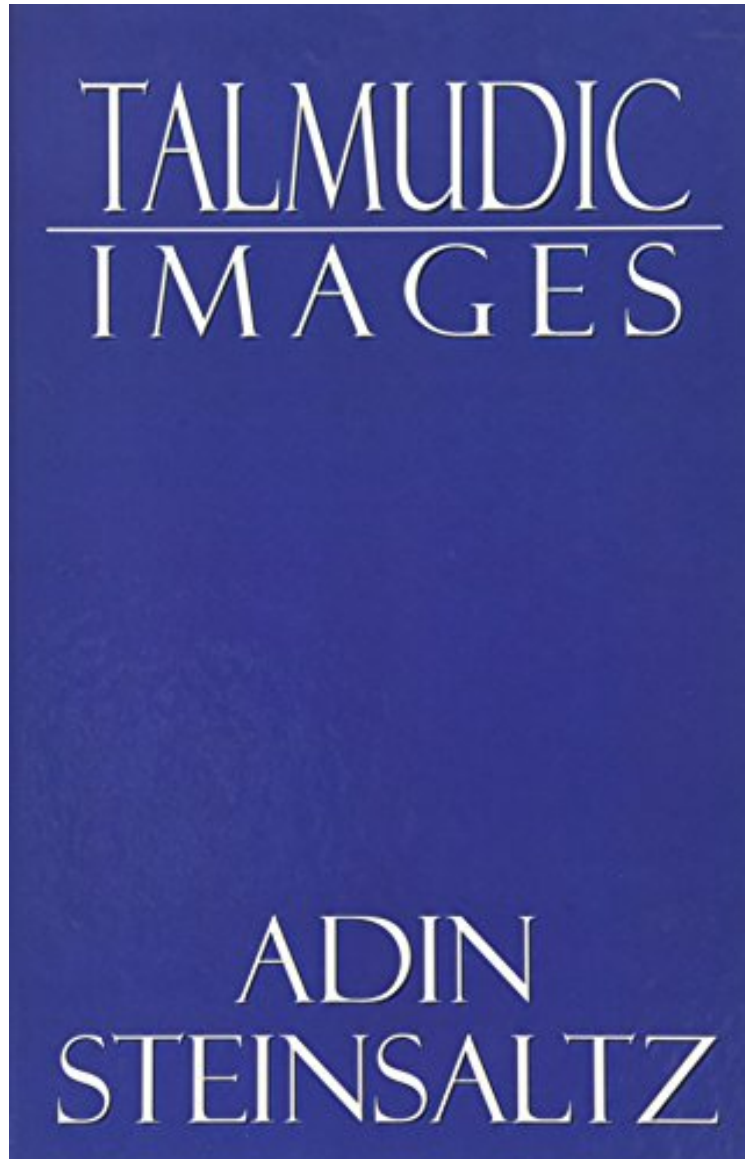


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## Talmudic Images

*Adin Steinsaltz*

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It is an introduction to the Talmud, which is ...By JerryIt is an introduction to the Talmud, which is a the Mishnah, a short text of the law and the Gemara, the record of the interpretation of the law, as well as the arguments of the rabies in the generations after the Mishnah was written. Rabbi

Steinsaltz purpose is to present the history of the era in which the sages lived and their opinions about the laws, which were written in previous generations. The reader is not likely to find the following review helpful.

Names become people

By Ari D. Marcus

While studying Talmud, the names of the scholars come up again and again, and you start to get hints of who they were. This book brings it together and places them in context in a very readable way.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An introduction to the rabbis of the Talmud as the Talmudic rabbis thought of them

By Israel Drazin

Maggid Books has launched a project beginning in 2011 to publish seven popular titles of the books by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. They plan to follow with new editions of more than twenty other works by this rabbi, including several previously unpublished volumes. Steinsaltz is a well-known writer. In 2010, he completed his monumental translation of the Talmud into Modern Hebrew; a work composed for the most part in Aramaic and ancient Hebrew, and added many notes explaining the text, the ideas behind the discussions, the history of the times and personalities, as well as much more relevant information. His work is the best commentary on the Talmud.

This book introduces readers to about a dozen of the men whose views appear in the Talmud. Steinsaltz does not focus on the teachings of these men, but rather on their "history," although he mentions some of their teachings. This is not a scientific study of the periods in which the men lived, nor is it a scholarly study of their biographies. It is rather a brief presentation of the men as they are described in the Talmud, a description that is generally legendary in character. Thus readers seeking the truth about these men, as maintained by scholars, will not find it here. However, it is important to know what the Talmudic editors and Jewish tradition thought about these sages, and Steinsaltz presents this well. He devotes about a half dozen pages to each person.

Rabbi Steinsaltz is by no means unaware of the scholarly views. For example, he notes that the Nasi and the Deputy Nasi were representatives of different schools of thoughts with different world views but "we are ignorant today" what they are. Similarly: "there are differences of opinion among scholars as to exactly when the center of Yavneh began to function." An example of his style is his portrayal of the great sage Hillel. He states that Hillel was the Nasi of the Sanhedrin, meaning the head of the Jewish court that made religious legal decisions. He says that Hillel lived 120 years. The idea about the Nasi and the Sanhedrin is the view of the Talmud. That Hillel lived 120 years is a legend in a Midrash, implying that he was so good that he lived as long as Moses. However, scholars are convinced that the Sanhedrin was a governing body, a kind of parliament that was headed by the High Priest who governed the people at that time. This is the portrait of the Sanhedrin in the New Testament. Readers interested in the scholarly view may want to read Sidney B. Hoenig's great work *The Sanhedrin*. Readers will have to decide for themselves which approach they prefer, but as previously stated, even if they reject the Talmudic approach presented by Rabbi Steinsaltz, they should not reject it without understanding it, for the position he presents is the understanding of most people.

Another example is the interesting appraisal Rabbi Steinsaltz gives readers of the disputes between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. He states that the school formed by Hillel's colleague Shammai regarded "reality through the prism of the ideal of the world to come. For this reason, reality must surrender to the ideal, and must be defined by clear cut rules, without compromise." In contrast, the school of Hillel "is pragmatic...one which takes reality into account, and considers human problems, sensitivities, and vagaries." This may be true. However, another view, favored by many scholars, is that Shammai and his school were conservatives, insisting that the old laws and old ways should not be changed, while Hillel and his school sought changes to fit the new needs of society. In summary, this is a very good beginning to what will surely be an excellent series. This volume introduces readers to the Talmudic personalities and some of their teachings as they were understood by the rabbis who wrote the Talmud.

This is a collection of 13 portraits of selected Talmudic personalities. Rabbi Steinsaltz has chosen select individuals of particular importance, and has offered the reader a written sketch of that personality and his importance.