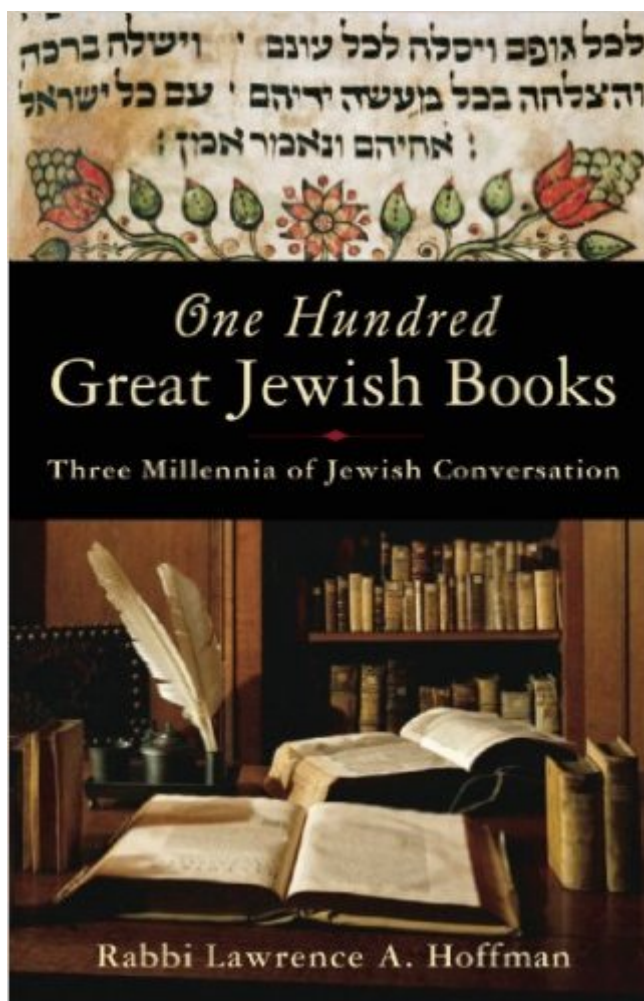


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One Hundred Great Jewish Books: Three Millennia Of Jewish Conversation



Synopsis

An introduction to one hundred great Jewish books, arranged as a concise and thought-provoking guide to the Jewish conversation across many centuries. Each of the entries features one work in its historical and cultural context, provides a summary of content and author, and reflects on its relevance for today's readers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Despite its title, which subliminally implies limitation, "One Hundred Great Jewish Books" is not a top one hundred listing - an absurdity given the immense catalog of essential Jewish reading - but instead is meant to be what Lawrence Hoffman describes as "an altogether new kind of introduction to Judaism, intended to enrich the explanations of Jewish history, thought, and practice that other books provide." Unfortunately, on the first page of his introduction Hoffman makes a statement that's bound to alienate many readers, and also defines his surprisingly limited frame of reference regarding what constitutes a "great" book. "For the majority of Jews in Israel," he writes, "religion is associated with Jewish fundamentalism and its ultra-Orthodox political parties that would return Judaism to the Middle Ages if they could." This statement is at best a gross simplification; at worst, deliberately divisive if not provocative. As a rabbi, especially one who identifies with a branch of Judaism that supposedly emphasizes diversity, inclusiveness and open-mindedness, Hoffman should know better than this. Hoffman acknowledges that his choices for inclusion in his survey are

"somewhat personal"; and even though he never mentions it, the one hundred book cut-off is artificial given that there are far more than a hundred books on his list. It just depends on how you count them. For example, the Babylonian Talmud is counted as only one book despite the 63 named tractates which run to 72 volumes in the current Hebrew/English Artscroll edition. Hoffman also counts the Midrash Rabbah as one book even though it takes up 10 volumes in the Soncino Press edition.

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