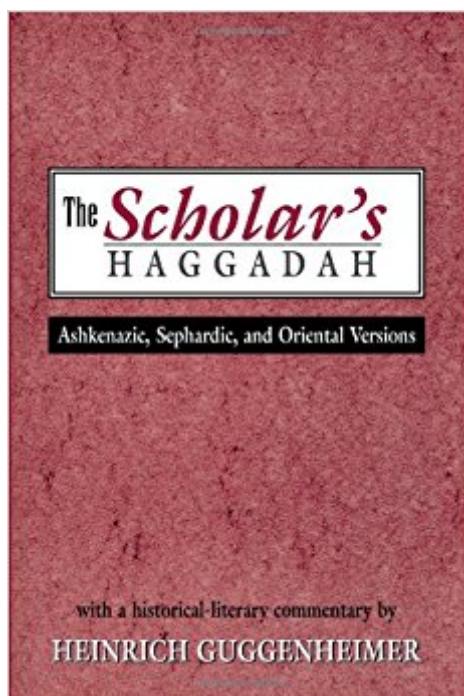


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The Scholar's Haggadah: Ashkenazic, Sephardic, And Oriental Versions



Synopsis

In this unprecedented masterwork, *The Scholar's Haggadah: Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Oriental Versions*, Heinrich Guggenheimer presents the first Haggadah to treat the texts of all Jewish groups on an equal footing and to use their divergences and concurrences as a key to the history of the text and an understanding of its development. The Seder (the ceremony of the Passover night) is one of the most universally celebrated rituals among Jewish families, for what it commemorates—“Jewish freedom from bondage” is the glue that bonds all Jews together, traditional and modern, Ashkenazic and Sephardic alike. In the Book of Exodus the Jewish people are instructed to tell their children of how God brought the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt, and thousands of years later this timeless tradition remains an immutable factor in Jewish homes on Passover night. While many commentaries have been written on the Haggadah during the last one thousand years—“most delineating the spiritual meaning or the ritual details of the Passover ceremonies”—few historical investigations have dealt with texts that are not wholly Ashkenazic. Available for the first time to the reader is a Haggadah that includes the customs and ceremonies of not only Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewry, but of Yemenite Jews as well. Additionally, the author provides a commentary that not only offers a key to the roots of the Passover ceremonies and an introduction to the thought and practice of talmudic-rabbinic Judaism, but also presents a history of the development of text and practice of the Seder celebration. While Yemenite Jewry still follows texts and prescriptions of Maimonides practically in their original form, unchanged for at least 800 years, European Ashkenazic and Sephardic practices have undergone many changes. While the history of Yemenite Jews is riddled with oppression and migration, the Moslem rulers of their country never extended their persecutions to Jewish books. On the other hand, the history of European Jews is dominated by

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Customer Reviews

Heinrich W. Guggenheimer is professor emeritus of Polytechnic University (formerly Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn), where he taught mathematics and also Jewish studies in the Department of Humanities. He received his M.S. and Sc.D. degrees from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and his Jewish training at the Bet Hamidrash of Basel, Switzerland. He also taught at Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University, Washington State University, and the University of Minnesota. He has published over 150 research papers in mathematics and Talmud and is the author of Differential Geometry, Plane Geometry and Its Groups, Mathematics for Scientists and Engineers, Applicable Geometry, BASIC Mathematical Programs for Engineers and Scientists, Seder Olam (in Hebrew), and, together with his wife, Dr. Eva H. Guggenheimer, Jewish Family Names and Their Origins: An Etymological Dictionary. He currently teaches a daily class in Talmud at Congregation Anshei Shalom, West Hempstead, New York.

Very useful book for understanding cultural differences between Haggadot. Also good for scholarly research if you're writing a Haggadah. Nicely done and welcome addition to my library.

I originally purchased the book to see how different the Haggadahs were in the different traditions, maybe get some ideas to spice up our Ashkenazi/Reform practice. But I found something out - the Haggadahs are more the same than different, and the differences are shown with various fonts - a great idea. The differences are then discussed at length in the second section of the book, with commentaries on the historical period when the change likely came into play. Guggenheimer draws from the oldest extant copies of the Haggadah from each tradition and from the Mishnah and Talmudim (Jerusalem and Persian) to give insight into how the traditions grew and evolved to give us the current haggadahs.

I just wonder that no review has been forwarded yet. This is a remarkable work intended for the scholar more than for the practical use at the seder table. The comments by Guggenheimer are excellent. I used his edition for preparing the seder with the intent to draw the attention of the attendants to the variety of customs and to show the differences in liturgy. The presentation by

Guggenheimer makes this easy by using different letter types for each version. The comparison of these versions was very stimulating for my guests and the following discussion went on and on....

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