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## CRITICAL NOTICES.

## THE JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA.

*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. I. (FUNK and WAGNALLS Co.)

THE first volume of *The Jewish Encyclopedia* lies before us. The outcome of an age of systematization and co-operation, its appearance is a distinct event in the history of letters. One regards its publication with feelings of gratitude and admiration. Gratitude towards the publishers whose public-spiritedness made the issuing of the work possible; admiration for the manner in which it has been produced under the direction of the able projector, Dr. Isidore Singer, and his band of four hundred scholars and specialists.

The magnificence of the complete structure can easily be gauged by the excellence of the portion now in our possession. It will be a worthy Temple set up to the genius of Jewish Science and Jewish Thought, into whose courts, far from the coarse clamour of the market-place, all may come, and, conning the rich page of Israel's history, may get for themselves knowledge unbiassed and broad sympathy. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by this new "Revelation." Or rather it might be as true to say that we have everything to lose—our unequal share of the world's misjudgment; and others have everything to gain—true insight, a larger knowledge, liberal-mindedness. But then such loss being another's gain, is, ethically, a gain too—so we can well afford it.

The work—need it be said?—comes from that land of big enterprises and big successes, America. Right royally is the New World repaying the Old for discovering it. And for this last guerdon it holds the world its debtor indeed.

The scope of the work can be outlined by a brief statement of the departments in its purview. The subject-matter falls into three main divisions, which again branch out into subdivisions. They are (1) History, Biography, Sociology, and Folk-lore; (2) Literature—Biblical, Hellenistic, Talmudical, Rabbinical, Mediaeval, and Neo-Hebraic; (3) Theology and Philosophy; each department being

under the control of an editor responsible for the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the articles in his province.

The prospectus of the Historical and Biographical division promises much in the way of detail, and in the way of rescuing from oblivion those worthies who have, by word or deed, contributed to the general commonweal; and in this, the first volume, these promises have begun to be redeemed right honourably. Jews by race, Jews by conviction, Jews by predilection—all will be included, and rightly so, if we really desire to get a true conspectus of Israel's ramifications.

Obviously *The Jewish Encyclopedia* is a dictionary of the Bible, but it is something more than this, inasmuch as it deals not with a part of Jewish History, but with the whole. In the domain of Literature no attempt has been made to compete with the Bible Dictionaries of Hastings and Cheyne; but these, in many ways and many places, by sudden side-lights, are supplemented by such a work as this, even in their own special departments, for it is the superior vantage-point that gives a wider outlook. The plan has been adopted of treating the more important Biblical articles under three heads, under the first of which are ranged the Biblical data, giving the plain statement of the text; under the second, we have the Rabbinical interpretation, including that of the Talmud and Midrash; the third division presents the critical view. Thus the Encyclopedia strives to keep abreast of the latest explorations in the fields of Assyriology, Egyptology and in general archaeological investigation.

The Talmud, of course, will receive treatment commensurate with its importance, and the Rabbis of the Talmud, the Tannaim and Amoraim, many of them epoch-making in virtue of their work or personality, will each have a niche in this Temple of Fame. In connexion too with this subject the course of later Rabbinical Literature will be traced for the fourteen hundred years (500–1900) of its run. And lastly the History of the Jewish Literature will be set forth in all its multifariousness.

The third division of Theology and Philosophy will include a systematic presentation of Rabbinical Judaism in regard to Jewish beliefs and doctrine.

And, finally, the Encyclopedia will deal in an exhaustive manner with the subject of Anthropology, under which section will fall the evidence relating to purity of race, special aptitudes, susceptibility to disease, &c., &c.

This in short is a summary, and summary at that, of the task the Editors have set before themselves. High as the ideal is, this first volume makes us confident that it will be successfully attained.

It is not surprising that an undertaking of this kind should prove so fascinating both to the professed student, or professional, and to the general reader. The Jew stands as a link between the ancient world and the modern. Present at the launching of the oldest civilizations he voyaged with them for many a weary year, if not actually as pilot, often as one of the crew; and he has lived to see them swept away on the floods of time. If the knowledge of the centuries points to any one truth, it points to the transitoriness of all things, the ebb and flow in the affairs of mankind.

And throughout all these vicissitudes, the Jew, while not unresponsive to the *influences* that pulsed about him, has preserved the continuity of his traditions, and the purity of his ideals. It is a strange history that is here unfolded, now rolling majestic under Babylonian or Egyptian skies; now sunning itself gloriously as it winds through the fields of Old Castile; now wasted and scanty as it spreads itself over the sandy soil of oppression and repression. Such story as this must grip one strongly; and as one reads, mind and soul yield unreservedly to the all-compelling charm. It will give the reader a heart of understanding, enabling him to grasp aright something of the significance of Israel's wanderings; to rub off the grime and unlovely lettering of this human palimpsest, and to read beneath all of it the majestic drama of a nation's history. We shall see how the Jew has pushed onward the vehicle of the world's progress; how the light of his genius has played upon the fields of Art, and Science, and Literature, in many and many a land. With this work as our spell, Israel the Sphinx will be made to speak some of its most precious secrets.

And now to examine our treasure a little more closely. It is a handsome volume, its print clear and pleasant, and its illustrations numerous and really elucidatory of the text. And more; we shall find, if we test it, that the work exactly fits that empty space which somehow gapes from the shelves of every library however well furnished—the vacant chair, so to say, at the Symposium of Letters!

Let us turn, say, to the article "Adam." Under this heading we have, first of all, a statement of all the Biblical data. Then follows an account of the name in Apocryphal and Rabbinical Literature, comprising a most interesting survey of the sources of the Midrashic conception, by Dr. Kohler; Prof. Gottheil then takes up the story and discourses pleasantly of Adam in Mohammedan Literature. Lastly, we have a summary of the critical view, in which the generic use of the word in contradistinction to the use of it as the name of an individual is well brought out. Then succeed articles on the Book of Adam, and Adam Kadmon or Kadmoni, both of them

crammed with information. It should be added that a Bibliography is appended to each article—a very valuable consideration.

The same care characterizes the subject "Akiba b. Joseph": Palestinian Tanna. His parentage and youth are lucidly narrated, his remarkable life is then set forth, bringing out his relation with Bar Cochba in the sad times in which his lot was cast. Akiba as Systematizer, his Halacha, his Hermeneutic System, his Religious Philosophy—these are but headings, but they show sufficiently the trend of the rest of the article. To round off the whole we have, lastly, an account of the various legends that have clustered round the Martyr's memory.

The important subject of Angelology is especially well treated. The Biblical conception of these celestial beings is traced step by step; their denomination, their appearance, their function—all are here set forth. The second part of the article occupies itself with Angels in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature. We have a succinct account of the development of the angel-idea, of the angelic embellishment of the Bible story, and of the nomenclature and variety of angelic forms. "Angels and the Cabala" and "Angels and Mysticism" conclude this division of the subject. At this point Dr. Kohler continues the task. He outlines for us the general historical development of this subject of Angelology, and shows us how the circumstances of Israel's environment in Persia and Babylonia combined to make complex and cumbersome the simple conception of the Divine Messenger found in earlier Biblical writings. Thus Angelology tended towards systematization, and so we find that it is in the Book of Daniel that a systematic classification of angels is first presented. And Daniel led the way for the establishment of a hierarchy of vast proportions. Then follows a mass of information in regard to some of these hierarchical systems, with an account of the powers of individual angels, as instructors, as mediators between God and man, as guardians of the nations. Finally, we are presented with the views of Philo on Angels, of Saadya Gaon, of Judah Ha'Levi, of Ibn Daud and Maimonides. A brief statement of the Mohammedan position, which seems to trench both on Jewish and Gnostic ground, brings us to the end of this engrossing subject.

But let this suffice. The more the work is examined the indispensableness of it becomes more and more evident, and the wonder grows that its success should have ever been questioned. It is just the work required for the completion of every library and the equipment of every student. Such a bringing together the latest results of Jewish scholarship in the domain of Jewish lore is a notable achievement indeed. The effect of it—who shall deny?—will be as im-

portant as widespread, culminating in a real revival of Jewish learning.

It is ungracious to find fault with the well from which we have just slaked our thirst, but it is impossible to resist expressing the regret that in a work presenting the imperial proportions, as it were, we have endeavoured to draw, there should have been included names of those whose work lies rather before them than after. We have said the worst; and it may be that this little spot but serves, after all, to bring out the extreme fairness of the rest of the page.

Concluding, we can but re-echo the words of the writer who has said: "Christianity will learn from it to understand Judaism and to respect Jews. Jews will learn from it to understand and respect themselves."

H. SNOWMAN.

#### MACLEAN'S "VERNACULAR SYRIAC."

*A Dictionary of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac*, as spoken by the Eastern Syrians of Kurdistan, North-West Persia, and the Plain of Moşul, with illustrations from the dialects of the Jews of Zakhū and Azerbaijan, and of the Western Syrians of Tur 'Abdin and Ma'lula, by ARTHUR JOHN MACLEAN, M.A., F.R.G.S., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1891, 4to, pp. xxiii and 334.

MORE than thirty years ago Prof. Noeldeke expressed the hope that a dictionary of modern Syriac dialects would be compiled from materials gathered among the Nestorian population east of the Tigris without regard to the classical language, and that in so doing special attention might be paid to the vernacular of the Jews living in the district. Since then much valuable linguistic research has been accomplished in this field, both in the publication of texts and their utilization for grammatical purposes. The great vitality of this group of dialects is illustrated by the fact, that amidst a population of different creed and languages it not only held its own but penetrated further east, supplanting a tongue spoken of old in these territories. Geographically speaking, the dialects in question form the vernacular of many villages situated in a large triangle, comprising the Plain of Moşul, Lake Van and the Urmiah lake. Even a comparatively short examination will reveal the fact that these dialects are distinctly different from classical Syriac, and the appellation *Fellihi*, selected by Prof. Sachau (*Skizze des Fellihi-Dialekts von Moşul*, Berlin, 1895), has therefore much in its favour. It is but