

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

BY HEINRICH GRAETZ

VOL. I

From the Earliest Period to the Death of Simon the Maccabee (135 B. C. E.)



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v

PREFACE.

It is a matter of especial satisfaction to me that my work, "The History of the Jews, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day," should be rendered accessible to the English-reading public in a compact form and by means of an adequate translation; for in countries where English is spoken, books are not only bought, bound, and placed in libraries, but are also read, taken to heart, and acted upon. It is therefore to be expected that the English-speaking people, which has never disregarded but has at all times recognised and appreciated the peculiar character of the Jewish race, will feel an increased sympathy for it, on reading the alternations of its sublime and tragical history.

English readers, to whom the forefathers of the Jews of to-day—the patriarchs, heroes, and men of God—are familiar characters, will the better understand the miracle which is exhibited in the history of the Jews during three thousand years. The continuance of the Jewish race until the present day is a marvel not to be overlooked even by those who deny the existence of miracles, and who only see in the most astounding events, both natural and preternatural, the logical results of cause and effect. Here we observe a phenomenon, which has developed and

vi

asserted itself in spite of all laws of nature, and we behold a culture which, notwithstanding unspeakable hostility against its exponents, has nevertheless profoundly modified the organism of nations.

It is the heartfelt aspiration of the author that this historical work, in its English garb, may attain its object by putting an end to the hostile bearing against the Jewish race, so that it may no longer be begrudged the peculiar sphere whereto it has been

predestined through the events and sorrows of thousands of years, and that it may be permitted to fulfil its appointed mission without molestation.

This translation, in five volumes, is not a mere excerpt of my "[German: Geschichte der Juden]" (like my "[German: Volksthümliche Geschichte der Juden]"), but a condensed reproduction of the entire eleven volumes. But the foot-notes have been omitted, so as to render the present work less voluminous for the general reader. Historical students are usually acquainted with the German language, and can read the notes in the original.

In this English edition the "History of the Present Day" is brought down to 1870, whilst the original only goes as far as the memorable events of 1848. The last volume will contain a survey of the entire history of the Jewish nation, together with a comprehensive index of names and events.

In conclusion, I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude to one whose life-task it is to further with rare generosity all humane and intellectual interests, and who has caused this translation to be made and

vii

published. At the risk of wounding his modesty, I must mention, as the Mæcenas of this work, Mr. Frederick D. Mocatta, whose name is a household word in every Jewish circle.

H. GRAETZ.

Breslau, *January, 1891.*

To the foregoing words of the author I merely wish to add, that while the first volume, as far as the period of the Hasmonæans, has been translated by me, the other volumes have for the greater part "been done into English by various hands," and have afterwards been revised and edited by me.

My cordial thanks are due to Mr. Israel Abrahams, whose scholarly co-operation has enabled me to cope with the difficulties presented by Hebrew and Jewish names and technicalities.

BELLA LÖWY.

London, *January, 1891.*

PREFACE TO THE SOCIETY'S EDITION.

Owing to necessary revision by the American editors, there has been a delay in the publication of this work beyond the time announced for its appearance.

It is hoped that in the future such delay may be avoided.

The Publication Committee.

June, 1891.

ix

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EARLIEST PERIOD.

The Original Inhabitants of Canaan—Gigantic Anakim and Rephaim—The Phœnicians—Israel's Claim Hereditary Law—Emigration to Egypt—Tribal Union—Bright and Dark Sides of the Egyptians—Moses

Prophetic Sage—Call of Moses as Deliverer—Opposition—Exodus from Egypt—Passage of the Red Sea—Revelation on Mount Sinai—The Decalogue—Relapse—Concessions—Crisis—Circuitous Wanderings—Canaan on Trans-Jordanic Side—Commencements of Hebrew Poetry—Death of Moses

CHAPTER II.

OCCUPATION OF THE LAND OF CANAAN.

Joshua's Succession—Passage of the Jordan—Conquest of Jericho—The Gibeonites—Coalition of Canaanites—Israelites—Settlement in the Land—Isolation of the Tribes—Allotments—The Tribe of Levi—The Ark—Condition of Canaan at the time of the Conquest—Climate and Fertility—Intellectual Activity—Poetry—Canaanite Populations—Death of Joshua

CHAPTER III.

NEIGHBOURING NATIONS.

The Phœnicians, Aramæans, Philistines, Idumæans—Their Customs and Mythology—The Moabites and Ammonites—The Israelites with their Neighbours and Adoption of their Manners—Disintegration of the Tribes—Canaanite Deliverers

CHAPTER IV.

THE JUDGES.

Animosity of the Idumæans—Othniel, a Deliverer—Eglon, King of Moab—The Canaanite King, Jabin—The Prophetess and Poetess Deborah—Barak—Victory

x

near Tabor—Early Hebrew Poetry—Sufferings through Nomads—The Hero Gideon Jerubbaal—Victory over the Midianites—Commencement of Prosperity—Abimelech—Feud with the Shechemites—Jair the Gileadite—Hostilities with the Philistines—Jephthah—Samson—Zebulunite Judges

CHAPTER V.

ELI AND SAMUEL.

Importance of the Judges—Public Feeling—Sanctuary in Shiloh—Eli and his Sons—Defeat by the Philistines—Destruction of Shiloh and the Sanctuary—Flight of the Aaronites and Levites—Death of Eli—The Ark in Gath—Prophecy re-awakened—Samuel in Ramah—The Order of Prophets or Singers—Popular revulsion—The Philistines' attacks of the Philistines—Meeting at Mizpah—Samuel's activity—Nob as a place of Worship—Increase of the Philistines and Ammonites—The Tribes desire to have a King—Samuel's course of action

1100?–1067 B. C. E.

CHAPTER VI.

THE APOGEE.

Establishment of a Kingdom—Saul—His Position and Character—His secret Election at Mizpah—Humiliation under the Philistines—Declaration of War—Assemblage in Gilgal—Battle of Michmash—Defeat of the Philistines—Victory over the Ammonites—Saul's Election as King confirmed—His Court and Attendants—His Office as King—War over the Amalekites—Disputes between Saul and Samuel—Saul's Attacks on the neighbouring Peoples—Place of Worship in Gibeon—War against the Philistines in the Valley of Tamarinths—Goliath and David—Saul's Jealousy turns into Madness—The Persecution of David—Saul's last Battle against the Philistines

1067–1055 B. C. E.

CHAPTER VII.

DAVID AND ISHBOSHETH.

Burning of Ziklag—Defeat of the Amalekites—Judah elects David as King—Abner and Ishbosheth—War between Abner and David—Murder of Abner—Death of

xi

Ishbosheth—David recognised as sole King—Capture of Zion—Fortification of Jerusalem—War with the Philistines—David—The Heroes—Alliance with Hiram—Removal of the Ark of the Sanctuary to Jerusalem—The Hi

the Temple—Internal Government of Israel—The Gibeonites and Rizpah—Mephibosheth
1055–1035 B. C. E.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAVID.

War with the Moabites—Insult offered by the King of the Ammonites—War with the Ammonites—The Attack of Hadadezer—Defeat of the Aramæans—Acquisition of Damascus—War with the Idumæans—Rabbah—Defeat of the Idumæans—Conquered races obliged to pay tribute—Bathsheba—Death of Uriah—Nathan—Birth of Solomon (1033)—Misfortunes of David—Absalom—Wise Woman of Tekoah—Rebellion of Absalom—Numbering of the Troops—Pestilence breaks out in Israel—Absalom's Rebellion—Murder of Absalom—Insurrection—David and Nathan—Adonijah

1035–1015 B. C. E.

CHAPTER IX.

SOLOMON.

The new King's Rule—Solomon's Choice—Poetic Allegory—Murder of Adonijah and Joab—The Court—Solomon's Buildings—The Plan of the Temple—The Workmen—The Materials—Description of the Temple—Consecration—Reorganisation of the Priesthood—The King's Palace—The Throne—Increase of National Power—Seeds of Disunion—Jeroboam—Idolatry permitted—Estrangement from Egypt—Growth of surrounding Kingdoms—Fame—His Death

1015–977 B. C. E.

CHAPTER X.

SECESSION OF THE TRIBES.

Accession of Rehoboam—Jeroboam's return—The King at Shechem—The Secession of the Ten Tribes—Alliances—Rezon and Shishak—Fortification of Shechem—Jeroboam's Idolatry—Ahijah's rebuke—Rehoboam's death

in Judah—Abijam—Asa—Nadab—Baasha—Wars between Asa and Baasha—Defeat of Zerah—Benhadad's war—Samaria built—Omri's policy—Alliances with Ethbaal and Tyre—Ahab: his character—Jezebel—Naboth's vineyard—Elijah at Carmel—War with Benhadad—Death of Ahab and Jehoshaphat—Ahaziah and Elisha—Jehu—Death of Jezebel

977–887 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSE OF DAVID AND THE JEHUDIDES.

Athaliah's rule—Early years of Joash—Proclamation of Joash by Jehoiada—Athaliah slain—Religious Reform—Temple—Death of Jehoiada and of his Son—Invasion of Israel by Hazael—Jehoahaz—Murder of Joash, Jehoahaz—Defeat of the Aramæans—Amaziah—Conquest of Edom—Death of Elisha—Amaziah defeated—Death of Amaziah

887–805 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XII.

END OF THE HOUSE OF JEHU AND THE TIME OF UZZIAH.

Condition of Judah—The Earthquake and the Famine—Uzziah's Rule—Overthrow of Neighbouring Powers—Jerusalem—Navigation of the Red Sea—Jeroboam's Prosperity—The Sons of the Prophets—Amos—Prophecies—Hosea foretells Ultimate Peace—Denunciation of Uzziah—Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem—War between the King and the High Priest—Uzziah usurps the Priestly Functions—Uzziah's Illness

805–758 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOWNFALL OF THE KINGDOM OF THE TEN TRIBES; THE HOUSE OF DAVID, AND THE INTERVENTION OF THE
King Menahem—The Babylonians and the Assyrians—Pekah—Jotham's reign—Isaiah of Jerusalem—

public address—Later speeches—Their immediate and permanent effect—His disciples—Their character and prophecies

758–740 B. C. E.

xiii

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF THE TEN TRIBES, AND THE HOUSE OF DAVID.

The Reign of Ahaz—His Character—Alliance between Pekah and Rezin—Tiglath-Pileser and Assyria—Isaiah's Opposition—Defeat of Pekah and Rezin—Introduction of Assyrian Worship—Human Sacrifice after Pekah's Death—Assyria and Egypt—Hoshea—Samaria taken by Shalmaneser—The Exile—Hezekiah's Weakness of Character—Isaiah's Efforts to Restrain Hezekiah from War with Assyria—Arrangements for the Exile—Isaiah Predicts the Deliverance—Micah—Rabshakeh's Embassy—Hezekiah's Defiance—His Illness—Destruction of Sennacherib's Army—Merodach-baladan—Hezekiah's Rule—The Psalmists—Death of Hezekiah
739–696 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST KINGS OF JUDAH.

Manasseh—Fanatical Hatred of Hezekiah's Policy—Assyrian Worship Introduced—The Anavim—Persepolis—Esarhaddon—The Colonisation of Samaria—Amon—Josiah—Huldah and Zephaniah—Affairs in Assyria—Josiah—Repairing of the Temple—Jeremiah—The Book of Deuteronomy—Josiah's Passover—Battle of Megiddo
695–608 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XVI.

END OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

Effects of Josiah's Foreign Policy—Jehoahaz—Jehoiakim—Egyptian Idolatry introduced—The Prophecy of Jeremiah's renewed Labours—Fall of Assyria—Nebuchadnezzar—Baruch reads Jeremiah's Scroll—Surrender—Rebellion and Death—Jehoiachin—Zedekiah—Siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar—The Siege raised—Egypt—Defeat of the Egyptians—Renewal of the Siege—Capture of Jerusalem—Zedekiah in Babylon—Jeremiah's Lamentations

608–586 B. C. E.

xiv

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DESTRUCTION.

The National Decay—The Fugitives—Enmity of the Idumæans—Johanan, Son of Kareah—The Lamentation appoints Gedaliah as Governor—Jeremiah Encourages the People—Mizpah—Ishmael Murders Gedaliah—Jeremiah's Counsel Disregarded—Depopulation of Judah—The Idumæans make Settlements in the Country—The Judæans in Egypt—Defeat of Hophra—Egypt under Amasis—Jeremiah's Last Days

586–572 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BABYLONIAN EXILE.

Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of the Exiles—The Exiles obtain grants of land—Evil-Merodach favours the Judæan Exiles—Ezekiel's captivity in the first period of the Exile—Moral change of the People—Baruch and compiles the Histories—The Mourners of Zion—Proselytes—The Pious and the Worldly—The Poets—The Book of Job—Nabonad's Persecutions—The Martyrs and the Prophets of the Exile—The Babylonian Exile—The Return under Zerubbabel

572–537 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN FROM BABYLON, THE NEW COMMUNITY IN JUDÆA, EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

The Journey to Jerusalem—The Samaritans—Commencement of the Rebuilding of the Temple—Inter-

Haggai and Zechariah—Completion of the Temple—Contest between Zerubbabel and Joshua—Intermixture of the Judæans in Babylonia—Ezra visits Jerusalem—Dissolution of the Heathen Marriages—The Book of Ruth—Nehemiah—His Arrival in Jerusalem—Fortification of the Capital—Sanballat's Intrigues against Nehemiah—The Poor—Nehemiah's Protest—Repopulation of the Capital—The Genealogies—The Reading of the Law—The Great Assembly—The Consecration—Departure of Nehemiah—Action of Eliashib—Withholding the Tithes—The Prophets—Nehemiah's Second Visit to Jerusalem—His measures
537–420 B. C. E.

xv

CHAPTER XX.

THE SOPHERIC AGE.

Enmity of the Samaritans against the Judæans—The Temple on Mount Gerizim—The High-Priest Manasseh—The Samaritans—Their veneration for the Law of Moses—Judaism loses its national meaning—The Jubilee—The Almsgiving—The Council of Seventy—The Assyrian Characters—The Schools and the Sopherim—Observances—Prayers—The Future Life—The Judæans under Artaxerxes II. and III.—Their Banishment to the Caspian Sea—They contend for the office of High-Priest—Bagoas—The Writings of the Period—The Greeks and Macedonians—The Judæans—Judæa accounted a Province of Cœlesyria—Struggles between Alexander's Successors—Antiochus—Ptolemy—Judæa added to the Lagidean-Egyptian Kingdom—The Judæan Colonies in Egypt and Syria and in Palestine

420–300 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIMON THE JUST AND HIS DESCENDANTS.

Condition of the Judæans under the Ptolemies—Simon effects Improvements—His Praises are sung by the Chasidim and the Nazarites—Simon's Children—Onias II. and the Revolt against Egypt—Joseph, Son of Simon—Alexandria—He is appointed Tax-collector—War between Antiochus the Great and Egypt—Defeat of Antiochus—Manners in Judæa—Hyrcanus—The Song of Songs—Simon II.—Scopas despoils Jerusalem—The Contest with Rome—Continued Hellenisation of the Judæans—The Chasidim and the Hellenists—José ben Joezer and Simon—Heliodorus—Sirach's Book of Proverbs against the Errors of his Time

300–175 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TYRANNICAL CONVERSION TO HELLENISM AND THE ELEVATION OF THE MACCABEES.

Antiochus Epiphanes—His Character—His Wars with Rome—He appoints Jason to the High-Priesthood
xvi

of the Greek Games—Jason sends Envoys to Tyre to take part in the Olympian Games—Affairs in Jerusalem—Antiochus attacks the City and defiles the Temple—His Desecration—Second Invasion of Egypt—The Persecution of the Judæans—The Martyrs—Mattathias and his five Sons—The Chasidim—Death of Mattathias and Appointment of Judas Maccabæus as Leader—His Virtues—Battle of Bethsur—Heron—Antiochus determines to Exterminate the Judæan People—Composition and Object of the Book of the Maccabees
over Lysias

175–166 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VICTORIES AND DEATH OF JUDAS MACCABÆUS; JONATHAN THE HASMONÆAN.

Return of Judas to Jerusalem—Reconsecration of the Temple—The Feast of Lights—Fortification of the City—The Ammonites defeated by Judas—Ill-treatment of the Galilean Judæans—Measures against Timotheus—The Hellenists to Antiochus V.—Battle at Bethzur—Retreat of Judas—Affairs in Jerusalem—Alcimus—Nicanor's Interview with Judas—Battle of Adarsa—Death of Judas—Results of his Career—Condition of the Judæans—The Chasidim, the Hellenists, and the Hasmonæans—Jonathan—His Guerilla Warfare against the Syrians

Priest Alcimus—Truce between Jonathan and Bacchides—Jonathan as High-Priest—His far-sighted Policy—165–143 B. C. E.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JUDÆANS IN ALEXANDRIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF SIMON.

The Judæan Colonies in Egypt and Cyrene—Internal Affairs of the Alexandrian Community—King Philometor—Onias and Dositheus—The Temple of Onias—Translation of the Pentateuch into Greek—Struggle between the Jews and the Greeks in Alexandria—Affairs in Judæa—Independence of Judæa—Simon's League with the Romans—Overthrow of the Hellenists—Simon's Coinage—Quarrel between Simon and the Syrian King—Invasion by Cendebæus—160–135 B. C. E.

1

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

CHAPTER I. THE EARLIEST PERIOD.

The Original Inhabitants of Canaan — Gigantic Anakim and Rephaim — The Phœnicians — Israel's Claim to Canaan — The Patriarchs — Hereditary Law — Emigration to Egypt — Tribal Union — Bright and Dark Sides of the Egyptians — Moses, Aaron and Miriam — The Prophetic Sage — Call of Moses as Deliverer — Opposition — Exodus from Egypt — Passage of the Red Sea — Wanderings in the Desert — Revelation on Mount Sinai — The Decalogue — Relapse — Concessions — Crisis — Circuitous Wanderings — Victories over Populations of Canaan, on Trans-Jordanic Side — Commencements of Hebrew Poetry — Death of Moses.

It was on a spring day that some pastoral tribes passed across the Jordan into a strip of land which can only be regarded as an extended coast-line of the Mediterranean. This was the land of *Canaan*, subsequently called *Palestine*. The crossing of the Jordan and the entry into this territory were destined to become of the utmost importance to mankind. The land of which the shepherd tribes possessed themselves became the arena of great events, so enduring and important in their results, that the country in which they took place became known as the *Holy Land*. Distant nations had no conception that the entry of the *Hebrew* or *Israelite* tribes into the land of Canaan would have such momentous consequences. Even the inhabitants of Palestine were far from recognising in this invasion an occurrence fraught with vital significance to themselves.

2

At the time when the Hebrews occupied this territory it was inhabited by tribes and peoples dissimilar in descent and pursuits. The primary place was held by the aborigines, the *Anakim* and *Rephaim*, a powerful race of giants. Tradition represents them as the descendants of that unruly and overbearing race which, in primæval times, attempted to storm the heavens. For this rebellious attempt they had been doomed to ignominious destruction.

Their reputed descendants, the powerful natives of the country—who by some of the ancient nations were called *Emim*, "terrible men"—were unable to maintain themselves; notwithstanding their imposing figures, they were destroyed by races of inferior stature. The rest were obliged to migrate to the East-Jordanic lands, to the south, and also to the south-west of the West-Jordanic region. This remnant of the *Anakim* filled the Israelite spies with such abject terror that they made the entire nation despair of ever obtaining possession of the country. This gave rise to the

proverb, "Who can stand before the children of Anak?" "We were," said the spies, "in our own eyes as grasshoppers, and so we appeared unto them." These giants were eventually overcome by the Israelite dwarfs.

Another group of inhabitants which had settled in the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan was that of the *Canaanites*, whom the Greeks called Phœnicians. These Phœnicians appear to have pursued the same employment in their new country as they had followed on the banks of the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf. Their chief pursuits were navigation and commerce. The position which they had selected was eminently favourable to their daring expeditions. The great ocean, forming a strait at the Pillars of Hercules, and separating Europe from Africa, as the Mediterranean

3

Sea, has here its extreme limit. At the foot of the snow-topped Lebanon and its spurs, commodious inlets formed natural harbours that required but little improvement at the hand of man. On this seaboard the Canaanites built the town of Sidon, situated on a prominent crag which overhangs the sea. They afterwards built, on a small rocky island, the port of Tyre (Tor, which subsequently became celebrated); they also built Aradus to the north of Sidon, and Akko (Acre) to the south of Tyre. The neighbouring forests of the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon supplied them with lofty cedars and strong cypresses for ships. The Canaanites, who became the first mercantile nation in the world, owed much of their success to the advantage of finding on their coast various species of the murex (*Tolaat shani*), from the fluid of which was obtained a most brilliant and widely celebrated purple dye. The beautiful white sand of the river Belus, near Acre, supplied fine glass, an article which was likewise in much request in the Old World. The wealth of the country lay in the sands of the sea-shore. The Canaanites, on account of their extensive trade, required and introduced at an early period a convenient form of writing, and their alphabet, the Phœnician, became the model for the alphabets of ancient and modern nations. In a word, the narrow belt of land between the Mediterranean and Mount Lebanon, with its spurs, became one of the most important points on the face of the globe. Through the peaceful pursuits of commerce the Canaanites were brought into contact with remote nations, who were gradually aroused from a state of inactivity. They became subdivided into the small nationalities of Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, and Perizzites. The Jebusites, who inhabited this district, were of minor importance; they dwelt on the tract of land which afterwards became the site for the city of Jerusalem. Of still less account were the Girgashites,

4

who had no fixed residence. All these names would have remained unknown had not the Israelites entered the land.

But this people had not taken a footing in the country with the mere object of finding pasture land for their flocks; their pretensions were far greater. Chief of all, they claimed as their patrimony the land where the graves of their forefathers were situated. The first patriarch, Abraham, who had emigrated from Aram, on the borders of the Euphrates, had, after many wanderings through the country, acquired in Hebron, as an hereditary burial-place, the Cave of Machpelah, or the "Double

Cave," together with the adjoining field and trees. There his wife Sarah had been interred, then he himself, and after him his son, the patriarch Isaac.

The third patriarch, Jacob, after many vicissitudes and wanderings, had purchased a plot of land near Shechem, and had taken that important city "with his sword and with his bow." The city was in the very heart of the territory of the Hivites, and its capture had taken place in consequence of a breach of peace, through the abduction and dishonour of Jacob's daughter. The land was henceforth regarded as the property of the patriarch, and he only reluctantly quitted it at the outbreak of a famine, in order to proceed to Egypt, where corn was plentiful. On his death-bed, Jacob impressed upon his sons that they should deposit his remains in the family tomb of the "Double Cave." Not alone did Canaan contain the graves of the three patriarchs, but also the altars which they had erected and named in various places, in honour of the Deity whom they worshipped. The Israelites were therefore firmly convinced that they had a right to the exclusive possession of the land.

These claims derived further strength from the tradition left by the patriarchs to their descendants as a sacred bequest, that the Deity, whom they had been the first to recognise, had repeatedly and indubitably,

5

though only in visions, promised them this land as their possession, not merely for the sake of showing them favour, but as the means of attaining to a higher degree of culture. This culture would pre-eminently consist in Abraham's doctrine of a purer belief in the *One God*, whose nature differed essentially from that of the gods whom the various nations represented in the shape of idols and by means of other senseless conceptions. The higher recognition of the Deity was designed to lead Abraham's posterity to the practice of justice towards all men, in contradistinction to the injustice universally prevailing in those days. It was affirmed that this higher culture was ordained by the Almighty as "the way of God," and that as such it should be transmitted by the patriarchs to their families as a bequest and as a subject of hereditary instruction. They also received the promise that through their posterity, as the faithful guardians of this teaching, all nations of the earth should be blessed, and should participate in this intellectual advancement of Israel; and that with this same object the land of Canaan had been allotted to Israel, as especially adapted for the purposes of the hereditary law. Hence it was that the Israelites, while in a foreign country, felt an irrepressible yearning for their ancestral land. Their forefathers had impressed them with the hope that, though some of their generations would sojourn in a land which was not their own, a time would surely come when Israel should return to that land which was the resting-place of their patriarchs, and where the patriarchal altars had been erected and consecrated. This promise became identified with all their positive expectations, and with their conviction that the acquisition of Canaan was secured to them on condition that they performed the duties of worshipping the God of their fathers, and observed the ways of justice and righteousness. The nature of this worship and "the way of justice" was not

6

clearly defined, nor did they require such a definition. The lives of the patriarchs, as commemorated by posterity, served as a sufficient illustration of the family law.

Abraham was especially held up as a model of human excellence. Differing from other nations who *worshipped* their primæval ancestors, his descendants did not revere him as a performer of marvellous deeds, nor as one exalted to the eminent degree of a god or a demi-god. Not as a warrior and a conqueror did he live in the memory of his descendants, but as a self-denying, God-fearing man, who joined true simplicity and faith to nobleness in thought and in action. According to their conception, Abraham the Hebrew, although born of idolatrous parents in Aram, on the other side of the Euphrates, and although brought up amidst idolatrous associations, had obeyed the voice which revealed to him a higher God, and had separated himself from those around him. When disputes arose, he did not obstinately insist upon his claims, but renounced his rights for the sake of living at peace with his fellow-men. So hospitable was he, that he would go forth to invite the passing wayfarers, and delighted in entertaining them. He interceded for the sinners of Sodom and the neighbouring cities, when their cruel and inhuman acts had brought on them the punishment of Heaven; and he prayed that they might be spared for the sake of any few righteous men amongst them.

These and other remembrances of his peace-loving and generous disposition, of his self-abnegation, and of his submission to God, were cherished by his descendants, together with the conviction that such a line of conduct was agreeable to the God of their fathers; that for the sake of these virtues God had protected Abraham, as well as his son and his grandson, because the two latter had followed the example of their predecessor. This belief that God especially protects the virtuous, the just, and the

7

good, was fully confirmed in the life of the patriarch Jacob, to whom the additional name Israel was given. His life had been short and toilsome, but the God of his fathers had delivered him from all his sorrows. Such remembrances of ancestral piety were retained by the sons of Israel, and such family traditions served to supplement and illustrate their hereditary law.

The growth of Israel as a distinct race commenced amidst extraordinary circumstances. The beginning of this people bore but very slight resemblance to the origin of other nations. Israel as a people arose amidst peculiar surroundings in the land of Goshen, a territory situated in the extreme north of Egypt, near the borders of Palestine. The Israelites were not at once moulded into a nation, but consisted of twelve loosely connected shepherd tribes.

These tribes led a simple life in the land of Goshen. The elders (*Zekenim*) of the families, who acted as their chiefs, were consulted on all important occasions. They had no supreme chieftain, nor did they owe allegiance to the Egyptian kings; and thus they habitually enjoyed the freedom of a republic, in which each tribal section was enabled to preserve its independence without falling into subjection or serfdom. Although they did not become intermixed with the ancient Egyptians, who in fact had an aversion to shepherds—perhaps on account of the oppression they had in former ages endured from such shepherds (the Hyksos)—yet opportunities for contact and mutual communication could not be wanting. Some families of Israel had abandoned their pastoral pursuits, and devoted themselves to agriculture or industrial occupations, and were therefore brought into connection with the

inhabitants of towns. It seems that the members of the tribe of Ephraim stood in closer social contact with the original inhabitants. This intercourse had a favourable influence upon the Israelites.

8

The Egyptians had already gone through a history of a thousand years, and attained to a high degree of culture. Their kings, or Pharaohs, had already built populous cities, and erected colossal edifices, temples, pyramids and mausoleums. Their priests had acquired a certain degree of perfection in such arts and technical accomplishments as were suited to the requirements of the country, as for example, architecture and hydraulic constructions, the kindred science of geometry, the art of medicine, and the mystery of embalming for the perpetual preservation of the remains of the departed; also the artistic working of objects in gold, silver and precious stones, in order to satisfy the luxurious demands of the kings. They also knew the art of sculpture and the use of pigments. They studied chronology, together with astronomy, which was suggested by the periodical overflow of the Nile. The all-important art of writing had been invented and perfected by the Egyptian priests. They first used stones and metals to commemorate the renown of their monarchs; and they afterwards employed the fibre of the papyrus shrub, which was originally marked with clumsy figures and subsequently with ingeniously drawn symbols. Of these several attainments the Israelites seem to have acquired some notion. The members of the destitute tribe of Levi in particular, being unencumbered by pastoral service or by landed possessions, appear to have learnt from the Egyptian priests the art of writing. Owing to their superior knowledge, they were treated by the other tribes as the sacerdotal class, and hence they held, even in Egypt, the privileged distinction of their priestly position.

The residence of the Israelites in Egypt was of great advantage to them. It raised them, or at least a portion of them, from a rude state of nature to a higher grade of culture. But what they gained on the one hand, they lost on the other; and in spite

9

of their arts and accomplishments, they would in time have fallen into a more abject condition. Amongst no people which had advanced beyond the first stage of Fetish worship, had idolatry assumed such a hideous development, or so mischievously tainted the habits, as was the case with the Egyptians. By combining and intermingling the gods of the various districts, they had established a complete system of polytheism. As a matter of course they worshipped goddesses as well as gods. What made the mythology of the Egyptians especially repulsive, was the fact that they placed the deified beings of their adoration, from whom they expected help, far below the level of human beings.

They endowed their gods with the shape of animals, and worshipped the inferior creatures as divine powers. Ammon, their chief god, was represented with ram's horns, the goddess Pecht (Pacht) with a cat's head, and Hathor (Athyra), the goddess of licentiousness, with a cow's head. Osiris, who was worshipped throughout Egypt, was represented in a most loathsome and revolting image, and the universally honoured Isis was often pictured with a cow's head. Animals being scarce in the Nile region, great value was attached to their preservation, and they received divine homage. Such honours were paid to the black bull *Apis* (*Abir*) in Memphis, to the

white bull *Mnevis* in Heliopolis, to the lustful goats, to dogs, and especially to cats; also to birds, snakes, and even mice. The killing of a sacred bull or cat was more severely punished than the murder of a human being.

This abominable idolatry was daily witnessed by the Israelites. The consequences of such perversions were sufficiently deplorable. Men who invested their gods with the shape of animals sank down to the level of beasts, and were treated as such by the kings and by persons of the higher castes—the priests and soldiers. Humanity was contemned;

10

no regard was paid to the freedom of the subjects, and still less to that of strangers. The Pharaohs claimed to be descended from the gods, and were worshipped as such even during their lifetime. The entire land with its population was owned by them. It was a mere act of grace on their part that they granted a portion of the territory to cultivators of the soil.

Egypt, in fact, was not peopled by an independent nation, but by bondmen. Hundreds of thousands were forced to take part in compulsory labour for the erection of the colossal temples and pyramids. The Egyptian priests were worthy of such kings and gods. Cruelly as the Pharaohs harassed their subjects with hard labour, the priests continued to declare that the kings were demi-gods. Under the weight of this oppression the people became devoid of all human dignity, and submitted to the vilest bondage without ever attempting to relieve themselves from the galling yoke. The repulsive idolatry then prevailing in Egypt had yet further pernicious consequences. The people lost the idea of chastity, after they had placed the brute creation on an equality with their deities. Unspeakable offences in the use of animals had become of daily occurrence, and entailed neither punishment nor disgrace. The gods being depicted in unchaste positions, there appeared to be no need for human beings to be better than the gods. No example is more contagious and seductive than folly and sin. The Israelites, especially those who were brought into closer contact with the Egyptians, gradually adopted idolatrous perversions, and abandoned themselves to unbridled license. This state of things was aggravated by a new system of persecution. During a long period, the Israelites residing in the Land of Goshen had been left unmolested, they having been looked upon as roving shepherds who would not permanently settle in Egypt. But when

11

decades and even a century had passed by, and they still remained in the land and continued to increase in numbers, the council of the king begrudged them the state of freedom which was denied to the Egyptians themselves. The court now feared that these shepherd tribes, which had become so numerous in Goshen, might assume a warlike attitude towards Egypt. To avoid this danger, the Israelites were declared to be bondmen, and were compelled to perform forced labour. To effect a rapid decrease in their numbers, the king commanded that the male infants of the Israelites should be drowned in the Nile or in some of the canals, and that only the female infants should be spared. The Israelites, formerly free in the land of Goshen, were now kept "in a house of bondage," "in an iron furnace"; here it was to be proved whether they would conform to their hereditary law, or follow strange gods.

The greater part of the tribes could not stand this trial. They had a dim knowledge that the God of their fathers was a being very different from the Egyptian idols; but even this knowledge seemed to decrease from day to day. Love of imitation, sore oppression, and daily misery made them obtuse, and obscured the faint light of their hereditary law. The enslaved labourers did not know what to think of an unseen God who only lived in their memories. Like their masters, the Egyptians, they now lifted their eyes to the visible gods who showed themselves so merciful and propitious to Israel's tormentors. They directed their prayers to the bovine god Apis, whom they called *Abir*,¹ and they also offered to the he-goats.² The daughter of Israel, growing up to womanhood, sacrificed her virtue,

12

and abandoned herself to the Egyptians.³ It was probably thought that, in the images of the grass-eating animal, honour was paid to the god of the patriarchs. When the intellect is on a wrong track, where are the limits for its imaginings? The Israelites would have succumbed to coarse sensual idolatry and to Egyptian vice, like many other nations who had come under the influence of the people of the land of Ham, had not two brothers and their sister—the instruments of a higher Spirit—aroused them and drawn them out of their lethargy. These were Moses, Aaron and Miriam.⁴ In what did the greatness of this triad consist? What intellectual powers led them to undertake their work of redemption, the elevating and liberating effect of which was intended to extend far beyond their own times? Past ages have left but few characteristic traits of Moses, and barely any of his brother and sister, which could enable us to comprehend, from a human point of view, how their vision rose step by step from the faint dawn of primitive ideas to the bright sunlight of prophetic foresight, and by what means they rendered themselves worthy of their exalted mission. The prophetic trio belonged to that tribe which, through its superior knowledge, was regarded as the sacerdotal tribe, namely, the tribe of Levi. This tribe, or at least this one family, had doubtless preserved the memory of the patriarchs and the belief in the God of their fathers, and had accordingly kept itself aloof from Egyptian idolatry and its abominations.

Thus it was that Aaron, the elder brother, as also Moses and Miriam, had grown up in an atmosphere of greater moral and religious purity. Of Moses the historical records relate that after his birth his mother kept him concealed during three months, to evade the royal command, and protect

13

him from death in the waters of the Nile. There is no doubt that the youthful Moses was well acquainted with Pharaoh's court at Memphis or Tanis (Zoan). Gifted with an active intellect, he had an opportunity of acquiring the knowledge that was to be learnt in Egypt, and by his personal and intellectual qualities he won the affections of all hearts. But even more than by these qualities, he was distinguished by his gentleness and modesty. "Moses was the meekest of men," is the only praise which the historical records have bestowed upon him. He is not praised for heroism or warlike deeds, but for unselfishness and self-abnegation.

Influenced by the ancient teaching, that the God of Abraham loved righteousness, he must have been repelled by the baseless idolatry of animal worship and by the social and moral wrongs which then were rife. Shameless vice, the bondage of a

whole people under kings and priests, the inequality of castes, the treatment of human beings as though they were beasts or inferior to beasts, the spirit of slavery,—all these evils he recognised in their full destructive force, and he perceived that the prevailing debasement had defiled his brethren. Moses was the open antagonist of injustice. It grieved him sorely that Israel's sons were subjected to slavery, and were daily exposed to ill-treatment by the lowest of the Egyptians. One day when he saw an Egyptian unjustly beating a Hebrew, his passion overcame his self-control, and he punished the offender. Fearing discovery, he fled from Egypt into the desert, and halted at an oasis in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, where the Kenites, an offshoot of the tribe of Midianites, were dwelling. Here, as in Egypt, he witnessed oppression and wrong-doing, and here also he opposed it with zeal. He gave his aid to feeble shepherdesses. By such action he came into contact with their grateful father, the priest or

14

elder of the tribe of the Midianites, and he married Zipporah, the daughter of that priest.

His employment in Midian was that of a shepherd. He selected fertile grazing plots for the herds of Reuel, his father-in-law, between the Red Sea and the mountain lands. In this solitude the prophetic spirit came upon him.

What is the meaning of this prophetic spirit? Even those who have searched the secrets of the world, or the secrets of the soul in its grasp of the universe, can give only a faint notion and no distinct account of its nature. The inner life of man has depths which have remained inscrutable to the keenest investigator. It is, however, undeniable that the human mind can, without help from the senses, cast a far-seeing glance into the enigmatic concatenation of events and the complex play of forces. By means of an undisclosed faculty of the soul, man has discovered truths which are not within the reach of the senses. The organs of the senses can only confirm or rectify the truths already elicited. They cannot discover them. By means of the truths brought to light by that inexplicable power of the soul, man has learned to know nature and to make its forces subservient to his will. These facts attest that the power of the soul owns properties which go beyond the ken of the senses, and transcend the skilled faculties of human reason. Such properties lift the veil of the dim future, and lead to the discovery of higher truths concerning the moral conduct of man; they are even capable of beholding a something of that mysterious Being who has formed and who maintains the universe and the combined action of all its forces. A soul devoted to mundane matters and to selfishness can never attain to this degree of perfection. But should not a soul which is untouched by selfishness, undisturbed by low desires and passions, unsoiled by profanity and the stains of every-day life,—a soul which is completely merged in the

15

Deity and in a longing for moral superiority,—should not such a soul be capable of beholding a revelation of religious and moral truths?

During successive centuries of Israel's history there arose pure-minded men, who unquestionably could look far into the future, and who received and imparted revelations concerning God and the holiness of life. This is an historical fact which will stand any test. A succession of prophets predicted the future destiny of the

Israelites and of other nations, and these predictions have been verified by fulfilment. These prophets placed the son of Amram as first on the list of men to whom a revelation was vouchsafed, and high above themselves, because his predictions were clearer and more positive. They recognised in Moses not only the first, but also the greatest of prophets; and they considered their own prophetic spirit as a mere reflection of his mind. If ever the soul of a mortal was endowed with luminous prophetic foresight, this was the case with the pure, unselfish, and sublime soul of Moses. In the desert of Sinai, says the ancient record, at the foot of Horeb, where the flock of his father-in-law was grazing, he received the first divine revelation, which agitated his whole being. Moved and elated—humble, yet confident, Moses returned after this vision to his flock and his home. He had been changed into another being; he felt himself impelled by the spirit of God to redeem his tribal brethren from bondage, and to educate them for a higher moral life. Aaron, who had remained in Egypt, likewise had a revelation to meet his brother on Mount Horeb, and to prepare himself jointly with him for the work of redemption. The task of imbuing the servile spirit of the people with a desire for liberty seemed to them far more difficult than that of inducing Pharaoh to relax his rigor. Both brothers therefore expected to encounter obstacles and stubborn opposition. Although both men were already advanced

16

in years, they did not shrink from the magnitude of the undertaking, but armed themselves with prophetic courage, and relied on the support of the God of their fathers. First they turned to the representatives of families and tribes, to the elders of the people, and announced their message that God would take pity on Israel's misery, that He had promised them freedom, and that He would lead them back to the land of their fathers. The elders lent a willing ear to the joyful news; but the masses, who were accustomed to slavery, heard the words with cold indifference. Heavy labour had made them cowardly and distrustful. They did not even desire to abstain from worshipping the Egyptian idols. Every argument fell unheeded on their obtuse minds. "It is better for us to remain enthralled as bondmen to the Egyptians than to die in the desert." Such was the apparently rational answer of the people. The brothers appeared courageously before the Egyptian king, and demanded, in the name of the God who had sent them, that their people should be released from slavery, for they had come into the country of their own free will, and had preserved their inalienable right to liberty. If the Israelites were at first unwilling to leave the country, and to struggle with the uncertainties of the future, Pharaoh was still less inclined to let them depart. The mere demand that he should liberate hundreds of thousands of slaves who worked in his fields and buildings, and that he should do so in the name of a God whom he knew not, or for the sake of a cause which he did not respect, induced him to double the labours of the Hebrew slaves, in order to deprive them of leisure for thoughts of freedom. Instead of meeting with a joyful reception, Moses and Aaron found themselves overwhelmed with reproaches that through their fault the misery of the unfortunate sufferers had been increased. The King only determined to

17

give way after he and his country had witnessed many terrifying and extraordinary phenomena and plagues, and when he could no longer free himself from the thought that the unknown God was punishing him for his obstinacy. In consequence of successive calamities, the Egyptian king urged the Israelites to hasten and depart, fearing lest any delay might bring destruction upon him and his country. The Israelites had barely time to supply themselves with the provisions necessary for their long and wearisome journey. Memorable was the daybreak of the fifteenth of Nisan (March), on which the enslaved people regained their liberty without shedding a drop of blood. They were the first to whom the great value of liberty was made known, and since then this priceless treasure, the foundation of human dignity, has been guarded by them as the apple of the eye.

Thousands of Israelites, their loins girded, their staves in their hands, their little ones riding on asses, and their herds following them, left their villages and tents, and assembled near the town of Rameses. Strange tribes who had lived by their side, shepherd tribes akin to them in race and language, joined them in their migration. They all rallied round the prophet Moses, obeying his words. He was their king, although he was free from ambition, and he may well be called the first promulgator of the doctrine of equality amongst men. The duty devolving on him during this exodus was more difficult to discharge than his message to the king and to the people of Israel. Only few amongst these thousands of newly liberated slaves could comprehend the great mission assigned to them. But the masses followed him stolidly. Out of this horde of savages he had to form a nation; for them he had to conquer a home, and establish a code of laws, which rendered them capable of leading a life of rectitude. In this difficult task, he could reckon with certainty only on the tribe of

18

Levi, who shared his sentiments, and assisted him in his arduous duties as a teacher. Whilst the Egyptians were burying the dead which the plague had suddenly stricken down, the Israelites, the fourth generation of the first immigrants, left Egypt, after a sojourn of several centuries. They journeyed towards the desert which divides Egypt from Canaan, on the same way by which the last patriarch had entered the Nile country. But Moses would not permit them to go by this short route, because he feared that the inhabitants of Canaan, on the coast of the Mediterranean, would oppose their entry with an armed force; he also apprehended that the tribes, whom their long bondage had made timorous, would take to flight on the first approach of danger.

Their first destination was Mount Sinai, where they were to receive those laws and precepts for the practice of which they had been set free. Pharaoh had, however, determined to recapture the slaves who had been snatched from his grasp, when, in a moment of weakness, he had allowed them to depart. When the Israelites saw the Egyptians approaching from afar, they gave way to despair, for they found themselves cut off from every means of escape. Before them was the sea, and behind them the enemy, who would soon overtake them, and undoubtedly reduce them again to bondage. Crying and lamenting, some of them asked Moses, "Are there no graves in Egypt that thou hast brought us out to die in the desert?" However, a means of escape unexpectedly presented itself, and could only be regarded by them

as a miracle. A hurricane from the north-east had driven the water of the sea southwards during the night, so that the bed had for the greater part become dry. Their leader quickly seized on this means of escape, and urged the frightened people to hurry towards the opposite shore. His prophetic spirit showed him that they

19

would never again see the Egyptians. They rapidly traversed the short distance across the dry bed of the sea, the deeper parts of the water, agitated by a storm, forming two walls on the right and the left. During this time, the Egyptians were in hot pursuit after the Israelites, in the hope of leading them back to slavery. At daybreak, they reached the west coast of the sea, and, perceiving the Israelites on the other side, they were hastening after them along the dry pathway, when the tempest suddenly ceased. The mountain-like waves, which had risen like walls on both sides, now poured down upon the dry land, and buried men, horses, and chariots in the watery deep. The sea washed some corpses to the coast where the Israelites were resting in safety. They here beheld a marvellous deliverance. The most callous became deeply impressed with this sight, and looked with confidence to the future. On that day they put their firm trust in God and in Moses, His messenger. With a loud voice they sang praises for their wonderful deliverance. In chorus they sang—

"I will praise the Lord,

For He is ever glorious.

The horse and his rider He cast into the sea."

The deliverance from Egypt, the passage through the sea, and the sudden destruction of their resentful enemy were three occurrences which the Israelites had witnessed, and which never passed from their memories. In times of the greatest danger and distress, the recollection of this scene inspired them with courage, and with the assurance that the God who had redeemed them from Egypt, who had turned the water into dry land, and had destroyed their cruel enemy, would never desert them, but would "ever reign over them." Although the multitude did not long retain this trustful and pious disposition, but fell into despondency at every new difficulty, the intelligent portion of the Israelites were,

20

in subsequent trials, sustained by their experiences at the Red Sea.

The tribes, delivered from the bonds of slavery, and from the terrors of long oppression, could peaceably now pursue their way. They had yet many days' journey to Sinai, the temporary goal of their wanderings. Although the country through which they travelled was a sandy desert, it was not wanting in water, and in pasture land for the shepherds. This territory was not unknown to Moses, their leader, who had formerly pastured the flocks of his father-in-law here. In the high mountains of Sinai and its spurs, the water in the spring-time gushes forth copiously from the rocks, forms into rills, and rushes down the slopes towards the Red Sea. Nor did the Israelites suffer through want of bread, for in its stead they partook of manna. Finding this substance in large quantities, and living on it during a long time, they came to consider its presence as a miracle. It is only on this peninsula that drops sweet as honey exude from the high tamarisk trees, which abound in that region. These drops issue in the early morning, and take the globular size of peas or

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