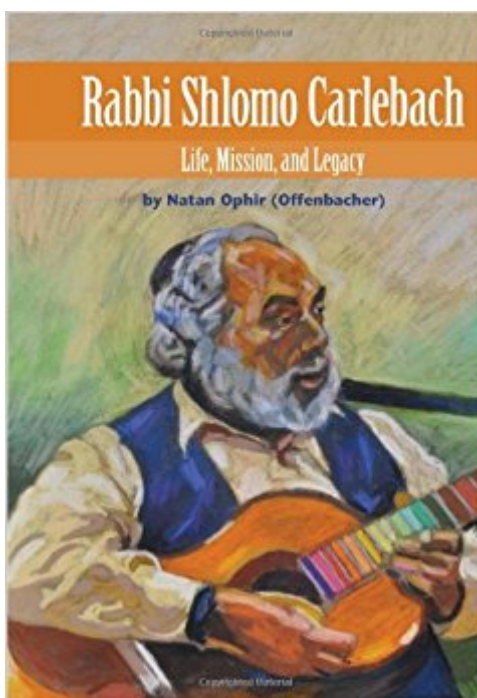


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# Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach: Life, Mission, And Legacy (Modern Jewish Lives)



## Synopsis

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach is a man considered the most influential composer of Jewish religious music of the 20th century and a progenitor of the modern neo-Hasidic renaissance is the focus of this systematic study. The book presents a scholarly analysis of his teachings, innovations, and music and examines Carlebach's life and career via the prism of the historical and cultural developments of his time, including the Holocaust, the Six-Day War, the hippie phenomenon, the New Age movement, and other events that were channeling the course of Jewish life. It also attempts to understand the roots of the Carlebach phenomenon and its wide-range appeal, but above all, this book provides a new framework to evaluate and appreciate the unique form of heartfelt Judaism, joyful optimism, and soulful rejuvenation that Shlomo Carlebach inspired.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"At last, a carefully researched and meticulously annotated biography of Shlomo Carlebach. A must-read for anyone interested in Reb Shlomo and his legacy. Professor Jonathan D. Sarna, author, *American Judaism: A History* "Dr. Ophir worked tirelessly, not only collecting and organizing data on three continents, but gained the trust of hundreds of people who told him their experiences with Reb Shlomo. The result is a documentary history that promises to be the definitive biographical study of Reb Shlomo's life and career."

•Prof. Shaul Magid, Jay and Jeannie Schottenstein professor of modern Judaism, Indiana University

Natan Ophir (Offenbacher) is a teacher of practical Jewish meditation and a professor at the Jerusalem College of Technology and the Ono Academic College. Neshama Carlebach is a singer and songwriter and the daughter of the late Shlomo Carlebach. She lives in New York City.

so far great. really detailed. takes you back.

Numerous excellent and inspirational books have been written outlining the life of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and transcribing his deep, moving, and inspiring stories and inter-song comments that he wove skillfully and almost magically into his concerts, but until now no one has attempted to reconstruct THE FULL STORY of this creative and constructive genius whose equal has yet to emerge and may never be born! Rabbi Dr. Natan Ophir (Offenbacher) has just written a blockbuster magnum opus about Rabbi Carlebach that is sweeping in scope and destined to become the definitive biography of a unique personality whose direct influence on Jewish prayer of a broad spectrum of Jews worldwide as expressed musically may be more far-reaching than that of anyone since King David. Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach popularized excerpts from the prayer book and from the Bible through his captivating and mesmerizing melodies. He inspired a "Nusach Carlebach," forming the basis of minyanim and prayer groups bearing his name and perpetuating his unique approach to prayer in virtually every meridian of the globe where Jews gather to share their common destinies. This biography eclipses prior books about Carlebach in terms of comprehensiveness and the placement of each individual event and anecdote in historical and cultural context, with intriguing lists, such as the names of virtually each major song that Rabbi Carlebach composed, its English and Hebrew title, its source, and where it can be downloaded and heard on the Internet. This book provides an unprecedented systematic reference and resource guide to Carlebach's life, influence, songs, and concerts. It would be an understatement to say that Rabbi Carlebach was controversial in his lifetime and remains controversial posthumously. This biography deals with the criticism as well as the praise, putting it all in perspective. The difference between most of Carlebach's critics - and there are many -- and his most thorough biographer - who is unique -- is that Rabbi Dr. Ophir has compiled and organized the documentation to place everything in perspective, and openly shares it with his readers. This reader's has only two "criticisms" of the book (with tongue in cheek), most notably that (1) its publicity understates its many features by noting that the book has an index.

It actually has multiple indices, of names, places, and other categories of fascinating information. And finally, (2) the book ends. Or does it? As with regard to Rabbi Carlebach's music, which continues to ring in people's ears long after they put down his recordings, the reader wishes the book would never end, and the rabbi's music would never stop. Actually, his legacy lives on, as described above, and in the book, and by means of the book, and his music is probably being sung, played, and hummed every moment of every day somewhere in the world. Even the people who knew Rabbi Carlebach the best observed that they learned a lot about him from this book that they did not know before. Imagine how much new information about such an exciting, spontaneous, and holy personality the average reader can absorb and savor! Dr. Natan Ophir (Offenbacher) has amazing credentials as an authority in Judaica both as a rabbi and as an academic scholar. He graduated from Yeshiva University, the oldest and largest American University founded by traditional Jews and affiliated with a rabbinical school, and then studied for seven years at the flagship premier religious Zionist school of higher Jewish learning, the Mercaz HaRav Kook Yeshiva in Jerusalem, where he received ordination from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Then he completed his MA and Ph.D. in Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (informally sometimes referred to as "the Harvard of the Middle East") where he served as rabbi of the campus from 1982-1998. Currently, he directs JMIJ, the Jewish Meditation Institute Jerusalem, and teaches at the Jerusalem College of Technology and the Ono Academic College where his expertise is in developing Computer Aided Instruction and Blended Learning. Rabbi Aaron I. Reichel, Esq., who wrote this review, is the author of *The Maverick Rabbi*, about a different maverick rabbi, Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, whose prime was in a different time. Even this reviewer concedes that Carlebach was far more of a maverick than Goldstein, although each did wonders for the Jewish community and the community beyond "outside of the box." In the 1970s, this reviewer organized a Yavneh-sponsored standing-room-only symposium at Yeshiva University, with the participation of Carlebach and other very notable rabbis, on responding to the Jews for Jesus, as documented and placed in context, as never before, in this new biography.

The book was well researched, and gave a very comprehensive overview of Rabbi Carlebach's life. The author was respectful and generous with praise for the Rabbi. The only thing I found objectionable was a misleading idea that Reb Shlomo was involved in inter-faith meetings, and encouraged Jews to do so. I knew him and was with him when he went, and heard his comments. He went only for one purpose, which was the overriding goal in everything he did, to bring every Jew to learn and keep Torah.

Great!

Gevald! I bought this book looking forward to an objective biography of a controversial figure whose music had spread across the Jewish world. What a disappointment!! The early chapters are of interest, detailing Rabbi Carlebach's family background (descended for a long line of distinguished rabbis) and his Yeshiva training (one of the first student at Lakewood Yeshiva and a talmudic genius) and his closeness to the last 2 Rebbes of Lubavitch (culminating in him being assigned as one of the earliest Chabad outreach Rabbis in the 1950's.) It is the years as a singing rabbi that the book begins to take a turn for the worse, and spirals down from there. While there are several interesting anecdotes, there is never a critical attempt to analyze this complex man. Several examples of how the book could have been improved: We are told that the traditional Orthodox world shunned him, but given little insight into why this might be other than brief vignettes. A deeper understanding of this, with more of Carlebach's responses to this criticism, would have been fascinating. An exception to this general rejection was that of the Amshinover Rebbe, leader of a deeply traditional Chasidic group who (or whose father) had been in Shanghai during World War 2, and who was a powerful and unusual personality in his own right. We are given no real insight into the relationship between Carlebach and the Amshinover, although this was clearly a close and unusual friendship.. Carlebach is credited for bringing hundreds, or maybe thousands of Jewish youth back to Judaism (and we are given endlessly repetitive examples of such individuals throughout the book), and was close to Chabad, but there is no analysis of how he may (or may not) have influenced the subsequent enormously successful outreach of Chabad on college campuses. There are whole chapters in this book that predominantly list when and where Carlebach gave concerts, often including who organized them. These chapters at times feel more like one is reading a catalogue than a book, and is certainly not in the vein of an academic analysis of the man. On a positive note, there are some useful footnotes, particularly to YouTube video clips for those who wish to follow Carlebach's career, but at the end of the day, I came away from this book feeling that, despite the author's insistence that he looked at all aspects of the man, I had read a long-winded tome written by a non-objective author who appeared to suffer not only from a lack of objectivity but certainly lacked a good editor. Perhaps one day we will get a more definitive biography of this complex and intriguing character whose impact on the Jewish world lives on.

Too many dry record of dates and people met and not enough life. It failed to really mirror and/or

explain the whys and hows of the controversial and colorful life of Rabbi Carlebach.

Rabbi Dr Natan Ophir has written an excellent and thorough biography of the late great Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. From his youth in Europe and yeshiva education in America, to a lifetime of Torah teaching and outreach to Jews and non-Jews all over the world, Reb Shlomo's music and teachings continue to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds. Shlomo brought joy and repair back to Jewish life after the Holocaust, and helped to lift up those who felt fallen in spirit. It was my privilege to meet Reb Shlomo in 1969 and many times thereafter until his passing. And while it is impossible to cover all of a person's life in one volume, Rabbi Ophir has managed to include many important and varied aspects of Reb Shlomo's deep spiritual and holy work in the world. This interesting book is well-researched and has copious footnotes, photos, references, links, and indexes. Highly recommended.

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