

Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World

Norman A. Stillman, ed. *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010. 5 vols. \$1099.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9789004176782 (set). [Online also available.]

These four volumes, plus a volume consisting of the index and resources, the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, fill a gap in the area of Judaic studies. Presenting over 2,100 articles signed by over 350 international specialists, the alphabetically arranged entries cover Jewish history, religion, culture, and language in the Islamic world and the contemporary diasporas of the Sephardic community. In entries ranging from 300 to 18,000 words, readers will learn about a wide range of disciplines related to the Jews in the Islamic world, including history, anthropology, ethnology, folklore, law and jurisprudence, linguistics, sociology, politics, philosophy, religious studies, women's studies, art history, literature, film studies, material culture, and biographies—all presented without bias.

The importance and value of this work lie in its coverage of the Jews of the Islamic world, of which until recently very little academic work had been done. Even today, comprehensive work in this area is still lacking. Until the seventeenth century, most of the Jews lived in the Islamic worlds, yet little is commonly known or shared about this area where many aspects of Judaism were formulated, codified, and disseminated, such as the liturgy, law, theology, and philosophy. The executive editor, Norman A. Stillman, is the Schusterman/Josey Professor of Judaic History at the University of Oklahoma and the author of many books, including *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (Jewish Publication Society, 1991) and *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Jewish Publication Society, 1979). Over 1,300 of the entries are not to be found in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, the hallmark resource for anything Judaic, and in those entries that are parallel, this work still offers a unique perspective on the topic, approaching it from the Sephardic and Islamic worldviews.

The materials covered can be identified by one of six main categories, each of which had its own editorialship: Medieval Arab East and North Africa (Classical period); Medieval Iberia (Islamic al-Andalus and in Christian Spain where the Arabic tradition lived on); the Ottoman Empire, including the Balkans, and the Turkish Republic; Persia, Modern Iran, the Caucasus, and Central Asia; the Arab countries from 1492 to the present; and the Diasporas, both historical where Jews from the Islamic world established trading colonies in earlier centuries and modern where most have resettled since the mass emigration from Islamic lands.

Whether seeking information on a geographic location, including region, country, individual city or town, this work will inform the reader. Over one thousand biographical entries are included, although the user will need to have familiarity with alternate names in order to use the alphabetical arrangement for quick location. Foreign terms are explained or translated at their first occurrence, making the work accessible to those who are not scholars, while the resources at the end of each entry enable scholars to go further with research. The work uses only transliterations of names, making it approachable to all, yet the use of the Hebrew or other alphabet characters to represent the name would enable those familiar with the language(s) to see the name as intended, and thus know the correct pronunciation as no transliteration is totally correct for each regional pronunciation of the language.

Over 250 color and black-and-white illustrations, graphs, and maps provide additional information and visual interest for the user, enabling this to be used as a primary, or solitary, source for research depending on the level of the researcher and project.

Missing from the work is an entry on Talmud. While one can search the online version and find 270 mentions of the word “Talmud,” there is no single entry on this work, the Babylonian edition of which came from this area in particular. However, “Midrash” and “Aggadah” are both treated in this work, causing there to be an unequal coverage of materials. One disconcerting lack to the user familiar with the field is that there is no entry indicated for the Rambam, although there is an entry for “Maimonides, Moses,” nor for Ramban, though there is an entry for Rabbi Nachman, yet there is a cross reference from Ladino to see Judeo-Spanish literature. For those who have heard of a Jewish scholar such as Ramban or Rambam without knowing that these are acronyms, or alternate names, this work would not be of use as there is no entry with a cross reference under Rambam or other such acronyms.

Available both online and in print, there are benefits to each access method. The online version lacks an index, although full-text searching is possible. The online version also includes hyperlinked terms within the entries for clicking to related entries, although this can be disconcerting as too many clicks can cause loss of a trail back to where one began. The “see also” references are not in the traditional location at the end of the article in the online version, but rather are located on the left with the navigational tools. The lack of the index in the online version is problematic for the user. The online version also has a navigational problem in that once a search is begun, it is nearly impossible to return to the table of contents in the volume. Each online article includes a citation at the bottom, enabling the user to know where the material came from once printed or saved. However, pagination is not given, neither in the record nor in the citation, making it hard to locate the material from an online printout in the printed version.

The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World is appropriate for any academic or specialized library where there is a focus on either Judaica or the Islamic world as a whole, as well as for yeshiva high school collections. The influences of the Jews, and on the Jews, in the Islamic world from the seventh century forward are presented objectively, enabling all to benefit from reading this work. It is also strongly suggested as an accompaniment to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* as it covers areas lacking in this set.

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