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# Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature: English translation

B. Halper

## PREFACE

Although the Hebrew language ceased to be the vernacular of the majority of the Jewish people during the last years of the second temple, it has, throughout the various periods, with but few exceptions, persisted as the medium for the noblest literary productions of the nation. Irrespective of the language spoken by the people in the countries of their adoption, the best thoughts of the Jewish writers found expression in the holy tongue. The Gemara, which is preponderately in Aramaic, can hardly be regarded as an exception, for it consists, in the main, of records of oral discussions and arguments, which were naturally carried on in the vernacular, and as such it is not to be classed among works of literature in its narrower sense. On the other hand, it is very significant that the Midrash and some of the midrashic elements in the Talmud are mostly in Hebrew, and it is just these parts which may claim to be regarded as literature. Then the prayers, many of which date from the early centuries of the present era, and the piyyutim are practically all in Hebrew.

When the centre of Jewish literary activity was transferred to Arabic-speaking countries, the Hebrew language still continued to be employed by a good many of the writers. The treatises with a practical purpose, intended for the edification of the people at large, were, it is true, written in the vernacular, but the literary productions were composed in Hebrew. Lexicographical, grammatical, and philosophical books

appealed to the general public, and had therefore to be expressed in the language spoken by the people. But Hebrew was employed for the literary compositions, poems, and piyyutim. Sa'adya, Ibn Gebirol, and Judah ha-Levi wrote their philosophic works, which undoubtedly had a didactic aim, in Arabic, but their poems and hymns are invariably in Hebrew. Moreover, the popularity of books written in Arabic was short-lived. For shortly afterwards the centre of Jewish learning was shifted to other countries, and the vast Jewish-Arabic literature inevitably became a sealed book. While the Hebrew translations of Sa'adya's *Faiths and Creeds*, Bahya's *Duties of the Heart*, Judah ha-Levi's *Khazarite*, and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* have been repeatedly printed, the Arabic originals of these books had been moulding in the various libraries until scholars in comparatively recent years unearthed them and published them for the use of the few scientific investigators. A similar fate has befallen the grammatical treatises of the brilliant grammarians of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The works written in Arabic, in spite of their intrinsic merit, have almost entirely been forgotten, having been superseded by Hebrew manuals of an inferior character. In this case the Hebrew translations did not save them from oblivion to which they have been condemned for centuries. For the Hebrew writers of the subsequent periods, who knew Arabic, borrowed from their predecessors, and presented the material in a manner acceptable to their readers.

The continuity of the Hebrew language as a literary medium is, accordingly, unbroken, and to illustrate this fact by examples is one of the aims of this

*Anthology.* Incidentally a study of the numerous extracts incorporated into this volume will establish the truth, which has too often been ignored, that the Hebrew genius did not become stagnant with the conclusion of the biblical Canon. It is true that the literary quality of post-biblical works cannot approach the sublimity and beauty of the Bible; but this verdict may justly be applied to other literatures. During the last two thousand years no literature which could rank with the canonical books of the Bible has been produced.

Apart from the literary criterion, there is another aspect which differentiates post-biblical Hebrew literature from the Bible: the former is the product of men, who, with the exception of Ben Sira and possibly the teachers of the Mishnah, did not speak Hebrew as their mother-tongue. Their style, as a consequence, bears the marks of artificiality, and in many cases lacks spontaneity. Hebrew was for them a dead and foreign tongue, and this circumstance involved numerous obstacles and disadvantages. Some of the medieval Hebrew poets had to confine themselves to the vocabulary preserved in the Bible, and rarely ventured to employ expressions occurring in the Talmud or to coin new words which were needed for their poetic compositions. They were thus denied that freedom of expression which is essential to the creative genius, and were compelled to fit their work to the frame. It is due to these considerations that some of the hymns appear like strings of biblical verses or phrases, more or less skilfully put together. The original and daring spirits among these writers, in order to express their new ideas and sentiments, were driven to invest the biblical words and phrases

with new significations, and thereby developed a novel style, which, though interesting in itself and doing credit to the ingenuity of the authors, could not have been conducive to literary creativeness. For while in quest of a biblical phrase which should serve as a vehicle for his newly-conceived thought, the poet could not give free rein to his fancy. And yet, despite all these disadvantages, we have before us masterly compositions which cannot fail to arouse our interest and admiration. On the other hand, the philosophers, grammarians, lexicographers, historians, and geographers have freely introduced new words and expressions, and have thereby enriched the volume of the Hebrew vocabulary. These new coinages, which, to a great extent, have been sanctioned by the usage of centuries, are of vital interest to us at present owing to the widespread movement to revive the Hebrew language. Instead of beginning with a *tabula rasa*, as is done by some of the leaders of this movement, it would be more advisable, and certainly more scientific, to explore our old treasures. There is ample material in post-biblical Hebrew works for the reconstruction of the language.

This volume of translations is a companion to the Hebrew texts printed in a separate book, and in the case of some extracts the reason for their inclusion in this *Anthology* may not be quite apparent. For, in preparing the selections, I have been guided by two principles: the literary merit of the extract and its pedagogic value. The latter quality would be entirely lost in a translation. A passage whose literary value is not very high, but which is pedagogically important, would naturally be welcomed by the student desirous of familiarizing himself with the style

of post-biblical Hebrew. Such a passage, however, may appear cumbersome in translation. At the same time it is hoped that the reader will derive æsthetic pleasure from the beauty or quaintness, as the case may be, of the great variety of passages. In order to give an idea of the diversity and extensiveness of post-biblical Hebrew literature, practically all branches have been incorporated into this *Anthology*, and great care has been taken to select representative authors. Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, liturgy, poetry, philosophy, ethics, history, geography, folk-lore, travel, philology, epistles, ethical wills, and general compositions are represented in this volume. It is to be regretted that two branches, which have been and are the most potent factors in shaping Jewish intellectual life, could not be included. I refer to Halakah and biblical exegesis, which had to be excluded for the simple reason that the representative passages of these branches scarcely possess literary value. At the same time I have excerpted sections from Maimonides' *Code*, Eleazar of Worms' *Rokeah*, and Abravanel's commentary on the Pentateuch. These extracts, however, do not represent Halakah or exegesis, though they happen to have been incorporated into halakic and exegetical works. For a similar reason Kabbalah is not represented here, although there is a mystical strain in the extract from the *Rokeah* and in Nahmanides' epistle. While in point of time Ben Sira belongs to the biblical period, it has been deemed advisable to incorporate passages from his *Wisdom*, because it is outside the Hebrew Canon. Moreover, in the Hebrew text of the extracts selected for this *Anthology* at least two Hebrew verbs, not occurring in the Bible, have been rescued from oblivion.

The texts are arranged chronologically as far as possible. The method of arranging extracts according to subjects, which other writers may prefer, presents numerous difficulties which are now obviated. Some passages defy classification, while others can be placed in more than one group. Moreover, the chronological arrangement has the advantage of presenting a complete picture of the growth and development of the various branches of Hebrew literature. Although some branches synchronize, as, for instance, poetry and philosophy, few of them persist throughout the various periods. In the majority of cases each age has produced a mode of literary expression peculiar to itself. The eleventh century may be regarded as the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry. A few gifted poets have arisen during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but we meet with no great talents until we reach the modern renaissance, the beginnings of which are incorporated here. The philosophic activity extended over a much longer period, but the best works have been produced in a limited number of generations.

The translations are obviously based upon the Hebrew volume of this *Anthology*. A reader comparing my translation with other editions of the extracts will therefore come across some discrepancies. A few examples may suffice to illustrate this point. The printed editions of the Mishnah have a word denoting "silver" which is here rendered by "golden" (II, 2, l. 7). Of course, my edition has the correct word which is found in the famous Munich manuscript. In the Pesikta extract there is an additional sentence not found in any of the editions that have hitherto appeared: *A messenger came and said unto me:*



"*Thy husband died in the city across the sea*" (V, 1, l. 10). My reading, however, is derived from the Parma manuscript. In Judah ha-Levi's poem entitled "Meditations in Mid-Ocean" (XVIII, 2, l. 6 from end) my translation reads: *The waters and the sky are like brilliant and bright ornaments on the night.* The word "ornaments" does not occur in any of the printed editions, and, instead, they all read two words which signify "until the sea," which are entirely unsuitable for the context. My rendering is the result of a slight emendation involving merely the joining of the two words into one and a change in the vocalization. In the notes to the Hebrew volume the reader will find ample justification for the rather numerous variants. In order not to render this volume cumbersome, those notes have been omitted here.

Wherever possible, I have attempted to retain the flavor of the original, and the translation is literal as far as the English idiom would allow. In a number of cases, notably Judah ha-Levi's letter (XVIII, 3), a free rendering would, I fear, be meaningless. To my mind, only a literal translation is capable of doing justice to a literature of this kind. The King James' Version of the Bible owes part of its charm to its literalness. Those translators were fortunate in writing during the formative period of the English language, before the various idioms became fixed. But even in more recent times the superiority of Burton's *Arabian Nights* must be partly ascribed to its quaint literalness. This method has been wisely followed by Chenery and Steingass in translating Al-Hariri's *Assemblies*, though they lacked Burton's artistic skill. The average reader is probably not aware that the literal translator imposes upon himself

a much severer task than the writer who merely gives a free rendering. The former, if he is a conscientious worker, attempts to reproduce everything, while the latter often allows himself to omit or vary difficult expression which task the translator's skill. The uncharry reader finds the free translation smooth and easy, and is liable to condemn the literal one, which is necessarily rugged.

Some of the extracts had been previously translated in a satisfactory manner, notably Ben Sira, Kalir, Ibn Gebirol's *Royal Crown*, Benjamin of Tudela, Judah ha-Levi's *Khazarite* (by H. Hirschfeld), and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* (by M. Friedländer). But in all cases I found it necessary to subject the passages to a thorough revision, partly because my aim was different from that of my predecessors. This revision was especially necessary in the two last-named extracts. Hirschfeld and Friedländer translated the Arabic originals, while I wished to illustrate the style of the Hebrew translators. This fact will also explain another difficulty which may puzzle a reader of this volume: Extracts XXIII and XXVI are listed under Judah b. Saul Ibn Tibbon and Samuel b. Judah Ibn Tibbon, and not under Judah ha-Levi and Moses b. Maimon, respectively. In an anthology of philosophy these sections would naturally be credited to their original authors, but the Hebrew translations must be given under the Ibn Tibbons. And obviously the arrangement of this volume ought to follow that of the Hebrew texts.

Doctor Cyrus Adler has kindly read the manuscript and proof-sheets of this volume, and I am indebted to him for a number of valuable suggestions, especially

in connection with the style. My thanks are also due to Professor Israel Davidson and Doctor Isaac Husik for going over the proof-sheets of the poetic and philosophic sections, respectively.

B. HALPER.

DROPSIE COLLEGE, *February, 1920.*

## I. THE WISDOM OF BEN SIRA

[This apocryphal book, usually called "Ecclesiasticus," was composed about 180 B. C. E. by Jesus, the son of Simon, the son of Eleazar, the son of Sira. The author was probably a scribe, and was well-versed in the wisdom literature of his day. The Hebrew original of this work was still known in the tenth century, but was subsequently lost sight of. In 1896 a fragment from the Cairo Genizah was given to Prof. S. Schechter, who immediately identified it as the Hebrew original of this book. Other discoveries were afterwards made, and now about two-thirds of the entire work have been recovered.]

### 1. Wisdom Is a Source of Happiness<sup>1</sup>

Happy is the man that meditateth in wisdom,  
And that hath respect unto understanding;  
That setteth his heart upon her ways,  
And considereth her paths;  
Going out after her in search of her,  
And spying all her entries;  
That prieth through her window,  
And hearkeneth at her doors;  
That encampeth about her house,  
And fixeth his pegs into her wall,  
And he pitcheth his tent by her side,  
And dwelleth in a goodly dwelling;  
And he buildeth his nest on her bough,  
And lodgeth among her branches;  
And he sheltereth in her shade from the heat,  
And dwelleth in her habitations.

For he that feareth the Lord doeth this,  
And he that taketh hold of the Law attaineth unto her.

<sup>1</sup> Chapters 14.20-15.8.

And she will meet him as a mother,  
And receive him as a wife of youth.  
And she will feed him with the bread of understanding,  
And give him water of knowledge to drink.  
And he is stayed upon her, and shall not be moved;  
And in her he trusteth, and shall not be confounded.  
And she will exalt him above his neighbor,  
And in the midst of the congregation will she open  
his mouth.  
He shall find joy and gladness,  
And she will make him inherit an everlasting name.  
Men of vanity shall not attain unto her,  
And men of arrogance shall not see her.  
Far from scorers is she,  
And liars remember her not.

## 2. The Usefulness of the Physician <sup>a</sup>

Honor a physician according to thy need of him—  
Him also hath God apportioned.  
From God a physician getteth wisdom,  
And from a king he receiveth gifts.  
The skill of a physician lifteth up his head,  
And he may stand before nobles.  
God bringeth out medicines from the earth,  
And let a prudent man not despise them.  
Was not water made sweet by wood,  
To make every man know His power?  
And He gave men understanding,  
That they might glory in His mighty works.  
By means of them doth a physician assuage pain,

<sup>a</sup> Chapter 38, 1-15.

And likewise the apothecary maketh a confection:  
That His work may not cease,  
Nor health from the sons of men.

My son, in sickness be not negligent;  
Pray unto God, for He healeth.  
Flee from iniquity, and from respect of persons,  
And from all transgressions cleanse thy heart.  
Offer a sweet savor as a memorial,  
And prepare a fat offering according to thy substance,  
And also to the physician give a place,  
And he shall not be removed, for there is need of him  
likewise.

For there is a time when in his power is good success,  
For he, too, maketh supplication to God,  
That He should prosper to him the treatment,  
And the healing, for the sake of his living.  
He that sinneth against his Maker  
Behaveth himself proudly before a physician.

### 3. In Praise of the High Priest Simeon the Son of Johanan\*

Great among his brethren, and glory of his people,  
Was Simeon the son of Johanan, the priest;  
In whose generation the house was repaired,  
And in whose days the temple was fortified;  
In whose generation a cistern was digged,  
A pit like the sea in its abundance;  
In whose days a wall was built—  
Turrets for protection in the temple of the King:  
Who took thought for his people against the spoiler,  
And fortified the city against the besieger.

\* Chapter 50, 1-24.

How glorious was he when he looked forth from the  
Tent,

And when he went out from the sanctuary!  
As the morning-star from amid thick clouds,  
And as the full moon in the days of the solemn feast;  
As the sun dawning upon the temple of the King,  
And as a rainbow seen in the cloud.

As a bud in the branches in the days of the solemn  
feast,

And as the lily by the watercourses;  
As the flower of Lebanon in the days of summer,  
And as the fire of incense upon the meal-offering:

As a gold vessel . . . .<sup>4</sup>

That is set with precious stones;

As a green olive full of berries,

And as a wild olive-tree with branches full of sap.

When he put on robes of honor,

And clothed himself with robes of glory;

When he ascended the altar of majesty,

And made glorious the court of the sanctuary;

When he received the portions from the hand of his  
brethren,

While standing by the altar-fires:

Round him the garland of his sons,

Like cedar-plants in Lebanon.

And they compassed him about like willows of the  
brook—

All the sons of Aaron in their glory;

With the fire-offerings of the Lord in their hand,

Before all the congregation of Israel;

Until he had finished serving the altar,

And arranging the fires of the Most High.

<sup>4</sup> There are some illegible letters in the original.

Then sounded the sons of Aaron, the priests,  
With trumpets of beaten work;  
And they sounded, and made their mighty voice heard,  
To bring to remembrance before the Most High.  
All flesh hastened together,  
And fell down on their faces to the ground;  
Worshipping before the Most High,  
Before the Holy One of Israel.  
And the choir uttered its voice,  
And over the multitude they made sweet melody.  
And all the people of the land chanted,  
In prayer before the Merciful;  
Until he had finished serving the altar,  
And had brought his customary offerings unto it.  
Then he came down, and lifted up his hands  
Over all the congregation of Israel;  
And the blessing of the Lord was on his lips,  
And in the name of the Lord he gloried.  
And they bowed down again a second time,  
The people, all of them, before Him.

Now bless ye the Lord, the God of Israel,  
Who doeth wondrously on earth;  
Who bringeth up man from the womb,  
And maketh him according to His will.  
May He give you wisdom of heart,  
And may He be with peace among you.  
May He make His mercy stand fast with Simeon,  
And may He confirm to him the covenant of Phinehas,  
That shall not be cut off from him and from his seed,  
As the days of heaven.



## II. THE MISHNAH

[A collection of Jewish jurisprudence, dealing with the various aspects of Jewish life, and classified in the following six orders: *Zera'im* ("Seeds"), containing eleven tractates; *Mo'ed* ("Festivals"), containing twelve tractates; *Nashim* ("Women"), containing seven tractates; *Nezikin* ("Damages"), containing ten tractates; *Kodashim* ("Holy Things"), containing eleven tractates; *Teharot* ("Purifications"), containing twelve tractates. The Mishnah is written in terse and simple Hebrew, well adapted to the various subjects, and has preserved a number of words, which, as may be seen from the cognate languages, must have been in common use in biblical times, though they do not occur in the Bible. It also contains some loan-words from Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. It was redacted by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi about 200 c. E.]

### 1. The Bringing of the First-Fruits to Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>

In what manner were the first-fruits brought up? All the inhabitants of the towns of a district assembled in the principal city of the district; they spent the night in the market-place of the city, and entered no house. Early in the morning the appointed officer would proclaim: 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the house of the Lord our God.'

They that lived in the vicinity would bring fresh figs and grapes; they that came from afar would bring dry figs and raisins. The bull went before them, its horns overlaid with gold, and a garland of olive-leaves on its head. The flute played before them, until they drew near Jerusalem. When they drew near Jerusalem, they sent messengers before them, and adorned their first-fruits. The governors, deputies, and treasurers came out to meet them; according to the rank

<sup>1</sup> Tractate Bikkurim 3. 2-8.

of those that entered did they come out. All the craftsmen of Jerusalem stood up before them, and greeted them, saying: 'Our brethren, ye men of such and such a place, ye are welcome.'

The flute played before them, until they reached the temple mount. When they reached the temple mount, each man (even king Agrippa) put his basket upon his shoulders. Then they went in as far as the temple court. When they reached the temple court, the Levites recited the song: 'I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast raised me up, and hast not suffered mine enemies to rejoice over me.'\*

The pigeons which were fastened to the baskets were offered as sacrifices, while those which they held in their hands were given to the priests.

While the basket was still on his shoulder, he recited from *I profess this day unto the Lord thy God,*<sup>2</sup> till he finished the entire portion. Rabbi Judah says: Only as far as *A wandering Aramean was my father.*<sup>4</sup> When he reached the words *A wandering Aramean was my father*, he took the basket down from his shoulder, held it by its rim (while the priest put his hand under it, and waved it), and recited from *A wandering Aramean was my father*, until he finished the entire portion. He then placed his basket at the side of the altar, prostrated himself, and went out.

Formerly any one who was able to read would read by himself, while he who could not read would repeat after the reader. But as many people refrained from

\* Psalm 30. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 26. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 26. 5.

bringing the first-fruits on account of this, it was instituted that both, those that are able to read and those that are not able, should repeat after the reader.

The wealthy would bring their first-fruits in baskets of silver or of gold, while the poor would bring them in wicker baskets made of peeled willow-twigs. The baskets and the first-fruits were given to the priests.

## 2. The Libation of Water and the Water-Drawing Feast<sup>1</sup>

In what manner was the libation of water made? A golden pitcher of the capacity of three logs was filled with water from the brook of Shiloah. When they reached the Water Gate, they sounded a plain note, a tremolo, and a plain note. The priest went up the ascent of the altar, and turned to his left, where stood two golden basins. Rabbi Judah says: They were of gypsum, but their appearance was darkish because of the wine. In each was a hole like a narrow nostril, one of the basins having a big opening and the other a small one, so that both should become empty at the same time. The basin toward the west was for water, that toward the east for wine. But if the water is poured into the basin for wine, or the wine into the basin for water, it is lawful. Rabbi Judah says: The libation was performed with one log during all the eight days. Unto him who poured out the water they said: 'Raise thy hands;' because it once happened that a priest poured the water over his feet, and all the people pelted him to death with their citrons.

As they did on week-days, so they did on the Sabbath, except that on the eve of the Sabbath they would

<sup>1</sup> Tractate Sukkah 4. 9-5. 4.

fill a golden pitcher, which had not been consecrated, with water from the brook of Shiloah, and place it in the chamber. If the water was spilt, or uncovered, they would fill the pitcher with water from the laver; for wine or water, which was uncovered, is not fit to be offered on the altar.

He who did not see the rejoicing of the water-drawing never saw real rejoicing in his life.

At the expiration of the first day of Tabernacles they\* descended to the Women's Court, where they made great preparations. Golden candlesticks were there, upon whose tops were four golden basins. Four ladders were placed near each candlestick, and four young priests held pitchers of oil containing one hundred and twenty logs, which they poured into basins.

Of the worn-out breeches and girdles of the priest wicks were made, wherewith to kindle the lamps. There was not a court in Jerusalem which was not illuminated by the lights kindled at the water-drawing.

Pious and distinguished men danced before them with torches in their hands, and chanted before them hymns and praises. The Levites with harps, lutes, cymbals, and trumpets, and musical instruments without number stood upon the fifteen steps, that led from the Men's Court to the Women's Court, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascent of the Book of Psalms. Upon these steps the Levites had stood with musical instruments, and chanted hymns. Two priests with trumpets in their hands stood at the Upper Gate, which led down from the Men's Court to the Women's Court. When the cock crowed, they sounded a plain

\* That is, the priests and Levites.

note, a tremolo, and a plain note. When they reached the tenth step, they again sounded a plain note, a tremolo, and a plain note. When they reached the Court, they once more sounded a plain note, a tremolo, and a plain note. They continued to blow the horn, until they reached the gate that led out to the east. As soon as they reached the gate that led out to the east, they turned their faces from east to west, and said: 'Our fathers who were in this place turned their backs toward the temple and their faces toward the east, and prostrated themselves eastward to the sun; but as for us, our eyes are turned to God.' Rabbi Judah says: They repeated it,' and said: 'We are God's and our eyes are turned to God.'

'That is, perhaps, they repeated God's name.

### III. ABOT DE-RABBI NATHAN

[A sort of Tosefta (addition) to *Pirke Abot* (Saying of the Fathers). It contains homiletic expositions, based upon the mishnic text of that tractate, as well as a number of independent maxims and narratives. It is divided into forty chapters (in some editions there are forty-one), and is of tannaitic origin. Two recensions are extant.]

#### Rabban Johanan the Son of Zaccai's Pupils Offer Consolations to Their Master on the Death of His Son<sup>1</sup>

When the son of Rabban Johanan the son of Zaccai died, his pupils came to console him. Rabbi Eliezer entered, sat down before him, and said unto him: 'O master, is it thy will that I should say something to thee?' He replied: 'Speak.' Rabbi Eliezer then said unto him: 'Adam had a son who died, and yet he accepted consolation for him. Whence do we know that he accepted consolation for him? because it is written: "And Adam knew his wife again."<sup>2</sup> Accept thou consolation likewise.' Whereupon Rabban Johanan said unto him: 'Is it not enough that I am grieved, must thou also remind me of Adam's grief?' Rabbi Joshua then entered, and said unto him: 'Is it thy will that I should say something to thee?' He replied: 'Speak.' Rabbi Joshua then said unto him: 'Job had sons and daughters all of whom died in one day, and yet he accepted consolation for them. Accept thou consolation likewise. Whence do we know that Job accepted consolation? because it is written:

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 14, Schechter's edition, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 4. 25.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." <sup>1</sup> Whereupon Rabbān Johanan said unto him: 'Is it not enough that I am grieved, must thou also remind me of Job's grief?' Rabbi Jose then entered, sat down before him, and said unto him: 'O master, is it thy will that I should say something to thee?' He replied: 'Speak.' Rabbi Jose then said unto him: 'Aaron had two grown-up sons both of whom died in one day, and yet he accepted consolation, as it is written: "And Aaron held his peace"; <sup>2</sup> now silence implies consolation. Accept thou consolation likewise.' Whereupon Rabbān Johanan said unto him: 'Is it not enough that I am grieved, must thou also remind me of Aaron's grief?' Rabbi Simon then entered, and said unto him: 'O master, is it thy will that I should say something to thee?' He replied: 'Speak.' Rabbi Simon then said unto him: 'King David had a son who died, and yet he accepted consolation. Accept thou consolation likewise. Whence do we know that David accepted consolation? because it is written: "And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon." <sup>3</sup> Accept thou, O master, consolation likewise.' Whereupon Rabbān Johanan said unto him: 'Is it not enough that I am grieved, must thou also remind me of king David's grief?' Rabbi Eleazar the son of Arak then entered. As soon as Rabbān Johanan saw him, he said unto his attendant: 'Take his garments, and walk after him into

<sup>1</sup> Job 1. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 10. 3.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 12. 24.

the bath-house,\* for he is a great man, and I cannot withstand him!’ Rabbi Eleazar entered, sat down before him, and said unto him: ‘I shall give thee a parable to which this matter is like: it is like to a man to whom the king committed a trust. Every day that man would weep, and cry, saying: “When shall I be freed of this trust in peace?” Such is thy case, O master: thou hadst a son who studied the Torah, the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings, the Mishnah, Halakot, and Haggadot, and departed from this world without sin. Thou shouldst surely accept consolation for him, when thou hast restored thy trust unimpaired.’ Whereupon Rabbi Johanan said unto him: ‘Eleazar my son, thou hast comforted me in the manner men should comfort.’

When they went forth from his presence, Rabbi Eleazar said: ‘I shall go to Dimsith which is a beautiful place with pleasant and delicious waters.’ But the others said: ‘We shall go to Jamnia, where there are many scholars who love the Torah.’ He who went to Dimsith which is a beautiful place with pleasant and delicious waters, his fame as a scholar waned; but they who went to Jamnia, where there are many scholars who love the Torah, their fame as scholars became great.

\* This is an expression, of frequent occurrence in Aramaic, denoting: *pay him homage*. Comp. *Erubin 27b*.



## IV. THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

[Lengthy discussions of the subjects treated of in the Mishnah. It likewise contains numerous anecdotes and legends. While most of the discussions relate to the legal and ritual topics, the Talmud may at the same time be termed a store-house of almost all the sciences cultivated in those days, as medicine, astronomy, and mathematics. It is of extreme interest to the student of folk-lore. The noblest minds of the Jewish race have up till comparatively recent times been devoted to the study of the volumes of the Talmud, which has contributed to the shaping of the Jewish character. The language is for the most part Aramaic, but Hebrew passages occur now and again. It was redacted about 500 c. E.]

### 1. The Martyrdom of Rabbi Akiba<sup>1</sup>

Once upon a time the wicked Roman government decreed that the Israelites should not study the Torah. One day Pappos the son of Judah met Rabbi Akiba, who publicly called assemblies together, and studied the Torah. He said: 'Akiba, fearest thou not the government?' Rabbi Akiba replied: 'I shall give thee a parable: A fox walked about by the riverside. Perceiving fishes that were fleeing in companies from place to place, he said unto them: "Why do ye flee?" They answered: "On account of the nets that men bring against us." He said unto them: "Do ye wish to go up to the dry land, so that I and ye may live together in the same manner as my forebears lived with your forebears?" They said unto him: "Art thou he who is said to be the shrewdest of the animals? Thou art not shrewd, but foolish. If we are terror-stricken in the place where we live, how much greater our fear in the place where we are like to die!" This is our case. If we are in such distress now that we study the Torah, concerning

<sup>1</sup>Tractate Berakot 61b.

which it is written: "For it is thy life and the length of days;"<sup>2</sup> how much more shall we be in distress, if we cease to study the Torah!

It is related that before many days passed Rabbi Akiba was seized and put into prison. Pappos likewise was seized and put next to Rabbi Akiba, who said unto him: 'O Pappos, why wast thou brought here?' He replied: 'Happy art thou, Akiba, that thou wast seized because of the words of the Torah; woe unto Pappos who was seized because of vain things.'

Rabbi Akiba was led forth to be put to death at the time for reading the Shema'. While they tore his flesh with iron combs, he took upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. His pupils asked: 'O master, thus far?' He replied: 'All my life have I been distressed about this verse: "With all thy soul"<sup>3</sup> (even if He takes away thy soul); I used to say: When shall I have the opportunity to fulfil it? Shall I not fulfil it now that the opportunity is come?' He prolonged the word *One*, so that his soul departed while he uttered the word *One*. A heavenly voice came forth, and said: 'Happy art thou, Rabbi Akiba, because thy soul departed at the word *One*.' The ministering angels said unto the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Is this the Torah, and this the reward thereof? *Is Thy hand governed by men, O Lord?*'<sup>4</sup> He replied unto them: '*Their portion is in eternal life.*'<sup>5</sup> A heavenly voice came

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 30. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 6. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 17. 14. A haggadic interpretation is given here. Rashi offers a different explanation. It is also possible, by changing the vocalization, to translate: *These are slain for Thy hand.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

forth, and said: 'Happy art thou, Rabbi Akiba; thou art ready for the life of the world to come.'

## 2. A Controversy on the Merits of Charity\*

Turnus Rufus<sup>1</sup> asked Rabbi Akiba: 'If your God loves the poor, why does he not sustain them?' He replied: 'That we may be delivered from the punishment of Gehenna.' Turnus Rufus said: 'That would condemn you to Gehenna. I shall give thee a parable. A king of flesh and blood is wroth against his servant, casts him into a dungeon, and decrees that none shall give him food or drink. A man, however, comes, and gives him food and drink. When the king hears of it, will he not be angry with him? Ye are called servants, as it is written: "For unto Me the children of Israel are servants."'<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Akiba replied: 'This is not so; let me give thee a parable. A king of flesh and blood is wroth against his son, casts him into a dungeon, and commands that none shall give him food or drink. A man, however, comes and gives him food and drink. When the king hears of it, will he not send him gifts? We are called children, as it is written: "Ye are the children of the Lord your God."'<sup>3</sup> But Turnus Rufus said unto him: 'Ye are called children, and ye are likewise called servants: when ye do God's will, ye are called children; but when ye do not God's will, ye are called servants. At present, however, ye are not doing God's will.' Rabbi Akiba replied: 'Nevertheless it is written: "Is it

\* Tractate Baba Batra 10a.

<sup>1</sup> A Roman commander in Judea under Hadrian. Turnus stands either for Tyrannus or T. Annius.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 25. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 14. 1.

not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?"<sup>10</sup> Now to which time do the words *bring the poor that are cast out to thy house* apply? Certainly to the present time, and yet it is written: "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry!"<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Maxims and Admonitions<sup>12</sup>

Rabbi Eleazar ha-Kappar says: Keep away from complaining, lest thou shouldst complain against others, and sin all the more. Love him who reproves thee, that thou mayest add wisdom to thy wisdom; hate him who praises thee, that thy wisdom may not be diminished. Love the synagogue, that thou mayest take thy reward every day; love the house of study, that thy children may be inspired to study the Torah. Love the poor, that thy children may not come to that state. Love humility, that thou mayest complete the years of thy life. Love acts of beneficence, that thou mayest be delivered from the angel of untimely death. Be careful in reading the Shema' and prayers, that thou mayest be delivered from the punishment of Gehenna. Let thy house be open wide, that thou mayest not lack sustenance. Take heed that the doors of thy house should not be locked when thou reclinest at the table to eat and to drink; for the doors of thy house sometimes lead thee to poverty. Take care of the honor of thy wife, that she may not be like a barren woman. Be joyful when thou art afflicted with pain, for this delivers thee from the punishment of

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 58. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Tractate Derek Erez Zuta, chapter 9, Tawrogi's edition pp. 45, *seq.*

Gehenna. Rejoice in thy table when the hungry derive pleasure from it; for thereby thou wilt prolong thy days in this world and in the world to come. Be joyful when thou hast given away aught from thy house, that the anger of the angel of death may be averted from thee, as it is written: 'A gift in secret pacifieth anger; and a present in the bosom strong wrath.'<sup>13</sup> If thou hast refrained thyself from doing a good deed, the angel of death will meet thee; but if thou hast caused thy feet to hurry for the sake of the poor and for the sake of the commandments, the words *Blessed art thou when thou comest in, and blessed art thou when thou goest out*<sup>14</sup> apply to thee. If thou keepest thy mouth from slander, thou wilt be all thy days in peace. If thou hast been impudent before one who is greater than thou, thou wilt in the end become leprous. If thou hast refrained thyself from a good deed, and has occupied thyself with a sinful deed, thy wife will in the end die of a plague, as it is written: 'Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a plague.'<sup>15</sup> If thou hast run to honor a sage, thou wilt have sons and daughters who are righteous before Heaven; and if thou hast run to honor a poor man, thou wilt have sons who study the Torah and fulfil the commandments in Israel. If thou seest that a sage has died, turn not away from him until thou hast accompanied him to the grave; so that when thou diest, thou shalt enter into peace and rest in thy bed. If thou seest that thy friend is impoverished, and that his hand has failed, send him not back empty, as it is written: 'Whoso keepeth

<sup>13</sup> Proverbs 21. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 28. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Ezekiel 24. 16.

the commandment shall know no evil thing.<sup>15</sup> If thou hast lent him aught in the hour of his need, the words *Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will answer*<sup>16</sup> will apply to thee. If thou hast humbled thyself, the Holy One, blessed be He, will lift thee up; but if thou hast made thyself haughty before thy friend, the Holy One, blessed be He, will humble thee. Pursue peace, and people shall tell of thy peace as of the peace of Phinehas the son of Eleazar. And thus did Rabbi Eleazar say: Love peace, and hate strife. Great is peace, for even if the Israelites worship idols, but peace reigns in their midst, the Shekinah, as it were, can do them no harm, as it is written: 'Ephraim is united, though he has idols, let him alone.'<sup>17</sup> But if strife is in their midst, what is written concerning them? 'Their heart is divided: now shall they be destroyed.'<sup>18</sup> How does this apply? A house in which there is strife will in the end be laid waste. The sages say: A synagogue in which there is strife will in the end be demolished. If two scholars dwelling in one city have two courts of justice, and there is strife in their midst, they will die an untimely death.

Abba Saul says: Strife between courts of justice brings about the destruction of the world.

<sup>15</sup> Ecclesiastes 8. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 58. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Hosea 4. 17. A haggadic interpretation is here given.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 10. 2.

## V. THE MIDRASH

[The midrashic literature is divided into two main classes: halakic and haggadic. The former deals with legal matters, while the latter, which comprises the greater part of midrashic collections, is exegetic and homiletic. Some of the books are arranged in accordance with the order of the biblical passages upon which they are based, while others are groups of homilies delivered on the important Sabbaths and festivals. The language of this branch of literature is mostly Hebrew, and is very fluent and sometimes poetic, but Aramaic passages occur now and then, especially in the older collections. These works were compiled and redacted at various times, from the tannaitic period down to the twelfth century, and are mostly of Palestinian origin.]

### 1. The Prophet Jeremiah Meets Mother Zion Mourning for Her Exiled Children<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah said: While going up to Jerusalem, I lifted up mine eyes, and saw a woman sitting on the top of a mountain, clad in black garments, her hair dishevelled; she was crying and asking who would comfort her, and I was crying and asking who would comfort me. I drew nigh unto her, and said: 'If thou art a woman, speak to me; if thou art a ghost, depart from me.' She replied: 'Dost thou not know me? I am she who had seven children; their father went away to a city across the sea. A messenger came and said unto me: "Thy husband died in the city across the sea." While I went about weeping for him, another messenger came, and said unto me: "The house fell upon thy seven children, and killed them." Now I know not for whom I should weep and for whom I should dishevel my hair.' I said: 'Thou

<sup>1</sup> Pesikta Rabbati, Friedmann's edition, p. 131b.

art not better than my mother Zion, and yet she has become pasture for the beasts of the field.' She answered and said unto me: 'I am thy mother Zion, I am the mother of the seven, for thus it is written: "She that hath borne seven languisheth."'<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah then said unto her: 'Thy misfortune is like the misfortune of Job: Job's sons and daughters were taken away from him, and likewise thy sons and daughters were taken away from thee; I<sup>2</sup> took away from Job his silver and gold, and from thee, too, did I take away thy silver and gold; I cast Job on the dunghill, and likewise thee did I make into a dunghill. And just as I returned and comforted Job, so shall I return and comfort thee; I doubled Job's sons and daughters, and thy sons and daughters shall I also double; I doubled Job's silver and gold, and unto thee I shall do likewise; I shook Job from the dunghill, and likewise concerning thee it is written: "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> A mortal of flesh and blood built thee, a mortal of flesh and blood laid thee waste; but in the future I shall build thee, for thus it is written: "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, He gathereth together the dispersed of Israel."<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Death of Moses<sup>5</sup>

The Holy One said to Gabriel: 'O Gabriel, Go, and bring Me the soul of Moses.' But he replied: 'Lord of

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 15. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Here and in the following sentences the prophet speaks for God.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 52. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 147. 2.

<sup>5</sup> This narrative is part of a Midrash especially devoted to this subject, entitled *Midrash Petirat Mosheh*, which was added at the end of Debarim Rabbah.



the universe, how can I look upon the death of him who is equal to the sixty myriads of Israel? How can I cause anguish to such a man?' God then said to Michael: 'Go, and bring Me the soul of Moses.' He replied: 'Lord of the universe, I was his teacher, and he was my pupil; I cannot look upon his death.' Whereupon God said to Sammael the wicked: 'Go, and bring Me the soul of Moses.' He immediately clothed himself with wrath, girded on his sword, wrapped himself in cruelty, and went to meet Moses. When Sammael perceived that Moses was sitting and writing the Ineffable Name, that the radiance of his countenance was like the sun's, and that he resembled an angel of the Lord of hosts, he was afraid of him, and said: 'It is certain that the angels are not able to take the soul of Moses.'

Before Sammael appeared, Moses knew that Sammael was coming. As soon as Sammael saw Moses, trembling and pale, as of a woman in travail, took hold of him. Sammael could not open his mouth, until Moses said to him: 'There is no peace, saith the Lord concerning the wicked!' What art thou doing here?' He replied: 'I came to take thy soul.' 'Who sent thee?' asked Moses. 'He that created all creatures,' answered Sammael. 'Thou shalt not take my soul,' said Moses. 'The souls of all that enter this world are delivered into my hands,' said Sammael. 'I am stronger than all who enter this world,' asserted Moses. 'Wherein lies thy strength?' asked Sammael. 'I am Amram's son, who came forth circumcised from my mother's womb, so that there was no need to circumcise me. On the very day of my birth I was able to talk; I walked about, and

' Isaiah 48. 22.

spoke to my father and mother; I did not even drink milk. When I was three months old, I prophesied and said that I was destined to receive the Torah from the midst of flames of fire. While walking about in the streets, I entered the king's palace, and took off his crown from his head. When eighty years old I did signs and wonders in Egypt, and brought forth the sixty myriads of Israel in the sight of all the Egyptians; I divided the sea into twelve parts, and made the waters of Marah sweet. I ascended to heaven, where I walked about, and took part in the controversy of the angels; I received the Torah of fire, dwelt under the throne of fire, took shelter under a pillar of fire, and spoke face to face with God. I conquered the dwellers of heaven, and revealed their secrets to the sons of men. I received the Torah from the right hand of God, blessed be He, and taught it to Israel. I waged war against Sihon and Og, the two mightiest men of the Gentiles, who were so tall that during the flood the waters reached not their ankles. I made the sun and moon stand still in the height of the universe, and smote these mighty men with the staff that was in my hand, and slew them. Who is there among them that enter this world who can do all this? Get thee hence, O wicked one; thou must not stand here; go, and flee from me. I will not give thee my soul.'

Sammael forthwith returned, and brought word back to God. But the Holy One said to Sammael: 'Go, and bring the soul of Moses.' He immediately drew his sword from its sheath, and stood near Moses. Whereupon Moses grew wroth, seized in his hand the staff, upon which was engraved the Ineffable Name,

and fell upon him with the Ineffable Name, and taking a ray of splendor from between his eyes, he blinded Sammael's eyes. Thus far Moses prevailed.

At the last moment a heavenly voice came forth, and said: 'The hour of thy death has come.' Moses then said to the Holy One, blessed be He: 'O Lord of the universe, remember the day on which Thou didst reveal Thyself unto me in the bush, and didst say unto me: "Come, and I will send thee unto Pharoah, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt."\*' Remember the time when I stood upon mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. I implore Thee, deliver me not unto the hand of the angel of death.' Whereupon a heavenly voice came forth, and said unto him: 'Fear not! I Myself shall take charge of thee and of thy burial.'

At that moment Moses arose, and sanctified himself, as do the Seraphim. The Holy One came down from the highest heaven of heavens to take the soul of Moses, and with Him were three ministering angels, Michael, Gabriel, and Zagzagel. Michael arranged Moses' bed, and Gabriel spread a garment of fine linen at his head; Zagzagel was at his feet. Michael stood at one side, and Gabriel at the other. The Holy One then said to Moses: 'Moses, close thine eyelids, one upon the other; place thy hands upon thy breast; place thy feet one upon the other.' Moses did as he was commanded. At that moment the Holy One summoned the soul from Moses' body, and said unto her: 'My daughter, one hundred and twenty years have I appointed for thee to be in Moses' body; the

\* Exodus 3. 10.

time to depart has now arrived. Come thou forth, tarry not.' The soul said unto Him: 'Lord of the universe, I know that Thou art the God of all spirits, and that all the souls, the souls of the living and of the dead, are delivered into Thy hands, and that Thou didst create and fashion me, and put me into Moses' body for one hundred and twenty years. Now is there in the world a body purer than that of Moses, upon which there never was any pollution, nor worm and maggot? Therefore I love it, and desire not to depart from it.' But the Holy One said: 'O soul, come forth, tarry not. I shall bring thee up to the highest heaven of heavens, and cause thee to dwell under My Throne of Glory near the Cherubim, Seraphim, and hosts of other angels.' The soul then said: 'O Lord of the universe, when from Thy Shekinah in heaven there came down two angels, Uzzah and Azrael, they coveted the daughters of the earth, and corrupted their way upon the earth, so that Thou didst suspend them between heaven and earth. But the son of Amram has not come in unto his wife from the day Thou didst reveal Thyself unto him in the bush, as it is written: "And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman."<sup>9</sup> I implore Thee, let me remain in Moses' body.'

At that moment the Holy One kissed him, and took away his soul with a kiss. God wept, and cried, as it were: 'Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers? who will stand up for Me against the workers of iniquity?'<sup>10</sup> The Holy Spirit said: 'And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 12. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 94. 16.

unto Moses.’<sup>11</sup> The heavens wept, and said: ‘And the upright among men is no more.’<sup>12</sup> When Joshua sought his master and found him not, he wept, and said: ‘Help, O Lord, for the godly man hath ceased; for faithfulness hath failed from the children of men.’<sup>13</sup> The ministering angels said: ‘He executed the righteousness of the Lord.’<sup>14</sup> Israel said: ‘And His ordinances with Israel.’<sup>15</sup> All of them together said: ‘He entereth into peace, they rest in their beds, each one that walketh in his uprightness.’<sup>16</sup>

The memory of the righteous is blessed, and his soul shall be in the life of the world to come.

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 34. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Micah 7. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 12. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 33. 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 57. 2.

## VI. ELEAZAR BE-RABBI KALIR

[Opinions differ as to the time and birthplace of this liturgic poet. The latest researches, however, tend to prove that he flourished in Palestine toward the end of the seventh century. He was a very prolific poet, about two hundred of his poems being still extant in the various Mahzorim. His muse is doleful, bewailing the misfortunes of the Jewish people. His style, though chiefly biblical in construction, teems with newly-coined words.]

### I. A Complaint<sup>1</sup>

‘Why is the glory of kingdoms cast down and still without dominion?’ ‘Bel she set up as king, and walked after him, against the law of God. Over her was then set the mistress of kingdoms,<sup>2</sup> until God’s rule shines forth.’

She burned my dwelling-place, and crushed my saints, and yet her kingdom was prolonged. She spreads on all sides, she bends her bow against me, and extends her yoke. She terrified and crushed the tender people; and yet she still holds sway. She laid bare and waste my temple’s foundation; her guile is very deep. She lifted up her head, and took crafty counsel; her hands are exalted. Her cunning burns

<sup>1</sup> This poem, which is found in the Ashkenazic ritual for New Year, consists of fifteen stanzas, and is an acrostic bearing the author’s name. Each stanza has three short rhyming lines. The poet asks why the Jewish kingdom is cast down (stanza 1). A brief answer is given by the Holy Spirit (stanzas 2 and 3). The remaining stanzas are uttered by the Jewish nation complaining of the evil done to her by her enemies who as yet have not been punished for their wickedness.

<sup>2</sup> That is, Rome.

in her, she soars to the sky, and is girt with sovereignty. She rent my curtains, and destroyed my tent; she harrowed and ploughed my land. She props herself with dominion, is girt with sovereignty, and me she harasses. She plans rebellion, and hastes to serve strange gods;—God's kingdom she profanes. She tortures the King's sons, and says before the King: 'Who in heaven is king over me?'

She vaunts against the King's throne: 'There is no king save me, none else besides me reigns.'

O highest King, reject Thou her from sovereignty;—restore Thy dominion to Thyself.

## 2. The Patriarchs and Matriarchs Intercede on Behalf of Their Exiled Children<sup>\*</sup>

Jeremiah went about by the fathers' graves, and said: 'Beloved ones, how can ye lie at rest, while your children are banished, pierced through with the sword? Where is then your merit in a land laid waste?' The patriarchs all cried with bitter lamentations, because they were bereft of their children; with an imploring voice they moaned to the Dweller of the skies: 'Where is Thy pledge: "But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors"?'<sup>†</sup>

'They changed My glory for vanity; they had no dread of Me, they feared Me not; when I hid My face from them, they longed not, and waited not

<sup>\*</sup>This poem is found in the Ashkenazic ritual for the Ninth of Ab. It consists of eleven stanzas of five rhyming lines, except the last which has four lines. The stanzas are in alphabetic order, two letters being disposed of in each stanza.

<sup>†</sup>Leviticus 26. 45.

for Me. How shall I then refrain Me when they say: "He is not our God"?<sup>a</sup>

The father of the multitude<sup>b</sup> cried in their behalf, and implored the Most High God: 'In vain was I tried ten times for their sake, since I now behold their destruction. Where is Thy promise: "Fear not, Abram"?'<sup>c</sup>

'Ah, they have erred and gone astray from Me, and consecrated themselves to strange gods; they counselled to hew out cisterns for them—but broken cisterns are theirs. How shall I refrain Me, when they break the ten commandments?'

And thus cried Isaac wofully unto the Dweller of the skies: 'In vain was I appointed to be slain, since my seed is crushed and ruined. Where is Thy pledge: "But I will establish My covenant with Isaac"?'<sup>d</sup>

'They rebelled against the prophet Jeremiah, and defiled mount Moriah; I am weary of hearing the complaint which rises to Me from the earth. And how shall I refrain Me since Zechariah is slain?'

And then spoke he who was born for study,<sup>e</sup> like jackals shedding tears: 'My little ones whom I reared with care, why did they fly away so soon? Why was I punished a thousandfold for my blood-guilt?'

Then spoke the faithful shepherd,<sup>f</sup> covered with ashes, wallowing in dust: 'The flocks that were entrusted to my care, why were they cut off before their

<sup>a</sup> Jeremiah 5. 12.

<sup>b</sup> That is, Abraham.

<sup>c</sup> Genesis 15. 1.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.* 17. 21.

<sup>e</sup> That is, Jacob.

<sup>f</sup> That is, Moses.



## VII. ELDAD HA-DANI.

[A traveller who flourished in the ninth century. According to his narrative, he was a native of East Africa. He seems to have travelled in Spain and Babylon.]

### Eldad Leaves His Native Place Beyond the Rivers of Cush<sup>1</sup>

And in this manner did I go forth from beyond the rivers of Cush: I and a Jew of the tribe of Asher boarded a small ship to trade with the sailors. And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord caused a very great and strong wind to blow, so that the ship was wrecked. And the Lord ordained that I should seize hold upon a plank. And when my companion saw this, he likewise seized hold upon that plank with me. And we went up and down with it, until the sea cast us forth amidst a people whose name is Romaranus. They are black Cushites of tall stature, without clothes and without raiment; for they are like animals, and eat men.

When we came to their country, they seized hold upon us. Seeing that my companion was corpulent, plump, and fat, they slew him and devoured him, while he shouted: 'Woe is me, that I should know this people, that the Cushites should eat my flesh.' But me they cast aside, for I had been sick on the ship; and they put me in chains, till I should grow fat and plump. They brought me delicious dishes of for-

<sup>1</sup> Epstein's edition, pp. 23, *seq.*

bidden food; but I ate nothing, and hid the food. When they asked me whether I ate, I replied: 'Yes, I ate.'

I stayed with them a long time, till God, blessed be He, performed a miracle for me, and there came upon them a big army from another place, who took them captive, and plundered them, and slew some of them. And these took me with them among the captives. Those wicked people were fire-worshippers; every morning they would build a great fire, to which they would bow and prostrate themselves. I dwelt with them four years, until they brought me one day to the city of Azin.

A Jewish merchant of the tribe of Issachar met me, and bought me for thirty-two pieces of gold, and returned with me to his country. They inhabit the mountains of the sea-coast, and are under the rule of Media and Persia. And they fulfil this verse: 'This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth.'<sup>2</sup> They have no yoke of the kingdom, but only the yoke of the Law. They have among them captains of hosts, but they do not contend with any man except about the Law. They live in prosperity and ease; there is no adversary, nor evil occurrence. They occupy an area of ten days' journey by ten days' journey, and have abundant cattle and camels and asses and servants; but they do not rear horses. They have no weapons, except a knife for killing animals. There is no extortion, nor robbery among them; even if they find garments or money on the road, they do not stretch forth their hands to take them. But there live near them wicked people, fire-worshippers, who

<sup>2</sup> Joshua 1. 8.

take their mothers and sisters for wives. These, however, neither harm them, nor benefit them. They have a judge; when I asked about him, they told me that his name was Nahshon. The four modes of executing criminals are practised by them. They speak in the holy tongue and in the Persian tongue.

The children of Zebulun inhabit the mountains of Paran, and are on the border of Issachar. And they make tents of hairy skins which are brought to them from Armenia. They reach as far as the river Euphrates, and engage in commerce. The four modes of executing criminals are practised by them in a fitting manner.

The tribe of Reuben dwell opposite to them, behind mount Paran. They live in peace, love, brotherhood, and friendship. They go together to battle, and attack wayfarers; and they divide the booty among them. They walk in the way of the kings of Media and Persia, and speak in the holy tongue and in the Persian tongue. They possess the Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, and Haggadah. Every Sabbath they expound the reasons for the commandments in the holy tongue, and the explanations are given in the Persian tongue.

The tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh dwell there, in the mountains of Nejd, the city of Mecca, where is the idolatry of Ishmaelites. These are of abhorred soul and cruel heart; they possess horses, and attack wayfarers, and do not spare their enemies. They have nothing but booty to live upon. They are great warriors; one of them vanquishes a thousand.

The tribe of Simeon and the other half-tribe of Manasseh dwell in the land of the Chaldeans, six

months' journey from the temple. They are more numerous than all the others, and collect tribute from twenty-five kingdoms; some of the Ishmaelites pay them tribute.

We in our country say that we have a tradition that ye, children of the exile, are of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, living under the rule of the adherents of the idolatrous religion, in the unclean land, scattered among the Romans, who destroyed the house of our God, and among the Greeks and Ishmaelites. May their sword enter into their own heart, and may their bows be broken!

We also have a tradition, handed down from man to man, that we are the children of Dan. At first we were in the land of Israel, dwelling in tents. And there were not among all the tribes of Israel brave warriors like us. When Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin, and made two golden calves, rebelled, so that the kingdom of the house of David was divided, the tribes assembled together, and said: 'Arise, and make war against Rehoboam and against Jerusalem.' But the children of Dan replied: 'Why should we fight against our brethren and against the son of our lord, David, king of Israel and Judah? Far be it, far be it from us!' At that time the elders of Israel said: 'There are no mighty men among all the tribes of Israel like the tribe of Dan.' Whereupon they said to the children of Dan: 'Arise, and make battle against the children of Judah.' But they replied: 'By the life of the head of Dan our father, we shall not make war with our brethren, and we shall not shed their blood.'

Whereupon the children of Dan took their swords and spears and bows, and prepared themselves to de-

part from the land of Israel; for we saw that it was not possible to remain there. They said: 'Let us go now, and find a resting-place; for if we wait till the end, they will destroy us.' We took counsel, and determined to go to Egypt to lay it waste, and to destroy all its inhabitants. But our princes said to us: 'Is it not written: "Ye shall see them again no more for ever?"'<sup>a</sup> How then can ye prosper?' Then they said: 'Let us go against Amalek, or against Edom, or against Ammon and Moab, to destroy them, that we may dwell in their place.' But our princes replied: 'It is written in the Torah that the Holy One restrained the Israelites from passing through their border.'<sup>b</sup>

Finally they took counsel to go to Egypt, but not by the way our fathers had gone, nor to lay it waste, but in order to pass to the river Pishon, to the land of Cush.

And it came to pass, when we drew near to Egypt, that trembling seized hold upon the Egyptians. And they sent word to us: 'Are ye for war or for peace?' We replied: 'For peace: we shall pass through your land to the river Pishon, for there we shall find a resting-place.' And it came to pass, because they did not believe us, that all the Egyptians stood on their watch until we had passed through their land and reached the land of Cush, which we found to be a good and fertile land, having fields, vineyards, gardens, and parks. The inhabitants of Cush did not prevent the children of Dan from dwelling with them, for we took the land by force. And it came to pass, because we

<sup>a</sup> Exodus 14. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Comp. Deuteronomy 2. 4, 9, 19.

wanted to slay all of them, that they became tributaries, paying taxes to the Israelites. And we dwelt with them many years, until we were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly. And we had great wealth.

## VIII. JOSIPPON

[A historical book written in biblical style. Although ascribed to the famous historian Josephus, it is a production of the ninth century at the earliest.]

### **Mattathias Charges His Sons Before His Death, and Appoints Judah Who Is Called Maccabæus as Leader in His Stead<sup>1</sup>**

Now the days of Mattathias drew nigh that he should die; and he called unto his five sons, and he encouraged them, and he strengthened them with his words. And he said unto them: 'My sons, I know that now many wars will be waged among you, because we arose, and bestirred ourselves to fight for our people and for our remnant that escaped, and for the cities of our God. And now, my sons, be jealous for the sake of your God and for the sake of his sanctuary; and fear not death, for if ye die in the battle of the Lord, ye will receive your reward, and ye will be in the land of the living with our fathers. Moreover, ye will also inherit a portion and an inheritance in the lot of their inheritance; for all our fathers were jealous for the Lord, and our God gave them grace and honor. Know ye not that Phinehas our father, because he was jealous for the God of Israel, when he slew Zimri with the Midianitish woman, received a covenant of salt for ever? And his priesthood was unto him, and unto his seed after him, an everlasting covenant; because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel. And the Lord our God therefore raised him

<sup>1</sup> Part of Book IV, chapter 20.

above all the sons of Aaron, our first father, and He gave him His covenant of peace. Also unto all our fathers who were jealous for our God did our God give their reward; and they found favor in the sight of God. Now, my sons, be strong and of good courage, fear not, and be not dismayed on account of these unclean nations; for they trust in their strength that perisheth and in their might that cometh to an end, but ye trust in the strength of the Lord our God which perisheth not and in the power of His might which cometh not to an end. For they trust in the multitude of their troops and in their army, but ye trust in the Lord with whom are strength and power to save by many or by few. And the power of the horse is a vain thing for deliverance, for deliverance is the Lord's. Assemble yourselves, my sons, and be like one man and of one heart; and be jealous for the God of Israel, as your pious fathers were; and the Lord, the God of your strength, will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon your enemies.'

And he called unto Simon his eldest son, and charged him, and said unto him: 'My son, I know that the Lord has put wisdom and understanding in thy heart. And now give, in perfect good will, thy counsel unto thyself and unto the holy people, and withhold not, I pray thee, thyself nor thy counsel from this people. And thou shalt be a father to thy brethren, and they will hearken unto thee in every matter; for the Lord our God has put in thee counsel, and wisdom, and strength.'

And Mattathias said again: 'Call to me Judah my son.' And he was called unto him; and he stood before him. And he said unto him: 'My son Judah, whose





name is called Maccabee, because of thy strength, hearken to my counsel, so that withersoever thou turnest, thou mayest have good success, and mayest be prosperous. I know that thou art a man of war, and that God has put in thee power and strength, so that thy heart is as the heart of a lion, which melteth not and feareth not. And now honor the Lord with thy strength which He has given thee, for everything is from Him; and go, and fight His battles without slothfulness; and be not slothful to go to every side, and to every corner, in the east, and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, in the holy land, to take vengeance from the nations who defile it. And be thou unto the holy people captain of the host and war Messiah.’<sup>3</sup>

And Judah answered his father, and said: ‘Behold, my lord my father, I will do according to all which thou hast commanded me.’

And he commanded, and they brought unto him the vial of oil; and he poured it upon his head, and he anointed him leader and war Messiah. And all the people shouted with a great shout, and blew the trumpet, and they said: ‘Long live the leader,’ and: ‘Long live the anointed.’

And it came to pass, when Mattathias the priest finished charging his sons, that he expired and died, and was gathered unto his people. And Judah his son, who was called Maccabee because of his strength, arose in his stead from among his sons, to be leader and anointed. And his brethren and all his father’s house and all the congregation of the pious helped

<sup>3</sup> In Yoma 72b and Horayot 12a this term refers to the priest who is anointed to encourage the army. Comp. Deuteronomy 20. 2-4.

him. And he buried his father with great honor. And after that Judah put on a coat of mail as a mighty man; and he girded his armor upon his loins; and he went down to the uncircumcised, who were encamped round the mountain, which they came to take. And he smote among them eight thousand and two hundred of their mighty men. And he judged Israel with his sword; and he purged out the violent from them, and he destroyed them. And he trod down to the earth the strangers that were in all the borders of Israel. And the wicked were discomfited through their dread of him, and the wrong-doers were dismayed through their fear of him. And it was that, when he shouted, his voice was as the voice of the roaring of a lion on the day he roars to tear the prey. And all Israel rejoiced in his deeds, and exulted in his work. And all the world was terrified because of his fame. Then were kings, greater and mightier than he, dismayed; and trembling seized hold upon the chiefs of the earth and the kings thereof. And his name went forth among the nations to the end of all the earth; and the tales of the wonders of his war and the terrors of his mighty deeds reached to the end of the earth. And when he was gathered unto his people, all the seed of Israel praised him, and honored him. And they spoke, saying: 'May the spirit of the Lord cause him to rest, and may he dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, under the tree of life.'

And he went from city to city, and slew all the wicked of the people of Judah, who were destroying the people of Israel.

## IX. SA'ADYA GAON B. JOSEPH

[This great Gaon was born at Fayyum, Egypt, in 892. He settled in Babylon, and, though a foreigner, was appointed Gaon of Sura. His many-sided activities and achievements are astounding in their magnitude. He discharged his duties as Gaon with stupendous energy, and found time to write numerous books on grammar, lexicography, exegesis, philosophy, Halakah, and liturgy. He excelled in almost all branches, as may be readily seen from his works that are still extant. His greatest achievement was in the domain of biblical philology. Most of his works were written in Arabic, but he was also a master of Hebrew style. He carried on an effective campaign against the Karaites and other sectarians. He died 942.]

### A Prayer Entitled *Magen U-Mehayyeh* (Shield and Quickener) <sup>1</sup>

He remembers the lovingkindnesses of the fathers, and answers the children in the time of their distress, because of His name which is called upon them, and because of the merit of their fathers, as He has done from the days of old, and wrought for them this work; as it is written: 'And the Lord was gracious unto them. . . .'<sup>2</sup> We therefore ask of Thee, O Lord our God, these three things: to be gracious unto us, to have mercy upon us, and to turn unto us. I beseech Thee, O Lord, be gracious unto us by accepting our prayer; as it is written: 'Behold, as the eyes of servants, . . . .'<sup>3</sup>

I beseech Thee, O Lord, be gracious unto us by accepting our repentance, and by pardoning us; as it is

<sup>1</sup> From a manuscript in the library of the Dropsie College.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 13. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 123. 2.

written: 'Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have compassion upon the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.'<sup>4</sup> I beseech Thee, O Lord, turn unto us, and fulfil our request for life; as it is written: 'And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful. . . .'<sup>5</sup> For Thy covenant stands fast forever, and Thy faithfulness is as the days of heaven, and Thy righteousness shall be forever, and Thy salvation unto all generations. O King that art a Savior and a Shield: Blessed art thou, O Lord, Shield of Abraham.

Thou art on high for ever, O Lord, mighty from eternity to eternity; from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. Thy lovingkindness is in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reaches unto the skies. Thou makest Thy might known to the sons of men, and Thy excellence is over Israel. From the uttermost part of the earth are Thy songs, and all the ends of the earth are filled with Thy praise. Thou art the life of all eternal life, and the life of all the living comes from before Thee. Thou fashionest them all with the four kinds of life, which Thou establishest in them to keep them alive.<sup>6</sup> At first with the spirit of light, for the light of the spirit completes their soul. The foundations of the world which Thou hast stretched forth may be searched out, but Thy praise shall not depart; for the mountains may depart, but Thy kingdom shall not vanish; the hills may be removed, but

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 39. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 26. 9.

<sup>6</sup> This is the end of a leaf in the manuscript of the original, and there is a likelihood that some leaves are missing here, so that the following sentences are not a continuation of this part.

Thy mercies shall not fail. Man is too brutish to know Thy creatures; man is put to shame, and fathoms not the mystery of Thy beings. The wise are too foolish to speak of Thy might, and as for them who enumerate Thy works, their tongue stammers. The singers find no strength, and as for the minstrels after them, there is no speech in their lips. Even the holy Living Creatures cannot declare all Thy glory, and even the ministering angels cannot tell all Thy praises. Above all songs and hymns art Thou glorified with Thy praises, lauded with Thy hymns, exalted for Thy favors, sanctified in Thy congregations, sung among Thy hosts, glorified for Thy miracles, crowned for Thy might, declared powerful in Thy books, extolled for Thy victories, proclaimed King for Thy dominion, beloved for Thy teachings, honored for Thy attributes, respected for Thy unity, set on high for Thy purity, prayers are offered to Thee for Thy strength, Thy melodies are chanted to Thee; Thou art met in Thy meeting-places, declared majestic for Thy splendor, sought for Thy words, magnified for Thy might, blessed for Thy blessings, declared strong because of all the things Thou didst create in Thy universe: Because of the sun when it rises and when it sets; because of the moon when it stands in the midst of the heaven; because of the stars when they shoot their arrows on the earth, and when they grow dark and withdraw their shining; because of the heavens which are sometimes bright, while at other times they become gloomy and clothe themselves with darkness; because of the lightnings when they dart forth; because of the arrows when they go abroad; because of the whirlwind when it blows; because of the storm

when it rages; because of the clouds when they pour out water, and the skies when they give forth a sound; because of the rain when it comes down in abundance; because of the flood of mighty waters that sweeps over the earth; because of the earth when it puts forth grass; because of the fruit-tree when it brings forth its fruit; because of life when it is fashioned, brought to the birth and produced; because of the strength of the young men and the splendor of the old men; because of the day when it gives us light; because of the night when it grows dark for us; because of the months when they are renewed; because of the years when they are changed; because of the kingdoms of the earth to which Thou givest dominion (Thou shalt also cause them to pass away, and raise others in their stead); because of Thy people Israel whom Thou didst chastise in judgment (Thou shalt also bring them back, and restore their pristine glory to them). Above all hymns and praises shall Thy name be sanctified, O God, that art mighty and strong; purified and blessed; exalted and great; Thou art a distinguished Judge, Thou art declared majestic, and all meditate in Thee; Thou art eternal and faithful; Thou art pure and sustainest all; Thou art pious and wise, good and pure; Thou art the only One and art upright, powerful and perfect; clothing and capturing; O exalted King, that art strong and trusted, enduring and forgiving, mighty and most high, redeeming and delivering, watchful and righteous, holy and jealous, lofty and compassionate, Lord and Keeper, perfect and mighty. He is mentioned on the earth, and it quakes; on the lightnings, and they run; on the burning coals, and they are extinguished; on the pestilence, and it

rages ; on the mountains, and they are rent ; on the child, and it goes forth ; on the tempests, and they subside ; on the woman with child, and she brings forth ; on the diseased, and he is healed ; on the sea, and it was divided ; on the chain, and it is loosened ; on the lion, and he turns back ; on the water, and it stands still ; on the river, and it turns back ; on Satan, and he is stupefied ; on the world, and it exists ; on the afflicted, and he is cured ; on the rock, and it brings forth water ; on the eloquent, and he becomes silent ; on the thunder, and it ceases ; on the adamant, and it breaks in pieces ; on the depth, and it overflows. All this is because of the glory of Thy name. For as Thy name so is Thy praise, and in Thy name do Thy people exult, and for Thy name's sake dost Thou defer Thine anger, and givest glory to Thy name. For whosoever knows Thy name stands in awe of Thy name ; and he who keeps it mentions it with fear, with purity, and with holiness. For according to Thy glory didst Thou hide it from the multitude of the sons of men, and it is transmitted only to him who is meek and of lowly spirit ; who fears God, does not get angry, and does not insist upon his ways. Yet in every generation didst Thou make plain part of the mystery thereof.

## X. NATHAN HA-BABLI

[A scholar who flourished in Babylon in the tenth century. His descriptions of the Babylonian academies are obviously those of an eye-witness.]

### The Installation of an Exilarch<sup>1</sup>

When the community agreed to appoint an exilarch, the two heads of the academies, with their pupils, the heads of the community, and the elders assembled in the house of a prominent man in Babylon, one of the great men of the generation, as, for instance, Netira, or a similar man. That man in whose house the meeting took place was honored thereby, and it was regarded as a mark of distinction; his esteem was enhanced, when the great men and the elders assembled in his house.

On Thursday they assembled in the synagogue, blessed the exilarch, and placed their hands on him. They blew the horn, that all the people, small and great, might hear. When the people heard the proclamation, every member of the community sent him a present, according to his power and means. All the heads of the community and the wealthy members sent him magnificent clothes and beautiful ornaments, vessels of silver and vessels of gold, each man according to his ability. The exilarch prepared a banquet on Thursday and on Friday, giving all kinds of food, and all kinds of drinks, and all kinds of dainties, as, for instance, different kinds of sweetmeats.

<sup>1</sup> Neubauer, *Mediæval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. II., pp. 83, seq.



When he arose on Sabbath morning to go to the synagogue, many of the prominent men of the community met him to go with him to the synagogue. At the synagogue a wooden pulpit had been prepared for him on the previous day, the length of which was seven cubits, and the breadth of which was three cubits. They spread over it magnificent coverings of silk, blue, purple, and scarlet, so that it was entirely covered, and nothing was seen of it. Under the pulpit there entered distinguished youths, with melodious and harmonious voices, who were well-versed in the prayers and all that appertains thereto. The exilarch was concealed in a certain place together with the heads of the academies, and the youths stood under the pulpit. No man sat there. The precentor of the synagogue would begin the prayer *Blessed be He who spoke*, and the youths, after every sentence of that prayer, would respond: 'Blessed be He.' When he chanted the Psalm of the Sabbath day,<sup>1</sup> they responded after him: 'It is good to give thanks unto the Lord.' All the people together read the 'verses of song,'<sup>2</sup> until they finished them. The precentor then arose, and began the prayer *The breath of all living*, and the youths responded after him: 'Shall bless Thy name'; he chanted a phrase, and they responded after him, until they reached the 'Kedushah,' which was said by the congregation with a low voice, and by the youths with a loud voice. Then the youths remained silent, and the precentor alone completed the prayer up to *He redeemed Israel*. All the people then stood up to say the Eighteen Benedictions. When

<sup>1</sup> That is, Psalm 91.

<sup>2</sup> That is, Psalms 145-150.

the precentor, repeating these Benedictions, reached the 'Kedushah,' the youths responded after him with a loud voice: 'The Holy God.' When he had completed the prayer, all the congregation sat down. When all the people were seated, the exilarch came out from the place where he was concealed. Seeing him come out, all the people stood up, until he sat down on the pulpit, which had been made for him. Then the head of the academy of Sura came out after him, and after exchanging courtesies with the exilarch, sat down on the pulpit. Then the head of the academy of Pumbeditha came out, and he, too, made a bow, and sat down at his left.

During all this time the people stood upon their feet, until these three were properly seated: the exilarch sat in the middle, the head of the academy of Sura at his right, and the head of the academy of Pumbeditha at his left, empty places being left between the heads of the academies and the exilarch. Upon his place, over his head, above the pulpit, they spread a magnificent covering, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple. Then the precentor put his head under the exilarch's canopy in front of the pulpit, and with blessings that had been prepared for him on the preceding days he blessed him with a low voice, so that they should be heard only by those who sat round the pulpit, and by the youths who were under it. When he blessed him, the youths responded after him with a loud voice: 'Amen!' All the people were silent until he had finished his blessings.

Then the exilarch would begin to expound matters appertaining to the biblical portion of that day, or would give permission to the head of the academy

of Sura to deliver the exposition, and the head of the academy of Sura would give permission to the head of the academy of Pumbeditha. They would thus show deference to one another, until the head of the academy of Sura began to expound. The interpreter stood near him, and repeated his words to the people. He expounded with awe, closing his eyes, and wrapping himself up with his tallith, so that his forehead was covered. While he was expounding, there was not in the congregation one that opened his mouth, or chirped, or uttered a sound. If he became aware that any one spoke, he would open his eyes, and fear and terror would fall upon the congregation. When he finished his exposition, he would begin with a question, saying: 'Verily, thou needest to learn.' And an old man who was wise, understanding, and experienced would stand up, and make a response on the subject, and sit down. Then the precentor stood up, and recited the Kaddish. When he reached the words *during your life and in your days*, he would say: 'During the life of our prince the exilarch, and during your life, and during the life of all the house of Israel.'

When he had finished the Kaddish, he would bless the exilarch, and then the heads of the academies. Having finished the blessing, he would stand up and say: 'Such and such a sum was contributed by such and such a city and its villages;' and he mentioned all the cities which sent contributions for the academy, and blessed them. Afterwards he blessed the men who busied themselves in order that the contributions should reach the academies. Then he would take out the Book of the Law, and call up a priest, and a Levite

after him. While all the people were standing, the precentor of the synagogue would bring down the Book of the Law to the exilarch, who took it in his hands, stood up, and read in it. The heads of the academies stood up with him, and the head of the academy of Sura translated it to him. Then he would give back the Book of the Law to the precentor, who returned it to the ark. When the precentor reached the ark, he sat down in his place, and then all the men sat down in their places. After the exilarch the instructors read in the Book of the Law, and they were followed by the pupils of the heads of the academies; but the heads of the academies themselves did not read on that day, because someone else preceded them. When the Maftir read the last portion, a prominent and wealthy man stood near him, and translated it. This was a mark of distinction and honor for that man. When he finished reading, the precentor again blessed the exilarch by the Book of the Law, and all the readers who were experienced and well-versed in the prayers stood round the ark, and said: 'Amen!' Afterwards he blessed the two heads of the academies, and returned the Book of the Law to its place. They then prayed the additional prayer, and left the synagogue.

## XI. JOSEPH B. ISAAC IBN ABITOR

[Flourished in Spain during the tenth century. Owing to some quarrels, he left his native country, and went to Damascus. He was an eminent talmudic scholar and liturgic poet, and is said to have translated the entire Talmud into Arabic. Only a small number of his poems have been preserved, but they tend to show that he was a skilful poet with intense religious fervor. Some of them are of ingenious and complicated structure.]

### I. Hymn Based on Psalm 120<sup>1</sup>

O God, be gracious unto me on the day I hasten to praise Thee; forgive my sins, and judge me not according to my deeds; when with a Song of Ascents I cry to Thee, make clear to me: *'In my distress I called unto the Lord, and He answered me.'*

For Thee, O God, my soul has ever pined; through the abundance of my sins I have no respite; wipe off, I pray Thee, all my sins, the known and the unknown,—O Lord, *deliver my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.*

I said unto deceitful Uz<sup>2</sup>: 'Shalt thou for ever walk upright in thy wantonness? Gehenna is prepared for thee as thy apportioned lot.—*What shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done more unto thee, thou deceitful tongue?*'

<sup>1</sup>The following four poems are from a manuscript in the library of the Dropsie College, and are probably the first of a series of fifteen based on the fifteen Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134). The first stanza of each poem bears the author's name in acrostic, while the remaining stanzas are in alphabetic order, three letters being disposed of in each stanza. The fourth line is a verse, or part thereof, from the Psalm upon which the poem is based.

<sup>2</sup>That is, Edom. (Comp. Genesis 22. 21), hence Rome.

My presumptuous sins are marked before Thee; they are bound up in bundles, engraved, and sealed. Prepare a feast for them that are benign to the guileless people;—*sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of broom!*

Majestic Lord, before Thee are my sorrows; among the multitude of thorns I am well-nigh destroyed. But a short while I lived in magnificent dwellings; *woe is me, that I sojourn with Meshech, that I dwell beside the tents of Kedar.*

All my oppressors smite me with horror; in the presence of my enemies I feel deeply ashamed; all the backsliders hate me with an everlasting hate; *my soul hath full long had her dwelling with him that hateth peace.*

O Most High, console Thy people that is disconsolate; to her that is unpitied turn Thou, and be merciful. My adversaries say: 'No comfort shalt thou ever see.'—*I am all peace; but when I speak, they are for war.*

Whenever it is time for praise, I cry to Thee, my God; as I set forth my prayers, show Thy kindness unto me. To praise Thee, O Praised One, I kept awake at night—accept Thou then my prayer with the Song of Ascents.

## 2. Hymn Based on Psalm 121

When I come, O Creator, to proclaim Thy unity, turn unto me! Forgive my sins, and heed not my wicked thoughts; with this my Song of Ascents I cry unto Thee, O my Crown. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come?*

Woe to the daughter who derides the ancients of the earth; but when I hear her mockery, I boldly answer thus: My Redeemer lives for ever; He dwells in the lofty skies—*my help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

The persecutor smites the multitudes who extol Thee (behold, they have no other hope but in Thy words alone); presumptuously he mocks the words of Thy Psalms: *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

When the wanton ones take counsel together, they plan to destroy the remnant of Ariel; but Israel says: Trust ye in God our Redeemer;—*behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep.*

May now the trust of Thy believers be made strong and firm, according to the psalmist's words who sings Thy songs of joy: When terror seizes thee, the Lord shall be thy refuge; *the Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

My trust I put in Thee, O Dweller in the skies above; I stay myself upon the psalmist's words who sings jubilantly: In thy Creator put thy trust, always rely on Him; *the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

The multitude of Thy saints come before Thee; they loudly sing Thy praises in Thy holy sanctuaries; the remnant of them that seek Thee say to one another: *'The Lord shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul.'*

All Thy beloved ones together raise their voice, and say: 'With perfect heart sing ye unto the Living God; He who understands all secrets will hear

your cry; *The Lord shall guard thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and for ever.*<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Hymn Based on Psalm 122

When I draw nigh to extol Thee amidst a poor and needy people, strengthen Thou my remnant scattered in all regions. With this my Song of Ascents I cry to Thee, O King: *I rejoiced when they said unto me: 'Let us go unto the house of the Lord.'*

For my perversity I have been given twofold punishment; announce Thou consolations to the barefoot people.<sup>8</sup> The people, whose feet Thou makest strong, shall proclaim Thy greatness;—*our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem!*

Establish Thou the pillars of Thy desolate temple; the measurements thereof make wondrous fair, and wide, and long. This miracle shall strike with confusion him who destroyed the desirable things thereof: *Jerusalem that was built as a city that is compact together.*

The righteous song regard with favor; may it be Thy will to gladden with the redeemer's coming them that trust in Thee. Thy banished children shall go up to erect Ariel, *whither the tribes went up, even the tribes of the Lord, as a testimony unto Israel.*

Destroy them that strive with me, and increase their tribulations; enslave the tyrant;—*for there were set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*

Bring good tidings to them that sanctify Thee and sing Thy words—they that are led by a fiery wall near Thee; I shall rejoice near Thy shield, and hear Thy

<sup>7</sup> That is, Israel mourning for the temple.



pleasing words: *'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may they prosper that love thee.'*

O city of the Lord, rejoice, and increase thy lays; burst forth with song, exult, make thy melodies great; I shall fill thy utterances with joy and exultation; *peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.*

They that wait for Thy utterance shall lift up their voice together; they that sanctify Thy unity shall sing new melodies; they that are satisfied with bliss from Thee shall proclaim peace; *for my brethren and companions' sakes I will now say: 'Peace be within thee.'*

Increase the glory of the stronghold in Thy border; mayest Thou hear from Thy habitation the praises which we utter; may the wisdom of Thy anointed be spoken in Thy temple: *for the sake of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.*

#### 4. Hymn Based on Psalm 123

When I seek Thee amongst them that proclaim Thy unity twice, that hope for the day of Thy wonders to be redeemed from their two exiles, I pour out my heart like water in the Song of Ascents; *unto Thee I lift mine eyes, O Thou that art enthroned in the heavens.*

O Give ear unto Thy people's groans and hear their supplications, when they draw near to Thee to set forth their hymns of praise, and when, humbly kneeling, they lift their eyes to Thee: *behold, as the eyes of servants unto the hand of their master.*

Deliver from destruction them that seek Thy face; hasten Thy salvation in due time to them that pray for it; look on the afflicted people's woes, when it

renders thanks to Thee: *as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress.*

Remember Thy lovingkindness, O God, our Shield; O pity us, have mercy, and forgive our sins; O Thou that art pure, we ever seek Thee, answer us;—*so our eyes look unto the Lord our God, until He be gracious unto us.*

Despise not the woes of the remnant of the plundered ones, for the tents of Uz and Buz devoured and destroyed them; Jeush hastes to trample on us, and Buz<sup>4</sup> speeds to spoil; *be gracious unto us, O Lord, be gracious unto us; for we are full sated with contempt.*

Tribulations have beset us, and have humbled our heads; we have been left groaning, entangled in our snares. Through the abundance of our guilt, with filth and bitterness *our soul is full sated.*

The company of the needy ones, that have escaped and still remain, hope for Thy righteous acts, O Highest of all high. They that are filled with tribulations set forth their meditations;—*with the scorning of those that are at ease and with the contempt of the proud oppressors.*

<sup>4</sup> All these are tribes of Gentiles. Comp. Genesis 22. 21; 36. 18.

## XII. HAI B. SHERIRA GAON

[The last Gaon of the academy at Pumbeditha. He was an eminent authority on the Talmud, and numerous responsa written by him are still extant. He was the author of commentaries on talmudic treatises and of a dictionary of difficult words occurring in the Bible, Targum, and Talmud. He also acquired fame as a poet, and was one of the first to employ the Arabic metre in Hebrew poetry. He died 1038.]

### Maxims and Admonitions<sup>1</sup>

Let thy tongue be imprisoned in thy mouth, and in company be thou like one that is mute.

Loose not a lion that is bound by thy chain, for if thou settest him free, he will devour thee.

Cast not thy gaze upon thy neighbor's wife, and thine own helpmate keep inside the house; it is glory for women and grace for men that women should not look upon strange men.

Make no partnership, though thou needest aid; transact no business with thy kith and kin.

Dwell not too long by the river; turn to the mountain on account of the rain.

Sow goodness, that thou mayest reap pleasantness, and thy reward from God shall be complete.

Be perfect and upright with God, and seek not that which is too high.

Keep away from imbeciles, from deaf and dumb, and from women; have no quarrels with them.

If thou hast not acquired wisdom and understanding, sit near the judges of the people when they preside.

<sup>1</sup> Philipp's edition, lines 109-136. For reasons, which do not appear to be cogent, Hai's authorship of these maxims has been doubted.

Be not ashamed to learn and to seek knowledge; be a tail to the wise, so that thou mayest become a head.

It is wisdom to tread in the ways of faith; to fear God and to depart from evil is understanding.

Be near the judges of the community, and buy thy things in the proper manner of transaction. For thy possessions choose good witnesses,—they will relieve thee from strife.

It is better for thee to visit mourners than to go to the house of feasting and rejoicing.

Reveal not to an enemy that which is in thy heart; uproot his enmity, if thou hatest him not.

Inquire about the sick, and visit them with a cure; speak comfortingly unto embittered men.

Depart from quarrel, and flee from strife, and stand not upon the verge of a pit and an abyss.

Honor thy parents, and also thy kinsmen and all that seek their peace.

If thou drawest nigh unto the shadow of a king, know that thou standest near a lion. Then other men shall be exceedingly afraid of thee, but thy fear shall also be great and awful.

Thou shouldst not hold the horns of a fierce bull, and do not seize the bridle of a lion.

Grieve not if unto thee a daughter is born; trust in God, exult and rejoice in thy lot. At times a daughter is better than a son; she is good and pure to her parents. Take delight in whatsoever comes from God, and say: 'This also is for the best!'

It is better that thy daughter should go down to the grave as a maiden than that she should beseech a man.

Buy thee a dwelling among the upright; depart from the habitation of the covetous and envious.

### XIII. SAMUEL HA-NAGID

[Born at Cordova 993, and died at Granada 1055. He was famous as a poet, Halakist, and philologist, and was the author of a treatise on the methodology of the Talmud. Some medieval Jewish critics considered him the greatest Hebrew poet. This view, however, cannot be maintained, as he was certainly surpassed by Ibn Gebirol and Judah ha-Levi. He was for some time vizier at the court of King Habus. His poems, perhaps more than those of any other poet of that epoch, resemble the Arabic poems very closely.]

#### I. On Leaving Cordova<sup>1</sup>

The soul is deprived of that which it desires, and that which it asks is withheld from it. Although the body is plump, and fed, and fat, the glorious soul is not yet satisfied. A humble man walks on the earth, and yet his thoughts reach unto the skies. Of what avail is it to man to have his body's pleasures, while his soul is distressed? Some friends there are who harm and profit not; they have big bodies, but their minds are small. They think that to increase my riches I depart from my dwelling-place and roam about—though the locks of my head are dishevelled and mine eye is painted with night's stibium. My friends know not the secrets of my heart; indeed my friends spoke not knowingly. Their soul knows nought, nor does it understand; it is like the soul of a cloven-footed beast.

Shall he refrain himself, whose soul is like a moon, and, like the moon, strives to soar high? And shall

<sup>1</sup> Harkavy's edition No. 15; Brody's edition No. 36. It is an excellent specimen of the Fakhr (self-glorification) poems of the Arabs.

he rest until he girds his loins with her wings, as one girds on a cloth, and till his deeds are heard throughout the world, and like the ocean is his fame increased?

I swear by God and by His worshippers (assuredly, my like shall keep his oath) that I will ascend the rocks on foot, and go down to the deepest pit; The borders of the desert will I join, and cross the ocean in a boat with sails; I shall roam about until I soar and rise to a height that forever shall be known. With terrors shall I then inspire my foes, but my friends shall find salvation in me. The ears of freemen shall I bore through<sup>1</sup> as slaves', and mine ear, too, shall be bored through by my friends.

I have a soul that sustains my friends, but from my adversaries it is withheld. In it there is for thee a garden filled with friendship, planted by the brook of love; it is that friendship which is kept from early youth, like a signet fixed in a ring; it is engraved like the green gravings in a window cut out in the door of a palace.

May God be with thee as thou lovest, and may thy soul, which He loves, be redeemed from the hand of foes. May the God of deliverance send thee salvation, till there be no sun and moon!

## 2. On Having Been Saved in Mid-Ocean from a Tunny Fish<sup>2</sup>

Shall he that falls and stumbles rise again, and he that roams and wanders find repose? Shall I be

<sup>1</sup>Comp. Exodus 21. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Harkavy's edition, No. 23; Brody's edition, No. 39. Some lines are missing in the place indicated by the asterisks. Then follows a graphic description of the tunny fish.

raised yet once more, although my feet stumbled, and my ankle slipped?

In my soul are all the things that offer help and consolation to the stricken souls; but confusion reigns in the souls of them that came to gloat over me in the day of my discomfiture. They think that troublous times never change, a waste land shall not be inhabited. Yet God does raise them that He humbled and brought low; and He has mysteries, His way is hid.

O hear this word, and know that not in vain does God keep me alive upon the earth; and then shalt thou receive the evil days with cheerful heart, closed mouth, and bridled thought. Let thine ear be deaf to dissenters, and thine eye closed from seeing backsliders, who are like Hofni in Shiloh,<sup>4</sup> or like Zimri with the Midianite woman,<sup>5</sup> or Onan<sup>6</sup> with his brother's wife.

O hear this word, exalt God in thy house, and on thy way, whilst thou sittest or standest.

\* \* \*

Her head is as a row boat in size, with a countenance raised very high; she has eyes like fountains, a nostril like a furnace, and temples like a wall. Her mouth is deep and wide like a cave; when thirsty, she pours a stream into it. Her lips resemble two inflated skin-bottles, and between them is a hole like that of a torn garment. White is her body, green her back; her neck is like a tower, her belly is like a heap. Her fins are like a keen-edged sword; her scales look like a red buckler. To them that watch, her structure is like a rock projecting in mid-ocean.

<sup>4</sup> Comp. 1 Samuel 2. 22, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Numbers 25. 6, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 38. 9, 10.

When she came swimming round about the boat, no one uttered aught, nor breathed a word. Then she drew nigh unto the sides of the boat, and stood on her tail which was as a cedar or a vine.

The hearts of all men melted like wax, like water, or a stream that is swept away. Through grief I stilled me like a lamb that becomes mute on the day of slaughter. Then I thought of my God, while others at my side thought of gods like Ashima.<sup>1</sup> I said: 'It is true, in such or such a way transgressions ensnare the guilty soul; though Jonah through piety was vomited from the sea on land, but what am I? My God, stay Thy wrath, for this calamity awakened me (for I had been slumbering). But if I deserve this punishment, may it be an atonement for my great guilt.'

She then sank into the water, like the host which God had cast and thrown into the sea, and came beneath to overthrow the boat; (all hearts stood still, and every breath was gone). But God rebuked her, so that she returned in a moment to her abode in the depth of the sea. Thus to small worms He brought salvation, upon a beam daubed all around with pitch. The dead restored He from the grave, and with His high and lofty hand He saved the drowning.

All men who know the ocean marvelled, and said: 'Wherefore, and how did these escape? for hitherto no boat has yet been saved from this accursed monster of the deep.'

I answered them: 'Thus God's redemption is majestic and complete to them that know the glory of His splendor; He works salvation for them that know Him, and takes vengeance upon them that provoke Him.

<sup>1</sup> Comp. 2 Kings 17. 30.



His are the sea, the beasts, and the waters of the great deep—all of them He hung on nought. What is this beast against the Lord, who made her reign supreme, and gave her strength and might?'

To God I will render the thanks of them that are redeemed—it shall be set and put in my mouth. I declare that, unlike created things, my Rock has no beginning and no end; I declare that the dead shall be quickened, when the end of the mysterious heptad<sup>\*</sup> comes; that Moses and the Torah which is in our hands are true—it is marked with perfection; that the words of our sages are straight and upright, their Talmud and their Mishnah are pleasant; that there is a goodly reward for the pure in the next world, a recompense for them that die for the sake of the traditional law. God has dominion over land and sea, over heaven, the Great Bear, and Pleiades. His fear is put upon my countenance, and His Torah is perfect in my heart.

<sup>\*</sup> Comp. Daniel 9. 24-27.

#### XIV. SOLOMON B. JUDAH IBN GEBIROL

[Deep thinker and lyric poet. One of the most original and noblest minds of medieval Jewry. He was born at Malaga about 1021, and died at Valencia about 1058. In his philosophic works and in his poems which are still extant one discerns a spirit that strives to soar high and to attain to the loftiest state of mental development. In his soul mystic and rational elements are wonderfully blended. He had great influence upon subsequent writers.]

##### 1. On Leaving Saragossa<sup>1</sup>

My throat became dried from crying, my tongue cleaved unto my palate; my heart flutters because of my great anguish and pain. Great is my sorrow, that it no longer allows mine eyes to slumber.

To whom shall I speak and complain? to whom shall I declare my grief? Would there were one to comfort and to pity me, who would hold my right hand! I would pour out my heart to him, and would relate some of my woes. Perchance by uttering my grief the tempest of my heart may subside a little.

O thou who inquirest about my peace, draw nigh, and hearken! My roaming is as the sea's. If thy heart were as adamant, it would melt from my affliction. How canst thou think I am alive, while thou knowest my languishment? Alas! I dwell in the midst of a people that thinks my right hand is my left. I am interred, but not in a desert—my coffin is within my house. I am motherless and fatherless, distressed and lonely,

<sup>1</sup> Dukes' edition, No. 1. The poet complains of his uncongenial surroundings. He is misunderstood by his neighbors, because he strives to attain to knowledge.

young and poor. Alone, without a brother, I have no other friend but my thoughts. I mix my flowing tears with blood, and then my wine is mixed with tears. I thirst for a friend, but I shall be consumed ere my thirst is slaked. The heavens and their host prevent me from attaining my desire. I am counted like a stranger or sojourner, my dwelling is amongst ostriches; among the crooked and the fools, who think that they are very wise: the one gives to drink the venom of asps, the other, flattering, smooths the head; but he lays an ambush in his heart, though he says to thee: 'I pray thee, my lord.' They are a people whose fathers I would disdain to set with the dogs of my flock. Their faces never blush with shame, unless they are dyed with scarlet. Like giants are they in their sight, in my sight they are like locusts. When I take up my parable, they chide me, as they would chide a Greek: 'Speak a tongue that we understand, for this speech is of an Ashkelonite.'

I shall now crush them as mire, for my tongue is like a sharp spear. If their ear is deaf to me, of what avail can be my bell? Unworthy are their necks to be adorned with the gold of my crescents.

Oh that the fools would open their mouth to receive the spring-rain of my clouds! My perfume would I drop on them, my saffron and my cinnamon. Woe unto knowledge, woe to me! In the midst of such a people do I dwell! They count the knowledge of God as witchcraft and as sorcery.

I therefore lament and wail, I lie all night in sackcloth. I am bowed down as a bulrush, and fast on the second and fifth days of every week. What shall I hope for, while I live? in what then shall I put my faith? Mine eye roams about in this world, but it beholds not what I desire. Oh death is precious in

my sight, because I disdain this earth. If my heart turns to her ways, may my tongue cleave to my palate! My soul rejects her glory, for her honor is disgrace in mine eyes. I never shall rejoice in her, my pride shall not exult in her, even if the constellations would call to me: 'Turn in, and sit with us, O lord.' For this earth has become to me as a yoke upon my neck. What else is left me in this world, except to endure my blindness?

My soul complains aloud, for it found not as yet my abode. I am weary of my life, and loathe that my flesh should lord over me. For its rejoicing is my grief; and when it sorrows, I rejoice. I seek to know, and I shall find true knowledge when my flesh and vigor are gone. For after grief comes relief, after leanness comes my nourishment.

All my life I shall search and seek the commands of Solomon my ancestor. Perchance He who lays bare deep things will reveal wisdom to mine eye; for this alone is my portion from all my labor and wealth.

## **2. A Vow to Seek Wisdom<sup>\*</sup>**

A soul whose raging tempests wildly rise, whither shall she send her meditations? She rages, and is like a flame of fire, whose smoke constantly ascends. This time her meditations are like a wheel that turns around on the earth and the multitudes thereof, or like the seas wherein the earth's foundations were fastened: 'How canst thou be so strong and filled with courage, that thou disdainest a place upon the stars? From

<sup>\*</sup>Dukes' edition, No. 7. The poet declares that, in spite of all obstacles and discouragement, he will seek wisdom and strive to make himself as perfect as possible.

the path of wisdom turn thou away thy heart; the world shall then smooth thy path for thee.'

Oh comfort ye my soul for that, my friends, and likewise for her sorrows comfort her; she thirsts for a man of prudence, but finds not a man to slake her thirst. Seek ye amongst the men of fame, perchance there may be one to grant her desires. If this world sins against me, my heart will regard it disdainfully. If it cannot see my light with its eye, let the world then be contented with its blindness. But afterwards, if it appeases me, I shall turn round, and forgive its sins. The earthly sphere would then be good; the hand of Time would place no yoke upon the wise.

Oh too much wrong didst thou commit; long have the gourds been as cedars of the earth. Despise the vile ones of the people, for stones are less burdensome to me than they. Cut off the tail of them that say to me: 'Where is then wisdom and her votaries?' Oh that the world would judge them aright! oh that it would give food unto her sons! They would then rest, not toil, and would attain their goal, without knowing worldly joys. Some took the sun's daughters, and begot folly, but they were not its sons-in-law.\*

Why do ye chide me for my understanding, O ye thorns and briars of the earth? If wisdom is of light esteem to you, vile and despised are ye in her sight. Though she is closed, and reaches not your heart, lo, I shall open her chests. How shall I now abandon wisdom, since God's spirit made a covenant between us? or how shall she forsake me, since she is like a mother to me and I am the child of her old age? or like an ornament which adorns the soul, or like a

\* This seems to be an allusion to those who adopted false doctrines.

necklace on her neck. How can ye say to me: 'Take off thy ornaments, and remove the precious chain from her neck'? In her my heart rejoices, and is glad, because her rivers of delights are pure. Throughout my life I shall make my soul ascend until her abode is beyond the clouds. For she adjured me not to rest, until I find the knowledge of her Master.

### 3. The Royal Crown<sup>4</sup>

This my prayer may avail a man to learn righteousness and purity; therein I declared wonders of the living God, briefly, not at length. I placed this hymn above all my hymns; wherefore I named it 'Royal Crown.'

Wonderful are Thy works, and that my soul knows right well! Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the eminence, and the majesty. Thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, and Thou art the One exalted as head above all; and Thine are riches and glory. Unto Thee do the creatures from above and beneath testify that they shall perish, but Thou shalt endure. Thine is that power whose mystery our minds fail to fathom, for Thou art too mighty for us. Thine is the hiding-place of might, the mystery and the foundation. Thine is the name which is concealed from the men of wisdom, and the power which sustains the universe on nothing, and the ability to bring every hidden thing to light. Thine is the loving-kindness which is great toward Thy creatures, and the bliss which is stored up for them that fear Thee.

<sup>4</sup>This is the first part of that beautiful composition in rhymed prose. It has been incorporated in the Sephardic ritual for the eve of the Day of Atonement. The biblical verses are introduced with wonderfully artistic skill.

Thine are the mysteries which no intellect nor mind can contain, and the life over which decay has no dominion, and the throne which is exalted above all the highest, and the habitation which is concealed in the height of the hiding-place. Thine is the existence from the shadow of whose light every being was created, of which we say: 'Under its shadow we live.' Thine are the two worlds between which Thou didst set a boundary: the first for deeds and the second for recompense. Thine is the recompense which Thou didst store up and hide for the righteous, for when Thou didst see that it was good, Thou didst conceal it.

Thou art one, the first of every number, and the foundation of every structure. Thou art one, and at the mystery of Thy oneness the wise are perplexed, for they know not what it is. Thou art one, and Thy oneness can neither increase nor decrease; it can neither be diminished, nor can aught be added to it. Thou art one, but not such a one as can be possessed or numbered; for neither increase nor change, neither qualification nor attribute can be conceived of Thee. Thou art one, but my imagination fails to set a limit and a bound about Thee; I have therefore said: 'I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' Thou art one, too high and too exalted to be brought low and to fall, for how can the One fall?

Thou art existent, but the hearing of the ear and the sight of the eye cannot perceive Thee; nor can the How? the Wherefore? or the Whence? be applied to Thee. Thou art existent, but by Thyself, and there is none other with Thee. Thou art existent, and hadst been before time was, and didst abide without space. Thou art existent, but Thy mystery is hidden, who can reach it? exceeding deep, who can find it out?

Thou art living, but not from any fixed time, nor from any known period. Thou art living, but not through a soul and breath, for Thou art the soul of the soul. Thou art living, but not as the life of man who is like to vanity, and whose end is moth and vermin. Thou art living, and he who reaches Thy mystery shall find everlasting delight: he shall eat, and live for ever.

Thou art great, and compared with Thy greatness all greatness is humbled, and every excellence is faulty. Thou art too great for any thought, and too sublime for any composition. Thou art greater than all greatness, and exalted above all blessing and praise.

Thou art mighty, and among Thy creatures and beings there is none that can do according to Thy works and according to Thy mighty acts. Thou art mighty, and Thine is the absolute power which changes not and alters not. Thou art mighty, and because of the abundance of Thy might Thou dost pardon even in the time of Thy indignant wrath, and dost defer Thine anger to sinners. Thou art mighty, yet Thy tender mercies are over all Thy creatures: these are Thy mighty deeds that were of old.

Thou art light, and the eyes of every pure soul shall behold Thee; but the clouds of iniquity shall hide Thee from its eyes. Thou art the light which is hidden in this world, but shall be revealed in the high and beautiful world; on the mount of the Lord shall it be seen.

Thou art most high, and the eye of the intellect yearns and longs for Thee; but it can only see the utmost thereof, and cannot see the whole.

Thou art the God of gods, and all Thy creatures are Thy witnesses, and for the glory of this name every creature is obliged to worship Thee. Thou art God,



and all the beings are Thy servants and Thy worshippers; yet Thy glory is not diminished because of them that worship aught beside Thee; for the intention of them all is to attain unto Thee, but they are as the blind: they set their faces toward the way of the King; but they wander out of the way: one sinks into the pit of destruction, and another falls into the abyss; they all think that they have reached their goal, but they labored in vain. But Thy servants are as the clear-sighted who walk in the straight path: they turn not from the way to the right hand or to the left until they come to the court of the King's house. Thou art God, supporting the beings with Thy divinity, and sustaining the creatures with Thy unity. Thou art God, and there is no distinction between Thy divinity, and Thy unity, and Thy eternity, and Thy existence; for it is all one mystery: although the names of each one are different, they all go unto one place.

Thou art wise, and wisdom, which is the fountain of life, emanates from Thee; compared with Thy wisdom, every man is brutish and without knowledge. Thou art wise, prior to all first beings, and even wisdom was Thy nursling. Thou art wise, but Thou didst not learn from another, nor didst Thou acquire wisdom from any one beside Thee. Thou art wise, and from Thy wisdom didst Thou set apart the predestined will, as a workman and an artist, to draw forth the emanation of existence from non-existence (as the light, issuing from the eye, emanates and draws from the fountain of light without a bucket), and it made all things without instruments. It hewed and engraved, cleansed and purified; it called unto non-existence, and it was cleft in twain; unto existence, and it was established; unto the universe, and

it was stretched out. It meted out heaven with the span; its hand joined the pavilion of the spheres, and fastened the curtains over the creatures with the loops of potentiality. Its power reaches as far as the edge of the curtain, the outermost creation, which is the extreme end of the coupling.

## XV. BAHYA B. JOSEPH IBN PAKUDA

[Philosopher, talmudic scholar, and liturgic poet. Difference of opinion exists as to the time when he flourished. It is usually accepted that he lived in the eleventh century. But arguments, though by no means conclusive, have been brought forth to prove that he lived a century later. To him is due the credit of having been the author of the first Jewish system of ethics. His ethical work *Hobot ha-Lebabot* (Duties of the Heart), which was written in Arabic, has always been a great favorite in its Hebrew translation.]

### Pious Reflections and Admonitions to the Soul<sup>1</sup>

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

O my soul, march on with strength, and bless thy Creator. Prepare a supplication for Him, and pour out thy meditation before Him. Awake from thy sleep, and consider thy place, whence thou camest, and whither thou goest.

O my soul, awake from thy slumber, and utter a song to thy Creator; sing praises unto His name, declare his wonders, and fear Him wherever thou dwellest.

O my soul, be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; nor shouldst thou be as a drunkard that is fast asleep, or as a man that is stupefied; for out of the fountain of understanding wast thou formed, and from the spring of wisdom wast thou taken; from a holy place wast thou brought forth, and from the city of the mighty, from heaven, wast thou taken out by God.

<sup>1</sup>This beautiful prose poem has been frequently printed in some Hebrew prayer-books.

O my soul, put on garments of prudence, and gird on a girdle of understanding, and free thyself from the vanities of thy body, in which thou dwellest. Let not thy heart beguile thee with the sweetness of its desires, and let it not allure thee with the visions of its pleasures which melt away like water that runs apace. Remember that the beginning of these pleasures is without help or profit, and their end is shame and also reproach.

O my soul, run to and fro through the streets of thy understanding, and go about in the chambers of thy wisdom, and come unto the structure of the building of thy imagery, whose foundation is in dust; is it not a despised body and a carcass trodden under foot? It is formed out of a troubled fountain and a corrupted spring, built of a fetid drop; it is burned with fire, it is cut down. It is an unformed substance resembling a worm, it is nought but terror. It is kept in a foul womb, closed up in an impure belly; it is born with pangs and sorrows to see trouble and vanities. All day long it covets pleasures, and departs from instruction and from commandments; it comes in the dark, and goes away in the dark; it is a poor, needy, and destitute wayfarer. It has no knowledge without thee, and no understanding beside thee. While alive, it is dust; and when it dies, it is ashes. As long as it lives, worms surround it, and when its end comes, vermin and clods of dust cover it. It cannot discern between its right hand and its left hand; its lot is hidden in the ground. Go thou, therefore, and reign over it, for sovereignty is meet unto the children of wisdom, and the foolish is a servant to the wise of heart. Walk not in the stubbornness of thy wicked heart, be not ensnared by its counsels,

and despise the gain of its frauds; trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery; for oppression makes a wise man foolish, and a bribe destroys the heart.

O my soul, set thy heart toward the highway, even the way by which thou didst go; for all was made of dust, and indeed unto dust shall all return. Every thing that was created and fashioned has an end and a goal to return unto the ground, whence it was taken. Life and death are brothers that dwell together; they are joined to one another; they cling together, so that they cannot be sundered. They are joined together by the two extremes of a frail bridge over which all created beings travel: life is the entrance, and death is the exit thereof. Life builds, and death demolishes; life sows, and death reaps; life plants, and death uproots; life joins together, and death separates; life links together, and death scatters. Know, I pray thee, and see that also unto thee shall the cup pass over, and thou shalt soon go out from the lodging-place which is on the way, when time and chance befall thee, and thou returnest to thine everlasting home. On that day shalt thou delight in thy work, and take thy reward in return for thy labor wherein thou hast toiled in this world, whether it be good or bad. Therefore hearken, I pray thee, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget thy people and thy father's house. Arise, and sing unto thy King all thy day and all thy night; lift up thy hands toward Him, and bow down unto Him with thy face to the ground; let thine eyelids gush out with waters, and kneel thou upon thy knees; the King may perchance desire thy beauty, and lift up His countenance unto thee, and give thee peace. He will be gracious

unto thee in the days of thy affliction in this world, and also after thou hast returned to thy rest. For as long as thou didst live He dealt bountifully with thee.

O my soul, prepare provision in abundance, prepare not little, while thou art yet alive, and while thy hand has yet strength, because the journey is too great for thee. And say not: 'I shall prepare provision to-morrow'; for the day has declined, and thou knowest not what the next day may bring forth. Know likewise that yesterday shall never come back, and that whatever thou hast done therein is weighed, numbered, and counted. Nor shouldst thou say: 'I shall do it to-morrow'; for the day of death is hidden from all the living. Hasten to do thy task every day, for death may at any time send forth its arrow and lightning. Delay not to do thy daily task, for as a bird wanders from its nest, so does a man wander from his place. Think not with thyself that after thou hast gone forth from the prison of thy body thou wilt turn to correction from thy perpetual backsliding; for it will not be possible for thee then to do good or evil; it will not avail thee then to turn away from backsliding or to repent of wickedness, guilt, and transgression. For that world has been established to render accounts—the book of the hidden and concealed deeds which every man commits is sealed—and it has been prepared to grant a good reward to them that fear the Lord and think upon His name, and to execute the vengeance of the covenant upon them that forget God, who say unto God: 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?''

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Job 21. 14, 15.

O my soul, if thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself; and if thou scoffest, thy error remains with thee. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Lay continually to thy heart the words of Koheleth the son of David: 'The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole man. For God will bring every work into judgment concerning every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'<sup>3</sup> Forget not that He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom He has made may know it.<sup>4</sup> Remember likewise that there is no darkness and no thick darkness wherein the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.<sup>5</sup> Seek the Lord thy Maker with all thy might and strength. Seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be that thou wilt be hidden in the day of God's anger, and in the day of His fierce wrath, and that thou wilt shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the sun when it goes forth in its might. The sun of righteousness with healing in its wings shall shine upon thee. Now arise, go and make supplication unto thy Lord, and take up a melody unto thy God. Praise thou God, for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiastes 12. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Comp. Job 37. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Comp. Job 34. 22.

## XVI. AHIMAAZ B. PALTIEL

[Liturgic poet and author of a family chronicle. He was born at Capua, Italy, 1017, and died at Oria about 1060. His Chronicles (*Sefer Yuhasin*) is an important source for the history of the early Jewish settlement in Italy.]

### Shephatiah Before His Death on Rosh ha-Shanah Declares that the Tyrant Basil Is Dead<sup>1</sup>

And Rabbi Shephatiah was old and well stricken with age; and God blessed him with all pleasant qualities. The Dweller of the high heavens gave him the Torah as a possession, and made him great with riches and immense wealth. He endowed him with a son who was worthy and perfect; the father and the son were faultless. With them was Rabbi Hananel who was great and perfect; they were all steadfast in the fear of God. They were brothers and friends, and were pleasant in their friendship. They continually occupied themselves with the Torah and with the commandments and lovingly fulfilled God's statutes. They exalted their King with strength and with glory, and magnified their Maker with honor and majesty, and made for their Creator a wreath, and a crown, and a diadem of fine gold. They ascribed strength and power to their Maker, and came in the evening and in the morning to the assembly of prayers. All the days that they were upon earth they bewailed with grief the exile and the destruction, and lamented with bitterness and desolation over the persecution.

<sup>1</sup> Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. II., p. 123, seq.



They cried and made supplications to Him who turns wise men backward,<sup>2</sup> by whose knowledge the depths were broken up, and who established and founded the rivers and seas, that He should make foolish the knowledge of the enemy, and that He should lay his kingdom waste. They asked understanding from Him who is full of mercy, that the decree of persecution should be brought to nought and be abolished. Because of their cry which they cried to the Highest of all high, the decree did not pass across from the other side of the seas, and His servants who were perfect in His laws He delivered from filth, and dirt, and foul waters: from being made to kneel to the deaf and mute, and from worshipping the blind and sightless, and from bowing down to idols and images. He thundered with the voice of thunders upon their enemies, and was filled with indignation against their persecutors; He delivered His beloved ones from the hand of them that rise up against them; and spared their soul from the coals of broom; that they may occupy themselves with the Torah, and meditate therein, and that they may smeli the savor of the spices and perfumes which are hidden and sealed up in the treasuries and store-houses, which are closed up in the Eden of the venerable and ancient fathers. Then Rabbi Shephatiah, the teacher among the wise, yielded up his soul completely to the Judge of the widows and the Father of orphans. He tasted the cup of his ancestors, which the father of the serpents caused all mortals to drink.<sup>3</sup>

On New Year's day, Rabbi Shephatiah, being the worthiest man in a worthy congregation, had to blow

<sup>2</sup> Comp. Isaiah 44. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Comp. Genesis 3.

the horn, for the sake of the glory of God and His people. That day he was feeble, bent down by illness; but all the congregation whispered to him persuasively: 'Our master that art clothed with light, radiance of our splendor, light of our eyes, blow thou the horn for us; all the days that our God will keep thee among us no other man shall blow the horn in our midst.' And they burdened him with the blowing of the horn. He stood up, and blew the horn; but he was without strength and power, and the blowing of the horn did not come out in a fitting manner. Whereupon the righteous man cried out aloud unto them, and justified God's judgment against himself: 'My children, may this be a good omen unto you; for on account of my transgressions fortune has changed against me.' He left the synagogue of his congregation, went to his house, and lay down upon his bed. And all the congregation came after him to his bed-chamber. He then turned his face toward them, and thus said he unto them: 'I am going to my eternal rest, to my lot with the ancient fathers; and I make known unto you, my dear sons, my three beloved sons, that Basil<sup>4</sup> the oppressor and apostate is dead. He passes before me now, bound with chains of fire, and is handed over to the destroying angels. And He whose name is the Lord of hosts sent for me to go to meet Basil, and to contend against him in judgment, because of all the evil which he had done unto His people, in order to cut off his name and the name of his seed, his root, his offspring, and his plant.' (And they wrote down the day and the hour. Some days later a report came that Basil who had done evil died; in accordance with the words of the

<sup>4</sup> Basil I, known as the Macedonian (died 886).

righteous man did the letter arrive. For thus the emperors of Constantinople were wont to do according to their custom; when a king died, they would send an explicit letter to Bari,<sup>5</sup> and write down the day and the time, which brought the terrible tidings of the king's death.) 'Blessed be He who alone does wondrous things, who destroyed him from this world, and cut him off from the world to come. Blessed be His name, and blessed be the name of His glory. Now I am to be gathered unto my people, and I shall go to my place. And ye, my children, the children of my trials, all the congregation of my multitudes, may God be with you. He kills, and makes alive; He is named I AM THAT I AM, when He brings to life the righteous of Benjamin and the lion's whelp.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Town in Italy.

<sup>6</sup> That is, Judah; comp. Genesis 49. 9.

## XVII. MOSES B. JACOB IBN EZRA

[Poet, philosopher, and philologist. He wrote gracefully in Arabic and Hebrew. He was born about 1070 at Granada, and died in the first half of the twelfth century. His best works are still in manuscript, but even his published books show him to have been a man of great talent. His poetry was chiefly praised for the beauty and polish of its diction. Judah ha-Levi addressed several panegyrics to him.]

### I. Dirge on the Death of His Brother<sup>1</sup>

Oh mourn, my soul, and with a mourning cloak be clad, and put ropes upon thy sackcloth; be gathered to go to the right and left, awake to wail and to strip off thy train. Sell thy joy forever; it shall never be redeemed, nor shall it have a jubilee. Write a bill of divorce to rejoicing, take wailing instruments instead of harps. No longer shalt thou dread the wrath of time, nor fear the burning anger of the world; for what more can it do to thee? It has harmed thee grievously, and brought thee dire distress! Now that my brother is fallen, time is powerless to do me good, or to wound me. It smote, and did not spare; it broke all thy strength and glory, as a vessel made of clay. It hurled down thy height with wrath; how canst thou say that thy lot is cast in pleasantness?

Since my brother is gone my world is no more wide; it is a prison, and the earth is like shackles. He that upheld the glory of all things, how is it that his back is now burdened with dust? Because he is gone the sun is the companion of jackals, the moon is the brother of mourning since his death.

<sup>1</sup> Brody, in *Steinschneider's Festschrift* (1896), p. 43 (Hebrew part).

Now shall all understand that heaven's host will fade and shrivel as a withering bud (all this shall vanish as a clod of earth, and yet the memory of his glory never shall grow old). When my brother went to the grave, I knew that all creation is but vanity.

## 2. Poem Addressed to One of His Noblest Friends<sup>2</sup>

A prisoner,<sup>3</sup> whose heart is made to boil like a pot by a burning flame, and whose eyes are laden with a cloud of tears! He thought to relieve his illness with his tears, but when he shed them, lo, it was rain making things to grow: a smoking furnace which, without a hand, sprinkles soot upon the brightness of his face and forehead. From his scalding tears the mountains crumble, just as when he roars the raging seas are calmed. In Edom's field he wanders without pasture (regarded by none), like lost sheep which a lion thrust aside.

For him the daughters of the Great Bear moan, for him Orion makes baldness like an eagle. The hand of time went forth against him for evil, until with wrath it banished him out of the West.

How long shall he traverse the surface of the earth? how long shall he not loose his girdle and his belt? His brothers stood at a distance to gloat over him in his distress, and all his friends broke their covenant. With willful hand they shed his blood, and how could they have thought to cover it on a rock? But when God saw his strength was spent, He appointed thy right hand, O my lord, to shelter and to cover him. In his misty night thou didst shine as a star, and he beheld the light of companionship in the gloom of exile.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> The poet describes his own plight.

His feet had slipped, but when he saw thy dwelling-place, they stood up firmly as in strongholds and on rocks. He came to the midst of the garden, and through thy sweet words his soul was made secure on fields of ease. Thou art honey to the palate, sunlight to the eye of him that looks, and myrrh unto the nostril of him that smells. Thou art the foundation of kindness, glory's pillar, and art the plank and bar of the abode of truth. Ere thou hadst knowledge to cry: 'My father', and 'My mother', thy Maker caused thee to delight in the fear of God. Thou hast prudent counsels, wherewith thou annoyest thine enemies and gladdenest the souls of thy friends. With the breath of thy mouth thou makest the foolish wise, and with thy pen's fluid washest off the blood of time's ignorance. Thou art like a cedar that grew high in wisdom's garden, so that the other shoots set forth their meditations unto thee. They are like an airy dream, like flying chaff, but thou renewest thy strength, and buddest by the glorious waters. Thy hand built for thee dominion with hewn stones, while other rulers plastered it with vanity. Thou art generous like thy fathers, and how pleasant it is to eat the second growth with grace, when the first is gone! Thou turnest thy right hand's rivers as a honey stream, and makest them flow into the mouths of them that ask. Thou softenest thy generous heart toward the needy, but hardenest it like flint<sup>4</sup> against thy wealth. Thy soul urges thee to make the indigent rich, so that thou causest the name of poor to be forgotten. The sorrow-stricken man cheers up, on seeing thee: his wish is granted, when he calls thee by thy name.

<sup>4</sup> That is, *thou spendest money freely.*

Fain would I speak more of thee, but tempestuous is the sea of exile—who shall make its waves subside? I long to see the image of thy features in my dream, if only my pain allowed me to sleep! Thou art a garden of delights, but closed are its openings, that I should not smell the myrrh thereof. Time is thy slave, and yet it sends against me, day by day, the indignation and wrath of men. Hadst thou rebuked it, thou wouldest have pacified its wrath and its fierce anger, and it would have ceased to vex me.

My words have reached thee; command thou thy bounty that it should judge between me and between thy slave.<sup>5</sup> Here is the song, it is perfumed oil; take it, I pray, O man that art to be anointed with it now! A necklace! a word of glory on thy golden checker work, a speech on thy variegated chain.

### 3. Poem in Honor of the Wedding of Solomon b. Matir<sup>6</sup>

Is it a scent of myrrh, which pervades the air; or a breeze, which shakes the myrtles? A cloud, or a great mass of spicery? Lightning, or the sparkling of wine cups? Is it the clouds that pour out perfumes, or do the drops come from the myrtle tops? Is it the mouthless mountains that burst forth with joy, or doves and birds on boughs? The clothing of the earth is inwrought with gold, its coats are made of variegated silk. Its paths are straight to him that treads on them, and mountain-ridges have become like plains. The houses jubilantly shout, and the stone from the wall and the wooden beams respond. The erstwhile gloomy faces are now clad with joy, and

<sup>5</sup> That is, Time.

<sup>6</sup> Brody and Albrecht, *Sha'ar ha-Shir*, No. 59.

men of grief are merry and exult. The lips of stammerers now plainly speak, to build the house of mirth that was destroyed. Indeed the mysterious wonders now appear, that have been hidden in the heart of time. The tent of glory has now been coupled, hooks have been placed into the loops of praises. The days have brought together bone to bone, and separated bodies are now joined together. Upon the mounts of myrrh have joys been set high, they are assembled on the hills of frankincense.

On morning's wings a voice proclaims unto the world (not on swift runners, nor on horses): 'Solomon has lovingly betrothed a noble maid,' as though the moon and sun had been betrothed.

Upon the path of prudence are his steps, his feet walk and tread upon instruction. From early youth his thoughts were on the skies, his meditations were borne onto the constellations. He excels all men of his own age, as sons of men excel all beasts and worms. His deeds are far more precious than theirs, as rubies are more precious than clay. They run to reach the dust of his feet—how can a sparrow pursue the hawks?

Oh answer: how can Orion meet Pleiades on earth, while none inquires, nor takes notice? Is this not so? Are not their radiant wings spread upon their charming countenances? How did they steal the light of the stars? Were men ever seen robbing and despoiling heaven's lights?

O all his friends, make haste to drink to-day the wine of friendship in the bowls of joy. Be ready to increase your merriment, and open ye the store-houses of ease. The goblets are like frozen water, and the burning coals have been dissolved in their midst. Drink



now as he appointed in his house; drink ye at your desire, without being forced.

O youth, rejoice in the lovely hind, and sing ye both in ecstasies of joy. Delight thou in a figure graceful as a palm-tree and lithe as the myrtle-twigs. Fear not the sound of her neck's ornaments, at twilight, nor the rustling of her veils. And be not terrified by dove-like eyes, drunk with the wine of passion's violence. Take courage, when embraced by arms bedecked with bracelets and with bangles of pure gold. Nor shouldst thou shun the snake-like locks that fall on a face bathed in maiden modesty; indeed, they come to thee in peace, though they conceal and hide the splendor of her face.<sup>†</sup>

And know that time is the slave of thy desire, assembled are its sons to do thy wish: they hasten to bring near what thou seekest, but drive away the sorrows of thy heart.

This song is from a friend whose heart rejoices in thee, whose thoughts fly and hasten to thee; it is a glorious robe which shall never grow old, till the foundations of the world are demolished. Indeed the water of his friendship is as pure as snow and is not fouled by feet; if in my heart it is concealed from thee, it is to be sought in the gardens of thy mind. For rubies are for men of intellect, while for the vain are fatlings of lambs; the brave men crave for words of eloquence, but fools hunger after fattened geese.

O noble scion, live at ease with the daughter of nobles, sheltered under the shadow of the Almighty!

<sup>†</sup> Four lines have been omitted in this translation.

## XVIII JUDAH B. SAMUEL HA-LEVI

[Lucid thinker and melodious singer. Born at Toledo in the last quarter of the eleventh century, and died in the Orient in the middle of the twelfth. His philosophic work, written in Arabic, has always been a household word in Jewish homes in its Hebrew translation under the title *ha-Kozari*. His poems are the outburst of a deeply religious soul, and often describe his fervent love for Zion. Though under the influence of Arabic literature, his poems are more Jewish than those of the other great poets of that brilliant epoch.]

### I. Ode to Zion<sup>1</sup>

O Zion, wilt thou not inquire about the peace of thy captives, they that seek thy peace and are the remnant of thy flocks? From west and east, from north and south, greetings from them that are far and near take thou on all sides. Greetings also from a slave of yearning, who sheds his tears like Hermon's dew, and longs that they fall on thy mounts.

I am like a jackal to bewail thy woe; but when I dream of thy restoration, I am a harp for thy songs. My heart moans for Bethel, and Peniel, and for Mahanaim, and all the meeting-places of thy pure ones. There God's Presence dwells near thee, and thy Creator opened thy gates toward the gates of heaven. The glory of the Lord alone was thy light; the sun, the moon, and stars illumined thee not.

I yearn that my soul be poured forth in the place where God's spirit was poured out on thy chosen ones. Thou art a royal house, thou art the throne of God, how then can bondmen sit upon the thrones of thy princes?

<sup>1</sup> Harkavy's edition, vol. I., p. 10; Bordy's edition, vol. II., p. 155.

Would that I were roaming about in the places where God appeared unto thy seers and messengers! Who would make me wings, that I may fly away? I would cause my broken heart to move amidst thy mounts of Bethel! On thy ground fain would I lie prostrate; I would take pleasure in thy stones, and would love thy dust! Then standing by the sepulchres of my fathers, I would gaze with rapture on thy choicest graves in Hebron. I would pass through thy forest and Carmel, and stand in Gilead, and gaze with rapture on mount Abarim;—mount Abarim and mount Hor, where are thy two great luminaries, thy teachers who gave thee light.

Thine air is life for the souls, like myrrh are the grains of thy dust, and thy streams are like the honeycomb. It would be pleasant for me to walk naked and barefoot among thy desolate ruins, where once thy temples stood; where thy ark was hidden, and where thy Cherubim dwelled in thy innermost shrines.

I will pluck and cast away the beauty of my locks, and curse fate which defiled thy Nazirites in an unclean land. How can it be pleasant unto me to eat and drink, when I see that the curs drag thy young lions? or how can the light of the day be sweet to my sight, when I see the flesh of thine eagles in the mouth of ravens?

O cup of sorrow, gently! desist for a while! for my reins and soul are already filled with thy bitterness. When I remember Oholah, I drink thy poison; and when I remember Oholibah, I drain thy dregs.

O Zion, perfect of beauty, thou hast of yore combined love and grace, and the souls of thy companions are bound up with thee; they that rejoice in thy bliss, are grieved at thy desolation, and bewail thy misfor-