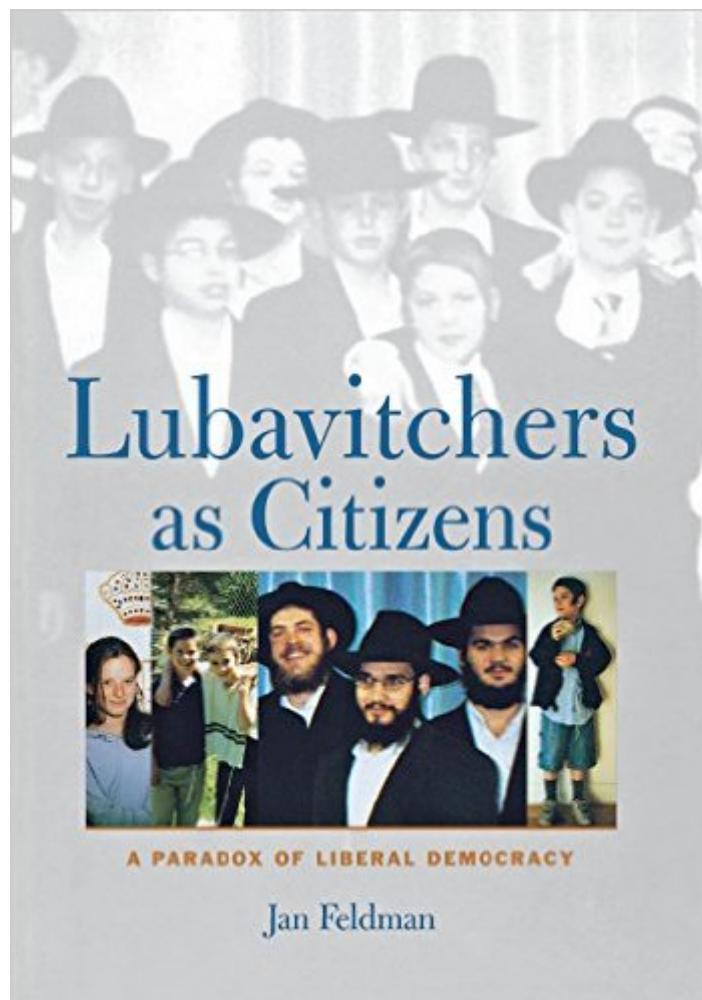


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Lubavitchers As Citizens: A Paradox Of Liberal Democracy



Synopsis

Lubavitchers are active in the civic life of their communities and so should be considered good citizens by advocates of participatory democracy. However, their obviously nonliberal worldview tends to elicit rancor in precisely those quarters. The notion that democratic political institutions require the support of a democratic political culture is pervasive in political theory. Many scholars treat democratic virtues and liberal values as synonymous. As a result, nonliberal groups are viewed with suspicion: if they reject liberal values, they are also seen as rejecting democratic ones. Jan Feldman focuses on a subset of Chassidic Judaism known as Lubavitch, or ChaBad, to explore this assumption. Lubavitchers make an excellent test case, she explains, because they are informed, politically active, and democratic on the one hand, yet embrace nonliberal values on the other. Unlike the Amish or Hutterites, they do not rely on rural isolation for group survival but function remarkably well in secular, urban settings. They embrace rather than withdraw from political life. Although they do not use the state to promote their worldview to a wider audience, their entry into the public realm often generates hostility and fear. Feldman does not claim that liberal values are irrelevant to democracy nor does she argue that all nonliberal groups are equally benign. "What Lubavitchers allow us to investigate," she writes, "is the common assumption that liberal and democratic attitudes are inextricably linked." Through numerous interviews in the centers of Lubavitch life in Montreal, New York, and Washington, D.C., she not only illuminates a group fascinating in its own right but also provides insights into long-held assumptions about the relationship between liberal and democratic values.

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Customer Reviews

This book was simply about the authors sabbatical that she took after her horrible divorce from her Russian Jewish husband. I cannot believe a tree was cut down to publish such grammatical ranting. The book is written as if she was writing her thesis for a masters class and goes on about the friends she made while studying at a Chabad in Montreal. By reading it you can immediately realize that she is embellishing on some of the experiences. She raves about her feminism under control while in the Lubavitch community. Don't waste your money on this book.

This book was HORRIBLE! From premise to conclusion this book really had no firm ground to stand on. What a futile exercise in intellectualism!! Look elsewhere to read about the Chabad Lubavitch sect, such as the Rebbe's Army...

I have always thought of the Lubavitch as the "Hippies" of the Hasidic movement, since they are viewed as way left by absolutely all of their Hasidic neighbors (some sects won't even talk to these "infidels", and in my observation have drawn lots of secular lefties from around the world. I'm not a Lubavitch but love em! Kinder, wiser, less judgemental people you cannot find -- the way they love G-d is admirable by all who have had a less than ideal religious background.

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