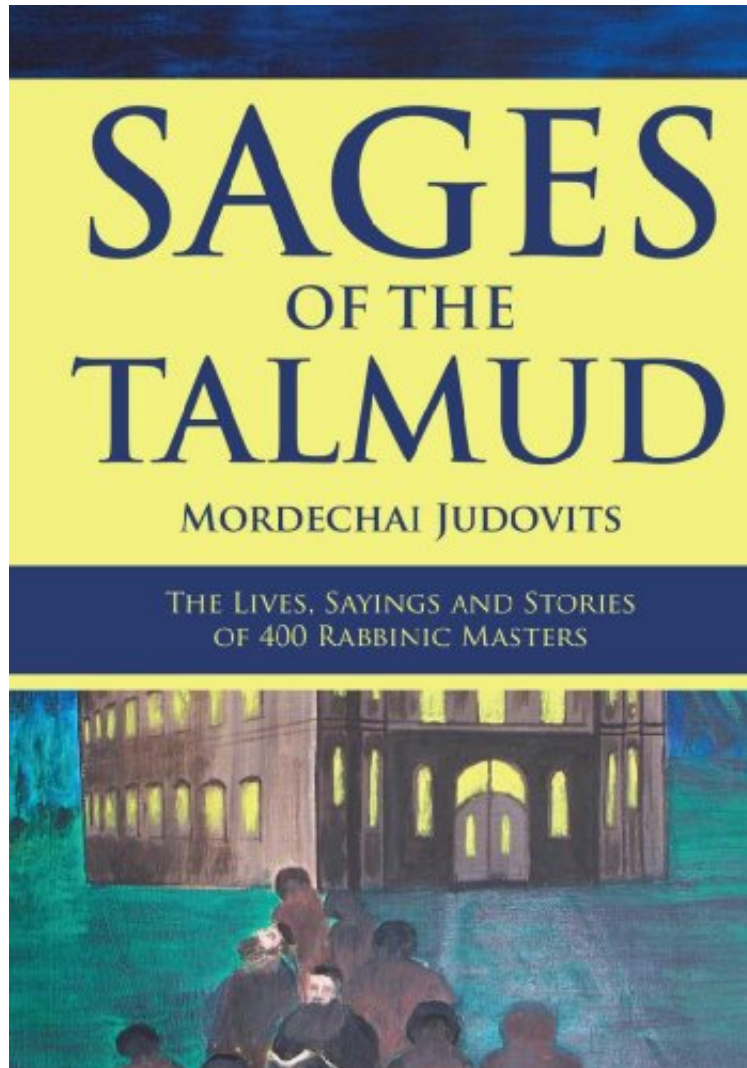


(Free read ebook) Sages of the Talmud: The Lives, Sayings and Stories of 400 Rabbinic Masters

Sages of the Talmud: The Lives, Sayings and Stories of 400 Rabbinic Masters

Mordechai Judovits

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Mordechai Judovits : Sages of the Talmud: The Lives, Sayings and Stories of 400 Rabbinic Masters before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sages of the Talmud: The Lives, Sayings and Stories of 400 Rabbinic Masters:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerGreat. Concise but interesting1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. but not as good as the Encyclopedia of the Talmudic Sages by Gershom ...By AbbyIt is ok, but not as good as the Encyclopedia of the Talmudic Sages by Gershom Bader, which unfortunately seems to be out of print. I was hoping it would similar. Good in its own way, but not what I was looking for8 of 8

people found the following review helpful. A host of interesting information in a well-written book By Israel Drazin This is a book for everyone, Jews and non-Jews, Talmud-students and secularists, men and women, history and literature lovers. Even rabbis who have studied Talmud all their lives will gain information from reading this book and they will enjoy themselves doing so. Mordechai Judovits knows his subject and presents a host of interesting information very well. The volume introduces readers to some 400 ancient Jewish sages, men who helped mold current Jewish life, men who lived during the pagan period and during the onset of Christianity just prior to the appearance of Mohamed, men who suffered persecution and persevered, men who made sacrifices and endured hardships so that that Judaism would endure. Judovits answers many questions in his introduction. What is the Talmud and why is it important? What does it contain? Who were the sages who are mentioned in the Talmud and when did they live? Why are their lives and their efforts and their teachings valuable? What events made it impossible for many of them to be ordained in the traditional manner? He shows us that the talmudic rabbis who devoted their lives to study and to preserving Judaism were frequently working in arduous occupations like other Jews and were not similar to present day pastoral clergy. Judovits also offers some fascinating original ideas. For example, why didn't these sages have names such as Abraham, Moses, Aharon, David, and Solomon? He suggests that this was due to the persecutions of the period. Jewish parents were afraid of reminding authorities who forbid circumcision that they advocated it by naming their son after the first Jew who was circumcised. He offers similar reasons for the other names. The bulk of the volume is devoted to the 400 sages. Judovits gives us their names, dates, and country. He places each in historical perspective, telling us about their era and who were their teachers. He informs us how they made their living. He narrates events in their lives and significant statements that they made. He concludes each biography with a short reference to other sections in his book so that readers can glimpse the entire world during the sage's lifetime. For example, the first of three Hillels lived during the first century BCE and the first century CE. He came to Israel from Babylonia. Tradition says that he was a descendant of King David and lived for 120 years. Judovits has three pages describing episodes in his life, including some significant things he said and did and how he impressed people with his humility and his learning. As a young man, Hillel spent half his daily wages as a day-laborer to pay the admittance fee to enter the study hall to study. He lived during the period when the Jewish king Herod was controlled and manipulated by the Romans, when high priests who were ignorant of Jewish law bought their positions. In Avot 1:3, he is reported to have said, among other things: "He who does not study deserves to die. He who uses the crown of Torah for unworthy purposes shall waste away." In 1:14, he says: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? Yet if I am for myself only, what am I? And if not now, when?" Rava, to cite another example, is mentioned frequently in the Talmud. He lived in the third and fourth century CE in Babylonia. He ran a wine business. He distributed charity to both Jews and non-Jews. He was fortunate in being friendly with the mother of the king of Persia. He founded the prominent academy in Mehoza in Babylonia and lectured there. Judovits tells stories about him and his ideas in five pages. Rava said, "When a man dies and goes to heaven he is asked: 'Did you deal honestly and in good faith with your fellow-men?'" Significantly, he did not say, "fellow-Jews." Meir, another example, lived during the second century CE. His earned his living as a scribe. Judovits describes his teachers, how he was persecuted by the Romans and had to flee Israel to Babylonia, the death of his sons, about his wise wife, about his relationship with an apostate who he admired and respected, and his enormous contributions to Jewish study. He does so in six pages. Meir is recognized for passing on Jewish laws that were later recorded in the Talmud. Yet he was also interested in teaching the common people. It is said that he composed three hundred parables about foxes that taught lessons to the general population in a simple fashion. Judovits was very scrupulous in presenting the traditions about each sage. When I saw the entry in the first draft of his book about the Bible translator Onkelos, I pointed out that I had proven that the translator lived around 400 CE and not the second century as stated in the Talmud. Judovits explained that his book is designed to relate the talmudic views. Judovits summarizes the history of these sages from 650 BCE until 550 CE in about forty pages at the conclusion of his book. We meet the last kings of Judea, the scribe Ezra, Julius Caesar, Herod, the first Jewish philosopher Philo, Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi, and hundreds of others, showing how Jewish history meshed with Babylonian and Roman events and how each affected the other.

With biographical information on the 400 authors of the Talmud and hundreds of anecdotes about these sages as recorded in the Talmud itself, this collection is both an excellent and practical guide for students of the Talmud as well as a fascinating read for the lay reader. The author details the time period in which each sage lived, who his teachers and significant colleagues were, and the house of study or city associated with the sage. The wealth of stories and anecdotes offered in the book are linked to the correct Talmudic sage and offer a fascinating glimpse into the social environment in which each man lived. An appendix with the corresponding general history of the time also provides readers with an understanding of the political climate in which each master worked.

Sages of the Talmud is a necessary book for every person, lay and scholar alike, who is interested in Talmud and Jewish history because it presents important data about the Talmudic sages in both an informative and enjoyable manner. Since the Talmud contains the views of rabbis who lived over a period of many centuries and since the

Talmud mentions the teachings of these rabbis in its text in close proximity, many readers might mistakenly imagine that the sages knew one another. Judovits places the sages in the century in which they lived and describes the unique historical and social environments that prevailed in the days of each one. In addition, readers will find interesting revelations about the character traits of each sage and their accomplishments. --Rabbi Dr. Israel Drazin, author of *Maimonides: The Exceptional Mind* and co-author of *Onkelos on the Torah* English-speaking students of rabbinic literature will be grateful for this comprehensive, easy-to-use guide, *Sages of the Talmud*. Mordechai Judovits, student of the Talmud, has produced an eminently useful reference tool for anyone interested in the biographies, maxims and historical context of the ancient rabbis whose teachings shaped Rabbinic Judaism. --Jonathan D. Sarna, Joseph H. Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History, Brandeis University, author of *American Judaism: A History* About the Author Mordechai Judovits is a Holocaust survivor and a longtime student of the Talmud. He is the author of *Sages of the Talmud*. He lives in Boca Raton, Florida.