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“The Jew of History,” 1906 March 25.

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### THE JEW OF HISTORY

There is a world of interest in the Jew with the dawn of the twentieth century. The Jew has been long in the world, but even after these thousands of years he is not known and not understood. What thinks the world of the Jew? The world pictures him as the Jew of the Bible - representative of the chosen people, chosen for God's favor and blessing, or singled out for God's punishment and curses, a people chosen and appointed of God, as some interpret, with the distinct mission to produce the Messiah. Nineteen centuries ago the Jews rejected and crucified the Messiah, so we are told, and then upon the Jew were fulfilled all the curses that are written in Scriptures, and then a standstill in Jewish history and Jewish development, and the rest of Jewish history is unknown - Israel's wandering and persecuted and heroic martyrdom and wonderful life and development through all these dark centuries.

The world believes the Jew of today a survival of a forgotten age, the living representative of a dead civilization, an Oriental curiosity, out of place in this twentieth century life.

Explain the Jew alive today, wonder of the world, the indestructible race. One answers - the vitality, the persistence, the power, the genius, the cunning of the race. Another answers - it is the fulfillment of the law and the prophecy. The Jew is witness the curse of God is upon him until the day shall come when he shall see the light and accept the Saviour, the Jew shall return to Palestine and rebuild the Temple, or 'twill be the time of the Messiah.

They who interpret thus thus understand not the old Hebrew literature, the Bible and the teaching of the Rabbins, and know not the history of the Jew in the centuries since the age of the Bible. There never was a standstill in Jewish history. There has been unceasing development from the age of Abraham the Patriarch,

through Egypt and the desert, through the first Hebrew republic, the Judges and the Kings, through the first destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, through the return and the rebuilding of the Temple, to the last destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the year 70 of the common era. Through the almost two thousand years of wandering since that historic event they have been associated with the life and history of every civilized nation, and they have made their distinct contribution to the development of mankind.

Are we the chosen people for blessing or for curse? In history Israel appears as the servant of God, chosen to evolve and to proclaim religious truth, but not chosen to give birth to a religious redeemer. The Messiah idea was born of Israel. Jesus was not the only Messiah in the history of Israel. Messiahs there were before and after His day. Jesus did not fulfill the Jewish expectation, therefore the Jews rejected him. According to Jewish law, his trial and execution were impossible.

"The Curse of God" is a fallacy. It is the sin and crime of the centuries. The dispersion was not the curse of God. The Jews were scattered through other lands before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the defense of Jerusalem against all-powerful Rome is as magnificent a story as may be found in all history.

The later history of the Jews is more wonderful than the Bible story. The wandering Jew sought refuge in other lands. He established his home and won peace and prosperity by industry and integrity. Then a hundred times came envy, hate, persecution, and always the choice - apostacy, exile or death. Thousands became apostates. They loved life and their possessions and homes. Thousands had the courage and strength to die for their faith. Thousands more had the courage not to die, but to live, and staff in hand to go as wanderers over the



earth. We cannot comprehend the misery and persecution of the Jews for centuries. We fail to understand what it means to live day and night with property subject to confiscation and plunder, with life in danger, with home not sacred and women not inviolate from inhuman outrage, and children too often slaughtered by bloody hands. Russia, the infamous, has helped the Jew and the world to understand the life and martyrdom of Jews through centuries. Who has power to picture the terrible tragedy of Israel and the ignominy heaped upon the Jew during the crusades; the valiant crusaders, flaming with hate of the infidels, plundered and slaughtered the Jews, the infidels at home. By Church and State the Jew was compelled to wear upon his person the badge of shame. How often the cry has sounded, "Death to the Jews and death to Israel's literature." The Torah and the Talmud, Israel's law book and the laws of the Rabbis, had been publicly burned at the stake. Israel's literature was not destroyed. Its law book is the law book of the world.

The twentieth century finds the Jew in America more than a million strong. The Jew has been in America this two hundred and fifty years. Jews fought to establish American independence. They sacrificed life and fortune in the cause of American freedom. Jews fought to preserve liberty and the Union. The heart of the Jew in lands oppressed longs for America, his soul yearns to breathe the atmosphere of freedom. None are more truly American than these foreign-born Jewish immigrants. They come to stay in America. Heart and soul they love freedom and are ready to give their life-blood to and for America.

Jews are not American in spite of their Jewish convictions. The purposes and principles of the Republic are in perfect harmony with Jewish principles. The spirit of the old Hebrew commonwealth, the first republic of history, is in accord with the spirit of America, the last republic of history. The Jew, more than all other men, believes that America is the land of freedom.

The Jew is always what the world will let him be. Shut out from the world for centuries, he was shut in to himself. With freedom, down went the walls of the ghetto, and with joy he hurried forth to life and to freedom. Whenever a hand is honestly held out to the Jew, the hand of the Jew is ready to grasp it in honest fellowship. The Jews are charged with being a race of traitors. "They do not live upon the soil." Prohibited by law from ownership of the land these thousands of years, driven almost these two thousand years from the Holy Land, they still celebrate festivals and customs peculiar to an agricultural people. Wonderful the idealism of the Jew, in spite of the hard necessities of his history, in spite of the sordid and mean occupations to which Church and State compelled him. Jews are practically men of the world, and they are "dreamers of the Ghetto." Jews are materialists and Jews are idealists. Under sorrow and under suffering, in other lands, in spite of age-long martyrdom, hope lives eternal in the heart of the Jew that God will hear Israel's cry of affliction. Despite eighteen centuries of misery, with all their terrible realities, the Jew has retained his idealism. As did the Prophets of old, he proclaims to the world Messianic ideals and looks forward eagerly to the coming of the Messianic age.

Every nation of antiquity, and almost every people of more modern times, has burdened and oppressed him. Church and State have sought to destroy him. In spite of them all, the Jew lives with honor and with power. No one people, race or religion has exercised more permanent influence on civilization or has put a deeper impress on human thought and human conduct. The Jew today is the living representative of one hundred generations of Israel. Alone of all the great people of antiquity, the Jew lives, child of the ancient world race, the most wonderful race of human history.