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THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY OF AMERICA
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY
BROAD STREET AND GIRARD AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA

April 20, 1921.

TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

We take pleasure in sending you a copy
of Dr. Halper's "Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature"-
An Anthology.

As you will note from the enclosed
statement, it is a work of very substantial
character and your readers would no doubt be
glad to have their attention called to the fact
that it has now been completed.

You may, if you wish, use the enclosed
note for whatever publicity you may find it
desirable.

Should you publish a review, we would be
grateful to you if you would send us one or two
copies of your valuable periodical containing it.

Yours sincerely,

I. George Dobrevage

Secretary.

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POST-BIBLICAL HEBREW LITERATURE

Although the Hebrew language ceased to be the vernacular of the majority of the Jewish people during the last years of the second temple, it has, throughout the various periods, with but few exceptions, persisted as the literary medium for the noblest productions of the nation. Irrespective of the language spoken by Jews in the countries of their adoption, the best thoughts of the Jewish writers found expression in the holy tongue.

When the centre of Jewish literary activity was transferred to Arabic-speaking countries, the Hebrew language still continued to be employed by a good many of the writers. Books intended for the edification of the people at large, were, it is true, written in the vernacular, but the literary productions were composed in Hebrew. Grammars, dictionaries, and philosophical works which were intended for the general public had therefore to be expressed in the language spoken by the people, but Hebrew was employed for the literary compositions, secular and liturgic poems. Thus Saadia, Ibn Gebirol, and Judah ha-Levi wrote their philosophical works in Arabic, but their poems and hymns were invariably in Hebrew.

It is not generally and fully realized that Hebrew continued as a literary medium throughout the ages. The proof for this fact is adequately furnished in a volume just issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America, entitled "Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature", an Anthology. The author is the distinguished scholar, Dr. B. Halper, of the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning. Dr. Halper is the author of many books dealing with various branches of Jewish literature, and his knowledge covers an unusual range of Jewish learning. With it he combines a breadth of view and a literary style. This work is published in two volumes: one contains Hebrew texts, notes and glossary, and the second comprises the English translation. The plan of the work is designed to acquaint students and the general reader with the growth and development of post-biblical Hebrew Literature. The extracts are arranged chronologically, and are prefaced by brief introductions giving the salient facts about the authors and their works. It is thus a history of Hebrew literature by examples.



In preparing the selections for this Anthology, Dr. Halper was guided by two principles: the literary merit of the extract and its pedagogic value. Through the study of these texts the student may acquire an extensive vocabulary and will derive aesthetic pleasure from the beauty and quaintness of the selections. In order to give an idea of the variety and extensiveness of post-biblical Hebrew literature, practically all branches have been incorporated into this Anthology, and great care has been taken to select representative authors. Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, liturgy, poetry, philosophy, ethics, history, geography, folk-lore, travel, philology, epistles, ethical wills, and general compositions are represented in this volume.

Dr. Halper very aptly points out that of all medieval literatures, Hebrew books are the most studied but the least edited. Thousands of students are poring over the folios of the Talmud and its commentaries, and yet a critical edition of this work is slow in making its appearance. Of the numerous philosophical works few have hitherto been critically edited. A great deal of research is still to be done in medieval poetry. Dr. Halper has made use of all accessible editions and manuscripts, and has set himself the task of editing critically every extract included in the Anthology. He has endeavored to present the texts in the form in which they are likely to have left the hands of their authors. With rare acumen he succeeded in solving many baffling problems. Approximately two-thirds of the texts are vocalized. The vocalization of these texts will not only be helpful to the student, but will establish in many instances disputed pronunciations of Hebrew words. Dr. Halper gives all possible assistance to the student who is taken up these branches of literature for the first time. At the same time, owing to the nature of the work, some remarks of an advanced character are included. These notes contain many interpretations and assign reasons for fixing the texts either on the basis of manuscripts or conjecture. Dr. Halper carefully avoided making radical changes, and only introduced those of which one can be reasonably sure.

The glossary at the end of the volume is confined to words and phrases that do not occur in the Bible and to biblical words which are invested with a new shade of meaning.

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This volume contains the extracts from Ben Sira down to Tossely, and includes Mishnah, Eleazar Be-Rabbi Kalir, Sa'adya Gaon. B. Joseph, Nathan Ha-Babli, Samuel Ha-Nagid, Solomon B. Judah Ibn Gebirol, Moses B. Jacob Ibn Ezra, Judah B. Samuel Ha-Levi, Abraham B. Meir Ibn Ezra, Benjamin of Tudela, Judah B. Saul Ibn Tibbon, Moses B. Maimon, Joseph B. Meir Ibn Zabara, Judah B. Solomon Al-Harizi, Moses B. Nahman, Eleazar of Worms, Joseph Albo, Isaac B. Judah Abravanel, Menassel B. Joseph Ben Israel, Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, and others.

No trouble was spared to make the volume as attractive as possible from external appearance. A happy selection was made of the face of the type, and the Hebrew text was set accurately and artistically by Moses Alperowich, formerly of the Romm Press in Vilna.

The second volume contains graceful and accurate translations into English of all the Hebrew texts. In this volume, too, each selection is preceded by a short introduction. These two volumes will serve the student as well as the general reader; one may be used without the other, since each is complete in itself.

Viewing the work in its entirety, it may be said that the extracts have been brilliantly selected, cleverly annotated, and gracefully translated. It may be regarded as an introduction to the Jewish Classics Series which the Jewish Publication Society has projected, and some volumes of which will soon be published.

This book bids fair to become the standard text book in colleges and universities in English-speaking countries, while the Hebrew text can be used everywhere where Hebrew is studied and read.

The English volume sells for \$2.00 and the Hebrew for \$2.50.