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ARTICLE II.

THE BOOK OF ENLIGHTENMENT.

BY JACOB, THE SON OF AARON, SAMARITAN HIGH PRIEST,
NABLUS, PALESTINE.¹

XIII. THE JORDAN.

IF any one should ask, What is the Jordan? answer, It is the river of the Torah.

They celebrated the Passover after they crossed the Jordan, and on the second day of the feast of the Passover manna disappeared, and they ate from the products of the land and made therefrom unleavened bread. Then they began their seven years' war against the enemy, and on the seventh month of the seventh year they conquered their enemies entirely, and were rested, and erected the tabernacle on Mount Gerizim, which is the chosen place of the dwelling of the Most High God. They built the stone altar in accordance with the command of God, and offered due sacrifice, and fasted during the great day of sin covering, and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. On that day the high priest Eleazar Ben Aaron began to read the law to the people from the copy handed to them by Moses, the apostle of God, written by his noble hand, as we see in Deut. xv. 1, "At the end of seven years," in the first year of rest, when the children of Israel shall celebrate the feast and appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he chose, shalt thou read before them this Torah in the hearing of the children of Israel. He

¹Translated from the Arabic by Professor Abdullah Ben Kori, of Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon; edited by Rev. William E. Barton, D.D., Oak Park, Illinois.

began its reading on the feast day, and on the seventh day it was finished. It is said that he used to read to them some book each day.

He would stand on a high place, and would raise his voice so the whole people could hear his words and understand the meaning, and the import of the Torah, — what was to them pure and what was impure, the verses that were intended for men and those that were intended for women, all that God commanded that they should do and perform. Compare Num. xxxi. 12: "Gather ye the people, men and women, and the children and the neighbors and the strangers," that they may hear and be instructed. Some learned men say that, on account of the large number of people and the large space occupied by their tents, the high priest could not make himself understood to the farthest as well as the nearest to him, and therefore he used to adopt two plans: either to gather them in separate numbers and read to each; or to read to the chiefs of the people, the men of understanding, and have them instruct the rest. *And God knows best.*

It is said that whenever seven years would pass, when the year of rest would take place, the high priest used to enter the tabernacle on the day of Sin Covering to burn incense. He would return, and with him he would have the roll of the Torah, and would read it to the people of Israel, according to one of the above plans during one of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. He would keep the roll throughout that whole year, for the people used to be scattered after their plowing and planting, treepruning, and the rest of their work. The scribes would present themselves before the high priest and examine the writing of the roll, the placement of characters, and the true spelling. During the second year, on the day of Sin Covering, he would return the roll to its

place. Some learned men, however, say that the roll was never removed from its place in the tabernacle. It was only the roll that was written by the hand of Moses that was taken out and shown to the people, which is quite correct. *And God knows best the truth.*

XIV. THE SHINING OF MOSES' FACE.

I was asked by some, concerning the face of our lord Moses Ben Amram when it was bright and shone with light, When did it happen, and how did he use to deal with the people when he used to read to them the words of God?

After the three forty days' fastings, light darted out from him with dazzling effulgence, outwardly and inwardly, and his noble face shone. This was one of the greatest wonders that he performed; for the one who keeps up fasting becomes feeble, he loses his strength, and the energy upon his face is lost. It was the contrary in his case; for, in spite of the long fasting, he shone with a divine light, through the favor of God. This is implied in the saying of God in Ex. xxxiv. 10: "With thee I will do wonders again, which have never before been performed in all the earth, and before all men, and in all nations," — meaning that none of the jewels of the earth will ever compare in brightness with this light with which he shone. He added "and in all nations," meaning that there has never been any man among all the peoples of the earth who had ever come near possessing the same.

Verse 11 reads: "And all the people of which thou art will see that the work which the Lord thy God will do thee is wonderful," meaning that this wonder will be seen by the people without their being conscious of it. For we read in Ex. xxxiv. 39: "And Moses knew not that the skin of his face

began to shine while he was speaking with him." And when he descended from the mountain, the children of Israel, with his brother Aaron, saw him while his face was brighter than the light of the sun. And they were dazzled with his look, and were afraid to approach him, as we read in verse 30, "they were afraid to approach him," although he knew nothing about the condition of his face, for he was like other men, and unable to see his own face. Calling them to draw near, he was informed of what they saw. Therefore he made for himself a face veil, in order that the people might behold him (may the peace of God be upon him). So then, whenever he addressed them, he would uncover his face, and would speak with them the words of God; and when he was through his address they would not be able to behold him. Whenever he went into the presence of God he unveiled himself, but when he addressed the people he put on the veil. *And God knows best.*

I was asked by some, concerning Ex. xxiv. 10, "And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, as clear as the cloudless heaven," What did they see? They saw indeed our lord Gabriel the Archangel, the servant of the glorious God. To interpret the word *Elohim* as God would be gross ignorance, for God has neither member nor claw, because in the same verse we read: "under his feet." For God (who is exalted) is not seen, and cannot be likened to anything. Compare Ex. xxxiii. 20: "For no man shall see me and live."

The word *Elohim* has different interpretations. It may be applied just as the words Rabbi and *Adonai* to several titled persons, such as the governor, sultan, etc., the number of which may render this treatise long. Therefore what they saw was not God, but Gabriel, as we have said. He was

standing on a platform in the guise of a column as pure as a jewel, and very transparent, as we read in xxxiv. 10, "having the transparency of heaven in clearness," that is, as clear as the heaven when it is cloudless. Our lord Gabriel was in the service of Hakkabod (Glory), whose look was like the very consuming fire. Compare Ex. xxiv. 17, "And the appearance of the glory of God was like the very consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the presence of the children of Israel."

At this time they were commanded what we read in Ex. xxiv. 1: "And he said to Moses, Come up thou, and Aaron, and Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar." It is said also, Let Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and Ithamar come. And they saw the Lord of Israel while they were at the base of the mountain, but the people observed the light from the encampment, as we read in the same chapter, "in the presence of the children of Israel." This was on a different day from that of the day of the address before the decalogue, for there we read in Ex. xix. 21: "Hurry down and warn this people, lest they be emboldened to see Jehovah." He also warned him to declare unto the people, even unto the priests, not to approach the mountain. He commanded them to consecrate themselves lest the chief angel should strike them. Compare verse 22: "And let the priests also, that come near unto Jehovah, sanctify themselves, lest the angel of Jehovah strike them down"; and that is why we read in xxix. 11: "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand," which means that they, with the exception of the apostles, did not embolden themselves, and did not approach without receiving a command, and did not commit any evil thing without being struck by the Lord. But they were fa-

vored with strength and power from on high, when they saw the chief archangel in that wonderful sea.

They returned safely and with gladness, eating and drinking. Compare Ex. xxiv. 11: "And they saw the angel of the Lord, and they ate and drank." Moses, however, did not receive the address which was all made in the presence of the people of Israel.

And I pray God for forgiveness for any addition or subtraction. This is what my tired mind and sickly understanding could discover. *And God possesses the best knowledge.*

XV. THE WATER AT REPHIDIM.

To the question, What happened in Rephidim of miracles, on account of the lack of water, and its appearance through Moses? my answer here follows.

Before the war with the Amalekites they encamped in Rephidim and were very thirsty, as, when they encamped there, they found no water. They quarreled with the apostle Moses (upon whom be peace), and told him: "Arise, and give us water, that we may drink, together with our children and babes and cattle." But the apostle told them: "Why quarrel ye with me, and tempt Jehovah?" They let him alone; but, on account of their parching thirst, they returned unto him, and said: "Did you intend to bring us out of Egypt that we might perish of thirst? If we ourselves were guilty, and did not deserve to be given water, the children and the cattle, in what have they sinned, that they should die of thirst?" The apostle, knowing that they were to strike him down, cried to God for help, and the answer was immediate: "Pass before the people, and be not afraid, and take with thee some of the elders of Israel."

This was done that they might behold the wonder, and

not in company with the people; for the place from which he caused the water to gush forth was far away, and all the people could not behold it. And Jehovah knew that there was no good in their coming to it to behold it. The place was Horeb. In verse 6 it reads, "Behold, I," meaning that the angel will stand in a pillar of cloud in the place which he was to strike.

Arriving, the apostle, in company with the elders, smote the rock with his well-known staff; and behold the water in abundance flowing out of it, which formed a large river. This river is the one alluded to in Deut. ix. 21, "I have cast its dust in the river which flowed from the mountain." It divided into two branches, one branch toward Rephidim and the other toward the wilderness of Sinai, of which they drank during their stay in the wilderness. That place was called Meribah in Ex. xvii. 7: "And he called the name of the place Massah Meribah." The first word, Massah, refers to their tempting God, as we read in xxii. 2; and this was due to their great ignorance, lack of faith and trust in the presence of God, and in his power to overcome their hunger and their thirst. Verse 7 proves this; for in it we are told that they said: "Is God among us, or not?" This was prohibited by God, as we read in Deut. vi. 16: "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." The word "Meribah" refers to the quarrel which they had with the apostle. *But God knows best.*

XVI. THE BATTLE WITH THE AMALEKITES.

As to the question of the Amalekites' battle and the reason why the Amalekites came from a far country to fight them in that place, we may answer, that this took place for several reasons: First, that God might remind them of what

they had committed in past sins, when they desired water and tempted him, quarreling with his apostle, that they might reform and repent. Second, when the king of the Amalekites heard of the arrival of the children of Israel, and feared lest they would attack his land on account of his courage and his strength of character and his God-offending pride, he sought to fight them in that place, thinking that he would overpower them in the wilderness easier than it would be possible for him had they been in a nearby settled country, thereby showing to the rest of the nations his audacity and boldness. Therefore God sentenced him to perdition, as we read in Num. xxi. 20: "The first of the nations is Amalek, but its end is perdition."

XVII. THE REASON FOR NOT DESTROYING THE AMALEKITES
EARLIER.

Should one ask, Why did not God destroy, as he was able, the Amalekites before they fought the children of Israel? we answer, God was surely able to do so, but he allowed this to help him, that it might be an example and a reminder, like the affair of Pharaoh, together with the miracles that took place to his disadvantage and to that of his people; that the children of Israel might know the great favor of God in destroying this Amalek, who was a giant, and greater than he God had never before created; and that they might know the art of war and tactics and courage, so that, when Sihon and Og and the rest should come against them, they would fight without fear.

Again, the coming of this great giant with his Amalekites was for the purpose of destroying all those who complained and quarreled with our lord Moses in connection with the waters. Compare xvii. 11. As to the real battle, Moses gave

its conduct to Joshua Ben Nun because he was sure of his courage, and that the apostle Moses might stay on the mountain interceding and praying for success. Of this our lord Moses had informed his disciple Joshua, saying to him, that what he would do would take place on the morrow. At that time, therefore, he ascended the mountain in company with Aaron and Hur, who was the grandfather of Bezaleel, who built the tabernacle.

One stood on his right and the other at his left, while the apostle stood interceding and praying, with his hands raised towards heaven towards the holy place, and his staff in his hand. Verse 12 tells us that his hands became tired; and therefore Aaron and Hur supported them, for he was higher than they, as they placed under him a stone, and he sat on it: "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put under him, and he sat thereon."

Now if some ask, Why did the apostle not keep his hands raised, since he knew that in raising them Israel had victory, and in lowering them Amalek had it? Why did he not keep his hands raised until all the Amalekites had perished? the answer is, that this was done in accordance with the command of God when he ordered that others should lower them, that beholders may know the high station he had before God. They, no less than the whole nation, had need to know. This took place, according to what we have kept in our memory, on Friday.

The Standing of the Sun.

The battle did not cease at the end of the day. Therefore the sun stopped for a sufficient time to allow Joshua a complete victory over the Amalekites before sunset. Amalek and the people who followed him must be killed before the com-

ing in of the Sabbath, for at the sunset the Sabbath would begin, and Israel would be bound in with its conditions, and could not continue the fight. This we have taken from the book attributed to him and known as the book of Joshua. *And God knows all these things best.*

However, we could infer this from Ex. xvii. 12, for we read: "And his hands were kept steady until the going down of the sun." This was due, probably, to what we know of the same verse and the preceding one. When Amalek and his people were destroyed, God commanded Moses to write down the record of this battle in a roll, and to read it in the hearing of Joshua, that he and the people might know that God had blotted out the name and the mention of the Amalekites from under the entire heaven, that the people might recover their courage, as they had been terribly afraid, since the giant had come from a very far place to fight them boldly. Then the apostle built in that place an altar, and sacrificed thank offerings to God for his health, and called the place "Jehovah is my standard," meaning "O Jehovah, thou art my high mark. To thee I direct myself in the time of need, as men direct themselves to the standard of the king wherein his camp is in the time of need." Some learned men claim that the name was not called *Nessij*, but *Ness*, without the *ij*, meaning that this altar was to be a standard of a sign to Israel whereby the nations should know what God had done for them in delivering them from Amalek. Therefore it was called *Hanness*, meaning the standard of the sign. Some say it is derived from *Hannosch*, which is the name given to the angel who is occupied with the affairs of Israel, and this is the interpretation of our most devout and chiefest of poets, our lord Phinehas, in the words to be spoken on the great day of great fasting, and those of his son our lord Abishah.

Among the secret properties of this name one is that it contains the exact numerical value of the period our lord Moses lived—120 years. NeSeH=120.

The apostle closed his words with the saying, "The hand is upon the throne of Jehovah. (He has sworn) there will be a war for Jehovah with Amalek from generation to generation." Some explain the last two words forever and ever. This was done so that Joshua might not be carried off with his strength and courage because he destroyed Amalek, but that he might remember that his ability was from God, that he might be humble and attribute nothing to himself. From the word *Kessah* we have now what we call "the verse of the throne," for the word means "throne." *And God possesses the best knowledge.*

Any one that desires to learn further, let him read what our learned men have written upon the Sabbath of Amalek. This is all that my sickly intelligence and weak mind has discovered, and *we will some day return to God.*

XVIII. THE TIME OF JETHRO'S VISIT.

A question concerning the story of Jethro: When did he come to his son-in-law? Was it while he was in Rephidim or after? According to the order in the Torah, he arrived at Rephidim before Israel went to Mount Sinai; but we cannot be led with the order, for the words of the Torah may imply the time either before or after. We believe, however, that it is more correct to hold that his visit was on Mount Sinai. Compare Ex. xviii. 5: "And Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came with his sons and his wife to the wilderness where he was encamped, at the mount of God." These words are clear enough, and need no more explanation. According to the commentaries written by that most excellent

doctor of blessed memory, Sadakah, his visit to Mount Sinai was in the second year after the erection of the tabernacle. We can prove that from the words given in the fifth book i. 6: "Jehovah our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain. Turn and take your journey," etc. Then in the next passage, beginning with verse 9: "And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you alone myself," etc.

Read the following verses, where he informs us that he established "chiefs of thousands and of hundreds," referring to what Jethro his father-in-law had advised him. Thus we know that it was before their departure from Mount Sinai this new arrangement was done. It was due to Jethro, who gave the advice the very morning of the day when he arrived at where the apostle was, as we read in Ex. xviii. 13. This passage is the greatest proof to us that Jethro arrived in the beginning of the second year of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, after the erection of the tabernacle. Therefore no attention should be paid to the suggestion that his visit took place before their entrance into the wilderness of Sinai, for we read in Ex. xviii. 27: "And Moses sent his father-in-law, who went to his home." Again, we know the departure of Jethro to his land took place during the time when they were about to leave Mount Sinai, as we read in Num. x. 29: "And Moses said to Jethro, the son of Hobab the Midianite, his father-in-law, We are about to leave." And he asked him to go with them; but he refused, saying, "No, I cannot go, but I shall go to my land and to my kindred." And this is an additional and plain testimony to our position.

Why Both Hobab and Jethro?

If one asks, Why was he called here Hobab when his name

was Jethro? we will say, The name *Hobab* means "loving," and was given to him by the apostle Moses. Compare Deut. xxxiii. 3, *Af hobeb ammim*, "he loveth (is lover of) the people." He loved piety, and offered sacrifices of thanks to God for his great favors to Israel, for delivering them from Egypt. Read Ex. xviii. 10-12: "Blessed be Jehovah, who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from that of Pharaoh, . . . and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God." To those who assert that Jethro knew God only during this visit of his Moses, as verse 11 may indicate, we would say, The conversion of Jethro took place while he was the high priest of Midian, but his people continued in their heathenish way, and he left them, believing in God and in his oneness. That is why the people lost their respect for him, and his daughters were driven away, and not allowed by the shepherds to water their sheep; for it was but right that his sheep should have been given the right of way first and allowed to drink, for Jethro was the high priest. Were it not for his conversion, Moses would not have entered into his family by marrying one of his daughters.

The words of Jethro, *Attah yadaty*, "Now I know," imply only a declaration, but nothing reflecting on his former belief. Having heard of the deeds of God's power and greatness, he renewed his belief in him and his greatness by saying, "God is greater than all the gods."

If one also should say, Why was not the account of the visit postponed, and recorded at its own place? we would reply in two ways: First, as it was God's plan to record ordinances and occurrences, some anticipating others, and as the account of Jethro's visit was short, he recorded it here. Second, God may have recorded Jethro's visit in chapter xviii., in order that it might be read immediately after the ac-

count of the battle with Amalek, that Jethro's superiority and nobility of character might be the more noticed. He was related to Amalek, being the son of Reuel and a descendant of Esau; and Amalek, we know, was the son of Eliphaz, a descendant of Esau. The latter came to do evil to Israel, but the former came to do them good; and that is what prompted Moses to call him *Hobab*, or "lover," and to be pleased with his counsel, which he obeyed. He therefore asked what may be read in Num. x. 31-32. A like example and precedent may be found in Genesis, where the account of Judah is given in the story of Joseph, and where it is said that when Judah saw the harlot woman, he went to her, but as to Joseph, when the harlot saw him she sought him, but he ran away from her, and the difference and superiority of the one over the other may be well marked out. *Enough. The best knowledge is that of God.*

The most learned and wise doctor, Jacob Ben Isaak, the physician of Askelon, says, in his book called "The Commentaries of Ordinances," that Jethro made two visits to his son-in-law; first, in company with Moses' wife and two children; and last with the intention of settling down with him and entering into his religion and fulfilling the ordinances, together with all those who moved with him of his children and neighbors, thereby becoming like the Israelites, with the same rights and privileges. It is said that the children of Jethro received a portion of the promised land in preference to the rest of the Gentiles, who were converted to our religion. *God alone, however, is infallible.*

XIX. THE SONS OF MOSES.

To the question, whether the children of Moses, with their mother, returned with Jethro or remained with Moses, I an-

swer, The wife of Moses, or the mother of the children, remained with the apostle without ever being known by him, as we know from Num. xii. 1: "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses on account of the beautiful woman whom he had taken." This *Ishah*, or "woman," was exactly the same Zeborah, and not, as the Jews pretend, that the apostle Moses took a Cushite woman as wife, — *Kusheet*, that is "a black woman." *May God fight them for this imputation on the Apostle!* The fact is that the apostle Moses did never marry, not to say that he had married a black woman, a marriage that was quite prohibited, and the Israelites were absolutely forbidden to approach such women. The qualifying word is *Kasheet*, which means "beautiful," and not *Kusheet*, as the Jews had it, meaning "black," thereby reversing the meaning of the passage.¹

For the apostle, after conversing with God in the burning bush, did never know a woman; and we will prove this in another place, if the Lord wills. As to the children, according to our lord high priest Jacob, in his book entitled "Pleasure Hours," they returned with Jethro; but the apostle, fearing they might go astray after his death, in accordance with what he said in Deut. xxxi. 39, wrote them a copy of the Torah, and handed it to them, and sent them in company with their grandfather Jethro. They, however, did not return to their former place, but in company with a party of people, who were to see to the fulfillment of the Torah and its commands, went towards the east, and their descendants are still living; but they had a nomadic life, like the Arabs, dwelling in their hair tents. The writer of the aforesaid book says that their descendants will live unto the end, in their obedience to God. When Moses bade his children good-by,

¹The Samaritans read this word *Kash-sheet*, and derive it from a verb meaning "to grow fat, plump, and beautiful."

the writer says, he uttered the following words: "Peace be to you, O Gershom and Eliezer!" This was a covenant of peace, a guarantee from all dangers, and it would not be possible that their race be cut off to the end of the world. Only Jehovah had concealed them and set them afar, that none may know their whereabouts until he permits it. *And God knows best!*

XX. THE HEIR OF AN ADULTERESS.

Question: Should a man take to himself a woman as his wife whom he discovers afterwards to have violated her purity, and who is adjudged to be killed; if she is killed, who will be her heir?

Her heir will be the high priest who adjudges her to death. None else, whether he be a relative or neighbor, or even her husband, can inherit the least thing from her. This can be inferred from Num. v. 5-8: "When a man or woman commit any sin . . . if the person have no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the guilt, such restitution that is made unto Jehovah for guilt must be the priest's." The writer of this answer compares it with the case of the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad, who would not have inherited their father, unless it were for the fact that he did rebel against God, for they said: "He was not among them that gathered themselves against Jehovah in the company of Korah: but he died in his own sin" (Num. xxvii. 3). His sin resulted from his work on the Sabbath: on that day he was discovered felling wood, which was not rebellion, and therefore his daughters deserved to inherit him. The unbeliever or rebellious, according to our learned men, can neither inherit nor be inherited. It is said that in such a case as we have already mentioned, the money advanced, or whatever

was promised to the woman by the husband before the marriage to be paid by him after the marriage, even if it were advanced to her previous to the discovery of her guilt, the same forms a part of her inheritance, and he can lay no claim to it. *And God knows the unknown.*

XXI. THE FACE OF LABAN.

Why is it that in Gen. xxxi. 2, "And Jacob saw the face of Laban, and, behold, they were not *Eynam* as before," the plural form is used? The reading *Eynam* refers surely as well to the children of Laban.¹ For the first verse reads, "And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's." Thus *Eynam* refers to them as well as to their father. Our lord Jacob discovered the inner change of Laban from that of his face; for nothing he concealed within himself but leaked through the features of his face and the utterances of his tongue. The countenance of man is the mirror of his soul. Some say that the sharp sight of the believer unveils the inner soul. *But God knows best.*

XXII. CONCERNING OATHS.

How can you harmonize the command of the decalogue, "Do not pronounce the name of Jehovah thy God in vain," and the one, "Do not swear falsely in my name," with "His words he shall not unbind or break"? Answer: The command given in Deut. v. 11, meaning, "Thou shalt not raise," etc., really does not mean to prohibit something the carrying of which is sinful, nor the raising or lifting of an object from one place to another; but the command means simply, "Do

¹The Hebrew form is probably a later correction. It is *Eynonoo*, — "it was not."

not pronounce" the name of the Most High in false utterances, just as we have the same words *Lo tish-sha* in the prohibitive command *Lo tish-sha shoma shaw*, meaning, "Do not pronounce or raise a false report" — avoid spreading reports of the veracity of which you are not sure. Our learned men have divided oaths under three heads.

First. The prohibited oath of falsehood, as meaning "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," and "Thou shalt not bear vain or untruthful witness."

Second. The prohibited oath for selling or buying commodities either without weight or measure, but by mere guesswork.

Third. The prohibited oaths which are made for no purpose whatever, and nothing is affirmed or denied thereby. From the command "Thou shalt not swear falsely in my name," we may infer that an oath may be either obligatory, or lawful, or vicious. The first is the right of the one accused of crime but without evidence. The oath is to be made in the court before the judge, for Jehovah said, "In my name thou shalt swear"; also, "The oath of Jehovah shall be between them." The lawful oath is that which binds a man to performance if the act be lawful; as, refraining from eating, drinking, fasting, and wearing costly apparels, etc. The oath in such cases is binding, and must be carried out. The vicious oath is that which is made falsely, coupling the name of the Most High God with things unlikely or false, and thereby dishonoring him. Compare "Ye shall not swear falsely in my name, and thus profane the name of thy God. I am Jehovah."

The punishment of such a transgression must be meted out with death. The transgressor profanes the name God by such an oath, made in any other tongue. As to Lev. v. 2,

it means that the swearer rashly must be bound to his oath, if sin is not to be committed; but if his oath is due to causes which render him unconscious of his oath, such as drinking, he is not responsible; if conscious, he is quite responsible and must carry out his obligation. Then God said, "He shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that which proceeded out of his mouth."

Our learned men have written with great zeal concerning the import of "Thou shalt not pronounce the name of Jehovah thy God falsely." Of the many allusions this passage contains, one is to the hypocrite, who shows piety to the world, but who is secretly attached to his sins and to a life of immorality, a slave to his passions, and therefore his connection with God is groundless, and the pronunciation of God's name is in vain, and untrue to his conviction. Therefore God said: "For Jehovah will not hold him guiltless, who pronounces his name falsely." Clear! the man whose conduct is so characterized is more afraid of the creature than of the Creator, and cannot be guiltless before God, for his false oath. Every word of God as given in the revealed Torah through our lord Moses (upon whom be peace) possesses several allusions which are to be applied in their proper places. This is enough for the man who lays aside his prejudice, and is willing to receive guidance and act piously. In all such things let God be the final judge, and let the sentence he utters be carried out. This is all which a tired mind and sickly intelligence could discover. *But the Most High knows best what is ideally right.*

XXIII. THE INHERITANCE OF A WOMAN WHO MARRIES OUTSIDE THE TRIBE.

If a man should die leaving behind him wealth, such as

land, etc., but no male heir who may legally inherit him; if he should be survived by daughters, married in families other than his and outside of the tribe, what should be done with the wealth of the defunct? Have the daughters any rightful claim on them or not? What would follow? The answer (praise be to God only) is as follows. The daughters who are the only offspring of their parents should marry their cousins of their tribe, if they desire valid claim to their shares, in order that the inheritance may continue to be theirs. Remember that the daughters of Zelophehad, when their request was granted, were conditioned to marry in the tribe of their father; for the inheritance should never pass from one tribe to another. Our predecessors (may God be pleased with them) said, and their saying must be obeyed, that even if the daughter who has inherited from her father should desire to marry a man outside of her tribe she would be disinherited, and others worthier than she, who belong to the tribe, would receive the inheritance. This statement is absolute, and liable to no modification. The land of the defunct should not be transferred to his daughters who are his only heirs, but who have married into another tribe. The inheritance of their father must remain intact: another tribe is not to enjoy its use. It must be preserved and carefully guarded until God's purpose is made manifest relative to the daughters of the defunct. Should their husbands die, they are entitled to the inheritance; should they die, the inheritance becomes the property of the House of God, if there is none that may have a legal claim to it. Cf. Num. v. 8, "And if there is no kinsman to the man that restitution may be made to him for the guilt, the restitution that is made for the guilt unto Jehovah shall belong to the priest." The restitution to the priest is made as if to the House of God. This

is according to our understanding of the law and to the exact interpretation of our learned men. *But the Most High God knows best the exact truth. Verily he knows the unknown.*

XXIV. THE USE OF RENNET.

Some of my people asked me concerning the use made by our predecessors of the rennet of the suckling kid, in order to make cheese, by placing it in milk, and the continuance of this custom until the attention of the humble writer was called to it, resulting in its abolition; and since then we have not discovered any using it. As to the use of the rennet by our people, I may say it is surely a great vice which our people introduced inadvertently. They had either taken it from the Jews, or had been deceived into adopting it by some indifferent believers in the days of *Benutan*. Nobody seemed to have spoken against the practice, as it is evident many generations had come and passed without the least attention having been called to it.

If one should ask, How could this have taken place during all this time and period, the length of which is unknown, and none of the former learned and able men had ever attempted to oppose and prohibit the practice? for an answer, I can only say that God, in his divine foreknowledge, knew that doubtless some faults would be unknowingly committed by his hosts, and their eyes could not discover them, and therefore, he said in Lev. iv. 13: "And if the whole congregation of Israel shall err, and a certain thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly." Otherwise no need of this passage would have been found. No guilt is therefore to be laid on us, or on those who preceded us, for this past practice; for it was due to a general inadvertence. Behold how careful we are in our use of meat in connection with milk or milk in connection

with meat. Should a vessel have the least trace of flesh or milk; should it not even be very clean, and then any of the two substances, flesh or milk, be placed in it, it becomes, according to us, *Tamay*, that is, "defiled." Even if the salt that touched the meat be used with milk, the same state of pollution would follow, and we could not use the milk.

The rennet is, in reality, one of the portions of the sheep or kid that belong to the priest, and should be immediately delivered to him, and no delay made: for it is *Kadosh*, "holy." Since it contains milk, and the butcher removes it and cuts it while both his knife and hands are stained with flesh and blood, it becomes binding to us to have nothing to do with its use as food, if we are to be faithful to our tradition and practices. I, therefore, in order to keep my religious duties, have put its use under the ban. Its eating is neither necessary nor binding, and we have neither command nor law to that effect; but we use it as we use butter and fat and the like. It is unlike the unleavened bread and the sacrifices of the Passover which must be eaten. We must not defile our souls by a doubtful thing which we can easily do. God said, "Do not defile your souls," and "Ye shall be holy to God," etc. This is sufficient. *To obey is safest, and God knows best.*

XXV. THE ABRIDGMENT BY LAYMEN OF THE AUTHORITY
OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

A few men of the laity protested that they should be "associates" of the Scribes in giving judgments and supervising the estates of the priesthood. Can there be any attention paid to them, and have they any right to their claim? If what they claim is vain, please give them a confuting reply, and convict

them strongly of their vicious pretensions; and may the kind giver reward you!

The answer: The noble Torah gives the children of Levi complete authority over all the estates or offerings of the temple. None else can have any hand in these matters. Thus said God in Num. xviii. 1: "And Jehovah said to Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy fathers' house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary. And thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. And thy brethren also, the line of Levi, the tribe of thy father, draw them near with thee, that they will be responsible as he was." God foreknew that the descendants of Aaron are the children of Levi. Again, we are plainly told that in whatever matter not indicated by the law, the decision of the priests, the sons of Levi, should prevail, and could not be modified unless by some legal reasons. Read Deut. xviii. 8: "If there be concealed from thee a matter in judging, as between blood and blood, between plea and plea, or stroke and stroke, matters of controversy . . . arise, and go up to the place, which Jehovah thy God has chosen, to the Levite priests." Their decision is binding, as we read in verse 10: "according to the decision they shall tell thee thou shalt do; thou shalt not turn aside from the sentence they shall show thee, neither to the right nor to the left." The same is affirmed in those things set apart for God: "Then the priest shall value it, whether it be good or bad; as the priest shall value it, so it shall stand" (Lev. xxvii. 14).

In addition, I must say that, from Scriptural inferences, the high priest of the people must have his due honor. None should injure his name or measure up himself beyond him, as one may do with others. His people should pay him their respects and esteem, and should not look at him as any of

their ordinary fellow citizens. Distinction and preference should be given all his people, for it is apparent to all intelligent people that not every man of any grade could be made into a high priest, lest his practices humiliate him and keep him aloof, lest God be displeased and his worship be vain; this especially given with reference to the Levites, who are, as the righteous Lord has said, the chosen persons for priesthood, prayer, blessing, and divine judgments. Compare Deut. xviii. 5: "For Jehovah thy God has chosen him out of all thy tribes, that he may stand to serve in the name of Jehovah, he and his sons all the days." This means that they were chosen from ancient days to be honored and respected.

I have found, also, that the Levite must not be discarded and others followed: "Beware of discarding the Levite the length of thy days on earth" (Deut. xii. 19). It is in connection with the tribe of Levi that the apostle Moses made the prayer found in Deut. xxxiii. 11, that its prayers may be heard, and blessings may be bestowed; that its enemies may be crushed, as "O Jehovah, bless his strength, and be pleased with the works of his hands." A warning is given that the Levite may not be opposed, as we read in the same verse: "But break through the loins of those that rebel against him and hate him." The learned Hasam Assoory of Tyrus explains these words as follows: He who harbors any evil thing or hatred against this tribe, Jehovah will smite him with great calamities, and his plans will fail; for the prayers or curses of the Levites shoot through faster than the very arrows. As to the words "Break through the loins of his opposers and haters," they mean that he who would plan to do such things is only a darrer, who is unaware of his conditions, and is like the man who drinks poison to try it. To

impress the people with dire consequences of such an attempt, he says, "Who could oppose him?" Therefore, I believe that it is not lawful to depart at any time from their given decisions and pleasures, nor is it lawful to call a halt to them through reasons of expediency, on merely mental grounds — for they have been long before empowered by the declarations of the Torah, and it is not to be imagined that the decisions of others are applicable to them unless there is against them a legal plea. *And God knows best.*

Now I ask you readers of this my epistle to explain to me the exact meaning of the words of Jehovah in Deut. xix. 14, "Thou shalt not remove the landmarks of thy neighbors which the ancients have set up." What meaning do you put on the word *Reeshoneem*, "first ones," "ancient ones"? God has affirmed this command with strong terms, for he said, "Cursed be the man who changes the landmarks of his neighbor."

Pray, inform me, also, concerning the meaning of the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. I am God." How contrary to this command do we act! How we do hate each other, and how we do backbite each other! To these things is due our downfall and utter relapse. So much is sufficient.

And, as for the rest, though it is unknown to me, and I understand not even the boundaries of that which I know not, it is definite in the mind of God, and he knows all. Amen.

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