

יום טוב ON הוצאת התורה י"ג מדות RECITING THE

It is somewhat surprising that on the holidays and on the ימים נוראים, after opening the ארון קודש to remove the ספרי תורה for קריאת התורה, we follow the practice of reciting רבנו של עולם. (ה', ה', א-ל רחום וחנון . . .). Why do we recite the י"ג מדות, a prayer that is generally said on fast days in conjunction with סליחות and וידוי, confession, on the שלש רגלים, which are viewed as days of שמחה, joy? It is further surprising that no early סידורים include this practice. As late as the 1500's, סידורים do not include the practice. We begin to see the custom described in סידורים published after the 1700's. Why the sudden change in practice? All of the סידורים that include the custom attribute the practice to the ספר שערי ציון written by Rabbi Nosson Nota Hanover, ז"ל, who died in 1683 and who had been a student of the Maharshal. His book, שערי ציון, became a very popular kabalistic collection of תפילות and מנהגים. In סידורים published after the 1700's, in the section described as: הוצאת ספר תורה, we find the following note printed above the י"ג מדות:

תפלה משערי ציון' מה שאומרים בשלש רגלים בשעת הוצאת ספר תורה ואמר מקודם י"ג מדות ג"פ ואחר כך יאמר תפלה זו (רבנו של עולם).

Translation: A prayer that is taken from the book: Sha'Arei Zion that is recited on the holidays while the Torah is being removed from its ark. It is customary to recite the Thirteen Attributes of G-d three times and the prayer that begins: Ribbono Shel Olam.

We must begin our discussion by distinguishing the role that the י"ג מדות play when they are linked to סליחות and וידוי and when they are said as part of הוצאת ספר תורה on the שלש רגלים. Why did the י"ג מדות become linked to סליחות and וידוי?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ראש השנה דף יז' עמ' ב'-ויעבר ה' על פניו ויקרא, אמר רבי יוחנן: אלמלא מקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרו, מלמד שנתעטף הקדוש ברוך הוא כשליח צבור, והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה. אמר לו: כל זמן שישראל חוטאין – יעשו לפני כסדר הזה, ואני מוחל להם. ה' ה' – אני הוא קודם שיחטא האדם, ואני הוא לאחר שיחטא האדם ויעשה תשובה. א-ל רחום וחנון, אמר רב יהודה: ברית כרותה לשלש עשרה מדות שאינן חוזרות ריקם, שנאמר (שמות לד) הנה אנכי כרת ברית.

Translation: And 'the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed [etc.]. Rabbi Johanan said: Were it not written in the text, it would be impossible for us to say such a thing; this verse teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, drew His robe round Him like the prayer leader of a congregation and showed Moshe this

1. The practice can be found on page 45 of the ספר שערי ציון published in 1692 in Prague available for viewing and downloading from www.hebrewbooks.org.

order of prayer. He said to him: Whenever Israel sins, let them recite this service before Me, and I will forgive them. 'The Lord, the Lord': I am the Eternal before a man sins and the same after a man sins and repents. 'A G-d merciful and gracious:' Rab Judah said: A covenant has been made with the thirteen attributes that those who recite the Thirteen Attributes will not be turned away empty-handed, as it says, Behold I make a covenant.

A survey of Rabbinic literature uncovers that our Sages point to two aspects of our recital of the **י"ג מדות** during **ספר תורה** on the **שלוש רגלים** that distinguish it from the way the **י"ג מדות** are recited on fast days. First, they recommend that we recite the **י"ג מדות** during **ספר תורה** on the **שלוש רגלים** not as a **בקשה**, request, but as **שבח**, praise. Second, they point to the fact that the key moment in which we recite the **י"ג מדות** on fast days is not when we recite them as part of the **סליחות** and **וידוי** but when we recite them as part of **קריאת התורה**; when the **בעל קורא** stops and gives the congregation an opportunity to recite the **י"ג מדות** ahead of him. That may explain one additional difference in the manner in which the **י"ג מדות** are recited during **ספר תורה** on the **שלוש רגלים** as opposed to how they are recited as part of **סליחות** and **וידוי**-we omit the opening line of: **ויעבר ה' על פניו ויקרא**. Here is one source that presents these differences:

שו"ת דברי יציב² חלק אורח חיים סימן רמ"ג-ג) וא"כ מובן היטב כוונת רש"י ותורת אמת היתה בפיהו, דבעת קריאת התורה דפרשה זו דתענית ויחל משה, אז הבטיח שאם יעשו לפני כסדר הזה דייקא, כמו שהיה באותו מעשה שהקב"ה התעטף כש"צ ומשה צועק ה' ה', וכן יתעטף הש"ץ ויקרא בתורה ויענו הקהל, ואז השי"ת מוחל לעונותיהם. וא"כ לא הוצרך הש"ם לפרש יותר, דאנחנו ממילא נדע שזה הוא בתענית שאז קורין ויחל ואז הוא הזמן לומר י"ג מדות. ודומיא לזה אמרו במדרש תנחומא [תשא אות ג'] לענין פרשת שקלים, דא"ל הקדוש ברוך הוא חיך כשם שאתה עומד כעת ונותן להם פרשת שקלים ואתה זוקף את ראשון כן בכל שנה ושנה שקורין לפני פרשת שקלים כאילו אתה עומד שם ואתה זוקף את ראשון, ועיי' לאא"ז בבני יששכר [מאמרי אדר מאמר ב'].

Translation: We can now well understand the comments of Rashi, who always reveals the true intent of the Torah, that it is Kriyas Ha'Torah on a fast day when we read the section of the Torah in which the Thirteen Attributes of G-d are mentioned, that is the act that G-d referred to as being what brings the Jewish People forgiveness. We must conduct ourselves as G-d did with Moshe: i.e. G-d donned a talis like a prayer leader and Moshe began crying out to G-d: G-d, G-d, etc. In a like manner, the Torah leader wraps himself in a Talis on a fast day, reads from the Torah and the congregation recites the Thirteen Attributes of G-d. It is through that act that G-d forgives the Jewish People. As a result, the Gemara did not need to provide any additional details for Rashi to know that the Gemara was referring to a fast day. We know by the circumstances described by the Gemara that they have in mind a fast day on which this section of the Torah is customarily read. That it is the appropriate time to recite the Thirteen Attributes of G-d.

2. Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, F"l, the Klausenberger Rav (1905-1994).

3. Rabbi Halberstam is trying to explain the basis on which רש"י concluded that the **גמרא** that we quoted above contained a lesson on how we should conduct ourselves on fast days.

להבין את התפלה

Similarly, we learned in the Midrash Tanchuma [Parshas Ki Tisa, paragraph 3] concerning the donations of the half Shekel. G-d said to Moshe: just as you stand today and teach them the requirement to donate a Half Shekel and you count them so too in the future as long as the Jewish People read this section of the Torah dealing with the Half Shekel, I will deem it as if you are standing there and are counting the People.

א"כ העיקר הוא בשעת הקריאה, אלא רבותינו לאחר חתימת הש"ס תקנו לומר ג"כ י"ג מדות בפיוטים וסליחות, אבל מדינא דהש"ס כל הזכרת י"ג מדות שייך דייקא בשעת הקריאה, ולזה פירש"י ביומא דתעניתא דאז קורין ויחל.

Translation: Therefore the main recital of the Thirteen Attributes occurs during the Torah reading on a fast day. After the completion of the Talmud, our Sages added the practice of reciting the Thirteen Attributes in conjunction with reciting Piyuttim and Selichos. Nevertheless, the basic requirement outlined in the Talmud was not altered and the primary recital of the Thirteen Attributes continues to be during Kriyas Ha'Torah. That is why Rashi knew that the day to recite the Thirteen Attributes is on a fast day, a day in which the required Torah reading includes the Thirteen Attributes.

ד) ומה שתקנו דוקא ביומא דתעניתא, הוא משום דיומא דרחמי הוא, דומיא דכ"ד ברכות שתקנו לתענית, ואמרינן בברכות כ"ט ע"א ונמרינהו בכל יומא, ומשני אימת אמרינהו שלמה ביומא דרחמי אנן נמי ביומא דרחמי אמרינן להו עיין שם, ועיין במנורת המאור נר ג' ח"א כלל ג' ח"א סו"פ כ"ה לאחר שהביא גמ' זו כתב, ובכל ימי בקשת רחמים מוסיף בהם בתפלה זכרון י"ג מדות שאנו מובטחין בהקב"ה שאינם חוזרות ריקם מלפניו כדגרסי' בפ"ק דר"ה וכו' עיין שם, ועיין ג"כ בירושלמי פ"ד דברכות ה"ג דדרשו ליענך ה' ביום צרה דהיינו יומא דתעניתא עיין שם.

Translation: Our Sages instituted the practice of reciting the Thirteen Attributes specifically on a fast day because fast days are considered days in which G-d exhibits compassion. For a similar reason Shemona Esrei was expanded to include 24 Brachos on fast days. We learned in Maseches Brachos 29a: let us recite the Shemona Esrei of 24 Brachos every day- the Gemara answered: only on fast days because they are days on which G-d exhibits compassion. See the comments of the Menoras Ha'Maor Section 3, 1, 3, 1 in which he declares that on any day in which G-d exhibits compassion, we should add the recital of the Thirteen Attributes to the end of Shemona Esrei and by doing so we are confident that G-d will answer our prayers. See also the Talmud Yerushalmi, Maseches Brachos, chapter 4 where they explain the verse of Ya'Ancha Hashem B'Eis Tzara as being a reference to fast days.

ובזה יש מקור למנהג אשכנז שלא לומר י"ג מדות בכל יום, כיון דזה אינו שייך רק ליום התענית. ומובן ג"כ מש"כ הרמ"ז באגרותיו סי' י"ד, ומובא בשערי תשובה או"ח סי' תפ"ה, שלא לאמר הי"ג מדות ביום טוב דרך בקשה אלא דרך שבח עיין שם, ולהנ"ל יבואר דאדרבה זה שייך ליומא דרחמי. וגם משום כך מובן מה דמביא שם דכשחל בשבת אינו אומר כלל, דאז חמיר יותר דאין לומר בו שום ענין של תחינה.

Translation: This may further explain the custom among Ashkenazim not to recite the Thirteen Attributes as part of Tachanun every day; i.e. it is appropriate to include the recital of the Thirteen Attributes only on fast days. This view of the Thirteen Attributes also explains that which was written by the Ramaz in his letters, Siman 14, and quoted by the Sha'arei Teshuva, Orach Chaim, paragraph 488 that one should not recite the Thirteen Attributes on Yom Tov in the form of a request but as a means of heaping praise on G-d.

We do not recite the Thirteen Attributes by way of request on Yom Tov because that is an act that is appropriate only on fast days. The fact that the Thirteen Attributes can be said both as requests and as praise may explain why when Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, we do not recite the Thirteen Attributes because on Shabbos, it is inappropriate to recite any prayer that can be mistaken for a request.

The text of the paragraph that begins: **י"ג מדות של עולם** that follows the recital of the **י"ג מדות של עולם** that we recite today matches the text found in the **ספר שערי ציון**. One exception to that rule is a version of the **י"ג מדות של עולם** that was recited by some on the first two days of **פסח**. The following is found on page 259 of the **סידור תפלה ישראל** published 1820 in Rodville (?):

סידור תפלה ישראל – בב' ימים ראשונים של פסח אומרים זה אחר י"ג מדות מהאר"ז – רבנו של עולם, מלא משאלותינו לטובה והפק רצוננו והוציאנו מעבדות לחרות משעבוד לגאולה מאפלה לאור גדול מאבל ליויט ונהיה ששים ושמחים בבנין עירך ובית מקדשך ותתננו לחן ולחסד ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני כל רואינו ותן לנו עושר וכבוד ונכסים לעבודתך כמו שנתת לאבותינו במצרים בימים ההם שנאמ' ושאלה אשה משכנתה ומגרת ביתה כלי כסף וכלי זהב ושמלות ונמצא הן וחסד בעיניך ובעיני כל רואינו ונצליה בעסקינו ובממונינו ושלה ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשי ידינו כמו שעשית לאבותינו במצרים שנאמר ויתן ה' אה הן העם הזה, בעיני מצרים וישאילום כלי כסף וכלי זהב ושמלות וינצלו את מצרים ונקום את נקמתנו מיד מבקשי נפשנו ורעתינו ונקום נקמת דם עבדיך השפוך כמו שנקמת נקמת אבותינו במצרים כמ"ש ועברתי בארץ מצרים בלילה הזה והכיתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים מאדם ועד בהמה ובכל אלהי מצרים אעשה שפטים אני ה' ותעשה עמנו נפלאות ונסים כמ"ש כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות אמן כן יהי רצון : ג"פ ואני תפילתי.

Translation: On the first two days of Pesach say the following after reciting the Thirteen Attributes of G-d-instituted by the AR"Y, of blessed memory: G-d, fulfill our wishes for good. Satisfy our desires and rescue us from slavery and deliver freedom to us; take us from enslavement to redemption; from darkness to great light; from mourning to celebration. May we be joyous and happy in the rebuilding of Your city and Your Beis Ha'Mikdash. May You cause us to be viewed with compassion, charity and favor in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who observe us. Grant us wealth, prestige and assets with which we may serve You just as You provided our forefathers in Egypt at that time, as it is written: a woman should borrow utensils of gold and silver, and clothing from her neighbor and from the head of her household,. May we find compassion and favor in Your eyes and in the eyes of all who see us. May we be successful in our endeavors and in financial matters. May You imbue a blessing of success in all that we undertake as You did for our forefathers in Egypt as it is written: and G-d caused the Egyptians to look favorably upon the Jewish People and the Egyptians lent the Jews utensils of gold and silver and clothing. They overcame the Egyptians. May You execute our revenge against those who look to harm us and avenge all the Jewish blood that has been spilled just as You executed the revenge of our forefathers in Egypt, as it is written: and I will travel through the Land of Egypt on that night and I will kill every first born in the land of Egypt, whether it be human or animal. I will destroy all the Egyptian gods, I am G-d. You then performed great miracles as it is written: as on the day that I rescued you from Egypt, I will show You great miracles. Amen. May that indeed be Your will. Then recite the verse of V'Ani Sefilasi three times.

SUPPLEMENT

רבי אלעזר הקליר And His Era

The *קינות* of *רבי אלעזר הקליר* play a central role in *תפלת שחרית* of *תשעה באב*. As we had previously noted, *רבי אלעזר הקליר* also composed *קרובות* for *שמונה עשרה* of *תפלת שחרית* on *תשעה באב* and that the *קינות* were written as an extension of the *קרובה* for the *ברכה* of *עירך* *ולירושלים*. *רבי אלעזר הקליר* composed 21 *קינות* to be recited, corresponding to the 21 days between *י"ז תמוז* and *תשעה באב*, the three weeks. To the 21 *קינות*, *רבי אלעזר הקליר* added 12 *נחמות*, poems of comfort. In the excerpt from the *מחזור רומא* that I previously distributed and which included the *קרובות* of *רבי אלעזר הקליר*, you can find some of the *נחמות*.

The last *קינה* found in the excerpt begins: *אש תוקד בקרבי*. *רבי אלעזר הקליר* creates a transition from the *קינות* to the *נחמות* by changing the refrain for the last line and by then referring to two *פסוקים*:

ששון ושמחה ושובה ונוחה *בשובי לירושלים*
 ככתוב (ישעיהו פרק נא-ג) ששון ושמחה ימצא בה תודה וקול זמרה:
 למענך א-להי תאגר נדחי למזוזות פתחי
 ונגש זבחי ריה נחותי ויודוך חי חי וידעו כל חי כי הם בני א-ל חי
 (דניאל פרק ט', יז) והאר פניך על מקדשך השמים למען א-דני:

אנכי אנכי אנחם . . .

The second of the *נחמות* begins with the words: *בימים ההם בעת ההיא*. This is a *פיוט* that has received much attention because of the fact that it describes on a month to month basis what will occur in the year in which the *משיח* arrives. From where did *רבי אלעזר הקליר* cull that information? Yehudah Ibn Shmuel in his book: *מדרשי גאולה*, Mossad Bialik, 1968, speculates that *רבי אלעזר הקליר* borrowed heavily from two books: *ספר זרובבל*⁴ and *ספר אליהו*, two apocalypse books that were written in the 600's CE during a period of messianic fervor. Ibn Shmuel suggests that *רבי אלעזר הקליר* lived soon after that period.

4. This book can be found in the collection of Midrashim compiled by Eisenstein and is part of the Midrashim section of the Bar Ilan Digital Library.

The messianic fervor was ignited by the fact that in May 614 CE, the Persian armies captured Jerusalem from the hands of the Christians (Byzantine) and turned control of Jerusalem over to the Jews. Some evidence exists that the Jews may have started offering animal sacrifices at that time. Many Jews viewed the Persian emperor, Heraclius, as a reincarnation of **כורש**, King Cyrus, who had authorized the rebuilding of the second **בית המקדש**. The joy from gaining control over Jerusalem was short lived. For reasons that are not known, the Persian government reversed its policy in 617 CE and made peace with the Christians. **ספר זרובבל** describes how many of the Jewish leaders were killed by the Persian forces at that time.

For further information on this period in Jewish history, I have attached several pages from the book: A History Of The Jewish People, edited by H. H. Sasson. The book represents a collaboration among leading scholars at Hebrew University and was published by Harvard University Press in 1976. The excerpts from the chapter that I have included was authored by Professor Shmuel Safrai, ז"ל. I also uploaded to the website of the Beurei Hatefila Institute: www.beureihatefila.com, the following additional files:

1. Two copies of the **קרוכות** of **רבי אלעזר הקליר** with commentaries;
2. A copy of the **קרוכות** included in **מחזורים** Ashkenazic;
3. The Introduction to the **נחמה** entitled: **בימים ההם בעת ההיא** and the commentary provided by Yehudah Ibn Shmuel in his book: **מדרשי גאולה**;
4. An Article entitled: **רבי אלעזר בירבי קליר ופיוטיו החדשים**, authored by Yosef Marcus and published on page 21 of the Journal, Choreb, Volume 1, No. 1, 1934, which provides some further history behind the **נחמה** entitled: **בימים ההם בעת ההיא**.

Aggadah and Piyyut

In this era the spirit of the Jewish nation found expression in the *aggadah*. The *aggadah* actually dates back to far earlier times and always had gone hand in hand with the *halakhah*, both in sharing the same underlying philosophy and in the historical sense. Unlike the *halakhah*, however, the *aggadah* had never been collected in compendia. In the Mishnah and even more frequently in the two Talmuds, *aggadah* appears in the form of an accompaniment to and expansion upon the *halakhic* argument. Alongside the *halakhot* dealing with the order of prayer, for instance, we find much in the Talmud concerning the value of prayer, serving God in the heart, the customs of various scholars and the religious expectations of the Jewish people throughout the generations. *Halakhot* on alms-giving are accompanied by discourses on the importance of charity, on the ways in which it should be dispensed and on principles of social and public life. Occasionally, entire sections of *aggadah* stand on their own, with only a loose connexion established between the *aggadah* and *halakhic* sections by means of associating the *aggadah* with or attributing it to the scholar in whose name the *halakhah* is reported.

However, in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries and even somewhat later, we find independent collections of *aggadah*. The earliest of those that have survived are *aggadic midrashim* (homiletic commentaries) on Genesis, Lamentations and Leviticus from the fifth century. In these *midrashim*, *aggadah* is the point of departure as well as the main substance. Mostly they take the form of homilies on the Pentateuch, the five scrolls and other parts of the Bible that were read in the synagogue on the Sabbath and festivals. Some of this homiletic literature interprets the text verse by verse, while some consists of entire sermons or parts of sermons based on a single verse. The prophecy of consolation in Isaiah 40, for example, which is read on the Sabbath following the Ninth of Ab, is expanded into a discourse on the nation's hope for future redemption. In more extreme instances the verse serves merely as the point of departure for a sermon that goes far afield.

The pattern of *aggadic* writing arose from the fact that the *aggadah* had, from its earliest times, been handed down mainly by means of the public sermon. The preacher used to build his discourse on the reading of the day, with which the congregation was familiar from its own study and from hearing it in the synagogue year after year. The sermon was the channel through which the thoughts of the rabbis and the wisdom of generations were communicated to the general public, including women and children. It was the main instrument of public education and of guidance on contemporary issues in political and social life. Editing and collecting the *aggadah* also satisfied the demand for professional literature for preachers and reading matter and study material for the people on the Sabbath and festivals. Among the collections of *aggadah* on the Torah are works of a type known as *Yelammedenu*, after the standard introductory formula *Yelammedenu rabbeinu* ('May our teacher instruct us'), which introduces the *halakhic* question that the preacher poses and that he answers in the course of the sermon, with the addition of *aggadic* digressions. Often the *halakhic* question is not a genuine problem requiring solution but a formal method of introducing the *aggadah*.

Unlike the *halakhah*, which has been preserved in two parallel compendia – the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds – the *aggadah* and the *aggadic* books are mainly the work of Palestinian Jewry, and the scholars referred to in the *aggadah* of the amoraic period are mostly of Palestinian origin.

Another literary development in these times was the *piyyut*, liturgical poetry that was included in the prayer service, mainly on the Sabbath, festivals and other public occasions. It includes elements of *halakhah* and *aggadah*, mystical thought, prayer and even the secular songs of earlier generations. In the case of many *piyyutim* of this era, we know nothing about the authors, not even their names; but the identity of some of them has been preserved, including Jose ben Jose, R. Jannai and R. Eleazar Kalir. Their works have been incorporated into the prayer-books of the various Jewish traditions. Some *piyyutim* are recorded as having been composed for specific occasions or at the request of an individual and are preserved in collections of *piyyutim* by one or several authors. Although the amoraic era was the golden age of the Palestinian *piyyut*, the composition of *piyyutim* continued in Palestine until much later.

According to some views, the creation of the *aggadah* was a sign of intellectual decline, and the *piyyut* reflects conditions in which the teaching of Torah was banned. *Halakhah*, which was forbidden to be taught, was ‘smuggled’ into the prayer service, which was permitted. The *midrash* states allusively: ‘At one time, when money was not scarce, people longed to hear Mishnah, *halakhah* and Talmud; nowadays money is scarce and, worse, the people sicken under their slavery, and all they want to hear are blessings and consolation’ (*Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 2:14). However, such views are at best only part of the picture: political or economic conditions do not offer a sufficient explanation for the development of so rich and vital a literature. In fact, this was an era of creative *halakhic* work; and, above all, the *piyyutim* contained the strongest and severest strictures on Christianity and Rome found in the entire Jewish literature of the time.

It is more likely that the *aggadah* and *piyyut* are expressions of the accumulated spiritual wealth of the nation than of its material poverty. This era of Jewish culture in Palestine clearly shows the effect of generations of creative development. Torah education and knowledge of the Torah had penetrated deeply. There was widespread study of the Bible, of the oral tradition and of the Hebrew language, and Tiberias remained a centre for the study of the Bible and of the Hebrew language for generations after the Arab conquest. Jewish homes were full of books, and there was even a degree of return to the use of Hebrew. Many traditions that are recorded in Aramaic in the earlier literature recur in Hebrew in later homiletical collections. The return to Hebrew is reflected even in the use of Jewish names.

The Revolt Against Byzantium

In the last days of Byzantine rule over the Land of Israel the Jews made an attempt to exploit the rivalry between the powers ruling the orient – Persia, Byzantium and Rome – in order to regain their political independence. For hundreds of years they had repeatedly hoped that the redemption of the Jewish people would come with the

conquest of Palestine by Persia; and now the time seemed to have arrived. At the beginning of the seventh century, the Persians set out on their conquests in the East, and in the year 614 they reached the borders of Palestine. Their approach set off a powerful messianic fermentation, which is reflected in several works written at the time whose theme is the Redemption. The Armenian historian Sebeos reported (Chapter XXIV): 'As the Persians approached Palestine, the remnants of the Jewish nation rose against the Christians, joined the Persians and made common cause with them.' The Jews assisted the invaders materially in their conquest of Galilee. From there the invading army turned to Caesarea and continued its conquests down to Apollonia, then eastwards to Lydda and from there to Jerusalem, which was captured in May 614. Jewish forces also took part in the conquest of Jerusalem. Sophronius, a contemporary monk who lived near Bethlehem, wrote in a poem: 'God-seeking strangers and citizens of the city [Jerusalem]/ . . . When they faced the Persians and their Hebrew friends/Hastened to close the city gates.'

The Persians handed Jerusalem over to Jewish settlers, who proceeded with the expulsion of the Christians and the removal of their churches. At the head of Jerusalem stood a leader whom we know only by his messianic name: Nehemiah ben Hushiel ben Ephraim ben Joseph. The sacrificial cult may even have been resumed. Jewish rule in Jerusalem lasted three years. In 617 there was a reversal of Persian policy. For reasons that are not sufficiently clear, the Persians made peace with the Christians. The Jews, on the other hand, did not, and the Persian authorities were forced to fight them: 'And they waged war against the saints and brought down many of them, and Shiroi [the king of Persia] stabbed Nehemiah ben Hushiel, and sixteen of the just were killed together with him' (*Book of Zerubabel*, page 101).

Meanwhile, the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, had begun to build up his military strength, and in the spring of 622 he embarked on a campaign against Persia. Though the Persians remained in possession of countries that had been part of the Byzantine Empire and Persian governors resided in Antioch, Damascus, Jerusalem and Alexandria, Heraclius succeeded in reaching Ecbatana and forced the Persians to sue for peace and agree to withdraw from his conquered possessions. In 629 the emperor arrived in Palestine, preparing for the greatest hour of his life when he would enter Jerusalem and reinstate the Holy Cross. The Jews made a desperate attempt to come to terms with the new conqueror. The emperor received the Jewish leaders of Tiberias, Nazareth and the hills of Galilee, accepted their gifts, promised to pardon them and even signed a treaty with them and confirmed it on oath. One of the Jewish leaders, Benjamin of Tiberias, who was exceedingly rich, offered the emperor lodgings in his house in Tiberias, maintained the imperial court and army at his own expense and accompanied the emperor on his journey to Jerusalem. On 21 March 629, Heraclius made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem and, with a procession in the Byzantine style, proceeded to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and returned to their place the relics of the true Cross, which the Persians had surrendered to him. The emperor, who by inclination was not anti-Jewish and had even pardoned the Jews of Edessa, who had defended the town after the Persians had abandoned it, had intended to keep his promise of clemency but was forced to break it at the insistence of the clergy.

From the Abolition of the Patriarchate to the Arab Conquest

The priests assumed responsibility for the emperor's perjury, in atonement of which they instituted a special fast, which the Egyptian Coptic Church continued to observe for centuries. The emperor ordered that the Jews be expelled from Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings. A number of Jews were accused of having killed Christians and of having destroyed churches in Jerusalem and in Galilee. Many were put to death; others fled to the desert or to Persian or Egyptian lands. In the brief interval between the return of Heraclius to Jerusalem and the Arab conquest, there were even official campaigns to convert the Jews by force, as well as persecutions on the part of Christians.

This was the final confrontation between Judaism and the Roman Empire on the political plane, for by this time the Arabs, who were to rule in Palestine for many centuries, had already appeared on the scene. The Arab conquest lasted from 630 to 640. While the Jews certainly looked forward to the fall of the 'kingdom of evil', they expected little from the victory of the Arabs. Islam was unlikely to restore Jewish rule in Palestine, for, like Byzantium, its aspiration was uncontested rule by its own religion, although the Moslem attitude towards non-Islamic sects was at that time more tolerant. At all events, we have no reliable reports of Jewish assistance to the Arabs in their conquest or of any special treatment allotted to the Jews by the new rulers. The main advantage derived by the Jews from the Arab conquest was the right to live in Jerusalem again, and even that right was restored not at the time of the conquest but only later.

After the Arab conquest, the condition of the Palestinian Jewish community was easier than it had been under Byzantine rule; but it was no longer the centre of Jewish leadership.