

nation—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, He who commanded them to depart out of Egypt and gave them the land of Canaan. With the other Eastern nations, the primary and fundamental existence was Nature; but that, with the Hebrews, becomes a mere creature, and Spirit is foremost. God is the creator of Nature and all men, the only first cause of all things. The great element in the Jewish religion was exclusive unity—only one people, only one God. All other gods were regarded as thoroughly false; nothing divine was admitted to exist in them. Of course, the fact is, that however erroneous a religion may be, it possesses at least some mutilated and obscured truth. In the most imperfect forms some spiritual element exists, or existed, though the Jews were practically right in regarding the heathen worship as simply sensuous and immoral. In the religion of the Hebrews, Spirit became the one great truth, and true morality appeared; God was honoured, and could be honoured, only by righteousness, the reward of which was to be happiness, life, and temporal prosperity.

4. In the earliest history, that of Abraham and his first descendants, we have merely a family history, and the Jewish nation begins with the departure from Egypt in B.C. 1491. We may divide the interval between that time and the conquest of Judæa by the Romans into four periods; all the earlier dates being far from certain.

(a) *From the departure out of Egypt to the establishment of the monarchy under Saul*, B.C. 1491–1095.

(b) *From the establishment of the monarchy to the separation into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah*, B.C. 1095–975.

(c) *From the separation of the kingdoms to the Babylonian captivity*, B.C. 975–588.

(a) *From the Babylonian captivity to the conquest of Judæa by Rome*, B.C. 588–63.

5. The first period opens, on the departure from Egypt, with the *theocracy* or government by God in revelations of His will to the people, through laws directly given from Sinai, and communications made to the high-priest. This lasted, during the wanderings in the wilderness under Moses, and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, until B.C. 1426. Then came the *Federal Republic*, from 1426 to 1095, under which system the tribes were separately governed, subject to the divine laws, by their own patriarchs, but were all united in one state and one common bond by the worship of Jehovah. As the people