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Research notes, Maimon ben Joseph, notes and journal article,
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The father of the best known rabbinic philosopher in the Middle Ages, Maimon Maimonides by name Maimonides ben Joseph, was a scholar of note, heir of the proud Spanish Jewish tradition, keeper of the halachas, Joseph ibn Maimonides, a man of quality. During his lifetime the almohdes fervent Muslim Berbers, overran North Africa and Muslim Spain and forced the dislocation of this family. He is of interest to us because of a public letter that he addressed in 1160 to the Jews of Fez who were being physically coerced towards apostasy. Here is a scholar writing for ordinary Jews, men, probably men of some commercial success, men who had for centuries lived within a Muslim environment. As you would expect, he counsels steadfastness, but what is of interest to us primarily is the image he conveys of Moses. The argument runs this way. God has promised to redeem Israel. Israel can bank on this promise because it is of

God and has been transmitted by "our teacher who speaks only the truth." ^{The} ~~Their~~ reward?

OF NO FAITHFUL WILL BE THAT

~~Not only will~~ Israel ultimately be freed as a nation but those who will remain faithful will receive the reward of their steadfastness and life eternal. God revealed this secret through "the first prophet" and subsequent prophets fleshed out this teaching. We can be certain that God will not allow us to be destroyed by the power of the nations or by sheer numbers

We do not know when this redemption will come, but at present there is no escape. Our test is to hold fast to the Torah and to obey its commandments. Torah is a cord which hangs down from heaven and those who grab hold of it have hope. Moses is offered as proof of God's dependability. Man should believe in God who is truth and that God's promises are true. He should believe in the first prophet and Moses' mission. Man should acknowledge God that Moses spoke truth and the Torah is true. We must put this awareness of reality against the enticements of the world. It is a question of giving in to our desires or submitting ourselves to duty. Maimonides particularly encourages correspondents to fulfill the mitzvah of prayer, of saying the amidah - at least the

short version. After a rather didactic explanation of the amidah and its various versions he turns to what is essentially a commentary on the one psalm subscribed to Moses which is published in the Scripture outside of the Torah. Psalm 90, according to this commentator, expresses all the truths that he has been attempting to expound. Obviously, Maimonides was playing on the themes which have been understood by his correspondents. He speaks endlessly of the greatness of Moses. God distinguished Moses for good from other folk. Man's faith in Moses should be complete for he will be led to believe in God, the of belief in Moses and his mission.

God created Moses in a special and unique way. Moses was created according to the most perfect form. He was physically perfect. His name was good. The light of God radiated from his face even as a child and his radiance grew in power through the years until his face was brighter than the light of the sun. Moses' face was radiant with the uncreated light of God's kavod, so much so that no one dared look at him unless he placed a veil over his face. No one dared to draw near to him. No one could look at his back without squinting his eyes. Such was his radiance that even the archangels could not look at him face to face. / His body was pure, as pure as the body of the angels. Moses was of flesh and blood, yet, he was so pure that he could enter the heavens. It was well-known that the angels can burn up by a simple look immortals who enter heaven, but Moses entered among them. He entered the world of the angels and went beyond them, higher, until he contemplated the light of God in ways which are almost too wonderful for man to consider. The angels feared to take hold of the Throne of Glory. Moses' hands were so pure that he could do so at will. His feet were so pure that he could walk on the clouds of holy light. Those souls who visit heaven do so for only a moment, in a moment of illumination. Moses thought he was so strong that he lived among the angels for 40 days and 40 nights, not only once but twice, not only twice but thrice. When he laid his

hand on Joshua, his successor's mind was so strengthened that he was able to understand Torah in six brief months.

Moses then is an object of special creation. He is one and a half times again as tall as other men. He could remain without food for 120 days. His intercession was powerful. He was a prophet of such power that if anyone raised any doubt to his message or any part of it he died by being burned alive. His power was such that he could stay the angel of death. Maimon expounds at length at the numbers who mistrusted Moses' vision or disobeyed his orders were destroyed for their lapse. He equates denial of Moses with denial of God. Maimon's message is esthetic. The world is to be despised and all things worldly. Man is not to be trapped by his appetites but is to commit himself to truth, Moses' truth. Moses is "the best of creators, the greatest of men, the noblest of apostles" - the words duplicate the familiar praise of Mohammed. When in doubt, Maimon encourages his correspondents to think of the prophet. Why was he sent? To be an apostle, to urge you to obedience. The laws must be believed because it contains the commandments of God but also on account of his greatness. "Gratitude and cleaving to God, because of him you sent and him who was sent. Through the greatness of the apostle you will understand the greatness of the power who sent him. Moses is the greatest of apostles and an effective intercessor. Yet, despite his majesty and power, he was the gentlest and noblest of men, thoroughly devoted to his people, considerate of their needs rather than of his own. When he was told of his death Moses was anxious because he knew Israel might be left without anyone to intercede for them, anyone to pray for them, anyone who is fit to pray for them, a man of sufficient learning to instruct them. Fearing that his people might be left without hope, Moses sang his psalm which is less a praise of God than a description of what will be. He included in his psalm all that would happen to Israel from the beginning of the exile until its end. He prayed that God would punish Israel gently and not angrily, that he would give Israel

patience to bear its calamities and he included in his prayer reference to all of that which would be, the hope, the promise.

Psalm 90 has become for Israel assistance, support and refuge, an impregnable fortress to which we could escape in the hour of sorrow, the promise of Moses to intercede effectively for us with God, the promise of certain deliverance. Maimon tells his correspondents that he has for years recited every morning Psalm 90 as part of his formal devotions. In doing so he draws near to God using the very words by the best of creators, asking for a blessing from God, using Moses' language, uniting himself with God by the very prayer spoken by the best of those who were ever born. Translated into terms of the mystic way, Maimon was drawing on the power of Moses and intercession of Moses and the hope to make these effective in his life. A long letter ends with a line by line explanation of the psalm which Maimon claims Moses spoke the day before his death and which he hopes his correspondents of Fez will speak in an intense way, seeking a blessing through its pure words, uniting themselves to God by means of this prayer offered originally by the best of men and the greatest of prophets. There is no prayer equal to it. This intrusion will smooth for us the rugged ways of the exile and is a refuge to us in time of misfortune. God shall bring about our deliverance to which Maimon concludes by saying that there is some doubt as to the nature of Moses' death. On the day of his death he recited Psalm 90, said farewell to Israel and ascended to Heaven. God hides him in heaven until such a time as he will be pleased with mankind and that he will send Moses back to assist the royal messiah.

THE LETTER OF CONSOLATION OF MAIMUN BEN JOSEPH.

It was, I think, Abraham Mendelssohn who said that, up to a certain period of his life, he was the son of his father, but afterwards he was the father of his son. The latter part of this happy remark might be applied, but with far less justice, to the subject of this paper. All who have any pretence to a knowledge of Hebrew literature know something about Maimonides, or more correctly Maimunides, but few have heard of his father. And yet his father deserves a niche in the history of his age and of Judaism. The letter, of which I publish the Arabic text¹ and an English translation, bears evidence to his simple faith, to the warmth of his affections, to his enthusiasm, and his confidence in the future of Israel, and of Israel's religion.

Of the life of Maimun² ben Joseph, we know but little. His name is Arabic, and is derived from the verb *Yamana*, and means Felix, Benedictus, a translation, perhaps, of the Hebrew *Baruch*. We must remember this when we meet with the name Maimun. It is not an unusual name, and several persons have borne it. Azariah de Rossi³ speaks of a Maimun, the author of a commentary on the Astronomy of Alfergani, but Steinschneider has shown that the author of this commentary was a certain Maimun of Montpellier.⁴ I think I may say of our Maimun that he was a pupil of Joseph Hallevi Ibn Migash. His grandson, Abraham ben Moses Maimonides tells us this in his *Kitab Alkifayah*.⁵ Ibn Migash was head of the school at Lucena, and his pupil followed in his footsteps, for we find that he bore the title of *Dayan*, a title probably equivalent to *Ab beth-Din*.

¹ The Text and Appendix will appear in No. 6.

² Should be spelt with *m* in last syllable, not *n*.

³ מַיְמוֹן בֶּן יוֹסֵף (ed. Cassel), page 331.

⁴ *Namazzir*, 1879, p. 110.

⁵ Steinschneider Catalogue of Bodleian Coll., 1865, p. 55. Dr. D. Joel, in his *Aberglaube und die Stellung des Judenthums zu demselben*, ii. 63, throws some doubt as to the relations which existed between Ibn Migash and Maimun.

That he was learned in Talmudical literature may be proved from the number of times he is quoted by his illustrious son.¹ He wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch in Arabic, fragments of which are known to us from the commentary of his grandson on Genesis and Exodus, which fragments we publish in the Appendix. I trust that, perhaps, the publication of these fragments may be the means of unearthing the commentary itself. Some of the comments are very beautiful. Noticeable, for instance, is Maimun's remark upon the prayer of Jacob, that his grandchildren might be called by the name of his fathers. "So long as they deal righteously," Maimun says, "they will be worthy to bear the name of their ancestors; if they sin they will be called the princes of Sodom and Gomorrah."² We know, too, that he wrote in Arabic commentaries on the Dinim, concerning the ritual and the festivals.³

But his greatest work, because it is still complete, is the letter which he composed for his co-religionists who were suffering from the persecution of the "Unitarians" in Fez. Geiger was of opinion that this letter was identical with the Iggereth Hashemad which is generally attributed to Maimonides, and the opinion was supported by some words of Saadiah ben Maimun ibn Danan.⁴ Graetz was distinctly of opinion that such an identification was impossible, basing his conclusion on the Hebrew marginal notes which are appended to the letter, and the Hebrew verses which are quoted in it.⁵ And Graetz's view was undoubtedly correct. There is not the slightest likeness in substance or in the manner of treatment between the "Letter of Consolation," by the father, and the

¹ Introduction to Commentary on *Mishna* :

Bechoroth, viii. 7.

Eduyoth, iv. 7.

Eduyoth, i. 3.

Shevuoth, vi. 7, a valuable passage, proving that Joseph Hallevi was the teacher of Maimun.

Yad Hachazakah Hēchoth Shechita xi. 10, an interesting passage.

² Steinschneider refers (in his commentary on *Hawazeh*, vi. 1863, p. 114) to the fact of Maimun being quoted by his grandson. The passages commented on by Maimun, which, as we have said, are given in the Appendix, are the following: A long commentary in his own words on portions of Exodus xxxii. and xxxiii.; Genesis xxi. 16, 30, xxiii. 2, xxvi. 3, xxxiii. 17, xxxiv. 7, xxxv. 4, xxxviii. (the dream of Joseph, and his being sold to the Midianites), xli. 23, 34, xlii. 13, 24, xlviii. 16, xlix. 16, l. 2; Exodus iv. 16, xiv. 8, xix. 22, xx. 24, xxi. 29, xxiii. 14, xxiv. 14, xxviii. 13, xxviii. 28, xxx. 7.

³ Azulai *Shem Haggadolim* s. v. Maimun. *Responsa* Simeon Duran, I. 2.

⁴ Geiger, *Moses ben Maimun*, Anmerkung 17.

⁵ Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Vol. vi., 2nd edition, 293; Edelmann-*Chemda Genuzah*, Introduction lxxxiv.

"Letter of Apostasy," which is assigned to the son. Nay more, there is no comparison possible between the minds of the father and son. The son was not unemotional, but he was a philosopher first of all. The father is all enthusiasm, full of faith, longing to dwell in the beautiful stories of Hagadah, not afraid of believing in angels, not desirous of making God an abstraction, or the apostle of God merely a deep thinker. We have been taught to appreciate the great religious revival in Islam which was brought about by the Almuwahhidun or the strict Unitarians, and for this better appreciation we must be grateful for the work done by Prof. Goldziher of Vienna in publishing the Paris MS. of the Mahdi Book of Ibn Tumart. But though the Unitarians brought about a great religious reform, yet the fanaticism, which is almost inseparable from any deep religious feeling, caused much misery to non-Moslems who were dwelling in Moslem states. "In our country," said boastingly a great historian of the time, "there is no church and there is no synagogue." Maimun endeavoured to strengthen the faith of those who were wavering, and he sent an open letter to one of his brethren in the year 1160. In that year Maimun and his son Moses were in the "land of the West," and it is to the inhabitants of Fez that his letter applies.¹ In the year 1165 they left Africa for Palestine, and arrived on Sunday, May 16th, at St. Jean d'Acre. There they met Jepheth ben Elijah, whom Benjamin of Tudela visited before the year 1173. Jepheth seems to have accompanied them to Jerusalem, where they arrived on October 12th, 1165. Jepheth ben Elijah returned to Acre, and Maimonides journeyed to Egypt. Whether Maimun accompanied him thither or remained in the Holy Land is doubtful. Geiger has published the letter which Maimonides wrote to Jepheth ben Elijah, the Dayan, in which he speaks of his father's death, but we cannot glean from it where he died. All Maimonides says is this: "After we had parted a few months, my father died, and letters of consolation came to me from the extreme ends of the Magreb, even from Christian Spain, but thou didst give no heed." If we might make history, instead of telling the simple truth of history, we should let him die in the land to which he hoped that one day all nations would flow, believing in God and in God's apostle.

I think I have now recounted all his works known to us. He may have written a commentary on the book of Esther. There is a reference to a comment on a verse in Esther in a Yemen Arabic manuscript referred to by Steinschneider;² but

¹ Geiger, *Moses ben Maimun*, 20.

² *Hamezair*, 1880, 63.

his reputation must be based upon his letter. There is little need for me to give an abstract of it, as I have translated it in full; but I cannot refrain from praising its simple style. There are parts where the reader who is but slightly acquainted with the beauties of the Arabic language, as the present translator, is carried away by it. He writes in parts as Jehudah Hallevi might have written. It has sometimes been asked why, if Maimonides wrote the *Iggereth Hasshemad*, did he not refer to his father's work? The answer is that he could not. The objects aimed at by the two letters were different. Perhaps the difference lay deeper still, as the father, to use the words of Maimonides, was one of those who forbade, while the son was one of those who permitted.¹ I do not think that I should be wrong in asserting that, at any rate, when the Letter of Consolation was written, Maimun had no intention of embracing Islam, even in appearance.

One point is striking in the reading of the letter: it is the very strong influence which Moslem phrases exercised upon Jewish theology. Maimun's perpetual insisting upon belief in God and his Apostle, and in that with which he was sent down, seems almost like an echo from the *Qur'an*. Abraham is called without hesitation the Mahdi of God, and perhaps the great stress which is laid upon the greatness of Moses may be intended as a set off to the greatness of Mohammed. At least this is clear, that there is much greater affinity theologically between the parent and the younger daughter religion than between the parent and its elder daughter. Imagine a Jew in Russia writing to his persecuted brethren and using terms identical with those of Christian theology.

Possibly the portion of the letter which will prove most interesting to some readers is the commentary on the 90th Psalm, with which the letter concludes. It will be interesting to find how this Psalm was applied, not so much to the shortness of life as to the shortness of God's anger, and the ultimate deliverance from captivity. This Psalm apparently possessed great attractions for those who suffered calamities in the days of persecution. We are told that Judah Hadassi, the Karaite, wrote a commentary on it, which reminds the reader very strongly of the commentary of Maimun.

Goldberg translated a great portion of the text into Hebrew,² but I trust that the letter in its English dress will be, to use the words of its author, "a source of consolation and of comfort" to those who are inclined to waver in faith, or

¹ *Hilchoth Schechita*, ad loc. cit.

² *Lebanon*, 1872.

Letter of Consolation

The letter of Maimon Ben Joseph, may his memory be for blessing, which
was written in Fez in the year ^{1471 OF THE SEULWAN ERA (1139)} ~~1159~~ and sent to a brother in order to encourage him ^{AND}
lighten the burdens of his ^{MANY} soul ~~and the~~ troubles of the exile ^{EXPERIENCED BY ANY WORKED BY} ~~from~~ distress at the de-
lay in the promises and the length of the waiting ^{SO IN APPROPRIATE} ~~which is not proper~~ to a chosen
people ~~because~~ day and night are ceaselessly filled with trouble and distressful,
written for those who bind themselves to ^{OBEY} ~~experience~~ God and His commandments in
despite ^{MULTITUDE OF} of the troubles.

IN ORDER TO GIVE LOVE TO
~~Out of hope for~~ those who trust in Him and ^{AND} ~~is~~ confidence ^{TO THE} ~~for those who are~~ faithful
God ^{ENCOURAGE} ~~the encouraged lifts himself up~~ and His word is established ^{SURELY} ~~so~~ God said about
himself: "I have sworn by ^{MY} name, the word has gone out of ~~My~~ mouth in righteousness
and shall not return, but unto ~~Me~~ every knee must bend and every tongue shall
swear" (Isaiah 45:23). This text is to be explained: I swear by my name that there
is no greater oath than one taken in my name, that I am determined with steadfast
love to bring redemption. This event, though delayed, shall not fail to come for I
am above remorse or hate for unto me every ~~man's~~ knee is bent and ~~to me~~ every
oath is spoken in pure intent. No matter is sworn to in my name unless it is to be
carried out. How much the more so when I am the one who makes the oath ^{AND THE}
~~one who carries it out~~.

(END OF INTRODUCTION)

The ^{Angels}~~correspondence~~ said: Know that God will be gracious to you because He wishes to and He will keep you far from everything He despises, and He will guide you on a straight path, and He will give you the angels who protect His people and who will support you so that you can do what is fitting in His eyes, all that His law declares obligatory.

God made known His promise through the prophets: "Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore doth He instruct sinners in the way. He guideth the humble in justice. He teacheth the humble his way" (Ps. 25 vs. 8-9).

It has been made crystal clear in the prophetic writings and the explanation thereof has been established by our teacher who speaks only the truth, that God is truth and the prophecies are true and the received tradition in each generation is true. Neither doubt or confusion attaches to it. There are no lies in it and nothing is wanting. God knows all that was before His creatures. His knowledge precedes all existing things. He has no desire which later He comes to loathe. He makes no choices which He later comes to despise. Only man from whom the secret knowledge is hidden, at times desires something which later when seemingly chance events occur he will come to loathe. How shall He whose knowledge precedes all existing things and who established all things from the first according to His will ever want something and then come to loathe it - ^{choose}~~change~~s a people and ^{then} come to a time when he will despise them? Surely that would be a situation inappropriate to God as it has been said by one who thought along this line, "God is not a man that He should lie; nor the son of man that He should repent" (Numbers 23:19). Samuel said "also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent" (I Samuel: 16-29).

We have seen that God chose this people, selected them, protected them, gladdened them with His goodness and drew them closer to himself than any people before or after; therefore it is clear that His promise has been made to them and it is certain that His promise is unbreakable provided His commandments are obeyed. All the events which have occurred ^{which seem to be exceptions} ~~seemingly contradictory~~ to this principle are accidental and have neither significance or consequence. To what shall the ^{matter} ~~nature~~ be likened? To a healthy man who grew through his youth from height to height. When he reached manhood he remained for a specific time at a given height. Later illness and disease occurred to him ~~and~~ ^{his} health was broken. His appearance was changed. It was as if he had never been healthy. Soon it appeared that in a single aspect it was as it had once been. He remained for some time in this unhappy state until little by little his condition began to change. His body healed. He regained strength. His health returned to what it had been and it appeared as if he had never been ill. God knew from the beginning that Israel would remain faithful to the commandments, steadfast and upright, and that they would accept the yoke as it said "and all this people answered with one voice and said, 'all the words which the Lord has said we will do'" (Ex. 24:3). God knew that Israel would remain faithful to the end of the generations, therefore He began and said "and so ^{thus} ~~believe~~ you forever" (Ex. 19:9). God described the intermediate condition ^{between these two poles} ~~to two conditions~~ in the text: "and it shall be if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Deut. 28:10). God declared to them every trouble that would occur, every condition that would happen and every punishment that would descend. He made it clear that despite the deterioration of their situation and the punishments meted out to them that He was neither outraged by them nor did He despise them and that these events

were designed to be instructional and to be appropriate punishment for their disobedience. Thus we find punishment ~~called~~ ^{you} discipline as it is said "^{you} shall know that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you" (Deut. 8:5). The prophet (Moses) said it in this respect, "know that the disciplines that God brings on you are not like the disciplines He brings on the other nations. There is a distinct difference. Thus the rebel who is a non-Jew will be punished in a different matter from the son. The man who incites someone who is not his son brings upon himself a heavy guilt for having cursed Him since he sought to uproot him from God's people; but ~~the~~ ^a rebellious son the father punishes by way of discipline. He causes him pain but seeks not to inflict upon him any permanent damage. He strikes him with a short string that does not leave a mark rather than with a whip that leaves a mark. He whips him with a branch which makes a good bit of noise and which causes pain but does not wound the flesh as a whip might. As Scripture says "though you beat him with a rod, he will not die" (Prov. 23:13). It is said concerning the one whom he loves better than all other creatures that ^{whom} ~~when~~ he despises God will correct him with many sufferings as when a man is hit with a staff. The flogging which he brings upon himself is like the flogging of a man which is not really brutal as it is said "[if he commit iniquity]" I will chastise, ~~in~~ him with the rod of man and with the stripes of the children of man (Sam II 14).

God revealed this secret to his first prophet (Moses): "yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God" (Lev. 26:44). Further he said through the agency of the prophets who came after the first prophet (Moses): "for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered you, but I will not make a full end of you,

I will correct you ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ measure. I will not utterly destroy you" (Jeremiah 30:11).

If God had wanted to denounce us when we disobeyed his word He would have completely cast us away. A deep impression would have been made on us. It would have been as our enemies say, [as if there was truth in their words,] that God would have given them what He had given us. He would have ^{appointed} ~~pointed~~ them to the station to which He had pointed us. There is nothing subtle in this. If the king becomes angry with one of his intimates he replaces him with another whom he invests with the uniform and the badge of office ^{AND} ~~he~~ places him and his in the status of the one who has been demoted.

Similarly, when a man becomes angry with his wife he replaces her with another whom he raises to the rank of the first wife as it is said, "he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti" (Esther 2:19). But where is the nation whom God has openly spread His divine presence and in whose midst he has placed the ^{Shekinah?} ~~sheenah~~? As it is said about Israel: "and the glory of God filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34) and again, later when they were in the land "The glory of God filled the house of God?" (I Kings 8:11). Where is the prophet like the awesome prophet and where is evidence of the special wonders and wondrous deeds which negate natural law?

A farther argument: If God were to draw near ^{to} ~~him~~ some other people and give them our Torah then it might be possible to say that God has deposed Israel ~~and~~ with cause since they rebelled against his ^{rule} ~~obedience~~ and disobeyed His word but the Torah is not like the Koran. How can we conceive that God should want now what he had not wanted heretofore and that He should love today what He had previously hated?

If there were the possibility that God might abandon us implicit in the words of assurance and warning Scripture would have stated this clearly, that if we do good then the assurance will be established and if we do evil then the warning would be established. We would have needed no other explanation. Yet, even so it is possible that we might be resurrected since He has for us a specific purpose. We have the evidence of our own eyes that God did not depose us for another people. He has given to no other group the gifts given to us. Then, too, his book is filled to overflowing with clear assurances about a relationship after the punishment. After He spoke the warning "if you will not. . ." He continues "you shall surely be. . ." All these ideas are underscored in various short statements by the first prophet (Moses). In the end of days "you shall return to the Lord your God and harken to His voice. . . the Lord your God will turn your captivity and will have compassion on you and will return and gather you from all the peoples from whom the Lord your God has scattered you. . . he will save you from them. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it; and He will do you good and multiply you above your fathers. . . the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers (Deut. 30 2:9). It is possible to elucidate on this general principle in conformity of the explanation of the prophets that came after the first prophet (Moses). Statements that we find in the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the twelve and Daniel who is the seal of the prophets - and in all the assurances contained in the ~~book~~ Psalms. All these texts are explanations of the general statement spoken by the first prophet (Moses). What illustration can be offered? Consider a flesh and blood king who

said to his second in command: 'tell my citizens that the king will do favors for you. He will invest you and find offices for you. Subsequently this messenger disappeared and at various times and quite frequently other messengers came each in turn picturing for you as he was commanded to do the good things that were promised. God said to you: 'so and so among you will receive these favors.' The people listened and reflected in what they heard. Then he sent a second messenger who said to them 'these are the good things, thus will be the uniform of everyone of a said rank. The design will take this shape. Similarly, every messenger brought reassurance and showed how the particulars of their statements were included in the first statement. Then God swore by his holy name to all of them that He would fulfill all that was said to them by those according to His command who came directly from His presence.

If a king who is only mortal reaffirms his promise and swears an oath to that effect those who receive the king's assurance would be gladdened by them even though there is still an element of risk involved since it is possible to doubt from two points of view the certainty of the promise. It is possible that His plans may depend upon another and that his spirit may not be independent, thus if he lives perhaps he will not have the power to establish his promise because of unforeseen circumstances or unexpected obstacles. Death may come to the king so that he is no longer able to fulfill his promise or death may come to one who has been promised office and does not have the chance to have his hopes fulfilled. But nothing is an obstacle to God. There is no circumstance which He has not foreseen. There is nothing which is too difficult for Him to accomplish and God forbid that we should conceive of His death. Neither death nor annihilation. How then can one conceive that God would not fulfill what He has promised without an oath, how much the more so with an oath?

If one of his creatures swore in God's name he is under the obligation to fulfill his oath as it is said, "he shall do according to all that projects from his mouth" (Numbers 30:3) how much the more so God Himself? If God swore by His creatures who are really powerless since all power is in His hand it might be possible to say that this is not an oath but God has sworn by His name which will never lose its power or change. God said "by myself have I sworn" (Gen. 22:16). When he was angry with them and proposed to destroy them because of their deeds the first prophet (Moses) said to him "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel thy servants to whom thou would swear your own self" (Ex. 32:13). God said about these insurances: "By myself have I sworn, the word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness" (Isaiah 45:23). All these statements are clear judgements and reveal roots and establish proofs that God will neither depose us nor deprive us of the name of 'sons.' Neither when we please Him or when we anger Him, neither when we are faithful to Him or when we are disloyal to Him as it is said, "you are the children of the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:1). "Israel is my son, my firstborn" (Ex. 4:23). "Children in whom is no faithfulness" (Deut. 32:20). "Children who deal corruptly" (Isaiah 1:4) "they are sottish children" (Jer. 4:22).

God further promised us that we would remain ^ablessing to him as it is said: "It shall be said to them, 'you are the children of the living God.'" (Hos. 2:1) "For I am become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born" (Jer. 31:9). There are many similar examples.

All this shows that we are obliged to trust and remain faithful to God and not to doubt his promises. Just as we entertain doubts as to His existence so we should entertain no suspicion that He will push us away since He has promised

to draw us near. God will not allow us to be destroyed by the power of the nations or by the length of their rule or by sheer numbers as they say and hope. We trust in God and in His promise even though they rule over us and treat us harshly and defeat us and though new sufferings come upon us each day and each night. During the day we fear that they may act treacherously towards us and with each passing hour bring new cruelties upon us to the degree that we ask today that we may remain as we were yesterday. Yesterday seems secure. As the day lengthens we say would that we were secure from them today as we were last night when it was as if nothing happened to us. When the night comes we say who knows what will happen to us tonight. Would that tonight it might be as yesterday. It is as the prophet (Moses) declared to us, "in the morning you shall say: 'would it were evening.' In the evening you shall say: 'would it were morning.'" (Deut. 28:66). Given our condition we must depend upon what He promised us and what we hope for, for only then will the anxious heart know rest and our fears subside.

There is no escape at present. Healing does not come after the break nor relief after our distress. We try ~~both~~ both secretly and publically to concern ourselves with Torah and to obey the commandments ~~both~~ by intention and in act. Man will hold fast to the cult of the Torah and his hand will not loosen its hold. Since in the exile we are subjected ~~to~~ AGAINST our will

We are already plunged into the depths of the anger but we still hold fast to certain shameful things. The days of the exile have overwhelmed us. We are sunk into their depths. The waters have reached our nostrils. We remain in the worst possible of situations. David, peace to him, pictured the condition: "save me O God for the waters ^{are come} ~~in~~ even unto my soul" (Ps. 69:2). The waters threaten the breathing apparatus, but look, the cord of the commandments of Torah hangs down from heaven to the earth. Anyone who grabs hold of it has hope and life (breathing). By grasping the cord the heart gains strength and the confidence that it will not sink into annihilation ^{but} anyone whose hand slackens from the cord has no longer any ^{the} ~~due~~ duty to God. The waters overwhelm him. The breathing apparatus is suffocated and he drowns and dies. God's reassurance against our drowning is as dependable as ^{the} ~~the~~ maintenance of this world. One who holds on with all of his strength has a greater hope than one who holds on with only partial strength. There is no doubt that one who holds on only with his fingertips has a greater hope than one who slackens his hold altogether. No one will be delivered from the snares of the exile except by occupying himself with Torah and its commentaries, following and obeying her precepts, paying careful and continuous attention to her teachings and meditating on them day and night. It is as David the king said: "Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction" (Ps. 119:92), which is to say, had your Torah not provided me with pleasure and encouragement I would have given up and died during the days of my misfortune. David prophesied this concerning Israel which would be driven into exile and caught in her snares. Surely when they busy themselves with Torah and follow it they will be delivered and redeemed from the snares of their enemies among whom they have been exiled.

Man is under obligation to make his intentions full and his heart pure.

He should believe in God who is truth; that God's promises to us are true. He should believe in the first prophet (Moses) and in his mission. He should acknowledge the sovereignty of God and the true mission of the prophet (Moses). He should acknowledge Him in his ^{honesty} soul without deceit or wavering, that Moses truth ^{is} ^{AND HIS} Torah ^{is} truth. He should not follow his animalistic desires. He should not allow his instincts to overwhelm his intelligence, ~~and~~ ^{and} this will not happen unless he abandons his faith in the world to come and allows this world to deceive him, this world of appearances.

Love of this world is an instinct which can overpower man. In this world man is tested in two ways: first, by sex; secondly, by love of this world - its hopes and purposes - with a passion that overwhelms all else. We were created in this world and the worldly permeates everything. Only the prophets and righteous are clear of her. This world can be likened to a comely woman who is exceptionally beautiful. Her garments are voluminous. Her scent is widely spread. This woman's passage captivates all who see her. Her eyes are like arrows. Her speech is engaging and enticing. People are eager to hear her and bend forward to listen to her.

A trap is spread along her way. The snare is hidden along her path. She flirts with him with all ~~of~~ her sex. He longs for her and she leads him on until he falls. He follows her out of ~~her~~ desire and she dances away from him. He pursues her in his passion and he does not know what is under him. He is as a bird which flies down to earth as a free being though they have spread for him a trap and set for him a net. When the bird sees the bait from above she is drawn after it and descends to gather it in. Immediately the trap operates and she is caught. She struggles to get free but she cannot manage to fly. It was Solomon the king who first likened this world to a woman, "and, behold, there met him a

woman with the attire of a harlot, and wily of heart (Prov. 7:10). Solomon describes her blandishments towards anyone attracted to her until he is caught in her trap, "as a bird hastens to a snare" (Prov. 7:23). Be warned of the deceit of this world and of the dangers of passion and think of the deadly sufferings which separate men from their desire. Desire draws man out from his native land and considers him to be thrown out from his home. He comes to fear the place where he ought to live peacefully until he is finally driven from it. Relatives turn away from him. The bond is cut. He finds himself alone in narrow circumstances, having lost all of his possessions. He must render account for all that he has lost. The bill is presented and he is liable for a fine - a fine hidden from the eye and not generally understood by man, but the prophets understood it, the pious knew it and the righteous were fearful because of it. Only the wicked did not think about it. But he was warned and looked carefully and did not preoccupy himself with this world. He drew near what pleased him and pushed away what distressed him. There is no understanding of anyone who reflected ^{upon this, but} ~~beyond it~~ made a choice that might bring danger ^{to him} ~~with~~ standing with God.

What success is there to anyone who is not favored by his Lord? What joy is there to anyone who does not guard himself against punishment? What relief is there for anyone who has no future in the world?

How can anyone hope to fulfill his desires in a matter which is hidden from him or which is ^{definitive} ~~discovered~~? How can he hope for benefit from something which he can obtain only from erecting a barrier between himself and God?

Anyone whose eyes are open will look to his God and will seek to cleave to Him so that he will be among the happy ones who are bound close. He will be satisfied with little from this world since satiety is difficult to attain. Indeed, he will be satisfied with quite modest achievements. Anyone who searches for high rank or great wealth let him find his hopes where God concealed them for him. He will achieve the loftiness of his duties. Let him apply himself diligently. Let man weary himself working for himself. Let his concern be for his soul and not for others.

The fulfillment of the obligation of prayer is among the strongest bonds between creature and creator. We thank God for having sent us his light three times each day: each dawn, each noon and each eventide. Such prayer has been part of our tradition since the time when day and night were created. Our sages passed to us this tradition on the authority of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who offered these prayers. Abraham our father lavished special attention on the morning prayer. He waited for the moment of sunrise and sanctified it before God, as it is said, "Abraham hurried in the morning ^{To} ~~for~~ the place where he had stood before the Lord" (Gen. 19-29). Jacob our father was especially interested in the mincha prayer. He would wait attentively for the beginning of the seventh hour when he prayed as it is said: "And Isaac went out to meditate in the fields towards evening" (Gen. 24:63). Jacob our father paid special attention to ^{MAALIV!} ~~maale~~. He waited for the time when the stars came out, as it is said, "he lighted upon ~~the~~ the place and he tarried there all night, because the sun was set" (Gen. 28:11).

All three of the fathers prayed all three prayers. It is possible for men of great faith to be particularly attentive to one commandment while they obey all of them. Since Abraham was the first believer he paid special attention to the first stated hour of prayer. Since light is ^{THE GIFT OF} ~~brought~~ ^{WANE} into the world through the agency of

Abraham who enlightened the pagan world (and was the first messenger of God's to man). Isaac, second to him, paid special attention to the second term of prayer and Jacob the third to the third. The pious among the people always practiced all three. The best is the one who three or two or once ~~in measure~~ as he has the opportunity. No one who obeys the Torah absents himself completely. David knew the importance of this obligation. He pictured himself and those who are devoted like himself as rarely neglecting any of the three times of prayer: "evening, morning and at noonday, I will complain and moan" (Ps. 55:18). It is told about Daniel, peace be unto him, that he paid close attention to all three. "Three times a day he kneeled and prayed and gave thanks before his God" (Dan. 6:11).

Daniel put his life in danger at the time when the ^{Medes}~~medes~~ and the Persians forbade all prayer in order to undo him and he was undone. But God allowed no one to harm him. The king ordered that no man should pray for thirty days and that all petitions should be directed to the king - none to a God or to God. Daniel exposed himself to danger by continuing to pray as had been his custom. They spat on him, exposed him, apprehended him and brought him to trial before the king. Because he was second only to the king and in rank before all of them they propose to bring charges against him to the king. They ^{could}~~had been~~ able to find no other charge except that he was close to God.

The king found it hard to acquit Daniel of the charges brought against him. The princes were strongly against Daniel. They proposed that he should be thrown into a den full of angry lions which the king maintained for the punishment for whom ^{of the} he proposed a special death. Daniel was cast into the pit and the king was saddened by his fate. He paced all night. They put a stone into the mouth of the pit and stopped

it with sealing wax. The noble said to the king, "be careful lest they take away the stone during the night and Daniel be brought out of the ^{TUNNEL} or lest it be done in cunning." When it came time for Daniel to descend in the pit Gabriel came and stood with him and closed the jaws of the lion and bound them so that they could not move from their crouched positions. Gabriel stayed with Daniel and encouraged him lest he be afraid. Dawn came. The king arose. Sleep had escaped him that night. He had eaten nothing and had ^{summed} neither concubine nor professional ^{reader} ~~reader~~, ~~summed~~. The king was burdened with grief. He rose early and grieving went to the den. He took with him any whom he chanced to meet. As he drew near the den he sighed a grievous sigh and said 'Daniel, Daniel, servant of the living God, ^{Poe} ~~that~~ the God whom you have always served have sufficient power to deliver you from the lions?' Daniel who was still imprisoned in the pit answered him, 'God sent an angel who closed the jaws of the lion so that they would not kill me. It was a reward for my obedience. I did not violate your command. Had I obeyed your will I would not have honored you. God sets boundaries due obedience to a king. Men owe you obedience but worship belongs to God alone and not to you. Anyone who will not show you obedience transgresses your commands and God's but anyone who will not worship you obeys God and does not act treacherously towards you. Because of this I was saved. ✓

The accursed group was among those who had assembled. Daniel was raised from the pit, ~~stripped~~ of his garments, his body was seen to be altogether without wounds. His faith had delivered him. The king said 'bring to me everyone who spoke against Daniel.' They were brought, they, their wives and their sons. They

were manhandled and then thrown into the pit. Hardley had they touched the floor of the den ^{for} the lions opened their jaws, seized them and crushed their bones. All those who stood at the mouth of the pit prostrated themselves.

If it had not been for the value of his prayer Daniel would not have endangered himself in order to fulfill this obligation nor would he deem it sufficient to recite the prayers in a secret place or simply to himself. He prayed because he was faithful in his obedience to God. "



^{Since it is of special value}
~~Because of the special value~~ of the Amidah the first authorities (the three
last prophets, ^{Haigai} Haigai, Zachariah and ^{together} Melachai ~~in concert~~ with the 120 elders chosen
from those knowledgeable in the tradition) authorized a liturgy in which the wise
and ignorance were equal. The wise does not add to it and the ignorant does not
delete from the Amidah. The Amidah is ^{required} obligatory when the worshiper is in a secure
place. ~~However, since~~ ^{Because} a man may find himself in a place of danger these authorities
also authorized a short Amidah lest anyone be unable to recite the prayer at all.

There are distinctions between the short ~~version~~ and the full text. The full version
is recited while facing Jerusalem and while standing - or seated with this posture
as physically required, the short version is recited in places of danger whether seated
or standing or walking, depending on the circumstances. Anyone reciting the short
version fulfills his obligation to recite the Amidah at an appropriate time.

It may happen that at the end of a day a man who has recited the short version
at the three appropriate times finds himself in a secure place. In such a case he
should go back and recite the full version of the ~~amidah text~~ appropriate to ^{Maariv} maariv
but not shaharit or mincha. If he comes to a secure place while it is still daylight, ^{7:14}
the time for mincha ^{before the} he should pray mincha ~~for~~ Amidah for shaharit.

Anyone who does not know the full text of the Amidah should recite the short
version at the specified time and not ^{Mish} ~~pass over~~ the recital of the Amidah. No one
should completely absent himself from this obligation since anyone who does not
recite the Amidah appropriately is ^{like one who is} ~~in effect~~ naked of faith.

If one is ignorant and stands ^{and prays} ~~in place~~ in a general way and does not know
what he is saying he does not fulfill the obligation of prayer. The only acceptable
prayer is the Amidah which is the first authority's prescribed, that is the shemoneh
esreh in its received form or the short version for the ignorant or a shortened
version of the short version. If one has less than an inadequate mastery of Hebrew

let him still use the short form in Hebrew. The text begins, "O Lord, open my lips. . . ." and continues until the end "you are holy" followed by ^{RETZE}retze, modim and Sim Shalom. According to the custom of our time the short form is substituted for the intermediate petitions in place of atah honen.

The worshiper recites after atah kodesh:

Give us understanding, O Lord our God, to know your ways, and circumcise our hearts to fear you. Be forgiving to us, so that we may be redeemed. Keep us far from sorrow. Cause us to dwell in the pastures of your land. Gather the scattered from the four corners of the earth. Let those who go astray in the knowledge of you be ^{Judged And o}~~changed~~, ^{wave your hand}~~save you~~ over the wicked. Let the righteous rejoice in the rebuilding of your city ~~and~~ in the re-establishment of your temple ~~and~~ in the flourishing of the horn of David, your servant, and in the rekindling of the light of Jesse's son, your anointed. May our prayer be heard. Blessed be he who harkens to prayer. . . . After this recitation he should add retze, modim and sim shalom.

If the occasion requires speed he fulfills his obligation by reciting the just quoted verse instead of atah honen. It is to be said standing or seated if one is physically required to remain seated.

According to our sages the short version of the amidah to be said during time of danger is as follows:

"Our God and God of our fathers, the needs of our people Israel are many and their capacity is limited. May it find favor before you that each be given enough for his need, let everyone be granted sufficient sustenance. May you hear our prayer. Praise be he who hears prayer."

This short version is sufficient and requires neither the three introductory or three concluding benedictions. If anyone cannot recite this prayer in Hebrew he fulfills his obligation if he recites it in Arabic. Prayer may be said in any language. Specifically the Amidah may be translated into Arabic provided it contains those specific elements which the sages authorized. It is forbidden to recite the Amidah in Arabic in a form which does not follow the form prescribed by the sages. To cite one example of a form which is forbidden: Have mercy on me and give me this or that. . . anyone who recites such a flawed petition, whether he is traveling or sitting or standing fails to fulfill his obligation.

Following is the substance of a short amidah which fulfills a man's duty when the time for prayer occurs at a time of danger:

O Lord our God and God of our fathers, you know that our petitions are many and our capacities slight. May it be pleasing to you that you give to each among us a portion of what he needs and sufficient sustenance to everyone and receive our prayers. You are he who receives prayers. May you ^{YOUR GUEST NAME} ~~me~~ be blessed.

This formula is sufficient if one is ignorant but does not want to be distant from God because of his failure to recite the Amidah. No act is more honored by God than the recitation of the Amidah. If his intentions are worthy, his heart pure, if he believes in God and his prophets, then his faith will be considered complete, his gratitude appropriate and good in the eyes of God and God will guard him from punishment. He will enjoy God's mercy and the pleasures of the world to come. He will be delivered from hell. He will merit resurrection and the gift of a good reward and to see the pleasant times that are promised. These rewards await him whether or not he is a scholar or a sage. To be sure, high degrees of reward await the sages who teach Torah and who labor to understand the Torah's meaning. When piety and true faith coexist the learning ~~essay~~ ^{is superlative} ~~achievement~~ increases a man's reward.

You should know the greatness of him who was sent to you (Moses) and of what was sent through him. The Torah is mighty. Would that you knew only a fraction of the greatness God granted to him and how he separated him for good from other folk. Let your faith in him be complete. You will be led to believe in God through the agency of belief in him.

God created this prophet in a special and unique way. He created him according to the most perfect form as Scripture testifies: "She saw him that he was a goodly child" (Ex. 2:2). The name of God is good: "God is good to all" (Ps. 145:8). "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him" (Lam. 3:25). "Good

and upright is the Lord (Ps. 25:9). "Thou art good and doest good" (Ps. 119:68).

Moses' name is good: "If I had not believed to look upon the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. 27:13). "How abundant is your goodness which you have laid up for them that fear you" (Ps. 21:20).

He was beautiful of form and the light of God radiated from his face "he was a goodly child" (Ex. 2:2). This light grew over the years until he radiated a powerful light "and God passed before his face" (Ex. 34:6). He made the radiance of his face greater and brighter than the light of the sun. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise since the sun's light was created from light which God had already brought into being and the radiance of Moses' face was from the uncreated light of God's kavod. This light was awesome. No one dared draw near to him. No one dared look at him unless Moses placed a veil on his face. No one even looked at his back without squinting his eyes. Even Michael, Gabriel and the holy beings could not look at him such was his glory as it is said: "I will make all my goodness pass before your face" (Ex. 33:19).

Moses' body was purified until it was at the very least the equal of the bodies of Michael and Gabriel and most certainly purer. They were of light which was not attached to flesh, blood, muscles or matter. He was of flesh and blood and entered between the myriads of fiery angels. Anyone of these angels could burn up the entire world, how much more so when they were all bound together, yet, he entered among them as it is said: "The chariots of God are myriads, even thousands upon thousands. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in holiness" (Ps. 68:18). The Lord revealed himself with all of these. He passed among them and ascended

beyond them and contemplated the light of God in ways in which if the Scriptures had not suggested and illustrated and explained the mind could not comprehend. It was as God testifies: "Moses drew near into the thick darkness where God is (Ex. 20:18).

Moses' hands were so pure that he could take hold of the ~~Throne of~~ glory.

In this he exceeded the holy things who cannot ~~touch~~ ^{touch} the ~~Throne~~ until God places a curtain between their ~~legs~~ ^{heads and the legs of} and the throne.



~~Heads and legs of the throne:~~ "Over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a firmament, like the color of the terrible ice, stretched forth over their heads. . . and above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above (EZ. 2:22-26). The explanation of this text is: ~~Ezekiel saw when~~ God revealed Himself during ^{EZEKIEL} my sleep, he showed ^{him} ~~me~~ his throne of Glory. I saw those who gave semblance of bearing the ^{chain} ~~claim~~ - though in truth they bear the chain only through the strength of God. He bears them. They do not carry Him. I saw above them something which had the appearance of the firmament of the heavens - that which looked like transparent snow was frightening. On this firmament was the form of a chain, apparently of sapphires. Its light had been created by God. Above it the light of His Glory which is beyond all representation - a matter which they could not lift, ^{could Moses} Moses - ~~Noses~~ whom God honored more than all created ^{men} ~~them~~ - more than the angels. It is needless to add more than any mortal. It is enough for you to know that as soon as he placed his hand on Joshua, God placed in his brain the strength to understand Torah, a task he accomplished in six months (6 months elapsed from Joshua's ordination to Moses' death) during which from Moses more than all who had studied before him during the previous 40 years brings those 6 months. "And Joshua the son of NUN was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. 34:9). Though the agency of Moses' hands light cleaved to Joshua's face as God had commanded: "and you shall put your honor upon him" (Num. 27:20). All the congregations of Israel obeyed him ^{as} it is said "the children of Israel hearkened to him" (Deut. 34:9) and further, "they feared him as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life" (Joshua 4:14).

Moses' feet were so pure that he could walk on the clouds of Holy Light, as God testifies "Moses entered into the midst of the cloud and went up upon the mount" (Ex. 24:18).

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The body of Moses was so strong that he ~~could dwell~~ among the angels when the light of God surrounded him for 40 days and 40 nights. He stood 40 more days like those and still a third 40 days when he interpreted righteousness for our sake and with the light surrounding him. The last day was the ~~fast~~ Day of Atonement. God invited him as it is said about him: "He heard. . . he went up. . . and God descended in the cloud" (Ex. 34:4-5). This was the wondrous sight (of God) during which he saw what even an angel may not see (one need not add no mortal may so see) as God testifies about him: "I will take away my hand, and you shall see" (Ex. 33:23) and "God passed before him" (Ex. 34:6). The light of God passed before him. God called to him and informed Moses that he (God) alone is God, that he is merciful and gracious and the rest of the 13 attributes through which God gave an impression of himself. These are lifted up in this text. When Moses saw what he saw he prostrated himself before God as it is said: And Moses hastened and he bent to the ground and prostrated himself.

This is his (Moses') description. These thoughts draw a general outline, without drawing out specific detail.

He was a prophet whom God created by means of a special creation. Most men are 4 cubits tall. He was 10 cubits tall. We know this from the text: "and he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:19). The height of the tabernacle was 10 cubits as it is said, "10 cubits shall be the length of the board" (Ex. 26:16) (T. B. cf. 47a).

He was a prophet who could remain without food for 120 days. During the first 40 days the original tablets were given him. During the second 40 days he pleaded in favor of the community that it should not be destroyed. During the third 40 day period he interceded for those who remained that God forgive them and not withdraw the light of his Shekinah from them. God accepted his words of intercession.

He was a prophet of such power that if anyone raised a doubt to part of

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his message he died by being burned alive as happened to the sinner ^{Korah} ~~Korah~~ and his 150 (sic) ~~sinner~~ companions: "Fire came forth from the Lord and devoured the 250 men that offered the incense" (Num. 16:25).

He was a prophet of such power that anyone who accused him of lying was burned alive and went down to Gehenna ^{NH} ~~alive~~ ^{alive}. These are the accursed, the heretics, the deceivers Dathan and Abiran ^{The K} ~~and the~~ sons and their wives and anyone who ascribed any doubt to his message. The number reached 250 men and all of them were cast into the depths and burned. There remained of them ¹⁷ 700 who had some doubts about Moses, but not of the order of the doubts of Dathan and company. These died the next day (cf. Num. 17:14). Since they called themselves "of the people of God" and they were not of the people of God. The peoples of God is none other than they who believe in Moses. The Torah draws this out: "On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron saying, 'ye have killed the people of God'" (Num. 16:6). Then the plague descended: "The plague was begun among the people" (Num. 17:12). Moses had anticipated this evil and said to Aaron: 'God is among with the people. Quick take the firepan, put fire from the altar in it, make the incense which you offer each morning and night before God for God has revealed to me that the incense will stay the plague.' This is what the Angel of Death has told me: 'When the incense will come down I will be thrust away.' Aaron quickly did as he was told. He stood between the living and the dead. The angel was killing folk in clusters. They began to fight with each other. Aaron said to the angel: 'Flee, I am doing the work of the incense here.' The angel answered: 'God ordered me here.' Aaron said to him: "Moses ordered me here and the command of Moses is the command of God." The angel of Death immediately left, the incense went down and the plague stopped. God said to him: 'The command of my prophet is my command' as it is said: "He stood between the dead and the living"

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(Num. 17:13). The number of the dead reached 14,700 in addition to those who died with ~~Korah~~ on the previous day. In this way the mission of Moses was established and it was proven that the command of Moses ^{CAME} ~~was~~ wholly from God. That only one who brings doubts to his faith in God ~~casts~~ doubts to Moses. Those who were tumbling into the pit shouted in the moment of their disappearance "Moses is truth and his Torah is truth." Their belated cry availed them nothing. (Had they cried out earlier, before the earth opened up, it would have been of benefit to them) since Moses had warned them and placed the fear ^{ON} God ~~there~~ in respect to the extent of the punishment of God. They persisted to act arrogantly towards him and to say that he lied.

Moses said to them: 'Know, sons of Israel, if these men go to die in the ordinary way God would judge them as all men are judged. They would die and be burned. Afterwards God would resurrect them and arrange for them a final judgment. Those who deserve the fires of Gehinah he will cast into the fires. If God should act in this manner to these and they die, but you do not see any new thing, then your words might be true that God had not sent me ^{with} any other words which I spoke to you. ~~They~~ come only from me ~~as they argued~~, but if God should make a new creation such as had never existed before and would never be again and bring you to judgment before death and before resurrection, the earth will open her mouth and swallow them. They will go down alive into the fires of ^{Behenna} Gehina in a place concealed with God which is prepared by him for such punishment. Then you will know the truth of my words and that one who denies me denies God. Those who deny me their denial is not of me but of God who ^{sent} ~~sent~~ me and who testified that he sent me. He spoke to me in your ~~hearing~~ ^{hearing} and you said to me, 'we believe in you, in all that you will bring us from God.' This general theme is found in this text: "If these now die the common death of all men, and be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the ground open her mouth and swallow them up, with all their belongings,

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and they go down alive into the pit, then you shall understand that these men have despised
the Lord" (Num. 16:29-30)



(Numbers xvi. 24), and they did thus, and they got up from the Tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and when they saw that they actually were in the jaws of the earth and that it was swallowing them gradually they cried out, but their cry did not avail them, just as confession will not avail on the day of reckoning, for God will cast down those who confess only then into a fire which burns everlastingly, for confession avails us only before calamity has happened to us, in accordance with the words of Solomon (peace be with him), "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might" (Ecclesiastes ix. 10).

The explanation of this verse is as follows:—Solomon said, directing him whom God directs, 'All which thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, striving to obey God, and repent at a time when repentance will avail, and work where work is possible, and render to thyself an account in whatever thou gainest or whatever thou lovest, and know that which thou needest to know and to understand before thou go down to Sheol to meet the punishment of thy sins, because thou meritest to go down thither. When thou art there thou wilt be able to attain naught wherewith to defend thyself, "for there is no work" (*ib.*); thou wilt be able to do no work there, nor wilt thou be able to reflect, or know, or understand when thou goest down into the earth, into Sheol whither descended all those who doubted or denied the best of creatures, the greatest of men, the noblest of apostles. Therefore awake, O thou who slumberest in the flood of thy desires, for thou art in this world as one who slumbers dreaming of things delightful to him, dreaming that he possesses and does whatever he fancies; but when he awakes he finds nothing of that which existed in his dreams, and so are the hopes of this world and the attaining of its desires. At the awakening of death and the hour of judgment thou wilt find naught of that which thou hast done in this world, and if its pleasures were permitted pleasures, they will all vanish and thou wilt find naught of that which thou didst treasure up. Pleasures are not good deeds that thou mayest find them; and if the pleasures which thou hast treasured up in this world are prohibited, thou wilt be doubly affected with the calamities they bring. First, thou wilt find naught, and secondly bitter anguish will overtake thee on account of these pleasures. The body which takes pleasure in secret in those things which God does not desire, is cast down into a burning fire in the darkness of hell, which is fashioned in accordance with the will of God. Therefore awaken before thy death, and repent before thou leavest this world, and mend in the time of youth that which remainest to thee of old age; and just as if thou loved him who loved thee not, and neglected a dwelling in which thou didst remain, and held possession of a dwelling which belonged not to thee, so thou lovest this world. For this world is hateful. It gnaws away thy life by

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Judith

day and by night. When the day is passed thou rejoicest in the night in that which thou hast acquired for thyself, and when the night is passed thou rejoicest that thou art in possession of another day in this world, and all the days and nights we pass do but diminish our life and shorten its duration, and no man of intellect would give predominance to that state in which thou art, to that life which thou hast wasted. Thou art in this world like one who is called to a feast, and who knoweth for a certainty that he will under no circumstances spend the night there, but that when the day is finished he will leave. And the intelligent man is he who is able to enjoy the pleasures of eating and drinking, but still thinks about his departure and still turns to his own abode. He lives at ease, and gives himself at eventide no anxiety concerning that which exists: he finds in himself strength for the rising, and when the night cometh he arrives home in health, and is at rest. And he who is light-witted cares too much about the feast and gets intoxicated, and oversteps the bounds of moderation, and continues to enjoy himself, and when the night cometh he is expelled by force in an unseemly condition, and is thrown outside into the lowest place. He is not left where he was, nor does he ever reach his abode. Lo! how weak is such an intellect. Therefore in this world we must bear in mind whither we are tending and journeying, so that we are not deceived or beguiled by it in the manner in which we have been speaking. All that we have been saying refers to one who has been seeking lawful desires, striving to attain legitimate hopes, endeavouring not to waste his time in laziness; how much more must this be the case with one who expects to attain these things by disobedience, and by finding pleasure in idleness. Therefore let naught deceive thee, and no temptation seduce thee.

Contemplate the prophet who was sent to thee, and that with which he was sent, and his position. And what was the aim of his message? that he might be an apostle to thee, and urge thee to obedience. And if the law which he promulgated had to be believed merely on account of his own greatness, which we have already described, it would still have been necessary to believe it; how much more must we believe it when that law contains the commands of the Creator and his ordinances. And gratitude and cleaving to God are necessary, on account of him who sent and him who was sent. And this love is a virtue; so let not him whom God brings near make himself afar off, and let not him to whom Moses is the apostle neglect himself; and in the greatness of the apostle thou mayest understand the dignity of him from whom he was sent. If thou art a great man, he sends unto thee a messenger like unto thee, and according to thy position with him who sends will be the position of the messenger. And none are greater in the sight of God than Israel, and he sent unto them an apostle like whom there is no other apostle, and owing to the greatness of God's

✓ can believe on account of his greatness

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love for Israel he made him an intercessor between him and them; but in spite of his position before God and his nearness to him, he was the gentlest and most humble of mankind, as the Scripture bears testimony, when it says of him in the name of God, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers xii. 3). And Moses was more jealous for Israel than he was for himself, and he loathed his own life on their account, and he would willingly have been blotted out of the company of the just on their account, since he said, 'O God, O my Lord, they have sinned a great sin, but thy forgiveness is greater; if their sin is pardonable forgive them, but if thou wilt not forgive and wilt cut me off, then cut me off in this world and the next. Is not the great pre-eminence to which I am to attain, only on their account? And if they are to cease to exist, then blot me, I pray thee, out of thy divine "Book of Life," for I do not wish to be left alive after them'; so the Scriptures repeat his words "and if not, blot me out of thy book" (Exodus xxxii. 32). And God was filled with pity, with compassion, and with mercy, for the congregation.

And when the approach of death was announced to him, this did not terrify him, nor did he consider it a great calamity, but he devoted himself to his people and said to God, "Let me not die till thou appointest over them those who shall lead them, for I am jealous on their account, lest I should die and not know who shall be the leader to superintend their affairs." Then God said to him, "Appoint Joshua," and Moses appointed him, and he rejoiced thereat, for he knew his character, and he strengthened him and he presented him to the people, and began to charge him concerning them.

And when the song (Deut. xxxii.) was revealed to him, and in it there was made known all that would happen to Israel in the long captivity, as it is said, "They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat" (Deut. xxxii. 24), and all that God had threatened, "The sword without, and terror within shall destroy" (Deut. xxxii. 25), he was deeply impressed, and when he saw that at that time there would be no one to intercede, no one to pray, no one who would be fit to pray, and that no man of learning would be left among them, and that all would be equal in their wickedness, he was troubled. It was as God had described their condition when he said, "And he saw that there was no man" (Isaiah lix. 16). The explanation of this verse is as follows: "When he saw that there was no man amongst them who could avail to intercede for them, he was astonished; and when he saw that there was no one to pray¹ for them he had mercy and assisted them. And God also said, When I shall see that there is no pious man amongst them, and there is no aid to be expected from these virtuous men, for they

¹ Double explanation of the verse.

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have all perished, then they will be assisted. And when Moses knew their degraded condition, and it was said to him when he had recited his prophecy concerning Israel, "Go up to Mount Abarim and die there, then Moses (peace be with him) arose and prayed for all Israel who should be driven into captivity, and when he saw that there was no good man fit to bear the name "the man of God," he said (Psalm xc.) "The prayer of Moses, the man of God." He included in it a prayer for all the vicissitudes which should befall Israel from the beginning of the captivity till its end, and a hope that God would deal gently with them, and cause their punishment to descend in gentleness and not in wrath, and that he would not root us out, nor let us pass away from him, but that he would forgive us, and return to us even as he was in times gone by, and that he would gladden our hearts and give us patience to bear our calamities during the length of the captivity, and that he would repel from us the evil the nations would inflict upon us, and the evils of every persecutor, and that he would still the waves of the seas which surround us, for the nations among whom we are dispersed encompass us about. And he included in this prayer a reference to all which had been, and all which was to be during the existence of the world. If we consider attentively every verse of this prayer we shall find that all God's promises to us and all his prophecies are contained in it. And after God had accepted his intercession on our behalf he made every prophet who came after to prophesy the same prophecies, showing thereby that God had accepted his request, and he sent prophets to us telling us of those favours that Moses desired, and he promised that he would grant them. And this prayer refers to the greatest calamities, and it has been for us an assistance, a support and a refuge, a reliance upon which we could rely, a perfect protection, an impregnable fortress to which we could escape in the hour of sorrow, for we are like a lamb which erred, which went astray amongst the thickets, or which forgot the place of its pasture, or was lost in the forests. And in these thickets there were a lion, a wolf, and a leopard, and they were hungry and ravenous, and they came forth all of them and they saw this lamb without a shepherd of whom they need be afraid, and that it had no power to rise, much less to run. Then they pricked their ears, they gazed intently, they ground their teeth greedy to devour it, for they had resolved to attack it. So God compared Israel when he said "Israel is a scattered sheep, the lions have driven him away" (Jeremiah 1. 17). And the intercession which the best of creatures interceded for us stood before God, therefore their limbs were fettered, their feet entangled, their mouths closed, and the attack against her was prevented.

One day one of the kings of Rome¹ (cursed be all of them

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¹ Midrash, Esther, x.

except the distinguished Antoninus who lived in the days of Rabbi Jehudah the prince) said to Rabbi Joshua ben Chanan-yah, "How strange it is that a lamb sees lions and walks amongst them without fear, though without a shepherd to help it"; and the Rabbi said to him, "It is because of the strength of the unseen shepherd who fetters their limbs and breaks their teeth, and prevents them from attacking it, because David our prophet prayed and said, "Break their teeth in their mouth, O God" (Psalm lviii. 7). The explanation of this verse is as follows: "Behold, O Lord, thou seest the beasts of prey that attack Israel; break their teeth in their mouths, O God, and shatter the grinders of all the lions, O Lord." And God himself has said: "Their redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is his name" (Jeremiah i. 34).

And I have for many years taken upon myself the duty of reading every day "The prayer of Moses, the man of God" (Psalm xc.) before the reading of the hundred blessings before the prayer *שמונה עשרה*, thereby drawing near to God in the very words used by the best of creatures, and imploring a blessing from him in his very language, and uniting myself to God in the very prayers used by the best of those who were ever born. And I used to reflect why this prayer came to be inscribed in the Book of Psalms, and how it came to be handed down from generation to generation, even to the days of David, who gave it a place in the book of praise with the prophecies of the ten elders, some of whom were his predecessors, some his contemporaries—for instance, the sons of Korah, who lived in the time of Moses, and they were Asir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph, of whom our Rabbis have handed down that because they fled from the error of their fathers, and followed the righteous apostle, they were inspired, and made to speak. Hence it is said, A Psalm of the sons of Korah, and Heman, and Jeduthun, and Maschil, and Ethan, and Asaph, and others. And I did not know why this prayer should be taken from the remaining prayers of the apostle, and placed in the Book of Psalms even till our day. And I commented on the portion of Haazinu (Deut. xxxii.), in accordance with that which I found handed down by our Rabbis, that when Moses came to the words, "For the Lord shall judge his people" (Deut. xxxii. 36), then he uttered "The prayer of Moses, the man of God," in which occur the words, "Return, O Lord, how long yet" (Psalm xc. 13). Then I considered the whole of the Psalm, and its secret was made clear to me that Moses had uttered it for the time of captivity, and that David had placed it in the Book of Psalms, that it might be a source of comfort and consolation to the followers of our faith. Then I commented on the whole of the Psalm, through God's help and guidance, and I placed it in the volume of my composition, upon the portion Haazinu, with which our commentary on the Torah concluded. And I said at the end of this Psalm that there was no doubt that he

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uttered it on the day of his death, and left it as a legacy to Israel, and I did not know this as a matter of fact, but only as a conjecture, but after a while, when I commented upon the portion וְאַתָּה הַבְּרִכָּה (Deut. xxxiii., xxxiv.), I found this conjecture fully verified by the words of our Rabbis, for in Sifre,¹ at the end of the commentary on the Torah, they say eloquently that our master on the day of his death uttered this prayer, and afterwards blessed Israel, and that he said וְאַתָּה הַבְּרִכָּה with the conjunctive *וְ*, because this *וְ* signifies something preceding it, and that that which preceded was "The prayer of Moses, the man of God." Then I rejoiced greatly, because I was led to a true conjecture of that which was handed down by our Rabbis amongst other traditions, and I rejoiced also to find the contents of all this prayer in the declarations of the prophets, and I have commented on it in order that it may be a source of comfort to the souls which are desolate in the desolation of captivity, and it is also a source of contentment to weary hearts which are wasted by the intense fear of the nations, and a correction of knowledge, and a strengthening of faith to the pious, and the steadfast, and the repentant, and those who have trust, and those who grasp the strong cord which unites them to God through their faith in our honoured apostle, elected above all mankind.

And the following is a commentary on the well-constructed words of his prayer, peace be upon him and upon the Rabbis who received the traditions from the prophets, and they in their turn from their master and the master of all mankind, peace be upon him. How nobly did he speak when he stood and offered this prayer for us.

"A prayer of Moses the man of God." The man distinguished by God. God has in this world no other since him. And every prophet, great in his own age, who arose after Moses and resembled him in possessing one or more of his characteristics was called, "The man of God," and they were ten, the first of them was the master of all mankind, and the last of them was Elijah, and these are they: Moses, Elkanah, Samuel, David, Shemaiah, Iddo, Elisha, Micah, Amoz, Elijah.²

O Lord thou hast been our refuge. O God, our God, thou art our refuge to which we fly, generation after generation, because when we have been conquered and dispersed amongst our enemies, and when misfortune overtakes us, and there is no king to order our affairs, and no adviser to guide us, and no fortress in which we can be intrenched, and no place of safety whither we can flee, and no army wherewith we may be protected, and no provision and no power even to speak, for we are deprived of every resource, the victories of our enemies and our inability to answer them have made us

¹ Sifre, Friedman, 342.

² Sifre, ibidem.

dumb. We are silent as if we were speechless. We are unable to open our mouths. And so David describes us (Psalm xxxviii. 14), "I am as if I were deaf, that I could not hear," etc. And when all resources are cut off and all our hopes are frustrated, there is no protection but with thee. We call and thou assistest; we cry and thou answerest, for thou art our refuge, as it is said, "O Lord, thou hast been our refuge."

And here Moses describes the reasons why God accepts our prayers and answers them. These reasons are repentance, obedience and confession to God, and if we possess these merits he assists us. And when God knew that we should sin, and that we should be overcome by the inclination to evil which was to be created in man, he ordained, even before he created man, amongst the seven things to be brought into being before the creation of the world, that repentance should be accepted.¹ The first of these seven things was the law, the last was Messiah, the son of David. And amongst these was repentance, because it is conducive to the happiness of the world. And our apostle had repentance in view, when he described our captivity, and desired it for us, as he said, "Before the mountains were brought forth thou didst turn man to contrition and say, Return, ye children of men." The meaning of this is: Before and after thou didst create the mountains, and form the earth and the world, thou wert from eternity to eternity, and then thou didst desire repentance when thou didst say, "Return, ye children of men," and if we repent, then thou answerest.

And that which necessitates our remaining in captivity is the fact that a thousand years, though many for us, are but few for thee. "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, which is passed." The explanation of this verse is as follows: Behold a thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday which has passed, or like a watch which is the third of the night. And when the period of the captivity is completed, we shall be as one who had slept one third of the night and then awoke. And in spite of its length, when its torrents have flowed and passed, it is as if it had never been. And so he said, וַיִּסַּחם שָׁנָה יְהוָה, "Thou carriest them away as in a torrent, they are as in a sleep." וַיִּסַּחם is derived from סָח, which means torrent; and so the nations are compared to a torrent in the words, "As a torrent of hail, as a torrent of mighty waters overflowing" (Isaiah xxviii. 2), and it is said, "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters" (Isaiah xvii. 13). The meaning of this last verse is that when the nations are united against Israel they rush upon them like mighty waters when they receive an addi-

¹ *Petachia*, 54a.

tional torrent. But in great tempests some regions often remain unscathed, the most weakly constructed building or the most fragile object will be saved, while walls will be overturned or stones carried away. In the same way captivity will crush and shatter powerful batteries and destroy strong walls, but God saves the weak and feeble nation, for the storm does not carry them away, and when the waves of the sea of captivity are agitated God calms them. If this were not so they would overwhelm us so that no trace of us would be left. Dost thou not see the abounding waters of the waves, black in colour, uplifted to their very height, advancing rapidly so that thou wouldst imagine that if they reached a ship they would sink and wreck it, or if they reached the dry land they would desolate it? Then thou seest one wave broken and multitudes follow continually, but still they are obedient to the command of God and do not pass the bounds he has assigned to them. Thus arise the mighty waves of distress in captivity, so that thou sayest, "None can now escape"; but at last thou seest how God stills them, and calms them, and delivers us from them; and thus spake David, "Which stilleth the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of peoples" (Psalm lxxv. 8). The explanation of this verse is as follows: O thou who stillest the tumult of the peoples when they rush over Israel. And when the period of the captivity is over, and when the waves have been poured forth and are arrested, it is as if it were the sleep of the slumberer in the words of the Apostle, "Thou carriest them away as with a torrent, they are as in a sleep."

"In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up" (Psalm xc. 6). The meaning of this verse is as follows. In the morning deliverance cometh after the night of captivity. He compares the darkness of captivity to the darkness of the night, and the morning of help to the dawn which brightening gradually, refresheth souls distressed by the anxieties of the night. He compares our position to that of a man who, like one who is blind, is lost in a desert, and the darkness of the night comes upon him, and he walks in dread of every possible calamity. Now he walks securely, now he is covered in darkness, now he has to be on his guard, for ditches are beneath him and precipices surround him. He knows not where he may fall, and if he be safe in his walking, then he is not secure from the injury of wild beasts which might seize him, or of the enemies lying in ambush for him on the road. Alas! in what sad straits is he, in what sore perplexity. The night drags on till the dawn ascends, till the light appears and men's minds are a little at rest, till the light bursts forth, and the sun is seen and light is given to the world, then the sorrow flies away, the eye of the traveller discerns the country around him, and he sees where to walk and whither he is going. David said,

referring to this, "Weeping may tarry for the night but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm xxx. 6); and also, "It shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4); and with the light of the day of our deliverance the sun of our dynasty shall arise as Isaiah promised us, "Then shall thy light arise in darkness" (Isaiah lviii. 10); and another prophet says, "But unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and gambol as calves of the stall" (Malachi iii. 19). And when our light breaks forth the nations will covet our position and will come against us in the manner described by the prophet, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zechariah xiv. 2); and this is the war of Gog and Magog and their followers, which has been described by all the prophets. There is no prophet who has not foretold it.

But when they covet our position, and an opportunity presents itself to them of harming us, and we fear their attacks, God will bring their affair to naught, and they will be as if they had never been. God compares their position to that of a man who dreams that he has eaten and drunk and is satisfied, but when he awakes he is still hungry and thirsty. Thus are all the nations. They see that the city is surrounded by the peoples of the earth, desiring to swallow us, and we are besieged and the city is conquered and half of us are taken captive, and at that moment God grows angry and is enraged against all of them, as it is said, "My fury shall come up in my nostrils" (Ezekiel xxxviii. 18). And God will cause a great shaking through which the mountains shall be thrown down, and buildings and walls shall fall, and the wild beasts shall die through fright, even the fishes of the sea shall tremble and flee. And a voice shall come forth from God saying, "Your own swords shall pierce you," therefore will every one turn his sword against his neighbour, and heads and corpses shall fall, and the horses and their riders shall be annihilated, the rider struggles on, his eyes fail, his tongue cleaves to his mouth; he is seen but sees not; and so it is declared and explained by all the prophets. So the nations are as grass, the verdure of which just begins to be seen, and it is then dried up and withers. All which we have said is included in the one verse "In the morning they are like grass which groweth." In this very manner God foretold and said that the nations should be like unto grass; still not like the grass of the earth which has roots, branches and soil, moisture and other materials, which, although it is unstable, still has material and roots. But they shall be as the grass on the roof tops which has no roots to supply it, and no soil to nourish it, but it is blasted and immediately withers. So says the Psalmist, "They shall be as the grass on the roof tops," שְׁקֵטָהּ שֶׁלֹּף יֵבֶשׁ (Psalm cxxix. 6). The meaning of these last words is, "Before it is drawn forth from its covering it

withereth." Then Isaiah the prophet of God spoke in the same sense (Isaiah xl. 6-8). The meaning of these verses is thus, A voice came to me saying, "Cry," and I said "What shall I cry." The voice said "Cry that all mankind is in my sight as grass, and their works, and that which in their opinion is their excellence, is but as the flower of the field which will mature into no fruit or seed. At one moment it seems beautiful to you, but it has no permanence; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God and his promises stand for ever."

"On the high mountain" (Isaiah xl. 9). 'O thou prophecy, which bringest good tidings to Zion, upon a high mountain lift up thy voice with strength; O thou prophecy, that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem, raise thy voice, fear not, say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God." And our apostle, referring to these matters, exclaims *הלא יצא יצחק*. On the morrow this one will blossom and will produce new sprouts, but in the evening it will be annihilated and withered. And so will those be who arise in the morning to fight against us; God will darken their days as it is said, "A day of darkness and gloominess" (Zephaniah i. 15), and it is also said that it will be a day which is neither day nor night (Zechariah xiv. 7). "And darkness and gross darkness shall cover the earth" (Isaiah lx. 2), and they will fight against us, and there will be a great slaughtering amongst them from midday, and all of them shall perish, and at the approach of the evening the day shall brighten, as it is said "The Lord shall arise upon thee" (Isaiah lx. 2), and with respect to this, it is also said, "At the time of the evening there shall be light" (Zechariah xiv. 7), and at eventide not one of them will be left alive, as our first prophet said, "In the evening it shall be cut down and wither" (Psalm xc. 6).

And after the apostle finished describing the events which had taken place, which would take place, and that to which these events would lead, he again prophesies and laments over our condition in captivity when he says, "For we are consumed in thine anger" as thou hast threatened; and it is said "Ye shall be left few in number (Deut. iv. 27); and it is also said, describing our condition, "For we are left but a few of many" (Jeremiah xlii. 2), and there are many other such descriptions. So we are consumed in the anger of God, and we who are left are amazed in that we are cast into captivity in accordance with that which is said, "And we are consumed in thine anger." And the prophet describes that which necessitated this, "Behold all this is on account of our sins." When they multiply God places them before him, and looks at them, and according to their sins he punishes, as it is said, "Thine iniquity is marked before me" (Jeremiah ii. 22), and whatever we do secretly or openly is before his light. Naught is hidden from him, as it is said, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I

shall not see him" (Jeremiah xxiii. 24). Can any hide himself in secret places and rebel against me, so that I see him not; doth not my light fill my heavens and my earth. For I exist in every place, and no place is void of me, and that which will be is not hidden from me, and whither can one flee from me? And when God knew and saw he decided and pronounced sentence, thereby confirming in truth the description of our apostle, "Thou hast placed our iniquities before thee, our hidden sins before the light of thy countenance." "For all our days," etc. (Ps. xc. 9). Behold all our days vanish in the heat of thine anger, our years pass away like a word which is spoken. A word is spoken and is finished. And so in captivity it is said, "A son or daughter is born to such a one," and while the father hopes that the child will grow up, it dies; and we hear naught else than that a little child is dead as thou hast threatened, "Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be thine" (Deut. xxviii. 41), and it is said, "Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them that there be none left" (Hosea ix. 12). But some will be excepted who will live, and in this manner our number decreases daily. And the prophet wept for this when he said "For we are consumed by thine anger." We desire perchance that deliverance may come in our days, though the lives of all of us vanish like a spoken word, and if some do live, how long do they live? The limit is seventy years, the extreme limit is eighty years. And so Moses said, "The days of our years are seventy years." Moses meant of our captivity; in short the sorrows of the heart, in addition to paucity of help, and want of strength, and cutting off of hope, make the heart sick, weaken our powers, shorten our lives, and bring death near, and we are all of us in this sad plight.

And those of us who exceptionally are in happier circumstances, gain naught except after great difficulties, and when we attain that which we strive for, means are found of taking it from us unjustly and with enmity. The prophet said, describing all this: "And their increase is but labour and sorrow," and even when we attain that which we strive for, it comes to us only with difficulty, because by attaining worldly goods man does not gain power over his own life, and even when we attain them, injustice will find causes for depriving us of them, as God decreed at the very first, "And I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured" (Deut. xxxi. 18), and it is also said *וְנִשְׁבְּרָה וְנִפְּצָה*, "For we are soon cut off and we fly away." *וְנִשְׁבְּרָה וְנִפְּצָה* Behold it shall be cut off quickly, and that which is in our possession shall fly away, for we have no endurance, no stability.

Then the prophet is again perplexed and amazed at the darkness of our captivity, which is distressing, which is obscure, which is severe, without any opportunity for Israel, and without any information as to its length, either from

useful analogy, or by means of correct calculation, or by means of clear proof, without good tidings, and without near hope. And we are perplexed, like a man who is sleeping in the middle of the sea, or on the top of a mast, and how can his sleep be comfortable when the roaring of the sea disturbs him? how can he be still when the water shakes that upon which he is lying? How can life be pleasant to him that is on the top of a mast, which is a very narrow and confined position, with the winds blowing vehemently, and terror and assured death beneath him? Such is the life of all of us in captivity. And Solomon said, "Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast" (Proverbs xxiii. 34). The Hebrew word *מִסְתָּה* is a mast. And we are in this plight. And if the length of our captivity were determined, and we knew from what time the calculation began, there would be some relief for us. You see that the captivity of Egypt lasted four hundred years, but with respect to that captivity there is also doubt as to the date from which we are to begin the calculation. Is it from the covenant between the parts, or from the birth of Isaac, or from the hour when Israel went down into Egypt? God calculated it from the birth of Isaac to amount to four hundred years, and from the time of the covenant between the parts it amounts to about four hundred and thirty years, and had God desired to increase our captivity, it would have begun from the date of our entering Egypt. But God dealt gently with us, and left us in Egypt but two hundred and ten years, and then hinted at it in the words spoken to Jacob *אֵלֶיךָ אָנֹכִי וְאֶתְּנֶנְךָ אֶל־מִצְרָיִם* (Genesis xlii. 2), "Go down thither," for the number contained in the letters of the word *אֵלֶיךָ* is two hundred and ten.¹ And as regards the captivity in Babylon, it is said to be seventy years, and this is subject to doubt. Is it to commence from the beginning of the Babylonian dynasty, or from the captivity itself? Between the two there is a difference of twelve years. The matter was obscure except to Daniel, who said, "There remains a little time before the dynasty of Elam shall be completed, then Media shall follow, and deliverance will be at hand,"² and this was so, and the seventy years were completed. But with regard to the present captivity, which is foretold to last many days, the apostle said until when, and the signs which were given to Daniel were obscure, and when he asked for an explanation, God said, "Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel xii. 9). When deliverance cometh, thou wilt understand all that God said in the Book of Daniel. And when Asaph perceived this great darkness, he wept, and said, "We see not our signs, there is

¹ *Seder Olam*, Cap. III. and parallels.

² The author seems in error in referring to Daniel. See Isaiah, Cap. xxi, Meguillah, 11b.

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no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long" (Psalm lxxiv. 9). And when the best of mankind saw by means of the wonderful inspiration which was granted him, and by means of his magnificent powers the innermost meaning of things, but still was unable to comprehend the captivity, he exclaimed, "Who knoweth what will be the power of thine anger, and just in proportion as man should fear thee, so is thy anger?" And when we shall be sunk in the deep mire, do not cut us off entirely. The knowledge that our chastisement is fixed is enough for us, this is sufficient sorrow. Therefore do not deprive us of the light of thy law, and give us wisdom as a substitute for a prophet, who shall prophecy unto us, and supply us with a wise heart, whereby we may understand thy law, and be at rest in it. The apostle, summing up all these prayers, said, "Teach us to number our days" וְנִבֵּן לִבְּנוֹתָּהּ, "and a heart of wisdom for a prophet."

And God so decreed it. The wisdom of our Rabbis and that knowledge to which each one of them attained are sufficient for thee, and the subjects they spoke about, and their books and their compositions are matters which we can understand through the study of many years only. I mean to say for instance that the Mishna and the commentary of the Talmud thereon, and the books of Midrashim are works which require a year or more in order to read even one of them; how much more time would be required to understand them? We can but employ ourselves for the rest of our lives with a few pages of their easiest works in accordance with the command of Moses וְנִבֵּן לִבְנוֹתָּהּ. Owing to that which has been read and taught in the days of our Rabbis in the days of captivity there is no less knowledge to be gained of the Torah now than in the days of the prophet himself.

"Return, O Lord, how long?" (verse 12). O God, when thy mercy is turned to us, it is enough. How long yet? In these words "how long" David implored for aid on behalf of Israel in captivity. "O Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph, having naught to perplex them, how long shall the workers of iniquity utter vain things and boast" (Psalm xciv. 3). God decreed that as a recompense for the night when we rebelled against him, the night of the spies, the night of the ninth of Ab, that we should implore for aid with the words "How long yet?" When God was angered against us and said, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation" (Numbers xiv. 27) he determined to cast upon us the worst of calamities, on a similar night, the night of the ninth of Ab, and that we should be in sore distress and implore for deliverance from that distress with the words "how long yet?" And David made clear to us that we should use the words "how long yet" by repeating four times the words "how long" (Psalm xiii.) in correspondence with the similar expression

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used four times by God "How long do you refuse?" (Exodus xvi. 28). "How long will this people provoke me?" (Numbers xiv. 11). "How long will they not believe in me?" (*ibid.*) "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation?" (Numbers xiv. 27), and by using the expression four times God showed that he would cast us into captivity and disperse us in four empires.

And when the thought of the long period of the captivity was too sad for Moses, he exclaimed "Return, O Lord, how long?" "Turn away thine anger from us" as if God were a man who repented on account of that which happened to a beloved one against whom God was angered, and so God promised us by the mouth of his apostle, "For the Lord shall judge his people and repent himself for his servants" (Deut. xxxii. 36), and Moses relying upon this promise prayed "And let it repent thee concerning thy servants."

"Satisfy us in the morning" (verse 14). O God, satisfy us in the morning of the dawn of our deliverance, and favour us with thy grace. For God is "abundant in mercy," and he favours us as he has promised, "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee" (Isaiah liv. 8). And it is also said, "How precious is thy lovingkindness, O God" (Psalm xxxvi. 8), and also, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting" (Psalm ciii. 17). And it is also said of the Messiah, "And my mercy shall not depart from him" (2 Sam. vii. 15). And it is also said, "The sure mercies of David" (Isaiah lv. 3). Therefore the Apostle prayed, "Satisfy us in the morning with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." And it is said, "Rejoice, ye righteous, in the Lord" (Psalm xxxiii. 1), and also, "Then our mouths shall be filled with laughter" (Psalm cxxvi. 2), and Isaiah said, "Break forth into joy, sing together" (Isaiah lii. 9). And a prophet said, "Sing with gladness for Jacob" (Jeremiah xxxi. 6). Therefore Moses exclaimed, "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us" (verse 15). O God, cause us to rejoice in accordance with the days of our punishment. ~~This the prophet sought from his Lord, and all men were ignorant,~~ I mean the men of our own age and the men of preceding ages, as to the meaning of his request. It is impossible that Moses, our master, should pray that our days of joy should be in accordance with the number of our days of calamity. We do not find in preceding captivities this slight compensation, nor has God given any hints that he compensates in this slight measure. Job suffered in his body, in his wealth, in his children. No one maltreated him. He was not despised, or sold, or enslaved, and his punishment endured only twelve months,¹ and he was rewarded by receiving

¹ *Seder Olam* II.; *Mishna Edyot* II. 10

twice as much as he had before in money and in children, and he lived a hundred and forty years. Since he received of all things twice as much as he had before, it seems as if he were seventy years of age at the time his trial began, therefore his whole life lasted two hundred and ten years. And as for us who have been slain, and taken captive and ruled over by our slaves, and our lives made miserable, and we and our children sold, and held in bondage eleven hundred years and more, not knowing how long that bondage will still continue, would our prophet who was filled with solicitude for us, and who stood so near to God as to reply to him when he said, "Michael should alone go with us" (there are the same letters in מִכָּאֵל and מִלְאֵל), "If thy countenance go not with us, bring us not up hence"—would he have prayed to his Master for so slight a compensation as that contained in the words, "Make us rejoice according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." For if this prayer were granted, what would happen afterwards? Shall we again return to misfortune? No, for God has sworn, "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me" (Isaiah liv. 9), and he also said, "The Lord hath sworn by his right hand and the arm of his strength" (Isaiah lxii. 8).

The captivity in Egypt lasted two hundred and ten years, but of these years not many more than a hundred were spent in servitude, humiliation, and punishment. Yet the recompense for this was eight hundred and ninety years. And the captivity in Babylon lasted seventy years, and our happiness after that four hundred and twenty years, what then should recompense us for a captivity of eleven hundred years and more, perhaps hundreds of years more? How could Moses pray, "Make us rejoice according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." He prayed to God to grant us days of happiness corresponding to days of misery, measured by such days as are days in God's sight. And God compared the period of our captivity to a moment, as it is said, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee" (Isaiah liv. 7). "In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment" (Isaiah liv. 8). "Hide thyself for a little moment" (Isaiah xxvi. 20). "There is but a moment in his anger" (Psalm xxx. 6). All these verses are clear examples that the period of the captivity is a moment, and a moment is one part out of many hundred parts of an hour. So Moses prays to God to grant us hours and days, months and years, according to the length of the captivity in moments, so that for each moment there might be bestowed upon us a thousand years or more, and how many these will amount to God alone is able to tell. Thousands and myriads of years God will give us, for it was he who said a year will contain thousands and thousands of years, as it is written, "I will gather thee with great

mercies, and with everlasting mercy will I have compassion on thee" (Isaiah lrv. 78). And it is also said, "To eternity and to eternity" (Daniel vii. 18), that is to say, a person who lives will live thousands of years, he will build buildings which will crumble to dust, while he exists, as the Prophet says, "And my chosen shall wear out the work of their hands" (Isaiah lrv. 22).

And I am firmly persuaded that when Isaiah said "For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people" (Isaiah lrv. 22), he meant by tree the tree of life which was in the midst of the garden. God had given an assurance that every one who ate of the tree would live eternally, and God would not create anything in vain, and since Adam was driven forth from Paradise without eating the fruit, there is no doubt that it will be eaten at some future time, and the reason why the time seems delayed is that God does not wish that man should become thoroughly righteous till the end of time, as he himself has promised. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah xi. 9), and it is also said "They shall all call upon the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent" (Zephaniah iii. 9). Since it is proved that no created being, as the world is now, is created perfect, it follows that when the new heavens and the new earth are made, that the influences of the heavens and the nature of the earth will be totally changed, and that there will be a light which will eclipse the light of the sun and the moon, and then those of Israel who are worthy will eat of the tree of life, as it is said, "He will eat and live for ever." And this is the intention of that which David said of the Torah, "It is a tree of life to those who take hold of it" (Proverbs iii. 18). And he did not exaggerate, for the word of God is the exact truth; and if we had seen that any one who had studied the Torah had lived for ever, it would at once have been clear that God's word was truth, but since we have seen that Moses the master of all the prophets died, and do the prophets live for ever? (Zechariah i. 5), we ask where is the tree of life? But the words are meant here with reference to the distant future only, according to the words "Which if a man shall do, he shall live in them" (Ezekiel xx. 11) in the future, and therefore the author of the Targum, who knew the secrets of the word of God translated the words "He shall live by them to all eternity," and David meant that for those who took hold of the Torah it would be a tree of life, and through it they would find favour in the sight of God, and through it they would become worthy to see the fulfilment of the divine promises, and merit to partake of the tree of life and live for ever. And the verse "Make us rejoice according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us," is an evident Biblical authority for all the assertions which have been made by those who explain the Scripture after the manner of a Midrash, including the verse in Daniel (xii. 3), "And they

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that turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars for ever and ever."

And the prayer of Moses was answered Moreover God made the following declaration by his prophets in answer to the prayer of Moses, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants openly and publicly." "They shall see eye to eye when the Lord returneth to him" (Isaiah lii. 8). "And ye shall see it, and your heart shall rejoice" (Isaiah lxvi. 14). "And your eyes shall see and ye shall say, The Lord be magnified" (Malachi i. 5). "And nations shall see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory" (Isaiah lxii. 2). And God, who is the most faithful of promisers, himself said, "And all the nations of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord" (Deut. xxviii. 10). And with respect to the words *בניהם על זיהורך* they may be rendered thus, "Let thy beauty be upon the face of their children." It is to be noticed that the condition of a generation to whom deliverance came in their own days, was in no manner changed, except in respect to their bodily strength, their form and their bodies remained as they were heretofore, as it is said, "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." But with regard to the generation which shall grow up after the future deliverance, God will increase their stature, as it is said, *ואולך אתכם קומטיות*, I will lead you *קומטיות*. Our Rabbis explain this verse to mean double the stature which Adam had when he was driven forth from the Garden of Eden, that is to say, one hundred cubits. And God will strengthen their forms so that the strength of God will be apparent in their faces, as it is said "And their seed shall be known among the nations" (Isaiah lxi. 9). This is the meaning of the prayer of the prophet "May God and his favour be with us." And this also was the prayer for the accomplishment of which David strove all the days of his life, namely, that God might purify him to see the great good with which the souls of the pious are refreshed, and that through them he might attain the knowledge of the Law, when he said, "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord," etc. (Psalm xxvii. 4). So we should read and pray that we may be purified to see the light of God, and to hasten to his temple early in the morning. Here *בבקר* in this verse means to visit early in the morning, being derived from *בדק* morning, not from the word which means "to distinguish, to search" as it is used in the verse, "He shall not search, whether it shall be good or bad" (Leviticus xxvii. 33). Therefore God assured him, and announced to him the good tidings that he should live and return to the House of God continually and for many years, and so David said joyfully, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm xxiii. 6).

¹ *Sanhedrin*, 100a.

I shall not be missing at the house of God during the whole of my life, and I shall sit again and again in the house of God, to the utmost length of days, that is to say days without number. The Hebrew word *ושבתי בשלום* means, "And I shall return." And it occurs twice in Scripture in this sense, namely *ושבתי בשלום* "And I shall return in peace" (Genesis xxviii. 21), and in the verse we are now considering. And David means to say that he will live in this world during his natural life, having enjoyed the goodness of God and his favours, that he will then pass from it to the next world, and that then again he will return to the House of God at the resurrection, dwelling in it and visiting it early in the morning to the utmost length of time (Psalm xxiii. 6). "O Lord, to the utmost length of time" (Psalm xciii. 5). And the pious men of Israel will live in the House of God to the utmost length of days, and in like manner God promised those who read his book, "Length of days and years of life and peace, they shall add unto thee" (Proverbs iii. 2).

"And establish thou the work of our hands upon us." In this world. Because if the help of God is granted to the pious he improves his work in obedience to him. For if man inclines to obedience God and his angels will assist him, and if he turns to evil, God permits evil to come to him, and will not turn him from it,¹ and if God is pleased with his servants, he assists them in doing good. And if man does one good action God causes that action to bring forth for him many rewards which he did not expect, and if perchance the *צור הרע* should once overcome him, God will make difficult for him the opportunities of rebelling against him, and he will defend him against it, and he will deliver him just as he delivered Joseph, and Boaz, and Paltiel ben Laish, and many others like them. It was in this sense that the prophet prayed and said, "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us" that we may be proved worthy to receive the promise contained in the words, "He has established the work of our hands upon us." God has guaranteed to us that when he shall be pleased with us after the redemption he will correct our manners, establish our religion, and direct us in obeying the law, as it is said, "I shall put my spirit among you" (Ezekiel xxxvi. 27), and with regard to the knowledge of the law, God guarantees "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts I will write it" (Jeremiah xxxi. 32, 33). In these verses God says, "I will put my Torah in the heart of each one of them, and it shall be written in their hearts so that no one will teach his neighbour how God is to be worshipped, but they shall all know me, from the least of them even unto the greatest," and this is what our great prophet prayed for on our behalf before his death. And when we say his "death" we must not liken it to the death of other mortal men. His corpse remained

¹ *Joshua xxiviii. b.*

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pure even in death. His eye did not grow dim, and its moisture did not abate. He was as if he were not dead, for God appeared to him as usual. The light of God kissed the pure mouth with which he had so often been addressed and the pure words of which he made binding even upon himself. He thereby made our prophet a light to teach us his words. His spirit was taken from him in such a manner as God willed, not as the spirit is taken from the bodies of other men, but without the bitterness of death, and it was at once united with the ~~angel~~ ^{angel} and clothed with the body of angels like Michael and Gabriel, and he in his turn sang praises and thanksgiving to God even as they did. And even when he was amongst the angels his power was not less than theirs. It was not less when he was clothed in bodily form, surely it was not less when he was clothed in the form of angels. This too is what our Rabbis say who realised the mission of Moses, and how correct was their opinion when they said, "There are some who say that Moses our master is not dead but standeth and serveth God in heaven."¹ And this too is our opinion. And after he presented his intercession on our behalf he recited his blessings, and when he finished them, he said farewell to Israel and ascended heavenwards, and his Creator hid him till a time shall come when he shall be pleased with this world,² and then he will send him back to it, to assist the king who is to reign in the strength of God, that beloved one of God to whom testimony is borne in the verse "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee" (Psalm ii. 7). And this intercession has smoothed for us all the rugged ways of captivity, and it is the strong fortress in which we can take refuge in the time of misfortune until the time shall come which God has appointed for our deliverance, for the fulfilment of his promises to us.

Therefore reflect upon our letter, and what it teaches. May thy faith be perfected. May thy knowledge be corrected. The fundamental truths which we have placed before thee are sufficient for thee to rely upon. Reflect, then, upon what they demand of thee, so that thou mayest become righteous in the sight of thy Creator. It is necessary that this prayer which I have commented upon should be treasured up by thee, and that thou shouldst read it before ~~שמונה עשרה~~ ^{שמע ישראל}, seeking a blessing for thyself in its pure words, and uniting thyself to God by means of the prayer which was offered up by the best of men and the greatest of prophets, and there is no prayer better than it. And if men had only known its contents, and the fundamental truths which God has established in it for the strengthening of our religion and the correcting of our faith, they would have made it obligatory upon themselves every day, just as they did

¹ *Sotah*, 26b.
² See *Targum*, *Jerushalmi*, to Song of Moses, MS. (British Museum), additional 18,690, p. 219a.

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the reading of the Shema. I have therefore briefly made clear to you its contents, so that you may be guided in that which I have pointed out to you, and that you may imitate that which I have made clear to you, and may God guide all of us to understand its contents and to know his wishes; and may he cause his redemption to draw near in our days, and establish in our time that which he has promised us, and may he enlighten our darkness as he has assured us, and his assurance is indeed faithful. "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah lx. 2). And so may it be God's will.

This was written by Emanuel, the son of Rabbi Yechiel נבתיא.¹

¹ "His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the land" (Psalm xiv. 14).