

***“How odd of God – The enigma of Jewish history”***

By

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*‘How odd of God*

*To choose the Jews;*

*But not so odd -*

They aired His views!

He didn’t have

A PR man,

So He hit upon

An inspired plan:

To touch the heart

Of Abraham,

To spearhead

His programme,

And to ensure

That his clan,

When it settled

In Canaan,

Remained forever

In the van

Of moves

To elevate man,

So nations  
Might be guaranteed  
A peaceful world  
For their seed.

But who loves  
A 'holier than thou',  
With texts, for most,  
Too high-brow,  
Who, in ancient Egypt,  
Refused to tow  
The idolatrous  
Status quo;  
Who were the world's first  
Monotheists,  
And theological  
Theorists;  
Who built a Temple  
To the Most High,  
Accepting His law,  
Without asking, 'why?'  
Who pursued wisdom  
And human rights,  
With virtue, never  
Beyond their sights?  
  
Was it any wonder

They were God's choice,  
When, to the down-trodden,  
They lent their voice?  
Does it surprise  
That they were feared,  
And at their life-style,  
Heathens jeered;  
That their land was invaded,  
And upon their heads,  
Insults cascaded?

A people that challenged  
The greatest of nations –  
Undermining their very  
Moral foundations -  
Assyria, Persia,  
Babylon and Greece,  
Allowing the Romans  
No moments of peace –  
Does it perplex  
That, every time,  
They found themselves  
In the firing-line?

Then a teacher appeared,  
Out of the blue,  
Named Joshua -

In Greek,  
Jesu.  
The accepted traditions  
Of Jewish law,  
He sought to revise –  
And crowds,  
He'd draw;  
Performing miracles,  
Healing the sick;  
With twelve disciples -  
His chosen clique.

They promoted him  
As 'king of the Jews';  
For the Romans,  
That wasn't,  
At all, good news!  
That was an act  
Of pure sedition;  
A threat to the Emperor's  
Position.

His crucifixion  
Touched many hearts;  
Slogans were hurled  
At the Roman ramparts.  
Voices were joined,

Of association  
With the new Christian  
Dispensation.

So, two fronts, now,  
Challenged the Jews;  
Armed struggle with Rome,  
And divergent views  
On Sabbath, circumcision,  
And dietary law,  
And the divinity of Jesu –  
A concept most raw.

*How odd of God  
To choose the Jews;  
Hard-wired with  
Divergent views.*

Christianity grew  
Exponentially due  
To its vigorous  
Missionary thrust,  
While Judaism turned  
In on itself,  
In a climate of  
Mutual distrust.

Denounced for the crime

Of Deicide,

The Jews were

An object of hate;

For two thousand years,

Persecution ensued -

With a venom

That wouldn't abate.

Clothes,

Yellow-starred;

Menial trades;

Money-lenders;

Renegades;

Pauper peddlers,

Tax-collectors,

Christ rejecters,

Well infectors;

Spreaders of

The Black Death;

Desecrating the Host

With every breath.

So, on their way

To the Crusades,

Christian knights made

Their violent raids

On Jewish homes

Without the aid

Of barricade

Or stockade.

Devoid of training

In defence,

All resistance

Was useless.

Bows or swords,

Unable to wield -

They were massacred

In home and field.

They decreed the eviction

Of the remaining Jews;

Wretches that couldn't

Pay their dues.

They cancelled

All debts,

That, to them,

Were owed,

Before driving them onto

Exile's highroad.

German Protestants

Stepped into the fray;  
Luther determined  
To make the Jews pay;  
Authoring tracts,  
Saturated with hate:  
'Let Jews never enter  
A Christian land's gate'.

His work was regarded  
As holy writ;  
Authoritative, passionate,  
Full of spirit.

He infected the psyche  
Of subsequent ages -  
Pogroms applauded  
By leading sages.

Is it any wonder  
Such historic hate -  
Generated by king,  
Subject and prelate,  
And sourced  
By theology's  
Great weight –  
Led, inexorably, to  
The crematoria gate?



Islam viewed Jews  
With greater respect;  
Appreciating  
Their intellect;  
'People of the Book',  
Was the phrase  
They coined,  
Though separation  
Was enjoined.

It offered refuge  
To the exiled,  
With many differences  
Reconciled;  
A similar concept  
Of God,  
They shared;  
Their respective traditions,  
Readily compared;  
Though the order of the day  
Was segregation,  
With the Jews perceived  
As a *dhimmi* nation,  
'Inferior',  
by Sheikh Umar's  
Declaration.

Yet Jews prospered

In every trade;

Ever doing

As they were bade.

Bankers, doctors,

Merchants galore;

Scholars, politicians,

And a conquistador!

Religions being

What they are,

Each generation

Bore its scar.

Into *Mellah* – ghettos

Jews were segregated,

And, often,

Barely tolerated.

Extremist sects

Were not unknown:

Almohads stirred up

Violence,

Full-blown.

A massacre in Granada

In 1066;

The Jews of Meshed

Found themselves betwixt

The choice of death,  
With no appeal,  
Or Islamic conversion -  
A situation,  
Surreal!

In more recent times,  
When the Shah was deposed,  
The Jews of Iran  
Rightly supposed  
That choice of a Mullah,  
Of fundamentalist bent,  
Was a warning to leave,  
By common assent.

The Crusader wind,  
Again,  
Sharply blows,  
As extremism  
Just grows and grows;  
With medievalism  
Reincarnated -  
And Jews,  
By all sides,  
Equally hated.

*How odd of God*

*To choose the Jews;*

Chosen for what? -

To be accused

Of special favours

By Him bestowed?

Of laying claim

To a higher code?

Elusive favours,

That's for sure;

Favours that have

No allure;

That only the faithful

Can discern,

Assured that paradise,

They'll earn;

Who believe they hear

Messiah's call,

Urging them on

To walk tall,

For they possess

The wherewithal,

To save themselves

When others

Fall;

To commit themselves

To His will,

And hear His voice -

Though small

And still.

*How odd of God*

*To choose the Jews;*

Of all the concepts

That amuse

So many, Lord,

Even I declare

That this is one

That I can't square

With all the anguish

And despair

Bred by the Holocaust

In full glare

Of a world,

To whose hate,

Jews were heir.

'The mysteries

Are all Yours,

Lord';

Beat into ploughshare,

Every sword;

Let nations know

It's not so odd

To choose a nation

That has trod

The path of God –

But felt the rod!

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