

CHAPTER II.

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE ORDER OF PROCEDURE ON THE LAST SEVEN FAST-DAYS, AND THE PRAYERS TO BE RECITED ON THOSE DAYS.

MISHNA: What is the order of procedure on the fast-days? The ark containing the Holy Scrolls is to be brought into an open place in the city, ashes of burnt substances are to be strewed on that ark, on the head of the Nassi (prince), on the head of the chief of the Beth Din (court of justice); and other persons shall also themselves strew ashes on their heads. The eldest among them shall then address them in heart-moving terms, as follows: "My brethren! Consider that it is not written, anent the (repentance of the) Ninevites, that God regarded their having wrapped themselves in sackcloth and considered their fast-days, but that 'God saw their *works*, that they had turned from their evil way' [Jonah, iii. 10], and the tradition of the prophets is (as it is written): 'Rend your hearts, and not your garments'" [Joel, ii. 131.

After standing up to pray, the people shall place at the praying-desk, to minister, an old experienced person who has children and whose larder is empty, so that his mind may be entirely devoted to his prayer. This person shall say twenty-four benedictions; namely, the eighteen benedictions of the daily prayer, with the addition of six more, which are as follows: The texts of Zikhronoth (remembrance of His creatures) and of Shophroth (sounding of the cornet); the chapters [Psalms, cxx.] "Unto the Lord, when I was in distress, did I call, and he hath answered me"; [ibid. cxxi.] "I lift up my eyes unto the mountains," etc.; [ibid. cxxx.] "Out of the depths have I called to thee, O Lord; and [ibid. cii.] "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed." R. Jehudah said: It was not necessary to mention the Zikhronoth and Shophroth, but the following passages are to be read instead, namely: [I Kings, viii. 37]: "If there be famine in the land, if there be pestilence," etc.; and [Jeremiah, xiv.] "The word of the Lord

that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought"; and the concluding is then added to each.

To the first he (the reader) shall say additionally: "May He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah answer you, and listen to your (prayer and) cry on this day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel!" To the second he shall say: "May He who answered our ancestors on the Red Sea answer you, and listen favorably unto your cry this day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who rememberest all things forgotten (by man)!" To the third he shall say: "May He who answered Joshua in Gilgal answer you, and listen to your cry this day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who deignest to listen to the sound of the cornet!" To the fourth he shall say: "May He who answered Samuel in Mizpah answer you, and listen this day to your cry. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hearkenest to (our) cry!" To the fifth he shall say: "May he who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel answer you, and listen favorably to your cry on this day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hearkenest to prayer!" To the sixth he shall say: "May He who answered Jonah in the bowels of

the fish answer you, and listen unto your cry this day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who answerest in the time of distress!" To the seventh he says: "May he who answered David and his son Solomon in Jerusalem answer you, and listen unto your cry on this day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast compassion on the earth!"

It happened in the days of R. Halaphta and R. Hanina the son of Teradion, that a minister advanced to the praying-desk and completed the entire benediction without any (of the congregation) answering thereto "Amen." (The sexton then proclaimed): "Sound, priests! Sound!" (The minister who said the prayers then continued): "May He who answered our father Abraham on Mount Moriah answer you, and listen favorably to your prayer this day." (The sexton then called): "Sound an alarm, sons of Aaron! Sound an alarm!" (The previous minister continued): "May He who answered our ancestors on the Red Sea answer you, and listen favorably to your cry this day." When the sages were informed of this, they said: "This was not our custom, except at the eastern door (of the Temple) and on the Temple mount."

On the first three fasts, the priests who had the weekly watch of the Temple fasted, but only part of the day, and the ministering priests did not fast at all. On the second three fast-days, the

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priests on the weekly watch fasted the whole day, but the ministering priests only fasted part of the day; but on the last seven fast-days both classes of priests fasted the whole day. So said R. Jehoshua. But the sages say: "The first three fasts were not kept by either of the two classes; on the second three fasts the priests on weekly watch would fast part of the day, but the officiating priests would not fast at all. On the last seven, however, the priests on the weekly watch would fast the whole day; but the officiating priests would fast only part of the day."

The priests having the weekly watch may drink wine at night, but not during the day, 1 but the officiating priests may drink it neither by day nor by night. The priests of the weekly watch and the standing men (commoners attending the public sacrifices as the representatives of the congregation at large) are not allowed to shave their beards or to wash their clothes; but on Thursday they are permitted to do so, in honor of the approaching Sabbath. (Moed Katan, p. 25.)

Wherever it is mentioned in the "Roll of Fasts" that "no lamentation and mourning is to be made" on certain days, it is also prohibited to do so on the day preceding, but permitted on the day following. R. Jose, however, says: "It is prohibited to do so on both the day preceding and the day following." Where it is said, however, "No fasts are to be kept thereon," it is allowed to fast on the day preceding and following days. R. Jose, however, says: "It is prohibited on the preceding, but allowed on the following day."

Public fasts must not be ordered to commence on a Thursday, in order not to raise the price of victuals in the markets; 2 but the first three fasts must be kept on Monday, Thursday, and the following Monday. But the second three fasts may follow on Thursday, Monday, and the following Thursday. R. Jose says: "Even as the first fasts are not to be commenced on Thursday, so also are the second and last fasts not to commence on that day."

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Public fasts are not to be ordered to take place on the feast of the New Moon, on that of Dedication (Hanukah), nor on that of Lots (Purim); but if the fast had already been commenced on one of those feasts, it need not be broken. Such is the decree of Rabban Gamaliel. R. Meir, however, says, that although Rabban Gamaliel said that the fast need not be broken, he admits that on those days people are not to fast the entire day. Such is also the case with the fast of the ninth of Abh, if it happen to fall on a Friday.

GEMARA: "*What is the order of procedure on the fast-days?*" Does this apply also to the first three fast-days? Then it would be a contradiction to the following Boraitha: The first and the second three fast-days they enter into the praying-house and pray as usual; but in the last seven the ark is to be brought into an open place, etc. Said R. Papa: "Nay; our Mishna also refers to the last seven."

"*On the head of the Nassi (prince)*"; and further, the Mishna teaches that "other persons shall also strew ashes on their heads." This should not be so! For did not Rabbi teach in a Boraitha that where an act of honor is to be accomplished the most prominent persons are commenced with, while when an act of humiliation is to be performed the lowest in rank are first considered? The strewing of ashes on the heads of the prince and of the chief of the Beth Din first is also an act of honor; for they are told that they are more worthy of praying for mercy for us and for all the world.

"*Other persons shall also strew ashes on their heads.*" Why must the prince and the chief of the Beth Din have someone else to strew ashes on their heads? Can they not do so themselves? Said R. Abba (or Ada) of Kisri: "The humiliation of disgracing one's self by one's own hands is not equal to that of being disgraced by the hands of others (where prominent persons are concerned, but as for common people it does not matter)." On what part of the head are the ashes put? Said R. Itz'hak: 'On the place where the phylacteries are generally worn, as it is written [Isaiah, lxi. 3]: 'To give unto them ornament in the place of ashes,' implying that where ornaments (phylacteries) were worn ashes were put."

Why do they congregate in an open place? Said R. Hyya bar Abba: "In order that they might say: 'We have prayed privately and were not answered, hence we shall humiliate ourselves by praying in public.'" And Resh Lakish said: "In

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order that they might say: 'We have been driven from our abodes, and may our banishment be the means of our forgiveness.'" Why is the ark brought into an open place? Said R. Jehoshua ben Levi: "In order that they might say: 'We had a hidden treasure, but through our transgressions that also has become profaned.'" Why do they clothe themselves in sackcloth? Said R. Hyya bar Abba: "In order that they might say: 'We are now like the beasts of the field.'" Why are ashes strewn on the ark? Said R. Jehudah ben Pazi: "In order to say that this is an allusion to what is written [Psalms, xci. 15]: 'With him I am in distress,' meaning that the Shekhina shares the distress of the people." Resh Lakish said: "In order to say that this is an allusion to the passage: 'In their affliction he was afflicted.'" Said R. Zera: "When I saw the rabbis strew ashes on the ark, my whole body trembled."

Why are ashes strewn on the heads of all? Concerning this, R. Levi bar Hama and R. Hanina

differ. One says that this is equal to saying: "We are now before thee, O Lord, as ashes"; and the other says: "It is for the purpose of begging the Lord to remember the ashes of Isaac." For what purpose did they go out to the cemeteries? ¹ Concerning this, R. Levi bar Hama and R. Hanina also differ. One says, in order that they might say they were now equal to the dead; while the other says that it was for the purpose of having the souls of the departed pray for them.

Why was the Mount called Mount Moriah [II Chronicles, iii. 1]? Concerning this there is again a difference between R. Levi bar Hama and R. Hanina. One says that Moriah is the equivalent of Horaah (*i.e.*, enactment), while the other says that Moriah is the equivalent of Mora (fear); for when the Temple was built, other nations were awed.

"In heart-moving terms." The rabbis taught: If the eldest among them was also a scholar he would address them; otherwise a scholar, even if he was younger, would address them, and if there was no scholar among them a prominent man would do it. And he would say to them: "Brethren! It is not written, anent the repentance of the Ninevites, that God regarded their having wrapped themselves in sackcloth and considered their fast-days,

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but that 'God saw their works, that they had turned from their evil way'" [Jonah, iii. 10].

Concerning the Ninevites it is written [Jonah, iii. 8]: "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth." How was it done? They separated the suckling animals from their mothers and said: "Sovereign of the Universe! If Thou wilt not have mercy upon us, we will not have mercy upon them." And further on: "Let men call unto God with might." What is meant by "with might"? That means to say that they said: "Lord of the Universe! Who of the two should give way unto the other? The oppressed and the one who cannot be oppressed, the righteous and the wicked?" (Now, as we are the oppressed and Thou canst not be oppressed, shouldst Thou not overlook our iniquity?) Further, it is written [ibid.]: "And let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence which is in their hands." What is meant by "the violence which is in their hands"? Said Samuel: "If a man had wrongfully appropriated a beam which he had used in building a house, he would tear down the house and restore the beam to its rightful owner."

R. Ada bar Ahabha said: "If a man confesses to a wrong committed, and repents it without making proper restitution therefor, he is equal to a man holding a dead reptile in his hands and bathing himself in order to become clean; for, as a man who has a dead reptile in his hands, even should he bathe in all the legal baths in the world, would not become clean until he had rid himself of the reptile--but if he threw away that unclean thing a bath measuring forty Saahs would cleanse him--so it is with a man who had committed a wrong: unless he made proper restitution all confession and repentance is in vain, as it is written [Proverbs, xxviii. 13]: 'He that concealeth his transgressions will not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them will obtain mercy'; and as it is written [Lamentations, iii. 41]: 'Let us lift up our heart and our hands unto God in the heavens.'"

"After standing up to pray." The rabbis taught: At prayer, though there be the eldest and a scholar present, neither should be placed at the reading-desk unless they were experienced in prayer; but only one who has had thorough experience. R. Jehudah said: "The minister should be a man who has children and cannot provide for them, who works hard in the field but has empty

storehouses, who has good manners, who is modest, who is popular, who has an attractive, sweet voice, who can read the entire Holy Writ, and is competent to learn Midrash, Halakhoth,

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and Haggadoth, and is conversant with all the benedictions." The rabbis looked among themselves and cast their eyes upon R. Itz'hak bar Ami, who had all those qualities.

(R. Jehudah said:) "'Who has children and cannot provide for them and who has empty (store) houses.' Is that not one and the same thing?" Said R. Hisda: "By an empty house is meant one free from sin." What is meant by "good manners"? One who never had a bad reputation since his earliest youth.

"With the addition of six more." Are there not seven additional benedictions? as the Mishna states further on: "To the seventh he says," etc. Said R. Na'hman b. Itz'hak: By the seventh is meant the seventh to the long benediction, as we have learned in a Boraitha: He says twenty-four benedictions, namely: the eighteen benedictions of the daily prayer, with the addition of six more, and those six are said between the benediction of redemption and healing, and the benediction of the redemption is made longer. After each benediction the congregation answers "Amen." Such was the custom, however, only outside of the Temple, but in the Temple the reader would say: "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, from the beginning to the end of the world"; and they would conclude by saying: "Blessed be the Redeemer of Israel." But no "Amen" was answered; and why not? Because in the Temple it was not allowed to answer "Amen." Whence do we deduce this? Because it is written [Nehemiah, ix. 5]: "Arise, bless ye the Lord your God from eternity to eternity. And let men bless thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." This signifies, that after each blessing the Lord's name should be praised (but not that "Amen" should be said).

The rabbis taught: To the first benedictions the reader would say: "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, from the beginning unto the end of the world. Blessed be the Redeemer of Israel!" and the people answered after him: "Praised be the name of the glory of His kingdom for ever and ever." The Chazan (sexton) of the congregation then says: "Sound, priests, sound!" The reader then continues: "May He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah answer you, and listen to your cry on this day." The priests then sound, make an alarm, and sound again. To the second, the reader says at the conclusion: "Blessed be the Lord, who remembereth all things forgotten (by man)"; and the people answer: "Praised be the name of the glory of His kingdom for ever and ever." The Chazan then says: "Sound

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an alarm, children of Aaron, sound an alarm!" The reader then says: "May He who answered our ancestors on the Red Sea answer you, and listen favorably unto your cry this day." The priests then make an alarm, sound, and then make another alarm; and such is the manner of procedure with everyone of the benedictions. The Chazan says alternately, "Sound!" and "Sound an alarm!" until all the benedictions are said.

Thus did R. Halaphta proceed in Sepphoris and R. Hanina ben Teradon in the city of Sikhni; and when the sages were informed of this, they said: "This was not customary except at the eastern

door of the Temple, and at the Temple Mount."

"*R. Jehudah said: 'It was not necessary to mention the Zikhronoth,'*" etc. Said R. Ada of Jaffa: "The reason of R. Jehudah's dictum is, that the Zikhronoth and Shophroth are only mentioned on the New Year day, on the day of the jubilee, and during times of war."

"*To the sixth . . . to the seventh he shall say,*" etc. Let us see! Jonah lived after the time of David and Solomon, why is he mentioned first? Because he must conclude the benediction to the seventh with, "Blessed be thou, O Lord, who hast compassion on the earth," therefore he must mention Jonah first. We have learned in a Boraita: It was said upon the authority of Symmachos that instead of the benediction, "who hast compassion on the earth," the benediction, "who makest humble those that are arrogant," is said.

"*On the first three fasts, the priests,*" etc. The rabbis taught: Why was it said that the priests on the weekly watch were allowed to drink wine at night and not during the day? Lest the officiating priests be overwhelmed with work and those on the weekly watch would be required to assist them. And why was it said that the officiating priests must not drink either during the day or at night? Because they were compelled to work day and night.

"*The priests of the weekly watch and the standing men,*" etc. What was the reason that they were not allowed to shave their beards? "In order that they may not enter upon their duties while they are ugly to look upon," said Rabba bar bar Hana in the name of R. Johanan. [1](#)

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"*Wherever it is mentioned in the, Roll of Fasts,*" etc. The rabbis taught: It says in the "Roll of Fasts": These are the days on which fasting is not permitted, and on some of them it is not even allowed to mourn. From the first of Nissan on, until and including the eighth, on which days it was resolved that the strife carried on between the Pharisees and the Bathusees concerning the continual daily offering [1](#) should be amicably concluded by adopting the decree of the Pharisees, it was enacted that no mourning or lamenting should be permitted; and from the eighth day of Nissan until after the Passover festival it was established when the feast of Pentecost should be celebrated, [2](#) and for that reason on those days no mourning or lamenting is allowed.

The Master said: "From the first day of Nissan," etc. Why does he say from the first? That is the day of the New Moon, and in itself a feast-day when one must not mourn--why does he not say from the second day of Nissan? Said Rabh: "He said 'from the first day of Nissan' so as to provide that even on the day preceding that, one must not mourn." But the first day of Nissan being a feast of the New Moon, it is self-understood that on the preceding day one must not mourn; for such is the law concerning all days preceding a feast-day! Nay; but the feast of the New Moon is a biblical feast-day, and no additional measure need be enacted to provide for its faithful observance; and mourning on a day preceding a feast-day is only prohibited as a precautionary measure, lest the mourning be continued on the feast-day itself. If the feast-day, however, is a biblical one, such a measure is not necessary and is only enacted for rabbinical feast-days.

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The Master said: "From the eighth day until after the festival," etc. Why does he say "until after the festival"? Why not until the festival? Surely one must not mourn on the festival itself! Said R. Papa: "In the same manner as Rabh said, that the first day of Nissan is mentioned in order to provide for the day preceding it as a day on which one must not mourn, so in this case it says 'until after the festival' in order to include the day following the festival among the days on which it is not allowed to mourn; and this will be in accordance with the dictum of R. Jose, who says in this Mishna 'that it is prohibited to mourn on both the day preceding and following.'"

It was taught: R. Hyya bar Assi said in the name of Rabh that the Halakha prevails according to R. Jose, and Samuel said that the Halakha prevails according to R. Meir.

R. Na'hman ordained a fast-day on the thirteenth day of Nissan, and he was reminded by the sages that that was the day of Torainos; but he replied that the day of Torainos was abolished, for on that day Shmaia and Ahia his brother were slain. Why was R. Na'hman reminded that the day was that of Torainos, he could have been apprised of the fact that it was the day before the feast of Nikanor? Said R. Ashi: "If the day was abolished as the feast-day of Torainos, should it be kept as a precautionary day for the observance of the day of Nikanor?"

What is Nikanor and what is Torainos? We have learned in a Boraitha: Nikanor was one of the Greek viceroys, and every day he would lift up his hand and vow that if ever Judea and Jerusalem came into his hands he would crush them. After the Maccabees conquered him in battle, his thumbs and big toes were cut off and hung up in the gates of Jerusalem, and it was said that the mouth which had vowed against Jerusalem and the hands which had been lifted up against it should be made to suffer.

What is Torainos? It was said: When Torainos desired to slay Lolainos and his brother Papos in Ludkia (Lydda), he said to them: "If ye be of the same nation as Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, let your God come and save you from my hands as He did them from the hands of Nebuchadnezzar." They answered: "Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were truly righteous men and Nebuchadnezzar was a just king, deserving of being the means through which a miracle was to be performed. But we have incurred the death penalty before Heaven in any event, and if thou shouldst not slay us, God has other agents who will

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accomplish this--for instance, lions, bears, and other wild beasts who could kill us; and thou art a wicked man, who art not worthy of having a miracle occur through thee, and God hath given us into thy hands in order to hold thee to account for our blood which thou wilt have shed." Still, he had them executed, and it was said that he did not leave his place before two envoys arrived from Rome, and his skull was split into pieces.

"*Public fasts are not to be ordered,*" etc. What is meant by "but if the fast had already been commenced"? Said R. Aha: "If three fast-days had already been kept"; and R. Assi said: "Even if one had been kept."

R. Jehudah said in the name of Rabh: All (of) this (clause of the Mishna) is in accordance with the dictum of R. Meir in the name of Rabban Gamaliel; but the sages said that one must complete his fast. Mar Zutra went and preached in the name of R. Huna, that the Halakha

prevails that one must fast under those circumstances and, moreover, complete the fast.

Footnotes

[33:1](#) This regulation is a general one and applies to ordinary days as well as to fast-days.

[33:2](#) Precautions were taken in every instance to prevent exorbitant prices being charged for victuals and at times even existing ordinances were abrogated for this purpose. Thus no fast-days were ordered to commence on Thursday in order that the dealers in articles of food might not take advantage of the greater demand produced by the necessity of laying in an extra supply for the day preceding the fast and for Sabbath.

[40:1](#) In the Palestinian Talmud it is stated, in addition to what is taught in this Mishna, that they would clothe themselves in sackcloth, go out to the cemeteries, and sound the cornet.

[43:1](#) The proper time when kings, officials, and the common people may shave their beards will be explained and discussed in Tract Sanhedrin, and for that reason the discussion pertaining thereto is here omitted.

[44:1](#) The strife carried on between the Pharisees and the Bathusees concerning the continual daily offering was as follows: The Bathusees maintained that because it is written [Numbers, xxviii. 4]: "The one sheep shalt *thou* prepare in the morning and the other sheep shalt *thou* prepare toward evening," it is permitted for an individual to bring the continual daily offering, while the Pharisees held that the offering must be brought by the congregation from communal funds, basing their claim upon the passage [ibid. 2]: "Shall *ye* observe," etc.

[44:2](#) The Pharisees and Bathusees also disputed about the date when the feast of Pentecost was to be celebrated, the latter claiming that as it is written [Lev. xxiii. 15]: "And ye shall count unto you, from the morrow after the Sabbath . . . seven complete weeks," the day of Pentecost must necessarily fall on the first day of the week; but the Pharisees, through R. Johanan ben Zakkai, maintained that the passage implies that counting must be commenced on the day following the first day of the festival, and therefore the feast of Pentecost would fall on the sixth day of the month of Sivan.

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