

SERIES V

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No book of the Bible has been so dear to the hearts of men as the Book of Psalms. The Psalms are sung under every sky and in almost every human accent. They have found their way into the ritual of both synagogue and church. Calvin once said of it that it is the perfect anatomy of the human soul. And, in very truth, each Psalm seems to reveal some hidden corner of the human heart, some private grief, some troubled mood, some hope or joy or ecstasy. The Psalter also echoes the great moments and moods in the national experience of Israel through more than a thousand years, and, perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, reveals the profound and continuing spiritual character of Judaism. The influence of the Psalms upon the Western World is incalculable. Successive generations have been guided by these Psalms in the ways of devotion and piety, and have been taught to read the handwriting of God in nature, in history, in man's moral experiences, in the struggles and tribulations of his days, and in his own inarticulate yearnings for the dwelling places of the things imperishable. The Psalms have shown men the way to God through faith, holiness and sacrifice, and the precious gifts of confidence and comfort which come to those who take refuge in Him.

It is no wonder, then, that the Psalms have tempted Jewish expositors and homelists from earliest times. A Midrash on the Psalms was extant in early Talmudic times. Jewish philosophers, poets and grammarians wrote commentaries upon it in the Middle Ages, and in modern times the appeal of the Psalms to students and scholars has been no whit less.

Within the past year, our literature has been enriched by two important commentaries on this most beloved book of Israel. Dr. Moses Bottenwieser's monumental work on the Psalms, chronologically treated, represents the most comprehensive study which this millennial anthology of Jewish religious poetry has ever received at the hands of seasoned Biblical scholarship. It is a decisive advance on all that has been known heretofore

about the text, style, structure, history and religious significance of these one hundred and fifty de thless religious lyrics.

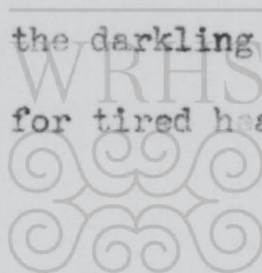
Dr. Solomon B. Freehof has given us a more popular commentary of the Psalms which is intended for the lay-reader. It is written in that charming, concise and lucid style which one has come to associate both with the written and the spoken word of this most gifted and learned teacher and preacher in Israel. While the work is written in a non-technical vein for the average reader, it nevertheless bears on every page the stamp of sound and authentic scholarship. Dr. Freehof draws upon the classic Jewish commentators of the past - Saadia, Kimchi, Ibn Ezra, Rashi and others, as well as upon the more modern students of the Psalms, both Jewish and non-Jewish. He blends the traditional Jewish interpretation with the modern, and what he finds, he recasts and enriches by his own research and insight. The result is a most gratifying piece of expository labor, fresh and luminous, presented with all the consummate skill of a trained and inspired teacher.

The volume opens with a concise but quite adequate general introduction to the Psalms - its history, arrangement and poetic structure, and the role which it played in the development of religious thought and public worship in the Western World. Each Psalm is then commented upon separately, the theme announced, the ethical and spiritual content noted, the historical allusions identified, and wherever necessary, the obscure words and phrases explained. No pedantry here, no grave marshalling of authorities in support of a platitude and no straining after scholarly exhibitionism. Only that which is calculated to give the reader a correct understanding and a deeper appreciation of the Psalms, and to make their reading more enjoyable and more rewarding is incorporated by Dr. Freehof in his Commentary.

This volume will prove a welcome gateway for many to the wide and fascinating spiritual landscapes of the Psalms. The Union of American

Hebrew Congregations is to be congratulated upon inaugurating its new series of commentaries for Bible readers with this splendid exposition of Psalms from the pen of Dr. Freehof. They should also be commended for the artistic setting which they have given to Dr. Freehof's book, its physical attractiveness and its clear and readable type.

It is most appropriate that this book should make its appearance at this time. In all periods of great affliction "when the waters came in even unto the soul" Israel turned to the Psalms for comfort and strengthening. Its tender cadences soothed the hearts of our people, its mighty rhythms and resounding strophes heartened them. Perhaps we, too, of this generation, may find the wisdom to turn to this great storehouse of the spirit now that we find ourselves upon the darkling plain... The Psalms can still perform their blessed ministry for tired hearts and weary minds, and for a people in sore distress.



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