of Hassidik tales attributed to Nachman of Bratslav

makes for interesting reading and adds to the richness of the tales.

Excellent translations of stories, insightful commentary.

Great book. Fast shipping.

Rabbi Nachman is one of the legendary figures of the Jewish world. He has a unique, if not quite understandable position in a number of ways. When he died no leader was allowed to replace him and for the Breislav Hasidim even today he is the leader. He had a problematic and short life and his teachings bear the mark and wisdom of having suffered much, and learned much from the suffering. Still as a Hasidic master his Torah is a Torah of joy in depth in living in the life of Torah. His stories are mystical and mysterious. They seem to have both a fairy-tale quality and an enigmatic yearning tone. I personally have always had difficulty understanding the tales. This volume contains explanation by the translator Arnold Band and commentary by philosophy professor Joseph Dan. For me the Tales however wondrous have always been secondary to the discursive homiletic teachings. I would recommend to anyone who reads these tales and is in some way moved by them to examine the thought of Rabbi Nachman in depth. He is a tremendously inspiring spiritual teacher, one of incredible depth and beauty.

Do you want to read a book of fairy-tales written by by a little-known Hassidic Rabbi, eccentric even by the standards of Hassidic Rabbis, a tormented soul in spite of his deep Jewish faith, absorbed in abstruse Kabbalistic speculations, and possibly subject to Messianic delusions? It may not sound very attractive, but believe it or not this is one of the most beautiful, haunting, profound, mysterious, re-readable and unforgettable books I have ever discovered. Although I've known these stories for 20 years, some episodes still move me to tears. It's an open secret that traditional fairy-tales are spiritual teachings in costume. All children know this, and absorb these teachings at an early age without being able to explain them. The authority here was the Sri Lankan scholar Ananda Coomaraswamy, if you can find his wonderful essays. "Thumbelina" is the most beautiful, concise, complete outline of the spiritual life you could hope to find. "Beauty and the Beast", "East of the Sun, West of the Moon", are also outstanding. (Let's not get carried away. You'd have a hard task to find mystical significance in "Goldilocks and the Three Bears".) Rabbi Nahman takes over the set vocabulary of Eastern European fairy-tales, with their Princesses and Emperors, speaking animals and magical objects, complicated quests and royal children exchanged at birth with commoners,

and adds some stock characters from Jewish folklore. The stories are said to contain concealed meanings referring to the Kabbalistic universe of Rabbi Isaac Luria: but given that no two commentators agree on what these meanings are, you can safely ignore them and just read for the story. A warning. These stories are like those transcribed by field-workers, stories from oral tradition never subjected to literary reworking. They can be oddly inconsequential, leaving out crucial matters while including the seemingly irrelevant. They often have a "Suddenly! ...nothing happened" quality, and they don't so much end as just stop. The Story of the Heart and the Spring, in part 5 of "The Seven Beggars", made me gasp and drop the book the first time I read it. You finish these Tales with a sigh, feeling, like the narrator of "The Ancient Mariner", sadder but wiser, having learnt something heart-rendingly true you'll never forget... but unable to explain what it is.

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