

Nonprofit offers Talmud in English online for free

by [Michele Chabin](#) in the [April 12, 2017](#) issue

For some, the notion of delving into the Talmud in English for free with the click of a mouse was something they could only dream of. Now that dream is becoming a reality.

Sefaria, a nonprofit organization devoted to Jewish text learning, recently announced it had uploaded 22 tractates of the renowned Steinsaltz English-language edition of the Babylonian Talmud and will post the remainder as they are translated and annotated.

The Hebrew version of the Talmud will begin going online by the end of the year. Known as the William Davidson Talmud, the online edition offers parallel translations linked to major commentaries, biblical citations, midrash (ancient rabbinic literature), and halakhah (Jewish law and jurisprudence).

The Talmud is central to rabbinic Judaism but has mostly been the purview of rabbis and scholars, in part because it is written in Aramaic and in part because it encompasses multiple volumes.

“Ninety percent of the world’s Jews speak Hebrew and English,” said Daniel Septimus, Sefaria’s executive director. “The Talmud is in Aramaic. From an accessibility point of view, it’s a game changer.”

Although there are other online Talmud editions, they are either not in English or charge hundreds of dollars for access. Sefaria’s edition has a Creative Commons noncommercial license, meaning anyone can use it as part of the public domain for noncommercial purposes.

The project is funded by the William Davidson Foundation in cooperation with its publishers, Koren Publishers Jerusalem and Milta.

Septimus said the project, which required the efforts of 15 engineers and countless scholars and translators, has been a labor of love.

“For the Jewish people, our texts are our collective inheritance,” he said. “They belong to everyone, and Sefaria wants them to be available to everyone.” —Religion News Service