

נ ת י ב ו ת ע ו ל ם

עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתבות עולם ירמיה ו' טז'

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THE Jewish deputies, when asked by Napoleon whether they considered Frenchmen as their brethren, replied in the affirmative, and after quoting the Mosaic laws respecting the stranger said, "To these sentiments of benevolence towards the *stranger*, Moses has added the precept of general love for mankind: '*Love thy fellow-creature as thyself.*'"^{*} And in the authorised Jewish Catechism used in Bavaria, after the explanation of the moral duties, we find the following question:—"Are these laws and duties, affirmative and negative commandments, binding with respect to a non-Israelite?" Answer—"By all means, for the fundamental law of all these duties, '*Love thy neighbour as thyself.*' is expressly laid down by the Holy Scriptures in reference to the non-Israelite, yea, to the heathen, as it is written, 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.'[†] (Levit. xix. 33—35.) These declarations are very explicit, and, as forming part of public documents, highly satisfactory. The representatives of the Jewish people in France, and the teachers of the Jewish youth in Bavaria, declare, that in the scriptural command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," neighbour means *fellow-man*, without distinction of nation or religion. Where then did they learn this interpretation? From the Talmud or from the New Testament? The Jewish Deputies say, from the former. On the page cited above they add, "This doctrine is also professed by the Talmud. We are bound, says a Talmudist, to love as brethren all those who observe the *Noachides*,[‡] whatever their religious opinions may otherwise be. We are bound to visit their sick, to bury their dead, to assist their poor, like those of Israel. In short there is no act of humanity which a true Israelite is not bound to perform towards those who observe the *Noachides*." The Bavarian Catechism is more cautious. It makes no

* Transactions of Parisian Sanhedrin, p. 178.

† Lehrbuch der Mosaischen Religion. München, 1826, page 150.

‡ We quote the passage as we find it. *Noachides* is here taken for the seven commandments of the children of Noah, contrary to the usual acceptation of the word.

such bold assertion respecting the Talmud. It only intimates that the oral law teaches this doctrine, by subjoining to the passage from Leviticus the same extract from Maimonides, alluded to by the Jewish deputies. The Catechism gives the extract a little more at length, and as follows:—"We are bound in every thing to treat the non-Israelite, who sojourns with us with justice and with love, as we would treat an Israelite. Yea we are even bound to maintain him, as the Scripture teaches in the words, 'Thou shalt give it to the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it.' (Deut. xiv. 21.) Our wise men have commanded us for the good of society, even to visit the sick of the heathen, to bury their dead, and to deal out alms to them: for of our Creator it is said, 'The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.' (Psalm cxlv. 9.) (Maimonid. Hilchoth Melachim 10, 12)."

No doubt the passage as here given, both by the French deputies and the Bavarian Catechism, is very plausible; and if it could be found verbatim either in the Talmud or any of its compendiums, would go far to justify the bold assertion of the former, and the cautious insinuation of the latter. But unfortunately the original passage is very different. In the above citations, it is mutilated in order to suit the purpose of the citers. In the *Jad Hachasakah* it stands as follows:—

וכן יראה לי שכתבתי גם כן חושב בדרך איך וגמילה
חסדים כישוראל. שהרי אנו מצווין להזיזין שנאמר לך
אשר בשעריך תחננה ואלהו. וזה שאמרו חכמים אין
כפתוך להן שלום. בנים לא בני חושב. אפילו הנשים
צור חכמים לבקר חוליהם. ולקבור מתיהם עם מתי
ישוראל. ולפנים ענייהם בכלל עניי ישוראל. מפני דרכי
שלום. הרי נאמר טוב "לכל ורחמי על כל מעשי
ונאמר ורכיה ורכי נועם וכל תרבותיה שלום:

"And thus it appears to me, that the *proselytes allowed to sojourn* are to be treated with the same courtesy and benevolence as the Israelites; for behold, we are commanded to maintain them, as it is written, 'Thou shalt give it to the stranger (proselyte) that is in thy gates, that he may eat it.' *As to that saying of our wise men not to return their salute, it refers to the Gentiles, not to the proselyte allowed to sojourn.* But even with regard to the heathen, the wise men have commanded us to visit their sick, and to bury their dead with the dead of Israel, and to feed their poor

along with the poor of Israel, FOR THE SAKE OF THE WAYS OF PEACE; for it is written, 'The Lord is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works;' and again, 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'" (Prov. iii. 17.) The reader will observe that there are several striking differences between this translation and that of the Bavarian Catechism; and these differences prove that, by the word "neighbour," the oral law does not understand a fellow-man without any regard to his religious opinions. First, the Bavarian Catechism says, "We are bound in everything to treat the non-Israelite who sojourns with us with justice and with love, and as we would treat an Israelite." The original says, "And thus it appears to me, that the *proselytes allowed to sojourn* are to be treated with the same courtesy and benevolence as the Israelites." The Bavarian Catechism translates this passage as if it were the undisputed law of Israel thus to act; whereas Maimonides only offers his own opinion. He says, "It appears to me." Here the French deputies represent the matter more accurately, by saying, "We are bound, says a *Talmudist*." Not the Talmud, but a Talmudist. Then, again, the Bavarian Catechism speaks generally of "non-Israelites." Maimonides speaks of only one particular class, the proselytes who had permission to sojourn in the land of Israel. That we do not misrepresent Maimonides' meaning, is plain from the words of the Jewish deputies, who also restrict the sense to that one particular class. "We are bound, says a Talmudist, to love as brethren all those who observe the *Noachides*, whatever their religious opinions may otherwise be." Here, then, on the showing of the Jewish deputies themselves, the Talmud does not teach that all men are to be loved as brethren, but only those who keep the seven commandments of Noah. How, then, are we to regard the idolater and the heathen, who have not embraced these seven commandments, and how are we to treat them? This leads us to notice,

2dly, The important *omission* made by the Bavarian Catechism. In citing the words of Maimonides, the compilers have omitted the whole sentence, "As to the saying of our wise men not to return their salute, it refers to the Gentiles, not to the proselytes allowed to sojourn." To this sentence, the French Jewish deputies have also made no allusion; and yet this sentence is found in the very middle of the passage quoted. What goes before and what follows is quoted by both, but both have with one common consent omitted this passage. Now this mere fact of omission is, in itself, sufficient to excite the suspicions of Israelites not acquainted with the oral law. The Jewish deputies in Paris, and the compilers of the Jewish Catechism in

Bavaria, had one common object—they wished to prove, or to intimate, that the Talmud teaches us to love as ourselves all our fellow-men, without any respect to religious differences. In order to prove this, they both refer to one and the same passage—and from the middle of that passage they both omit one important sentence. What conclusion will be drawn by any man of common understanding? Just this, that as they both quote one and the same passage, there must be a great scarcity of proof from the Talmud; and that, as they both make the same omission, the sentence omitted must be unfavourable to that proof; and that, therefore, this one passage does not prove that the Talmud teaches any such doctrine. Such is the conclusion to which we are led by considering the facts of the case. An examination of the omitted passage will show that this conclusion is most just—"As to the saying of our wise men, not to return their salute, it refers to the Gentiles, not to the proselytes allowed to sojourn." Had this passage been inserted in its place, the Bavarian Catechism could not have been translated *גוי ורשע* (sojourning proselytes) "non-Israelites," for from this passage it appears that these *sojourners* are different from the "Gentiles," whose salute is not to be returned. In plain English, this passage restricts "the courtesy and benevolence" to those proselytes who, by taking upon them the seven commandments of Noah, obtained the privilege of sojourning in the land of Israel; and consequently excludes "the Gentiles"—and consequently disproves the assertion that the Talmud teaches us to love as ourselves all our fellow-men, without any respect to religious differences. On the contrary, this passage tells us that the salutation of the Gentiles is not to be returned. It prescribes two different lines of conduct to be pursued towards different religionists, and makes the difference of religious persuasion the basis of the rule. But some readers may say, that the difference is very small—that the command "not to return the salute of the Gentiles," is a mere matter of etiquette—whereas the command to visit the sick of the Gentiles, to bury their dead, and to feed their poor, is a substantial kindness. This we should admit, if the reason assigned for such conduct, "for the sake of the ways of peace," did not utterly remove all the apparent kindness. And this brings us to

The third misrepresentation of the Bavarian Catechism. It translates the words *כשי רורי שלום* (for the sake of the ways of peace) "for the good of society." Here, then, there is an evident difference between us. But who is right? We do not ask the Israelite to believe us. Maimonides here refers to another passage of the oral law, where this expression is fully explained, and where the

command "not to return the salutation of the Gentiles" is also found. We will give this passage, and then the unlearned can judge for themselves:—

מסרנסים עניי עלים עם עניי ישראל משני דרכי שלום.
ואין ממוחן בדי עניי עלים בלקם שחיה ושיחה משני
דרכי שלום. ושואלים בשלוםם ואפי' ביום חגם משני
דרכי שלום ואין כוונתן להן שלום לעולם. ולא ינכס
לביתו של נכר עלים ביום חגו לתת לו שלום. מצאו
בשוק נותן לו שלום בשפה רפה ובכבוד ראש: אין כל
הדברים האלו אמורים אלא בומן שגלו ישראל לבין האומות
או שיד עלים הקיפה על ישראל אבל בומן שיד ישראל
הקיפה עליהם אמור לנו להיזהר עובר כיום בינינו אפילו
ישב שיבת שרא או שבר ממקום למקום בסחורה לא
יבזר בארצנו אלא עד שיקבל עליו שבע מצות שנצטוו
בני נח שנאמר לא ישוב בארץ אפילו לפי שפה ואם
קבל עליו המצות היה זה גר חושב וכו'.

"The poor of the idolaters are to be fed with the poor of Israel for the sake of the ways of peace. They are also permitted to have part of the forgotten sheaf, and the corner of the field, for the sake of the ways of peace. It is also lawful to ask after their health, even on their feast-day, for the sake of the ways of peace; but never to return (literally reiterate) the salutation, nor to enter the house of an idolater on the day of his festival to salute him. If he be met in the street, he is to be saluted in a low tone of voice, and with a heavy head. But all these things are said only of the time that Israel is in captivity among the nations, or that the hand of the idolaters is strong upon Israel. But when the hand of Israel is strong upon them, we are forbidden to suffer an idolater amongst us, even so much as to sojourn incidentally, or to pass from place to place with merchandize. He is not to pass through our land until he take upon him the seven commandments given to the children of Noah, for it is said, 'They shall not dwell in thy land,' (Exod. xxiii. 33,) not even for an hour. But if he take upon himself the seven commandments, then he is a proselyte permitted to sojourn. (גר חושב.) Hilchoth Accum., c. x. b, &c. This is the passage alluded to, and the reader may now judge whether the words, "For the sake of the ways of peace," can be interpreted as the Bavarian Catechism renders them, "for the good of society." If so, then "the good of society" is to be consulted only whilst the Jews are in captivity, and the Gentiles have got the power; but as soon as the Jews get power, "the good of society" may safely be disregarded. The meaning plainly is, that in the present position of affairs it is advisable to keep the peace between Jews and Gentiles, inasmuch as the Gentiles are at present the strongest. Now, then, it is expedient to visit the sick, and feed the poor, and bury the dead of the Gentiles, for this will promote that object; but when the tables are turned, and

the Gentiles are the weakest, there will be no necessity "for the ways of peace," or, as the Bavarian catechism has it, "for the good of society." It is plain, therefore, that the passage cited by the French deputies and the Bavarian catechism does not answer the purpose for which it is cited. It does not prove that the Talmud teaches us to love our fellow-men as ourselves, whatever be their religious opinions. On the contrary, it teaches that a wide distinction is to be made between one class of religionists and another; and that if men be idolaters, we are to show them no kindness, except for fear of the consequences that might result from betraying our real sentiments. When, therefore, the Jewish deputies and the compilers of the Bavarian Catechism asserted the true explanation of the Mosaic command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," it is plain that they had not learned it from the Talmud, but somewhere else. We hesitate not to say, that they learned it from the New Testament, for there it is taught plainly, repeatedly, and without any reservation. A certain lawyer once asked Jesus of Nazareth, "Who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go thou and do likewise." (Luke x. 29, &c.) Here then the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that we are to show kindness even to an idolater, for that even he is included in the class specified by the word "neighbour." Jesus of Nazareth makes no limitation "for the sake of the ways of peace," but gives a general command. And he appears to have selected this case of a man lying half dead, in order to contrast it with a similar case supposed in the oral law.

"If a Gentile, an idolater, be seen perishing, or drowning in a river, he is not to be helped out. If he be seen near to death, he is not to

be delivered. But to destroy him by active means, or to push him into a pit, or such-like things, is forbidden, as he is not at war with us.* The Lord Jesus does not say that the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho was an idolater. He only says, "a certain man." But he evidently intimates that he was such, for if he had been a Jew, the priest and the Levite would not have passed him without rendering assistance. As he was only an idolater, according to the oral law, the priest and the Levite were not simply not to blame in leaving him to his fate, but were obeying a command. They saw him perishing—near to death. They did not use any violence to accelerate it. They only looked at him, and left him to perish. So far, then, the lawyer who asked the question thought that the priest and Levite were in the right. But then the Lord Jesus introduces a Samaritan, whom the oral law also looks upon as an idolater, and showing how he acted, he appeals to the plain common sense of the questioner, "Which of these three was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" And the lawyer is compelled to acknowledge, "He that showed mercy." We make a similar appeal to the advocates of the oral law. We ask, which is, the oral law or the New Testament, the most like the law of God? The oral law forbids you to help a poor dying fellow-creature in his hour of need, because he is an idolater. It commands you to stifle the natural instinct of the human heart, which is indeed the voice of the God of nature—to behold the agonizing struggles, and hear the heartrending cries of a drowning fellow-sinner, and yet when you have it in your power to snatch him from the jaws of death, and from that everlasting destruction which awaits him, to leave him to his fate, without help and without pity. The New Testament, on the contrary, tells you, that though, by his idolatry, he has incurred the wrath of God, yet he is your neighbour—that it is your duty to help him, and by that very help to endeavour to lead him to the truth. Which then agrees with the law of God? We are quite sure that the language of your heart is, the New Testament is right. The oral law is wrong. Your brethren in France and Bavaria have already proclaimed that opinion to the world. In the answer of the Jewish deputies to Napoleon and in the Bavarian Catechism, they have said, "that we are to love our

* Hilchoth Accum, c. x. 1.

fellow-creature as ourselves," whatever be his religion. They have thus made an involuntary acknowledgment of the superiority of the New Testament, and of the benefit which it has been to the world. Just suppose, for a moment, that the Scribes and Pharisees had succeeded in extirpating the doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth, what would have been the consequence to you and to the world? Had the doctrines of Jesus perished, the oral law would have had an undisturbed and universal domination, for the Karaites have always been few in number, and have never exerted any influence on mankind at large. The Jews in France, Bavaria, as well as in England and elsewhere, would all have known the law only according to the oral interpretation, and consequently would not have understood the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." They would still have held the fearful doctrine, that a perishing idolater was not to be helped. They would, moreover, have had none but idolaters around them, for all the knowledge of God that prevails amongst us Gentiles comes from Jesus of Nazareth, Jew and Gentile, then, would have lived "hateful and hating each other." You may think, perhaps, that some mighty spirit would have burst the chains of tradition, and reasserted the simple truth of God. But such an event is altogether beyond the limits of probability. One of the mightiest intellects that ever dwelt in a tenement of clay was that of Moses, the son of Maimon; a man whose learning and industry were equal to his genius. If ever there was a Jew, who was likely to overcome the prejudices of tradition, it was he. And yet with all his genius and all his opportunities, he never was able to arrive at the true sense of the command which we have just considered. The atrocious passages, which we have above discussed, are all taken from his compendium of the oral law. You are indebted, then, to Jesus of Nazareth for your deliverance from this foul error. With respect to your duty to your neighbour, your own brethren in France and Bavaria confess, that you are right if you follow Jesus of Nazareth, and that you are wrong if you follow those who rejected him. Remember, then, that your duty to your neighbour is half of the whole law of God, and examine whether the Christians, who are confessedly right in the second table of the law, do not, also, possess the truth respecting the first.

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