GUIDE FOR INSTRUCTION IN JUDAISM: A MANUAL FOR SCHOOLS AND HOMES. ESPECIALLY ADAPTED FOR TEACHERS, ADVANCED PUPILS AND FOR PRIVATE STUDY

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K. KOHLER

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A MANUAL FOR SCHOOLS AND HOMES

Especially adapted for Teachers, Advanced Pupils and for Private Study

BY

REV. DR. K. KOHLER

RABBI OF TEMPLE BETH-EL, NEW YORK

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1898

To the Rev. Dr. M. Baar,

THE FATHERLY GUIDE OF THE FATHERLESS,
AND THE WISE EDUCATOR FULL OF LOVE
FOR GOD AND OF MAN,
THIS MANUAL IS DEDICATED
IN SINCERE FRIENDSHIP AND ESTEEM,
BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

To present within the small compass of a school-book the religious and ethical teachings of Judaism in a comprehensive, clear and systematic form, is a task which has engaged the leading teachers in Israel for more than two generations; yet but few have succeeded in producing the work needed to awaken religious fervor, and at the same time to stimulate thought and create a firm religious conviction in the young.

In publishing this humble effort of mine, as the result of many years study and pedagogic experience, I feel satisfied that I have earnestly endeavored to profit by all my predecessors —from Plessner down to Stein and Einhorn, and from Leeser to Friedlander—while at the same time I have avoided many difficulties in the treatment of metaphysical, dogmatic and ritualistic questions, by placing myself upon the historical standpoint, and showing, in the notes intended for teachers and advanced pupils, the development of the various religious ideas and practices throughout the Biblical and Rabbinical stages of growth. I have tried to cast light on every religious belief or practice essential to either conservative or progressive Judaism, while I laid more stress upon, and devoted more space, to the *ethical* side of Judaism, especially of Rabbinical Judaism, than any previous writer has done.

I trust, therefore, that my manual will be welcomed by both teachers and pupils, as well as by my colleagues, the rabbis and school superintendents of this country, as a trustworthy guide for a deeper comprehension of our faith and for a higher appreciation of Israel's lofty mission of Truth, of Righteousness and of Peace.

THE AUTHOR.

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GUIDE FOR INSTRUCTION IN JUDAISM

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I.—Religion.

1. There is a world round about us which we perceive with our senses, and the study of its laws we call *Science*. But there is a world within us which cannot be reached by our senses—it is a world of feeling, thought and will-power. These inner forces make us look up with wonder and awe to a Power greater than we, and regulate our actions and our conduct so as to please this great Power above us. This supreme Power we call *God*. The consciousness of God and the recognition of our allegiance to Him, is *Religion*.

2. Any being far greater and more powerful than we are fills us with awe and fear, and when we think of this great God high above us, we have this feeling of *fear* and *reverence* in an extreme degree. Religion, then, is first of all *Fear of God*. It restrains us from doing or saying any thing which is displeasing to God, and thus gives life an earnest and solemn purpose.

> "Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. i. 7.)
>
> "Come ye, children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Psalms, xxxiv. 11.)
>
> "Let the fear of God be upon you that ye sin not." (Exodus xx. 20.)
>
> "Fear God and do His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes xii. 13.)