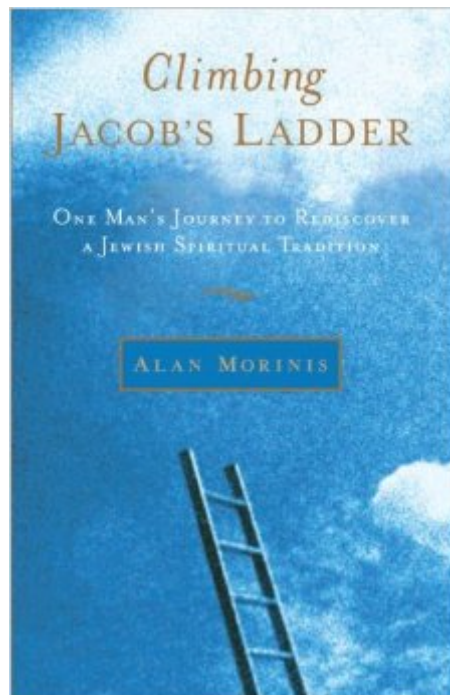


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Climbing Jacob's Ladder: One Man's Journey To Rediscover A Jewish Spiritual Tradition



Synopsis

Jewish by birth, though from a secular family, Alan Morinis explored Hinduism and Buddhism as a young man. But in 1997, in the face of personal crisis, he turned to his Jewish heritage for guidance. In his reading he happened upon a Jewish spiritual tradition called Mussar. Gradually he realized that he had stumbled upon an insightful discipline for self-development, complete with meditative, contemplative, and other well-developed transformative practices designed to penetrate the deepest roots of the inner life. Eventually reaching the limits of what he could learn on his own, he decided to seek out a Mussar teacher. This was not an easy task, since almost the entire world of the Mussar tradition had been wiped out in the Holocaust. In time, he found an accomplished master who stood in an unbroken line of transmission of the Mussar tradition, and who lived in the center of a community of Orthodox Jews on Long Island. This book tells the story of Morinis's journey to meet his teacher and what he learned from him, revealing the central teachings and practices that are the spiritual treasury and legacy of Mussar.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's not often that one comes across a nonfiction book as smooth reading as "Climbing Jacob's Ladder." Alan Morinis has produced what might be called a spiritual autobiography, with a specific purpose, explained in the title as, "One Man's Discovery of a Jewish Spiritual Tradition." Underlying all is a searing honesty that is positively inspiring. The tradition in question is Mussar, which has its roots in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust. This so decimated Mussar practitioners that Mussar did not gain prominence in the study of Judaism as a whole. So, for Alan Morinis, after much

research, it was a "find". His description of it is so compelling that it is hard to put aside. As an autobiography, the character of the author as a secular Jew comes through very clearly in all its ramifications during his journey towards spiritual fulfilment. Also central to the book's treatment of Mussar is the character of the person who ultimately became Morinis' teacher. Rabbi Yechiel Yitzchok Perr, living in New York to where the author travelled several times from Vancouver for study. Rabbi Perr, though orthodox himself teaches without imposing orthodoxy on the learner as the writer might have expected, since he found the subject grounded in orthodoxy. However, Mussar is not only for studying, but for practising: its basic principles emanating from the soul of every practitioner, different as they are from every other practitioner. I found the book positively exciting because of the honesty of expression about the author's feelings at every stage of the journey. The writing is imbued with a very human quality that draws the reader into the author's soul, which is the whole point of the exercise of Mussar: to develop the soul toward spiritual perfection as far as possible.

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