

**ASPECTS OF THE HEBREW
GENIUS: A VOLUME
OF ESSAYS ON JEWISH
LITERATURE AND THOUGHT**

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Aspects of the Hebrew genius: a volume of essays on Jewish literature and thought by Leon Simon

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LEON SIMON

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EDITED BY
LEON SIMON

כי אלה נעים באגידה ביום אמתול



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1910

DEDICATED
TO
THE MEMORY OF
GUSTAV KARPELES
HISTORIAN OF JEWISH LITERATURE
AND FOUNDER OF
THE UNION OF JEWISH LITERARY SOCIETIES
IN GERMANY

PREFACE

THIS volume of Essays owes its appearance to the Union of Jewish Literary Societies, and is a substitute for the Annuals issued in previous years by that body; but it is distinguished from its predecessors by greater unity of purpose and content, and has more conscious designs than they had on a permanent place in the comparatively small library of books written in English by Jews on Jewish subjects. The issue of the volume has been rendered possible by the generosity of four gentlemen—Mr. S. Japhet, Mr. Max Langermann, Mr. Claude G. Montefiore, and Mr. Otto Schiff—who have guaranteed the Union against financial loss through its publication. The Council of the Union has been represented, so far as the production of this book is concerned, by a Special Committee, consisting originally of Mr. A. M. Hyamson,

Mr. Norman Bentwich, and Mr. C. A. Franklin ; afterwards of the two last-named gentlemen and myself.

This volume has a very essential connection with the popular Jewish literary movement of which the Union is the outcome and the representative. Of the seven Essays that it contains, six were originally lectures delivered before the North London Jewish Literary Union in the Sessions 1907-8 and 1908-9 ; though it should be added that the Essays on Philo, Saadiah, and Maimonides have been wholly, and that on Jewish Mysticism partly, rewritten for the present purpose. The remaining Essay — that of Dr. A. Wolf on Aristotle and Medieval Jewish Thought — reproduces a lecture read (as one of a series on "Aristotle in the Middle Ages") at the Summer Meeting of the University Extension, held at Cambridge in 1908 ; and the inclusion of the subject in the programme of that meeting was due to the suggestion of the Union.

Finally, the Introduction, which aims at linking together the isolated Essays, is a modified form of the Presidential Address delivered by Mr. Elkan Adler, as President of

the Union, at University College, on the 18th September.

The book is, of course, by no means a complete survey of Jewish literature and thought since the Dispersion. It makes no pretence to completeness, and may legitimately deprecate in advance any criticism based on the obvious fact that it leaves untouched many men and many tendencies of the first importance. But it does aim at indicating and explaining for the general reader some, at least, of the main lines along which the mind of the Jewish people has been working during the last two thousand years.

The Essays vary, not unnaturally, in method and point of view, and no contributor to this volume is responsible for the opinions of his collaborators; nor is the Editor answerable for the views of any of the contributors. His responsibility extends only to the selection and arrangement of the Essays; to the choice of a title for the book; to the securing of uniformity (or failure to secure it) in such minor matters as the trans-literation of foreign words; and to the preparation of the Index.

It is my privilege to be able to express the Union's thanks to the guarantors and to the

contributors, to whom jointly is due the credit for whatever value this book may have ; and I would tender also my personal thanks to my colleagues on the Committee for assistance of various kinds. It remains only to add that the responsibility for any shortcomings, so far as they come within the sphere of editorship, rests with the Editor alone.

L. S.

LEWIS HOUSE, LONDON, E.

November, 1909