



The Legends of the Jews, Volume IV: From Joshua to Esther

Louis Ginzberg

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Louis Ginzberg was born in Kovno, Lithuania on November 28, 1873, to a family of rabbinic scholars which had once included well-known Lithuanian intellectual Rabbi Elijah Gaon. By age 14, he had memorized the Bible, and had a vast knowledge of Judaic literature. He pursued his higher education in Germany, and received a doctorate in Semitic languages from the University of Heidelberg in 1897. Two years later, he moved to the United States, and obtained work as an editor for the upcoming *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which was being compiled as part of an ongoing effort by the Jewish Publication Society in America to foster a broader understanding of Jewish culture in the general population. Ginzberg then became a Talmudic professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, where he served from 1902 until his death in 1953. Within this time he helped found the American Academy for Jewish Research, serving as its first president, and compiled his six-volume masterpiece, *The Legends of the Jews*.

This series of books, published between 1909 and 1939, was certainly the first, and is perhaps the greatest, comprehensive overview of Judaic tradition, belief and lore ever published. Utilizing his proficiency in the Latin, Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, Arabic and Akkadian languages, Ginzberg was able to draw not only from the Torah, Talmud, and Midrash, but also from the Pseudepigrapha, Christian scripture and apocrypha, and Islamic legends, his sources spanning in origin from three centuries before Christ until his own modern times. The first volume deals with events from the creation of Adam in Eden, through the lives of the patriarch Jacob and his twelve sons. The second book treats the Hebrews' time in Egypt, from the selling of Joseph as a slave to the Exodus led by Moses. The third book is about the time spent by the Israelites wandering in the wilderness up until the death of Moses. The present volume, which has been out of print for some time, pertains to matters stretching from the time they entered the Promised Land, under the commanding lead of their anointed ruler, Joshua, until the rule of Queen Esther, including the period of the Judges, the reign of kings Solomon and David, the dividing of the kingdom, the captivity, and the return from exile. Volumes Five and Six contain the notes to the previous four (to which the footnote annotations in this volume refer), and a seventh volume has been published containing the index. Aside from the scriptures themselves, few writings have had as much impact on modern Jewish thought, and on the popular conception of Judaism, as Louis Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*.

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