

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LITURGY OF THE DAMASCENE KARAITES.

No one acquainted with the brightness, beauty, and spontaneity of thought and expression which characterize the Liturgy of the Synagogue can possibly bestow a large amount of admiration on the Services of the Karaites. As is usually the case, comparison with the really fine proves fatal, or all but fatal, to that which—without being destitute of certain merits of its own—is clearly inferior in point of beauty and the perennial interest which springs from deep-seated reality. The Karaites would probably have done wisely if they had retained the essential features of the ancient Hebrew Services and only adapted them here and there to what they regarded as their own special requirements. As it was, their opposition to Talmudism blinded them to their own better interests. The parts which they did retain they often mutilated and altered to such an extent that the few beautiful ancient phrases left shine out like pearls in the midst of a heap of far less valuable material. Nor were they much more fortunate in their imitations of classical Rabbanite models. To produce a really good and striking imitation a degree of talent is required which almost borders on genius, but—so far as poetry and higher religious inspiration are concerned—the Karaites were, and probably still are, as a body very far removed from the standard of their Rabbanite opponents. It is not my intention to speak of details in a brief introduction like this; but I will add that the estimate of the Karaite Services formed by Zunz (*Ritus*, pp. 156-62), and recently confirmed by Harkavy and Kaufmann Kohler

(*Jewish Encycl.* articles on "Karaites," vol. VII, pp. 440, 446), will certainly not be reversed by future scientific writers on this subject, although, of course, the new material that is now more generally available will greatly help to promote a fuller study of the whole matter.

The real interest of the Karaite Liturgy lies, not in its own intrinsic merit, but in its historical associations. No student of post-Talmudic Judaism can ignore the great Karaite schism which began about the middle of the eighth century, continued for a considerable period of time to increase in both polemical and social power, and still survives in a flourishing condition in the Crimea¹, although it has dwindled down to something that is not much more than nothing in its earlier strongholds in different parts of the East and European Turkey. But if Karaism must, from an historical point of view, be studied, it is clear that its forms of religious services must be studied too; for it is in the ritual of a religious body that most of its ideals, doctrines, hopes, and fears find a clear and popular utterance. Another kind of historical interest lies in the connexion that, of course, does exist between the Services of the Synagogue and those of the Karaites. It is from this point of view that Zunz approached the subject, and penned the pages of his *Ritus* already referred to. Again, the Karaite Services branched off from the orthodox ritual at a time when the Siddur, as it now exists, was in the process of formation or rather extension, and when the Mahzōr had not even begun to exist. The question, then, arises how much the Karaite Liturgy in its earliest form borrowed from the then existing authorized or unauthorized liturgical formulae. This question still awaits an answer. It may possibly never be answered at all, but it would clearly not be right to give up every attempt at finding a solution.

¹ According to Harkavy, *op. cit.*, p. 446, col. 1, the Karaites are estimated to number at the present time 10,000 in Russia, and about 2,000 in other countries.

The best known form of the Karaite Services¹ is, however, of a comparatively late date, having been redacted by Aaron ben Joseph, who appears to have been born in the Crimea, about the middle of the thirteenth century, though he later on flourished at Constantinople². That two kinds of earlier redactions existed has been known for some time past³. One of these was said to be very ancient, and the other was ascribed to R. Joseph, the father of the Aaron already mentioned. In addition to this information there is now the fact that the British Museum Karaite Service Books preserved in MS. form (Or. 2530, 2531, 2532, 2536, besides four volumes of Piyyūtim), and representing the use of Damascus and Jerusalem, differ in almost all matters of detail from the redaction of Aaron ben Joseph, though agreeing with it in its general principle of arrangement. The question, therefore, which must be asked is whether the British Museum texts represent the ancient form mentioned in Dr. Neubauer's work, or whether it is another form again. It is not likely to be the redaction of R. Joseph, the father of Aaron; for, supposing him to have lived in the Crimea, it would be strange that his order of Services should be found in use in Damascus and Jerusalem rather than in the Crimea itself. The probability is that Aaron ben Joseph merely issued a fresh redaction of the form of Services originally planned or executed by his father, and that the later recension of this order superseded the earlier. There, therefore, only remains the possibility of the Palestinian Services being identical with the much older form already referred to. One might even regard the identification as probable rather than possible, for there is so far no other Karaite ritual to dispute the claim to antiquity thus made for the now accessible ritual of Damascus and Jerusalem. The fact

¹ Printed at Venice, 1529; Vienna, 1854, &c.

² He composed his important Commentary on the Pentateuch, entitled ספר המבואר in 1294.

³ See Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, pp. 58, 140.

that Palestine became the headquarters of the Karaite body not so very long after its rise within the Persian dominions would also seem to favour the probability that an earlier liturgical use would be preserved in the two Palestinian cities named rather than in Constantinople and the Crimea. But no fully satisfying answer can in the present state of our knowledge be given. Future discoveries may either confirm or overthrow any theory that may be formed on the strength of the data before us.

Turning now to the special part of the subject as represented by the text given in the following pages, it must be admitted that the short treatise exhibits, if not the high-water mark of the Karaite devotional spirit, at least a very fair approximation to it. It is here called an Introduction, not so much in the usual sense of affording a clear and historical insight into the details of the Karaite Liturgy—for this it only does to a slight extent—but rather because it was intended to promote the general spiritual preparedness for prayer on the part of its readers. It will be seen that pp. 510-15 deal with the proper attitude of the worshipper towards his Creator, the times of prayer, the language to be used, cleanliness, &c. On p. 515 begins a section treating on the obligation to honour places of worship, and on the manner of doing so. Then follow remarks (p. 516) on the treatment that is to be accorded to the Sefer Torah. Lastly (p. 517) there is a paragraph describing the kind of personal character that befits those who act as ministers in places of worship.

The attentive reader will easily discover the extent to which the rules contained in the treatise are to be ultimately referred to Rabbinical tradition, and he will also notice the points of difference between the Rabbanites and the principles laid down in the Karaite use of Damascus. One of the most striking rules is that the scrolls of the law are to be kept in the Synagogue only.

It should be borne in mind, however, that Karaite worship appears here in a special local colouring belonging

to a definite time; for the treatise was written, and probably also composed, at Damascus in the year 1700, and is prefixed to the forms of week-day and festival services as then in use in that city. No author's name is given, nor are any authorities quoted in it. It is possible that Daniel ben Moses Pērōz, who figures very largely as a book-collector and author at that period¹, and who (with the exception, however as it seems, of the present treatise) wrote the MS. from which the text is taken, was himself the author or compiler of it; but all that can at present be urged in favour of this suggestion is that if Daniel had not himself been the author, he would have been likely to have inserted the author's name, or given some indication of the origin of the treatise in a MS. planned and partly written out by himself with a view to presenting it to the Synagogue of his city. If, on the other hand, he was himself the author of it, his silence might legitimately be ascribed to modesty. Anyhow, all that we know of Daniel Pērōz proves him to have been a person of considerable capacity and zeal, and he was no doubt quite capable of writing a treatise like the present one.

The text derives some additional interest from the fact that it represents an undoubted specimen of the Arabic dialect used by cultivated Jews at Damascus at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A few remarks on linguistic peculiarities will be found in the notes on the text and translation. For the rest I must leave this part of the subject to Arabic specialists. My translation must in some instances be regarded as conjectural.

¹ See Pinsker, לקושי קרמונית, pp. 130-1, 167-9 (where also several other members of his family are named); also Neubauer, *Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek*, p. 26; Steinschneider, *Die arabische Literatur der Juden*, p. 258.

ועד • חם יקרא אלברכה מקדמה אלתורה כמה הו מדכור פי אלסדאדיר •
 ויקרא מן אלתורה מא יכצה • ובעד דלך יקרא אלתשייעה כמה הו
 מדכור פי אלסדאדיר • ואעלם אן ילום אלגמאעה אכראם ספר תורה ענד
 רנועה ללהיכל כמה דכרנא ענד כרוגה ושלום על ישראל :

ובעד אן דכרנא דלך נחתאג נדכר מא יגב עלי כאדם בתי כנסיות :
 פיגב עלי אלכאדם אן יכון דא דיאנה ירא שמים בעל חרירות שבעאן
 אלנפם דו קוה צאחב נשאט • ולא יכון מסתהתר כסלאן ויכון מעתקדא"
 פי כדמתה להא אנהא שרף לה ואכתסאב אגר מן את ולא יכון מתוהם
 באן כדמתה להא ככדמה" אחד אלאדמיין ולא יכון מהמל גיר שפוק עלי
 אמואל אלנאם ובאל אחרי עלי קדש יי • ולא יכון נאייה כדמתה להא
 לאגרה יאכדהא וסעיה יכון¹ פי אלכדמה יכון¹ לונה את חתי יכתסב
 אלאגר מנה תע • ואן כאן כהן או לוי כאן אולי באלכדמה • ולא יגון
 לאחדא" אלתצבף פי כלי בית יי אנה יגעלהם חול • ואן תהרי שי מנהם
 יכזו ואן כאן יעוד מנה נפע יעמל מנה אשיא מן קדש לקדש ושלום :

II. TRANSLATION.

In the name of the Lord, the God of eternity, blessed be his name.

With the help of God, exalted be he, do we begin to record the obligation lying on every believer, namely the worship of God by means of prayer.

Know thou that the word צלוח (i. e. prayer) is a noun derived from צלאה, that is to say that man should by it be joined² to his Creator. It is obligatory both on grounds of reason and of tradition³. For God, exalted be he, is the most entitled to worship, and gratitude, and praise, and glorification, and laud, and exaltation, and adoration, and sanctification, and to bowing down, and standing up, and humiliation before him, exalted be he. From him also must the supply of necessities be asked, as also the remission of guilt and sin, and inspired guidance to rectitude. And these are the things comprised in prayer. And he who does not worship his Creator and neglects prayer is worthy of death. It is also necessary for us to

¹ Omit one יכון.

² The author begins with a false etymology, connecting צלוח with the root וצל (to join) whence a *nomen actionis* صلة.

³ Literally "hearing."

accustom our children to prayer and worship, so that the obligation might be easy to them when they arrive at it. And of the principles [underlying] all the commandments these are the most general¹. It is also obligatory on women as on men; there is no difference. The number of prayers is twice in the natural day, which begins with the second stage in the setting of the sun, namely, the latter partitions in the time of twilight, and ends [the next day] in the latter stage in the setting of the sun, namely of the latter of its partitions. And their times are morning and evening, in accordance with what is written: "And to stand every morning to laud and to praise the Lord, and thus also in the evening." This has been ordered in accordance with the times of the sacrifices, and the song, and the worship, which they used to recite in the house of the Lord, as it is written: "And at the time when the burnt-offering began the Song of the Lord" down to "everything till the completion of the burnt-offering." And the obligation of prayer at these two times is an everlasting obligation. But there has also come down in the sacred narratives a mention of prayer offered up by the prophets and [other] good men at times different from those mentioned, namely at midday, the night-watches, midnight, and at the time of the [morning] twilight; as our Master David, peace be upon him, said: "At evening, and morning, and midday do I meditate and groan." He also said: "In the night-watches do I meditate upon thee;" and again: "At midnight do I rise to praise thee;" also: "I rise early in the twilight and cry." Thus has the Scripture also reported of our Master Daniel, peace be upon him, that he used to pray three times in the day, as it is written: "And three times in the day did he bend upon his knees, and pray and give thanks before God." And the learned, blessed be their memory, have agreed that the third prayer, namely, that of midday, is voluntary, not obligatory. He who desires to do so may offer it. But it is understood that voluntary things assume the character of obligatory ones when continuously attended to. And we know that some of the people of our time have continuously attended to midday prayers. And when we find persons who thus continuously attend to it, it is obligatory upon us to confirm the custom. For it is required that the worship of God should be practised² at all times so long as man remains tied to life, and more especially when he is in a condition of prosperity and peace, as his beloved, peace be upon him, said: "I shall bless

¹ The phrase is difficult in any case, but the substitution of שמך for אלהים appears to give the best sense obtainable.

² This is a conjectural rendering. The meaning of התחנך given in the Dictionaries does not fit in here.

God at all time, his praise shall be always in my mouth." And as for the limit of time for morning prayer, it is in accordance with the decision¹ of the learned, blessed be their memory, that its appointed time is after the appearance of the morning twilight and the brightening of the light, namely from near the time when the sun-rays become visible to the appearance of the first part of its disk. But when the sun has once risen, the time of prayer is no longer. Its time, namely that for the reciting of the *Korban*, is passed. But as for "*Musāfōth*," they may be recited after the rising of the sun. And as for the appointed time of evening prayer, it lasts from the disappearance of the sun's disk till the end of the evening twilight. And the appointed time for midday prayer is the time when the sun stands midway in the firmament, this being the meaning of the word צהרִים, for צהר is the singular of the dual form, that is to say two brightnesses, one in the east and one in the west. After having mentioned the times of prayer, we say that when prayer is obligatory, namely morning and evening, it should be in a form divinely ordered², for we find that Hezekiah and the men of his generation charged the Levites with it, as it is written: "And King Hezekiah and the princes ordered the prophets to praise God in the words of David and Asaph the seer, &c." But when the prayer is of the voluntary kind, this is not necessary. And if any one asks whether a person who is not able to pray in Hebrew on account of being ignorant of it, should pray in whatever language he understands or should abstain from praying; the answer is that it is proper for a man to pray in a language which he understands and not in a language which he does not understand. But far be it that any Israelitish person should not know any prayer that he can say in Hebrew, for none of them can as time goes on help getting to know some of the prayers and comprehending their meaning. But it is proper that one should pray in a language one understands if that which he prays [in Hebrew] is difficult to him. And as for the direction of the face at prayer, it is necessary that it should be towards the holy *Kiblah*, that is to say the Temple, which is Jerusalem. For it is this place which God, exalted be he, chose for sacrifices, and for prayer, and for worship³. . . . Let us pray the Lord, exalted be he, that he may allow us to witness its restoration, as our Master Ezekiel, peace be upon him, has prophesied. And for the place of prayer in the captivity, it is best that it should be in

¹ This is apparently here the meaning of קבוע מא.

² מן אלמנל, literally: sent down, revealed.

³ The phrase מר בני ואלמנל seems untranslatable. The text must be corrupt in this place.

synagogues, as it is written: "In the assemblies bless ye God the Lord." But as for one who for some cause or other finds it difficult to get to the synagogues, it is necessary that the place in which he prays should be free of unclean matter, a requirement of both reason and tradition. And no one should engage in prayer before having done what is needful, namely purification. One should cleanse oneself, then thoroughly wash one's hands with something that removes the traces of unclean matter. After that one should wash the face, and the eyes, and the nose, and the mouth, and the cavities of the ears. This must be done because the face is exposed to dust, and the eyes to the tears which issue from them, and the cavities of the ears to secreted matter, and the nose to the fluid that issues from it, and the same is the case with the mouth. Then shall one wash the feet up to the ankles and the hands up to the wrists. This washing is in imitation of our Master Aaron, peace be upon him, and of his children, as it is written: "When they enter the tent of meeting and when they approach the altar, they shall wash, &c." Then comes the cleansing of one's clothes from unclean matter. And if a man has special garments assigned for prayer, it is better still. Then the cleansing of the heart and its purification from all pollution, and greediness, and evil thoughts, as it is written: "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away your evil deeds, leave off doing wrong." And if it be true that this is obligatory on every one both at prayer and apart from prayer at all times, it is yet more binding at prayer. And it does not befit a man to pray without having made a partition between his heart and the lower part of his body. And this is to be done by putting on breeches or something about the middle of his body like a girdle or a waist-wrapper. One shall then take hold of the *Şişith*¹ and envelop oneself in it, and cover one's face, so as to shut out the things of sense appearing [around]. One shall utter the benediction and say: "Blessed be thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hath sanctified us with his commandments, and enjoined *Şişith* upon us." This covering [of the face] is in imitation of the Seraphim, peace be upon them², as it is written "With two he covered his face." It is also in imitation of our Master Moses, peace be upon him, as it is written: "And Moses hid his face." And he who leads³

¹ Here used as a singular, i. e. the *שִׁשִׁית* containing the *שִׁשִׁית*.

² A curious use of this phrase as applied to the Seraphim, probably a mere slip.

³ In the MS. an *ש* is here written over, so that the form is *שִׁשִׁית*. Either this form or the more usual *שִׁשִׁית* generally means simply "he who is praying," but the context (see the following parts of the translation) seems to require the meaning of "Īmām."

the service should not carry anything in his hand, nor shall his handkerchief be in his sleeve, nor shall there be anything on his shoulder or on his head; and he shall not point with his hand, nor wink with his eyes, nor turn himself about either to the right or to the left, and he shall not occupy his mind with any tale he may have heard, and he shall not blow his nose, and he shall not throw out spittle¹ to a distance, but he should in case of necessity throw it into a corner of the handkerchief that may be in his bosom, or at his side on the ground. And he shall neither be torpid nor stretch out his hands in agitation. And it is not right to say one's prayers on a chest, or a chair, or a couch. And there shall be nothing between him and the ground. He shall then turn towards the Kiblah in fear and trembling as if he had come into the presence of a mighty ruler, fearing to meet him, trembling for fear of him, anxious to do him honour, as it is written: "Who shall not fear thee, O King of the nations." And between him and the Kiblah there shall be a space sufficient for prostration; not less than that, lest he should be hemmed in; nor more, in order to avoid disturbing the mind of him who may happen to lead the service with him². Then shall he for a time make a devout invocation before beginning prayers so as to chase away his [ordinary] thoughts and fix his attention. He shall then throw himself on the ground, and press his face upon it and say: "O God, behold I press the greatest of my members upon the place on which I tread with my feet, namely the dust to which I shall return in accordance with what thou hast told me: 'For earth art thou, and to earth shalt thou return.'" And he shall make his soul like unto the ground on which he had prostrated³ himself, by confessing to himself that he is of dust. And it is also obligatory on him who leads the service that he should be cognizant of the main principles of the Law, grounded in all the ordinances, fearing God, exalted be he, and [also fearing] the abyss of transgression and sin, so that he should know and firmly believe that he is standing before his Creator, exalted be he, in an attitude of obedience, not from fear of punishment nor as desirous of reward. And he should when standing place his feet evenly, and he should keep them apart on

¹ The word קִרְוֵי is difficult, but the verb קָרַק makes the sense clear.

² The original is here rather difficult to construe. Dozy gives אִם with ב in the sense of acting as *Imām* along with another. The same will probably hold good of the xth form as used here. That several persons officiated together in leading the services among the Karaites is shown e. g. on pp. 169-70 of this MS., where certain recitations are appointed for five חַוֵּי in succession.

³ אִם apparently used in this sense.

account of his toes that he may be able to steady himself. And he should not put one foot upon the other, nor fix his hand on his waist, because such a thing is the opposite of contrition. And it is necessary for him that he should bend his eyes towards the ground, and direct his heart to his Creator, exalted be he. Then shall he cross his hands over his heart as in the attitude of a servant before his lord, well-mannered, confessing the sins that he has committed, for he is a sinner, a transgressor, vile, miserable, unable to guide himself, and he has neither one that answereth¹, nor one who regardeth, or speaketh [for him] except God, exalted be he. And this shall be done with a saddened soul and a broken spirit, as it is written: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Then shall he look for his consolation, and wait for his succour, and hope for his mercy, as it is written: "As the eyes of servants towards the hand of their Master." Then shall he stretch out his hands to God, exalted be he, praying for the apportioning of his need, and cognizant of the multitude of gifts [received] from him, exalted be he, as has said his beloved, peace be upon him, "I have stretched out my hands towards thee," "I have extended the palm of my hand to thee," "Lift up your hands in holiness and bless the Lord." And he shall join together² the inner sensations like the outer ones, as it is written: "We lift up our hearts with the hands to God in Heaven." Then shall he purify his attention for prayer. And it is also necessary for him with regard to the reading, correctness of diction, and proper articulation with his lips. And at the reading of "Shema" it is necessary that he should make a break between all letters that are like each other, so that they should not be joined together. Such are "Bekhol-lebhābhka," "Al-lēbhābhkem," &c., and the like in other cases also. And as for the word קוּן , it is necessary to prolong it much, and he should dwell in his mind on the fact that God, exalted be he, is the fullness of the heaven and the earth, and the four sides of the world. And the lengthening out should be on the letter Dal. And the Īmām should not lower his voice, on account of the congregation who follow him in prayer. Nor should any of the congregation raise his voice above him [i. e. the Īmām] nor [should they do so] in reciting what he gives out to recite. And it is said concerning one who prays in private, and leaves off praying with the congregation without a preventing cause, that he is worthy of punishment, because there is in it opposition to what he, exalted be he, said: "In congregations bless [the Lord]." And it is said that they who are led in prayer shall, when the Īmām says: "Magnify the Lord with me," respond

¹ I have ventured to substitute קוּן for קוּן ; see text.

² i. e. join them together for the purpose of lifting them up in prayer.

“Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised.” And when he has said “Lift up your hands in holiness and bless the Lord,” they shall lift up their hands and say, “Blessed be the Lord,” and other similar responses. And they who are led in prayer should do what the Īmām bids them do without raising their voice higher than his. And they must also wait until he shall have finished what he has to utter; then shall they respond to him as custom requires. Nor should he on his part begin [a fresh part] before those who make the responses have finished. And the Īmām must also fix his intention, the intention of the heart counting above everything. And prayer is not permitted to one whose mind is occupied with anything apart from the prayer, and he shall not be perturbed like a drunken man or a forgetful man, and by no means¹ like one who is occupied with that which disturbing thoughts, until he has cleared his mind. And it is necessary that he should strive to bring about proper intention, and this by driving out all imaginations with all possible striving.

Let us now speak of bowing and kneeling and prostration. As for bowing (כריכה) it is a term applied to the posture of one who rests on his knees with his legs against his thigh. And as for kneeling (כריעה), it is the posture upon the knees without pressing the legs against the thigh, as it is written concerning Solomon, peace be upon him: “He rose up from before the altar of the Lord from bowing upon his knees.” And if it is joined with the word אפים, it means bowing down with the forehead, with the breast upon the ground without touching the ground with his face. And as for prostration (השתחויה), it means falling down on the face and prostrating his figure by itself until the vertebrae become loosened. The term also applies to bowing down to the earth with the forehead only, when the word אפים is not joined with it; for when it is so joined, it signifies bowing down with the forehead together with the breast, as we have said in connexion with כריעה. Let us now speak of the different parts of the service. It is necessary that the Īmām and the congregation should do alike in the different parts of the service. When he stands they must stand, and when he sits they must sit. And if they have done the opposite of what he does, it is contrary to what it should be. As for the parts during which they should be standing, they are, for example, giving of praise, and magnifying, and the declaration of the divine unity, and the reading of the Kōrban, and the recitation of the Shema and what follows, and the Song of Moses, and the chapters of Mūsāfōth. And as for the parts during which they shall be sitting, they are the confession of

¹ This is a mild rendering of אלהים אלה which follows.

sins, and the recitations of the Widdūyōth, and the Psalm "Hānēnī," and the like.

Know thou that יהוה רחום has been appointed at the beginning of prayer, because prayer is instead of sacrifice, whereby sins are forgiven. For it is now absent from us, but God, exalted be he, is merciful and forgives, having permitted the words of our lips to be in its place. And when he who leads in prayer¹ has begun, the congregation should repeat it with a loud voice. And as for the parts for prostration, it is to be on three occasions, namely, at the magnification of his name, exalted be he, and at the confession, and at the prayer for his mercy, exalted be he. And the congregation, both men and women should concentrate their attention behind him who leads the prayer¹; and it should be in soberness and purity on the part of both men and women, for of the unclean prayer is not accepted, and more especially of those who are seriously unclean. And the congregation, both men and women, should not occupy their minds with news or worldly narrations, lest their worship should be spoilt, and they be punished by God, exalted be he. And they must attend to the Īmām, so that they should understand the words he utters, and they shall not raise their voice above his; and when they make responses, their voice should be lower than his. And when the magnification is uttered, they shall repeat his words, as "Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord?" "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." "Holy, holy, holy," melodiously and gently and sweetly, and with the soul well affected. And when the Widdūyōth and the confession of sins are uttered by the Īmām, the congregation shall evince gentleness and supplication and weeping and penitence and inward contemplation until the heart shall become inflamed thereby and the tears flow. This is the purport of what is written "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." And he, exalted be he, will receive and answer him who does so, as he said, exalted be he, to Hezekiah, peace be upon him, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." It is also said concerning the lady Hannah, "and she prayed to the Lord, and kept on weeping." And prayer in the midst of the congregation is in this way better than the prayer of a single person. And it is said that the קרישה should not be recited by less than ten persons, for in this way the magnification is greater. And Israelites should chant one to another in prayer, as the angels do, for they call one to another, as it is written, "And they called one to another and said." And it is clear that prayer made by the congregation is greater than the prayer of individuals. May God, exalted be he, accept it. Amen.

¹ The word קריש is here used; see note 3 on p. 520.

After having spoken of all these things, we must also speak concerning synagogues, may their glory be exalted¹.

Know thou that it is obligatory upon us to honour and reverence synagogues, because they are called small sanctuaries, for worship takes place in them during this captivity, they being to us in place of the great sanctuary, may it be quickly rebuilt; and God, exalted be he, has said "And my sanctuary shall ye fear." And it is obligatory in accordance with what we have said concerning them, that one should not eat in them, nor drink in them. Nor should jests be made in them, nor should there be laughter or strange tales, or worldly calculations or any ordinary things, for they are holy. And if a synagogue has two doorways, it is not allowed to make a roadway of it, nor should one mount it for a dwelling-place except its ministers, or travelling strangers without, however, staying long. And the setting out for it should be done quickly, and it should take place before the time fixed for prayers, so as to be accounted a zealous worshipper. And the going out thereof should be done in the opposite manner, as it is written, "I have elected to tarry on the threshold of the House of my God." And one should not pass by it, or move away from it², without reading some part of either the Law, may he magnify it, or of the Prophets, or of the Psalms, even if it be only one verse. Among the chief ways of honouring it are the treasury, and the oil, and the matting, and the candles, and the curtains. And as for the order in which the people should stand therein at prayer it is to be as follows: the old people and the distinguished and the learned should be in the front, and the delicate people in the middle, and the young people behind. And no one should enter it who does not understand, nor women, nor little children who do not understand anything. And it is said that the early attendance at prayer is one of the things that prolongs life. And know thou that the parts of the synagogue differ from each other. The part at the entrance answers to the outer court which is the outlet thereof like the קאטע³; and the middle part answers to the inner court; and as for the place of the oracle which is the Haikal it is the place of the book of the Law. And as for the case [of the Law] it is in place of the Ark; and as for the book of the Law, may he magnify and glorify it, it is in place of the tables of the covenant. And it follows from this that no one should draw near it except when there is need, and in case of necessity, be it in order to take it out for

¹ Conjectural; reading ירום הרום for 'יר' ה', but the phrase is properly used of persons only.

² See the note on the text.

³ On the different meanings of this word see the Dictionaries.

reading in it, or for mending anything connected with it. And only the clean should come near it.

We must also speak of the obligations relating to the book of the Law. Know thou that the book of the Law, may he magnify and exalt it, should only be in synagogues, for they are specially venerated in connexion with divine worship. And it should lie in a place against the Kiblah. And the place should be provided with doors, and it should be covered with a curtain, and it [the book of the Law] should be placed into a case and covered with a mantle called in the sacred language *כַּטְמֵנֶת* [for *כַּטְמֵנֶת*]. And over it the ornaments¹ for they are part of the honour [due to it]. And one should not turn one's back to the place where it is, that is to say, turn the back of one's head to it. And those present should stand when it is brought out of the Haikal, and they should walk with it whilst praising and magnifying, as is mentioned in the service-books. And people should not crowd round him who carries it, nor should any one touch the mantle with his hand for the purpose of receiving it or kissing it; nor should one roll in the dust before it, because this would . . .², and also because he might leave on it a trace of perspiration and spittle. For the book of the Law is like a king. And it is necessary that at the time of its going forth the congregation shall stand round it in rows, and that they should bend their heads to the ground as a service to God, exalted be he, and as an honour to his ordinance. And he who approaches to read from it shall approach it like a servant before the representative of his master, whom he has appointed to observe him and bear witness concerning him, as it is written, "And he shall there be to thee as a witness." And one shall approach it well-mannered, in fear, and thinking little of himself. Then shall he open his mouth in declaring to those who listen to him the greatness of his name, exalted be he, as he shall also declare his greatness before reading out of the book of the Law, and he shall say, "Bless ye the Lord, the blessed One," and when they hear it they shall answer, "Blessed be the Lord, Who is blessed for ever and ever." Then shall he read the blessing which is used as an introduction to the reading of the Law, as is mentioned in the service-books³. And he shall read out of the Law the portion appointed. And after that shall be read the concluding blessing, as is mentioned in the service-books. And know thou that the congregation must show honour to the book

¹ See note on the text.

² The meaning given in Dozy of *جهرم* II cum *علي* pers. is "braver," "morguer."

³ *סדר* must be a broken plural of *סדר*.

of the Law when it returns to the Haikal, as we have mentioned in connexion with its coming forth, and peace be upon Israel.

And after we have spoken of these things, we must also speak concerning him who ministers in the synagogues.

It is necessary for the minister to be a person of a religious turn of mind, one who fears heaven, careful, of a satisfied spirit, possessed of strength, a man of activity. He shall not be frivolous or careless, and he shall be firm in his service to it; for it is an honour to him and a means of obtaining a reward from God, exalted be he. And he shall not be opinionated, because his service to it is like the service to a human being. And he shall not be careless or merciless concerning the property of people, and so much the more concerning the holy things of the Lord. And the object of his service to it shall not be the reward which he receiveth. And his intention in the ministry shall be directed towards God, exalted be he, so that he may receive the reward from him, exalted be he. And if he is a priest or a Levite, he is the more to be preferred in his ministry. And no one should make private use of the vessels of the house of the Lord, for he would thereby render them common. And if any of them get broken, it shall be hidden away. And if one might get a benefit from it, it may be so used: holy things being turned into other holy things, and peace!

GEORGE MARGOLIOUTH.