



New York College
Societas Rosicruciana
In Civitatibus Foederatis
Spring 2022



From the Chief Adept
R. Curtiss Montgomery IX^o et Philologus Zelator

Fratres, ego salutant vos,

Fratres, we read in the Book of Ecclesiastes, or if you're of my generation hear in the the Byrds 1965 hit single "Turn, Turn, Turn" about the varied seasons and activities of human life. The definitive statement being that there is "a time for every purpose under heaven," After the events of the past two years, I suggest to you that this is a time for reconnecting; a time to renew and refresh our relationships with our fellow men.

At our upcoming Convocation this Saturday we will conclude the measured progress of our current class of six aspirants as we confer the three Adeptus Grades of the Second Order. Thus, soon will be the time to start thinking about any Masonic brothers of your acquaintance for whom our Grades would assist in the progress of their Great Work, and who would become contributing Fratres of our College. We must remember that the great bulk of our programming comes from our College members teaching and enlightening their peers.

Soon also will be the time to make plans to attend the High Council session in Louisville in November. It is a great experience and well worth the time and the trip, and this session will mark the conclusion of our own RW W. Bruce Renner's hugely successful three-year tenure as Junior Deputy Supreme Magus. Our College certainly joins with Fratres from across the US and the entire Rosicrucian world in thanking Frater Bruce for the outstanding annual High Council programs, regular messages and provision and organization of the SRICF's intellectual content.

I look forward to seeing each of you Saturday.

LVX,
Curt



From the Celebrant RW Richard Powell VIII° et Philologus Theoricus

Ave Fratres! It has been a very long time since we brought in new VII° Fratres but that is what we are planning on doing at our next Convocation. The Second Order will be conferred on Saturday, July 30th! All three Grades will be conferred that day so please make every effort to be there, especially if you are a Candidate.

My calendar says that our Fall Convocation will be on Saturday, November 12th. I would like to see some new presentations and presenters for this gathering. If you have something in mind, please reach out to me. Presentations should be of an esoteric nature. If you are not sure if your idea fits with what we expect for our College's presentations, please ask.

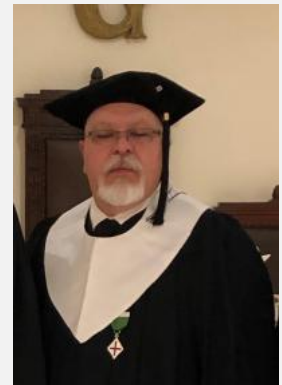
Our fall meeting is one week after the Annual Meeting of the High Council in Louisville, KY (November 4-5, 2022). The High Council is a great time to meet other like minded Fratres from around the world and it is always a brilliant time. The meeting is held in the historic Brown Hotel. The hotel is something to see but the presentations will be the highlight of the weekend. Ask Bruce Renner, Curt Montgomery, Walter Cook, Myron Deputat or myself about it or visit the High Council website at <https://sricf.org/> to learn more.

Dates for 2023 Convocations of the New York College will be forthcoming. Once we announce them, please put them into your calendar and make every effort to attend. Our winter meeting, likely in January will be done on Zoom.

Welcome to all the new Fratres! We look forward to sharing more wisdom with you and hope that you will share with us as well.

Sapere Aude,

Rick



Proposed Agenda for our Saturday, July 30th Convocation

(times are approximate)

- 10:00 AM Welcome
- 10:05 AM Summer Solstice Ceremony
- 10:15 AM Fifth Grade: Adeptus Minor
- 11:00 AM Sixth Grade: Adeptus Major
- 11:45 AM Philologi Societas Presentations
Call & Expectation for Fall Presentations
- 12:00 PM Lunch
- 12:30 PM Seventh Grade: Adeptus Exemptus
- 1:15 PM Chief Adept
Junior Deputy Supreme Magus
Close

From the Secretary

RW Myron J. Deputat, VIII^o et Philologus Philosophus

Cari Fratres,

I trust that you are all well! The time has come to start making plans for our High Council Convocation November 4th & 5th in Louisville, KY. There may still be rooms available at the Brown Hotel. In the event that they are sold out, the Hilton Garden Inn two blocks down the street is a good option. Please contact me if you need further information.

I have also been informed by the High Council Secretary that the registration for convocation should be ready in a few weeks on the High Council website SRICF.ORG

This is really a wonderful opportunity to meet fraters from all over the world and I encourage you to join us in Louisville. I look forward to seeing you at our next convocation on Saturday, July 30th at the Valley of Buffalo.

LVX,

Myron



From the Junior Deputy Supreme Magus

RW W. Bruce Renner, IX^o, KGC et Philologus Adeptus Exemptus

This month our series on world religions continues with part 1 of a two-part essay on Judaism. I hope as you read these essays that you note the perennial ideas highlighted and perhaps even identify some others on your own. You will find that some of the same ideas are found across many religions which are, of course, of particular interest.

Many people treat religion and spiritual matters, in general, passively. Rosicrucians, in contrast, have a long history of inquiry and are actively involved in their spiritual life. They follow the dictate, *be thou thy own priest*. This doesn't mean necessarily that they aren't involved in a church or have a minister or priest as a spiritual advisor. However, they treat such a relationship as a partnership, and they take a keen, active, and educated view of their own spirituality. The intent of the Philosophus Grade admonition to study other religions and philosophies is intended to make our Christian faith more informed.

The High Council has recently added a new feature to its website. When you visit the the site, check out the **Portal** menu selection. Clicking on it will take you to a sign in page. The password is *chemwed*. You will be taken to a file menu that currently contains three items. Two of these are sub-directories named *Ad Lucem* and *Fama*. **Click on the name** (not the file symbol) and you will be able to access all the items in the directory. Click on the file name you want and you will be able to view it on-line. If you would like a local copy, click **Download** in the upper right corner. A popup box will appear asking if you really want to download the file. Click **Yes**, and the download begins.. There are a number of other items at the top of the screen that lets you manipulate the viewing of the document. A little experimenting and you will get the hang of it! There is no need to sign out when you leave.

The *Ad Lucems* and *Famas* are seed material for a repository that I hope will expand greatly over time. A third file is a list of all the *Famas* and *Ad Lucems* currently in the repository. We would really like to have a complete set of the *Famas*, but especially the *Ad Lucems*, in the repository. If you have any of the missing ones, please consider allowing us to digitize them so they are available for future generations.

You will note that the password is rather simple. It is designed to keep out the lazy intruder. I ask that you share it with all the fratres but ask them to keep it amongst themselves. However, there is nothing that can be harmed or secrets to be found in the repository if the word gets out. Many of these documents can be found in libraries both physical and virtual. If we feel that we are getting too many intrusions, we will change it occasionally. My guess is that few non-members will discover it.

The upcoming High Council session will be the end of my three-year term as Junior Deputy Supreme Magus. It has been a great and unexpected honor to serve in this role, but it is equally important that we have new faces and ideas on a periodic basis. I think many of you know my successor (who will be announce at High Council) and will be pleased, as I am, about the choice.

Although this phase of my Great Work is over, my interest and enthusiasm for the SRICF remains as strong as ever. I hope to be of service to the High Council and New York College for many more years!

Stay your Path, and, especially now, stay healthy!

Scire! Velle! Audere,! Tacere!
To Know, To Will, To Dare, To Remain Silent

LVX,

Bruce



College Happenings

Our Spring Convocation took a break from Grade conferrals to attend to several other College activities. After a brief welcome by the Celebrant, RW Richard Powell, RW W. Bruce Renner lead the attending fratres in a review of the traditional Qabalistic Cross, Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, and the Middle Pillar. A solemn memorial service was conducted by the Celebrant and Exponent for two of our fratres Clyde Card and Steven Whittaker. Both were active participants in our College for many years. The highlight of the day was an interesting presentation by our Secretary, RW Myron Deputat on Kirlian Photography. Myron is known for applying his engineering expertise to esoteric endeavors.

We then had some brief message, and our (less brief !) traditional pizza lunch.



The four Ancients attend to the memorial service. Fire, VW William Edwards, Water, VW Frank Rice, Earth, W Fr. John Morse, Air, VW James Stoll. In the West is Exponent VW Walter Cook.

RW Myron Deputat with some of his Kirlian apparatus





Judaism Through Its Scriptures - YouTube

Judaism

Introduction

Cursory research in preparing this essay suggests that the peak number of those identifying with the Judaic religion today to be 16.5 million. This is close to the Jewish population today. Despite its small numbers, Judaism is foundational to the world's two largest religions, Christianity and Islam. Although there were precursors, Judaism, is also the first enduring monotheistic religion (see the sidebar on monotheism).

Despite its parental role, it has suffered extreme prejudicial treatment at the hands of its offspring through large tracts of history. It may be then, that this is a good time to address this negative perennial characteristic, and let's be fair here, of all religions. Why do devotees of a particular religion have a prejudicial view of other religions? This series of essays has highlighted perennial ideas from each of the religions that have been considered, but I have tried to stay away from comparative religion in a pejorative sense, particularly in regard to Christianity. However, such comparisons, particularly in this age of globalization are inevitable. Unfortunately, such comparisons are often superficial at best, and ill-informed at worst. Majorities dominate and minorities suffer.

The majority of people receive their religious beliefs from their familial and social environments. These beliefs help us to become functional in an often daunting world. For example, it gives us a perspective on death and the ability to cope with its eventuality. These beliefs are unprovable in a scientific sense; they rely entirely on faith. Many people have strong religious epiphanies in their lives, but they are largely personal and internal, and, therefore, can only be related by language. In the scientific sense, they are undemonstrative and non-repeatable. For most people, however, religious faith underpins their notion of reality. When we encounter people of a different faith, it challenges our understanding of how the world works. We immediately take the position that only one religion can be true, and it has to be mine. Otherwise, my entire basis of existential coping is challenged.

It is also important to understand that religion is never a stand-alone phenomena. Rather religion becomes tightly integrated into our social network. This is a reflection of the tendency of all life toward tribalism as a survival mechanism. In more tolerant countries, we see this reflected in separate communities that share common values and perspectives. In less tolerant ones, we see violence, particularly by majorities against minorities, or outright attempts to eliminate devotees of other faiths.

Many Jews would argue then that to refer to Judaism as a faith is too narrow a categorization. Although we will primarily consider the religious aspects of Judaism in this essay, keep this broader cultural identification that many Jews hold in mind. We will also try to look at Judaism from the inside out, rather than looking, as most non-Jews do, from the outside in.

Origins

Judaism identifies its historical roots in the *Hebrew Bible*, or what Christians refer to as the Old Testament. The ancestors of modern Jews had an evolved system of belief as well as a distinct national affiliation referred to as *Israel*. The attachment to a specific place is based on God's promise to give this land to the offspring of Israel's founding patriarch, Abraham. For much of the biblical period, Israel was a monarchy going back to King David, at first united, then divided into two smaller kingdoms. Biblical Israelites were instructed to refrain from intermarriage with non-Israelites, as an effort to preserve this identity.

Judah was the fourth son of the patriarch Jacob, son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham. Israel was the subsequent name given Jacob in the book of Genesis. King David, the founder of the Israelite kingdom which would persist for four centuries, was a descendant of the tribe of Judah. The kingdom would ultimately go by the name of Judah. These early Jews were referred to as Judeans, and would retain this designation even if they eventually lived elsewhere. The term Judaism appears first in Greek literature in the 2nd century B.C.E in reference to these people that were linked to the land of Judaea. The term Judaism first appears in the Bible in the Second Book of the Maccabees.

Monotheism

Monotheism is usually defined as the doctrine or belief that there is only one God. Although there were precursors, Judaism, a so-called axial religion, is generally credited as the first religion to conceive of a personal monotheistic God. This concept was retained in the formation of the Christian and Islamic religions, and adopted by many others.

The development of monotheism in Judaism evolved over time. Prior to the Babylonian Captivity, Jews thought that each nationality had its own god. For Jews, their god was Yahweh. One god for them, but others could and did have a different god or gods. When the Jews were held captive in Babylon, the question arose, whose god was in charge? The Jews then made the next evolutionary step in thinking. There could only be one God for all people and that God was Yahweh.

Nor did Jewish monotheism completely eradicate the polytheistic notion of many Gods, each responsible for a particular part of our reality. Judaism has a large pantheon of lesser divine creatures, such as archangels and angels, a practice also retained by Christians and Muslims. These entities also have responsibilities for various aspects of creation, but take direction from one supreme being. Thus they aren't generally addressed directly in prayers, although various esoteric traditions endeavor to invoke (but not worship) them.

Judaism also has many names for the one God often to differentiate among God's many roles. For example, *Adonai ha-Aretz* (Lord of the Earth) and *YHVH Eloah va-Daath* (Lord God of knowledge).

Note that the Sephiroth on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life each have a unique name of God, archangel, and angel assigned to them, as well as many other correspondences.

Articles of faith and practices

If one were to ask several people to define their faith or to give a short overview of it, it would be no surprise that many would struggle, and those that answered would vary widely in their thinking. More surprising, perhaps, is that those devoting their lives to the study of their faith disagree on such definitions. In thinking about Judaism, many would suggest that the Ten Commandments offer a good guideline for faithful practice. However, this isn't as widely accepted as one may think. Some would suggest that a focus on the Ten Commandments causes neglect of the rest of the Bible. Others would suggest that the Ten Commandments are too detailed, and a shorter statement like, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man," might suffice. Still others would expand the list.

Part of early Jewish thinking on the matter was stimulated by the emergence of the Christian and Muslim faiths. These faiths challenged Judaism to articulate differences between themselves and their two offspring. An example of this is a list proposed by 12th century Jewish philosopher, Maimonides (see sidebar). Note that some of these principles addressed major challenges such as the rejection of the traditional roles ascribed to Muhammad and Jesus.

Maimonides's formulation appeared at first as commentary to the *Mishnah* (a rabbinic text we will discuss later). Later, however, it became a Judaic

version of a catechism. Each principle was preceded by the affirmation: "I believe with absolute faith that..." It eventually became a common ingredient in Jewish prayer books. Even so, attempts are still made to expand or contract the list. Still others, such as Isaac Abravanel, maintained that such list suggest different levels of sanctity in the Torah (a portion of the Hebrew Bible), which he considered a heresy.

Maimonides also linked his principles to the communal aspect of Judaism, and indeed much of Jewish theological writing continued to inseparably link God, Israel, and the Torah. Modern attempts to integrate the Jewish populations of various countries, beginning in the 18th century, has led to both a downplay of communal and national roots that stresses Judaism as a religion, and exactly the opposite, as with the Zionist movement.

We might pause here and reflect on a few perennial concepts we have brushed against before. First, religions become more powerful over time. The longer something has persisted, the more value it is ascribed in peoples' minds. We might observe that many groups (including Masons!) invent a mythology of ancient origins where none really exist precisely to capitalize on this phenomena. New religions, therefore, struggle to become established, and many disappear because of this failure to capture a sufficient number of devotees. Although Judaism has always been a small religion, it has persisted because its shared collective past has contributed powerfully to its sense of unity. Its story is shared, transmitted, and re-lived in its devotees (example: the Exodus is relived in the celebration of Passover). Thus its story, spanning some 4,000 years, continues to inspire its adherents.

A second perennial thought that we have seen, particularly in our examination of the Hindu and Islamic faiths, is that religions become indelibly connected with the social and even governmental aspects of their communities. For the Jewish people who have always been, with rare exception,



The Sacrifice of Isaac (by Abraham) Giambattista Pittoni
britannica.com

strangers in a strange land and never the majority (except in modern day Israel), this has been particularly difficult. However, within their small communities, they have persevered in the preservation of their traditions. Of necessity, the survival of the Jew has depended on commitment to a high degree of religion in their day to day life, not just on the Sabbath.

History in a nutshell

As Christians we share more than half the Bible with Judaism. The Biblical period spans about 1,400 years. It begins with the patriarch figure of Abraham. In the bible he would be perceived as the first human to recognize God's existence, and remove himself from the pervasive idolatrous culture of his time. He would be tested frequently, as in the famous story of God's request to sacrifice his son Isaac. This story is foundational to the historical Jew's willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the benefit of their faith.

The second significant event is the biblical account is their bondage in Egypt, and their eventual exodus led by Moses. This is foretold in Genesis centuries before it occurred, thus stressing the destiny of the Jewish people. In their time of bondage, they increased from some 70 people to hundreds of thousands.

During their exodus, Moses received the Ten Commandments and the very first establishes the monotheistic basis of what was to become Judaic belief, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods but me..."

Moses also received the *Torah* (the first 5 books of the Old Testament referred to as the *Pentateuch*), which some believe were dictated in their entirety by God, while others allow for greater human authorship (based on modern analysis techniques). After wandering 40 years in

the desert, under the leadership of Moses's successor, Joshua, Canaan and Israel are established as a nation, fulfilling the promise of God to the patriarchs.

At first there was a period of political consolidation under a series of "judges," eventually ending in a monarchy. David, the second king would established a monarchical dynasty in the 10th century B.C.E that would rule for four centuries until it was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.

During his reign, David established his capital in Jerusalem. As Masons are well aware, his son,

Maimonides 13 Principles of Judaism

- 1) The existence of God
- 2) God's unity and indivisibility into elements
- 3) God's spirituality and incorporeality
- 4) God's eternity
- 5) God alone should be the object of worship
- 6) Revelation through God's prophets
- 7) The preeminence of Moses among the prophets
- 8) That the entire Torah (both the Written and Oral law) are of Divine origin and were dictated to Moses by God on Mt. Sinai
- 9) The Torah given by Moses is permanent and will not be replaced or changed
- 10) God's awareness of all human actions and thoughts.
- 11) Reward of righteousness and punishment of evil
- 12) The coming of the Jewish Messiah
- 13) The resurrection of the dead

Solomon, was to build a Temple as a center for Jewish worship. This was also the period in which the great prophets appeared. Their teachings, stressing moral and ethical imperatives, became a cornerstone of both Jewish and later Christian practice. For some Jews these even surpassed the Torah in prominence.

This period marks the end of the first, formative period of Jewish history. The Hebrew Bible ends with the first stirrings of restoration, when Persian King Cyrus allowed the captives in Babylon to return to Zion and rebuild the Temple. This is related in both Knight Templar and Scottish Rite ritual. The Royal Arch and Council rituals revolves

around the actual rebuilding of the Second Temple which was completed in 516 B.C.E and stood until destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. This period, and what followed, was very unsettling to Judaism. The destruction of the Second Temple left Jews with no unifying cultic center, and without access to sacrificial worship, new systems and context for Jewish religious life began to emerge. Jews also had limited control of their own government and had to cope with a variety of conquerors (Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman), who largely held religious worldviews in conflict with Judaism. A new form of Judaic leadership emerged in the form of sages versed in the Torah e.g. Ezra the Scribe. This was the beginning of the rabbinical tradition.

By the Middle Ages, Jews, no less challenged, had largely left the homeland. This diaspora had actually begun in 586 B.C.E. when Babylon conquered Israel. From then on Jews never had an independent state, until the establishment of modern Israel at the conclusion of World War II. The diaspora has historically had a great effect on Jewish thought. Some considered a return to the homeland to be of paramount importance, while others thought the diaspora to be God's way of spreading true monotheism of the Judaic tradition throughout the world. Today there are approximately 15 million who profess the Jewish faith, and they are evenly divided between the Israel and the United States, with only a few hundred thousand living in neither.

The diaspora had existential significance for the Jewish people. Where others have perished in such events, the Jews survived, although not without a great deal of suffering. One reason for this is that the diaspora didn't mean dissolution. Jews didn't move as individuals but as groups. By the Middle Ages we find them throughout Europe, making a home in any place that would show the least bit of tolerance. No matter how tolerant their surroundings, they would tend to keep to themselves in other than business dealings, and live in their own, highly segregated neighborhoods. This served to isolate them from mainstream society, but also served to preserve their traditions.



Moses and the Ten Commandments
By Rembrandt
Britannica.com

A second factor of the faith is that it became increasingly intellectualized. Oral traditions were put to paper and greatly expanded in the flowering of the rabbinical system. A combination of philosophical treatises, mystical literature, polemical works, and the expansion and application of the existing legal system created a highly coherent and well thought out theology and gave Jews a highly defined way of life.

Beginning with the Enlightenment, Christian society became increasingly tolerant of Jews, making efforts to assimilate them into mainstream society, albeit with a caveat that they must be willing to forego some of the norms of their tradition. This met with resistance, but also intellectual consideration that eventually led to a reform movement. For the first time, Judaism would see a significant split in the traditional practices – those that hold to the old ways and those that advocate reform.

The foundational literature of Judaism

All of the religions we have considered so far have a long history and in so great a length of time, often millenniums, it is unsurprising that there is a wealth of writing concerning them. In this respect, however,

the Jews are the first among equals, as there has been a strong current of intellectual reflection embedded in Judaism. Even that critic of religion, in general, and Christianity, in particular, H.L. Mencken, whose reference to the Jewish people often bordered on the antisemitic, spoke admiringly of the beauty of biblical writing which he attributed largely to Jewish writers in, perhaps his most famous book, *Treatise on the Gods*.

The most important book in the Judaic tradition is the *Hebrew Bible*. The term *Bible* is Christian in origin, and because of the vast number of Christians vs. Jews, many people confuse the term in reference to Judaism. Unlike the *Christian Bible*, the *Hebrew Bible* contains only what is known as the *Old Testament*. While Jews may use the term *Bible*, the more common term among them is *Tanakh*. The *Tanakh* is divided into three parts:

The *Torah* the five Books of Moses also referred to as the Pentateuch

The *Nevi'im* (prophets)

The *Ketuvim* (scriptures)

The first letter of each of these term compose the word *Tanakh*.

The *Torah* is preeminent of the three. It begins with Creation and ends with the death of Moses. It plays a large role in synagogue ritual, and contains almost all of the legal components of the tradition. The creation of copies of the *Torah* requires special paper and ink, applied in a certain way.

The books of the Prophets cover the period from Israel's settlement in Canaan until the destruction of the first Temple in 586 B.C.E. It contains some historical information, but, as its name implies, largely covers the rhetoric of the prophets of the period.

The *Ketuvim* is more eclectic and contains wisdom literature, poetry, and historical works. The largest book is the Psalms. It also contains the five *Megillot* (scrolls): *The Book of Esther*, *the Song of Songs*, *Lamentations*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Ruth*. Other books include *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Daniel*, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, and the two *Books of Chronicles*.

Jews continued to produce books throughout much of the Second Temple period. Many of these were expansions or elaborations of the core biblical documents. These books survived because of the preservation efforts of the Christian Church. Even Jewish historian Josephus and philosopher Philo come to us through Christian collections.

During the first six centuries C.E. what is known as rabbinic Judaism flourished. Several major works came out of this tradition:

1. The *Midrash* provides a sort of commentary to the Torah using many different literary forms including fables and parables
2. The *Mishnah* emerged as the central legal text of rabbinic Judaism
3. A slightly later work, the *Mishna* is the basis of all subsequent rabbinic legislation
4. The *Talmuds* were produced independently and are known as the *Babylonia and Palestine Talmuds*. The *Babylonia Talmud* has a preferred status. Both are based on the earlier *Mishna*.



Presentation of The Torah,
by Édouard Moyse, 1860
Wikipedia

The *Talmud* was used to formulate systematic legal texts such as the work of Maimonides, who strove to codify the rabbinic legal tradition. Later works such as the *Shulhan Arukh* (Spread Table) by Rabbi Joseph Karo continued this effort. The *Shulhan Arukh* divided all Jewish law and practice into four groups:

1. Rituals of daily life (prayer, Sabbath, holidays)
2. Dietary laws
3. Laws of marriage and divorce
4. Civil law

Another type of legal literature is known as *the responsa*. As the name implies, these are opinions and commentaries on questions that arose in the Jewish communities. They are particularly valuable today as a social history.

Medieval Judaism produced another form of literature of profound interest to students of the *Torah*. These are commentaries such as those of Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (aka Rashi 1040-1105).

The Jewish Prayer Book likely had its genesis in the 8th or 9th centuries in the Babylonian academies. Over time the *Prayer Book* has evolved and there are significant geographical differences between various *Prayer Books*, as well.

Jews in general are brought up as bibliophiles. When a book falls to the ground, the custom is to pick it up and kiss it. Old books are not discarded but buried.



A deeper look at Rabbinic Judaism

Freemasons will be familiar with some of the history of the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem. Together (with a short gap of 70 years) these two Temples persisted for a millennium (960 B.C.E to 70 C.E.). In 70 C.E. the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans. It brought into question whether the Jewish God was indeed the true God, or whether the Roman gods were the true divine power. The emerging faith of Christianity also saw vindication in their beliefs with the destruction of the Second Temple. This caused some Jews to go into a perpetual state of depression, consternation, and mourning.

To understand the state of the Jewish mind in this period consider that for a millennium religious practice of the Jews had centered on the Temple. The Israelites of the Bible were required to serve

God through an elaborate system of sacrificial worship, that is, by slaughtering animals on an altar at the Temple. This worship relied on a class of priests. It is difficult to imagine how one could adjust to so devastating a blow. However, a new system of worship with a new central figure, the *rabbi*, did emerge. (As an aside, it is interesting to note that the role of rabbi is not found in the Bible.) This is the form of Judaic practice we find today. Rather than reliance on a central temple, decentralized worship in synagogues became the new model. The sacrificial model conducted by a priestly class gave way to individual prayer that didn't require the intermediary of a priest. This new system of practice became known as *Rabbinic Judaism*.

Blood Sacrifice

There are many theories on why most religions of ancient origins practiced some form of blood sacrifice. It must be understood that ancient peoples knew very little about how things actually work, and faced a hostile world for which they had little defense. Blood must have seemed to be an elixir of life. Lose too much, say in battle, or the innumerable accidents that could befall one, and the person died. Death to illness and old age was seen as a depletion of life force in the blood. When nature was particularly cruel with draughts and floods, it was believed that the creator was in need of a life force transfusion, and so a living thing was sacrificed to re-energize the god in question. This type of connection between nature, man and the divine, continued in various forms throughout history. Remember the wounded king and the desolate land from the Arthurian Tradition?

Yahweh, the Jewish God, was portrayed throughout the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) as particularly cantankerous and vengeful, forever punishing his people for slights and failures. Indeed, it has often been asserted that the God of the Old Testament was angry and the God of the New Testament was loving. The Jews thought of themselves as God's chosen, and their history reflects the belief that God was quite involved in their day to day existence. However, that existence was fraught with a great deal of misery and misfortune. How is this reconciled with being the chosen of God? The Jews believed this was because they had not measured up to God's commandments.

Pragmatically, and with historical hindsight, the Jewish people has always been a small minority. Often they were victimized by vastly larger majorities. Thus to atone and gain God's good graces to intercede in human affairs on their behalf, they reasoned that they must sacrifice. On a personal level such sacrifice was to atone for sin. The sacrificial animal, in this case, was a representative (not as a substitute, as sin was seen as non-transferable) sent to God to plead their case.

There is a purely economic argument that can be made here as well. To sacrifice means literally to give up something of value. Thus sacrifice could be seen as a request for assistance or as payment for past favors.

Blood sacrifice also was part of many fertility rituals in ancient times, although this doesn't appear to be a central concern of the Jews.

Rabbinic literature ascribes this new practice to one sage, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai. He is mentioned in the Mishna as being associated with a number of ordinances aimed at providing an alternative to the central temple model. The word *rabbi* means, literally "master" or "sage," and more specifically "a teacher of the Torah." Unlike the priests whose authority rested on lineage, a rabbi's authority was earned through learning and individual charisma. They were also mobile allowing them to establish a decentralized collection of followers in all portions of the Jewish diaspora.

The sum total of rabbinic teaching during the five to six centuries after the destruction of the second temple became known as the *oral tradition*, complementing the *written tradition* teaching of the Hebrew Bible especially the Torah. These became inseparable and served as the basis for almost all subsequent intellectual and legal activity. Rabbinic Judaism stressed the study of the Torah not only as

a means of determining God's desires of man, but as a central form of religious devotion. A reading from the Torah is always part of a service at a synagogue.

Yohanan ben Zakkai stressed "acts of loving kindness" as a suitable alternative to sacrificial worship. However, the rabbis never presented their teachings as a system that superseded the Bible. The success of rabbinic Judaism was in the balance between obvious innovation and the continuity of their teaching with those of the Bible.

Prayer

One of the perennial truths we have discovered in these essays is that religions evolve - at least those that survive. More subtly, we find that we often read in such evolution into the original foundational documents. A case in point, is the use of prayer in the Hebrew Bible. Although by no means absent from the Bible, it wasn't the major mode of religious practice it is today. Rather the God-fearing Jews of the Old Testament expressed their devotion, as we have seen, by the practice of animal sacrifice. Even those Jews living far from the Temple would send funds to purchase animals for this purpose. Those who visited the Temple could purchase an animal along the way. At the dedication of the Temple, *thousands* of animals were reported sacrificed in the Bible.

Animal sacrifices could only be done at the Temple, and with its destruction there was no way to continue. Fortunately for a lot of animals, the Rabbinic System that emerged established more benign practices to replace the old ritual sacrifice model. Prayer was central to this new practice, and, of course, continues to the present day. Although a Jew may pray anytime, the rabbis formalized a system that called for daily prayer, and defined the when, what, where, and how of required prayer. This framework was established in the first century C.E. and persist to the present day.

To some extent prayer was to follow the rhythm of sacrifice. There were, for example, two times of mandatory daily prayer, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. A third evening prayer was eventually added. Central to these prayers were 19 blessings on weekdays (fewer on holidays), known as *the Amidah* (pray while standing) each detailing one of God's attributes. The Amidah wasn't just a list of praises and requests, but a public declaration of the national and religious aspirations of the Jewish community. A study of Jewish prayer would probably be the ideal way of examining Jewish self-identity.

In the morning and evening prayers, the Amidah is preceded by the recitation of three chapters from the Torah:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Deuteronomy 11:13-21

Numbers 15:37-41

The first chapter begins with the words: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." The Hebrew words opening this scripture, *Shma Yisrael*, have determined the name for the entire prayer: the *Shma*. The *Shma* has universal importance. In addition to its use in daily prayers, it is the ideal dying statement of a Jew as the soul departs, and an affirmation of faith in the face of martyrdom.

Rabbinic Judaism considers prayer to be a public expression of religious fealty. Almost all prayers are recited in the plural form. Public prayer requires a quorum of 10 (known as a *minyan*). Conservative and Reform Judaism stress egalitarianism, while Orthodox Jews require 10 males. No official is required, and any 10 people can provide the quorum.

The synagogue

The main setting for prayer today is the synagogue. No mention of synagogue is found in the Hebrew Bible, although they are mentioned in the Christian New Testament. The synagogue first appeared in the Second Temple period, primarily for public reading of the Torah and the delivery of sermons. The reading of the Torah is a tradition that continues today and is read completely over the course of a year. Prayer is also required, but a sermon is optional.

There is no architectural requirement for a synagogue and services could be held even in a private home. In a building expressly built as a synagogue the Torah is usually deposited in an ark, which stands in front of the hall. Prayers are generally recited facing the Torah, but Jewish tradition actually mandates facing Jerusalem. From ancient time synagogues were and are often designed to fit in with local architecture.

Although not mentioned as such in the Bible, Jews remote from Jerusalem met in a synagogue type setting that served both a religious and community function. However, until the destruction of the



Eldridge Street Synagogue, New York City
Wikipedia

Second Temple, the primary place of worship was considered the Temple in Jerusalem to which they contributed monetary support.

The Judaic calendar

I would imagine everyone reading this is familiar to some degree with Jewish holidays. After all, we live in New York State which is home to more Jews than any other place except Israel. Granted, the majority live in and around New York City, but Western New York has a fairly substantial Jewish population, as well. The calendar, however, has an interesting evolution and is far more complicated than most non-Jews imagine.

The calendar has both lunar and solar characteristics. The months of the Jewish calendar are lunar, and account for 354 days as opposed to the solar calendar of 365 days. Since a solar year determines seasons, there was initially a problem with slippage. Because there is an 11 day gap, a spring holiday such as Passover, would gradually slip into winter!

The first solution to this problem was to occasionally add a 13th month to get things



Eldridge Street Synagogue, New York City
Wikipedia

back in sync. This addition was made by authorities empower to do so, but in the ancient world communicating these changes to the calendar couldn't be made in a timely fashion. Eventually it was Christians, who determined Easter, from the date of Passover, that pressed to base calendar dates on a fixed rather than ad hoc basis. By the 4th century C.E. all of Judaism committed to one calendar with fixed rules. In a normal year the calendar has 12 months, but leap years have 13. Jewish holidays though continue to be celebrated on specific days of the lunar month.

Months of the Jewish Calendar

Month	Name	Leap year months	Days/Month	חודש	Corresponding months
1	Tishrei	1 Tishrei	30	תשרי	Sept.-Oct.
2	Cheshvan	2 Cheshvan	29/30	חשוון	Oct.-Nov.
3	Kislev	3 Kislev	29/30	כסלו	Nov.-Dec.
4	Tevet	4 Tevet	29	טבת	Dec.-Jan.
5	Shevat	5 Shevat	30	שבט	Jan.-Feb.
6	Adar		29	אדר	Feb.-Mar.
		6 Adar Alef	30		
		7 Adar Beit	29		
7	Nissan	8 Nissan	30	ניסן	Mar.-Apr.
8	Iyar	9 Iyar	29	אייר	Apr.-May
9	Sivan	10 Sivan	30	סיון	May-June
10	Tamuz	11 Tamuz	29	תמוז	June-July
11	Av	12 Av	30	אב	July-Aug.
12	Elul	13 Elul	29	אלול	Aug.-Sept.

There is one holy day not determined by a particular date and that is *the Sabbath* (to rest) occurring once a week. This is the only holy day mentioned in the Ten commandments. Like all Jewish holidays it begins at sunset and continues until evening of the following day.

The High Holy Days (or Days of Awe) are New Year (*Rosh ha-Shana*) and the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). Both fall in the month of *Tishri* (just as summer ends and fall begins). Rosh ha-Shana is considered the yearly day of God's judgement over mankind. Along with extended prayer the day is marked by the blowing of a ram's horn (*shofar*) and is considered a wakeup call to arouse man from moral slumber. There are 10 days of repentance between Rosh ha-Shana and Yom Kippur, the latter being a day of total fasting and prayer.

There are three seasonal holidays originating in agricultural cycles. They bear close association with the chapters of the biblical Exodus story. *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) comes 5 days after Yom Kippur. The final day of this holiday marks the coming of winter and a special prayer for rain is recited.

Six months later the festival of *Passover* is celebrated. The event most associated with this holiday is the *Seder* dinner, in which a text known as the Haggadah is read recounting the Exodus story. The food served at Seder is intended to conjure up memories of the bondage and redemption in Egypt.

Seven weeks after the beginning of Passover (which is celebrated for a week) the festival of Pentecost, or *Shavu'ot* (weeks) is held. Although biblically linked to an agricultural feast, rabbis link it to the revelation of Sinai and the giving of the Torah.

The feast of *Purim* originating in the Second Temple period is celebrated a month after Passover and is based on events recounted in the Book of Esther. It relates the story of an evil official's attempt to annihilate all the Jews of the realm, only to be thwarted.

Hannukah, perhaps the best known Jewish holiday among gentiles, is celebrated, like Christmas, in December, and focuses on the cultural clash between Judaism and Hellenism.

The *Ninth of Av* (usually occurring in late July or early August) is a day of mourning. Central to it is the remembrances of the destruction of both Temples, as well as other misfortunes.

Finally, there are two relatively recent holidays. One is Israel's Day of Independence. The other, occurring one week after Passover, is the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and the tragic events of the Holocaust.

Four approach in modern Judaism

Orthodox Judaism hold the Torah (oral and written) was given by God to Moses. Consequently, they hold that the laws of the Torah must be strictly observed. One well known sect of Orthodox Jews is Hasidism. Modern versions of the Orthodox tradition embrace modern life, but strictly observe Jewish law. Sexes are segregated during prayer.

The least traditional movement is **Reform Judaism**. They don't believe that the Torah was given to the Jewish people by God. Rather, they hold that it was written by divinely inspired men. While the Torah is considered sacred, its laws aren't strictly enforced, and they ignore some, such as dietary restrictions, that they hold to be outdated.

Conservative Judaism falls in the middle. Like those in the Reform movement they hold that while the Torah may have been divinely inspired it was not literally given by God. They also believe that the Torah is sacred but assert that certain laws and customs can be adapted to the modern world. The synagogue service is conducted in Hebrew and men and women usually sit together.

Reconstructionism emerged in the USA in the early 20th century and holds that Judaism is not merely a religion but is a religious civilization, and thus is integrated into all aspects of the person's life. A relatively small movement.

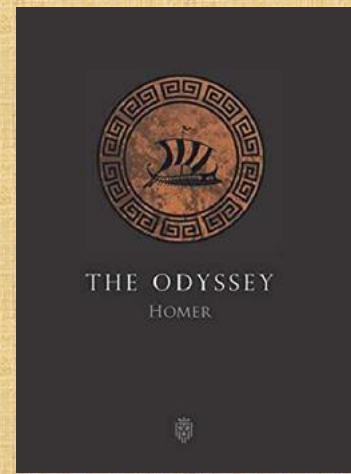
(from an article on Judaism found at collectionscanada.gc.ca)

In bibliothecam

The Odyssey

Homer

Available from Amazon and other booksellers



The Odyssey is written as a direct sequel to *The Iliad* via the story of Odysseus. Odysseus was often described as the most cunning and intelligent of Agamemnon's warrior-kings, and the tale bearing his name is an easier read than *The Iliad*. The *Odyssey* follows the fate of Odysseus after the completion of the Trojan war, in his years-long quest to return home. His journey includes a large sampling of the fantastic creatures and gods to be found in the ancient Greek mythos. This being said, I am still trying to decide exactly what sort of story *The Odyssey* is. There are strong arguments to be made that it is just one of the mythic tales in the ancient Greek catalogue, but there is a strong sense of allegory that begins to pervade the tale for those who have a taste for this sort of literature.

The tale begins with a familiar invocation to the muses and details that Odysseus has been held captive by the goddess Calypso, preventing him from returning home. Meanwhile, his home is besieged by suitors attempting to win over Odysseus' wife Penelope in marriage, under the assumption that Odysseus is dead. The suitors have been consuming so much of the food and resources left to Penelope that she and Telemachus (her son with Odysseus) have reached a critical point where Penelope must either consent to be married or enjoy the miraculous return of Odysseus. Under the prompting of Athena, Telemachus begins a quest to discover the fate of his father.

This narrative jump from the titular character to the viewpoint of Telemachus is the first of some strange choices made by the author Homer. The narrative eventually jumps back to Odysseus in the present day, who after finally leaving the island of Calypso, begins to tell his story to Alcinous the king of the Phaeacians in thanks for hospitality after shipwrecking.

Odysseus then (finally) begins to tell of his story immediately following the events of the Trojan war. I have always found this sort of jumping around to be confusing when encountered in modern story telling. I now see where the trouble started. As much as it is good to remember and venerate the texts and tales that have shaped our culture through the millennia, I have to say that even when done by a master like Homer, it does not lend itself to intelligibility by the audience. Upon subsequent readings of the *Odyssey*, I'm sure the tone and tension of the story will show how masterful the handling of the narrative is.

Maybe.

Or, it may be that the next read-through of *The Odyssey* will cement my suspicion that this is written much like *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas – itself a perennial masterpiece. The issue I have with *The Count of Monte Cristo* is that its story was deliberately padded with superfluties and twists to extend its length. A choice made by Dumas to ensure that he kept getting paid for his story which was told via serialization in the French newspaper *Journal des Debats* from 1844 to 1846.

I may be accused of being a touch cynical in remarking that Homer wrote the *Odyssey* the way he did in order to procure some personal reward. Fame perhaps, if not direct payment. In my defense I can only say there are more direct (and easier to follow) ways to tell stories that span 18 volumes in the case of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and 24 books in the case of *The Odyssey*.

That all being said, the bulk of the remaining story can be divided into two parts. The first being the sensational voyage through myth and legend where Odysseus and his crew are eventually whittled down to a single man through several encounters with gods, goddesses, monsters, and side-quests to the land of the dead. The second part details Odysseus' return to his home in Ithaca, where he assesses the state of his home and plots his bloody revenge against the suitors who have taken advantage of his estate and house in his absence.

I mentioned earlier that I am not certain as to what sort of story *The Odyssey* truly is. In Myths such as the tale of Perseus in his journey from banished infant to saving Andromeda from the Kraken, the story has so many elements of the supernatural there is an escape from realism that is performed. The story then becomes larger than life and so the resulting tie-ins explaining constellations or other natural phenomenon seem like a fitting method to end such clashing of titanic forces. The first half of *The Odyssey* fits this sort of story like the oft-mentioned hand in glove. It is after all a tour-de-force of cyclopes, goddesses, and maelstroms.

The second half of the story however, very nearly ejects all aspects of the mythic or supernatural leaving Odysseus with some oblique help from his patron goddess Athena in reclaiming his house. The story in this respect is much more grounded. While losing the sensational appeal of larger-than-life elements, this choice by the author drives home to the reader (at least this reader) how bloody and savage Odysseus' reclamation of his place in Ithaca was.

It is perhaps more comfortable to declare the entire story a myth, in which case the actions of all characters are merely "what happened" and not something that requires much reflection on behalf of the audience because these characters are meant to explain the interaction between heroes and monsters or gods. Not being these people of super-normal capacity relieves us of the task of personal reflection on the actions of story's characters. We merely enjoyed it or we didn't.

If *The Odyssey* was meant to be an allegory as some do suggest, then this leaves us with an entirely different encounter with the story. Allegories are meant to be instructive to us living our lives in the real world via the masking of our inner demons and better natures in the guise of monsters and gods. In this case, paying close attention to details is warranted. If this is the case, then the methods of Odysseus are subject to scrutiny. If we are meant to look to "the most cunning of kings and men" as someone who lost his whole crew, earned the ire of Poseidon by ramming a giant stake in to his son's cyclopean eye, spent years moping on the beach with a beautiful goddess rather than being more proactive, and solving the problem of his house overrun by bad guests by murderous bloodbath, I have some questions about the mold Homer intended to provide his audience with for their character.

This criticism may be too harsh, as Homer was supposed to have lived over 2800 years ago. Perhaps life was just that violent and brutal in that age. We are after all products of our upbringing, our culture, and our individual life experiences. It would be understandable to give Homer and thus Odysseus a pass on his "aggressive style of problem solving" in this regard.

However, in most cultures throughout all time, it is universally understood that murder is to be frowned upon. If Odysseus was indeed the cleverest of all men as he is repeatedly told, then it seems like he possessed the means of finding a way to achieve his homecoming and reclamation of house and throne without bloodshed. Homer after all, at the end of his story, acknowledges this in the story's denouement. Due to the blood spilled by Odysseus when he slew all the suitors who coveted

his wife and estate, he was not able to finally rest, and instead had to flee with his wife and son to escape the wrath of those suitor's families. Only after a further task not detailed in the story, was he supposedly able to return home in earnest.

What can I say in the end about *The Odyssey*? For me, the quest for home is the desire for resolution to the tonic from dissonance, an emblem of the cyclical toil of the work week and the week-end, the silence following cathartic release. The template of this tale hangs over our spiritual quest to reunite ourselves with the source of our being in Deity. The specifics of the tale can be taken allegorically, but not for me. I respect intellect and versatility, but not so much as I respect the greater virtues of love and preservation of life. I love the phantasmagoria of monstrous images, but detest the descent a man makes when he becomes a monster. As a Rosicrucian, I feel sorry for the character of Odysseus and his family. To me his is a man given every possible advantage: wealth, political power, a cunning mind, a strong body, a loyal family. He had challenges put before him that were the equal of those advantages, and rather than contend for *the true* goal of transcending the toils put before him by fate, gods, and circumstance, he merely sought victory. His ending was a pyrrhic one, where he was not able to rest lest the consequences of his actions find him.

I really wanted to find Odysseus an inspiring figure, but instead I find that he is rather trapped in the same sort of trap sprung around Agamemnon in *The Iliad*: too invested in the mortal world and its concerns to transcend his limits and find his heart's desire: peace.

Therefore, I find, that in order to restore my affection for the ancient Greek mythological tales I will resolve to instead finish this era of my survey by adding the Labors of Herakles, wherein I hope to find a more worthy exemplar for our Rosicrucian adventure through time.

Amor libertatis lucem vitae,

Walt

VW Frater Walter E. Cook, IV, VII° et Philologus Philosophus
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My astrological adventure

RW W. Bruce Renner, IX°, KGC et Philologus
Adeptus Exemptus

In the spirit of full disclosure, I've never been very fond of astrology. Over the years, however, I've become acquainted with various facets of it. Years ago, I learned how to do all the calculations needed to erect an astrological chart. It is really tedious and complicated. This is now easily done in seconds with various apps (I use iPhemeris on my iPad). One wonders how our pre-computer ancestors persevered. And how often did they make an unnoticed mistake?

*Once you are able to erect a chart, you can use it for different types of divination. **Natal Astrology**, by far the most common, analyses a person's makeup and potentials using a chart of their exact time and place of birth. **Horary Astrology** seeks to answer a question based on a chart of the exact moment it was asked. **Electoral Astrology** is used to determine the best time to hold an event. Then there is **Synastry** which involves the comparison of the relationship between two natal charts. Are you compatible? Maybe better not to ask.*

I made a bit of a New Year's resolution this year to fill in some of the gaps in my astrological knowledge. I'm trying to get a handle on my natal chart, more out of curiosity than anything else. For answering questions and such I find tarot much more straightforward. My goal was to get knowledgeable enough to do a presentation on it. I'm not quite there yet, but I'm making a bit of progress. And I am willing to admit I'm having a bit of fun do it.

As an aside, divination to me is a method for answering non-linear questions – not fortunetelling. Should I take that new job or not? Maybe you can't decide but working through a divination exercise allows you to make evident your true feelings on the matter. In terms of the natal chart, I really bring a skeptic's hat. Is what the chart reflects really an expression my make up or not. It is hard to avoid confirmation bias though

Of course, astrological symbolism is found abundantly in world literature and art. It seems to find its way into all the esoteric traditions in one form or another. Although viewed in modern society as pseudo-science, what alchemy did for chemistry, astrology did for astronomy. All that observation of the sky did lead to making accurately made maps of the sky. I also find myself in agreement with Carl Jung that many of the methods employed by various esoteric disciplines were early precursors to psychology.

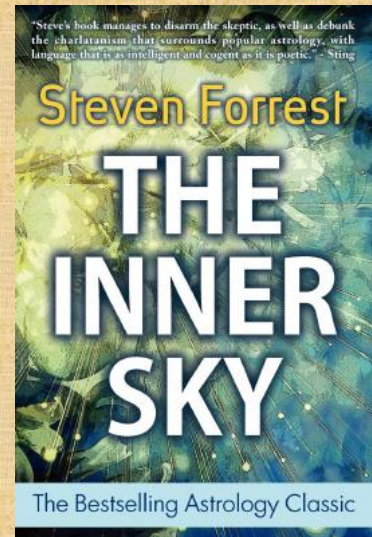
If you have curiosity about astrology, one of your first challenges is finding a few good books on the subject out of literally hundreds. Like all subjective subjects there is a lot of room for flimflam. I'm reviewing two books here that I think give a good overview of the subject, without the hype of fortunetelling. They both are concerned with Natal Astrology which is the first analysis that must be mastered.

The Inner Sky

By Steven Forrest

Seven Paws Press; Reprint edition 2012

Available from Amazon and other booksellers



Steven Forrest has been a professional astrologer all his life and has several books to his credit. I read a few, but *The Inner Sky* is the best introduction to astrology that I've come across and a great place to start if you're looking to get a better understanding of the subject.

He starts with what he terms the vocabulary of astrology: signs, planets, and houses, and proceeds to form sentences involving how the three interact through things like aspects, rulership and nodes. He has a pleasant, easily accessible writing style, and uses many examples to illustrate his points. These examples are, however, in texted form and the style is stream of conscious writing. He also provides theories into why astrology works and through his writing shows perhaps why his particular style of astrological analysis works (hint: it doesn't depend entire on the charts for interpretation).

The last sections of the book outline an incremental approach for performing an astrological analysis. Here a detailed step by step example or two with illustrations might have been helpful.

Overall, then, the main downside is that this book lacks tables, summaries, and illustrations. This isn't necessarily a bad thing if the reader is willing to make the effort to summarize for themselves. This would certainly lead to a better understanding of the material presented. It could be that the author may have done this on purpose to prevent a cookbook approach which he clearly doesn't use himself. However, one wonders how he internalized the complex methodology himself. This unanswered question is perhaps the most vexing to me: how to organize the material in such a way that a beginner can have some success with their own analysis efforts?

Ultimately, his approach is largely like mine with Tarot, focused on what the cards mean to you, not canned explanations. However, I'm unconvinced that astrology can work like that unless an enormous amount of time is invested in developing what ultimately becomes intuitive. One can use this book in two ways then; as a pleasant overview or a workbook requiring you to roll up your sleeves and do real work.

If you finish *The Inner Sky* and want to go deeper, I highly recommend four other Forrest books: Fire, Earth, Air, and Water. These explore in far more detail the signs, planets, and houses associated with the four Ancient Elements, known as the quadruplicities.

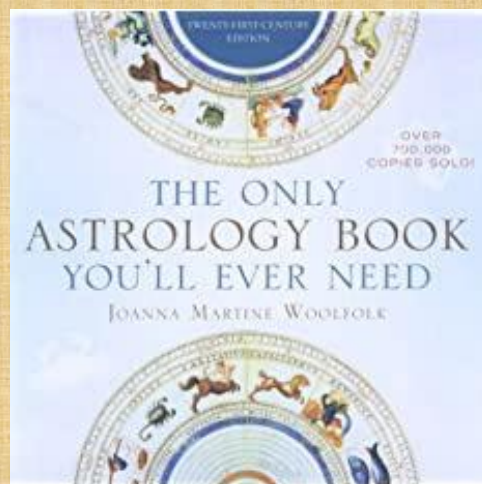
The Only Astrology Book You'll Ever Need

by

Joanna Martine Woolfolk

Taylor Trade Publishing; 2012

Available from Amazon and other booksellers



This is the first, and for a long time, only book I had on astrology. I still have mixed emotions about it, but I've found it useful over the years. My copy has a sticker on it that says 700,000 sold. Probably well over a million at this point. Given the natural competition between professionals of any type, other astrologers must be grinding their teeth! Of course, having the most copies sold just means it's popular, not that it's good. In my opinion, some degree of discernment must be exercised by the reader in using it. However, I do think it does largely live up to its name to all but the most ardent student.

Steven Forrest presents a rather long list of further reads at the end of *The Inner Sky*. This book isn't in it and one can see why. It takes the exact opposite approach in that it provides a lot of cookbook summaries, illustrations, and examples. You're much more likely to find it in your local book store than the Forrest books, and I think that is because it provides all the information most people want in a more digestible form.

Although it strays into pop astrology on occasion i.e., the cookbook approach that is perhaps best illustrated by the daily horoscope section found in many newspapers and sun signs of famous people, it addresses most of the major methodology covered in the Forrest books with many examples. In a nutshell, it is well organized with detailed summaries of what each sign, planet, and house mean, and how they interact. It leaves nothing to your imagination except, "Does this fit my understanding of my persona (when doing your own natal chart)?" My suggestion for using it is as an aid to developing your own astrological interpretations. You can certainly use it as a first cut analysis and then add insights found in *The Inner Sky*.

One more thing! If you invest in these books, get a hardcopy. You are going to want to leaf through them, and jump around. This is harder to do electronically.

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