



A Thousand Years of Jewish History From the Days of Alexander the Great to the Moslem Conquest of Spain

Maurice Henry Harris

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When the impatient youth demands, like the heathen from Hillel, a definition of Judaism, bid him "go and learn" the history of the Jew. Let him follow the fascinating story from hoar antiquity, when the obscure Hebrews, "leaving kindred and father's house," took a bold and new departure for the land that God would show—the land that would show God. Point to the colossal figure of Moses on Sinai, "greatest of the prophets," who gave the first uplifting impulse with his Ten Words of Faith and Duty. Trace with him the soul struggle of this "fewest of all peoples" to reach the truth of divinity—beginning with a crude conception that became steadily more exalted and more clarified with each successive age, until, at last, the idea is realized of an all-pervading Spirit, with "righteousness and justice as the pillars of His throne," the "refuge of all generations." Make clear to him how the revelation of the divine will came to be expressed in Law. And, how the preservation and development of this Law, in the interpreting hands of prophets, scribes, rabbis, poets and philosophers, became henceforth the controlling motif of the history of the Jew, his modus vivendi, whether under Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabians or Franks. Help him to see that through it the Jew held in his keeping the religious fate of Orient and Occident, that took from him their respective impressions of Islamism and Christianity. Let him see the "God-intoxicated" teaching his message by living it; the Suffering Servant whose martyrdom brought healing to his smiters. Then, perhaps, he may understand that no one definition can completely express the Faith of the Jew and his place in the divine economy. But with this glimpse of his history the grandeur of his inheritance will sink into his consciousness, becoming part of himself, and he will be thrilled with the tremendous responsibility devolving upon him as a member of the priest-people, the witnesses of God, whose mission was and is to "bring light to the Gentiles—that salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."



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