

# נתיבות עולם

עמדו על דרכים וראו ושאלו לנתבות עולם. ירמיהו טז

"THE OLD PATHS."—Jer. vi. 16.

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THE progress of the year brings with it again that season, in which God commanded his people to observe THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES; and the constancy with which Israelites in every part of the world still observe the rites and customs handed down by their forefathers, necessarily commands respect and admiration. When we remember the many centuries during which their dispersion has continued, the universal oppression which they have been compelled to suffer, and the unmerited contempt with which they have had to contend, we cannot but honour the strength of moral courage which they have displayed, in thus observing and handing down to their children a religion, which has been the cause of their misfortunes. But this very constancy, and the respect which it begets, naturally leads us to inquire whether the religious system itself be true, and, therefore, worthy of that fidelity with which it has been preserved; and, above all, whether this constancy is such as at the last great day to meet the approbation of Him who judgeth not as man judgeth. The professors of this system think, of course, that it is, and that by observing these rites and ceremonies, they are keeping the commands of God, and thereby ensuring his favour; and with regard to the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in particular, they are taught to believe that they alone are so important, as at the day of judgment, to prove Israel's obedience, and the disobedience of the other nations. We will first state the doctrines of modern Judaism on this subject, and then examine whether they be well founded. In the Synagogue Prayers for this feast we find it stated, that the construction of a tabernacle according to Rabbinic prescription, is a work of merit.

השונה ארבע אמות על ארבע • פסלה פרוחה מארבע • כרי לוכח עם רוכב :

"It must be four cubits long, and four cubits broad: but if it be less, it is profane; that it may render the people of Israel meritorious." (P. 116.) And a little lower down, after describing the feast in Paradise on the salted Leviathan and Behemoth, it adds, that this one precept will form the last trial vouchsafed to the Gentiles, and that their unwillingness to keep it will prove the cause of their final condemnation.

נכנס כל האומות לדין • פני יושב על כסא דין •

ובצדק אוחנו דין • סדר מצותיך הן לנו ונקמה ונוכה עם אלו בנחמה • שניא כח שוכן רומה • עליך השופט כל באמנות • ישמע להם בתבונה • יש לי מצוה קטנה • שיוש סוכה ושאליה • ארבע דפנות וצל עליה • אל תרחוק ממליה • צללים ושלוח בה יעשו • רומה קדוה עליהם ולחמו • וברגליהם יבעשו • קדש ישמר עליהם חימה • ושלם בניהם בל רומה • במדרגה החתומה במדומה :

"All nations will come to be judged in the presence of Him who sitteth upon the throne of judgment; in righteousness will he judge us. *The nations will then say,* Give us the order of thy precepts, and we will perform them, that we may be equal with those in happiness, O Thou, who art great in power, dwelling on high. The Most High, who judgeth all in truth, will cause them to hear, and understand his words, saying, I have one small precept; its name, tabernacle, and its ordinations: four sides, and shade over it: fail ye not to observe it. They then will make the shadowy booths to abide under, but the sun will shine so hot as nearly to burn them, when they will spurn at it with their feet. The Holy One will then pour out his wrath upon them, and cast them into gehinnom [hell] without mercy, into the lowest part with confusion." (Ibid.) This extraordinary account of the day of judgment, and the condemnation of the Gentiles, has been adopted from the Talmud, where it is given at great length, and all the particulars fully detailed. To give the whole would occupy too much of our space; but as parts of it are necessary to the full consideration of this subject, we give the following extracts:—

לעמד לנו מבני הק"ב ספר תורה בדיקו ואומר כל מי שעסק בה יבא וישול שכרו מיד מחבקצין ובאין אמות העולם בשבוביא שנה' כל הגרים נקבצו יחדו אמר להם הק"ב אל תנכרו לפני בשבוביא אלא חינכם כל אומה ואומה וספריה :

"In the time to come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring a roll of the law in his bosom, and say, Let every one, who has occupied himself herein, come and receive his reward. Immediately the nations of the world will gather themselves together, and come in promiscuous crowds, as it is said, 'Let all the nations be gathered together.' (Isaiah xliii. 9.) The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say, Come not before me promiscuously, but let each nation come by itself along with its learned men." Then follows an account of

the appearance of each nation, and of the vain attempts which they make to justify their conduct. After which the narrative thus proceeds:—

אומרים לפניו ר'שע ישראל שקבלו היין קיימה  
אמר להם הק"ב'ה אני מעיד בהם שקיימו את התורה  
אוכרז לפניו רבנו ש'ע כלום יש אב שמעיד על בנו  
דרכיו בני בכדי ישראל אמר להם הק"ב'ה שמים וארץ  
יעידו בהם שקיימו את התורה כולה אומרים לפניו  
רבנו של עולם שמים וארץ נגנצין בעדותי של' אם לא  
ברתי יוסם ויללה תוקעין וארץ לא שמתו ואר'ש  
כן לקיש מאי דכתיב יהוה ערב ויהי בוקר יום השמי  
מלמד שהתנה הק"ב'ה עם משהש בראשית האמר אם  
ישראל מקבלין את תנתיי מושב ואם לאו אחרו' אתנ'י  
לחרו' וברחו חיינו דמא' תוקעין מאי דכתיב משמים  
השמיט רין ארץ יראה וסקמדי אם יראה למה שקמה  
ואם שקמה למה יראה אלא בתורה יראה ולבסוף  
שקמה אמר להם הק"ב'ה מכס יבאו ועידו בתן בישראל  
שקיימו את התורה כולה יבא נמרו' ועיד באברהם  
שלא עבר ע"ז' יבא לבן ועיד בעקב שלא נחשד על  
הגול תבוא אשה פומיפיע' ותעיד ביוקם שלא נחשד על  
העביר' יבא בנביכ נצר ועיד בהנני' מישראל ועוד  
שלא השתחוו לאלם יבא דרוש ועיד בדניאל שלא  
בישל את התפלה יבא בלדד השחיד ועודי הנעמתי  
ואליש החמני ואלקו' בן ברכאל הבתי ועידו בהם  
בישראל שקיימו את התורה כולה של' יתנו עדיהן  
רצדקי אמר לפניו רבנו'ע' תנו לנו מראש ועשה אמר  
להן הק"ב'ה שמים שבעלם מי שפרד בשבט שבת יאכל  
בשבט מי שלא פרד בשבט שבת מהיכן יאכל בשבת  
אלא אע"פ' כן מצה קלה יש לי וטובה שמה לנו ועשו  
אורה ומי מציה אמרת הכי הוא א"י' יהושע בן נוי  
מאי דכתיב אשר אנכי מצוך היום היום לעשותם ולא  
למחר לעשותם היום אנכי מצוך היום לעשותם ולא  
אלא שאין הק"ב'ה בא בפרוסיא עם בריחו' ואמאי קו'  
ליה מצה קלה משום לית ביה חסרון כיס מיד כל  
אח' נוטל הולך ועשה סוכה בראש גגו הק"ב'ה  
מקדיר עליהם המה תקמו' החסו וכל אח' ואחד מבעט  
בסוכתו ויבא וכו' ;

“ The Gentiles will then say before him, O Lord of the world, the Israelites received the law, but how did they keep it? The Holy One, blessed be He, will reply, I bear them witness that they have kept the law. The Gentiles will say, O Lord of the world, is it fair that a Father should be a witness for his children? For it is written, ‘Israel is my son, even my first-born.’ (Exod. iv. 22.) The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to them, Let the heaven and the earth bear witness to them, that they have kept the whole law. The Gentiles will answer, O Lord of the world, the heavens and the earth are interested witnesses, for it is said, ‘If your covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and the earth.’ (Jer. xxxiii. 25.) R. Simon Ben Lakish says, What is the meaning of the words ‘And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day?’ They show us that the Holy and Blessed One, made a condition with the creation, and said, If Israel will receive my law, all is well; but if not, then I will turn you back into chaos.

Hezekiah also teaches this same truth, saying, What is the meaning of the words ‘Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still?’ (Ps. lxxvi. 9, Eng. 8.) If it feared, how could it be still; and if it was still, how could it fear? The answer is, at first it feared [that Israel would not receive the law, and it should be turned into chaos]; but afterwards it was still. God will then say to the Gentiles, Then let some of yourselves come, and bear witness to Israel that they have kept the whole law. Nimrod shall then come forth and testify of Abraham that he did not commit idolatry. Laban shall come forth and testify of Jacob that he was not suspected of dishonesty. Potiphar’s wife shall come forth and testify of Joseph that he was not suspected of the transgression. Nebuchadnezzar shall come forth and testify of Hannaniash, Mishael, and Azariah, that they would not worship the image. Darius shall come and testify of Daniel that he did not neglect prayer. Bīdad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, and Eliphaz the Temanite, and Elihu the son of Beracheel, shall come forth and testify of Israel that they have kept the whole law, as it is said, ‘Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified.’ (Isaiah xliii. 9.) The Gentiles will then say, O Lord of the world, give us the law from the beginning, and we will do it. To this the Holy One will reply, O fools, he that works on the eve of the Sabbath shall eat on the Sabbath. He that will not work on the Sabbath eve, from whence should he eat on the Sabbath? Nevertheless, I have one easy commandment, Tabernacle is its name, go, therefore, and do it. But how is it possible to affirm that God will do this, when R. Joshua, the son of Levi, says, What is the meaning of the words ‘Which I command thee this day?’ And says, the meaning is, they are to be observed to-day [i.e., in this world], and not to-morrow [i.e., in the world to come].\* To-day they are to be observed; but the reward is not to be received to-day. The answer is, that God does not deal with his creatures in a tyrannical manner. But why is this called an easy commandment? Because it is not attended with any pecuniary loss. Immediately every one of the Gentiles will hasten away, and make a tabernacle on the roof of his house. But the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause the sun to pierce them with an extraordinary heat at that season, and then every one of them will kick down his tabernacle and go forth,” &c. (Avodah Zarah, fol. 2, 3.) Such is the doctrine of the Palmud, adopted and therefore sealed with the most solemn sanction by the public worship of the synagogue. In the first place it

\* ויהי לעשותם בשלם יחדו : ולא למחר דאית יכל לעשותם ולשלם הבאי :

is perfectly false; it has not even the merit of plausibility. It is only astonishing how an imagination so absurd should ever have found its way into the prayers of Israel; and stranger still that the Jews of England should suffer such a foul blot still to remain on their public services. It certainly represents Judaism in the most unfavourable point of view as a religion of the grossest and most inconsistent superstition; and proves, beyond all controversy, first, that the synagogue receives, as of divine authority, even the fables of the Talmud; and, secondly, that the authors of the oral law, who could either invent or believe so absurd a statement, cannot be depended upon as faithful transmitters of the religion of the prophets.

Further, it totally misrepresents the character of God. It describes Him, first, as bearing witness to the obedience of Israel, whilst in His Word he bears constant testimony to their disobedience. Here he is represented also as calling upon heaven and earth to attest their innocence and righteousness, whilst in His Word he calls upon them to be the witnesses of their rebellion. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." (Isaiah i. 2.) And again, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. ii. 12.) These passages of the Word of God are directly opposed to the above statement of the oral law. But further, it misrepresents the Divine Being as an unmerciful and unjust judge, who pretends to give the guilty Gentiles another and easy trial by giving them the commandment respecting the tabernacles, and then employs his omnipotence so to plague them with the heat of the sun, as to render it impossible for them to yield obedience. Such a representation is altogether unworthy of the Judge of all the earth, who will deal justly by the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

But besides misrepresenting the divine character, it misleads the unlearned and superstitious to believe that, at the day of judgment, God will not render to every man according to his deeds, but will pass by their sins and their impotence, if only they be Israelites. It therefore begets a false confidence, and is eminently calculated to lull men asleep in their sins. The man who believes this fable of the Gentiles bearing witness to the righteousness of Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, &c., and thinks that this is sufficient for his acquittal at the bar of judgment, can have no motive for personal repentance or righteousness. Neither does

this fable tend to produce good will and respect towards his Gentile fellow-sinners. Few men will elevate themselves above their notions of the Deity. When, then, the Rabbins see that, according to the oral law, God treats the Gentiles with injustice and cruelty, is it natural to suppose that he will treat them differently? This and similar passages well merit the serious consideration of all influential Israelites. It is imperative upon all such to determine, whether such passages of their prayers and their law are of divine authority or not; and if they are convinced of their falsehood, to use their unceasing exertions to expunge them from their religious system. As long as they exist, and are publicly read in the synagogue, men can only come to one conclusion, and that is, that the characteristics of the Rabbinical religion are superstition and uncharitableness. Nothing but a public protest against the error, and an erasure from the prayer-book, will satisfy the mind, or wipe away the reproach from Israel. The private professions of individuals can be of no avail in this matter. Men will go to the authorised books, especially to the prayer-book of every class of religionist, in order to judge of his principles; and no one will believe that any man can be so careless or so presumptuous as to address the Divine Being in the language of acknowledged falsehood. But above all, let every Jew compare this account of the day of judgment with that contained in our Christian books. Judaism teaches that at that great day God will appear as a partial and cruel judge. Christianity gives us the following account of the same period:—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer and say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, and in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. xxv. 31—46.) Such is the view which Christianity sets before us of the day of judgment, and the principles according to which that judgment shall be conducted. You will observe that the whole account is essentially different from that given by the Talmud. In the first place it represents God as a just Judge, altogether overlooking nationality; taking no notice of the temporary distinctions of Jew and Gentile, but fixing his eyes on the eternal features of moral character, and according to those fixing the eternal destinies of each individual. In the second place it tends to promote good will and charity between man and man, for it represents charity or the want of charity as the main points of inquiry, and the distinctions according to which the eternal portion of each is assigned. We ask, then, every impartial and candid Jew to tell us, which of these two accounts are most worthy of the great God whom we worship? We Christians believe that the synagogue-worshippers are in error, and they again think us in error; but we have now before us the doctrines of the two systems on the most important point in all theology—the principle of final judgment; by their respective statements, then, on this subject let each system be judged. Judaism says, that one class of men is to be saved by the partiality of the Judge, and the other class condemned simply because they are Gentiles. Christianity says, that all men shall be tried impartially by one rule, and that neither possession nor prejudice, but justice alone, shall influence the decision. Which, then, Judaism or Christianity, is most agreeable to the character of Him of whom the Psalmist says, "He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the nations with equity?"

We are sure that the good sense of the Jew-

ish nation must decide, that the impartial justice of the New Testament-representation is most in accordance with the spirit of the law and the prophets. Nay, we believe that every devout and thinking Israelite will feel that the Talmudic picture of God's judgment misrepresents the God of Israel as much as any graven image ever defiled by heathen idolaters. To suppose that God would make a mock overture of mercy, or offer a mock trial to any of his creatures, is to strip him of the attributes of Deity, and to exhibit a blind and senseless bigot as the object of Israel's worship. A statement so abhorrent even from human reason, and so inconsistent with the Word of God, proves that its authors were not moved by the Spirit, and that the religion of which it forms a part cannot be divine. But here, as in many cases which we have already pointed out, the New Testament avoids the error of the Talmud, and teaches a doctrine conformable to the law, and in accordance with right reason. Let the advocates of the oral law explain the fact.

But this Talmudic representation of the day of judgment is not only opposed to reason and Scripture, but also seems to contradict other statements of the oral law. Here the Gentiles appear to be marked out for destruction; whereas, we are told elsewhere, that the pious of the nations of the world are to have a part in the world to come: and that obedience to the seven commandments of the sons of Noah, is all that is required from a Gentile. If this be true, what need is there of giving them the command to keep the Feast of Tabernacles? But, above all, if they are to be cast down into the lowest hell, as the Prayer-book says, how can they have a part of the blessings of the world to come? It is at the very least, the duty of those who advocate the oral law, to explain this matter to us Gentiles. We cannot persuade ourselves that a religion, which makes so little provision for the eternal welfare of the great bulk of the human race, can possibly proceed from Him who is the God of the spirits of all flesh, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind. Living daily by his bounty, and receiving all we have at his most gracious hands, we believe that if He makes such provision for our bodies, He has made still more for our immortal spirits; and therefore, amongst other reasons, we believe in Christianity; for if it be not true, there is no spiritual provision for the Gentiles, and God has left the majority of his rational creatures without any proof of his paternal affection.

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