

became conscious of it.”¹ Here he claims the glory of being a son of God for Israel, but not for all men. Still, as soon as the likeness of man to God is taken in a spiritual sense, then it is implied that all men have the same capacity for being a son of God which is claimed for Israel. This is unquestionably the view of Judaism when it considers the Torah as entrusted to Israel to bring light and blessing to all the families of men. Rabbi Meir, the disciple of Rabbi Akiba, said: “The Scriptural words, ‘The statutes and ordinances which *man* shall do and live thereby,’ and similar expressions indicate that the final aim of Judaism is not attained by the Aaronide, nor the Levite, nor even the Israelite, but by mankind.”² Such a saying expresses clearly and emphatically that God’s fatherly love extends to all men as His children.

6. According to the religious consciousness of modern Israel man is made in God’s image, and is thus a child of God. Consequently Jew and non-Jew, saint and sinner have the same claim upon God’s paternal love and mercy. There is no distinction in favor of Israel except as he lives a higher and more god-like life. Even those who have fallen away from God and have committed crime and sin remain God’s children. If they send up their penitent cry to the throne of God, “Pardon us, O Father, for we have sinned! Forgive us, O King, for we have done evil!”; their prayer is heard by the heavenly Father exactly like that of the pious son of Israel.

¹ Aboth III, 13, quoted above, Chap. XXXIV, par. 6.

² Sifra *Ahare* 13, p. 86.

CHAPTER XLI

PRAYER AND SACRIFICE

1. The gap between man and the sublime Master of the universe is vast, but not absolute. The thoughts of God are high above our thoughts, and the ways of God above our ways, baffling our reason when we endeavor to solve the vexatious problems of destiny, of merit and demerit, of retribution and atonement. Yet religion offers a wondrous medium to bring the heart of man into close communion with Him who is enthroned above the heavens, one that overleaps all distances, removes all barriers, and blends all dissonances into one great harmony, and that is — Prayer. As the child must relieve itself of its troubles and sorrows upon the bosom of its mother or father in order to turn its pain into gladness, so men at all times seek to approach the Deity, confiding to Him all their fears and longings in order to obtain peace of heart. Prayer, communion between the human soul and the Creator, is the glorious privilege enjoyed by man alone among all creatures, as he alone is the child of God. It voices the longing of the human heart for its Father in heaven. As the Psalmist has it, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”¹

2. However, both language, the means of intercourse between man and man, and prayer, the means of intercourse between man and God, show traces of a slow development lasting for thousands of years, until the loftiest thoughts and

¹ Ps. XLII, 3.

sublimest emotions could be expressed. The real efficacy of prayer could not be truly appreciated, until the prophetic spirit triumphed over the priestly element in Judaism. In the history of speech the language of signs preceded that of sounds, and images gradually ripened into abstract thoughts. Similarly, primitive man approaches his God with many kinds of gifts and sacrificial rites to express his sentiments. He acts out or depicts what he expects from the Deity, whether rain, fertility of the soil, or the extermination of his foes. He shares with his God his food and drink, to obtain His friendship and protection in time of trouble, and sacrifices the dearest of his possessions to assuage His wrath or obtain His favor.

3. In the lowest stage of culture man needed no mediator in his intercourse with the Deity, who appeared to him in the phenomena of nature as well as in the fetish, totem, and the like. But soon he rose to a higher stage of thought, and the Deity withdrew before him to the celestial heights, filling him with awe and fear; then rose a class of men who claimed the privilege to approach the Deity and influence Him by certain secret practices. Henceforth these acted as mediators between the mass of the people and the Deity. In the first place, these were the magicians, medicine-men, and similar persons, who were credited with the power to conjure up the hidden forces of nature, considered either divine or demoniac. After these arose the priests, distinguished from the people by special dress and diet, who established in the various tribes temples, altars, and cults, under their own control. Then there were the saints, pious penitents or Nazarites, who led an ascetic life secluded from the masses, hoping thus to obtain higher powers over the will of the Deity. All these entertained more or less clearly the notion that they stood in closer relation to the Deity than the common people, whom they then excluded from the sanctuary and all access to the Deity.

The Mosaic cult, in the so-called Priestly Code, was founded upon this stage of religious life, forming a hierarchical institution like those of other ancient nations. It differed from them, however, in one essential point. The prime element in the cult of other nations was magic, consisting of oracle, incantation and divination, but this was entirely contrary to the principles of the Jewish faith. On the other hand, all the rites and ceremonies handed down from remote antiquity were placed in the service of Israel's holy God, in order to train His people into the highest moral purity. The patriarchs and prophets, who are depicted in Scripture as approaching God in prayer and hearing His voice in reply, come under the category of saints or elect ones, above the mass of the people.

4. Foreign as the entire idea of sacrifice is to our mode of religious thought, to antiquity it appeared as the only means of intercourse with the Deity. "In every place offerings are presented unto My name, even pure oblations,"¹ says the prophet Malachi in the name of Israel's God. Even from a higher point of view the underlying idea seems to be of a simple offering laid upon the altar. Such were the meal-offering (*minha*);² the burnt offering (*olah*), which sends its pillar of smoke up toward heaven, symbolizing the idea of self-sacrifice; while the various sin-offerings (*hattath* or *asham*) expressed the desire to propitiate an offended Deity. However, since the sacrificial cult was always dominated by the priesthood in Israel as well as other nations, the lawgiver made no essential changes in the traditional practice and terminology. Thus it was left to the consciousness of the people to find a deeper spiritual meaning in the sacrifices

¹ Mal. I, 11.

² With its *askarah*, the flame of incense rising in "pyramidal" form, generally translated "memorial," or "memorial-part." Lev. II, 9, 16. For sacrifice as means of atonement see Schechter: *Aspects*, 295-301.

instead of stating one directly. The want was supplied only by the later Haggadists who tried to create a symbolism of the sacrificial cult. The laying on of hands by the individual who brought the offering, seems to have been a genuine symbolic expression of self-surrender. In the case of sin-offerings the Mosaic cult added a higher meaning by ordering a preceding confession of sin. Here, indeed, the individual entered into personal communion with God through his prayer for pardon, even though the priest performed the act of expiation for him.

5. The great prophets of Israel alone recognized that the entire sacrificial system was out of harmony with the true spirit of Judaism and led to all sorts of abuses, above all to a misconception of the worship of God, which requires the uplifting of the heart. In impassioned language, therefore, they hurled words of scathing denunciation against the practice and principle of ritualism: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Yea, though ye offer Me burnt-offerings and your meal-offerings, I will not accept them; Neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.

Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; and let Me not hear the melody of thy psalteries.

But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."¹

Thus speaks Amos in the name of the Lord. And Hosea: "For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings."²

Isaiah spoke in a similar vein:

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . .

¹ Amos V, 21-24.

² Hosea VI, 6.

Bring me no more vain oblations; it is an offering of abomination unto Me; new moon and sabbath, the holding of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly. . . .

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings From before Mine eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."¹

Most striking of all are the words of Jeremiah, spoken in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices, but this thing I commanded them, saying; 'Hearken unto My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'"²

6. However, the mere rejection of the sacrificial cult was quite negative, and did not satisfy the normal need for communion with God. Therefore the various codes established a sort of compromise between the prophetic ideal and the priestly practice, in which the ideal was by no means supreme. Sometimes the prophetic spirit stirred the soul of inspired psalmists, and their lips echoed forth again the divine revelation: "Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: God, thy God, am I. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; and thy burnt-offerings are continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. . . .

¹ Isa. I, 11-18.

² Jer. VII, 21-23.

Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?"¹ Another psalmist says: "Sacrifice and meal-offering thou hast no delight in; Mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required."²

Still, the sacrificial cult was too deeply rooted in the life of the people to be disturbed by the voice of the prophets or the words of a few psalmists. It was connected with the Temple, and the Temple was the center of the social life of the nation. The few faint voices of protest went practically unheeded. The priestly pomp of sacrifice could only be displaced by the more elevating and more spiritual devotion of the entire congregation in prayer, and this process demanded a new environment, and a group of men with entirely new ideas.

7. The need of a deeper devotion through prayer was not felt until the Exile. There altar and priesthood were no more, but the words of the prophets and the songs of the Levites remained to kindle the people's longing for God with a new zeal. Until then prayer was rare and for special occasions. Hannah's prayer at Shiloh filled even the high priest with amazement.³ The prophets alone interceded in behalf of the people, because the ordinary man was not considered sufficiently clean from sin to approach the Deity in prayer. But on foreign soil, where sacrifices could not be offered to the God of Israel, the harp of David resounded with solemn songs expressing the national longing toward God. The most touching psalms of penitence and thanksgiving date from the exile. A select class of devout men, called the godly or pious ones, *Hasidim* or *Anavim*,⁴ assembled by the rivers of Babylon for regular prayer, turning their faces toward

¹ Ps. L, 7-13.

² Ps. XL, 7.

³ I Sam. I, 13-14.

⁴ Often mentioned in the Psalms, under such terms as "the congregation of the righteous," "the holy ones," "the devout ones," etc.

Jerusalem, that the God of Israel might answer them from His ancient seat.¹ Thus the great seer of the exile voiced the hope for "a house of prayer for all peoples" to stand in the very place where the sacrifices were offered to God.² The congregation of Hasidim elaborated a liturgy under the Persian influence, in which prayer was the chief element, and the secondary part, the instruction from the Torah and the monitions of the prophets. The Synagogue, the house of meeting for the people, spread all over the world, and by its light of truth and glow of fervor it soon eclipsed the Temple, with all its worldly pomp. In fact, the priesthood of the Temple were finally compelled to make concessions to the lay movement of the Hasidim. They added a prayer service, morning and evening, to the daily sacrifices, and opened the Hall of Hewn Stones, the meeting place of the High Court of Justice, as a Synagogue in charge of the priests.³

8. In this manner the ancient sacrificial cult, thus long monopolized by the priesthood, was gradually superseded by congregational prayer which was no longer confined to a certain time or class, and justly called by the rabbis "a service of the heart."⁴ Moreover, the Temple itself lost much of its hold upon the hearts of the people, owing to the more spiritual character of the Synagogue. Thus the torch of the Roman soldiery which turned the Temple into a heap of ashes broke only the national bond, but left the religious bond of the Synagogue unbroken. True, the hope for the restoration of the Temple with the priestly sacrifices was not relinquished, and officially the daily prayers were considered only a "temporary substitute" for the divinely ordained sacrificial cult.⁵

¹ See I Kings VIII, 48; Dan. VI, 11.

² Isa. LVI, 7.

³ Tamid V, 1; comp. Kohler: Monatsschr., 1893, p. 441.

⁴ Sifre Deut. 41: "What is meant by, 'To serve Him with all your heart?' this is prayer."

⁵ Ber. 26 a.

Nevertheless, the deeper religious consciousness of the people felt that the celestial gate of divine mercy opens only to prayer, which emanates from the innermost depths of the soul. Accordingly, some of the Haggadists try to prove from Scripture that prayer ranks above sacrifice,¹ while others even identify worship with prayer.² They represent God as appearing to Moses in the guise of one who leads the congregation in prayer, His face covered by the prayer-shawl (*tallith*), in order to teach man for all time the mode and power of prayer.³ Still these remain isolated expressions of an underlying sentiment; on the whole, the rabbis regarded the Mosaic legislation, with its emphasis on sacrifice, far too highly to accord prayer any but a secondary place, either accompanying sacrifice or as its substitute.⁴

9. Through many centuries, then, the belief in the divine origin of the sacrificial cult remained, even though it could no longer be carried out. The liturgy contained prayers for the speedy restoration of the Temple and the sacrifices, which were preserved by tradition, and nowhere was even an echo heard of the bold words of Jeremiah denying the divine character of the sacrifices,⁵ even though the idea of the restoration of the old cult must have been repugnant to thinkers. The sages of former ages could only resort to a compromise or an allegorical interpretation. It is noteworthy that the Haggadist Rabbi Levi considered the sacrifices a concession of God to the people, who were disposed to idolatry, in order to win them gradually for the pure monotheistic ideal.⁶ This view was adopted by the Church Fathers, and later by Maimonides and other medieval thinkers. On the other hand, an allegorical meaning was assigned to the sacrifices by Philo

¹ Ber. 32 b; Midr. to Sam. I, 7.

² P. d. R. El. XVI.

³ R. ha Sh. 17 b.

⁴ Meg. 31 b; Yer. Taan. IV, 68 c. But compare Isaac Aboab: *Menorath ha Maor*, III, 3 a; Bahya ben Asher: *Kad ha Kemah*, art. *Tefillah*.

⁵ Jer. VI, 22.

⁶ Lev. R. XXII, 5.

and Jehuda ha Levi, as well as by Samson Raphael Hirsch in modern times.¹

Reform Judaism, recognizing the results of Biblical research and the law of religious progress, adopted the prophetic view of the sacrifices. Accordingly, the sacrificial cult of the Mosaic code has no validity for the liberal movement, and all reference to it has been eliminated from the reform liturgy. In this, however, the connection with the past was by no means severed. The main part of the service remains the same, although much of the character and many of the details have been changed.² Only the allusions to the Temple worship and the sacrifices were eliminated, and the entire form of the service was made more solemn and inspiring "by combining ancient time-honored formulas with modern prayers and meditations in the vernacular and in the spirit of the age." The morning and evening services retained their places, while the additional festal service (*mussaf*) was abrogated, because it stood for the additional festal sacrifice. As to the voluntary element in the old sacrificial system, the peace, sin, and thank-offerings, this is replaced in the reform ritual, as in the traditional practice, by private devotions for special occasions, to be selected by the individual.

The traditional Jewish prayer has certainly a wondrous force. It remains a source of inspiration from which the religious consciousness will ever draw new strength and vitality. It echoes the voice of Israel singing the song of redemption by the Red Sea: "This is My God, and I will

¹ *Cuzari*, II, 25, see note by Cassel; *Moreh*, III, 32; comp. Midrash Tadshe 12; I, 177 f.; comp. Hebrews IX-X; *Barnabas*, I, 25. S. R. Hirsch in *Horeb* p. 639 f.

² See Philipson: *The Reform Movement in Judaism* for the various views and debates on sacrifice and prayer. I. Elbogen: *D. jued. Gottesdienst i. s. geschichtl. Entwicklung*, p. 374 f., 435 f., is written in a more conservative spirit and unfavorable to American Reform Judaism. Comp. for the traditional liturgy: Dembitz: *Jewish Services in the Synagogue and Home*, especially on the Prayerbook, p. 233-246, and for America, 497-499.

glorify Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him."¹ Consequently our liturgy must ever respond to a double demand; it must throb with the spirit of continuity with our great past, to make us feel one with our fathers of yore; and it must express clearly and fully our own views and needs, our convictions and our hopes.

¹ Ex. XV, 2.

CHAPTER XLII

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PRAYER

1 Prayer is the expression of man's longing and yearning for God in times of dire need and of overflowing joy, an outflow of the emotions of the soul in its dependence on God, the ever-present Helper, the eternal Source of its existence. Springing from the deepest necessity of human weakness, the expression of a momentary wish, prayer is felt to be the proud prerogative of man as the child of God, and at last it becomes adoration of the Most High, whose wisdom and whose paternal love and goodness inspire man with confidence and love.

2. Every prayer is offered on the presumption that it will be heard by God on high. "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee doth all flesh come," sings the Psalmist.¹ No doubt of the efficacy of prayer can arise in the devout spirit. There can be only the question whether, and how far, the Deity can allow its decrees to be influenced by human wishes. Childlike faith anticipates divine interference in the natural order at any time, because it has not yet attained the conception of a moral order in the universe and, therefore, expects from prayer also miraculous effects on life. As the Deity can suddenly send or withhold rain or drought, barrenness or birth, life or death, so the inference is that the man of God can do the same with his prayer. This is the point of view of the Biblical and Talmudic periods, as well as of the entire ancient world. It seems almost childish to our religious consciousness when,

¹ Ps. LXV, 3. See Wm. James: *Varieties of Rel. Experience*, 463-477; Foster: *Function of Religion*, 183-185; Abelson: *Jewish Mysticism*, p. 15 and elsewhere.