

# נתיבות עולם

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

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It is recorded of the Cutheans and those other nations whom the King of Assyria placed as colonists at Samaria, that they endeavoured to combine the service of the true God with the worship of idols. "So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day." (2 Kings xvii. 41.) Every one can see that this conduct was as foolish as it was wicked. It was wicked to dishonour the true God by associating him with them that were no Gods; and it was foolish to imagine that God could be pleased with a partial homage and a divided heart. Total idolatry would have been more reasonable and less offensive to the Divine Being, for he whom we acknowledge as God, must necessarily have the whole of our fear, our love, and our obedience. And yet there is perhaps a way of serving God more unreasonable still, and that is by giving to sinful and fallible men the honour that is due to God alone. The Cutheans falsely thought that God was one amongst many, and if they worshipped the many, it was under the impression that they were really Gods. But suppose a nation to acknowledge the one true God, and then to fix upon a certain number of men to be honoured and served with the same degree of reverence and obedience; none can doubt that this nation would be far more irrational than that of the Cutheans, inasmuch as to pay divine honours to a number of our fellow-men is more extravagant still than to worship a plurality of imaginary deities. Some may think that such a degree of absurdity is impossible, but fact shows that it is not only possible, but that it has actually occurred. When men exalt the inventions of their teachers to a level with the known and acknowledged laws of God, and make obedience to these inventions an essential part of their religion, they confer upon men the highest degree of honour and of service that can be rendered to God. The unreserved submission of the heart and conscience to the will of God is the highest act of worship, and when it is given to the will of men, in that degree men are made gods. Whether these remarks apply to those who make the דבליב בשר בבל, i. e., "The constitutions concerning meat in milk" a part of their religion, it is for the adherents of the oral law to inquire.

The general principle of these constitutions is thus expressed—

בשר בדלב אסור לבשול ואסור לאכול מן החורדה ואסור בהנאה וקוברין ארוי. ואסור אסור כאשר כל הנקברין. ומי שיבשל משניהם כוית כאחד לוקה שנאמר לא תבשל גדי בדלב אסור. וכן הורול כוית משניהם מהבשר והחלב שתבשלו כאחד לוקה ואע"פ שלא בשל :

"It is unlawful to boil meat in milk—according to the law, it is also unlawful to eat it; it is likewise unlawful to make any profit by it, and it is to be buried. Its ashes are also unlawful, like the ashes of other things that are buried. Whosoever boils together a quantity of these two things, equal to an olive, is to be flogged, for it is said, 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.' (Exod. xxiii. 19.) In like manner, he that eats a quantity of the flesh and the milk, which have been boiled together, amounting in value to an olive, is to be flogged, even though he did not boil them." (Hilchoth Maskhaloth Asuroth, c. ix. 1.) Here the oral law determines generally, that it is unlawful to boil meat in milk, or to make any use of meat so boiled, and sentences the transgressor to a severe and degrading corporal punishment, and yet this determination is altogether an invention of men, for which there is not the slightest authority in the Word of God. The prohibition of Moses is confined to one single case, which is exactly defined: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk," but there the prohibition ends, for the specification of one particular shows that that alone is intended, and necessarily excludes all others. To give some colour to the unwarranted extension, it is asserted that גדי הוא כולל ולד השור ולד השה ולד העז עי שירוש ואמרו גדי עוים :

"Kid includes the young of kine, of sheep, and of goats, so that to particularize, the word goat is added as 'a kid of the goats.'" And so Rashi also affirms in his commentary. Aben Ezra, however, has saved us the trouble of giving a refutation of our own, for he says—

ואינו כן כי גדי לא יקרא רק שהוא מהעוים ובלשון שבי הוא גדי ולא יאמר על מין אחר רק ש השם בן גדי ובן גדי עוים כי גדי גדול מגדי עוים כי ערנו צריך היוונו עם העוים וכזה שער ושער עוים חכמים קבלו שלא אכל ישראל בשר בדלב :

"This is not so, for nothing is called kid except the young of the goats; and in Arabic

the word has the same signification, and is never applied to any other species. But there is a difference between *kid*, and *kid of the goats*, for the former is larger, and it is necessary for the latter still to be with the goats; and the same thing is true of שָׂרָר, which is used in the same way. It is by tradition that the wise men received, that Israel should not eat meat in milk." (Comment. in Exod. xxiii. 19.) Thus Aben Ezra, himself a most learned rabbi, confesses that the words of the written law restrict the prohibition to one particular case, and that the rest is mere matter of tradition. Of course if it could be proved that this tradition came from God through Moses, it would be equivalent to the written law, but there is no attempt to prove any thing of the kind. The authors of the oral law calculated throughout upon the blind credulity of their followers, and therefore here, as elsewhere, there is an entire absence of proof. Indeed the tradition itself bears the plain mark of forgery. How can any one possibly believe, that, if God meant to forbid meat and milk entirely, he should first express himself incorrectly, and then leave the correction of the error to uncertain tradition? If the command had only been once noticed, it would have been hard to believe such a thing; but when we remember that this command is thrice repeated, in Exod. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26, and Deut. xiv. 21, it is plainly incredible. Thrice is the command written, and thrice it is restricted to one particular case, and yet the rabbies have dared to make unauthorised additions of their own, and their followers to this day exalt them to a level with the laws of God. It cannot be replied that the rabbies would not commit such wickedness as this, for every one, who knows any thing of the oral law, knows, that a great proportion of it consists merely of the *words of the Scribes*, acknowledged as such, and distinguished by that name from the supposed traditions from Sinai. Thus in the constitutions before us, it is plainly confessed that the written law allows the flesh of wild animals and of fowl in milk, and yet the rabbies forbid it.

ובשר חיה ועוף בין בחלב חיה בין בחלב בהמה  
אינו אסור באילה מן התורה לש' מותר לבשלו ומותר  
בהנייה ואסור באילה מוכרי סופרים כרי שלא ישמשו  
העם ויבואו לידי אסור בשר בחלב של תורה ויאלול  
בשר בהמה מותרה בחלב בהמה מותרה שררי אין  
משמע הכתוב אלא גרי בחלב אמו ממש לפיכך אסור  
כל בשר בחלב:

"And thus the flesh of a wild animal or of fowl, whether in the milk of a wild or tame animal, is not forbidden as food by the written law, and therefore it is lawful to boil it, and to profit by it. But according to the words of the scribes, it is unlawful to eat it, lest the people should go farther, and be led into a transgression of the written law, and eat the

flesh of a clean beast in the milk of a clean beast: for the letter of the written law refers only to a kid in its mother's milk in the strictest sense; therefore the wise men have forbidden all meat in milk." In this there is no equivocation, but a simple confession that the rabbies have taken upon themselves to forbid what God has allowed; and have, without ceremony or scruple, made great additions to His law. It matters little what the motive was, the conduct itself is in the highest degree presumptuous. The pretence, that these additions were made only for the purpose of keeping the people far removed from sin, will not serve as a ground of justification. If God had desired such precautionary measures, as being either necessary or beneficial, he would have prescribed them himself. If He did not prescribe them, and the rabbies themselves confess that he did not, but that they are the words of the scribes, then they can be neither necessary nor beneficial, unless we can believe what it would be blasphemy to assert, that is, that God's law was imperfect until it was mended by the scribes. It is truly astonishing that men professing respect for the law of Moses should treat it with such indignity, and still more so that those, who appear so anxious to avoid transgression, should themselves systematically transgress that plain command.

לא תוסיף על דברי אשר אמר כצוה אלהים:  
"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you." (Deut. iv. 2.) But the most extraordinary thing of all is, that the modern Jews should pride themselves on the purity of their faith, and think that they only of all the nations serve the true God and him only, when they are in truth serving the authors of the oral law, and dividing their religious obedience between God and the rabbies. If the Rabbinic additions were specimens of profound wisdom in legislation, or had a tendency to promote either the moral or temporal welfare of mankind, there would be some excuse, but what shall we say of those who transgress a plain command for the sake of such an addition as the following:—

הבשר לבדו מותר והחלב לבדו מותר ובהחשב  
שניחן על ידי בישול יאסור שניהם במה דברים  
אסורים שנתבשלו שניהם יחד או ששכל הם לתוך  
חם או צונן לתוך חם אבל אם נפל אחד משניהם  
הוא חם לתוך השני יהוא צונן קולף הבשר כולו  
שנגע בו החלב ואוכל השאר ואם נפל צונן לתוך  
צונן מדיה התייבחה ואוכלה:

"The flesh by itself is lawful, and the milk by itself is lawful, but as soon as they are mixed together by means of boiling (or cooking) they both become unlawful. In what cases does this hold? When both are boiled together, or when one being hot falls into the other also being hot, or when one, cold, falls into the other hot. But if one of them being hot falls upon the second being cold,

then all that part of the meat which was touched by the milk is to be peeled off, and the remainder may be eaten. But if one in a cold state falls upon the other also cold, then that piece is to be washed, and after that may be eaten." (Hilchoth Maakhaloth Asuroth, c. ix. 17.) We have, in the first place, an unwarranted extension of the divine command. God has simply forbidden to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. The rabbies first extend this to the young of kine, and sheep. Then they advance another step, and forbid the boiling or cooking of any sort of meat in milk, and now we have seen another advance still, whereby even any mixture of flesh and milk is strictly forbidden. Thus the rabbies aim at universal dominion, and are satisfied with nothing short of an entire subjugation of the heart and conscience. Other tyrants must rest satisfied with the enslavement of the body, but cannot touch the thought. The authors of the oral law attack the liberty of thought, and intrude even into the kitchens of their victims. They are determined that their followers shall not even eat excepting as they please, and boldly invade the prerogative of God himself, by forbidding the food which he provides for his people. But this extract presents, in the second place, an outrage on common sense. If milk and meat each be lawful by itself, how can the mixture make them unlawful? Whatever God forbids is unlawful, no matter whether we understand the reason or not. But here the rabbies themselves acknowledge that God has not forbidden this mixture; but that the prohibition is entirely their own invention. We are therefore bound to use our senses, if God has given us any, and to ask a reason why. Then, again, why should that which is lawful when cold, be made unlawful by being hot? It may be said, that this is a matter of little importance. In itself it is; but as a burden on the consciences of men, it is of the very highest importance, and as a cheat upon the ignorant it is more important still. In many countries, these and similar inventions constitute the whole religion of the ignorant, and especially of the women. The oral law affirms that it is not necessary to teach women the law of God, but it is almost a matter of life and death that they should know these Rabbinic laws about meat and milk. If a woman is unable to read the Word of God, and is as ignorant as a heathen of God's will, the rabbies think that is a trifle. But if a woman were, through ignorance, to serve up meat with any admixture of milk, the whole family would be in an uproar, and the rabbi himself would have to be consulted about a remedy for so dreadful a calamity. The consequence is, that with the mass of the uneducated, accuracy

in these observances passes for piety, and these poor beings hope that they are going straight to heaven, when they are utterly devoid or ignorant of that holiness, truth, and purity, which are the first essentials for admission into the presence of God. Thus the oral law destroys the souls of multitudes, but others will have to answer for their blood. All who uphold the system must share in the responsibility. The rabbies who teach, the learned Jews who aid and abet, the priests and Levites to whom God has committed the pastorship of his people, but who neglect their sacred office, all will have to answer for the souls of the lost. But most of all those who know that these things are wrong, who themselves eat meat and milk, and laugh at Rabbinic superstition, and yet are insensible to the miseries of their poor and ignorant brethren. Every one practically acquainted with the working of these laws, knows not only that they beget a false notion of religion, but that they are also a torment in this life. In domestic and culinary economy, accidents will happen. Meat may fall into milk, or milk into a pot of meat. Misery and vexation are the consequence, and if the unfortunate woman to whom the accident has happened cannot get satisfaction at home, she must go to the rabbi to inquire what is to be done. For instance—

בשר שנפל לתוך החלב • או חלב שנפל לתוך הבשר  
ונחבשל עמו שיעורו בנותן טעם • כיצד חזינה של  
בשר שנפלה לקדרה ורוחחה של חלב • טועם הנגי את  
הקדרה אם אמר שיש בה טעם בשר אסורה • ואם לאו  
מותרת ואותה חזינה אסורה • בר"א שקדם הדוציא  
את החזינה קדם שתפלום חלב שבלעה • אבל אם לא  
טל משערם אחרת בששים ספני שהחלב שנבלע בה  
ונאמר יצא ונחשב עם שאר החלב :

"With respect to meat which falls into milk, or milk that falls into the midst of meat, the measure is, if it give a taste. How so? If a piece of meat fall into a boiling pot of milk, a Gentile is to taste the contents of the pot: and if he says that it has a taste of meat, then it is unlawful. But if it has not the taste of meat then the milk is lawful, but that piece of meat is unlawful. In what cases does this hold? In case that the piece of meat has been taken out, before it has emitted the milk which it has sucked in. But if it has not been taken out, then a calculation must be made whether its proportion to the whole is as one to sixty; because the milk that was sucked in, and had become unlawful, has been emitted and has mixed with the rest of the milk." (Ibid.) Now, in the most tolerable case, that is, if the owner of the milk can afford to lose it and the meat too, there is, first, an unnecessary inconvenience and vexation, which no man has a right to inflict upon another. But there is, secondly, and what is of far more conse-

quence, a great sin in wasting good and wholesome, and, according to the written law, lawful food. If the milk tastes of meat, then the milk and the meat are rendered not only unlawful, but perfectly useless. How then can the Jews expect peace and plenty, when their oral law teaches them to despise and cast from them with disdain God's blessings? But suppose that the owner of the milk and the meat is a poor man, and that he has laid out his hard and scanty earnings to provide food for his family, an accident of this kind will leave them destitute. Their last hope of support is taken away, and they may die of hunger. If they go to the rabbies, and urge the necessity of the case—plead that they have no more—reason that if meat by itself is lawful, that milk is also lawful—that the law of Moses no where forbids this food—the teachers of the oral law will answer, that their traditions cannot be broken; and the poor people must learn that to eat food permitted and given by God is a sin, but to die of starvation is lawful. How can men with any of the feelings of humanity believe that such a law is from God?—how can men of any common sense suffer the consciences and the bodies of the poor and ignorant to be thus tormented? Above all, how can a nation that prides itself on the purity of its faith yield an idolatrous obedience to cruel and oppressive laws invented by men? It is a vain boast for them to say that they have no images—the oral law and its enactments constitute a whole host of idols. It is an unfounded triumph which they celebrate over the worshippers of Moloch. The oral law is a deity as fierce and as bloody, and to it are daily immolated the souls and bodies of the poor and ignorant. Any homage rendered to falsehood, or to cruelty, is idolatrous; and every thinking man must admit, that the worship of the oral law is of this character. To the Rabbinites themselves we would say, Just think whether it be possible that God would have given a law so oppressive, or whether he can have any pleasure in the obedience which is rendered at the expence of mercy? To those who reject the oral law we would say, You have a duty to perform from which nothing can exempt you—and that is, to rest neither day nor night until Israel is delivered from this idolatrous worship of

men, and set free from a yoke so oppressive to body and soul. We grant that Christians have also a duty, and in these papers we endeavour to discharge our share of it. But the duty incumbent upon Israelites is tenfold more imperative. The ties of flesh and blood—their office as a kingdom of priests—the mercy of God in giving them the law as their inheritance—all increase their responsibility and increase the weight of obligation. It would be a shame for Israel to be silent, when even the Gentiles cry out for the restoration of the religion of Moses and the prophets. Israelites may have peculiar difficulties. They may be united in commercial relations or by family ties with those who are in bondage to the oral law. They may fear the injury of their worldly prospects—they may dread the frown of relatives and friends. This was also the case of Abraham, when he determined to renounce the false gods of his fathers, and to worship the true God alone: and every one who determines by God's help to follow and assert the truth, must make up his mind to love it even more than life itself. But can a son of Abraham hesitate? Will he forfeit the smile of God to escape the frown of friends? Nay, if his friends are still in error, is this not a double motive to urge him forward in the overthrow of that error? Must he not be doubly anxious to deliver his father, his mother, his brothers and his sisters from such bondage? The first attempt may be difficult—the immediate results may be unpleasant; but if for God's sake he asserts God's truth, he shall have God's blessing, and at last find peace even amongst those who are now offended. As long as the present state of things continues, Israel can never be restored to their ancient position. God in mercy keeps them in dispersion, to prevent the triumph of the oral law. But when is this state of misery to cease? There must be a beginning. Some one follower of Moses must be zealous enough and bold enough to attack the strong holds of superstition, and to rouse his brethren to a sense of their condition—some one who not only professes to be a follower of Moses, but who has imbibed his spirit, and whose trust is in the God of his fathers.

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