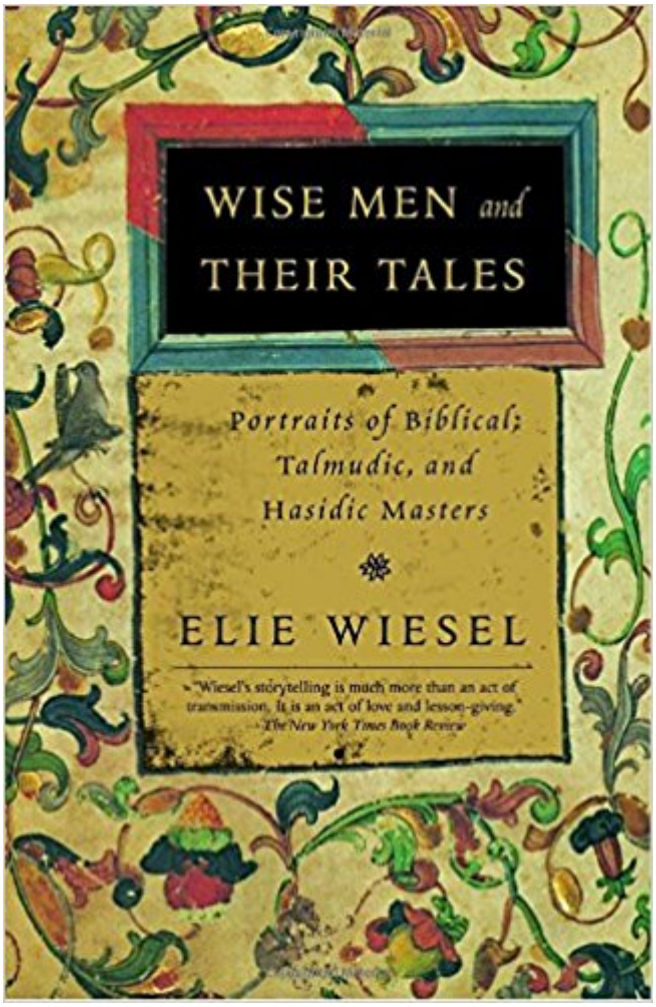
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Wise Men And Their Tales: Portraits Of Biblical, Talmudic, And Hasidic Masters



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Synopsis

In Wise Men and Their Tales, a master teacher gives us his fascinating insights into the lives of a wide range of biblical figures, Talmudic scholars, and Hasidic rabbis.The matriarch Sarah, fiercely guarding her son, Isaac, against the negative influence of his half-brother Ishmael; Samson, the solitary hero and protector of his people, whose singular weakness brought about his tragic end; Isaiah, caught in the middle of the struggle between God and man, his messages of anger and sorrow counterbalanced by his timeless, eloquent vision of a world at peace; the saintly Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, who by virtue of a lifetime of good deeds was permitted to enter heaven while still alive and who tried to ensure a similar fate for all humanity by stealing the sword of the Angel of Death.Elie Wiesel tells the stories of these and other men and women who have been sent by God to help us find the godliness within our own lives. And what interests him most about these people is their humanity, in all its glorious complexity. They get angryÃ¢â ¬â •at God for demanding so much, and at people, for doing so little. They make mistakes. They get frustrated. But through it all one constant remainsÃ¢â ¬â •their love for the people they have been charged to teach and their devotion to the Supreme Being who has sent them. In these tales of battles won and lost, of exile and redemption, of despair and renewal, we learn not only by listening to what they have come to tell us, but by watching as they live lives that are both grounded in earthly reality and that soar upward to the heavens.From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Paperback: 366 pages

Publisher: Schocken; Reprint edition (March 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0805211209

ISBN-13: 978-0805211207

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,039,056 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #107 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Hasidism #153 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings > Talmud #255 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Old Testament > Biography

Customer Reviews

Wiesel sketches familiar biblical, talmudic and Hasidic panoramas, then asks questions about the personalities that people them. His compelling portraits focus on disturbing episodes and character flaws, drawn with an unexpected zing that brings fresh perspective to these time-worn but timeless texts. Why did Lot's wife look back? To Wiesel, that's more understandable than why Lot did not: "for at times one must look backward lest one run the risk of turning into a statue. Of stone? No: of ice." The stories "continue to guide and enlighten us" in facing incomprehensible events and contemporary challenges. His "wise men" include the expected (Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Saul and Samuel), but also others rarely discussed (the prophets Isaiah and Hosea, and Talmudic sages like Rabbi Tarfon). His two Hasidic sketches are less successful and seem out of place in the context of the book, and the title is misleading, for Wiesel also considers "wise women" like Sarah, Hagar and Miriam. Wiesel's dramatic narratives are bolstered by generous helpings of midrash, commentary and a sense of humor. He raises the human, social, psychological, religious and historical dimensions of each conflict and character, but integrates them in a seamless way so they do not feel like the lectures they are originally delivered at Manhattan's 92nd Street Y and Boston University. It's a treat to see how Wiesel's mind works, to be privy to his literary wisdom, his insights into human character, his narrative directness and self-admitted lack of answers. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wiesel has written other books on this subject: Four Hasidic Masters and Their Struggle against Melancholy (1978), Five Biblical Portraits (1981), and Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and Legends (1991). In his latest book of prophetic warnings, midrashic stories, Rashi's interpretations, and Hasidic tales, Wiesel offers 19 commentaries and insights collected over the course of many years. There are such biblical personalities as Lot's wife, Aaron, Miriam, Ishmael, Gideon, Samson, Saul, Isaiah, and Hoshea. The section related to the Talmud concerns the lives of four sages, and there are two essays on the subject of Hasidism and the world of the shtetl. The book is a written version of lectures given in recent years at the 92d Street Y in New York and at Boston University. Their themes include the godliness within our lives, devotion to God, despair and renewal, the essence and function of prophecy, and understanding despair, guilt, and innocence--in essence, a search for timeless values and truth, a work of profound wisdom and understanding. Expect demand from his numerous fans and even new readers interested in the topic. George CohenCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In Elie WieselÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Wise Men and Their Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Masters, Wiesel artfully blends conversational and erudite discussions of characters from JudaismÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s most sacred texts.The strength of this work is the great breadth of the material covered. Despite this, Wiesel is never stretched thin; he brings a life-time of study and reflection to these chapters, providing fresh insights and details, and we are the beneficiaries of his work.If you want to know how Jewish people read their sacred books (or should!) this work is a necessity.

Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel returns to thoughtful biography of major figures of Judaism in this fine collection. A modern-day prophet, Wiesel commands our attention because of his moving personal story of perseverance in the face of unspeakable horror (which he tells unforgettably inÃ Â Night (Oprah's Book Club)), because of his wonderfully beautiful poetic prose, and because of his extraordinary insight.In this volume, Wiesel addresses Ishamel, Hagar, Lot's wife, Aaron, Miriam, Nadab, Abihu, Esau, Jethro, Gideon, Samson, Saul, Samuel, Isaiah, and Hosea among Biblical characters, as well as Tarfon, Yehoshua ben Levi, Abbaye, and Rava among Talmudic sages and Zanz and Sadigur among the Hasidic masters.This is territory that Wiesel has periodically explored before. He writes of other Biblical characters inÃ Â Messengers of God: Biblical portraits and legendsÃ Â (where he tells of Adam, Cain, Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Job),Ã Â Five Biblical PortraitsÃ Â (where he tells of Joshua, Elijah, Saul, Jeremiah, and Jonah),Ã Â Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and LegendsÃ Â (where he tells of Noah, Jephthah and his daughter, Ruth, Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther), and in his chapter in the anthologyÃ Â Congregation: Contemporary Writers Read the Jewish BibleÃ Â (Ezekiel again). He also writes on Talmudic sages inÃ Â Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and Legends. And he also writes of Hasidic Sages inÃ Â Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic MastersÃ Â andÃ Â Four Hasidic Masters and Their Struggle Against Melancholy (Ward-Phillips Lectures in English Language & Literature).Wiesel repeatedly helps us to see surprisingly fresh perspectives in these long-examined vistas. His reexamination proves the enduring value of the great Biblical Texts. And with the significance of his contribution, he reassures us of the continuing worth of the human soul.

Brilliant insights and commentary.

I don't usually agree with Elie Weisel - and I don't think he really cares if I do - but he always makes

me stop and think. As a protestant, I have never heard of about half of these characters but Weisel discusses them so interestingly that it was not a problem.

it heavy reading unless you have the background for understanding. It does show both sides of the various views and did open up my thinking about the different stories differently.

Elie Wiesel is great; I want to read more of his work

There are three major sections to this work. In the first Wiesel tells the stories of Biblical figures, Noah Jepthah and his daughter Ruth Solomon Ezekiel Daniel Ezra and Nehemiah Esther. In the second section he writes about Taludic figures, the houses of Hillel and Shammai, Hanina Ben Dosa, Elezar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Ishmael, Rabbi Akiba,Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma, Eilsha Ben Abouya Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradyon Rabbi Meir and Brurya, Rabbi Shimon Bar yohai and his son, Rabbi Zeira, Rav and Shmuel. in the final section he writes of hasidic masters, the Shpoler Zeide, the Apter Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham the Angel, Kotze and Iabitze, the Ostrowtzer.The writing is informed with a true love and feelling for the Tradition.It is also infirmed by the inquiring questioning spirit of Wiesel who challenges and questions as he describes. Reading the book one will get a sense and knowledge of many of the outstanding figures of Jewish history.This book should be of great value to anyone of real interest in the Jewish historical tradition in Learning and Thought.Wiesel is a poetic writer who too has a real feeling for human character and situation.

The name "Israel" means something like "he who wrestles with God". And one of the unique things about the Jewish faith, is that it is the only major world religion whose adherents feel free to dispute with their Maker.After his horrible traumas in the Holocaust, Wiesel thought for a while that he was through with religion. But his own children came along, and he found himself teaching them Torah. So he has stayed connected with his tradition, however uneasily, and has produced some genuine Jewish classics over the years, questioning all the while.This tradition of dispute is the real subject here, not so much the sketches of the minor Biblical characters. For each, Wiesel records their appearances in Scripture, and wonders why they meet the fates that they do. "Why" is the constant refrain. Why does Miriam get a harsher punishment than the others around her? Why does Lot’s wife look back; and why doesn’t Lot? Why is Aaron such a jellyfish? The Almighty isn’t talking, so Wiesel just records his puzzlement and sometimes his dismay, and moves on.This book isn’t as rewarding as his first collection of tales of the Hasidim, _Souls On Fire_. Even the most goyish

reader could feel part of the Hasidic family in that warm, wonderful book. This one isn't quite up to that level. But he does take the reader places, and it is good to more closely consider these lesser Biblical characters. Even if we don't get all the answers he asks for.

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