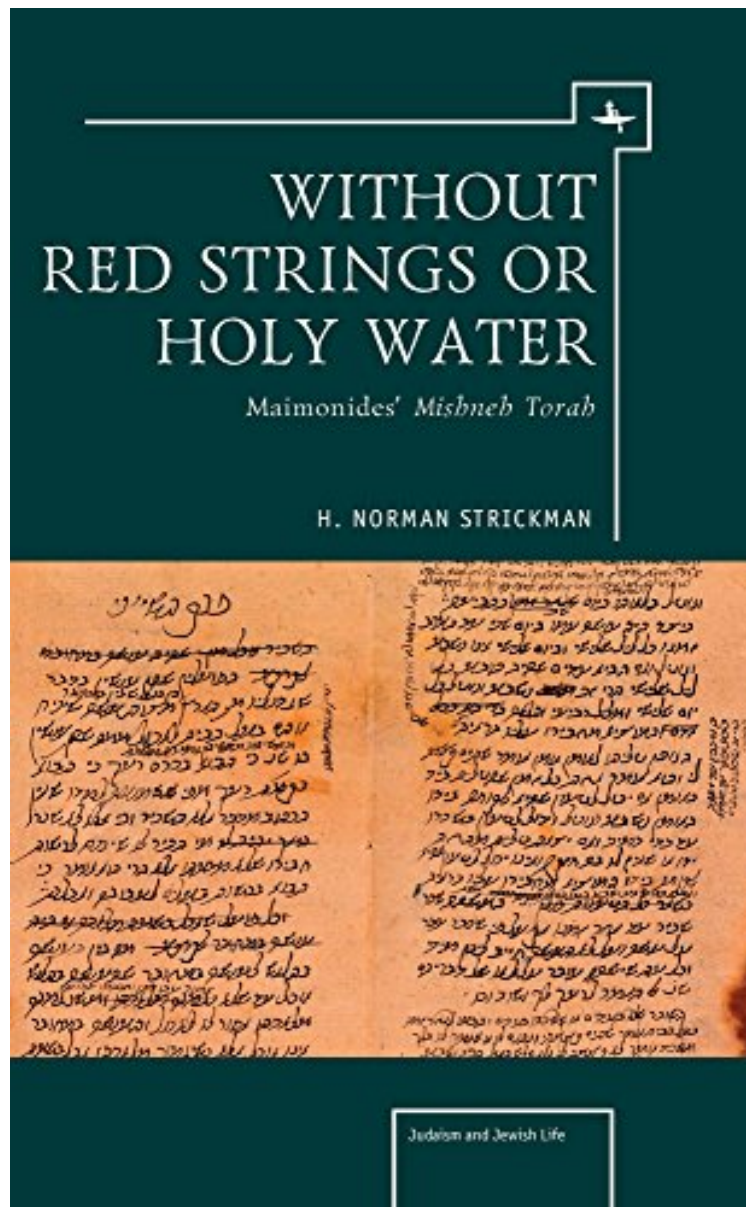


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Without Red Strings or Holy Water: Maimonides' Mishne Torah (Judaism and Jewish Life)

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H. Norman Strickman : Without Red Strings or Holy Water: Maimonides' Mishne Torah (Judaism and Jewish Life) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Without Red Strings or Holy Water: Maimonides' Mishne Torah (Judaism and Jewish Life):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Introduction to the Rambam By Howard J. Schwartz MD This is a well written and thoughtful book highlighting the contributions of Maimonides to Jewish thought and actions. The contrast between the Maimonidean rationalist thinkers and the Chareidi outlooks is well presented. It is a good introduction to Maimonidean thought and could well lead someone to do "dig in" to his Mishneh Torah itself. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Bringing the Rambam into our World By Raizel the Raisin Rabbi H. Norman Strickmans, "Without Red Strings or Holy Water" is a wonderful book that creates an environment where the reader gets to know and understand Maimonides as he or she would a contemporary Rabbi who is a giant in Torah. I think it is both a must read and a very enjoyable read for people on all levels of Torah learning. Brian Marcus 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Wonderful Guide to Maimonides By Jack Gorman H. Norman Strickman, a distinguished Rabbi and scholar, is widely known for his ability to help us understand even the most difficult and complex ideas, texts, and thinkers. His new book, "Without Strings or Holy Water" is a fabulous example of this skill and devotion to both learning and enjoyment. The book is a guide to Maimonides' great text "Mishneh Torah," the medieval genius' probing, wonderful and controversial explanation of Talmudic rules, principles, and themes. Having recently started studying "Mishneh Torah" in its original Hebrew, I have found Maimonides' work both intellectually gripping and amazingly modern, but at the same time complicated and often difficult to understand. Although Maimonides (known to Jews as the Rambam) wrote the book to help non-scholars understand the Talmud, he nevertheless assumed a fair amount of prior scriptural knowledge. Enter Rabbi Strickman who presents chapters on the major themes in "Mishneh Torah," explaining how Maimonides understood concepts like the non-corporeality of G-d, magic, medicine, and the coming of the Messiah. This is not simply Maimonidean hegemony; in each case Rabbi Strickman presents both the Rambam's ideas and criticisms of them by his contemporaries and later scholars. It is clear that Rabbi Strickman has deep reverence for Maimonides ground-breaking scholarship, but he also does not shy from explaining why Maimonides was so controversial in his time and still has important detractors. Do Jews believe that the mezzuzah on their doors can ward off evil spirits? Many still believe so, even to the point of blaming adverse events in their lives on mistakes in the mezzuzah text. Maimonides insisted, however, that such ideas were not only unscientific but, because they smack of superstition, actually heretical. When we read over and over again in the Bible about the "strong right hand" of G-d, should we think that He actually has an arm as we know one or is the Bible being metaphorical? The Rambam argues that we have no idea what G-d looks like and that He has nothing close to a "body" as we imagine one. But to some other authorities, "a right arm," means exactly that. The most important thing about "Without Strings or Holy Water" is the brilliant way in which Rabbi Strickman makes these concepts come alive for the modern reader. Although scholars will benefit from this book, as a non-scholar I too found it to be fascinating, easy to grasp, and fun to read. It is a must read for anyone interested in medieval thought, Jewish religious thinking, and the history of great ideas.

Maimonides was one of the greatest Jewish personalities of the Middle Ages: a halakhist par excellence, a great philosopher, a political leader of his community, and a guardian of Jewish rights. In 1180 CE, Maimonides composed his Halakhic magnum opus, the Mishneh Torah, which can be described without exaggeration as the greatest code of Jewish law to be composed in the post-Talmudic era, unique in scope, originality, and language. In addition to dealing with an immense variety of Jewish law, from the laws of Sabbath and festival observances, dietary regulations, and relations between the sexes, to the sacrificial system, the construction of the Temple, and the making of priestly garments, the Mishneh Torah represents Maimonides' conception of Judaism. Maimonides held that the version of Judaism believed in and practiced by many pious Jews of his generation had been infected with pagan notions. In the Mishneh Torah, he aimed at cleansing Judaism from these non-Jewish practices and beliefs and impressing upon readers that Jewish law and ritual are free from irrational and superstitious practices. Without Red Strings or Holy Water explores Maimonides' views regarding God, the commandments, astrology, medicine, the evil eye, amulets, magic, theurgic practices, omens, communicating with the dead, the messianic era, midrashic literature, and the oral law. Without Red Strings or Holy Water will be of interest to all who are interested in the intellectual history of Judaism.

Rabbi H. Norman Strickman's excellent new study of [the Mishneh Torah] explores Maimonides' views regarding astrology, medicine, the evil eye, amulets, magic, theurgic practices, omens, and communicating with the dead, and evil spirits. . . . The book is a most important contribution to the field. . . . I highly recommend it. (David B. Levy The Jewish Press 2013-02-28) Other scholars have noted how Egyptian Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides presented a strictly rational perspective of Judaism, but Strickman fills in some gaps and offers a new perspective. He characterizes the Mishneh Torah as the greatest code of Jewish law to be composed in the post-Talmudic era. (Book News, Inc.) About the Author H. Norman Strickman (Ph.D. Dropsie University) is a rabbi at Marine Park Jewish Center and a Professor of Judaic Studies at Touro College in New York.