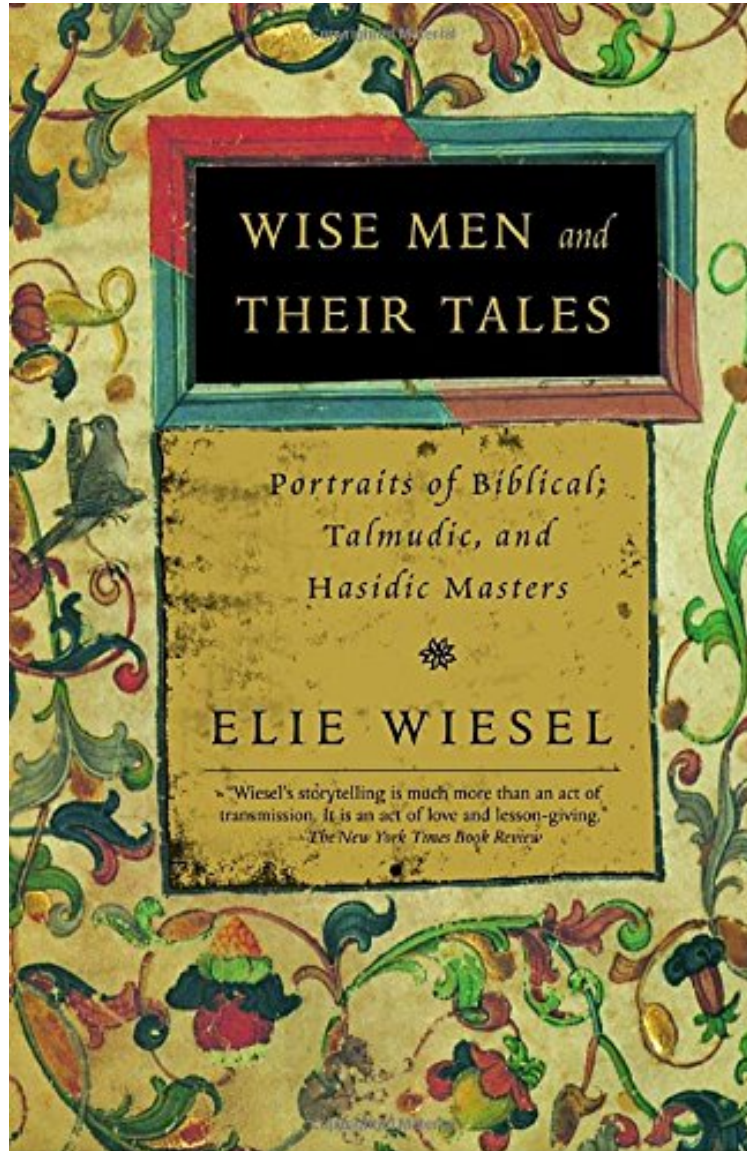


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Wise Men and Their Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Masters

Elie Wiesel

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Elie Wiesel : Wise Men and Their Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Masters before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wise Men and Their Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Masters:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. From a MasterBy Eric MaroneyIn Elie Wiesel's Wise Men and Their

Tales: Portraits of Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Masters, Wiesel artfully blends conversational and erudite discussions of characters from Judaism'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. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Wise Man Tells Wise Men's Tales By William G. Dauster 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 in *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 in *Messengers of God: Biblical portraits and legends* (where he tells of Adam, Cain, Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Job), *Five Biblical Portraits* (where he tells of Joshua, Elijah, Saul, Jeremiah, and Jonah), *Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and Legends* (where he tells of Noah, Jephthah and his daughter, Ruth, Solomon, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther), and in his chapter in the anthology *Congregation: Contemporary Writers Read the Jewish Bible* (Ezekiel again). He also writes on Talmudic sages in *Sages and Dreamers: Biblical, Talmudic, and Hasidic Portraits and Legends*. And he also writes of Hasidic Sages in *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters* and *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. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Soleil Brilliant insights and commentary.

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 angry 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 remains: 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.

From *Publishers Weekly* 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. From *Booklist* 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 Cohen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved

From the Inside Flap
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 angry--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 remains--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.