

MEGILLATH TAANITH.

"SCROLL OF FASTING."

ENGLISHED, FOR THE FIRST TIME,
FROM THE ARAMAIC AND THE HEBREW.

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[Continued from the *CHURCHMAN* of April.]

IX (KISLEV).

1. **ON the third of Kislev the images were removed from the Temple¹ ;**

Because the Greeks had set up several images in the court of the Temple ; and when the power of the Asmonæan house prevailed they were demolished and brought out of it ; and the day of their demolition was made a festival.

2. **The seventh is a festival.**

The day when Herod died^a ; for he was a hater of the sages, and there is joy before God when the wicked are removed from the world,^a as it is said, Moreover the hand of Jehovah was against them to destroy them, etc.^b ; and again, So it came to pass when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people^c ; and again, That Jehovah spake unto me saying, etc.^d And so it says, He is a good man and cometh with good tidings^e ; and again, And the King commanded Benaiah b. Jehoiada, and he fell upon him, and slew him, etc.^f So they made the day on which Herod died a festival.

3. **The twenty-first is the day of mount Gerizim, and on it one must not mourn.^g**

The day when the Samaritans sought leave from Alexander of

^a Tos. San. xiv. ; cf. Prov. xi. 10.

^b Deut. ii. 15.

^c *Ibid.* ii. 16.

^d *Ibid.* ii. 17.

^e 2 Sam. xviii. 27.

^f 1 Kings ii. 34, 46.

^g Yoma 69 a.

¹ See Josephus, *Antiq.*, xiii. 3, 1 ; *Bell. Jud.* ii. 9, 2.

² Herod I died in the month Adar, so the glossator's explanation cannot be accepted. Zeitlin refers the occasion to the victory over Cestius, A.D. 65, which was so recent as to render any explanation as to the cause of the festival unnecessary. Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* ii. 9, 9. Cf. Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

Macedon to destroy the house of our God¹; and they said to him, Sell us five chors of land in mount Moriah. He sold it to them; whereupon Israelites came and made the matter known to Simeon the Just. What did he do? He clothed himself with his sacerdotal garments, and went forth with the nobles of Jerusalem, and a thousand councillors clothed in white, and young priests striking their musical instruments, and torches of fire burning before them all night. Some were marching on one side of the mountain, some on the other. The king said, Who are these men? They said to him, These are the Jews who have rebelled against thee. When they drew near to Antipatris the sun arose, and they approached the first guard. When they met, the guard said to them, Who are you? They replied, We are the men of Jerusalem and have come to visit the king. When Alexander of Macedon saw Simeon the Just clothed in sacerdotal garments, he came down from his chariot and prostrated himself before him. His princes said to him, Should a great king like thee prostrate himself to this Jew? He replied, When I go down into battle I see the image of this Jew and come out victorious. Then he said to the Jews, Why have you come? They replied, To ask that the place where we pray for thee and thy kingdom may not be destroyed: [these gentiles have deceived thee, and thou hast given it to them. He said, Who are these people? They replied, These Samaritans who are standing before thee. He said, Lo, their fate is in your hands. What did they do to them? They perforated their heels, and hung them up to the horses' tails, and dragged them over thorns and thistles till they reached mount Gerizim. When they arrived there they ploughed it up and sowed it with vetches and salt, just as they had sought to do to the house of our God. And so of the day on which they did this they made a festival.

4. The twenty-fifth is the beginning of the eight days of the Feast of the Dedication,* when one must not mourn.

When the Greeks entered the Temple they defiled all the various kinds of oil in the Temple, so that there was no oil to kindle the lamps in the sanctuary. When the power of the Asmonæan house

* Sabb. 21 a; 1 Macc. iv. 52 ff; 2 Macc. x. 5 ff.

¹ So Yoma 69 a. The temple on Gerizim was not destroyed till 128 B.C. by Hyrcanus.

prevailed and subdued them, search was made, and there was only one cruse of oil found, which was not defiled, under the seal of the high priest ; and there was only enough therein to kindle the lamps for one day. But a miracle was wrought on it, and they kindled the lamps from it on eight days. In the following year they appointed those eight days as festivals, with the recitation of the Hallel ^a and the Hodaah.¹ But why make the dedication last eight days ? Was not the dedication which Moses made in the wilderness only seven days, as it is said, And ye shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting seven days, etc.^b ; and again, And he that offered his oblation the first day, etc.,^c and on the seventh day, on the Sabbath, Ephraim offered his oblation ? ^d And so we find of Solomon's dedication that it was only seven days, as it is said, They kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.^e Why then make this feast of dedication eight days ? Because in the days of the kingdom of Greece the Asmonæan house entered the Temple, built the altar, daubed it with lime, and put on it the vessels of ministry, and were busying themselves in this work for eight days.

But why should mention be made of the kindling of the lamps ? Because in the days of the kingdom of Greece when the Asmonæans entered the Temple ^f they had eight ^g spits of iron in their hands which they rubbed with wood, and so kindled the lamps ; and they busied themselves thus all the eight days.

But why say the whole Hallel ? To teach you that for every victory which God gives to Israel they must come before Him with Hallel, with song, with thanksgiving, and with the Hodaah, as it is said, They sang one to another in praising and giving thanks to Jehovah, saying, For He is good, etc.^h ; and again, Victory belongeth unto Jehovah, thy blessing is upon thy people.^h

¹ The commandment respecting the lamp for the Feast of the Dedication is this : one lamp for one man and his household, but for the more zealous a lamp for each soul. But what about those

^a Ps. cxiii.-cxviii.

^b Lev. viii. 33.

^c Numb. vii. 12.

^d *Ibid.* vii. 48.

^e 2 Chron. vii. 9.

^f Rosh. H. 24 b ; Ab. Z. 43 a ; Men. 28 b.

^g Ezra iii. 11.

^h Ps. iii. 8.

¹ Sabb. 21 a.

¹ The first of the last three sections of the Prayer of Benedictions.

² The Hebrew text has "seven," but this should be corrected, as in Pesikta Rabbati.

still more zealous? The house of Shammai say, On the first day they kindle eight, diminishing daily the number by one. But the house of Hillel say, On the first day they kindle one, adding daily one more. There were two elders in Zidon, of whom one did after Shammai, the other after Hillel. Both gave reasons for their action. One said, My action corresponded to the diminution of the bullocks at the Feast of Tabernacles ^a; the other said, In holy things one must add and not diminish.^b

The law of the kindling of the lights is this ^c: from the time when the sun sets till men cease to walk in the market place; and it is a duty to place the light before the door of his house outside. If he dwells in an upper room, he places it in the window which is near the public street; and if he be afraid of robbers he can place it before the door of his house on the inside; and in the time of persecution he can place it on his table, and that will suffice.

X (TEBETH).

On the twenty-eighth of Tebeth the Great Synagogue ¹ sat in judgment;

Because when the Sadducees were sitting in their Sanhedrin,^d Janneus the king with Salamis the queen sitting by him, there were no Pharisees sitting with them except Simeon b. Shetaḥ, who, when they were discussing questions and traditions for which they could bring no proof from the Law, suggested that whoever could bring a proof from the Law should be designated for a seat in the Sanhedrin, and that whoever could not do so should be considered unworthy of a seat. Once upon a time there was a matter worthy of disputation before them for which they could bring no proof from the Law, except a garrulous old man who contradicted Simeon and said, Give me time and on the morrow I will return you an answer. He went away and thought the matter carefully over, but could not bring a proof from the Law. When he saw that he could not do so, on the morrow he was ashamed to go and take his seat in the Great Sanhedrin. Then Simeon b. Shetaḥ set one of his pupils in the old man's place, saying that the number of seventy-one members ought not to be diminished.^e He did this day by day

^a Numb. xxix. 12 ff.

^b Ber. 28 a.

^c Sabb. 21 a; Sof. ii.

^d San. 52 b.

^e San. 2 a.

¹ See Jew. Ency. xi. 43 a.

till all of them were rejected, and the Sanhedrin was composed exclusively of Pharisees, as he wished it to be. And that day when the Sanhedrin of the Sadducees was ejected and that of the Pharisees was restored they made a festival.

XI (SHEBAT).

1. The second of Shebat is a festival, when one must not mourn.¹

Here it is written that we must not mourn, but this addition is not made above.^a Why is there this difference? Because on the seventh of Kislev Herod died, but on the second of Shebat Janneus died. It is a joy to the Lord when the wicked are removed from the world.^b It is said that when Janneus the king was ill he sent and seized seventy of the elders of Israel, and shut them up in prison, and said to the jailer, If I die, slay these elders, so that though Israel rejoice over me they may mourn over their teachers. They say that the king had a good wife, whose name was Salamis, who, as soon as he was dead, took his signet ring from off his hand, and sent it to the jailer with this message, Your lord in a dream set free these elders. So he set them free and they went home; and that day on which Janneus died they made a festival.

^c Whenever it is written in the Megillath Taanith that one must not mourn, he may fast after that day but not before it. R. Jose says, Neither before nor after. Wherever it is not written that one must not mourn, but only that one must not fast, one may fast both before and after that day. R. Jose, however, says, After but not before. ^d But on festivals and new moons it is allowed both before and after. Why in the one case is it forbidden and in the other allowed? Because the days mentioned in Scripture are the words of the Law, which need no protection; those not so are the words of the scribes, which need protection.^e R. Jose b. Dostai says in the name of R. Jose the Galilean,^f Every man who swears that he will fast on the eves of Sabbaths or festivals swears a vain

^a ix. 2. ^b Cp. Prov. xi. 10. ^c Taan. 15 b; Jer. Taan. ii. 12.
Rosh H. 19 a; Taan. 17 b. ^d Yeb. 85 a. ^e Tos. Taan. ii.

¹ See note on ix. 2 for a suggestion as to the omission of any historical circumstance. Zeitlin suggests the occasion was a few days after the 28th of Tebet, and that it commemorated the inauguration of the new officers of the Great Synagogue.

oath, because part of the Sabbath eve is as the Sabbath, and part of the eve of a festival as the festival itself.

2. On the twenty-second was destroyed the work which the enemy said he would bring into the Temple ;¹ on which day one must not mourn.

The day when Caius Caligula sent the images to be placed in the Temple, and the news reached Jerusalem, was the evening of the first day of Tabernacles. Simeon the Just said to the people, Celebrate your feasts with joy,^a for none of these things which you have heard shall be established. For He whose Shekinah dwells in this house shall work miracles for us at this time as He did for our fathers from generation to generation. ^b Immediately a voice was heard coming forth from the Holy of Holies saying, The work which the enemy said that he would bring into the Temple is destroyed ; Caius Caligula has been killed, and his decrees are made void. They noted the time exactly. When Simeon saw that the messengers were late in coming he said, Go out to meet them. When the matter was made known to all the nobles of Jerusalem they went forth with Simeon, saying, We will all die rather than such a thing should happen. They cried out and made supplication to the legate ; but Simeon said to them, Make your supplications and cries to our God who is in heaven that He would save you, instead of to the legate. When the legate came near the cities, and saw men advancing towards him from every city, he was filled with amazement and said, What a multitude these are ! The Samaritans said, These are the Jews who are advancing towards you from every city. When he came to the city he saw the inhabitants lying in the streets in sackcloth and ashes. He had not reached Antipatris^c before there came a letter to say that Caius Caligula had been slain, and that his decrees were annulled. Immediately they handed over the images to the Israelites, who sawed them up ; and the day on which they sawed them up they made a festival.

3. On the twenty-eighth Antiochus the King was removed from Jerusalem ;^d

Because he was oppressing the inhabitants of Jerusalem, whither

^a Cf. Neh. viii. 10. ^b Sot. 33 a. ^c Gitt. 76 b.

^d 1 Macc. vi. 28-62 ; 2 Macc. xiii. 1-26.

¹ Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* ii. 10, 5. See Derenbourg, *op. cit.*, p. 207 n.

he had come to devastate it and to destroy all the Jews, so that no one could come in or go out by day, but only at night.* But he heard evil tidings, and went away, and died at home; and that day on which he was removed they made a festival.

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(To be concluded.)

* Cf. ii. 3; vi. 2.

HOSEA.

THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA. By the Rev. Preb. Melville Scott, D.D.
London: S.P.C.K. 8s. 6d. net.

While we recognize the patient industry that lies behind this exposition we cannot bring ourselves to believe that Dr. Scott has greatly increased its value by making it appear to be, in the main, a severe attack upon Dr. Harper's Commentary on Hosea, in the *International Critical Commentary*. This is not the usual method of the judicious scholar, and it is moreover a method which is calculated to arouse prejudice. We find Dr. Harper's name on nearly every page: sometimes he is quoted with approval, but more frequently he is "inconsistent," "not very convincing," "strangely perverse," and so forth. We think Dr. Scott's work would have been more useful, as well as more agreeable reading, had he contented himself with stating the problem of the first three chapters and offering his solution, which is that chapter three is misplaced and should form part of chapter one, following on after verse nine. He points out the "remarkable likeness" between this verse and concluding verse of chapter two, which he believes led to the misplacement. Nor does he assume that the mistake was made by a copyist—it might, he thinks, have been an error on the part of the "preparer of the roll" who appended to a later sheet what should have been appended to an earlier one. He is in favour of the retention of what are termed "the Restoration passages" in the first three chapters as well as the fourteenth chapter, which has been excised by many recent critics. By no means the least valuable part of the book is the Critical Appendix in which the principles of criticism are discussed, and some useful notes added on the Hebrew text. The Dean of Lichfield contributes an appreciative preface. He feels that Dr. Scott has reinstated the Book of Hosea "as an evangelical message for the time when it was written; and therefore, in a measure, for all time."

S. R. C.