

# נתיבות עולם

עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתיבות שלם ירמיהו טז

"THE OLD PATHS."—JER. vi. 16.

NUMBER 34.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1836.

PRICE ONE-PENNY.

ALL who believe in Divine Revelation look forward to a great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and a righteous sentence pronounced upon all the sons of men. The most important thing in the world, then, for us to know is the way of acceptance with God at that solemn hour. And if men are bound as rational beings to examine the grounds of their opinions and belief on other subjects, they must be considered as altogether devoid of reason, who do not thoroughly examine and weigh the doctrines which have been taught them with regard to justification at the bar of God. A mistake on other subjects may be endured, but a mistake here is fatal and irreparable. What will be the horror of those who find that they have through their own want of consideration been trusting in a delusive hope, and have rejected, wilfully rejected, that way of acceptance which God has appointed. If there be any one point of difference between Jews and Christians, which requires profound and attentive consideration, it is this. We Christians believe that, on this all-important point, the oral law is utterly mistaken, and that all who trust their salvation to the hope which it holds out, will find themselves awfully mistaken if Moses and the Prophets speak truth. We have endeavoured to show that the hope of justification by merits is contrary to the Word of God. But we shall now proceed to show that the oral law by this doctrine contradicts itself, and that therefore it is most unsafe to rest our salvation upon any of its operations. In that law, which teaches that if a man's merits exceed his sins, he is justified, we also find the following parable, intended to explain God's dealings in the judgment of the New Year:—

משל למדינה שהיית מס למלך ולא נתנו לו בא אליה בזל לגבורו כשנתקרב אליה ב' שסאות יצאו גדולי המדינה לקראתו ואמרו לו אין לנו מה ליתן לך הניח להם שלש כיתן שנתקרב יותר יצאו בינוני העיר לקראתו הניח להם שלש השני כשנתקרב יותר יצאו כל בני העיר לקראתו הניח להם הכל כן המלך זה הק'ב' בני המדינה אילו ישראל שמשלגין עונות כל השנה ערב ר'ה הגדולים מחענין ומותר להם שלש עונותיהם. ב' ימים בינוניים מחענין ומותר להם שני שלישים. ביום ההפסדים הכל מחענין ומותר להם הכל:

"A parable. There was a certain city, which owed tribute to the king, but did not

pay it, whereupon he came upon it with an army to collect it. When he came within ten leagues of it, the great men of the city went forth to meet him, and said to him, We have nothing wherewith to pay thee, so he forgave them one-third. When he approached nearer still, the middle classes of the city went forth to meet him, and he forgave them a second-third. When he approached still nearer, all the population of the city went forth to meet him, and he forgave them all. The King here is the Holy One, blessed be He. The inhabitants of the city are Israel, who accumulate sins all the year. On the eve of the New Year, the great men fast, and one-third of their sins is remitted to them. In the ten days, the intermediate class fast, and two-thirds are remitted. On the day of atonement all fast, and all is remitted to them." (Orach Chaim, 581.) Now this representation is quite at variance with the doctrine that those are justified whose merits exceed their sins. This parable, in the first place, represents all as in debt, and secondly, that they have nothing to pay, and thirdly, that the King forgives them freely and for nothing. Now this statement is altogether contrary to the notion of merit. If a man has more merits than sins, and is on that score accounted just, he cannot be said to be in debt, and he needs no remission. But if it be true of the great men as well as the middle class, that they are in debt and have nothing wherewith to pay, then it is certain that they have no merits, and cannot be considered as just, but as sinners. Merit and forgiveness are as essentially opposed as payment and debt. The man who has paid his creditor all his demands can have no debt, and so the man who has kept God's commands so as to have merit, needs not forgiveness. But he who has nothing to pay, that is, he who has no merits, must either be condemned, or he must have a free forgiveness of all; and this the parable says is the case of Israel. They have nothing to pay, and God forgives them all. Merit is therefore altogether out of the question, and if this statement be true, then the doctrine of justification by merits is false, and therefore the oral law contradicts itself. How then can the Israelite trust his everlasting welfare to a system at variance with itself?

The prayers for the New Year are equally decisive against the doctrine of justification by merits. Out of many passages which deny the existence of merit, and assert the necessity of a free forgiveness, we cite the following:—

קדלות ורבות האליפים אשר לפנינו עברו הלוים ולא יכלו להצטרק היות חסים: הן שמים בעיני לא זכו: וכל לגיוני שחק כשמהו ועובי: ונחלב ונאלח וזכו: קובץ מרמה ומסתור בעיניו: אם יאמר בלבו מי יעירני לפניו קדחתיו ורדיוסיו ועציו ואבניו: שדור עינים ברע מראות: הגלל שחאניו בעמק מרחבות: ועשה עמנו לשונה אוח:

“Thousands and ten thousands of congregations, which have persecuted us and are vanished, were not able to justify themselves in purity. Lo! the heavens are not pure in his sight, and all the heavenly angels are as beaten flax: how then can he that is filthy and abominable be pure? He gathereth riches by deceit; and working in secret, he says in his heart, Who can bear witness against me before him? Even the beams, rafters, planks, and stones of his house. O Thou who art too pure of sight to view evil, sink our sins in the deepest recesses, and work the good sign for us.” (Prayers for the New Year, p. 149.) Here is an express acknowledgment that the congregations of old could not justify themselves by merit, an assertion in the words of the Psalm, that all men are filthy and abominable, and a prayer, not for payment of deserts, but for forgiveness of sins. If this prayer contain the sentiments of truth, and be offered in sincerity, then Israel has no merits, and the doctrine, that any man is justified by the superabundance of his merits, is a mere fiction. The man who will venture to offer this prayer, and yet hope to be saved by his good deeds, is a hypocrite, or is not right in his mind. Here again, then, the oral law is inconsistent with itself: for here it places the hope of salvation not in merit, but in the free and undeserved mercy of God. It is the duty of every Israelite, therefore, to ascertain which of the two ways is in accordance with the declaration of Moses and the Prophets. It is impossible that they should both be true. The fact appears to be, that the authors of the oral law, like all other men, loved the honour and glory of personal righteousness, and hoped that all those deeds, and fasts, and almsgiving, which were so lovely in their own eyes, and gained them so much credit amongst men, would also be duly acknowledged at the bar of God's judgment. At the same time their conscience was continually awakened and terrified by the plain declarations of the Word of God, and therefore, to quiet their conscience, they were driven even against their wills to acknowledge their guilt, and to seek for a quietus. This they partly found in the hope of free mercy,

but partly in inventions of their own. They placed no small dependence upon fasting and almsgiving, but their troubled conscience was not satisfied with these, and they have therefore fled for refuge to observances the most trivial, and hopes the most childish. By blowing the horn the whole month of Elul, they hope to deceive Satan, so that he may not know which is the first day of the new year, and may not be able to accuse them.

לכן התקינו חז"ל שידור חוקעין בר"ח אלול בכל שנה ושנה וכל הודוש כדי להזהיר ישראל שיעשו תשובה שני אם יתקע שופר בעצו וגומר: וכדי לטריב השמך:

“Therefore our wise men of blessed memory have ordained that the horn should be blown on the first day of the month of Elul every year, and during the whole month, to warn Israel to repent, as it is said, ‘Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?’ (Amos iii. 6), and also to confuse Satan.” How can any man of understanding believe that a law teaching such absurdity is from God? We are told in Zechariah and Job, that Satan does accuse the people of God; but how can any one, who has been taught by the Word of God, imagine that Satan is to be deceived by blowing the horn at a wrong time, or that even if he did not accuse at all, that God is ignorant of man's sins, or that he will judge unjustly unless he is reminded by Satan? In accusing sinners, Satan gratifies his own malignity, but his accusation is not wanted at the bar of God to convict man of sin. When men appear there they will be seen as they are. All their transgressions will be as visible as is now their bodily presence. The eye of God will penetrate every secret recess of the soul, and the conscience itself will testify and condemn the impenitent. It is therefore most absurd and irrational to hope to escape by confounding the accuser; and it is to us serious matter of astonishment how such an absurdity could have been tolerated for so many centuries, and how a people of such intellect as the Jews confessedly are, should remain the disciples of such senseless superstition.

But the Rabbies expect not only to confound Satan by blowing the horn at the wrong time, but to obtain God's mercy by blowing it at the right time. Thus we are told in *Vajjikra Rabbah*—

בשעה שישראל נוסעין את שופריתן וחוקעין לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא עומד מכאס הדין ויושב בכאס רחמים וכתבי ה' בקול שופר ומחמלא עליהם רחמים ומרחם עליהם חוקעין חתקין עליהם סדת הדין לרחמים אימתו ברוש השביעי:

“At the hour in which Israel take their horns, and sound before the Holy One, blessed be He, He rises from the throne of judgment and sits on the throne of mercy, as it is written, ‘The Lord with the sound

of the trumpet' (Ps. xlvi. 5); and he is filled with mercy towards them, and has pity upon them, and changes the attribute of judgment which was against them into mercy. When does this happen? In the seventh month." (Vajikra Rabbah, sect. 29.) This then is one of the means whereby the Rabbies try to quiet a guilty conscience. If true, it would no doubt be very convenient for a man who has spent the year in iniquity, and who has not repented, and does not intend to repent, to get rid of all his sins by blowing a horn on the new year, and thus turning God's wrath into mercy. But it is a statement altogether opposed to the Word of God, and derogatory to his character for mercy and for justice. No mere ceremonial act can atone for sin, neither does God need the blowing of a horn to remind him of mercy. To suppose that such a miserable ceremony can stop God in his course of justice, and make him reverse his determinations, is to deprive him of all the attributes of Deity, and to represent him as exceeding in imbecility the weakest of all the sons of men that ever occupied the judgment-seat. And yet this most absurd and unscriptural hope is not merely a Rabbinic legend, or an allegory, but is in the prayers of the synagogue gravely inserted as a devout petition.

תחנה לתקוע לפני התקיעה: ידי רצון לפניך  
אלהי ואלהי אבותי אלהי השמים ואלהי הארץ אלהי  
אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב האל הגבור הגדול  
הגורא ששאלו לי המלאכים הקדושים והשחרים  
נאמנים משרתים ונאמנים בשליחותם חפצים ורצים  
לכונן את ישראל ואת המלאך הגדול מצפידה הממונה  
להוציא וכוותיהן של ישראל בשנת שדוים תוקעים  
בשופר ואת המלאך הגדול חשבש הממונה להשמיע  
וכוותיהן של ישראל ולהביע השכן בקיפתם ואת  
השרים הגדולים הממונים על השופר אנקתם פסחם  
ומלאכים הגדולים הרגאל וסגולתן הממונים על  
תקיעתו המעלים תקיעתו לפני כסא כבודך ואת המלאך  
שמשאל הממונה על התרועה ואת המלאך פושטא  
הממונה על קשר"ל להיותם מומונים בשליחותם  
להעלות תקיעתו לפני השוכנת ולפני כסא כבודך  
המלא על עמך ישראל ברחמים ותכנס להם לפנים  
משורת הדין ותתמוך עם בניך במדת רחמים ותעלה  
תקיעתו לפני כסא כבודך וכו' :

The following prayer is said by the person who sounds the cornet, before he begins:—  
"May it be acceptable in thy presence, O Lord, my God, and the God of my fathers, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; the great God, mighty and tremendous; to send me the holy and pure angels, who are faithful ministers, and faithful in their message; and who are desirous and willing to justify Israel; and also the great angel Patzpatziah, who is appointed to present the merits of Israel, when they sound the cornet this day; and likewise the great angel Tashbash, who is appointed to declare

the merits of Israel, and confound Satan with their sound of the cornet; and the great princes, who are appointed over the cornet, Enkatham and Pastam; and the great angels, Hadarniel and Sandalphon, who are appointed over our sounding, who introduce our sounding before the throne of thy glory; and also the angel Shamshiel, who is appointed over the joyful sound; and the angel Prasta, who is appointed to superintend קשר"ל, that they may all be expeditious in their errand; to introduce our soundings before the veil, and before the throne of thy glory; and mayest thou be filled with mercy over thy people Israel; and lead us within the temperate line of strict justice; and conduct thyself towards thy children, with the attribute of mercy, and suffer our soundings to ascend before the throne of thy glory." (Prayers for the New Year, p. 81.) Here, then, we have, in the language of solemn prayer, the very same monstrous doctrine, that the sounding of the cornet on the new year can change God's determinations; and we have it in even a more objectionable form, for it is connected with other most unscriptural superstitions. This prayer asserts, what is nowhere found in holy Scripture, that there is a certain number of angels whose express office it is to superintend the blowing of the horn, and to hear the soundings thereof before the throne of God, and at the same time to advocate their merits. In the first place, this is a pure invention, and a fond superstition. In the Word of God, not one word is mentioned of any thing of the kind. We should be sorry to treat any religious tenet of any people, but especially of the Jews, with ridicule, but we cannot help asking the good sense of every reader, whether the representation here given is not in the highest degree ridiculous? The angels are to be sent down from heaven. For what purpose? Is it to warn men of the impending wrath of God, or to announce the coming redemption of Israel, or to execute God's judgments? No, but to attend to the blowing of a ram's horn, and to carry up the sounds before the throne of God, that they may turn his attribute of judgment into that of mercy. Is it necessary, then, for the angels to interfere in this matter? cannot God hear the sounding of the cornet, unless it be conveyed to him by angels? or do the movings of his compassion depend upon the blowing of a cornet? What would Elijah have said to such doctrine as this? When the priests of Baal only cried aloud, he mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." (1 Kings xviii. 27.) And yet the priests of Baal were not sounding a cornet, that they might rouse their pretended

Deity to compassion. If we had not read this prayer with our own eyes, we could scarcely have believed that even Rabbinism itself could have fallen into such manifest absurdity. But the subject is far too grave to be treated with levity. Upon this absurdity, the rabbies teach Israel to rest their hope of salvation. Conscious that the hope of justification by merit is fallacious, and yet unwilling to give up what is so palatable to the pride of man, they seek about to find something that will compensate for the deficiency, and in the eagerness of desperation grasp at any thing. The trivial ceremony of blowing the cornet was therefore turned into a mystery, and a suitable apparatus of angels invented to meet the apprehensions of the superstitious and unenlightened, and in some degree to take off the apparent irrationality of believing that an act so insignificant should effect a change so great in the purposes of the Almighty. But whatever was the motive or the origin of this fable, there it now stands in the prayers of the synagogue, to lead the ignorant away from the true means of justification, and the true ideas of God's justice and God's judgment. Let no man say it is an innocent error. No error is innocent. Error in every form is pernicious; in religion it is deadly. And the most mischievous of all religious errors are those which confirm men in the idea, that external ceremonies will atone for moral delinquencies; and this is precisely the tendency of the fable here noticed. An ignorant and superstitious man, and there are many such in every religion, finds in his Prayer-book that the blowing of the cornet can change the attribute of judgment into the attribute of mercy; he believes it to be true, not only because of the book where he finds it, but because every man is glad to hear of a way of acceptance, which will save the trouble of repentance and thorough change of heart and life. He therefore perseveres through the year in the practice of those things which his heart condemns, trusting that the blowing of the cornet will set all straight, and thus he goes on from year to

year until death overtake him hardened and impenitent, and he finds too late at the bar of God, that he has been in fatal error. Upon whom then will the guilt of such person's destruction be charged? Not only upon those who invented the falsehood, but on those also who sanction it, who leave it in the Prayer-book, and thus practically teach the people superstition. Every Jew who attends the worship of the synagogue is responsible in his station and calling, for the error and falsehood which its prayers propagate amongst the people. But at all events every person who disbelieves this story of the angels carrying up the sounding of the cornet, must grant that a system teaching such a method of salvation is very unsafe; and that, as it grossly errs in this one article, it is suspicious in all. But besides the absurdity of this doctrine, we must notice its inconsistency. The Prayer-book states that the blowing of the cornet is necessary to the procuring of pardon; it therefore implies that pardon is necessary, and therefore that Israel is guilty; what, then, becomes of merits? If Israel can be justified by merits, the blowing of the cornet is superfluous; for, in that case, all they want is justice. Where a man can claim salvation because of all his good deeds, he need not fear the attribute of righteousness, כִּדְרוֹ דוֹרֵי, and does not want the attribute of mercy. But the moment that he acknowledges his need of forgiveness, he confesses that he has no merits. If, therefore, the Prayer-book be right in acknowledging sin and praying for pardon, the oral law is wrong in teaching justification by merits. One contradicts the other, and therefore they cannot both be from God; and the man who believes both is guilty of renouncing his reason. But the man who trusts his salvation to a system so inconsistent with itself, is utterly devoid of wisdom. He is hazarding his eternal welfare on the testimony of a witness who contradicts himself; who says: at one time, that a man can be saved by his merits, and at another time that he has no merits that can stand the scrutiny of God's righteous judgment.

---

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

---

Macintosh, Printer, 20, Great New-street, London.