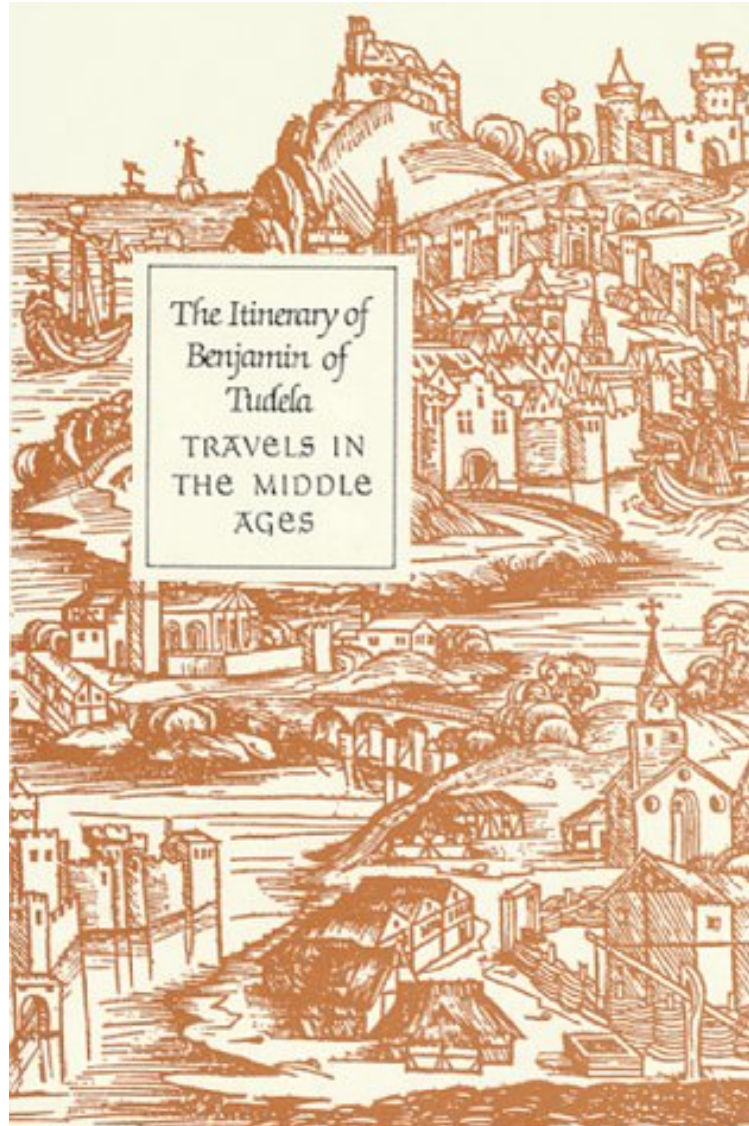


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The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages

Benjamin of Tudela

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Benjamin of Tudela : The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By flamom Best book I've seen on this subject. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful By Madame and Demoiselle Dybala This book is remarkable. This is basically a travel diary of Benjamin, a Jewish man, in the middle ages. He vividly describes the different

communities he visits throughout Spain and the middle east. Anyone who enjoys reading primary sources in history will enjoy this. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Indeed an itinerary. Need to be interested in old ...By Jack McCulley Indeed an itinerary. Need to be interested in old Jewish settlements in Christian/Muslim held pre Marco Polo Middle East.

Benjamin of Tudela, Spain, a famous world traveler of the 12th century [1173 C.E.] is considered by some modern historians as giving the most accurate description of every-day life in the Middle Ages. Written originally in Hebrew, it was translated into Latin and later became an extremely popular piece of Jewish literature in many languages. The modern reader might regard it as an exotic tale. But the author actually intended to give his contemporaries a factual account of his travels. What exactly did Benjamin plan to accomplish when he started out on his fantastic journey? At first, probably nothing but a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which, despite the Crusades, retained a magic attraction for the pious Jew. A pilgrimage-an Aliyah-probably with the thought to stay there for the rest of his life. But the fact is that he did take the long road, stopping frequently, meeting people, visiting places, describing occupations and giving a demographic count of Jews in every town and country.

More than 100 years before Marco Polo made and publicized his journey from Venice to the Far East, a Spanish Jew had traveled much the same route. Benjamin of Tudela covered even greater distances than Marco Polo in a 13-year odyssey that took him to every part of the then-known world and wrote an account of his voyages which to this day remains our best source of information about Jewish life in the Middle Ages. The book he wrote is called *Safer ha-Massaot* (Book of Travels)-a lively report, written in an easy, fluent Hebrew, on the people and the places he had seen in the course of a grand tour from his native city (Tudela) in the province of Navarre to the four quarters of the globe. A handsome, new edition of Benjamin's work (published by Joseph Simon) evokes the period and place in which he lived-12th century Spain, when Iberian Judaism was in its flowering-but discloses no more about the man himself than what appears in his own journal. There we learn only that he was born in Tudela, that his father's name was Jonah and that he made daily notes of everything he saw and heard. Like a good reporter of today, Benjamin not only told the facts; he also cited the sources of his information. -- Washington Jewish Week We know a good deal about medieval Judaism, but comparatively little about medieval Jews. There was a golden age, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and we can appreciate its extraordinary intellectual and artistic achievements by reading the commentaries of Maimonides or Rashi and the poetic works (still a part of the ritual of Sefardic services) of Ibn Gabirol or Judah Halevi. Now, the general public has access to the homely details of everyday existence in the period, as recorded by contemporaries. Benjamin's Itinerary is a kind of layman's treatise-Benjamin made no pretensions to being a scholarly expert-on the social and economic life of the Jewish communities in the dozen or so countries he visited by land. Benjamin's comments on the...quandary in Lebanon, for example, predate the teleprompted remarks of your favorite anchorman by about 800 years. -- Hadassah Magazine Language Notes Text: English, Hebrew (translation)