



A Vindication of Judaism: The Polemics of the Hertz Pentateuch (The Moreshet Series, V. 14)

Harvey Warren Meirovich

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The Hertz Pentateuch has been a mainstay of synagogues in the English-speaking world for more than half a century. Originally published in five volumes (1929-1935), it was the first English-language commentary on the entire Torah that was intended for a Jewish audience. The editor, Joseph Hertz, was the first rabbinical graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary and later served as chief rabbi of the British Empire from 1913 until 1946.

In *A Vindication of Judaism*, Harvey Meirovich describes the manner in which Hertz added a distinctive Jewish voice to the Christian-dominated world of biblical scholarship. Hertz sought both to enhance Jewish literacy and to reaffirm the essential relationship between the Bible and the Jewish people. A staunch advocate of "positive-historical Judaism," the ideological cornerstone of Conservative Judaism, Hertz cast his net wide in endeavoring to reach his audience. He drew on general world culture and archaeological research as well as traditional sources in order to demonstrate the sophistication and continuing relevance of biblical thought. At the same time, he attacked what he perceived as the excesses of Reform Judaism and the pernicious influence of Hellenism, including Christianity, on biblical thought.

Using a multidisciplinary approach, Meirovich carefully analyzes Hertz's contribution as well as his polemical stances. Like all of the great Jewish biblical commentators, Hertz sought to be respectful of tradition and, at the same time, attentive to the intellectual currents and spiritual needs of his time. With meticulous attention to both traditional sources and modern scholarship, Meirovich shows a deep understanding of the extraordinary contribution that the Hertz Pentateuch has made to modern Jewish culture.

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