

נ ת י ב ו ת ע ו ל ם

עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתבות עולם ירמיה ו' טז

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WE said, in our last number, that "the pious of the nations of the world" are, according to the oral law, those who have received the seven commandments of the sons of Noah. We said that of the laws laid down for their own conduct, some, as for instance that respecting divorce, are such as would introduce confusion and misery into Gentile society—and that others, referring to the administration of justice by Rabbinical tribunals, are extremely unjust. But the advocates of the oral law think, nevertheless, that it is very tolerant, more tolerant than the New Testament, because it says that "the pious of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come." Now we cannot help feeling a curiosity to know how great or how small that share will be. And this our curiosity is excited by the following information, which the oral law commands to be communicated to a Gentile who wishes to turn Jew:—

וכשם שמדיעין אחרו'עונשן של מצות כך מדיעין אחרו' שכן של מצות ומדיעין אחרו' שבעשית מצות אלו זוכה לדחי העולם הבא ושאיין שום צדיק גמור אלא בעל החכמה ש'עשה יודען; ואומרתן לו הוי יודע שהעולם הבא אינו צפון אלא לצדיקים דהם ישראל וזה שורארא ישראל בבצור בעולם הזה טובה היא צנוטה להם שאיין יכולין לקבל רוב טובה בעולם הזה נאמרת: שמא ידום לבם ויהיו ויסדדו שבר העולם הבא נענן שנאמר ישמך שרדון ויבעש: ואין הקדוש ברוך הוא מביא עליהן רוב פורענות כרי שלא יאבדו אלא כל האומות כלן דהן עומדן וגו'

"As they are to make known to him the punishments attached to the commandments, so they are also to inform him of the rewards for keeping them. They should inform him, that, by the doing of these commandments, he will be worthy of everlasting life; and that there is no perfectly righteous man, except that possessor of wisdom who does and knows them. And they are to say to him, Be assured that *the world to come is laid up for none but the righteous, and they are Israel*; and as to this that thou seest Israel in trouble in this world, their good things are laid up for them, for they cannot receive an abundance of good things in this world, like the nations. Their heart might, perchance, be lifted up, and they might go astray, and lose the reward of the world to come, as it is said, 'Jeshurun

waxed fat and kicked.' The Holy One, blessed be he, brings upon them the abundance of afflictions for no other reason than this, that they may not be lost. *All the nations shall be utterly destroyed, but they shall abide.*" (Hilchoth Issure Biah., c. xiv. 3—5.) To us this sounds very much like a flat contradiction to the above declaration, that "the pious of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come." Here, on the contrary, it is stated that the blessings of that state are reserved "for none but the righteous, and they are Israel;" and again, "all the nations shall be utterly destroyed." And it is even implied that the nations get their good things in this world, and do not suffer affliction, as they are not to have that blessedness, which is reserved for the righteous. How, then, are we to reconcile these two sayings? There are only two ways which occur to us, either by saying that this is not strictly true, but only a fair speech in order to catch proselytes; or, if it be strictly true, that then "the pious of the world" are to have a much smaller share in the blessedness to come. In any case the spirit is far from charitable or tolerant. It represents God as an acceptor of persons, saving Israelites simply because they are Israelites, and destroying the other nations because they are not Israelites. The New Testament representation is very different, and far more worthy of "The Judge of all the earth." It does indeed say, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." But in this very declaration, we have an impartial rule applied to all mankind. "He that believeth," of whatsoever nation, kindred, or tongue—Jew or Gentile, white or black—"shall be saved." "He that believeth not," whether he be called a Jew or a Christian, whether he be a son of Japhet, of Shem, or of Ham, "shall be damned." The New Testament asserts no monopoly of salvation for one favoured family. It excludes none because he had not the happiness to be descended from a privileged stock. It lays down a general and impartial rule to be applied to all the children of men. The oral law says,

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא
 "All Israel has a share in the world to come." The New Testament says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,

shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) The oral law says, "The world to come is laid up for none but the righteous, and they are Israel." The New Testament says, "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts x. 34, 35.) Now then we appeal to the good sense of every Jew, even of the Talmudists, to tell us which of these two statements is most just, impartial, and worthy of the Just Judge?

But the reasoning employed in the above extract from the oral law, is as false as the principles which it is intended to support, when it says, "As to this that thou seest Israel in trouble in this world, their good things are laid up for them, for they cannot receive an abundance of good things in this world like the nations," it directly contradicts the law of Moses, which everywhere promises an abundance of temporal blessings to Israel, if obedient. "It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all the commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. . . . The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (Deut. xxviii. 1-8, &c.) Here, then, is temporal blessing in abundance, promised to obedience; and the afflictions which have come upon Israel are not because of their piety, but because of their disobedience. In this case, then, the oral law speaks utter falsehood. God has not two ways of dealing with nations, but one way. He gives every nation a fair trial, and if they refuse to hearken to his voice, he pours out upon them his wrath. The rise, and growth, and trial, of a nation is slower, and requires more time than the growth and trial of individual men. The life of a nation is, so to speak, longer than the life of a man. Centuries are required as the time of a nation's trial, but all history, sacred and profane, testifies the truth of the general rule given in the Old Testament, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." The only difference which God makes between

Israel and the other nations, is with regard to their national existence in this world. He has crumbled the mighty empires of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome into dust, but he still preserves the independent existence of the family of Abraham, according to his covenant; and when, as a nation, they repent and return to him, He will remove the rod of his anger, and give them the temporal prosperity which He has promised by the mouth of Moses his servant. But this promise of temporal blessing will not justify any impenitent Jew at the tribunal of God's judgment. The hopes held out by the oral law are utterly fallacious, and dishonouring to God, inasmuch as he is represented as unduly favouring one nation, and unjustly condemning all others.

An advocate of the oral law may, however, find out some other way of evading the evident intolerance of the above statement, and still insist upon it, that as the Talmud says, "The pious of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come," it is a very tolerant book. We therefore proceed to inquire what pains the rabbies have taken to add to the number of those who are to be saved. They believe, as we are told, that every one, who receives and observes the seven commandments of the sons of Noah, will be saved; they believe that all others must be lost; have they then taken any pains to make known this important information to the world? Or, if that was not to be expected during the captivity, did they during the days of their power and dominion? Or, at least, did they offer every facility to those Gentiles who might come to renounce idolatry, to receive the necessary instruction? Did they command all their disciples to be ready day and night to open their doors at the knock of the penitent idolater, and by receiving rescue him from everlasting destruction? Not one of all these things. They commanded that, during forty-nine years out of every fifty, such converts should be refused, and that if they did not choose to be circumcised, and observe the whole Mosaic law, they should be left to perish.

א' זה הוא גר חושב גר שקבל עליו שלא יעבד עב' עם
 עם שאר הכוזב שנצטוו בני נח לא מל ולא מל הד' זה
 מקבלין אותו וזוהא מחסדי אומות העולם ולמה נקרא
 שמו חושב לשי שמותר לנו להשיבו בינינו בארץ ישראל
 כמו שבארנו בהלכות עב' עם: ואין מקבלין גר חושב אלא
 בזמן שהיוכל נהג

"What is meant by a sojourning proselyte? Such an one is a Gentile, who has taken upon himself not to commit idolatry, together with the remaining commandments given to the sons of Noah, but is not circumcised nor baptised. Such an one is received, and is of the pious of the nations of the world. And why is he called a sojourner? Because it is lawful for us to let him dwell amongst us

in the land of Israel, as we have explained in the laws concerning idolatry. *But a sojourning proselyte is not received EXCEPT DURING the CELEBRATION OF THE JUBILEE.*" (Hilchoth Issure Biah. c. xiv. 7, 8.) During the other forty-nine years the unfortunate heathen might perish, if they did not choose to become Jews altogether. Now was this charitable? Was it tolerant? What use was there in talking of the liberality of the Talmudic law during these forty-nine years? The Rabbinist might say, We grant that the pious of the nations may be saved; and a Gentile might answer, Well, I am willing to become one of the pious; I wish to be saved; receive me. The Rabbinist would answer, Nay, you must wait until the year of Jubilee. The Gentile might urge, there are eight-and-forty years to pass away before that; in the meanwhile I must die, for I am already old, and if I die, I must be lost. The Rabbinist could only reply, I cannot help you, unless you will consent to be circumcised and turn Jew. But what will be thought of the charity of this law if we add, that there has been no jubilee, and consequently no pious amongst the nations for two thousand seven hundred years and more? Yet this is what the oral law tells us.

משגלה שבם ראוּבן ושבוּם גר הוצי שבם מנשה בפלו
 דיובלות שנאמר וקראתם דרור בארץ לכל יושביה בומן
 שכל יושביה עליה הוא שלא יהיו מעורבין שבם בשבם
 אלא כולן יושביה כראון.

"Since the time that the tribe of Reuben, and the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were led away captive, the jubilees have ceased, for it is said, 'And ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof;' (Lev. xxv. 10); that means, when all its inhabitants are upon it, and moreover when the tribes are not mixed one with another, but all dwelling according as they were appointed." (Hilchoth Shemitah, c. x. 8.) We have the account of this captivity in the following words, "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel: from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites." (2 Kings x. 32, 33.) That was, according to the common chronology, about 884 years before the Christian era. If to this we add 1836, we have 2720 years since the time that there could be a jubilee, and consequently 2720 years since any Gentiles were converted from the errors of idolatry to the religion of the sons of Noah. What is it then but solemn mockery, in any one acquainted with the oral law, to tell us that the Talmud is tolerant, and admits "that the pious of the nations of the world may be saved;" when according to that same book seven-and-twenty centuries have elapsed, since any such converts were received? We be-

lieve that those who make this defence are unacquainted with the principles of the system which they undertake to defend. The truth is, that the authors of the oral law, finding that they could not altogether deny salvation to the pious of other nations, were determined not to add to their number, and therefore limited the possibility of this mode of conversion to times that had elapsed long before they were born. But in their own times they would not receive any one who was not willing to be circumcised and to receive the whole law. And hence we see how exactly the New Testament represents the state of the case, when Christianity was first propagated amongst the Gentiles, and free salvation was proclaimed to all who believed, without becoming Jewish proselytes. The Rabbinists opposed with all their might. "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." And again, "There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Acts xv. 1—5.) It was not the year of jubilee, and therefore renunciation of idolatry was not sufficient in the eyes of these traditionists, who believed that at such a time there was no salvation except for those who observed the whole law. But how is it now? If a Gentile should desire now to become one of the pious of the nations, could the Jews receive him? According to the above general principles, certainly not. The tribes are still scattered and mixed up together. The land has not got "all its inhabitants." There can be no jubilee, and therefore those that wish to be saved, must, according to the oral law, turn Jews, or take their chance of living to a year of jubilee. But we are not necessitated to argue from the principles. The thing is expressly laid down in the oral law. After explaining, as we have quoted above, who are the pious of the world, and that the year of jubilee is the only time for receiving them, it adds—

אבל בומן הזה אשלו קבל עלי כל החורה כולה דורן
 מדיקור אחד אין מקבלין אותו:

"But in the present time, though a man should be willing to take upon him the whole law with the exception of only one of its least requirements, he is not to be received." Now then what becomes of the boasted toleration of the Talmud? It says that "the pious of the nations of the world may be saved." But it says, first, that such converts can only be received once in fifty years. It says, secondly, that even those scanty opportunities have not occurred for the last 2700 years; and, lastly, it positively forbids the Jews in the present time to give the Gentiles a chance of salvation, unless they are willing to receive the whole

law. What use is it then to talk of the pious of the world, or to say that people of other religions may be saved? According to the Talmud, there are no pious of the nations, unless perchance there may be some descendants of those who were received 2700 years ago. But all history that we have ever seen is silent on the subject. We do not know of a single congregation of Noahites in the whole world. The forefathers of the Christians were not received during the year of jubilee. They were idolaters received against the wishes of the Rabbinites. The Britons and the Saxons were converted to Christianity long after the final dispersion of the Jews, that is, at a time when, according to the Talmud, it was unlawful to add to the pious amongst the nations. Neither were they received according to the Talmudic condition, in the presence of three learned Jews.

וצרך לקבל עליו בשני שלשה חכמים

“And it is necessary for such an one to take the seven commandments on him in the presence of three learned men, who are qualified to be rabbies.” (Hilchoth Melachim, c. viii. 10.) According to the oral law, then, there are no such persons now existing as “the pious of the nations of the world.” It is, therefore, idle to talk of the liberality with which they would be treated, were they forthcoming. Thus the only appearance of an argument in favour of the Talmud vanishes into thin air, and mocks our grasp, as soon as we endeavour to lay hold of it. Those who caught at this phantom of charity, no doubt meant it sincerely. They thought that the oral law was misrepresented. They were told that it was charitable, and they therefore nobly came forward in its defence. If they had known its true principles, they would have renounced them. Their advocacy went on a false supposition. But now that we have set forth the true bearings of the case, and given them chapter and verse to which they may refer, and convince themselves, we call upon them to do so: and then, as they hate intolerance, to join with us in protesting against it, even though it should be found in that system, which hitherto they have believed, on the testimony of others, to be divine. At the same time we would seriously ask of them to compare this system, which has been for more than 1700 years the religion of the majority of the Jewish nation, with the system laid down in the New Testament, and to decide which is most agreeable to the character of God, as revealed in the law and the prophets, and most beneficial to the world. The oral law says, that God has commanded the

heathen to be left for 2,700 years without the means of instruction, and that when the days of Israel's prosperity come, the nations are to be converted by force; but that even then, they will not be raised to the rank of brethren, but only be sojourning proselytes. The oral law looks forward to no reunion of all the sons of Adam into one happy family. The New Testament has, on the contrary, commanded its disciples to afford the means of instruction “to every creature.” It speaks to us Gentiles, who were once regarded as poor outcasts, in the language of love, and says, “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” (Ephes. ii. 19.) It takes nothing from you. It asserts your privileges as the peculiar people of God; but it reveals that great, and to us, most comfortable truth, “That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body;” and it promises a happy time, when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. It does, indeed, tell us not to forget what we once were, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” (Eph. ii. 12.) It reminds us that the olive-tree is Jewish, and that you are the natural branches, and warns us against all boasting. (Rom. xi. 16—24.) And we desire to remember these admonitions, and to acknowledge with thankfulness, that all that we have received, is derived from the Jewish nation. We ask you not to compare the oral law with any Gentile speculations, or systems, or inventions, but with doctrines essentially and entirely Jewish. Christianity has effected great and glorious changes in the world, but we take not the glory to ourselves. We give it to God, who is the author of all good, and under Him, to the people of Israel. We ask you, then, to compare these two Jewish systems, Rabbinitism, which has done no good to the Gentiles, and perpetuated much error amongst the Jews; and Christianity, which has diffused over the world the knowledge of the one true God—disseminated the writings of Moses and the prophets, and increased the happiness of a large portion of mankind. The comparison may require time, and ought to be conducted with calmness and seriousness. But we think that, even without instituting that comparison, you must acknowledge that the principles of the oral law, discussed in this paper, are contrary to the law of Moses; and that, therefore, a decided and solemn protest against these Rabbinical additions, is an immediate and imperative duty,

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