

THE HABAD SCHOOL OF HASIDISM is distinguished today from other hasidic groups by its famous emphasis on outreach, messianism, and empowering women. *Hasidism Beyond Modernity* provides a critical thematic study of the movement from its beginnings, showing how its unusual qualities evolved.

Naftali Loewenthal's approach is twofold. He examines the functioning of Habad in contemporary society, with detailed consideration of the outreach ethos, the turn towards women in the twentieth century, attitudes to non-Jews, and the place of the individual in the hasidic collective. Recognizing that these social attitudes are underpinned by a spiritual quest, he also discusses the practice of mystical contemplation in the context of modernity, messianism, and the direction of the movement after the passing of its seventh *rebbe*, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, in 1994.

The discussion highlights the many contrasts that continue to exist within the movement: pre-modern, modern, and postmodern conceptions of Judaism; the clash between maintaining an enclave and an outreach model of Jewish society; particularist and universalist trends; and the subtle interplay of mystical faith and rationality. Some of the chapters are new; others, published in an earlier form, have been updated to take account of recent scholarship. This book presents an in-depth study of an intriguing movement which takes traditional hasidism beyond modernity.