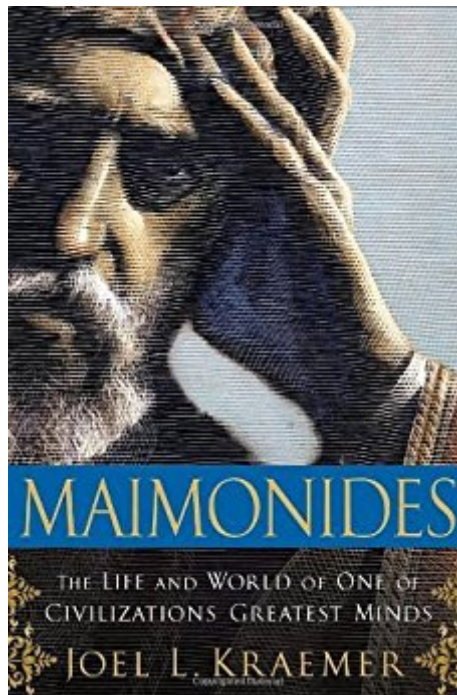




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Maimonides: The Life And World Of One Of Civilization's Greatest Minds



Synopsis

This authoritative biography of Moses Maimonides, one of the most influential minds in all of human history, illuminates his life as a philosopher, physician, and lawgiver. A biography on a grand scale, it brilliantly explicates one man's life against the background of the social, religious, and political issues of his time. Maimonides was born in Córdoba, in Muslim-ruled Spain, in 1138 and died in Cairo in 1204. He lived in an Arab-Islamic environment from his early years in Spain and North Africa to his later years in Egypt, where he was immersed in its culture and society. His life, career, and writings are the highest expression of the intertwined worlds of Judaism and Islam. Maimonides lived in tumultuous times, at the peak of the Reconquista in Spain and the Crusades in Palestine. His monumental compendium of Jewish law, the Mishneh Torah, became a basis of all subsequent Jewish legal codes and brought him recognition as one of the foremost lawgivers of humankind. In Egypt, his training as a physician earned him a place in the entourage of the great Sultan Saladin, and he wrote medical works in Arabic that were translated into Hebrew and Latin and studied for centuries in Europe. As a philosopher and scientist, he contributed to mathematics and astronomy, logic and ethics, politics and theology. His Guide of the Perplexed, a masterful interweaving of religious tradition and scientific and philosophic thought, influenced generations of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish thinkers. Now, in a dazzling work of scholarship, Joel Kraemer tells the complete story of Maimonides's rich life. MAIMONIDES is at once a portrait of a great historical figure and an excursion into the Mediterranean world of the twelfth century. Joel Kraemer draws on a wealth of original sources to re-create a remarkable period in history when Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions clashed and mingled in a setting alive with intense intellectual exchange and religious conflict.

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Customer Reviews

I purchased the Audible version, and about 2 or so hours into it I have decided not to listen to the remaining 18 hours. Not because it is a bad book, but for me, just not an engaging one. I would say if you want a very scholarly, and as far as I can tell, very well researched biography based on original sources, this may be satisfying. However, if you are hoping for something that brings Maimonides to life in a personal and interesting way, as I was, this may not be the book you want. I gave it three stars because I think it would be unfair to give it less, as it really does appear to contribute to the overall understanding of the man and the era, but again, from a scholarly and not human interest perspective.

There are few such comprehensive biographies of Maimonides as this. Maimonides' works, as the author intimates, were necessarily written with a degree of opacity as to shield himself from the critical eye of Islamic authorities of the day and as such, were never as accessible to me as a young student, perhaps because they weren't to my teachers as well. Maimonides truly modern understandings, his humanity when dealing with the judicial questions of the day as they affected his wards as an acknowledged leader of Jewry in his day are eye opening. The depths of his understanding of the sciences and the effort to impose a rationalism into Judaism of his times has endured to this day. The author wonderfully brings this somewhat remote larger-than-life character into focus.

An interesting and well written and researched book about a fascinating person. If you are all interested in this period or the history of Jewish philosophy then this is a must have. Note the author makes the point that he consulted large numbers of sources in Arabic as well as in Hebrew so it represented an advance over prior biographies and study on Maimonides.

very readable and scholarly. Not being particularly religious and a feminist I wanted to know about the men in history who determined my fate. I believe I can only reject or embrace their ideas if I am familiar with them. Not being an historian, I will not read the original texts the author studied. Glad I exposed myself to Maimonides' life and writings. Thank you Dr. Kraemer for being clear and engaging.

The subtitle speaks for the book, "The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds." Maimonides devoted the first 18 years of his life to Biblical studies "by which time he was already an 'internationally' known and respected scholar. After that he took up the study of the sciences (mathematics and astronomy), logic and philosophy. "It was scientific reasoning that became Maimonides' ultimate touchstone of truth" (page 66). Nevertheless, Maimonides' mind was first prepared and shaped by his Biblical studies. Small wonder that he is considered one of civilizations greatest minds. This is a well-written, comprehensive and significant book. Abraham Rempel Author of "The Book of Nots in Science & Religion: a believer's guide to reality." Publication date: 2014.

Great book!

I was introduced to this book by Dr. Stephen Teitelbaum, Chief of Urology, Kings Highway Division of Beth Israel Hospital, Brooklyn, NY, U.S.A. My thanks and gratitude to the abovementioned gentleman. I read the book TWICE. I was astonished by the accumulation, compilation and systematic in-depth of the various account-of-events in Maimonides life. Rabeinu Ha'Ramban ZT"L will be pleased. The Author did an excellent job. 22 of Shvat 5761 - January 27 2011 David Sebbag

Just started it. So far, I'd say this biography will meet my expectations. However, I am prepared for a slow read with a dictionary close by.

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