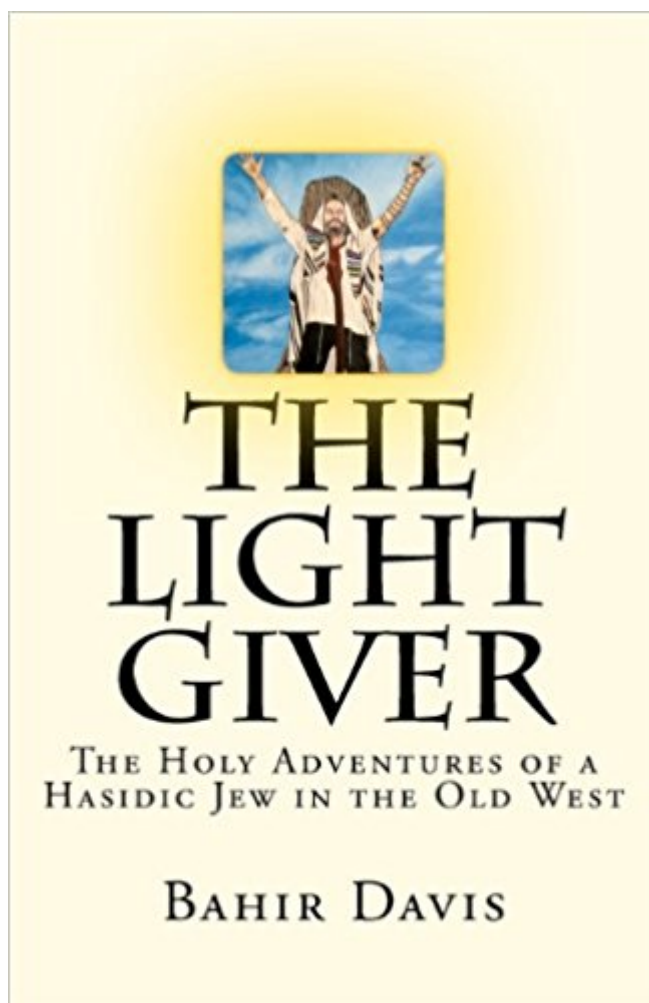


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The Light Giver: The Holy Adventures Of A Hasidic Jew In The Old West



Synopsis

What would happen if a Hasidic rabbi from Eastern Europe suddenly found himself in the 'Old West' of the American 1850s? This is the question Bahir Davis answers in the delightful and often profound stories of *The Light Giver*, in which Reb Ya'ir, a Hasidic Jew from the Polish town of P'shyskha embarks on an adventure through the 'New World,' trying to reach San Francisco, where he has been offered a position as rabbi. Along the way, he finds that the true purpose of his coming to America has little to do with his destination. Rather, it lies in the journey of discovery, in the meeting of different cultures, in the wisdom he gains from fugitive slaves, Native American medicine men, and settlers on the frontier. And we, the readers, benefit from the light that he shares from his own spiritual tradition. In each story, a different Jewish holiday is experienced and explored in a unique and inviting manner. An accomplished storyteller, Bahir Davis, a circuit-riding rabbi and founder of Rocky Mountain Hai in Lafayette, Colorado, skillfully combines his love of 'Old West' lore with his true vocation as a spiritual teacher in this wonderful book of Jewish wisdom for the American frontier. Praise for *The Light Giver*: "What fun it is to follow Reb Bahir's rabbi-hero on his journey through the Wild West and the Jewish calendar. A wonderful read, it sneaks in solid teaching wrapped in a rollicking tale." — Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of the Jewish Renewal Movement "Jewish mystical stories were born at the strange, hazy crossroads between uncommon wisdom and common sense. *The Light Giver* hearkens back to the time when rabbis didn't lecture from podiums and write blog posts from iPads, but went on adventures into the wild, befriending runaway slaves and dodging Injun arrows, throwing themselves into the wide world because G-d created it all. Written in the fine tradition of Reb Shmuel Munkes and *The Frisco Kid*, the stories in this book are funny, sad, innocent and world-weary, and truly, truly wise." --- Matthue Roth, author of *Yom Kippur A Go-Go: A Memoir* "At once funny, touching, and profound, *The Light Giver* takes us on a journey through the Jewish calendar, the Jewish spirit and into the Jewish soul. Rabbi Davis is by no means conventional, and this book is unlike any other. Within it there are sparks of Divinity waiting for us to unearth. This book is a delight to read and learn from." --- Mayim Bialik, actress and author of *Beyond the Sling*

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Customer Reviews

BAHIR DAVIS is currently the rabbi and spiritual leader of Rocky Mountain Hai in Lafayette, Colorado.

I sat down to read an advance copy of this book and I didn't sleep a wink! I just couldn't put it down. It was facinating and touching. The stories are not only historically accurate but they paint a thoughtful and beautiful picture of many different cultures and American groups. You learn about Jewish traditions and practices through Reb Yair, the young hero of the story who travels from his closed and constant community in Poland throughout the American West. As Reb Yair teaches Jewish traditions to Mountain Men, Native Americans, and runaway slaves, he teaches us about our own traditions. Not only do we learn about Jewish ritual practice, we learn and learn to love the practices of others. Reb Bahir Davis paints a complete picture of Native American culture and African-American struggles in the Old West. I highly recommend this book to folks who want to learn more about Judaism, people looking for an engaging story, teachers searching for a new way to teach their students, and beyond. This is a book to pass down through the generations, as Reb Bahir Davis has passed these stories down to his children and chosen family.

This is a wonderful book that shows the mystical side of ritual. Comparing the Jewish view of religious thought and practice with those of various Native Americans helps the reader to see the spiritual/mystical infrastructure of religious practice. Many moderns see religious ritual as mindless repetition or strict adherence to ancient (irrelevant) instructions, but this delightful set of stories helps us see the way ritual is the language of the spirit. In studying spirituality and mysticism, it is vital to understand the dynamics of thought, spiritual aspiration, and behaviors that express these ethereal qualities. That is why this book is required reading in my Penn State course on Jewish mysticism. Thanks to Rabbi Davis for this wonderful introduction to the life of the spirit.

This book was recommended to me by a friend and I'm so glad I read it. Bahir Davis's story of the Light Giver is educational and inspirational, teaching the reader not only about Judaism but about the American west in the 1800s. In addition, each anecdote explores the fundamental elements of Jewish holidays, demonstrating how these ancient ideas are applicable to any individual's search for meaning, regardless of his or her personal religious beliefs. Rabbi Ya'ir's spiritual quest mirrors the reader's own journey to enlightenment.

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