

p. v

CONCLUDING WORDS

TO THE COMPLETION OF SECTIONS FESTIVAL AND JURISPRUDENCE.

With the benediction to the Almighty, who prolonged our life to see the completion of our translation the above two large sections of the Talmud, we deem it necessary to say a few words concerning the criticisms which have recently appeared, and to which we are grateful for having called our attention to some important matters. However, before we will come to the point we beg to say that we were anxious during the whole time to see a true criticism to our entire work, pointing out the mistakes or errors which must be found in the editing as well as in the translating itself of such a difficult and voluminous work. But to our knowledge such has not appeared anywhere as yet, although reviews and notices of different kinds were given in more than a hundred leading papers in both the old and the new world. The praises encouraged us but little, and some of the criticisms did not discourage us at all, for the reason that both were only phrases, without giving any evidence or important facts to which our proper attention should be called. And we would still be grateful indeed to those who would give such criticisms in compliance with our wishes, as this would be a great help to us in the continuation of the translation of the four remaining sections, which may take about twelve volumes or so more. Now to the point. There was a criticism in the "Open Court" of Chicago, Vol. XVI., pp. 425-427, accusing us that we have omitted the discussion of some sages concerning "evangelium." How it should be written •••-••••• or •••-••••• [1](#)

p. vi

and for such an omission he exclaimed that we have no translation of the whole Talmud. [1](#) We have received also some private letters from educated people, asking why they do not find any mention of Jesus of Nazareth. And in answer to the criticism as well as to the many letters we have received, we beg to give some letters of an editor of a scientific paper of this country, which we think will throw some light on this matter.

June I, 1901.

REV. MICHAEL RODKINSON,

New York City.

Dear Sir:--The receipt of Volume XII. of the Talmud brings back recollections of a pleasant hour spent with you in my office, and the information which you so kindly gave me on several very obscure points. Perhaps you will pardon a personal letter of inquiry on a point or two in "Sabbath" that have especially interested me.

You will remember where the subject is discussed as to whether it was lawful to rescue books from the

flames, the point turning especially, as I read it, that on the one hand the books of unbelievers should be allowed to perish, while on the other hand, these same books also contain the Sacred Name.

R. Abuha is asked if the books of the Be Abhidon should be saved, and gives an equivocal reply. It is stated that Rabh went to neither the Be Abhidon nor the Be Nitzrephe. Samuel went to the Abhidon, and Mar Bar Joseph "was of their society."

Your note on the passage leaves it conjectural who the people were. To me it seems altogether likely that they were Christian sects (possibly Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians). I should infer this because, first, R. Tarphon's statement immediately precedes it, and Christian tradition at least connects him with disputes with Christians. Second, the story of Ema Shalom and her brother Gamaliel II., and the philosopher and judge follows it. It seems to me that there are at least three implied quotations in this story from Matthew's Gospel or some other Christian document: "Let your light shine," "I came not to destroy but fulfill the law," and the statement about son and daughter inheriting alike.

Do Hebrew scholars think that Christians are indicated by Be Abhidon and Be Nitzrephe? And if so, how is the fact explained that Samuel went to one of them, unless it be that Samuel is Saul (Paul), and how could Mar Bar Joseph be of their society?

It seems to me that I find a number of places where Christian usages or

p. vii

doctrines are referred to, and I wish I were informed as to the names would show this. If you could give me some and other indications which light, without trespassing too much on your time, I would be very grateful indeed.

June 12, 1901.

My Dear Sir: Your kind favor of the 9th at hand and carefully noted. I assume that you have good and sufficient reasons for your hesitation in such a matter, although they may not be apparent to me. Therefore it only remains for me to assure you as strongly as I know how, that the information I seek is only for myself, that it will not be published, that it will not be quoted even in conversation as your opinion.

I simply wish to read understandingly the fine work you are placing before English readers; I want to get into the atmosphere of the times as much as possible. Judaism and Christianity must have touched elbows a good deal in the first three centuries, and there must be some evidences of it in the Talmud to those who can read between the lines. I think I can see references. For instance, were there Saducees after the final overthrow, and is not the term, at least occasionally, applied to Christians?

My own conviction, which of course, is based on very superficial knowledge mostly gleaned from the early Christian Fathers, is that at first, the line of demarcation between the Jewish Christians and the Jews was not so strong as it became afterwards. But at any rate, there must be more references to them than appear on the surface, it seems to me, and that is what I want to know. But I have no theory to vindicate and seek the knowledge only for myself.

July 2, 1901.

My Dear Sir: I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your very kind and instructive letter of two weeks

ago. It covers substantially the points I wished to know, and saved me much research that might in the end prove barren of results. I shall remember your kindness. Again thanking you, I am,

And to these letters we may add a paragraph of Tract Sabbath, p. 119. "R. Aqiba said: 'The wood-gatherer was Zelophchad.' To which R. Jehudah b. Bathyra exclaimed: 'Aqiba! Whether your statement be true or false, you will have to answer for it at the time of the divine judgment; for if it be true, you disclosed the name of the man whom the Scriptures direct to shield, and thus you brought him unto infamy, and if it be false, you slandered a man who was upright,'" etc. (See there.) And this rule we adopted while engaged in this translation--namely, not to give hypotheses to the reader, as there is not one line in the whole Mishna which speaks clearly of Jesus and his beliefs. In our book on "Phylacteries" we have alluded to the reason why the editor of the Mishna did so. And the same reason prevented us from *interpreting* passages or paragraphs which seemed to us to treat about Jesus and his

p. viii

followers, as after all these are only hypotheses, and we do not like to throw our suppositions in a translation which ought to be more or less authentic. This is all that we can say in answer to the "Open Court."

There has appeared in the "Baltimore Sun," April 17, 1903, a notice which, in the main, is very flattering, but gives also some criticisms that are of interest, and correct from the standpoint of the writer. They concern the remarks sub 3 and 4 of the "Explanatory Remarks" published in each volume on the other side of the title-page. Concerning the fourth he says: "There are many who would be glad to verify references who may not have a copy of the new Hebrew text, or unable to use it, if they had it." Concerning the third remark he says: "This seems unfortunate. The alternative interpretation is often of very considerable value, and may be used for historical purposes even if not so important theologically." To this we may say that we were very careful when omitting the first version, and where we found it important we translated both, as the reader will find in our Talmud in many places, "If you wish, it may be said so, and if you wish, it may be said so and so." And we did not fail even to translate a third "if you wish" when we saw that they all were of importance. In general, however, only the last versions are of great account, and the decisions of the post-talmudical rabbis were only in accordance with those. And only they are the guides of the Schul'han Arush (Jewish Code).

Concerning the fourth we may confess that the critic is perfectly right in his contention. However, it is not our fault but that of the circumstances which deceived us in the beginning of our undertaking. We previously thought that we would find subscribers for the Hebrew text also, and so give the Hebrew with the English together, and then there would have certainly been no need of separately marking the pages of the text. Unfortunately, there was no demand for the text at all, so that we were unable to furnish it with the translation, and in reality, for the general English reader who is not able to read Hebrew the page of the text is immaterial. And for the Hebrew students, who are very few, we could not afford to go to such expense, as a separate column for each page would be necessary for this purpose, for such could not be inserted in the text even in parentheses.

Concerning the last Tract Horiath, which speaks of sacrifices

p. ix

and offerings only, we are at a loss to understand why it was inserted in the section Jurisprudence, unless the reason be the treatment of whether the expenses of the offerings must be carried by the judges of the court themselves or by the treasury of the congregation, which may belong to the category of damages.

However, the whole tract treats almost of one and the same point, so that we could not give the contents of each chapter separately, and confined ourselves by giving the synopsis of the beginning of each Mishna and some important matters from the Gemara, of the last.

M. L. R.

NEW YORK, *May* 25, 1903.

Footnotes

[v:1](#) The meaning of the first two words is one and the same. And the [aleph](#) here is the same as the *ayen*. The same differ also about the same letters concerning the word "Eidehen," Abuda Zara, p.1. (see foot-note there); hence, as it is without any importance for the English reader, we have to omit it, according to our method. But that what was said in the name of Jesus by Jacob (James) we have translated, although we do not believe that this was so (see foot-note, *ibid.* p. 27).

[vi:1](#) Some one has called our attention to this article being in the public library about a year ago and we only glanced at it for lack of time. And for the same reason we could not have the original before us when we are writing our answer. By the way, we like to say that there is published a booklet, "Chasronoth-Hashas," containing the omission made by the censor about Jesus and his disciples, to which we do not pay any attention, as its contents are nonsense and we are sure that these were not said or written by the talmudic scholars. We also possess a letter from the late lamented Dr. Mielziner, who agrees with us on this point.

[Next: Contents](#)