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Book Review: Maimonides: Life and Thought

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Halbertal, Moshe. **Maimonides: life and thought**, tr. by Joel Linsider. Princeton, 2013. 385p bibl index afp ISBN 9780691158518, \$35.00.

This insightful, well-written book offers a fresh perspective on Maimonides. Halbertal (NYU; Hebrew Univ.) offers an excellent introductory overview of Maimonides's life and contributions to Jewish law, philosophy, medicine, and religious consciousness. He also makes clear how Maimonides's personality, psychology, and evolving outlook penetrate his oeuvre. Halbertal shows that one cannot separate Maimonides's writings from his experiences, such as being driven out of Spain by the fanatical Almohads; his openness to science related to Greco-Islamic thought; his ascetic and Aristotelian disparagement of the physical; his sense of living in a time of crisis; and his valorization of the redemptive life of the mind and intellect. The author offers a window into the self-perception of this greatest of medieval rabbinic thinkers, physicians, legalists, and theologians, and the radical transformations he sought to effect in Judaism. Readers may also wish to consult Herbert Davidson's *Moses Maimonides* (CH, Jun'05, 42-5799); Menachem Kellner's *Maimonides on Judaism and the Jewish People* (CH, Feb'92, 29-3265); H. Norman Strickman's *Without Red Strings or Holy Water* (2011); and Abraham Joshua Heschel's publications, including *Maimonides: A Biography* (CH, Sep'82), among other works.

--D. B. Levy, *Touro College, Lander College for Women*

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-level undergraduates through researchers/faculty in Jewish studies, comparative religion, religious psychology, history, and philosophy.