



Enchantress

Maggie Anton

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Fantastic tales of demons and the Evil Eye, magical incantations, and powerful attractions abound in *Enchantress*, a novel that weaves together Talmudic lore, ancient Jewish magic, and a timeless love story set in fourth-century Babylonia.

One of the most powerful practitioners of these mysterious arts is Rav Hisda's daughter, whose innate awareness allows her to possess the skills men lack. With her husband, Rava--whose arcane knowledge of the secret Torah enables him to create a "man" out of earth and to resurrect another rabbi from death--the two brave an evil sorceress, Ashmedai the Demon King, and even the Angel of Death in their quest to safeguard their people, even while putting their romance at risk.

The author of the acclaimed *Rashi's Daughters* series and the award-winning *Rav Hisda's Daughter: Apprentice* has conjured literary magic in the land where "abracadabra" originated. Based on five years of research and populated with characters from the Talmud, *Enchantress* brings a pivotal era of Jewish and Christian history to life from the perspective of a courageous and passionate woman.

Enchantress Details

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Author : Maggie Anton

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From Reader Review Enchantress for online ebook

Nomi Eve says

It's too easy to say that Enchantress casts its own spell, but such a comparison is impossible to resist. Hisdadukh, Anton's main character, may live in the early 4th century, but once you are immersed in Enchantress, she becomes as familiar as a dear friend and as fascinating as any of the great heroines of biblical history whose names are more familiar. An absolutely rewarding read!

Rachel says

Maggie Anton has done it again. She's written a book that is engaging, both from an intellectual and emotional point of view. I've read most of the books she has written and the reviews are on my Goodreads page. Anton has woven a rich world, once again during a time period I don't have a lot of familiarity with. She also struck a great balance of magic and life. Granted, reading a novel like "Enchantress" you expect magic but it was never so crazy that it broke my suspension of disbelief.

I love the way Anton writes relationships, particularly when they are ones that are building. She has a great sense of timing, not drawing out a "will they or won't they" too long, but just enough that it doesn't seem like a foregone conclusion and she's going through the motions. As usual, she also paints a portrait of the complexities of marriage. Something I really came to appreciate about Anton in this work was that she isn't afraid to have characters being sexual throughout the course of their life and show how that changes. We've seen Hisdukah go from innocently washing Rami's feet in book one to trading sexy banter well into her 60s (or older!).

Something that I've often mentioned with Anton's work is the Talmud and Torah discussions within the books. In other works it felt long and took me out of the story sometimes. However, in Enchantress she struck a perfect balance. There was enough material that I learned a lot but not so much I disengaged. This work deserves all 5 of its stars.

Maggie Anton says

Personally, I think this is the best novel I've written. My editor at Penguin did a fantastic job of tightening the story, removing unnecessary exposition, and distributing the backstory from Apprentice: A Novel of Love, the Talmud, and Sorcery into many scenes instead of a few big information dumps.

Imagine fourth-century Babylonia – land of jinni and flying carpets, where the very word “magic” originated. But this is also where the Talmud was created, and indeed, slipped in among its countless legal arguments are fantastic tales of demons and the Evil Eye, and of enchantresses and rabbis whose spells protected people from them.

There are fewer stories of learned women, not surprising in a text that names more demons than women. One curious piece of Gemara has Rav Hisda's daughter sitting in her father's classroom when he suddenly calls up his two best students and asks her, “Who do you want to marry?” Astonishingly, she replies, “Both of

them,” and more astonishingly, she is considered a prophet because that is what ultimately happens. She does marry both of them ... sequentially.

This is one of many rabbinic texts I wove into *Enchantress*, my novel about this audacious girl who yearns to become a sorceress, an esteemed profession for women in her community. But she is caught between memories of her first husband Rami and her increasing passion for Rava, the man she once blamed for Rami's untimely death. Eventually though, our heroine finds her place among the most powerful magic practitioners, along with Rava, her second husband.

Joy Ramlogan says

Enchantress was a well researched novel with a message on the role of men and women in the Jewish community in ancient Babylon (Babylon in the centuries after Christ). The divisions between the Rabbis and those who follow the Rabbis' laws and those who want to follow the Torah only are touched on. The central story is of Hisdadukh a healer who becomes chief soceress and her husband Rava who is powerful in priestly magic is filled with expositions of Jewish law and courts and interpretations of the Torah and the Rabbis' teachings. I learned a lot (and have forgotten a lot as it was chock full of information) about the Jewish community in those times. BUT...the story arc and character development left me wanting more. Good, I guess, but I am not interested in reading any more about Rav Hisda's daughters or Rashi's daughters right now - think I need some time to pass before I delve in this trove of information which as fiction falls flat in places.

Stephanie says

This was a difficult novel for me to finish. It shouldn't take me over 2 weeks to finish a novel. I received an ARC through First to Read from Penguin group.

I will start on a positive note and say it was interesting to learn about Talmudic lore and the history of Babylonia. The story is incredibly well researched.

However, I found at times the story would get weighted down with too many discussions or debates on Jeweish laws and customs, especially when the topic was not relevant to the central story. After a while I began to skim those parts.

There was much potential but I felt the focus of the story was slow and often had no direction.

Also I feel the pacing can be summed up well through this quote from page 362:

"That year in Pumbedita before Rava and I became betrothed had felt interminable, yet now it seemed that no sooner did we dismantle one year's sukkah than it was time to build another."

Slow beginning with the end often being described in a summary year to year.

There was so much time spent on Hisdadukh and Rava's courtship and not enough on her sorcery. Training with her mother would have been cool to see. I mean the title is *Enchantress* after all.

The end battle was anti-climatic because the rivalry with Zafnat was incredibly underdeveloped. Her presence in the story happens less than a handful of times.

The family dynamics were well developed. There were some humorous parts as well.

I did like Hisdadukh very much. She was strong, intelligent, could hold her own in difficult situations and was independently wealthy from her husband. I also liked that Rava was a supportive husband. They were two people I would root for.

Ultimately, it was too slow to develop and I often felt uninspired to continue. I kept waiting for Zafnat to evoke the Evil Eye and create many conflicts directly toward Hisdadukh. Instead it felt very much like reading a day by day, or a year by year diary.

2.5 out of 5 Incantation Bowls.

Toby Schonfeld says

I enjoyed this very much. Just as good as the first one. Guess I'll have to try Rashi's daughters next!

Melinda says

Completely captivated by the story I did find the numerous Jewish references a challenge. Continually consulting the glossaries and notes a must in order to comprehend the meanings was at best a distraction. My extensive lack of knowledge was my failing, the narrative was enjoyed along with eloquent prose. The heavy laden eye for detail was cumbersome at times, nonetheless appreciated.

I commend Anton on her painstaking research, a fascinating subject matter creating great interest. With the extensive Jewish references I did find my focus challenged more than I would have liked, diminishing my thorough pleasure of narrative. A marvelous read with its set of challenges, highly recommend, patience required.

Ionia says

Initially I was afraid that taking this book under my review wing would be a little scary. The amount of knowledge I had prior to reading this novel when it came to Jewish history could have been held in a shot glass. Even so, through Maggie Anton's magical abilities as a storyteller, I found myself immediately immersed in a world of long ago with characters so rich and vibrant that they dance off the pages.

The way this author interweaves her story with historical threads and uses such beautiful imagery and wonderful word choices kept me up late at night turning pages. She not only has a gift for making you see the world of her characters through words, but also has a real talent for making her characters vulnerable and human at the core level. Reading her writing is a journey, and one that you will want to repeat again.

I loved that the story took unexpected turns and that there was no way to know what was coming next. What I thought at first, would be a rather difficult book to read, instead turned out to be exciting, compelling and a fine example of literary genius.

My only stumbling block along the way was the difficulty of keeping certain characters straight. There is a guide in the beginning to help with that, so the troubles were really more my fault than that of the author (difficult to keep checking back on a Kindle ereader.)

Overall this is a beautifully crafted novel with plenty of reasons to make me recommend it. A great book from a very talented author.

This review is based on a complimentary copy from the publisher and distributed through Netgalley. All opinions are my own.

Dana says

While not a fan initially, this book grew on me. I thought that the subject matter was fascinating albeit hard to believe it was based on real life. The author has obviously researched the Jewish faith extensively.

I enjoyed the main character although found her strict way of life hard to relate to, but still I could appreciate it. I did have a little trouble with all of the Jewish terms, with which I was not familiar with but the glossary at the end of the novel helps with this.

Overall I would recommend this book , although I would caution that unless you have an interest in ancient Judaism you may find this novel a little dry, however the mystical properties of this story may make up for it. 3.5/5

Note: I received this novel for free in exchange for an honest review.

Betty says

My first real exposure to Jews and ancient magic was in Maggie Anton's first book in the "Rashi's Daughters" trilogy. After reading it I discussed the topic with my rabbi who said superstitions were a big part of the Jews at one time. Then on one of my trips to Israel I saw that the Biblelands Museum was having an exhibit on Angels & Demons. Much of what I saw there had been mentioned in "Rashi's Daughters".

I enjoyed the book tremendously but am a bit torn. It seemed that the second book of "Rav Hisda's Daughter" series has sorcery all through it. I preferred the scattering of it as in the "Rashi's Daughters" books. This book was more like a pure fantasy book. I feel like the historical aspects were forgotten. So if I consider the book as fantasy (with romance mixed in) I would give it five stars, but as historical fiction it is four stars. Either way, it is an interesting read. I prefer the philosophical debate portion of the story. This is such a huge part of Judaism even today. I feel like this book could have been two books by slowing it down. Sometimes an entire decade has passed from one chapter to the next. I did care about all the characters (and there's quite a

few of them). There are some very strong personalities in the mix.

It is obvious that the author put a LOT of research into this book. Well done!

Kelly says

(Full disclosure: I received a free copy of this book for review through Goodreads' First Reads program.)

DNF (did not finish) at 18% / 66 pages.

I took a chance on *Enchantress: A Novel of Rav Hisda's Daughter* in a Goodreads giveaway; unfortunately, it's just not for me. While Anton does a commendable job of explaining ancient Jewish beliefs, customs, and phrases for the reader, I often found myself lost and confused. I also didn't realize that this is the second book in Anton's Rav Hisda's Daughter series, which is slated to be a trilogy. It's hard to say whether reading the books in order would have drastically affected my enjoyment of *Enchantress* - which, for what it's worth, I think can also be read as a standalone story.

I might have been willing to power through had I found any of the characters even remotely interesting or engaging - but, as it turned out, the only character for whom I could muster up any sort of feelings was Rava, who is a just an all-around shitty human being: sexist, arrogant, presumptuous, entitled, and narcissistic. And that's just in the first 66 pages.

Seeing as he's one half of the book's power couple, this is especially problematic. Rava and Hisdadukh (the titular daughter of Rav Hisda) aren't together at the beginning of the novel, but we know from the book's synopsis that their romance forms the backbone of the story. I cannot think of two people I want to see get together less than Rava and Hisdadukh. Or Rava and any human woman with a pulse.

To cite just one example (which manages to perfectly encapsulate so many of his character flaws): As a kid, Rava studied under Hisdadukh's father Rav Hisda. At one point, Rav Hisda asked his daughter - in front of the class (no pressure there!) - who she'd rather marry: Rava or Rami. She chose them both, to which Rava quipped that he'd be the last husband. That day began Hisdadukh's betrothal to Rami because, you know, kids are notoriously adept at making sound, life-altering decisions.

Fast-forward 10, 15, 20 years; Hisdadukh is a widow, and Rava is trapped in an unhappy marriage to an "unloved, barren wife." (Which, incidentally, excuses his odious behavior. Men are responsible for their successes, while women are to blame for their failures. Got it!) While Hisdadukh is out of town and thus unreachable, Rava approaches Hisdadukh's father to request her hand in marriage. Rav Hisda agrees because, hey, Hisdadukh said she desired to marry Rava all those years ago! When Hisdadukh returns and learns of the arrangement, she demands/begs him to break it off, which offends and angers Rava.

Even though: a) Rava will remain married to his first wife, Choran, who will maintain all the power and prestige of a first wife; b) Hisdadukh's primary use is to be as a baby machine; c) everyone, including Hisdadukh herself, suspects Rava of murdering Rami.

And yet Rava's shocked and insulted that his sneaky little play was rejected by Hisdadukh! (Who, by the beginning of *Enchantress*, is actively courting *him*. Talk about your head-scratchers!) Imagine that!

So yeah. Shitty human being. No like.

Granted, these odious attitudes and practices may all be historically accurate, but this knowledge does little to enhance my enjoyment of the book. If anything, it makes me like it even less.

That said, those who have an interest in and working knowledge of the Talmud are likely to have a greater appreciation of *Enchantress*. That just isn't me.

<http://www.easyvegan.info/2014/10/03/...>

Shomeret says

I received this book from Net Galley and participated in a blog tour to promote this book. This is the briefer Goodreads version of my review.

Maggie Anton's second book about the Jewish scholar and magical practitioner who she calls Hisdadukh, is far more fantasy oriented than the first volume. Demons appear and a mysterious magical artifact surfaces as Hisdadukh ascends through the hierarchy of sorceresses in the Jewish communities of ancient Persia. We learn that a number of eminent women were sorceresses and that they were as integral to the Judaism of the time as the Rabbis who also had a secret tradition of magical practices.

Anton's protagonists, Hisdadukh and Rava, are portrayed as human beings who grow and change during their lifetimes.

As I was reading the book, I questioned the development of Hisdadukh into a woman who prioritized status and power. Yet she still maintained the pursuit of knowledge as a main goal as well as the strength of her family and community. Status and power were intended to serve those goals. She didn't become distracted or corrupted by her increased status and power as some other characters did. I found that very admirable.

Rava had a dark side to his character. His enduring failings were arrogance and rage in response to any challenge. Since I have little tolerance for people who refuse to admit that they can make mistakes, I originally thought that he couldn't have any successful relationships. On the other hand, I admit that he did have some commendable traits. His brilliant mind, heroism and loyalty do go a long way to compensate for a rampant ego. He also eventually showed some regret over the results of his own bad behavior which demonstrates growth. The revelations about the difficult past that formed his character also made him more sympathetic.

I recommend this book to readers who want to see a fully realized Jewish society where building the Talmud and practicing magic were both considered Jewish activities.

For the blog version of my review which also includes an interview with Maggie Anton see <http://shomeretmasked.blogspot.com/20...>

Crystal says

(Full disclosure: I received a free copy of this book for review through Goodreads' First Reads program.)

I found this book to be a bit difficult to read. All in all, I enjoyed reading about parts of Jewish culture that I didn't know before, however I found myself struggling to understand it all. The character development was stellar, and the story telling entertaining. Would I read this again? Probably not. Not due to any fault of the novel, it just isn't my typical read.

Lizzy says

It was really interesting to read about ancient Hebrew and Babylonian sorcery, especially with how superstitious they were and to learn about the demon world. I will say, the sex scenes are really annoying and completely unnecessary. If you can ignore the overdone romance, the knowledge in here is worth it.

Sarah Bollt says

Not as well-written as the first book; much choppier.
