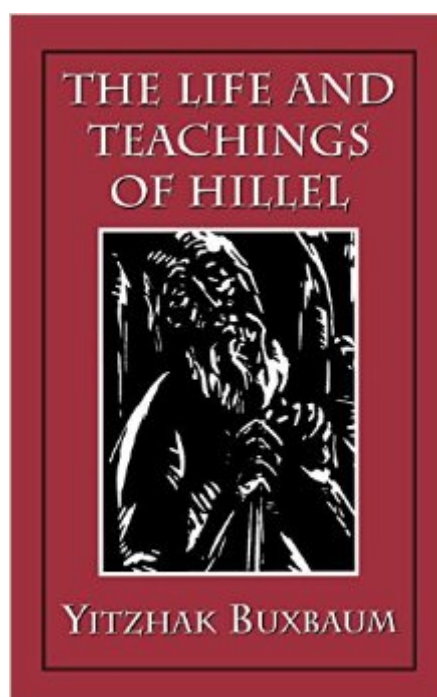


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The Life And Teachings Of Hillel



Synopsis

The Life and Teachings of Hillel provides the most comprehensive treatment ever published of one of the greatest figures in Jewish tradition. Yitzhak Buxbaum weaves together the various stories about Hillel along with his teachings and sayings to develop this ground-breaking portrait, shedding new light on Hillel's illustrious career, fascinating life, and profound teachings. Hillel is one of the most important and popular of the talmudic sages, yet he is mostly known only in the context of two or three popular stories told about him. Such stories as teaching the "Golden Rule" of Torah "while standing on one foot," and his saying, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me, and if I am for myself alone, who am I," have eclipsed a more complete view of Hillel's influence and significance. In the rabbinic tradition, there is much debate between the teachings of the school of Hillel and that of his contemporary, Shammai. Hillel is often seen as the more tolerant, softer teacher, with his teachings representing what we consider "normative" Judaism. Often, the traditions passed down to modern times are a result of the rabbis' reconciliation of the two schools, so that Hillel's pure teachings have been lost. The Life and Teachings of Hillel separates out Hillel's teachings and looks at them independently of Shammai's. Studied on their own, it becomes evident that Hillel was actually much more radical and "hasidic" than is commonly thought. While he is known for representing the gentler, more loving side of Judaism, in this work his pious radicalism is also apparent. Readers will be charmed and fascinated by Hillel's fiery gentleness. The Life and Teachings of Hillel offers new information about a radiant religious figure, and it also recovers a side of Jewish tradition that has been lost to most people.

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Customer Reviews

With this book, Buxbaum provides a much-needed resource on the person generally recognized as the founder of rabbinical Judaism. He does a great service by giving the reader the historical, social/political, and religious context for the sayings attributed to Hillel -- both those that are well-known and those that are obscure. Buxbaum also points to Hillel's more compassionate, inclusive interpretations of religious law as a helpful and appropriate counterpoint to the more legalistic approach of his contemporary, Shammai. This volume is intended for the intelligent (and faithful) lay reader, rather than the scholar, but both will benefit from reading it. It brings to life a man of great influence and learning. It also revives a great tradition within Jewish life and thought.

Hillel is one of the greatest men who ever lived, and yet it is incredible how little most people -- even most Jews -- know about him. Commonly associated with a couple of glib quotations (e.g., "if I am not for me, who will be; if I am only for me, what am I?"), Hillel is perhaps the perfect bridge between Judaism and Christianity. That is nowhere more apparent than from reading Buxbaum's wonderful book. In my own research concerning Jewish philosophy, I repeatedly go back to Buxbaum to rekindle my love for Hillel. Whether the reader is a high school student or a Jewish scholar, it is difficult to imagine not being touched by the example that Hillel provides. If I could take five Jewish books with me to a deserted island, this assuredly would be one of them.

I am still reading, but it is a really interesting approach to Rabbi Hillel and it is divided into short chapters which are nice because you can kind of chew on a little bit of Hillel's words and bio each day and really let it sink in.

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