

# Prayer In Bible and Talmud,

NAHIDA REMY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

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By HENRY COHEN.

**To the Memory of my Dear Parents,**

WHOSE PIOUS TEACHINGS IMBUED ME  
WITH LOVE FOR BIBLE AND  
TALMUD, THIS VOLUME  
IS AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

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The following pages, with but few alterations, were written by Frau Nahida Remy, a Christian, who has made a study of Judaism, even to a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language. She is also the author of "Culturstudien über das Judenthum" (which has now absorbed the present work) and "Das Jüdische Weib." In both productions the greatest sympathy with our people is shown. I consider that we are under an everlasting obligation to this noble-minded woman. Since reading the original, I have been anxious that "Das Gebet in Bibel and Talmud" should circulate among the English-speaking public. Hence my translation.

HENRY COHEN.

Galveston, Texas,  
February, 1894—Adar, 5654.

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## NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In 1895 Frau Nahida Remy adopted the Jewish faith and became the wife of the renowned Prof. Moritz Lazarus. As Nahida Ruth Lazarus—she wrote "Ich Suchte Dich," (1898) an autobiography of peculiar interest to Jews.

H. C.

Galveston, Texas.  
September, 1910—Ellul 5670.

## PRAYER IN BIBLE AND TALMUD

### I.—PRAYER IN THE BIBLE.

From the many of my co-religionists of whom I have asked, "Have you a recollection of any prayer in the Bible?" the answer was, invariably, "No." I even met with the counter-question, "*Are* there any prayers in the Bible?"

Most people think, "How strange, nowadays, to occupy one's self with the Bible!" It is not strange. Whoever is conversant with Scripture, and knows its beauties, daily discovers new charms therein.

All great thinkers and poets have drawn inspiration therefrom. Goethe found in Job, Schiller, in the Proverbs of Solomon, the most profound stimulus; and who knows to what extent the savants of other nations are indebted to it? In the fact that nearly every family possesses a Bible, and scarcely any knows its contents, is hidden a problem of great bearing. It would indeed be an honorable life-task to solve this problem satisfactorily.

But now to our theme. Strictly speaking, the Bible contains but one prescribed prayer.

In the laws concerning the first fruit of the earth (Deuteronomy xxvi.) we find the command (verse 2): "Thou shalt take of the first fruits . . . (3) And thou shalt come unto the priest . . . (5) And thou shalt commence, and say," etc. Then follow verses 6-14, which form an introduction and a historic review. After the words, "I have done all, just as thou hast commanded me" (14), comes the actual entreaty and prayer: "O, look down from the habitation of thy holiness, from the heavens, and bless thy people Israel, and the soil which thou hast given us, as Thou hast sworn unto our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.

This is the only prescribed prayer for the people in general. And for what does the petitioner pray? For

whom does he pray? Is it for himself? For his house? No! For the people and for the country; that God may bless them, and also the land. Even here the elementary thought of Jewish prayer is clearly and plainly expressed. As soon as man stands before God, his supplication shall embrace humanity. He shall not pray for himself alone, but he shall be united in love with the whole world. Everything in the chapter but the invocation quoted above, is precept and command.

The most important prayer of the Jews, the *Sh'ma*, is also composed of precept and command; but, as this is a rabbinical arrangement, I shall allude to it in speaking of the Talmudic prayers. So much may be said now for the benefit of my non-Jewish readers: *Sh'ma* means "Hear!" *Sh'ma Yisroel*, "Hear, O Israel!" Thus commences the holiest prayer of the Israelites. Those two words form a sign of recognition between one Israelite and another. If two Jews from any part of the world meet on the road—whether or not they speak a common language—the mention of the *Sh'ma Yisroel* will cause their eyes to light up with love for the "Only One," their Father, and thus they are made brethren.

From this fact originated Ludwig August Frankl's poem, "Tourist und Cicerone." A guide, conducting a tourist through Rome, came to the Arch of Titus, erected to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem. The cicerone says:

"Good sir, thou didst me order  
To lead thee through this border,  
To view this very place;  
But through this archway Roman  
With free will passeth no man  
Of all my suffering race.

"See! with its decoration,  
This arch derides my nation,  
By Titus scourged and slain!  
It pictures his achievements,  
And all of our bereavements;  
Its sight fills me with pain.

“Then, sir, do not command me,  
 Indeed, I would withstand thee,  
 The custom I'll not break!  
 Alone go through the gateway,  
 While I *around* and straightway  
 Will meet thee,” thus he spake.

“My faithful guide, know, thy way  
 Is parallel with my way,”

I forthwith made remark:

“I hate the chariots gory,  
 But love Judea's glory—  
 The Candlestick and Ark.”

Whereat he gazed in wonder  
 Upon my face,—and under  
 His eyelids teardrops stole,  
 He touched my hand then quickly,  
 Half doubtfully, half meekly,  
 And said, “Sh'ma Yisroel!”\*

Of course, my tears descended,  
 While I the greeting ended,  
 “Adonoi Echod!”\*  
 Around the archway turning,  
 The past within us burning—  
 “Jehovah is our God.”

The Bible, however, contains many general supplications, and individual prayers. The best known are prayers of Moses, Hannah, David, and Solomon, also those of Hezekiah. Those of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah, are less known. The invocations of the poet Habakkuk (who gave voice to that matchless phrase: “In wrath remember mercy.” (Hab. iii. 2), of the very human Jonah, of the patient Job, of the all-righteous Amos, not to specify others, I cannot even briefly mention.

The first prayer in the Holy Bible emanates from Abraham, and refers to his and Hagar's son (Gen. xvii. 18). “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” Here for the first time, we have an expression of fatherly love.

\*Hear O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One—the Jewish declaration of Faith. (Deut. 6, 4). The first and last words of the sentence are here expressed.

The second prayer—one of the most touching of the whole Bible—is also spoken by Abraham. Sublime ingenuity of the Bible, that makes men so self-confident as to converse with God as with their equal!

I cannot refrain from sketching Abraham's intercession with his Creator. When Sodom and Gomorrah were threatened with destruction, the "father of the faithful" addressed to God the astounding inquiry: "Wilt thou then destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou then also destroy and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous that are therein? Far be it from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked" (Gen. xviii. 23, 24, 25). "Far be it from thee!"—what an incomparable expression. Who dares to remind God—the Essence of Justice—"that the Judge of all the earth shall exercise justice!"

God considered this, and would have pardoned Sodom on account of the fifty righteous therein, but Abraham again asked in all humility: "Peradventure there will lack five of the fifty; wilt thou then destroy the city on account of these five?" (verse 28). And as God showed Himself gracious, Abraham continued with renewed fervor: "Peradventure there are only forty—thirty—twenty—ten, . . ." until God promised him that he would spare Sodom, if only ten righteous could be found therein.

The Bible then says: "And the Lord went away," as if to express that He was not equal to Abraham's merciful persuasion. It is noteworthy that this episode serves but to show one of Abraham's characteristics, inasmuch as his solicitation had no practical success, for there could not be found even ten righteous in the city, and Sodom was destroyed.

In using the word "characteristic" it must not be understood that the Holy Scripture professes to portray a marked feature in the character of its heroes. The idea is, to convey to men a moral and ethical precept. In this case,



for instance, we learn that in the interests of Justice, the righteous should not be punished with the wicked, and that even the wicked should be treated with clemency.

A very fine trait, true to nature at its best under the circumstances, is shown in the next two short prayers in the Bible; in the entreaty of Eliezer to God, as he wandered forth to win a bride for the son of his master (Gen. xxiv.), and in Jacob's petition when he heard that Esau was coming to meet him (xxxii.). Both invocations were rendered in a few words, but what a dramatic contrast in situation, color, tone, and general surroundings! With what circumspection, I would almost say, with what self-confidence, does Eliezer say to God: "And let it come to pass that the maiden to whom I shall say: Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink;' and she shall say: 'Drink, and to thy camels also will I give drink,' be the one that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac" (verse 14).

Entirely different is the disquietude of Jacob, conscious of his former infidelity to his brother: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac," he cries, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him!" (verse 12). With Eliezer, it is simply the knowledge of complying with his duty, albeit performed according to the circumscribed mode of thought peculiar to a servant of those days, that made him require a sign; with Jacob, it was the confusion of a smitten conscience, but also the assurance of a son clinging to the breast of a father.

The humble rejoinder of Moses (Exodus iv.), when God commands him to return to Egypt, and to plead before Pharaoh for the liberation of his brethren, cannot be at all compared with his celebrated "Song of Triumph," after crossing the Red Sea. "I will sing unto the Eternal, for he hath triumphed gloriously!" (Exodus xv.).

But here also there are only two verses, containing actual prayer: "Let fear and dread fall upon them (the

enemies). By the greatness of thine arm, let them be still as a stone till thy people pass over, O Lord, till this people, which thou hast purchased, pass over" (verse 16).

Moses repeatedly found occasion, by reason of the stubbornness of the people, to pray to God. But actual prayer occurs only, when he, even as Abraham, implored the Eternal in behalf of a stiff-necked people, in the moment of God's anger. "Why, Eternal, shall thy wrath wax hot against thy people that thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with a great power, and with a mighty hand? . . . Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent thee of the evil decreed against thy people" (Exodus xxxii). Moses reminds God of the promise to his forefathers—and, as the Bible says, "the Eternal bethought himself of the evil which he had spoken to do unto his people" verse (14).

A remarkable contrast is shown, when Moses, returning from Mount Sinai, finds this very people, for whom he has been imploring grace, and to whom he now brings the tablets of the law (the Ten Commandments), again rebellious. He angrily breaks the tables of stone. But the next day, consequent upon the terrible punishment visited on the people, he fervently prays to the Lord: "Pardon this people! But if thou wilt not pardon their sin, then blot me out, I pray thee, from thy book, which thou hast written" (verse 32).

Again and again Moses addresses himself imploringly to God: "Let me know thy way, that I may know thee, in order that I may find grace in thine eyes (chapter xxxiii. 13) . . . and if thy presence go not with us, then carry us not up from here! (verse 15) . . . Walk in our midst, O Lord! Pardon our sins, forgive us our iniquities, and take us for thine heritage" (chap. xxxiv. 9).

When the children of Israel set forward with the "Ark," Moses says: "Rise up, Eternal, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let those that hate thee flee before thy face!" . . . When the Ark rested, he prayed: "Return, O

Lord, among the myriads of the thousands of Israel” (Numbers x. 35, 36).

[It is a sublime fact, that even to-day these two sentences are said during the Jewish service; the first when the Sepher Thora is taken from the Holy Ark, the second, when it is returned.]

The law-giver shows himself but human, and conscious of his own weakness, when he exclaims: “Wherefore have I not found grace in thy sight, O Lord, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?” (Numbers xi. 11) . . . “I am not able to carry this people alone, too heavy is the burden for me!” (verse 14) . . . . . “But if I must bear it, then slay me, so that I may not see my wretchedness” (verse 15) . . . . “My wretchedness”—that is the wretchedness of the people, of whom this great man feels as one.

Later, when the children of Israel are despondent and discouraged, Moses, never fatigued, again prays to God, and presents to him, in a manner, that patience is a divine duty (Numbers xiv.).

He concludes his invocation, remarkable in many instances, with the pacifying expression: “Pardon the iniquity of this people according to the magnitude of thy beneficence, even as thou hast been indulgent to them from the day they left Mizrayim, until now” (verse 19).

Extraordinarily singular is the utterance (verses 16, 17), used also in a modified form by Daniel (chapter ix. 19). “Not for our sake, not for the people’s sake, but for thy sake, Lord, extend thy mercy, and lead thy people, as thou hast promised into the land which thou hast sworn to give them, so that thine enemies may not say: That because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he had sworn unto them, hath he slain them in the wilderness. . . . “Let justice prevail, be gracious, so that thy power may be everywhere seen, and acknowledged!”

We see how old the desire is that God should be acknowl-

edged by others; by the heathen, and even by the enemy. Not with any selfish motive did the law-giver speak as the Scripture portrays. Moses knew that he would not enter the Promised Land—and notwithstanding the guilt of the “stiff-necked people,” as he calls Israel, in the overwhelming passion of his great soul he looks for the fulfilment of God’s promise, so that the sun of God’s mercy may shine resplendently over the earth.

That poetically sublime chapter, generally designated as “Moses’ Prayer” (Deut. xxxii.), is an address to the people, not to God, and consequently cannot be examined here.

A word as to Psalm xc., also called “The prayer of Moses.” The several parts of this matchless psalm have become, through Luther, Paul Gerhardt and others, so much the common possession, even of the Christian service, that I hardly need mention its beauty and magnificence.

Before we finish with this noble character, of whom the Bible says: “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. xxxiv.10), it will serve a purpose to record his prayer on behalf of his sister, when she was stricken with leprosy: “O Lord, heal her now, I beseech thee.” (Num. xii.13). The Talmud (Berachoth 34a) tells us that we may deduce from the wording of this appeal that it is not necessary to mention the names of those on whose behalf we pray. This invocation is unique in every way.

Of Moses’ successor, Joshua, (different from the law-giver, who was meeker than any man on the face of the earth) is preserved only one prayer,—a wail of despair after he suffered defeat by the wall of Ai. He fell on his face, rent his clothes, and cried to the Eternal. He, also, finishes his entreaty for help with the typical question: “And what wilt thou do for thy great name?” (Josh.vii. 9).

Celebrated, although much criticized, is the remarkable introduction to Joshua’s invocation to the Lord,

before the eyes of Israel: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, O Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (x.12). And the sun and the moon stood still, until Joshua and the Israelites completed their victory at Beth Choron. This report loses its fable-like impression, if one recalls having read a few lines before, that God sent a great hail-storm from heaven. It is likely that such a storm had never yet been seen; this taken in connection with the obscuration of the sun and moon, a strong after-imagination may have invested the legend with all appearance of actuality.

During the time of the Judges we have no prayers, with the exception of Manoah's short petition; as Deborah's celebrated song is a triumphal chant occasioned by victory. On the other hand, the Book of Samuel begins at once with an appeal by Hannah, the childless, of the most soul-stirring kind. In the Temple at Shiloh she weeps passionately: "O Lord of Hosts! If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but will give unto me a man-child, then will I give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head!" (I Samuel i. 11th v.) The high priest observes her and thinks she is drunk, "because her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard" (verse 13). When addressed by him, she answers: "No, my Lord . . . a woman of a heavy heart am I . . . Wine and strong drink have I not drunk . . . I have poured out my soul before God!" (verse 15).

Her prayer is answered. In due course of time she is given a son, the little Samuel,—whom she makes every year a colored garment, and carries it to him; for he has been dedicated, according to her promise, to the service of the Temple in Shiloh. The exuberance of her spirits—after the birth of the child—causes her to break forth in a song of praise (undoubtedly composed later; perhaps during the time of the Kings), which contains several pro-

found conceptions (Samuel chap. ii). These were borrowed by the New Testament writers, and are, even to-day, chosen as the favorite themes of all Christian moral teachers and preachers:

“The bow of the mighty is broken, and those that stumbled are girded with strength” (verse 4).

“The Eternal killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up” (verse 6).

“The Eternal maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low, and also lifteth up” (verse 7).

“He raiseth up out of the dust the poor: from the dung-hill he lifteth up the needy to set them among nobles, and he assigneth them the throne of glory!” (verse 8).

“He ever guardeth the feet of his pious ones, but the wicked shall be made silent in darkness; for not by strength can man prevail!” (verse 9).

In the same manner, David, framing his first prayer exclaims: “He delivered me from mine enemy, the strong, from those that hated me, when they were too mighty for me. They overcame me on the day of my calamity, but the Eternal became my protection” (2 Samuel xxii. 18, 19)t

When David “had peace from his enemies,” he vows to build a house to the Lord, and he prays for God’s benediction upon this house. The solicitation of the king for his people is grandly expressed in a short orison, after God had visited Israel with punishment: “Was it not I that sinned? But these sheep, what have they done? O, Eternal, my God, let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house! but do not bring misfortune against thy people!” (2 Chron. xxi. 17). Once only does David address the Almighty in his own behalf— when his and Bathsheba’s child of sin, is dying. The king prayed for the lad, fasted, and lay upon the floor all night. To this human and most affecting episode we are indebted for a characteristic expression, which shows the old Jewish belief in the immortality of the soul. When David was told that the child was dead, what did he do? Did he give himself up to despair? No! He collected himself, rose up, changed his clothes, and asked for meat and drink.

To the question of his surprised household, he simply answered: "Can I then bring back the child? I may go to him—but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel xii. 23).

From the tone of David's hymn of thanks (2 Samuel xxii.), flowing in powerful rhythm to the very last strain of his Hallelujah: "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord" (Psalm cl.), we may judge that the praise of the Eternal is the principal theme in all his immortal psalms.

Although he repeatedly expresses in his sacred songs repentance and remorse—"I watch, and I am become like a night-bird sitting alone upon the house-top" (Psalm cii. 7)—although he again and again confesses, "Poor and needy am I" (Ps. xl. 17), "I am weary of my calling, my throat is hoarse" (Psalm lxix. 3) . . . . "I am bowed down to the utmost" (Psalm xxxviii. 7) . . . . the joy of having confidence in the Eternal is more clearly demonstrated than all his other invocations. That the psalms have always been bodily appropriated for the devotional exercises of the different religious denominations there is no need to specialize. I would only recall the weighty opinion of Luther: "Where can one find more inspiring words of joy than in the psalms, praises and hymns of thanksgiving? From their standpoint, one can fathom the heart of the righteous. As beautiful flowers blossom in a fair garden, so do beautiful thoughts of God spring from the words of the psalmist. Where can one find deeper and more solemn meditations than are comprised in the penitential psalms? Here, again, one may catch a glimpse of the remorseful soul, and it is as if he were looking at death, or, perhaps, upon hell. How sombre and gloomy everything seems because of the wrath of God! When fear and hope are alluded to, no painter could depict, no orator could portray, the terror of the one or the sublimity of the other."

The Bible is in everybody's hands. Whoever wishes to obtain a true picture of the Jewish spirit, let him read

impartially those lines in which are set forth the immortal characteristics of a rock-like confidence in God, deep-seated gratitude, and an almost passionate devotion to His will, three principal traits of the children of Israel. Where is there a people that can show anything like it?

The Greeks and Romans, the Germans and Indians, fought for the blood-stained palm of victory, for the crown of honor, for the wreath of love; the Israelite's ornament is his belief in the One God, his watchword: "Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever" (Psalm cxxxvi.).

Solomon's prayer at the consecration of the Temple is from beginning to end, so lofty in its simple piety that it would be well to give it in full (1st Book of Kings, chap. viii., 23-53):

23. And he [Solomon] said: O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath, thou who keepest the covenant and the kindness for thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart;

24. Who has kept for thy servant David, my father, what thou hadst promised him; and thou spakest with thy mouth, and hadst fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day.

25. And now, O Lord, the God of Israel, keep for thy servant David, my father, what thou hast spoken concerning him, saying: There shall never fail thee a man in my sight who sitteth on the throne of Israel; if thy children but take heed to their way to walk before me as thou hast walked before me.

26. And now, O God of Israel, I pray thee, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David, my father.

27. For in truth, will God then dwell on the earth. Behold, the heavens and the heavens of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less, then, this house that I have built?

28. Yet wilt thou turn thy regard unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord, my God, to listen unto the entreaty and unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day;

29. That thy eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which thou hast said: My name shall be there; that thou mayest listen unto the prayer which thy servant shall pray at this place.

30. And listen thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of



thy people Israel, which they will pray at this place; and oh, do thou hear in heaven, thy dwelling place; and hear and forgive.

31. If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thy altar, in this house:

32. Then do thou hear in heaven, and act, and judge thy servants by condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and by justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

33. When thy people Israel are struck down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and they return then to thee, and confess thy name and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house.

34. Then do thou hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and cause them to return unto the land which thou hast given unto their fathers.

35. When the heavens be shut up, and there be no rain, because they have sinned against thee, and they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, because thou hast afflicted them:

36. Then do thou hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel; for thou wilt teach them the good way wherein they should walk; and give them rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

37. If there be famine in the land, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, or if there be locust, caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land in their gates; at whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness;

38. What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, of all thy people Israel, when they shall be conscious every man of the plague of his own heart, and he then spread forth his hands toward this house:

39. Then do thou hear in heaven the place of thy dwelling, and forgive, and act, and give to every man in accordance with all his ways as thou mayst know his heart; for thou, thyself alone, knowest the heart of all the children of men;

40. In order that they may fear thee all the days that they live on the face of the land which thou hast given unto our fathers.

41. But also to the stranger, who is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far-off country, for the sake of thy name;

42. For they will hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand and of thy outstretched arm; when he will come and pray at this house:

43. Mayest thou listen in heaven the place of thy dwelling and do according to all that the stranger will call on thee for; in order that all the nations of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee,

as [do] thy people Israel; and that they may understand that this house, which I have built, is called by thy name.

44. If thy people go out to battle against their enemy on the way on which thou mayest send them, and they do pray unto the Lord in the direction of the city which thou hast chosen, and of the house that I have built for thy name:

45. Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and procure them justice.

46. If they sin against thee (for there is no man that may not sin), and thou be angry with them, and give them up before the enemy, so that their captors carry them away captive unto the land of the enemy [be it] far or near;

47. And if they, then, take it to their heart in the land whither they may have been carried captive, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of their captors, saying, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly;"

48. And they return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, who have led them away captive, and they pray unto thee in the direction of their land, which thou hast given unto their fathers, of the city which thou hast chosen and of the house which thou hast built for thy name:

49. Then hear thou in heaven the place of thy dwelling, their prayer and their supplication, and procure them justice:

50. And forgive thy people for what they have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions, whereby they have transgressed against thee, and cause them to find mercy before their captors, that they may have mercy on them;

51. For they are thy people, and thy heritage, whom thou hast brought forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace;

52. That thy eyes may be opened unto the supplication of thy servants and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to listen unto them in all for which they call unto thee;

53. For thou hast separated them unto thee as a heritage from all the people of the earth, as thou spokest by the hand of Moses, thy servant, when thou broughtest forth our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord Eternal.

A paragraph, which represents a most holy conviction, and the most important confession of Judaism, and of the repetition of which the Israelite never tires, forms the introduction: "Eternal, God of Israel, there is no God like thee in the Heavens above, and on the earth beneath." The Almighty is then implored to grant his people—what?

Justice for the guilty as well as for the innocent, every one according to his doings. Another striking sentence, equally a tenet of Israel, and equally important, follows: "If thy people Israel have sinned and returned to thee, and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication unto thee in this house, then hear thou in Heaven, and pardon the sin of thy people Israel" (verses 33, 34).

But not only of Israel is the king mindful; "Also of the stranger who is not of thy people Israel, who cometh from far lands, for thy name's sake—and prays in this house; hear thou in Heaven, the place of thy dwelling, and do everything which the stranger shall ask thee, so that all people on earth shall know thy name and that thy name shall be called over this house, which I have built."

The fact that at the greatest national religious event (verses 41, 43) in the world's records, the consecration of the Temple, crowning the union of nations, the first man of the land before the people assembled should especially include the stranger, the foreigner, as belonging to his people, in his solemn intercession, and that he should implore for him the same mercy as for himself and his co-religionists, must be particularly mentioned.

This incident simply belies those statements that refer to the prejudicial and inimical Jewish spirit of exclusiveness where Gentiles are concerned. Even if the historic exactness of this episode may not be fully credited, we have at least the written sentiment which guides the rule of action, and the moral which everyone may draw therefrom.

This prayer is remarkable in another sense: it does not mention the Sacrificial service.

The fourth chapter of the Second Book of Kings contains the appeal of Elisha. The wonderful recitals of this chapter are most interesting, since they have served as the prototypes of several narratives of the New Testament.

Infinitely more important is Hezekiah's entreaty to the

Eternal. Of king Hezekiah, the Bible simply and definitely says: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." He has bequeathed us an invocation, which is incorporated, almost literally, in the Jewish ritual of to-day.

"O, Eternal, God of Israel, who dwelleth between the cherubim, thou art the true God, thou alone, for all the kingdoms of the earth; for it is thou who hast created the heavens and the earth. Incline, O Lord, thine ear, and hear! Open, O Eternal, thine eyes and see!" (2d Kings xix., 15, 16).

He prays for protection against Sennacherib and his people; "They have placed their gods in the fire, for they are no gods, but works of human hands, wood and stone. . . And now, O Eternal, save us, I beseech Thee, out of his hand!" Why? Why does the Jewish King implore so beseechingly the help of the Eternal? "In order that all the kingdoms of the earth may confess that Thou alone art the Eternal God!" (verses 18, 19).

A continuation of Hezekiah's supplications is to be found in the Book of Isaiah. His first prayer, "O, Eternal, who dwelleth between the cherubim," and the prayer repeated when healing the sick, are given exactly as in the Book of Kings, but the 3d Chapter of Isaiah contains a written prayer of Hezekiah, which breathes a spirit of extreme sadness. It is a poem so lofty in conception that I shall quote it here: (Isaiah xxxviii., 9-20).

9. The writing of Hezekiah, the King of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

10. I had said, In the midst of my days must I enter the gates of the nether world. I am deprived of the residue of my years.

11. I had said, I shall not see the Lord, in the land of the living; I shall not behold man any more among the inhabitants of the regions of death.

12. My dwelling is broken down, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off, like a weaver, my life; with pining sickness will he snatch me away; from day until night wilt thou make an end of me.

13. I waited (with patience) till morning [whether], as a lion,

so would he break all my bones; from day until night wilt thou make an end of me.

14. Like a swallow or a crane, so did I chirp; I did moan like a dove; my eyes were lifted up on high. O Lord, I am oppressed; grant me ease.

15. What shall I speak? He hath promised it unto me, and hath also accomplished it. I will make pilgrimages [to God's house] all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.

16. O Lord! by these [things, men] will live, and in all these [things] is the life of my spirit; so wilt thou give me health, and cause me to live.

17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but thou hast, in loving my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast behind thy back all my sins.

18. For the nether world will not thank thee, death will not praise thee; they that go down into the pit will not hope for thy truth.

19. The living, the living alone, shall thank thee, like me this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

20. The Lord is there to help me: therefore will we play my hymns all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.

In the twelfth verse, it were well to notice the uncommonly poetical comparison between the human being, flitting hither and thither, and the perishable tent of the wandering shepherd. And then, again, the beauty of the phrase, "I have cut off, like a weaver, my life; from day until night wilt thou make an end of me." One can hardly call the magnificent invocation of the prophets, "Prayer."

Let us proceed to the book of Jeremiah. The twelfth chapter begins at once with Jeremiah's bold question:

1. (Too) righteous art thou, O Lord, that I could plead with thee, yet must I speak of (the principles of) justice with thee: Wherefore is the way of the wicked happy? Do all those prosper that deal treacherously?

2. Thou hast planted them; they have also taken root; they grow; they also bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth and far from their mind."

And now the request with all the energy of its revolting sadness.

3. . . . Set them apart like sheep for the slaughter.

4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herb of all the field wither? Because of the wickedness of those that dwell therein are

wholly removed, the beasts and the birds; because they said: He will not see our last end.

Although this "communing with God" cannot be properly called "Prayer," nevertheless whole sentences from these parts of the prophets have been transplanted word for word into the daily devotions of the Israelites; as, for example, the inspiring utterance of Hosea, repeated every morning while binding the Tephillin: "I will betroth thee unto me forever; Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and injustice, and in loving kindness, and in mercy; and I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord" (chap. ii. 21-22).

Equally important are the words of Zechariah: "And the Eternal shall be King over the whole earth. On that day God will be (acknowledged) One, and his name be One" (chap. xiv. 9).

Besides to Isaiah and Jeremias, both Jews and Gentiles are indebted to Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Joel, Obadiah and Micha, for their sublime meditations and incomparable expressions. Where can we find a more liberal and altruistic saying, than the sentiment uttered by Malachi: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Then why shall we deal treacherously, every man against his brother?" (chapter ii. 10).

The prophets all, have added gems of thought to ornament the daily service.

One of the longest prayers finds a place in the book of Nehemiah.

After the prophet's brief historic reflection, follows a number of exclamations of a self-accusing nature and then the final entreaty for mercy (Neh. ix. 33). "Thou art righteous in all that is come over us, for thou hast acted according to the truth, but we have done wickedly." Israel frankly confesses that by reason of his own guilt he has brought servitude upon himself (verse 36). "Behold we are this day servants, and the land which thou hast given to our fathers, to eat its fruit and its good things,

behold we are servants in it" (verse 37). "And it yieldeth its products in abundance for the kings, whom thou hast set over us, because of our sins; also over our bodies have they dominion, and over our cattle also, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress."

A remarkable outburst of political insight, gained at last through suffering!

Who does not call to mind in connection with the exclamation: "The king whom thou hast set over us because of our sins," Samuel's persuasive admonition when the people wanted an absolute ruler? Now had they come to realize this questionable good fortune— and they, the stubborn children of Israel, cry to God in their trouble, keeping fasts and wearing sackcloth!

This petition of the distressed people is the last preserved in the Bible. The invocations of Jesus of Nazareth do not belong here, although Jesus, when he prayed, must have felt a Jew in every sense of the word.

But through disputes and differences, the traditions of the New Testament have made such inroads into otherwise impartial judgment, that, perhaps, neither Jew nor Gentile will admire my silence on the subject.

In conclusion, I would add a general remark:

Prof. Lazarus, in his book: "Treu und Frei" (which merits perusal by both Jew and Christian) says: "The Jews have always been the classic people of self-criticism," and he further says: "This, our propensity for self-accusation, fosters a bitter prejudice against us: our self-praise has been justly blamed, but our self-blame, unjustly condemned. Often, therefore, the opinion is rife (as with Goethe), that Jews must be so much worse than other people, because their prophets, their orators, and their leaders have always rebuked them for their wickedness. It may be that our faults have not been greater than other peoples', our condemnation of them, however, has been more severe." Verily, it must be so! For if you examine earnestly and sincerely most of the propitiatory prayers

in the Bible, you will find a sharp contrast between Israel's and those of other people, who are used to beat the breasts not without a certain amount of self-conceit. From the paroxysms of howling dervishes, to the Catholic confessional, which latter is held in such favor by the female sex because it is apt to quiet the conscience, the modes of the avowal of guilt are varied. Jewish self-confession, without humiliation, is not to be thought of; the Israelites' acknowledgment of sins strips every palliating cover off the soul, and pries into its depths with rigor, albeit with sagacity. God is implored for pardon not only for vital sins, but even for those committed without our knowledge—even for sins in passing judgment upon others, for our hatred without cause, and for our sins in thought only.

A most fervent avowal of sin, which has been incorporated in the ritual of the most sacred day in the year—Yom Kippur—taken originally from sentences scattered here and there throughout the Bible, ends with this devout and humble petition: "O, may it be thy will, O Eternal, my God, and God of my fathers, that I may sin no more; and as to the sins I have committed, purge them away in thine abounding compassion, though not by means of affliction and sore disease."

How strange! . . . Is the Israelite afraid of pain? Can it be that he is more sensitive than the numerous martyrs of other beliefs, who for the so-called "Honor of God" castigated and even mutilated themselves? In this unassuming expression, over which perhaps many pass without a thought, lies hidden a wonderful meaning. No!—The Jew does not fear pain and suffering!—He is accustomed to it,—but he fears the inability to serve God. Because suffering and sickness would prevent him from carrying out his religious duties, therefore he fears it; hence, he prays to God thus to protect him. No flagellation or mutilation, no mangling of the body fashioned sound and whole by the Creator! On the contrary, protection against bodily suffering is asked for, so



that the Israelite shall not be incapacitated from serving his Creator with his whole power, and with entire devotion. In this Judaism stands in peculiar contrast to other confessions. And a second comparison not less important and valuable, consists in this: that Judaism does not throw the burden of its sins on other shoulders, it does not let the innocent expiate the actions of the guilty; it does not employ substitutes in expiating its own sins. In Judaism there is no vicarious atonement. One's own guilt—one's punishment; no pardon without true repentance, no manner of justification without it be based on justice.

## II. PRAYER IN THE TALMUD.

The prayers of Israel—those recited in the synagogue as well as those offered in private life—are nearly all drawn from the Talmud. However, the Jewish ritual with the history of its creation, laws for its use, and in fact, the Halachic view of the prayers, do not, for the moment, interest us. What attracted me in the Haggadic portion of the liturgy, and what I there found, I wish, briefly, to bring to your notice. I cannot conceive why only Talmudic scholars should benefit by the wealth of all that is beautiful in Rabbinical literature! Why should not we laymen refresh ourselves with the spiritual food offered by the rabbis? Only *refresh* ourselves, mark you! I do not want to be “Massig Gevul” (a trespasser in another’s domain).

Neither can I give a chronologically-arranged record of Talmudic prayers, for even the Talmud does not contain it. What I would offer is only a glance through an almost impenetrable, tho’ beautiful forest, in which thousands upon thousands of voices sing the praise of the Creator.

The mode of expression in the Talmud differs entirely from that of the Bible.

Like the bubbling fountain mentioned in the Scripture, sometimes fresh, often bitter, but always stimulating, so the Talmud is as a mountain stream, containing a creative force, which seems to well up from the depths of a consecrated spirit, and with ever increasing power flowing from the hidden depths, circling between intervening heights, carrying with it its manifold waves, and bearing in its path matter, rough and tender, vital and puerile. On its borders lay many gems of the most varied form and hue. Often is the clear sky of the simple Bible interpretation reflected in it; often it appears obscured by the impenetrable forest of artificial casuistry. Not many wanderers in these regions possess the art of disentangling

carefully these thickets, so that a glimpse of the beyond may be obtained. Nevertheless, over the whole shines a friendly light permeating the entire moral being of the Jew. The bearers of this light are the rabbis of the Talmud. Very often they were men of modest position in life, and of poor origin. For not only the professional rabbis and teachers devoted themselves to study; almost every thinking man studied also. Unlike to-day, they did not study only in their youth, and then under compulsion,—their's was a task, to which, led by their inward feelings, they involuntarily attached themselves. To *Think, Learn and Teach*, appeared to the assiduous Jewish spirit of the people, their principal aim of life. I do not, by any means, refer to teachers by profession—but to men who lived by their handiwork. To the Jewish shoemaker or locksmith, peasant or weaver, shoes and locks, field and woof, were objects in the handling of which a livelihood was to be obtained,—as physical activity was a divine duty. But whilst in this manual exercise, the thought of the worker was in the realms of the “teacher,” inasmuch as he meditated upon things divine and moral—from no other motive, than that he was a Jew.

Most of the rabbis, whose compositions and sayings are found in the Talmud and used in the daily prayers, were artisans, earning their bread by the sweat of their brow. But they were not prevented thereby from acquiring knowledge, and from possessing widespread reputation as scholars. Other nations have produced, although more rarely, similar characters; for instance, Hans Sachs, the cobbler-poet of the Reformation, and Jacob Boehme, coupling the same handicraft with more than an ordinary knowledge of religious philosophy. The trade of a shoemaker requiring steady and domestic habits, was looked upon as peculiarly suited for study. Under all circumstances, we seldom meet with a scientific man who disregards or undervalues manual labor. We also find ordinary workmen (those having no aptitude for a particular

branch of skilled labor) among the sages of the Talmud, and I will name one, of whom many of my brethren-in-faith may have heard, and who was at the same time, one of the noblest and most amiable of men; I refer to the day-laborer, Hillel. He is said to have been, according to a very doubtful legend, the teacher of Jesus. All these men taught in a similar manner, both as to transmitting what they had learned, and in expounding their own doctrines. The process seldom changed. The pupils received the lesson *viva voce* from the teacher. Theories were put into practice, and both transmitted to posterity, the former by precept, the latter by example. All disquisitions were reduced to writing, and the records kept. Whether the pupil, or, in due course, the teacher came or went, whether he worked or mused, whether he was alone or in company, even during the most intimate family intercourse, never did he neglect to further his teachings, nor did he lose sight of the demands of decency and morality in connection with all his doings in life. Doubts arose often, improvements were proposed, innovations carried out; fiery discussions animated the mind to high passion, but there was always,—and this is characteristic of nearly every page of this gigantic work—a union in the desire to act uprightly and honestly, “for the sake of the Divine name”—*leshem shomayim*.

The Talmudic prayer itself, in its meaning as well as in its treatment, partakes on the part of the writers, of the most minute observation. Nearly all of the more prominent teachers and editors of the Talmud not only add many explanations to the Biblical traditions, but also make comments thereon. The great abundance of such original remarks and commentaries precludes my treatment of them in detail. I shall, however, mention a few of the chief thoughts underlying them. Here we find a principle suited to all times, namely, that not mere theory must be sought after, but practice is what is required. (*Pirke Aboth*.) The disregard of this brings its own punish-

ment. The attention to forms, without participation in the spirit, leads to indifference, and produces only that which is base and despicable. It is in this soil that deceit and perhaps apostacy will flourish. Therefore the Talmud allows much latitude, and permits the Israelite, under certain circumstances, to accommodate himself to its laws. During the course of many centuries, the innovations of numberless teachers of the Jewish race must necessarily have widely differed on this one point; however, the best of them agree that the spiritual surpasses all that is merely formal. During the time of the Middle Ages the rabbis regarded these liberal views with less favor, thereby allowing their ideas to run parallel with the dark history of that time; because of this, I shall not dwell further on this phase of the subject.

The eminent Joshua ben Chananya earnestly recommends the shortening of several of the longer prayers, in the interest of religious devotion. Even in one of the chief invocations of the Jews, the "Shemone Ess're" (eighteen blessings), he introduced a single sentence embracing the whole contents. He also wrote the following short and pointed petition for one undertaking a journey: "Assist, Eternal, thy people, the remnant of Israel, on all the paths of their pilgrimage, and may thy providence bless their undertakings. Praises to thee, O God, who heareth my prayer!"

Elieser ben Hyrkanos, the contemporary of Joshua ben Chananya, although honestly differing with him on many points, says: "Do not regard thy prayer as a formal expression, but as an entreaty to God." It is highly interesting to follow Rabbi Elieser in his liberal view with regard to prescribed prayers, his otherwise strict and conservative system notwithstanding. He resolved to teach nothing but what he had learned from his teachers. In his time, Rabban Gamliel had established certain formulæ for prayer, as well as laws regulating their sequence, the like of which had never before existed. After the destruction

of the Temple, a regular order of prayer seems to have taken the place of the sacrificial and hymnal service. Elieser objects to this, because tradition knows nothing of formulæ, and he sets up the principle that "Prayer comes from the heart," and therefore cannot be made the object of a prescribed law. Also in the much discussed question whether one should first glorify God, and then pray for himself, or vice versa, the opinions of Rabbi Elieser and Rabbi Joshua widely differ. Rabbi Simlai, on the other hand, demands that the praise of God shall precede each and every petition, and thereby imitates Moses. Rabbi Joshua would also follow Moses, but Rabbi Elieser is of the opinion that Moses should not be imitated, for the simple reason that Moses is inimitable. (Aboda Zara 7b.)

Although, again and again we meet with diverse opinions presented with great weight and dignity, all furnish the pleasant impression of honest search for truth, yet, with no sign of a claim of infallibility. The rabbi's opinion is given without hesitation, and without personal feeling, albeit, the opinion of an adversary may prevail. In exceptional cases a claim of infallibility has appeared for rabbis are only mortals. Such claimants, however, are excommunicated. Not the opinion of an individual, but the consideration for the commonwealth, should be predominant. It is explicitly stated (Aboda Zara 36a): "Only such ordinances which are of advantage should be carried out by the people, and such rules only which the requirements of public life have created should be observed." One particular sentence even goes so far as to say "General usage in Israel is law," and again, "Usage annuls an ordinance"—meaning that custom makes law. This thought is even more clearly expressed in the words: "A legal order should only be enforced if the majority of the community be not injured thereby." (Baba Kama 79b.) If anyone is active in the interests of an entire community, he is accounted as if engaged in religious work, and is therefore exempt from observing any ceremonial

law that may interfere with his public labor. (Sanhedrin 41a). To such men, as officers of the court, elders of the congregations, in short, to all engaged in public affairs a limitation of their prayers is not only permitted but commanded, because a movement of which the commonwealth is the beneficiary, is more important than prayer. The copyist of holy writings (Sofer) for example, could dispense with the recitation of the "Sh'ma," and all other prayers, so long as he was engaged in his edifying work. Thus the followers of every educational and elevating occupation, were exempt from the regulation ceremonies and from duties of a merely formal nature—even those who dealt in books, or worked in any manner for the interest of religion and morality (Maimonides Hilchoth Mamrim 2, 5). It is, indeed, refreshing to observe how little the Talmud limits the liberty of conscience!—Hil'el and his pupils taught that the "Sh'ma" may be said while standing, lying down, sitting during work, on a journey, etc. Time and circumstance were quite a factor. Rabbi José objects, however, to saying it in a subdued voice, while another admits of it, and allows even, the omitting, or the changing of words. In the latter case one must start again from the beginning; while yet another is satisfied to re-commence where the mistake is made. In short, there was to be no dispute about the letter of the law.

Therefore a newly married person is exempt for the first three days after matrimony, from the duty of regular prayer, "since he will hardly be in a state of mind for worship"—a beautiful, although quaint illustration. It marks the only true and sincere regard for prayer which should exist to-day and forever! He who prays to God, should be wholly at one with Him. Hence, not he who prays the least is irreligious, but he who prays without devotion.

Great value is placed upon the necessity of prayer. Of such that had a synagogue in a village, and did not attend

it, Resch Lakisch applied the saying, "Behold! I will pluck them out of their land, and the house of Judah will I pluck out from the midst of them." (Jer. 12, 14.) Rabbi Aba Benjamin says: "When two pray in the same house, and one on leaving it does not wait for the other, the prayer of such will be of no avail;" meaning the prayer was valueless, for there lacked human love in the breast of the one who hurried away. "He who leaves the house of prayer, should not take long strides" is the dictum of Rabbi Abaya, "but when going to synagogue, it is your duty to go quickly." Some rabbis look upon prayer as prolonging human life. Nearly all Talmudic sayings are so deeply symbolic that one gradually accustoms himself to look below the surface, and thereby is educated to reflect profoundly. What has just been said concerning the prolongation of life may be found to contain a substratum of satire, but close investigation will reveal its truth. The pious lives more modestly than the frivolous. He cherishes his trust in God and resists, with much more ease, all life's enemies. Strength, joyfulness and moderation in all things, preserve existence.

As Jews became scattered throughout the world, their schools in Palestine became diminished, and teachers as well as pupils emigrated to Babylonia, Syria, Greece, Italy and Spain. Hence, influenced by local customs and circumstances, changes and improvements in the manner of worship, and even in prayer itself, began to appear. The different climates and modes of living, created diverse requirements, and alterations were made accordingly. For example, the ritual laws in regard to eating were set aside by later rabbis who proclaimed that everything is to be regulated according to locality and time, and that the older laws made for other countries were no more in force. In Tractate Berachoth, we find: "The rabbis taught that such men who are threatened by wild beasts, robbers, or by danger of any kind, or those who prepare for a journey, or who are enfeebled by illness, may say a short



prayer" (instead of that regularly prescribed). Among innumerable petitions, I have found none, except one seemingly humorous request, for the granting of physical favors. Only during times of distress, or natural catastrophes, the protection of Jehovah is entreated, but never for the individual, always for the whole community. The people that suffers as a whole, shall be prayed for as a whole. This is the touchstone of Jewish supplication. An illustration of this is given in Tractate Taanith. Quite frequently the Romans stipulated that the Israelites should not wear signs for the purpose of recognizing one another, that they should neglect their Sabbath and pay no attention to the Torah. Jehuda ben Shamua and his friends went to a matron for instruction how to avoid all this. She said: "Place yourselves on the streets at night time, and cry to God." They did so. Lifting up their voices in prayer, they said: "Oh, Eternal! Are we not brethren, are we not sons of one father? Are we not children of one mother? Why are we separated from other nations and such a fate destined for us?" Their lamentations must have touched the hearts of the officers of the government, for we read that "the much-condemned restrictions were withdrawn." In remembrance thereof the 28th of Adar was set aside as a festival.

The commands of the Rabbis as to the time when prayer should not be said, are clear and to the point. Never when absentminded, nor in a frivolous mood, nor during a conversation or an entertainment, nor even while in pain (*Berachoth 31a*). "Not while in pain"—this may seem strange to men of modern times, especially to non-Jews, for we are so accustomed to resort to prayer in times of adversity and distress. The Talmudic conception, condemning selfishness, allows prayer only for general welfare, but commands praise and gratitude to God at all hours, not for bad times only. A clear mind is essential to prayer . . . such would be impossible

during pain, and therefore we should not pray when undergoing physical suffering.

Unnecessary exaltation in prayer is also objectionable. Rabbi Chanina once interrupted a worshiper, who invoked God as the Great, the Strong, the Mighty, the Powerful, over and over again, and sarcastically asked him: "Have you enumerated all the qualities of the Eternal? If the owner of many thousands of gold coins were praised for the possession of one thousand silver coins, would it not be next to an insult? God's greatness cannot be thus estimated." The Talmud of Jerusalem quotes an excellent anecdote of Rabbi Chanina. While he was praying, an arad (possibly a species of watersnake), approached him. He paid no attention, and was, consequently, bitten. Now it happened that the wound did not prove dangerous to the man, but the snake died. This gave rise to the *bon mot*: "Woe to the man who meets an arad, but woe to an arad that meets with a Rabb Chanina" (Berachoth 33a). Even when a king discovers us in prayer, we should not countenance an interruption. Once a prince saluted a worshiper while at his devotions, and felt greatly insulted at not receiving recognition. The pious man subsequently asked the prince if he would have replied to the salutation of a passing friend while in conversation with his king. This question being answered in the negative, he continued: "Can you not draw a conclusion from this? If you would not suffer yourself to be disturbed when standing before a king of flesh and blood, with no fixed residence, one that might be well to-day, but dead to-morrow, much less would I when standing before the King of all kings, the most Holy One, blessed be He, who reigns now, and will exist to all eternity!"

I have said that one should not pray while in a jesting mood, nor while in pain. In conformity with the Halacha should our orisons be offered. The meaning of Halacha is defined in the most beautiful language by Heine.

Referring to the boyhood of Jehudah Halevi (Hebrew Melodies\*), he says

Yes, full early did his father  
Lead him onward to the Talmud,  
And he then unfolded to him  
The Halacha, that illustrious

Fighting school, where the expertest  
Dialectic athletes, both of  
Babylon and Pumbeditha,  
Carry on the mental combats.

Here the boy could gain instruction  
In the arts, too, of polemics;  
Later, in the book Cosari,  
Was his mastership established.

Yet the heavens pour down upon us  
Lights of two distinct descriptions—  
Glaring daylight of the sun,  
And the moonlight's softer luster.

Thus two different lights the Talmud  
Also sheds, and is divided  
In Halacha and Hagada . . . . .  
Now, the first's a fighting school;

But the latter, the Hagada,  
I should rather call a garden . . . . .  
And the youthful Talmud scholar,  
When his heart was overpower'd.

And was deafened by the squabbles  
Of the Halacha, by disputes  
All about the fatal egg  
Laid one feast-day by a pullet;

Or about some other question  
Of the same importance, straightway  
Fled the boy to find refreshment  
In the Blossoming Hagada,

Where the charming olden stories,  
Tales of angels, famous legends,  
Silent histories of martyrs,  
Festal songs, and words of wisdom.

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\* Bowring's version.

Hyperboles, far-fetch'd it may be,  
 But impress'd with deep conviction,  
 Full of glowing faith—all glitter'd,  
 Bloom'd, and sprung in such abundance.

And the stripling's noble bosom  
 Was pervaded by the savage  
 But adventure-breathing sweetness,  
 By the wonderous blissful anguish

And the fabulous wild terrors  
 Of that blissful secret world,  
 Of that mighty revelation,  
 Known to us as Poesy.

“How many excellent Halachas (rules of ritual tuition) might be taken from the expressions in the prayer offered by Hannah?” says Rabbi Hammuna. In the first book of Samuel (chapter i.) we find: “And Hannah spoke from her heart,” which clearly shows that the worshiper should attune his heart, that is to say, his mind, to devotion. Further: “Only her lips moved,” consequently, loud speech is not required, and again: “And Eli regarded her as a drunken woman,” which implies that persons shall not pray when intoxicated; and later: “Eli said to her: ‘How long wilt thou be drunken?’” which seems to tell us to correct our companions when their behavior provokes criticism. And such hair-splitting “Halachas” we find in the Talmud by the thousand.

With regard to the proper or improper mode of praying, there are a great many excellent remarks. When Elieser asked the Lord for a sign in the selection of a bride for the son of his master, the Rabbis hold that his action was well-timed, and give, as a proof of this, that his wishes were fulfilled. On the other hand, the prayer of Jephthah was not a proper one, and in consequence thereof, he was punished, in the sacrifice of his only child. A petition should not be offered in reference to matters that cannot be changed. The blessings of prayer become apparent in such things, only, that can neither be weighed nor measured, neither be counted nor calculated upon, and

which are otherwise hidden from the human eye. How profitable it is to reflect on such claims or pretensions. The first and foremost of the general necessities for which prayer is offered, especially in Southern countries, is rain. Scarcity of rain (serious enough in itself), has sometimes furnished humorous situations. We read in Tractate Taanith (19a), the following legend: "Some one said to Choni, 'pray for us that rain may fall.' He did so, but rain came not. What did he then do? He traced a circle, in the centre of which he stood and exclaimed: 'Lord of the Universe! Thy children have cast their eyes upon me, being a son of thy house. I therefore take a solemn vow not to move away from this spot, until thou hast shown mercy upon thy children.' Rain then began to drop. His pupils said: 'Rabbi, it seems to us that this rain is only enough to deliver you from your vow.' Then the Rabbi further prayed: 'Not for such a rain did I ask, O Lord, but for one sufficient to fill cisterns and wells.' At this, the water poured down in such torrents, that the pupils were frightened. They cried out: 'It appears to us that everything will perish.' Again the Rabbi exclaimed: 'Such rain I have not prayed for, O Lord, but for one more moderate and fertilizing.' Then it rained in the usual way, and after a sufficient fall, the wind arose and dispersed the clouds, the sun reappeared, and all the people went out to inspect the fields. Wonderful to relate, all around the mount of the Temple, the ground was covered with morels and truffles." (Quick sprouting edibles.)

The grandson of Choni was afterwards requested to pray for rain. This time school-children surrounded him, touching the edge of his mantle and crying: "Father, father! give us rain!" He prayed to God: "Lord of the Universe! do it for the sake of these children who cannot discriminate between the Father that can give rain, and the Father that cannot give rain."

The following story has quite a touch of satire. "Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was on the road, when sudden rainy

began to fall. 'God, my Lord' said he, 'all the world is now gladdened, and comforted, only Rabbi Chanina is in trouble.' It thereupon ceased to rain. After having arrived home he said 'Oh Lord! Rabbi Chanina is now comforted, but the balance of the wor'd is in trouble again.' . . . . It then re-commenced to rain."

In such manner the Talmud combines the serious and the humorous, yet a moral principle is always underlying. A little fable seems to show that one might be grateful even for evil omens. "Once on a journey, Rabbi Akiba arrived at a city and asked for lodging, which was refused him. He said: "Whatever the Lord wills, is good." He went to camp out on a plain, having with him a cock, an ass and a candle. A wind arose and blew out the light, a cat came and stole the cock, and a lion came and devoured the ass. The Rabbi said: 'Everything that the all-merciful wills, is good.' During the same night, brigands entered the city, and captured its inhabitants. Rabbi Akiba said: 'Did I not say that everything that the Most Holy does, is well done.' A burning light might have revealed my whereabouts; it was well that the cock could crow no more, and it was also well that the ass perished as the lion's hunger was appeased. So Rabbi Akiba was saved."

The same Akiba died a martyr to a horrible death. He did not fall into the clutches of a lion, but in the hands of beasts belonging to the human race. It was the hour of saying the 'Sh'ma,' and he repeated the prayer during the torture he was undergoing: "Hear O! Israel, the Eternal, our God, the Eternal is One. Praised be the name of the glory of His kingdom for ever and ever. And thou shalt love the Eternal, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. . . . . "Enough, enough," exclaimed his followers; he replied, "During the time of my whole life I was troubled about the sentence," with all thy soul," which means, even if your soul is taken from you. I have often thought, "will I ever have the opportunity to fulfill this part of the phrase, and now that oppor-



tunity offers, shall I not discharge my duty?" His lips lovingly rested on the word *Echod* (One), until his soul took flight.

It would be hardly practicable to enter into further detail regarding the traditional doctrines and prayers of the different Talmudists; but two expressions deserve notice. The first is an exclamation of gratitude by Nechunya bar Hakkana, "I thank thee, my God, and the God of my fathers, that Thou hast so cast my lot in life as to enable me to attend the House of Worship, and that I be not among those that frequent the theatre or circus. True! I labor hard, so do they also; I have perseverance, so have they, but I labor to prepare myself for the future world, while they do not." The second, is taken from Mar Rabina, and the idea has been embodied in the following words, in the daily devotions of the Jews: Before my abusers, my soul remains silent," an expression at once humble and dignified, partaking equally of solemn simplicity and true greatness. These, and similar strains, the devout Jew pronounces daily, often not inquiring where they originated. And yet . . . I think that he should ask the question, at least he should know of the men whose thoughts and words are repeated in his own prayers. It seems but a tribute of gratitude due to their memory.

Translations of the Talmud, and of the Midrashim—to borrow the admirable words of Prof. August Wuensche—enable even the layman to become acquainted with the creations and accomplishments of the rabbis. He discovers therein a rich mine of knowledge, temporal, as well as spiritual, a treasury of practical doctrines, which often seem to refer to our modern life.

A mere examination of this collection of wisdom, embracing a period of over two thousand years, would not suffice. One, however, who regards this work as he would look upon a venerable friend, or a beloved companion, will derive great benefit from the contact. He

will unwittingly sharpen his power of judgment, and improve his literary taste to such an extent, that other reading matter will appear trivial and commonplace. Is there not great profit even in this?

To the modern reader, many things will look strange at first. For instance, the frequent incarnation of the Supreme Being. Yet such personification shows how close'y and naturally the Israelites had interwoven their whole life, with the thought of God. It was impossible that their sentiments could be always applied to the spiritual exclusively, yet as they desired to be hourly near their Creator, they thought of him as having human features.

The idea that neglect of divine worship, which, of course, includes moral action, would impoverish God, is very peculiar. It was believed that the more the children of God exerted themselves in the accumulation of a treasury of good deeds, the more would blessings be showered upon them from above. Only a people that love the Creator with such child-like and unbounded fervor, could attempt so hazardous a supposition, according to which God and earthly desire intermingle, even as the sky seems to bend with the highest earthly summit. To embrace fully the meaning of this, is left to the philosopher in his most studious moments. For ourselves, we must be content to look upon the elevating thought,—that God, Himself, is the poorer by the lack of morals on the part of His worshipers—with admiration, albeit, with apprehension. **At any rate, we may consider the other side; God may be enriched through the efforts of his children. Let me admonish you—you particularly, my sisters—to endeavor to enrich God by your good deeds, by your own perfection!**