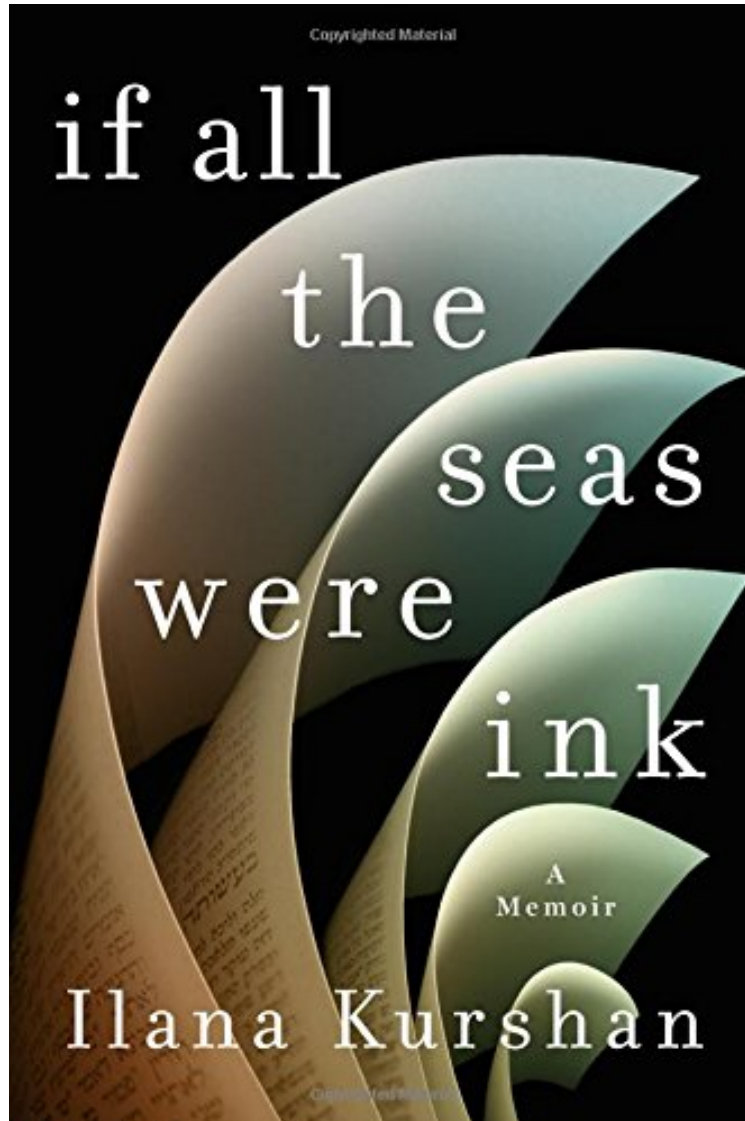


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## If All the Seas Were Ink: A Memoir

*Ilana Kurshan*

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#4810 in Books 2017-09-05 2017-09-05Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.58 x .5 x 5.79l, #File Name: 1250121264320 pages | File size: 58.Mb

**Ilana Kurshan : If All the Seas Were Ink: A Memoir** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised If All the Seas Were Ink: A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy SHortzLovely journey of the soul and heart.13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Her writing is often laugh out loud funny while the descriptions of her darker tribulations are painful ...By Rina GoldbergIlana Kurshan has written a spellbinding book.Her writing is often laugh out loud funny while the descriptions of her darker tribulations are painful and resonant.She has written a one of

a kind book; a new genre. I don't have enough accolades. So moving and personal and intellectual and literary wrapped up in a compelling *raison d'être* for women studying the Daf or any Jewish texts. Ilana's ability to weave the text into her daily life is unique and inspiring. I cannot recommend this book more highly. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. "The Talmud was fertile ground for gleaning new insights and fresh perspectives." By booklover10 In her memoir, "If All the Seas Were Ink," Ilana Kurshan recounts her journey from loneliness and despair to joy and fulfillment. When she was in her twenties, she fell in love, married, and moved to Israel. Unfortunately, the union ended in divorce and at twenty-seven, she felt adrift. Although she has a first-class education and was able to support herself she is a capable editor, translator, and literary agent--she experienced bouts of depression and self-doubt. At the urging of a friend, she decided to join the Daf Yomi, a worldwide endeavor in which students learn a page of the Babylonian Talmud each day. It takes seven and a half years to complete the thirty-seven tractates. All the while, she kept a journal and took notes, which served as this book's nucleus. As Kurshan states in the introduction, "My daily Talmud study was an anchor, if not a life raft." The author is an ardent bibliophile who lyrically expresses her love of language, appreciates the commentaries of the Jewish sages (even when she disagrees with them), and longs for a meaningful and spiritual existence. She is not Orthodox; Ilana was brought up in an egalitarian synagogue and has led services on the Sabbath and festivals. She keeps a kosher home and observes the Sabbath, but rejects other traditions that do not jibe with her beliefs. Kurshan discusses her exploration of the Talmudic texts, and notes parallels between her life and passages in the Daf Yomi. In addition, she weighs in on the debates among various scholars concerning such topics as the Holy Days, matrimony, the rituals that took place in the First and Second Temples, property disputes, the Jewish calendar, and prayer. "No detail is extraneous and little is transparent," Kurshan declares. In spite of her prodigious capacity for acquiring knowledge, Kurshan is modest and self-effacing. Her frank and eloquent writing reveals a quick wit, sense of humor, goal-oriented personality, compassion, and she would probably admit--a streak of stubbornness. Now living in Jerusalem with her second husband and their four children (including twin girls), Ms. Kurshan is committed to the lifelong pursuit of Torah. As a coda to this engrossing memoir, Ilana Kurshan might have used Frost's famous lines to describe her odyssey: "I took the [road] less traveled by/ And that has made all the difference."

The Wall Street Journal: "There is humor and heartbreak in these pages...Ms. Kurshan immerses herself in the demands of daily Talmud study and allows the words of ancient scholars to transform the patterns of her own life." One of BookRiot's most anticipated nonfiction books for the week of September 4 At the age of 27, alone in Jerusalem in the wake of a painful divorce, Ilana Kurshan joined the world's largest book club, learning *daf yomi*, Hebrew for daily page" of the Talmud, a book of rabbinic teachings spanning about 600 years and the basis for all codes of Jewish law. A runner, a reader and a romantic, Kurshan adapted to its pace, attuned her ear to its poetry, and discovered her passions in its pages. She brought the Talmud with her wherever she went, studying in airplanes, supermarket lines, and over a plate of pasta at home, careful not to drip tomato sauce upon discussions about the sprinkling of blood on the Temple altar. By the time she completed the Talmud after seven and a half years, Kurshan was remarried with three young children. With each pregnancy, her Talmud sat perched atop her growing belly. This memoir is a tale of heartache and humor, of love and loss, of marriage and motherhood, and of learning to put one foot in front of the other by turning page after page. Kurshan takes us on a deeply accessible and personal guided tour of the Talmud, shedding new light on its stories and offering insights into its arguments both for those already familiar with the text and for those who have never encountered it. For people of the book both Jewish and non-Jewish *If All the Seas Were Ink* is a celebration of learning through literature how to fall in love once again.

[Kurshan] is a gorgeous writer, emotionally honest and perceptive. She has written a beautiful and inspiring book. Both religious and secular readers will find themselves immensely moved by her personal story and the raw courage of the journey she has undertaken. Elaine Margolin, *The Jerusalem Post* "I am loving this memoir...[Kurshan] writes like nobody's business." Jeffrey Salkin, *Religion News Service* "From the moment I picked up *If All the Seas Were Ink*, I was not able to put it down...Highly recommended...No background in Talmud is needed to appreciate Kurshan's intriguing story. When you turn the last page, you will walk away feeling talmudically enriched and already hoping for a sequel." Rabbi Judith Hauptman, *Lilith Magazine* "[A] magnificent new memoir." *Forward* "Kurshan's intellectual dexterity and emotional vulnerability make this a gripping, smart read." *Kveller* "There is humor and heartbreak in these pages...Ms. Kurshan immerses herself in the demands of daily Talmud study and allows the words of ancient scholars to transform the patterns of her own life." *The Wall Street Journal* Lyrical and erudite. Kurshan's memoir gives us insightful contemporary readings of talmudic passages while demonstrating how life can accrue added richness when set against the backdrop of the Talmud. Sarah Rindner, *Jewish of Books* "[Kurshan] became one with the Talmudic lessons, seeing them everywhere and applying them to being a Jew and a mother in the modern era." *The JC* "Engaging...a compelling read, especially for but certainly not limited to students of the Talmud." *The Jewish Exponent* Clever and witty Kurshan is a fabulous writer; her clarity and simplicity propel you along almost unaware that you're reading. So engrossing I hardly could put it down. Neal Gendler, *American Jewish World* "Delightful...The

most enjoyable feature of the book is the brilliant and creative integration of the daily Talmudic folio Kurshan studies with experiences of her life." Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Lehrhaus*"What makes Kurshans memoir unique is her explication of the text...this is an introduction by someone who is trying to live both with and in the text." Beth Kissileff, *Tablet Magazine*"Uniquely beautiful...an amazing feat." *The Jerusalem Report*"Intriguing." Kirkus s"Kurshan committed herself to the Daf Yomi...she reports on how this daily discipline brought humor and wisdom and insight into her life." Rabbi Jack Riemer"If All The Seas Were Ink is a book about passion of many varietiesromantic passion, religious passion, aesthetic passion, but above all else, passion for knowledge. The word scholarship is too tame to do justice to Kurshans wild passion for the written word, whether the word is found on a page of Talmud or in a sonnet of Wordsworth. The blend of her loves makes for a rich and fascinating life, which makes for a rich and fascinating book." Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, author of *Plato at the Googleplex: Why Philosophy Won't Go Away*"If All the Seas Were Ink is such a moving memoir. Kurshan's portrait of everyday life in Jerusalem enriches her recounting of connecting to centuries of intellectual curiosity and conversing with bygone generations. How wonderful to explore this great volume with a such a sensitive and thoughtful guide." Susan Isaacs, author of *Long Time No See*"In this deeply personal and often hilarious story, Kurshan shows us how the Talmuds thousands of strange and demanding pages become a conversation about how best to live one's life in an imperfect world. Kurshan awakens us to our imperfect worlds hidden magnificenceand to the power of literature to inspire human resilience. A stunning, gorgeous memoir." Dara Horn, author of *The World to Come*"With this memoir, Ilana Kurshan enters the exclusive club of daf yomi learners, a club that was, for generations, restricted to men. Hers is a stunningly original voice in the world of Torah and the world of literature. Go run and read this book." Ruth Calderon, author of *A Bride for One Night*"When a woman as incredibly well-read as Ilana Kurshan commits herself to studying the Talmud daily for seven-and-a-half years, the results are mind-expanding, both for her and for readers of *If All the Seas Were Ink*. An utterly original book." Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, author of *Jewish Literacy*, *Rebbe*, and *A Code of Jewish Ethics*"An intimate and eloquent portrait of a young womans passionate loves and fears Kurshan writes as a woman of (as she puts it) Dickensonian sensibilities: clinging to her privacy while exposing her vulnerability, seeking the resonances between her mind, soul and body, and revealing an acutely sensitive intelligence, a wry self-awareness, and an active sense of the absurd." Avivah Zornberg, author of *The Murmuring Deep*"Kurshan's beautiful prose weaves the trials and tribulations of her personal seven-year journey together with the Talmud texts she's learning. I applaud, and am awed, by this moving and remarkable memoir." Maggie Anton, author of *Rashi's Daughters*About the AuthorIlana Kurshan is a graduate of Harvard and Cambridge. She has worked in literary publishing both in New York and in Jerusalem, as a translator and foreign rights agent and as the books editor of *Lilith* magazine. Her writing has appeared in *Tablet*, *Lilith*, *Hadassah*, *The Forward*, *Kveller*, *The World Jewish Digest*, *Nashim*, and *The Jewish Week*. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband and four children. Ilana is the author of *Why Is This Night Different From All Other Nights?* and *If All The Seas Were Ink*.