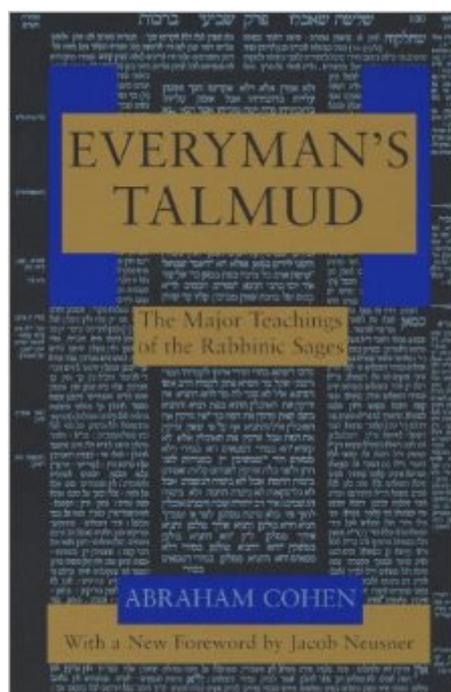


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Everyman's Talmud: The Major Teachings Of The Rabbinic Sages



Synopsis

"To some readers of this book, the Talmud represents little more than a famous Jewish book. But people want to know about a book that, they are told, defines Judaism. Everyman's Talmud is the right place to begin not only to learn about Judaism in general but to meet the substance of the Talmud in particular . . . In time to come, Cohen's book will find its companion-though I do not anticipate it will ever require a successor for what it accomplishes with elegance and intelligence: a systematic theology of the Talmud's Judaism."â From the Foreword by Jacob Neusner
Long regarded as the classic introduction to the teachings of the Talmud, this comprehensive and masterly distillation summarizes the wisdom of the rabbinic sages on the dominant themes of Judaism: the doctrine of God; God and the universe; the soul and its destiny; prophesy and revelation; physical life; moral life and social living; law, ethics, and jurisprudence; legends and folk traditions; the Messiah and the world to come.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a landmark - "a comprehensive survey of the doctrine of this important branch of Jewish literature... a summary of the teachings of the Talmud..." in the words of its author. Jacob Neusner's "foreword" describes it as the "first classic introduction of the Talmud to the English language." As Neusner states: "The greatness of Cohen for the beginner is that he tells us the single most important thing we can know about the Talmud, which is what it says." Abraham Cohen was born in 1887 and died in 1957. His work is a groundbreaking opus that was originally published in 1931; he revised it in 1948. (In 1931 the Talmud had not yet been translated into English!) Neusner's foreword, as well as Cohen's original 23-page introduction, are marvelous and deserve

intensive re-reading. (Just one example of Cohen's support for the novice is his practice of defining words: e.g. Talmud = "study"; Halachah = "walking", the way of life to tread in conformity with the precepts of the Torah., and so on.) The only weak area in the foreword and introduction is that of history. (Here I found the perfect remedy: part 1 of Adin Steinsaltz's book 'The Essential Talmud' - also available through .com). Readers should be aware that Cohen's book is not organized as is the Talmud: you will NOT find the six orders (seder) divided into tractates (masekhet) and chapters (periqim). Instead he divides this great work into 11 chapters: (1) The Doctrine of God, (2) God and the Universe, (3) The Doctrine of Man, (4) Revelation, (5) Domestic Life, (6) Social Life, (7) The Moral Life, (8) The Physical Life, (9) Folk-Lore, (10) Jurisprudence, and (11) The Hereafter.

As most of the reviews say: For its time, this is a great achievement and it is an easy-to-read introduction to the Talmud. Its chapters are easy to follow and it is well indexed. Still, I find it lacking in some very important ways. The Talmud is a collection of rabbinic discussions on mishna (oral tradition), halachah (law) and Torah. This version of the talmud gives us a "unified vision" of what history has to say on any given subject and is in effect a very condensed work. The author took pains to find "the essence" of decision on these subjects. He achieves this and should be commended. Still.....This, in my opinion, goes against the very nature of the Talmud, which is opinion and discussion over the ages. The text only in some instances gives the rabbinic author, and does not provide references to the era in which the writing was done. For the beginner or someone who is not of Jewish origin, this may be helpful by providing something more streamlined. Still, if a Jew has a question about what a particular Rabbi's opinion was, they will be hard pressed to find it. Finally, I find in both the introduction and the forward a bend to the language. Passages such as, "So he [the author] had to make up his own program. He did this by following the standard theological program of mainstream Protestant Christian theology and locating statements on the topics of that program made in the Talmudic writings." (Neusner, pg. xv) worry me that the work may have an unintended Christian leaning. This is not a fault necessarily, and in fact may help those Christians who are looking for more during their studies--my hat's off to you! For a Jewish student though, this could be a bit of a turn-off.

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