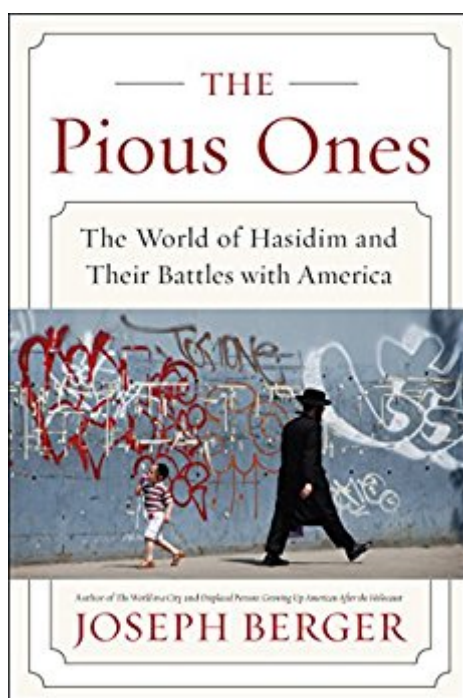


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# The Pious Ones: The World Of Hasidim And Their Battles With America



## Synopsis

As the population of ultra-Orthodox Jews in the United States increases to astonishing proportions, veteran New York Times journalist Joseph Berger takes us inside the notoriously insular world of the Hasidim to explore their origins, beliefs, and struggles—and the social and political implications of their expanding presence in America. Though the Hasidic way of life was nearly extinguished in the Holocaust, today the Hasidim—the pious ones—have become one of the most prominent religious subcultures in America. In *The Pious Ones*, New York Times journalist Joseph Berger traces their origins in eighteenth-century Eastern Europe, illuminating their dynamics and core beliefs that remain so enigmatic to outsiders. He analyzes the Hasidim's codified lifestyle, revealing its fascinating secrets, complexities, and paradoxes, and provides a nuanced and insightful portrayal of how their all-encompassing faith dictates nearly every aspect of life—including work, education, food, sex, clothing, and social relations—sustaining a sense of connection and purpose in a changing world. From the intense sectarian politics to the conflicts that arise over housing, transportation, schooling, and gender roles, *The Pious Ones* also chronicles the ways in which the fabric of Hasidic daily life is threatened by exposure to the wider world and also by internal fissures within its growing population.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Learning about a fascinating yet different culture broadens my appreciation for America and all its glorious diversity. As the oldest in a large Irish clan, I can appreciate the challenges of the large Hasidic families detailed in this book. However the description of the lives of women and girls in this culture, their lack of education and, more importantly, their lack of life choices was disturbing. The author's attempts to explain the reasoning behind this culture's philosophy and deeply held religious beliefs allowed those of us on the outside to appreciate the deep faith of these people.

I enjoyed the book, and I learned a lot. The writing made it easy to read. And there were plenty of good stories. My two complaints: the book really needs an index; and because the chapters seem to have begun as separate and discrete articles, there was a lot of unnecessary repetition that a good editor should have taken care of. (Why don't books have editors these days?)

I was astonished by the success of the Hasidim in keeping their children so ignorant of American life and customs. I wish the author had delved more deeply into the thoughts and emotions of the Hassidic women who face no choices in their lives' directions. If the Hassidic growth rate continues so rapidly I think there will be much greater backlash from society against having to accommodate their customs. There are some similarities to current backlash against Muslim immigrants who maintain their dress and other non-assimilation customs.

For anyone hoping to have more of an insider's vantage point to increase their understanding of Hasidism, *The Pious Ones* will be both informative and an enjoyable read.

I find the Hasidim endlessly fascinating and the book was eminently readable. I remember reading Buber on the great masters and find today's Hasidim rather sad. I can't help wondering how much brilliance perished in the Shoa.

Just what I wanted great info about that group

Joseph Berger is a very good writer. He gives an accurate unbiased understanding of the inner

workings of the Hasidic community. I really enjoyed it. And gained a lot of insight.

Fascinating, unbiased view of the world in Kiryat Joel, Williamsburg. Not only their daily lives, rituals, role of women, but their battles with the government and its laws, many of which they manipulate and circumvent.

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