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T H &

Ethics of the Fathers,

— BY —

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PREFACE.

IT is a truth evolved from the experience of authors, that prefaces are written to remain unread. The Preface is but the outer hall of entrance, and the guests are not pleased to be received in such unstately manner, and the well-bred host hastens with eagerness to have his well-beloved guests ushered with all due speed within the well-ordered chambers of entertainment. *The Ethics of the Fathers*, the commentary upon the first section of which I herewith introduce to the public, could well dispense with a preface, for such brilliant aphorisms that may well be followed, need, at least, no introductory commendation, to be considered.

If, therefore, I do not deem these few prefatory lines superfluous, it is for two reasons. *First*: I wish to remind my worthy reader that the critical study of the Pirke Aboth has demonstrated that, beside the ethical value of these

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:

I may, perhaps, be permitted here to interpolate for a moment my personality, to say that while I endeavored, in translating these discourses for publication in the columns of *THE AMERICAN HEBREW*, to infuse into my rendering something of the fervor of Dr. Kohut's eloquence, I subordinated felicity of expression to fidelity of thought. I must further beg indulgence for some verbal faults due to the hasty manner in which the translations were prepared; and some typographical errors, among which are several in the Hebrew quotations, which could not be corrected owing to the exigencies of publication which prevented proper revision.

THE TRANSLATOR.

The Ethics.

AS God pursued the work of creation, He gave to everything its distinctive function. To the trees, for instance, he prescribed that they bear seeds within themselves, *עץ פרי עושה פרי* yielding fruit, whose seed is in itself. The same is true of all nature, *אשר ברא* being determined that all the forces of nature should renew themselves and should develop by force of innate power.

Metaphorically the *Thora* is called a tree.

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה

A tree of life for those who abide thereby. And on that Jewish tree of life have blossomed lovely fruits, beautiful in the sight of God and man, serving in all times, in moments of grief as in hours of joy, to give the needed word of warning, or warm the heart of Israel. Under the shade of this tree of life, Israel rested in the storm-stress of persecution, in the parched heat of hatred.

Israel has nurtured it with the sweat of a life-

labor, with the heart's blood of three thousand years of martyrdom. Would you learn to know the most beautiful of the fruitage of this tree? Would you acquaint yourselves with the most exalted of its teachings? I will produce them for you in a series of observations, God willing; and your patience serving, we will wander in the garden to pluck for you the fruits. I will not weary to go to the depths of Jewish ethics to gather pearls of wisdom for you; not weaken in my efforts to delve in the mines of wisdom, to bring forth nuggets of gold, to transmute them into negotiable coin for use in every-day life.

In short, my object is to deliver a cycle of religious discourses, each complete in itself, but interrelated each with the other, upon the *פרקי אבות* the Ethics of the Fathers.

I am incited to this not only by the beautiful old custom of delivering, in public and private, discourses on this worthy theme during the summer Sabbaths, but also as an acknowledgment. I find to the delight of my heart, that those who visit this beautiful Temple, men, women and youth of both sexes, are imbued with the religious spirit, and it is due to them that vital ethical provender be secured for them. The sages are accustomed to compare God's word to the manna of old. As that nourished and strengthened man, woman and child alike, so the word of God should

operate vitally, must serve for each sex, for every age and every station, and be a welcome gift to all.

As an acknowledgment then *רבאו האנשים על* that you, as in the times of Moses, in the sanctified places men and women appeared together in large hosts, so your thirst for knowledge and desire for spiritual enlightenment merits acknowledgment; therefore I will seek to prepare a banquet for both sexes alike, important for both, and for each inspiring and exalting, from the ethical sayings of the Fathers. They form the summit of the wisdom of life; they enclose the seed of Truth; they are the sweet savored fruit ripened on the Jewish tree of life.

I will only give you the quintessence of the moral truths, which you may take, so to speak, as *vade mecum* storing up for use in the exigencies of the world and life.

I.

We may consider as introductory the first remark, the first sentence of the Ethics, which reads:

משח קבל תורה מסני ומסרה ליהושע ויהושע לזקנים חקנים לנביאים ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי בנסת הגדולה: הם אמרו שלשה דברים הוו מתונים בדין והעמידו תלמידים הרבה ועשו סייג לתורה:

Moses received the Law at Sinai and transmit-

ted it to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, these to the Prophets, the latter to the men of the Great Synagogue. The historical and literary view of this Great Synagogue, I reserve for future consideration. It suffices now to remark in general that these men of the Great Synagogue were the representatives of the newly-developed Judaism at the time when a portion of the Babylonian Jews went forth from their exile to the Holy Land, and there established themselves anew, and determined upon matters of highest import to Judaism for all time; laying, so to speak, a new foundation upon which Judaism should again flourish.

The chain of tradition continued unbroken from Moses through the intermediation of Joshua, the Elders, the Prophets and the men of the Great Synagogue, to the latest times. Upon this tradition rests our faith, which Moses first received from God on Sinai. On this foundation rests yet to day the Mosaic-rabbinical Judaism. On this foundation we stand, or thither we should place ourselves. Whosoever denies this; denies this on principle, disclaims his connection with the bond of community of the house of Israel. Let it be well observed, I say *denies on principle*, because there are many who do not observe this or that ordinance of the Mosaic-rabbinical Judaism, who cannot or will not apply it to the ex-

igencies of life, but they do yet grant that those laws belong to the conditions of existence. For themselves, these laws are not applicable. Moreover, we cannot observe every one, even the most pious *יהודי* cannot observe all of the six hundred and thirteen laws together with the complementary forms of application and amplification.

Many laws, mandatory and prohibitory, lapse by their very nature or by the decree of God under certain designated contingencies. So the number of laws of the so called *חובות ארנה*; the laws whose validity is limited to the confines of Palestine; as the Sacrificial, Tithe and First-born legislation. Even of the so-called *חובות נברה* laws which are personal, and possess continuous validity; even of these universal ordinances, not all, not everything can be maintained.

In connection herewith I would comfort those whose hearts should throb because of the thought that they cannot fulfil the whole of the law, I would give them a large minded explanation of the great Maimonides, and I offer it with the less reluctance because of its utility in explaining the sentence which invariably closes each section of the Ethics of the Fathers. This recurrent closing is the beautiful saying of R. Chananja :

רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות
The Holy One, praised be His name, seeking rewards for Israel, made laws for its observance.

Maimonides remarks that it is with this, as in the story of the Talmud, where it is narrated that in the time of the persecution of the Jews under the Emperor Hadrian, when death was suspended over the heads of those who endeavored to fulfil the Law, R. Chananja ben Teradjon was discovered teaching, and sentenced to be punished by being delivered over to the flames. Before the sentence was executed R. Chananja was oppressed with gloom. "I am inconsolable," he said to his friend R. Jose ben Kisme, "not that my earthly existence is to be curtailed, but rather that I may be deprived, which God forbid, in my share in the future life."

"But tell me," said his friend reassuringly, "tell me, have you ever fulfilled, be it but one religious obligation, out of purest, noblest motives?"

"Truly," answered R. Chananja, **נבאי צדקה הינא** "I have gathered moneys for the poor, and the funds for the widows and orphans were intrusted to my care. It happened once that my own not insignificant funds were inextricably mixed with the money for the poor, without any chance of stating the amount of either. To ensure the widows and orphans against every danger of loss, I applied to the use of the poor the entire fund, including my own money."

"Then," said R. Jose, "if you acted with

conscientious unselfishness, and observed God's law without any interested motives, you will surely share the future life."

From this Talmudic tale Maimonides demonstrates that he is a true **ידורי** and he is assured of the future life who observes one **מצוה**, one command with an honest and pure motive, without any interested purpose. The same is meant by R. Chananya ben Akaschya. Because God wished Israel many rewards, He multiplied the laws, so that from the many some could be chosen for observance by every one; not that one should have the preference over another, rather at least one law should be observed in the purest spirit.

This digression has served to manifest that not every one should be condemned who cannot observe all the laws with equal vigor; taking for granted, however, that he recognizes the binding nature of the Law. Only he who denies this, who turns away on principle from the standpoint of the validity of the Mosaic-rabbinical tradition, such an one has banished himself from the camp of Israel; writes his own epitaph: "I am no Jew; no adherent to the faith of my fathers." In point of fact, he denies that **משה קבל התורה מכני** Moses received the Thora on Sinai, **ומסרה** and transferred it to Joshua, he again to the Elders, these to the Prophets, the latter to the Men of

the Great Synagogue, and so onwards to the Soferim, the teachers of the Mishna, and the writers of the Talmud. Whosoever breaks through the verity of tradition has ceased to be a Jew, and is a Karaite.

This Jewish sect formed in the ninth century, recognized only the validity of the written law, תורה שבכתב but not that of the oral law תורה שבעל פה. And what did that sect accomplish? It decayed, it disappeared; its absurd inconsequence caused its decadence; no, we cannot maintain Judaism without the tradition as it has been orally bequeathed to us from the time of Moses. Without the oral teaching we cannot comprehend the written, of which it is developed, commentary and illumination. It served to lead the infant steps of Judaism, and when later Israel stood in manly maturity, it was the safe path on which Israel undertook its historical development. This staff, then, this secure support, we do not wish to, we never will remove from our hands.

Such a reform which seeks to progress without the Mosaic-rabbinical tradition, such a Reform is a Deformity: is a skeleton of Judaism without flesh and sinew, without spirit and heart. Without tradition there is no life but only vegetation; without it we have a tying of the wheels of life, —a suicide. And suicide is no Reform.

We desire a Judaism full of vitality חי

יודוך כמני we desire to worship the living God in forms full of life and beauty, Jewish, with the fresh breath of the modern spirit.

Only a Judaism true to itself and its past, only a Judaism which does not disown the character of its worthy antiquity, but is receptive of the ideas of the present, and accepts the good and the beautiful from whatever source it may come; only such a Judaism can command respect and recognition.

But let us guard carefully against heresy-hunting. The first and foremost moral truth of the הו מתונים ברין פרקי אבות says on this account Be circumspect in judgment. We believe, and strive thereafter, that we represent true Judaism. But let us not excommunicate those congregations about us, with their members and leaders. While we may deplore that each swings his censor of separate religious views, we must realize that every one should strive after truth, in his own manner.

Let us learn tolerance of those old unjustly-condemned rabbis who are decried as intolerant, who say: כפלה הרימון רקתך Israel is like the pomegranate; ריקנים שבהם מלאים במצות כרימון even the seemingly insignificant is full of virtue and humanity, as the pomegranate is full of seed.

See how much good, how much that is humane, is practised by the Reformers. Our

false Orthodox; for the sincere and honest Orthodox are tolerant; our false Orthodox, who are so ready to dispense forcible words *עם הארץ* and *פושע באלהי ישראל* they who deny the Jewish character of every one who differs from them in opinion, they should judge with more lenity upon the Jewish heart which dispenses charity. Where the Jewish heart still beats, there is piety and understanding of Judaism not yet entirely extinct. Therefore, slow in judgment, *היו מתונים בדין*!

But on the other hand we call to those of more liberal tendencies, in the further words of the ethical sentence *העמידו תלמידים הרבה* "train up many scholars," and *ותעו סייג לתורה* place a fence around the *Thora*. How glorious would the prospects of American Judaism be, if these two behests were fulfilled. Train up many scholars; many who will aggressively struggle for the old Jewish faith.

I know but too little as yet of the Jewish statistics of this great country. Nor do I know whether New York has 90,000, or 100,000, or even 120,000 Jews. I only say *ה' אלהיכם הוסיף עליכם* may the Almighty multiply and bless them; but this I am sure of, that there are not 90,000 or 100,000; much less 120,000, members of Jewish congregations. I would be content with a third or a fourth part. This is an anomaly.

The ancient Jewish congregational status considered it a moral obligation: *אל תפרוש מן הצבור* do not sever your connection with the congregation.

I do not know whether it be my fortune and my honor to possess your sympathy with my position; my religious standpoint of Mosaic-rabbinical Judaism freshened with the spirit of progress; at all events, to maintain the healthy golden mean; I do not know whether I have your acquiescence with this. I hope for it; I plead for it; yes, I expect it; spread out your banner of TEMPERATE progress. You will, you must if you respect the third of the ethical sentences *העמידו תלמידים הרבה* *ותעו סייג לתורה* make a fence around the *Thora*.

THE HEDGE AROUND THE LAW.

I HAVE hitherto endeavored to demonstrate that the existence or non-existence of Judaism is intimately identified with the belief or non-belief in the tradition which dates from the time of Moses, and has grown together therewith ; I have striven to prove that Judaism stands or falls, as long as it is or is not based upon a Mosaic-rabbinical foundation. And now we will undertake to comprehend how the maintenance and development of this tradition is to be understood. In other words, is Judaism concluded for all times, or has it the capacity for, the need for development ?

In the first case, we would not dare depart by a hairbreadth from the limited intellectual sphere of our ancestors, and would be compelled to accept the warning אל חסיני נבול עולם disturb not the limitations put by the fathers, by the spiritual lords. According to this, our standpoint would be one of petrefaction ; we would resemble that R. Elieser, whom the *Perek* celebrates as one who was בור סיד שאינו מאבד טפה a calcined cistern, which does not permit a drop

to pass; like him we would only transmit that which has been taught us by our teachers; we would be doomed to spiritual instability, to mechanical thoughtlessness. In that case, this question would be justifiable: are we in general Jews yet? For the most orthodox of the orthodox cannot say of himself that he stands confined to the intellectual attitude of the ancients, and has never passed outside of the sphere of that attitude. In that case a smile should never play upon the lips of a believer in the Talmud, for the most solemn earnestness has been commanded; and not the brightest bon-mot nor the cleverest play of wit should move the lips to laughter, because מיום שחרב בה' מקדש אסור למלאות פיו שחוק since the destruction of the sanctuary at Jerusalem the truly pious should not laugh.

Why, the unlearned would not even dare to eat meat, because it has been taught ע"פ הארץ אסור לאכול בשר the Jewish ignoramus shall not enjoy meat. He dare not even drink water, much less wine, because formerly libations of wine and water were used at the altar at Jerusalem, and with the cessation of the ניסוך יין ומים with the interruption of wine and water sprinkling, the pious are forbidden the use of wine and water.

Whither then would the one-sided letter-worship lead us? It is clearly apparent from the drastic examples cited that it would lead us to

that point whence we could no more say with the first Moses, Moses ben Amram רק עם נבון וחכם הגוי הנדול הזה a wise and reasonable people is this despite its great number. Rather at such ridiculous hobby-riding we would have to exclaim with the second Moses, Moses ben Maimon, in a spirit of travesty רק עם נבל וסכל הגוי חקטן הזה a foolish and stupid people is this despite its small numbers and insignificant intellectuality.

Let us view the reverse of the picture: "Not cleaving to the letter, but the spirit, grasping only the spirit, and refining Judaism, so refining it as to remove all attached non-essentials." That is the watchword of Reform, the Reform without conditions, without presuppositions. Whither does this conception lead us? Precisely to that point attained by the Alexandrian Philo 2000 years ago. He, the neo-platonic-Jewish philosopher, supported by the symbolizing spirit of his times, laid down the principle that the biblical truths, historical as well as ethical, were merely abstract ideas.

Yom Hakippurim, for instance, or the Sabbath, is only the idea of the supremacy of mind over matter. Passover is the idea of abstinence. So even the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are no more than the ideas; Abraham, representative of mind; Isaac, of suffering; and Jacob, of labor. According to this the biblical law

evaporates into mere ideas. Before all this spirit, the body disappears. But a bodiless spirit is as little comprehensible as a spiritless body is vital and potential. This purely spiritual conception leads us as far from pure Judaism as the mechanical unthinking method.

Whether Judaism is evaporated, or is flattened to a dead level; whether it is so refined that nothing remains but a shadow, or nought but empty phrases, or transparent ether;—or whether it is taught with such coarseness, that it is blasphemously asked by the שיעור קומה, that is, how large is God's beard! In both cases Judaism is misunderstood and the apprehension of it clouded.

Were Moses ben Amram and Moses ben Maimon to arise from their graves; and were these two, the greatest sons of Israel in whose laps Judaism was nurtured; were they to look upon our modern Judaism, they would not recognize our Orthodox, much less our Reformers. Neither the Mosaism of the Reformers, nor the narrowmindedness of the Orthodox would permit the two Moses' to say; זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי, ובשר מבשרי, this is bone and meat of the essence of religion as we taught it unto you.

They would say to the former; you who seek only the spirit, only the idea, lose thereby the kernel of religion, because the kernel needs the protecting shell, cannot dispense with forms.

You however, who take only the husk, the shell, can for that reason never penetrate to the inner pith.

How then shall we find the pure and true Judaism. Only by the happy reconciliation of both aspects. The men of the Great Synagogue discovered the accurate method, ועשו סייג לתורה, place a hedge about the law.

Whoever possesses a beautiful garden, with fruit trees and fragrant plants, fences it round about so that neither human nor animal transgressors can trespass therein and carry on their work of destruction. So too, must the garden of the Thora, which is enriched with noble trees and lovely plants, be encircled by the protecting hedge, the defensive enclosure. And do you know what title this hedge has? It is called, Reverence;—not to touch and handle without respect; with clumsy, unskilful hands the flowery domain of the Divine Law. Reverence and honor is the security for the preservation of the plants which have been entrusted to our keeping, של געליך מעל הנליך כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת, cast off the dust which clings to your feet when you tread the holy ground of religion. Would you approach the pure glory of divine ideas with the earthly dust of your daily life? You with your limited mental faculties, you would seek to discover the final cause of the

Divine Law, and not only that but model it after the designs of your convenience! Do you not know that Religion even by its very etymology is the consciousness of being bound? עבדא בהפקידא? ניהא ליה, says the Talmud.

The slave loves license and would break the chains which bind him. License is however no liberty. Religion however, which also would make man free, free from the enslaving senses; Religion stands for freedom within bonds. With Religion, in Religion, are you in fetters, free! Without Religion you are though unbound, yet fettered, אל תקרא חרות אלא חירות. Buried within you, within your soul, the Word of God, the Law of God, makes you free; but blot this divine inscription, then אותיות פורחות באויר, then will the heavenly token of the divinity of your new birth flee from you, and you will remain what you were at your birth, פרא אדם ילד, a wild, untamable animal, dangerous for yourself and all about you. But, it will be asked, shall the hedge around the garden, shall the Reverence be extended around everything that the Past hedged in? Are there not mayhap, too many fences already? Yes, סייג לא היו, the over-pious ones draw around the fence so many other fences that access to the garden of religion was nearly absolutely cut off? Should we strike the same key with them as they in their flight through

the world, in the אמות של הלכה, which they struck within the four yards of their *Halacha*-trading Pilpulists, who held as their highest principle; כל המחמיר תבא עליו ברכה, "Whoever can conceive of even but one new difficulty, upon him shall fall the blessing." Shall we never dare to say with the Talmud, כה דהתירא עריף, the spirit of explanation which lightens the burdens is to be preferred? To all this my answer is, עשו סייג לתורה. Make a hedge around the *Thora*. Not everything that is exhaled, that is hatched by one who in his leisure hours seeks to win for himself the name of a מחמיר, a scholar who creates difficulties; not everything which is published as תורת משה, is in reality the teaching of Moses; nor is everything which strives קולות בית הלל, to relieve from all burdens; rather we must conceive of the *Thora* as that which is commanded us in the teachings of Moses, in accordance with its spirit and its significance for the culture of mankind.

In this teaching Moses lays it upon our hearts וזכור ימות עולם בינו שנות דור ודור, "Remember the days of your fathers, and search in the mutations of each generation." From the well-preserved teachings of our ancestors we must indeed make our starting-point. But search up, too, in each generation what is of use, and what is needed in each.

the rightful starting-points, ימות עולם, Bind yourself closely to the past, to the law of Moses, received on Sinai from God; for your development, for your perfect'ion, for he knew שנות דור ודור, that every generation would have its dominant ideas, its peculiar ideals, therefore he permitted you, believers in Mosaism, if you have chosen the proper starting-point, if you bind yourself to Moses; then can you pursue your goal of perfection, not rashly but with courage, שנות דור ודור, In the progress of each generation, its needs must be kept in view. That is a saving thought for us, as it was for our ancestors. This thought was conceived by the Talmud and transferred into a saving reality for the salvation of Judaism. Therefore the Talmud says: אין לדון אלא מה שענינו ראוהו The judge decides from his point of view, so as he finds fitting, and according to the best of his knowledge and belief, and his decision is well done.

Moses in the divinity of his inspiration would not have us confined within the narrow sphere of long past centuries; he wished only to establish

In the same manner the *Sopherim* proceeded, so the Tanaites; so the Talmudists; so the framers of decisions; and so the codifiers; all took their departure from the divine words of the Jewish writings, hedged them in with their גזירות ותקנות, with their preventive regulations,

their defensive methods, but always with fullest consideration for the times and changes that were become urgently necessary in the tendency of the times.

And as the elders did, so can, may, yes, must we do, the later Epigoni. "Why," asks Maimonides, "Why did the Omniscience of God set the eyes of man in the front of the skull of man? So that we should see that which lies before us, always forwards?" Yes, but what was permitted to the elders, is it not granted unto us? It is said that they were giants; we are, as regards intellectual force, as compared with them, but mere pigmies. It is true, this is my own view as well. But let us not forget that when the dwarf exalts himself upon the shoulders of the giant, then is his view further than that of the giant.

And now we may revert to the question raised at first; Is Judaism definitively closed for all time, or is it capable of, in need of development? Yes and no! Yes, because man, and only for man has Religion been given,—as long as he lives, can and must be perfected, therefore he must modify the forms for religious satisfaction in sympathy with the dominant spirit of the times. No, however, in so far as concerns the word of God, which cannot be imperfect, as what issues from God must be perfect תורת ה'

תמימה. But you, Israelite, imperfect, seek to perfect yourself in the image of your perfect God.

Hold in honor His unchangeable Law. Let it be the soul of your soul to generate new force for the outward manifestation; to renew the garment; to change the husk. For instance: עורר נשים since Ezra's time the women have in the house of worship been separated from the men. Why? So that the synagogal propriety should not be sacrilegiously disturbed through unbecoming conduct. But where quiet, reverence, piety and religious fervor are found in men and women, shall I strive against it?

Our women are indeed by far more pious than the men, they are ever before the men as exemplars. I believe indeed if my powers of persuasion were to win a conquest over the hearts of the piously-inclined women, so that they would appear at the Friday-night service in the Temple, I am sure the attentive men would soon follow them thither וסתוך שלא לשמה באין לשמה and inasmuch as they would come seeking their wives, they would remain seeking after God. Here then you have a modern interpretation of the עשו סייג לתורה. Make a fence around the Law, for the sanctification of the Sabbath.

Another example! After our wives what is dearest to us? Our children! We have well-

organized religious schools with disciplined teachers and volunteer teachers both male and female, and yet if parents attended as by rights they should attend, the examinations which have been going on several weeks past, they would with regret have discovered, that the children whose spirits are imbued with piety, can read the beautiful Jewish prayers only with the greatest difficulty. Why? Because the home does not support the school. Strive at home, morning, noon and night to keep your children at reading the Hebrew portion of the prayer book. Especially if you yourself set the example, because children love the "object-lesson" method;—then you would find what is meant by עשו סייג לתורה place a hedge around the Law, you will prepare the way for that which I would gladly attain; that your children should early gain the power to understand the Jewish writings in the original text. Were the Jewish Bible-spirit to permeate your homes, your children would become your teachers, and awaken your memories: "Father and mother, the law of Moses tells us to observe dietary laws," and in time you may have once again the Jewish home life? Pursuing this, you will acquire an affection for the Mosaic-Rabbinical Judaism.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF JUDAISM.

FROM the day of Revelation, the day destined for the salvation and happiness of humanity, from that day is dated the national existence of Israel. Before that day the children of Abraham were simply members of a large family, an inanimate mass, a slave-herd without self-consciousness, without any intimation of the Higher Power which rules and directs mankind's career. In Egypt but a body of men without purpose, spending its energies in the treadmill of forced labor, no ambition, no yearning for loftier ends; moved only by the iron rod of the tyrant;—only at the foot of Sinai did they erect themselves to a significance worthy of humanity; to a comprehension of themselves.

Only after the lightning flash of Sinai spread, animating and inspiring, through the dead mass; only after the loud thunder awoke the torpid, were they imbued with the consciousness that thenceforth they were not to be mere lifeless, purposeless tools, but messengers of a great mission of religious and ethical ideas.

The first, spiritually illuminating, **אני**, I am the Eternal your God, gave them the sense of self-consciousness. Again intoned from God the creative word, and light was in their minds, which so long had been encompassed by the terrors of spiritual darkness; light was in their hearts, which had so long been insensible to the religious feelings which bring happiness; the breezes of springtime were wafted, soothing and animating, through their souls so long depressed, for on Sinai's heights there arose the sun of clearer comprehension, bearing health for the sickly spirits wasting in the marshes.

כשברא הקב"ה את עולמו אמר השמים שמים לה' והארץ נתן
לבני אדם וכשבקש ליתן תורה לעמו ישראל אמר מכאן ואילך
ילכו התחתונים אל העליונים וירדו העליונים לתחתונים.

"In the beginning when God created the world, it was supposed that heaven was God's heaven, and that the earth remained for the children of men! But when the *Thora* was given to Israel, it was declared thenceforth that those who are below should lift themselves on high, and those above should descend to earth, which is that that is written, what God wishes he does in heaven and on earth."

How shrewd and yet how elevating is this saying of the ancients. Before revelation, they would say, only the earth belonged to the children of men, they cleaved to the clod, they moved

only in the sphere of their senses and the worship of nature, and could not rise to the bright height of the idea of God. Only on the day at Sinai heaven opened itself to man, from out of the heights the All-merciful lovingly stretched out his hand to the falling dust-born and lifted them forth to a moral atmosphere. No more was man orphaned, bound and confined, for from out of the close cavity in which it had been compressed, his soul made its way to the knowledge of the Only One.

The lowest among the people made a discovery at that time which could not be excelled by the greatest spirit of the future centuries—the discovery of the fact that there was a moral force, an inconceivable higher power, which alone is entitled to say **אני**, I am. Man found his God, and with the discovery an end was begun of the errors and confusions of vacillating, fluctuating humanity, and stability was assured.

So it was verified **אני יושב ארץ וכל יושבי ארץ תכנתי** whereas beforetime the earth swayed and its inhabitants were unsettled, the **אני**, which resounded sonorously through the world, and sank as a higher moral force into the heart of man, cemented the foundations of earth and secured eternal stability to its pillars. And what are those pillars upon which since the day of Revelation the Jewish world is based? A sage

has answered thus: על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על: The ethical world of Judaism rests upon three things: the Law, worship, and living love.

Let us approach nearer to those three foundations and examine them by the light of the Ten Words.

התנה הקב"ה עם מעשה בראשית ואמר להם אם ישראל מקבלן התורה אתם מתקיימן ואם לאו אני מחויר ארצכם לזהו ובהו

"Earth and heaven were only created conditionally. The condition upon which their existence depends, God said, is the acceptance of the *Thora* by Israel. Should Israel decline it, however, you may return to your original *Tohu Vabohu*."

What an inspiring thought lies hidden in this sentence! The first divine creative thought and the final cause of creation was the moral perfection, the impulse toward which is implanted deep in every human being. The recognition and realization of the filial relation to God, is the moral nobility which is inscribed upon the brow of man created in the image of God, an inscription which should never be obliterated by man, unless he wishes to sink once again to spiritual *Tohu Vabohu*, and be relegated to moral chaos and anarchy.

This moral anarchy, the essential characteristic

of the pre-Sinaitic period, has been beautifully illustrated by the sages. God proffered the *Thora* to various of the wild tribes, before He gave it to Israel. "What is there in this so highly-lauded *Thora*?"

"Thou shalt not steal; the property of strangers must be sacred unto you."

At such a price they could not afford to secure the Law which should master and restrain them, thought the wild sons of the desert who lived by depredation.

Then God applied to the Ammonites who led dissolute lives: "What is then the contents of this *Thora*?"

"Marriage must be sacred to you."

"Is that the case? Then we can make no use of the proposal. We will not be restrained."

And so all the peoples declined the *Thora*, until it came to Israel's turn. Israel asked not, nor deliberated, rather exclaimed with one voice נעשה ונשמע we will do and understand the commands of the proffered Law. Ordinarily we listen and then, after investigation, accept and obey. Israel, however, in its enthusiasm for the word of God, sent forth before the נעשה ונשמע. It promised unconditionally to obey the commandments of God, and then its word to immerse itself in the study. So Israel saved mankind, which threatened to revert to moral depravity. And because it man-

ifested good-will and compliance, it was rendered capable of comprehending and grasping the word of God.

and as at ראה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראה יחזקאל הנביא the sea-shore, so at the foot of Sinai a profounder conception of the nature of God was given to even the most insignificant, than to those of the later days, rich in inspiration. And because Israel was the only people which manifested such comprehension, therefore it was addressed with אנכי ה' אלהיך I am the Eternal thy God in the singular number, because united into a unit was the people which was prepared to break the shackles of spiritual bondage; to press forward from instability to firm ground; and to behold in the *Thora* the foundation of the moral world, and to cling to it for all futurity.

The first world-redeeming Sinaitic Word אנכי, I am your God, supplements the second לא תעשה make unto yourselves no other gods before Me, from that which is in the heavens above, or upon the earth, or beneath the earth. Have you, O man! once conceived with your intellectual vision the necessary existence of a God, then must that God be One, an only One. Read further of God's wondrous work in the script of the stars, the planet-sown heavens; wander ever amid the manifold beauties of nature; work ever down to the depths of the earth; meditate, probe,

search, classify, experiment, but do not deify the work of the Master, above the divinity of the Deity, the workmaster! Well may you, should you, stand in awe of God's creative power as seen in the towering heights of the mountain, as in the grain of sand that slips through your fingers; in the heaving, billowing, foaming ocean, as in the trembling drop of water on the edge of the bucket; in the giant mammoth, as in the fluttering gnat! Man! with your world-combining wisdom, bow yourself down to the dust in awe and worship of that Inscrutable Wisdom, which hath brought forth and maintained all this! Do not deny Him who hath produced it all, for אם ישים אליו לבו ורוחו ונשמתו אליו יאסף יגוע כל בשר יחדו when reflection is turned back upon itself, no more embracing the Paternal loving kindness in His creation, then is all flesh doomed to perish, then were all creation crumbled into fleeting atoms!

Do not deny! Ah! that is the cancer which is eating ever deeper into the sap and marrow of modern Judaism. Yes, to this has it come; because man received freedom of thought as a divine free gift, because he has learned to guess at the highest truths concerning God, he in immeasurable conceit presumes to deny this God, or patronizingly declare that He can only operate as a limited force.

Therefore the second Word commands לא

תעשה make unto yourselves no Gods, neither from that which is in heaven, upon the earth, nor underneath the earth. And as this your God, One and Only One, purely spiritual, and absolutely not to be represented, is only disclosed to your profoundest research, so is He too the embodiment of all moral perfection. Hence the third Word, **לֹא תשא**, utter not the name of the Lord your God in vain. Moral truth is the seal of Divinity; do not desecrate it by deceit and hypocrisy. Seek rather to perfect yourself by the development of your natural talents and your wonderful faculties.

Therefore, **זכור את יום השבת** remember the day of rest. Do not labor exclusively for the trivialities of the earth. You are a citizen of two worlds. Let, therefore, the divinely-spiritual portion of your nature secure its rightful share in Sabbaths and holy days. **כל המעמל בערב שבת ואומר ויכולו נעשה שוחף לקב"ה** Who labors six days and can say on the Sabbath **ויכולו**, I have completed the work of my hands, to take up now the labor of my soul, he becomes a co-operator with Divinity, for God gave man only a physical existence, and a possibility for the spiritual. To develop these possibilities is in the power of man, he is responsible for the creation of himself into a spiritual, moral, ethical being, and if he thus becomes the creator of his better self, he be-

comes conjoined with the Deity in the creative work.

Thus in outward form and inner contents the first four Sinai-words hang close together, forming elevating means towards the great end of self-sanctification and moral perfection. They constitute the substance of our spiritual consciousness, and prescribe our relations with, and duty towards, God; that is, they indicate our service to God, our form of worship, and as such they are the second foundation upon which the moral order rests, without which no support, no firmness is conceivable.

An ancient teacher, R. Akiba, wishes to indicate the same symbolically: **כשתניעו לאבני שיש מדור יאל תאמרו מה מים שנה' דבר שקר לא יכון לנני עיני** when you see white marble pillars, do not say that is only show and idle pretence like the hither and thither flowing of the waves. When you have gone so far that you think you can dispense with the stability which the Divine idea can grant, when you consider religious worship as superfluous ballast, then be on your guard, then have you lost your bearings, and you wander and divagate like unto the hither and thither flowing waters, confused amid moral error. Therefore let the Divine service, the second pillar, be our stronghold, our support.

The third pillar which bears the edifice of the

world is practical love, and it possesses a great supporting power. Only through it the other two bases, knowledge and worship of God, are really rendered steadfast. Hence the basis of the first Sinai Word, I am your God, because I am He **אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים** who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. The divine act was an act of benevolence towards Israel. And if the Israelite endeavors energetically to extricate himself from spiritual slavery, and in the strength of the acquired means of culture strives to perfect himself in the service of God, then is this too an act of benevolence which the Israelite manifests towards himself, for a mighty force streams thereby through his decaying, feeble limbs, and he gains courage to carry on the holy contest against the arch-fiend of virtue. Therefore is such a divine service, a service towards one's self, and the duty to God, at the same time a duty fulfilled owed to self. But man has also holy duties towards his fellow-men, whose fulfilment is of equal importance as those to God.

Hence the fifth Word: Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee. This Word is in one view the closing point of the line of duty towards God, and at the same time the transition to the new sphere of duty to human

society. Hence with the command of honor towards parents, God's name is mentioned, as He who implants within our hearts such holy emotions; not simply an instinctive affection, which is felt as well by the hyena for its mother, is here commanded, but such a profound love interwoven with respect, as the animal is incapable of; and how beautifully says the Talmud:

יש מאכיל לאביו פסיוני ומורדו מחיי העולם הבא

One is at such pains to furnish his parents the choicest viands, and yet loses his future reward; **ויש מטהינו בריחיים ומביאו לעולם הבא** another child does not relieve its father from arduous toil, and may yet be considered a good child, for all depends upon the disposition, the love, the veneration with which it treats its parents.

Respect for the person and property of the stranger is equally of the highest ethical importance, hence follow the further five holy Words on the second of the two stone tablets of the Covenant,

לא תרצח, לא תנאף, לא תגנב, לא תענה, ולא תחמד

Sacred be unto you the life, the domestic purity, the property, the good name, and every possession of your neighbor.

The last five words, with the fulfilment of which, we practice true and righteous practical love,—so long as reason remains, so long as the moral law is not infected by the mildew of false

philosophy ; so long these five Words form the substance of the highest ethical truth, first taught by Israel, and whose honor and fame it will remain as having first placed them as the basis for a code for the individual as for the community ; for society as for the State.

The second half of the Decalogue, obvious to everyone, demonstrates that the more abstract first portion is an outcome of the highest Divine truth and wisdom. Intellectual indolence might say of the former portion *לכבוד עצמו הוא דורש* that God established the laws relating to His existence for His glory. But there follow close on them the latter five, relating only to the weal and welfare of mankind, and they lead to but one conclusion : that *ה' אלהיכם אמת* The Eternal, your God, is truth. Truth speaks in the wise commands which direct His will toward us. May they guide our relations to Him, our relations to ourselves, and to our fellow-men, and be the means of now firmly establishing the three-fold basis upon which our moral existence rests, viz.: *תורה עבודה ונח* Law, Divine service and practical love. In these wise ordinances, in the fulfillment of these essential truths, we must find the real purpose of the holiness of our lives, and nourish and pursue it with unremitting love. In view of this it is that our sages say that the *Thora* should be to us as if revealed to us anew each day.

An ancient writer asks: how was it that the joy in and with the *Thora* is celebrated at the end of the *Sukkoth* festival, as a separate *Simchat Thora* nearly half a year later than would be expected? Would it not be more proper if *Simchat Thora* and *Shebuoth* were celebrated together as the *Matan Thora*?

But, it is answered, it is with this as with the union of hearts between a newly-married couple ; they have learned to love one another, and vow eternal fealty. But how often does it happen that this fealty though assured for eternity, is broken in the lapse of time, and even the bonds that symbolize the union are cast asunder ! They have found on closer study that because of dissimilar tastes, ideas and expectations, they do not fit together, and they speak the pitiful words *אם הימין ואשמאלה* if you go to the right, I go to the left. But if by reason of perfect sympathy and heart-harmony not only the honey-moon, but month after month in ever increasing joy pass by in rapid flights, and they feel themselves happy ; day by day revealing to each new virtues and graces, then they are filled with greater joy than on their wedding day.

So with Israel. On the day of Revelation our ancestors exclaimed *נעשה ונשמע* we will obey and understand, fulfill and comprehend, the word of God. How, if this Law had antagonized its

character, would then the oath of fealty not have been over-hasty? But Israel has gone to the depths of the *Thora*; has day and night, week by week, month after month brought forth precious pearls out of its immeasurable profundity. As they worthily celebrated the finding of this treasure, so six months later they rejoiced at the knowledge of its worth.

LOVE AND FEAR IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

HAVING completed our introductory view, and considered the foundations of Judaism, we may now enter particularly upon the Ethics of Judaism. To this end we have at our service the apothegm of Antigonos of Socho:

"Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; but be like servants, who serve their master without a view of receiving a reward and let the fear of heaven be upon you."

In relation to this sentence we are told by an ancient authority that the scholars of Antigonos misunderstood the meaning of their master and particularly two pupils, Boethos and Zaduki, who hit upon the erroneous view, that the master had forbidden divine service in hope of reward,—because in fact there was no reward to be hoped for.

The sects of the Boethusians and Zadukites, which at the time of the second Temple played a great political part, established a peculiar religious system, with the particular characteristic of denying on principle the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the future life.

Turning from this historical view, we have however urged upon us the question: What was the design of Antigonos, when he set up his thesis? For thus much is certainly considered by the sentence: the necessity for future rewards. This world below has too much of inequality, too much of seeming injustice, that we should not rightfully assume, there must be a time in which these inequalities will be adjusted, and the injustice rectified.

In the course of Maimonides' thirteen articles of faith, which Joseph Albo reduced to three, the acceptance of שכר ועונש of God's reconciling justice, is undisputed. Let us be just to ourselves! It would fare ill with the intrinsic faith of even the most pious Israelite, if not animated by that hope; if much here on earth were not dispensed with, because of the trust that at some time בעלמא רקשט in the kingdom of truth it would be recompensed.

What manner of God indeed, would that be who in the domain of retribution would not call to account individuals and communities for the crying injustice and revolting violence which they are guilty of in this world?

That is a beautiful teaching of the Talmud מי חשיר קב"ה דעבד דינא בלא דינא Who will accuse God of not securing without trial and judgment, the right for Truth, the victory for Justice. This

divine justice, at some time to be executed; this accomplishment of recompense as the reconciliation of inequality is the rock of our faith.

How then could Antigonos without offense against this fundamental doctrine, declare that the Lord should be served without hope of reward? I believe that this difficulty can be solved.

Maimonides has in his *Jad Hachazaka* expounded the two methods by which God may be honored. The lower degree he designates (and he is followed by all the moralists) עבודה מיראה the honoring of God through fear. The higher degree is עבודה מאהבה honoring God through love. Upon the undeveloped stage stood for instance, Job, whose piety was not entirely without doubt. For Satan said, that is, as Samuel ben Chofni explains, it was said by personal enemies of Job, ההנם ירא איוב אלהים Does Job fear God without a purpose? הלא אתה שבת בערו ובער ביתו Thou protectest him and his house. But stretch out, Oh! God! Thy hand of punishment upon him אם לא תברך על פניך יברך and see then if he will not loudly blaspheme Thee before all the world.

And the event proved the truth of the charge abundantly, for though at first he stood steadfast under the divine visitations which fell upon his devoted head, and held out against the despondent, rebellious voice of his wife חבר אחת הנבלות תדברי גם את הטוב וקבל מאת האלהים ואת הרע לא נקבר

"Do you too, speak as those that are cast off? Shall we accept only good of God, and not misfortune?" But this firmness did not continue long אחרי כן פתח איוב את פיו וקלל את ימו Job soon raised his blasphemous voice against God.

This manner of piety may be called the slavish fear of retribution. This fear is not a reverential awe. The slave is not amenable to such an emotion. The slave metes out his service by the standard of reward and punishment; standing on the lower level of relation to God.

On a far higher plane stands Abraham. He the sorely tried childless one, to whom is promised the most brilliant future, that his descendants shall be as the stars in heaven and like them shall shine;—and this is promised though an old man of 99 years, to whom no offspring had yet been granted, and yet ויחשביהוה לו צדקה he trusted in God, and deemed this trust in God the greatest virtue. Surely he honored God עבדה מאהבה from pure love, as the child loves and honors its father. Surely an Abraham may be exalted as a brilliant example, as a contrast to slavish fear. ואברהם עבדנו עומד לפני ה' Eyen today, even to our present time, may Abraham serve as an exemplar worthy of emulation, for genuine veneration of God, moved by Love. Only one could excel an Abraham who in his love for God was willing to sacrifice that which was

dearest to him, his only son; and that one was Israel's greatest product, Moses, who brought a sacrifice even greater. Not in deed that sacrificed himself to the weal of his beloved people, but that he LIVED for them. His courage to live was the bravest sacrifice.

To lay down one's life for a great idea is by no means so exalted as to *live* for it through a career of deprivation, and despite calumny, despite failure, to resume ever anew, and *live* for the great idea. The founder of the religion which is the daughter of Israel, became great only through his *death*. The greatness of Moses is by his *life*, by his unremitting striving to develop the nation of slaves into a nation of moral men.

His example, which he held as a mirror before his people, must, of necessity, therefore, have exerted the greatest influence in developing humanity, inasmuch as notwithstanding the unpropitious time, despite a world of adversaries, this people, torn from its national soil, could maintain itself by the strength of the religious idea. And how did Moses teach the people to gain love for the religious idea? ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלהיך שואל מעמך כי עם ליראה את ה' אלהיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאהבה "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to *honor* the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to *love* Him, and to serve the

Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

But, it will be asked, is not too much herewith required? Can more be demanded than that God shall be feared and loved with entire heart and soul? Our talmudists were already struck with this view, and asked: **אִם יֵרָאָה שָׁמַיִם מִלֵּתָא** Is, then, honoring God so small a matter that Moses makes use of the expression "what doth the God require of you but that you should honor Him?" They answer: **אֵין לְנָבִי מִשָּׁה** Yes, in the eyes of Moses, the fear of God was an easy matter.

I must admit that the answer at first sight seems unsatisfactory, and all thoughtful persons will feel embarrassed at it. And even if the Talmud is proverbially familiar with the expression: **אִם כָּל עֹלָמָא מִיְנַמְר נִמְרָא** Is the whole world composed of learned men? So we may ask in the present instance: Is the whole world of Israel composed of spiritual masters like unto Moses? If, then, the fear of God was so easy a matter in the sight of Moses, which he was justified in requiring; could, however, every one in Israel aspire to the high level of culture, and the deep inner faith of a Moses?

But after what has been said, the problem is easily solved. The lower grade of divine worship, the slavish fear, this, at least, could be

expected of every one, by Moses. Even the lowest among the people who saw and heard God's wonders, the countless deeds of benevolence, must at least feel the primitive fear, the servile awe which slaves entertain for their masters. Even the dullest must have perceived that transgression of the divine command, drew upon itself a well-deserved punishment. How could the worm, called man, groveling in the dust, dare to contravene the commands of its God, the Almighty, and not fear the lightning of His wrath, the rolling thunder of His retribution?

Hence Moses said: **וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מֶה ד' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׂוֹאֵל** What less can the Lord, thy God, the All-powerful require of you than to *fear* this your God? According to this view the Talmudical question: "Is the fear of God so small a matter?" is well answered? Yes, in the eyes of Moses, the lower degree of divine worship is indeed an easy matter. So much every one could, must every one feel and know that servile fear is the earliest, lowest stage of honor to God, and that it is a bounden duty to every one **לֵלֶכֶת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו** to walk in the ways of God.

But the thinking Israelite having reached this stage, and seeking to emulate his great exemplar, whom he can admire in Moses, will soon strive to lift himself from the undeveloped stage of the

עבורה מראה to the עבודה מאהבה he will press forward from *fearing*, to *revering* because of love. ולאהבה אותו ולעבוד את ד' אהיה בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך To love the Lord his God, with all his heart and soul, as the child its father. This thought is touched on with clearness by the last of the prophets, Malachi, who recalling Moses, saying: "Remember the laws of my servant Moses," and goes on to admonish his degenerated contemporaries in the following words: "ועיניכם תראינה ואהם תאמרו יגדל ד'" Your eyes have seen; you speak it yourselves; God is great! and yet you do not conduct yourselves according to that consciousness." He then proceeds: "A son honors his father, a slave his master;—am I your Father, then where is the tender reverence towards me, am I your Lord then where is the fear for me?"

Now we can understand the saying of Antigonos, אל תהיו כעבדים, be not like slaves who honor their master for fear, rather as such who serve without expectation of reward. And when will you manifest such honor towards God which seeks no selfish return וידי מורא שמים עליכם When there shall be constantly upon you the fear of God; when you in all and everything shall be dominated by the thought that an All-seeing Eye rests upon you; and you let deep roots of God's love sink within you. The fear of a retributive hand may be the

first incentive for the most uncultured idolator, the object for which he honored his idols. But an awe of God which like that of Job, rests only upon anxious fear of punishment, cannot withstand temptation. For if הלא יראתך כלסתך only your fear sustains your hope; תקותך ותום דרכך expectations of reward your virtuous tendencies, then must it lead infallibly as Elifas closed his admonitory words: הלא נסע יתרם בם ימותו ולא בחכמה When at last the rupture comes between conduct and the imagined advantages, then such people are irredeemably lost, and they who began so bravely, end in despair. Therefore away with the slavish, primitive fear, and instead thereof the honor of God and the filial love confirmed by Abraham, taught by Moses and recalled by Antigonos of Socho, that in all your thinking, feeling, doing and being, you may realize the appeal of Moses: Be ye as children of the Lord thy God.

THE LEARNED AND THE POOR.

THE following two sentences from the Ethics have an intimate connection, and are therefore here treated together ; that of Jose ben Joezer and that of Jose ben Jochanan. The former said : " Let your house be a place of assemblage for the learned, cover yourself with the dust of their feet, and drink in thirstily their words."

Jose ben Jochanan said : " Let your house be widely open so that the poor shall be your domestics."

Manifestly the first of these expresses *theoretical* Judaism, while the latter speaks for *practical* Judaism. That which is expressed by our proverb : " Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you what you are," is to a certain degree the explanation of the sentence : " Let your house be a house of assembly for the learned." The measure of the culture of any people is the support and esteem it metes to art and science. In the degree in which it honors and venerates its great men, in that degree is a people ranked among civilized nations.

Monuments of bronze and stone have been reared which perpetuate the memory of men of

genius, and high in honor is held the memory of those by contemporaries and those of the younger generation.

The monotheistic nation of Jews, which had for its highest ethical ideal, its God, could not and dared not present any image or sensual conception. As its highest ideal put to shame every attempt at material presentation by means of chisel and brush, so it was concluded that neither could its great men be righteously immortalized by national memorials; and yet, more than any other, this nation understood how to honor its great men—*by the perpetuation of their thoughts and deeds.*

Is not the memory of Moses, is not the memory of the Maccabees more truly preserved in the grateful hearts of the people than could have been accomplished by means of monuments, however artistically executed? That is also what is taught in the Talmud; אין עושין נפשות לעדריקים; מעשיו הן זכרונם "No monuments are erected for the great men in Israel; their deeds are their memorials."

The Jewish literature, which in contents and form can hold its own with that of every civilized nation, owes its existence and development to the reverence which the Jewish people have ever observed towards the bearers of learning.

This all too zealous, pious care to conserve

everything that ever a sage had spoken, has had in a certain way its disadvantages. A glance into the gigantic Talmud work will certify to this. This work, upon which was labored more than six hundred years, by men of the most various degrees of culture and spheres of life; this work has perpetuated some *Hagadistic* utterances which had better not have been immortalized. Not, indeed, that morality would place its veto upon even one of the utterances. But because some are only of antiquarian interest, and of significance only for the history of culture, a significance whose personal and other relations are closed to us, the key to which has been lost.

Only the extravagant honor in which the authors of those utterances were held, has secured a place and perpetuity for one or the other dictum, although, according to our æsthetic tastes, they may be deemed *bizarre* and peculiar.

Even in the present time this pious tendency towards the Jewish printed sheet and manuscript is so strong that the pious of the old school would not, for anything in the world, surrender a loose leaf inscribed with Hebrew letters, to profane uses; and rather burn or bury the sheet which might possibly contain the שם, the name of God, and be subjected to profanation. If then the products of Jewish learning were so

highly honored, how much more the men of learning!

Although there was never in Judaism any justification for a class distinction of professorial or professional men of learning, as little as at an earlier period a hierarchy could be developed in accordance with the Mosaic command; *והם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש* "Ye shall be unto me a *Kingdom of priests*, and an *holy nation*;" yet in the Talmud and in the consciousness of the people, the distinction between the position of a *תלמיד חכם* and that of a *עם הארץ* was never effaced.

The essence of all veneration was comprehended in the title *Talmud Chochom*, while the *Am Haarez*, the boorish, untutored clown, sprung from the common herd, is looked upon with contempt.

He who does not respectfully arise from his seat in the presence of a scholar is adjudged as one of rude manners. The Talmud says: "The stupid Babylonians stand reverentially before the dead parchment of the Thora and kiss it as it is carried past; but not before the Jewish sages, the living upholders of the *Thora*."

"Whoever," says another, "commits a breach against the honor of a Jewish sage, and deliberately treats him depreciatingly, transgresses the honor of God. But to him who receives a sage,

and shows him honor, it is reckoned as if he had extended hospitality to the majesty of God."

This glorifying of learning does not take its source from extravagant self-admiration of self-satisfied vanity of the Jewish sages, rather from the righteous veneration for Jewish learning, flowing from a Divine source, saying: *גדולה דעה* *והנהגה בן שתי אותיות שנא' כי אל דעות ה'* "Great is wisdom, taking its place between the two Divine attributes."

And because the Jewish sage, having an ethical principle (for without it he was not deemed a scholar, but a *סבור*, one who rebelled against God), securing all honor; because the Jewish sage when he religiously taught as he dealt, and lived as he taught, as a *נאמן דורש ונאמן מקיים*, the best guide for the religious life, being in his own person the best moral beacon and rule of life; therefore was the reward of the greatest, for intercourse with the learned; therefore Jose ben Jooser taught *לחכמים יתי ביתו ועד לחכמים*. "Let your house be a place of assembly for the learned, and seat yourself in the dust at their feet, and drink eagerly their words of wisdom."

And yet, glorifying Jewish learning, and association with its disciples and the supporters of the *Thora*, embodies only the *theoretical* estimation of Judaism. It is imperfect, unless completed by the *practical*.

This completion is implied by the other Jose, the son of Jochanan when he said : יהי ביתך בית : "Let thy house be wide opened, that the poor be thy domestics."

Let your intercourse be with the wise, but not at the expense of the poor. Not only to the former, but to the latter as well, your house should be opened wide.

ל: "Neither has he *Thora*, who only exclaims '*Thora! Thora!!*' He who only *speaks* '*Thora! Thora!!*' but does not *act* according to its humane behests; he who only theoretically, but not practically practises his Judaism, though his mouth be never so full with its praise, has but little of *Thora* in his heart.

לכבתיני באחת מעיניך בתחלה באחת לבשתעשה בשתי עינים "You have considered me, with but one eye, that is, when you observed me, with one eye; but when you *act*, then you have looked upon me with both eyes."

He who views his Judaism, his God, only with one eye, who looks upon the *Thora* only as abstract philosophy, has but a narrow comprehension of the demands of religion. Only he who conducts himself in accordance with its teachings, exercising practical virtue, grasps in its entirety the divine teachings, looks upon God with both of his eyes.

Beautifully have the ancients expressed this: כל האוחז ספר תורה ערום נקבר ערום סלקא דעתך אלא ערום בלא מצות.

Whoso grasps the *Thora* naked will be buried naked. What is meant here by the "*Thora* naked?" It is without its practical commands! He who holds in view only the pure theory, deems the *Thora* only as a subject for study, but neglects observance of its commands; in his hands the *Thora* is naked; he has stripped it of its most beautiful garment, and he goes hence naked, and his soul is disrobed of its finest array, which preserve the מצות ומעשים טובים.

Hence among the best of the ethical sentences is that יהיו עניים בני ביתך, the poor shall be your domestics, members of your family. How is that to be understood? Shall the beggar have the right to place himself among the members of your family? Shameful and shameless beggars should share the daintiest delicacies, the finest raiment, the last coin, with the members of your household?

No! Here, too, תפשת מרובה לא תפשת, "ask not too much, so that too little be not given unto you; call not all your own, so that everything be not withheld from you!"

The meaning, however, may be found. Your business often compels economy in your expenditures. Honestly speaking, where do you begin

with your economy? Is it in that you limit the gratification of your own desires? No! Your own table is as luxuriously set as before; your own extravagance of dress, and of those of your family is as undiminished, be the business depression never so weighty. In fact, it is frequently the case that the outward show is heightened to conceal the inner rottenness! Do you know to whom you curtail your expenditures first of all, even if before you had not been all too liberal? *The poor!* It is in view of this the ethical teacher said: "Let the poor be your domestics, members of your family."

Let us view the reverse. Say that your business circumstances have changed for the better, prosperity has entered your house. Your *Zedakah*, however, remains the same; the old, shrivelled-up pauper; your hand of charity knows no change for the better! That is, says an old interpreter, as it is written: *הן עושר בביתו וצדקתו עומדת לעד*. Riches and prosperity are in *his* house, when he has acquired riches and prosperity. Elegant furniture adorns *his* house; splendor and superfluity mirror themselves in his appurtenances, but *צדקתו עומדת לעד*, the *Zedakah*, charity, that remains ever the same, poor and contemptible!

American Judaism has in its generosity afforded illustrations for the saying of both Joses, by the maintenance of religious schools, in which thou-

sands and thousands of children of both sexes are instructed in the principles of our holy religion. There the youth enjoy intercourse with the supporters of Jewish learning. In living pictures they behold Israel's spiritual heroes, and are inspired with the ambition to emulate them.

APPOINT A TEACHER, PROCURE A FRIEND.

THE Ethical teachings are, in general, truths of experience, whose applicability is not limited to such cases and circumstances which inspired their utterance, but may be pertinently extended as well over such as lie outside and beyond. Such an one is the sentence of Joshua ben Perachja; עשה לך רב וקנה לך חבר והוי, "Appoint thyself a teacher, procure a friend, and judge all mankind favorably."

Whoever is acquainted with the career of the author of this sentence will recognize it as an outcome of his own experience. But it has a significance and applicability far beyond the narrow limits of Joshua ben Perachja's individuality.

It is an incontestable truth, that every man of whatever sphere in life, or of whatever degree of culture, sets up for himself some model to shape his career.

Originality is a fine thing. It is a sure passage to fame, when one is not only a follower; does not simply tread beaten paths; stands on one's own feet; thinks and acts according to one's own

methods ; and possesses independence of judgment.

But it were venturesome indeed if we would so far distend the force of originality as to become operative in all and everything ; that self should be its own model, and naught be accepted that is proffered by another.

Carried to their logical sequence, such principles were incapable of being executed. He who would carry them out, would not dare to speak as others, nor dress and eat like his fellows. He must expose himself to the merited ridicule of mankind, and be treated as an eccentric.

Certain traditions have been accepted for the guidance of human society which serve as rules for conduct without constant investigation as to their source and origin. Enough that they are in force, and cannot with impunity be transgressed. To this the Talmudic saying agrees עולם במנהגו נהג ושומים שקלקלו עליהם ליתן את דרין "The world goes on in its normal course, and the fool who would go against it will be called to account," and laughed at by the world.

If such rules of convenience are recognized as valid rules of conduct in the ordinary affairs of life, why should they be excluded from the religious relations?

What would become of us if everyone in his blindness, in his shallow conceit, would recognize

only himself as highest authority, and force his views upon the world, saying: קבלו דעתי "Whether they be good or evil, whether tried or not, accept my ideas and enforce them as the guide of life !" No wise man speaks thus, only the dullard, דרך, אויל ישר בעיניו ושומע לעצה חכם "Only the ways of the fool please him; the wise man listens to the opinions of others."

Particularly in matters in relation to religious ideas the past centuries must be considered ; the opinions of the thinkers, the directions of the leaders must be received, especially as for so many centuries they have served as staff and support ; sure guide, solace and comfort for a whole nation in its dispersion, under all conditions of existence and exigencies of fortune.

If we would burn the bridges behind us ; break off the communications which unite the past with the present : if we would desert the paths which our forefathers have broken for us, and rather pursue the untrodden tracks, although through brambles, thorns and thistles, that lead to religious chaos, then could the sage well say of us: יש דרך ישר לפני איש ואחריתה דרכי מות "Some paths please some although the end of the paths is death; that is, results in moral, religious death."

Our religious guide is תורת משה the law of Moses interpreted and applied in the light of

Tradition. But as the opinion and individual exposition of each one can not be valid for the whole community, therefore it behooves individuals and communities to appoint only recognized authorities as teachers; that is, such as do not disdain the belief in authority, but at the same time with profound comprehension and careful tact and conscientious criticism, consider what may be approved in respect for the exigencies of the times, for the refined, æsthetic taste, and what may be discarded without altering the nature and character of the foundations of faith.

This is the impression which is made by the sentence of Joshua ben Parachja: "Appoint a teacher for *yourself*." A teacher, recognized by you as an authority who is bound by the moral obligation and is empowered with the right to meet your moral needs according to the circumstances of time and place. While the congregation appoints its teacher with competence to labor for the weal of the congregation according to his best knowledge and ability; and the teacher esteems it his highest duty to further its interests; the congregation on its part must recognize it as its obligation *עשה לך רב* to yield unto its appointed teacher the authoritative power, and to be guided by his teachings whether they be difficult or convenient in nature.¹

¹ Kethuboth 105, a

צורבא מרבנן דמרחמי ליה בני מתיא וכו'

It may sometimes happen that a teacher of the people who is universally beloved, is so because he surrenders himself to the will of the people, letting the crooked be straight, the straight crooked; just as the whim of the congregation may dictate.

The conscientious teacher will not swerve from, nor veer in innermost religious convictions according to the transient and spasmodic fancies of his congregation. It should be noted that with clear foresight Joshua ben Parachja said: *עשה לך רב*, *Appoint* unto yourself a teacher, recognize him as binding authority; but that he did not say, *קנה לך רב*, *Purchase* a teacher for yourself.

However large the salary might be, it shall not serve to purchase his religious convictions, to bribe conscientious scruples. I would the times were again so fashioned that the Rabbi, as in former years, should receive no compensation.

In the thirteenth century, it was necessary to procure the permission of the great Talmudist, R. Meir Rothenburg, to espouse the new arrangements for the payment of a salary to the congregational officer, which had become necessary by the change of circumstances.

If our rabbis of to-day were, like the Levites of old, uncompensated teachers, it were better not

only for the financial condition of our congregations, but for their religious condition as well.

Congregations would no doubt gladly see the ancient dictum of the Talmudists carried out: *מה אני בחנם אף אתה בחנם*, "As the Lord your God gave you the *Thora* without price, so should you, teacher of Israel, expound it without recompense."

But though they would gladly see it, yet *אפי' רמנ מנ שריא*, "A physician, be he a physician for body or soul, who cures without pay, is not of much value." It is questionable, however, whether congregations would as gladly see an uncompensated Rabbi who would not be a Reform Rabbi.

The sages have already indicated with shrewd wit: *ומקלו יניד לו*, "His staff teaches him;" the same: *יכל המקיל לו מניד לו*. Only the Reform Rabbi is favored, he who only teaches from the point of view of easy performance, who never threatens with the staff of rebuke.

The converse conditions apply to the acquisition of a friend. If the teacher is the authority, the friend must be the conscientious counsellor, must constitute an indispensable mine of comfort, to purchase which, all your wealth is not too much. Hence *קנה לך חבר*, Purchase, procure yourself a friend. Left to yourself, you would be-

² Pesachim 52, b.

come the most miserable creature, to perish in wretched solitude: *או חברותא או מיתותא*. "Either joined with a friend, or physical and moral death."

The teacher cannot follow your every footstep; your friend can. Furthermore, *אין מן הכל זוכה אדם*, *ללמוד*, "You cannot learn from every teacher." Either your receptive faculties are limited, or the teacher's method is not suited to you. Your true friend, however, can always be relied on. For, "If a friend teaches what you *may*, your enemy what you *should*." Therefore, procure a friend; have and hold at every price, a friend.

But all the aid which the teacher can give in matters of conscience, all the wise counsels of the friend in worldly matters, cannot secure you happiness, unless your heart is moved with tolerance and feelings of love for humanity. Hence the Ethical teacher adds the third phrase to his sentence: *הווי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות*, "Judge everyone favorably." *בצדק תשפוט הווי דן לכף זכות*, "You cannot form a judgment better than by considering the better nature of your fellow-man."

If you seek, like that Talmudist, something of good in every man, you will not entirely condemn any one. Not even the most wicked is so entire-

ly abandoned as to have altogether lost his title as a child of God. On the other hand, how many have sunk in the pool of sin, only because you have allowed them to fall further and deeper down the steep path of crime by means of precipitate intolerance, instead of striving to restore to them their self-respect, by mild and charitable judgment.

And you, who beat your breast with pride, saying, "I am pure, innocent; I have remained guiltless." Who knows how many faults another could find in you? For every one, says a thinker, carries his burthen of sin upon his back. He himself sees it not. But his neighbor who follows after, behind him, he sees. Hence say the Talmudists: *הזן לכה זכות דנין אותו*, *לכה זכות*, "Whoever judges others charitably, will be judged tolerantly by others."

Therefore let us learn, and form the resolve to do as that Talmudic sage, who deemed his long life a gift from God as a reward *לא עלה קללת חברי*, because he never despised any fellow-man, and never closed his eyes in sleep unless he had forgiven his enemy!

Only with a teacher in authority over us; a friend beside us, charity and humanity within us, then only can we tread the arduous path of life

in peace of soul and spirit, looked upon with favor by God and man, and to the blessing and weal of Israel and mankind.

THE DANGER OF THE WICKED NEIGHBOR.

THERE is hardly a proposition which can command validity and application in every case without any exception. As little as any man can from one point of view see everything that is spread out round about him ; just as little in the sphere of morals, of ethics, in the criticism of certain manifestations, can all possible phases be focused to one point of view.

However, the exception usually confirms the rule. We can experience this now, when we place in juxtaposition the sentence of the Mishna which we last treated of and that which follows, to be discussed here.

We explained latterly the necessity, and the resultant rule, formulated by wisdom, and destined for happiness ! " Judge everyone according to his better nature."

And we arrive at once at an exception, and we cannot but exclaim with Nitai the Arbelite :
הרחק משכן רע ואל תתחבר לרשע ואל תתיאש מן הפורענות
" Hold yourself aloof from the wicked neighbor ; do not associate with evil companions, and think not that you will evade punishment."

We cannot therefore practically execute our

tolerance and humanity under all circumstances, as all are not deserving thereof. *We* may be inspired by the purest motives; to what end, however, if they are rendered futile by the wicked neighbor or the evil companion who shadows our footsteps? *Our* hearts may overflow with love of humanity; of what use is it if vitiated through the instrumentality of the wicked neighbor? *We* may be imbued with the worth of the inalienable sacred possessions of freedom and human rights, but what can we accomplish if we dare not pursue the paths directed by our hearts; if the tyrant swings his retributive rod over our heads, and with rude hand and unrighteous violence, snatches from us the unfurled banner of our Ideals, and ridiculing and scorning it, casts it into the dust, to tread it under foot?

The same holds true of our religious inspirations. We have, for instance, enjoyed a religious training, and arrange our household according to the ritual ordinances. We observe our parents, our grandparents existing in the same sphere of ideas, and we note that they live happily and contentedly within the restraints dictated by Religion.

We emulate their example. On Friday nights we assemble our children around our tables, for the Sabbath angels seek with their soft lights those who enter to dedicate the holy day. We

let our children sing the prayer of thanks in Hebrew choruses and responses. We converse with those of the younger generation on religious topics, tell over for them the pious story of Israel's glorious career; we awaken the enthusiasm of the children of Israel's joys and sorrows.

With the elder children; daughters and sons-in-law we speak of our family traditions. We direct their attention to the God who was ever ready to save; who freed our parents and grandparents from various critical situations in life. We direct their view towards those heights עזרי מעם ה' ערשה שמים וארץ, whence we may ever anticipate succor. We are in the bosom of our family, comfortable and happy in the religious atmosphere which pervades us, when a knock is heard at the door, and our neighbor enters.

"Ah! do I disturb you, perhaps?"

Etiquette commands the answer: "By no means. Pray be seated. I was just narrating," the head of the family explains to the new-comer, "I was just narrating to my children concerning the beneficent influence of the Sabbath, and how it generated for our ancestors the force for the culture of the people; how it upheld their spirits and sustained their souls; how it retained ever in its purity the domestic life. For, when the father bending throughout the week beneath the burthens that labor puts upon his shoulders, casts off

with panting breath the load when Friday night approaches, and, praising God, betakes himself to the synagogue; whence coming home where the pious housewife has already assembled the children to receive the blessings from the returning parent; what joy for father, mother and children reigns in that household! And all, thanks to the noble Sabbath-idea."

"But, my dear friend," begins the neighbor who had just dropped in for a visit, "my dear friend, how can you reason in such an antiquarian fashion? Who would remain bound by such prejudices, and even immerse his children therein? Freedom is the watchword of the times! Free religious views are the ornaments of youth! What would you with the cobwebs of antiquity? What profit can you procure from the old lumber-room of antiquated ceremonies and ritual ordinances? The very preachers from the pulpits hold them up to ridicule! And you dwell in this misty atmosphere through which no fresh breath, nor ray of light, can penetrate? I must tell you a good joke:

"Recently a Reformer met a Conservative; as he saw him, he exclaimed in surprise:

" 'Do you live yet?'

" 'That is a cheerful question,' said the Conservative; 'but why do you ask it?'

" 'Well,' answered the Reformer, 'because

with your freakish and torturing usages you belong to the thirteenth century and not to our modern times; therefore I am surprised that you still live!'"

So spoke the neighbor, and the children laughed loudly, while the father's brow was wrinkled. Falsely-conceived hospitality compelled his silence. But we call out:

הרחק משכן רע ואל תתחבר לרשע ואל תהי' אש מן הפורענות
 "Hold yourself aloof from the wicked neighbor. Do not consort with the godless scoffer, for do not imagine that you can evade the punishment."

Retribution comes all too soon! The religious views of the children will quickly be poisoned by the snakish seed sown by the scornful neighbor, who mocks and jeers at the piety of others. The children begin to be ashamed of their ancestral religion. Little by little they relieve themselves of the practices and customs prescribed by a pious adherence to the Law. The former eager learners become in time the teachers of their parents, whom they overawe by their accounts of the much-lauded Progress and the saving power of Reform. So that ultimately the elders soon cast aside their former views, and the word of the Prophet is verified in that family: "The son dishonors the father; the daughter strives against the mother, and the people of the house are the enemies of the house."

Hence, keep aloof from the wicked neighbor, who would overshadow the purity of your soul with the darkness of his words, who would disturb the peace of your spirit with cold, distracting doubt.

See what was said of those נקיי הדעת שבירושלים, that the honest and religiously-thinking men of Jerusalem never associated intimately with any one whose upright character and pious life was not of general repute. Observe the talmudic proverb: *אוי לרשע ואוי לשכניו*, Woe unto the reprobate, and woe unto his neighbor, for in the company of a reprobate, the most honest, upright and pious will be led astray. Hence the first verse of the Psalm teaches: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

That is, as explained by the sages; if he only goes to the place of meeting of the wicked, he will at least stand and listen, and finally seat himself among them!

And not only in the religious relations, but in the political as well, we must observe the admonition: "Shun the wicked neighbor, ally yourself not with the tyrant, or you will not escape punishment." Contact with the wicked neighbor is not

1. Talmud Aboda Zara 18.

only dangerous to our religious conceptions and the performance of pious obligations, which are ridiculed by him, but also in our political relations. The best illustration of this is afforded by the history of the struggle for American Independence against English violence.

It is a familiar story: this glorious history, which deserves to be written in golden letters, traced in glowing ineffaceable lines, in the annals of our magnificent country. It is familiar that the Briton was the wicked neighbor who sought to embitter the lives of our fathers more than one hundred and nine years ago. No one could write a letter here without stumbling against the infamous stamp act. No housewife could serve a cup of tea, without paying a tax thereupon.

This could no longer be endured by the liberty-loving people of America, and the desperate struggle of the few was begun against the overwhelming numbers of the British, to cast off their tyrannous yoke.

After various skirmishes, a battle was fought at Lexington, on April 18, 1775, and thanks to the energy, the lofty wisdom, and splendid generalship of the commander-in-chief, George Washington, the Englishmen were beaten in the field as early as March of the following year, and the land was rescued from the clutches of the tyrant, although many battles had yet to be won

before the country was ridden of the wicked neighbor who sought to enter by force, and the power of the tyrant was broken.

Yet, as in the struggle for freedom of the Maccabeans, Judas Maccabee restored the sacrilegious Temple, and solemnly proclaimed the independence of the Jewish people even before the final deliverance from Syro-Macedonian power; so in the struggle for American independence, although eight years of contest were yet to transpire before peace was restored, yet on the Fourth of July, 1776, just 109 years ago to-day the Declaration of Independence was solemnly pronounced by the Continental congress.

The memorable principles of freedom were enunciated in the main, in the following words:—"That all men are created equal; that all have a natural right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that human governments are instituted for the sole purpose of securing the welfare of the people; that the people have a natural right to alter their government whenever it becomes destructive to liberty. And that, therefore, the United Colonies of America are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states."

These principles of inalienable human rights, in whose behalf America's brave sons stood up in battle array at Lexington, can and should be celebrated in this Lexington Avenue Temple, on

this national holiday. Not only because we are patriots, but because we are Jews, as those principles are pure biblical thoughts, which were carried on to victory in more than one century.

Does not the Law of Moses teach from the very beginning that man was created in the image of his Maker, and is, and must be free? Does not the Law of Moses first teach that "One law shall ye have for the stranger as for the native-born, for I am the Lord thy God."

As God is the Father of us all, so each one of us has the natural right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and whoever trespasses upon this natural right, transgresses the will of God, "for the right is God-given," and whoso encroaches upon the one violates the other.

As often, therefore, as the tyrannical Kings of Israel outraged the welfare of the people and the national fortunes, so often God sent men gifted with burning eloquence in the persons of the Prophets, who with the keen-edged sword of their withering speech, prepared the downfall of tyranny.

And, obversely, as often as a just government wielded the sceptre in Judah, the approval of God was proclaimed by the mouth of the Prophets. So, for instance, the prophet Isaiah terms the pious King Hezekiah: "Wonderful counselor, hero of God, constant father, prince of peace,

to enlarge the sovereignty, to make peace lasting, and establish the kingdom, by means of right and justice, unto eternity."

These words of the prophet are as if coined for that wonderful counsellor, that hero of God, who was a constant father to this great country and may be termed its prince of peace; George Washington, who based the pillars of the United States of America upon Right, Justice and Liberty, and gave the impulse for further development and constant growth.

We see, then, that the ideas of liberty have flowed from the same source as the principles of religion; from the will of God. The pious observer of God's commands is supremely qualified to be a good patriot.

We see too, with true joy, in this land of liberty, that fidelity to religion in the various denominations, holds pace with glowing patriotism. By so much is it to be desired that we Jews, who do not remain behind others in patriotic feeling and activity, should be of like strength and fidelity as regards religion, as those of other faiths.

It were high time that the unprofitable pen and pulpit contest, which certainly was not begun by me, were discontinued, especially as some reporters, with but limited judgment, have reduced

the warfare to a very caricature, considering the holy cause as a matter of business, and give no truthful picture of the situation.

It were time, instead of the sterile fencing with words, concerning Reform or Orthodoxy, that with united forces and means, true and genuine Judaism be strengthened in the hearts of the hosts of Israel.

If, however, we do struggle, let it be against corruption wherever it may be found; as Pinchas did, of whom the weekly portion of the *Thora* says: "Because he in holy zeal struggled zealously against the moral destruction in the midst of the people, and thus turned away God's wrath, therefore such human deed is crowned with peace as God's reward." As it is said; [Numbers 25, 12.] **לֹכַן אָמַר ה'נִי נֹתֵן לוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם**

"Therefore announce, that I present him with the covenant of peace." To this the ancient remark **וַיִּזְרַח שְׁלוֹם קָטִיעַ** The *Vav* in the word *Sholom* is broken in two, and leaves *Sholem*, which means perfect.

He who struggles for peace struggles for civilization, for the development of virtue and the perfection of human society, and its welfare. Such an one was George Washington, therefore he won lasting prosperity and the blessings of civilization for his country, and may be called for all time the prince of peace.

With warm hearts of faith, with glowing patriotic impulses and courage, we will cherish the legacy Washington has bequeathed to us, and to aid in fostering to fuller blossom this noble Fatherland, is our most fervent yearning, and to this end may the Almighty strengthen us.

BE GUARDED IN YOUR TEACHINGS.

IN intimate connection stand three of our ethical sentences: those of Judah ben Tabbai, Simon ben Schetach and Abtalyon. The first taught: Be not a partisan judge; and when the contesting parties appear before you consider them guilty; but when you have given your verdict, deem them innocent.

Simon ben Schetach adds: Scrutinize conscientiously the testimony of the witnesses, be cautious in giving judgment, as false views might be deduced therefrom. And Abtalyon voiced the like caution, saying: "Ye learned, be guarded in your teachings, or you may lead exiles astray to unhealthy waters, and scholars that follow you may drink therefrom, and sacrilege might easily be committed against God's name."

Golden teachings such as these fit not only for the halls of Justice in which and for which they were first enunciated, but in general for all the circumstances of life they find application, and particularly for the attitude which we assume in religious questions.

Tempting as it is to present pictures of life in relation to which these wise rules may be applied, we will limit the course of ideas. We will leave untouched business establishment, the domestic hearth, the school house, the judicial bench ; on all of which should be appended in lustrous letters : " You merchant, in your affairs ; you father, in your conduct ; teacher, in your vocation ; judge, in your rule ; remember all, ' Be guarded in your judgment.' "

But we pass by all these spheres of life and enter the house of God, look upon the audience, listen to the sermons, and recall to the listeners, to the preachers, to those receiving the teaching, and to those who give the teaching, the word of our three ethical teachers, for constant warning. So far as concerns the people, they who regularly attend Synagogue and Temple deserve credit in view of the strong tendency to free-thinking, and especially here in the new world. Without expecting as a premium that their names will be recorded in the public prints, men, women and children attend the houses of worship, certainly in the first instance to gratify the needs of their souls. These people, however, with their needs and wishes, must be gratified.—How ?

One portion would be entertained by hearing apt anecdotes ; another by explanations of the holy writings ; a third by spirited lashings of the

abnormal outgrowth of the times ; a fourth, certainly the smallest portion, requires only a feast for the ears, caring less for personal edification than for criticism of the preachers. One Sabbath in one synagogue, another in a different house of worship,—to institute a comparison between them which pleases him best, and which is most free in thought.

As therefore the degree of culture varies in the different auditors, as also the motive which leads them to the synagogue is different in many, though all are imbued with the desire of dedicating a number of hours to the elevation of their souls, what course shall the preacher pursue to utilize these hours to the most beneficent and fruitful advantage ? In reply to this we receive good and sufficient counsel from the three sentences we have cited above. They bid the preacher take to heart : " Be not a partisan judge ; " that is, do not adjudge as an advocate for one or the other, but be rigid in searching the equity for both parties, as if both were guilty, and when they are gone, your decision having been rendered, consider them as reconciled.

Which are the two parties in action to be tried by the conscientious judge, in our case the upright Rabbi, and then after judgment rendered, to be tolerably treated ? They are the two religious parties, Reform and Orthodoxy. To

approach the trial of them with prejudgment, with partisanship, would be committing a sin against truth. *וְלִישָׁב עַל דִּמְשָׁמְךָ זֶה הָיָה רֵץ אֶמֶת לְאִמְיָתוֹ* "Whoever," says the Talmudists, "would sit conscientiously in judgment, must judge of truth according to the truth."

What is meant by the phrase "Judge of Truth according to the truth?" Let us take a religious truth, for instance; the validity of the Law of Moses and its rabbinical interpretation.

If a rabbi wished to express himself according to the tastes and religious views of his hearers, he must know every one of them, must have studied closely the mode of life of each one; must have prosecuted research into the thoughts and sentiments of all of them, and were he possessed of this superhuman psychological knowledge, and did he treat his theme as the attendant audience required, then he would not be judging Truth according to the truth, but in accordance with the ascertained wishes of his hearers. As often as he should learn how they would prefer to have the subject treated, so often he must change his views on the same subject, which must also occur when he has other listeners with views diverging from his former auditors.

That then is no essential Truth, but a personal aspect of it; not absolute, but relative; Truth which the rabbi has not secured from personal

conviction and from study of the related facts, but rather has been forced upon him by others, borne in upon him from without.

But the rabbi should encompass the truth from himself; from the Divine Book and combined development of Judaism; not receive it from outside agreeably to the variable, fluctuating principles of changeable Fashion.

Hence the rabbi should observe the behest: "Be not the advocate of your listeners." Not as they wish, but as you understand it, and as it corresponds to the matter of fact, you must dispense your teachings. The Mosaic-rabbinical Law has been till now for so many centuries the elixir of life which has preserved Judaism sound and healthy, in body and spirit, that it cannot at once have degenerated into an opposite character as a poisonous decoction. If for many, preachers and laymen, the Law has assumed this character, it is not to be charged to the law but to its expounders, as the Talmud has already observed; *כִּי לֹא דִבֶּר רַק הוּא מִכֶּם*, "The law should be no shallow thing for you." *אִם רַק הוּא מִכֶּם*, "Is it however so, then it is through yourself and in yourself that the shallowness is found."

No rabbi, if he is proud of his title, and if he would be a teacher of a Jewish congregation, dare assume the robe of a Ham, and uncover the nakedness of his father. If he sees aught at

fault in the religion of his fathers, he must reverently cover it, and not expose it to ridicule before all the world.

And then there arises the question, whether that is really a fault which he deems as such. The sentence of Simon ben Schetoch should be ever before his eyes: "Scrutinize carefully the testimony of the witnesses." Not every haphazard suggestion which you set up as revealed truth, and to-morrow as quickly pronounce an error; not every whim of fashion in the defense of which you are to-day deified, and to-morrow stoned; not these should serve as the basis for your judgment and determine the nature of your teachings.

Examine the witnesses who lived before you; search after what your predecessors thought; let the thinkers, poets, sages and heroes of the faith pass in review before your mind's eye; consider the moral courage with which your ancestors bore persecution and misery for the sake of ideas which were dear to them, in whose behalf they were *מוֹסֵר נַפְשׁ*, sacrificing their lives; enduring torture at the stake, and you a more fortunate son of happier times in a country of liberty freely acknowledging the beautiful religion of your fathers, you accept no witnesses, listen to no voice but your own, and enunciate your teachings as those of Judaism! Oh! my brother, observe

the sentence of Simon ben Schetach: "Weigh carefully your words, for how may of the untutored deduce error from your teachings!"

This warning applies particularly to the teacher of Israel. Because of the various modes of perception, degrees of culture, and methods of training which prevail among the auditors, how often is not even the clear and with unambiguous definiteness-expressed word, the subject of misapprehension? More than by others, curious motives of which were not dreamt of by the speaker, are ascribed to the minister; personal allusions are sought and supposed to be found, which the speaker never had in his mind. How much more, then, when the message is dubious in phraseology and open to misconstruction.

Hence Abtalyon's warning is sent to the publicly teaching interpreters of God's word, to the Rabbis: Ye learned, be guarded in your utterances; you might easily be condemned to banishment to a place where bad water is, and the scholars that come after you, might drink thereof and die, whereby God's name might be subject to sacrilege.

The word of God should, like the smoothly-flowing waters of Silvah, teach us gently, and, like fresh spring water, should refresh us, not like the slough, lead us to poisonous weeds. Distorted teachings, heretical doctrines are, how-

ever, such poisonous elements which mingling with the healthy juices ruin the strong organism. The scholars, the listeners eager to learn, may easily with such erroneous teachings become imbued with such poisoning elements, and die, that is, become lost to the real and genuine Judaism.

The prophet sends forth the invitation to hear the word of God with the phrase, "Come all ye who are thirsty and drink of the waters." הוֹי כָּל חַיִּים הַשְׁמִיעַ לָמַי, The sages ask: Why is the word of God compared with water?

מִזֶּה מַיִם מֵהַיָּדֵי מָקוֹם נָבוֹה וְהוֹלֵכִין לְמָקוֹם נְמוּךְ אִם דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה אֵין מִתְקַיֵּימִין אֵלָּא בְּמִי שְׂדַעְתּוֹ שְׂפִלָּה.

As the water possesses the peculiarity that it flows from above and seeks the lonely places, so the word of God becomes fruitful only in and through him who descends from the heights of his conceit to lowly modesty.

He who in his self-deification and in the consciousness of his own infallibility, reviles against the Jewish antiquities; describes as men of darkness the shining lights of Israel; holds up to public scorn and ridicule the Laws which have been for so many centuries piously observed, he leads his pupils to bad waters. And when this is boasted of, and the public prints are filled with

1. Taanith 7, b.

such teachings, then he directly or indirectly tends to the desecration of God's holy name.

Consciously, however, no good Jehudi would commit such sacrilege. Our sages consider the *Chillul Haschem* as the greatest sin which an Israelite can commit, מוֹטֵב שֶׁיַּעֲבֹד ע"ז וְאֵל יַחֲלֵל ש"ש: "Rather idolatrous practices than public desecration of God's name."² מוֹטֵב שֶׁתַּעֲקֹר אוֹת אֶחָד מִן הַתּוֹרָה וְאֵל יַחֲלֵל ש"ש: "Rather remove a letter from the Holy writings, but do not desecrate the name of God."³ נֹחַ לוֹ לְאָדָם שֶׁיַּעֲבֹר עֲבִירָה בְּסֵתֶר וְאֵל יַחֲלֵל ש"ש בְּפִרְהֵסְיָא: "He should rather sin in secret than create public anger, and thus desecrate God's name."⁴ כָּל מָקוֹם שֶׁיֵּשׁ חֵדוֹל הַשֵּׁם אֵין: "He, however, who desecrates God's name has no title to rabbinical honors,"⁵ and he was not recognized as a rabbi. Conversely he who zealously strove to reconcile the altered views occasioned by changing tendency of the times with the teachings of former sages, and thereby honors God's name and the venerable Jewish religion, he was highly lauded.

It is said of a great teacher of the Mishna, חֲכָם גָּדוֹל אֵתָּה שְׁקִימַת דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים: "You may be

2. Synhed. 107, a.

3. Jeban. 79, a.

4. Kiduschin 40, a.

5. Berach. 19, a.

called a great scholar, for you seek to confirm the teachings of the learned who preceded you."⁶

Such scholars may we be ! Ours be the ambition to sustain, not to abolish; to remove the lax religious views and preserve the ancient Jewish spirit !

I pronounce these warnings not to any one individual, but to all, myself as well. Oh ! might we all, rabbis and laymen, but heed the words of the great Maimonides, כל בית ישראל מצווין על קידוש השם הנדול הזה שנאמר ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל : "The whole house of Israel is bound to honor the name of God, for it is said, I would be honored in the midst of the children of Israel."⁷

But if we carry our internal domestic affairs outside and give our enemies occasion for malignant joy, then we dishonor God's name. Within our lines we must fight out the mooted points, but when the contesting parties are separated, they should be considered as reconciled, and not give cause for hatred from without. In the halls of learning the warfare—in life, peace. So it was in the time of Hillel and Shamai, so may it be with us !

6. Negaim 9, 3.

7. Jesode Hatauroh v., i.

EXPIATE THE YOUTHFUL SINS.

OF unquestionable worth, and in this country of higher value, is the sentence of Shemaya who said: אהב את המלאכה ושנא את הרבנות ואל תתורע לרשות "Love labor, shun the possession of power, and avoid office-seeking."

Seldom is this sentence so well observed as here in America. Labor! Labor is the watchword of all classes. As much as one labors in his vocation, be it with hand or brain, with hammer, shovel and axe, or with pen, chisel or brush, so much is he worth.

And dread of power, too, is a characteristic of the American citizen. Jew and non-Jew alike have been imbued in blood and flesh with the principle of equality. Class distinctions between great and lowly have for long been non-existent here, and as the religion of the American is labor, גדול הנהגה מיניע כפו יותר מירא שמים, as here he who supports himself honestly by the toil of his hands, is of greater importance than the man of piety, as here has been verified the counsel of the Talmud, בשוק חקיל אנרא ולא תימא פשום נבילתא

“Perform even the most menial labor and receive the wage therefor, and do not say, I am of priestly birth, a great man, such labor does not befit me,”¹ even so has the principle of equality become a triumphant axiom.

Power, office of honor and trust, is not the exclusive possession of any distinctive class, but the highest good which the people have to confer; and anyone who can prove himself worthy is endowed therewith.

By so much as the sentence of the ancient Mishna-teacher has been fulfilled in the new world, by so much it finds here peculiar application, and as well to the Sabbath of mourning the prelude to the ninth of Ab.

The ninth of Ab! May it yet be mentioned without being decried as retrogressive? Can it be called a shame that the mature man recalls his youth, considers its many perversities, remembers also his youthful sins, remembering them all the more if by rigid introspection he discovers that he has not yet liberated himself from them entirely? And he who now stands on such a plane of happiness had in his youth so many perversities!

Who can describe the agony of a man, who

¹ Pesachim 113a.

reared in poverty, toiling by the sweat of his brow day and night; hoarding his savings and investing them when sufficient has been amassed, in a dwelling-place to be beautified into home for his family, and then,—after a time, fire breaks out and reduces the house to ashes, scarce giving time to save himself and his dear ones from the flames; who would attempt to describe the pain that pierces his very marrow, the soul-destroying agony of him who is so suddenly reduced to the beggar's staff?

And yet, time heals all things. The shattered energies gathered themselves together anew; the depressed spirits arose again; once more the hard-used man begins his running and risking in the race after fortune. And after years of tireless toil and unwearying thinking and endeavor he, under fortune's favor, amasses once again sufficient to erect upon the ashes of the burnt edifice another even more beautiful than the first.

Gradually he forgets his former woe. He drinks with gusto from the cup of joy, when he is startled by the shrill cry of “fire,” and thick with smoke the flames burst through the gable windows. In a few hours the proud work of years of tedious toil is reduced to naught; the man of competence is once again a beggar.

Who shall depict the misery of soul now heightened thousand-fold, of the man who has

twice been thus ruined! There he sits upon the smoking ruins of his happiness burnt to ashes, and wringing his hands, he laments: "Whence shall aid come to me?" A stream of tears flows from his eyes, his soul weeps in secret. At last the spring of salt tears dries up. His eyes have no more tears to shed, and as he pitifully sobs "מאין יבא עזרי", "Whence shall aid come unto me?" there comes to him the Divine echo in his heart, "עזרי מעם ה' עושה שמים וארץ", "My aid comes from the Lord, the Creator of the heaven and the earth!" This answer soothes and comforts him wonderfully. He begins anew and in his hands of toil the beggar's staff blossoms wonderfully into a wand of fortune.

For the third time our hero attains prosperity. But taught by painful memories and experience, he is fearful of risking, for the third time, all his possession in a house of stone and wood. Even the vicinity of the place which twice was witness of his misfortune, fills him with dread. Far from this scene he seeks a home out in the wide world.

But before he leaves the spot where so many joys were his, and, too, so many sorrows, he registers a solemn vow, that each year he would return thither, so that there may pass before his vision his past, and enter within his soul the consolation of trust in God.

Who is this child of misfortune of whom we

have been speaking? Was it a romance or reality? poetry or truth? Truth, though not a man, but a people. It is Israel. Twice it saw its politico-national independence strengthening, and twice it crumbled to pieces. Twice it lamented in agonized outcry, *ממרום שלח אש בעצמתי וירדנה*, "From above He hurled down glowing fire in my limbs, ah! how it blazed and raged!" Twice was Israel permitted to see its beggar's staff of wandering; "its yoke of sin blossoming in its hand."

In fulfilment of the prediction of the prophet of grief, Jeremiah, Israel had twice to weep for the two-fold night of misfortune of the ninth of Ab, in which God "emptied the shell of his wrath upon wood and stone." The walls of Zion have fallen, the holy place has been reduced to ashes, but the Highest God yet remains to them, and with Him, the Unchangeable, is Israel's existence bound up.

"As I," explain our sages,² "have never changed, and never can change, so you, house of Jacob, have never perished and never will perish. As you are united to the Eternal your God, so you shall remain forever."

Misfortune, too, is for Israel a will of instruction, טוב לנבר כי ישא על בנעוריו "It is beneficial for a man, if he have taken up in his youth the

² Derech Erez, Sutta 11

yoke of misfortune." And year after year on the return of its day of misfortune, Israel, scattered like rose leaves in every direction, makes its pilgrimage at least in thought, to the scenes of its sorrows, recalls the sins of its youth, and makes holy resolves to free itself therefrom.

חמא חמא ירושלים על כן לנדה היתה, "Jerusalem committed a two-fold sin, therefore was hurried upon it the two-fold punishment by God. The first Temple was destroyed, as the Talmud teaches,³ because of the prevailing vices of idolatry, murder and incest. But why was the second Temple destroyed? Obedience of law, piety and charity were observed at that time.

The second Temple מפני מה נחרב, why was it destroyed, מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם because of the party hate which was dominant in Israel. למדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד עבירות ע"ז נ"ע וש"ד "That may teach you that in the divine scale of justice, party hate weighs as heavy as the three great sins of idolatry, murder and incest."

The first youthful sins have, thank God, long been expiated from the camp of Israel. A refined sense of honor to God, the sacredness of the home, and domestic, holy possessions of modern Israel have long consigned to forgetfulness the three capital sins of the period of the first Temple.

³ Joma 9b.

But how is it with the sin which brought the Israel of the second Temple nearly to the verge of extinction? How is it with the groundless party hate? Has the mature Israel expiated this youthful sin as well? Or does not rather fraternal hate yet rage, and party contentions storm to-day as was its wont aforetime?

Orthodox and Neologians, do they not stir up the burning embers of fraternal hate, do they not glow with animosity one against the other; are not the unholy flames destroying the life possessions of Israel? Yes: the fierce element of the flames seizing all about them, would reduce to ashes the holy of holies if it were placed within the power of the flames for the third time.

Israel! aged youth! When will you finally lay aside your ancient youthfulness? Are you not yet content with your unexcelled school of life, with the old cry of pain, אני הנבר ראה עני, "I am the man who saw the injury accomplished by the terrible rod of His wrath."

Has the rod of party hate not given you wounds enough? Brought enough devastation into your spiritual, religious and social life? For how long yet shall the old complaint with justice be made, אבותינו חמאו ואינם, "Our fathers sinned and were by party hate destroyed," ואנחנו "but must we accept also their sins and their punishments?" Shall the lament ever

more be heard? As long as *we* sin against ourselves, as long as *we* continue the fraternal contention, so long, Oh! God, Thou canst not forgive us! Here is room for the application of the proverb: "God helps those who help themselves," and the sentence of Shemaya, "Love labor." Not simply the physical labor which strengthens the limbs and imbues the muscles with the power of steel, but the religiously creative spirit. "Shun lust of power." None should wish to demonstrate his superiority over others, but with considerate loving co-operation, labor for the communal religious weal.

But if our teachers, and particularly those who have the fortune to have their light shine in larger congregations, compete with each other in their efforts for separate action, each going his own way, proud only of his well-endowed Rabbinate as of a fat benefice, then it might easily be *אוי לרבנות שמקברת את בעליה* that a great disaster may attach to the high position, and that with all the plenty, they who seek for religious nourishment, may famish.

At the doors of the rabbis it must be laid off among those of their congregations religion is not operative in life and in the home, because we have neglected to urge upon the hearts of our hearers with all the requisite impressiveness, the Jewish religious life. So, too, it was at the time

of the national independence, the great ones in Israel who exercised the power, failed to utilize this means of strengthening religious life.

R. Charina was right when he taught: *לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שלא הוכיחו זה את זה* "Jerusalem was destroyed only because the moralists did not pursue their vocation with sufficient rigidity, and did not correct themselves."

Hence it is our rabbinical duty to utter forth the truth with all impressiveness; to search to the very root of our truths, and pull up the weeds of religious laxity to the end that better things shall come forth, as R. Simon ben Lakish teaches: *כל העונה אמן בכל כחו פותחין לו שערי גן עדן* "To him who speaks the truth with religious courage and the strength of his faith, to him will open the gates of Paradise," that is, he paves the way for happier times, prepares for a more beautiful future.

Be not ashamed of your past! Hold sacred that which was sacred to your ancestors. Be joyful with their joys, and grieve at their times of grief. Fast on the great national day of mourning, the ninth of Ab, for it is becoming to the fortunate man to recall the days of misfortune of his youth.

He who כל המתאבל על ירושלים זוכה ורואה בשמחתו

mourns for Jerusalem will, at some time, rejoice at its glory." Oh! May the spiritual Zion, the Jerusalem of true and glorious piety soon be rebuilt!

THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE.

HILLEL, one of the greatest of the Tannaim, and one of the most influential produced by Judaism, taught :

הוּי מַתְלַמְדֵּי שֶׁל אֶהְיֶה אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמִקְרִיב לְחֹרֶה. "Be as the scholars of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, a friend to humanity, and leading mankind to the *Thora*."

This thought, worthy of him who uttered it, can be best understood in connection with the Sabbath of consolation. The Sabbath which has received its title from the initial words of its *Haftorah*, נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי, "Console! console my people," this Sabbath forms an expressed contrast to its precedent Sabbath of mourning. Whilst it recalls to us the blood-red setting star of Israel's political independence; the other Sabbath reveals to us דֶּרֶךְ כּוֹכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב how another star of spiritual brilliancy, arising, gleaming in the firmament of Jacob's history of dispersion. If our tear-bedimmed glances were cast on the Sabbath of mourning and on the national Day of Grief, the Ninth of Ab, over a field, of death covered with

the parched bones of men, heroes who fought bravely for liberty; then we hear on the succeeding Sabbath, the voice of consolation יחיו מתוך, your dead arise to new life and await with rejoicing those who are now grovelling in dust.

If we listened last week to Jeremiah, the prophet of affliction, voicing the grief of a people, sending to the sons of Judah scattered over the universe the mournful dirges to buried liberty; then we hear to-day another divinely appointed prophet exclaim, על הר נבוא עליך, "Go forth to the mountain top, messenger of peace to Zion! and lift up your voice strongly in comfort to Jerusalem. Lift up your voice and speak to the cities of Judah: your God the All-merciful, He is here."

How beautiful is this voice of consolation, which is directed to the heart of Jerusalem, soothing it that after its two-fold punishment, the repeated destruction of national existence, it receives the two-fold consolation, for the חטא חמאה for the double sin and punishment a נחמו נחמו a two-fold comfort. The sages have already observed לכל הדורות באתי לנחם because it reads comfort ye! comfort ye my people יאמר אלהיכם your God *will* speak, instead of the grammatically more correct your God *has* spoken: it follows that God through this prophet of consolation wished to console us for all time.

For his times and for the long exiled Jewish people, the words of the great clear-sighted prophet, have certainly proven themselves as soul-soothing words of comfort, but are they that for our times; for the entirely different circumstances of the later Judaism? Certainly! and why? The prophet explains this himself, קול קורא במדבר פנו דרך ה' "A voice calls: in the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God!"

That is a consolation, and at the same time a glorious acquisition. United to its soil, under its national liberty, Israel had not fulfilled its mission; by no means lived up to its name: Israel, Champion of God! It became such only after culture in the school of suffering in banishment; after it had been refined in the crucible of a thousand miseries. The same people which in the fulness of its strength of national life, surrounded by pious men, eloquent prophets, psalmists and thinkers forget its origin; the same people became transformed in the midst of heathendom, and attained a realizing sense of its mission to the world. The same people which under the shadow of its vine and fig-tree, had neither desire nor inclination to think of its vocation, voices under the shadow of its willows of Babel elegiac strains of yearning for its native land, and swears to forget its right hand, ere

Jerusalem be forgotten, and alas! its oath has been faithfully kept.

In the midst of the desert of its homelessness, a new Jerusalem has been established upon the granite foundation of its divine monotheistic conception. Only the Israel living in dispersion viewed a comprehension of the prophetic demand, *ישרו בערבה מסילה לאלהינו* "In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God!"

In the wilderness of superstition and unbelief of the people around them, Israel prepared the way for the Eternal One. In the desert of moral desolateness Israel cut the paths for Right, Truth and Humanity! Its watchword during the centuries, long lapse of time was, *ממדבר מתנה* "From the wilderness to the camp," *ממתנה נחליאל* "From the camp to the divine patrimonial estate" *מנחליאל במות* "and from divine heritage to the Heights."

These were the single stations in the long wanderings of Israel and of its development. Its traveling staff in one hand, the Thora in the other, Israel betook its way through the wilderness of barbarism; through the desolate desert of spiritual life. Through its teachings it procured for the world the patrimonial estate of the divine idea, and lifted humanity to the heights

of civilization. Learning, it taught; teaching, it learnt to understand *אור ניום* how to become a light to humanity, to spread the beams of light for the illumination of the world. To spread these truths is the sublime aim of Israel and the purpose of its mission. Nobly say the sages: *ביום שחרב בהמ"ק נולד משיח* "On the day of the destruction of the sanctuary at Jerusalem, the Messiah was born," extinction of the Jewish state, gave birth to the messianic vocation of Israel, for the salvation of the world.

The Jewish nationality was carried to its grave, and from it grew Israel's universal citizenship. How was this revolution accomplished? By what means did Israel so changed, still wield so mighty an influence on the history of mankind? It heeded the words of its prophet of consolation: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the dimly burning wick shall he not quench," while it strove for the truth, quietly living and working as a priestly people for humanity. Apt application is here found for Hillel's words, not only for single individuals, but for the individuality of the whole Jewish people. The whole Jewish people have become studious pupils of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace.

כל המצות כתיב בהן כי וכו' ברם הכא בקש שלום ורדפה בקשהו במקומך ורדפהו ממקום אחר.

1. Nasso Jalkut § 711; Jer. Peah I. 15d.

By other commands and ordinances we are not directed to seek out occasions for exercising such duties, but to practice them when occasion offers. But of Peace it is said: *Seek* and pursue it. Seek it where you are, and, if unsuccessful, pursue it onwards.

Such is Israel's course. Wherever a seed-corn of life was scattered, there Israel planted its divine truth, and nurtured them to quietly working, but none the less effectual, activity. Moving from place to place, Israel was the wandering memorial of the teachings of peace, demonstrating by example how the stubborn must be reduced to obedience; the immovable be softened; the intolerant be reconciled. Despised and persecuted, Israel never ceased to be a disciple of Aaron, not only to love peace and pursue it, but to love mankind and bring them nearer to the *Thora*. By means of the unexampled endurance which Israel evinced in its vocation as teacher of law and peace, the persecutor was often forced to acknowledge his victim as an ally. The enemy became an admirer. The influence of Israel upon the thinking, feeling, judging and acting of those they lived with, constantly increased, so that rigid justice, kindly benevolence, refined piety were the results of the teaching of the priestly people, even if all peoples are not sufficiently grateful to recognize and acknowledge

the teachers, at the same time that they adopt their teachings.

But we can only successfully progress with this priestly work by heeding the further admonition of the prophet of consolation: 'Every valley be exalted; the crooked be made straight; and the rough places, plain.' Wherever a vital, sanctified command of God is cast down and appears lowly it shall be lifted up, and by being placed in its religious right, be exalted, where; on the contrary, an ungainly custom, as a crooked path, hinders the way in the path of God, refined taste must be given the power to remove it!

When we shall have a Judaism, thus strengthened internally, and externally organized in a representative and authoritative manner, working harmoniously and with brotherly love, with aspirations and hopes for the future, then we shall have founded the new Jerusalem to which may be applied the consoling thought of R. Akiba.*

R. Gamaliel, R. Eliezer ben Azarya, R. Jehosua, and R. Akiba were walking once in the vicinity of Jerusalem. On the Temple mount they saw a fox. The first three teachers began to weep bitterly at this sign of desolation. But R. Akiba

*. End of Makkoth.

began to laugh. Rebuked for this, he answered: "We see the fulfilment of the preliminary portion of Micah's prophecy: Zion is desolate and wild animals inhabit the sanctuary. This dreary fulfilment is, however, the surest guarantee to me, that the prophecy of Zechariah of the new life of Jerusalem shall also be fulfilled." Then the other rabbis exclaimed: "Akiba, you have consoled us!"

And we too are consoled! The ancient Zion with its sacrificial altar is no more, the new Zion with its thousands of humane institutions, is at least a present substitute. The older Jerusalem has fallen, but the new Jerusalem, uniting the sons of man, attaining to a knowledge of God, that will and should be erected on the ruins of the other. Be consoled! Awake and stand erect, my people! If you remain true to yourself and, by Hillel's advice, true to your priestly vocation; if you would be true even in the freedom-breathing Present, true to the fundamental teachings of the Past, to prepare with its aid a Future, beautiful in the sight of God and man; serving the holy cause of religion with a broad culture, but with a warm heart as well; then would the Sabbath of consolation prove of unusual significance for the future of Israel and all mankind.

From this Zion the law will go forth; the word

of God from this Jerusalem. The Law, a law for all the world; the word of God, the common property of all mankind!

HILLEL'S GOLDEN WORDS.

OF the sayings of Hillel, two particularly precious ones have been preserved for us, viz. :

"He who would exalt his name, loses it: he who acquires not, diminishes that which he has; he who learns nothing deserves death; he who would make the crown an object of trade, will disappear."

His other saying is:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me; if I am only for myself, what am I; and if not now, when?"

Never has a man so expressed his individuality in a proverb as is here the case. Hillel whose name has become proverbial for patience and modesty as for love of learning and activity for general good; Hillel indeed could only teach this, could only subjectively reveal himself in these maxims; and only he was justified in commending these words of wisdom for our emulation. An incident in the life of Hillel will emphasize this.

While yet a poor youth, so we are told, he could not on one occasion give the doorkeeper of the house of learning the requisite fee that was generally given. He sought a window, climbed up, and, seated there, heard the lecture and the discussions. It was a bitter cold winter's day, the snow covered him over and the frost benumbed until towards morning he was discovered unconscious. Brought into the room he was however soon revived.

Who then would be more entitled to say as Hillel said: "He who would exalt his name, will lose it"? For if he had only intimated that he could not enter for lack of the small coin due to the doorkeeper, hundreds would have flocked to procure him admission. The modest Hillel, however, did not wish his name to be praised, as that of one who though pressed by poverty yet seeks the house of learning. Furthermore he did not wish to utilize the *Thora*, the crown of his life, as an object of barter, to secure him an advantage. Rather expose himself to danger, than gain a personal benefit by means of the *Thora*.

If such principles were dominant among our present disciples of the *Thora*, we would not indeed, have so many world-restorers and savers of humanity, but we would have so much the more animating peace in which to live in the spirit of our ancestors.

Many spring up in our days, like the builders of the Tower of Babel, exclaiming "we will make us a name!" They press themselves forward with their strange and estranging ideas that excite wrath, with their alleged improvements which should in reality be called defacements, and create confusion as those at the tower of Babel so that *אשר לא ישמעו איש שפת רעהו* one does not understand the language of the other, that is, as explained by the sages *זה שואל לבנה חה מביא טיט* one asked for bricks, and the other brought him mortar, and the first arose against him and dashed out his brains.

For building purposes brick and mortar are certainly essential. But if one is substituted for the other, if instead of hard durable brick and stone for the foundation of Judaism, the laborer brings only mortar and cement which may be utilized for decorative purposes to beautify the surface, as if that could guard the edifice against stress and storm, and if added to the diverging views of the laborers who do not or will not understand one another, the heroes of the pen fall upon them with their ready weapons and crush them, at least manifest their willingness to crush; is not then this a confusion of Babel? and caused by the watchword "Let us make ourselves a name?"

Therefore let us heed Hillel's wise counsel:

"He who would exalt his name, will lose it." Many a one enjoys a good reputation, who quietly and modestly pursues his vocation, but when his name is made the shibboleth of a party, it may easily happen, he loses his own good name, to secure which he strove arduously for many years.

To rabbis especially Hillel's wise word should be a guiding star; leading far from false ambition, unjustifiable eagerness for honors, and harmful yearning for fame. The injury is greater than the blessing which follows from a love of fame. But if thirst for fame is to be disparaged, that does not commend inactivity or suggest remaining in the ruts. For he who does not acquire will lose that which he possesses.

As long as man exists he must exert energy, and only as long as he is active, does he live. יום תעזובני ימים אעזבך (Jer. Ber. ix, 14. d), "If you desert me one day," says the *Thora*, "I will desert you two." You move and I move, if you go backwards one day I go forward one, so are we two days' journey asunder. No progress means retrogression.

ת"ח אין להם מנוחה לא בעו'הו ולא בעו'הב שנא' יבנו מחיל אל חיל.¹

The disciples of learning have no rest either

¹ Berachoth' 64

here or there; they proceed from development to development of strength. The question is what we shall call Progress in Religion, and how we are to conserve our energies. If this manifests itself only by destroying and not by building up; if it cuts off and gives up ancient venerable, worthy customs, that have been honored by long usage, and bring comfort to the soul, and proffer nothing as substitute, then every well-meaning Jew must designate such progress as dangerous retrogression, as little adapted for the practical demands as for the spiritual edification of Israel, and we must justify the saying of the elder rabbis:

פסיעה נמה נוטלת א' מת' ק ממאור עיניו של אדם.²

"The vision of man is apt to become beclouded when taking too great paces."

In the raging haste to abolish time-honored, important Jewish customs, our historical vision becomes befogged, and our clear-sightedness which should distinguish significant and insignificant between more and less important, loses its power. Hence Hillel teaches: "He who learns nothing is deserving of death." He who learns nothing from Israel's rich and glorious historic past, and does not distinguish between the eternally valid and unalterable, and between that which is subsidiary and subject to the circum-

² Berachoth 43,b

stances of time and place, such an one condemns the fresh pulsating life of Judaism to stagnation to death.

It is true that the æsthetic form was not of the greatest value to our ancestors, for the fulfilment of the law in communal and domestic life was the essential important factor, but even among them was voiced the sentiment: *זה אל' ואנורו חתננו* נכסות "This is my God, Him I will glorify," "this is," they explain, "seeking a beautiful form for the fulfilment of the commandments." But the form may submerge the essence; the superfluity of forms may screen the kernel from view. Hence we may take to heart the saying of Hillel: "He who utilizes the crown as an object of barter, will disappear."

The fulfilment of the Law, is the crown of Israel's life. It must illuminate our spirit, warm our hearts; to humiliate it to the service of mere form, of unthinking formalism, whether it be of partisan orthodoxy or partisan radicalism, that is to utilize the crown as an object of barter.

Envelope the crown worthily, provide the essence with an expressive form, then you will demonstrate that you have learned, and not forgotten; that you have learned to combine and harmoniously to blend the piety of the past with the modern sense of beauty. To produce this harmony with profound comprehension and in-

spiring love for the holy cause of Judaism is the grateful task of the present day. And here we are confronted with the words of Hillel teeming with inspiring impulse: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me."

If we will not put forth with the fervor of our spiritual conceptions, with the intensity of our feelings, with the force of our will, with all the fulness of our means and instruments, to preserve the transmitted spiritual inheritance from the past, to guard it against disfigurement and deformation, and to deliver it as a precious heritage to posterity, if we ourselves will not undertake it, who will accomplish the great task of regeneration for us?

Surely every one recognizes the necessity of imbuing modern Israel with new life. But on the question of how it is to be done, views diverge, and alas, so widely diverge, that we are nearly forced to despair of success in the needed task. And yet Hillel teaches us what method to pursue, for he places before us the golden axiom: "If I am only for myself, what am I?"

What we have does not entirely belong to us alone. We can only proceed from where the preceding generations ceased. Before a great discovery, a practical or social idea can become the common property of mankind, hundreds before us must have labored on the fundamental

facts and the separate elements, labored with beads of sweat at the midnight lamp, unceasingly at the web of thought and science.

We should live for ourselves alone! *כמה יגיעות ינע אדם הראשון עד שמצא פת לאכול וכו'* "How much toil Adam must have expended upon one piece of bread! He must have sowed, reaped, bound sheaves, threshed, sifted, ground, kneaded and baked; if he wanted a garment, he must have sheared, washed, fulled, spun, and woven. For me," says Ben Soma, "it is finished on the morrow when I awake."³

And should it be otherwise with the bread of the spirit and the garment of the soul? Moses has already said, *כי לא אל הלחם לכדו ידיה האדם*, "Man lives not merely for bread alone, but for what goes forth from the lips of God."

This bread of the spirit must be prepared by means of the cooperative labor of all who are authorized. The dress which is to enclothe the soul, that is, the form, the religious external of Judaism, must enlist the active service of all who are authorized. But if every one lives and strives only for himself, each going his own way pursuing after his narrow conceptions, and his personal advantage, *מה תהא עליה* what is to become of Israel's Thora, of its religious unity, of its uniform congregational service?

³ Berachoth 58,a.

The glowing fanaticism of one, the nerveless indifference of the other permits the priceless treasures of Israel to trail unheeded in the dust. Though the thought of union is certainly strong in this country of freedom and vigorously pulsating life, yet it is not a dominant or universal thought, for the evidence of separatist tendencies are easily traced.

Only when the rabbis of this country shall be impelled to a communal endeavor for a wise moderation; shall not be affrighted at the "Backwards," which may indicate a beneficent progress; when it shall be possible to elevate religion in the home where it now lays in sore straits, then when conservative progress and not the violent, unruly, unsystematic rapid march, shall characterize the religious movement, then only can we hope for communal and mutually beneficial results.

That in which we should take hasty steps, is the accomplishment of these results, therein it is said: "If not now, when then?" Never were times and circumstances so happily situated for a regeneration as the present times in this country. In all civilized countries the Jews are held in honor without any distinction because of creed. Indeed, the orthodox, or perhaps more properly the conservative Jews, if they are otherwise in sympathy with the spirit of the

times, stand in as high esteem, to say least, as those of radical reform tendencies. A Sir Moses Montefiore enjoyed the esteem of royalty. A Sir Nathaniel Rothschild who, like all of the beneficently active family, clings to conservative ideas in matters pertaining to religion, in very truth, מקדש השם ברבים, honored God's name, when on taking the oath of fealty in the House of Lords he covered his head on uttering the name of God. Who will maintain that Sir Nathaniel Rothschild, despite his conservative ideas, does not stand as high in esteem as our reformers who during public divine services remain with uncovered heads, heedless of the words of the Talmud.

Our times, then, which have gradually disentangled themselves from the meshes of anti-semitism, have disarmed the revolutionary attempts in the city of Berlin, and there where as in Hungary defence was dependent on great sacrifices, and was successful, thanks to the cultured and literary loving Premier, Tisza Kalman, in securing respect for the Jews, our times make upon us the urgent demand: "Bring order out of your internal chaos, which has so long been the subject of dispute."

Especially the Judaism of this free country, the rabbis of this remarkable land of America, should say with Hillel: "If not now, when then?"

If by such happy circumstances of time and place we do not attach ourselves to the rapid flight of time and hang upon its wings significant deeds, who knows if we ever will have other opportunities; for in matters of mutual interest we must well consider the saying of the Talmud: כל הרוחק את השעה שעה רוחקתו וכל הנרחק מפני השעה השעה נרחקת מפניו "He who urges the hour will be hurried by it; he who is urged by time, conquers time."

The opportune moment cannot be created, cannot with violence be brought about, but when it has come, and demands great deeds of us, then we must not weakly submit without having accomplished great things.

4 Berachoth 64a.

PERSISTENCE IN THE STUDY OF THE LAW.

WITH a violent, at least to us incomprehensible break in the golden sentences of Hillel, which only find their continuation in the second section of the Ethics of the Fathers, the editor of the Mishna leads us from Hillel to his expressed antithesis and renowned antagonist, Shammai. His sentence is as follows: עשה תורתך קבע אמור מעט ועשה הרבה והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות, "Constitute your Thora as something enduring; speak little, do much, and greet everyone with a friendly countenance."

In this too, as in that of Hillel, the individuality of the author is indicated. In contrast to Hillel who endeavored to render easy the fulfilment of the Law, Shammai is possessed of the inflexible principle which does not shape itself according to the plastic material it accidentally comes in contact with. Shammai is neither pliable, flexible, nor submissive. For him the Law is stubbornly immovable, incapable of concessions. Hence he conceives of no consideration as regards literal obedience to the Law. Characteris-

tic of him is the report¹ of the rigor with which he would have insisted upon his young son's carrying out the behest of the Law of fasting on the Day of Atonement, but that friends had to intercede in the child's behalf.

And yet Shammai was not the grim granite that legend portrays him, which pictures him not otherwise than armed with a rod in his hand to chase the kill-joy from the house.² In the sentence we have quoted, he utters the contrary sentiments: "Greet everyone with a friendly countenance." The oppressive, rigorous, well-nigh painful views of Shammai, succumbed in the course of time in the houses of learning, where two strong parties were found, one pursuing the method and teaching of Hillel the other grouping itself about Shammai. Although the voice of a child of heaven, a species of divine revelation had announced: **אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים**: "The views of one as well as of the other man of learning, are the words of the living God." Rather the final clause of the phrase was heeded: **אבל הלכה כבית הלל** "But in religious practices judge according to Hillel."³

This rule found all the more willing acquiescence, as gradually the rigor of the Shammaites,

¹ Tosefta Yoma, c 4

² Shabbath, 31 a.

³ Erubin, 13 b.

grew nigh unto eccentricity and it could not be concealed that practical wisdom demanded not to overburden the people with heightening of the difficulties of fulfilling the Law. In relation to this, the rule held good: **אין נחרץ נידה על הציבור** "The community should be given only such regulations as the majority can carry out without being overburdened."

By all of which it would appear venturesome to take up the defence of Shammai's views. What! exclaim the great majority, that which was not accepted by the rigorous people in Asia in the early ages, that should be rehabilitated for the recognition and acknowledgment of the nineteenth century, in the atmosphere of free religious tendencies of America!

Not as if I would contravene the former legal decisions and Halachic rules whose validity was secured by the Beth Hillel. But rather that I would restore the words of Shammai **עשי תורתך קבע** "Constitute your Thora to something enduring," to their supreme importance for this new world.

Do I know this new world particularly in its religious relations, its leaders and congregations, that I presume to pass judgment? Well then, I will not utter any judgment as I must apprehend

⁴ Baba Kama, 79 b.

having turned upon me the saying: **ידו בכל יד כל** "If I attack every one, all could with all the more justice attack me."

But in this free land of free opinions, I may, according to gathered experiences, permit myself the expression of an individual opinion of which I am convinced that after calm and deliberate discussion it would not be entirely discarded, but rather if generally encouraged and supported would work beneficently.

To a stranger, after a transatlantic voyage arriving in this cosmopolitan city, there is forced upon his vision immediately a beautiful sight which he would seek for in vain in the old world; the architectural peculiarity of the residences, the methodical sameness and grand regularity of the rectangular streets. Stepping into one of the dwellings, he would find at once the regularity of the street repeated in the house, in the methodical arrangements of the rooms, convenient appliances for comfort. Everywhere provision is made for the three principal elements of comfort: light, heat and water.

If now we go into the Jewish temples and synagogues, school houses and houses of worship we find at once a fearful contrast to our street experiences. Of similarity of arrangement there is no thought; as if method strove to manifest itself through dissimilarity. And too, the three ele-

ments, light, heat and water, with which we cannot dispense in the house of God, are found distributed disproportionately, often one or the other not provided at all. Here, only light, much light, glaring light but not any warmth-dispensing fire of religious emotion; at another place only heat, all too much heat, the consuming heat of fanaticism, and far too little of the illuminating Light for nourishment of mind and thought. In the infrequent case of the light of a refined divine service being joined with the fire of religious emotion, there is wanting the third element, the soul-cleansing laving in which the hosts of worshipers emerge purified for practical Judaism, from the dust of week day worldliness.

"As the streams rush onward," say the sages in amplification of the Biblical expression, **כנחלים** **כך בתי** "as the streams cleanse the bathers" **מדרשות ובתי כנסיות בני אדם נכנסים לתוכן כשהן מלאין** "So is it with Israel's houses of worship. They who enter therein covered with the dust of daily life, stained with spots of sin, leave it spiritually purified, and strengthened for the fulfilment of God's command."⁵

Whose is the fault that the Judaism of the new world is so characterized by dissimilarities and differences, by so many various points of view, forming to the eye as many dark spots? I believe

⁵ Jalkut Balak, § 771.

in the greatest degree the fault is to be attributed to the Rabbis.

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הָיִשָּׁר בְּעֵינָיו נִשְׁעָה.
 "In those days there was no king in Israel; every one did what seemed best in his own eyes."⁶

With these words the holy Scriptures portray a mournful episode in Israel's history. The dissensions and contentions which prevail in our religious relations, appear to me to find their source in the circumstance that we recognize no authority in matters of faith and religion. Particularly in this country, he who is merely able to show his contract, even if only a חֶזֶק of his congregation plays רַב according to his own caprice, preaches what and as he pleases, does what and as he wishes, and his congregation lets him pursue his own path as long as the members and seatholders are kept together sufficiently to guarantee the support of the Temple.

To this must be added the fact of overpreaching. A great preacher was asked, how often sermons should be delivered? He answered that a good preacher should deliver a well digested, thoughtful sermon once a month; a mediocre preacher, fortnightly; and a poor one should speak every day. Be it observed that the principal occupation of the Rabbi from the earliest times has been the culture of Hebrew learning,

⁶ Judges, 17, 6.

and that therefore only particular occasions have in former times called him into the pulpit. If we compare with this the custom which has grown of constituting oratorical display as the main task of the rabbi, manifestly in imitation of non-Jewish churches where weekly sermons are prescribed, then we may conclude that truth lies between the two extremes. Not simply as in olden times, a sermon only on Sabbath Haggadol and on Sabbath Teshuba, and, at most, one on each of the holidays; nor, on the other hand, as is here the custom, to preach every Sabbath, but rather one sermon every two or three weeks.

Why? To ease the labors of the rabbi? On the contrary to increase them, to insure his pursuing more assiduously the study of the *Thora*, so that he should be able "to sit and learn," as the ancient phrase had it. And here Shammai's words acquire additional weight: עֲשֵׂה חִוְרְתְּךָ קָבַע אָמֹר, *עשה חוורתך קבע אמור*, Make the study of the Law the principal occupation of your vocation; speak little but act much. This rule was universally observed in former times, when there was no class distinction of clericals and laymen, hence the duty of every Israelite to pursue the study of the Law; when it could not be conceived מִחוּץ חַי עוֹלָם *מחוץ חיי עולם* how any one could set aside all thought of the eternal life, and occupy himself

Sabbath, 10 a.

entirely with the transitory existence; when in every house of Israel were heard the echoes of study of the Thora; and wherever the material necessities required constant attention during the day, there the nights were brought into requisition, and in the spirit of faith it was said: בית שנשמעין ד'ת בלילה אינו נחרב "A house in which the sounds of Thora study are heard at night, cannot, will not, be destroyed."⁸

In the present day, however, when לא אפשר דרא the circumstances are not constituted so that all may indulge in a profound study of the Law, and when Rabbis are appointed to pursue researches into the Thora, it should at least be the holy obligation of these salaried representatives to fulfil Shammai's requirement: עשה תורתך קבע make the study of the Thora your principal occupation, and consequently אמור מעט preach less and do more. Only occupation with the Thora invests the Rabbi with right to exercise rabbinical functions, for here too the Talmudical proverb has validity. אי לא תורה כמה נחמך "If occupation with the Thora is not the condition upon which the honor of the position is based, then any one can assume the honor."

If our congregations would see to it that their

⁸ Erubin, 18 a.

⁹ Kiddushin, 33 a.

spiritual guides are supplied, if not with all the equipments necessary to bearing the title "Reverend," at least profound Talmudical knowledge, and therewith should demand a religious life as highest rabbinical characteristic, then there would be brighter prospects for our Jewish congregations; ולא כל הרצה ליטול את השם יטול¹⁰ then would not every one who styles himself "reverend" be permitted to teach God's word, and exercise rabbinical functions. Furthermore, small congregations would care less for independence, and with cramped resources rather ally themselves with larger congregations, and thus more worthily serve the holy cause. If instead of twenty-five independent congregations we should have but five, the lesser in this instance would be the greater.

With strengthening of the congregations, and abstaining from waste of time on the part of the Rabbis, the cause of humanity would be much better served than is otherwise done. Shammai's demand would also thus be better met: "Greet every one with a friendly countenance." Whom particularly should we greet with kindly welcome? Certainly those who are dependent upon our aid. The control of the thirty-six charitable institutions supported by the community require a cooperative energy on the part of the con-

¹⁰ Berachoth 48

gregations and Rabbis. If the congregations would organize a communal union, and the rabbis not devote themselves exclusively to the preaching of sermons, both would largely gain in usefulness, but especially the cause of humanity be mightily forwarded.

Are there then the means and methods for providing for the future? Yes! Granting that these propositions be carried out, these ideas realized, what result may be anticipated? The rabbis would form a Union, the congregations would form a Union, the benevolent institutions would form a Union.

The Union of Rabbis would not simply consist of a loose and formless bond which should bring them together once a month for discussion and interchange of thought and views, but should consist therein that *קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה*, the zeal for research which they develop through the study of the Thora, that Jewish learning which lies in such sore straits, shall receive a huge impetus. This zeal for teaching honestly, true to conviction, and genuinely Jewish, and worthily to live in accordance therewith would further result in doing away with all manner of petty jealousy; would check the careers of the unauthorized, ignorant and arrogant ones who assume to themselves rabbinical honors, as the Talmud speaks of Eldad and Medad who without author-

ity would prophesy, going about preaching, and Joshua asked Moses to forbid them *אלוהי משה בלאם* that is, says the Talmud *הוה כלן חזן צרכי צבור* "Give them really duties to perform and they will disappear of their own accord."

If the vineyard of the Lord were cleansed of the *שועלים קטנים* the small foxes which ravage the vines, those plants that were tended by authorized gardeners would bloom more brightly and flourish better.

The Union of the Congregations should be one not simply on paper, but in reality as a vital factor, then we should have the first actual, important result that the congregations, the synagogues and the temples would acquire once again their right, and power usurped from them restored. A great wrong has been done to the congregations by the various charitable organizations and Orders, which are not content with providing for the needs of the living, but spread their shelter over the dead, and provide for their burial which is a trespass upon the province of the congregation.

In our times there lives one, if not the only one, certainly in his way he stands unique, who lives in accordance with the principles we have

11 Synh. 17a.

here displayed, and fulfils the requirements of Shammai: Make the study of the Law your constant occupation, speak little, do much, and be friendly in your greetings to all." This אדם גדול as man and Jewish scholar of gigantic stature is Dr. Zunz, who on the tenth of August attained his ninety-first birthday. יום טוב ליפמאן he is called, and that day ninety-one years ago on which he first saw the light of day in the little town of Detmold, should be returned and celebrated as a יום טוב by the whole world of Judaism, whose bright ornament he is, as he has been long acknowledged as the father and re-creator of Jewish learning.

חיים שאל ממך נתתה לו אורך ימים עולם ועד "Life he asked of thee, O Lord, and Thou givest him long life." Life he asked, to dedicate it to the service of God, to the glory of Judaism, to rebuild its neglected literature. He fulfilled his holy vow and God has given him immortality. As long as Jewish learning shall live, so long in its firmament shall Zunz shine as one of its brightest luminaries.

גדול כבודו בישועתך Great is his name through the aid of the Lord; may he also give him health of body and mind to the very end of his earthly career. Only a Zunz can console us for the loss of Montefiore. One was the heart, the other the brains of modern Judaism. From the one the

warmth of love streamed out; from the other the light of intellect. May that light long pour out its rays to the weal of Israel, to the blessing of mankind !

DOUBT AND SUPERSTITION.

THERE are truths that cannot be urged with sufficient force nor whose commendation be impressed too frequently. Such a truth is that uttered by Rabbi Gamaliel:

עשה לך רב והסתלק מן הספק ואל תרבה לעשר אומות
“Appoint for yourself a teacher, withhold yourself from doubt, give not-tithes continually according to conjectural assessment.”

Why did the sage repeat the first portion of his saying? Joshua ben Parachia had already dwelt upon the obligation to appoint over us a teacher. The commentators explain this by saying that R. Joshua ben Parachia pointed out the teacher as a contrast to the friend, and as one from whom *we* should learn; while R. Gamaliel considers him as one *authorized to teach*. This explanation we may accept as far as it goes, but I believe the solution is better to be found in an historical episode. In connection herewith another difficulty must be alluded to.

The previous aphorisms were prefaced by קבל מהם, this or the other author received the teaching from some previous teacher. In this manner

the chain of tradition is formed from the men of the Great Synagogue, to Hillel and Shammai. In due course then we should now have Rabbi Jochanan ben Sakkai, who received the tradition from Hillel and Shammai, as is also made clear by the eighth section of the second *Perek*. But as the Patriarchate wished to give reference to the followers of Hillel the editor ignores genealogy, and breaks through the chain of tradition.¹

With this we have explained not only the appearance in this place of Rabbi Gamaliel, but also some light shed upon his aphorism. As the religious controversies of Hillel and Shammai created party differences in Judaism, which later assumed such dimensions that it was sorely bewailed: נעשה תורה כשתי תורות, "There seems to be two Thoras," for what the one permitted, the other prohibited; as further it was to be feared that the capricious interpretation of the Law would indefinitely open the door for everyone to expound the Law, according to his own whim and desire; therefore Rabbon Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel, recognized the necessity to repeat the enunciation of a principle which had been uttered before under other circumstances by another authority, viz., "Appoint unto yourself a teacher," and added thereto its cause and purpose, that you may be withheld from doubt.

¹ See also Tossafot Yomtob.

That the teacher as highest authority may direct you, according to which Halachic rule you shall be governed.

If these precautionary measures were necessary in those times when the knowledge of the Law was so widespread, when the study of the Thora was the essential element of life, how much more in these later days, when alas, the lament must be uttered, במסלול האשכולות, the supporters of Jewish learning are ever decreasing, and occupation therewith ever diminishing, so that as was recently to be read, public journals declare² in proportion as Israel ceases to pursue Hebrew researches, by so much more it is pursued by non-Jewish students.

Is it then to be wondered that mediocrity and superficiality (in all that concerns Jewish antiquity) spread themselves? And that everyone who has but entered the threshold of Jewish theology feels authorized, מורה הוראה בישראל, to set himself up as a teacher in the Israel of the new world? To such circumstances we may well apply the saying of the Talmud, כירבים חללים הפילה, Many wounds indeed have been made by unauthorized companionship, זה ת"ח שלא הניע להוראה, ³ומורה that is, he who exercises functions as a public teacher without qualifications has insti-

² See THE AMERICAN HEBREW editorial, July 17th, 1885.

³ Sota, 22 a

tuted much damage, ועצומים כל הרוניא, and many mighty ones have fallen victims, זה ת"ח שהניע, להוראה ואינו מורה, which refers to those who are qualified and authorized, but through false modesty and lack of courage fail to encounter the ignorant and shallow impostors. In former times righteous indignation, public opinion, kept from the pulpit those who were not fit. Rabbi Jehudah in the Rab, taught, ת"ח ואינו, כל המתנאה בטלית של ת"ח ואינו, He who attired himself in the garb of a scholar without just title thereto, dared not approach the Divine. Conversely, who excelled by virtue of learning and other qualifications, and by reason of a pious course of life served as an example for others, was distinguished with the praise: הוא יא תולתיה, He is a worthy sage, and is deserving of the robe.⁴ In accordance herewith, it served as a universal rule: לינמר אינש הודר ליסבר, A man should first learn something thoroughly before he undertakes to teach others.⁵ Furthermore, assiduous students were formerly urged: נרוסו מעיקרא מתניתן: הודר עולו קמי רבנבן, Study thoroughly before you attempt to appear before your teachers. For this reason it was considered well, לעולם ידור אדם,

⁴ B. Bathra, 98 a.

⁵ B. Bathra, 111 a.

⁶ Schabb., 63 a.

⁷ Kerith., 6 a.

במקום רבו,⁸ to make one's domicile near that of the teacher, as questions would arise which could not be solved without the aid of a higher wisdom. Many a one acknowledged that his intellectual attainments were due to the fact of living near his teacher to whom he applied when confronted with difficulties. והיו עיניך רואות את מוריך, Keep your eyes steadfastly fixed upon your teacher. It is then with profound comprehension that Rabbon Gamaliel teaches: "Appoint unto yourself a teacher, that you may be withheld from doubt."

How necessary were a Rabbon Gamaliel for our times! In these times, when half-educated men most quickly catch the public ear, regardless of the Talmudical maxim, אין יריעה לחצי שיעורי, "Half learnt, is no learning." In such times when everyone feels justified in setting up transient suggestions that occur to him as unquestionable truths, regardless of the Talmudical warning:⁹ "Only when you know a truth as thoroughly as your own sister, dare you venture to give it public utterance." In these times that are eaten into by the worm of Doubt, sickened by the hollow phrases of cheap learning; in our times indeed a double blessing would ensue upon

⁸ Berach., 8 a.

⁹ Erubin, 13 b.

¹⁰ Schabb., 72 b.

¹¹ Synh., 7 b.

a recognition of R. Gamaliel's words: "Establish over you the authority of a teacher, to hold you from the clutch of Doubt."

But the latter portion of his sentence is of great importance as applied to our times: "Accustom not thyself to give tithes by conjecture." Our condition resembles in many respects that in which the physician Benjamin lived, when it was scornfully said of the Rabbis: מאן אהני לן רבנן מעולם לא שרו לן עורבא ולא אסרו לן יונה¹² "Of what use are such Rabbis, who will not permit us to eat ravens, and cannot prohibit the indulgence in pigeons."

If the Rabbis pursued the duties of their vocation with diligent conscientiousness according to the dictates of the law, preached in sympathy with its spirit, renounced all claim to the title of Innovator, and took pride in maintaining the good of olden times, then would be heard in many circles the above reproach against the Rabbis. We do not need such men of learning, it is said by such people of whom one lived in Jamnia, concerning whom the Talmud says: תלמיד ותיק היה ביבנה שהיה מטמא את השרץ במאה וחמשים מעמים. There was a scholar in Jamnia who permitted the use of a forbidden animal, and accompanied the permit with a hundred and fifty reasons."

Posterity has not learned who this scholar was.

¹² Synh. 99 b.

His name is not mentioned, as he who excites public wrath, incites others to wrong-doing and is not deserving of a place of honor in the Pantheon of Jewish history. He, however, who exerts his energies to produce reasons whereby the permitted and the prohibited shall be substantiated in permission and prohibition, earns recognition. Hence, on the same page of the Talmud, where we read of the just-mentioned scholar, there is mentioned a celebrated pupil of R. Meier, who advanced forty-eight reasons for the permitted, and a like number to demonstrate the justice of the prohibited. In this instance the name of the scholar is honorably mentioned. It was Symmachos.¹³

Intellectual power, then, is only productive of lasting renown when we utilize it in the service of legitimate research. Hence there is addressed to us the direction not to be governed by conjecture, but by the standard of the Law, neither too much nor too little; inasmuch as כל המוסיף נורע, "he who is too much in one case, is too little in the other."¹⁴

This is demonstrated by the example of Saul, who was so considerate towards Amalek, but, on the other hand, so cruel against Nob, that the Divine voice was heard in remonstrance: "Be not so pious that ye become wicked."¹⁵

¹³ Erubin 13, b.

¹⁴ Synh. 29a.

¹⁵ Joma 22b

Do nothing by guess-work, upon conjecture ; for, in some measure, you will commit injustice ; either giving too much or too little. So likewise in your religious relations, abstain as much from doubt as from credulousness. It is as wrong to wrap one's self in agnostic self-deification, to accept only that which is comprehensible to his own mind, and perceptible to one's own senses, doubting and rejecting all else, as it is an intellectual narrow-mindedness to believe everything. Solomon, in his wisdom, has already expressed the thought : the fool believes everything without judgment.

Peace of soul and heart's ease will best be found in hearkening to the voice of an authorized teacher ; freed from doubt and far from superstition ; neither adding aught to the Word of God, nor taking aught therefrom.

SPEECH AND SILENCE.

TWO men once appeared before a Roman ruler to engage in a debate (as was then the custom), upon the question, whether speech or silence was of the greatest use and advantage. The first, a celebrated speaker, sought in an eloquent oration to demonstrate the service of speech, how by its means the sorely afflicted are consoled, the calumniated defended, the doubting convinced, the seeker after wisdom supplied with knowledge, how, by means of the inspiring word, the leader of armies can spur on his troops to victory.

The other debater then stepped forward, and in a carefully considered address endeavored to produce arguments against those of his opponent. He defended the position that silence was of greater use, as through its instrumentality mankind is saved from much misery, many faults are avoided, and in particular, that by silence, men never betray themselves. At this point he was interrupted by the other, who rudely insulted him. Called to account for his unruly conduct, by the ruler, he vindicated himself thus:

When I, by means of my oratorical powers, sought to prove the utility of speech, I was within my legitimate sphere, availed myself of a proper weapon, and did not swerve from my province. If now my opponent would prove his position he should have utilized the appropriate means, and demonstrated the virtue of silence by remaining silent. Inasmuch, then, as he has made use of my arguments, for the purpose of proving his thesis, trying to show the superiority of silence by means of speech, he has usurped my province and deserves punishment.

We are irresistibly reminded of this anecdote, when we endeavor to elucidate the saying of Simon ben Gamaliel. He says: "During the days of my life I have had intercourse with wise men, *ולא מצאתי לנף טוב משתיקה*, and find for the human being nothing better than silence, *ולא למד*; *המדרש עיקר אלא המעשה*; learning is not the principal thing, but action, for he who speaks much, conduces to sin."

The author was, if any one, justified in uttering this beautiful sentence. Although he was a man of learning and president of the Sanhedrin, he vacated his chair of learning and participated actively in the struggle against Rome, and it is believed he fell a sacrifice to his high courage.

Men of action will surely coincide with our epigrammatist. But it is just the closet-student,

holding aloof from the surging stream of life, whose intellectual activity is *ד' אמות של הלכה*, confined within the four yards of his study chamber, whose vocation, or let us call it by its right name, whose means of sustenance is speech, will certainly not accept the first phrase of Simon ben Gamaliel's sentence, as a maxim for the conduct of life.

The orator would often, alas, too often, prefer silence to speech, and recall the advice of the Talmud, *יפה שתיקה לחכמים ק'ו למפשים*,¹ silence becomes the sage, how much more the fool. As Solomon says: "If the fool is silent, he is thought to be wise." And yet there are times when silence is no virtue, when speech is worthy. This is true, particularly of religious teaching, *כל פטמיה בישן ופטמיה דאורייתא טבין*.² "A useless stream of talk is never to be commended, but when religious instruction is to be imparted, fluent speech is of service." But many preachers speak without saying anything; make a great show of words but never a thought or an idea, holding with the great diplomat, that speech was made to conceal thought. They who thus think and act, deserve censure as much as he who in the anecdote was reproved by the advocate of speech. Certainly if convenience and personal comfort

¹ Pesachim, 99a.

² Jer. Berach. IX. 14d.

are to be considered, silence is preferable, as the prophet has said: **לֹכֵן הַמְשָׁכִיל בַּעַת הַהֵיאָ יָדוּם**: כי עת רעה היא. He who is shrewd will keep silence, for these are bad times. Silence has seldom caused so much unpleasantness as bold denunciation of the spirit of the times, courageous criticism of the customs of the day; and brave exposure of the dominant moral spirit. Silence may be the course of shrewdness and prudence, and may be conducive to personal convenience, which is alluded to by Simon ben Gamaliel's sentence: **לֹא מִצְאָתִי לְנוֹף טוֹב מִשְׁתִּיקָה**, for the body there is nothing more comfortable than silence, than abstaining from all controversy.

But, whether this attitude whereby all things crooked shall be as it they were straight, whether this quiescent position is honest and worthy, that is another very different question.

In worldly affairs we may observe Solomon's counsel: Be not hasty in entering into controversy; and may follow the advice of the Talmud: **אֵין הָעוֹלָם מִתְקִיִּים אֶלָּא בְּשִׁבְלֵי מִי שְׁבוּלָם אֶת עַצְמוֹ בְּשַׁעַת מְרִיבָה**, The world exists through him who in contention keeps silence. But the same Talmud guards against silence when the holy cause of religion is in question, and a victory for the wider dispersion of its beneficence may be gained. Then it says: **יָכוֹל אֶף לְדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה ת"ל צֶדֶק**, **תְּרַבְּרוּ**, Is silence concerning religion to be com-

mended? No, then must be spoken, and with all the force of religious conviction; stand must be made for the truth as it is understood and believed;³ then it is said: **דַּאֲנָה בְּלֹב אִישׁ יִשְׁחָנָה**, **יִשְׁיָחֲנָה לְאַחֲרֵים**, When an important subject fills your mind and lies heavy on your heart, then be communicative and speak out your thought.⁴

In this connection another phrase of the sages possesses cogency: **הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה וְאֵינוֹ מְלַמְּדָהּ הִרִיזָהּ**, **דְּבַר ה' בִּזְוָה**,⁵ He who learns Thora and does not teach it to others, has treated with contempt the word of God.

For admonition to the performance of religious duties speech is praiseworthy. Omission on the part of him whose obligation it is to instruct in those duties is a sin of omission. But there is a merit in speech, even higher than instruction. The most perfect art manifested in an address, well-ordered, finely conceived, richly draped in rhetorical vestments, profound in thought, and wonderful in fluency and rhythm of phrase, does not approach in value the inspiration to deeds. The art of speech often consists of silence, in concealing some phases of fact, and certain circumstances, whose exposition would cause the speaker personal unpleasantness.

³ Chullis, 89a.

⁴ Joma, 75a.

⁵ Synh, 99.

Then discretion bids careful shunning of the object of attack; then the words of the Talmud are utilized: שתיקותיך יפה מדבוריך,⁶ "Silence pays better than speech." And many speakers can utter that other phrase: מלה בסלע משתוקה בתרין,⁷ "If speech is worth a *sela*, silence is worth double." And many a preacher of our times is paid more for what he does not say, than for what he would dare to preach in censure of religious inconsequence. But that sermon may be the noblest and most successful in all respects, which is delivered by means of action. The religious deed, the practise of the divine commands, is to be valued higher than the rarest eloquence. For that reason our ethical sentence says: לא המדרש עיקר, אלא המעשה וכל המרבה דברים מביא חטא, not the preaching but the searching. Theory is not the main thing, but the deed, for he who talks much, can cause error; he who uses many words does not shun error, but he whose good deeds speak loudly can contribute to the ultimate uprooting of error.

And Judaism is primarily and supremely a religion of deed. Not emotional raving, not fullness of phrase, not jingling of words, but the deed, the living act, the unambiguous pious practise of religion was valid in all times as the

⁶ J-bam., 65a.
⁷ Meg., 18a.

true expression of genuine Judaism. At a time of great political activity, at the time of the persecutions under Hadrian, when discovery at the study of the Law, or at the practise of its behests was punishable by death to the offending Israelite; at that time a number of the most renowned men assembled at the house of one otherwise unknown. They considered the grave question: תלמוד גדול או מעשה גדול, Which is worthier: Theory, as embodied in biblical researches, or the practice of the commandments of the Law? If martyrdom must be the consequence of religious confession; for adhesion to Judaism, shall it be courted for the theory or the practice?

Opinions varied. R. Tarphon emphasized the practise of religion. R. Akiba maintained that the theory was most essential: נענו כולם ואמרו תלמוד גדול שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה,⁸ After discussion and vote, it was established as a rule: that only those studies were worthy which incite to religious practise. The wisdom of his decision was most brilliantly manifested by R. Akiba himself, in that, though he maintained that theory was the mother of practice, yet he never ceased to relax his personal efforts to encourage the exemplification of religion in life. He traveled to many of the large cities of Asia Minor to awaken the Jews

⁸ Kiddushin, 40b.

from their lethargy, to bring them to a realization, and the proud consciousness of their obligations to Judaism. R. Akiba sealed his inspiring labors in behalf of the religious truths of Judaism by a painful martyrdom. Should we not be edified by his glorious example?

We, the fortunate sons of a happier epoch, how should we rejoice in the divine commands, for the fulfilment of which our ancestors offered up their lives, and how should we obey them of our own free will and volition, and thereby fulfil upon us the words of Moses: When the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of the Eternal, your God, is spoken among you in veneration, when they shall hear of this wise Law, **ושמרתם ועשיתם**, which you practice and obey, they will praise you as a wise and sagacious people.

But alas in certain Jewish circles wisdom and enlightenment is sought just in the non-observance of the Mosaic Law, in the disregard of religious statutes which are of the very marrow of Judaism. Great as have been the exertions to arrange a religious service, great as have been the sacrifices of the elders to place the altar of the Lord in worthy condition, yet an honest Rabbi cannot, none the less, conceal the truth, that the exercise of religion in the home and in life is not as it should be.

It is true, a Rabbi dare not assume to himself judicial functions concerning the religious conscience of the members of his congregation, **הנסתרות לה' אלהינו**; it is said at the present 'day, that what is done in private, whether Jews live Jewish lives, or not is no concern to the preacher, that is God's affair, and is to be settled by individual consciences, and we must be satisfied with such settlement.

To a certain extent the justice of this must be admitted. Freedom of conscience cannot be trifled with. But let this concluding phrase be considered: **והנגזרות לנו ולבנינו עד עולם לעשות את כל**, **דברי התורה הזאת**, Freedom of will and of conscience belongs to us and to our posterity, to fulfil the words of this Thora.

That which is done in private is of private concern, and is to be accounted for between the individual and his conscience, between the soul and its God; but that which is done in the home, in the presence of children, to them you are accountable and through them to the world to which your children belong as well as to you: that is, the accountability to which you are held to execute the commands of God.

To acknowledge this duty only in theory, and not fulfil it in practise is a glaring contradiction, a dangerous hypocrisy.

The words **לנו ולבנינו** are literally punctuated, and

the Talmud⁹ explains this by the query whether Israel was punishable for private sins, or according to some, whether amenable more for public than for private offenses, before crossing the Jordan, for, after having crossed the Jordan, Israel had withstood the sore trials of the wilderness, and no obstacles were in its path for the due observance of the Law.

We, too, have crossed the Jordan; living in a free country we can with joyous complacency pursue the will of God without fear of encountering hostile forces. Let us then, too, accentuate the words *לנו ולבנינו*; let us emphasize them. Let it, to the weal and happiness of us and our children, be ours to establish ourselves ever more firmly in the Jewish religious life, against internal and external dangers, that it be to us, as to our ancestors, a strong bulwark, and never forget *לא חמורש עיקר אלא חמשה*, that not abstract theories, not abstruse philosophies, nor contemplative speculations make up the sum and substance of Judaism, but the vital religious deed. This be our wisdom and our spiritual strength before all the world, now and for all times.

⁹ Synh., 43 b.

TRUTH, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

AS the traveller who after having overcome many obstacles encountered during his pilgrimage, is glad when he reaches a rocky eminence whereon to rest after his fatiguing journey, and whence he can with complacency survey the stretch of territory he has traversed, although he is well aware that he has hardly covered a fifth of the road reaching to the goal of his journey, so with us. We have had many difficulties of exposition to conquer, before we have completed the explanation of a fifth of the object which we had in view, the illustration of the Ethics of the Fathers.

We may be pleased at having reached a resting place, in order that in surveying the intellectual pathway we have trodden, we may measure that which yet stretches its length before us. Involuntarily our vision strays backward to our starting point, and gladly finds, despite the various divergencies we made during our journey, an intimate connection between our point of departure and our resting-place. Such a connection is formed by the sentence of Simon the

Just, according to which the moral world is based upon three supports: the Thora, worship, and practical virtue, considered with the sentence of Simon ben Gamaliel who taught: על שלשה דברים העולם קיים על האמת ועל הדין ועל השלום "Three things maintain the moral world, truth, justice and peace," and it is said: אמת ומשפט שוים בשעריכם: "truth and the peace of justice be the standards of judgment within your gates."¹

Between these related proverbs the connection is formed in that Simon the Just determines the foundations of the moral world *in general*, while Simon ben Gamaliel discovers in particular the determination of them by means of the practical exertions of man unto man, for although the Thora is a support to the world, it is such only by virtue of its being based on truth וְהָאֱמֶת זוֹ תוֹרָה, The Thora must be expressed in Truth.² Worship in the narrower or broader sense, honoring God, manifests itself only then as main support of the world, when we judge ourselves rigidly, כל דבר האסור ללך נאמר בו ויראת מאליהו, Everything that is beyond the jurisdiction of the law of the land, and is restricted to the surveillance of conscience, is ever accompanied by the voice of warning, Fear God!³ Finally, practical benevo-

¹ Zacharia 8, 16.

² Berach., 5 b.

³ Baba Mezia 58 b.

lence can only be secure of its position as the third principal pillar of the moral world, when its ultimate aim is peace.

In this manner the saying of R. Simon ben Gamaliel explains and complements that of Simon Hazadik. Approaching then in detail we will find the ideas of Truth, Justice and Peace intimately connected, and one complementing the other. Foremost stands Truth, which of a verity may be ranked as the highest and most indispensable means of sustaining society. In the Talmud,⁴ a story is told of a city which was called קישטא, Truth, because no inhabitant ever told an untruth, and as a result of this virtue, no death ever occurred in the city. At one time, however, two children died. The unusual occurrence incited to investigation which led to the discovery that the mother of the children had been guilty of an untruth. The inhabitants were urgent in their pleadings to her, במטותא מנך פוק, "We beseech you to leave the city lest the punishment for your sin fall upon the city, and death come unto us."

Many poetical beauties are embodied in this story. If we would however utilize it for ethical purposes, we find that by the stringent observance of moral and religious truths we would

⁴ Synh. 97 a.

have no need to deplore moral decadence, nor the dying out of the Jewish religious life. If we should in all and everything, in deed and conduct, in thought and conception base ourselves upon Truth, no power on earth could move us from our firm foundation. Our wise men have expressed this symbolically, considering the formation of the letters that form the word אמת and contrast therewith its opposite, שקר. They say: קושטא קאי ואמת מלבן כבונה⁵ "Sheker stands on but one foot. *Emeth* has a broad foundation." The three points of ש run together and connect in a top-heavy manner, as if on one foot. The ק runs down with its one useless limb below the limb, and the ר has only one feeble support. Not so the אמת, the connective links of the א, the respective two solid supports of the ט and the ת demonstrate that even externally while *Emeth* rests on sure ground, *Sheker* stands on only one leg. קושטא קאי שיקרא⁵ לא קאי, Truth stands eternally, untruth decays.

For mutual support the men of untruth associate together, hence our symbolical expositors proceed to explain the three letters ר, ק, ש, are taken close together from their place in the alphabet, while Truth retains its secure place though standing alone; hence the letters which

⁵ Schabb., 104a.

form אמת are taken from widely dispersed places in the alphabet, being grouped from the beginning, middle and end.

The juxtaposition of the letters ר, ק, ש, and the scattered places of ת, ט, א, also point to the fact שיקרא שניה קושטא לא שניה, that the lie is more frequently met with, than the truth. A truth that is learned by experience, by everyone in even the most ordinary problems and in common intercourse with man. It is even more painful when Truth is banished from her own home, from the Temple, for as there can be but one manner of truth, so one and the same truth could not assume so many various colors as in fact it is made to do from the mouths of its expounders. How does it happen that what is here set forth as truth, is by others declared to be exactly the contrary? It is said: חותמו של הק"ב אמת⁶, God's seal is truth. With one seal innumerable impressions can be made, without a single error being made visible. How is it then that so much counterfeit of God's seal of truth, is current? An answer to this is furnished by the idea of דין, which should serve as complement to אמת.

The second world-sustaining power is based upon דין, the forms of justice. If we would administer justice according to the forms laid

⁶ Schabb., 55a.

down for us from ancient times, if the judicial rules had validity for us, as they had for our ancestors, then indeed we would soon arrive at an understanding concerning truth. But when the proposition is laid down as a starting-point: that Moses had only his times in view, and would have written entirely different for our days; or to speak in the words of the Talmud: *משימין משה רבינו חכם ותורתו אמת ואומרין: לא היה כותבו יודע משה רבינו שיהיה ריוח בדבר לא היה כותבו* "They who say our teacher Moses gave his legislation from limited human understanding, and that if he had had a broader vision would not have commanded or written this, that or the other;" they who set forth with such false premises, must arrive at false conclusions.

But if we honestly pursue our task, and let justice be the judge, and maintain with immovable firmness that *תורה אינה מוחלפת* the Thora as God's teaching cannot be altered, as it has been demonstrated by the religious philosophers, then our conclusions would be different, and we would join in the expression *אמת ותורתו אמת* ⁷ *ואנו בראין* ⁸ Moses is true, his teaching is true, and we who rebel against it, are in error, and would furthermore agree ⁹ that *כתי שקרנים אין מקבלין פני*

⁷ B. Mezia 75 b.

⁸ B. Bathra, 74 a.

⁹ Sota, 42 a.

השכינה, the class of those who teach untruth dare not approach the divine.

But if we would not have *והאמת תהא נעדרת* ¹⁰ Truth lacking in our teachings; if we will place ourselves on the immovable standpoint, *מה ראיה* ¹¹ *משה אמת ראה* "What Moses under divine inspiration saw, that was made visible to him as absolute truth;" if we have secured such firm ground for our foothold that we can, and at times must, make concessions on such matters as do not compose the vital principles of Judaism, then we can approach the third principal support of humanity, the *שלום*, Peace, and in accord with the usage of the elders *שלום* Permit some things for the sake of sweet peace.

Here we require honesty, love of truth, and pastoral tact, so that that which is really permitted be not hindered, and to reconcile differences. The Talmudists have explained the verse: *מי כהנחם ומי יודע פשר דבר מי כהק"ב* ¹² *שה שיווע לעשות פשרה* "Who is so wise and understands how to effect a reconciliation?" as referring to God. He therefore is praised as a Peacemaker in the heavens, who establishes peace between the planets, that they do not cross the orbits one of

¹⁰ Sota, 49 b.

¹¹ Synh. 111 a.

¹² Berach. 10 a.

another, that every planet may unhindered pursue its path.¹³

So we here below, in the course of fleeting time, who have our ordained spheres of action, can establish peace *ויהיב שומא ויחייב דרכים*.¹⁴ That we reconcile ourselves at the juncture of the two ages, that the departure of the modern from ancient finds some moderating of the difficulties for our times without violating the fundamental principles of Judaism. In this spirit it was said *יפה כח פשרה מכה דרין*.¹⁵ A peaceful reconciliation is worthier than stubborn justice. Just in behalf of reconciliation as against rigid justice, the verse from Zacharia is quoted in our Mishna, asking, it is said: *אמת משפט שלום שפטו*, if we are told to judge according to truth and the judgment for peace, then it is remarkable, *הלא במקום שיש משפט אין שלום ובמקום שיש שלום אין משפט* . . . *אלא דרין* אומר זה ביצוע strict justice according to which we are to judge, then there can be no peace; if peace, however, shall be the standard, then justice cannot obtain. How shall the two be reconciled? By means of peaceable adjustment. Strict justice must not stand upon its stubborn self-conceit, but must concede somewhat to peace: Peace must not be

¹³ Rosh Hashana 23 b.

¹⁴ Nedarim 8 a.

¹⁵ Synh. 5 b.

mere careless, thoughtless indulgence, but must have a judicial basis; then through the harmonious commingling of both, emerges the legal adjustment.

The highly important question then presents itself; when can and should we secure an adjustment, that is *לפנים משורת הדין*, within judicial lines? The Talmud¹⁶ supplies us with an answer to this query: *תורה דכתיב ביה אמת דכתיב אמת קנה ואל תמכר: אין הק"כ עושה לפנים משורת הדין דין ולא כתיב ביה אמת הק"כ*, "The fundamental truths of the Thora admit of no accommodation or adjustment; there the unmistakable voice of truth is the only standard, but in judicial interpretation adjustment may be utilized."

Such judicial decisions are those which have not eternal validity, for the conceptions of the world is not always the same, except as concerns the unalterable ethical conceptions. With broader culture, more refined taste, and widening of the æsthetic consciousness, our ideas of the world and of men, and of our relations to the universe, change and are sensibly modified. Account must be taken of these altered conditions. Let us take a striking example. The great congregational strife centres more or less about the *Siddur*, particularly in more recent times, and

¹⁶ Aboda Zara 4 b.

especially in America. Around this rage the hosts of combatants and teachers.

One would pluck out from the prayer-book all trace of Hebrew, another would mercifully permit the retention of some pieces endeared to memory in the original Hebrew, so to speak as *זכר לחורבן*; another *improves* the good old biblical expression, and thus to the end of the list of prayer book makers.

If we could develop a *Siddur*, which should appeal to modern taste, upon the lines and in the language of the old *Siddur*, made acceptable to, and be adopted by all the congregations, then we could make concessions to adjust the olden spirit with the modern consciousness, doing homage to the Talmudic principle,¹⁷ *אחר המדבר* "Whether more or less, that only his purpose and motive be good."

And give our adhesion also to that other principle,¹⁸ *אחר כוונת הלכ הן הן הדברים*, "In the observance of the commandments, only the honest, pure purpose is to be considered."

A number of pieces in the olden *Siddur* could be given up by concession, in consideration of the sentiment expressed of old *תפילה בלא כוונה כגוף* *תפילה בלא נשמה*, A prayer without devotion is like a body

¹⁷ Berach. 17 a.

¹⁸ Meg., 20 a.

without soul." Especially in this field would the *עין תפילה* have opened for it a profitable sphere of labor, by pursuing the beautiful and liberal words of the Talmud in relation to this.

A uniform prayer-book would at one stroke close the congregational strife and put an end to the contentions which now distract us, and the principal preliminaries to a lasting peace would be perfected. And Peace is so often praised in the prayer-book. Every prayer, every blessing ends with *שלום*. The Mishnajith conclude with *שלום*, the first section of our ethics concludes with *שלום*, and so I too conclude with the beautiful words of the Mishna,¹⁹ *הכלי מחזיק* "לא מצא הקב"ה כלי מחזיק", *ברכה אלא שלום שניא ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום*, "God found no vessel that could contain more blessing for Israel than Peace, for it is said, when God granted strength to his people, then he blessed his people with peace."

As the peaceful development of the faculties is the greatest blessing, so without peace this blessing cannot be secured.

גדול השלום שהשלום לארץ כשארור לעיסה, "What yeast is to the dough, that is peace to the earth."²⁰ Peace is the productive, energetic impulse to all the great intellectual creations which elevate in the various stages of development to spiritual

¹⁹ Uksin 3, 12.

²⁰ Perek Masolaum.

and moral perfection. To labor at this, to participate actively in the structure of Judaism be our task. In the degree in which a Rabbi whose vocation it is to forward this spiritual structure, is capable of solving the problems connected therewith, in that degree he deserves title to the name of a רב, the name of a Jewish sage, by which the master of the moral and Jewish religious world are designated.²¹

Beth Elohim.

²¹ Berach 64a.

Beth Elohim

Unser Tempel ein Gotteshaus.

Ewiger unser Hort und Erlöser! öffne meinen Mund, daß ich Lünde Deiner Gnadewaltung Wunderthaten, welche Du an dieser in Andacht versammelten Gottesgemeinde bewiesest, indem Du ihr, der numerisch nur geringzähligen, doch so viel Kraft verliehest, daß sie Dir eine Stätte der Andacht sich zur Erhebung, zu Deiner Verherrlichung errichten konnte. Segne diese Festesstunde nimm in Wohlgefallen auf, die Weihe unseres Herzens, die Lehren unseres Mundes und laß fruchtbringend in unser Gemüth fallen das belehrende Wort Deiner Wahrheit, auf daß es nicht leer verhalle, sondern segensverbreitend in den Herzen der Zuhörer fortwirke. Amen.

Wenn ich dankbaren Herzens Eurem mich ehrenden Rufe folgend in Eurer Mitte an dieser geheiligten Stätte erschien, um sie ihrer geweihten Zweckbestimmung entgegenzuführen und ich um mich blickend den zuckenden Freudenstrahl Eurer Augen gewahre, die Zufriedenheit und freudige Genugthuung ob des Gelingens Eures herrlichen Werkes an dem heiteren Glanz Eures Antlitzes rückgestrahlt sehe, dann fuhrwahr kann ich nicht umhin,

an Euch bewährt zu sehen das einleitende Wort der dieswöchentlichen Sidra:

„So Du kommen wirst nach dem Lande, welches der Ewige Dein Gott Dir zum Besitz geben wird, dann sollst Du Deines Bodens Erstlinge vorzeigen an jener Stätte, „Welche der Ewige Dein Gott erwählen wird, um seinen Namen daselbst thronen zu lassen.“

Ja, heute nehmet Ihr Besitz von dieser heiligen Stätte, welche Ihr unter göttlichem Beistand mit dem Schwunge Eurer Gedanken, der Glaubensinnerlichkeit Eurer, für Israels angestammte Religion so warm fühlenden, Herzen zum Gotteshaus weihet, heute könnet Ihr, wenn vor Eurem Geistesauge vorüberzieht die Fülle der Opfer, die Jeglicher brachte sei es an materiellen Opfern, sei es an liebevoller Bemühung, sei es an gutem Rath, oder wohlvollender Gesinnung, heute könnet Ihr mit gutem Recht der Sidra Worte auf Euch anwenden „Siehe! nunmehr haben wir gebracht unseres Bodens Erstlinge, die Du, oh Gott, uns gegeben, Jeder von uns reichte dar seines, wenn noch so spärlichen Einkommens entfallenden Betrag, um ihn nach Maßgabe seiner Leistungsfähigkeit an den Gottessaltar niederlegen zu können, so nun hörten wir auf die Stimme des Herrn, der uns befahl „Ihr möget mir errichten ein Heiligthum und ich will in ihnen wohnen“ und wenn auch dieses Haus kein neuerbautes ist, wenn auch diese Gemeinde mit der h. Schrift ausrufen kann „fürwahr, es wohnte schon Gott früher an diesem Orte, wenn ich es auch nicht erkannte,“ es schlug Gott schon früher seinen Sitz auf an diesem Ort

zur Zeit als dieser seiner kirchlichen und noch nicht seiner synagogalen Zweckbestimmung diene und diese Gemeinde, diese heilige Stätte noch nicht als den Ausdruck ihrer jüdischen Bekenntnisse erkennen konnte, so kann sie aber jetzt, nach angemessener Adoption, mit um so größerer Freude ausrufen, „Wie ehrfurchtgebietend ist dieser Ort, er ist sicherlich ein Gotteshaus und hier die Himmelspforte.“

So bewährte es sich hierorts (Menach 53 a), בא יריר, es komme der Gottgeliebte und soll umbauen das Gottgeliebte dem Geliebten, es komme die Beth Elohim Congregation und baue um die schon früher geliebte Stätte für den Gott, der sein Volk liebt und ein liebender Gott aller Völker und Nationen ist. Und so wie jetzt eine israelitische Gemeinde an derselben Stätte ihren Gott verehrt, an welcher eine nicht israelitische es früher that, so werden auch umgekehrt einst nach prophetischer Versicherung die Völkergruppen das Haus Jakobs aufsuchen sprechend: „Kommet laßt uns hinaufziehen auf den Gottesberg in das Haus des Gottes Jakob!“ אלהי יעקב ולא אלהי אברהם ויצחק, Wie, fragt der Talmud, warum wird das Gotteshaus, das Haus Jakobs und nicht Abrahams oder Jizchaks genannt? Und die Antwort lautet לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר nicht nach Abraham wird das Gotteshaus genannt, denn daselbst heißt es Gott ist sichtbar an dem Berg; nicht nach Jizchak, denn es heißt bei ihm und Jizchak erging sich auf dem Feld sondern nach Jakob wird zubenannt das Gotteshaus denn so heißt es, er nannte diesen Ort Haus Gottes.“ (Pessach, 88a).

Lasset uns meine A. diese äußerst dunkle Stelle erklären, denn hebt sich ab das Dunkel, so erstrahlt uns hoffentlich das Licht, in welchem wir die eigentliche Mission eines Gotteshauses erblicken werden!

M. a. 3. Die Gotterkenntniß erschließt sich uns in der philosophischen Spekulation, in der Völker- und Naturkunde und endlich in den in uns gelegten sittlichen Wahrheiten, die der Herr am Berge Sinai uns geoffenbart hat.

Der erste der Gott als den Schöpfer des Universums, als einen einheitlichen, einz-einigen erkannt hat war Abraham, mit Abraham lichtet sich das Dunkel, welches so lange in wahnethörter Geistumhüllung die Welt einschloß. Kraft eigenen Denkens und Sinnens erfaßte Abraham die Tiefe der Gottesidee, schwang sich auf die Bergeshöhe vorurtheilsloser klarer, lauterer, abstracter Gedanken. Zu dem Bibelausdruck מרחוק מן המקום ירא את המקום, Abr. erblickte den Ort von der Ferne, bemerken die Alten, (Jalk. § 100), מתחילה היה המקום עמוק אמר הקב"ה אין דרך המלך, (הגביה הקב"ה לשכן בעמק. Der Ort der Gottesanbetung war ursprünglich in der Tiefe des Thals, aber Gott sagte es sei ungeziemend, daß der König im Thale residire, wohl aber auf der Höhe, deshalb erhöhte ihn der Herr, so daß Abr. ihn schon von der Entfernung gewahrte. Entkleiden wir diesen Ausdruck der bildlichen Hülle, so ergibt sich uns der bereits erwähnte Gedanke, daß die Welt vor Abraham über den Gottesbegriff unwürdige Vorstellungen hatte, er ward in die Tiefe der Gedanken-niederung herabgezogen.

Erst Abraham hob den Gottesgedanken in die gebührende Höhe achtungserweckender Verehrungs- und Anbetungswürdigkeit. Aber selbst Abraham ירא את המקום מרחוק konnte Gott auch nur von einer gewissen Entfernung sehen. Der gedanklichen Fernsicht eines beschränkten Menschenverstandes, und wäre dieser so geschärft auch wie bei Abraham, mußten sich viele Hindernisse in den Weg stellen. Auf den letzten Urgrund einzugehen, das Wesen Gottes Kraft eigener Spekulation aus sich selbst erkennen, ist keinem Sterblichen gegönnt. Es bleibt daher ein ewig wahres Wort שמו ומסתרים שמו das Gotteswesen als abstracter Gedanke bleibt dem Menschen so lange er in seiner stofflichen Hülle lebt ein ewiges Mysterium, ein tiefes Dunkel. Es muß also selbst für den Denker die Gotteserkenntniß mehr in dem Walten Gottes, in der Natur, in der Völggeschichte und der Offenbarung sich erschließen. Die Natur mit ihren Wundern kündigt zwar deutlich genug das Vorhandensein eines Schöpfers, und doch ist selbst dieses offenliegende Buch mit sieben Siegeln verschlossen und nicht Jedermann ist befähigt die Siegel zu lösen und die Chifferschrift zu lesen.

Daher ist auch die Gotterkenntniß, die nur die Natur vermitteln hilft, eine defecte, unzureichende, oft sogar eine betrügerische. Nur wenn man in der Natur die gütige Valtung einer Vorsehung gewahrt, wird man auf die Gottesanbetung von selbst hingeleitet. Dies war der Fall mit Isaa. Von Isaa wird nirgends betont, daß er etwa wie sein Vater ein tiefer Denker gewesen wäre,

wohl aber, daß er, im Gegensatz zu seinem vielgeprüften großen Vater, ein glücklicher Mensch war. Was er that gelang ihm, er war reichgesegnet mit Glücksgütern. Der Boden gab hundertfältig belohnend wieder den in ihn gesenkten Samen, so daß Jizhak sich ergehen konnte auf dem Felde, auf dem Felde der Gotteserkenntniß, die ihm die Natur mit ihrer reichen Fülle erschloß. Aus der ihm gewordenen, durch die Naturgaben gewonnenen Erkenntniß: es müsse einen Gott der Vorsehung geben, baute sich Jizhak seine Gottesvorstellung auf, die ihm übrigens schon von Abraham tradirt wurde. Allein schon sein Sohn Jakob erbte nicht mit des Vaters Segen auch dessen Glücksgüter.

Harte Schicksalsschläge trafen ihn in stetiger Aufeinanderfolge. In frühester Jugend von des Bruders rache-schnaubender Wuth verfolgt, mußte er sein väterliches Haus verlassen. In der rauhen Fremde, wenn auch bei Verwandten, mußte er sich schrittweise den Bodenerringen in dem großen Kampf um's Dasein, welchen Kampf er bis zum letzten Athemzug zu führen genöthigt war. In diesem Kampf ward er von den Schlägen, die der Menschennatur anhaften, wie in einem Schmelztiegel geläutert und vervollkommnete er sich soweit, daß die Alten richtig von ihm behaupten konnten, Jakob war der vorzüglichste der Patriarchen. In allem und jedem begleitete ihn der Gottesgedanke. Von dem Tag an, da er unter Gottes freiem Himmel den harten Stein zum Rissen nahm, und doch von dem was ihn Tags über begleitete und erfüllte auch in der Nacht träumte: nämlich

von seinem Gotte, bis zu der letzten Anstrengung, die er am Todtenbette machte um sich zum Empfang seines Sohnes Josef aufzurichten und dankend sprach: „Gott, der mich geführt und geweiht seit dem ich bin bis zum heutigen Tag,“ hatte Jakob ein Selbstläuterungswerk an sich vollzogen, Kraft der Gottesidee, die sein ganzes Wesen erfüllte.

Die schweren Prüfungen besiegte er mit dieser Idee, wie schon die Alten bildlich so schön bezeichnen, wenn sie sagen:

„Die Steine gingen einen Wettstreit ein, jeder Stein sagte *וְכָל אֶבֶן מִן הָאֲבָנִים* auf mir soll dieser Gerechte sein Haupt niederlegen, aber er nahm alle diese Steine zusammen und sobald dies erfolgte, „da stand über ihm Gott.“

Diese Steine sind Steine des *A n s t o ß e s*, die das rauhe Gesicht dem Jakob in den Lebensweg schleuderte, jeder Stein war so gewuchtig, daß man annehmen konnte durch ihn wird der Gerechte sein Haupt beugen, durch ihn werde er zu Falle gebracht werden, aber Jakob blieb standhaft, denn er nahm alle diese Steine zusammen, er betrachtete sie als Prüfsteine und trat ihnen entgegen mit dem Gottesgedanken, über ihm stand Gott, denn in ihm lebte Gott und er selbst ward aus einem Jakob, dem in der Täuschungs-Be-griffenen, ein *J i r a e l*, ein Kämpfer für Gott. Nach ihm benennt sich unser Volk. Somit löst sich das Dunkel obigen Talmudspruchs. Unsere Gottesverehrung, wie sie im Tempel uns zum Bewußtsein gebracht wird und

werden soll, nennt sich nicht eine speculative, das Gotteshaus heißt nicht nach dem Vorgang Abrahams Berg Gottes, denn nicht jeder ist berufen seinen Gott auf der Bergeshöhe gedanklicher Abstraction zu begreifen. Unser Tempel nennt sich nicht nach Siczak, denn nicht jeder vermag, wie er, seinen Gott aus der Natur zu erfassen, im Gegentheil, diese Gotteskenntniß unterliegt vielen Täuschungen, wohl aber knüpft unsere Gottesverehrung an Jakob an und nennen wir nach seinem Beispiel unseren und speciell diesen Tempel, בית אלהים, ein Haus Gottes, denn wie Jakobs Gottesverehrung das Haus versinnbildlichte, so soll auch dieser Tempel wie unser Haus sein, uns anheimelnd ein sicheres Heim für die Besucher sein.

Hiermit aber haben wir auch die Bestimmung des Tempels bezeichnet, das Haus mit seinen mannigfachen freudigen und schmerzlichen Ereignissen ist auch ein Bild für dieses Haus. Draußen ein Haschen und Wagen das Glück zu erjagen, rennen wir nach leerem Schatten, bauen um zu zerstören, zerstören um zu bauen; oft mit Glück, öfters aber mit Mißlingen unserer weltstürmenden Pläne sehen wir zuletzt ein, daß Alles nichtig und hinfällig ist und erinnern uns noch bei Zeiten, wir haben ja ein geliebtes Heim, einen freundlichen Feuerherd.

Voll Enttäuschung uns vom Lebensgewühl draußen abwendend, finden wir Ruhe und Seelensammlung im Hause, an der Seite einer trauten Gattin und im Kreise liebender Kinder. So sei unser Gotteshaus — ein Bild

des Lebens. Dieses mit seinen Verschlingungen und Windungen befriedigt uns nicht, unsere Ideale, denen wir, wie Kinder Schmetterlingen, nachellen, verflüchtigen sich, sind überhaupt selten erreichbar. Alle unsere Pläne, wenn sie auch im seltensten Fall gelingen, sind auf Flugland gebaut.

Eine innere Leere, von der Menschheit ganzem Jammer erfasst, macht uns mißmuthig, lebensüberdrüssig, gleich der Noahetaube, gewinnt unsere Seele keinen Ruhepunkt. Wohin willst Du gehen, Du mit Dir und der Gesellschaft Zerfallener, wenn nicht in das Haus Gottes? Ja, komme hierher, denn nur hier kann Beruhigung finden die schmachthende, lechzende Seele. Hier bist Du nicht allein. Die Andachtschaar berauscht Dich, verklärt Dich und was Du draußen vergeblich gesucht, hier findest Du sie wieder, Deine Seelenruhe. — Da ist ein Anderer, ein Mann von Bildung, eine Frau von Belesenheit. Sie leben in der Zeit der Aufklärung. Die Religion gilt nichts, Alles nur Vernunft; fortgerissen von dem Strudel der Zeitrichtung kommst Du dahin allmählich Dich zu emancipiren von den religiösen Formen, Du denkst, forschest, grübelst und weil Du nicht alle Lebensräthsel zu lösen im Stande bist, leugnest Du — sogar Deinen Gott!

Vor den Foltern der Zweifel, wohin könntest Du Dich wohl flüchten, wenn nicht in das Gotteshaus? Hier siehst Du den Glücklichen und Unglücklichen nebeneinander, der draußen nach Menschenschätzung hochangesehen ist, gilt hier vor Gott nur so viel wie der im Schweiß

seines Angesichtes sein Brod Erwerbende und vielleicht nicht einmal so viel. Siehe, wie sie am heiligen Tag der Versöhnung beide gleichmäßig gebeugt unter der Wucht ihrer Sündenlast stöhnen, um Verzeihung flehen — und Du solltest nicht finden was die Weltphysiognomie, die trügerische, Dir nicht geben, wohl aber Dir wegdäutern kann? Ja, hier im Gotteshaus findest Du Deinen Gott, Deine Zweifel lösen sich, Du hast Dich wiedergefunden, Dein besseres Ich erschließt sich Dir von Neuem und in Dir findest Du wieder Deinen Gott, der Dir zuruft, wo warst Du bisher? Schäme Dich nicht einzugehen: Deine Stimme hörte ich zwar im Donner der Ereignisse, im Zephyrhauch meines Seelenlebens — aber, ich verbarg mich, weil ich nackt war — nackt und entblößt von den mir gebotenen Pflichten, die ich bisher vernachlässigte, aber jetzt fasse ich heilige Entschlüsse Dich, meinen Gott, nie wieder zu verlieren!

Dort wieder geht ein Glücklicher einher, ein Kinder-
 seggen preßt ihm Freudethränen aus dem Auge, ein An-
 derer sieht den Ertrag seiner Bemühungen im Bilde seiner
 Kinder reich belohnt, der gute Fortgang der Erziehung
 und deren Resultate berechtigen ihn zu großen Hoffnungen.
 Wohin solltest Du sonst Deine Schritte richten als nach
 dem Hause Gottes, um ihm für seine Gnade zu danken
 für solches Glück denn, **ה"י כני ומני לא ברכתא תליא**
סירתא, Leben, Kinder und Nahrung hängen nicht
 vom Verdienst, sondern vom Glück ab!

Wenn also Dein Leben kein kümmerliches, Deine Kinder nicht aus der Art geschlagen, sondern wohlge-

rathen, Dein Nahrungserwerb kein schwerer, sondern ein leichter ist, so ist das Alles nicht Deinem Verdienste zuzuschreiben, wohl aber dem von Gott verliehenen Glück und seinem Segen. Und Du solltest Ruhe finden ohne zu gehen in das Haus Gottes, um dajelbst auch zu erflehen den glücklichen Fortgang und Schluß? Außer diesen Gelegenheiten, die das Leben bietet und den Einzeln sein Gotteshaus zu gehen auffordert, hat die Gemeinnsamkeit an Israels traurigen und freudigen Geschichtserebnissen noch mannigfache Anlässe sich hier im Gotteshause zu versammeln.

Die Fast- und Festzeiten, die erhabenden Geschichtsdenkmale Israels, die gemeinsamen Erlebnisse in der Vorzeit, die wir in der Gegenwart feiern, oder auch nationale Erinnerungs- und Denktage der Gegenwart rufen die Bekenner Israels zu dieser heiligen Stätte, „Wie schön sind Deine Zelte, Jakob, wie herrlich Deine Wohnungen, Israel, wie die Bäche sich hinschlängeln, so wie Aoeppfungen von Gott angelegt.“

Wer die Geschichte Israels in der Vor- und Jetztzeit beschreiben wollte, der müßte die Geschichte seiner Tempel und Synagogen beschreiben. Die hohe Mission Israels als des Volkes der Gotteskämpfe, spiegelt sich treu in seinen Tempeln. Seine Bet- und Lehrhäuser waren seine feste Burgen, an denen die feindlichen Anriffe stets wirkungslos abprallten.

Auch diese Gemeinde hat sich erst von heute ab diesen Namen mit Recht erworben, da sie dessen sich bewußt wird, daß sie den ethnischen Sammel- und Mittelpunkt

echt jüdischer Bestrebungen in ihrem Tempel gefunden. Mit großen Opfern und noch fortwährenden Anstrengungen errichtete sie oder richtete sie ein diese Gottesstätte. Es ist zu wünschen, daß so wie sie für die Gesamtheit der Zugehörigen verdienstvoll gewirkt, auch die Gesamtheit ihre Pflichten kenne in nimmerrastender Opferbereitwilligkeit, ja, daß auch die dieser Festesstunde Anwohnenden ihre Hochherzigkeit an den Tag legen, auf daß es wahr werde „Dein Licht ist in meiner Hand, mein Licht in Deiner Hand, zündest Du mein Licht im Gotteshause an, so erhalte auch ich Dein Lebenslicht; kommst Du in mein Haus mit Deinen Spenden, so komme auch ich in Dein Haus mit meinen Segnungen!“

Jakob, der den Stein zum Gotteshaus weihte und daselbst Gelübde that, schließt sein schönes Gebet, „Was Du mir gibst, will ich verzeihen, also nicht bloß beten, sondern auch spenden.

Und in diesem Sinne weihe ich Dich als Gotteshaus. Es wisse Jeder an Deiner Weihe, die Du ausströmst, daß Du bist ein Haus Gottes, eine Andachtsstätte der Menschen, die im Innern den Tempel des Herrn tragen. Ich weihe Euch heilige Geräte, zunächst Dich Tisch des Herrn. Möge das von hier emporsteigende Gebet stets ein reines, lauterer, von dem Herzen der Gesamtheit für das Gemeinwohl gerichteter sein. Insofern aber Du Tisch des Herrn auch als Predigtstuhl dienst, möge nie von Dir gesagt werden des Herrn Tisch ist herabgewürdigt durch Lehren, die seiner nicht würdig sind. Möge hier das Wort der Aufklärung, Erbauung und

religiösen Belehrung allwöchentlich vernommen werden und in segensvollen Thaten sich umwandeln jedes auf die Ehre und Lehre des Judenthums, auf die Menschenliebe und Tugendübung sich beziehende Wort. Ich weihe Euch Tempelsitze und ihr werdet nur dann geweiht sein, wenn eure Besucher allsabbathlich von euch Besitz nehmen werden. Alle, alle heilige Gerätschaften des Tempels sei mir geweiht, sowohl die da in den Räumen des Tempels als auch die an dieser heiligen Bundeslade sichtbar sind. Bloß Dich heilige Thora brauche ich nicht zu weihen, denn Du bist schon geweiht, ja durch Dich erhält Alles seine eigentliche Weihe, Dich kann ich nur symbolisiren! Wo durch? Durch dieses dieses ewige Licht, durch diese beständige Lampe. Sei mir also besonders gegrüßt und Dich anzündend sprechen wir und Ihr Alle sprecht es mir im Herzen nach:

„Gelobt seist Du Ewiger, unser Gott, der Du uns, diese, Deine in Andacht versammelte Gemeinde, erleben ließest diesen Zeitpunkt, daß wir in diesen geweihten Räumen אנחנו נאמיר die ewige Lampe anzünden können.“

Glückere sanft kleines Licht, denn Du bist Symbol dieses großen Lichts, welches hier in der Thora uns ewig leuchtet. Hier vor dem großen Licht bist Du aufgestellt zum Zeichen dessen, daß ausströmen muß das Thoralicht in diesem Hause, in unserem Wohnhaus, in unserem Leben.

Verhüllt durch diese Decke ist das große Licht, denn

unser beschränkter Menschenverstand ist wie mit einer Decke umhüllt, wir vermögen nicht die Lichtfülle der Weisheit zu ertragen, wir können nur Ausstrahlungen in uns aufnehmen, um in ihnen unser Thun und Lassen wieder spiegeln zu lassen. Ein grelles Licht verträgt das physische Auge nicht, auch unser geistiges kann die Lichtsonne der Thora nicht einsaugen. Begnügen wir uns mit dem kleinen Licht, daß der glühende Docht dieser Lampe nie erlösche, daß der Thora Licht stets sanft aber immerwährend in uns leuchte und uns erleuchte. So seiest Du nun geweiht heiliger Tempel und geweiht die Gemeinde, geweiht Jeglicher, der Dich aufsucht.

Du aber Allgütiger! „Blicke in Gnaden herab aus Deiner himmlischen Wohnung und segne dieses Dein Volk Israel und segne alle Nationen und dieses herrliche Land mit seinen geistlichen und weltlichen Vertretern, Würdenträgern, seinen Humanitäts-Anstalten, seinen auf allen Gebieten der Gesellschaft, Wissenschaft und Kunst = emsigen Arbeitern darauf spreche Jedermann, Amen.

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