

A Story
About Hebrews
About Jews

by

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This is not an in-depth history of the Jews. I'm not capable or qualified to attempt such a work. Rather, it's for those of us who have a superficial or even less understanding of the Jews as a people, myself included.

The myth and the facts are not my own. I read and extracted what I thought was interesting from:

The Jews by Howard Fast

A History of the Jews by Solomon Grayzel and

The Bible as History by Werner Keller

I. Abraham and his Sons

About 4000 years ago, the world of the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, referred to as the "Fertile Crescent," the peaceful, prosperous civilized land of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine, was suddenly attacked by hordes of nomadic tribes of Semitic stock from the Arabian Desert. Wave after wave of the Amorites, "Westerners" as their name implied, surged against these kingdoms until they collapsed.

The Amorites founded their own states and dynasties. The one that became supreme was Babylonia. Its sixth king was the famous, wise King Hammurabi.

Meanwhile, one of these Semitic tribes, a small insignificant group of no importance, was the family of Abraham, forefather of the Jews.

The old patriarch, Terah, took his son Abram, his young wife Sarah, their son Lot, and all of the relatives and left the city of Ur of the Chaldees. The caravan traveled 600 miles to the land of Canaan, the land promised Abraham, according to the Bible.

Theirs was not the only tribe living in the desert. There were hundreds of them. Life was hard and bitter. These tribe were linked into a loose confederation.

Our interest lies with a tribe who called themselves “The Children of Israel” or “B’nai –Yisrael”.

And so the story goes. These wanderers went down to Egypt and because there was famine in the land, Abraham asked the Pharaoh for permission to live on the outskirts of Egypt where everything was green and where cattle could graze. Here they lived for many generations until the Egyptians eventually enslaved them.

Abraham’s wife Sarah was barren. It was important that a man should have an heir. Sarah agreed for Abraham to take Hagar, her personal maid, as his concubine to live with, so that she might bear him a son. This she did and his name was Ishmael.

Of course, Sarah was very jealous. The story goes that three angels came to see Abraham and told him that Sarah, who was 90, would be pregnant and bear him a son. Abraham was 100 at the time. Sarah began to laugh and the angels said that God could do anything.

So, little Isaac was born. Now Sarah demanded that Abraham drive Hagar and her unruly son away into the desert to eventually die. Some local tribes found them and saved them. But God was with this boy, and Ishmael too became a father of a nation, for the Arabs are his descendants.

The day came when God told Abraham to take his only son, whom he loved so much, to the land of Moriah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. God was testing his faith. At the very last moment, God stopped Abraham’s hand as he raised his knife. The awful ordeal was over.

Soon after this test on Mt. Moriah, Abraham and Isaac went home to Hebron in the land of Canaan. Sarah died. He purchased a piece of property, the cave of Machphelah, a tomb in which to bury his dead. In time, he was laid beside his wife in the cave. His son Isaac, and his wife Rebekah as well as their son, Jacob and his wife, Leah are also laid to rest there.

Isaac's wife Rebekah was a terrible schemer. She had another son, Esau, but she favored Jacob. Esau was the rightful heir to Isaac's estate. Isaac was old and blind, and she substituted Jacob to receive, his, Isaac's blessing. Esau was a hunter, a powerful hairy man. Jacob was a puny boy. She covered Jacob's arms with hair and told Isaac that it was Esau. Isaac's perplexing statement is well known. "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the arms are the arms of Esau." Having tricked Isaac in this manner, Jacob had to flee to another land, fearing Esau's wrath.

Many years later, he returned and made peace with his brother. He received the name of "Israel" from God. The nation was called the "Children of Israel" after him.

Jacob had twelve sons from whom evolved the twelve tribes of Israel. They were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin.

Apparently, Joseph was Isaac's favorite son, because his father outfitted him with a beautiful coat of many colors and sent him with food for his brothers where they were grazing the sheep. The sight of him in his new coat angered them to the point of killing him. Judah was against it. However, they threw him into a deep pit, smeared the blood of a sheep on his coat and told their father he was killed by a lion. Jacob mourned for his son. Benjamin was still a baby and wasn't part of the conspiracy.

A caravan found Joseph and sold him to the Egyptians as a slave. While he was in captivity, he interpreted Pharaoh's dream about seven lean cows devouring seven fat cows, meaning that there would be seven fruitful years followed by seven years of famine. If the Pharaoh would store the harvest from the good years, he would make "big bucks" when the famine comes. It did come to pass and the Pharaoh was grateful, made Joseph his minister of finance, and gave him his daughter in marriage.

There was great famine in the land and Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph was a prince now and his brothers didn't recognize him, but he recognized them. He sold them the grain, but gave instructions to place a golden goblet in one of the sacks. They left and Joseph sent soldiers to arrest them for stealing. They were in great agony. That's when he said to them, "I am Joseph, your brother!" He told them to go and bring their old father, Jacob, and their younger brother Benjamin whom he loved dearly.

This is how the Jews found themselves in Egypt. They lived there and prospered in the land of Goshen for hundreds of years. No doubt, they aroused jealousy of the Egyptian people and the Pharaohs, who enslaved them to construct their pyramids. Thus, it seems, that the Jews lived there about 600 years, three hundred in luxury and peace and three hundred in slavery.

II. Moses

Now we must tell the story of the man called Moses. Without him there would not be a Jewish nation. I cannot and won't attempt to detail the often told and much romanticized story of the Exodus. What becomes evident is that cruel difficulty of life in the desert created disappointment and regret for leaving Egypt. Moses knew that this generation would be unfit to gain the Promised Land. He knew that it would be a new generation capable of fighting and would be deserving of Eretz-Yisrael. The only one fit to enter this land of the old generation would be Joshua who would be in command of the army. Even Moses was not permitted to enter. He was only allowed to see it and then he died.

Moses gave the world laws and a code of ethics that, to this very day, shapes the thinking of our world. His Ten Commandments are accepted by all civilizations.

They were a powerful group who left Egypt under twelve banners, one for each of the twelve sons of Jacob. They invaded Palestine, inhabited by a people called the Philistines.

How these tribes looked with envy at this land of green pastures - the land of "Milk and Honey"! How they looked back at their own miserable existence on the cruel, stony bareness of the desert! But, these riches were well guarded by disciplined armies and strong walled cities. The Canaanites, a well-dressed, well-fed, cultured, civilized people, living behind their strong walls, looking at the wanderers and seeing their black tents, made up a name for this group, "Ivrim", or as we now know them "Hebrews", which means "those who come from the other side". Thirst and hunger drove them to desperation and they matched their inferior arms against the well-trained armored soldiers. Sometimes, with desperate courage, they would win a battle. Most times, they would die from thirst and hunger. In time, they acquired the iron sword, horses, and

bronze chariots that gave them great mobility they never had. All this exploded into motion and the well-disciplined Philistine soldiers broke and fled. The walls stopped them, but they gained the fertile valleys. We hear stories of how Joshua made the walls of Jericho fall down. Eventually they found a way. These battles continued for many generations.

The largest tribe of all was the tribe of Judah who were known as the Judahites, the “Yehdudim” - the “Jews”.

A priest by the name of Samuel appointed the first great war chief of the B’nai-Yisrael. He was Saul.

In time, Samuel began to hate Saul. After Saul and his three sons died in battle, the old priest gave his blessing to a young Jew whose name was David. He was an extraordinary man. There is a legend that he killed Goliath, a Philistine giant. David played a string instrument and composed psalms. He was a poet and a singer. He married King Saul’s daughter. He conquered the Philistines. He made friends of the Phoenicians and for the next 500 years, Jewish cargo and Jewish sailors sailed all over the known world, establishing a network of trade and colonies in every land.

David was not Moses. Moses was a giant, larger than life, noble and beyond lust. David was a man of flesh. He lusted, whored, lied and cheated. He was brilliant and gifted, and the Jews loved him as he was.

His son, Solomon, inherited the wealth that David accumulated. He built and completed the first temple in Jerusalem. He was called the copper king. We know how important Solomon’s copper mines were and his stables were famous. Jews had to have heroes, so Solomon became the “Wise King”. His father was more creative and brilliant. Besides, any man that gathers for him a thousand wives doesn’t show good sense.

The southern kingdom was called Judea, named for the tribe of Judah who remained true to God. The land to the north, now known as Samaria, was the land of the other tribes who were lost to us because they did not follow God’s and Moses’ teachings. This is why we’re called Yehudim, Judeans, Yidden, Yuden, and finally Jews. However, the prophets who spoke against the forsaking of God were from the northern kingdom. Theirs were a response to power and evil. The north was conquered by Assyria. The kingdom of Judah existed for three hundred years, only to be conquered in the end by

Babylonia. Eighteen kings ruled Judeah after Solomon. The king of Babylonia took about 35,000 Jews as exiles for seventy years until the Persian emperor, Cyrus, freed them. Forty thousand Jews chose to return to Jerusalem and forty thousand chose to remain in Babylon. These became wealthy merchants and sent caravans as far as India. Babylon became the center of Jewish culture and wealth, the place where the Talmud was written. It was much easier for those that remained in Babylon and other Persian cities than for those that returned to Palestine. Jerusalem was looted and a burned out ruin. For seventy years, every wandering band of Bedouins, every band of bank robbers and outlaws looted Jerusalem. It was a ghost city. The returned exiles faced an overwhelming job to rebuild the ruined Temple. A sense of hopelessness, doom, and defeat overtook them. Word reached Babylon of their failure. At this point, two men of influence begged the Persian Emperor to grant them leave to help the exiles overcome the bad situation in Jerusalem.

One was an aristocrat, Nehemiah, and the other was a priestly man called Ezra. Together, they set about solving the many problems it took to rebuild the ruined, empty city and to rebuild the Temple. For a hundred years or more, the Jews lived in peace and enjoyed the protection of Persia. Then, it all came to an end. A new conqueror appeared and destroyed Persia's huge army. It was Alexander the Great.

III. Alexander the Great and the Maccabees

Alexander came to the throne of Greece in 336 B.C. He was brilliant, dynamic, and had an enormous drive for power. He conquered the army of Darius III of Persia, who had control of the area that is now Turkey. Alexander conquered Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Arabia and India, by the time he died at the age of thirty-three. His followers admired the Jews and were receptive to the Jewish concept of God. For a hundred and fifty years, Jews and the Egyptian-Greeks lived in peace, mutual respect, and benefit. Once again, Jewish super-cargoes and Jewish sailors sailed on Phoenician ships. Jewish synagogues and colonies were established in faraway countries like Carthage, Spain and even Britain.

Jewish language shifted from Hebrew to Aramaic. It was probably the language of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It soon replaced Hebrew and was a better language for

trade. However, Hebrew remained the language of the Torah – the “lashon kadosh” or holy tongue.

Alexander died and his generals divided the lands that they conquered. Antiochus the Great conquered Palestine and Judea in 198 B.C. The Jews took pains not to anger the Syrian-Greeks. When he tried to make the Jews give up their religion, Antiochus created a situation that the farmers, very staunch Jews, could not tolerate. The Hasmonean family of Cohens, under the leadership of Mattathias and his five sons, Judah, Jonathan, Simon, John, and Eliezer, began a revolt. These were the Maccabees who built their little force into an army under the leadership of Judah. They fought against great odds and recaptured the Temple, cleansed and rededicated it. Some scholars think that Judah was called “Maccabee,” which means the “hammer” and that God chose him to smite the enemy. Antiochus sent legion after legion and was defeated by this small army of brave fearless Jews. Judah was a military genius. Syria was on the verge of bankruptcy, losing so many legions. It was when they started attacking with elephants that the Maccabees began to lose battles. Judah died on the battlefield. They lost the support from their own priests. Five years of fighting exhausted the people. The Maccabees became outlaws. They were glorious in battle. They saved Judaism. They taught the world to fight injustice, no matter how great the odds.

Jonathan, when the political climate improved, was permitted by the Syrians to govern Eretz-Yisrael. Judah was an idealist and Jonathan was a diplomat. There was one act of diplomacy the Jews lived to regret. Jonathan thought that signing a pact with the Romans would discourage the Syrians from attacks. As it proved later, the Romans were the cruelest enemy the Jews ever had. Jonathan was slain. This was in 142 B.C. Simon was installed by the Greeks as governor. He ruled for seven years and he was murdered. Thus came to an end the struggle of the five glorious brothers, the Maccabees.

In time, the Romans installed an Idumean whose people years ago converted to Judaism. His name was Antipater. His son Herod, whom history remembers as Herod the Great, succeeded him. Israel lasted seventy-two years between the end of the Maccabees and Herod.

During that time, thousands of Jews left Judea for Galilee, Alexandria, Babylonia, Tyre, Rome, Greece, Spain, and Italy. Judea as a garrison state was distasteful to them. In

many of these Jewish settlements, they were objects of hatred and envy. Anti-Semitism is old, very old.

IV. The Romans

After two generations that followed the Hasmonean period, a gentle philosopher and teacher named Hillel, began to make his mark upon the Jewish scene. He was a wise and tolerant rabbi. He is remembered for these quotations: “To love thy neighbor as thyself. That is the whole law, and all the rest is commentary.” The other famous saying was, “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And, if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” Hillel taught life as opposed to death. War was totally evil.

Herod was a cruel and horrible man. He was a most successful tax collector because he would crucify those that would not or could not pay. That was the end of tax dodging. For these crimes, the Jewish court would have sentenced him to death, but the Romans intervened and made him king of Judea. He was a madman, trusted no one, and murdered everyone he suspected of plotting against him. This included his brother-in-law, his wife Mariamne, and his two sons by her. Suspecting his own first-born son, Antipater, he had him murdered. He was paranoid. He frantically tried to create immortality for himself by a compulsive program of building. He built roads, baths, theaters, gymnasiums, and racetracks. In spite of all this, the land prospered. Hillel built his academy in Galilee. Jewish scholars created that enormous ancient Jewish culture, the Talmud. Herod died, unmourned, four years before the birth of Jesus. Fourteen years later, Hillel died. The whole world wept for him, not only Jews, but thousands of pagans also shared in the sorrow.

By the year 70 A.D., Roman cruelties and indignities of the last five decades produced a situation where the majority of Jews were willing to support the Zealots and to make war with the Romans. The Zealots were dispossessed farmers with a deep hatred for the Romans who inflicted heavy taxation on them. The hard-core Zealots were the Sicarii, who carried the dagger that was his weapon of terror.

When the Sicarii were allowed to enter the Temple after being excluded for many years, they began a campaign of murder. First, it was the Levites, then they murdered all of the Pharisees. The moderate Zealots, horrified by the slaughter of innocent Jews,

turned against the more radical group. In their insane fury, the Zealots set food warehouses on fire, and the hope of withstanding a long siege went up in flames.

It is quite likely that Jews could have been victorious had it not been for the insanity of the Sicarii and, or the leader of the Jewish army, an aristocratic Jew by the name of Josephus (the historian) who abandoned the Jews when things turned against them and went over to the Romans. It was an unforgivable act of treason.

Vespasian, the Roman general, who had to return to Rome, left his son, Titus in charge. He laid siege to the city. The war of Jews against Jews in Jerusalem went on. They ran out of places to bury the dead and the smell became intolerable. The people were dying of starvation. Finally, Titus moved his troops in, with minimum resistance and very little effort. Eliezer, the leader of the Sicarii, escaped with a band of assassins and occupied Herod's castle on Masada. The Sicarii committed suicide rather than face crucifixion.

Probably because Titus was in love with Bernenice, a princess in the line of Herod and the Maccabees, he showed no mercy to the Jews who survived the horror. An effort was made by the world Jewish community to raise money to buy the Jewish captives from Titus (being a Roman, he preferred money to revenge) and resettle them in other cities.

A generation later, the Roman government became friendlier. In the year 110 A.D., Emperor Trajan, who dreamed of being another Alexander the Great, wanted to conquer Persia and India. He wanted the goodwill of the Jews. Because Judea was a border province of Persia, he promised the Jews of Palestine that he would help them rebuild the Temple. His dream never came to be as Hadrian succeeded him. Rome promised to redeem its pledge, but waited for Hadrian to personally visit Judea. He started to rebuild the Temple. It was to have an altar to Jupiter, a pagan god. Judaism meant nothing to him. This was a terrible blow to the Jews. He issued a decree prohibiting circumcision. He was bent on destroying the Jewish religion. He wanted them to assimilate into the pagan world. The Jews saw in Hadrian, another Antiochus. And where there was an "Antiochus," a Maccabee was bound to rise.

As it appeared to the Jews in the year 130 A.D., they would either perish like cowards or fight.

The leader of the second revolt was an eighty-year-old scholar, Rabbi Akiba. He was too old. A younger man was to be found. His name was Simeon. Rabbi Akiba was so pleased with him, he called him, “Bar Kochba”, “the son of the star”. Hadrian realized that he would have a hard struggle. Again, a Roman army, aided by the pagan neighbors of the Jews, marched into Palestine. Before their arrival, Bar Kochba defeated the local Roman soldiers. He took Jerusalem and the altar was rebuilt on the Temple Mount. The Romans waited two years. They prevented supplies from reaching the Jewish army. They finally had to give up and the Romans marched into Jerusalem again. This time, Hadrian decided that this must be the end of Judaism. No more observance of Sabbath and holidays. No more studying and teaching of the Torah. It would be punishable by death. Rabbi Akiba refused to stop studying. He was condemned to be flayed alive. With his last breath, he cried out, “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One!”

With the downfall of Jerusalem, the Jews realized that war was senseless, evil and tragic. The Jews gave up war and for the next eighteen hundred years survived without it. The Jewish state existed no more.

With the Temple in ruins, the Pharisee rabbis took over. The synagogue became the central place in the Jewish community. Thousands of pagans flocked into the Jewish community because they were areas of refuge and decency. They accepted circumcision and became Jews. Perhaps if it hadn't been the time of the beginning of Christianity, Judaism would have become the religion of the West.

Thousands of Jews who opposed Rome were crucified as Jesus was. Blaming the Jews for something the Romans did is our nonsense, like all anti-Semitism. We have to remember that early followers of Jesus were Jews. Jesus came from Galilee. He was influenced, to a great extent, by John the Baptist, a Jewish prophet, who believed in washing the soul and purification. This was an ancient Jewish rite as, for instance, the Orthodox use of the “mikvah”. The sermons that Jesus preached were preached by Rabbi Hillel, whom Jesus admired and loved. His followers referred to him as the “Mashiah” or “Messiah” out of love and respect, and not the harsh Greek, “Jesus, the Christ”. Hatred of the Jew was not the doing of Jesus, but that of Paul, a Greek-Jewish tentmaker. He created Christianity and the Christian church. He was brilliant. He preached all over the Greek and Roman world for about twenty years. He never met Jesus. Unlike the Jews and

followers of Jesus who were filled with love, pacifism, and goodness, Paul defined man as basically evil, filthy, the work of the devil and sinful.

When Paul could no longer recruit Jewish followers through his preachings, he turned his hatred upon them and turned to the pagans. Circumcision was feared because of a mistaken belief that it would cause impotence. They flocked to the new church because they could now become Jews without pain.

Paul's hatred of his own people started the Christian religion with an obsession of hatred and destruction of Jews in the name of religion that was to last for the next two thousand years. It has provoked the murder of millions of human lives in such senselessness and cruelty that it will remain the shame of mankind as long as it exists on earth.

The early Christians called themselves Jews and thought of themselves as Jews. Christians depended on the Jews during their years of persecution by the Romans. Again and again, Christians were saved from death by Jewish bribes. They were sheltered and fed and hidden in Jewish homes for three hundred years. It was when Christianity was declared the official state religion of the Roman Empire by Emperor Constantine in 329A.D., that a separation of Jew and Christian was complete.

Even in the time of Jesus, Jews found themselves in the Diaspora (Greek for dispersion). Even after two thousand five hundred years, it was, in the Jewish mind, a temporary condition. The undying hatred of the Christian drove the Jew from city to city, from country to country. Then the Moslems joined in to discourage Jews from living in Moslem lands.

V. The Diaspora

In the Middle Ages, Jews pushed north and established communities in England, Holland and Germany. Persecution drove them to the Baltic countries and into Poland and the Ukraine.

For three hundred years, the Jews, together with the tolerance of the Arabs, existed in Spain in what was termed the "Golden Age". Like all golden ages, the glitter is somewhat unreal. By the tenth century and most of the years that followed, the life of a Jew resembled a chronic toothache – it was beautiful whenever it stopped hurting. The

gold was a very thin plating and the simple fact of existence was turned into a glorified privilege. These are the “Golden Ages” the Jewish historians refer to.

(I could not resist copying word for word, from Howard Fast’s analogy to the “Golden Age”.)

Spain had become one of the greatest Jewish centers in the world until persecution drove the Jews out of the land they lived in longer than the Christians who expelled them. The Spanish Jew went to Greece, Turkey, and North Africa. Some went to the New World.

We must go back to how Jews found themselves in Christian Spain. The Christian kings of Spain of Northern Spain were fascinated by the wisdom. They saw that they could turn the expulsion of the Jew from Moslem Spain to their advantage. They let it known that Christian Spain and Christian Portugal would welcome Jews. So, they came by the tens of thousands. This had an immediate effect toward their strides to sea power. The Jews alone could produce dependable maps of the world at that time. They were able to be mapmakers because of hundred of years experience, acquired from establishing trade routes to China, India, Russia, Scandinavia and Italy, as well as the Mediterranean. They knew every language. They were able to make instruments for stellar observation.. Spain became a show place of wealth and distinction.

This was short-lived. The Order of the Dominicans decided that this embrace of the Jews had gone far enough. This was another short-lived “Golden Age”. The choice was baptism or death. A lot of Jews chose baptism. It was the greatest mass conversion of Jews in history. This took place between 1391 and 1410. Those that converted to Christianity had to eat what Jews detested most, the pig. The Spanish word for swine was “marrano”.

By 1478, after ten years of the Inquisition and expulsion, the “Marranos” watched hundreds and hundreds of their fellows burned at the stake. Whole families, men, women, and little children consumed in flames. Art, science, culture, and progress perished almost overnight.

After a residence of almost two thousand years, Spain expelled the Jews and hurt herself beyond measure. Spain never recovered from this madness, fanaticism, and greed. The Jews still practiced their religion in secrecy. A special prayer was written for all of

those who were compelled to sin against God. It is “Kol Nidre”, sung on Yom Kippur. They are to be forgiven.

In the nineteenth century, the horrible conditions in Eastern Europe started a mass exodus of Jews to the United States. It is the final madness of Nazism that drove a new immigration of Jews into their ancient homeland of Palestine.

Since the Catholic countries forbade the Jews to own land or engage in agriculture, the Jews living in the Diaspora had no alternative but to engage in things they could carry. One never knew when they could be driven out without notice. Commonly, Jews dealt in money, jewels, and perfume. Because of the lack of sanitation or baths, no people were as dirty as those of Europe. Selling an ounce of perfume could feed a merchant’s family for a year.

Each country would welcome the Jew because of his expertise in business, trade, and medicine. In each case, it would begin with a “honeymoon” and end with a “divorce”. Once they learned the trades, they didn’t want his competition. So, with the aid of the church, they wanted them out of the country. In medieval times, the kings, princes, and emperors had a need for the Jew. For the most part, except for the clergy, royalty were illiterate. The Jew was literate from the time he was a child. Education and books were not new to him. Jews were adept at record keeping, collecting taxes, and the written word.

Of course, there was moneylending. The kings came to the Jew to finance their wars. Jewish tailors supplied the uniforms. Money and the use of money became a means of survival. If the Jew, as so many writers spread the lie, was a bloodsucker when it comes to lending money, why did the Christians come to them? The answer is shockingly obvious: because the Christian moneylender asked ten or twenty times as much interest. Sometimes the Jew was repaid, sometimes not. Jewish moneylenders were ethical. Christian moneylenders were not. The Christian practice of lending money at exorbitant rates became so widespread in Italy that the church knew they had to take some measures against it. They declared that only a reasonable rate of interest was acceptable.

The Jew created an atmosphere of trust and decency where there was none. They established international banking houses of great importance. They began the use of

international finance paper and mutual trust, and were able to “draw” on each other, thereby avoiding the transfer of funds in troubled times.

Medicine was another service the Jew provided in the Diaspora. He was physician to the Christian and Moslem world. During the Middle Ages, he was the only physician with real skill. Beside the ancient writings on medicine in the Talmud, he had the ability to read the medical books of Hippocrates and others. Other physician’s knowledge of medicine was pitiful. At best, he was a barber, undertaker, unwashed and terribly ignorant. The fact that the Christian world was totally illiterate, apart from the clergy, made the training of Christian physicians almost impossible.

European nobility preferred Jewish doctors to their Christian counterparts. All kinds of laws and restrictions were passed against Jewish physicians. But the will to survive, by the nobility, was greater than their anti-Semitism. They managed to hide or to disguise their Jewish physicians. Many Jewish communities were saved because of the need for Jewish doctors and surgeons.

All kinds of plagues swept through Europe during the Middle Ages. The Jewish doctor was accused of poisoning the wells and starting the plague. These accusers failed to take notice, or didn’t care that Jews were also dying, but to a lesser degree, because they obeyed strict sanitary and dietary laws.

The great Moses ben Maimon (better known as Maimonides), was born in 1135 A.D. in Cordova, Spain. Because the fanatical Moslem rulers of the time gave the people in Spain a simple choice, convert or die, many Jews escaped to Christian Spain. Maimonides’ father fled with his family to Palestine. It was the time of the Crusades, whose insane bloodlust and cruelty were hard to match until Hitler’s time. It was impossible for Jews to live there, so they took refuge in North Africa where they settled permanently. By this time, Maimonides was in his thirties. He became a rabbi, a scholar, a famous physician, a trader, and world authority on jewels. He became a personal physician to the Viceroy of Egypt. He was a writer on religion and medicine. His most famous work is *The Guide to the Perplexed*. Many Jews loved their two Moses’ as the brightest jewels in their history.

VI. The Crusades

The time of the Crusades had arrived. To the feudal leader of England, France, Germany, and Italy, it was the opportunity to break the Moslem-Jewish trade in that part of the world. To the church, it was a crusade for Christianity, to drive the infidel, the Jew and the Moslem, out of the Holy Land.

The chivalrous Godfrey of Bouillon swore to redeem Jerusalem as the city of Jesus. "I will avenge the blood of little Jesus, on the blood of the Jews, and God willing, leave not one of the cursed lot alive!" But, being a reasonable man, he accepted protection money; today's equivalent of twenty thousand dollars, from every Jewish community he overran. This was the first crusade in 1096.

Surprisingly on this question, the church was split. There were Catholic bishops who opened their homes to the Jews and died with them as well. In the city of Mainz, the Archbishop Ruthard, sick at what was happening, brought them into the monastery, but the crusaders forced the gates and killed hundreds of men, women, and children. The Jews were helpless before the mailed knights. In Worms, all of the Jews were killed. In Cologne, where the whole city population benefited from Jewish charities for centuries, the Christians took the Jews into their own houses and told the crusaders to pass or take the city by fire and sword. The crusaders had no stomach for such a fight so they held off. At Altenach, Archbishop Egbert tried to defend the Jews and was beaten half to death. In England, they considered how far they would have to go to Jerusalem to kill Jews when they had them here at home, so, the followers of Richard the Lion-Hearted went after them from city to city. In the town of Ospring, things got a bit out of control and they killed a dozen Christians. One could go on and one detailing the horrors that happened all over Europe.

So, was Jesus honored in a mighty Christian effort called the "Holy Crusades"? By 1320, the nightmare was over. For the Jews of Europe however, it was not finished at all.

We'll never know how many Jews fled Germany during the Crusades. They ran to the kinder heathens of Poland and Lithuania and they took their language with them. This is how Yiddish became a Jewish language with a German base.

After the Crusades, Jewish life in Europe changed a great deal. Jews were isolated and cut off from normal intercourse with people around them. Their great commercial network was smashed. Italian and French ship-owners destroyed all of the Jewish cargo ships. Permissive lawlessness against the Jews was considered lawful. Serious debates took place on the question of whether it was a sin to murder a Jew and whether it was more sinful to murder a Jewish child than a Jewish woman. Hate became legitimate against the Anti-Christ, the Jew who was considered Satan.

VII. The Crusades to today – Summary

After the Crusades, Europe became, for the Jews, a place of horror. In 1298, Rindfleisch, a German knight, promoted dreadful massacres. This stemmed from the evil lie that Jews murder little gentile children, preferably blondes and use their blood for ritual purposes. This malicious nonsense exists in some German minds to the present day.

In 1248, the “Black Death” hit Europe. The Jew was again singled out for murder. Over 210 communities of Jews were annihilated. Pope Clement VI, issued a decree pleading for mercy for the Jew. The Emperor Charles IV negated this. It was the worst holocaust in the Middle Ages up to the time of Adolf Hitler.

The Protestant Reformation began in Germany. The Jews had great hopes of the coming of better days, but Martin Luther’s failure to convert the Jews made him a bitter anti-Semite.

So, the Jew in the European Diaspora found refuge in Poland and Russia. Not being allowed in metropolitan cities, they built small isolated communities of their own (the shtetle) and for centuries dreamed of the coming of the Messiah and the return to their ancient sunny land away from the cold, dark winters. To this day, they continue to greet each other with “Next year in Jerusalem”.

It was a time of Messiah hopes and false Messiahs. There arose an extraordinary man. His name was Israel ben Eliezer and he was called the “Baal Shem-Tov”, which is Hebrew for “the Master of God’s Good Name”. He taught that a man can witness God through ecstasy. He preached of religion, the joy of obeying God’s commandments, the joy of trust and the love of God. This, enlightenment was welcome in a period of such hopelessness.

The people followed his movement by the thousands. It was called Hassidamism. It finally failed, but there are still some followers in America and Israel.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the German Jew was finally allowed out of the ghetto and began to take part in German life. Like a cork, when the pressure is relieved, comes floating to the top, so the Jews rose to prominence in almost every field. They entered with brilliance and distinction as writers, musicians, financiers, scientists, and physicians. Anti- Semitism did not disappear. Hatred for the Jews was still there but the German became cultured and enlightened, and during that interval, their passion for mass murder and the German delight in death was temporarily subdued. This extended until the first part of the 20th century, and then came the greatest tragedy the world ever witnessed.

We will not discuss the Holocaust. It is too fresh a wound that will take long to heal and must never be forgotten. Never, in all of our history, are we as free of fear and persecution as we are in this blessed land, the great and wonderful United States of America.

After two thousand years, the world saw fit that the Jews should have a homeland of their own. The Moslem nations waged four wars to prevent it and lost each war. Again, Jewish blood was shed - this time in victory.

Until the Moslem world opts for a peaceful solution instead of the futility of revenge, peace is a long way off.