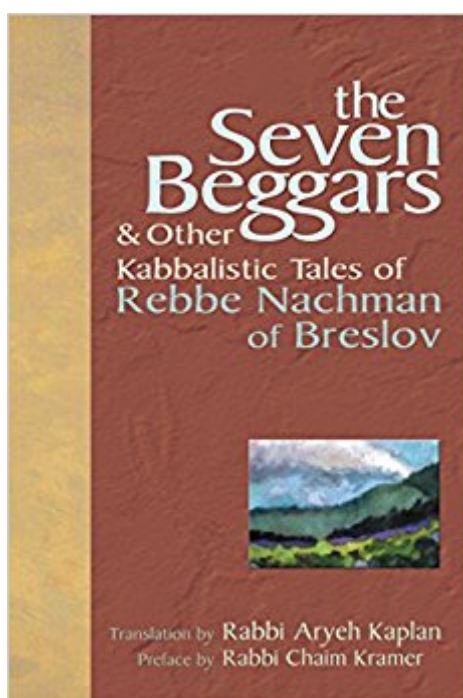


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The Seven Beggars: & Other Kabbalistic Tales Of Rebbe Nachman Of Breslov



Synopsis

Rejoice in the stories of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov for their insight into the human condition and the realm of the mysterious. When Rabbi Nachman first started telling his stories, he declared: "Now I am going to tell you stories." The reason he did so was because in generations so far from God the only remedy was to present the secrets of the Torah including even the greatest of them in the form of stories. From the Preface For centuries, spiritual teachers have told stories to convey lessons about God and perceptions of the world around us. Hasidic master Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) perfected this teaching method through his engrossing and entertaining stories that are fast-moving, brilliantly structured, and filled with penetrating insights. This collection presents the wisdom of Rebbe Nachman, translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan and accompanied by illuminating commentary drawn from the works of Rebbe Nachman's pupils. This important work brings you authentic interpretations of Rebbe Nachman's stories, allowing you to experience the rich heritage of Torah and Kabbalah that underlies each word of his inspirational teachings.

Book Information

File Size: 5549 KB

Print Length: 192 pages

Publisher: Jewish Lights; 1 edition (July 7, 2011)

Publication Date: July 7, 2011

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01HT6DKWC

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #593,730 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #33

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Hasidism #105

in Kindle Store > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Hasidism #148 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings > Kabbalah

Customer Reviews

Anything that Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan translates is stupendous. Absolutely the best stories with great depth. Brings an understanding no matter the religious affiliation.

the vision of this master storyteller is brought before us a the story of seven beggars, and other kabbalistic, zoharic, lurianic, baal shem tov, master of the name of ha Shem, a master of the shem, name, or of the question? so a holy master who holds the secret of Ha Shem.

The 18th century Rabbi Nachman of Breslov was famous for his mystical stories. True to the kabbalistic approach, these seemingly simple and entertaining stories, carry layers of hidden meaning that can serve to enlighten the reader or listener. For example in the Treasure, a man dreams of a treasure under a bridge in Vienna. He travels to Vienna, only to learn after waiting by the bridge for an opportune time, that the treasure is actually back in his own house. Although we bear our own treasure, the story implies, we must find a spiritual leader who will help us find it. The Seven Beggars story of the title, is extensively footnoted to show the reader how almost every line of the story includes Biblical or Talmudic references. Only by understanding these, can the heart of the story enlighten us with its mystical messages. This book is a great introduction into this type of kabbalistic story telling, and it contains an extensive bibliography for readers who would like to further explore Jewish mysticism.

Opinions differ about the stories told by the Chassidic Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810). A recent book by Rodger Kamenets, called *Burnt Books*, say his tales are "crude," "lack polish," "deformed," "distorted," "confused," "verbose," and "ignoble in form." Kamenets states that the Rebbe's stories had to be rewritten by Martin Buber and Nachman's disciple Rabbi Nathan to make them understandable. He describes Nachman as a manic-depressive. Others feel just the opposite; they see Rebbe Nachman as a saintly man with deep insight into the teachings of Jewish mysticism. His disciples claim that his stories are parables containing the secret mystical teachings. They say that the Rebbe burnt some of his writings because he felt that they were too lofty and not fit for his generation. Rabbi Nathan, who transcribed his teacher Rebbe Nachman's stories, writes that many Chassidic leaders who felt they understood the Rebbe's stories claimed that they were too holy for publication and told Rabbi Nathan to stop publishing them. Claims have also been made that Rebbe Nachman did not invent his tales; he received them from God through divine inspiration. Rebbe Nachman himself said he told the tales to bring Jews to God. Rabbi Nathan, his disciple,

wrote in 1816 that "even the plain, simple meaning of these stories can strongly motivate a person toward God." There is growing interest in Rebbe Nachman. The Breslov Research Institute was established in Jerusalem in 1979 to research and teach Breslov texts, oral traditions, and music. There are many Breslov Chassidim today. In recent years, as many as 20,000 male pilgrims swarmed into Uman to visit Rebbe Nachman's grave around Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year holiday. These people are diverse - Hasidic Jews with disheveled beards, secularists, and seekers after life's meaning. This volume contains seventeen of Rebbe Nachman's tales with copious informative notes by Rabbi Kaplan that explain the mystical references that he sees in the stories. Rabbi Kaplan frequently uses phrases such as the story may mean and probably mean and apparently mean, showing that despite the claims made about the tales, there is no clear mystical message. Rabbi Kaplan also frequently tells us that the original had words different than the ones he placed in his translation; apparently showing that he had to clarify the text. Rebbe Nachman's world is radically different than the world of many of his readers. Like most Chassidim, he feels that his followers should look to the Rebbe for solutions to all of their problems and not rely on their own ideas - "Each person has a treasure, but in order to find it, he must travel to the tzaddik," the Rebbe. He saw a world filled with evil demons that must be combated. He felt that physicians cannot heal their patients; only God can do so; at best, he claimed, physicians can only alleviate symptoms. Nevertheless, his stories are fascinating, magical in character, similar in many respects to ancient delightful fairy tales, they have messages - such as "Sadness is a very despicable trait", and whether one tries to plumb them for mystical meanings or not, they make absorbing and intriguing reading. See also my reviews of *The Empty Chair* and *The Lost Princess* for other information about Rebbe Nachman and his teachings.

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