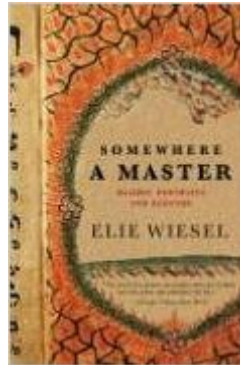




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Somewhere A Master: Hasidic Portraits And Legends



Synopsis

The compassion of Reb Moshe-Leib, the vision of the Seer of Lublin, the wisdom of Reb Pinhas, the warmth of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the humor of Reb Naphtali—to their followers these sages appeared as kings, judges, and prophets. They communicated joy and wonder and fervor to the men and women who came to them in the depths of despair. They brought love and compassion to the persecuted Jews of Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania. For Jews who felt abandoned and forsaken by God, these Hasidic masters incarnated an irresistible call to help and salvation. The Rebbe combats sorrow with exuberance. He defeats resignation by exalting belief. He creates happiness so as not to yield to the sadness around him. He tells stories to escape the temptations of irreducible silence. It is Elie Wiesel's unique gift to make the lives and tales of these great teachers as compelling now as they were in a different time and place. In the tradition of Hasidism itself, he leaves others to struggle with questions of justice, mercy, and vengeance, providing us instead with eternal truths and unshakable faith.

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"The work of a master storyteller who has looked into the ashes and rekindles the fire."—Chicago Tribune Book World
"Wiesel's storytelling is much more than an act of transmission. It is an act of love and lesson-giving."—The New York Times Book Review

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It would be easy and lazy to label Elie Wiesel's *Somewhere a Master: Hasidic Portraits and Legends* as mere hagiography: simple stories of saintly man without human flaws. But this collection of stories and tales belies hagiography. Wiesel takes these figures, brings them to life, and maintains their human complexity. Hasidic rebbes were public figures. They had followers and students. This came with a great cost. The need for solitude and connection to G-d was strong, and often stymied because of their functions as rebbes. Wiesel observes that nearly every master died in some state of despair. Often, it is not clear why, but Wiesel seems to be telling us that these men, who gave so much to their people, lost things in life through their service; this brought some measure of despair at the end.

Even this atheist loved this book.

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