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The Story of the Chosen People is a biblical historical narrative which will propel you to lands such as Sumeria, Egypt, Phoenicia, Israel, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia
PREFACE

In this little volume the author has tried to give a consecutive story of the Jews, or Chosen People, as objectively as the Stories of the Greeks and of the Romans, with which it forms a series. The narrative has been written in the simplest style, so as to enable even the youngest child of the third or fourth reader grade to understand it.

Not the least attempt has been made to dwell upon the strictly religious side of the subject, for, owing to the mixed population in our large cities and schools, such an attempt would be impracticable. The sole aim of this very elementary work is to familiarize children, be they of Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Freethinker parentage, with the outline of the story contained in the Old Testament, so that they can understand the allusions which appear even in juvenile literature, and can look with intelligent appreciation upon the reproductions of works of art which are now to be found in nearly all our books and magazines.

I have found that, when told to young children, these historical narratives prove a source of much interest, and that the elementary knowledge then obtained remains so clear and vivid that even when they are grown up, and able to enter into the subject more thoroughly, the impression of the story as first heard is the one which is most permanent.

While it may seem that, with all the facilities which the country affords to rich and poor alike, such instruction in schools would be superfluous, the fact remains that, with the exception of a few well-known stories, the children have no idea of the contents of the Old Testament. This lack of general information on the subject is often a great drawback to teachers in the course of their instruction, as references are constantly made to the Bible.

Although this is a juvenile history of the Jews, it has not been written without much research; and, in order to make it as brief, comprehensive, and accurate as possible, many authorities beside the Bible, Josephus, and the Bible dictionaries, have been consulted.

It is hoped that an inkling of the story of the Jews will stimulate the children's interest, will early imbue them with a taste for history, and will give them the desire to gain further and more complete information on the subject when they grow older.

We are indebted to Merton Russell Cotes, Esq., J.P., F.R.G.S., ex-Mayor of Bournemouth, for permission to reproduce T. M. Rooke's painting of Ahab and Elijah, now in his possession, and to Messrs. Braun, Clement & Co., for the use of several of their carbons.
CHAPTER I

THE CREATION

THE Bible, as you already know, is composed of two parts, called the Old and the New Testaments. Both Jews and Christians consider that the first part of this book is sacred, because it contains God's teachings as he revealed, or made them known, to man. They do not, however, agree about the second part, which is considered sacred only by Christians.

The Old Testament contains, besides God's teachings, a history of the Jews, which is so interesting and important that educated people of all countries and religions are expected to know all about it. It is this history which you are going to hear, but, of course, if you want it complete, you must read it in the Bible itself.

The very first book of the Bible is called Genesis, a word meaning "origin," because it tells us about the beginning, or origin, of the world. We are told that in the beginning there was neither land nor water, nor any living things, and that darkness rested over all.

This early stage of affairs, when the elements of all things were mixed up together, has been called Chaos (confusion); and we are told that God, the Almighty, who had no beginning or end, created, or made, the whole world out of Chaos.

The story is told very briefly indeed, and all the periods of creation are called days. Of course we now know that by days the writer of the book of Genesis did not mean twenty-four hours, as we do. The word "days" was used for an indefinite space of time; and, just as God is far more powerful than we can imagine, so his days are far longer than ours.

God's spirit moved over Chaos, and during the first day he said: "Let there be light." At these words the darkness which rested over all things vanished, and light first appeared. This light shone through the thick vapors which then surrounded the earth.

During the second day, or period, the vapors parted, and now for the first time the blue sky could mirror itself in the blue waters which covered the face of the earth. As the clouds in the sky could rain down water, the Bible says that on the second day God divided the waters which were under the firmament [or sky] from the waters which were above the firmament."

During the third day, or period, another great change took place; for the crust of the earth, shaken by earthquakes, formed great bumps and hollows. Thus were formed mountains and valleys; and the waters, which had covered all the face of the earth, now flowed into the deep basins, where they formed lakes, seas, and oceans.

As soon as dry land appeared, God said that the earth should bring forth grass, trees, and plants of all kinds; and each one was to have seeds, so that new plants would replace the old as soon as they died. The earth had been bare and ugly when it first rose up out of the waters; but it was now covered with verdure, and became beautiful as it is to-day.

On the fourth day, God allowed the lights in the sky to be seen; and the sun, moon, and stars began to serve, as they do now, to
mark the days and the nights, the seasons and the years. Darkness and light were thus clearly divided, and we are told that "God saw that it was good."

During the fifth day, or period, when the rays of the sun had strengthened the trees and plants, God created the birds and fishes, and bade them multiply and fly through the air, and fill all the waters in the seas. It is in obedience to this command that the birds and fishes lay eggs and hatch their young.

The sixth day, or period, was spent in the creation of the higher animals, and lastly of man. Now the Bible tells us that man was formed out of earth, but that he was different from all the beings which had already been created, because he was like God.

This first man bore the name of Adam. Although his body was made of dust, his life was breathed into him by God, who brought all the animals to him that he might name them and told him that he should be master over them all.

God had labored for six whole days, or periods, and from Chaos had brought forth the world and all the living creatures in it. He gazed upon his work, "saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." The labor was done, so, on the seventh day, God "rested from all his work."

It is partly because God rested on the seventh day, after laboring six days, that we work for six days of the week, and rest on the seventh; and each Sunday is thus an anniversary of God's day of rest.

CHAPTER II

THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

ADAM had been placed in a beautiful garden named Eden, which God had planted, and which was watered by four rivers. Here God came to visit the first man, and told him that he could eat of the fruit of every plant and tree in the garden, except the fruit which grew on "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." This tree was placed in the center of the garden, and God gave this order to find out whether Adam would obey him.

Besides, if the man did not eat of the fruit, he would never know trouble or sickness. At the same time that God gave this first command, or law, he added the first punishment, or penalty, saying: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

God now brought the animals which he had created, so that Adam might name them all. In doing so, the man saw that the beasts went about in pairs, and that he was the only living creature who had no mate. He felt very lonely when he saw this, and told God that he would like to have a companion like himself. So the Creator "caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs," and from it made a woman.

When Adam awoke, God brought the first woman to him.

Adam saw that she was a part of himself; and he said that a man shall "leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife." Thus, in the Garden of Eden and in the presence of God
himself, the first marriage was celebrated; and Adam and his wife were so pure and innocent that they were perfectly happy, and no more ashamed of being naked than little children.

Adam dwelt in the Garden of Eden with Eve, as the first woman was called, in perfect happiness, which was to last as long as they obeyed God and did not eat any of the fruit which hung on "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Unfortunately, however, there was an evil spirit, called the Tempter, the Devil, or Satan, who entered the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent.

He was jealous of the happiness of Adam and Eve, and very anxious to deprive them of it. So he spoke to Eve, and told her that God had forbidden their eating any of the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden only because he wanted to keep it all for himself.

The serpent then urged Eve to taste the fruit, saying: "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Eve believed the words of the wicked serpent, ate some of the fruit, and gave some to Adam, who ate it too.

As the serpent had said, their eyes were now opened; and, whereas they had known only good before, they now knew evil also. God had seen that they would never be perfectly happy if they knew evil, and he had kindly kept that knowledge from them.

But now they had disobeyed his command, and with the knowledge of evil came the feeling of shame and fear, which they had never had before, and which made them go and hide among the trees of the garden. In the cool of the day, God came into the garden, and called to them. Adam came slowly, in answer to this call, and excused himself, saying that he was afraid to come out because he was naked.

At these words, God asked him whether he had tasted the forbidden fruit; and when Adam confessed that the woman had given him some, God questioned Eve. She, in her turn, confessed her disobedience, but said that the serpent had tempted her.

Both Adam and Eve had broken the first law, so they had to suffer the punishment which God had warned them they must receive. The serpent, who had tempted the woman, was condemned to be hated of all men, and to crawl in the dust. Eve was told that she must obey her husband, and that she would suffer, while Adam was doomed to a life of hard work, because the earth would no longer yield him food unless he tilled the soil.

No promise was added to make the serpent's sentence less severe, but Eve was told that her children would fight against the serpent (the spirit of evil), and that in time one of them would conquer him. Adam was promised that his toil would not be in vain, but that God would bless it and enable him to earn, by the sweat of his brow, the bread without which he could not live.

When the judgment against the serpent, the man, and the woman had thus been given, God reminded Adam and Eve that, as they had sinned, they would suffer death. He warned them that as their bodies had been made of dust, they could not last forever, using the words which are now spoken in the funeral service: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."
CHAPTER III

THE FIRST MURDER

GOD is as good as he is just, so he next taught Adam and Eve how to clothe themselves in the skins of wild beasts, and then sent them out of the Garden of Eden, which they were never to see again. God did not want them to come back there, because the tree of life grew in the garden, and as long as they ate of its fruit they could not die. To prevent their coming in again, he placed an angel at the gates of Paradise (Eden), and armed him with a flaming sword which turned every way.

Although Adam and Eve suffered keenly for their disobedience, they did not despair. They believed God's words, and began to look forward to the time when the promised child would come, who, by killing the serpent, would make up for the harm they had done. The mention of this child is the first prophecy about the Messiah, or Redeemer; and from the day she left Eden, Eve lived in constant hope of his coming. To prevent man from forgetting this promise, and, the Christians say, as a sign of the last great sacrifice in the Bible, God also taught Adam and Eve to offer living animals upon his altar.

It was after they had been driven out of Eden that Eve gave birth to her first child, in sorrow and suffering, as God had foretold. This child was called Cain, a word which means "a possession," because his mother thought that he was the promised child; but when her second son, Abel, meaning "a breath or vapor," was born, Eve began to understand that the time for the keeping of God's promise might still be a long way off.

While Eve nursed her children, Adam tilled the soil, and when the two boys grew up, they worked too, Cain at the plow, and Abel as a shepherd. Thus, you see, farming and cattle raising were the two first occupations of man.

When these two young men were old enough, they got ready to offer a sacrifice to God. But Cain, the elder, was in a bad temper when he laid a basket of fruit on the altar. An offering made in such a spirit could not be agreeable to God, so he not only refused it, but also rebuked Cain for his bad feelings. Abel, who was gentle and loving, brought a lamb from his flock, and laid it upon the altar, full of love and trust in God; so his sacrifice was accepted.

Shortly after this ceremony, the two brothers met in a very lonely place; and Cain, who had long been jealous of his brother, took this chance to fall upon him and murder him. This first crime was very quickly punished. Even as Cain fled in terror from the spot where his brother's lifeless body was lying, God suddenly appeared to him, and asked: "Where is Abel, thy brother?"

Cain crossly answered: "Am I my brother's keeper?" But God knew all that had happened. To punish Cain, God told him that the earth would no longer bear any fruit under his care, and that he would not be allowed to make his home near the spot where his murdered brother lay.