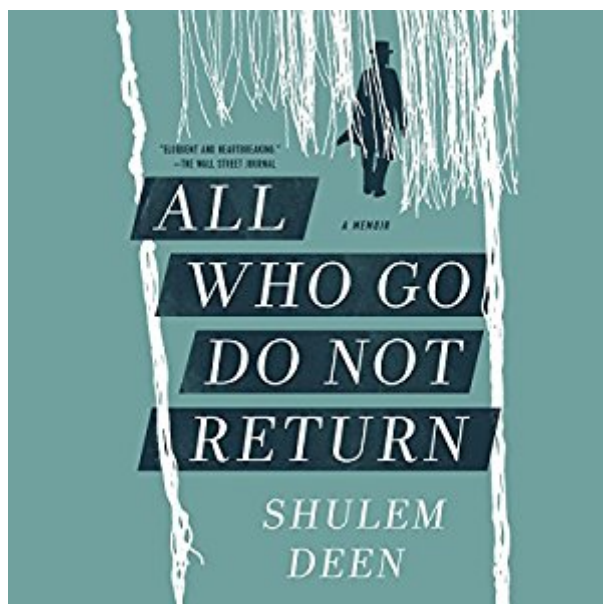


The book was found

All Who Go Do Not Return: A Memoir



Synopsis

A moving and revealing exploration of Hasidic life and one man's struggles with faith, family, and community. Shulem Deen was raised to believe that questions are dangerous. As a member of the Skverers, one of the most insular Hasidic sects in the US, he knows little about the outside world - only that it is to be shunned. His marriage at 18 is arranged, and several children soon follow. Deen's first transgression - turning on the radio - is small, but his curiosity leads him to the library and, later, the Internet. Soon he begins a feverish inquiry into the tenets of his religious beliefs until, several years later, his faith unravels entirely. Now a heretic, he fears being discovered and ostracized from the only world he knows. His relationship with his family at stake, he is forced into a life of deception and begins a long struggle to hold on to those he loves most: his five children. In *All Who Go Do Not Return*, Deen bravely traces his harrowing loss of faith while offering an illuminating look at a highly secretive world.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

[SPOILER ALERT: I found it difficult to write this review without discussing some of the major aspects and events of the book. I don't think that these are exactly spoilers: we know from the jacket cover and picture of the now clean-shaven author that he ends up leaving a Chassidic sect and the book opens with the author and his family getting ousted from the New Square community. I refer to most specific events in general terms but, even so, I just wanted to give readers the heads up.] Shulem Deen's *All Who Go Do Not Return* is the author's memoir of leaving an Orthodox

Chassidic sect. I was riveted from start to finish. This is a powerfully written book that is even more gripping because it is not fiction. Moreover, it has intrinsic interest because it opens the door to the inner sanctum of the insular, Skverer Chassidic community located in New Square, New York. However, I found the book equally intriguing as it was disturbing to me. I am not Hasidic, but I am an observant Jew. Although I hate labels, Deen would probably peg me as 'Modern Orthodox.' (For those who are not in the know, this moniker cuts a large swath, describing anyone from the most liberal Jewish Orthodoxy--just to the right of Conservative--to a graduate of Yeshiva University's rabbinical school. If this is the range, I would definitely fall right of center.) As such, I am familiar with Hasidim and Hasidic communities. I have not lived in such a community nor am I drawn to do so. But just as I am able to appreciate the authenticity of Deen's point of view, I also have a great respect for and know many Hasidim who are, indeed, pious and live rewarding and productive lives within communities that are similar to New Square.

I rarely struggle to write a review but today I find myself conflicted over this book and all that it represents. First, prospective readers should know this is a well written and very engaging book. No, it does not have the poetic quality of Wiesel nor the philosophical orientation of the great masters but as a deeply personal biography, it stands alone in being honest, unique, insightful and heart wrenching. Above all, heart wrenching. As a first-hand account of a very little known sect of Hasidic Judaism, it is a rare glimpse into a lifestyle very few ever encounter much less understand. Clearly this is a personal reflection - and reaction - to a religious orientation, culture, belief system and world that is quite unlike anything most modern day Americans can comprehend. It is both fascinating and bewildering. There is a tendency to form opinions, pass judgement or try to sum up the experience in a manner that aligns with our own personal value system (or lack thereof). Both the religious element as well as environment and individual feelings/thoughts come into question each bringing with it a tendency to try to put a label on it, try to sum it up in a nice tidy manner but honestly, this defies label....both the experience of the individual and the larger environment itself. There are those who might see this as an attack on the foundation or faith of Judaism itself...and it is easy to see why. When someone embraces a belief system, a lifestyle, a culture, the people, home, faith etc born of thousands of years of suffering -often literally at the choice of death - the continued existence of the people, belief, language etc is testament to the enduring struggle and dedication of those who came before.

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