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*LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL
REVELATION.*

VI. THE CALENDAR OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

IN the first half of the 11th century Abd Al-Hayy of Kardiz compiled a history,¹ mainly intended to glorify the Sultans of Ghaznah, his masters, but also incorporating a variety of interesting matter. Several chapters are taken up with accounts of the feasts of the Eastern nations, among whom he included Mohammedans, Jews, Christians, Parsees, and Hindus. The devastating hordes of Janghiz Khan had not then swept Asia, and much precious literature was still in existence to which we no longer have access. Kardizi, as we shall call this writer, went to authoritative sources for his Calendars,² and his chapters, which are in Persian, have some curious marks indicating the authentic character of the documents whence they were drawn. The Jews learned from the Greeks to count by the letters of the alphabet, but for 15 they write 9, 6, to avoid employing the Divine name Jah for so mundane a purpose. To the Persians the letters JH have no such association, so that when they count by letters they make no exception in this case, but let 15 follow the same system as the others. In the Persian account of the feasts of the Jews, 9, 6 appears to have been used in place of 15, which, taken together with some peculiarities of the numeration in the twenties, gives us a certain trace of the character in which the underlying document was written. Kardiz, which is sometimes included in Ghaznah, is far removed from those communities of Sora and Anbar to which we owe our ordinary information concerning Jewish affairs, so that we are justified in expecting something out of the way.

¹ It is called *Zain al-akhbār*; the Bodleian Library has the unique copy.

² He utilized Al-Biruni's *Chronology of Ancient Nations*; but most of the matter to which attention is called below is independent of Al-Biruni.

This expectation would appear to be fulfilled. Kardizi commences by enumerating the categories of acts which might not be done on the Sabbath. He counts 38; and his list cannot possibly be dissociated from the Talmudic list of 39. But when we compare the lists, we find that they differ widely. Of the categories enumerated only half tally; and even by correcting the text and assuming occasional mistranslation of Hebrew words we cannot, without exceeding the limits of probability, bring many more into harmony. Which list is then the earlier? The Talmudic list begins with Sowing, Ploughing. That this is an intentional inversion is obvious; for every one knows that ploughing precedes sowing. But the first letter of the verb to sow comes in the Hebrew alphabet immediately before the first letter of the verb to plough. The purpose of the inversion is therefore to aid the memory, and is characteristic of a Mishnah or unwritten book. But the Persian list has the natural order, Ploughing, Sowing.

What, however, is more important and striking is the fact that the Persian Mishnah contains categories which we know from the New Testament to have been among the acts forbidden in our Lord's time, whereas the Talmudic list does not contain them. One of these is *plucking an ear of corn*. Every one remembers how the disciples were rebuked for doing this on the Sabbath. It would, however, be difficult to bring this act under any of the 39 categories of the Mishnah. The nearest would be "reaping"; and, indeed, "pulling up" is repeatedly said to be a subdivision of "reaping."¹ Against this it might be urged that reaping is done with an instrument, whereas the act of the disciples was scarcely distinguishable from ordinary eating; and, in the second place, that the list makes a distinction between acts of which the law forbids a minimum, and acts of which a minimum is not forbidden; and clearly "reaping"

¹ Rashi on *Betsah*, 3a.

is of the latter class. Hence the disciples might easily have defended their action. But the Persian Mishnah has "plucking an ear of corn" as a special category, No. 27. If, therefore, the Persian Mishnah were in vogue in our Lord's time, the act of the disciples could not be defended. The occurrence of this category would excite grave suspicion if the list of forbidden acts were given by a Christian or in a document which betrayed Christian influence. But in Kardizi's case such a suspicion would be ill-grounded. His misrenderings of Hebrew words show that his source was Jewish, and the agreement between his number 38 and the Talmudic number 39 cannot possibly be accidental. Neither a Jew nor a Mohammedan would have had any interest in interpolating the list so as to confirm the Gospel; but the Mishnah which accords with the usage of New Testament times has a right to be considered earlier than the Mishnah which disagrees with it. If it be added that the Mishnah of the treatise *Sabbath* teems with late words, which are likely to have been learned by the Jews after the Mohammedan conquest, it is evident that it can lay no claim to antiquity.

A case similar to this, in which there can be no suspicion of interpolation, is No. 3 of the Persian list, which appears to mean "watering the fields," combined with No. 38, "digging a thing up from its place." Neither of these categories is to be found in the Talmudic Mishnah; both, however, were forbidden, and elsewhere in the Talmud there is an interesting discussion about the categories under which they come. "On what grounds,"¹ asks a Rabbi, "do we warn any one who waters or weeds on the Sabbath?" Rabbah said, because these operations come under the head of ploughing. Rab Joseph said, because they come under the head of sowing. The first explained that watering was, like ploughing, a mode of softening the

¹ *Moed Katon*, 2b.

earth; whereas the latter held that, like sowing, it contributed to the growth of the plant. The Persian Mishnah, by assigning these operations special categories, rendered such a discussion unnecessary.

To only one more of these categories need attention be called. The Gospels make much of the prohibition against moving objects on the Sabbath. A man who took up his bed and walked thereby violated the Sabbath. This, too, cannot easily be got into the Talmudic categories. No. 39, "removing from region to region," is the most likely; but this implies the elaborate doctrine of regions, which has about it no semblance of antiquity. The Persian Mishnah has three categories which are connected with this subject, and No. 35, "removing furniture from place to place," exactly corresponds with the theory recorded in the Gospel. The question, then, does not depend on the doctrine of regions, which has not yet been worked out.

The remainder of the categories offer scope for observations that are not devoid of interest, but would be irrelevant here. The examples given make it likely that we are tapping a source of Jewish tradition that is older than the collections of which the genesis was described in the last chapter. It is certain that, then as now, only specialists in Judaic matters would have even heard of the categories of acts; there can be no doubt therefore that Kardizi gets his facts from a Jewish book. The book known to him must have been in Judæo-Arabic or Judæo-Persian. For the Feast of Tabernacles was called *Matal* in it, and Kardizi mistakes this for a Hebrew word; whereas it is really an Arabic word which might have been used in either of the languages mentioned. But this work must have been a rather unlearned translation of a work in New-Hebrew, as shall be seen presently, when we consider what it says of the numbering of the people. This work (called by Kardizi the Book of Fasts) cannot have been the existing

Book of Fasts (*Megillath Ta'anith*), for that does not contain all the matter known to Kardizi. There are, moreover, grounds for thinking that the Book of Fasts in the existing form is of no great antiquity; for the Talmud, while quoting it, declares it abrogated. Rashi, whose opinions are always deserving of consideration, supposed that an exception was made in favour of the Book of Fasts when the prohibition against writing anything save the Bible was introduced.¹ But it seems more probable that the Talmud refers to a lost book, of which the Fast-Scroll known to us was a later reconstruction.

For the present the document which, as has been seen, was known to Kardizi at third hand, may be identified with an apocryphal scroll quoted in the Talmud,² which contained the 39 categories of acts, though we cannot be sure with which list they agreed. That apocryphal scroll was probably the source not only of Kardizi's lists, but of the matter afterwards written down in the Fast-Scroll,³ and of the supplement to it, containing a list of days on which fasting was incumbent, which the later Jewish codes copy without being able to make anything of it. The antiquity of the matter contained in that Appendix can be proved very curiously. A day is there set apart for the commemoration of the struggle between the parties of Hillel and Shammai, wherein blood was shed. Of this event there is a casual notice in the Palestinian Talmud, but none in the more popular Talmud of Babylon, whence it came that in the second quarter of the 10th century the most learned Jew of the time knew nothing of it.⁴ That he knew nothing of an event commemorated in the Calendar is explicable only on the supposition that either it was inserted in the Calendar after his time, or that the Calendar,

¹ *Sabbath*, 13b.

² *Sabbath*, 6b.

³ Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles*, ii. *init.*

⁴ Frankel, *Introduction to the Jerusalem Talmud*, p. 132b.

though old, was known to only a few persons in the 10th century. Since the memory of the struggle was so painful that the Rabbanite Jews preferred to forget about it, the former supposition is exceedingly unlikely. The latter therefore remains, and it is confirmed by the occurrence of this fast in the Persian Calendar. Kardizi mistakes the parties for tribes, but that is a natural blunder for a Mohammedan to make.

The Persian Calendar differs from the Fast-Scroll in that it commences the year with Tisri, which is the practice of the ordinary communities, whereas the latter commences with Nisan. New Year's Day was called the Fast of the Ten Days by the Jews known to Kardizi, and even the babe in the cradle, he tells us, was not allowed any milk. It was kept for two days, a practice about which we read much in the Talmud, and in the controversial literature of the 10th century. In what follows we shall collect other notices in this Calendar that seem to be ancient.

Feast 9 "is called 'Barek' which means 'blessing' in the Hebrew tongue." The name *Barek* was sometimes given to Mount Gerizim, where the blessing was to be recited.¹ The Persian Calendar connects it with the protraction of the life of Moses, a legend to which Mohammedan writers occasionally refer.² That the Persian writer should have invented a Jewish festival, or interpreted its import out of his own head, is highly improbable; therefore he must have obtained both the name and the interpretation from his Jewish authority. It might indeed have been expected that the blessing on Mount Gerizim would have been commemorated by a day in the Calendar. There may perhaps be a reference to both the points noticed in the Persian Calendar in the words of Ecclesiasticus about Moses, "And he brought out of him a merciful man, finding favour in the eyes of all flesh,

¹ Commentators on Josephus, i. 252. ² Letters of Abu 'l-Ala, p. 107.

beloved of God and man, Moses, whose memory is in blessings."¹ These verses can be restored to their metrical shape by the most literal retranslation; and since where syllables are numbered not every clause need be forcible, it is possible that this means no more than the familiar "whose memory is blessed" which the Jews, perhaps in imitation of Mohammedan practice, put after the names of dead saints. On the other hand, if an event in the life of Moses was really commemorated at a feast called Blessings, the last clause would be much more pointed.

It is noteworthy that the legend about Moses is preserved by Mohammedan writers rather than by Jews. Something of the same sort occurs in the notice of the trumpet-blowing on New Year's Day. This, Kardizi tells us, is to imitate the sound which Satan caused Sarah to hear at the time of the sacrifice of Isaac. That New Year's Day with the Jews commemorates the sacrifice of Isaac we learn rather from the practice of their ritual than from any express statement to that effect. Of an interview between Satan and Sarah that took place at that time we read little in Jewish books except in one very late Catena;² whereas the historian Tabari gives a very detailed account of one. What we should infer hence is that we are not entitled to neglect the Biblical legends of the Mohammedans when they are found in early and careful reports like that of Tabari. Instead of looking for the source of these in the Talmuds, we should regard them as an independent current of tradition.

Fast 4 is "the Day of Visitation," and commemorates

¹ xlv. 1: וְיִצְחָק מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ חֲסִיד
 מוֹצֵא חַן בְּשֵׁנָיִם בְּלִלְבָשֶׁת
 אֱהוֹב מֵאֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם
 מִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר זָכְרוּ בְּבְרִכּוֹת

² See *Yalkut Sofer* (Pax, 1894), 126a.

the numbering of the people by David. This is not noticed in the Appendix to the Fast-Scroll, and the Talmud seems to know nothing of such a commemoration. Yet the account is here authentic. In the first place the name of the Fast is represented by the Arabic word for punishment. In Hebrew the word for census-taking is identical with the word for visitation in the sense of punishment:¹ so that we have no difficulty in restoring the Hebrew name of this Fast. There is also another indication of the source of this notice. The choice offered David is between "famine, defeat, and death." The word used in New-Hebrew for "pestilence"² differs by one letter added from the word for "death"; and in the paraphrase of the chapter in 2 Samuel, where this story is told, the ordinary edition several times gives "death" for "pestilence" in consequence. Similarly in Ecclesiasticus xxxix. 29 we read "fire and hail, famine and death, all these were created for vengeance," where "death" must be a mistranslation for "pestilence."³

As has been seen, the Persian Calendar is not supported by the Appendix in mentioning this Fast. Yet it is clear that it was mentioned in the New-Hebrew document on which the Persian Calendar is based. The facts collected above, which prove this document to contain matter that goes back to New Testament times, allow us to infer that the notice of this Fast goes back to the time before the destruction of the second temple. But where are we to stop? That a fast-day should have been instituted between the first and second captivities to commemorate David's numbering of the people seems unlikely: the consequences of that event were not sufficiently disastrous to make this likely. On the other hand, the purpose of the Appendix to the second Book of Samuel might very possibly be to

¹ בְּקִיּוּרָה.

² מוֹתָן.

³ אֵשׁ וְדָרָד קָפֶן וְמוֹתָן.

explain the origin of a fast. Hence the calendars might seem to contain relics of oral tradition of great value.

Of the other notices which the Persian Calendar only contains, the most interesting is certainly post-Christian. This is that at the Feast of Purim it was the custom of the Jews to have a sort of miracle-play, at which the figure of Haman was *burned*; but the Feast was called "*Haman Crucified*." In the formula of abjuration for converted Jews, printed as an appendix to Clement of Rome, the practice of crucifying a figure ostensibly meant for Haman is mentioned and condemned; apparently in the community known to Kardizi burning was substituted, but the name "*crucified*," which Kardizi gives with the Mesopotamian pronunciation, was retained.

It would be expected that a nation which had passed through so many vicissitudes as the Israelites would have a very full calendar of days commemorating national joys and sorrows. Certain days would count as specially unlucky, being marked by the recurrence of calamities; and the fact of a day being already signalized by a calamity would render the occurrence of a fresh one more striking, and serve to keep it in the recollection of the people. Days which marked minor victories or defeats, or such as were too ephemeral in their effect to count as of great importance, would presently drop out of the reckoning. Hence the fact of a fast being retained, the cause of which was unknown to the Rabbis, seems a sign of good faith. Such a fast is mentioned in both the Appendix and the Persian Calendar as coming after the Days of Darkness. If the compiler had intended to falsify his table, he would surely have found no difficulty in assigning a reason for it from among the many national disasters recorded in the Bible. And, indeed, in one of the late codes¹ a suggestion is made for it: whereas Kardizi's authority made out

¹ *Sefer Kol-bo*.

that the nature of the disaster had been intentionally concealed.

It is clear that both the Fast-Scroll and the Persian Calendar show traces of a considerable amount of information that is otherwise lost to the Jews. So much of the Fast-Scroll deals with the glorious period of the Maccabees that it is sometimes called the Maccabean Scroll.¹ Some of the feasts which it mentions tally with notices in Josephus, whereas in the case of others it stands alone. The fact that many Jewish scholars in the first nine centuries of Christendom had access to Josephus and the other books concerning the Jews, which are preserved in Greek, renders it particularly difficult to sever purely Jewish tradition from that which has been contaminated from Greek sources; but the general appearance of the Fast-Scroll suggests that the text represents an authentic oral tradition, whereas the commentary is of a very mixed nature.

The latest event mentioned is probably the death of Rabbi Akiba, who is supposed to have been executed in the time of Trajan, and whom we know from the notices in Epiphanius to have been a historical personage. The Persian Calendar notes the day as a Fast-day, but the name of Akiba has dropped out, though the words which it contains about him leave no room for doubt as to his identity. But from this period the Calendar goes back with apparent continuity to the remotest antiquity of the Hebrews. And it is remarkable for both what it omits and what it includes.

As was seen above, the numbering of the people is told in an appendix to David's biography, which might seem to have been suggested by the need for the explanation of a Fast-day. The Bible once or twice points out that future generations will want to know the reason for certain

¹ So in the *Halachoth Gedoloth*.

practices, and therefore a record of them is left in writing. Fast 18, "the Death of the Tribes," seems to admit of a similar analysis. The Appendices to the Fast-Scroll and the Persian Calendar agree in commemorating the almost total extinction of the tribe of Benjamin. The story is told in the Appendix to the Book of Judges. The Book of Judges also names a day on which the death of Jephthah's daughter was commemorated, of which neither of the calendars take notice. The obvious reason is that that Fast-day was celebrated by a tribe which went into captivity and never returned thence, whereas the tribe of Benjamin did return from captivity. If we were to regard the Calendar as a conscious fabrication, it would be hard to account for the insertion of a fast not mentioned in the Book of Judges, and the omission of a fast that is mentioned there.

Fast 29, "the Fast of the Ark," commemorating the capture of the ark by the Philistines, is also common to the Hebrew and Persian Calendars. That the event is historical is probably granted by even the most sceptical; what is doubted is whether the ark ever returned. There can be no doubt that its capture would be regarded as the gravest of national disasters, which, therefore, we should expect the Calendar to commemorate. With regard to the story as told in the first Book of Samuel, there is a passage in the valuable chronicle published with the title, "Fragments of the Arabic Historians,"¹ which bears so curious a resemblance to it that it seems right to quote it here. One of the early battles of Islam is being described. "Said the Persians: Ye have slain Kutaibah; had he been one of us, and died among us, we should have regarded him as a martyr, and kept his *ark* (coffin) till the Day of Judgment, to ask aid thereof when we went on a campaign." Were it not for the shape of the ark being so carefully recorded in Exodus, we might have supposed the Israelitish

¹ *Fragmenta Historicorum Arabum*, i. 19.

ark to have had the same origin and the same purpose ; but the measurements are given too accurately to admit of such a possibility.

The Jewish prayer books would seem to have been compiled in the 10th and 11th centuries. These contain services for very few of the days the observance of which is not prescribed in the Pentateuch. One of these, however, the Fast of Gedaliah, is commemorated in the Service Books. This must assuredly represent a continuous tradition ; for the murder of Gedaliah was too insignificant a disaster to attract the attention of a fabricator ; whereas at the time when it occurred it would be of sufficient importance to cause the anniversary of the day whereon it occurred to have melancholy associations.

Both the Persian Calendar and the Appendix state that the Day of Atonement commemorates the worship of the Calf. And, indeed, the Appendix, instead of speaking of the Day of Atonement, has the succinct notice : " On this day the worship of the Calf was expiated." The learned Jewish editor¹ of the Fast-Scroll tells us that he consulted the best authorities to find confirmation of this statement, but did not succeed. Modern critics regard the Day of Atonement as a very late institution, and very few of them would assign the episode of the Calf any historical value. It is clear that if monotheism came in with Elijah, the worship of the Calf in the wilderness would not have been criminal. It seems a bold suggestion that the calendars are here preserving a fragment of genuine tradition, yet there are grounds for making it. The worship of the Calf is as much the great national sin of the Israelites as the Exodus was the great national miracle. That a fabricator would find a day to commemorate this event and its disastrous consequences is likely ; but would he have fixed on the great national fast without some authority from tradition ? This

¹ J. Lev.

appears to be unlikely; and the fact that in the narrative of the Exodus Aaron takes part in the worship of the Calf agrees curiously with the doctrine that on the Day of Atonement the high priest first makes atonement for himself. The ceremonies of the Day of Atonement would appear to belong to a very extreme antiquity; and the choice remains whether we are to regard the statement of the calendars as the conjecture of a heortologist, or a fragment of genuine tradition.

If the Day of Atonement were a late innovation, it should be possible to account for its origin. This could scarcely be done with ease, and it would seem that the attempt to derive Purim from a Persian festival has been of dubious success.

Of the fasts which commemorate events connected with the history of the Bible we have already had occasion to allude to two. One is the Fast called Darkness, supposed to commemorate the darkening of the world for three days, owing to Ptolemy Philadelphus having ordered the LXX. translation to be made. The Persian Calendar exhibits on this occasion more knowledge than was possessed by the compiler of either Talmud, for it knows the name Philadelphus, which the Talmudists have lost. The conflicting notices of this holy day show us the difficulty of dealing with oral tradition. According to Philo, who ought to know, the Egyptian Jews celebrated a feast at Pharos, in memory of the LXX. translation, which they regarded justly as a national benefit. According to Josephus it was Ptolemy who celebrated a feast. And here we have the Jewish tradition maintaining that the Jews kept the day as a fast! The traditions concerning the LXX. which the Talmud contains by no means favour the view that the LXX. translation would be regarded as a national misfortune; they, moreover, contain (curiously enough) a stratum of true tradition which we gratefully accept, while numerous

errors of detail prove that they have passed through a number of inaccurate memories before being committed to paper. Perhaps the name Philadelphus was purposely omitted by the earliest recorders owing to the associations connected with that word, which would have been so painful to the Jews. The words of the Persian writer, which seem to mean "Ptolemy, at the same time that he liberated Egypt, conferred favours on the Jews, and sent them back to their own country," seem to go back to Josephus, whom it is surprising to find even so well-informed an author as Kardizi quoting in this context; but it has already been observed that the Archæology was accessible to many Jews while the Byzantine empire flourished. Whether the Darkness from which this Fast took its name was real or fictitious cannot easily be determined. It seems, indeed, analogous to the earthquake which, the Talmud tells us, signalized the translation of the Prophets by Jonathan Ben Uzziel, probably a mythical personage; and it is in favour of the antiquity and trustworthiness of the calendars that they know nothing about this; for the origin of the Targums has already been seen to be unworthy of such celebration.

Of the burning of the Law by Apostomus, which is also known to the Talmud and the Jewish liturgy, notice has already been taken. On another day the burning of the Scroll of Jeremiah was commemorated; the Fast was, according to the Persian writer, called *Kinoth*—the Hebrew for "Lamentations"; and his account of it differs somewhat from the account of the Appendix. Finally, the Fast-Scroll appears to contain a notice of the enactment forbidding the writing of other books in addition to the Law. The day whereon this event was celebrated was Tamuz 14. The reason assigned for it is that the existence of a Sadducean Scroll made it necessary to interpret literally certain passages of Scripture which it was

desirable to gloss. The particular cases cited include the precept "An eye for an eye," which, it will be remembered, is abrogated in the Gospel. The whole story, as it appears in the Fast-Scroll, seems to represent the memory of a real event, very much disfigured by alterations, intentional and unintentional.

The remaining days commemorate the deaths of leading members of the community—Moses, Aaron and his sons, Miriam, Joshua, and Samuel. In the case of some of these the date is argued out in the existing Talmud, so that there is no reason for assigning these days any high antiquity. The Appendix and the Persian Calendar agree in noticing a Fast of the Death of the Righteous, who, they say, were the leaders of the people in the time of Joshua, son of Nun.

A calendar is, it may be observed, the kind of work to which the theory of accretion is not only applicable, but best suited. As the events occur, the day of their occurrence is noted; and some days, like the ninth of Ab, are likely to acquire notoriety for ill luck. The names of the months used by the Jews were probably adopted by them in the first exile. The dates of pre-exilian disasters could then be remembered, and some of them may have been translated into the new Calendar. This collection of lucky and unlucky days was probably preserved orally, and added to as new events of importance occurred; the Macabean period provided a number of memorable days. Whether there is any truth in the story of the composition of the Fast-Scroll narrated in the Talmud is doubtful; but the reference which has been quoted to an Apocryphal Scroll seems genuine, and this may have been the basis of the three documents which have furnished the matter for this chapter. The memory of it was best retained in an obscure and distant community, whence we owe our best knowledge of it to Abd Al-Hayy of Kardiz, who wrote in the 11th century, and of whose work a transcript of the

18th century appears to be the sole copy that remains! If a document of so late a date seem a strange source to draw from, how old, it may be asked, are the oldest known copies of the Hebrew Bible?

The place which this discussion occupies in the defence of Revelation is due to the continuity of history that such a Calendar exhibits. At each point where we can test it, it appears to display collateral knowledge to that recorded in the ordinary sources of information. At the commencement we have seen that it agrees curiously with the Gospels on the question of the acts forbidden on a Sabbath. Then it knows about Maccabean victories which the historians, having only the books of the Bible to read, have forgotten. So strange even to learned mediæval Jews was the history of the Maccabean period that the author of the famous work *Khazari* (called by the Jews *Cusari*) puts Alexander Jannæus after Christ. The destruction of written literature, the occasion of which is forgotten by the nation at large, is remembered here. The building of the Egyptian Temple by Onias, which is remembered also by the Talmudists, is commemorated, owing to its having been associated with the unlucky ninth of Ab. Where it deals with events recorded in the Bible, the Biblical passages, from the fact of their being supplements, seem rather to be commentaries on its statements than the texts which gave rise to the notices in the Calendar. For surely, had the Calendar been a compilation, in which arbitrary dates were assigned to events of national importance, such memorable days as those of the finding of the Law and the recitation of the law by Ezra ought not to have been neglected, seeing especially that the later tradition makes the former the commencement of an epoch.¹ Going back to the beginnings of Israelitish history, we find that it has an account of the Day of Atonement which is unknown to both the Bible and

¹ Targum on Ezekiel.

the tradition, and that it professes to retain the memory of an event of the time of Joshua which the ordinary tradition has at any rate forgotten.

If we compare this Calendar with the Calendar of Mohammedan Feasts that precedes it, the first fact which strikes the reader is that all the Mohammedan days commemorate events of actual, and indeed modern, history, except those of which the origin is explained by deliberate fabrication. In such cases both the time and the source of the fabrication are fairly clear. Elsewhere, though there may be some doubt concerning the correctness of the date, there is no reason to doubt the historical character of the fact recorded. If this list of Mohammedan feasts of the 11th century be compared with that of the Mohammedan feasts of the year 1900, it will appear that many of the old holy days have fallen into desuetude, but that there are no events of early history commemorated now, which were not commemorated in Kardizi's time.

Of a Calendar borrowed from another nation this would not be true. The Abyssinians strangely fast three days in commemoration of the fasting of the people of Nineveh; but nothing can be concluded therefrom except that at some time or other the example of the people of Nineveh, as recorded in the Book of Jonah, was held out to them for imitation. And, indeed, the whole Abyssinian Calendar is that of another community introduced when the Abyssinians were converted. But in the case of national calendars like those of the Jews and the Mohammedans, the point at which deliberate fiction comes in is hard to fix. The Feast of the Dedication commemorates, as we know, a historical event; the Jews had for centuries no book in which it was recorded; but the fact of the festival recurring served to retain a vague notion of the important epoch in the national history to which it belonged. In the old Calendar (which the Persian text represents) that event is already embellished

with details taken from other histories ; but there is as yet nothing miraculous. By the time the Talmud is committed to writing a miracle is introduced. From the Dedication the next step takes us to the translation of the Bible and the building of the temple of Onias, both of them events that are well known to be historical, but of which the Jews preserved only vague notions. A few more steps take us to Purim, the account of the origin of which appears to be the latest book included in the Canon, and which, indeed, may be still said to be hovering about the Canon, since the Talmud has doubts about the question whether it may be written, and in a work of the 11th century it is excluded from the XXIV. Canonical Books. Thence we are carried back by easy stages to the time before the Exile, to the splitting of the nation, to the time of David, to that of Samuel, that of Eli, that of the Judges, that of Joshua, that of Moses, till we come to the sacrifice of Isaac, with which the sacred year commences, though there is a tradition that its date has been altered. The Calendar is so purely national that the commencement of Israel's influence on the nations of the world is signalized by a fast. Nothing before the time of Abraham is worthy of commemoration, but from that period onwards it continues to collect until the last relics of a Jewish state are extinguished in the time of Trajan. Of the great national Fast it can give a good account, viz., that it is for the great national sin.

Although, then, the evidence of a document so late as the Calendar, which lies at the basis of the works we have discussed, must be accepted with great caution, we seem justified in regarding it as a barrier against the wholesale discrediting of the Old Testament narratives. The distinction between good and bad days was of no slight consequence to the ancient nations ; among some of them it constituted a science ; and Ben-Sira parallels the inequality of different men by the inequality of different days. The fact that men,

though all of the same clay, are yet unequal is, he thinks, analogous to the unequal value of different days, all of which are produced by the same sunlight. This observation, made before the time of the Maccabees, shows that the extreme importance of the holy days which constitute the Calendar would strike any thinking man. The more celebrated of these were of course enjoined by the Law, and their observance even in Justin's time was regarded as one of the chief differences between Jews and Christians. But even those enjoined by the Law were commemorations of definite events. And this fact enabled the Calendar to grow continuously. Where the celebration was not prescribed by the Law, it was prescribed by the Rabbis.

That in certain cases, where a day counted as of good omen or as of evil omen, a cause was assigned to it by conjecture, is conceivable; but yet the acknowledgment of ignorance made by the Calendar with respect to the day which followed the Days of Darkness seems a decided mark of good faith. And another is found in the comparative unimportance of the events commemorated: thus the death of the sons of Aaron would appear to have been of very trivial consequence in the evolution of Israelitish history, but it has a day, whereas the deaths of Saul and David have none. The ordinary sign of natural growth as opposed to fabrication is the absence of system; for in performances of the latter kind the effects of accident, though not negligible, are considerably restricted. Whereas in the case of what grows by nature the range of accident (by which the working of forces that cannot be mathematically measured is meant) is very wide.

The more, then, we regard the Biblical grouping of Israelitish history as correct, the more easily shall we be able to interpret the Calendar by it, and it by the Calendar. If the legend of the compiling of the Fast-Scroll some time during the century before the destruction of the second¹

temple be correct, and the number of days assigned in it to events connected with the Maccabees lends it some colour, the work then done will rather have been the regulation and codification of existing practice than the assignation of dates to events deserving of commemoration. Possibly at the time when it was compiled the list of acts that might not be done on the Sabbath was also provisionally fixed ; polemical interests may have caused its later alteration. And here it may be regretted that so little of the talent that has been spent on the analysis and grouping of partly imaginary codes, supposed to be contained in the Bible, has been devoted to the comparison of the codes actually existing among the Jews ; for any scientific account of the Old Testament must deal primarily with the form of it current among the Jews, and communication therewith can only be secured by advancing to it through the outworks of comments wherewith the Rabbis have surrounded it.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

*THE TERRORS OF THE SUN AND OF
THE MOON.*

WHEN the Psalmist says to me (Ps. cxxi. 5, 6)—

The Lord is thy Keeper :
The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand :
The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night,—

I must needs be delighted, not only with the most comfortable assurance conveyed to me, but also with the charmingly picturesque way in which it is expressed. It is the fashion to lament the decay of poetic feeling under modern conditions of life amongst the general mass of our people. But one must not forget that Religion is the foster-mother of Poetry ; that of all books the Bible is most full of poetry ; that no one can really know and love