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OBSERVATIONS
ON
THE JEWISH RITUAL
OF THE
PRESENT TIME.

By H. GUEDALLA.

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PREFACE.

THERE is very little of importance to cavil at in the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Ritual adopted in Bevis Marks, except the anomalies I have pointed out in the following few pages.

The Ritual adopted in Berkeley Street, and altered to order by an anonymous incompetent hand, is, on the contrary, open to numerous objections.

Dr. Zunz, now upwards of ninety, has given me permission to have his Gottesdienstliche Vorträge, etc., translated and published in English, and this ought to be instantly carried out by subscription.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE JEWISH RITUAL.

MAIMONIDES (Tephilla 1) thus expresses himself on the origin of the prayers: "The commandment for daily prayer is contained in the Scripture passage, 'Ye shall serve the Lord your God' (Exodus xxiii. 25). Ezra and his school composed for the children of the Israelites carried into captivity in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the form of the eighteen blessings (עשרה עשרה) for daily prayers. The number of prayers was appointed by the Great Synod, according to the number of the sacrifices prescribed." Maimonides relies on the Talmud as his authority (vide Berachoth, fol. 33): "The men of the Great Synod appointed for the Israelites, blessing, prayers, sanctifications, and service on the going out of Sabbaths and Festivals." We know but very little of the prayers adopted at the time of the Second Temple; the only document remaining to us is contained in Mishnah Tamid, § 32 b, where we find the following account respecting the early prayer in the Temple:

אמר להם הממונה ברכו ברכה אחת. והם ברכו. קראו עשרת הדברות. שמע. והיה אם שמוע. ויאמר. ברכו את העם שלש ברכות. אמת ויציב. ועבודה וברכה כהנים. ובשבת מוסיפין ברכה אחת למשמר היוצא:

This short divine service now consisted, according to the interpretation of Samuel in Tract Berachoth (§ 11 b), of the following parts, קריאת שמע, עשרת הדברות, אהבה רבה, קריאת שמע, אמת ויציב, רצה ומודים, ושים שלום. We may probably regard these compositions as the most ancient prayers, which probably owe their origin to Ezra, the restorer of the Temple, and of the whole divine service thereof. A less



influential authority would hardly have caused them to be adopted in the Temple, since for this purpose the highest sanction was required.

So, in spite of some disbelieving this hypothesis, it seems to me to be the most probable one among the various conjectures which have been hazarded, although the exact time of the compilation of the Jewish prayers into a formally arranged ritual can never be ascertained with any degree of certainty, surrounded as the whole question is by so many difficulties. All are agreed, however, that at the time of the composition of the Talmud, no *written* ritual systematically arranged was in existence. Indeed, we find a strict prohibition of it in both the Talmuds quoted, Tosephta (vide Sabbath, f. 115), "The writing of the Blessings is like the burning of the Law." The real Tephilla (prayer of supplication) we find nowhere mentioned in the service of the Temple. The 'Keriath Shema' alone was used, being recorded as an affirmative Mosaic commandment.

Amongst the Tanaim, the most celebrated is R. Jehuda Hanassi, who flourished in the year 220, and who, by the composition of several prayers, exercised a beneficial influence in this field of labour, as well as that of the Mishnah of which he is the compiler.

Not unworthy of him are his two eminent disciples, Rab and Samuel, who flourished in the third century, and to whom we are indebted for several excellent compositions—(Berach, 29 a), *הבינו* (ibid. 33 b) *ורודעינו*, &c., &c. Among the succeeding Amoraim, R. Papa, in the year 350, is most distinguished for his great zeal in collecting and revising prayers (ibid, f. 60 b; Sota, 40 a, &c.); he was a colleague of R. Jochanan and R. Assa, the first compilers of both the Talmuds. The period of the Seburaim and Gaonim was the most productive in this branch of literature, and gave birth to the whole voluminous collection of *piyutim*. R. Amram Gaon, who flourished in the ninth century, is the author of the Siddur of the Germans; which, though composed for the Spanish Jews, was not accepted by them.

There were previously other ancient collections extant by R. Saadia Gaon, the 8th chapter of whose work, "The Book of Belief and Tenets" (*ספר האמונות והדעות*), I should like to see form part of our daily ritual. So profoundly does he express himself therein, and also so touchingly, that resignation to present sufferings is acquired in consoling images of the future. This celebrated work was translated by R. Judah Aben Tybbon, from the Arabic into Hebrew. There is another ancient collection of prayers, by R. Nissim Gaon, extant. Many of the daily prayers had already been mentioned in the Talmud, as in the debate about *ואהבת* *עולם* (Berach, f. 11 b.) The remembrances of the history of our sufferings in Egypt and at other memorable periods constitute the most important portions of our liturgy.

Hence the origin of many psalms, as the sublimest specimens of true national inspiration and genuine popular poetry (Psalms lxxviii. and cv., as well as the energetic prayers in 1 Chr. xvi. 8—37, and Neh. ix. 6—35). A classical *piyut* is the beautiful Ahalela in the New Year's Mussaf, by Jos. ben Jose. The principal authorities on the subject of our Ritual, are—Heidenheim, Rapport, Zunz, Luzzato, Dukes, Geiger, M. Zachs, Landeshut, Delitzsch, and Sachs; but I am afraid these are sealed books to most of the English Jews, who are now agitating for curtailments and alterations. Everyone of these authors ought to be at once translated into English, and then the agitators would be qualified to discuss the question with their co-religionists in France and Germany. Now, with a few exceptions, they are totally incompetent.

The Ritual of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, as read from the Amsterdam edition, published there by Mendez and others in the middle of the eighteenth century, contains, I consider, less objectionable passages than the Leghorn edition so extensively in use (from its cabbalistical and mystical prayers) in Turkey and Africa. It is, with very few exceptions, entirely free from

piyutim, so vehemently animadverted upon by the author of Peri Chadash. "If the Talmudists (he says) considered the usual eighteen blessings to be too long for the Sabbaths and Festivals, what would they have thought of this huge mass of *piyutim* which swells our prayer books to the size of folios.

Alas! we now waste our time with *piyutim*; and why should we affect to be more pious than our Rabbis, the authors of the Talmud, and not receive instruction from them, who stated: "It is obligatory on man to pronounce the whole of the eighteen blessings;" but the Rabbis did not burden the people with repeating the same number on the Sabbath, on account of its distinction as a day of rest.

Abarbanel says, in the name of the Rabbi Tanchoum that there are prayers heard favourably at the end of forty days. Deuteronomy ix. 25—ואתנפל לפני ה' את ארבעים—Deut. x. 3—וביום—היום עד מלאה של שם שבועים ימים; other prayers at the end of three days, ויתפלל יונה (Jonah ii. 2); others at the end of a day, ויגש אליהו (1 Kings xviii. 36); others in an hour (Psalm lxix. 5, 14), ואני תפלתי לך ה' עת רצון; and others even before they are said (Isaiah lxv. 24) מרם יקראו.

Sermons are now all the rage. They should never occupy more than twenty minutes in their delivery. To do much good they should be adapted to the intellectual appreciation of the audiences to whom they are addressed. Thus, what is excellent for refined listeners, is Greek to those with little education, being above their comprehension. Abarbanel says, sermons should be like the auditory, either simple, as תרועה; or *recherché* and winding, as שברים; or both, as שברים.

Why is עלינו, which formed a subject of much dispute, read three times daily? It has been transferred, without cause or reason, from the שמונה עשרה of the New Year's day into the daily prayers. In all ancient Sidurim, as in those of Rabbi Amram and Maimonides, it is found in its original place. M. Rapoport, with much probability, takes

Rab as its author. Some information as to the date when it was first read three times daily is solicited. There can be no question that with a view to bring about a reconciliation of creeds, and not to leave the smallest vestige of space for misunderstanding, very many equivocal passages, ought to be expunged from all our prayer books. Recriminations, imprecations, and vengeance, are too often met with. The latter is the most detestable of passions. Was it in keeping on New Year's day, after invoking it most bitterly on our enemies, to follow it up by asking for our own pardon? This obnoxious prayer is not found in the Portuguese and Spanish Ritual. I think we pray a good deal too much for the punishment of the wicked (forgetting that, perhaps, we may be praying against our very self), instead of doing so sufficiently for our own pardon. Our future motto should be, כל בני אדם אחים, "All the sons of Adam are brothers;" for we ought to recollect that on every place of worship should be inscribed: ביתי בית שם משהחיים, "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." The verse להבל וריק ומתפללים אל אל לא יושיע, "who worship vanity and emptiness, and make supplication to a God who cannot save," should be omitted from עלינו, and למלשינים from the daily *Amidah*, as its insertion was only caused by the schism which took place when the nation was divided into many sects of Pharisees, Sadducees, Caraites, &c. The קדיש is now said by the dozen. The author of "Magen Abraham" justly censures the custom of repeating the "Khaddish" so frequently, and his remarks deserve our earnest attention ("Orach Chaim," 54). It was originally, as its name denotes, repeated by the speaker in the Chaldaic language (the language of the people) after every "Derashah" (religious discourse). Its use was afterwards extended, and the "Kaddesh" served as the commencement and conclusion to every act of religious worship (*vide* Sota f. 48 a). Whenever said in different countries, it ought to be in the vernacular, as formerly.

The abolition of offerings and **מי שבירך** at synagogue would save much time. The amount contributed annually by every individual should be published once a year by the executive, and sent to every rate-payer.

With the exception of the few points to which I have referred, there is very little to cavil at in the Ritual, except a few anomalies, such as repeating the fifteen blessings one after the other, without reference either to time or circumstance (vide Tephilla 7, 9), which Maimonides justly censures as entirely indefensible.

"Ascaboth" at Sepher ought to be abolished, or there ought to be some limit to them. On the death of an important personage, whether celebrated for piety, wealth, or position, or only for being a "Parnas," we witness strange things. Everybody called up to Sepher makes an "Ascaba" for him, although several have scarcely in life ever spoken to the said person. It is the same on the death of a rabbi or minister, and even on that of an influential man who scarcely was a Jew, except in name. Only those in "Abel" (mourners) should be allowed to do so; but if none should be present, then one "Ascaba" might be allowed from another relative. "Ascaboth" might very well be limited to the day of funeral, after week of mourning, the 30th day, the 11th month, and the 12th month. On the Saturday after the funeral they are only read for financial purposes.

The substitution of Psalm xix. for **אל נקמור** on Wednesdays by the West London Synagogue of British Jews is a great improvement.

I have a Hebrew manuscript in which Psalm lxxvi. is used for the Tabernacle instead of Psalms xlii. and xliii. If verses 7 to 11 inclusive were omitted from Psalm xcii., or that for the Sabbath day, it would be better. Indeed, they look very much like interlopers from another Psalm. For the day of rest it would be preferable to praise God for His benefits to oneself than for the punishment of the wicked. Psalm cxii. is spoilt by the introduction of the 10th verse. Psalm xlix., read at the house of mourners,

is sublime, and ought to be said daily instead of the said special occasion, for which I do not consider it at all appropriate. The 16th verse throws rays of light on a future life and on the immortality of the soul; indeed, the whole Psalm is an earnest persuasion to build the faith of resurrection, not on worldly power, but on God. At the house of mourners a Psalm which would comfort and console the bereaved ones should be read. Out of England, Psalm xvi., **מכתם לדוד**, and not Psalm xlix., is read. Certainly it is much more appropriate. Amongst other things we are told that we must be calm at the sight of the riches of the wicked, who, in dying, cannot take them away with him, but he is sure to perish eternally. From this doctrine I dissent *in toto*.

I shall now proceed to consider the **עמידה**, or **שמונה עשרה**. Dr. Zunz (Gottesdienstliche Vorträge, &c., p. 369) established the conclusion that we have in the **עמידה** the labours of five successive epochs, in part at least posterior to the time of its supposed composition, and embracing a period of 300 years. He recognises in our liturgy of the present day the progressive labour of more than 1,000 years, and adds, page 379, "The sentences and prayers of revered individuals were disseminated by their disciples, and in the course of time obtained in many congregations the consideration due to a portion of the established ritual."

שמונה עשרה—the eighteen blessings underwent a considerable alteration, as they were found too prolix for the public on the Sabbath; and they were, therefore, reduced to seven.

With much probability it may also be maintained, that R. Gamliel, when he offered the prayers to be arranged by Simon Hapikuli, took particular notice of Sabbath and festival prayers, by causing the above modifications and appropriate insertions to be made. Thus, for the Sabbaths and festivals, seven blessings (**ברכת שבע**) were adopted, consisting of the first three and last three (of the eighteen blessings), and one blessing relating to the nature of the

festival. The schools of Hillel and Shammai carried on many debates about the number of insertions in case the new moon or another festival falls on the Sabbath (vide Erubim, f. 40 b). "If the new moon fall on the day of Sabbath, the disciples of Shammai maintain we ought to repeat eight blessings: those of Hillel maintain seven."

It therefore appears that the inserted blessing (אלהינו) is the most ancient part of this prayer; all the rest, except the Scriptural passages relating to the sacrifices, sanctification, and celebration of the festivals, is the production of the Gaonim, and not mentioned in the Talmud. R. Amram mentions אלהי אבותינו רצה וכו' and R. Moses Gaon, who lived before him, was already acquainted with the former prayer (Tur 268).

תכנת שבת, adopted in the German ritual in Mussaf, is from the prolific age of the *piyutim*, which is obvious from its having assumed a new form—the alphabet reversed, ת"ש ר"ק—characteristic of that school of poetry so eager for such ingenious adornments.

מגן אבות, a repetition of the שמנה עשרה condensed in short sentences, is of a Talmudic origin (Sabbath, 21 b). This repetition was introduced for the convenience of those persons who did not come in proper time for the service, and who would have had to return alone from the synagogues which were very distant from the towns, had they been obliged to go through the whole of the blessings. Such abridgments were much in use, and resorted to especially by husbandmen, workmen, and the unlearned people in general; and, in case of urgent affairs and other obstacles also by the learned (Berach 28). "R. Gamliel is of opinion that we ought to repeat every day eighteen blessings; R. Jehoshuah, however, maintains an abridgment of the eighteen blessings to be sufficient, whilst R. Akiba declares, if a person is well conversant with the Tephilla, he ought to repeat the eighteen blessings; and, if not, at least abridgment of them." In the absence of written copies of prayers, it was very difficult for the greater part of the congregation

to retain long prayers in their memory; abridged forms were therefore used. R. Samuel had this circumstance in view when he composed the excellent prayer הבינו (ibid. 29), which appeared to have obtained so much celebrity that it almost superseded the שמנה עשרה, and Abajah found it necessary vehemently to oppose the adoption of הבינו. (Abajah decried those who used the prayers of Habinenu.) In the Tosephta (B. a 3) several short and very expressive prayers of this kind are mentioned.

A Rabbi is not competent to introduce new forms and ceremonies which can be binding on any other congregation except his own, even if he should be supported by a Synod. In Germany each Chief Rabbi is infallible with his congregation; hence the number of rituals and customs in existence, and the eccentricities which many of them contain. Thus I have seen an Italian edition, printed 350 years ago, which contained on the Kipur day's service in the עכנו, twenty-six invocations to the twenty-six names of the different angels. Many of the rituals published during the present century contain a form of prayer for a person who has had troubled dreams, and add that for three kinds of dreams, he may fast on the Sabbath day; viz., if he sees the Sepher Torah burning; if he hears the Nehila on Kipur; and if he sees his house or his teeth fall, when most likely all came from eating an indigestible supper.

Then at the house of mourners for the week I have heard (much to my disapprobation) six portions of a psalm commencing by the initials קרע שטן ("Karah Satan") and which are found in Psalm cxix. alphabetically arranged in Hebrew. The same initials are found in the second verse of the prayer אנה בכה, and, according to tradition, both have the virtue of keeping off Satan or the Devil.

I should like particularly to be informed why so much importance is attached at the present day to הושענא רבה and how long the custom has existed, seeing that it is not mentioned even in the Mishnah.

I will now open the *Seddur* itself, and examine in detail

the age of each prayer, and in doing this, shall mostly follow the order of the established prayer book. I am indebted for most of the details to an article of D. Oppenheim's, published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, 1845.

מה מוכר.—Prayer on entering the synagogue, is composed of Scriptural verses.

יגדל—a didactic poem, reciting the thirteen articles of faith as the principles of Judaism. Both this poem and the succeeding hymn אדון אולם are of more modern date. M. Fürstenthal, in his "Morch," ascribes the former to R. Jechiel Bar Baruch, because the final strophe יהיה אל ברוב י"ה"ב"ב forms the acrostic וכו' ברוך וכו'.

The blessing on the cleansing of hands (נטולת ידים) is found in Berachoth (f. 66 b.), where R. Papa mentions it, though uncertain about its proper conclusion, which was rectified by R. Shesat.

The praises and blessings before the reading of the Torah (ברכי התורה), and the study of the Law (ibid. 11 b).

והערב נא.—The production of R. Jochanan, the most ancient part of which is the closing blessing, which is said to have been used by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Yoma, 68 b), and is considered one of the most sublime אר"המ זו היא מעולה בברכות וכו' (R. Hammuna says, this is the most distinguished of blessings.)

Then follows the first Mishnah, Peah.

אלהי נשמה (ibid. 60 b) forms the final blessing.

The fifteen blessings which now follow are likewise Talmudic, and belong to the Tanaim; for R. Meir anticipated them in laying down the law of daily repeating one hundred blessings, to which he himself furnished the second, third and fourth (Menachoth, 43 b, Maimonides Tanhilo, 7, 41).

Closely connected with these blessings is יהי רצון, which also occurs in the Talmud with little deviation (ibid. 60). All these blessings, eighteen in number, expressive of our gratitude for the kindness and mercy which the Creator

bestows upon us, throughout every moment of our lives—all these blessings were originally repeated separately, each on its proper occasion. For example, on awaking, "Blessed art thou, &c., who removes sleep from mine eyes," &c.; in dressing, &c., as circumstantially prescribed in the Talmud. The remembrance of the Supreme Being was to be continually present to the mind of man; every action, every step was to be exalted, nay, sanctified by this sublimest of thoughts; therefore, the smallest action of life was to be accompanied by a blessing and praise. This was the only way in which these blessings could make a powerful impression upon the human mind; and Maimonides justly censures the usage, now generally prevailing, though entirely indefensible, of repeating all the fifteen blessings one after the other, without reference either to time or circumstance (*vide* Tephilla 7, 9).

It must also appear strange to find here the second יהי רצון immediately following, whilst its author, R. Jehuda Hanassi, was wont to repeat it after every prayer. Perhaps it was intended to separate the portion of the morning service, called the Birchath Hashachar, from the other prayers by the intervention of the above concluding prayer.

לעולם and רבון we already meet with in the productions of R. Amram Gaon, and they are taken from the "Thana debe Eliahu." The opinion of M. Rapoport (Kalir, No. 20) that לעולם was inserted without cause or reason into the prayers by ignorant transcribers who took לעולם to be in connection with רבון, is proved to be erroneous, from the circumstance of לעולם being mentioned in the same form by R. Amram, who lived long before the compiler of the "Thana debe Eliahu." The same prayer is also mentioned by Maimonides, who certainly did not copy any ignorant writer (*vide* Beth Joseph 46). A more ancient authority ascribes רבון to R. Jochanan, who used to repeat it on the Day of Atonement, before the confession (Rashi on Yoma, f. 87 b).

אֲתָהּ הוּא occurs in the Talmud Hierosol., and *in extenso* in Yalkut §836, where the prophet Elijah relates so many miracles as resulting from the mighty effects of this prayer.

Next follow portions from the Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud respecting the daily sacrifices.

The second part is formed by what is called Pessuke Desimra, consisting of Psalms, and some passages from the Chronicles and Nehemiah.

This section has, for an introduction, the excellent song of praise בְּרוּךְ שֶׁאֵמֵר, known to have been chanted, together with Psalms, by a chorus composed of the young students, at the installation of a Rosh Gelutha (head of the captivity). (Juchasin.)

חֲמִסְחֵר בֵּין, known in the Talmud Hierosol. יִשְׁתַּבַּח, known in the Talmud Hierosol. יִצְ'א and יִשְׁתַּבַּח לִיצְ'א וכו' he who talks between יִשְׁתַּבַּח and יִצְ'א forms the conclusion of this section.

Respecting the prayer of the New Moon, all the additions, except אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, which is mentioned in the Talmud, were written after the Talmud (Tur. 435), but are already quoted by Maimonides.

A similar fate to that of the eighteen blessings of the Sabbath met those of the festivals, which were also reduced to seven. In Tract Sophrim (19, 7) a large portion of the prayers, among which are יְעֹלֶה וִיבֹא and וְהִשְׁיֵאנוּ, are found with many variations. The remaining parts are mentioned in Yoma, 87 b, רַבָּא פִתַּח בְּאַתָּה בְּחֵרְתָּנוּ (Raba began with Atta Bechartanu).

The עֲלִינוּ, which formed a subject of much dispute, seems to have been transferred, without cause or reason, from the שְׁמֵנָה עֶשְׂרֵה of the New Year's Day into the Daily Prayers. In all ancient Sidurim, as in those of R. Amram and Maimonides, it is found in its original place, and in the present day ought to be restored there and omitted in every other instance, according to my notions.

A great difference of opinion exists amongst European rabbis as to the latest hour in summer and winter at which Divine Service should be allowed to commence, in deference

to the unanimous wishes of the frequenters of the Synagogue. Even in London the time is different at nearly every Synagogue, and the principal object almost entirely lost sight of, viz., the saying of the שְׁמַע before a certain hour, as in some Synagogues where the service is commenced the latest, the prayers are read and chanted much more monotonously than where they are commenced the earliest. There can be no doubt the latest possible hour permitted by ecclesiastical authority finds the most favour with the majority of the present generation; but a powerful minority, myself amongst the number, do not feel inclined to sacrifice one's former habits and conveniences, more particularly to innovators. It therefore appears to me that the service might be read, as at Gibraltar and elsewhere, three times to different audiences, the last having the advantage of the latest hour allowable. This practice is adopted by the Catholics with great advantage, as both employers and employed can thus attend Divine service at their convenience.

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19/1/83 Sunday 10.5.