Find it in the Talmud

Mordechai Judovits. *Find it in the Talmud: An Encyclopedia of Jewish Ethics and Conduct: Thousands of Talmudic Subjects, Stories and Expressions.* Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2014. 525 pp. $31.50. Hardcover. ISBN: 9789655241464

R. Tanhum said: "One should divide his time of study into three: one-third Scripture, one-third Mishna, and one-third in Talmud" (Avodah Zarah 19b; Kiddushin 30a) (376).

Mordechai Judovits, retired businessman and longtime student of the Talmud, shows his love for Judaism and the rabbinic tradition with *Find it in the Talmud*. He has compiled an easy-to-use encyclopedia and concordance for English-speaking scholars studying the Babylonian Talmud or "Bavli." Judovits is the author of *Sages of the Talmud*, another Urim publication, which lists biographical information for over 400 contributors to the Talmud.

In his dedication Judovits remembers and honors members of the Judovits and Jakubovits families: one page to those who perished in June of 1944, a second to his wife, and a third to the next generations — children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The following four pages show the Holocaust Memorial he built at the Boca Raton Synagogue in Florida. The thread of family (loss, remembrance, and hope for the future) and love of Judaism was inspirational for Judovits's work on this "sefer" (book of education). Judovits reminds us that the teachings and legacy of the Talmud result in a way of life that values charity, decency, ethics, justice, and morality.

Talmud comes from a Hebrew word that means to learn, study, and teach, and is made up of two distinct parts: the Mishna and the Gemara. The Mishna was written in Hebrew by rabbis in the second and third centuries and is spare and simple. The Gemara was written in Aramaic (and some Hebrew) during the fourth and fifth centuries by another set of rabbis. It is much lengthier and explains the meaning and intent of the Mishna.

The main portion of *Find it in the Talmud* contains over 6,000 entries in 525 pages and is arranged in alphabetical order in English. If there is a corresponding Hebrew word or phrase it appears on the right side of the column. Most entries are brief, only a sentence or two. The longest average half a page. Subjects that deal with charity, decency, ethics, justice, and morality are specially marked at the beginning of the entry with a Star of David symbol. Entries that include a story, or an anecdote with a message, are specially marked with a book icon. "See also" entries are listed in the footnotes.

Entries with more than one example are each listed separately. "Intercalate," for example, has eight entries: three with just "intercalate," also "intercalate outside Israel," "intercalate place and time," "intercalated year," "intercalation," and "intercalation of the year." Four of the entries have a book icon denoting a story or anecdote. These entries explain aspects of the rabbis' practice of adding a day to the calendar.

The appendices are in three sections. The first is an overview of the order of the Talmud. The order of the Talmud is a result of the decisions of the rabbis who created it. The first group, the Tannaim, decided on the order of the Mishna. Centuries later, the second group, the Amoraim, created the Gemara. The second section is of abbreviations that are listed in Hebrew only. The third section is various Talmudic sayings, expressions, and axioms. These are arranged according to the order of the Hebrew alphabet but from left to right within the book.

The Talmud covers myriad topics as interpreted by the rabbis. In its printed form the Talmud is sixty-three volumes. As one endorsement states on the back cover, the Bavli is "all *mevulbal*, mixed up." It is not always easy to find your topic in the Talmud's many stories and sayings. I found this reference book to be easy to use and enjoyed browsing through it. Although non-Jewish users may find it of limited use, I recommend it for anyone studying the Talmud.

<div align="right">

Jennifer Bartholomew
Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN

</div>