In our last number we ventured to say, that in the English synagogues "The sacred voice of prayer still consecrates the intolerance, the errors, and the absurdities of the oral law;" and we gave an instance in proof of our assertion. But to some Israelites, who have overlooked the contents of their Prayer-book, this assertion may require more proof; we, therefore, proceed to give it, and, first of all, with regard to intolerance. In the ceremonial for the first two evenings of the passover, in the midst of the rejoicings and thanksgivings, which the memory of their great deliverance naturally calls forth, we suddenly find the following prayer:

"Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place. (Psalm lxix. 6, 7.) Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. (Psalm lxix. 24.) Persecute them in anger, and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord." (Lament. iii. 66.) Here are three passages of Scripture, taken from their context, and joined together to make one prayer. In their context, and with reference to the times for which those portions of Scripture were given by God, they are intelligible. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, whilst the Jewish mind was still in a state of violent excitement against the authors of that calamity, such an imprecation may appear natural. During the persecutions of the Crusaders or the Inquisition it might be excusable, but in the present time and circumstances it is indefensible. Who are the heathen and the kingdoms, whom the offerers of these petitions wish to be pursued with God's wrath, and to be destroyed from under the heavens? Are they the Christians, or the heathen idolaters of Africa and India? The Mahometans profess a faith in the Unity very similar to that of the later rabbis; they, therefore, cannot be intended. If it be said that the idolatrous heathen are here intended, we must still protest against the intolerance of this imprecation; why should the Jews wish for their destruction? What evil did these poor ignorant people ever do to the Jews in England, that they should pray for their destruction rather than their conversion? If it be said, that nobody at all is intended in the present day, why, we would ask, is it still made a part of the passover ceremonial? We have before us several copies of the Haggadah, some printed very lately, and it occurs in them all.

If this were the only passage of the kind to be found in the liturgies of the synagogue, it might perhaps admit of palliation or excuse, but it is only one of a similar class, all breathing the same spirit. In the morning service for the second day of the passover, as translated by D. Levi, we find another more fearful still.

"Hasten, O my beloved, to where thy heart and eyes are; and though we have cast off that is good and pleasant, yet hear the roaring raging voice of those that oppress thy people; satiate the clogs with their blood; manure the earth with their fat; and let the stench of their carcasses ascend." (Levi's Prayers, vol. 8, fol. 142.) The translation is D. Levi's, so that it cannot be said, that the sense has been misrepresented or distorted for polemical purposes. It is the translation of a Jew, and of a Jew in England, and the title-page tells us that it is the second edition "carefully revised and corrected, and illustrated by Isaac Levi." The title-page also says, "As read in their synagogues and used in their families." Is not this prayer intolerant? Is there any thing like it in the New Testament, or in our Christian Prayer-books? And yet we are told that modern Judaism is more tolerant than Christianity, and that it teaches charity to all men. Let not the Jews think that we impute this spirit to the whole nation. No such thing. This passage is quoted as a specimen of the spirit of the oral law and its authors, who not only were possessed with this spirit of resentment, but so overwhelmed with it, as to transfuse it into their addresses to the God of mercy, and to prescribe it as a part of the public worship of the congregation. Whenever introduced, there it still remains, as a testimony to the
spirit of the first opposers of Jesus of Nazar

the, and as a portion of the liturgic service of the synagogue. In these passages, how-

ever, it does not appear what nations are in
tended; nor name or particular characteristic is
given, though the allusion, in the last quoted
prayer, to Isaiah xxxiv. naturally leads the
reader to think of Edom; but in other places a
more definite form is prescribed, from which
we find that Edom is the great object of hatred.

“God divideth the night of preservation,
when in the midst of the night, he went forth
gthrough the land of Egypt: may the mighty
God also divide it concerning Edom.” (Levi,
ibid. fol. 7.) This is a petition that God
would do to Edom as he did unto Egypt.
Again, a little farther on we read,

"On the passover, a sharp sword shall fall
on Edom, by the hand of him who is white
and ruddy, as in the days of the feast of pass-
over.” (Ibid. fol. 10.) And so throughout
the prayers there are frequent allusions to
this subject, as for instance—

"Then will his name be pronounced as it is
written: when the other half will complete the
word; his dominion also will be greatly
exalted, and his throne be completely
established; when he shall smite the descendents
of Esau, and take vengeance on his enemies.”
(Ibid. fol. 214.) But these are sufficient to
show that Edom is the great object of anti-
pathy, and of course the great question is
whom do the Jews understand by Edom?
Let the most famous of their rabbies instruct
us in this matter, and first let us hear
Maimonides.

"The Edomites are idolaters, and the first
day of the week is the day of their festival; there
fore it is forbidden to have commerce with
them in the land of Israel, on the fifth
and sixth day of every week. It is not
ecessary to say that the first day itself is every
where unlawful.” (Hilchoth Accum. c. ix. 4.)
There is but one class of religiousists who
observe the first day of the week as sacred. Now
let us hear Kimchi. In his commentary on
Joel iii. 19, “Egypt shall be a desolation,
and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for
the violence against the children of Judah,

because they have shed innocent blood in their
land:” he says,

“The prophet mentions Egypt and Edom:
Egypt, on account of the Turks, and Edom,
on account of the Roman empire; and these
two have now had dominion for a long time,
and will continue until the redemption.” This
is the fourth beast in the visions of Daniel.
... And this is said, the majority of the
Roman empire is composed of Edomites.
For although many other nations are mixed
among them, as is also the case with the
Turkish empire, they are called after the
root.” Kimchi then fixes Edom upon the
Roman empire, in which he evidently
includes the Greek empire, for he wrote in the
12th century, long before the Constantinop-
litan dynasty was overturned. Aben Esra
gives a similar interpretation on the blessing of
Esa.u.

"Rome, which led us away captive, is of
the seed of Kittim, and so the Targumist has
said, in number xxiv. 24, ‘And ships shall
come from the coast of Kittim.’ And this is
the same as the Greek monarchy, as I have
explained in the book of Daniel; and there
were very few who believed on the man of
whom they made a God. But when Rome
believed in the days of Constantine, who
changed the whole religion, and put an image
of that man upon his standard, there were
none in the world who observed the new law
except a few Edomites, therefore Rome is
called the kingdom of Edom.” (Comment.
on Gen. xxix.) We do not now stop to
refute the false statements which Aben Esra
here makes. Every one, that knows any thing
of history, knows that in less than a century
after the time of Jesus of Nazareth, the
Christian religion had made great progress in
the whole Roman empire, and that the pro-
pagation of the new law, as Aben Esra calls
it, before the time of Constantine, was more
rapid and more extensive than after his con-
version. Our business at present is with his
interpretation of the word Edom, he says
plainly that Edom and Edomites mean the
Christians. Now let us hear Abarbanel:—
Rome and the Christians deserved such punishment more than any one else; they therefore applied them to these objects of their antipathy. As far as authentic history will carry us, the descendants of the Edomites are to be sought for rather amongst the Jews themselves, than amongst any other people; for the last that we read of the Edomites is, that they were subdued by John Hyrcanus, and converted to Judaism at the point of the sword. Amongst the Jews, then, their descendants have ever since continued, and strange enough some of them may now be offering in the synagogue these imprecations against themselves. But, however that be, the prophecies against Edom do certainly not apply to the Christian religion, which was not Edomitical, but altogether Jewish in its origin. Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew, and his disciples and first disciples from a province of Judea as remote as possible from Edom. And even if the rabbis could prove that Rome is Edom, still this will have nothing to do with the other nations who are in no wise descended from, or connected with that city or people.

We are not ignorant of the many prophecies against Edom, but, however many or severe, they form no justification of these prayers, even if the rabbis know who is intended. God is a merciful God, as well as a just Judge, and when he arises to judgment, or when he utters a denunciation of wrath, we may be sure that he does all in truth and righteousness. But that furnishes no excuse for the sons of men who presumptuously take upon themselves to call down God's wrath by prayer, or to offer themselves as the executioners of his anger. The Word of God contains many denunciations of wrath against the Jews, but this does not justify the nations who have persecuted and oppressed them. What would the Jews think of us if we collected all the fearful passages in the xxvith chapter of Leviticus, and the xxvith of Deuteronomy, and wove them into a prayer to call down God's wrath upon the people of Israel? What would they say if we appointed this form for the most solemn days, and for the time of our festivity? Y'et this is what the rabbis have done, and what the oral law prescribes, and therefore we say that such teaching is not from God. And we say this, not simply because reason leads to this conclusion, but because such prayers are directly contrary to the express command of God. When He sent the Jews into captivity to Babylon, he did not tell them to pray that "He might pour out his wrath" upon that city, and much less to "satiate the clods with the blood" of its inhabitants. On the contrary, he said—

* See Jost's Geschichte, vol. I. 70 and 152.
"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." (Jerem. xxix. 7.) Now how does this command agree with the above prayers? Suppose even that the rabbies were right, and that Edom does mean Rome, how can the Jews there pray for its peace and for its utter destruction at the same time? Those prayers are utterly irreconcilable with this command of God, and therefore furnish another proof of the error as well as the intolerance of the oral law. This was the object which we had peculiarly in view. We do not wish to burden every Israelite in London with this Intolerance. Many are perhaps ignorant that such prayers are offered in the synagogue—many overlook them through inattention, and many others disapprove of them. But in those who do know and disapprove, it is exceedingly inconsistent to join in them, or to remain silent. The spirit of these prayers is thus countenanced, and the intolerance handed down from generation to generation. Children go to the synagogue, and hear these prayers offered; they think as it is the language of prayer, of public prayer, of the prayers of the people of Israel, it must be right. What other conclusion can they form? Thus they imbibe the same spirit, and thus the people of Israel are kept in bondage to the intolerance of by-gone generations. But some will say, We acknowledge that these prayers are contrary to the Bible. Remember, then, that in making this acknowledgment, you admit that the synagogue—yay, the whole nation of the Jews has been in error for many centuries. And if the Jewish nation has been universally mistaken upon so simple, yet essential, a point of religion as true charity, it is highly probable that they are mistaken on other points too, especially those that are more difficult and less obvious to human reason. But above all, remember that whilst the whole system of the oral law, in its precepts and prayers, has taught you to curse your enemies, Jesus of Nazareth has taught us to bless. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matt. v. 43, 44.) "Bless them which curse you, bless and curse not." (Rom. xii. 14.) But some Israelites may still think that it is unfair to judge the oral law by this one service for the passerover. Such an one we would remind of the blessing of the Epicureans, as it is called, which he is bound to say—

"Bless the enemies of the Jews." (Hilchoth T'phillah, c. ii. 2.) The people now witness and testify shema, wherefore the people of Israel, if they wish to be delivered from this intolerant spirit, must be ready to yield up to the voice of reason, and to act in accordance with the spirit of the oral law. If they cannot conform to this, they should no longer remain in the synagogue. The Epistle of the Lord (Ibid. c. x. 3.) According to this law, if the reader go wrong in invoking a blessing, or offering up an intercessory prayer for mercy, such a petition may be delayed for a whole hour. But if this maladiction should be the place of his mistake, there is to be no delay and no postponement. If the reader cannot offer it in time, another is to rise up immediately, and cry to heaven for a curse.

---

London:—Sold at the London Society's Office, 16, Exeter-hall, Strand; by James Duncan, Paterostawrow; and by B. Wertheim, 57, Aldersgate-street. This publication may be had by applying at No. 5, No. 7, or No. 13, Palestine-place, Bethnal-green.