

**THE JEWISH STUDENT'S
COMPANION. FIRST PART: POST
BIBLICAL HISTORY. SECOND
PART: EXPLANATION OF
MOSAIC COMMANDS**

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The Jewish student's companion. First part: Post Biblical history. Second part: Explanation of Mosaic commands by J. Mendes De Solla

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J. MENDES DE SOLLA

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FIRST PART:
Post Biblical History.

SECOND PART:
Explanation of Mosaic Commands.

BY
J. MENDES DE SOLLA, DR. TH.



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PREFACE.

The author of Ecclesiastes, already in his time, when no printing and little writing was known, observed that "there is no end to the making of many books." It is no wonder, therefore, that in our days, when book-making has become so universal, any new production issued from the press is apt to be received with the remark that we have already too many books. But though the Preacher was gifted with wisdom, more than all his contemporaries, knowledge was very limited then, and no intelligent person will deny that with the general spread of learning the demand for new books must keep pace. The method of imparting knowledge is from time to time changed, and we believe improved, and new mediums of instruction to correspond with the new methods are naturally required. The author of this volume, therefore, deems it unnecessary to say anything further by way of apology for the appearance of this new production of his labors, feeling as he does the earnest conviction that a book such as he now ventures to lay before the public is much needed to aid our scholars in the study of History and Theology.

As to the first part, it is certainly desirable that every Jew should have at least a superficial knowledge of the history of his nation; that he should have vividly before him at least the principal links in the long chain of events since the exodus from Egypt, down to our own days. As not every one can devote sufficient time to the regular study of history,

this SYNOPSIS may prove both instructive and pleasant to the earnest inquirer who desires to refresh his memory, or acquire some new information.

Our national history is a subject of honest pride to us; the study of it is calculated to inspire us with courage and fortitude in persevering in our efforts to uphold the proud name of our ancestral nobility; a nobility not resting on vain aristocracy or empty titles, but on the sterling qualities of endurance for the sake of principle; of sacrificing worldly interest to the conviction of doing right; of struggling and persevering on the path of duty, when deviating from the same would ^{not} bring honor, fame, and wealth. And it is our post-biblical history especially—I might say exclusively—which tends to inspire us with these exalted sentiments; it is the history of our martyrdom through many ages, not of the time “when Israel dwelt safely every man under his vine and under his fig-tree,” (which teaches us what man is capable of enduring and accomplishing, if he has the will and the firmness to walk steadily on the right course.) That great lesson our rising generation stands much in need of learning, and that this humble production may serve as a step towards promoting this end is the writer's earnest desire.

The second part of this book is of still greater importance, inasmuch as it concerns the practical part of our religion. (History is a great teacher of morals, but we may learn ethics likewise from various other sources.) A direct and positive information, however, of what we ought to do or abstain from doing, and the reasons why we should do this and avoid doing that, is of far more urgent necessity, particularly to the young. (In the present enlightened age, we cannot satisfy ourselves with the specious reasoning that we do such or so because we were told to do so by those wiser and better than ourselves;) that we saw our fathers do

so before us, and that we cannot be wrong in following in their steps. (We want a reason, and a valid reason, for what we are required to do; and unless our religious performances are based on the consciousness that we are doing what is right and useful, such performances are vain and valueless. The second part of this book, then, is intended to give an insight, at least, into the general intention and tendency of the Mosaic Laws, in accordance with the views of the great Maimonides, as laid down in his *Moreh Nebuchim*, (and to explain such laws especially as appear to us incomprehensible because not reconcilable with our present mode of thinking.) In order, therefore, that those who continue, as far as practicable, the strict observance of the Mosaic laws, may be better informed as to the origin of these institutions; (and that those who do not adhere to them as a whole may know the reasons why some are retained and others discarded,) it is important for both to be enlightened in regard to that which constitutes the basis of their faith and their acts of devotion. This information the second part of the book is intended, in a measure, to supply.

That, in the compilation of this book, I have made use of various works in English and other languages need not be said, for no writer of history can give his readers but what he finds in the works of his predecessors; but I here candidly state that I have not hesitated, in many instances, to copy, *nearly verbatim*, or to translate from other works even to the extent of whole paragraphs. My reason for not always crediting the author I copied or translated is, that I have in most cases abbreviated, added, or changed, and to particularize each line or phrase, mixed up as it is with my own words, would produce such a confusion of inverted commas, spaces, and dottings, as to disfigure the typographical appearance of the book, and be a source of annoyance

to the reader. I have done as Molière said: "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve." I make this general statement to exculpate myself of the crime of plagiarism.

J. M. DE SOLLA, DR.TH.

CURACAO, W. I., August, 1879.

FIRST PART.

A SYNOPSIS OF

Post-Biblical Jewish History.