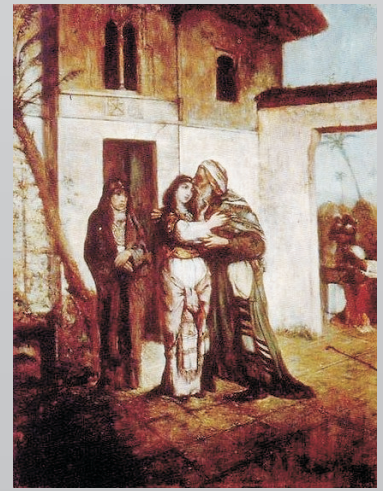


I. Nathan. Daja. Recha. The Dervish

Under the roof of Nathan's house, the three major monotheistic religions peacefully live together: Nathan himself is a Jewish merchant, his adopted daughter Recha is being brought up by a radical Christian, Daja, and Al-Hafi, the Dervish and treasurer of the Sultan, is his close friend and chess-partner. Nathan's independent spirit and his mellow, prudent ways are the balancing element between those contrasts.

During Nathan's absence, a fire devastated his house. A Christian Templar, whose life had been spared by the Sultan, saved Recha from the flames.

Nathan's narrative as to how Recha (who had been born to Christian parents) was given under his care, is a powerful and dramatic reminder of the persecution of Jews throughout history.



II. The Sultan. Zittah. The Imam

Sultan Saladin is an enlightened and thoughtful man, his beautiful sister Zittah is an elegant lady. They are both rooted deeply in their faith and see themselves victimized by Christian crusades. An armistice, currently in place, is frequently broken by the Templars.

As Saladin is short on funds, he negotiates a loan from Nathan. He tries to up the ante by asking him, which of the three major religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) is the true one, and threatens him with loss of life and livelihood. Nathan answers with the "Ring" parable.

III. The Templar. The Monk. The Patriarch

The young templar who has saved Nathan's daughter from the flames, carries in him a deep resentment against Jews. The Christian patriarch of Jerusalem, using a monk as a messenger, tries to lure him into spying and conspiring against the Sultan.

When the templar meets Nathan, he changes his mind about the Jew; later, he even falls in love with Recha. After learning that she had been baptized as a child, he asks for the patriarch's advice.

The patriarch tells him that Nathan must be burned on the stake for bringing up a Christian child in Jewish faith ("No matter what, the Jew must burn!")



IV. The Ring Parable

The "Ring" parable which Nathan presents to the Sultan, reflects the long-standing Jewish tradition of sharing wisdom and experience in the form of tales, stories, and parables. It is a moving and timeless appeal to enlightenment and insight, and an impressive plea for religious and cultural tolerance.