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SYNOPSIS OF SUBJECTS

OF

TRACT ROSH HASHANA 1

CHAPTER I.

MISHNA I. The first Mishna ordains New Year's Days, viz.: For kings, for the cattle-tithe, for ordinary years, and for the planting of trees. A king who ascends the throne on the 29th of Adar must be considered to have reigned one year as soon as the first of Nissan comes. The Exodus from Egypt is reckoned from Nissan. When Aaron died Sihon was still living. He heard that Aaron was dead and that the clouds of glory had departed. The rule about Nissan only concerned the kings of Israel; but for the kings of other nations, they reckoned from Tishri. Cyrus was a most upright king, and the Hebrews reckoned his years as they did those of the kings of Israel. One is guilty of procrastination. Charity, tithes, the gleanings of the field, that which is forgotten to be gathered in the field, the produce of corners of the field.

One is culpable if he does not give forthwith that which he has vowed for charity. In the case of charity it must be given immediately, for the poor are always to be found. The Feast of Weeks falls on the fifth, sixth, or seventh of Sivan.

How the law against delay affects a woman. In which month is grain in the early stage of ripening? Only in the month of Nissan. It is also the New Year for leap-year and forgiving the half-shekels. Congregational sacrifices brought on the first of Nissan should be purchased with the shekels raised for the New Year. He who lets a house to another for a year must count (the year) as twelve months from day to day; but if the lessee says (I rent this house) "for *this* year," even if the transaction takes place on the first of Adar, as soon as the first of Nissan arrives the year (of rental) has expired. The first of Tishri is the New Year for divine judgment. At the beginning of tile year it is determined what shall be at the end of the year. The Supreme Court in Heaven does not enter into judgment until the Beth

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[paragraph continues] Din on earth proclaims the new moon. Israel enters for judgment first. If a king and a congregation have a lawsuit, the king enters first. From New Year's Day until the Day of Atonement, slaves used not to return to their (own) homes; neither did they serve their masters, but they ate and drank and rejoiced, with the crown of freedom on their heads. R. Eliezer says, that the world was created in Tishri. R. Joshua says, that the world was created in Nissan. Says R. Joshua, God grants the righteous the fulfilment of the years of their life to the very month and day. Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were visited on New Year's Day. Joseph was released from prison on New Year's Day. On New Year's Day the bondage of our fathers in Egypt ceased. The

Jewish sages fix the time of the flood according to R. Eliezer, and the solstices according to R. Joshua; but the sages of other nations fix the time of the flood also as R. Joshua does. Whoso vows to derive no benefit from his neighbor for a year must reckon (for the year) twelve months, from day to day; but if he said "for this year," if he made the vow even on the twenty-ninth of Elul, as soon as the first of Tishri comes that year is complete. The New Year for giving tithes is for a tree from the time the fruits form; for grain and olives, when they are one-third ripe; and for herbs, when they are gathered. R. Aqiba picked the fruit of a citron-tree on the first of Shebhat and gave two tithes of them, [1-20](#)

MISHNA II. At four periods in each year the world is judged. All are judged on New Year's Day and the sentence is fixed on the Day of Atonement. R. Nathan holds man is judged at all times. God said: "Offer before Me the first sheaf of produce on Passover, so that the standing grain may be blessed unto you. Recite before Me on New Year's Day the Malkhioth, that you proclaim Me King; the Zikhronoth, that your remembrance may come before Me, for good, and how (shall this be done)?" By the sounding of the cornet. Three circumstances cause a man to remember his sins. Four things avert the evil decree passed (by God) on man; viz., charity, prayer, change of name, and improvement, Some add to these four a fifth--change of location. Three books are opened on New Year's Day: one for the entirely wicked, one for the wholly good, and one for the average class of people. The school of Hillel says: The most compassionate inclines (the scale of justice) to the side of mercy. Who are those who inspire their fellowmen with dread of them? A leader of a community who causes the people to fear him over-much, without furthering thereby a high purpose. The legend how R. Joshua fell sick and R. Papa went to visit him. The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself, as does one who recites the prayers for a congregation, and pointing out to Moses the regular order of prayer, said to him: "Whenever Israel sins, let him pray to Me after this order, and I shall pardon him." Prayer is helpful for man before or after the decree has been pronounced. The legend of a certain family in Jerusalem whose members died at eighteen years of age. They came and informed R. Johanan ben Zakkai. The Creator sees all their hearts (at a glance) and (at once) understands all their works, [20-28](#)

MISHNA III. Messengers were sent out in the following six months: in Nissan, Abb, Elul, Tishri, Kislev, and in Adar. The legend of the king

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(of Syria who had earlier) issued a decree forbidding the study of the Torah among the Israelites, or to circumcise their sons, and compelling them to desecrate their Sabbath. Judah b. Shamua and his friends cried aloud: "O heavens! Are we not all brethren? Are we not all the children of one Father?" etc. Samuel said: "I can arrange the calendar for the whole captivity." Rabha used to fast two days for the Day of Atonement. Once it happened that he was right, 29-34

MISHNAS IV. to VII. For the sake of (the new moon), of the two months Nissan and Tishri, witnesses may profane the Sabbath. Formerly they profaned the Sabbath for all (new moons), but since the destruction of the Temple they instituted that (witnesses) might profane the Sabbath only on account of Nissan and Tishri. It once happened that more than forty pair (of witnesses) were on the highway (to Jerusalem) on the Sabbath. Shagbar, the superintendent of Gader, detained them, and (when) R. Gamaliel (heard of it, he) sent and dismissed him. It once happened, that Tobias the physician, his son, and his freed slave saw the new moon in Jerusalem. The explanation of the passage Exodus xii. 1, by R. Simeon and the rabbis. Who are

incompetent witnesses? Gamblers with dice, etc., [34-36](#)

CHAPTER II.

MISHNAS I. to IV. If the Beth Din did not know (the witness), another was sent with him to testify in his behalf. It once happened that R. Nehorai went to Usha on the Sabbath to testify (to the character) of one witness. The legend how the Boëthusians appointed false witnesses. Formerly bonfires were lighted (to announce the appearance of the new moon); but when the Cutheans practised their deceit it was ordained that messengers should be sent out. There are four kinds of cedars. The whole country looked like a blazing fire. Each Israelite took a torch in his hand and ascended to the roof of his house. Great feasts were made for (the witnesses) in order to induce them to come frequently. How were the witnesses examined? The sun never faces the concave of the crescent or the, concave of a rain bow. (If the witnesses say) "We have seen the reflection (of the moon) in the water, or through a metal mirror, or in the clouds," "their testimony is not to be accepted." The chief of the Beth Din says: "It (the new moon) is consecrated," and all the people repeated after Him: "It is consecrated, it is consecrated." Pelimo teaches: "When the new moon appeared at its proper time, they used not to consecrate it," [37-42](#)

MISHNAS V. and VI. R. Gamaliel had on a tablet, and on the wall of his upper room, illustrations of the various phases of the moon. Is this permitted? Yea, he had them made to teach by means of them. It happened once, that two witnesses came and said: "We saw the moon in the eastern part in the morning and in the western part in the evening." R. Johanan b. Nuri declared them to be false witnesses. Two other witnesses came and said: "We saw the moon on its proper day, but could not see it on the next evening." R. Gamaliel received them; but R. Dosa b. Harkhinas said: "They are false witnesses." R. Joshua approved his opinion. Upon this,

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[paragraph continues] Gamaliel ordered the former to appear before him on the Day of Atonement, according to his computation, with his staff and with money. What R. Joshua did, and what R. Aqiba and R. Dosa b. Harkhinas said about it. What R. Hiyya said when he saw the old moon yet on the morning of the twenty-ninth day. Rabbi said to R. Hiyya: "Go to Entob and consecrate the month, and send back to me as a password, 'David the King of Israel still lives.'" The consecration of the moon cannot take place at a period less than twenty-nine and a half days, two-thirds and .0052 (*i.e.*, seventy-three Halaqim) of an hour. Even if the commonest of the common is appointed leader by a community, he must be considered as the noblest of the nobility. A judge is to be held, "in his days," equal in authority with the greatest of his antecedents. Gamaliel said to R. Joshua: "Happy is the generation in which the leaders listen to their followers, and through this the followers consider it so much the more their duty (to heed the teachings of the leaders)," [42-44](#)

CHAPTER III.

MISHNA I. If the Beth Din and all Israel saw (the moon on the night of the thirtieth day), but there was no time to proclaim, "It is consecrated," before it has become dark, the month is intercalary. When three who formed a Beth Din saw it, two should stand up as witnesses and substitute two of their learned friends with the remaining one (to form a Beth Din). No greater authority than Moses, our master, yet God said to him that Aaron should act with him. No

witness of a crime may act as judge, but in civil cases he may, [45-46](#)

MISHNAS II. to IV. Concerning what kind of cornets may be used on New Year's and jubilee days. Some words in the Scripture which the rabbis could not explain, until they heard the people speak among themselves. The cornet used on the New Year was a straight horn of a wild goat, the mouthpiece covered with gold. The jubilee and the New Year's Day were alike in respect to the sounding (of the cornet) and the benedictions, but R. Jehudah's opinion was different. R. Jehudah holds that on New Year's Day the more bent in spirit a man is, and on the Day of Atonement the more upright he is (in his confessions), the better; but R. Levi holds the contrary. "On the fast days two crooked ram's-horns were used, their mouthpieces being covered with silver." According to whom do we nowadays pray: "This day celebrates the beginning of thy work, a memorial of the first day"? It is unlawful to use a cornet that has been split and afterwards joined together. If one should happen to pass by a synagogue, or live close by it and should hear the cornet, he will have complied with the requirements of the law. If one covered a cornet on the inside with gold it might not be used. If one heard a part of (the required number of) the sounds of the cornet in the pit, and the rest at the pit's mouth, he has done his duty. If one blew the first sound (Teqia), and prolonged the second (Teqia) as long as two, it is only reckoned as one. If one who listened (to the sounds of the cornet) paid the proper attention, but he that

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blew the cornet did not, or *vice versa*, they have not done their duty until both blower and listener pay proper attention. If special attention in fulfilling a commandment or doing a transgression is necessary or not. As long as Israel looked to Heaven for aid, and directed their hearts devoutly to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed; but when they ceased to do so, they failed. All are obliged to hear the sounding of the cornet, priests, Levites, and Israelites, proselytes, freed slaves, a monstrosity, a hermaphrodite, and one who is half-slave and half-free. One may not say the benediction over bread for guests unless he eats with them, but he may for the members of the family, to initiate them into their religious duties, [46-52](#)

CHAPTER IV.

MISHNAS I. to IV. Regarding if the New Year fall on Sabbath. Where the shofer (cornet) should be blown after the Temple was destroyed. What was the difference between Jamnia and Jerusalem? Once it happened that New Year's Day fell on the Sabbath, and all the cities gathered together. Said R. Johanan b. Zakkai to the Benai Betherah: "Let us sound (the cornet)!" "First," said they, "let us discuss!" R. Johanan b. Zakkai ordained that the palm-branch should everywhere be taken seven days, in commemoration of the Temple. Since the destruction of the Temple, R. Johanan b. Zakkai ordained that it should be prohibited (to eat of the new produce) the whole of the day of waving (the sheaf-offering). Once the witnesses were delayed in coming, and they disturbed the song of the Levites. They then ordained that evidence should only be received until (the time of) the afternoon service. Concerning what songs the Levites had to sing every day from the Psalms. What did the Levites sing when the additional sacrifices were being offered on the Sabbath? What did they sing at the Sabbath afternoon service? According to tradition, a corresponding number of times was the Sanhedrin exiled. The witnesses need only go to the meeting place (of the Beth Din). Priests may not ascend the platform in sandals, to bless the people; and this is one of the nine ordinances instituted by R. Johanan b. Zakkai, [53-57](#)

MISHNA V. Regarding the order of the benedictions on New Year's Day at the morning prayer, additional prayers, and at what time the cornet must be blown, etc. What passages from the Scriptures are selected for additional prayers on New Year's Day. To what do the ten scriptural passages used for the Malkhioth correspond? How many passages must be recited from Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa? We must not mention the remembrance of the individual (in the Zikhronoth), even if the passage speaks of pleasant things. What are the passages which must be said in the benediction of Malkhioth, Zikhronoth, and the Shophroth? R. Elazar b. R. Jose says: "The Vathiqin used to conclude with a passage from the Pentateuch." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is our Lord," may be used in the Malkhioth. The second of those who act as ministers of the congregation on the Feast of New Year shall cause another to sound the cornet on days when the Hallel (Service of Praise, Ps. cxiii.-cxviii.) is read.

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[paragraph continues] We are permitted to occupy ourselves with teaching (children) until they learn (to sound the cornet), even on the Sabbath. The order, and how many times it must be blown; also, the different sounds and the names of them. How all this is deduced from the Bible, and the difference of opinions between the sages. Generally the soundings of the cornet do not interfere with each other, nor do the benedictions, but on New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement they do. R. Papa b. Samuel rose to recite his prayers. Said he to his attendant, "When I nod to you, sound (the cornet) for me." Rabha said to him, that this may only be done in the congregation. A man should always first prepare himself for prayer, and then pray. R. Jehudah prayed only once in thirty days, [57-66](#)

Footnotes

[xxiii:1](#) See introduction to synopsis of Tract Sabbath, Vol. I., p. xxix.

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