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ELDAD THE PILGRIM

A SKETCH OF THE

Manners and Customs of the Jews

IN THE CENTURY WHICH PRECEDED THE ADVENT
OF OUR SAVIOUR.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION,
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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE original Work, of which this is an abridgement, was intended to show the manners and habits, and religious feelings of the Jewish people, shortly before the coming of our Blessed Lord. The information it gives was drawn from a variety of sources ; and every care appears to have been taken by the Author to make it correct. It is easy to see that such information must throw light upon many parts of Holy Scripture, especially of the New Testament ; and an attentive reader will find pleasure in making such applications. He will not, however, meet with any attempt to fill up the details of characters and circumstances which the inspired narrative has left in obscurity. If such attempts are not to be condemned as profane, yet, surely, they are far from wise or profitable.

Let us rather repress this sort of curiosity, and rest satisfied with what the Divine Wisdom has seen fit to reveal to us. If more light and

greater knowledge on these subjects had been good for us, it would not have been withheld. All that is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness," has been given to us. All else is among "the secret things which belong to God."

Such appears to have been the feeling of the Author: and in accordance with it, the era of John Hyrcanus was chosen as the fittest date for his story. He himself says, "By selecting this period it was more easy to avoid the inconvenience of placing fictitious characters in contact with the real personages of history, than if the time of our Saviour had been chosen," while it was yet possible "to give a picture which, as far as relates to usages and manners, should be applicable to the times of the New Testament," very little change having taken place, in these respects, between the time of John Hyrcanus, and that of our Blessed Lord.

But the Author had another and a higher object in view; to the accomplishment of which the incidents in Eldad's life, and the development of his character and principles, are all made subservient. The ardent zeal which led him to aspire to the rank of Chasidean, and to a moral perfection unattainable in this world, is not wholly condemned,

but it is shown to be powerless. That zeal was not quenched, it was only better directed, when his eyes were opened to discern the wondrous beauty of the moral, and the typical mystery of the ceremonial law of Moses. His spiritual progress, under the teaching of "The Old Man of the Temple," may, indeed, be taken as an illustration of St. Paul's doctrine, that "by the Law is the knowledge of sin;" and again, that "the Law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ." Without the conviction of sin—without a heartfelt acknowledgment that of ourselves we cannot do the things that we would—it is clear that the redemption, foreshadowed under the law, and brought to light by the gospel, can find no entrance into the heart of man; and this would seem to have been the one great truth which the story of Eldad was intended to teach. Let it not be said that this teaching belongs to the new covenant, rather than to the old. The light which penetrated through the veil of type and figure, was a *real* light, that could be "spiritually discerned" by the spiritual worshipper, although it was but a dim twilight compared with the full brightness of the day, after the rising of the "Sun of righteousness." This idea is well expressed by a late writer.

“It is inconceivable,” says Archer Butler, “but that the higher class of Israelitish minds, the holy and meditative class, must often have felt that the mass of ordinances which surrounded them, were truly meant as types of some more profound spiritual realities; and that their whole national history was intended, in some secret way, to image forth a moral history, wider in its purpose and extent, and more adequate to the power and dignity of a God, whom, at the very time they were exulting in His special favour, they well knew to be the God of the whole earth, as well as of the territory of Israel—yea, even a God whom the heaven of heavens could not contain. A Jewish student who, in a fitting spirit, meditated over the records of his country, might detect these laws of God’s spiritual as really as of His temporal providence, and become, in a manner, an anticipated Christian.”¹

¹ Sermons by the late Archer Butler—*First Series*.

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ELDAD THE PILGRIM.

Part I.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY.

It was the eve of departure. The whole house was in commotion. The camels were receiving their load in the inner court; and drinking before their journey from the fountain beneath the palm-trees. The slaves ran hither and thither; in the apartments of the women, the maid-servants were busily preparing the farewell meal for the son of their mistress. She, while she hurried to and fro, giving directions to each, was herself repeating the words of the forty-second Psalm:—

“As the hart desireth the water brooks,
So longeth my soul after Thee, O God!
My soul is athirst for God,
Yea, even for the living God!
When shall I come
To appear before the presence of God?”

She had been born in the Holy-Land, but her deceased husband had brought her to Egypt. The country in which her youthful days had been spent, and the journeys to Jerusalem in which she had

borne a part, rose up to her remembrance, and with overflowing eyes she went on :—

“ My tears have been my meat day and night ;
While they daily say unto me,
Where is now thy God ? ”

The thought of her deceased husband rushed upon her mind, and her tears flowed in a fuller stream ; but after a short pause she proceeded with a lighter heart, and a less faltering voice :—

“ When I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself,
For I went with the multitude ;
I brought them forth into the house of God,
In the voice of praise and thanksgiving,
Among such as keep holyday.”

At this moment Eldad met her. She embraced him, and said, “ So, once, I went to the Holy City ; but now I must remain a captive in a strange land. All the day long this Psalm of the sons of Korah dwells upon my mind. Thy father sung it the last evening that we spent together. Immediately afterwards, he set out for the promised land, and returned no more.”

Eldad was moved by the distress of his mother. His feelings had been the same as hers, but he felt, also, that he was now near the accomplishment of his wishes. He was about to visit the Holy City, and the grave of his father in the Valley of Jehoshaphat ; and raising himself from his mother’s arms, he replied, “ Hast thou forgotten the thrice-repeated chorus of that Psalm ? ¹—

¹ The forty-second and forty-third Psalms are supposed by Bishop Lowth and others to form but one Psalm ; and this opinion is supported by thirty MSS.

“ ‘Why art thou so vexed, O my soul,
And why art thou so disquieted within me ?
Oh, put thy trust in God ; for I will yet thank Him,
Who is the help of my countenance and my God.’ ”

Jetur, a young Jew, who had been purchased as a servant six years before, now entered the apartment, while Eldad was still speaking ; and addressing him with a dejected countenance, anxiously asked, “ Wilt thou not take me with thee, master ? ” The mother replied, “ Thou art free ; yesterday thy six years expired, and it shall be Eldad’s last employment before his departure, solemnly to emancipate thee.” The youth stood with his eyes fixed upon Eldad, as if he was still asking him—“ Wilt thou not take me with thee, master ? ” “ Why dost thou refuse freedom, Jetur ? ” said Eldad. “ Master,” replied he, “ when thy father bought me six years ago, I was a houseless, friendless boy. I have been brought up with thee, and if I now leave thee, I shall be again without a friend or a home. I will not leave thee ; thou art going to Jerusalem, and if I go not with thee, I shall never behold the altar of my God, nor the land which was given to our fathers. Take me with thee, and I will be a servant in thine house all my days. I have called the elders, and they will be here presently.”

They endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose. Eldad spoke to him of the value of freedom, and the mercy of Jehovah towards the bondsmen among the children of Israel, in appointing their release in the seventh year. His mother promised that he should not go out empty-handed ;—that she would give him, “ of her flock, and of her barn, and of her winepress ;—of all in

which the Lord her God had blessed her, as the Lord had commanded by Moses in the Law." But Jetur replied, "Nay, but I will remain with thee; it is best for me to be here."¹

The elders had now arrived. "This youth," said one of them, "desires to be a servant of thy house. Come, then, together, to the gate." Eldad, his mother, and Jetur, went, therefore, with the elders, through the covered way, as far as the gate which opened to the outer court. Jetur placed himself beside the gate posts. The elder asked him, "Wilt thou not leave Eldad?" Jetur replied "I will not leave him; for I love him and his house." Then Eldad took an awl, and piercing his ears against the door-post, made him his servant for ever. The elders pronounced a blessing, and Eldad put a ring through the ears of Jetur, as a sign that he was become his property. The youth bounded for joy, exclaiming, "I have bought thee with my blood. Wilt thou not now take me with thee to the Holy Land?" "Go," said Eldad; "look after the camels, and prepare thyself for the journey."

The mother invited the elders to partake of the

¹ By the law of Moses, foreigners might be bought as slaves, and retained in slavery during their whole lifetime; but if a native Israelite had been reduced to servitude by poverty, he was to be set free at the end of seven years, or at the year of Jubilee, if this should occur before the seven years of service had expired. (See Exod. xxi. 2—6; Lev. xxv. 39, 40; and Deut. xv. 12—18.) It would, however, frequently happen, that a servant would have formed an attachment to his master's house, which would make him unwilling to leave it, especially as the children who might be born to him by a female slave in the family, continued, with their mother, to be the property of his master. (Exod. xxi. 4.) In such case he was allowed to bind himself to his service for ever: the compact taking place in the presence of witnesses; with the ceremonies detailed in the text.

farewell supper with her and her son, at which Melchi was also to be present. They consented, and went back with her into the inner court (*The Tavech*).¹ Eldad remained awhile behind, to inspect the preparations for the journey. The slaves were equipping three stately dromedaries, which, young, high-spirited and fleet, well deserved the name of ships of the desert. They had taken a long draught at the well, while the slaves laid in order the baggage which contained the food and clothing of the travellers, and presents for their host in Jerusalem.² In the East, the expressions of friendship were made by deeds rather than by words; and the travellers destined for their host, costly caftans, Egyptian linen, a robe of thread of gold, and some books written on papyrus. The camels, kneeling down, received the burden on their backs.

Eldad's uncle, Melchi, who was to be his guide in the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, now arrived, examined the preparations, and fixed the hour of departure. Eldad and he then went together into

¹ *Tavech* is a Hebrew word denoting the midst, and is applied to the middle or interior court which formed the centre of the buildings of the house. (2 Sam. iv. 6.)

² In Maundrell's Travels we read of these customary presents, which seem to have been in his time as common as they are now. He says, "All great men expect these gifts, and look upon themselves as affronted, and indeed defrauded, if they are omitted. Even in familiar visits among those of inferior rank, a person seldom comes without bringing a flower, or an orange, or some other such token of respect. This is but a keeping up of the ancient oriental custom hinted at (1 Sam. ix. 7):—"If we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God. What have we?" which words are, probably, rather to be understood as relating to a token of respect than to a price of divination.

the inner court, where the elders were sitting under the palms beside the fountain, enjoying the refreshing coolness of the evening. This inner court, around whose sides ran a portico and a gallery, was paved with green, white, yellow, and black marble. An awning of various colours was stretched over it, to shelter those beneath it from the burning rays of the sun; and in the middle was the fountain with its lofty palms. In Alexandria, as in the East generally, this was the place for the reception of visitors. When the meal was ready, the elders arose from beside the fountain, to place themselves on cushions round the table. A venerable man, with hoary locks, took the place of honour—the middle place, on the middle cushion. The seven-branched lamp shed a bright light around, from its one-and-twenty flames. The slaves had strewed the table, the cushions, and the floor, with the flowers of spring. Jetur came with a silver basin, poured water on the hands of the guests, and when he had wiped them, sprinkled on them the fragrant nard.¹ The most delicate productions of Egypt were served up; among which the mother had not forgotten the fish of the Nile,² that her son might taste them once more before his departure. Eldad lay before Melchi; or, as it was called in the East, in his bosom.

Melchi, acting as father of the house, blessed

¹ The costly liquid perfume called *nardus* by the ancients, was obtained from the flowers of the Indian plant *Valeriana latamensi*. From the resemblance of the grains, with which the lower part of the stem is covered, to an ear of corn, it obtained the name of *spike-nard*.

² Harmer tells us that in the hot seasons in Egypt, the languid appetite scarcely relishes any food but fish.—In Numbers xi. 5, we are told that the people “wept,” when they remembered the fish which they “did eat in Egypt freely.”

the bread. He spread both his hands over it, and said, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who makest bread to grow out of the earth," and the others answered, "Amen!" As this was an entertainment, the wine was also blessed. Melchi took the cup with both hands, then holding it with the right, at the height of a yard above the table, he praised the Lord, and said, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, who hast given unto us the fruit of the vine;" and the rest again replied, "Amen!" The bread and the wine were blessed with both hands, that the fingers might be a memorial of the number of the commandments. This being done, he repeated the twenty-third Psalm:—

"The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing:
 He shall feed me in a green pasture :
 And lead me forth beside the waters of comfort :
 He shall convert my soul,
 And bring me forth in the paths of righteousness.
 For His name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
 death,
 I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me,
 Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.
 Thou shalt prepare a table before me,
 Against them that trouble me ;
 Thou hast anointed my head with oil ;
 And my cup shall be full.
 But Thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the
 days of my life,
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

This was the prayer with which the festive meal was usually hallowed in Israel.¹ The guests helped themselves, and enjoyed the feast. When

¹ This account of the ceremonies during meals, must be understood to rest on Rabbinical authority ; or to refer to Jews of a later age.

the last dish was removed, Melchi spoke: "Long is it since I repeated that beautiful Psalm, with such a feeling of devotion as to-day. One might think it had been written expressly for this feast, on the evening before our departure for the Holy Land." Eldad's kindling glance thanked Melchi for thus expressing a sentiment of which his own heart was full: but some of the guests were animated by a very different spirit. Their hearts, as well as their homes, were in Egypt; and they were so settled there that they were not willing to believe that the law of Moses could not there be kept, in all its purity and fulness. They spoke of the temple of Leontopolis, and the high-priest who officiated there; and tried to prove that the sacrifices and the vows of Israel might be there offered, as acceptably as in the Temple of the Lord, at Jerusalem: while Melchi quoted text after text, triumphantly proving that the Law could nowhere be fully kept but in Jerusalem: that Israel was Israel nowhere but in the Holy Land.¹ The contention became more and more

¹ In order to understand the allusion to the state of the Jews in Egypt, it may be well here to give a sketch of their history. The first account that can be relied on of the settlement of the Jews in any numbers in Egypt, after their triumphant departure under the command of Moses, may be found in Jeremiah xli. xlii. xliii. After the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians had left in command over the remnant of the people, was murdered by Ishmael, a prince of the house of Judah, who had taken refuge with the King of Ammon. The people fearing the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar, determined to take refuge in Egypt. Jeremiah, who endeavoured to dissuade them from this step, which was in direct opposition to the command of God, was overpowered; and even compelled to accompany them in their flight. He, probably, died in Egypt. The fugitives took up their abode in the country near Pelusium, and at Memphis and Thebes. Jere-

violent, they had long ceased to eat, and sat upright on their cushions. One of the elders started on his feet, and seemed about to offer some affront to Melchi: but a grey-headed elder, who had hitherto only listened, now interposed, and with the calm authority of age, said to them both, "Peace, my children! There is enough of strife in Israel; let us not increase it. Do thou remain in Egypt, and thou, Melchi, take thy way to Jerusalem. The Messiah cometh, and will teach us all things."

miah foretold the destruction of all these disobedient Jews, but we are not told when, or in what manner, the prophecy was accomplished. Long after this, Alexander the Great, Josephus tells us, brought a great many Jews to settle in the city of Alexandria; which he founded, and called by his own name. He gave them, for their peculiar residence, a quarter of the city, adjoining the palace; and there they were permitted to observe their national customs unmolested. These privileges were confirmed to them by Ptolemy Lagus, who, when driven out of Judea by Antigonos, carried a number of Jewish families with him into Egypt.

Their numbers gradually increased; many being driven out of Judea by the continual wars which raged in that country, and others drawn into Egypt by the favour shown to the Jews by the successors of Ptolemy Lagus. In the reign of Ptolemy Philometer, Onias (whose father, third high-priest of that name, had been murdered,) fled into Egypt, and rose into high favour with the king, and Cleopatra, his queen. Jonathan, of the family of the Maccabees, having been nominated to the high-priesthood in Jerusalem—Onias used his influence with Ptolemy to procure the establishment of a temple and ritual in Egypt. From motives of worldly policy, the king readily consented. The place chosen by Onias, was at Leontopolis, where Ptolemy granted to him a ruined temple of Bubastis, and a tract of land around it for the maintenance of the priests and temple. Onias built a city resembling Jerusalem in miniature, and an altar in imitation of that in the Jewish Temple, constituted himself high-priest, and appointed priests and Levites from among the Jewish settlers. The chief seat of the Jews in Egypt, after Alexandria, was the district in which this temple stood, and which was called from its founder the district of Onias.

The mother at this moment entered the room; "What sayest thou, dejected mother in Israel?" continued the aged man. She replied that she could not get rid of the fear that one of the travellers would never return. So it had been six years before. Her only comfort was that her deceased husband had been buried in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and nothing would have induced her to consent to Eldad's departure, but the thought that he would visit his father's grave. "Ye all knew him," said she, turning to the guests, "he was a stay of Israel in a foreign land."

The elders turned to Eldad, and said, "Blessed be thou, for thou art the son of an upright man, and one that feared God." "As to thy fear that one of us may not return," said Melchi, "let us rather hope that we shall bring back with us a new member of the family, a future mother, either from Jericho, or Anathoth."

The mother smiled, with a significant look, which seemed to say that she already knew more of this matter. The elder, who had scarcely recovered from his passion, seemed not well pleased that the number of Aramæan¹ Jews in Alexandria should be increased. Eldad, on the other hand, blushed, and observed the modest silence which became a youth in Israel in the presence of his elders.

"Of the two," said the old man, "thou wouldst

¹ *Aram*, in its largest sense, comprehended, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine. The Jews, who in foreign countries retained their attachment to their own country and their own Temple, were called Aramæan Jews—while those who were contented to become naturalized, as it were, among the Gentiles, were named Hellenists.

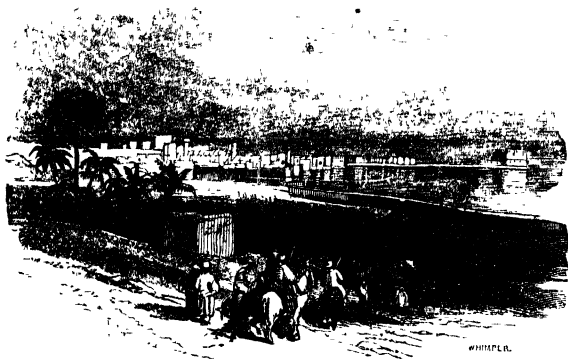
rather receive thy new relation from Anathoth." "True," she replied, "many of our friends live there, and there the holy prophet Jeremiah was born." The mention of Jeremiah's name was sufficient to kindle Melchi. His forefathers had accompanied the prophet when, after Ishmael's outrage upon Gedaliah, he was carried into Egypt (Jer. xliii.) by the people who feared the vengeance of the king of Babylon; and he had sojourned with this family. "While there lives one of our race," exclaimed Melchi, "never shall it be forgotten by us, that we once entertained a prophet of the Lord. His writings are our favourite study, and by them we are directed to seek the Holy Land."

The discourse then assumed a more cheerful character. The last cup was emptied, Jetur washed the hands of the guests, and sprinkled them with fragrant oil. Melchi pronounced the thanksgiving,¹ and the old man, rising slowly, took Eldad's hand, and said, "Farewell, and take with thee my blessing." Then, laying his hands upon the young man's head, he said,—

"He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth;
May Jehovah be thy keeper, thy shade on thy right hand;
May Jehovah preserve thy going out and thy coming in;
From this time forth, and for ever more."

The other elders also blessed him; but it was evident that they would have done it with a more hearty good-will if he had been going to Leontopolis. All the guests then took leave, and returned to their homes.

¹ Returning thanks after a meal is said to be founded on Deut. viii. 10; but no actual form is provided by the Law.



ALEXANDRIA.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAREWELL.

It was already late; when the guests retired, the slaves extinguished the seven-branched lamp, and laid the cushions for beds in the porticoes which surrounded the inner court. All retired to rest, that they might awake the earlier on the following morning. But the mother still lingered on the spot; her grief increased as the time of departure drew nigh; weeping, she embraced her son, and said, "Call me Mara (Ruth i. 20), for I am a sorrowful mother in Israel." Eldad in

silence leaned upon her bosom, till Melchi came, and said to her,—“Bethink thee of what our prophet saith, ‘Rachel weepeth for her children, and refuseth to be comforted. But thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eye from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, and thy children shall come again to their own border.’” He forced her away into the inner apartments while thus offering consolation, and himself lay down on one of the cushions in the portico.

Eldad did not attempt to sleep. Wishing his uncle calm repose, he ascended the roof of the house, where stood the Alijah,¹ a small apartment like a turret, dedicated to secret meditation and prayer. From the roof there was an extensive view over the city of Alexandria; on the north to the Mediterranean, on the south to the lake Mareotis, and on the east to the Nile and the Delta. Here he had often stood when a boy, and with restless longing had looked towards the Holy Land. It was now a clear calm night of spring. Refreshing odours arose from the surrounding gardens. The countless stars shed down their twinkling radiance upon him, and the moon’s new light was mirrored in the lake and the canals of the Nile.

Before him lay the city of Alexandria, justly styled, in the days of its highest prosperity, the Queen of the East,—the Chief of Cities. In what stillness she now lay with her towering obelisks! How deep the silence and the repose which now wrapt her 600,000 inhabitants, and her fine har-

¹ Alijah is used in Judges iii. 23, to signify a chamber; in 2 Sam. xviii. 33, it means the “chamber over the gate;” and in 2 Chron. ix. 4, simply an “ascent” or staircase.

bours, by day so full of mirth and noise! The house of Eldad was near the Panium, from which the whole city could be seen at one view.

There stood the Bruchium which, besides the Royal palace, contained the Museum, rendered the chief seat of the learning of the times by its library of 400,000 volumes, and by being the residence of the learned men whom the Ptolemies delighted to draw into their court.¹ Here Eldad had sat for several years at the feet of the philosophers. He thought on those years, and as he compared them with his present hopes, he exclaimed,—

“One day in thy courts is better than a thousand:
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.”

Psalm lxxxiv. 10, 11.

“Truly ‘the tents of ungodliness,’” said he to himself, as he paced the roof, “even when I think on mine own people, who live here in such favour. Let their honours and their prosperity be what they will, still Egypt is a land of exile, and Israel is in affliction. Their schisms in doctrine, and laxity of morals, are too plain a proof of it.”

He went into the Alijah, and brought out his

¹ Alexandria had two principal harbours; on the eastern one was the Bruchium, or granary. The separation between these two was formed by the shallows between the Pharos and the land, afterwards covered by the mole called the Heptastadium. The modern city stands on the ground which has accumulated about this mole. The Museum, where men of letters lived in common and at the royal charge, was founded by Ptolemy Lagus, and the library enlarged by Philadelphus and succeeding kings till it amounted to 400,000 volumes. This library was burnt in the wars of Cæsar. Alexandria was reckoned the second city in the Roman world.

harp; the plaintive tones resounded through the still air of night as he sung,—

“By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,
When we remembered thee, O Sion :
As for our harps, we hanged them up,
Upon the trees that are therein.”—*Psalm cxxxvii.* 1, 2.

“Here,” he continued, “we ought to hang them on the Pyramids. Would that I could forget the dispute that destroyed the peace of our social ~~meal~~ this night! At all events I will praise God that Jeremiah sojourned with my forefathers, and that our family has ever remained Aramæan; not one among us has ever gone over to the Hellenists.”

A feeling of pride mingled with the devout aspirations of Eldad, and he forgot how narrowly he had himself escaped bringing this disgrace upon his family. The death of his father had deprived him of the guidance which his ardent pursuit of knowledge, and easily excited fancy, rendered especially necessary. Attending the schools in which the Grecian philosophers taught, he had nearly been led to adopt their errors. A young and lively Greek of the name of Lysis was his companion in these studies. With him he listened to the eloquent teaching of a Platonic philosopher, and in this school became acquainted with a learned Jew, whose talents were employed in the vain endeavour to reconcile the revealed truths of Scripture, with the falsehoods and errors of an unsubstantial philosophy. By him Eldad was taught to set aside the plain and literal meaning of Scripture, and to affix to it one that was vague and unsatisfactory. This was called, in the language of the schools, the spiritual and mystical interpretation, and by it the truths of revelation were melted

away, and the falsehoods of paganism were softened and explained, so that the one might be placed beside the other as of pretty nearly equal value and authority. For a time Eldad was so carried away by these vain speculations that he only continued to observe the law of Moses, and the customs of Israel, under the influence of the pure and simple manners to which he had been habituated in his mother's house. He was first brought to suspect the soundness of his teacher's arguments, by observing that they availed to vindicate the worship of Jupiter, Bacchus, and Apollo, with all the countless idolatries of Polytheism, as easily as to explain and give a mystical interpretation to Scripture. The promises which were given to Israel as the chosen people, the threatenings and warnings of Jehovah against participation in idolatry, were brought to his recollection, and the memory of his deceased father was daily held up to him by his mother, as one who had abhorred the system of the Hellenists. A feeling of pride in his own nation, as the peculiar people of the Lord, was awakened in his bosom; and he could no longer listen with pleasure to the lessons of heathen philosophy. He felt that, in matters relating to God, nothing could be relied on as truth, but that which was revealed by God himself. This revelation he found in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in them alone; and he remembered, with feelings of awe, the sublime and impressive circumstances under which the Law was delivered to his forefathers upon Mount Sinai. One evening, while his mind was thus agitated, his mother remarked to him, with sorrow, how negligent he had become in his observance of the Divine precepts.

Offended by her gentle remonstrance, he answered it by an angry look, and retired to his study. But conscience would not let him rest. Suddenly the threatening of the Lord occurred to his mind,—“The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” (Prov. xxx. 17.) He was deeply moved; for now his eyes were opened, and he saw the depth of wickedness into which his love of this new philosophy had nearly plunged him. His desire had been to be set free from the burdensome duties of the ceremonial law; but he had now transgressed the simplest precept of the moral law. He had trespassed against the first commandment with promise. He felt to what this irreligious philosophy was leading him; for now, in his own heart, he discovered the seeds of those vices which the lives of the heathen exhibited in all their enormity. These reflections determined him to turn with an obedient heart to the faith of his fathers; and in an earnest endeavour to fulfil the Law, he hoped to find happiness, and to become a partaker of the promises which God had made to the faithful and upright. No sooner had he begun to act upon this resolution, than his heart was relieved from a weight of uneasiness. He felt himself once more at home under the paternal roof; his former filial reverence for his mother returned. His father’s spirit seemed again to smile upon him, and the wise counsels of his uncle Melchi proved far more useful to him than all the boasted philosophy of the Museum. All the peaceful joys and holy desires of his childhood returned, and, among them, his ardent longing to behold Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah. This long-

ing had been the strongest of his early feelings ; the very names of Canaan, and Zion, and Jerusalem had held a mysterious sway over his youthful imagination. His mother, as he sat upon her knees, had told him of the hallowed place, towards which he was taught to lisp his prayer.¹ She had told him of the thousands who went up to the feast, had talked to him of Moses, and David, and Solomon, and had represented Egypt as a land of exile in comparison with the land of his fathers. He often saw her weep when she spoke of Jericho, and her native city ; and related how she, when a maiden, had gone up in the choir of singers to the festival. As the severest punishment for his childish offences, he used to be told that it would be a long time before he would be fit to accompany his father on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land ; and the reward of his proficiency and his obedience was the promise of a sight of Jerusalem. When Jews from the Holy City visited Alexandria, and, as their custom was, came to see his father, it was a festival for Eldad ; he regarded these strangers with scarcely less veneration than his fathers had regarded Jeremiah, and tried all the childish arts of persuasion to induce the kindly disposed among them to tell him something about the land of his ancestors. When his father was at leisure, and in a cheerful mood, Eldad would coax him to relate anecdotes of his pilgrimages, beginning and ending every narrative with the words of the children of Korah,—

“ The Lord loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob !
Very excellent things are spoken of thee,
Thou city of God.”—*Psaln lxxxvii.* 1, 2.

See Daniel vi. 10.

The journey from which his father never returned, was to have been the last which he would make alone; on the next, Eldad was to have accompanied him. Many particulars connected with this journey were fixed in the memory of Eldad: his grief at being obliged to remain at home; his mother's tears at the parting; his father's solemn farewell, as it were prophetic of the fatal event; his mother's daily remarks, "Now they are in Hebron; to-day they will reach Jerusalem; to-day the Passover; now the Passover is ended;" then their joyful expectations of his return, and the overwhelming intelligence of his death; all had combined to make an impression on his mind, which he had with difficulty mastered for a time, and which now revived with uncontrollable force. Since his return to the Law of his fathers, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem had been his dream by night, and his thought by day. The accounts he received of Leontopolis, the character and proceedings of the Hellenists, and even the argument at this evening's entertainment, all united to convince him that Egypt was no place for the fulfilment of the Law. It was the first desire of his heart to become a true Israelite, a faithful observer of the Law, and one of God's obedient children; and he felt that only in the Holy Land could this desire be accomplished.

All these recollections and reflections now crowded into the mind of Eldad, as he laid down his harp upon the parapet of the roof, and paced up and down in strong emotion; at times he stopped, and fixing his eyes on the north-east, almost persuaded himself that the clouds which he saw there were the hills of Judah. In the meantime Jetur,

like his master, unable to sleep, had placed a lamp in the Alijah. Eldad was soon attracted by the light, and went in; a roll lay unfolded; he looked into it, and opened at the splendid description, which an exile at Nineveh, of the tribe of Naphthali, gives of the Holy City; "O Jerusalem, the Holy City * * * many nations shall come from far to the name of the Lord God, with gifts in their hands, even gifts to the King of Heaven * * * O blessed are they which love thee, for they shall rejoice in thy peace; * * * for Jerusalem shall be built up with sapphires and emeralds, and precious stones; thy walls, and towers, and battlements, with pure gold; and the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl and carbuncle, and stones of Ophir; and all her streets shall say, Alleluia! and they shall praise Him, saying: Blessed be God who hath extolled it for ever." (Tobit xiii. 9. 11. 14—18.)

"Alleluia!" he exclaimed, "that such words were found in the mouth of a captive at Nineveh." He hastened to his harp, and placing the footstool under his foot, turned towards the Holy Land as he sang the sixty-third Psalm:—

"O God; thou art my God! early will I seek Thee;
My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee,
In a barren and dry land, where no water is;
Thus have I looked for Thee in holiness,
That I might behold Thy power and glory."

He knew by heart all the Psalms which related to Jerusalem; and no sooner had he finished one, than his fingers and his voice unbidden began another:—

"When Israel came out of Egypt,
And the house of Jacob from among the strange people;
Judah was His sanctuary,
And Israel His dominion."—*Psalm cxiv.*

His own pilgrimage to Jerusalem seemed to him like the departure of Israel from Egypt fourteen hundred years before ; and he was transported at once to those remote ages with so lively a feeling, that the Psalm seemed to him to spring fresh from his own soul, and to have been dictated by his own emotions. The forty-third Psalm occurred to his mind, and with the raised look, but subdued voice of humble devotion, he sang,—

“O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me,
And bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling ;
That I may go unto the altar of God,
Even unto the God of my joy and gladness ;
Upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee,
Oh God ! my God !”

The tones of the harp gradually died away, and Eldad remained absorbed in gratitude and devotion.

At length he arose to offer up his evening prayer. Since his return to the law of his fathers he had been rigid in the performance of this duty ; and in the fervour of his new zeal would have willingly added to the length and frequency of his devotions. A distinction was commonly made, at this time, among the Aramæan Jews, between the righteous man who only aimed at fulfilling the Law as given by Moses, and the pious man who, not content with this, endeavoured, by the performance of other ceremonies and ordinances, to attain a still higher degree of the Divine favour. A few years ago, it would have seemed unnecessary to Eldad to seek for the distinction of a righteous, *now* nothing could satisfy him short of becoming a pious man. The washing of the hands always preceded prayer, in token that nothing impure could be allowed in the immediate presence of the most Pure and Holy. Eldad then covered his head with his mantle, which

had fringes at the four corners, as God commanded that the children of Israel "might look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." (Numb. xv. 39.) He next bound the phylacteries on his forehead and his left arm. These phylacteries were little cases, containing strips of parchment, on which were written the verses 1 and 11—16 from Exod. xiii., and 4—9 of Deut. vi.¹ He then placed himself with his face towards Jerusalem, and repeated the Cri-schma,² a prayer which consisted of three passages from the books of Moses: Deut. vi. 4—9, in which it is commanded to love and honour God alone; Deut. xi. 13—21, where rewards are promised to those who fulfil the Law; and Numb. xv. 37—41, where obedience is again enforced. He concluded with a prayer to God, as the beginning and the end of every act of religious worship.

Having performed his devotions, he descended with a cheerful heart from the roof, and laid himself beside Melchi in the portico. At the first cockcrowing, however, he arose; for, strengthened and animated by hope, he had little need of sleep.

He went first to the Alijah, and having repeated the ceremonies of the preceding evening, and again concluded with an act of prayer and praise to God, he roused the slaves, and bade them lead the laden camels to the gate.

His mother came with eyes red with weeping, from the apartment of the women. The sun was, at that moment, shedding a flood of light on every

¹ This was done in obedience, perhaps too literal, to the command in Deut. vi. 8; "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon the hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."

² Cri-schma or shema, so called because the passage in Deut. begins with the word *shema*, i.e. "Hear."

object, and Melchi, approaching her, offered consolation to her in the words of the eighty-fourth Psalm :—

“The Lord God is a light and a defence,
The Lord will give grace and worship ;
And no good thing will He withhold from them that live a
godly life.
O Lord God of Hosts !
Blessed is the man that putteth his trust in Thee !”

She answered in the words of another Psalm :—

“Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me ;
For I am desolate and in misery :
The sorrows of my heart are enlarged,
O bring Thou me out of my troubles !”—*Psa.* xxv. 15, 16.

The travellers were invited to take some food, but Melchi declared, that only a servant in Israel would eat in the morning, to others it was a disgrace. The mother, however, was not to be denied, and compelled them to eat some dates, figs, and honey. “Greet thy father’s grave,” said she to Eldad, “let thy first visit be to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.” Jetur led out the camels ; he was full of joy, and every moment touched his ear-ring, as if to assure himself of the safety of this which he regarded as a badge of honour.

The mother embraced her son, and weeping exclaimed,—

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee,
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee !
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace !”

“Go, then,” she added, “God be with thee on the way, and His angel lead thee !”

Eldad tore himself from her, and, accompanied by his uncle, descended to the inner court ; he had

scarcely reached the outer, before the delightful expectation of seeing Jerusalem had already effaced the sorrows of departure ; and when, from the end of the street, he had cast back a look upon the parental house, and blessed once more his mother and the Alijah, he went on his way with alacrity, repeating to himself,—

“Blessed is the man who putteth his trust in Thee,
And thinketh of the way to Jerusalem.”

CHAPTER III.

THE JOURNEY.

THE slaves halted before the gate, with the camels and horses. The camels bore the travelling equipage, provisions, clothes, and presents. Jetur, when weary, was to find a seat upon the one which had the lightest load. Melchi and Eldad mounted two stately Egyptian horses, which they designed to sell again at Gaza. Egypt abounds in beautiful horses,¹ and supplies the neighbouring countries with them.

They had arranged their journey so well, that by joining a Syrian caravan from Pelusium to Gaza, they would arrive in Judea in time to accompany the pilgrims from Hebron on their way to Jerusalem. From Alexandria to Pelusium, their road lay through Egypt, and they could venture to make it alone.

Alexandria is built upon a tongue of land, having the Mediterranean sea on the north, and the lake Marcotis on the south. The first part of the journey offered striking views, sometimes of

¹ The horse appears to have been used by the Egyptians, long before it was common among the Jews, or even among the Arabians; though Arabia has been supposed to be its native country. Horses are not mentioned among the riches of the patriarchs; and in later times are connected with Egypt. See 1 Kings x 28, 29. 2 Chron. i. 16, 17. Ezekiel xvii. 15.

the sea, and sometimes of the lake. The shores of the lake were covered with palm-trees, and papyrus; canals united it with the Nile, and splendid buildings were seen on every side. Eldad, in spite of his longing for the Holy Land, was compelled to confess, that Alexander had well chosen the spot that was to bear his name. It was as delightful for scenery as it was convenient for trade.

The places through which they passed were too well known to both the travellers, to attract particular attention. They halted one day, because it was the Sabbath; and they were forbidden to travel on it more than a thousand paces.¹ The whole distance occupied nine days, in the course of which they ferried over the several branches of the Nile which form the Delta. They passed through Naucratis, the first place, and for a long time the only place, where the jealousy of the Pharaohs allowed foreign merchants to resort for traffic; Sais too they passed, with its temple of Nertha; Busiris, with its ruins of the largest of the Egyptian temples of Isis; and Tanis, anciently a royal residence.² This land of wonders had, however, little other effect on Eldad, than to make him often repeat,—

“Blessed is the man who putteth his trust in Thee,
And thinketh of the way to Jerusalem.”

His uncle sometimes smiled, and observed, that it was well they had left the elder behind in

¹ See note to p. 40.

² Tanis was the Zoan of Scripture. (Isaiah xix. 11; Ezekiel xxx. 14.) Josephus says, that in his time it had dwindled into an insignificant place; but the remains of several obelisks prove its former magnificence.

Alexandria; but further than this, little conversation took place. Melchi was wearied by the journey; and Eldad and Jetur were silent, or repeated passages from the Psalms.

- At length they came in sight of Pelusium, where they were to join the Phœnician caravan; and Eldad rejoiced to leave the country of the grave and gloomy Egyptians, to penetrate into the desert that would lead him to the land of his forefathers.

As they made a circuit round the city, they saw, outside one of the gates, a promiscuous assemblage of men, goods, camels and horses. The neighing of the Egyptian and Arabian steeds pierced through the hoarser cry of the camels. Egyptians, Phœnicians, Syrians, Romans, and swarthy Ethiopians, were hurrying in every direction, between the heaps of merchandise piled on every side—Greek, Aramaic, and Latin, were heard blended into one unceasing murmur. The caravan was chiefly composed of Phœnicians from Tyre; who, according to the custom which then prevailed, had carried wine in earthen jars to Egypt, where but little wine was made. They had gone through Alexandria to Memphis; and Melchi having met them as they passed, had agreed to be conducted by them from Pelusium to Gaza. They were now just arrived from Memphis; and this was the rendezvous for all who were to accompany them in their journey through the desert. They had purchased, to carry back with them, horses, cotton, and embroidered cloths, and the fine and costly linen of Egypt. The leader of the caravan, busied with a variety of cares, briefly saluted Melchi and Eldad, and informed them that

he should depart on the following morning at day-break ; and that the camels should be arranged four and four. Half the inhabitants of Pelusium were come out to traffic with the travellers, or to gaze upon them ; and the tumult and bustle were indescribable !

While Melchi and Eldad endeavoured to find a suitable lodging-place for the night in the marshy land which surrounds the city, bordering on the vast sandy desert of Arabia,¹ and Jetur was following them with the slaves, a well-known voice exclaimed ; “ Welcome, Melchi and Eldad ! Are you also for Tyre ? ”—It was Lysis, a young and handsome Greek from Alexandria, Eldad’s early friend, who had studied with him in the Museum, and, indeed, had introduced him to the knowledge of Platonism. Since returning to his obedience to the Law, Eldad had purposely avoided him, and was sorry to encounter him *now*, just as he was entering upon his journey to Jerusalem. Lysis was going to Damascus, and meant to accompany the caravan to Tyre ; and although they told him that their intention was only to go as far as Gaza, yet this did not prevent his offering to join company with them to that place ; and he made this proposal with so much of Greek urbanity, that they knew not how to refuse. The pleasure of their society, he said, would be valuable to him, not only for its own sake, but also as saving him from the annoyance of being with the Phœnicians,

¹ Pelusium was the last town in Egypt on the side of Asia ; and, from its strength, was the key of the whole country. The name in Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Coptic refers to the marshy soil in which the town is situated. In Scripture it is called *Sin*, i e. clay. See Ezekiel xxx. 15, 16.

who would talk of nothing but their merchandise; and whose company threatened to be more fatal to him than thirst in crossing the desert. "Your oriental gravity," said he, "will be enlivened by my Grecian levity; and, together, we shall form the most agreeable party in the whole caravan." He took the hand of Melchi, with a smile, while he was speaking, and the bargain was struck.

Long before sunrise, on the following morning, the tumult of the caravan began again. The camel of Lysis was bound behind the three camels of Melchi; Jetur led them, the slaves urged them on, and the three travellers mounted their horses. The trumpet sounded a second time as the signal of departure. The camels were arranged four together, and our party endeavoured to place themselves as near as possible to the head of the line of march, to avoid the clouds of sand, which were raised in the middle and near the end. Between every fifty parties of four camels, was a guide, on horseback; and a man bearing a kettle of pitch, raised on a pole, which was to be kindled during the night. The principal guide, who had the superintendence of the whole caravan, rode usually in front, on a horse richly caparisoned, and accompanied by a camel, which carried his treasure. He was the absolute master of the whole train: at his nod, the blasts of the trumpets were given, and every one set forward or halted. A litter was borne behind him, in which he occasionally reposed.

It was an hour after sunrise before all the arrangements were completed, and the third blast of the trumpet given. The guide then mounted his Arabian horse, and the march began. Thou-

sands of persons, from Pelusium and the neighbourhood, stood by the road-side, and saluted them as they passed. The slaves began to sing, and the chiming of the bells on the necks and feet of the camels was heard. Every thing connected with the march was performed in measured time; the step of the camels, the jingling of the bells, the song of the slaves, all united to form a sort of cadence; and thus it is that, even in the desert, man and beast are full of alacrity, and one portion after another of the dreary waste is passed without weariness.

Eldad's heart beat high with the thought that he was now fairly entering upon the road to Jerusalem; and he could not refrain from exclaiming, when the signal for the march was given,—“Happy are the people that know the sound of the trumpet.”¹ To Lysis, this exclamation was quite unintelligible, and he continued to exercise his Attic wit upon all that was passing around him. Eldad was, however, too much absorbed in his own reflections to notice what he said.

The first day's journey, as is usual with caravans, was very short; and they halted, after a march of an hour and a half, at Gerrha, where there was a fountain, by which they encamped. All the bustle and tumult of the early morning was now renewed. The beasts and the merchandise were

¹ Psalm lxxxix. 15 or 16. But the words are not so rendered in the English version, either in the Bible or Prayer-book. The difference, however, is not great. The modern Jews repeat this verse when the trumpet is blown at the Feast of Trumpets. Bishop Hall says, “Blessed are the people whose ears are inured to the cheerful sound of the sacred trumpets of God, in their solemn feasts and sacrifices.”

placed in the middle, and tents were erected all around, as a shelter from the burning heat of noon. The slave of Lysis went to fetch wood and water; Jetur unpacked the travelling equipage from the camel; and the three travellers helped him to set up the tent. He then spread a carpet, on which Melchi seated himself; coverlets and mattresses were brought out for sleeping; and a round piece of leather, having rings at the edge, which can be drawn together like a purse, by a string running through the rings. This was to be laid on the ground at meal-time, and the dishes placed upon it.

The slave had brought the wood; a fire was kindled, and the camp-kettle hung over it. While Jetur and the slave were thus busied, Eldad and Lysis joined Melchi in the tent. The slave brought a hare, which Lysis had bought of an inhabitant of Pelusium, and was about to dress it: Melchi, however, observing it, immediately took part with Jetur, who thrust the slave away, exclaiming, that "the animal was unclean, and must not be dressed for food for his masters."

"Nay, what is this?" said Lysis. "The game is excellent, and I meant by it to do honour to my introduction to your society." *

"We may not eat of it," replied Melchi; "it is unclean. It is forbidden in our Law to eat any animal that ruminates without dividing the hoof." (Leviticus xi. 6.)

"Ye are, then, worse even than the Egyptians," said Lysis; "they are only forbidden to eat their sacred animals. We Greeks are wiser than either. We eat what we like—"

"And *do* what ye like," exclaimed Eldad, some-

what disdainfully. "Ye are without law ; we have the Law."

One word led to another ; and one argument was followed by another, till the discussion grew warm, when Melchi interposed, and spoke to Lysis of Abraham, the great forefather of Israel ; and of the Law which was given by Moses, and in obedience to which it was that he and Eldad refused to eat certain animals. Lysis listened with interest and attention, for he had all the curiosity and thirst after knowledge which characterised his nation. No sooner had Melchi ceased to speak, than Lysis exclaimed, "Fain would I hear from thyself, venerable Melchi, the history of thy people, related in order, from the beginning. Ere we reach Gaza, we shall have many an hour to pass together, at the different places of encampment, which might be so employed agreeably to us all. You will delight in relating what redounds so much, you say, to the honour of your people ; Eldad will listen as gladly as you relate ; and I shall rejoice in an opportunity of hearing from your mouth a full history of your nation."

"As thou wilt, Lysis," said Melchi ; "and I will hope that you Greeks may thus learn to value aright the chosen people of Jehovah."

Eldad had been sitting, absorbed in thought on what he had heard from the lips of his uncle, but he now exclaimed, "What a noble subject to occupy us on our pilgrimage to Jerusalem ! Truly, 'days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' (Job xxxii. 7.) Begin, then, dearest uncle, and speak of the glories of our forefathers."

"Youths," said Melchi, "I will not refuse

your request, although ye praise me too much. Before I begin, let me repeat to you a Psalm of Asaph, which your request brings to my mind :—

‘Hear my law, O my people !
 Incline your ears to the words of my mouth ;
 I will open my mouth in a parable,
 I will declare hard sentences of old,
 Which we have heard and known,
 And such as our fathers have told us,
 That we should not hide them from the generations to come,
 But show the honour of the Lord,
 His mighty and wonderful works that He hath done ;
 He made a covenant with Jacob,
 And gave Israel a law,
 Which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children,
 That their posterity might know it,
 And the children which were yet unborn ;
 To the intent that, when they came up,
 They might show their children the same,
 That they might put their trust in God,
 And not to forget the works of God,
 But to keep His commandments.’—*Psalm lxxviii.*

“Israel is rich in such Psalms as these. The history of our nation, *Lysis*, is to be found in our hymns, and songs, and prayers. All our festivals refer to some event or another in our history ; and nothing great or important takes place among us, that is not in some way connected with former times. A bold undertaking, therefore, is it, to relate the history of our nation ; and you must not expect from me anything like a perfect narrative during the halts of a caravan. I will, however, satisfy, as far as I can, your just and laudable curiosity ; but you must permit me, *Lysis*, to go on, after the oriental fashion, in an unbroken narrative, which is better suited too for history, than the dialogue form, interrupted by questions and objections, in which you Greeks so much delight.”

"Make what conditions thou wilt," said Lysis, "only begin."

Thus urged, the venerable Melchi made no further delay. The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man was already well known to Lysis, as it was often the subject of discussion among the philosophers and the Hellenists, in the schools of Alexandria. Melchi, therefore, went no farther back than to the division of the children of men, by the flight of Cain after the murder of his brother, and set before the Greek, in order, though with brevity, the account of the Deluge, the history of Noah, and of the patriarchs, up to the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose praises he dwelt upon with all the admiration which a dutiful descendant of the Father of the Faithful must needs feel while relating their history. He then paused, seeing that the sun was already high in the heavens, and the time was come for the midday meal. "Let us eat now," said he, "and then rest before we are called upon to renew our journey."

The slaves brought in the food, prepared after the fashion of the Jews. The round piece of leather was spread upon the ground, they sat around it, ate, and were satisfied. Lysis often wished to begin conversation again, but Melchi did not speak during the meal, and Eldad was lost in silent reflections on the glories of his national history, and in anticipation of the joy of soon standing on the very spots where Abraham and Isaac had talked with God.

After the meal they all laid themselves down during the heat of noon. The evening came, but hardly had the night begun, when, at the fourth

hour, (about ten in the evening of our reckoning,) the trumpet sounded for the first time. The tents were then struck; the camels loaded, the travellers mounted their horses; each party resumed their station in the line of march; and about midnight, after the third blast of the trumpet, they broke up from Gerrha.

On account of the heat, caravans travel chiefly at night, and halt during the day. The march was now more orderly and quiet. Flames flashed from the blazing pitch-kettles which were borne aloft, and threw their light over the desert. It was a striking sight to behold them like scattered suns, along a line of march extending for several thousand paces, and to see men and beasts thus travelling at night by the ruddy gleam.

Their journey lay this night, and indeed every night until they reached Gaza, along the coast; and the distant murmur of the sea was often heard, mingling with the songs of the slaves, and the tinkling of the camels' bells.

In the morning our travellers found themselves in the neighbourhood of Cäsium. The situation of the wells on the route determines the halts of the caravans; on this occasion, the night's march had not been long. Near the town a large sand-hill extended into the sea, on the point of which was built the temple of Jupiter Casius. The active Greek set off, though the distance was considerable; not, however, for the purpose of worshipping there, but to examine the building as a work of art.

Eldad felt no desire to accompany him. On a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and, in his present frame of mind, it seemed to him nothing less than a sin,

to visit a heathen temple, though but for the gratification of curiosity. Melchi praised his determination, and reminded him of the reproof delivered by the mouth of Jeremiah: "Thou hast always broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and hast said, I will not be restrained, but on every high hill, and under every green tree, thou hast gone after idolatry."

After a silence of some minutes, Melchi began, and Eldad devoutly joined in repeating the 103d Psalm:—

"Praise the Lord, Oh, my soul!
And all that is within me praise His holy name.
Praise the Lord, Oh, my soul!
And forget not all His benefits," &c.

When the 103d was finished, they sang the 106th, which describes the journeys through the wilderness, and the disobedience of Israel.

"It is well," said Melchi, when the Psalm was ended, "that our Greek is not here; or his new-born reverence for our people might be stopped in its first growth. I must confess that his society was, at first, very irksome to me, but he is more open to the truth than I had thought, and I have hope that he may even become a stranger of the gate."¹

¹ The Jewish writers (not, however, those of the Old or New Testament) speak of two kinds of proselytes. The "proselytes of righteousness," who submitted to circumcision, and, in every respect, conformed to the law of Moses; and the "proselytes of the gate," so called from the expression, frequently used in the Mosaic law, of "the stranger that is within thy gates." These last lived among the Jews, generally, as it seems, in a servile or menial capacity, observing, as some say, the seven precepts of Noah; or, at least, not sacrificing to any false god, and not working on the Sabbath; thus avoiding a transgression of any of the fundamental principles of the Law. In the earlier times of Jewish history, those only who lived among the Jews

Lysis returned full of admiration of the precious works of art, which he had seen in the temple of the Casian Jupiter; and which he was delighted to describe to Eldad. During the meal, however, the conversation of Lysis and Eldad (for Melchi was too oriental in his habits to talk at meal time) turned upon the ancient Goshen, within whose limits they now supposed themselves to be. They agreed, that it was difficult to make out its position distinctly, after the lapse of 1400 years, but that probably it was the district of Lower Egypt, which is bounded by the sea to the north,—and to the west, by the eastern branch of the Nile at Pelusium, and by the river itself. To the south, the district of Goshen probably extended to Helio-polis, and the range of mountainous country which connects the Nile with the head of the Red Sea.

When they awoke towards evening, refreshed by sleep, the conversation respecting Goshen was renewed; and Melchi, seated upon his carpet, took a part in it.

“It would seem,” he said, “that we are, at least, upon the skirts of that fruitful district of pasturage, in which the children of Abraham sojourned, and where they grew from a family to a people. That the promises of Jehovah should be accomplished, it was necessary that Abraham should ‘become a people,’ and a little reflection will show us, that in no country could this be done in so short a time as in this part of Egypt. Canaan was already fully peopled, but in Goshen there would embrace their religion; and such would probably receive circumcision; but when the Jews were dispersed over the world, and their doctrines more generally known, many appear to have attached themselves to the worship of the one true God, without farther conformity to the Mosaic law.

was ample room. The Canaanites would not probably have looked on quietly for many years, witnessing the increase of the strangers among them; whereas, the Egyptians, out of gratitude to Joseph, would, at least, for the first century after his death, have abstained from any injury to his people. Again, nowhere else could Israel have been kept so free from any mixture with other nations as in the neighbourhood of the Egyptians, whose very religion inspired them with a horror of pastoral tribes. The district was a fruitful one too, and thus well suited for the support of numerous families. Jacob came out of Canaan with seventy persons, and 215 years after, the Israelites numbered 603,550 men of war, without reckoning the 22,000 Levites, and the women and children. Thus, during the 430 years which had elapsed since Abraham, then childless, had left his native country by God's command, Israel had indeed become a nation!"

Melchi was thus naturally led to take up the history where he had left it the night before. He briefly related the sufferings of his people, under the iron rule of Pharaoh, and then, more at length, told Lysis of the birth and training of Moses, his appointment by God to be the deliverer of Israel, the miracles, by which he overcame the resistance of Pharaoh, and the final destruction of the Egyptian host in the Red Sea. He repeated the noble song of triumph, as we find it in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, and then described the awful solemnities which accompanied the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. The forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and the death of Moses, on the very border of the promised land,

brought his story to a close for a while, but he did not conclude till he had recited the last words, and the parting benediction, of Israel's lawgiver, as they are given in the thirty-second and thirty-third chapters of Deuteronomy.

Lysis listened with respect and interest ; but in answer to a remark made by Eldad, he acknowledged that the sublimity of the Hebrew poetry, and the solemnity of the history, produced on his mind something like the weariness with which the eye, dazzled by too stedfast a gaze on the sun, turns for relief and refreshment to the soft green which covers the face of the earth. "To look on the sun, and only on the sun," said he, "fatigues the eye. Melchi is always pointing thither, and my eyes already ache with straining them in the same direction."

Eldad had, fortunately, not time to express the first feeling raised by this confession, before the well-known blast of the trumpet was heard. They had not observed that they were prolonging their discourse far into the night. Jetur and the slave came up, and hastily pulled the poles of the tent out of the sand.

"It is time," exclaimed Melchi, "that we should leave off; even though Lysis had not felt weary. Reproach him not, Eldad. Let him learn to fear God, and the Law will not then be weariness to him."

"And then," said Eldad, "we should, as men, enjoy that communion in the knowledge of the truth, of which, as youth, we dreamed in the Bruchium."

Saying this, he held out his hand to Lysis, who took it with a smile, and they then hastened to their horses.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RIVER OF EGYPT—THE ALARM.

THE march began, as usual, about midnight. They had not proceeded far from Casium, when they reached the lake Sirbonis, whose surface was so covered with the drifted sand, that it was difficult, in the darkness, to distinguish it from the surrounding wilderness. A few Sabbath-days' journeys farther on,¹ they came to a green, fertile, and blooming valley, called Larish; in the midst of the desert, it seemed like a flower in the sand. A small brook gives this fertility, by running through the valley into the lake Sirbonis. In summer, it is commonly dry; at this season its clear waters were flowing, and, as the caravan passed, the stars were reflected in them. Melchi checked his horse as they were about to cross it, and turning to Eldad, exclaimed,—“Farewell! Farewell to Egypt! This is the boundary. *I now cross the River of Egypt.*” There was something

¹ The Sabbath day's journey is reckoned as 2000 cubits. This was the distance between the ark and the camp, during the march of the Israelites; see Josh. iii. 4, and probably the same distance was kept when they rested. As the Israelites were allowed to go from their tents to the Tabernacle to worship on the Sabbath day, they regarded going such a distance on other occasions as no breach of the Law given in Exod. xvi. 29,—“Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” 2000 cubits is considered by the Rabbins as about a mile; our author seems to take it as three-quarters of a mile.

melancholy in the tone of Melchi, as if the farewell were painful to him, though he was approaching the Holy Land. In truth, the ominous forebodings of Eldad's mother had occurred to him; and though at Alexandria he had despised them, as springing from female weakness, yet he could not now drive them from his thoughts. Eldad, however, was animated by far different feelings, and called aloud with a cheerful voice,—“Farewell Egypt! I see thee not again—or only as a new man!” He rode forward, giving way to the bright thoughts which filled his mind.

There was something of a fascinating interest in this procession by night, beneath the glimmering light of the stars, and with the ruddy gleams of the pitch-kettles, which deepened the surrounding shadows. Songs were heard on all sides, near and distant, and mingled pleasingly with the measured tinkling of the camels' bells. Eldad felt more than ever that he had indeed left Egypt behind him; and was even himself surprised at the warm enthusiastic feelings which stirred his bosom.

Two hours after sunrise they arrived at Ostracine. No one was weary. The tent was pitched, and they laid themselves down under it. Eldad was full of the animating reflections which the night journey had excited; while Melchi was still under the influence of the melancholy feeling which had oppressed him in crossing the River of Egypt. Both, however, were ready to accept the challenge of Lysis, who soon exclaimed, “Had we not all rather speak and hear, than sleep? Melchi, wilt thou not let us have the continuation of the history of thy people?” Willingly the old man

took up his narrative, and after a while seemed to forget the melancholy which the crossing of the little river, and the sad prognostics of Eldad's mother had occasioned. He related the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, passed lightly over the reign of Saul, but dwelt with delight on the character of David, and on the glories of the reign of Solomon. He described the beauty and magnificence of the first Temple, and would long have pursued the theme had not Jetur brought in the evening meal. Eldad, when his uncle had concluded, broke forth into thanksgiving, exclaiming, "Blessed be the Lord, the King of the world, who gave such a time of glory to His people!"

It was well that the discourse was thus interrupted, or it would have ended in a dispute. Lysis was but little disposed to join in the panegyric upon Israel, and was about to insist on the inferiority of the favoured people, in all the arts that minister to the pomp of life, as compared with his own countrymen—the witty and accomplished Greeks,—when Jetur happily entered. They ate and drank in silence and in peace; Melchi and Eldad ruminating on the glory of Solomon's reign, and Lysis revolving in his own mind arguments to prove the superiority of his own people. They slept from the heat of noonday till the sun went down; and when evening came on, were still in a state between sleeping and waking, enjoying the coolness of the breeze. The stars were just appearing, when they were roused by a sudden blast of the trumpet, in its loudest, harshest tone. They all started up.

"That," said Melchi, "is not the signal of the march, it is an alarm." Jetur rushed in, and in-

formed them that a horde of Arabs was in sight, and threatened an attack. The tumult was very great. The men mounted their horses, and hastened to the side on which danger appeared. The guides vociferated, and increased the tumult in their endeavours to restore order. The bows were strung, the tents were struck, and the slaves prepared to drive the camels further to the rear. After all these preparations, however, had been made, the enemy retired, feeling himself probably too weak to encounter such a resistance as the travellers showed themselves prepared to offer.

Lysis felt almost disappointed at the loss of an adventure, which seemed to promise some relief from the dull sameness of the march; but with very different feelings Melchi turned himself towards Jerusalem, and in an attitude of prayer repeated some verses from the fifty-sixth Psalm:—

“Whosoever I call upon Thee, mine enemies shall be put to flight,

This I know, for God is on my side.

* * *

In God have I put my trust,

I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

Unto Thee, O God, will I pay my vows,

Unto Thee will I give thanks;

For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling,

That I may walk before God in the light of the living.”

The guide not being willing to remain in the same spot till midnight, gave an early signal for the caravan to start. The alarm into which they had just been thrown, the terrors of their fellow-travellers, and the bustle of departure, could not prevent the thoughts of Melchi and of Eldad from recurring to the glories of the reign of Solomon; and they rehearsed together the seventy-second

Psalm ; which composed, primarily, to his honour, was believed to bear also a secret reference to One much greater than Solomon.

“ Give the king thy judgments, O God ;
And thy righteousness unto the king’s son.

* * * *

His dominion shall be from the one sea to the other,
And from the flood unto the world’s end ;
They that dwell in the wilderness shall kneel before Him.
His enemies shall lick the dust,” &c.

At an early hour, and in safety, the travellers arrived at Rhinocorura;¹ and encamped on the green and fertile banks of a mountain stream. Melchi, who, from his advanced age, was easily exhausted after any unusual excitement, either of mind or body, was compelled to lie down to rest immediately on his arrival, and it was not till after the mid-day meal, that he was able to take up the thread of his story, for which Lysis was waiting.

“ It is a long and melancholy history,” said he, “ that I must now relate. During five hundred years, the providence of God watched over the people of Israel ; rewarding with victory, and wealth, and prosperity ; their observance of His Law ; and punishing by defeat and afflictions of many kinds, their too often repeated disobedience and rebellion. Yesterday we left our nation on the highest and most brilliant pinnacle of national prosperity. They alone, of all nations upon earth, were governed by a Divine Law ; they were in possession of the promised land, and of a magnificent Temple, in which all the outward rites of the

¹ Rhinocorura, or Rhinocolura, is placed by some close to the western bank of the “ River of Egypt.” The author places it to the east, twenty-six miles from Ostracine ; and the River of Egypt between Rhinocorura and Pelusium.

worship of Jehovah might be observed. One thing only was wanted to make Israel that blessed people, by whom all other nations were to be blessed, and this was a *willing obedience*. The possession of the Law, and the means of keeping it, were not enough to produce this obedience. Something more was necessary; and we must ever acknowledge it to have been one of the marks of the favour of Jehovah towards Israel, that He made reward and punishment to follow so closely upon obedience and disobedience, that they were at last brought to feel the necessity as well as the duty of walking stedfastly in the way of God's Law. It may, indeed, be said, that the history of Israel is set up as a monument to all nations, of the justice and power of the one true God; and if such the lesson it teaches to other nations, how much more to Israel itself. In order to impress it the more upon them, a succession of prophets was raised up, who enforced, by their instruction, the moral, which the events of history, year by year, were teaching."

Thus did Melchi enter upon what was truly a melancholy task to him. He had now to tell of the division of the chosen people into two kingdoms; of the immediate falling away of one from the pure worship of Jehovah; and of the gradual decline of the other, in spite of the examples of pious kings, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, and the fervid remonstrances and inspired threatenings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. Nothing availed to stay the rebellious idolatry of Israel and Judah, till first one, and then the other, were carried away captives into distant lands, and made slaves to the worshippers of false gods. Then

was their magnificent Temple laid low, and all the holy vessels consecrated to the pure worship of Jehovah, were carried away to Babylon. The seed of Abraham, who would not follow after the faith, and the obedience of their great forefather, were driven from their home, cut off from the land of promise, and left without a temple and without a prince to sit on the throne of David!

At this point in the history, Melchi ceased; exclaiming in the words of his favourite prophet,—“Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” A grief that would find no vent in words hung heavy on the heart of Eldad; and Lysis, respecting the feelings of his companions, was also silent.

The last glow of the setting sun had fallen on Melchi's countenance as he related the destruction of Jerusalem. Twilight succeeded; by the feeble glooming of the hearth fire, he had described the ruin and the misery of Israel, and now all was darkness and silence. The blast of the trumpet, which gave the signal to prepare for the march, at length broke in upon them, and they all arose.

CHAPTER V.

THE HALT AT RAPHIA.

THE caravan halted near the ruins of Raphia; their daily journeys had been short, on account of the quantity of merchandize which they carried. They were now on the border-ground between Egypt and Syria. For ages past this had been the theatre of war between these countries; and this circumstance, before the Babylonish captivity, had been the occasion of frequent calamity to Israel, which could hardly escape being involved in the war or its consequences. This thought occurred to the minds both of Eldad and Melchi, as they crossed the very spot where Antiochus the Great had, a hundred years before, lost a great battle with the Egyptians. They, however, found consolation in reflecting, that it was Judea's conqueror who had here been conquered. Antiochus, after the battle, fled back into his own kingdom, and Palestine was again free.

When they awoke, after the noonday sleep, Lysis was the first to speak. "Venerable Melchi, shall we now hear the remaining part of the history of your nation? The journey to Gaza will be the last that we shall make together. Let us then pass these hours in something more improving than listening to the noise of camels, and the Phœnicians' talk of buying and selling."

Melchi did not refuse the challenge, but placing himself in a convenient posture, began by describing the condition of his people, when they "sat down and wept by the waters of Babylon." He spoke of the consolation given by their prophets, especially Ezekiel and Daniel; and told of the efforts which, after the long lapse of seventy years, the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin made to obtain permission to return to their own land. "From Cyrus the Persian, the conqueror of Babylon, they obtained this permission, and, supported and encouraged by him, they began to raise a building to replace the Tabernacle of David, and the Temple of Solomon. The foundations were laid while the shouts of joy and the noise of weeping were mingled together; and it was in the midst of much tribulation and persecution that the work was accomplished. First Ezra, and then Nehemiah, were their faithful and indefatigable leaders, and the work of restoration prospered in their hands. The heavy afflictions, by which the sins of Israel had been punished, were not without effect. After their return from the captivity, the Law was observed with a strictness and a zeal which they had never before shown. They had learnt, by long and bitter experience, that obedience and national prosperity were inseparably connected together. In their captivity, the better part of the people had been strengthened by the words of the prophets, whom Jehovah sent to them for this very purpose, and cherished, in secret, the hope of being restored to their own land, and to the Divine favour. These formed the chief strength of the nation when it returned from captivity. The baser sort, regardless alike

of promises and threatenings, were content to remain behind in a strange land, even as many do now in Egypt. From this time, then, a new period begins in Israel, in which the fruits of the discipline, which the people had undergone in former periods, are displayed. It is true that Israel was now subject to a foreign yoke, and was obliged to serve in foreign wars ; but in the midst of these trials they were obedient, and walked in all the ways of the Lord."

Melchi was here interrupted by Lysis. " Allow me, venerable Herodotus, for so I may well call you," said he, " to make a remark here. I know how much you dislike interruption, but this will not displease you. On the contrary, it will gratify you to find your own account confirmed by the mouth of one whom you call a heathen. Hecataeus (it is true he was a native of Abdera) has written a book respecting your nation ; in which he gives them the highest praise for the firmness with which they adhered to their Law, when on military service in the midst of foreign nations, as well as on other occasions."

This remark was as gratifying as Lysis had anticipated, to the aged Melchi, who, with renewed spirit, continued his story.

" Antiochus the Great was so much pleased with the faithfulness of Israel, that he commanded victims, wine, oil, frankincense, and wheat, &c., &c. to be furnished for the sacrifices of the Temple, he gave wood from Lebanon for its repairs ; and freed the nation from all tribute for three years. Another Antiochus (Epiphanes, King of Syria), made a very different use of the power which, for wise purposes, God had given him over the chosen

people; and carried his cruel tyranny so far, that he may be said to have prepared the way for the complete emancipation of Israel, making the Syrian yoke unbearable. Alas! that among the sons of Israel some should have been found base and wicked enough to assist the tyrant. Such were Joshua and Onias, who, with a miserable daring, denied their country, as well as their faith, by taking the Grecian names of Jason and Menelaus, and worshipping the gods of Greece. Upon one occasion, Antiochus took Jerusalem, plundered the city, cut to pieces 80,000 men, and sold as slaves, or carried into captivity, as many more. He added impiety to cruelty. Entering the Temple with the apostate, Menelaus, he reviled the God to whom it was dedicated; directed all the gold and silver, the table of shew-bread, and the candlestick, to be carried away, and then offered—I tremble while I relate the horrible atrocity—he offered swine upon the sacred altar, and sprinkled the whole Temple with the water in which the unclean animal had been boiled. The daily sacrifice was put an end to upon another occasion; the worship of Grecian idols commanded upon pain of death; the Holy Scriptures cut to pieces or carried away; and the Temple itself dedicated, with abominable rites, to Jupiter Olympus. To practice circumcision, or to observe the Sabbath, was forbidden on pain of death. Two women were discovered to have circumcised their children; the infants were bound upon their breasts, they were led round the whole city, and at last hanged, or, as some say, precipitated from the walls. Some had crept into caverns near the city; they were all burnt alive. Every month,

at the return of the day on which the king was born, the Jews were forcibly driven to offer an idolatrous sacrifice. On the festival of Bacchus, they were made to appear in garlands of ivy to his honour. Eleazer, an aged man, and learned in the Law, had his mouth forced open, that he might swallow swine's flesh; but, in spite of force and fraud, he preferred to die. A mother with seven sons was taken, and they were scourged, to force them to eat the unclean food, but it was vain, they all remained firm. The executioners then took the eldest of the sons, inflicted on him the most cruel torments, and finally burned him to death. He, all the while, exhorted his mother, and his brethren, who were standing by, to die undauntedly for the Law. The other sons were slain in like manner; and, last of all, the mother, who had thus addressed her last son, 'My dearest child, whom I bore nine months beneath my heart, and three years at my bosom, have pity on me! Fear not the man of blood, but die willingly, as thy brothers have done, that the God of Mercy may restore you, with them, living, to my embrace.' What a miracle of steadfastness and courage was thus shown! Such instances served to stir up the spirit of the people; and, at length, Israel was again, by the mercy of Jehovah, made free in the following manner. There lived in Modin a priest named Mattathias, who had five sons. He bewailed himself that he had been born to behold the oppression of his people, and the desolation of the Holy City, without being able to give any aid. He rent his clothes, and he and his sons put on sackcloth. When the captains of Antiochus came to Modin, they seduced many of

the people to apostatize, and endeavoured, by promises of all kinds, to persuade Mattathias, who was one of the principal men of the place, to do the same. But he not only openly refused to offer sacrifice and burn incense, but when a Jew at the same moment went up to the altar, and sacrificed to the idol, so great was the zeal of Mattathias, that he ran towards the altar, killed the Jew who had offered sacrifice, and the captain of Antiochus, who stood by, and then overturned the altar. This done, he cried aloud through the whole city, 'Whoso is zealous for the Law, and will keep the covenant, let him go forth with me!'

"Many followed Mattathias and his sons into the desert, and a multitude of pious Jews soon assembled around him. They traversed the country in a body, throwing down the altars of the idols, circumcising the children, and attacking the apostates and the ungodly. Mattathias thus succeeded in maintaining the Law, and rousing the spirit of his countrymen; but he was already advanced in years, and did not live to complete the task he had so courageously begun. He died, and was buried with his fathers, having first blessed his sons, and encouraged them to keep up a vigorous resistance against their heathen tyrants.

"Judas, the third son, became leader after the death of Mattathias. He gained several glorious victories over the Syrians, and at length entered in triumph into Jerusalem. When he and his followers beheld the altar defiled, and the sanctuary laid desolate, they rent their clothes, and made great lamentation. They cast ashes on their heads, threw dust into the air, and cried towards Heaven with a bitter cry. They did not rest till a new altar was built, and the Temple purified and

restored to its former state. On the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, was an offering made according to law, with song, and pipe, and harp, and cymbal. This was the first offering since the sanctuary had been defiled by the heathens. The festival continued for eight days,¹ and there was great joy among the people. The day is annually observed as a remembrance for ever of this great deliverance. Judas proceeded from victory to victory, till at length he lost his life in an unsuccessful battle. His brother Jonathan succeeded him. He was appointed high-priest, and maintained his own power, and upheld the Law in very difficult circumstances. By stratagem, this heroic defender of his country was made prisoner, and shamefully put to death. He was great in council, still greater in the field; and those who saw him were compelled to confess, that Jehovah had indeed raised up a guardian for His people in their time of need. I saw him in my youth at Ptolemais, at the espousals of Alexander Balas, King of Syria, with the daughter of the King of Egypt. The hero sat in a robe of purple among kings, and surpassed them all in royalty of mien.

“After the death of Jonathan, Simon, now the only survivor of the noble band of brothers, took the command of the army. He it was whom his dying father had called ‘the wise,’ and commanded his brethren to obey him. For four and twenty years he had served his brethren in counsel; and though older than Judas or Jonathan, had filled a subordinate station with so much humility, as well to deserve the honour of finally establishing the independence of Israel. Scarcely

¹ 1 Maccabees iv. 56.

had he erected a monument at Modin, to his father and valiant brothers, when the Romans, with whom he had renewed the covenant, declared Israel free; and Demetrius, the King of Syria, renounced all claim of sovereignty over them. Simon retook Gaza; Jerusalem was purified; the garrison in the castle surrendered and retired; and Simon entered with palm branches, and the sound of the harp, singing praises to God for having delivered Israel from the tyranny of strangers. The people in gratitude for all he had done for them, chose him as their prince and high-priest, till God should raise up the true Prophet. While Simon lived, Judah had peace; every man cultivated his own field, and ate the fruit of his land, and drank the wine of his own vineyard. The elders exercised authority, and preserved good order, and the people prospered.

“What shall I say of John Hyrcanus, his son and successor? Thou wilt thyself see him, Eldad, in all his majesty; and wert thou, Lysis, to see him, thou wouldest never again make a jest of Israel. Hyrcanus humbled the Samaritans, and removed the Temple on Mount Gerizim, so long an eyesore to every true-hearted son of Israel. He gave the Idumæans their choice, to leave the country, or to receive circumcision; and thus united the seed of Esau with the posterity of Jacob. He is distinguished above all the princes, and fathers of Israel, by uniting, in himself, the threefold office which the Messiah is to bear. He is king, and teacher, and high-priest.

“To such a pitch of glory, and to such hopes has Jehovah exalted His people; to Him be the praise! I thank my God that He has permitted me to behold the glory of His people, and to feast my

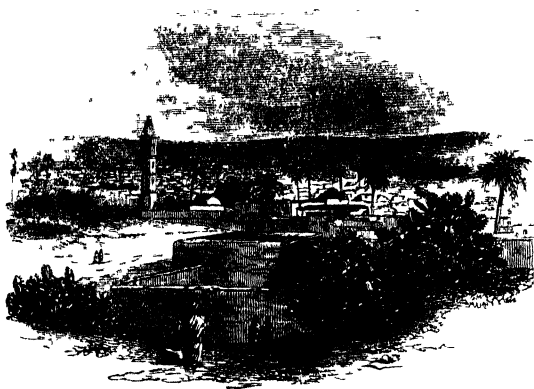
thoughts with the contemplation of it, though it is not given to me to dwell with my brethren in our own land. Let me now remind you, Lysis, of the beginning of my narrative, in which I told you that Israel was appointed to communicate the faith of Abraham to all nations, by means of the Law ; and that the Messiah is to be the Patriarch of the human race. To bring this to pass, it was that Israel multiplied into a nation in Egypt ; received the Law from Sinai ; conquered the Holy Land, under the Judges ; built a Temple under the Kings ; and was taught obedience by the vicissitudes of adversity and prosperity in successive centuries. All now exists together ; Israel is a nation, has the Law, and obeys it willingly. The time, therefore, cannot be remote, when all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham, and the son of David. He that is promised shall come, and that speedily. ‘Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. * * * The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.’ (Isaiah lx. 1—3.) In this hope, Lysis, I conclude my narrative with one of King David’s Psalms, full of thankfulness and hope :—

“ ‘Praise the Lord, for it is good to sing praises to our God :
Yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful.
The Lord doth build up Jerusalem :
He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

* * * * *

He showeth His word unto Jacob :
His statutes and ordinances unto Israel.
He hath not dealt so with any nation,
Neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws.
Praise Jehovah !’”—*Psalms* cxlvii.

“Amen!” exclaimed Eldad. “Amen!” responded Melchi : and even Lysis repeated, “Amen !”



GAZA.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENTRANCE TO THE PROMISED LAND.

THE way from Raphia to Gaza was travelled with very different feelings by the different members of our party.

Eldad, as he rode on, was constantly looking to the right, toward the hills of Judah, which rose black and dark on the starry sky, to the eastward of the road which they travelled along the coast. His feelings were more excited at every glance;

passages from the Psalms and the Prophets perpetually rose to his lips, and all the fatigue of the journey over the stony and sandy soil was forgotten in the reflection, that every step brought him nearer to the promised land. The history of his people passed in review before his mind, and his imagination gave a new colouring to all that was around him. Instead of a caravan of Phœnician traders, he seemed to himself to be sometimes in the pastoral encampments of Abraham; at others, with Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness, or in the suite of the Queen of Sheba, when she came to see the glory, and hear the wisdom of King Solomon, or among the exiles returning from the land of their captivity, with Zerubbabel, to rebuild the ruined sanctuary.

Melchi was seated on his horse, his mind full of the glory of Israel about to be revealed. In the midst of the bitterness against the heathen, which was become habitual to his aged heart, and the sort of ill-feeling, which, in consequence, he harboured against Lysis, he could not but rejoice in the triumph he had gained over him by his narrative, which had, indeed, been complete, since it forced the Greek to assent to the praises of Israel.

The feelings of Lysis were of a very mixed kind, and some of them far from pleasant. He felt the Jewish pride in all its force, and was perpetually tempted to keep it within bounds, by applying to it the keen edge of Attic wit. Yet, when he reflected, that the society of these Jews had enabled him to pass his time more pleasantly and instructively than he would have done among

the Phœnicians, and considered that the journey was now at an end ; he thought it was not worth while to offend them, and so held his peace. He had a further reason for not wishing to come to a rupture with his fellow travellers ; he was unwilling to lose the invitation to Jerusalem, on which he reckoned. For, notwithstanding all that had been disagreeable to him, he could not but acknowledge that the Jews were a people in the highest degree remarkable, and he had a great curiosity to see what they were in their native land, where he had often been told they could alone be fairly judged of.

With these feelings they came late at night to Gaza. Melchi, while the tents were erecting, paid the conductor of the caravan the sum agreed upon for the journey. As he intended, according to the ancient custom of his people, to make the journey to the Passover on foot, he had already bargained with some one in the caravan for the disposal of the horses. They rested for some hours, and rose again before the dawn.

The caravan still lay buried in profound slumber. By the time that the camels were loaded, and Melchi and Eldad ready to depart, the morning began to dawn, and a singular spectacle was disclosed. The camels were crouching in a wide circle round the baggage, the horses, and the merchandise ; and their long necks and little heads rose like towers above a wall. The men had encamped round the fires, or within the tents. Most of these fires had burnt out, only here and there the dying embers occasionally shot forth a flame, which feebly illumined the sleeping groups around. Within the great circle all was still, save that the

watchmen, with their long staves, were going their rounds, and calling their watchwords in the stillness of the night. In the distance were heard the hoarse sounds of the waters breaking upon the shore. On the other side of the camp was Gaza, with its ruins; the fiery glow of the morning sun beginning to light up the scene of the fearful accomplishment of the word of prophecy. Gaza, once so populous, magnificent and strong, when she committed the shameful outrage on Samson, had no longer any gates at the spot where the mighty hero once lifted them up, and carried them to the top of the hill opposite to Hebron. (Judg. xvi. 3.) Jeremiah had taken the wine-cup of fury from the hand of Jehovah, and Gaza was among the nations to whom he was commissioned to carry it. (Jeremiah xlvii.) The shepherd of Tekoah had foretold this in still plainer language; "I will send a fire on the walls of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof" (Amos i. 7); Zephaniah had said, "Gaza shall be forsaken" (Zeph. ii. 4); and last of all, Zechariah had declared, "Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful * * * and the king shall perish from Gaza." (Zech. ix. 5.)

What the prophets foretold against Gaza, Alexander the Great had fulfilled. The city, now lying in ruins, had formerly been the seat of the worship of Dagon; a monstrous idol, whose lower half had the form of a fish, and the upper that of a woman. Eldad regarded the city as a monument of the wrath of the God of Israel, placed on the very confines of the promised land. To-day he was to enter that land, and it seemed as if this awful spectacle had been exhibited to him, to impress

indelibly on his mind the transition from the land of the heathen, to the land of Jehovah.

Lost in these thoughts, Eldad stood unconscious of what was going on round him; Lysis placed himself beside him, and for a long time watched him with earnest curiosity. "In good truth," he at last suddenly exclaimed, "this is oriental contemplation! Eldad, thou thinkest on Jerusalem!" Eldad, disagreeably startled from his sublime reflections, replied, "I was not thinking on Jerusalem, but on that city of the heathen, on which, as our prophet predicted, 'baldness has come.'"

"It is, indeed, a revolting sight," said Lysis, "and your prophet's anticipation has proved correct. But you are about to depart for Jerusalem. How I wish I could go with you, and enter this Temple, whose magnificence I have heard you describe; I should like to accompany the train of pilgrims to the Passover!"

"You would find yourself," said Eldad, "in a more disagreeable situation than even on the journey from Pelusium to Gaza."

"I should be able to stand my ground, nevertheless," said Lysis; "but I must now go to Sidon. I have, however, a plan to propose."

He then suggested, that as his own business would probably be finished about the time when Melchi and Eldad would have celebrated the two festivals, he should then join them at Jerusalem; and after visiting together some other parts of the Holy Land, they should return to Egypt in company. With the address of a Greek, Lysis contrived to make this proposal acceptable even to Melchi, who, offended as he had often been by

his contemptuous ridicule of the Jewish people, yet cherished a hope, that, by knowing them better, he might judge of them more truly; and might even be persuaded to become, if not a proselyte of righteousness, at least a proselyte of the gate. Eldad, convinced that no true peace was to be derived from all the boasted wisdom of the Greeks, ardently desired that the friend of his youth might be brought to confess that this peace, which they had sought in vain in philosophy, was indeed to be found in the Law of Jehovah. Thus the travellers took leave of each other, in the hope of meeting again after a few months. Lysis went through the camp to seek for company as far as Tyre, while Melchi and Eldad took the road to Hebron. From Gaza two roads lead to Jerusalem—one was by the plain of Sephela, and generally chosen by travellers, as the easiest; but Melchi preferred the other, partly because he had a friend in Hebron, whom he had not seen for many years, and in whose company he wished to perform the pilgrimage; and partly because he wished to make Eldad's first entrance into the land of promise as solemn and impressive as possible. The road by Sephela would have taken them a long way through the country of the Philistines, and they would have met with but few pilgrims to the holy feast. The road by Hebron, on the contrary, would bring them at once into the Jewish territory; would lead them through scenes rich in historical associations, and every village would swell the number of pilgrims, in whose company it would be delightful for them to travel.

They had not proceeded far inland in the direction of the river Besar, when they reached the con-

finest of Judah; they stood at the foot of its hills, and the land of the heathen lay behind them. Eldad seemed now to feel, for the first time, what home and native country mean. In Egypt, where he had been born and brought up, he had no such feeling; for he had been taught to regard himself as a stranger and a sojourner there. He was now about to enter upon his real, though hitherto unknown country, and before he set his foot upon it, at the very first sight of it, the breeze seemed to waft from its hills a welcome to his home. "Land of my fathers!" he exclaimed, "Land of promise! promised to me also, from my earliest years!" and quickened his steps to reach it. He felt the truth of the saying, Israel is Israel only in the Holy Land. "Here," said Melchi, "is the boundary of Judah!" Eldad, unable to speak, threw himself on the sacred earth; kissed it, and watered it with his tears; and Jetur, letting go the bridles of the camels, did the same. Melchi stood beside them, and as he stretched his arms over them, and in the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, blessed their going out and their coming in, his eyes too overflowed with tears, and his heart seemed to warm again as with the renewal of a youthful love. "See," he exclaimed,—

"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come;
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs;
And the vines with the tender grape give fragrance."

Song of Solomon. ii. 11.

They advanced slowly; Eldad, gazing around him on every side, thought he had never seen so

lovely a spring. The latter rains¹ had ceased, but they had given a freshness to the breeze from the hills, such as he had never known in the Delta. The narcissus and the hyacinth, the blossoms of the apricot and peach, shed their fragrance around. The groves of terebinth, the oliveyards and vineyards, stood before them in living green; the corn, swollen by the rain, was ripening fast for the harvest, and the fields of barley were already yellow. The extensive meadows, covered with grass for the cattle, the undulating surface of hill and valley, the rocks hewn out in terraces, and filled with earth and planted, offered a constant variety of delightful views. The traveller might see that this was a land blessed by Jehovah; and in which the prayer of Isaac had been fulfilled, —“God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.” (Gen. xxvii. 28.) Eldad drank of the clear mountain stream that ran sparkling along, and thought the sweet water of the Nile so praised by the Egyptians, was not to be compared with it. Melchi reminded him of the words of the Psalm:—

“The river of God is full of water,
Thou preparest their corn,
Thou providest for the earth.

* * * *

The little hills shall rejoice on every side,
The folds shall be full of sheep;
The valleys also shall stand so thick with corn,
That they shall laugh and sing.”—*Psalm lxxv.*

¹ The early and latter rains are frequently spoken of in Scripture. After the dry months of summer, it begins to rain in Palestine in October; this is the *early* rain. Again a considerable quantity falls in March and the beginning of April; this is the *latter* rain. Without the former, the grain would not spring; without the latter, it would not swell and ripen.

Eldad replied in the words of another Psalm :—

“He watereth the hills from above;
The earth is filled with the fruit of His works;
He bringeth forth grass for the cattle,
And green herb for the service of man;
That He may bring food out of the earth,
And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,
And oil to make him a cheerful countenance,
And bread to strengthen man’s heart.”—*Psalm civ.*

“This is indeed the land of promise!” they both exclaimed together: and Eldad called to mind the words of the prophet Ezekiel: “I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land * * * flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.” (Ezekiel xx. 6.)

These words were continually repeated by Eldad as he went forward. The pure mountain air strengthened and refreshed his body, while his mind was invigorated by spiritual joy. During the whole of this journey to Hebron he seemed not to see what was actually before his eyes, but what his imagination pictured to him *had been* in those places in the different periods of his people’s history. When Melchi pointed out to him Gerar, which lay far to the south of their road: and reminded him, that it was the place where Abraham and Isaac had involved themselves in difficulties, by concealing the truth from Abimelech (Gen. xx. and xxvi.); and where the pious Asa had defeated the Ethiopians (2 Chron. xiv. 13);—the imagination of Eldad instantly covered the plains with the flocks of the patriarch, and the hosts of the faithful King of Judah.

They passed near Beersheba; and remembered the expression so common in Scripture history

“from Dan to Beersheba,” to denote the extent of the Holy Land from north to south. Beersheba was distant from Dan 160 Sabbath days’ journeys, that is, about 120 miles. Melchi related how Abraham and Isaac had digged a well there, and called it Beersheba, in memory of the oaths exchanged between them and Abimelech (Gen. xxi. 31, xxvi. 33); how Jehovah had there appeared to Jacob, and encouraged him to go down into Egypt to his beloved son Joseph (Gen. xlv. 2); how Elijah the Tishbite had fled there from the face of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings xix. 3); how Samuel’s sons had there judged Israel (1 Sam. viii. 2); and how, in later times, it had become the seat of idolatrous worship under Uzziah;—as Amos testifies when he joins Beersheba to Bethel with its golden calves; and to Gilgal, which, as Hosea tells us, had become a place of wickedness, hateful to Jehovah. (Amos v. 5; Hosea ix. 15.)

Notwithstanding the length of the journey, performed too on foot, Melchi seemed to feel no fatigue; and every hill and valley, every town and village, which they passed, recalled something of interest in the history of the Israelites. Their road lay by Debir, called in ancient times Kirjath-Sepher; and he there reminded Eldad of the heroic prize, the hand of Achsah, his daughter, which Caleb had proposed, as the reward of the man who should conquer Kirjath-Sepher. (Judges i. 12.)

At length Hebron rose before them; and with different feelings, they approached it. Eldad looked upon it with interest, as having been for seven years the city of David’s residence. (2 Sam.

ii. 11.) He could almost have fancied that the tones of the sweet singer's harp lingered about its walls. Melchi longed to see the friend of his youth, and to repose under his hospitable roof. There was an unusual commotion beneath the lofty palm-trees at the gate, and in all the streets. It was evident that many were preparing to depart for Jerusalem on the morrow.

They were received with the cordial welcome of early, but long separated friends. Melchi had scarcely laid himself down to have his feet washed, when the discourse between him and his host flowed as freely as if the old man had only walked a Sabbath day's journey. Here Eldad found the ancient custom still preserved, of lying on the carpet at meals, while in Alexandria he had been used to recline on Grecian cushions. He soon fell asleep, and both mind and body found the rest they so greatly needed.



TEREBINTH TREE.

CHAPTER VII.

HEBRON AND JERUSALEM.

AT the first crowing of the cock, all was in motion; the master of the house was making the last arrangements for his departure, when the neighbours entered to announce that the march was about to begin. Refreshments were offered to the travellers, and especially to the aged Melchi; but he earnestly declared that, even amidst the

idolaters of Egypt, he had scarcely ever allowed himself to take food early in the morning, and much less would he do so now, in the midst of Israel, in the city of David, and on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The commotion in the street became greater and greater, and it was scarcely yet dawn when they set out. All the doors of the houses were open, all the roofs were covered with persons watching their departure. Eldad, as he passed through the streets of Hebron in the ruddy light of the morning, thought of the many circumstances connected with it that gave it more than common interest. Hebron was one of the oldest cities in the world, having been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. (Numb. xiii. 22.) It had been conquered by Joshua, and given as the portion of the faithful Caleb; it afterwards became a city of the priests, and had been the residence of David: taken by the Idumæans, it was reconquered by the Maccabees, and now again incorporated with Judah. When he had passed through the gate, and gained a view of the lovely valley full of vineyards and corn-fields, all the high and holy feelings of the previous day were renewed in his mind. He looked around on the country where patriarchs had tended their flocks, and pitched their tents, and lived in visible communion with the Lord Jehovah; and the later history of Hebron was forgotten in the remembrance of its earlier glory. From all the cross-roads, men, women, and children, were streaming towards the highway to Jerusalem. Scarcely had they gone a Sabbath day's journey ere they saw the grove of Mamre. Cymbals, flutes, and Psalms resounded from the midst of it, and hundreds of

people were standing beneath the wide-spreading branches of the terebinth-tree¹ of Abraham. Eldad entered the grove with feelings of religious veneration. Here Abraham had dwelt; here the angels had appeared to him; beneath these trees Isaac had been promised and the rite of circumcision instituted; and not far off was the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah were buried. On this spot, consecrated by so many recollections, the children of the patriarchs were now assembled, ready to set out on their festal pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The place and the occasion seemed to banish from all hearts every feeling but piety and good-will: mutual greetings were exchanged; friends and relations sought each other out, and associated themselves for the journey. All faces beamed with joy. "It is time to set out," said some of the elders to the judge of Hebron; "already has the priest asked the watchman on the Temple, Does it begin to be light towards Hebron?"² The priests and elders led the procession; the people followed; the slaves with the camels were placed in the midst; while the Levites, with their instruments, distributed themselves among the whole company, singing as they set forward the 122nd Psalm:—

¹ The terebinth is a tree that lives to a very great age. This particular one at Mamre is mentioned by Josephus and other ancient authors as being the object of great admiration. Some said that it was as old as the creation, and others traced it to Abraham's time.

² It is said to have been the custom to place some one on the highest point of the Temple to give the first notice of daylight, that the morning sacrifice might be offered. Has the light of morning dispersed the shades of night, so that Hebron is visible? is the meaning of the question.

"I was glad when they said unto me,
We will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built as a city at unity in itself,
For thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord.

* * * * *

Oh, pray for the peace of Jerusalem :
They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
And plenteousness within thy palaces."

It is impossible to conceive the triumphant joy with which this Psalm was sung, and its effect on old and young. Now the voices rose, like the notes of the mounting lark on the summit of the hills, and now sank again in the depths of the valleys. How different was its effect now upon the heart of Eldad, than when he sung it to his solitary harp on his housetop at Alexandria. It was indeed on such a pilgrimage, and with such accompaniments, that the sublimity and force of the Psalms, and the superiority of the Jewish poetry over that of all other nations, made itself fully felt. Eldad was astonished at the effect upon himself and all around him. The youths and maidens bounded for joy, and tears of pleasure stood in the eyes of the aged. Those who were going up for the first time to the festival, listened to those who had been already there, as if to hear from them an explanation of the full meaning of what they themselves were singing. The old heard in these festive acclamations the echo of their own youthful joy; and while their hearts swelled with the remembrance of their own first pilgrimage, they beat yet higher with gratitude to Jehovah, who had permitted them, in their grey hairs, to behold such glorious days for Israel,—the Syrian yoke broken, and Hyrcanus on the throne.

Nothing seemed more remarkable than the power which the aged and the weakly showed, in going through this pilgrimage of thirty-six Sabbath days' journey over hill and dale without complaining of fatigue. It seemed as if the strong had given to the weaker a portion of their own vigour; or rather, as if Jehovah himself had strengthened the feeble knees for this journey. These thoughts seemed to be expressed by their following up the 122nd Psalm by immediately singing the 121st:—

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help.
My help cometh even from the Lord,
Who hath made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;
He that keepeth thee will not sleep:
Behold, He that keepeth Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.”—*Psalm cxxi.*

It was a beautiful sight, when the procession passed from the plain among the hills, the rocky walls through which their path lay re-echoing with their sacred songs. Eldad withdrew a little from the line, to an eminence which commanded a view in both directions, and could see the train, covering both the ascent and the descent of the hill, spreading over the plain, and winding like a wreath round the hill beyond.

In every town and village to which they came, they were received with shouts of joy. Before the doors of the houses stood tables with dates, honey, and bread. Crowds of people, dressed in their holiday attire, were waiting at the junction of the roads, in the fields, and at the entrance of the towns, and joined themselves to the long pro-

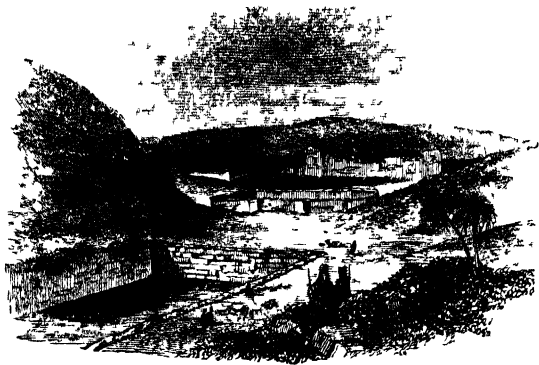
cession. Here and there, before the houses, in the fields, or in the vineyards, stood an unclean person, or a woman or a child who had been compelled to remain at home, and who replied with tears to the salutations of the passing multitude. It seemed as if the people carried all joy with them from the country to Jerusalem, and only sorrow was left for those who remained behind. Before a house in Bethshur, stood a fine boy, of ten years old. Tears fell from his large dark eyes, and the features of his noble countenance bore an expression of deep sorrow. His mother was trying to comfort him, and to lead him back into the court, assuring him that his father would take him the next time. But the boy listened neither to her consolations nor to her promises, and continued to exclaim, "Oh! Father, Father; let me go up to the Temple! I know all the Psalms by heart!" He stretched out his arms to the passers-by in earnest entreaty, and happening to see among them a man of the neighbourhood whom he knew, he flew to him, and clinging to his girdle and his upper garment, besought him, with tears, to take him; till at last the man, moved by his earnestness, asked his mother to allow him to go, promising to take care of him till he should find out his father.

"And is such, then," thought Eldad, "the object of children's longing? How early does the desire of keeping the festival of Jehovah manifest itself!" He felt convinced that had he been brought up in Palestine, such too would have been his feeling in childhood.

They now passed through a wood, and then descended a lofty hill, whose slope was wholly

covered with vines. In the valley before them lay the pools of Solomon. The procession slackened its pace while the eighty-fourth Psalm was sung:—

“ Oh, how amiable are thy dwellings,
Thou Lord of Hosts !
My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts
of the Lord :
My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.”



THE POOLS OF SOLOMON.

They had now reached the pools of Solomon, into which flowed the brook Etham, and which had formerly supplied Jerusalem with water, by means of a costly aqueduct. The three pools lay on different levels, one below another, on a sloping ground. Around each was a double row of noble palms, in which the whole of this spot abounded.

The celebrated gardens of Solomon lay beneath these reservoirs in a rocky valley, enclosed by high hills, and planted with choice fruit-trees of every kind. Solomon is said to have sealed up the fountain with his own signet ring. Here beside the springs, and in the refreshing shade of the trees, the pilgrims encamped to rest at noon; and as they drank of the cool rock-water, they blessed the memory of the great king of Israel. The heat of the sun was intense, and every one enjoyed the coolness and the rest which they were here allowed to take. They had accomplished twenty-six Sabbath days' journeys, and had but ten yet remaining of their march. Eldad, as he lay musing beneath a tree, was reminded of the words of the royal Preacher:—"I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water." (Eccl. ii. 4—6.)

These were, indeed, great works, and well worthy of the great king by whom they were made, who is said to have "exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom." (1 Kings x. 23.)

After a short rest, the sacks and wine-skins were unpacked from the camels by some of the pilgrims, while others drew their humble stores from their mantles or their bosoms. Their upper garments were then spread for carpets, on which they lay down to rest or reclined to eat. Now might it indeed be seen that these pilgrims were a band of brothers. The very poorest had brought something. Ever since the Feast of Tabernacles, some weeks previously, they had denied themselves in

many ways in order to have something to bring to the festival. On this day, at least, the spirit of



WINE SKINS.

the Law was carried out, and no beggar was seen among the children of Israel. The rich had provided not only for themselves, but for their poorer brethren, and at this time gave them many things, which on ordinary occasions they were unable to enjoy. Some sent to the old men a cup of generous wine; others regaled the children with fruits or confectionary. From Tekoah, the birth-place of the prophet Amos, which was not far off, came asses loaded with the celebrated honey of Tekoah; and from Beth-Cherem, famed for its wines, others brought bunches of large and sweet raisins. Such was the cheerful mirth of the whole assemblage, while thus enjoying the shade of the trees, and the

delightful coolness of the water, that they seemed more like a company celebrating the festival of the new moon, than a caravan halting for a mid-day rest. No one felt the heat, or complained of weariness, except a few aged or weakly persons, who indulged themselves in a short repose.

Behind a hill, the walls of Tekoah were discerned in the distance, and beyond it the desert of Tekoah, the fragrant pasture of the bees, for whose honey the town was celebrated.

"Does not this scene remind thee of the prophet-herdman of Tekoah?" said Melchi to Eldad.

"How should it not," he replied, "when I see his prophecy thus fulfilled before my eyes?"

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen,

And close up the breaches thereof :

And I will raise up its ruins,

And I will build it as in the days of old.

* * * * *

And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel,

And they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them ;

And they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof.

They shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them ;

And I will plant them upon their land,

And they shall no more be pulled up out of the land which
I have given them,

Saith the Lord thy God."—*Amos ix. 11. 14, 15.*

They waited another hour in this pleasant valley, till the great heat of noon was moderated. During this time some youths came to Eldad, and said to him, "Though you speak our language, you are not a youth of Judah, your turban betrays you." Eldad explained to them that he was an Aramæan Jew, a native, indeed, of Alexandria, but one who had chosen Jerusalem in preference to Leonopolis. On hearing this they acknowledged him

with joy as one of themselves, and invited him to accompany them in a walk round the encampment. Eldad gladly accepted this offer.

What a number of interesting groups presented themselves on every side, as they wandered from one palm-tree to another! Each party as they passed, offered them wine or mead, honey or dates, and greeted them with friendly words. Boys had insinuated themselves among the circles of men, and listened, with fixed eyes and open mouth, to every word that was uttered about Jerusalem and the festival. The child whom Eldad had seen weeping so bitterly, at the solitary house by the wayside, had found his father, and was now lying in his lap, and repeating to him the Psalms he had learned by heart. A group of maidens, here, were listening to a description of the magnificent vestments of the high-priest; while there, a company of men were speaking of the heroic deeds of Hircanus and the Maccabees; and rejoicing that Edom and Samaria had been again made subject to Israel. One feeling of joy seemed to pervade all bosoms, though it expressed itself in various ways, according to the sex and age of each.

One group riveted the attention of Eldad, who did not leave them till it was near the time of departure. Under some of the furthest palm-trees; sat seven robust young men, with an equal number of women, and several children. "This is Mardochai of Ziph, with his children and his children's children," said one of the youths who accompanied Eldad. They approached him, took his hand, and congratulated him on being able to go up to the feast with such a train of his de-

scendants. "Yes," exclaimed the aged man, while tears trembled in his eyes; "Jehovah hath abundantly blessed me; I see my offspring like the sand on the sea-shore—children and children's children to the number of fifty souls!"

This aged pair, for his wife was with him, had not for several years gone up to the festival: but their children had now persuaded them to appear once more before Jehovah. They had been the last in the procession; and refusing either to ride or be conveyed in a carriage, were almost borne in the arms of their sons and their daughters, who had joyfully taken up the burden thus laid upon them. "Where could a Psalm of degrees be more in its place?" said a lively youth of the company. No sooner had he spoken than several ran to fetch their musical instruments, and standing round the venerable couple, who were deeply moved by the scene, they sang the 128th Psalm:—

"Blessed are all they that fear the Lord,
And walk in His ways :
For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands .
O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be ;
Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine
Upon the walls of thine house,
Thy children like the olive branches
Round about thy table.
Lo, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.
The Lord from out of Zion shall so bless thee,
That thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long;
Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children,
And peace upon Israel."

Others, attracted by the music, now came up, and soon the news was spread through the whole assemblage that Mardochai of Ziph was among them once more. The judges and elders of Hebron were among those who formed the circle; and all

greeted the venerable pair, and wished them peace, in the name of the Lord.

“Ye shall lead the procession,” said an elder of Hebron; “The place of honour belongs to you. The pilgrims of Hebron cannot go up to the feast with any blessing better or more rare!”

The sons took their father in their arms, the daughters their mother, the priests and the elders followed, and the march began again. They were still ten Sabbath days’ journeys distant from Jerusalem.

Far from the expressions of joy being exhausted by all the songs and acclamations of the morning, they seemed only to be beginning when they set forward again. From the pools of Solomon they took their way through the hills to Bethlehem. The cymbals, cornets, and timbrels of the Levites struck up their music again, and many a soul-inspiring Psalm was heard from the lips of an assemblage now swollen to several thousand persons. In a pilgrimage to the Temple, could *he* be forgotten, whose pious heart first conceived the wish to build a house for Jehovah? The warrior-bard was commemorated in the 132nd Psalm,—

“Lord, remember David,
And all his trouble;
How he swore unto the Lord,
And vowed a vow unto the almighty God of Jacob;
I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house,
Nor climb up into my bed;
I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep,
Nor mine eyelids to slumber,
Neither the temples of my head to take any rest,
Until I find out a place for the Temple of the Lord,
An habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.
Lo! we heard of the same at Ephrata,
And found it in the wood.

We will go into His tabernacle,
And fall low on our knees before His footstool."

It seemed as if the multitude could not leave this last couplet, which they repeated over and over again. They then went on to the second part of the Psalm, which was, probably, sung at the dedication of the Temple, and repeated, in the same way, the elevating words with which it concludes:—

"The Lord has chosen Zion to be an habitation for Himself :
He hath longed for her."

The instruments now struck in with a louder tone, and the multitude lifted up its voice in repeating the words of Jehovah—

"This is My rest for ever :
Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein :
I will bless her victuals with increase,
And will satisfy her poor with bread :
I will deck her priests with health :
And her saints shall rejoice and sing.—*Psalm cxxxii.*

Proceeding in this way, they reached Bethlehem-Ephratah ; "little among the thousands of Judah," yet highly honoured, since to her is the promise, "out of thee shall He come forth to me to be ruler in Israel." (Micah v. 2.) Both the names of this little town allude to the fertility of the country around; Bethlehem signifies, *the house of bread*, and Ephratah means, *fruitful*. In its luxuriant pastures, Jacob fed his flock ; in its fertile fields, Boaz was reaping when he found his kinswoman Ruth. Here seven sons were born to Jesse, and here the man after God's own heart grew up, till the day when he came forth to avenge the honour of God and his people in the giant heathen.

Bethlehem is a small town, and only six Sabbath days' journeys from the Holy City. It is situated upon a narrow rocky ridge, surrounded by hills and valleys, and having an extensive view over



BETHLEHEM.

the country round Jericho, the Dead Sea, and the Arabian Mountains. Its fruitful fields are thickly set with olives and fig-trees, with vines and corn. But its greatest glory is that which the prophet Micah bids her look forward to : " But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall He come forth unto me, to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah v. 2.)

In Bethlehem, they met with another company of pilgrims, coming from Lachish, Adullam, and Libnah. Indeed, all endeavoured, if possible, to make Bethlehem in their way to Jerusalem on these occasions. It was the city of David; the road passed by the grave of Rachel; and it was dear to many, as the city to which the greatest of all the promises had been given.

The elders of the different cities soon agreed about the order of the remainder of the march. The venerable pair, Mardochai of Ziph and his wife, were borne in front; the elders followed, but without any distinctive badge, and the people arranged themselves as they chose. Some time, however, elapsed before they set out. There were greetings of friends and acquaintances, who met after a long interval; and those who had travelled far, needed rest and refreshment. At length, the Levites began their music and their songs, and the people set forward. As the living stream poured down from the hills, among the corn-fields and mulberry groves of the valley of Rephaim, the praise of Jerusalem ascended, in a mingled strain of voices and instruments:—

“They that put their trust in the Lord,
Shall be even as the Mount Zion,
Which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.
The hills stand about Jerusalem;
Even so standeth the Lord round about His people,
From this time forth for evermore.”—*Psalms* cxxv.

When they had proceeded about two Sabbath days' journeys, or a little more, from Bethlehem, they approached the grave of Rachel. At another time, this place of rest of Jacob's beloved wife, the hardy-earned recompense of his labours, might

have produced some melancholy feelings; but now such thoughts were banished by the universal joy. Eldad remarked to Melchi, that this was not the time of which their prophet had spoken: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children." (Jer. xxxi. 15.) "May it be ever thus among the children of Israel," replied Melchi.

The eager haste of the multitude now increased with every step, and their impatience for the first sight of Jerusalem was expressed in the forty-eighth Psalm:—

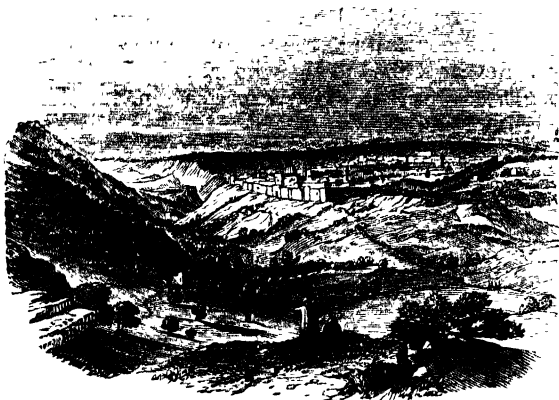
"Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised,
In the city of our God, even upon His holy hill.
The hill of Sion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth,
Upon the north side lieth the city of the Great King;
God is well known in His palaces, as a sure refuge.

* * * * *

We wait for Thy loving kindness, O God,
In the midst of Thy temple.
Let the Mount Sion rejoice, and the daughter of Judah be glad,
Because of Thy judgments."—*Psalms* xlviii.

Expectation was now at the highest. The last verses of the Psalm were not completely sung; many were already silent, eagerly watching for the first sight of Jerusalem. All eyes were turned towards the north, a faint murmur spread from rank to rank among the people; those only who had been at the festival before continued the Psalm, and these solitary scattered voices formed a solemn contrast with the silence of the rest of the multitude. Eldad's heart was in his eye, and he could scarcely draw his breath. When the Psalm was concluded, the instruments prolonged the sound for a moment, and then all that mighty multitude, so lately jubilant, was still as death.

All at once, the foremost ranks exclaimed, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" resounded through the valley of Rephaim. "Jerusalem! thou city built on high, we wish thee



JERUSALEM.

peace." The children dragged their parents forward, and all hands were lifted up to bless.

The high white walls of the Holy City cast a gleam along the valley. Zion arose with its palaces, and from Moriah the smoke of the offering was ascending to Heaven; it was the hour of the evening sacrifice. Scarcely had the multitude recovered a little, when they began to greet the Temple and the priests:

"Behold now, praise the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord,
Ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord;

Even in the courts of the house of our God.
Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and praise the Lord ;
The Lord that made heaven and earth give thee blessing
out of Sion."—*Psalm cxxxiv.*

They had now reached the termination of their march. The day of preparation was beginning. The following evening was the Passover. From the gates of Jerusalem came forth in every direction, the pilgrims who had already arrived, and the inhabitants of the city, to welcome the new comers from Hebron and Libnah. The venerable pair, Mardochai of Ziph and his wife, who were still borne in front, received the blessings of all who met them.

Close by the gate, some one from behind laid hold of Melchi: "Art thou Melchi of Alexandria?" Melchi turned round and recognised Ithiel, an old and faithful friend of the family. The old men met with a delight not to be expressed, and Melchi presented Eldad to his friend. The pilgrims had now reached the city, and separated to their different quarters. Ithiel conducted Melchi and Eldad through the Water-gate to his house on the open place.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAY OF THE PREPARATION.

At the great festivals, the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not consider their houses as their own individual property. Their city was the city of the whole people, not of its own inhabitants only; and when Israel came up to appear before Jehovah, every citizen regarded his house as belonging to his brethren as much as to himself. This seems to be pointed out by the very names which the city bore. It was called the Holy City, the City of the Congregation of Israel, the Gate of the People. Such was the reception that awaited Melchi and Eldad in the house of Ithiel. "You are at home," said their host, as he led them in; "at this time, I am not more so than you are. The citizen of Jerusalem considers himself, equally with his brethren, a pilgrim at this festival."

In fact, the house was filled with strangers. Melchi found among them many old acquaintances; but great was his joy, when he discovered in the number, Shemida of Jericho, the brother of Ithiel. His emotion was too great for him to speak; he could only silently, and with tears in his eyes, press him to his breast. Shemida had been the dearest friend of his youth; he had lived long in Alexandria, and they had spent the days of early manhood there together, each imparting

to the other his plans for the future. At a later period, they had been separated, and had not met for more than thirty years, but their hearts had remained united, and the joy of their meeting was mutual. It seemed, indeed, as if to Melchi youth itself had returned with the friend of his youth. Washing the feet of a guest is the first duty of hospitality, or indeed more properly it is the welcome of the East; and while this was done, Melchi and Shemida were engaged in uninterrupted discourse, as if they had been sitting alone in the court, rapidly running over earlier as well as later times—Alexandria as well as Jericho.

In the meantime, Ithiel and some of the guests had joined Eldad, and were congratulating him upon his first pilgrimage. Shemida and Ithiel had, in common, an honest and straightforward character, by which they might have been known as brothers; but they were attached to different parties in religion, and Ithiel had, besides, more of cheerfulness and vivacity in his temper than Shemida.

“My son out of Egypt,” he said to Eldad, “tomorrow, at this time, when the Passover begins, thou wilt see what thou hast never seen before. Already on the tenth of this month, I chose a lamb without blemish. Before sunset this evening, I fetched the water into the house with which the unleavened bread is to be made. If you please, you shall go with me, after supper, and seek the leaven in the house. A young Israelite, who is come for the first time to the Passover, should leave nothing unseen; but I forget that you came from Hebron to-day, and must be weary.”

Eldad seemed almost offended at being suspected of weariness, after a march made under such cir-

cumstances. With glowing cheeks he repelled the imputation, and begged to be allowed to see all.

“Just like his father,” exclaimed his host, “jealous of nothing so much as of being thought a genuine Aramæan Jew. To-morrow I will conduct thee to his grave, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. In truth, he was a man of noble mind, an Israelite without guile. He died in this house; and it was of thee, Eldad, that he spoke to me in his last moments.” He then related many anecdotes of his friend’s life, as well as the circumstances of his death; for the father of Eldad had been as intimate with Ithiel, as Melchi had been with Shemida; Eldad listened as if to the voice of his father. In such discourse time had passed rapidly, when a servant entered to call the guests from the cool fountains of the inner court, to the roof, where they were to sup. Here Ithiel was accustomed to entertain his guests at the festival, when there was any one among them, on whom the spectacle, beheld for the first time, was likely to make an indelible impression. It was a fine, clear, cloudless night; the moon shone sweetly upon Jerusalem, and changed the night to a softer and cooler day, than that which had been twelve hours before. A breeze from the Mount of Olives cooled the heated air. The neighbours had, in like manner, brought their guests to sup on the roofs of their houses, and as far as the eye could reach, on every side, feasting and illuminations were seen. A busy hum ascended from the streets beneath, and the white tents glistened in the Valley of Kidron. What a scene! The environs of Jerusalem were turned into one great encampment; all the hills and valleys, all the

streets and open places, were covered with tents. It was impossible that the houses should receive all the strangers who flocked to Jerusalem at this joyful season. Notwithstanding the unbounded hospitality which was practised on these occasions, it was still necessary that a large proportion of the visitors should dwell in tents during the festival. In the pleasant season of the year at which the Passover was held, this had nothing inconvenient or disagreeable in it. At the Feast of Tabernacles it was the custom with all, and it reminded them of the patriarchal life of their forefathers, and of the long wanderings in the desert.

Jerusalem had, at this moment, a very singular and interesting appearance. All was motion, life, and animation, and the thought for what purpose these tens of thousands had come up from far and near, filled the mind of the spectator with solemn and elevated feelings. A million of men have frequently been assembled on such an occasion; all met together for the one purpose of offering prayer and praise to Jehovah.

Carried away by the sight, Eldad involuntarily exclaimed:—

“Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is,
Brethren, to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head,
That ran down unto the beard,
Even unto Aaron’s beard,
And went down to the skirts of his clothing:
Like as the dew of Hermon,
Which fell upon the hill of Sion:
For there the Lord promised His blessing,
And life for evermore!”—*Psalm cxxxiii.*

The guests gazed upon him with surprise.

“Why,” continued he, “do you not see before your eyes the interpretation of the Psalm? On

such an evening as this,—or, at least, in view of such a spectacle as this,—must it have been composed. Is it not the dew of Hermon—these sons of Israel from the Tyrian Climax¹ and the plain of Jezreel—which now we see to have fallen on the hill of Zion?”

“Listen!” said Ithiel. Through the uproar of the streets they could discern a distant sound of cymbals, trumpets, and song, which came in the direction of the New City. “The Galileans are entering by the Gate of Ephraim; they are late; and yet they cannot, this time, have been obstructed by the Samaritans: Hyrcanus has removed that obstacle out of their way.”

The distant sound of music and song, heard in this calm soft night, seemed to Eldad even more beautiful than the jubilation with which the march from Bethlehem had been attended. Penetrating through all the tumult of the city, the spiritual and ethereal tones banished all other sounds, and seemed to him almost like the music of the heavenly host, when they ascend from earth to keep an eternal festival in the presence of Jehovah.

The guests had laid themselves down upon the carpets, when Ithiel took Eldad by the arm. Melchi had been compelled to occupy the place of honour, and Shemida could not be separated from him.

“You will stay by me,” said his host to Eldad, and we will take, as is becoming, the lowest place. Look down below on the Square; there it was that Ezra once stood when the people returned from the captivity, and there he read the Law to them.”

“I remember it,” said Eldad; “Ezra read upon

¹ See part II., page 268.

the open place before the Watergate, from the morning until midday, and 'blessed the Lord, the great God; and the people answered Amen! Amen! with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.'" (Neh. viii. 6.)

"Often have I stood here," said Ithiel, "looking upon that spot with this history in my mind, and have thought, with gratitude to Jehovah who has delivered His people, on that Amen, sent up by the assembled multitude, lifting their hands to heaven. But let us eat and be merry."

The mirth was such as suited the age and the piety of the company, and their enjoyment was heightened by the expressions of joy which they heard all around them. The old men discoursed of the happiness of the present time, and the glorious reign of Hyrcanus, and above all, of the victory which his sons had obtained over the Samaritans, and the destruction of the abomination of Gerizim.¹

¹ The Samaritans were not Jews by extraction, but Assyrians "from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava," &c., who were sent to re-people the land of Israel by Esarhaddon some time after the removal of its inhabitants by Shalmaneser. In 2 Kings xvii. a full account is given of this matter, and of the way in which these heathens were led to unite a corrupted worship of the true God, (such as existed among the Israelites before they were carried into captivity,) with their own worship of false gods. It does not appear that idolatry ceased among them till after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The name of Cutheans seems after a while to have been superseded by that of Samaritans, and under this name we hear of them henceforward. They at first proposed to join in building the Temple at Jerusalem; and when their assistance was declined by Zerubbabel and the other leaders, they began a vehement opposition, which greatly hindered the work of restoration. See Ezra iv. and v. Neh. iv. and vi.

Gerizim is a mountain near Shechem, in the province of Sa-

In the meantime, the master of the house called upon his younger guests to assist him in purifying his house from the leaven,—this was the evening of the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, the preparation day for the passover. Lest the command of Jehovah to eat unleavened bread for seven days, and to allow no leaven to be seen anywhere, should chance to be violated, they performed the ceremony of putting away the leaven on this evening. The master of the family gave each of his guests a torch, and led them in a solemn procession through the house. He had himself a dish and a brush in his hand, and he said, “Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who hast sanctified us by thy precepts, and hast enjoined us to put away the leaven.” All present said, “Amen!” They then proceeded to examine every corner of the house, opening every drawer, chest, and cupboard: here and there lay a piece of leavened bread, purposely left in the way; the master took it up, laid it in his dish, and carefully swept the place. When the company had gone round the house to the outer door, he said, “Whatsoever leavened thing there is in my house, which I have not seen, nor put away, may it be scattered in pieces, and accounted as the dust of the earth.”

maria. It was there that, according to the command of Moses (Deut. xi. 29,) the blessings of obedience to the Law were to be solemnly proclaimed. A temple in opposition to the Temple at Jerusalem was built by the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim (see Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* bk. ii. c. 8;) and thus was the enmity between them and the Jews perpetuated. This temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus; but an altar still remained there, and worship was continued even to the days of our Saviour. See John, c. iv. A sect of Samaritans is still found on the spot. See part ii. page 114, note. In course of time, and especially when it suited their interest, as Josephus observes, the Samaritans pretended to Jewish blood. He expressly says they were not Jews.

The search lasted two hours ; the dish was then locked up, and the guests retired to sleep.

Unable, however, to sleep, from the crowd of feelings which agitated his mind, when he thought that he was now, at length, in Jerusalem, in the Holy City, Eldad was one of the first who arose. He went immediately to the roof of the house ; the Alijah was open, he entered it, and performed his morning devotions, with a fervour which he had never felt before ; he put the talith¹ on his head, bound the tephillim² on his brow and his hand, and recited the Cri-schma. His whole body was in agitation, partaking of the emotions of his mind ; now he lifted his hand towards heaven, now threw himself with his face to the ground, and now bent his head in an attitude of lowly reverence. In the earnestness of his prayer, he seemed to wrestle with God. Here, in the Holy City, how much had he to ask from the God of his fathers !

When his prayer was ended, and he came out upon the roof, he looked down upon Jerusalem, which now lay before him in all the brightness of the rising sun. As yet all was still, even from the Temple, which rose in elevated majesty above the towers and palaces of the city, no sound was to be heard. The loud tumult of the arriving strangers on the preceding evening was hushed, and it

¹ *Talith* is here used for the square woollen garment put over the head at morning prayer. Lewis, *Ant. Heb. Rep.* vol. iii. p. 228, describes it as having tassels at each corner ; and says, that in his day, it was worn in the synagogues, but not in prayer offered up in private houses.

² *Tephillim*, i.e. instruments of prayer. This name was given to pieces of parchment with passages from the Law written on them. They were bound on the hand, and on the head, (then called phylacteries,) during prayer. See note 1, page 22.

seemed as if the repose which announced the vicinity of the sanctuary had diffused itself around and reduced all to silence. All the deep emotions of his heart returned with equal strength, but not with the same impetuosity, as on the preceding evening; his inward delight was even greater, but it was calm and holy. He felt that, near the presence of Jehovah, in the solemn assembly of His people, on the spot where the noblest and wisest of his countrymen had met together for such high purposes, his joy ought to be tranquil and sober, and the deep emotion thus driven back upon the heart, only became the stronger and the more vivid.

Jetur now came to ask his commands. When he had received them, he remained standing a little while, and said; "Master, I am only a servant in Israel, but I too am of the seed of Abraham, and I feel that this is the land of our fathers, and of their God, and our God. Let us not return into Egypt!"

When Melchi arose, one of his first occupations was to open the baggage, and take out thence the presents destined for his host. It was his rule never to come empty-handed, and on this occasion he was indeed come with his hands full. To the mistress of the house he sent all that remained—and it was no trifling store—of the provisions for the journey; some skins of delicious Chian wine, which he had purchased in the caravan, and a quantity of the finest Egyptian linen. To Ithiel he gave a turban curiously wrought, of a costly stuff, and an Alexandrian robe of ceremony, informing him that it had belonged to his brother-in-law, and that his sister had destined it for him.

To Shemida he carried a book. It consisted of several pieces of papyrus, the stalk of which is divided with a needle into thin leaves, which are then laid together, and fastened with the water of the Nile. Several of them were then laid upon each other and fitted together, and on these oblong leaves the book was written; this was an Egyptian invention, and very highly prized.

"I have brought you," said Melchi to Shemida, "the Hebrew work of Jesus the son of Sirach, the same which his grandson has translated into Greek. It is a work highly esteemed in Egypt, both by Jews and heathen. I could easily have procured a copy of the Greek version from one of our learned friends in the Bruchium, but that would not have answered my purpose; it was with difficulty I could obtain this copy of the Hebrew.¹ I give it thee for the sake of the passage on friendship. Read this: 'A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find Him: whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright.' (Ecclus. vi.) And here again: 'Forsake not an old friend.'"

Shemida smiled, which he was rarely seen to do, and said: "I accept the present, on the condition that you come to Jericho with me, that I may be able to return it." "We shall see." answered Melchi; "but in so doing I should be giving little to receive much in return." "Friendship," said Shemida, "has all things in common."

As our travellers came from a heathen land, it

¹ The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus is supposed to have fled into Egypt from the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, 171 years B.C. The Greek translator, grandson of the author, and bearing the same name, is supposed to have performed his part about forty years later.

was necessary they should be purified before they could go into the Temple. This alone would have prevented Eldad from attending at the morning sacrifice ; but further, he wished first to discharge a duty of filial piety, and to visit the grave of his father, before he appeared in the presence of Jehovah, whom his father had taught him to honour.

When the ceremonies of bathing, cutting off the hair, and others in which purification consisted, were over, he went forth to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, to his father's tomb. It was by his own dying request that he had been interred there ; for Ithiel would fain have given him a place in the sepulchre of his own family. From the words of the prophet Joel, "I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people," (Joel iii. 2,) it had become a prevailing opinion that this would be the scene of the general resurrection, and of the judgment of Jehovah, and therefore many of the Jews desired to be buried there. It took its name from the king of Judah, whose tomb is still shown there.

Ithiel, Melchi, and Shemida accompanied Eldad. Leaving the city by the Water-gate, they turned to the south-east, and kept along the brook Kidron. Willows and tall cedars threw their shadows upon the graves. They wandered silently along the stream till they reached the spot where the father of Eldad had been laid. The place was marked by a large stone, such as the Jews are accustomed to put on every grave, as a warning rather than a memorial, to prevent the passers-by from defiling themselves unawares. To-day,

especially, it was necessary for them to keep at a distance of several paces from it, if they would not render themselves so far unclean, as to be prevented from taking any part in the religious services of the day. Eldad felt an irresistible impulse to throw himself upon the grave, but the others forcibly held him back. Tears streamed from his eyes as he incessantly exclaimed, "My Father ! my Father !" With head and breast leaning forward, he was supported by his companions, scarcely conscious of what he did, to the Horse-gate, where they made him sit down. They spoke to him of the virtues of his father, of his surviving parent at Alexandria, of the happiness of being buried in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. By degrees he became more calm ; his tears continued to flow, but they were rather tears of affection than of sorrow ; he seemed to have found his father, rather than to have lost him. Ithiel, whose manner was often somewhat abrupt, now reminded him of his obligations to them, for having prevented him from making himself unclean, by throwing himself on the grave, which would have compelled him to keep the feast, not with the joyful multitude now assembled, but in the following month, with the rest of those who were unclean. "Bethink thee, too, that Jehovah himself has commanded that we should be cheerful on this day. 'Thou shalt rejoice before Jehovah thy God, at the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen that His name should dwell there.' "

They now made a circuit round the city, from the Horse-gate, which lies northward from the Water-gate, till they came to the Water-gate again. The whole circuit might be as much as

five Sabbath days' journeys.¹ Their object in making it was rather to give Eldad a general view of the different quarters of the city, and to divert his thoughts by variety of scene, than to examine any part minutely, which, indeed, would now have been impracticable, the ground being covered with tents.

Jerusalem stood on a very elevated range of hills; the last eighteen Sabbath days' journeys in approaching it, were almost a continual ascent. Only towards the north was there some level ground: on the other three sides it was surrounded by valleys. On the eastern side, where the Temple stood, was the valley, which from the winter torrent which flowed through it, was called the Vale of Kidron. On the western side was the Valley of Gihon; and on the south side that of Hinnom, where, under some of the last kings of Judah, children had been made to pass through the fire to Moloch, at a place called Tophet. (2 Kings xxiii. 10.)

On the eastern side, entering from the Vale of Kidron by the Water-gate, was the open square in which the house of Ithiel stood, and to which he now again brought his friends.

On the day of preparation it was customary in Jerusalem to take an early meal, in order to have time for the arrangements necessary before the evening. The time of this meal, however, had been long past when they returned to the house; the unleavened bread had been already baked and lay on the tables, in the women's saloon; and the cakes designed for the festival had been taken from the oven in the adjoining room. That which

¹ About three miles and a half.

was the portion of the priest was of greater size than the rest ; it was baked the first, and lay on a separate table, adorned with flowers. The father of the family was to carry it to the Temple in the afternoon. "The first and best of everything," said he, "belongs to Jehovah ; in honouring His servants we honour Him, so we set apart the first portion for the priest, who lives by the Law."

A short meal at noon was taken under the palm-trees in the inner court beside the fountain. The greatest neatness reigned in the whole house ; all the floors, as well as the furniture and vessels, had been washed. Only the white unleavened bread was seen at table. The pilgrims had eaten it on their journey, but this was the day on which it began to be used exclusively. It consisted of thin, flat, crumbling cakes, made of water and meal, full of little holes, that it might be free from any tendency to fermentation. It represented the food of haste and sorrow, and they had been commanded to eat it as a memorial of their being thrust out of Egypt in haste, without time for the preparation of their food.

Immediately after the removal of the dishes and carpets, a fire was made behind the women's saloon, in a small garden belonging to the house. When it blazed up, the guests and members of the family came and placed themselves around it, and Ithiel bringing the dish which contained the leaven, threw it into the fire, saying at the same time, "May all the leaven which I have seen or have not seen, which I have brought out, or have not brought out, be scattered and destroyed and accounted as the dust of the earth !"

This ceremony was just ended, and some other

trifling preparations for the festival had been made, when the trumpets from Mount Moriah announced the commencement of the Passover, and a thousand horns in the streets, from the houses, and the tents, replied to the signal. It was now about the eighth hour, and our pilgrims went up to the Temple to complete their purifications, and to show the impatient Eldad something, at least, of the general arrangement. Ethiel led his friend through the Water-gate into the Valley of Kidron, that they might view the magnificent exterior of this wonderful building, before they examined the interior. They ascended a flight of steps in the outer wall, and entered the Court of the Gentiles by the Beautiful-gate. This court was a square with porticoes on all four sides. The eastern side was called Solomon's Porch. At the western end stood the Sanctuary, or Temple properly so called, with its courts. Strangers from heathen countries and uncircumcised persons were admitted into the Court of the Gentiles, but were warned by an inscription in Hebrew and Greek, not to proceed further. From the Court of the Gentiles the Israelite might pass to the Court of the Women, then to the Court of Israel, and, lastly, to the Court of the Priests. Here he looked upon the altar of burnt-offering, and beside it the bath which supplied the place of the brazen sea, in Solomon's Temple. Beyond the altar, the Sanctuary arose with its threefold division. The floor was, throughout all these courts, of marble, and along the sides were porticoes and other buildings.

When Eldad reached the Beautiful-gate it was scarcely possible to pass, so great was the crowd

of men and lambs. It was a singular and exciting scene. The children of Israel out of all the tribes, from Dan to Beersheba, from the extreme point of Galilee in the north, down to the desert of Arabia in the south, strangers from Egypt, Cyprus, Syria, Cappadocia, and Babylon, were here assembled in their festive dress. Every master of a house had his lamb, either carried on his shoulder, or driven before him by his servants. In the spacious Court of the Gentiles were flocks of lambs and kids, the owners of which carried on a very extensive traffic at the time of the Passover. The bleatings of the sheep, and the cries of their drivers, were strangely mingled with shouts of joy, and hymns of praise.

Eldad passed through the Court of the Gentiles, scarcely noticing what was going on there, and entering the Court of the Women, his eye was fixed upon the altar of burnt-offerings. Fifteen steps led from this court through the Gate of Nicanor to the Court of Israel. On the steps the Levites were already standing with their instruments of music, but Eldad looked beyond them, and, through the gate, gained his first view of the interior of the Sanctuary. It was like a glimpse of heaven. He saw not the splendour of the gold, nor the richness of the ornaments; he felt not the pressure of the crowd around him. A feeling of intense devotion filled his soul, and for a time suppressed every other emotion.

His companions roused him by directing his attention to the Court of the Priests. The evening sacrifice, which this evening was killed an hour earlier than usual, was already brought to the altar, the holy place was illuminated, and they

were burning incense in it. Eldad gazed around him on the sanctuary, the altar, the courts, and the multitude which filled them. Bewildered and overpowered, he seemed incapable of fixing his attention on any single object, but his eye and his thoughts wandered from one to the other.

The paschal lamb must be killed between the two evenings.¹ The greater or first evening began soon after noon, when the sun first began to decline to the west ; the lesser began at sunset, and lasted only about an hour.

Ithiel conducted Eldad again into the Court of the Gentiles, where the slaves, with Jetur, were waiting for them. The lamb must be without blemish, more than eight days, and less than a year, old. The people had divided themselves into three great bodies in the Court of Israel. When the evening sacrifice was over, a priest opened all the folding-doors which led into the Court of the Priests, and allowed one of the divisions to enter, closing the doors behind them. The priests were standing in a row, reaching from the place where the lambs were killed to the altar ; each held in his hand a basin pointed at the bottom. Ithiel was among the first who entered. He presented his lamb, and mentioned the number of the company who were to partake of it ; they must not be fewer than ten, nor more than nineteen. He then drew his knife across its throat ; the priest nearest to him received the blood in his basin, and handing it to his neighbour, it was passed from one to the other, till it reached the priest who was next to the altar, and who poured the

¹ Such is the exact translation of Exodus xii. 6, and the marginal reading of the English Bible so renders it.

blood upon it. Each as he handed the full basin to his neighbour, received an empty one from him with the other hand: thus all was done with incredible quickness, and yet with a solemn regularity.

The father of each family killed the **pascal** lamb himself. In ordinary cases, ~~the~~ **priests** were the sacrificers; but once in the year the master of the house **was himself** a priest, as a memorial that Israel was a nation of priests. The Levites, in the meantime, sang the great Halleluyah, as they stood on the fifteen steps, and at the beginning of each Psalm, the priests at the pillar, which stands by the altar, blew the trumpet three times. Ithiel carried the lamb to the pillar, hung it to one of the hooks, and taking off the skin and the fat, gave the fat to the priest, who salted it, and laid it on the altar. He then carried the lamb home. Each one of the body who had been first admitted did the same, and when all had finished, the folding doors again opened, and a second division was admitted. Without the greatest regularity, it would have been impossible that such a number of lambs should have been killed in so short a time.

Eldad descended the steps with Ithiel, who had, also, offered a thank-offering; and as he paused at the gate and looked back, he mentally exclaimed, "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand." (Psalm lxxxiv. 10.)

CHAPTER IX.

THE PASSOVER.

THE Passover was now begun. The day of preparation was ended. Every master of a house had killed his paschal lamb on Mount Moriah; attaining for this day, an equal dignity with the highest order in the state, and exercising a sacerdotal function. The companies who were to eat the paschal lamb were already assembled, and the lambs were roasting in the deep ovens in the women's apartments.

These ovens were excavations in the ground, about two feet and a half broad, and from five to six feet deep. The sides were covered with stones, which were heated by a fire kindled at the bottom, and then the lamb was suspended within, on a piece of wood running lengthwise, and crossed by another between the forefeet. It was expressly commanded by Jehovah, "Ye shall not eat of it raw, nor sodden with water, but roast with fire." The fifteenth day of the month Nisan or Abib, (nearly answering to our April,) the first of the sacred year, was now arrived. The Jewish day began at sunset; a memorial that primeval darkness had preceded the birth of light, and that all life has its origin in a period of darkness.

When all the preparations were completed, and the feast about to begin, Eldad hastened to the roof of the house. He looked down on the open place, and up to Moriah and Zion, to the Mount of Olives, and on the valleys of Gihon and Kidron. —“Wherever I look,” thought he, “I see hundreds of thousands of the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, assembled to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. They are come to the hill where Jehovah hath made His name to dwell, and their minds are filled with the thought of their fathers, and of the mighty works which the God of their fathers has done in their behalf. Well is it said, Israel is Israel only in the Holy Land.” He then entered the Alijah, and remained long in fervent prayer. When he came again upon the roof, the last glow of evening was illuminating the city, and the lamps, which were kindled in every house and tent, shone through the thin veil of vapour which was spread over the whole scene. He lingered on the roof, till the golden margin had disappeared from the western clouds, and the stars had begun to twinkle in the firmament.

When he went down and entered the inner court, he saw within the porticoes, three rooms, brilliantly illuminated. It was not possible for all the guests to eat the Passover with the master of the house, because each company was not to exceed twenty. Two other apartments had, therefore, been prepared for other parties. On such occasions, we have before observed, no citizen of Jerusalem considered his house as his own; but cheerfully resigned it for the use of strangers, who, according to ancient custom, acknowledged his

courtesy, by the gift of the skin of the paschal lamb.

The light was streaming through the lattices of all the rooms, and Eldad entered, with a beating heart, that which was appropriated to the use of Ithiel, and his peculiar guests. A multitude of smaller lamps were suspended from the walls, and one, of great size, stood in the middle. Costly carpets were spread on the floor, tapestry was hung on the sides, and gold and silver glittered on the divan, though it was not used on this evening: for the paschal lamb was to be eaten standing. The air was filled with the fragrance of Arabian frankincense, and the most exquisite perfumes; the women were all richly clad, especially the mistress of the house, who appeared, this evening, in all her choicest ornaments, a Mother in Israel, in the city of God. It was on this day only, that the women ate with the men: even the servants, both men and maids, were not excluded. The whole household, of every rank and age, even the children, if they had begun to taste flesh-meat, must be assembled, and all must be Levitically clean. Of the inhabitants, (not disqualified by being unclean,) none were to be absent, except strangers of the gate, hirelings, and all uncircumcised persons. Such had been the command of Jehovah. On this night, all the covenanted people of Jehovah were brethren; all had been delivered by Jehovah from the house of bondage. The bondsman was as the freeman, the woman as the man; all were to partake alike of the festivity, all were the people of Jehovah, and equal in His sight.

In the middle of the room stood the table; which,

in the East, is always low, because the guests either lie around it on sofas, or sit on the carpets. On this occasion, however, there was neither sofa nor carpet near the table; which stood apart, as if the preparations were but half finished. It was about the middle of the second hour of the evening, (half-past seven,) when the company, consisting of nineteen persons, assembled round the table. Every one, though splendidly clad, seemed prepared for a journey. With sandals on their feet, which, at other times were not worn in a room, but given to the slaves at the door; with their flowing robes girt around them, and a staff in their hands, they surrounded the table. A large vessel filled with wine, freshly drawn from the cask, stood upon it, and the meal was begun by a blessing pronounced on the wine, by the master of the house. He laid hold of the vessel with both hands, lifted it up with the right, and said, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, thou King of the world, who hast given us the fruit of the vine," and the whole assembly said, "Amen." Next he blessed the day, and thanked God for having given them the Passover: and then drinking first himself from the cup, he sent it round to the rest. When this was over, he began again, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, thou King of the world, who hast sanctified us by thy precepts, and commanded us to wash our hands;" he and the whole company then washed their hands in a silver basin, with water poured from a silver ewer. This was the emblem of purification, and implied that every one should come with a pure heart, as well as clean hands, to partake of the paschal feast.

The unleavened bread, the bitter herbs,¹ a vessel with vinegar, and the paschal lamb were now placed on the table; and last of all the *Charosett*, a thick pottage of apples, nuts, figs, almonds, and honey, boiled in wine or vinegar, and not unfrequently made in the shape of a brick, or tile, to remind the Israelites of their Egyptian slavery, and strewed with cinnamon, in imitation of the straw, which was mixed with the clay. The master of the house then spoke again: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, who hast given us of the fruits of the earth." He dipped some of the herbs in vinegar, and the whole company did the same. At this moment, the mistress touched her little grandson, a child of ten years old. Children were always present at this festival, that, as the Law had commanded, the son might learn from the lips of his father, the history of its first establishment; and so the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt might be known to all generations. The child understood the hint, and asked his grandfather, why, on this night alone, the guests stood around the table, instead of sitting or lying down. With dignity and solemnity, the grandfather, turning to the child, related to him, how their forefathers had been oppressed in Egypt, and how the Lord had brought them out with a mighty arm. He described to him the evening which preceded their flight from Goshen; their busy preparation, and their anxiety to conceal it from the Egyptians. He told him, that the lamb was slain, and the blood sprinkled on the doorposts, that the destroying angel of the

¹ According to the Jews, these bitter herbs were lettuce, endive, succory, chervil, and the like.

Lord might pass by their houses, when he slew the firstborn of Egypt. The lamb was to be roasted, not boiled; that it might be the sooner ready, and strengthen the more those who were to eat of it; it was to be eaten standing, as by men prepared for instant departure; it was to be entirely consumed, for the whole people were about to quit their dwellings, never to return; and no bone was to be broken, for this is only done when men have time to eat their meal leisurely.

This explanation having been given, the bitter herbs were eaten, and the 113th and 114th Psalms were sung. This formed the first half of the great song of praise, which was called emphatically the Hallel. It consisted of six Psalms, from the 113th to the 118th, and was sung on all great festivities. A second washing of the hands followed; the cup was a second time blessed and sent round. The master broke off a piece of the unleavened bread, wrapped it in the bitter herbs, and having dipped it in the charoseth, ate it; and then distributed a portion to each of the company, who did the same; and then the eating of the lamb began, which was the proper paschal feast. Along with the lamb, the boiled flesh of the thank-offering which Ithiel had made in the Temple, was placed upon the table, and blessed by the master of the house. The lamb was wholly consumed, it being forbidden by the Law, that any part of it should remain till the next day. If any part was not eaten, it was to be burnt. The bones were not to be broken, for every thing was to remind them of their hasty flight from Egypt.

Cheerful conversation was now kept up by the

whole festive assembly. Whether it be that a people, which had suffered so much calamity and oppression, naturally enjoys the more keenly every interval of pleasure; or whether it be that every near approach to God is, to the pure mind, a source of joy and peace; certain it is, that no nation has ever more carefully removed all trace of sorrow from religious services, than the Jews. If the Law was sometimes felt to be a heavy burden, yet the service of God was freedom and happiness. All the regulations and customs of Israel are formed on this principle; and for this cause, all the marks of mourning were carefully to be separated from their worship, except on one only day in the year: the great day of Atonement. At other times, to pray, to "give thanks and sing," to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord," to "be glad on the day which He had made," are the expressions by which their religious services are described. He, who had touched a dead body, was held to be unclean, and excluded from the feasts. It was a sin for the high-priest ever to make himself unclean, even by the body of his nearest relation: he was to exhibit the Divine life in all its purity before the people. How earnestly do Ezra and Nehemiah exhort the people to lay aside their mourning, when the Law was read, at the Feast of Tabernacles, and even the curse on its violation made known to them! "This day is holy unto the Lord your God, mourn not, nor weep . . . Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah viii. 9, 10.)

The company in the house of Ithiel were not unmindful of these precepts ; and the hours passed quickly in cheerful discourse. The servants were not excluded from their share in it ; the innocent playfulness of the children was not repressed ; and the gaiety of the women lent wings to the conversation. Ithiel was the most animated of all, and Eldad thought he had never seen so old a man, so full of vivacity. " See, thou mother in Israel," said he to his wife, " the Lord has blessed us, and allowed us to keep one Passover more, before we are gathered to our fathers. Let us show our thankfulness for His mercy, by the cheerfulness with which we celebrate it. Who knows but this may be our last ? Seldom does a year pass away, but that some one dies, of those who kept the Passover together at the beginning of it ; and our turn, though long delayed, must come at last. We were blythe in our youthful days, half a century ago, what prevents our being so still ? Thou hast seen thy children, and thy children's children. Join with me in her praise, my friends. The Lord has given her store of children, and of guests ; and she has received them all as the gift of God, and tended them faithfully ! "

All present congratulated the venerable pair, and Ithiel continued, " Why didst not thou, Shemida, bring thy wife, and Susannah, who is lovelier than the fairest rose of Jericho ? A prize for some fortunate youth, for as Solomon has said, ' A virtuous wife is more precious than pearls. ' "

" What would Israel be," exclaimed Melchi, as the sounds of festivity reached them from the adjacent apartments, " what would Israel be, without the festivals of Jehovah ? Here we are all

assembled before the Lord, to praise His faithfulness which is great, and His mercy which is renewed every morning. What, compared with these, are the Grecian games at Olympia and Nemea? Would that Lysis were here! We, the children of Israel, are *one* people; we have *one* God, and *one* city of the Lord; and every Jew in Egypt, Asia, Syria, and Chaldea, always turns his eyes in prayer towards this *one* place. Think, my friends, that while so many hundreds of thousands are assembled in Jerusalem, millions in the far distant lands, in which our people have been scattered, cast longing looks, this evening, towards us; envying us our joy, and desiring nothing so much, as to be in the Holy City, and in the courts of Jehovah! I only regret that Gerizim and Leontopolis—”

“Hush,” interposed Ithiel, “to-day speak only of what is pleasing. Our prince has subdued the rebellious daughter Gerizim. Jehovah ceases not to concern Himself with the injuries of Israel.”

“The prophet,” replied Melchi, “has declared that all the nations of the earth shall be united, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and when the Messiah comes, the sceptre of Judah shall be extended over the whole earth.”

“Hyrcanus stands beside the altar,” said another of the company; “and the family of the Maccabees is flourishing; who knows whether the Messiah will not speedily appear from among them?”

“No,” answered Melchi, “the Messiah must come from the family of David, and the Maccabees are Levites of the family of Joiarib. The Jewish people, and the priests, consented, that

Simon should be their prince, and high-priest, till God raise up the true prophet, unto them. The Messiah will not be a Maccabee, though Hyrcanus unites, in himself, the three offices to which He will be anointed. Would that He who is promised, were come ! His way is prepared ; Israel is once more free, and a people. What would I give if in my grey hairs I might yet be permitted to behold Him ! What a glorious Passover will that be, when He keeps it with us, in Baris,¹ or on Zion, and His people accompany Him with palm branches and Hosannas ! I envy you, Eldad, for you may live to see that day."

"It will be a happy day," said Eldad, "but not more happy than this." The old men smiled at his enthusiasm ; and rejoiced that among the youth of Israel there should be such joy in keeping the festivals of Jehovah.

It was now late. The hired servant, stationed by the water-clock,² in the court, called the fifth hour of the night ; the paschal meal was not permitted to last longer than to the end of the first watch of the night, which terminated somewhere about an hour before midnight. There were two other watches between this and daylight, divided by the two cock-crowings. They heard the guests, in the other apartments, reciting the song of praise, and hastened to the conclusion of the feast.

¹ Baris, a palace and fortress on the north side of the Temple. The meaning is "in the Palace as a King or in the Temple as a High-Priest."

² The water clock was invented by a native of Alexandria in the reign of Ptolemy Physcon. In earlier times the sun-dial seems to have been the only mode of keeping time. Up to the conquest by the Romans, the Jews divided the night into three watches ; afterwards they made four watches, as the Romans did.

With the same prayer as before, they washed their hands again from the silver ewer and basin ; and Ithiel having again blessed the cup, they drank once more from it. This was called the cup of thanksgiving. The second part of the

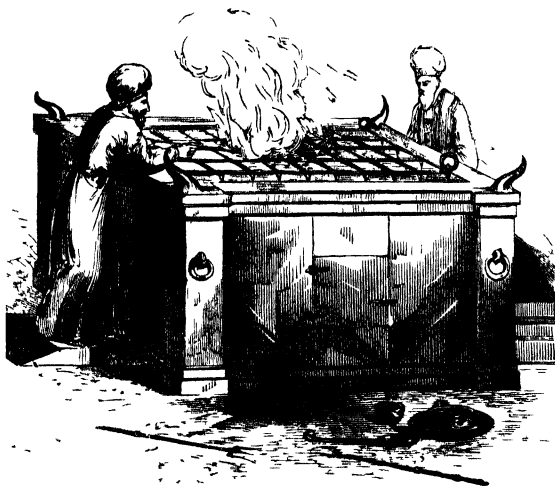


WASHING HANDS.

Hallel was now sung, consisting of the 115th, 116th, 117th, and 118th Psalms. Eldad thought of the words of Isaiah xxx. 29,—“ Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept ; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel.”

When the Hallel was finished, hands were again washed ; and the cup was blessed and sent

round for the fourth and last time. Eldad would gladly have joined in praying the Great Hallel; as they call the series of Psalms from the 120th to the 137th, after which, it was customary to send round the cup a fifth time, but midnight was already too near. The company broke up, and all retired to rest, intending to be early in the Temple the following day.



BRAZEN ALTAR.

CHAPTER X.

THE HIGH-PRIEST.

WHILE the paschal lamb was eaten by the people, the priests, in the Temple, were cleansing the altar of burnt-offerings. This was commonly done in the last watch of the night, towards the cock-crowing, but, on this occasion, during the first watch. Next, they themselves partook of the paschal lamb; and soon after midnight, the gates were opened, that the children of Israel

might enter in. Many were there, even at this early hour, in order to see the splendour of the illuminated Temple. No sooner had the watchman answered the customary question of the priest, "Does it begin to be light as far as Hebron?" than all the streets, leading to the Temple, were filled with men, dressed in their gayest clothes. On no other day of the year, was the Temple so crowded, as on the morning after the Passover.

The usual morning sacrifice was, first of all, offered. The lamps were extinguished, incense was burnt upon the altar, and the lamb was sacrificed to Jehovah, with the usual meat and drink offering. Then followed the special offering for the feast, as commanded in the law of Moses, (Numbers xxviii. 19—24,) two young bullocks, a ram, and seven yearling lambs, with meat and drink offerings. Next a goat was offered, as a sin offering: the Hallel was sung, and the blessing pronounced. The whole body of the priests was assembled; on ordinary days, only some were present; on the Sabbath, the whole course; and on high festivals, the whole twenty-four courses, the collective body of the priesthood.¹

Eldad had been among the first, who came up to the Temple of Jehovah, at the crowing of the

¹ The priests were first formed into courses by David. Each course attended the service of God for one week, from Sabbath to Sabbath. The course which had ended its week, not departing till the Sabbath was over; and the course that was beginning its week, entering in when the Sabbath began; so that on that day, there was always a double attendance. This explains the arrangement made by Jehoiada when Joash was to be proclaimed king: 2 Kings xi. At the great festivals *all men* were bound to appear before the Lord; (Deut. xvi. 16;) when of necessity all the twenty-four courses would be present.

cock. He beheld all with deep interest and devotion ; and as he gazed on the Temple, and the splendid rites and ceremonies taking place within it, the fond wish of his early childhood awoke in his heart, and he desired that he too might be thought worthy to become a priest of Jehovah, and to minister at His altar. With increasing eagerness he now looked for the appearance of the high-priest, the head and crown of the tribe of Levi and of all Israel. He had expected him to appear yesterday, during the morning sacrifice, but he was not then seen. Eldad felt an enthusiastic admiration for the heroic family of the Maccabees, and none of them all had risen to such an eminence as John Hyrcanus. In Egypt, in Hebron, on the pilgrimage, and through the whole preceding day, he had been listening to the praises of the man, whom he was now about to see.

He was standing on the lowest of the fifteen steps, which led from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel, when there arose a cry, among the thousands who surrounded him ;—"The high-priest is coming!" He came from an adjoining building, and walked towards the altar. The breastplate, with its precious stones, beamed from his breast. Over the ordinary white robe of the priests, which descended in folds to his feet, he wore a magnificent upper robe of a purple blue. The bells between the pomegranates, on the borders of his robe, gave a clear sound as he walked. Over this upper garment he had a third, which was shorter, called the ephod, splendidly embroidered with purple, dark blue, crimson, and thread of gold, on a white ground. On his head was a white turban, and over this a second, striped with dark

blue. On his forehead, he wore a plate of gold, on which the name of Jehovah was inscribed; and being at once high-priest and prince, this was connected with a triple crown on the temples, and back of the head.

The priests made way for him, as he entered, thus gloriously attired, and stepped in majesty along. Arrived at the altar, he looked round about on the innumerable multitudes that were assembled, while silent congratulations were addressed to him, by every heart. Eldad shared in the general feeling, and thought on the splendid description of the high-priest Simon, the son of Onias, in the book of Jesus the son of Sirach. (Ecclus. l.) Often had this description awakened the enthusiasm of Eldad; now, he saw it realized, in the most impressive service ever performed in Israel—that of the morning after the Passover. There stood the high-priest, spiritual and temporal sovereign of the people, on the mountain of Jehovah, in the presence of His sanctuary, looking through the lofty portico, full upon the curtain of the most holy place. On the other side, through all the courts even to the foot of Mount Moriah, was a countless multitude, all occupied with prayer and praise, all waiting anxiously for his benediction, all expecting to be purified by the sacrifice he was about to offer. Around him were all the priests of Israel, obediently ministering to him in his sacred employment. He, himself, their chief and leader, was adorned with all that oriental splendour could devise, in honour of the name of Jehovah which he bore on his brow. It was a sight that might well stir up sublime and religious feelings in the mind of Eldad.

The Hallel was sung. The priests stationed on the pillars near the brazen laver, accompanied the song with the sound of their trumpets, and the Levites, on the fifteen steps, with their cymbals,



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

cornets, and flutes. David had appointed four thousand Levites for musicians and singers, and the number was probably not much smaller now. The multitude responded, with its hundred thousand voices, to the song of the choir; and when the Alleluia, with which the Psalms begin and end, was thrice repeated, with the united volume of vocal and instrumental sound, poured forth at once, it seemed, indeed, as if the people of

Jehovah, in offering their homage, were conscious of the presence of their God. It was in such a moment alone, that the full meaning of these Psalms could be understood; and Eldad, to whom they had been familiar from childhood, felt now, as if he heard them for the first time. So entirely was he absorbed, that the wave of the people forced him, unconsciously, far down to the extremity of the court. He could only see, from a distance, the movements of the high-priest about the altar. His majestic figure, as he passed to and fro before the flames which rose from the altar behind him, appeared to be illuminated in an unearthly manner, producing a singular and very solemn effect.

When the sacrifice and the Hallel were ended, the people fell on their knees, and bowed their faces to the earth to receive the high-priest's blessing. He washed his hands with the usual solemnities, and advanced to the steps of the Levites, praying thus:—

“Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, thou King of the world, who hast sanctified us with the consecration of Aaron, and commanded us to bless Thy people Israel in love.” He then turned first to the Sanctuary, and afterwards to the people; then lifting his arms to the height of his shoulder, and joining his hands together, so as to leave five intervals between the fingers, with eyes cast down on the ground, he laid the name of Jehovah on the people and said,—

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”—*Numbers* vi. 24.

At every repetition of the word *Thee*, he turned to the north and the south. The people replied,—“Praised be the name of His kingdom for ever.” They continued awhile when the benediction was concluded, each praying to himself, while the high-priest, turning to the Sanctuary, said, “O Lord of the whole world, we have done what Thou hast commanded us, and Thou wilt do what Thou hast promised. Thou wilt behold us from the habitation of Thy holiness, Thou wilt look down from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel!”

The offerings which were thus concluded had reference to the whole people; it remained that individuals should offer for themselves, both thank-offerings and burnt offerings, in order not to appear empty-handed before Jehovah. Melchi, for a thank-offering had bought a goat, without blemish, in the Court of the Gentiles. The choicest parts, the breast and the shoulder, belonged to the priest; the fat to Jehovah; all the rest was cooked in some of the outbuildings of the Temple, for Ithiel had made arrangements for their feasting there. On this day, no other flesh might be eaten than that of thank-offerings; the majority of those who sacrificed, carried the portions which they retained for themselves, to their own houses or tents, and feasted on them there. Melchi had invited to his feast his host, his host's family, and some Levites, bearing in mind the precept, “Thou shalt not neglect the Levite, as long as thou livest upon the earth.” They assembled in a saloon allotted to this purpose, in one of the courts on the south. Melchi, as the offerer of the sacrifice, blessed the bread and the wine, and they were all joyful, and thanked the Lord. Eldad, to

whom this meal, eaten within the precincts of the Temple, seemed like an anticipation of his future priestly functions, thought of the passage in Isaiah



—“They that have gathered it (*corn*,) shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it (*wine*,) together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.”—Isaiah lxii. 9.

They remained together till the evening sacrifice; and Eldad did not leave the Temple till after it, in order that he might witness the ceremony of the wave sheaf. This is the commencement of harvest, which begins at the time of the Passover with the barley, and is finished about Pentecost with the wheat. Everything which concerned the people of Israel, the harvest especially, was begun and ended with a religious solemnity.

At sunset, the citizens who had been appointed by the Sanhedrim, to cut the wave sheaf, came down through the courts, accompanied by a great concourse of people, and Eldad joined in the procession. They went to the field of barley nearest to the city; the sixteenth day of the month Nisan was begun, and the evening star was already visible in the sky. The person who was appointed to reap asked aloud, "Is the sun gone down?" The people who stood around answered, "Yes." "Shall I cut?" "Yes." "With this sickle?" "Yes." "In this basket?" "Yes." The questions, thrice repeated, and thrice answered in the affirmative, he cut as much as would furnish an omer, and binding the sheaves together, carried them to the Temple. The barley was there roasted by the fire, cleared from the husk, ground into meal, bolted thirteen times, and the omer, (a measure containing about forty-three eggshells,) of the finest meal, was kept till the following day.

Eldad, having witnessed this ceremony, reluctantly left the Temple, and in his dreams seemed to live over again the events of this interesting day. The stately form of the high-priest seemed to be before him; and the sacred name upon his

brow appeared to shine with a lustre too dazzling to behold. Then he seemed to be in the crowd, urged by some irresistible but inexplicable impulse, to force his way amidst the waves of people, seeking something which he could not find; and examining every face, without finding that one of which he was in search. Again he seemed to be beside the high-priest, and a feeling of unutterable joy spread through his whole frame. His uncle appeared to him, pale and sad, and beckoned him from the Temple to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where he sat by his father's tomb, and wept. A graceful and lovely form now stood by his side, and pointed to the west; he followed her, and as they went, she too, turned pale and sighed. A murky, sultry atmosphere gathered around him; the lightning struck a lofty cedar, the deadly vapour almost choked him, he ran forward a long and dreary way, without finding any resting-place. At length a star appeared, and twinkled on him with so mild a ray, that his oppression was relieved, and his cheerfulness returned. He looked around him, and found himself on the north-west side of the city, on a plain, which he dimly remembered that Ithiel had called Golgotha. In his astonishment he awoke.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SYNAGOGUE.

It was the morning of the second day, after the Passover. Eldad was lying by Melchi on the divan. Glad to be delivered from his dream, he started up, performed his morning devotions in the Alijah, saluted Moriah and Zion, from the roof, and endeavoured to shake off the disagreeable impressions of the night, which returned upon him with something of an ominous import. When he came down into the court, he found Ithiel sitting under the palm-trees, and endeavoured to think only of his present happiness. He felt that as man is never more purely and vividly happy than in the morning of childhood, so the morning of each day is the time when he should have the most cheerful consciousness of all that is agreeable in his condition.

They all went together to the Temple to pray. After the usual morning sacrifice of a lamb, followed, as the day before, by an offering, appropriate to the festival, of two young bullocks, a ram, and seven yearling lambs, as a burnt offering, and a goat, as a sin offering. The high-priest ministered as before, at the altar, and the priests around him. The crowd was scarcely less than on the previous day, and nearly the same ceremonies were repeated.

Next followed the offering of the first-fruits; the omer of barley meal, which had been prepared from the sheaves, cut the preceding evening. It was brought in a golden dish, mixed with the finest oil, and sprinkled with incense before it was placed in the hands of the high-priest, who waved it to the four winds of heaven, and then adding salt, threw a handful of it on the flame of the altar. Immediately after a lamb was sacrificed, with the meat and drink offering belonging to it, and the high-priest concluded with his solemn benediction.

The harvest was soon solemnly begun, and Israel might pursue its joyful labours. Many of the pilgrims who had not time and means to spend the whole week of the festival in Jerusalem, returned home on this day. Only those remained behind who intended to make further offerings, and these were generally the wealthier among the pilgrims. Melchi, Eldad, and Jetur went down into the neighbourhood of the porch of Solomon, to purchase a victim. A dealer in cattle from Capernaum, in Galilee, furnished them with a calf of extraordinary beauty, which they drove to the northern gate of the Temple, where the sacrifices were admitted. Here they were compelled to wait a considerable time, as a large number had been admitted just before their arrival. At length they entered; the animal was examined and killed, on the north side of the altar; the offerers having first washed their hands, and laid them upon it. The priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar. A burnt offering was wholly consumed, except the skin, which belonged to the priest. While the sacrifice was being offered, Melchi

Eldad, and Jetur were praying that Jehovah would graciously accept their offering; and when it was ended, they and the rest of those who had been admitted with them, went out at the southern gate. Eldad, while he had witnessed the solemn ceremonial, and the deep and reverend silence of the spectators, had felt the dignity of the priestly office; and, as he prayed, had said in the words of David—

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require;
Even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of
my life,
To behold the fair beauty of the Lord,
And to visit His temple.”—*Psalm xxvii.* 4

In the afternoon Ithiel conducted him to one of the places of public religious instruction, called by the Greek name of synagogue. Such buildings had come into use only since the captivity; but there were already a considerable number of them in Jerusalem. In the days of David and Solomon, we find no trace of them. It is true, we have very early mention of the schools of the prophets,¹ from which they may be considered to have taken their rise. In the days of Elisha it appears to have been customary to visit the prophets on the day of the new moon, and on the Sabbaths. (2 Kings iv. 23.) During the captivity, the people felt, no doubt, still more the necessity of assembling on solemn days, to obtain consolation and hope, from the discourses of some man learned in the Scriptures. On the fifth day of the sixth month, we are told, that Ezekiel was sitting in his house, and the elders of Judah were sitting before him.

¹ See 1 Sam. x. 10, and xix. 20.

(Ezek. viii. 1.) The custom, thus found useful, was kept up after the return from captivity, when it had another advantage; for the common language of the people having become Chaldean, it was necessary to translate the Hebrew Scriptures before they could be understood by them. (Neh. viii. 7, 8.) These assemblies were, at first, held in the porticoes of the Temple, afterwards in buildings appropriated to the purpose, not only in Jerusalem, but in all the other populous towns. Sacrifices could be offered only in one place—the Temple at Jerusalem—but prayer might be made, and instruction received, anywhere.

They went into a synagogue, in the Lower City, where an eloquent expounder of the Law was accustomed to teach. The building somewhat resembled the courts of the Temple. A large square space was surrounded, on all sides, with porticoes resting upon a double row of columns. In the middle, a circular roof rested on four pillars, and on a raised place beneath it, lay the rolls of the Law. The people stood in the open part, which was sheltered from the sun by an awning. In rainy weather they went into the porticoes, one of which was set apart, exclusively, for the women. The reader, also called the apostle, or ambassador of the assembly, stood by the rolls of the Law. It was his duty to read the Law, and any letters or epistles which might be received from other congregations; he also offered up the prayer, and thus, was the messenger, as it were, of God to the people, and of the people to God. There was also a ruler of the synagogue, who maintained order, elders, who assisted him, a gatherer of alms, and a servant.

The synagogue was already full, when Eldad and his friends entered. The service began by praising God. The reader then read and interpreted a passage from the Law; and after again offering praises to God, he read a passage from the prophecy of Jeremiah. It was from the prayer which the prophet had offered up, in a moment of great tribulation, and recounted the ancient mercies of God to His people, as the ground of hope for present deliverance.

When the passage had been read and interpreted (Jeremiah xxxii. 17—22), the celebrated teacher of the Law, whom we have mentioned, rose up, and proposed to deliver a discourse. His language was simple, but for this very reason, the energy of the prophet's words, which he expounded, was the more strongly felt. He spoke of the signs and wonders which Jehovah had shown in Egypt—of the cruel bondage from which Israel had been delivered, and of which the Passover was a perpetual memorial. He then described the glorious times of Solomon, when Israel was obedient and prosperous, and the eyes of his audience glistened with delight. With far different feelings they listened, while he pictured the desolation and the sorrows of the Captivity—when the fourteenth day of Nisan came, and no paschal lamb could be slain, the unleavened bread of bitterness alone remained to Israel then. No one drew his breath, while he drew the picture of this misery—every bosom was agitated—and when the speaker paused for a moment, as if himself overwhelmed with the thought of the might and the justice of Jehovah, a woman, carried away by the feelings he had excited, suddenly exclaimed,

“Woe! woe to me and to my children, for we have sinned against the Lord!” “Woe to us all,” he resumed, “if we forsake Jehovah, the living fountain, and hew out for ourselves broken fountains which can hold no water.” In conclusion, he praised God for the happy times in which they now lived, and earnestly exhorted them to celebrate the feast with joy; and at all seasons, faithfully to observe the Law, in the land flowing with milk and honey, into which the God of their fathers had brought them.

When the discourse was ended, praises were again offered to God; the prayer called Crieschma was repeated; the benediction was given, and the whole assembly replied, “Amen;” and at the close of all, alms were collected for the poor.

As they left the assembly, Eldad remarked to Melchi, how much superior was the condition of Israel to that of the heathen, both in regard to sacrifice as well as to instruction. “They offer sacrifices, indeed, to their gods, but it is without divine laws to direct them in the offering, and to assure them of its acceptance; they have temples and altars, but no places or times for religious instruction; they have priests, but no teachers.”

On the following day, the third after the Passover, the same offerings as before were made, but the solemnity increased towards evening, when the Sabbath was to begin. It was announced, as usual, by six blasts of the trumpet, blown by a priest out of the chamber, which was situated on the southern side of the Temple, and which served



ANCIENT
TRUMPET.

as the watch-room of the priests and Levites. At the ninth hour, (three in the afternoon,) the first blast was sounded, as a signal for the cessation of all labour in the field. Troops of reapers and other labourers were immediately after seen coming from all the country around into Jerusalem. At the tenth hour the second blast was sounded, to announce the time of closing the shops and manufactories, completing the domestic preparations for the Sabbath, and putting on the best holiday dress. In every house, two loaves were placed upon the table, as a memorial of the double measure of manna, gathered in the wilderness on the day before the Sabbath. At the third blast, the mother of the family lighted the two lamps, which were to burn through the whole of the Sabbath. Light, being the symbol of joy and of knowledge, was appropriate on this solemn feast day. The mother spread out her hands towards the lamp which she had kindled, and said, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who hast sanctified us by Thy precepts, and commanded us to light the Sabbath lamp!" The fourth, fifth, and sixth blasts followed each other rapidly, as soon as the sun was set, and the Sabbath was now begun.

To take a family meal was the first thing done. The master of the house filled the cup, when all were assembled round the table, and blessed it, and said; "On the sixth day were the earth and the heavens, and all their glory, completed, for God finished all the work which He had made, and rested on the seventh day from all His labour, and hallowed it." After a short pause, he went on; "Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, who hast

created the fruit of the vine, and sanctified us by Thy precepts, and commanded us to keep Thy Sabbaths, as a memorial of the work of creation. We praise thee, O Lord, that Thou hast made the Sabbath day holy." The cup was then emptied, the master of the house blessed the bread in the usual form of words, and the meal began.

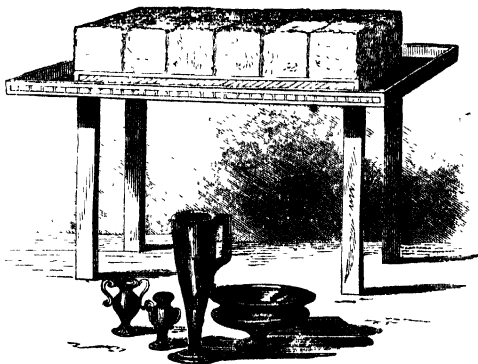


TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD.

In the meantime, the course of priests had been changed in the Temple, that which had been on duty in the preceding week, giving place to that whose turn of service was in the week following. The shew-bread was changed, twelve of the priests bringing each one of the new loaves in a golden dish, and two others, censers with incense. Then all the children of Israel laid themselves down to rest, in their own houses, or in the Temple, in joyful expectation of the Sabbath dawn.

The Sabbath was so strictly and solemnly kept, that it was not allowed to be broken, even by the greatest of the festivals; it may indeed be said, that as being the oldest, it was to be looked upon as the soul and parent of all the rest. It was not merely a day of cessation from labour, it was also a weekly acknowledgment of the one true God, Creator of heaven and earth; a remembrance, too, of the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Outward rest is in itself a pleasure in the burning East, but this holy rest had a deeper meaning, and was typical of that inward rest of holiness and peace, by which the outward rest is sanctified.

In pious fear of transgressing the Law of the Sabbath, the Jews, in later times, never went further on that day than two thousand cubits. They reckoned that the remotest tents in the camp in the wilderness, would be one thousand cubits distant from the Tabernacle, and that their forefathers must have been permitted to go and return this distance, in order to appear before Jehovah.¹

If, however, the Sabbath could not be suspended by the festivities of the Passover, those festivities received additional solemnity themselves, by the return of the Sabbath. Eldad felt the sanctity of the day with double force, from this union. He had risen early in the morning, and could scarcely wait till the hour arrived for his going up with the old men to the Temple, to spend a Sabbath there for the first time in his life.

The morning sacrifice consisted, on this day, of

¹ This is the foundation of the reckoning by a Sabbath day's journey, which is somewhat less than one mile of our measure.

the usual offering of a lamb; then followed the special offering of the Sabbath; and last of all, the festival offering for the Passover week. Two bullocks, a ram, ten lambs, and a goat, were sacrificed in succession, for these different offerings. In the meantime, the Sabbath Psalm was sung by the Levites, from the fifteen steps. They began with—

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,
And to sing praises unto Thy name, O most Highest !
To tell of thy loving kindness early in the morning ;
And of thy truth in the night season ;
Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the lute,
Upon a loud instrument, and upon the harp”

and concluded with,—

“Such as are planted in the house of the Lord,
Shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God :
They also shall bring forth more fruit in their age,
And shall be fat and well liking ;
That they may show how true the Lord, my strength is ;
And that there is no unrighteousness in Him !”—*Psa.* xcii.

Eldad remained the whole day in the Temple, witnessing the evening sacrifice, and heard the sound of the trumpet, which proclaimed that the Sabbath was ended. The old men retired soon after the morning sacrifice, leaving him to his own reflections, and rejoicing that one among the youth of Israel was so full of enthusiasm in the service of Jehovah. Eldad, as he wandered about the courts of the Temple, was revolving a design which had long been forming in his mind, and which the feelings of the last few days had rapidly matured.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION OF THE PASSOVER.

ALTHOUGH the greater part of the people had already returned to their homes, to begin the harvest, and large companies had taken their departure every morning, with the music of cymbals and Psalms, all the priests and Levites still remained, and a great multitude of the people, not fewer than 100,000 men, were still to be seen assembled in the courts of the Temple.

One day Eldad, after being present at the evening sacrifice, was witness of a new scene. He was standing beside the thirteen treasure-chests,¹ which were placed in the Court of the Women. Each of these chests was inscribed with the name of the gift which was to be deposited in it. Some were for voluntary gifts for the Temple, others for the capitation-tax. A Jew of Cyrene brought the capitation-tax from his brethren there. The law of Moses had ordered (Exod. xxx.) that, whenever the people of Israel were numbered, every man should give an offering to the Lord of a half shekel,²

¹ See Lightfoot, i. 1095.

² The value of the half shekel was fifteen pence. This was the "tribute" mentioned Matt. xvii. 24. The "piece of money" found in the fish's mouth is set down in the margin of our Bible as a "*stater*," the value of which was half-a-crown, i.e. double tribute.

The half Shekel = 2 Drachmæ.
The Stater = 4 Drachmæ.

neither more nor less, but after the Captivity this tax was levied annually. On the first day of the month Adar, the Sanhedrim sent messengers through the whole country, to collect the half



SHEKEL OF SILVER.

shekel, fifteen days being given for the payment. On the fifteenth day of the month, the receivers took their seats beside the chests, in the Court of the Women, and all who were twenty years and upwards brought their contribution. To the very poorest persons a respite of a year was granted, if they petitioned for it; and, for this reason, a chest for the past year was placed by that which received the contributions of the current year. A number of the poorer class might now be seen soliciting alms from the rich to enable them to pay their debt. Strangers, who came to Jerusalem chiefly at the festivals, were accustomed to take these opportunities of payment, especially at the Passover.

The Cyrenian had brought the sum due from his countrymen in Cyrene, and was about to

deposit it in the chest: but it was necessary that it should be paid in shekels, and he had only foreign coin.¹ As this was a case of frequent occurrence, the receivers of the tax were also money-changers, and had their tables placed beside the chests. They had a small profit upon exchanging the foreign coin into Jewish shekels and half shekels. Eldad witnessed the proceedings with no small dissatisfaction. He had a great dislike to foreign trade and commerce; no single encouragement to it, he was wont to say, could be found throughout the Law. Though Canaan lay on the shore of the Mediterranean, and the Israelites were encouraged to commerce by the examples of their nearest neighbours, the Phœnicians, yet it was not the will of Jehovah that His people should devote themselves to traffic. Agriculture, on the contrary, was consecrated by its union with religion: all the great national festivals were as much agricultural as historical. Eldad would fain have seen his countrymen animated with this spirit. The constant intercourse with foreigners necessarily produced compromises and conformity, which diminished the attachment of the Israelite to the laws and usages of his forefathers. He disliked the mercantile character of the Hellenists of Alexandria, and attributed to it much of their neglect of the Law, and their indifference to the Temple on Mount Moriah, and the sacrifices there offered up to Jehovah. If the children of the Captivity,

¹ Whole and half shekels were struck by the high-priest Simon, and were beautiful coins. On the one side is the budding rod of Aaron, and the legend round it, "The Holy Jerusalem:" on the other side, a pot of manna, and the words, "Shekel of Israel."

he thought, had not taken up the pursuit of commerce, on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, they would have returned in much greater numbers, and so many of them would not have preferred wealth in a foreign land to their own vine and their own fig-tree in the land of their fathers. "And had they returned in greater numbers," he exclaimed, "how soon would the Samaritans have been expelled, Galilee purified, and the proud Philistines been made to bow their necks. Jerusalem would again have been inhabited by her true sons, and the days and the glory of Solomon might have returned."

With such feelings, it was natural he should turn away in disgust from all that seemed to change the proper character, as he thought, of the festival. This mixture of commerce, however, with the religious solemnity was not new ; it seemed, in some measure, to arise necessarily out of the circumstances of the case. Vast droves of sheep, goats, and bullocks, preceded the pilgrims on their way to the city, to supply the sacrifices which were to be offered there. As the animals so offered must all be clean, it was necessary that this branch of trade should be wholly in the hands of Jews. It was not, however, by any means necessary, though it had become customary, to make a market-place in the Temple itself. One end of the Court of the Gentiles was made to serve this purpose ; the most extensive dealings carried on in it were in cattle. The bullocks came chiefly from Galilee, the sheep from the wilderness of Judah ; Tekoah and Hermon furnished honey, and Gilead its precious balm. The Phœnicians were

not backward in taking advantage of the national gathering: they attended the festival, bringing purple and fine Egyptian linen, with other foreign goods.

Melchi was frequently among the merchants, and judged of their wares with the eye of one experienced in such matters, for he had himself been a merchant. But Eldad could never be persuaded to follow his uncle's occupation. "Oh, that a prophet would appear," he exclaimed one day in the Temple, when his zeal was more than ordinarily kindled, "who should overturn the tables of these money-changers, and drive out those who buy and sell from the courts of Jehovah!" When he went up, morning or evening, and entered by the Beautiful-gate, he hastened as speedily as possible through the Court of the Gentiles, to reach a scene more congenial to his feelings; to ascend the flight of steps which led to the altar of burnt-offering; to wander in the spacious porticoes; to follow with the eye the majestic steps of the high-priest, or listen to the Psalms of the Levites. It is not possible to describe the delight in which he thus passed his hours away. He at that time inwardly resolved to become what was then called a Chasidean,—that is, a perfectly righteous man. He thanked Jehovah that he had escaped from the snares of the Greek philosophy, and was filled with so pure and ardent a love for the Law of his fathers. He prayed to the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, to be enabled to fulfil the Law in all its rigour; and conscious as he felt of an earnest and sincere desire of doing this, no doubt of success ever seemed

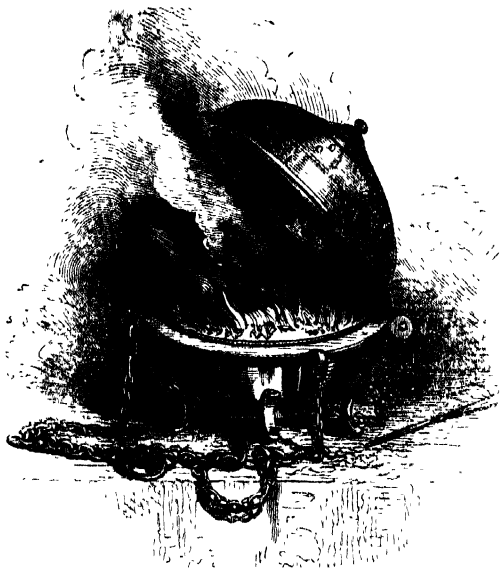
to cross his mind or disturb his hope for the future.

The close of the festival was now at hand. Eldad could scarce refrain from tears, when, on the evening of the seventh day, the sound of the trumpets announced that it was over. The last day of the feast, the twenty-first of the month Nisan, was as holy as the first; no work could be done on either. The festival offering was presented on this, as on every other of the seven days. The ashes from such a multitude of sacrifices never having been cleared away, had accumulated to a lofty heap upon the altar. All those who had remained in Jerusalem had assembled in the Temple; in the afternoon, they went to the synagogue, and, with sunset, the feast of unleavened bread was over.

Eldad went down from the Temple, with slow and melancholy steps. The pilgrims were preparing for their departure, and the citizens returning to their ordinary occupations. On the following morning, they were present at the sacrifice, and returned thanks to Jehovah for permitting them to join in the celebration of His Passover. The tents were then struck, the different companies arranged themselves, and with the sound of cymbals, poured out from the different gates, after having taken a hearty farewell of their friends.

Eldad stood upon the roof, and saw the commotion in the streets and at the gates. The city gradually became empty and silent. He listened, as the songs of the pilgrims died away in the distance; and when from the road to Bethlehem,

where he had himself joined in the chorus a few days before, he now heard the Psalm which the returning pilgrims were singing, he had almost wept like a child for its departed joy.



THE CENSEB.

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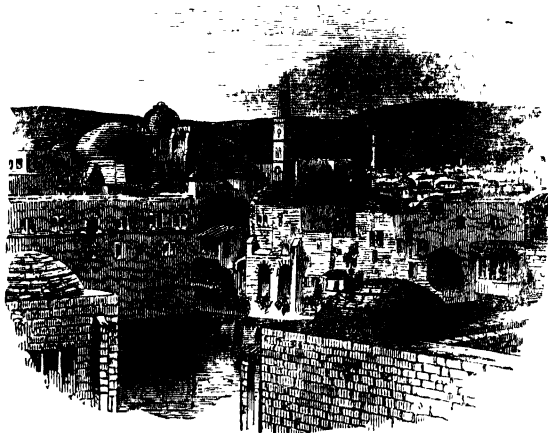
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ELDAD THE PILGRIM.

Part II.



POOL OF HEZEKIAH.

CHAPTER I.

THE VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT.—THE PRIESTHOOD.

THE Feast of the Passover was ended. The multitude had returned to their homes, or were busied in their usual occupations in the city. The ashes on the altar of burnt-offering, which had gradually accumulated during the Passover week, and had

risen at last into a lofty pyramid, were now cleared away. The days of unleavened bread were past; the people had returned to their ordinary food, and all the glory of the festival had disappeared.

Eldad stood on the roof the following day, watching the rising sun. His eyes turned towards the Temple; and he remembered, with a feeling of disappointment and regret, that on this, as on the preceding day, a single sacrifice only would be offered there. He looked down upon the streets; the exhilarating movement of the festival had ceased, and all was solitary and still, save where a Syrian merchant was seen hastening through the gate with his empty sacks, or a Galilean dealer in cattle driving before him the remnant of his herd, for which he had been unable to find a purchaser. No pilgrim from Hebron or Libnah, no stranger from foreign lands was to be seen.

A deep melancholy took possession of Eldad's mind, and the dawn of this day seemed likely to prove even more gloomy than the close of the preceding one. The depression of spirits, which for several years past had been almost habitual to him, had vanished during the paschal week. The enthusiasm which began at Beersheba, when he knelt down to greet the land of his fathers, had gone on constantly increasing, and he had felt within himself a resolution, which it seemed as if nothing could weaken, to keep stedfastly the Law of Jehovah. But now, though still in the Holy Land, and in the city of God, his spirits sank lower every moment. This was a natural consequence of their former excitement; he could not at once descend to the employments of ordinary life in Jerusalem, which was to him a sacred place,

the city of Jehovah ; and it seemed as if a perpetual festival ought to prevail there.

In the preceding days, the Psalms, with their tone of cheerful and exulting piety, or the glorious prophecies of Isaiah, had been in his heart and on his lips : now the plaintive strains of Jeremiah, formerly his favourites, recurred to his mind, and he began to feel how far he was still removed from that inward peace for which he longed, and which he thought that he had found, in the first days of the festival. When he looked down upon the streets, whose comparative emptiness seemed to him absolute desolation, the first words of the Lamentations burst from his lips :—

“ How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people !
How is she become as a widow ! ”

and he could scarcely forbear adding from the same prophet,—

“ Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace,
... My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.”
Lamentations iii. 17.

With these feelings he wandered to and fro on the roof in the cool air of the morning. Suddenly the smoke of the morning sacrifice arose on Mount Moriah, and the sound of a solitary trumpet was heard from the hill of the Lord. All Eldad's feelings returned with this sight and sound. “ There is, then,” he exclaimed, “ one occupation in Jerusalem which is a perpetual festival. It is theirs who dwell in the house of the Lord, and minister at His altar. Why do I delay any longer——?” At this moment the door of the Alijah¹ opened, and the venerable Melchi came out.

¹ See Part I., page 13, note.

He had been performing there his morning devotions. Eldad went up to him, wished him peace, according to the usual salutation, and with kindling eye addressed him: "My uncle, often hast thou told me that Israel is Israel only in the Holy Land, yet even here I cannot rest, unless I become a priest."

"Is it not enough for thee that thou art in the city of Jehovah?" asked Melchi, with a smile.

"Even in the city of Jehovah," answered Eldad, "the priests alone keep a perpetual festival, and I would fain keep it with them."

Melchi looked at him with joyful surprise. It had been his wish that Eldad, whose dislike of commerce he well knew, should become a priest; but desiring that it should be his own free choice, he had never mentioned it, and had not hoped for so speedy and so decisive a declaration. Hardly able to repress his joy, he replied, "In a son of Levi the wish is natural, but what has now suggested it?"

Eldad related to him what he had felt on the second day of the Passover, when offering the burnt offering; how the desire of becoming a priest had ripened into resolution; and how, ever since that time, the words of the prophet, "the priest is the messenger of the Lord of hosts,"¹ had been perpetually in his thoughts; and now his painful feelings on seeing the city deserted, and his reviving joy on hearing the trumpet from Mount Moriah, had convinced him that he could be happy only by entering the priesthood.

Melchi embraced him, and both remained for a time weeping. At length Melchi, breaking the

¹ Malachi ii. 7

silence, said, "We will go to-morrow to the high-priest, he knows our family and me too. . . . Jehovah has blessed our house with much wealth in a foreign land, and thou, alas! art its only heir. It is right that thou shouldest revive the priesthood in our family, in which it has slept four hundred years. This is the curse which rests on Israel in foreign lands: the privilege of being anointed to Jehovah by birth, and of ministering before Him, is despised, and a Levite becomes like another man. This I have often thought; the pursuits of commerce have, indeed, prevented my acting on this conviction, but all my wealth has been a poor consolation to me."

"My second father!" exclaimed Eldad, "my heart is filled with joy to hear you say this, and with gratitude, too, that you sanction my desire to revive the priesthood in our family."

"Yes, my son," said Melchi, "I feel with thee, that the priest is an angel of the Lord of Hosts. In the hour in which thou didst resolve to make a journey to the Holy Land, I framed in my heart the blessing which my lips now pronounce upon thee. But let us go to the grave of thy father, that thou mayest receive his blessing."

Without entering the house, they descended the staircase which led directly from the roof into the outer court, and so into the street; and soon reached the Valley of Jehoshaphat and its cedars. Walking beneath their solemn shade, they came to the well-known sepulchre of the Egyptian pilgrim.

Both stood before it awhile in silence, as if they expected a voice should be heard, or the spirit of the beloved one should come forth.

“Oh! hadst thou lived to see this hour,” at length exclaimed Melchi, “how had thy paternal heart rejoiced!”

Eldad wept; whether in joy or in sorrow he himself could hardly have told: such tears are sacred. He threw himself upon the grave, and long remained there praying and weeping. Melchi too wept abundantly. “Arise,” he said at length to Eldad, “and let us repeat together the ninetyeth Psalm. Thy father will give thee his answer in this song of Moses, and bless thee in the words of the man of God.”

Eldad arose, and they both said together,—

“Lord, thou hast been our refuge,
From one generation to another;
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever the earth and the world were made;
Thou art God from everlasting,
And world without end . . .”—*Psalm xc.*

Nor did the voice of either cease till they had reached the end of the Psalm:—

“The glorious majesty of the Lord our God be upon us.
Prosper thou the work of our hands upon us,
O prosper thou our handy-work.”

“Be that the blessing of thy father upon thee,” said Melchi, when they had finished. “Does not this Psalm seem as if it had been composed on purpose for us, beginning with lamentations on account of death, and confession of sin, yet even in the midst of these calling on Jehovah, on Him who has been our refuge from generation to generation? Yes, Eldad, such has He been to each one of our ancestors, even to him who, with the prophet Jeremiah, was compelled to flee into Egypt, and on this we found our prayer. Turn to us, O Jehovah; turn thee again at the last. The Lord

has heard thee, O happy youth! Thou shalt behold the works of Jehovah! and from the sepulchre of thy father, from beneath these ancient cedars, his spirit blesseth thee, and saith, 'The favour of the Lord thy God be upon thee.. May He prosper all the work of thy hands: yea, the work of His hands may His goodness prosper.' And now let us go. We will return home by Zion, and by the Spring of Siloah."

At the south-east corner of Jerusalem, near the spot where the Kidron turns off towards the Dead Sea, lies the Valley of Hinnom. Sacrifices were once offered there to Moloch in Tophet (2 Kings xxiii. 10), and the sons and daughters of Israel were, with many abominable and idolatrous rites, made to pass through the fire. Going along this valley, and by the aqueduct of Siloah, built by Solomon, they came to the south-west side of the city, near to the highly-prized fountain of Siloah, in Solomon's time called Gihon.¹ This was the spot where the wisest of Israel's kings was anointed. David, then grey with age, said, "Cause Solomon, my son, to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon, and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there." (1 Kings i. 33.)

"Not without reason," said Melchi, "have I brought thee hither this day. As the king is the anointed of a people, so is the priest of a family. For thine own sake I led thee to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, but as an omen to myself of the future, I have brought thee hither."

They were both silent, and pursuing their walk

¹ Gihon preserved its name even to the days of Hezekiah and Manassch. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 30; xxxiii. 14.

through the Valley of Siloah, they reached again the city and the house of Ithiel.

Fully did Ithiel sympathise in the joy with which Melchi announced to him the determination of Eldad. He was standing in the outer court, and had just taken leave of some acquaintance, when they entered. Leading them, with joyful exclamations, to the inner court, he called his wife from the apartment of the women, made the slaves place cushions around the fountain, and exclaimed again and again, "What a happiness for a family! The priest is indeed an angel of Jehovah of Hosts!"

The day was spent in domestic festivity, but it was with sorrow Eldad recollected, at the close of it, that he could not be present at the evening sacrifice, having made himself unclean by touching a grave. (Numbers xix. 16.) It seemed somewhat strange to him, that he should have been defiled by a visit to his father's tomb; and be unfit to appear in the Temple of Jehovah, because he had there shed tears, not of earthly sorrow but of heavenly hope. In the afternoon, as he could not go up to the Temple, he strayed, accompanied by his host, through the different parts of the Holy City. In one part he found the artisans at their labours, in shops opening to the street; in another, he passed the ruins of the palaces of David and Solomon, and saw the castle of Baris, where the high-priest resided, and where he went to be presented to him on the following day. The sepulchre of the kings, a splendid work, hewn out of the rock, was near, and proceeding a little farther they turned into the Valley of Gihon. "Yonder," said Ithiel, "is Golgotha." "Gol-

gotha!" repeated Eldad, as with a painful feeling he remembered his dream. "I have had within these few days an extraordinary dream, which I cannot forget, and which ended with Golgotha." When he had told his dream, Ithiel said, "Remember the words of Elihu:—

"In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falleth upon men,
In slumberings upon the bed,
Then he openeth the ears of men,
And sealeth their instruction."—*Job xxxiii. 15, 16.*

"A part of your dream is about to be fulfilled in your becoming a priest, and we will hope that the rest portends only good. I do not understand what Golgotha can mean."

Eldad purified himself in the evening by legal ablutions from the uncleanness he had contracted at his father's grave. Still he was not permitted for seven days to enter the Temple, so long was he reckoned unclean. This prohibition, however, applied only to the Temple.

The following day was a Sabbath. Melchi took the presents he had selected for the high-priest, and Eldad and he went together to the castle of Baris.¹ It was a stately edifice, built on a steep rock, which, from its south-eastern side, commanded the Temple. A splendid palace stood in the midst of a quadrangle; beyond was a wall, with towers at the four corners.

The high-priest received the strangers, sitting in the inner court, by the fountain, and bade them welcome. Melchi had been known to him before,

¹ This castle, built by John Hyrcanus as the royal residence, was afterwards enlarged by Herod and called Antonia. Baris (*Bâpis*) signifies a tower in later Greek. See Part I., p. 113; note.

and Hyrcanus rejoiced to see him, after an interval of many years. Melchi laid the rich presents from Egypt at his feet, with lofty panegyrics of his government, and of the heroic deeds of himself and his ancestors; afterwards he made application for Eldad to be admitted into the priesthood. The high-priest received the request favourably, but deferred the admission of Eldad to the service of the Temple till the triumphal entry of his sons into Jerusalem, which was to take place on the approaching new moon. He recommended Melchi to employ the interval in the examination of the genealogical table of the young candidate. The young man he addressed with much fatherly kindness, reminding him not merely of the dignity of the office to which he aspired, but of its responsibilities. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," said he, quoting the very words of the book of Malachi, which had been so much in Eldad's thoughts. Much more he added to the same purpose. Having promised them all necessary assistance in carrying out their wishes, he dismissed them with his blessing.

The first step had now been taken. Eldad left the castle full of exultation, and congratulating himself and his country, that such a hero as Hyrcanus sat upon the throne of Israel.

On their return home, Melchi announced to Ithiel his intention of making a journey with Eldad to Joppa, where the keeper of the genealogical register of their family lived. "Since you are now to become an inhabitant of the Promised Land," said he to Eldad, "it is right that you

should become acquainted with it, and with your kinsmen who dwell in it." Eldad begged that they might take Anathoth in their way; a place which he greatly longed to see, as being the native town of his favourite prophet Jeremiah. Melchi agreed, and as soon as the Sabbath was ended, preparations for the journey were hastily made.



JOPPA

CHAPTER II.

THE JOURNEY.—ANATHOTH.—LYDDA.—JOPPA.

THE crowing of the cock had already announced the near approach of morning, yet all was still in the streets of Jerusalem, and in the Temple, when Melchi, Eldad, and the faithful Jetur, their upper garments girt short around them, with sandals on their feet, and staves in their hands, passed through the gate of Ephraim, and took the road to Anathoth.

They entered the territory of the tribe of Benjamin as soon as they had passed the gate. Jerusalem was on the confines of Judah and

Benjamin,¹ as the metropolis of the whole people, and not belonging to any one tribe exclusively. Since the return from the captivity, the distinction of the tribes had been obliterated, with the exception of that of Levi. Strictly speaking, in the case of the other tribes only the name remained, as a cherished memorial of former times.

A beautiful and fruitful plain, yet with something of a declivity, lay before them; it was the only level ground in the immediate neighbourhood of the city. On whichever side you quit Jerusalem the ground falls, for the city is elevated and conspicuous on the surface of the earth, as its people are in the history of nations. It was growing light as they came into the King's Valley, so called because here the king of Sodom came to meet Abram, when he returned victorious from his pursuit of the four kings. (Gen. xiv. 17, 18.) Here too Melchisedeck, priest and king, brought forth bread and wine, and solemnly blessed the Patriarch. They passed along this lovely valley, just brightened by the first beams of the sun, and rejoiced in being permitted to visit scenes where holy men of old had lived and walked. "These," said Melchi, "are truly hallowed spots: the memory of events which happened here lives from generation to generation, and has already outlasted the pillars which Absalom raised on yonder spot, hoping to perpetuate his name by this monument when he had no son to preserve it. (2 Sam. xviii. 18.) He deserved not a son, because

¹ In Scripture, Jerusalem is sometimes spoken of as included in the territory of Judah (Joshua xv. 63), and sometimes of Benjamin. (Judges i. 21.) Josephus reckons it to belong to Benjamin.

he could not teach him to honour his father : his monument even is no more."

Eldad was silent ; he perceived that his uncle had awakened a thought which never failed to give him pain. Melchi had no children ; and he regarded this as a grievous punishment from heaven, for some unknown sin which he had committed. With an agitated voice he turned to Eldad, and gave him his hand ; "Be thou," he exclaimed, "my son ! Like Absalom, I am punished. Like him I must have sinned. I did indeed honour my father to his dying day ; but the ways of the Lord are unsearchable ; He is righteous, and I can only smite upon my breast, and say with David, 'Who can tell how oft he offendeth : O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.' " (Psalm xix. 12.)

"I am thy son," replied Eldad, as he returned the pressure of his uncle's hand ; "but here, while Israel rejoices around us, in this lovely valley, in the blessing of the harvest, let joy and thankfulness alone fill our hearts."

It was indeed a lovely scene. The fields of barley stood, golden ripe, on either side of the road ; troops of reapers were on their way to gather in the harvest, and the sound of the sickles, the song of the labourer, and the rolling of the threshing-wain resounded through the air. While rows of reapers were busy in cutting down the grain, others were binding up the sheaves, tying the stalks not far from the ears. Here a corner of the field was left for the poor (Levit. xix. 9) ; there a field already reaped was affording them a gleanng. Some were carrying their sheaves to the threshing-floor ; others were loading them on waggons. They passed near to one of these

threshing-floors. It was an open place in the field, where the soil had been beaten or trodden down till it was quite hard and smooth. Oxen, unmuzzled, according to the Law (Deut. xxv. 4), were treading out the grain. They passed another, which belonged to a richer man; a servant here sat upon a threshing-car or waggon, guiding the oxen,



who dragged the machine with its iron-shod wheels over the sheaves, while another servant following shook up the straw with a fork. The labours of all were cheered with a song, and passages from the Psalms were frequently heard, such as—

“He watereth the hills from above:

The earth is filled with the fruit of thy works;

. . . . That he may bring food out of the earth,

And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,

. . . . And bread to strengthen man's heart.”

Psalms civ. 13—15.

Or this:—

“Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
And thy clouds drop fatness,
The valleys shall stand so thick with corn,
That they shall laugh and sing.”—*Psalm lxxv. 12, 14.*

The travellers joined in these festive songs, and according to the ancient custom, pronounced as they passed each field, the benediction,—

“The blessing of Jehovah be upon you!
We bless you in the name of Jehovah!”

Psalm cxxix. 8.

They had travelled about three Sabbath-days' journeys¹ through this exhilarating scene, when they reached the little town of Anathoth; their road to



Joppa did not necessarily take them through it, but it was the birth-place of Jeremiah, and Melchi

¹ See note 1, page 40, Part I.

and Eldad could not refuse themselves the pleasure of honouring the remembrance of the prophet on his own native soil. It was here that the man of God had spent his childhood ; here, as a youth, he had received the call of Jehovah ; and when Eldad, in his boyhood, had heard from his father, or his mother, or his uncle, any anecdote of their prophet, the names of Jeremiah and Anathoth had always been connected together.

They halted at the gate of the city, and asked to be shown the field of Hanameel, which Jeremiah bought from the son of his uncle (Jer. xxxii. 7) when Jerusalem was besieged by the king of Babylon. This purchase was designed by Jehovah to be a pledge to His people, that they should return again from their captivity, then about to begin, and should again dwell in their own land. (ver. 15.) The pledge was redeemed, and Anathoth was now rebuilt.

The ancestors of Eldad derived their extraction from this city of the priests, in the tribe of Benjamin, which was another reason for his regarding it with feelings of interest and affection, and leaving it almost with regret ; but a long journey was still before them, and they bent their course direct from Anathoth to Bethshemesh. Here it was that the ark of God was brought by the Philistines after its capture in the days of Eli ; and here was a rash curiosity respecting holy things severely punished. Thus had every spot its own sacred associations. (1 Samuel vi. 12 to 20.)

From Bethshemesh they followed the road to Modin,—a place which their admiration and loyalty towards the Maccabees would not allow them to pass without notice. In this little village lived

the pious father and his five valiant sons, whose family bore the name of Maccabæus¹—that is, the *Hammerer*. When the madness of Antiochus Epiphanes reached its highest pitch, and Jerusalem bowed down beneath the oppressor's rod, then the aged Mattathias, in this obscure spot, declared, "Though all nations in the dominions of the king obey him, so that every one falleth away from the worship of his fathers, and obeyeth the commands of the king, yet I and my sons, and my brothers, will not depart from the law of our fathers." (1 Maccabees ii. 19.) So in righteous boldness he spoke, and punished the first apostate that he saw, and overturned the altars of the king; not in blind unauthorised fury, but in holy zeal for the rights of Israel. He and his family left their home, took refuge in the mountains, and collected around them the noblest and bravest of the people. The father died, but his spirit rested upon his sons. One after another they fought and conquered for the Law of Jehovah; until, at length, Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, obtained the high reward of so many exploits, in the united dignities of prince and priest.

Simon, in the brilliant days of his prosperity,

¹ In Hebrew מַקְבֵּי means *a hammer*, hence is said to be derived the name מַקְבֵּי, Μακκαβαῖος, *a hammerer*, i.e. a strenuous warrior, a cognomen of honour borne in the first instance by Judas, the son of Mattathias (and afterwards by the other princes of his family), as that of *Martel* was by Charles, the Frankish chieftain. The more ordinary derivation of the name is to consider it a cabalistic word formed of the initial letters of the Hebrew words in the sentence, "Who is like unto Thee among the Gods, O Jehovah," Exod. xv. 11., מַקְבֵּי, which may have been displayed on Judas' standard, as S.P.Q.R. (Senatus Populus que Romanus) were on the Roman standards.

caused the sepulchre of his family to be enlarged, and made it one of the most splendid works of architecture in the country. Melchi and Eldad hastened to visit it, and admired the lofty edifice of hewn stones, the seven pyramids raised in honour of the five sons and their parents, and the emblems of their victories, carved in stone upon the monument. "May Jehovah increase them a thousand fold," exclaimed Melchi. "May the blessing of Jehovah be on this heroic family of priests!" responded Eldad. As they pursued their way, looking back with admiration on the lofty monument, Melchi observed, that by the recent fall of Samaria God had continued to bless them, even to the third generation. Reclining under the shadow of a few lofty palms, which stood by the road side, whence they could see the towering Mausoleum, they refreshed their bodies in the cool shade, and their hearts with the thought of the mercies of Jehovah to His chosen people.

Rising after a while, they again set forward, and reached the limit of their first day's journey—Lydda, called also Lod and Diospolis.¹ Close to the city gate was a large house, where men, in festive dress, were going in and out, and the open gate seemed to invite the strangers. "Let us turn in hither," said Melchi; "hospitality never fails among those who are celebrating a feast." The master of the house came to the outer court to receive them, and conducting them in, bade them welcome to the Feast of the Winnowing, which he was celebrating. This feast was usually held at the threshing-floor, but the house being, in this case, near, it had been transferred thither. Their host led

¹ It is even now known by the name of Loudd. See Pocock.

them into the inner court, where his guests were assembled : the slaves untied the latchets of their sandals and washed their feet. Melchi was much fatigued, and enjoyed repose ; but not long, for they were speedily called to the meal. A great abundance of dishes was placed on the table, the servants were treated as guests,¹ and milk, honey, wine, fruit, cheese, rice, and flesh, were so plentifully supplied that they could not be consumed, though the appetites of all were keen.

"Our doctors of the Law," said the master of the house, "reckon the making a feast among good works, and I feel this doubly at the Feast of the Winnowing which I make for my servants." Eldad attached himself to the priests and Levites of the place, who, according to the ancient custom of Israel, had also been invited (Deut. xii. 17, 18) ; they received him into their circle, and gave him many particulars respecting the town of Lydda. Nothing, however, interested him more than the description which an aged Levite gave of the desolation caused by a flight of locusts which he had witnessed in his youth. These locusts are about the length and thickness of a finger ; their numbers are countless, and they form swarms which extend for several leagues in breadth. Such a swarm, when approaching, appears like a mist ; when it is arrived, it resembles the falling of thick flakes of snow : the air is darkened and filled with a fearful murmur ; they cover the ground, and all that grows on it, often to a foot in height, devouring every green thing,—grass, corn, and the trunks of young trees. They creep into the houses,

¹ This custom may perhaps have been grounded on Deut. xii. 18, and xvi. 11, with other passages to the same purpose.

destroy clothes and furniture; and besides this, lay their eggs in the ground, which in the course of fifteen or sixteen days become young locusts. The south-east wind brings them, and happy is it for the land when it also drives them into the sea.

The aged Levite had retained such a lively impression of the misery of those times, that he went on from describing the plague of locusts, to describe the still more dreadful evils of pestilence and famine which it left behind. Eldad listened to him with a shudder, and then broke out in the words in which the prophet Joel paints the fearful scene :—

“A day of darkness, and gloominess,
A day of clouds and of thick darkness,
As the morning spread upon the mountains:
* * * * *
A fire devoureth before them,
And behind them a flame burneth;
* * * * *
The day of the Lord is great and very terrible,
And who can abide it?—*Joel ii.*

It was late when our travellers retired to rest; yet they arose early, to reach Joppa before the heat of the day. Melchi left a present with the master of the house, as a return for his hospitality, and they took leave of each other, one saying, “God reward thee;” the other acknowledging it as a gift of God that such guests had taken up their abode with him.

They had not travelled more than seven Sabbath-days’ journies, when Joppa, *the beautiful*,¹ as its name implies, rose before them. It is close to the sea, is built upon a rising ground, and offers on all sides picturesque and varied prospects.

¹ As derived from the Hebrew יָפֶה, to be beautiful, to adorn.

Towards the west the open sea extends; towards the east spreads the fertile plain of Sephela, reaching as far as Gaza, in which are the fifteen chief cities of the Philistines; towards the north, as far as Carmel, the flowery meads of Sharon are seen; and through the dark summits of the hills of Ephraim and Judah on the east, a piercing eye can even discern one of the towers of Jerusalem. A thin veil of morning vapour lay on the blue hills, on the distant plain, and on the boundless sea. Our travellers gazed on the scene with such a fulness of tranquil delight, that it was long ere they remembered that they had business in the city. Melchi enquired at the gate for his friend, and going to his house, was received by him with a hearty greeting. His first question was as to the residence of the genealogist. He was told that he had left Joppa, and now lived in Ziklag. Melchi was vexed that he should have been so misinformed in Jerusalem; but Eldad pacified him by remarking that they had enjoyed a most pleasant journey, and that the mistake would give him the opportunity of seeing the south-west side of Judah. Melchi would fain have departed instantly, and Eldad was ready to follow him; but their host insisted that they should remain with him till the morrow. Melchi agreed, on condition that he would furnish Eldad with a guide, to go with him to the harbour, and show him all that was remarkable in it. He called for one of his sons, who was nearly of Eldad's age, and charged him to undertake the office. They soon reached the shore. Here it was that Solomon had landed the cedar wood from Lebanon (2 Chron. ii. 16), to be used in his various buildings; and here, too, the materials for the second Temple had been brought. The har-

bour had been improved, and the city fortified by Simon the Maccabee. Eldad, well acquainted with the celebrated harbours of Egypt, examined it critically, and not being, in his present mood, disposed to praise any thing connected with commerce, he excited some displeasure in the mind of his companion, by observing, what indeed was true, that the harbour was inadequately sheltered from the north wind. It was about noon when they returned, and found the elders sitting around the fountain in the court. "Have you remembered," said Melchi to Eldad, "that this was the place at which the prophet Jonah embarked on a voyage which had nearly ended fatally for him? He endeavoured to avoid the mission on which he had been sent, and but for the miraculous mercy of God would have perished." Eldad was about to answer, when he saw his host knit his brow, and start up. "You remind me," he exclaimed, "of an accursed heathen, who arrived here lately with a Phœnician caravan, a lively and acute Greek, who kept aloof from the other travellers, and amused himself by turning the Tyrians into ridicule. This son of Belial had the assurance to ask me, if the history of our prophet were not a new version of the Grecian story of Andromeda, who was exposed here to the jaws of a sea monster, and delivered by Perseus. What his Grecian fable may be, I care not, but I was so enraged at his profane mirth that—"

"This can be no other than our Lysis," said Melchi. "How long since he was here?" "About three weeks," replied his host. "It is the same," rejoined Melchi, he came with us from Egypt, as far as Gaza. The Greeks are a nation of scoffers,

but it shall one day fare with them, blessed be Jehovah, as it has fared with Samaria in our days." "Were that glory reserved to our Hyrcanus," said his host, "I would do what this man has done;" and he pointed to a Nazarite, who had just entered the court.

A wild looking figure presented himself to their view.* His upper garment was of rough hair, and his locks hung far down upon his shoulders, tangled and neglected, showing plainly that it was long since they had been shorn.

Eldad had never yet seen a Nazarite, for they were seldom met with except in the Holy Land; but he well knew the laws relating to this kind of vow (Num. vi.), by which a man consecrated himself for a time; abstained from wine, and from all produce of the vine; allowed no razor to come upon his head, and avoided the pollution of touching a dead body.

This Nazarite was a Jew of Maresa. He had been one of those that had seen both house and home destroyed by the Samaritans, when, a year and a half before, they had attacked the Jews settled in that town. In his wrath, he had vowed himself to Jehovah till the atrocities of the Samaritans should be put an end to, and Samaria be destroyed. He was just come from the camp of Israel, and was expressing his joy and gratitude to Jehovah, who had so soon accomplished the object of his vow. He had seen the houses and the walls of Samaria levelled, amidst the shouts of the soldiers, and the spot where the city stood furrowed with ditches and trenches so as to render the place a desert.¹ He had much to relate of

¹ Samaria was rebuilt by Herod, and named Sebaste in honour of Augustus, the Greek equivalent of whose name was Sebastos.

the preparations which Hyrcanus had made for the reception of his victorious sons; and he announced his intention of going up to the Holy City at the next Feast of the New Moon, to have his head shorn, and to offer a sacrifice on the termination of his Nazarite's vow. This led them into a wide field of discourse, and the Nazarite remained to partake of the evening meal, though he could not taste of the choice wine with which the citizen of Joppa regaled his guests. The Nazarite proved to be a friend of Ithiel, so that when Melchi and Eldad bade him farewell, it was with a hope of seeing him again, very soon, in Jerusalem.

On the following morning Melchi rose cheerful and refreshed, and grasping his staff, set out again, with Eldad and Jetur, for Ziklag. Their road led them first through Gazara, and then to Nob, celebrated for the terrible vengeance which Saul took there upon the priest Ahimelech, and the other inhabitants, for the aid they had given David in his flight. (1 Sam. xxii. 19.) Thence they descended into the plains of Sephela, where they came again upon the scenes of harvest, hearing on every side shouts of joy and pious thankfulness, until they reached Gath. This town was one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. (1 Sam. vi. 17.) The giant Goliath was of Gath.

Passing through two or three small villages, they quickened their pace, in order to reach Ziklag, where they arrived late in the evening. It was the favourite abode of David when obliged to flee from the persecutions of Saul—given to him by Achish, king of Gath. (1 Sam. xxvii. 6.) They went direct to the house of the genealogist. It had long been dark, and Melchi was very weary;

so when the genealogist had given them a friendly reception as his Egyptian kinsmen, and expressed high approbation of Eldad's determination to become a priest, they laid themselves down to rest.

The institution of genealogists may be traced up to the earliest times of Israel's existence as a people.¹ Jehovah was their true and only ruler. Under Him the people lived in families, which together formed tribes; the families themselves being subdivided into houses. Each tribe had its own prince. The princes and heads of families were called elders; their number was seventy-one; besides these, there were judges and genealogists, who kept the registers of the different families. In the tribe of Levi, to which such high privileges belonged, the genealogist was a very important person. He who wished to serve as a priest before Jehovah, must prove his descent from Aaron both on the father's and the mother's side.

The following day was occupied in these researches. The genealogist showed the pedigree of his family to Eldad: his name was formally entered under that of his mother, and he stood on her side among the children of the course of Abia, or Abijah, as on his father's he belonged to the course of Malchijah.

On the fifth day our travellers returned to Jerusalem. Eldad, rejoicing in the success of his journey, compared his own lot with that of the children of Habaiah, and Koz, and Barzillai, who, on their return from the captivity, sought for their registers, and, not being able to find them, forfeited their claim to the priesthood. (Ezra ii. 61.) Their

¹ The right of succession to landed property, and many other privileges depending on *birth*, made the keeping of accurate registers very important.

way back lay through Lachish and Libnah, and Socho; near the last is the grove of terebinths where David fought with Goliath. In the earlier part of their journey they had seen the Cave of Adullam, doubly memorable as having been the



CAVE OF ADULLAM.

hiding place of David, and as being the place where Judas Maccabæus kept the first sabbath which we read of as being celebrated after the atrocities of the king of Syria. (2 Macc. xii. 38.)

Happy in having stored his memory with many pleasing pictures of the Land of Promise, infinitely more happy in the thought that there was now no obstacle to his admission into the priesthood, Eldad greeted the Holy City a second time.

CHAPTER III.

RETURN TO JERUSALEM.—THE NAZARITE'S VOW.

As Melchi and Eldad drew near the gates of Jerusalem, they observed many signs of public rejoicing. The triumphal arches, the influx of strangers, the general commotion, reminded them of the preparation for the Passover; but now there was more of mirth, more of a worldly character in the scene. The shouts of joy which had been heard on the first news of the victory were now repeated. This was the eve of the day on which the victors were to make their solemn entry into Jerusalem.

Ithiel was standing at the gate of his house,—a place in which, according to the customs of the Jews, the father of the family was seldom seen, not even Ithiel, lively and active as he was. On this occasion, however, he had stationed himself there, in order to lose none of the animating sight which the busy and crowded streets exhibited. Beside him stood the Nazarite, who had already arrived, in his coarse garments and unshorn locks.

The feet of the guests were washed, and the supper served up. The conversation turned on what the travellers had seen during their journey, and what had passed in Jerusalem during their absence. All were in eager expectation of the spectacle of the morrow; and as Melchi

was weary, they soon separated and retired to rest. On the following day, as early as the commencement of the morning sacrifice, the multitude streamed towards the gate of Ephraim, by which the victorious army was to enter. The streets of the new city, and of the lower city, as far as the castle of Baris, were strewn with flowers; tapestry of various colours hung from the parapets of the roofs, and banners were displayed from the Alijahs. A chorus of virgins passed out at the gate of Ephraim, under a splendid triumphal arch, to meet the victors. Messengers were hastening to and fro, the crowd increased, and every one was looking out for a convenient position. The music of the Temple, too, was occasionally heard. Jetur had secured one of the highest places for his masters, and the whole scene lay before their eyes. In this way several hours had passed; the messengers, mounted on horseback, went and returned more frequently; and, at length, from thousands of voices burst forth at once the exclamation—"They come!"

The chorus of virgins arose, with their psalteries and tabrets, and sung, in bold strains, the valour of the conquerors, the fall of Samaria, and the mercy of Jehovah to His people. When they reached the advanced guard of the army, way was made for them till they came to the car on which the youthful Maccabees were seated. Standing before it, they began an ode, the burden of which recalled the immortal song of Miriam, the sister of Moses, the first of the female singers of Israel:—

"Sing unto Jehovah, for he has triumphed gloriously,
He hath filled Samaria with trenches of water."

Then the hymn took up the praises of the princes, the warriors, and the whole people, and the defeat of Samaria; and at the close of every strophe, all, with united voices and instruments, raised the chorus of Miriam.

The victorious princes thanked the virgins, who advanced before them to the triumphal arch at the gate of Ephraim. Here stood the high-priest, with the whole of the Sanhedrim, and a great multitude of the priests and Levites. To the sound of the Temple music they sang the ninth Psalm :—

“ I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, with my whole heart;
I will speak of all thy marvellous works.” ♫ . . .

Priests, warriors, and people, listened to the Psalm with silent reverence. The aged man, who wore the insignia of the high-priest's office, looked with moistened eyes towards the car where his sons were seated, as if the remembrance of his own youthful heroism arose in his mind, and as if he would have said—“ My Aristobulus, my Antigonus, sons of Mattathias, noble Maccabees, perform deeds in Israel like those of the brethren Judas and Jonathan !”

When the Psalm was ended, he approached his sons : they descended from their chariot, and hastened to throw themselves into the arms of their father, who embraced and blessed them. The music began again, the triumphal procession was arranged, and advanced through the city, which echoed from every side songs of triumph and congratulation. The maidens with their tabrets and psalteries were at the head, then followed a multitude of victims, adorned with

flowers, branches, and fillets; these were for the sacrifices to be offered on the morrow. Then came the prisoners in fetters, and the huge elephants taken from the Syrians. Each of these animals bore a wooden tower upon his shoulders, in which were thirty-two warriors, besides the Ethiopian guide.

After these came the high-priest with the Sanhedrim, the priests, the Levites, and the Temple music. The two sons of Hyrcanus on their car formed the centre of the procession, and behind them was the military music, flutes, horns, and trumpets. The army itself followed, adorned with palm and laurel branches. The cavalry were few in number, and lightly armed. The infantry had swords and lances, slings, bows and darts, and for defence the large shield, the coat of mail, the helmet to protect the head, and greaves for the feet and arms. Military engines followed, and the people crowding behind closed the long procession. When they arrived at the castle of Baris, the youthful warriors entered their father's palace, and the army dispersed itself through the city.

Eldad had beheld with pride this display of the martial power of his people. Hitherto he had taken little interest in war, or anything connected with it; yet now a new feeling was excited. These troops were the conquerors of the Samaritans, that apostate race who had opposed the rebuilding of the Temple with such bitter hostility, and had ever been a thorn in Israel's side.¹ Memory, too, recalled the manifestations of God's power in behalf of His people in earlier times;

¹ See note, page 91, Part I.

and Eldad thought of the triumphs of Uzziah and David; of the songs of the virgins in honour of David and Saul; of the daughter of Jephtha; of Miriam and Deborah! What youth is there whose bosom does not glow at the sight of a victorious army of his own countrymen?

While the city was filled with tumultuous rejoicings, Eldad drew aside a relation of Ithiel's who had served in the war, and led him home, questioning him respecting all the events of the campaign. The rejoicings of the inhabitants continued till the evening, when suddenly the trumpets were heard to sound, announcing the appearance of the new moon. The high-priest and the Sanhedrim had scarcely attended the warriors home, when they had to assemble in their hall in the Temple, and declare the commencement of the festival. They were accustomed to meet there on the evening of the new moon. Men were stationed on all the heights and watch-towers, who, as soon as they perceived the new moon, hastened to announce it to the Sanhedrim. On this the high-priest said, "The new moon is hallowed," and the Sanhedrim replied, "It is hallowed." Fires were then kindled upon all the hills, or messengers sent to different parts, and on the following day the people celebrated the Feast of the New Moon.

For the first time for many years past, the fire was lighted on the Mount of Olives. It had for a long time been the practice of the Samaritans, always on the watch to insult Israel, to light a fire on the wrong evening, and thus to mislead the people in distant towns. The custom had for this reason been discontinued, and, instead of the

fire, messengers were sent throughout the country. Now, however, that Samaria was destroyed, no such deception was to be feared, and the fires were lighted as of old. The citizens of Jerusalem hastened to the roofs of their houses to watch the blaze on the Mount of Olives, to which other answering fires soon appeared on the more distant hills.

When the morning came, the people crowded to the Temple through the gate of Nicanor. All the courts were filled, warriors taking the place of pilgrims. Melchi and Eldad remembered that if they desired to join in the solemn sacrifices, they had a previous duty to perform. Before their journey they had touched the grave of Eldad's father, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and had thus become unclean. This uncleanness did not prevent them from appearing before the high-priest, nor from pursuing their journey, nor from offering up their daily prayers: but in the Temple they were not allowed to go beyond the Court of the Gentiles; and had they knowingly ventured to enter even the Court of Israel, they would have brought on themselves the terrible punishment denounced by the Law—they would have been cut off from the people.¹ This legal uncleanness had reference exclusively to appearing before Jehovah in the place where His honour dwelt. The necessity for a purifying ceremony was a standing proof that what is considered pure by man, is not so regarded by Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. It must again be made holy by the observances of those ceremonies which He has Himself ordained. After they had bathed,

¹ See Numbers xix. 20.

and washed their clothes, they presented themselves, as they had already done on the previous day, on the steps which lead from the Court of the Gentiles into that of the women, and underwent a sprinkling. This was performed by one who was himself clean on those who were unclean, with a bunch of hyssop, dipped in water in which had been mixed the ashes of a red heifer, according to the Law of Moses. (Num. xix. 17.) Eldad remembered the words of David :—

“Purify me with hyssop and I shall be clean,
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”—*Psalms* li. 7.

On this day, as on every other day throughout the year, the daily service before the altar of Jehovah began by the sacrifice of a lamb, with the meat and drink offerings which belonged to it. When this had been done, the burnt offering and the sin offering, which Moses had appointed for the whole people on the new moon, were offered up (Num. xxviii. 11—15), the great Hallel¹ being sung, and the priests on the pillars blowing with the trumpets.

After this the high-priest presented his thank-offering for the victory, consisting of a vast multitude of bullocks, rams, and sheep, with their appropriate meat and drink offerings. His sons also offered up their sacrifices; and some of the principal officers of the army did the same, in token of their gratitude, or in the discharge of their vows. The victims which had been seen in the procession of the day before, adorned with flowers and fillets, were now brought to the

¹ See page 115, Part I.

altar; their blood was sprinkled upon it, the inward parts, with the fat, waved to the Lord, and burnt upon the altar, while the breasts and other pieces belonging to the priests were given to them, and the rest prepared as a feast for the person who offered the sacrifice. While this was doing, the priests blew their silver trumpets, and the Levites on the fifteen steps sang the 144th Psalm:—

“Blessed be the Lord, my strength,
Who teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight.”

* * * * *

Towards the end of all these numerous offerings the Nazarite made his appearance. He had already laid aside his coarse garment, and he was now to be solemnly absolved from his vow. It was necessary for him to present all the three principal kinds of offerings. The burnt offering of a lamb was wholly consumed on the altar; the sin offering of a yearling sheep was the portion of the priests; and the thank offering of a ram, served in great measure to furnish the festive meal which was prepared for the Nazarite and his friends in a small court opening into the Court of Israel, and which bore the name of the Court of the Nazarites.

To this court he went with Eldad, Melchi, Ithiel, his relative just returned from the war, and many others. Fresh coals were heaped on the fire burning there; and the Nazarite, uttering a prayer of thanks to God, took a knife, and cutting off the hair from his head, threw it on the coals to be consumed. The flesh of the thank offering was then roasted; and when it was ready

a priest took the shoulder, and going to the front of the Sanctuary, with the Nazarite, waved it to the Lord, and then received it as his own portion. This was the completion of the vow. He offered several special thank offerings besides, which were sacrificed in the usual manner, and the flesh of them added to the preparations for the feast. The table was spread in one of the galleries over the porticoes in the court. Ithiel and Eldad were made to take the seats of honour, one on each side of the Nazarite. He, relieved from the cumbrous load of hair which he had borne for a whole year, had anointed his head, and was clad in a splendid caftan. The servants of the Temple waited on him during the whole meal.

The Nazarite spread his hands over the bread, and, as a blessing, gave praise to Jehovah. Then, with more than ordinary solemnity, he took the cup with both his hands, lifted it high above the table with his right, and said, "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, thou King of the world, who hast given us the fruit of the vine." The company said "Amen." He then, in a long draught, drank the first wine which he had tasted for a whole year; and, as the guests followed his example, he exclaimed, "It is true that wine maketh glad the heart of man, as the Psalmist teaches us; but he who would feel the full force of the saying, must have drunk it for the first time at the close of a Nazarite's vow before the face of Jehovah, after the destruction of Samaria. This is the time to enter into the full force of what the preacher says, 'Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be

always white, and let thy head lack no ointment.' ” (Eccles. ix. 7, 8.)

“I see,” said Ithiel, “that you and I shall agree in congratulating ourselves that we are children of Israel, and not Rechabites, who, after the example and command of their ancestor, Jonadab, refused to drink wine when it was set before them by the prophet Jeremiah.” (Jer. xxxv.)

“I have found, however, by experience,” answered the Nazarite, “that zeal for Jehovah makes abstinence easy, and burdensome observances light.”

“So it is,” said one of the company, “in the case of the high-priest, who, in some respects, leads perpetually the life of a Nazarite. He is not allowed to drink wine or strong drink in the Temple; for the Spirit of the Lord, and not intoxicating liquors, must gladden his heart. He must not touch a corpse, for he must have no communion with sin, or with death, its punishment. He must not make his head bald, for mourning ill becomes him whose joy it is to be ever in the Temple of the Lord, and whose privilege it is to enter into the holy place.”

“The service of God,” rejoined Ithiel, “makes many things light that would be otherwise grievous;” and, as he said this, he turned his eyes towards his young relative who had just returned from the war.

“It is true,” said the youth, “I declined to avail myself of the indulgence which the Law would have granted me. I had just been betrothed, when the war broke out. The Keeper of the Register assembled our youth, and read to us the Law, as spoken by the Lord our God to

Moses. (Deut. xx. 5—9.) Whoever has built a new house, or has planted a new vineyard, or has betrothed a wife, all such may return home without shame or reproach. Many withdrew under these circumstances; but I refused to avail myself of the privilege; nor would my bride have allowed me to claim it. My father was with the army, when, twenty years before, our prince, John Hyrcanus, had conquered Shechem, and destroyed the Temple on Gerizim; and he had talked to me a thousand times of his campaigns and his victories. Ill would it have become his son not to be with the sons of Hyrcanus when they marched for the destruction of Samaria. I went, therefore, joyfully to the field."

"And are you not now in haste to return home?" asked another of the guests.

"I shall remain here till the fourteenth of this month, and then with my comrades I shall celebrate the latter Passover.¹ Then I may return home, and relate to my bride the valiant deeds of Aristobulus and Antigonus. I will tell her how we defeated Antiochus, who came to raise the siege of Samaria; and how Jehovah strengthened my arm, so that I smote his general, Callimander, in battle, whom he left in command of the army when he himself retired to Tripolis. She will laugh the Syrians to scorn, and become my faithful wife."

When he had said this, the whole company

¹ This "latter Passover" was instituted in consideration of the many accidental circumstances which might prevent an Israelite from partaking of the Passover, at the appointed time. If no blame could attach to him for neglect, he was permitted to keep it on the 14th day of the second month, instead of the 14th day of the first month. See Num. ix. 6.

were loud in his praise. "Never," exclaimed Ithiel warmly,—“Never may the altar of Jehovah be without an Hyrcanus, and never may the chief of Israel's armies be without such soldiers when he goes forth to the battle!”

The conversation during the rest of the meal turned upon the events of the war. The young soldier gave them the particulars of the defeat of Antiochus and his generals, and of the ravages he had committed in the country, when he dared not, even with his six thousand Egyptians, attack the Jewish army. At length, the last cup was blessed, and they left the Temple full of joy and gratitude. As they descended they heard the shouts of joy from the castle of Baris, where the high-priest had made a great banquet for his sons.



GRAVES IN THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT.

CHAPTER IV.

ADMISSION INTO THE PRIESTHOOD.

"OH! thou dream of my childhood and my youth! art thou really then to be fulfilled? Oh! pride and sorrow of my forefathers, sacred priesthood, art thou indeed to be revived in their descendant? Praised be Jehovah!"

Such were the exclamations of Eldad when, a few days after the Feast of the New Moon, the morning dawned of the day on which he was to appear before the Sanhedrim, and to undergo their scrutiny, preparatory to his admission to the

priesthood. The following day was the Sabbath, when he was to offer his first sacrifice. He opened the doors of the Alijah on Ithiel's house while it was yet twilight, and after the performance of the Cri-schma¹ threw himself upon the ground before Jehovah, and thus prayed:—

“Lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts:
Make me to understand wisdom secretly.
Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.
Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”—*Ps. li.*

The sun was rising as he quitted the Alijah. He looked towards the east, where his father's sepulchre lay in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and then to the south-west towards Egypt, where the reflection of the rising sun streaked the edge of heaven with a ruddy glow, and mentally greeted his mother. Next to the image of his parents according to the flesh, that of Aaron, the great progenitor of the priesthood, took possession of his mind on this day, which was to witness his admission to the sacred order. Melchi came to fetch him from the roof, and with a step of conscious dignity and pride, conducted him to Ithiel and the guests, who were assembled in the inner court. Having received their hearty congratulations, Melchi accompanied his well-loved Eldad to the Temple hill. Not even on the day when he made his first pilgrimage, and passed through the Beautiful Gate, and the gate of Nicanor, had the old man felt as he did on this morning, in which his kinsman was to revive the priesthood in his family. His heart beat not less high than Eldad's, and his aged eye was lighted up with youthful exultation and hope. He blessed Jehovah, who had given to him and

¹ See note 2, p. 22, Part I.

to his deceased brother, firmness to withstand all the solicitations which had been addressed to them, to assume the priesthood at Leontopolis.

Eldad entered with trembling steps into the courts of the Lord. The Sanhedrim were standing, along with the course of priests for the week, in the Court of the Priests, and the morning sacrifice was offered with the customary rites. As the priests on the pillars blew their trumpets at the pouring out of the drink offering, and the Levites sung on the fifteen steps, the sound of their voices and their instruments seemed to him like the call of Jehovah. "To-day," thought he, "I stand for the last time as one of the people in the Court of Israel, to-morrow I shall minister before the face of Jehovah!"

When the sacrifice was over, the high-priest and the Sanhedrim withdrew into their hall of judgment. No meeting of this body was ever held for merely secular business, either on the Sabbath or on the day of preparation, but they often assembled to transact business relating to the service of God.

With deep feeling Eldad entered the hall; it was one of the largest and most splendid of all which the Courts of the Temple contained. Here all the courses of the priests were exchanged, and here the great council, or Sanhedrim, held its sittings.

The Sanhedrim consisted of seventy-two persons, partly priests, partly Levites, partly elders. The original idea of such an assembly was derived probably from the Council of Seventy, instituted by Moses, but it had been much altered since his days. The high-priest occupied the place

of president, and was seated at the western end; on his right sat the Father of the Council, probably the most aged man among the elders; and on his left the Wise Man, probably the most experienced among the doctors of the Law. The rest of the members sat in a half circle on each side, with a secretary at the end of each row. As the three chief persons belonged respectively to the order of the priests, of the lawyers, and of the elders or heads of families, so the remaining members were taken from these three classes. The whole assembly was seated, with crossed feet, on cushions or carpets. The Sanhedrim was the supreme court in Israel; everything relating to the service of God, relations with foreign states, and matters of life and death, came before them. Their business it was to examine every son of Aaron who desired, as a priest, to enter into the service of Jehovah.

Melchi entered the hall attended by Eldad. He announced the name of the young man and that of his father, and produced extracts from the registers, which certified his birth. Of the twenty-four courses,¹ or families, into which the priests, descendants of Aaron's two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, had been divided by David (1 Chron. xxiv. 4), only four were found among the priests who returned from the captivity. These were subdivided into the original number of twenty-four. Eldad, by his father's side, belonged to the course of Malchijah, the fifth, and by his mother's to that of Abia, or Abijah, the eighth.

The passage of the Law was then read (Levit. xxi. 17), in which Jehovah commands that no

descendant of Aaron should ever be admitted to the priesthood who had any natural imperfection or deformity of body, although he might still claim a subsistence from the provisions of the Temple. Eldad was examined, and found free from any of those imperfections which the Law enumerates. Had it proved otherwise, he would have been clad in black and dismissed, being only allowed in future to discharge menial offices about the Temple. The outward worship of Jehovah was to be a mirror and emblem of the inward dispositions required in the worshipper, and therefore it was decreed that both the sacrifices, and those who offered them, should be without blemish.

Eldad having undergone the necessary scrutiny, and having been found not only of pure descent, but free from all bodily infirmity, was committed to the care of one of the ministering Levites, and conducted by him into the vestry, which stood near the gate of Nicanor. Here the Levite put on him the white sacerdotal robes which one of the same body had made. They consisted of drawers reaching to the leg, the under garment fitting close to the body and descending to the ankles, woven of one piece without joining or seam; the girdle of four fingers breadth, which went twice round the body, and being tied in front, both ends hung down nearly to the feet; it was woven so as to resemble a serpent's skin, and embroidered with flowers, purple, dark blue, and crimson; and lastly, the turban, which was wound firmly round the head in form of a crown. The feet were bare. (Exodus xxviii. 39—43.)

After being robed, Eldad returned into the hall

of the Sanhedrim, and the Law of Moses relative to the priests was read to him from Leviticus, the first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter. When this passage had been read, the high-priest blessed the candidate for the priesthood, saying—"Praised be God that no blemish hath been found in the seed of Aaron; and praised be He who hath chosen Aaron and his sons to stand and minister before God, in His holy Temple!" And all the members of the Sanhedrim said "Amen!" The sitting was thus ended, and Eldad was led into the Court of the Priests. Those of the course which was then on duty were standing there, and greeting him, received him among their body.

The family of Aaron was consecrated once for all in the wilderness, when they offered on eight days in succession the sacrifice of consecration. (Levit. viii. and ix.) Since that time a renewal only was needed, by each priest offering a meat offering when he first entered upon his ministration as a son of Aaron. This Eldad was to do on the following morning; and, fortunately, the course to which he belonged began their duties on that very day.

Melchi offered on this joyful occasion a magnificent thank offering of several bullocks, and invited the whole course of priests, who were gradually arriving to be in readiness to begin their functions, to feast upon the sacrifice. Among the rest he had invited *the Old Man of the Temple*. He who bore this name was a venerable priest, above one hundred years old, of the course of Joiarib, to which the Maccabees also belonged. He had been engaged since his twenty-fifth year in the service of Jehovah; eighty years he had now

passed in the house of his God, and in the course of them had witnessed very eventful times. He had entered the Temple in the life of the excellent high-priest Onias III.; he had borne the alternate yoke of the Syrians and Egyptians; he had seen Antiochus Epiphanes, and known the victims of his bloody anger;¹ he had been one of those who had followed the valiant Mattathias to the wilderness, and had served in succession each member of the family of the Maccabees. He had been frequently in Egypt, and had seen, forty years before, the foundation of the temple of Leontopolis; and now he had beheld that of Gerizim levelled with the ground. As a doctor of the Law, or, as it was expressed more shortly, a lawyer, he was master of all the knowledge of divine or earthly things which Israel then possessed, and had been able to compare his experience with the Word of God. He knew accurately the opinions of all the sects into which Israel was divided, and though he joined himself to none, yet he was honoured by all. For a long time he had held the distinguished office of the Wise Man in the Sanhedrim; and in every year of the thirty-four which had elapsed since Israel was freed from the yoke of the heathen, some important affair or other had been decided by his counsel. In consequence of his increasing years he had laid down all his offices, had given up his house and property to his children's children, and taken up his abode in a single apartment in the Temple, where he discharged the duty of a priest for any of the priests who could not serve in his turn with his own course. His piety, his wisdom, his

¹ See p. 49, Part I.

earnest longing for the coming of the Messiah, were become proverbial, as was also his attachment to the family of the Maccabees. He united so well the mild dignity of age with the warm feelings of youth, that he possessed greater influence than any other individual over the chief persons in the state, as well as over the younger priests, whose teacher he might be considered, and who very generally adopted his opinions. The very heathens admired the vigour and originality of his mind. What most surprised his countrymen was, that he who, of all men, they would have called a Chasidcan—that is, a man of extraordinary piety—himself laid no claim to so high a title, but was contented with the humble name of a just man.

The aged man appeared at the invitation of Melchi, but declared that he came only to bid the youth welcome to the courts of the Lord. “A feast,” he said, “even in the Temple, did not befit one over whose head one hundred winters and more had already passed.” All rose up at his entrance, and falling at his feet kissed the border of his robe. Eldad had heard of him, even at Alexandria, and Melchi had pointed out his venerable form as he assisted at the sacrifice; when now Eldad saw him, for his sake, appear in the banqueting room, he, too, overpowered by such kindness, fell in silent reverence at his feet, and kissed the border of his garment. The Old Man raised him up and said—“Praised be the God of Israel, who bringeth the seed of Aaron out of Egypt to the place where is the memorial of His name.” He spoke to Eldad of his grandfather, whom he had known at Alexandria, and said that

Jehovah would bless that house for ever, on account of the zeal which every member of it had displayed for the honour of His law. He then called Eldad from the company, observing to the others, that before he partook of their feast, he would regale him with food of another kind. With profound respect Eldad followed the Old Man, who led him through the Court of the Gentiles to Solomon's Porch, which with its lofty pillars formed the eastern boundary. Here he placed himself on the ground, and Eldad beside him. He made the youth relate to him the history of his life, and the manner in which the desire of becoming a priest had been first awakened in him. He afterwards put a few of those questions to him, by which one who knows mankind, penetrates into the bosom of youth. His countenance gradually assumed an expression of friendly pleasure, which proved the answers of Eldad had been satisfactory.

"It cannot be said, my son," he then began, "that the Hellenists have been wholly wrong in their allegorical interpretations. They are right in the principle from which they set out, that the service of Jehovah contains a hidden and deeper wisdom. Does not David say—'The secret of the Lord is among them that fear him?' (Psalm xxv. 13;) and again, Solomon says—'His secret is with the righteous.' (Prov. iii. 32.) The error of the Hellenists lay in this, that they sought to discover by heathen and human wisdom the secret meaning of our laws and ordinances. Here," he continued, "is the place which Jehovah hath chosen. Since He brought His people out of Egypt He has never fixed on any other city, in any other tribe, in which a house should be built

for His name to dwell in. I brought thee here that thou mightest see it in all its glory. Look how its courts rise, one above another, from the place on which we stand to the altar of burnt offering, and then to the sanctuary of Jehovah! Look and wonder! This Moriah is the place where Abraham was commanded to offer up his son Isaac, and where also was the threshing-floor of Araunah, near to which the angel of Jehovah stood when he stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it. (2 Sam. xxiv. 16.) David purchased the threshing-floor and built an altar, and offered sacrifice upon it; and here also his son Solomon built the house of God, and set up His altar. Dost thou know, Eldad, the prayer which he offered at the dedication of the Temple?" Without the least hesitation, Eldad began with the words, "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee in Heaven above or in the earth beneath," and went on to the end of the prayer. (1 Kings viii. 23—53.)

"Praise Jehovah," exclaimed the Old Man when Eldad had finished, "for the blessing of a father who has so well instructed thee in the Holy Scriptures. It becomes a young priest to be able to give an answer out of them to every question that is put to him. Thou hast repeated Solomon's prayer of dedication: his Temple, as thou knowest, was founded amidst acclamations and destroyed amidst tears; this Temple was founded amidst tears, but its glory shall surpass that of the first Temple when *He* comes for whom we wait; He shall walk through this Temple, stand in this Porch of Solomon, pass through this Beautiful Gate, approach the altar of burnt offering, and

give this house its highest consecration. Eldad ! the whole earth lies under a curse ; it bears thorns and thistles, and the ground is accursed on account of man, who has sinned. Jehovah will take away the curse when He comes to His Temple !

“ Learn, too, from this prayer how holy is the place in which thou art, and in which thou shalt in future serve Jehovah. Pray to Him in His Temple, that His eyes may be open upon thee, and that He may make the light of His countenance to shine upon thee. Go now to the feast, and when thou desirest to hear more, come to the Old Man of the Temple—there is his dwelling.”

The venerable man blessed him, and then crossed the Court of the Gentiles. Eldad watched him till he disappeared, and then remained a long time wrapt in thought, till some one came to summon him to the company.

The feast concluded early, for the course of Malchijah had to prepare, on the evening before the Sabbath, for entering upon its office. About the ninth hour all labour had ceased, the trumpets had announced the Sabbath, the Levites had baked the shew-bread, the twelve priests had carried it in solemn procession to the porch, and hence two of them had taken it into the holy place, and had deposited it upon the table of shew-bread ; two censers of fresh incense had also been brought, the shew-bread and the censers of incense of the preceding week having been removed. The priests and Levites then laid themselves down to sleep. Eldad, however, could not sleep ; the past and the future were alike engrossing. A feeling of mingled joy and awe shot through his heart when he heard the bars of the Temple gates closed,

and found himself shut in, within the Sanctuary of Jehovah; it seemed as if he were here protected from every earthly evil, as if nothing now could prevent him from fulfilling the Law of the Lord, and becoming perfect in his obedience. Often was he disposed to cry aloud, "Better is a day in thy courts than a thousand!" At times lost in thought, at times wrapt in devotion, he passed the sleepless hours, while the priests slumbered around him. When he heard the step of the guard of Levites in the Court of the Gentiles, or when the guard of priests, as they went their rounds in the Court of Israel, with lighted torches in their hands, approached the place where he lay, he envied the happy persons who were not only allowed, but whose duty it was, to traverse the courts and porticoes and palaces of the sanctuary, beneath the stars of heaven. When the two companies of the priests, uniting after their separate rounds, greeted each other with the words, "All is peace," the sound came upon his ear with a significance that cannot be described.

At an early hour the watch came again to waken those that slept. The priests bathed themselves, and went to the vestry to put on their robes. Next they assembled in the hall Gazith, to cast lots for the division of the offices for the day. The first lot, which decided who should cleanse the altar of burnt-offering from the ashes of the preceding day, fell upon Eldad, to his no small surprise. Then followed the lots of those who were to sacrifice the lamb, to sprinkle the blood upon the altar, to trim the lamps, to bring the parts of the victims to the altar of burnt offering, to burn incense in the holy place, &c.

One of the priests now opened the curtain of the portico, and another the gate of Nicanor, and some of the Levites threw open the outer gates of the Temple, that the children of Israel might enter. The crowing of the cock announced the time when the cleansing of the altar of burnt offering was to take place. The priests cried out to Eldad—"Beware of touching any vessel before thou hast washed thy hands and feet, and sanctified thyself!" He washed himself again, mounted with trembling steps the sloping ascent to the altar, which was fifteen cubits high, cleared the burning embers from the ashes, and collected them in a heap at an appointed place. This was his first service as a priest. As he went through it, he inwardly prayed that the flame in his heart might, in like manner, be purified from everything that made it burn dim.

The wood for the offering of that day had been prepared, and the watchers and the singers chosen, when, after a short interval, some of the priests exclaimed, "Light, light!" The others replied, "Is it light towards Hebron?" and when the question was answered in the affirmative, and the first beam of dawn struck upon the roof of the sanctuary, the chief of the course of the priests exclaimed, "Priests to your duties!—Levites to your steps!—children of Israel to your stations!"

The last words did not refer to the whole people of Israel, but only to the men of the station, who represented the people at the sacrifice. These substitutes of the people resided in Jerusalem, and were divided so as to represent the twelve tribes.

All hastened to their respective posts. The ser-

vice of Jehovah began with the cleansing of the altar of incense in the holy place, and laying the wood on the altar of burnt offering. A male lamb of a year old, without blemish, was brought to the north side of the altar of burnt offering; the men of the station laid their hands upon it, in the name of the people; one priest killed it, another received its blood, a third sprinkled the altar with it, while others extinguished five of the lights of the seven-branched lamp in the holy place. Incense was then brought in and burnt upon the altar of incense, and the remaining lights extinguished.

The sun had now risen. The pieces of the animal which had been killed, the usual meat offering (of fine flour mingled with oil), as well as that which the high-priest offered daily, and that which Eldad was to present, and the drink offerings, were all brought to the place between the altar of burnt offering and the sanctuary, where they were waved before Jehovah, and then carried to the opposite side of the altar. The pieces were sprinkled with salt, the Cri-schma was prayed, and the flesh laid upon the altar, and offered as a burnt offering to the Lord. The meat offering which belonged to it was next burnt, and the high-priest's meat offering followed. Eldad had already heaved the offering by which he renewed the priesthood in his family, and now brought it to the altar; salt was sprinkled on it, and a handful of the meal, with all the incense, was thrown into the fire; the remainder of the meal was the priest's portion. Lastly, the drink offering of wine was poured into a pipe which ran from the altar to the brook Kidron. While this

was done the Levites played and sung upon the fifteen steps the ninety-second Psalm :—

“ It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,
And to sing praises unto thy name, O most Highest ;
To tell of thy loving kindness early in the morning,
And of thy truth in the night season,” &c.

the two priests at the pillar near the altar, accompanying with their trumpets.

After this daily offering the special offering for the Sabbath-day (Num. xxviii. 9, 10) was offered, accompanied with other Psalms. At the close, the chief-priest of the course gave his blessing,¹ and the people replied by similar benedictions.

Eldad had been present at many sacrifices, but this was the first time that, as a priest, he had stood beside the altar of burnt offering. Seen so much closer than before, everything had appeared in a new light to him ; he felt that something profound must be hidden under this veil of outward ceremonies, and he longed to converse on the subject with the Old Man of the Temple, who, when the sacrifice was over, had betaken himself to his cell. The priests dispersed when the sacrifice was concluded. Eldad left the Court of the Priests, and was entering the Court of Israel, when he met Melchi, who, with feelings of the liveliest joy, had been standing there all the morning, to watch the first ministrations of his Eldad. He pressed the hand of the youth, and would have embraced him but for the sanctity of the place. Eldad regarded him with a look which expressed the fulness of his happiness, and tears stood in the eyes of both.

¹ Num. vi. 23.

"I have to greet thee in the name of Ithiel," said Melchi.

"And I thee in the name of the Old Man of the Temple," said Eldad.

"Art thou going to him?" rejoined Melchi. "Go, and the God of thy fathers go with thee!"

The old man was seated before a roll of the prophets, and invited Eldad to sit beside him. After a time he asked him what had seemed most impressive to him in the Psalm which he had heard sung that day on the fifteen steps?

"The close," replied Eldad, "in which it is said of those who are planted in the house of the Lord that they continue green even in old age."

"And who are they?" asked the old man.

"The sons of Levi," Eldad answered.

"Repeat then, if thou canst, the blessing with which Moses blessed them before his death."

Without hesitation Eldad began—"Of Levi he said, 'Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.'" (Deut. xxxiii. 8—11.)

"Thou hast seen, then, what is required of the

sons of Levi," said the old man. "It was not without a reason that to the whole tribe no portion was given in Israel—Jehovah is their heritage. Others have so much to do with worldly things that they cannot instruct their children from infancy in the knowledge of the Law; but the sons of Levi, with their children, are to live only for the Temple and the laws; on this account, the rest of the people give one-tenth of their income to the support of the priests and Levites, who are thus freed from the ordinary cares of life, and devoted exclusively to the service of Jehovah. They are to present the offering of Jehovah; hence the purity which they are so carefully to preserve; not allowing themselves to come in contact with anything which might defile them. The priesthood is the most exalted order in the world; yet its dignity lies not in any pre-eminence of its own, but in God's choice of it to preserve and make known His law. Be not thou, therefore, unduly exalted, but rejoice that thou art permitted, as a priest of Jehovah, to minister in His Temple. Before the full light of day is spread over heaven and earth some one spot is brightened by a partial gleam. But has that spot done anything to merit this distinction? Give thanks, then, to Jehovah that thou standest in the earliest beams of that dawn, which is the harbinger of light to all mankind. When He comes for whom we wait, the brightness of His rising shall illuminate the whole earth, and the heathens shall walk in His light."

The old man ceased, and departing left Eldad alone, till the time of the evening sacrifice drew near, and he hastened forth that he might not be

too late for his duties. The evening sacrifice on the Sabbath was in no respect different from that on ordinary days. The ceremonies and sacrifices already described were repeated, incense was again burnt in the holy place, and the seven-branched lamp was lighted for the night. It was about the twelfth hour when the benediction closed the service of the Sabbath, but the flame from the altar of burnt offering continued to shoot up long after it was dark ; even through the whole night the embers were glimmering. When all was finished, the priests prepared their meal, and then laid themselves down to rest.

So closed the first day of Eldad's ministry. His heart was agitated as it had been at his first entrance into the land of his fathers, but the sanctity of the place forbade every violent expression of his feelings. He had become more serious, it might almost be said more manly ; and his joy and gratitude, instead of dissipating themselves in words, seemed to reserve their energy for action and the fulfilment of duty. A new life seemed to have begun in the Temple of Jehovah.

CHAPTER V.

PURIFICATIONS AFTER CHILDBIRTH.

ON the following day, as Eldad attended the usual morning sacrifice, he saw a woman, who was going through the ceremony of purification after the birth of a son. She had bathed herself at home first on the seventh, and afterwards on the fortieth day, and she now brought to the Temple a burnt offering, and a sin offering—a lamb of the first year and a turtle dove.¹ The priest sprinkled her with the blood of the sin offering, and she was purified, and praised the Lord, who had done great things for her, had preserved her life, and had given a son into her arms. Eldad beheld the ceremony with profound attention. The Old Man approached him and said, “Son of Adam, remember that for thee, too, a mother once offered a sin offering and a burnt offering.”

“I know it,” replied Eldad, “but I have been in vain endeavouring to discover what is the import of this purification of the mother.” “Compare it,” said the Old Man, “with what thou thyself didst to obtain purification at the Festival of the New Moon, after having touched a grave. Since man defiles, at his death, those who lament his departure with tears of affection, and at his birth those who embrace him with joy, can he himself be pure by nature?”

¹ Levit. xii.

Eldad started. After a pause, the Old Man continued: "Does not David say, 'I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me?' And did not God say to the first man, 'In the day that thou eatest of the tree, thou shalt die the death?' Is anything more necessary, in order to prove that the birth of man is in sin, and that his death is the wages of sin? Forty days after the birth of a son, eighty after that of a daughter, (the sex which first sinned,) is the mother unclean. For a burnt offering she brings a lamb, for a sin offering a turtle dove, and reconciled by the blood of these innocent animals, she is permitted to appear before Jehovah. See what are the consequences of our birth!

"A red heifer without blemish (Numb. xix.), that has never borne the yoke, is brought before a priest, then led by another priest out of the Holy City, and killed yonder on the Mount of Olives. The priest dips his finger in the blood and sprinkles it seven times towards the Temple; then he burns the cow with the hide and the hair, and throws upon it cedar wood, hyssop, and a red thread. Another priest collects the ashes and carries them to an appointed place. All the three are rendered unclean. When any one who has defiled himself with a dead body is to be made clean again, these ashes are mixed with water, and one who is himself clean sprinkles it upon him on the third and on the seventh day: and thus while he that was unclean becomes clean, he that was clean becomes unclean! See what are the consequences of our death!"

The Old Man continued his walk in the Court of

¹ Psalm li. 5.

the Priests, and left Eldad standing in the greatest astonishment at the new and profound views which had been opened to him. He saw him not again till after the evening sacrifice. On the second day after the Sabbath, when the family of the course of Malchijah, to which Eldad belonged, had been called to take its turn in ministering at the altar,¹ he found the Old Man engaged in prayer, and was invited by him to place himself beside him on the carpet. After a short silence he began, "Have not our former conversations proved to you that the earth, with all its inhabitants, is unholy, and every individual a sinner? Is Jeremiah still the favourite prophet of your house?" Eldad replied that he was. "Do you understand the passage which occurs twice, as if to mark its solemn import (Jer. xxiii. 5 : xxxiii. 16), 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth? In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.' What means this?" "Instruct me," replied Eldad. "Herein the prophet speaks of the Messiah; the earth itself lies under a curse, and man, himself sinful, cannot exhibit upon it that righteousness which is acceptable to God. Therefore, Jehovah Himself will be our righteousness in the Messiah. He is the consolation of Israel; He is the great

¹ For the arrangement of the courses of the priests, see note p. 117, Part I. Each course was farther divided into six families, corresponding with the six days of the week. On the seventh day the whole course was on duty together.

object of prophecy, from its beginning in the days of our first parents to the present day, a period of nearly four thousand years. On account of the dulness of the people's heart, this prophecy is given in a twofold way, audibly in the words of Holy Writ, and visibly in the sacrifices. How often does Jehovah declare that He has no pleasure in sacrifices and burnt offerings: that is, when they are not presented with a reference to the Messiah. Taken in connexion with Him, they have a reconciling virtue. Every sacrifice, therefore, has a double import. The sacrificer lays his hand on the head of the victim, to transfer, as it were, his sin to it, and so far sacrifice is an acknowledgment, and a memorial of the offerer's guilt. But, on the other hand, when Jehovah permits the blood to be sprinkled, and the flesh to be burnt upon His altar, He signifies His acceptance of the sacrifice, and His pardon of the offender. Isaiah prophecies of the Messiah, that God will lay our sins upon Him, and inflict chastisement upon Him that we may have peace. (Isaiah liii. 5.) So that He will offer the true sacrifice, and our righteousness will come from Him, and all the promises of God will be fulfilled in Him. But these are dark, sacred thoughts, who can fathom them? Keep them, however, treasured up in thy mind; pray for divine illumination. The dark will become light to thee. Thou knowest, even from those heathens who formerly were the objects of thy admiration, that there are things, the knowledge of which cannot be learned, but must be given from above."

While they were speaking, Melchi came to the door, and announced that Shemida of Jericho was

standing without, and wished to speak with the Old Man. While this interview took place, Melchi called Eldad aside, and told him, that in the following week he was going to Jericho, and wished him to go with him, as his week of service would expire in a few days. Eldad was unwilling to leave Jerusalem, but he bethought him, that it became a priest to honour his father and his mother, or those who stood in this relation to him, that his days might be long upon the earth. He therefore agreed to the proposal of his uncle, especially as he heard that their journey would take them near the Oasis of the Essenes, whom he had a great desire to see. Melchi left him well pleased, and Eldad hastened back into the Court of the Priests.

On the fifth day the Old Man called Eldad, after the morning sacrifice, and desired him to follow him to his apartment. Both of them seated themselves on the carpet, and the Old Man began the conversation with unusual energy.

“Thy week of service is drawing to a close, and Shemida tells me that he means to take thee to the pleasant city of Jericho. May the angel of the Lord encamp about those that fear Him on their journey! But I foresee that he will introduce thee to the Essenes; I must, therefore, ere we part, give thee a word of admonition, and, oh, young man! remember that it is written, ‘Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.’ (Job xxxii. 7.) Eighty years have passed over me, since I began to be acquainted with men of every variety of religious opinion among my people. I was then, as thou art now, young, without an adviser, and easily attracted

and deceived by every new form of wisdom which appeared, I would fain guard thee against the errors into which I fell, for it is a bitter feeling at last to discover that we have been wandering from the truth. Thou rejoicest in Israel, in the Land of Promise, and in the Temple, and holdest the Hellenists alone in abhorrence. But, believe me, there are things yet more to be abhorred in Israel itself—in the Land of Promise—nay, even within the walls of the Temple. There is fearful division and confusion in Israel: seven sects wage war upon one another. May it fare with thee as with the Old Man! Thou wilt find many things in all of them which will not displease thee, but pray to God that thou mayst be enabled to see, that each has more or less departed from the right way, and mingled human wisdom with the divine law. Thou wilt find in all, honourable and upright men, but also among all, the proud man and the hypocrite: and all, without exception, are deficient in the humility and simplicity which are essential to the knowledge of divine truth. I will not reckon among them the *proselytes of the gate*, whom we have in all nations; and I mention them only that I may omit none,—I will begin where I have least to blame. Praise Jehovah that their number is constantly increasing, and pray that He would guide them yet further—that they may renounce every thing that is heathenish, and become proselytes of righteousness.¹

“It is worse with the *Hellenists*, who have been punished, by the blindness with which they have plunged into allegory, for that worldly mindedness which made them disdain to return

¹ See note, p. 36, Part I.

to the Land of Promise, This the *Essenes* did. On this account, and for their rigid obedience to the Law on some points, I praise them; but why do they imitate the manners of the heathen in the land of Jehovah, and pride themselves on vain wisdom, and despise the worship in the Temple, and many other laws of our God?

"The *Pharisees* I would praise for their zeal for the faith of our fathers, but I blame them for their great pride and for mixing tradition with the written Law—sometimes even giving it an unholy pre-eminence. For this fault they are justly reprov'd by the *Sadducees*; but these last depart still farther from the truth—they reject the prophets of Jehovah, and are more like the disciples of Epicurus than of the Lord who spake from Sinai.

"I need say little of the *Samaritans*, who, like ourselves, expect the Messiah, but prefer the desolate Gerizim to our Moriah. Alas! what confusion in Israel! What strife and hatred!

"There is still a small handful, whom I will not call a sect, men of pious peaceful minds, who wait in simplicity and humility for the appearance of the Messiah, who reject every word but that of God, who try to keep His ordinances, and worship in His temple. Of this number I reckon myself—Melchi is another, and so are nearly all the Aramean,¹ Jews, who live in the Diaspora.² In

¹ See note, p. 10, Part I.

² From the Greek *Διασπορά*, "dispersion." It is used in the New Testament, John vii. 35, and James i. 1, in the same sense as in this place—of the Jews scattered abroad in Heathen countries. St Peter, perhaps, takes it in even a wider sense, so as to include the Gentile Christians, whom he addresses as "strangers dispersed," or, as our translation has it, "scattered." Compare 1 Pet. i. 1 with 14, and chap. ii. 10.

Jerusalem, however, there are few such to be found.

“Now thou art forewarned; go, and Jehovah bless and keep thee!”

This was the last interview which, at that time, Eldad had with the Old Man. On the sixth day, the last before the new Sabbath, the course of Malchijah finished its term of service after the evening sacrifice. Eldad then quitted the Temple, and joined his friends in the house of Ithiel. The impressions which the first week of his sacerdotal duties had made upon Eldad were quite different from anything he had before experienced. His mind before had been excited, and his curiosity and expectations raised; but what he had lately seen and felt, had given a quiet soberness and calmness to his spirits; which were only broken at times, by an eager desire for further knowledge on those subjects, on which his conversations with the Old Man of the Temple had turned.

The next day he attended the morning and evening sacrifices for the Sabbath, in a portico which lay on the northern side of the Court of the Priests, opposite to the altar of burnt offering, and was called the Court of the Sabbath. This place was allotted to the course of priests who had been on duty the preceding week, and who when this second Sabbath was over, would rest for a while from the noblest of all occupations—the service of Jehovah.



CHAPTER VI.

THE ESSENES.

THE sun was rising on the Holy City, on the first day of the week, when Ithiel took leave of his guests at the Water Gate. They followed the road to Jericho, which leads over the Mount of Olives, having before them a distance of about twenty-four Sabbath days' journies. Passing the dry bed of the Brook Kidron, they walked under the shade of the cedars, till the road wound up the side of the mount, and led them through rows of olive

trees over the easternmost of the three summits. It is loftier than any of the hills on which the city stands. As they ascended it, Eldad cast back a look of gratitude and regret on the sacred spot where God had so blessed him. The summit commanded on one side a view of the Temple, the castle of Baris, Zion, and the wide-stretched city ; and on the other, the eye could reach to the Dead Sea, and the glittering line of the Jordan's course, which winds on the other side of the walls of Jericho. Towards the east, the exhalations rose from the Dead Sea, at the place where once Sodom and Gomorrah stood—a terrible memorial of Jehovah's vengeance on the transgressors. Towards the west, the smoke of the morning sacrifice was ascending from the altar of burnt offering in the Temple. "See," said Melchi, as he pointed to Moriah, "the fulfilment of the words of Moses, the glory of the Lord appearing to all the people in the fire that comes from before Him, and consumes the offering on the altar ;" and then turning to the cloud of pitchy smoke that hung over the Dead Sea, "Behold there the fulfilment of another word of Scripture, 'The Lord thy God is a consuming fire,—a jealous God.'" (Deut. iv. 24.)

They proceeded for a while in silence ; at length Eldad said, "When the flame ascends upon our altar of burnt offering, or the seven-branched candlestick is lighted at evening in the holy place, I cannot but think of Jehovah's comparison of Himself to a light, in our Psalms and Prophets. Fire, at once so useful and so destructive, is a fit symbol, as well of the grace of God to His faithful servants, as of His wrath against sinners."

"Beware," interrupted Shemida, "of making to thyself any likeness of God."

"I understand what you mean," replied Eldad; "even the doctrine of Zerdusht¹ is debased by superstition, but it is surely remarkable that the children of the East have retained this part of the divinely-taught wisdom of their forefathers, though they have forgotten that light and fire are but symbols. They have corrupted the teaching of their master, and worship the sun itself instead of the eternal uncreated light."

"Be satisfied," said Shemida; "those whom thou shalt see to-day have already prayed some hours ago for the return of the heavenly light. They do so every morning, and every morning their prayer is heard. You shall see my Essenes."

"THY Essenes!" exclaimed Melchi. "Thou hast already thrown out hints of this kind more than once, Shemida, to my great surprise. I remember when we were young together in Egypt thou hadst a similar passion for the doctrine of the Therapeutæ.² An early passion, it seems, never dies."

"I confess," said Shemida, "that in my youth I often looked with veneration towards the hill beside the Lake Marcotis, where they had their

¹ Zerdusht was the Persian Zoroaster, and is supposed to have lived in the time of Darius, the father of Xerxes. He was a great astronomer, and also revived and reformed the doctrine of the Magi, teaching his disciples to worship the Supreme Deity under the emblems of fire and the sun. This worship was soon corrupted into a worship of the sun itself. There are people in the interior of Asia, in the present day, who are fire-worshippers, and are probably descended from the disciples of Zoroaster.

² The Therapeutæ are called by Philo "Contemplative Essenes." There were many of them in all parts of Egypt, but their favourite residence was on a hill, near the Lake Marcotis.

favourite abode, but as I grew older I became convinced, that the pious but active life of the Essenes, is far better than the contemplative and solitary life of the Therapeutæ. I could say much to you of the Essenes, but I will wait till we have passed through Bethany."

They had now reached a spot that was indeed better fitted for *seeing* than for *hearing*. Bethany lay on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and about two Sabbath-days' journies from Jerusalem. It was a still and lovely spot, surrounded with olives, palm-trees, figs, and dates, so that the village seemed to stand in the midst of a large garden. They often turned to look back after they had passed through it. As they crossed a sparkling brook which ran at the foot of a steep hill, Shemida exclaimed, "I will first quench my thirst, after the manner of the Essenes, from this pure stream, and will then tell you, as I proposed just now, what I think of this people."

A wild and dreary region lay before them, called the Desert of Jericho, and the want of cheerfulness in all around made conversation the more welcome. "I know," said Shemida, "that our Sadducees ridicule the Essenes, and our Pharisees curse them. The Essenes believe that the soul of man is immortal, and on this matter stand midway between the Sadducees, who believe that both soul and body perish together, and the Pharisees, who believe in the resurrection of the body, as well as the immortality of the soul. The Essenes keep the Sabbath with peculiar sanctity, and are zealous in observing the Law——"

"But," interrupted Melchi, "they never appear in the Temple."

"It is true," continued Shemida, "and for this the Pharisees condemn them, and I will not undertake their defence. You know that I am so far from agreeing with them in this respect, that I am myself a punctual attendant upon all the festivals. The Essenes appeal on this point to passages of Holy Writ, which teach the inefficacy of sacrifices and ceremonies, and say that in their endeavour to keep the Law; they direct their attention to its inward fulfilment in the heart, rather than to any outward act of obedience. If they are wrong in neglecting the outward act, yet, I think, you will agree in considering them right, in valuing more highly the inward obedience of the heart. Self-examination and self-communion they practice continually, and the natural effect is an unusual degree of moral strictness. It is on this account that I look upon the Essenes to be those who have preserved the original knowledge of divine things in the greatest purity. Of their mode of life you shall judge for yourself, when we visit their village; their heroic deeds in war are known from the recent history of our country."

Eldad's interest and attention were very powerfully excited by this account, but the last warning of the Old Man of the Temple sounded in his ears, and he remained silent for a while, neither did the others keep up the conversation. Perhaps the consciousness that there was a great difference in their feelings upon this subject, had put them a little out of humour, an effect to which the Desert they had now entered upon, might, perhaps, have contributed. It was a long, hilly, dreary waste. Deep ravines, without verdure, opened beside serrated cliffs, sometimes of a chalky whiteness

and sometimes of sand. No shrub, no fountain, was to be seen far as the eye could reach; scarce here and there a stunted plant or a dry blade of grass. The rocks were rent, and thrown in such wild confusion, that Eldad thought an earthquake must have torn up the bowels of the earth in this abode of death and desolation. Towards the east, between the ragged summits of the hills, the thick clouds of smoke from the Dead Sea arose, as from the bottom of the abyss. From the higher ground the region around Jericho might, indeed, be seen, but it served by the contrast rather to aggravate than to lessen the dreariness of the nearer scene.

Eldad was the first to break the silence. "Can you tell me," he asked, "when the Essenes first made their appearance, and what is their origin?"

"Some," answered Shemida, "suppose them to be descended from Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who lived before the captivity, and their estimation of agriculture, as the most honourable of all occupations, gives some colour to the supposition. Others trace their origin to Egypt, and to some of its sects of heathen philosophers; while others give a much lower date, and suppose them to be the descendants of those who fled into the Desert with Judas Maccabæus, to escape from the oppression of the Syrian kings. I myself consider them to be of very high antiquity."

While he was thus speaking, they perceived a stranger hastening over one of the naked hills which were near them. He was an aged man, of a spare form, and with a long white beard, who, supporting his steps with a staff, held on his way without looking around. He seemed the human

counterpart of this dreary region. "This," exclaimed Shemida, "is one of them. I know him by his clothing, and by his only spitting behind him." As he approached they greeted him, and he gravely returned the salutation. According to the customs of the Essenes, he was clad in white garments, and carried nothing but a staff on his journey.

"Wilt thou guide us to the Oasis of the Essenes?" asked Eldad.

"Follow me," he replied abruptly.

"How many are there of you?" again asked Eldad, endeavouring to engage him in conversation.

"There are four thousand of us in this country."

"I am surprised that you travel without a wallet."

"I am come, curious youth, from a distance to assist at the trial of one of our body, which cannot be held by fewer than one hundred persons. Among us everything is common. We avoid great cities, but wherever we go we trust to the hospitality of our brethren."

"Who is the transgressor on whom ye are to sit in judgment?" asked Shemida.

"A man who had scarcely completed his probation, and was not able to keep the secret of our institution."

"Tell me, I pray you," said Eldad, "what is the probation which must be gone through, before any one can be received as a member of your society?"

"He receives a white garment, a girdle of peculiar sanctity, and a spade, after which he must labour for a year, and practice self-examination.

He is then received into our society, but for three years is not admitted to the common table. If during this time he gives evident proof of being discreet, just, temperate, and chaste, an oath of tremendous sanctity is demanded from him, that he will, before all things, honour and serve the Lord; that he will be just towards men; that he will hate all unrighteousness; assist the pious; keep his faith and word to every man, and pay exact obedience to the magistrate, who rules not but by the ordinance of God; that he will not abuse power, if he should ever be in possession of it; that he will keep his hands pure from theft, and his mind from the desire of unlawful gain; that he will conceal nothing from his brethren, nor reveal their secrets to any other, even when threatened with torture or death; that he will not communicate our doctrines to any one, in any other form than that in which they have been taught to him; and that he will keep with equal care the books of doctrine and the names of the angels.¹ When he has sworn to do all this, he is admitted to a participation in the bath, in the common meal, and in all the secrets of our society."

The gravity of the man, the solemnity of his words, and the earnestness with which he spoke, combined with the dreary solitude around, produced an indescribable feeling of awe in the mind of Eldad. They all walked on in silence till they came within sight of the Oasis—a fruitful spot amidst the waste. A fountain rose from a cleft in the rock, and a few cottages, surrounded by gar-

¹ Angels, or messengers, by whose hands the books were written and handed down to them.

dens, stood under the shade of palm-trees. Beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the fountain all was wild, desolate, and barren, an emblem, according to the Essenes, of the soul of an unrighteous man; and the naphtha smoke, which rose in the distance from the Dead Sea, they regarded as a type of the future punishment of the wicked. This was the settlement of the Essenes. As they approached they perceived, by the multitude of persons who were going to and fro, that the trial had occasioned an unusual resort: yet, in spite of this, every thing went on with a great stillness, as if single individuals were pursuing some noiseless occupation. An Essene, an acquaintance of Shemida, told them how great was the consternation and horror of the whole body, at the discovery that a traitor had divulged their secrets. This offence was to be visited by the most fearful penalty of their code—expulsion from the society. Its terror consisted in this, that having bound himself by an oath, which even the unworthy dared not violate, never to use ordinary food, nor even to receive food at all from other men, there was nothing left him but to support himself on roots and herbs till he died.

Their arrival at the Oasis was about the fifth hour,¹ the time when the common meal was eaten. The Essenes had risen before daylight; had conversed together briefly, but only concerning divine—never concerning human things, and had then greeted the sun, as if imploring him to rise. After this every one had been dismissed by the person under whose superintendence he was placed, to pursue his labour for the day. After the lapse of

¹ Eleven o'clock of our time.

some hours the labours were interrupted, and having bathed themselves a second time, they girded themselves with the sacred linen dress, and assembled in the hall. The entrance to this hall was forbidden to any but the members of the order, and passing through it they went to their refectory, as carefully purified as if they had entered a temple. Bread and vegetables were placed before them, and they *seated* themselves at table; not *reclining*, as was the general custom in the east.¹ A priest prayed before and after the meal. While eating, a solemn silence prevailed, and when they had finished they laid aside the holy garment, and each prepared himself to pursue his labour without intermission until the evening.

Food was placed before the strangers; Essene fare—bread and hyssop. No women were to be seen, for the Essenes on this Oasis belonged to the highest class, in which marriage was forbidden: it was allowed in the inferior classes, but with strict limitations and restraints. The sect must speedily have become extinct, had it not been that they received many children among them for education, and that many grown-up persons, weary of the disappointments and cares of a more busy life, continually joined their society. Thus they formed a society which never died out, although no children were ever born among them. They allowed no traffic in their community, because it must have been carried on through the medium of gold, which they considered as the root of all moral corruption;

¹ Sitting at table was the primitive custom of the Jews, as of the Greeks, in earlier time. See Genesis xxvii. 19; 1 Samuel xx. 5. 24. The recumbent posture seems to be first mentioned in Scripture, Amos vi. 4.

they had no servants, for each ministered to the other; and they took no oath, that which they had taken at their admission rendering every other superfluous.

Although our travellers were not admitted into the refectory of the Essenes, they were not alone. They found a multitude of sick persons, who were come hoping to obtain relief by the secret wisdom of the Essenes. They performed these cures by means of mysterious formularies, and recipes carefully preserved in their ancient books. They were chiefly wrought, however, by enforcing temperance, self-command, and the dominion of the soul over the body, and by these means they performed wonders. The simplicity of their mode of life preserved their own health to extreme old age.

When Shemida and Melchi had laid themselves down after their frugal repast to rest under the shade of the palm-trees, Eldad went about to examine the arrangement and economy of the establishment. He would gladly have entered into conversation with some of the Essenes, but no one spoke to him, and their determined taciturnity, and the stillness that reigned around their cottages, deterred him from making the attempt. He silently followed an aged man, who, with his staff, was making his round through the fields about noon, when every one was again at his labour, and who seemed to be superintending their operations. The bending of the men, and the prostration of the youths as he approached them, showed to Eldad that reverence for age was here inculcated and practised as one of the duties of religion. Every thing was done by command; no man followed a will of his own: indeed, the will itself

seemed not to be that of an individual, but the united will of the many. All was social, with one only exception; that exception was the giving to those who were in need. Every one, without asking permission, or waiting for a command, might relieve and assist the distressed, even though they were strangers to himself and to the society; provided always that they were not of his own family or kindred. The fields were covered with luxuriant crops, but the cultivators themselves were pale and thin.

Shemida and Melchi were now ready to continue their journey. The heat of the mid-day was past, and Eldad perceived that there was no more to be discovered by delay among the Essenes. The exterior simplicity of their habits and customs was seen at once, and to learn anything more was a work of time. To know their secrets it was necessary to listen in silence for years together. Our travellers, therefore, set out soon after the middle of the day, and continued their tedious way through the Desert to Jericho. Shemida had requested his friend, the Essene, to be their guide, as the road was intricate even to those who had frequently travelled it. The Essene readily complied, and appearing quite at home amidst these solitudes, he led them over naked hills and through ravines, amidst precipices, and through sandy plains, where no vegetation was to be seen. Always alert, and ready to assist, he gave them his hand in difficult parts of the way, and supported the elder men in the steeper ascents. He answered every question, but so briefly, that he seemed to weigh each word, and to be in perpetual fear of allowing one that was unnecessary, to pass his lips.

In answer to the inquiry of Melchi, whence the name of Essene was derived, he informed them that it was Persian, and denoted the resemblance of their lives to that of bees. "We learn from them to be unwearied in our labours; to live in brotherly union; to be without distinction of sex in our affections; and to gather stores for the supply of others." This contempt for the female sex, and aversion to matrimony, displeased Melchi, who considered the latter an ordinance of God, and pronounced it a vain and presumptuous thought of man to wish to annihilate the distinction of sex, when the Creator had made the human race male and female.

Shemida endeavoured to answer Melchi's objection by reminding him that nearly all the members of this community were old men. But the Essene himself would not accept this explanation; he maintained that celibacy was necessarily and intimately connected with the rest of their system. "The body, as ye see," said he, "is perishable, and its parts are for ever changing; the soul is immortal and unchangeable. It is kept imprisoned, as it were, in the body, so long as this latter continues to live. When freed from the fetters of the flesh, it rejoices like the captive delivered from a long and galling bondage, and wings its flight upwards. The souls of the just are conducted to an abode, beyond the ocean, of indescribable delight, where neither rain nor snow deforms the sky, and mild sea breezes temper the heat of the sun. The wicked, on the contrary, are condemned to eternal thralldom and torment in a dwelling of frost and darkness. Should not then every soul abhor and shun intemperance and pleasure as its

worst enemies, and renounce every gratification which would give power to the body, while it cultivates sobriety and chastity as the means of making its present captivity more tolerable, and of being ultimately delivered from it?"

The Essene spoke with animation in defence of his doctrines, and seemed almost to forget the ordinary conciseness of his discourse; nor did he give Melchi an opportunity to express his disagreement, for as soon as he ceased to speak, he made a brief salutation to the travellers, and turning abruptly round he left them. A hill, higher than any in the Desert, and equally bare, though on its confines, was before them. Looking back, they saw the Essene vanishing among the intricacies of the path they had just quitted, carefully holding his garments together, and hastening back to his brethren, without looking to the right hand or to the left. When they reached the top of the hill, and emerged from this region of desolation, Eldad seemed to breathe more freely, while Shemida, looking back towards the Oasis, and leaning on his staff, asked his companions, "Now, then, how like ye my Essenes?"

"Call them not *thy* Essenes," said Melchi, "for, Jehōvah be praised, there is a wide difference between them and thee."

"Allow me this," said Shemida, "and I will in return allow thee to speak of *thy* Pharisees."

"That," rejoined Melchi, very earnestly, "shall never be; call me an Aramæan Jew, and I will gladly accept the title."

"What difference should one name or the other make in our friendship?" asked Shemida. "Cannot we hold different opinions without any breach

of our mutual good will? Ithiel takes it ill if I call him a Sadducee; yet I see not wherefore ——”

“Alas, for Israel!” exclaimed Melchi, “shall peace never be given thee? It has been a melancholy reflection to me that, in the land where alone Israel is truly Israel, I have scarcely found a single old friend who does not lean to one sect or other. What will be the end of these things?”

The young priest, dissatisfied with the turn which their conversation had taken, said hastily, and in a manner which neither of the old men understood, “In my service in the Temple one thing only displeased me, that the turn of duty comes to each course of priests but once in twenty-four weeks. I fain would live the life of a priest every week and every day.”

“You might have discovered the method of doing so this very day,” said Shemida.

“The Essenes do not sacrifice,” said Eldad; “how, then, shall I find among them a perpetual priesthood?”

Melchi looked at him with astonishment; Shemida rejoiced as if he had won him over to his own opinion, and replied, “You may find it in the daily mortification of your body, and obedience to the Law.”

“No,” exclaimed Melchi; “I will tell you—the conjugal and domestic life is the perpetual priesthood. You know that the patriarchs sacrificed with their own hands, and even now the master of the house becomes a priest when at the Feast of the Passover he kills the lamb, blesses the bread, and offers up thanksgivings to Jehovah. In spite of all the Essenes, and all their admirers,”

added he, looking significantly at Shemida, "it is my opinion that the true Chasidean must be the father of a family."

Shemida stretched out his hand to the friend of his youth, who grasped it with friendly warmth. They turned and continued their journey, but had scarcely advanced a few steps when they stood on the verge of the hill ; and the garden of God, the fruitful plain of Jericho lay before them. The towers of the city arose from amidst fertile fields, through which the silver Jordan wound its course. From the Valley of Death, through which they had just passed, they had emerged into a scene where life was seen in full luxuriance. The wide meadows through which the Jordan rolled were adorned by groups of towering palm-trees and balsam-bushes, the hills on both sides closing in the landscape with a beautifully picturesque effect, while the air was fragrant with the odour of the roses which bear the name of Jericho. The note of the quail was heard in the corn-fields, the eagle swept his majestic way through the air, from one craggy rock to another, and the stork and the pelican strode with stately gait beside the stream.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CIRCUMCISION AND BETROTHAL.

THE travellers now passed through the gate of Jericho. Not far from it stood a house, distinguished from all that were around it by its size and the style of its architecture. This was the house of Shemida, who held the office of an elder in Jericho. He had scarcely bidden his guests welcome into the outer court, and invited them to enter the inner court, when his son met him with a newly-born grandson in his arms, not yet a week old. The joy of the old man was very great. "You see," said he to his guests, when he had led them to the fountain under the palms, and had called the slaves to wash their feet; "You see, by my joy at the sight of my grandchild, that notwithstanding all I have said in praise of the Essenes, I do not belong to the highest class among them. While the slaves attend upon you, allow me to take a short walk into the Armon."¹

Eldad viewed with admiration the wealth and splendour displayed in the mansion. Its general arrangement was that which is common to houses in the East; but the solidity of the building, and the elegance of finish that characterised every part, proved it to be the residence of a wealthy man. Marble, cedar of Lebanon, brass, gold,

¹ House of the women.

silver, ivory, silk, and whatever else contributes to the splendour of an oriental house, appeared here on every side.

Shemida had so built his house that it enclosed a large open quadrangular space, called Tavech (the middle or inner court),¹ which, under a sky that was almost uninterruptedly serene, served as a great chamber even on festive occasions. The pavement was composed of variegated marble, tastefully disposed in patterns. In the middle, where in humbler houses a simple basin stood, was a fountain enclosed with marble, and surrounded with palms, which cast such a cooling shade beneath, that our travellers felt themselves instantly refreshed. In the angles stood rows of vases, filled with flowers, especially roses of Jericho, and these, with other odoriferous shrubs, were also planted in bowers. This grateful shade, and the ever fresh and green turf around the fountain, made the coolness as it were visible, and in the hottest days it was always to be found there. On the sides of this quadrangle stood three rows of pillars, forming two parallel porticoes. The floor of these was covered with carpets and cushions of very elaborate workmanship, and before some of the pillars hung curtains, which gave the space behind the convenience of an enclosed chamber. The cushions were embroidered with gold and silver, and the curtains were of silk; red, white, green, and blue. Against the interior sides of the porticoes were divans and sofas, elevated to the height of two or three feet, and surrounded by a lattice. In the day time these were covered with carpets, and served as seats, while at night they

¹ See note 1, page 5, Part I.

were used as beds. Over the porticoes were three galleries, one above another, for the house was three stories high, and each gallery had a parapet breast high towards the court.

Round this court the principal parts of the house were disposed. The side which adjoined the street contained a small court, separated from the inner only by a wall and a door, contrary to the common mode of building, according to which this court would have been beyond the outer wall, and in front of the house, being connected with it by a covered way; some houses again had both the small internal court, which we have described in Shemida's house, and a larger exterior court, the latter then serving to receive horses and camels. In Shemida's house the smaller court was furnished with a sofa; visitors were received there, and only those whom the master of the house specially invited into the interior, went any further. The house-door, which was in the wall of the house, and was covered with inscriptions, led to the outer court. In this court was a staircase, which led to the upper stories of the house, and immediately to a little building, (overlooking the small interior court,) the Alijah, which rose, like a tower, upon the flat roof. An awning was fastened to the parapet of the roof, in such a manner that it could be drawn over the whole of the innermost court, and produce complete shade in the brightest sunshine.

The side of the court which was farthest from the street, formed the communication with the Armon, or house of the women. The apartments of the females were universally in the East separated from those of the men; and in Shemida's

mansion they formed a distinct house, divided and arranged much in the same way as we have already described, so that there were in fact two houses, having one side in common.

Melchi and Eldad had been so much occupied by the splendour with which they were surrounded, that they had allowed the slaves, with their silver ewers, to wait without performing their office. Shemida now re-entered and said, smiling, to Melchi, observing how he was engaged, "Doubtless you are accustomed to see more splendid edifices in Alexandria." "Nay," returned Melchi, laughing, "and I recall what I said on the way. An elder of Israel who dwells so tastefully and sumptuously is assuredly no Essene." Shemida led his guests first into one of the bowers, and after they had rested here a short time, to a richly spread table. When the dishes were removed, and the dessert set on, the mother and her daughter appeared, to bid a solemn welcome to the guests from Egypt—a condescension which marked the esteem which Shemida felt for them. The mother, though advanced in years, was active and still handsome; Susannah, her daughter, who stood by her side, was glowing in all the freshness of youthful beauty, and united in herself every charm by which a daughter in Israel could fix the attention of the beholder. From beneath the large eyebrows, coloured of a brilliant black, dark eyes, like those of the gazelle, sent forth their quiet brilliancy through the transparent veil, which descended from the turban. Her tall and stately form was clad in a robe of fine cotton, which flowed down in folds like a wide mantle; the sleeves hung loose, except where they were fastened

with costly bracelets ; the ears and the nose were adorned with rings of gold, in which rubies, emeralds, and topazes were set. Eldad, dazzled by so much beauty, on which he hardly dared to gaze, and agitated by an emotion which he had never felt before, thought he read in the looks with which the old men regarded his surprise, the interpretation of some words which had occasionally escaped Melchi and Shemida, and which till now he had not understood.

When the women had retired, the men continued their conversation, and after a while Shemida's son proposed to Eldad, that in the coolness of the next morning they should walk out together, offering to be his guide through the region round Jericho, and as far as to the Dead Sea. Eldad, lost in feelings to which he had hitherto been a stranger, had scarcely heard the conversation of the elders, but he was roused from his reverie by this offer, which it was difficult to decline without discourtesy, though it seemed to him as if he had been forcibly torn from a world of delightful illusions to which he had been just transported.

At the first dawn of the following day, the two young men went forth from the mansion of Shemida into the streets of Jericho.¹ The city is about six Sabbath days' journies from Jordan,

¹ There seems to be a difficulty in fixing the site of Jericho. It is generally supposed to be at Rihhah, a village about three miles from the Jordan, which is rather less than the distance given by our author. But as Rihhah has no ruins, such as might be expected on the site of Jericho, others have placed it nearer the mountains, in a spot where many broken shafts and other traces of large buildings are visible. This would make the distance from the Jordan six miles. The distance of six Sabbath days' journies would be, according to our author, (see note, page 40, Part I.) four miles and a half.

and three Sabbath days' journies in circumference. It was considered at this time as the second city in Judca, and had been in ancient times one of the thirty-one royal cities of Canaan. It was chiefly inhabited by priests, whose number was by some estimated as high as 12,000.

The son of Shemida was well acquainted with the ancient history of his nation, and had discovered Eldad's enthusiasm for every thing which recalled it. As they quitted the city he pointed to the other side of the Jordan. "There," said he, "our forefathers encamped in the fields of Moab, opposite to Jericho, and thither Balak, the King of Moab, summoned Balaam to curse them.¹ That blue hill, seen far in the distance, is the Hill of Abarim, and part of it is Nebo, to which Jehovah led Moses, and showed him the land he was not permitted to enter, the future heritage of the children of Israel.² Thence Joshua sent out spies to explore the land, and especially Jericho, when Rahab saved them by her humanity.³ There" (pointing to the banks of the Jordan itself) "our fathers crossed the flood, Jehovah enacting a miracle somewhat similar to that by which they had passed through the Red Sea.⁴ They destroyed the city, and not only exterminated every living thing, but their leader laid a curse on him who should re-build it, which curse, six hundred years after, fell on Hiel of Bethel, whose eldest son died when he laid the foundation of it, and the youngest when he set up the gates.⁵ Yet its

¹ Numb. xxii. 1.

² Numb. xxvii. 12.

³ Joshua ii. 1.

⁴ Compare Exod. xiv. 22, with Joshua iii. 16, 17. See also Joshua iv. 23.

⁵ Joshua vi. 26. 1 Kings xvi. 34.

sanctity was recovered by the residence of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, who long dwelt here, and superintended the schools of the prophets, which were established in this place.¹ In later times, we must remember with grief, that it was here the valiant chief and high-priest Simon, father of Hyrcanus, fell by the hand of his son-in-law."

Eldad thanked his companion for his information; dissatisfied with himself, however, as he found the present and the past contending as it were for possession of his mind and imagination. They soon reached an eminence from which they had a prospect scarcely to be equalled even in the Holy Land. The course of Jordan lay as in a map before them. From its source in Antilibanus, a distance of about one hundred Sabbath days' journies, it had attained a breadth of thirty paces; was about the depth of a man, and in the neighbourhood of Jericho had a strong current. It abounds in fish, and its banks were overgrown with sedges, reeds, willows, and tamarisks, among which jackals, lions (Jer. xlix. 19), and other wild beasts were to be found. The river had just overflowed its banks, in consequence of the melting of the snows of Lebanon; this annual inundation greatly promotes the fertility of the adjacent fields. On the banks of the Jordan lay Gilgal, the place where the people of Israel crossed over under Joshua, and erected twelve stones as a memorial. A little further on was Bethabara, where the pilgrims from Galilee crossed to the eastern side of the Jordan, in order to avoid going through the country of the Samaritans. Thus a great part of

¹ 2 Kings ii. 5, 18.

the beautiful valley of the Jordan lay before them ; the fertile fields were enclosed by hills on each side : on the east by the mountains of Judah, on the west by Abarim, with the summits of Pisgah and Nebo, and the mountains of Moab. Southward they beheld the plain of Jericho, ten Sabbath days' journies in length, and nearly three in breadth, extending to En-gedi. Here was the celebrated grove of palms, and it was besides adorned with olives and balsam-shrubs, and every where renowned for its honey and its roses. Beyond lay the Dead Sea or Salt Sea, as it is often called, extending to the southward, and covering beneath its sluggish waters the ruins of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of Adama and Zeboim. The waters are salt and bitter, and all around the shore bore the appearance of a recent conflagration, the earth being covered with a coating of salt. The fruit corresponded with the water ; the son of Shemida describing to Eldad the apples of Sodom, (as they are called,) as beautiful to the eye, but bitter and unfit to eat, and when dried containing nothing but dust, with which the mouth of the unwary traveller was filled.¹

On their return to the house they found all busy with preparations for the solemnities of the circumcision of Shemida's grandson, which was to take place on the following morning. At the third hour accordingly of the next day a large company

¹ "Poma Sodomitica," the fruit of the *Solanum Melongena*, *Linn.* "I found them in plenty," says Hasselquist, "about Jericho, in the vales near Jordan, not far from the Dead Sea. It is true they are sometimes filled with a dust, yet this is not always the case, but only when the fruit is attacked by an insect (*tenthredo*), which turns all the inside into dust, leaving the skin only entire and of a beautiful colour."

assembled in Shemida's house. Besides the two witnesses, who were required to be married persons of either sex, ten men were necessary, in whose presence the circumcision was to take place; and besides these, invitations had been given to the heads of all the courses of priests who lived in Jericho, to the elders, and to the friends of Melchi.

The rite was performed in the largest apartment of the house, and by the hand of the grandfather, in the presence of the whole assembly. When the child was born it had been washed, rubbed with salt, and wrapped in swaddling clothes, and the father then had placed it on his bosom, as a sign that he acknowledged it as his own. He now fetched it himself from the apartment of the mother, who had been cleansed, by bathing, from the impurity of the first seven days after childbirth, and brought it to the room where the company was assembled. A psalm was sung, alluding to the covenant which God had made with His people Israel, and then the song of Moses after the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The rite was then begun; in the midst of it, the father of the child said, "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the world, who hast sanctified us by thy precepts, and commanded us to enter into the covenant of Abraham." Those who stood around replied, "Lord, as Thou hast permitted this child to enter into the covenant of our father Abraham, grant also that he may enter into thy Law, into the marriage state, and into good works." Shemida then laid his hand upon the child's head, and asked the father what its name should be. The name was commonly significant of the circumstances under which the child was born or cir-

cumcised. The father, in honour of the guests from Egypt who were then present, replied, "His name shall be called Mizraim." The grandfather then prayed, "O Lord our God, God of our fathers, strengthen this child and preserve him to his parents. His name shall be called Mizraim, son of Abisuab, son of Shemida. May his father rejoice in the son of his loins, and his mother in the fruit of her womb!"

The boy was then carried back to his mother, and all present offered their congratulations to the father and grandfather. Shemida invited them to the inner court, where they partook of refreshments, and remained till after noon, when a splendid banquet was served up, consisting of everything which one of the wealthiest citizens of Jericho could collect for such an occasion. Two oxen, twenty lambs, and twelve fatted calves were killed; for the master of the feast was thought to show his wealth and his hospitality by the unexpected abundance of every kind of food. Every guest found in the fore-court a splendid caftan, which he put on for the feast, and took off at his departure. These garments were always in readiness to be worn on festive occasions, and their number and costliness was one of the surest proofs of the master's wealth. The guests, after their feet had been washed, were anointed with costly ointment, and when they took their leave they were perfumed, especially the beard.

Susannah and her mother did not appear this day, but confined themselves to the chamber of Abisuab's wife, and celebrated the festival there. Eldad had seen Susannah only once, and for a few minutes, on the preceding day, but he had in-

voluntarily retained her image imprinted on his heart. In the midst of the lively conversation which passed at the banquet, the proverbs which were quoted, and the riddles which were propounded, she was always present to his thoughts, and so animated the powers of his mind, that his eloquence and ingenuity drew on him the attention of all. His *mashal*¹ was the most pregnant and striking; his riddle the most ingenious; his solution the readiest and most happy. When he laid himself down in the divan beside his uncle, he could neither sleep nor rest, and to calm the tumult of his breast he arose, and passing through the courts, ascended the Alijah, in which, at Alexandria, he had passed many a sultry night. There, kneeling, he prayed to the God of his fathers, but his prayer partook of the general state of his feelings; unable to collect his thoughts sufficiently for meditation, he could only pour out before Jehovah the fulness of a grateful heart.

It was just before dawn when he left the Alijah, and walked up and down upon the roof. The stars were dim, the hills of Moab lay in darkness, and the Dead Sea was wrapt in vapour, but on the summits of the hills of Judah the first distant beam of light appeared to break. "What are they doing now in the Temple?" he asked himself; "perhaps they are changing the watch, or clearing the altar, or opening the gates, that Israel may come up and appear before Jehovah. And how is the venerable Old Man of the Temple employed?" He remembered with gratitude how much light he

¹ Mashal (Heb. מִשָּׁל) is the name given by the Hebrews to those sententious and figurative maxims of moral wisdom, of which the Proverbs of Solomon are a specimen.

had derived from his conversations with him, and now fully comprehended his warning. In the journey through the Desert, in the visit to the Essenes, in the discourse of Melchi and Shemida, and the conversation of the priests at the banquet, he had found abundant proofs of the truth of the Old Man's assertions respecting the parties by which Israel was distracted. He grieved to think that the highest and the noblest in Israel, were arrayed against each other in hostile sects; that simplicity of faith and purity of life were so little honoured, and heathen philosophy, in a Jewish garb, so highly exalted. "Should the Messiah come," said he, "I verily believe that, after having disputed about His claims, they would finish by all rejecting Him." The thought was too painful almost for utterance, and for a few moments he stood silent. "Who could have believed," he then continued, "when a few weeks ago I approached Jerusalem, when I saw for the first time the Temple and the priests, and all my wish was to be enrolled among them, and to dwell on the hill which Jehovah has chosen for His peculiar presence, —who could have believed that so short a time would have made every thing appear to me so tame and common? Is the fault my own? do I pass too easily from one extreme to another? or am I disappointed, because, instead of continually ministering before Jehovah, I am only called at long intervals and for a short time to appear in His Temple? But surely even this might be sufficient to keep alive my zeal, were it not that the moment I quit the Temple, the dreams of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes again take possession of my mind, and I am drawn into renewed trans-

gressions of the Law. What hope, then, under such circumstances, of becoming a Chasidean? There was another priesthood of which Melchi spoke, as we stood together at the foot of that pointed hill. Oh! that I could but be assured that I was not mistaken in the meaning of his often repeated hints!" As he spoke his face turned involuntarily towards the Armon. Some one came behind him and touched him on the shoulder. It was Melchi. He started, as if it were possible that he might have heard his soliloquy, and could scarcely return his uncle's salutation.

"I am glad," said Melchi, with a serious look, "to find you here alone, for I desire to speak with you on important matters. Let us go into the Alijah, we shall be most secure there from interruption.

"When we left Egypt it was thy sole wish to see the land of thy fathers; thy mother had another wish. Thou art now of an age when the youth of Israel take to themselves wives. Doubtless we are all agreed in this, that thy wife should not come of any Hellenistic family. Among the Aramean Jews of Alexandria there was none with whom so near a connexion would have been honourable for us. Besides, it is thy mother's wish, that her daughter-in-law should be, as she herself was, a native of the Holy Land. I have been occupied in looking round for a wife for thee. What sayest thou to Susannah, the daughter of Shemida?"

Eldad fell at his uncle's feet, and embracing his knees, exclaimed, "Is it possible? Ah! give me Susannah!"

"Rise," said Melchi. "May Jehovah bless you both! I have already settled the conditions with Shemida in Jerusalem, and we kept silence only that we might see whether Susannah would please you. He wished to have a priest for his son-in-law, and one who should not come empty handed."

"Oh! give my whole fortune, if he demands it," exclaimed Eldad.

"At this moment he is speaking to Susannah." Looking through the lattice of the Alijah, he now saw Shemida passing along the court, and called to him to come up to them. He came, and Eldad fell before him on his face.

"I know enough," said he; "I will call my wife and daughter. Follow me to the large saloon of the Armon."

He led them from the Alijah, through the outer and inner court of the Armon, which no foot of a stranger, unless a female, had ever trodden before. He left them standing in the richly ornamented saloon, and went to call Susannah and her mother. They came with him, and the brother also made his appearance. The mother was in tears; Susannah stood with her face completely veiled. Melchi then came forward and said, "If ye will deal kindly and truly with my nephew, Eldad, tell me, and give him this your daughter, Susannah, to wife; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." Then Shemida and his son answered, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord, therefore we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Susannah is before thee; take her and go thy way, that she may be the wife of thy nephew, Eldad." Melchi and Eldad bowed themselves to the earth, and Melchi said: "I will pay thee for

thy daughter ten thousand shekels." "I give them to her for her dowry," said Shemida, "and add to them ten thousand more." Then Shemida, turning to Susannah, said, "Wilt thou go with this man into the land of Egypt, or remain with him in Jericho, as Jehovah shall appoint?" Susannah, sobbing, answered, "Yes." Then the mother led her daughter to Eldad, whose joy was without bounds; she bowed down before him, and he took her by the hand, and raised her up. The father, the mother, and the brother of the bride, along with Melchi, then drew near to them both, and said, "May ye grow and multiply a thousand times, and may your seed possess the gate of your enemies!"

The company which had assembled on the preceding day was again invited, and Shemida said to his astonished guests; "Rejoice with me, my friends, and bless the God of our fathers; I have received from Jehovah two children—a grandson and a son-in-law."

Melchi remained in Shemida's house. Eldad, as propriety required, took up his abode in another house; but he spent the day chiefly in the Armon of his Susannah. The more intimately he knew her, the more he loved and admired her. Every day he learned to value more highly her deep piety, her gentle temper, her quick sensibility, her sound understanding, and her playful innocent wit. He watched her with delight when, in the course of her daily occupations, she prepared the meal for bread, kneaded it in flat round cakes, and baked it in the deep oven. He stood beside her, when, as became a woman, she wove cloth for the garments of the men. He assisted her when she

prepared the perfumed ointments, and rubbed upon a smooth marble stone the sandal wood, the juice of the date-palm, the kernel of the Behen-nut, sent from Egypt, oil of Sesame, fragrant reed from Lebanon, oil of myrtle, cypress, and mastic, and the juice of the pomegranate-rind. In whatever occupation he had seen her, whatever had been the subject of their conversation, he always returned home in the evening more grateful to God for the blessing which he hoped soon to call his own. The Sabbath and the new moon, all the solemnities of religion, became more interesting to him, and his confidence was again strong that he should be able to keep the whole Law ; that with such a daughter of Israel by his side, he might even become a Chasidean.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.—REDEMPTION OF THE FIRST-BORN.

THE Feast of Pentecost was now drawing near. This name, which is derived from the Greek, and its Jewish name—the Feast of Weeks—alike refer to the circumstance that seven weeks, or fifty days, clapse between it and the day after the Passover, on which the first fruits of barley were solemnly offered to the Lord. The days between the offering of the sheaf and the Feast of Weeks, were solemnly reckoned every evening after supper. The master of the house rising up with the rest of the company, said, “Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who hast sanctified us with thy precepts, and commanded us to count the days of harvest;” adding, “this is the fifth day,” or “one week and the third day,” and so on. In this they thought they were fulfilling the Law, “Seven weeks shall ye reckon,” &c. (Deut. xvi. 9.)

Eldad wished, in virtue of his priestly office, to go to Jerusalem. Abisuab and his wife were going up to present their new-born child before Jehovah; Susannah was glad to join herself to her brother and sister-in-law; and Shemida and Melchi went in compliance with the Law, which enjoins that all males should appear thrice in the year, at each of the great festivals, before Je-

hovah. The preparations were already made, and the day of the pilgrimage drew near.

On the forty-seventh day Eldad was sitting with Susannah beside the fountain in the inner court of the Armon. They were talking of the priestly office, and expressing their joy at the thought of going up together to the Temple of the Lord—Eldad to minister at the altar of Jehovah, and Susannah to offer up at the same time her prayers and her praises among the daughters of Israel in the Court of the Women. As they thus conversed together, the well-known sounds of cymbal and flute were heard, accompanied by more than a thousand human voices. "It is the Galileans going up to the festival," said Susannah, listening to the sacred sounds, which seemed to descend from heaven into the court where they were sitting. Eldad hastened forth to greet them. Although Samaria was destroyed, they still took their former road by Bethabara and Jericho, in preference to that by Shechem, and their train was swollen by accessions from every village through which they passed. They were now crossing the city of Jericho, intending to encamp at the western gate. They received welcomes and greetings at every house, as they went along.

On the following morning, when the pilgrims from Jericho were going to unite with them, the long-standing hatred between the Jews and the Galileans showed itself. The Galileans, who occupied the country which had formerly made a part of the kingdom of Israel, had adopted many customs from the heathen among whom they lived. Inhabiting a fertile region, they were

in possession of many physical comforts, but they neglected the cultivation of literature and knowledge; and their uncouth pronunciation, by which the guttural letters were confounded, bore witness to the low state of refinement among them. Their Jewish brethren, on the other hand, were as proud of superior knowledge, as the Galileans were of superior wealth; and they seldom came together without some dispute. The difference between them on this occasion, was about precedence on the march. The men of Jericho claimed it, as genuine Jews and inhabitants of a city of priests, reproaching the Galileans that their ancestors were only the common people of the land left behind, when the great and the noble were carried into captivity. The men of Jericho at length prevailed. Shemida, as elder of the city, led the march with the heads of the courses of priests; the Levites struck up their music, and all the people sang with one voice the 87th Psalm:—

“Her foundations are upon the holy hills:
The Lord loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
Very excellent things are spoken of thee,
Thou city of God!” &c. &c.

Thus the train quitted the smiling fields of Jericho, and entered on the wilderness, which they crossed by a nearer way than that which led by the Oasis of the Essenes. By midday they had reached a verdant spot, shaded with palm-trees; and encamping beneath them, opened their wallets, and, distributing their provisions, tried to excite cheerfulness amidst the desolation which

surrounded them. Susannah, sitting between her father and her bridegroom, had taken her sister's first-born from her arms, and tenderly placed it in her own lap, when a Galilean approached them, and asked Shemida, if Melchi and Eldad from Alexandria were with him. Shemida having pointed them out to him, he informed them that he was charged with the salutations of a young Greek of Alexandria, of the name of Lysis, whom he had recently seen in his visit to Damascus. Lysis had further desired him to say, that his affairs would not permit him to come to Jerusalem at Pentecost; and he, therefore, feared that on his return to Egypt he should lose their company, which had given him so much pleasure on the former journey. If, however, they could wait for him, he begged to be informed by this Galilean, who was about to return to Damascus immediately after the feast.

"A fair opportunity," said Abisuab, "for you, Eldad, to meet him in the north of Judea, and bring him to the festivities of the marriage; while you at the same time visit that part of our Holy Land which you have not yet seen. I know what you are going to object; but while preparations for the nuptials are going on, no one can be more easily spared, even by the bride, than the bridegroom."

Shemida agreed with his son; and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Eldad and Susannah, it was finally arranged that the Galilean should carry back word to Damascus, that Eldad would meet Lysis in three weeks' time at Dan, the frontier town of Palestine on the north.

The pilgrims resumed their march, the Desert

was soon left behind, and Bethany, with its gardens and olive-yards, appeared. The train ascended the Mount of Olives, and wound along its western descent among the cedars in the Valley of Jehóshaphat. The Temple, which was seen from this side under its most imposing aspect, was brightened with the glow of sunset; and the whole city, with its valleys and its hills, and the white tents which in some places were already erected, reflected back the rich tints of evening. Companies of pilgrims hastened from all sides to the city; but none drew the attention of the spectators more than that which was descending the Mount of Olives.

Shemida and his party were received with renewed hospitality into the house of Ithiel; who poured out his hearty congratulations to Eldad and Susannah, telling the former, that from the time he had first seen him, he anticipated that they should ere long be more closely connected. In the midst of his friendly greeting, it was, however, clear that something weighed upon his mind; and when the women had retired into the Armon, and the men were sitting round the fountain in the court, he asked whether they had heard what had occurred in their absence. Upon what subject they asked; and he replied, respecting the high-priest. They had only heard imperfect rumours by the way, and begged he would fully relate the circumstances.

“You are all aware,” he said, “that Hyrcanus has from his youth inclined to the party of the Pharisees, though with much moderation. I must confess, that I have often been astonished how he, who himself unites, as the Messiah shall here-

after do, the triple office of high-priest, king, and prophet, and to whom a voice foretold the approaching victory of his sons over the Samaritans, when he came out of the Holy of Holies, on the last day of atonement—how he—how such a man—should not have seen through these hypocrites. It is true, he was brought up by them; and their influence, which since the time of Jonathan has been unfortunately on the increase, has been very serviceable to him in the support of his government. They have now, however, scandalously abused his confidence. At one of the feasts which were held in the castle of Baris, in celebration of the victory over the Samaritans, the pious prince, moved by gratitude towards Jehovah, called upon those who were present to tell him if there were any point in which he had neglected to fulfil the commands of God, or his duties towards men. As was natural, they broke out into the warmest encomiums on his conduct and government. One of them only, the haughty Eleazar, (you know him, Shemida,) said that he could mention an instance of violation of the Law. Hyrcanus urged him to speak. ‘Thou canst not legally be high-priest,’ was the reply, ‘for thy mother was a bondwoman!’ The accusation was as groundless as it was insolent. Hyrcanus was stung to the quick; and even the Pharisees blamed Eleazar for uttering a falsehood. The banquet was interrupted. Jonathan, a confidential friend of the high-priest, although a zealous Sadducee, advised that the council should be called together, and the whole matter laid before them. Hyrcanus did this; but the Pharisees, who predominate there, proposed only the

imprisonment of the offender ; and the high-priest chose that the insult offered to him should be passed over, rather than that so inadequate a punishment should be inflicted. He has now, however, seen the Pharisees in their true colours ; and he and his sons, it is to be hoped, will in future be on their guard against these hypocrites. They will seek to do him mischief, but the conquerors of Samaria may well defy them."

All were grieved and astonished at the account thus given by Ithiel, whose indignation was warmly shared by Shemida. Melchi lamented that Israel should be distracted by such bitter quarrels, which appeared like a canker at the root of its prosperity. Eldad silently rejoiced in the prospect of domestic felicity with his Susannah, which would remove him from the scene of these unholy contentions, and preserve him, as he hoped, from the infection of party spirit. They all then partook of the evening meal, and Ithiel numbered the forty-eighth day from the offering of the first-fruits.

The following day was the preparation for Pentecost, and was passed in bathing, cutting off the hair, and other purifyings. An hour after the evening sacrifice, Eldad went up to the Temple, and knocked at the door of the Old Man's cell.

"Welcome to Azereth !" he exclaimed, as Eldad entered. Azereth, or day of assembly, was the name given to the day of Pentecost as well as to the seventh day of the Passover, and to the eighth of the Feast of Tabernacles.¹ (Levit. xxiii. 8. 21. 36.)

¹ The Rabbins give the name of Azereth to the Feast of Pentecost ; but in Scripture it is never so given, though applied to the other festivals.

"Will it, in truth, be Azereth to Hyrcanus and the Pharisees?" asked Eldad.

"Did I not tell thee, young man," he replied, "that it would be so? Believe me, this is but the beginning of long and ruinous quarrels between the council and the prince. God grant that I may not live to see them! But for thee, at least, priest and bridegroom both, it is truly Azereth!"

"Give us thy blessing," said Eldad; and as he knelt down the Old Man stretched out his hands upon his head, and blessed him.

Eldad then begged him to explain the design of the feast, which was about to commence.

"As," said he "when the first barley sheaf was offered, we prayed to Jehovah for His blessing upon the harvest, so now that both the barley and the wheat are gathered in, we thank Him that He has given us the early and the latter rain, and dew from heaven, and the appointed weeks of harvest. Thus the Pentecost is a harvest feast; but it is also a commemoration of the giving of the Law. For it was on this fiftieth day, the sixth after Israel's arrival in the wilderness of Sinai, and the third after the purification of the people, that Moses led them out of the camp to meet Jehovah, and to receive the Law, amidst the thunder and lightning, and the sound of the trumpet. But pray to God that He may disclose to thee the sublimer meaning which lies hidden under these more obvious purposes. Bethink thee of that approaching time when all the gifts of Jehovah shall be poured out upon His kingdom on earth, when all prayers shall be granted, and the Law shall be universally known, and kept in its purest and most spiritual sense. Let this

thought guide thy devotions at the feast. And now, if thou art pure, go to the evening sacrifice. Hark! the trumpets announce that the Pentecost is about to begin."

Eldad departed, was present at the evening sacrifice, and remained in the Temple through the night, with all the priests who had assembled at Jerusalem for the festival. On the following day the principal duty fell to the course whose week was just beginning; but there was so much to be done beyond the common offices, that they needed the aid of the others. The dissensions of the Pharisees and Sadducees were more visible than ever, ceasing not even in the Temple, and on this holy night.

The gates were opened, and among those who filled the courts before the crowing of the cock, Ithiel, Shemida, Abisuab, and Melchi, presented their victims to the priests; and Susannah, with her sister-in-law and the wife of Ithiel, were in the Court of the Women. The ordinary morning sacrifice was first offered, and then the special offering for the festival. The difference between the offerings at the Passover and at the Feast of Pentecost was, that at the Passover two bullocks and one ram were offered, and now two rams and one bullock. (Levit. xxiii. 18.) When the drink offering was poured out, the priests blew upon their pillars, the Levites sung on the fifteen steps, and the whole congregation joined in the great Hallel. Then came the special offering of the Pentecost. It consisted of two loaves, and the tenth of an epha of fine wheat flour, the first-fruits of the harvest which a priest had waved before Jehovah towards all the four winds of

heaven in the open space between the altar and the sanctuary.

After this offering, the sacrifices of individuals began. Shemida, his son, and Melchi, each brought noble victims. Thousands followed them; and among the rest, Eldad offered his thank offering, and paid to the Lord the vow which he had made in the happy hour of his betrothment. Shemida's son offered for the purification of his wife, as it chanced to be the fortieth day after the birth of her son. She prayed while the lamb as a burnt-offering, and the turtledove as a sin offering, were slain; and a priest bringing the blood of the sin offering in a dish, sprinkled her with it, and thus she became clean. She had brought her first-born in her arms to present him before Jehovah; and her husband redeemed him, according to the Law, by the payment of five shekels. (Num. xviii. 15, 16.)

When these sacrifices were ended, and the blessing given to the people in the name of Jehovah, Ithiel, with the assistance of his own slaves and of Jetur, presented his own thank offering. The wife of Abisuah, Susannah, and the wife of Ithiel, partook of the feast, which the sacrifice furnished, in one of the apartments in the Temple, together with some priests and Levites who had been bidden.

Eldad, once more in the Temple, rejoiced in the sight of the crowds of worshippers who poured in streams along its courts, and in hearing the solemn sound of the Temple music. Surrounded by all that made this consecrated spot a little world within itself, and seated by the fair Susannah, he forgot his native home in Egypt, and

even his longing for his mother. He thought not of the factions of the Pharisees and Sadducees; nothing occupied his thoughts but the wish to live in the Holy Land, as a priest of Jehovah; and to endeavour to fulfil the Law with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength.

The Feast of Pentecost lasted only one day.



SYCHAR

CHAPTER IX.

SHECHEM.—THE SHEPHERD'S CAMP.

IT was early in the morning of the next day, that Eldad stood upon the highest of the three summits of the Mount of Olives, and watched the train of the pilgrims from Jericho, as they disappeared among the groves and gardens of Bethany. With a heavy heart, and weeping eyes, he listened to their songs, in which he fancied he could trace the voice of his Susannah, warbling to him a farewell full of affectionate regret. Many a struggle had he gone through before he could give his consent

to this forced separation; but Shemida was determined to put his self-command to this test, and he was obliged to yield. There was a certain hardness in Shemida's natural character, which the influence of an amiable wife had not entirely softened. In his youth, he had been compelled to practise much self-denial, and to bear many mortifications, and he seemed to have something like a feeling of pleasure in making those even whom he loved, go through a similar discipline. He persuaded himself that he was improving *them*, while, in truth, he was only indulging *himself*. "The path of obedience is hard and rough," said Eldad with a sigh, as he turned his eye from where the Jordan wound its way through the meadows of Jericho, to those northern hills of Ebal and Gerizim, over which his destined journey lay: "The path of obedience is rough, but it shall be trodden." He remembered the first commandment with promise, and he thought that when he had made *this* sacrifice to a sense of duty, every other would seem light, and he should be able, without difficulty, to fulfil the rest of the commandments, and become a Chasidean. The proud desire of superiority thus came to the aid of virtue, and he returned to the city resolute, if not cheerful.

On the following morning he left Jerusalem, in company with the Governor of Samaria, newly appointed by Hyrcanus, and some Galilean Jews, who preferred returning to their own country by the nearest road. Ithiel, who was secretly displeased with Shemida for insisting on this journey, accompanied Eldad as far as the gate of Ephraim, and parted from him, with many sympathising

good wishes. The travellers were all mounted, and attended by a numerous train, as became the rank of the principal person in the party. They entered the King's Valley, after leaving the gate, and directed their course between Mizpah¹ and Nob,² towards Geba, which lay not far from Ramah,³ the city where Samuel dwelt (1 Sam. vii. 17), and which in later times was called Arimathea. The road was stony and rough, which made conversation difficult, and as what there was turned wholly on worldly topics, Eldad felt himself at liberty to follow his own train of thought. He could not, however, but remember, as he entered Geba of Benjamin, that it was the spot where David gained his celebrated victory over the Philistines. (2 Sam. v. 25.) Geba was six Sabbath-days' journies from Jerusalem, and as the party had been late in starting, they agreed upon this as their noon-day place of rest, and consulting their own case, remained there till late in the afternoon. The road which they then took to Michmash was more steep and rocky than the road to Geba, and they had to traverse a defile between two abrupt and rugged rocks, in the mountains of Ephraim. This pass is famous for the valiant attack upon the Philistines which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, when they had passed through it on their way from the camp of Saul. (1 Sam. xiv. 4, 5.) The halt for the night was made at Bethel, a well-known city, sixteen Sabbath-days' journies from Jerusalem. Eldad called to mind that when Abraham dwelt there it had been called Luz, from the mulberry-

¹ Gen. xxxi. 49. 1 Kings, xv. 22.

² 1 Sam. xxi. 1; xxii. 9—19.

³ Judg. iv. 5. 1 Sam. i. 19; xxv. 1. Jerem. xxxi. 15.

trees in its neighbourhood; that there Jacob saw the vision of the ladder, and the angels ascending and descending upon it; and that awaking the next morning he built an altar to Jehovah, and called the name of the place Bethel. (Gen. xxviii. 19.) The ark of the covenant had also stood there; and there, alas! Jeroboam had set up the golden calves, and made Israel to sin. (1 Kings xii. 29.)

On the following morning, instead of taking the usual road by Lebonah and Gophna, they went by Shiloh, where the governor had some business to transact. This change of road was very pleasing to Eldad, who looked with great interest at Shiloh, so long the resting-place of the ark of God, and the dwelling of His priests. It was here the aged Eli had fallen from his seat, and died, upon hearing the sad tidings of the capture of the ark (1 Sam. iv. 18); and here, in earlier times, the maidens of Israel were carried away, by force, to supply the men of Benjamin with wives. (Judges xxi. 21.)

After the mid-day rest at Shiloh, the governor hurried on to his residence at Shechem, which the party reached that night, and there separated. In consequence, however, of the strong recommendations of Ithiel, Eldad was warmly invited to take up his abode in the governor's house, where he found a numerous train of servants, and luxury of every kind. But the freedom of manner, and licentious conversation of the governor, who, though a Jew by birth, was a Samaritan in sensuality and worldly wisdom, made his society very disagreeable to Eldad, who would willingly have refused the offered hospitality. As this,

however, could not be done without rudeness, Eldad determined on remaining a few days at Shechem, and endeavoured to console himself by exploring every place of interest in the neighbourhood, the governor furnishing him with guides and attendants.

Shechem lay in a valley extending east and west. On the northern and southern sides of the long line of the city rose the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim,¹ separated by so small a distance that the human voice might be heard from the summit of the one to the summit of the other. Sheltered from the pernicious winds of the north-west and south-west, it lay stretched out in picturesque beauty, at the feet of the gigantic guards that seemed stationed for its protection. It was a half Sabbath day's journey in length, but so narrow, that it allowed only of two parallel streets, with an open space between them.² The fruitful plain into which this valley opened was watered by several mountain streams, and cultivated in vineyards and oliveyards, besides cornfields, plantations of mulberries, and orchards of figs, citrons, and pomegranates. In the middle of it was the grove of Moreh, one of the resting places of Abraham (Gen. xii. 6); and a little way out of the city, on the road to Jerusalem, was the well of Jacob, in the field which the patriarch had bought from the children of Hamor. (Gen. xxxiii. 19.) It was cut in the rock, a hundred feet deep, with five feet of water at the bottom.

¹ Deut. xxvii. 12, 13.

² Sichem, or Shechem, is the Sychar of the New Testament. The town of Neapolis was afterwards built nearly on the same spot, and is the modern Naplosa, or Nablous.

From every part of the plain, Shechem and its hills of Ebal and Gerizim were seen; the city appearing to be more closely connected with Gerizim, which lay on the south, than with Ebal on the north. Gerizim was fruitful, abounding in springs, and covered with vines and olives; and its principal face being turned to the north, it escaped the parching heat which kept Ebal sun-burnt and barren. The latter, on the side nearest the city, was full of caverns, which served the inhabitants as burying places for their dead.

The natural beauties of the scenery were combined with a number of historical associations, which gave it double interest with Eldad. The grove of Moreh had been Abraham's *first* resting place when he entered the Land of Promise. Jacob had dug the well, bought the ground, and buried the idols of his wives beneath the oak, or terebinth. (Gen. xxxv. 4.) His sons, Simeon and Levi, had avenged their sister's dishonour on this spot, and compelled their father to retire to Bethel. Here Joshua had called the tribes together for the last time, and had caused a stone to be set up as a memorial of the renewal of their covenant with Jehovah. (Josh. xxiv. 26, 27.) It was Shechem which proclaimed Abimelech king after he had murdered his seventy brethren; and it was Shechem which, after it had headed the revolt against him, was destroyed and sowed with salt. (Judges ix. 6. 45.) Again, Shechem is mentioned as the spot where Rehoboam, rejecting the advice of his aged councillors, gave occasion to the revolt of the ten tribes, who proclaimed Jeroboam king, and by him the city was rebuilt. (1 Kings xii. 1. 25.) It had been for three hundred years the

chief seat of Samaritan idolatry, after the erection of the Temple on Mount Gerizim which Hyrcanus had now destroyed.

Eldad dismissed his guides as soon as they had pointed out to him the particular spots he wished to see; and every morning he wandered alone, for several hours, in the neighbourhood. Now he lingered beside the well of Jacob, or rested in the grove of Moreh; and now from the lofty side of Ebal or Gerizim he gazed on the lovely landscape spread at his feet. The hours flowed on without his notice, while he was sometimes reflecting on the past, but more often, perhaps, picturing to himself his future happiness, which every day brought nearer. Nor was he without an unacknowledged feeling of pride in the virtuous resolution which had enabled him to quit Susannah for a time, in obedience to her father's command. It was unwillingly that he returned in the evening to take his place among the guests at the luxurious table of the governor, and to listen to their light and heartless jests.

Once, however, during his rambles, he found the governor's protection of great importance to him. He had joined a party of Samaritans who were reposing under the shade of some olives on the sloping side of Gerizim, and were conversing about their temple and their worship, the rites of which were still celebrated amidst its ruins. They reviled Hyrcanus and his sons, and exalted the memory of Sanballat and Manassch. This was more than Eldad could bear. He started up, exclaiming, "Where is your temple? When Moses commanded that on the entrance of the tribes into the Promised Land, one half should

stand on Ebal to curse the ungodly, and the other half on Gerizim to bless the godly, he also commanded that an altar should be built on Mount Ebal to Jehovah (Deut. xxvii.), and Joshua obeyed the commandment (Josh. viii. 30); but ye, contrary to the command, have built a temple upon Gerizim!"

The Samaritans arose, and in violent anger exclaimed, "Thou art a Jew, one of those who, through hatred of us, have corrupted the Law. Ye have changed by fraud the name of Gerizim for that of Ebal."

"It is false!" said Eldad.

"We alone possess the genuine Law," warmly replied the Samaritans.¹

"And ye have the curse," rejoined Eldad with equal emotion. Both parties soon became so heated in the discussion, that Eldad might probably have suffered some personal violence from them, had not the officers of justice made their appearance, and carried them all before the governor. He speedily decided the affair: dismissed the Samaritans with scorn, and gave some friendly but sarcastic admonitions to Eldad, to control his zeal and enthusiasm in future. At the evening banquet Eldad found himself again exposed to his

¹ No ancient authority supports the Samaritan reading of Gerizim for Ebal. Had the Jews corrupted the text out of hatred to the Samaritans, they would probably have made Gerizim the Mount of Cursing. A remnant of this people escaped the persecutions of the Emperor Justinian, and still celebrate their festivals on Gerizim. Jowett mentions forty of them at Naplosa. Had the Emperor effected his purpose of exterminating or converting them, Revelation would have lost the testimony which their copy of the Pentateuch furnishes to the general correctness of that portion of the Scriptures. A copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch was first brought to Europe about 1640 A.D.

raillery; and when alone, he could not help exclaiming, "Well may Shechem be called in Judea Sychar (intoxication); it is, in truth, a place of drunkenness."¹

The next morning Eldad took his departure. The governor politely gave him an escort as far as Samaria, fearing, as he remarked with a quiet smile, lest he should expose himself to danger, as on Mount Gerizim. Eldad did not refuse the offer, but shook off the dust of Shechem from his feet when he quitted the city.

Samaria was in the territory which, at the first, had belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. Omri, the father of Ahab, built it, and called it after Shemer, from whom he had bought the ground. (1 Kings xvi. 24.) After the destruction of Tirzah, Samaria became the capital of the kingdom of Israel. It was then a league in circumference, and contained a magnificent temple, built by Jezebel, and dedicated to Baal. (1 Kings xvi. 32.) By the prophets it was called "the head of Ephraim" (Isaiah vii. 9): but it slighted the warning of the prophets, and was taken, and its people carried into captivity, by the Assyrian Shalmaneser. (2 Kings xvii. 5.)

At the time of Eldad's visit, Samaria was comparatively a scene of desolation. The lofty hill on which it once proudly stood, with a view towards Joppa, Carmel, and the Mediterranean Sea, was now covered with ruins. Its commanding situation only made it a more conspicuous monument of God's vengeance upon its wicked inhabitants, and of the valour of the heroes of Judah. A second

¹ Sychar, in Heb. שִׁיכָר, signifies to be intoxicated.

time the prophetic word of Hosea and Micah had received its accomplishment. (Hosea ix. ; Micah i. 1—8.) Eldad looked down with patriotic exultation, and gratitude to God, upon the scattered huts in which the children of Samaria were hiding themselves, while the children of Jerusalem were praising Jehovah in their houses and palaces.¹

The escort of the governor accompanied Eldad no further than Samaria, leaving him to pursue his way, with Jetur only for his companion. He had intended to reach Megiddo; but at Tirzah his progress was arrested by a spectacle equally new and interesting. He came unexpectedly upon a tribe of wandering shepherds, who were making their annual migration from the plain of Sharon to Mount Hermon. They had been detained later than usual, for they commonly remove in early spring. The flocks and herds led the way; behind them came camels, laden with their tents, baggage, and poultry, and the young of the flocks, which were as yet too weak to follow with the rest. The women and children came next, mounted on other camels. Some of the females were spinning as they rode, others grinding in their hand-mills, others nursing their infant children. The boys ran by the side of the camels, playing or fighting. Lances, from eight to ten feet in length, were every where seen above the heads of this tumultuous train, and on all sides were heard the hoarse voices of the men who carried them, some of whom were

¹ A Macedonian colony was planted in Samaria, by Alexander the Great, and its inhabitants then removed to Shechem. But it remained a poor and ruinous city until it was rebuilt by Herod, who named it Sebaste, in honour of Augustus (Sebastus). Very magnificent ruins of this later city are still to be seen.

endeavouring to maintain order, while others guarded the long line of march.

When they reached their place of encampment, a new scene began ; the sheep and goats laid themselves to rest on the grass, the camels knelt down, and the poultry flew from their backs. In two hours the dark brown tents were all pitched. Eldad bade Jetur assist them, while he himself looked on and enjoyed the animated confusion of the scene. With upright and cross poles a large tent of an oblong form was erected. The coverings were of a thick brown stuff, made of goats' hair, and the door of the tent was nothing but a curtain of the same, which could be drawn aside, or lifted up at pleasure. The tent of the chief of this nomadic tribe was pitched in the middle ; the rest around it, to the distance of thirty paces. Every one of the larger tents was divided by curtains into three parts. In the outermost were the young and tender animals, which required shelter ; in the middle division the men, and in the innermost the women. The mattresses, pillows, and coverlets for the night, were laid in one corner ; the weapons were hung upon the sides of the tent ; carpets were spread upon the floor ; a hole dug in the middle for the fire ; and the few and simple articles of household furniture, wooden dishes, vessels of copper, leathern bottles, and a handmill, all found their appropriate places.

Eldad watched with admiration the building of this moveable town. The number of the tents was about thirty ; that of the men and women above two hundred ; and the cattle amounted to some thousands. Always uniting the past to the present, Eldad fancied he was watching the Recha-

bites; or Israel journeying through the wilderness; or the still earlier wanderings of Abraham and Jacob. "How much more agreeable to nature," murmured he, "how much more favourable to virtue, is this life of simplicity and freedom, than the restraints and the luxury of the governor's palace!" He stretched himself beside the well, and again he thought: "What would be wanting to the happiness or the purity of my life, if here, with Susannah, I could spend my days, far away from the cares and temptations of the busy world!"

The chief of the tribe received him and Jetur, and their horses and camels, with willing hospitality. He killed a calf for their entertainment, which the women cut into small pieces, and roasted. Milk, butter, and cheese, formed the rest of their repast. At the first dawn of day the whole camp was busily employed in milking the cows, and leading them out to their pasture. Eldad cast his eyes on the spot, marked by a few scattered cottages, on which the beautiful city of Tirzah once stood. Baasha governed Israel from this hill, and Zimri here slew Elah, the son of Baasha. Seven days only did he enjoy the fruits of his crime; and then, to escape the vengeance of Omri, he set fire to the palace, and was burnt to death. (1 Kings xvi.) "These," exclaimed Eldad, "are all passed away—city and kingdom, king and usurper, all are forgotten! but the tribes of migrating shepherds are still here, and still follow the track of their forefathers in ages past!"

About noon, a small caravan of merchants arrived, the usual followers of the shepherds. They pitched their white tents, forming a picturesque contrast to the brown tents of the shepherds,

and spread their merchandize in front. The shepherds became purchasers, giving in exchange skins, wool, goats' hair, cheese, and even cattle. Eldad bought some ornaments, as a parting gift to his hospitable entertainer. He remained some days among them, delighted with their mode of life, and interested in all their occupations. He helped the shepherds to water their flocks from the well ; he played with the children ; and in the evening, when all gathered around the fire with their camels, Eldad amused them with the account of his travels, and with stories which were listened to with delight. This calm and peaceful life could not, however, be allowed to last, for a few days only remained to the time fixed for his meeting with Lysis at Dan, and he was obliged to leave the encampment of the friendly shepherds.



MOUNT CARMEL.

CHAPTER X.

DAN.—THE LEPERS. — THE JORDAN.

AFTER quitting the camp, Eldad directed his course to Megiddo, which lies between the fragrant plain of Sharon on the south, and the great plain of Jezreel, on the north. Megiddo is celebrated for the battle in which Josiah was killed, fighting against Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt. (2 Chron. xxxv. 20—24.) Eldad went there following the great route of the Phœnician commerce, which pur-

sued a course parallel to the sea.¹ He passed Turris Stratonis, a small and now almost abandoned town, but possessed, as he remarked, of an incomparable harbour.² Keeping to the north, he came to Dor, on the sea-shore, and thence by Magdiel to the foot of Carmel.

Carmel joins the plains of Sharon to the south, and on the north the plain of Jezreel, through which the Kishon runs, rising in Mount Tabor, and falling into the sea at the foot of Carmel. Eldad ascended the mountain, and from its summit enjoyed an extensive and beautiful prospect both by land and sea. It is distinguished, as its very name expresses, by its fertility.³ The top is crowned with pines and oaks, while the lower regions abound with olives and laurels. Standing on it, Eldad thought with sacred awe of the victory which the worship of Jehovah had there gained over that of Baal, of the zeal of Elijah, and of the slaughter of the priests of Baal, which made Kishon run purple to the sea. (1 Kings xviii.) As he descended to the shore he found a number of Phœnician fishermen busily employed in taking the shell-fish from which their celebrated dye is made. There are two kinds of this fish; one is caught by bait, the other, which is particularly abundant on the shore of Carmel, is taken

¹ The remains of this paved road leading towards Tyre are still distinctly visible along the coast.

² This harbour was probably made by Herod, who spent ten years in restoring and beautifying the city, and gave it, in honour of Augustus, the name of Cæsarea. It was called Cæsarea Augusta, to distinguish it from Cæsarea Philippi, near Dan. It was to Cæsarea Augusta that St. Paul was sent when his life was threatened by the Jews. (Acts xxiii. 23.)

³ Carmel signifying full ears of corn, vineyard of God, &c., &c. See Cruden.

from the rocks. The dye is contained in a white vein or bladder in the neck; the Phœnicians make from it fourteen shades of purple, of which the most valuable, the bright red and the violet, are manufactured with wonderful skill at Tyre.¹ A shepherd's dog, which had fed upon the fish and stained its mouth of a beautiful colour, is said to have furnished the first hint of this famous dye.

Eldad did not proceed from Carmel to Accho,² a Phœnician city on the river Belus, for he had resolved to enter no heathen place on this journey, which was devoted to exploring the Promised Land. Leaving, therefore, Carmel to the south, the hills of Galilee to the east, and to the north the Tyrian Climax,³ behind which lay the city of Tyre, he entered the plain of Zebulun. His first resting-place was Gathhepher, in Galilee, the birth-place of the prophet Jonah; and thence he proceeded through the land of Naphthali, to Thisba, where in ancient times the great Elijah, and more recently the pious Tobit, had been born.

¹ Swinburne describes the method of preparing this dye in his travels. "Two shell-fish," he says, "were used in making the Tyrian dye—the *murex* and the *purpura*; the former gave a dark blue colour, the latter a bright tint approaching to scarlet." The purple colour was obtained by the mixture of the two. "The liquor is contained in a sort of pouch in the middle of the shell. The shells are carefully broken, so as to preserve this entire—they are then sprinkled with salt, and the mucilage which they form is put into a leaden cauldron and heated; the fleshy particles are gradually taken off, and the coloured liquid is left pure.

² Accho, now called Acre.

³ The Tyrian Climax appears to have been the *White Cliff*, in which the chain of Antilibanus terminates, and it probably derived its name of Climax from the road described by Egmont and Heyman. "It is so steep," says Mr. Buckingham, "as in some places to render *steps* necessary." Κλίμαξ, a step or stair.

But neither the beauty of the scenery, nor the interest he took in the memory of these eminent men, could make Eldad forget that every step carried him farther from Jericho. His pride in the consciousness of fulfilling a duty became less and less able to support him; he thought that he had carried his obedience a point too far, and was angry with Shemida, with Melchi, and with himself. Greatly, therefore, did he rejoice when he saw in the distance Antilibanus, the southern branch of a chain of mountains, of which the other branch lay in Phœnicia. Here, then, was the boundary of Israel's land. Its name, Lebanon (*white*), was derived from the whiteness of its rocks and peaks, and more especially from the perpetual snow which covered the head of Hermon, its highest summit. The morning sun was shining on this brilliant peak as Eldad crossed the Lesser Jordan, and entered Dan, the frontier town of Palestine, on the north. He inquired the way to the caravansera, and had just halted before it with his horses and camels, when Lysis came out and embraced him. Eldad joyfully returned his salutation.

"And shall you be ready," he said, "to-morrow to set off for Jericho?"

Lysis burst into a laugh. "It is true, then; the Galilean was right in what he told me of your good fortune. My own good star has brought me to be the witness of your nuptials. Receive my hearty congratulations. How is my venerable Melchi? But first let us give rest and shelter to your beasts."

They entered the court; in the middle was a large cistern of water, from which the horses and camels drank; the baggage was deposited in rooms

behind the portico; and fodder for the beasts, with a scanty supply for themselves, was purchased of the attendant in the caravansera.

When all this had been done, Eldad and Lysis seated themselves in a corner of the portico, where they could be most free from interruption, and Eldad related to his friend his adventures since they parted. Afterwards Lysis began his story:—

“After you left the caravan at Gaza,” he said, “I led but a dull life in the midst of my merchants, not one of whom had a single thought or feeling in common with me. My freedom of speech was perpetually involving me in disputes, out of which I found it sometimes difficult to extricate myself. I remember particularly at Joppa—”

Eldad here interrupted him, remarking that he had heard of the offence which Lysis had given a citizen of that place, and regretting his want of caution.

“There is no malice,” rejoined Lysis, “in my pleasantries; and for the rest, be assured that not one Greek in a hundred feels such real veneration for your religion and your people as I do. When I had seen the singular Tyrian Climax I had a great curiosity to visit Tyre and Sidon. These two cities were the parents of Carthage, Thebes, and Gades in Spain,¹ with many other powerful colonies. The principles of arithmetic, astronomy, geography, navigation, were all either discovered by them, or at least taught by them to the Greeks. It was Hiram, king of Tyre, as you have told me, who, giving his aid to Solomon, may indeed be said to have built the eighth wonder of the world, the Temple at Jeru-

¹ Gades, now Cadiz.

salem. The great invention of the alphabet was probably theirs—the discovery of the famous purple dye certainly belongs to them. There is something, too, in the situation of Tyre, in the midst of the sea, obliged to supply by her own industry and ingenuity what a narrow and rocky country denies her, which made me very desirous of seeing by what institutions she had been able to contend so successfully against natural disadvantages. I went, therefore, to Tyre, and found manufactories of glass, and purple, in full activity; docks crowded with ships, and markets full of silk, wool, cotton, ivory, ebony, and cedar,—of all the precious and useful metals, of wine and oil, of horses, dromedaries, and slaves. But the character of the inhabitants pleased me not. Their sagacity is too much like cunning—the polish of their manners has destroyed the force of their individual character—and their pride is but the mean pride of riches. In my own mind I applauded the wisdom of your lawgiver, who formed a nation of agriculturists rather than merchants.”

“How exactly,” said Eldad, “does your account of the New Tyre agree with that which our prophet gives of the old. Shall I repeat a part of it?”

“By all means,” answered Lysis: “since we have been separated I have often wished to hear more of your psalms and prophets, though I will confess that, while we were together, I sometimes thought that you gave me a little too much of them.”

With this limited encouragement Eldad began to repeat the words of Ezekiel:—

“Say unto Tyre:

O thou! that art situate at the entry of the sea,
A merchant of the people for many isles,” &c.

Ezekiel xxvii. 3—25.

"A splendid picture, indeed," exclaimed Lysis, as soon as Eldad was silent; "splendid, but not at all exaggerated. Yet Tyre, with all its luxury and splendour, was so little to my taste that I left it without regret—I went to Damascus: but how, Eldad, can I describe to thee this eye of the east, this earthly Elysium? Imagine a lovely plain, fruitful, well-watered, bordered by Antilibanus on the one hand, and the Arabian chain on the other. The meadows are shaded by trees, and from Antilibanus descends a stream which is called Chrysorroas; on entering the plain it divides into three branches, of which the principal flows straight towards Damascus, and, separating its amber waters into a multitude of little streams, refreshes every street of the city. Re-uniting with the other two branches below the town, they altogether form a lake of great extent, on the eastern verge of the plain. In the rich soil of which this plain is composed, every variety of fruit-tree grows in greater perfection than in any other spot that I have ever seen. The city itself is one of the oldest in the world. I passed my time there most happily, and nothing would have drawn me from it so soon but your friendly appointment. I have been waiting for you here since yesterday."

On the following morning they left the caravansera early, and turning from Hermon's snowy peak, they passed between the hills of Antilibanus, of which Hermon is only a part, and bending eastward came first to Paneas. It lies at the foot of a hill, which also belongs to Antilibanus, and the Jordan flows from caverns in the rock. They were wondering at the gushing stream, so copious

near its apparent source, when an inhabitant of Paneas approaching, said to them,—

“Strangers, this is not the real head of the Jordan; it has already flowed sixteen Sabbath-days journeys under the earth. At that distance, to the east of Paneas, is a little lake, called from its form Phiala,¹ which is constantly receiving the



LAKE PHIALA.

¹ Phiala, in Greek, is the name given to a round or oval shallow drinking vessel. Other lakes, from their form, received this name among the ancients, especially those which are the first receptacles of the waters of a river issuing from its source. There is little doubt that Phiala is the lake described by Captains Irby and Mangles:—“We saw, close to us, a very picturesque lake, apparently perfectly circular, little more than a mile round, surrounded on all sides by sloping hills, richly wooded. The singularity of this lake is that it has no apparent supply or discharge, and its clear and limpid waters appeared perfectly still.”

waters of different small streams, and yet, without any visible outlet, it never overflows. The reason is that its waters, by a subterraneous channel, pass to the Hill of Paneas, and break forth there as the Jordan, which from this cause appears in great force, even at the first."

They asked him how the existence of this underground channel was known, and he told them that things which had been thrown into the Lake of Phiala, had re-appeared in the Jordan.

From Paneas they followed the course of the river to the Lake Merom. (Josh. xi. 5.) Before it reaches this lake the Lesser Jordan, rising near Dan, flows into it. Merom is so much dried up in the early summer that only the bright line of Jordan's current is visible, and lions, tigers, bears, and other wild animals harbour in the reeds and bushes with which the rest is overgrown, till the snow of Lebanon begins to melt, when the Jordan overflows, and fills up the whole basin of the lake. (Jer. xlix. 19; Josh. iii. 15). It was now full of sedge and oozy water. Not being able, on this account, to take the nearest way to the Lake of Gennesaret, they struck into the Desert, thinking thus to reach Bethsaida. After riding a long time, however, under the burning rays of the sun, they at last found out that they had missed their way. Descrying some moving figures in the distance, which they took for shepherds, they made towards them, in the hope of obtaining information. Coming nearer, the men warned them by gestures to keep at a distance, with hoarse broken voices and melancholy looks, uttering the words, "Unclean, unclean!" (Levit. xiii. 45.)

"They are lepers," cried Eldad, with a look of

horror, and, turning his horse's head, fled with precipitation, followed by the others.

The huts of the unhappy victims of this loathsome disease were hard by, in the Desert. As our travellers were hastening away they met the relations of the lepers, who dwelt in Bethsaida, and who were bringing them the food by which their miserable life was to be prolonged. The lepers had set down their vessels and retired out of sight, the others then came, placed provisions in them with the greatest caution, avoiding to touch the vessels, and then hastened away, as from the region of death. Father and mother, brother and sister, wife and children, all forsake the miserable leper; scarcely will one of those who are clean venture to bid him peace from afar; and when the provisions are no longer fetched away, they rejoice that his sufferings are ended. These men had been attacked by the elephantiasis, the most virulent kind of leprosy. It is gradual in its approaches, a scaly scurf overspreading the body, the nervous system loses its sensibility, the touch grows duller and duller, till it is lost altogether. Little pain is felt by the afflicted person, but dejection and despondency take possession of his soul. The breath becomes corrupt, swellings of the size of a nut are formed, and ulcers cover the body. The nails fall from the fingers and toes, in some cases these parts themselves drop off; the hair turns grey and falls, all the joints become stiff; and yet, while the unhappy person becomes a burthen to himself, and loathsome to all around him, he eats and drinks as usual. This terrible disease is not only in the highest degree contagious, but also hereditary, sometimes continuing

in a family to the fourth generation ; and, to add to its horror, it is regarded as the judgment of God for some enormous crime.

Eldad and his companions continued their hasty flight, till they reached the Jordan, which soon conducted them to Bethsaida, standing on the spot where the river falls into the Lake of Gennesaret. Bethsaida is almost wholly inhabited by fishermen, who were busily employed with the angle and the net. They called to some of them, and were soon conveyed across the lake to Magdala. The Lake of Gennesaret, or of Galilee,



SEA OF GALILEE.

anciently bore the name of Chinnereth, (Numb. xxxiv. 11 ; Josh. xiii. 27,) or Chinneroth, (1 Kings xv. 20 ; Josh. xi. 2, &c.) Its waters abound with fish, and are so clear that the stones at the bottom

can be seen.¹ Aromatic reeds and bulrushes grow along the shores. The form of the lake is nearly oval, and it lies in a deep valley, which, on the east and west, is closed in by high mountains; and on the north and south expands into a plain. As Lysis and Eldad sailed on its transparent waters they saw, first, on its western side, Capernaum, which, as its name implies,² is delightfully situated between the lake and the hills; lower down, to the east, Chorazin and a number of smaller places. The celebrated region of Decapolis lay on the eastern side, beyond the hills.

Arrived at Magdala, they quitted their boat and traced the shore, as far as where the Jordan issues from the lake, then crossed the river, and being joined by the slaves, with the horses and camels, took the road to Tabor, which lies at the end of the Plain of Jezreel over against Carmel. Notwithstanding Eldad's impatience to reach the end of his journey, he could not resolve to pass this celebrated mountain without a closer examination, and he found Lysis most willing to accompany him.

Tabor rises out of the middle of the plain, wholly unconnected with any other hill. Its base is formed of an ash-coloured stone, and as the upper part is covered with trees it has the appearance of a tall pillar with a verdant capital. * The ascent to the

¹ Clarke, in his travels, says of this lake: "The water was as clear as the purest crystal, sweet, cool, and most refreshing to the taste. Swimming to a considerable distance from the shore, we found it to be so limpid that we could discern the bottom covered with shining pebbles." Clarke reckons the breadth of the lake at six miles, and Pococke thinks it is about fourteen or fifteen miles in length.

² Capernaum, in Hebrew, signifies "the town of consolation,"

כְּפַר נַחֲוִים

summit is nearly five Sabbath-days' journies, and on the top is a plain of about four in circumference.¹ Wild animals and birds abound on it, which seems to be alluded to by Hosea. (Hos. v. 1.) Barak assembled 10,000 men on Tabor, from Zebulun and Naphthali, before he engaged with Sisera (Judg. iv. 12); and indeed, a fitter position for a camp can hardly be imagined. Eldad and Lysis were astonished at the extent of the view. The snowy peak of Hermon, and the dark exhalations of the Dead Sea can both be seen from it. "And there," exclaimed Eldad, with delight, "there are the towers of Jericho!" The Sea of Galilee, the Jordan, and Peræa, spread themselves on the east; on the west the prospect reached to the Mediterranean and to Carmel, near which the Kishon, which rises in Tabor, falls into the sea. Near at hand, to the north-west, was Nazareth,² situated on the slope of a hill, and extending into a little valley, shut in on every side. To the south lay Endor, famed in the history of Saul, and near to each other, Shunem, the scene of Elisha's miracle (2 Kings iv. 8), and Jezreel, where the vineyard of Naboth stood. (1 Kings xxi.) The whole plain takes the name of Jezreel. In the distance a dark shade lowered over the hills of

¹ Pococke reckons the ascent about two miles, by a winding route, and the top half a mile long and a quarter broad. Others reckon the ascent at four miles, which is nearly the same as given by our author.

² "Nazareth," says Dr. Richardson, "stands in a vale resembling a circular basin, encompassed by mountains; it seems as if fifteen mountains met to form an inclosure for this delightful spot. They rise round it like the edge of a shell, as if to guard it from intrusion." It does not stand on the summit but on the side of a hill, and Buckingham speaks of a precipice above the town, which may be "the brow of the hill" mentioned by St. Luke, iv. 29.

Gilboa. Eldad called to mind the lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 19),



and repeated it to Lysis, who admired its pathetic beauty. They then descended from Mount Tabor, and continued their journey to Bethshan. The line from Dor, on the Mediterranean, to Bethshan formed the boundary between Samaria and Galilee. Agriculture and pasturage, the cultivation of the vine and the olive, and fishing, all were carried on with success in this country, which is diversified with hills and plains, and abounds with water. The inhabitants are characterised by their love of freedom, though both their language and their manners are corrupted by their continual intercourse with foreigners.

.They quitted Galilee at Bethshan, and cróssing the Jordan once again, pursued their journey along the numerous windings of the stream, passing Succoth, where Jacob dwelt—Mahanaim, where he had a vision of angels (Gen. xxxii. 2, and xxxiii. 17), and Bethabara. At length the Jordan opened into the Plain of Jericho; the travellers passed through the city gate, and soon reached the hospitable mansion of Shemida. The gate with its pious inscriptions (Deut. xi. 20) opened to receive them, and while Lysis was astonished at the splendour of the house, Eldad thought only that this was to be his happy home.



MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NUPTIALS.

No one was in the outer court of Shemida's house; and Eldad hastily passed into the inner court, followed by Lysis. A slave then came forward, and told them that there was no one in the house.

"Where are they then?" exclaimed Eldad.

"In Eldad's house," answered the slave, with a smile; and informed him that Shemida, Melchi, Ithiel, the wife of Shemida, and Susannah, and Abisuab and his wife, were all gone a few hours

before, in order to receive him in a newly purchased house. They had justly calculated on his return this very evening.

Eldad listened with joyful surprise, easily guessing, that from affection to Susannah, who wished not to be separated from her parents, Melchi had purchased a house for him in Jericho; and, if not an inhabitant of Jerusalem, where could he be better pleased to dwell than in the City of Palms?¹ The splendid mansion was to be a wedding present to his beloved nephew. It is true, that the property must return to its owner in the year of Jubilee, and the contract was therefore a lease, rather than a purchase; a considerable price had nevertheless been set upon it, but this Melchi's wealth enabled him easily to pay.

The slave showed them the way to the house, which stood near the opposite gate; so that they had to traverse the whole length of the city. A slave had been stationed at the gate of the house for some hours; and upon a signal given by him to those within, all the men of the company came forward, and were in waiting to bid him welcome.

"See," said Shemida, "the reward of self-denial."

"Welcome, my brother, and henceforth fellow-citizen of Jericho!" exclaimed Abisuab.

Eldad, with tears of gratitude, threw himself into the arms of Melchi, which opened to receive him. All stood around, pouring out congratulations and blessings.

¹ See Deut. xxxiv. 3. Judges i. 16; iii. 13. 2 Chron. xxviii. 15. The name, no doubt, was given because the finest and best palm-trees grew round Jericho and along the banks of the Jordan.

“What more do we want,” said Melchi, “but that thy mother from Alexandria were here?”

Eldad looked around with inquiring eye as if seeking something. Shemida took him by the hand, and led him through to the richly furnished inner court. Susannah came from the Armon, with her mother and sister-in-law. After their greetings had been exchanged, Eldad, as now master of the house, at the command of Melchi, reconducted them to their apartments. Bewildered with joy, he could scarcely speak. After a short interval they all went to the house of Shemida for the evening meal; and at night, Melchi, Lysis, and Eldad, returned to the house of Eldad, where they thenceforth resided. Lysis was in astonishment at all he saw, and began to form a very different idea of Israel from that which he had entertained before.

The next day Eldad arose early, and traversed the house which was to be the scene of his future happiness and future duties. No other feeling in life resembles that with which a youth just entering into manhood wanders in solemn musing through the house in which he is to sustain the dignity, and fulfil the duties of husband and father. As he explored by turns its courts and porticoes, and its chambers, he admired the convenient arrangement, the tasteful architecture, and the costly furniture; and blessed the generous Melchi, or raised his thoughts in pious gratitude to Jehovah, and besought a continuance of His mercies. He ascended the roof, and looked westward to the hills of Judah, and eastward to Nebo and Abarim; then entering the Alijah, he consecrated it as the future place of his devotions by prayer to Jehovah.

As he arose, turning involuntarily towards Jerusalem, he broke out in the words of the 127th Psalm:—

“Except the Lord build the house,
Their labour is but vain that build it,” &c.

As he ended the Psalm, he turned round and saw Melchi standing behind him at the door, brushing the tears away from his eyes. “May Jehovah bless thee,” said he. “Wonderful is His counsel, and He will bring it to pass!”

“God grant to me,” said Eldad, “that I may keep His law with a perfect mind!”

“May He give thee what thy psalm says,” replied Melchi. “Now that thou art a priest and a husband in the Promised Land, I fear no longer. Marriage is a divine ordinance, and the divine blessing rests upon it. This I myself experienced, alas! for too short a time. God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone, I will make a helpmate to be with him.’ And the Preacher says, ‘There is one alone, and not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This also is vanity—yea, it is a sore travail. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour; for if they fall the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to lift him up.’ (Eccles. iv. 8.) Eldad, *I had* once a wife and a child, and I was happy. What have I done that such bliss——? But I will say no more. The children of my brother are my children; thou art my son,

and I rejoice in thy happiness as my own. The marriage state is a service of Jehovah, and one of the most effectual means of fulfilling His Law. By this image He has described the relation between Himself and the people of His covenant. But let me hear thine own lips describe the blessing that awaits thee. Rehearse to me the conclusion of the Book of Proverbs, and bethink thee what is implied when we find that the great master of wisdom could devise no better termination of his precepts than the praises of a virtuous wife."

Eldad was well pleased to repeat what he regarded as the description of his own Susannah:—

. "A virtuous woman,
Her price is far above rubies;
The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her."

Not one syllable of the encomium seemed too much, and he ended emphatically with—

"Let her own works praise her in the gates."

The preparations for the nuptials were quickly made in both houses. The numerous companions of Susannah assembled in Shemida's Armon. The bride, who had just completed her fourteenth year, was conducted to a bath, at which gratification for all the senses was duly provided for her, and for all her young companions. After bathing she was anointed with the choicest perfumes, and her friends brought their gifts, consisting of rich clothes and costly ornaments, chiefly of their own making. Her hair was perfumed and braided, her eyebrows deepened with a powder of brilliant black, and her nails coloured red. Then, the young maidens, her companions, arrayed her in

the nuptial robes of the finest texture and most brilliant colour, which flowed with ample folds to her feet. The girdle was clasped around her waist, the veil hung down from her head, and high above all her other ornaments rose a *crown*, from which the bride in Israel was called "the crowned."

The evening was come, and the stars were shining into the court, where all was prepared for festivity. Now Eldad appeared, anointed and crowned in a similar manner, with the sons of the bride-chamber. They were the young priests and Levites of Jericho who had been invited for this purpose, and Lysis was among them. Each of them, to the number of seventy, bore a staff in his hand, on which was fixed a shallow vessel filled with burning oil and pitch. The festal train was admitted into Shemida's inner court; the bride and the virgins came forth from the Armon, and the youths and maidens, with aduffes and guitars, sung, in alternate strophes, the praises of the bridegroom and the bride.

Now began the ceremony of conducting the bride to the bridegroom's house. The seventy youths with their flambeaux headed the procession; the bride was surrounded by her bride-maidens; and Susannah thus prepared to quit her father's house and the home of her happy childhood. Arrived at the threshold, the feelings which she had struggled to suppress, the mingled emotions of hope and fear, of regret and joy, overpowered her, and she burst into a flood of tears. The mother, too, wept, pressed her beloved daughter to her breast, and blessing her, said, "Be thou mother of a numerous race like Rachel

the beloved, and like Leah the fruitful." She-mida supported his child in his strong paternal arms, exclaiming, "God, I thank thee that I have lived to see my child happy!"

Sounds of joy were then heard all around. Susannah was placed in a litter, and her nurse beside her. All the women were closely veiled. Susannah's veil was of flame colour. The long train moved through the streets of Jerichò. A number of persons went first, carrying the clothes, trinkets, and new furniture of the bride. As each carried one article only, the procession was very long. Next came the friends of the bridegroom, with Eldad himself; then the bride in her litter, accompanied by the virgins, her companions. The rest of Eldad's friends, men-servants and women-servants, and children, closed the train. All the inhabitants of Jericho hastened from their houses, or looked down from their roofs, as the procession passed through the streets.

Thus, at length, they reached the house of Eldad. The bride paused at the threshold of the dwelling in which so much of joy or of sorrow might await her, as if with a timid irresolution. She adorned the door-posts with woollen fillets, and anointed them with oil; and, at length, the virgins, her companions, suddenly lifted her over that threshold which was the boundary between her past and her future life. The nuptial train entered the courts, and the bride solemnly took possession of the Armon with her female companions and attendants, while the rest of the company remained in the outer apartments. A splendid feast was then served up to both parties separately. When all had eaten and were satis-

fied, men and women all assembled together again in the outer court; and the virgins presented the bride, and the youths the bridegroom, to Shemida, for the paternal benediction. In evident agitation, he said, "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, who didst create Adam and Eve. Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, who maketh Zion to rejoice in her children! Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, who makest the bride and the bridegroom to rejoice together!" Then taking the right hand of his daughter, he placed it in the right hand of Eldad, and pronounced the solemn benediction—"The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you, and help you together, and give His blessing richly upon you. Jehovah make the wife that comes into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, who built up the house of Israel! May thy house be as the house of Malchijah, thy father's father, and your sons be priests to minister before Jehovah in His Temple!"

Shemida, while he pronounced this blessing, struggled with an emotion which he was unwilling to betray. Melchi stood near him, giving freer vent to his feelings. The bride sobbed beneath her veil, and Eldad was melted into tears. Kindred and friends then drew near, and bestowed their good wishes, and offered their congratulations to the married pair. The feast ended with the usual ceremonies.

On the following morning the festivities were renewed, and lasted for seven days, each day being distinguished by some new expression of joy. Numerous presents were brought to the bride and bridegroom by their guests, and others were given to them in return. The company

exercised their ingenuity in riddles and mashals ; or a grave and learned rabbi discoursed on the duties of the marriage state, its sanctity, and the honour and happiness of those who might thus be appointed to give birth to the Messiah.¹

This protracted festival was at times wearisome to Susannah and Eldad, who longed to begin their tranquil domestic life without interruption. In the meantime, however, Eldad was delighted to discover every day some new perfection in Susannah, some new resemblance to the maidens and mothers of Israel in times past. He likened her to Sarah, in her domestic virtues ; to Miriam, the sister of Moses, in her poetical imagination ; to the daughter of Jephthah, in her disinterestedness and self-devotion ; and in her artless piety, to Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

¹ Many allusions to the nuptial ceremonies are to be found in Scripture ; as Gen. xxiv., Judges xiv., Esther ii., Matt. xxii. xxv., John ii. Other circumstances here mentioned may still be noticed in the East. See Russell, Harmer, and Calmet.



HEBRON.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOMICIDE.—THE CITY OF REFUGE.

It was intended that the young married couple, together with Lysis, should, immediately after the marriage festivities, proceed to Alexandria, to fetch Eldad's mother from Egypt in time to attend the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem. Melchi was to remain, meanwhile, at Jericho, lest, as he said with a smile, he should prove her a false prophetess. Alas! he little thought how speedy and how melancholy an accomplishment her prediction was to receive, and in his own person.

The journey was, however, delayed. Neither Susannah nor Eldad were in haste to depart; and Lysis was quite willing to wait for them. Eldad, indeed, had scarcely any thing left for him to desire. His expectations of outward prosperity were fulfilled, and he flattered himself he was as near the summit of spiritual perfection as of earthly bliss. The deep veneration which Susannah expressed for his purpose of becoming a Chasidean inspired him, by degrees, with a high opinion of his own righteousness. It was clear that she regarded him as already being all that he purposed to become, and to himself his present happiness seemed nothing less than a sign of the favour of Jehovah. As he had been accustomed to regard all calamity as a divine judgment for sin, and all prosperity as the reward of virtue, he considered his present condition as a mark of the distinguished approbation of God. His conscience even seemed to aid his self-deception. His tender affection for Susannah, his readiness to make little sacrifices of his wishes to hers, his gratitude and dutiful attachment to her parents and to his own uncle and benefactor, Melchi, all this was magnified by him into something more than mere righteousness—into a perfect obedience to the Divine Law. He began to think that everything which he did was right, and that every thing which he undertook must be successful, as those are apt to do who have experienced a long continuance of prosperity. He thought his mountain stood strong, and would never be removed. He never asked his own heart how much youth and good fortune, pride of spirit, and the feeling that his dearest wishes were now accomplished, had to do in building up this edifice

of self-righteousness, so fair in its outside appearances.

Lysis, during the first days of his residence at Jericho, found himself in circumstances so different from what he had expected, that he held it prudent to keep as much as possible in the background, and become better acquainted with the scene and the actors, before he trusted himself to take an active part. During the nuptial festivities he had been a quiet and unobtrusive spectator, and had recommended himself to the Jewish youths by the easy flexibility of his manners. When these social rejoicings were over, he seemed to attach himself particularly to Shemida, who, on his side, was well disposed to meet his advances. Shemida took him everywhere, even in the evening to the gates of the city, where the men of Jericho were accustomed to assemble to pass the cool hours in conversation; and if ever Lysis offended Melchi by some expression savouring of heathenism, which would now and then drop from him, as it were involuntarily, Shemida took his part. Having discovered Shemida's partiality for the Essenes, Lysis won his heart by telling him that the Tomuri of Dodona, the Orphici of Thrace, the Curetes in Crete, were either degenerate followers of the Jewish devotees, or had endeavoured to form a similar association of wisdom and sobriety, but had all remained at a much lower point in the scale of perfection.¹ On one occasion Eldad, of whom Lysis seemed to stand most in awe, happened to turn the discourse upon the superiority of Israel over the idolatrous

¹ The Orphic discipline resembled that of the Essenes. The Tomuri and the Curetes were priests of Jupiter, and in their manner of life also resembled the Essenes.

nations, and pointed out the absurdity of the worship of the Egyptians and earlier Samaritans,¹ who revered Apis, under the form of a bull; Moloch, of a figure partly man and partly calf; Dagon, as having the lower part of a fish; Tartac, as an ass; Nibbaz, as a dog. Every one expected to see Lysis provoked by this attack on his religion, but, to their great astonishment, he not only assented to all that Eldad had said, but entertained the company the whole evening with ludicrous tales of the adventures of the Grecian gods. The very contrast between his manner and character and those of the grave Orientals, seemed to form an unexpected bond of union between them; while they sat immovable in the positions they had once taken, he, on his light and nimble feet, turned this way and that, alert to seize every opportunity of mirth, ready to converse with those who were disposed for conversation, or to talk alone when others were silent. Amused with his lively sallies, they encouraged him to proceed from one freedom to another, till he thought that every thing was permitted.

One evening, it chanced that a man passed by, loaded with a heavy burden, and hanging down his head as one conscious of disgrace. He had been detected in some crime a few days before, and, as a punishment, his beard had been cut off. The whole assembly pointed to him with the finger of scorn, and he slunk hastily away.

"How strange," exclaimed Lysis, "that you should set so much value on a large bunch of hair on your chins, that one who has been deprived of it dares not show himself in your presence, and

¹ See note 1, page 91, Part I.

yet, you seldom have taste enough to give it an elegant form! Look, for example, at Melchi, who values his beard so highly, yet what an unsightly encumbrance it is to him!”

Encouraged by a thoughtless laugh from the younger part of those present, he approached Melchi and plucked him by the beard, little aware that to an Oriental, and especially to a Jew, such an action was one of the grossest outrages that could be committed—an attack upon the very sanctuary of his personal dignity. Eldad sprang forward to interpose, but it was too late. Melchi started up with burning cheeks, and with a look in which the expression of the wildest rage grew every moment stronger. His limbs trembled, his features were distorted, his hair stood on end, and his breast heaved with a feverish gasp.

“Accursed heathen!” he exclaimed in a fury. “Accursed heathen!” he repeated, and drawing his sword aimed a blow at the offender.

Lysis, awakened to a consciousness of what he had done, saw the uplifted weapon, and evaded the stroke; a citizen of Jericho, who had been pushed forward in the confusion, received it, and fell mortally wounded at the feet of Melchi. In silent horror all gathered round, looking by turns on the murderer, the slain, and the author of all the mischief. The whole city hastened to the spot. Lysis escaped, and Shemida, taking the scarcely conscious Melchi by the hand, led him home. Eldad, going before, burst into the house with a cry of horror—

“Woe, woe, woe!—homicide!—Melchi!”

The women hastened from their apartments, inquiring into the cause of the outcry; Shemida

entered with Melchi, one in eager haste, the other bewildered, with fixed eye and open mouth.

"Bring horses, bring camels, bring any beast of burden!" cried Shemida. "Thou hast slain him, Melchi, and must flee before the avenger of blood!"

"Whither?" asked Eldad.

"To a city of refuge! to Hebron, in Judah! to Bezer, in Reuben!—to Ramoth Gilead, best of all!"

At these words Melchi awoke, as if from a trance. Tears flowed from his aged eyes, and he exclaimed—"Merciful God! must I in my old age flee as a murderer, and die by the hand of the avenger? O fatal passion! How grievously has it led me into sin!" His voice was choked with sobs.

Two rapid dromedaries, ships of the desert, were brought.¹ Eldad accompanied the unhappy man. It was already night, and they passed unobserved out of Jericho. Without a salutation from neighbours, without a farewell to kinsfolk, they urged their flight, in dread lest the avenger should be on their track. Melchi, with hair loose and turban floating on the wind, carried death in his countenance.

It was one of the most terrific customs of the East, that the next of kin of any one who had been slain, even unwittingly, was deemed infamous if he did not avenge him by putting to death the person by whom he had been killed. The Law of Moses

¹ The camel is the heavy beast of burden; the dromedary is used on all occasions which require great expedition. The Arabs say that the speed of a good dromedary exceeds many times that of the fleetest horse.

had mitigated the severity of this custom, by the appointment of six cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan, in which the unintentional homicide might be safe from the vengeance of the Göel. (Numb. xxxv. 9—34.) In these cities, and for a thousand yards round them, he could not be touched: if he ventured beyond those limits before the death of the high-priest, the Göel might lawfully kill him. The roads and bridges leading to the city of refuge were to be kept in repair, that the fugitive might find no impediment in his flight. The avenger was called Göel,¹ or the redeemer or requirer. The son of the citizen of Jericho whom Melchi had killed had been fetched from the field, and had gone forth to avenge his father, but he was too late; Melchi reached Ramoth Gilead in safety.

On the following morning a judicial investigation of the case was made at Jericho. The seven judges took their places in an apartment at the gate, crouching on carpets; beside them sat two Levites. Shemida, who represented the accused person, stood on the left; the avenger of blood, as complainant, on the right. Shemida was clad in mourning, and with disordered hair. Behind him were the witnesses whom he had brought with him. They took an oath, and replied "Amen! amen!" to the imprecations which the judges laid upon them if they should not speak the truth. They bore witness that Melchi harboured no malice and had no feeling of ill-will against the deceased, and did not intend to smite him; but, having been provoked by the

¹ Hence Göel came to denote the next of kin, not merely in his character of avenger of blood, but as having the right of redemption of an estate.

insult of a young heathen, the blow intended for him, had fallen quite accidentally on the other. The judges did not immediately decide, but on the following morning a second sitting was held, at which they pronounced that Melchi, of Alexandria, had committed an involuntary homicide, and that the privilege of a city of refuge was decreed to him. As he had already taken refuge in Ramoth Gilead, a Levite was dispatched with a letter to the judges and elders of that place, commending him to their protection.

Shemida determined, as the judicial proceedings were now over, to go to Melchi, and Susannah could not be dissuaded from going with him. Ramoth Gilead lay on the other side of Jordan, in the country called in ancient times Gilead; a country not so fruitful as this side, from its many mountains and sandy deserts, yet rich in pasturage for cattle, and watered by two considerable streams, the Arnon and the Jabbok: the former empties itself into the Dead Sea, and the latter into the Jordan. On the conquest of Canaan, this country was given to the tribes of Gad and Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh. (Numb. xxxii.) Ramoth, on the Jabbok, was the principal city, celebrated in history for the battle between Ahab and Jehoshaphat and the Syrians. (1 Kings xxii.)

On their arrival they learned that Melchi was dangerously ill. The agitation of mind and the fatigue attending on his flight had overpowered his feeble frame; he had been attacked by a fever, under which he was rapidly sinking. A Levite, who was the physician of Ramoth, and possessed great knowledge of diseases, and of the virtues of plants, had been summoned. Strength-

ening baths had been employed, and the precious balm of Gilead applied externally and internally.¹ These were the two chief remedies of the Hebrews. (Jerem. viii. 22; xli. 11.) But here they had lost their power;—Melchi fell into a restless slumber. In his delirium the image of Lysis seemed to be constantly before his eyes; he upbraided him with his ingratitude, and warned Eldad to beware of him, as it would not be the last of his misdeeds. On the following day his reason returned for some hours, and he spoke calmly and clearly. It was the last revival of the flame of life. He begged Eldad to repeat to him the prayer of Moses, the man of God:—

“Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another,” &c. (Ps. xc.)

He listened to it with great attention, and with an emotion which, in many passages, was shown by his looks, and by his clasped hands. He then lay for a long time with closed eyes, but his lips were in motion, and it was evident he was addressing himself to God, probably in a penitential psalm; for once, when his voice grew stronger, he was heard to say—

“My days are gone like a shadow,
And I am withered like grass;
But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever,
And thy remembrance throughout all generations.”

His voice again became faint, and it was after some interval that he whispered—

“He brought down my strength in my journey
And shortened my days.”

¹ Hasselquist tells us that the balm of Mecca is at this time used internally, as well as externally, in Palestine.

And then, with a firmer tone—

“The children of thy servants shall continue,
And their seed shall stand fast in thy sight.”— *Ps. cii.*

A few minutes after he turned to Eldad, and said, “Cursed be my anger for it was fierce, and my wrath for it was cruel.” Then, with an expression of tenderest affection, he added—

“Greet thy mother from me—when the high-priest dies, carry my bones to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and lay them beside thy father’s; wait on the Lord and thou shalt obtain—”

His words then became inaudible. Eldad held his cold hand, and bathed it with his tears; and all who stood around his bed, in mournful silence, thought him already dead; but the dying eye opened once more, gazed around on them all, then fixed itself on heaven. His head sank back in the arms of Susannah; twice the mouth was distorted in the bitterness of pain—then once again, and then respiration ceased.

After a solemn pause, each reading in the countenance of the rest the confirmation of his fears, all uttered at the same moment a piercing cry of grief. The men rent their upper garments, beat their breasts, threw their turbans on the ground, strewed dust and ashes on their heads, put on sackcloth, covered their chins, and went barefoot.¹ Eldad was hurried away lest, being a priest, he should contract pollution from the dead body. The eyes of the corpse were closed, and it was carried into the Alijah by the nearest relatives. As it had been the custom in Judea, ever since

¹ See Ezekiel xxiv. 16, for some of these tokens of mourning; the others are so common as to need no illustration.

the captivity, to bury with very little delay, the night was passed in making preparations. The body was wrapped in a large sheet, the head bound with a napkin, and then the whole, from head to foot, swathed with bandages, each foot, each hand, and even each finger bound separately. At midnight came the Levites, with their musical instruments, and the female mourners began their office by lifting up their voices and lamenting,



MOURNING WOMEN.

strewn ashes on their heads, and singing a dirge. On the following morning the house was filled with neighbours and friends, expressing their sympathy. Susannah ran about weeping and

wringing her hands above her head. The men sat in another apartment upon the ground, and mourned in silence. Susannah was conducted to the apartment of the women, where she placed herself on a carpet in the middle; and the rest of the family sat around her. The hired mourners formed a wide circle at a little distance.¹ Each of the women held a handkerchief in her hand by two of the corners. The mourners, who knew a variety of funeral songs, began one which expressed the virtues and the calamities of the deceased. Susannah gave them a sign, and they ceased; when all the females of the family began to weep along with her. They arose, twisted their handkerchiefs together, and ran shrieking round the room; while Susannah, sitting motionless in the middle, wrung her hands, and tore her beautiful dark hair. When she ceased, the mourners resumed their song, till she again gave them a signal and the relatives renewed their lamentations. This lasted till towards evening, when the inhabitants assembled at the door, and the corpse was carried to the grave. Those who carried the bier went along with such hasty steps that they seemed rather to run than to walk. This haste was supposed to denote the terrors of death, as the punishment of sin. Every one who met the procession joined the mourners, and took a part in the cries and lamentations of the women.

Before the gate of the city, in a garden planted with trees, stood the sepulchre of Melchi's host, hewn out of the rock; and in this the corpse was deposited, for burning was deemed dishonourable

¹ Jer. ix. 17. Amos viii. 3.

by the Jews, and regarded with abhorrence.¹ The bearers threw aloes, myrrh, and other fragrant substances upon the body, so as to cover it, and the sepulchre was closed by a stone, which was, every year, whitened afresh with lime.² The friends and relatives remained standing awhile in silent meditation before the closed tomb; then bowed themselves three times to the earth, and prayed; and taking up a sod threw it behind them, saying, "Remember, O man, that dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." The procession then went back to the house, with a repetition of the funeral lamentations.

On reaching home, they washed their hands, and the neighbours brought them the bread of mourning—a beautiful and humane custom in Israel! No victuals were ever prepared in a house which death had visited, but the neighbours and friends came with delicate viands, and invited the mourners to partake of them, to recruit their strength and spirits. This was called the bread of mourning, and the cup which was handed round was called the cup of consolation.³ The mourning

¹ The "very great burning" in 2 Chron. xvi. 14, was probably the burning of spices; the former part of the verse agrees with the account given by our author of the spices thrown into the tomb.

² The Rabbins say this was done by the magistrates before the Passover.

³ This custom is alluded to in Ezekiel xxiv. 17, and in Jeremiah xvi. 7. Blayney says, "The origin of this custom undoubtedly was, that the friends of the mourner, who came to comfort him (and that they often came in great numbers we may learn from John xi. 19), easily concluding that a person so far swallowed up in grief as even to forget his bread, could hardly attend to the entertainment of so many guests, each sent in his proportion of meat and drink, in hopes to prevail on the mourner, by their example and persuasion, to partake of such refreshments as might tend to recruit both his bodily strength and his spirits."

lasted seven days, during which it was considered improper to wash the garments, to bathe or anoint the body, or to wear the sandals or the turban. Every day Susannah went, with the women of the family, to lament, at the tomb of the deceased, his true affection and his calamitous fate.

When the days of mourning were ended, suitable presents were made to the friendly host; and Eldad, Susannah, and Shemida, returned from Peræa, over the Jordan to Jericho. The bones of Melchi were to repose within the boundary of Ramoth Gilead till the death of the high-priest, when they might be transferred to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, to rest there till the joyful morning of the resurrection. He was at length at peace, after a life to which, like that of the patriarch Jacob, tranquillity had been a stranger. He had died in the city of the daughter of Jephthah; a victim to his indulgence of Eldad's wish to retain the friend of his youth, as she had been the victim of her love to her country. The secret anticipation which had always kept him at a distance from the heathen was now fulfilled; as well as the prophecy of Eldad's mother, when she parted from them in tears at Alexandria, and declared her apprehension that they would not all return. "Alas! that such a righteous man should have died the death of a sinner," exclaimed Eldad, in the bitterness of his grief, as he stood beside the stream of the Jabbok. "Doth Jehovah then punish the righteous as the sinner? Oh, Melchi! Melchi! where shall I find a light to guide me?"

"He has fulfilled his destiny," said Shemida; "who may escape what fate has ordained for him?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WATER OF JEALOUSY.

THE death of Melchi, with all its sad circumstances, so disturbed the mind of Eldad, that not even the affection of Susannah, or the wisdom of Shemida, could yield him consolation. The calamity which had deprived him of his second father had come upon him like a flash of lightning, and its sudden light had revealed to him some of the obscure and unsuspected recesses of his own heart. He could no longer flatter himself with the idea of being the distinguished object of the favour of Jehovah. In the tumult of his spirits, the hope of becoming a Chasidean was lost. The fabric of self-righteousness, which for some months he had built up with so much care, was overthrown. The cherished delusion had faded away. What would he not have given to be able to bring it back ?

The perverted state of his feelings showed itself most of all in his fury against Lysis. If his conscience whispered a remonstrance against this violence, he quieted it by the persuasion that it was not Lysis as an individual, but the idolatry of the heathen, that he abhorred. All those passages in the Psalms and prophets, in which Jehovah is implored to pour out His wrath upon the heathen, became the favourite theme of his medi-

tation. By an almost incredible delusion, he applied to his own personal injury all the denunciations of the vengeance of Jehovah against idolators generally. Even the love of the gentle Susannah, who anxiously watched him, hardly availed to pacify and to calm his mind.

In the meantime the joyous season of the vintage, and the ingathering of the olives and the fruits, began. With shouts of joy, the lofty palms, of which the plain of Jericho was full, were climbed, and the dates gathered, which grew in large bunches of fifteen to twenty pounds in weight. These were afterwards divided according to their different degrees of ripeness, some were eaten fresh, others were pressed, to obtain from them the celebrated palm-wine. This was all done amidst festive shouts, and the praises of the tree were celebrated, of which every part is in some way useful to man.¹ From the terebinths, some of which were still vigorous and verdant, they plucked the red and fragrant berries;² or climbed

¹ The natives of the East reckon 360 different uses of the palm-tree. Dr. Clarke says: "A considerable part of the inhabitants of Egypt, Arabia, and Persia, subsist almost entirely upon its fruit; they boast also of its medicinal virtues. Their camels feed upon the date-stone, and from the leaves they make couches, bags, mats, and brushes; from the branches cages for their poultry, and fences for their gardens; from the fibres of the boughs thread, ropes, and rigging; from the sap is prepared a spirituous liquor; and the body of the tree furnishes fuel." Though the palm is of great height, and has no lateral branches, yet it is climbed with ease by the prominences in the bark, which form a kind of natural ladder."

² "The terebinth," says Mariti, "has leaves shaped like those of the olive. The flowers grow in bunches, and are of a purple colour. The fruit grows among the branches in clusters; they are of the size of juniper berries, of a ruddy purple colour, and remarkably juicy. Each contains a seed of the size of a grape-stone."

the pistachio to bring down its delicious nuts;¹ or stored up the resin which spontaneously exudes from both these trees. They gathered the figs and the pomegranates, and scraped the balsam from the weeping tree, or expressed it from the seeds. Later in the season, the olive-trees, some of which yielded a thousand pounds weight of oil, were stripped of their yet unripe fruit, which was gently pressed, that the virgin oil might run out, or crushed in the press, that they might furnish oil for the necessary purposes of food and anointing. Even the vintage was beginning here and there.

Susannah was careful to accompany her husband to all these exhilarating scenes; but it was long before the luxuriance of nature, and the happiness of man, had any other effect upon him than to make him more painfully conscious of the loss of his inward peace. The more he examined his own heart and conscience as to his fulfilment of the divine Law, the more was he dissatisfied with himself.

One morning he was walking with Susannah and Abisuab through a vineyard, looking for the ripe bunches among the loaded trees, and his wife noticed with pleasure, that he was more cheerful and composed than he had ever been since the death of Melchi. They were overtaken by a slave, who came hastily from Shemida, to

¹ **בִּמְנִים**, pistachio nuts. These were an oblong species of nuts, and were so called from being flat on the one side, and *bellying out* on the other. They grow on a tree very like the terebinth, but which is not to be confounded with it. Pistachoi nuts are mentioned among the delicacies sent by Jacob to Joseph. Gen. xliii. 11.

summon Eldad to his house, where a messenger from Gaza had arrived with letters that required a speedy answer. These letters were from Lysis, and addressed to Shemida and Eldad.

On the unhappy evening when the homicide had been unfortunately committed by Melchi, Lysis had hastily taken the road to Gaza, with the intention of returning as speedily as possible to Alexandria. With all his levity, he had yet a great deal of natural good feeling; and when he reflected on his conduct, his conscience severely reproached him. He was obliged to wait at Gaza for an opportunity of going to Egypt, and during his stay, the news of what had happened in Jericho, soon followed by that of Melchi's death, was made public there, and excited a very general feeling against him, both among the Jews and heathens. The first effect was to make him wish for a speedy departure; but then, again, the thought of the injury and the affliction which he had caused the friend of his youth, smote him to the heart; and he could not leave the country till he had sought, at least, his forgiveness, and assured him of his deep regret for what had occurred. He allowed several opportunities to pass by of making the journey into Egypt in safe company, and yet could not summon courage to go to Jericho. At length he resolved to go to a place in the neighbourhood of that city, and to seek reconciliation by letter before he ventured to appear in person. In pursuance of this plan, he dispatched a messenger to Shemida, to whom he testified his sincere sorrow for what he had done, and earnestly requested his good offices in reconciling him to Eldad. To him also he wrote a letter, which he entreated

Shemida to deliver to him. On reading the letter addressed to himself, Shemida was much affected, and immediately sent for Eldad and gave him the other, but it was with difficulty that he could be prevailed on to receive it. Lysis touchingly reminded him of their youthful friendship, and earnestly supplicated for an interview.

"To grant it," said Shemida, "would be an act of heroism well worthy of an Israelite."

"The heathens are under the curse of Jehovah," exclaimed Eldad. "We reap nothing but misery from their friendship. I will not see him."

"Did not Solomon pray for the heathens?" (1 Kings viii. 41—43) asked Shemida. "Will not the Messiah be a light to the heathens? Be not implacable if thou wouldst fulfil the law of the fathers. Was not Joseph reconciled to his brethren? Did not David show mercy to Saul when he might have slain him? Did not Jehovah Himself from Sinai command, 'If thou seest the ox or the ass of thine enemy going astray, thou shalt lead him back?' and is not a heathen of more value than an ox or an ass?"

"Forgive Lysis," said Susannah, fondly laying her head on his bosom; "forgive him, priest of Jehovah! Leave vengeance to Him who hath declared He will repay; and think of the joy thou wouldst feel if through thy means he became a proselyte of the gate."

Eldad's former spirit seemed to revive, and he resolved to perform the heroic act to which he was called. The messenger went back with a permission to Lysis to come to Jericho; and soon did he make his appearance, for he had wandered

near the gates of the city, anxiously awaiting the issue of his embassy. He fell at the feet of his injured friend, clasped his knees, and besought his forgiveness with all the power which Grecian eloquence, and strong feelings of sorrow and penitence, could give. The reconciliation was soon effected, and Susannah had the delight of seeing her husband restored to the peace and joy which marked the first happy days of their union.

Lysis was received again into the house, and in the freedom of their renewed intercourse, Eldad informed him how much he was indebted for his return to the intercession of Susannah. As the recollection of past carelessness and its melancholy effects faded away, Lysis resumed his gaiety, and with it the hasty thoughtlessness which was his characteristic. Eldad was gone one day to the gate of the city while Lysis remained in the house, for since his return he had never accompanied his friend into places of public resort. It suddenly occurred to him that he had never duly expressed his gratitude to Susannah for her mediation in his favour; and he went straight to the Armon, in the first warmth of his feeling, without remembering the strictness of the Hebrew custom on this matter, or reflecting on what the consequences of such an unusual step might be.

Meanwhile, the citizens of Jericho who were sitting in the gate saw the red mist gathering in the north-west, which is the usual prognostic of the approach of the baneful wind of the East. This wind is felt in all its pestilential fury in the Desert, where it sweeps over the surface, often to the height of a foot, destroying everything which

it encounters. It is there called the Simoom.¹ In Palestine it is not destructive to life, but is followed by very disagreeable effects. All the citizens of Jericho arose hastily from the gate, and hurried each to his own home. Eldad on reaching his house went immediately to the Armon, to warn Susannah of the approach of the Simoom. At the door he met Lysis, whose visit Susannah had not received, but had warned him instantly to withdraw if he would not bring ruin on himself and on her. Eldad started with surprise and horror when he saw Lysis in his Armon, which no foot of man save his own had ever trodden before. Wild jealousy and rage took possession of his soul, and agitated his whole frame. "Vile heathen!" he exclaimed, in a frantic tone, "is this

¹ The above agrees with the generally received accounts of the Simoom; but the accurate Burckhardt, in his "Travels in Nubia," represents it as by no means so frightful and dangerous. "I inquired," he says, "as I had often done before, whether my companions had often experienced the Simoom, which we translate by the poisonous blast of the Desert, but which is nothing more than a violent south-east wind. They answered in the affirmative, but none had ever known an instance of its having proved fatal. I have been repeatedly exposed to this hot wind in the Syrian and Arabian deserts, in Upper Egypt, and Nubia. The hottest and most violent I ever experienced was at Suakin, yet even there I felt no particular inconvenience from it, although exposed to all its fury in the open plain. For my own part, I am perfectly convinced that all the stories which travellers, or the inhabitants of the towns of Egypt and Syria, relate of the Simoom, are greatly exaggerated, and *I never could hear of a single well-authenticated instance of its having proved mortal either to man or beast.* I never observed that the Simoom blows close to the ground, as commonly supposed, but always observed the whole atmosphere appear as if in a state of combustion: the dust and sand are carried high into the air, which assumes a reddish, blueish, or yellowish tint, according to the nature and colour of the soil from which the dust rises"—BURCKHARDT'S *Travels in Nubia*. BRUCE, in his *Travels*, chap. xvi. of the abridged edition, gives a vivid description of the Simoom.

thy return for my friendship and hospitality? Was it not enough that thou didst murder Melchi?" The protestations of innocence poured forth by Lysis were unheard or unheeded in the whirlwind of Eldad's fury. His angry voice soon brought together the slaves of the house. Seizing Lysis by the arm, Eldad thrust him towards them, and they, rightly interpreting the action, laid hold of him, roughly dragging him away, and with blows and curses drove him from the house.

Susannah hastened from the Armon, and endeavoured to calm her husband, but in vain. At the sight of her his fury burst forth more violently than ever, and thrusting her back into the Armon, he ran through the streets of Jericho like one frantic, seeking Shemida, to whom he related what had happened. They returned together, Shemida's indignation scarcely less fierce than his own.

On reaching Eldad's house, Shemida went straight to his daughter, and catching her by the arm, exclaimed, "Monster! am I then the father of an adulteress? Didst thou learn from thy mother, or from me, to break thy marriage vow with a godless heathen?" She had been sitting sobbing and in tears, her face hidden in a veil which she had thrown over her head. At these words, however, she uncovered herself; and looking up at her father, she said with a firm voice, "I am innocent!" Eldad and Shemida were yet more provoked by this assurance. "If thou art innocent," said Shemida, "thou shalt drink the water of jealousy. I will know if my daughter is pure; or if not, may all that the Law has denounced

against the adulteress light upon thee!" With these words he went forth to call the elders together, and Eldad shut himself up in the Alijah. All the happiness of his life was gone. He wept, he lamented, he inveighed against the heathens, against Susannah, against himself. In the agony of his grief, he threw himself on the ground, he rent his clothes, and tore his hair. Then again, he would sit for a while in mournful silence, opening his lips only to recite passages of Scripture which describe the harlot and the adulteress. "Yes," he exclaimed aloud, "the Essenes are right; it is because they know the inconstancy of women that they have excluded them from their society. Unhappy Israel! what shall become of thee, when thy matrons are corrupt, and thy wives give themselves up to folly? No wonder that the once holy people are fallen below the very heathens!"

A moment after, reflecting on what he had said aloud, he started with terror as from some frightful dream. "Can that be Susannah?" he said with a sigh, while the image of his wife, in all her gentleness and loveliness, rose before him; and he added with new energy, "it is impossible!" Had Susannah at that moment appeared, he would have listened to all—he would have forgiven all. He even quitted the Alijah to go to her; but when he looked down on the door of the Armon, and the thought flashed across his mind, that through that door the man had passed, by whom he had been dishonoured, every thought of compassion, and of returning love, vanished in an instant.

The inferior court, which was held on the spot

where the offence was alleged to have been committed, assembled in this instance on the following morning at the gate of the city. Shemida, appearing as accuser of his own daughter, stood on the right of the judges, and Susannah on their left. The whole gate was filled with citizens of Jericho, among whom the news of this affair had rapidly spread, and excited general curiosity.

Susannah felt at her first entrance, overpowered by the solemnity of this venerable assembly, of which she had heard so much, but which she had never before seen; that feeling, however, did not last long, and she soon regained her self-possession. Eldad stood by the side of Shemida, not venturing to look at his wife, or he would have read her vindication in her countenance, in which the pride of conscious innocence struggled with the shame of ignominious exposure. Her bright eyes were now red with weeping, but they were untroubled with any expression of guilt or fear.

The father related what had happened, the husband confirmed his statement. The judges then turned to Susannah, asking whether she acknowledged the truth of the accusation.

"I call Jehovah to witness," she replied, with lofty tranquillity of manner, "that I am innocent; I will take the oath of purgation."

"Be it unto thee," said the elders, "as thou hast desired."

Two assessors were selected to accompany her to the Sanhedrim, before whom alone the oath could be taken. Their duty was to protect her on the way from the fury of her accusers, and to lay the case before the Supreme Council. They left Jericho immediately—a melancholy proces-

sion! The whole city assembled to witness their departure, men, women, and children. The mother of Susannah was there wringing her hands. Most of the women sympathised with their suffering sister, though from some the whisperings of envy, and the taunts of malice, were heard.

Eldad followed at a little distance. It was the same road by which at Pentecost he had gone up to Jerusalem an affianced bridegroom, full of joy and hope. Then, the very Desert had seemed a paradise! How was it now changed!—how was his own condition changed! Melchi was dead, Susannah went before him as an adulteress! The Land of Promise had proved a land of chastisement to him. Even his enthusiastic love of the priestly office seemed dead within him. With what painful longing did he turn towards the distant Oasis of the Essenes, and desire to bury himself there, without a wife, without the priesthood, a stranger among the people of Israel, solitary and single in the Land of Promise!

In the evening they arrived in Jerusalem. Ithiel was sitting in the gate; but when he discovered the purpose for which they were come, he fled with averted head, and hands stretched out, as if to repel an advancing enemy. They slowly ascended the Temple hill. All who met them were astonished to see *her*, who at the feast had been the object of universal admiration, now brought up as a transgressor. She was confined for the night in a chamber in the Temple; while Eldad and Shemida retired to the house of Ithiel in deep gloom and dejection, bewailing the past, and scarcely daring to look towards the future.

The morning—the fearful morning—at last

came. After the usual sacrifice the Sanhedrim assembled in the hall Gazith. All its seventy-one members were present, the high-priest, the elders, and the Levites, sitting in a semicircle. Susannah was led through the multitude that filled the courts, and placed before the tribunal. The assessors of the Court of Jericho then laid the matter before the Sanhedrim, and Shemida and Eldad confirmed their statement. The father and husband were after this commanded to withdraw, and Susannah, in her mourning garments, remained standing alone in the midst of the judges.

They addressed her at first in a friendly tone, and endeavoured to bring her to confession, alleging grounds of excuse from her youth, and her husband's carelessness in having admitted a heathen into his house. "Daughter," said one of them, "glorify the great name of God, and do not allow this sacred name to be washed with water and blotted out." Another assumed an angry tone, blamed her silence, which he interpreted as an evidence of guilt, and bade her beware, lest, by her obstinacy, she should draw upon herself an untimely and fearful death. But Susannah adhered to her denial of guilt, and as often as they urged her to confession, simply replied, "I am innocent—I am falsely accused. Put me to what test ye will, but ask of me no confession of guilt. I am innocent." At last the Sanhedrim appeared to be convinced by her noble firmness: they ceased to importune her, and decreed that she should drink the water of jealousy, and take the oath of purgation. "Daughter," exclaimed one of the judges, "if thou art innocent, put thy trust in Jehovah, and drink boldly. It

is indeed poison to the guilty, but cannot harm the innocent !”

Susannah was then led from the hall Gazith to the gate of Nicanor ; not, however, by the direct road, but by a long circuit, that she might have time for reflection, and an opportunity still for confession. The crowd formed a lane through which she had to pass, not only exposed to their gaze, but plucked scornfully by the arms, and subject to both taunts and blows. Here and there, however, one of a more generous and discriminating character, struck by the noble and yet modest fearlessness of her manner, would encourage her by exclaiming, “ Fear not, the water of jealousy cannot injure thee ; drink it without alarm !”

At length they reached the gate of Nicanor, opposite to the Sanctuary ; and the priest who had been appointed for the purpose began the appalling ceremonies of the oath of purgation. Laying hold of the garments of the accused, he rent them from the top of the neck to the breast, with exclamations of horror ; he tore the veil from her head, and threw her turban on the ground ; he dishevelled her braided hair, and let it float upon the wind. And then, turning his face away from her, he said, “ Thou hast forsaken the manner of the daughters of Israel who cover their heads, and hast followed the manner of the heathen who go with their heads uncovered.”

The men spat on the ground before her, the women uttered cries of abhorrence, and a deep murmur of “ Woe ! woe !” ran from rank to rank among the people, which even the most unconcerned spectator could not hear without shudder-

ing. Eldad stood with averted head stupified with horror. Shemida wept aloud.

The priest threw all the rest of Susannah's ornaments, her necklace, earrings, and bracelets, to the ground, and girded her torn garments over her bosom with a strip of bark. The more ignominious the outrages to which she was subjected, the more striking was the contrast of her calm and dignified air and demeanour. The husband was compelled to reach to the priest the offering of jealousy, which was a tenth part of an epha of meal in an osier basket. The meal was of barley, the commonest and meanest grain, and neither oil nor incense was mingled with it. Eldad could not bear to look that way, but gave it to the priest with averted head, lest his eyes should encounter the eyes of his wife.

The priest then took an earthen vessel that had never been used, filled it with water from the laver beside the altar of burnt offerings, and carrying it into the holy place, put into it some of the dust of the floor. When he returned he exhorted her once more to reflect upon what she was about to do, and if she were indeed guilty to confess her sin, and not venture to drink of the water. The accused replied distinctly and firmly, "I am innocent." Again the deep murmur of "Woe! woe!" spread along the shuddering multitude who thronged the Temple courts. The priest then, with a loud and solemn voice, said, "If thou art innocent, and hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from the curse of this bitter water, and let it not harm thee. But if thou hast gone aside to another, and hast been defiled, then may

Jehovah make thee a curse among thy people, and bring on thee all the curses which are written in this Law." (Num. v. 19, 20.)

Susannah thus adjured, answered firmly, supported by the power of God, "Amen! amen!" and the murmur of "Woe! woe!" rolled deeper and more awfully along the ranks of men and women.

The priest now wrote the curses on a roll. Eldad took the barley meal from the basket, placed it in a sacred vessel, and gave it into his wife's hands. Her eyes met his, and her look pierced him to the heart. Roused from the stupor in which he had been sunk during the preceding part of the ceremonial, he made his way through the people, and rushed down from the Temple hill. There was a pause for a few moments; and then the priest, laying his hand under the hand of Susannah, waved the offering of jealousy in the customary form before Jehovah, then took it from her, carried it to the altar of burnt offering, and ascending it, mixed the meal with salt, and burnt it in the fire. He then descended again to the gate of Nicanor, took the roll, and washed the writing with the water in which the dust of the sanctuary had been mixed. The assembled crowd stood in deep and breathless attention. The priest reached to Susannah the vessel which contained the water of cursing, she took it, lifted her eyes towards the holy of holies, and drank it off. There was a stillness as of death amongst all who stood around, as if they were conscious of the presence of Jehovah to clear the innocent or punish the guilty.

Susannah stood in the midst of the people firm, and with her eyes fixed on the holy of holies.

The eyes of all the others were fixed upon her, and they watched to see the effect of the draught. When they saw that she was unharmed by it, and that God had justified her from her accusers, they burst into a cry of joy, and "Hallelujah" resounded from the Temple to the city. Shemida rushed to his daughter, and folded her with renewed affection in his paternal arms. With shouts of triumph, and exclamations of "Blessed be Jehovah, she is innocent!" they accompanied her into the inner court of the Temple, where the priest formally pronounced her acquittal. Thronging around her, all offered her their congratulations. Her hair was braided anew; her turban, her veil, her jewels were restored to her; and her dark garments of mourning were exchanged for a festal dress. Susannah descended from the Temple with modest and downcast looks. Ithiel, who had heard the shouts of joy, and rightly interpreted them, opened his gates to receive her. But not even when she had entered the house did the excitement subside. The crowd who had followed her long remained assembled in the open place before the Water Gate.

But where is Eldad? Why does he not join the joyful crowd? When he fled from the Temple, overpowered by a glance from his Susannah, he wandered about, shunned as one frantic by all who observed him; and unconscious where he was going, he found himself at last in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and by the grave of his father. Exhausted by fatigue, and grief, and strong excitement, he fell before the sepulchre, and remained long insensible. Long, indeed, might he have so remained, but that he was roused from

his stupor by the cry of "He is here ! he is here !" He opened his eyes, and saw Ithiel, who had come out with many others to seek for him. Ithiel embraced him, repeating, "She lives ! she is guiltless !" Eldad, as one awakened from a dream, scarcely understood the meaning of the words. When, however, consciousness returned, the remembrance of the past, and a full understanding of the present, rushed upon his mind ; and overwhelmed at once with joy, and shame, and remorse, he would have fallen again to the earth if his friends had not supported him. In this state, rather carried than led, they brought him home.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

SUSANNAH was waiting for her husband at the door, surrounded by her friends. As he entered she threw herself at his feet, and implored his forgiveness for the uneasiness which she had caused him. He raised her up, and then throwing himself on his face before her, besought forgiveness from her with a look which penetrated her soul. To ask pardon in words was beyond his power. They were conducted into the inner court by their friends, and there Susannah placed herself beside Eldad, and endeavoured to tranquillize him, but he sat with his eyes sadly fixed on the ground. He could scarcely rejoice, as might have been anticipated, in the acquittal of his wife, so bitter was the remembrance that it was by himself that she had been unjustly accused. For the first time in his life he despised himself, and this feeling of self-contempt was more intolerable than that of self-accusation. In vain did Ithiel advise him to forget the past and enjoy the present; there was too much of Sadducean levity in the exhortation. In vain did Shemida advise him to regard all that had occurred as the work of fate; the result of a destiny which could not be avoided. His heart oppressed by a sense of his misconduct, and his

soul agitated by grief and remorse, rejected such miserable consolation.

Thus the day passed on ; at evening the feast of the commencement of the civil year was announced by the sound of trumpets. It was the new moon of the seventh month, and was called the Feast of Trumpets, because from morning to evening trumpets of rams' horns were blown in the Temple, according to the command of Moses. (Levit. xxiii. 24.) Eldad resolved to pass this and the following eight days of penitence before the great Day of Atonement, with the Old Man in the Temple. While he remained with Susannah he was so painfully reminded of the injury he had done her, that he could have no hope of consolation, or of restored tranquillity.

As soon as the gates were opened he went up into the Temple, and as he crossed the Court of the Gentiles, he met the Old Man coming out of his chamber, and advancing towards him to bid him welcome.

"I purpose," said Eldad, "to spend the next ten days in the courts of Jehovah, and to present a sin offering."

"Come, then, to my chamber," said the Old Man, and remain there." He returned thither, and Eldad followed him.

"Melchi," said Eldad, "is dead at Ramoth Gilead, whither he had fled from the avenger of blood."

"I know it," replied the Old Man.

"I have accused my wife unjustly, and made her unhappy."

"I was present yesterday, and saw how nobly she vindicated her innocence by the water of jealousy," the Old Man replied.

"Alas! I am no Chasidean," exclaimed Eldad, mournfully; "I never shall be one."

"True," rejoined the Old Man; "but thou shouldest be more than a Chasidean."

"All on earth is vanity and deception; happiness, hope, love—all is deception," again exclaimed the young man.

"And the greatest deception of all is that which thou dost not suspect," rejoined the aged one. "Remain here till thou art purified. I go to the sacrifice, for this day shall no work be done, but offerings be offered unto the Lord." (Levit. xxiii. 25.)

Eldad remained in the Old Man's chamber. As every festival was begun by the daily sacrifice, so it was on this occasion. The usual morning sacrifice was first presented, then the sacrifice for the new moon, and, last of all, the special offering for the seventh new moon. The Law was afterwards read and explained.

Eldad heard in his cell the blowing of the trumpets and the song of the people, and in his solitude repeated after them the 81st Psalm, which they were reciting:—

"Sing ye merrily unto God our strength;
Make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob;
Take the psalm, bring hither the tabret,
The merry harp with the lute.
Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
Even in the time appointed and upon our solemn feast day."

After the evening sacrifice the Old Man questioned Eldad respecting the state of his mind. With filial simplicity and candour Eldad laid open his whole heart, and while speaking almost fancied

that Melchi, returned to life, was sitting before him. "Once only in my life," said he, "have I been happy; when I quitted Egypt, and entered the Promised Land, and kept the Passover in the Temple of Jehovah. I was then happy in sanguine anticipation. But I soon discovered imperfections where I had thought every thing faultless. I found the truth, the melancholy truth, of the account which thou hadst given me of the priests. I then thought to find a sanctuary of pure happiness and virtue in my own house. Jehovah bestowed on me a virtuous wife, but I proved myself unworthy of her. Melchi died under the imputation of homicide, and we all were guilty of injustice towards the excellent Susannah. Thou art right: Israel is a disobedient, sinful people. I condemn others freely, because I include myself in the same condemnation. Jehovah has given us his Law, and, alas! the only fruit of it is, that we are more guilty than the heathen, who live without a law. Oh! that I had lived in Solomon's or David's days! In our present condition it cannot be fulfilled. What God has enabled thee to do is a miracle, as all the people regard it."

The Old Man listened calmly to all this and much more, and then in a grave and serious tone began: "Thou talkest like a young man, hastily and ignorantly, and in all that thou hast said scarcely any thing is true, except the sinfulness of Israel. We are disobedient, as thou hast said, thou and I, and the whole people. In the days of Solomon and David it was no better, and hadst thou lived in those times, thou wouldst have been as far as thou art now from the fulfilment of the Law. The holy Law of Jehovah is not intended to

make His people proud and self-satisfied, but rather to humble and to prove them. When David breaks forth into commendation of the Law as 'undefiled,' and 'pure,' and 'righteous;' 'converting the soul,' and 'rejoicing the heart;' 'giving light to the eyes,' and 'wisdom to the simple' (Psalm xix.), what is the conclusion which he draws? 'Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults.' And thus it must ever be; the purity and holiness of the Law must show to us the sinfulness of our own hearts, and awaken in us a longing for help and consolation, or it will not have fulfilled the intention of Jehovah in giving it to us. It is the lot, or rather the privilege of Israel, that it alone of all nations has the knowledge of sin and the hope of a certain atonement. If both are united in thee, if thou mournest truly for thy sins, and truly desirest reconciliation, do what thou hast purposed, and offer thy sin offering; afterwards we will discourse further."

Eldad purchased a goat for a sin offering. He carried it through the gate, on the northern side of the altar of burnt offering; standing behind it, he laid his hands on the head of the animal, between the horns, and said, confessing his sins: "O Jehovah! I have transgressed against thee! forgive my transgression and my sin which I have committed." Then he slew the goat; a priest received the blood in a basin and carried it to the altar of burnt offering, dipped his finger into it, and touched the four horns of the altar, letting a few drops trickle down each of them. He then ascended the altar, and poured the remainder of the blood down the pipe. Eldad took off the skin of the victim, and taking the internal fat gave it to

the priest, who waved it, with the liver and kidneys, between the altar and the Temple, salted it, and burnt it upon the altar. The rest of the flesh belonged to the officiating priest. Eldad had offered this sacrifice in expectation that his conscience would be tranquillized by it, but he did not experience the peace of mind that he had promised himself. He found his heart as much oppressed by sorrow and fear after the offering as it had been before. He complained to the Old Man that he had desired to walk in the way of the Lord, and had offered sacrifice, in obedience to the commandment, but had found no blessing to follow.

"Has not David said," replied the Old Man, "even he who so delighted in the service of the sanctuary—has not he said,—

'Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it,
Thou delightest not in burnt offerings;
The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise?'"
Psalm li.

"I would," exclaimed Eldad, "that my whole heart belonged to Jehovah, then should I have peace and joy. But how may I accomplish this?"

"Tell me," said the Old Man, "when, as priest, would you declare the leper cleansed from his leprosy?"

"When no spot of leprosy remains in him from head to foot," replied Eldad, "but all is sound, as far as the priest can see."

"So judge then of your own state. Read the penitential Psalms, and tell me what you find in them most applicable to your own condition."

Eldad obeyed his injunctions, but for several

days the Old Man came and went without noticing him. One evening, however, when he returned from the sacrifice and was about to withdraw again, Eldad earnestly entreated him to stay. "I have found," said he, "the words which too truly describe my own condition :—

' There is no health in my flesh, because of thy displeasure ;
Neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin :
For my wickednesses are gone over my head,
They are a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.'

Psalm xxxviii. 3, 4.

"What a new light have these words opened upon me ! What a condition do I see myself in ! How did I deceive myself when I supposed that, mere learner as I was, I had already attained the rank of a Chasidean ! With what miserable self-delusion did I profess to renounce those things to which my heart so strongly clung ! What contemptible pride, to imagine that I could reach the summit of perfection by ascending, step by step, from the fulfilment of one commandment to that of another ! And when one frail support of my self-conceit gave way, how eagerly did I catch at another ! I must needs confess that I am under the curse pronounced upon all those who obey not the Law of Jehovah. My sin is too great to be forgiven, and I tremble at the words of the sons of Korah : ' No man can redeem his brother : nor make a ransom unto God for him.' "

" Praised be Jehovah," exclaimed the Old Man, " that thou hast at length discerned one part of the eternal truth ; the other will not be withheld* from thee in due season. Israel is a people mourning for sin, but also hoping for forgiveness. If our sins separate between God and us, we have

the more need of a Mediator. The Messiah cometh who shall 'make an end of sin,' as the beloved Daniel has told us.' (Daniel ix. 24.) Say not, therefore, 'my sin is too great to be forgiven,' but know that the mercy of Jehovah is, like His nature, infinite. Pray, then, for faith; and even now thy offering on His altar shall reconcile thee, by virtue of the future sacrifice of the Messiah. Thou hast partaken of the sin of thy people, partake also with them in the atonement which is to be made to-morrow."

On the following day Eldad was early in the Temple. The high-priest had been already seven days there, preparing himself for the great solemnity of atonement, on the tenth day of the month Tisri. The ceremonies began in the evening. It was the greatest fast in the year, lasting from evening to evening, twenty-four hours. The people assembled in the Temple as soon as it was light. The high-priest had watched all night, and had bathed himself in the morning. He was on this occasion the representative of the whole people before Jehovah, and he performed those services at the altar which were usually the office of the priests. He offered the morning sacrifice, and the meat offering for himself, as high-priest, and having again bathed himself, he put on his under robe of linen, his drawers, his upper garments, and his girdle and turban. Once more he washed his hands and feet, and then offered a bullock for a sin offering for himself and his house, and a goat for the sins of the people, at the door of the Sanctuary. He laid his hand on the hinder part of the head of the bullock, and said: "O Jehovah, I have sinned against thee, both I and my house; forgive my sins wherewith I have sinned against

thee, O Jehovah! I and my house; as it is written, 'On this day shall an atonement be made for you to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before Jehovah.'" Thrice he uttered the name of Jehovah in this confession, and thrice all the priests, the Levites, and the whole people, fell on their faces, and said, "Praised be the holy name of His kingdom for ever and ever."

From the bullock he went to the two goats on the north side of the altar, and placing himself between them, shook a box in which were two small tablets; one was inscribed "for Jehovah," and the other "for Azazel."¹ He drew a lot for each, and placed it on the head of the goat for which it was drawn. When he drew that which was for Jehovah, he said aloud, "for Jehovah;" and all the priests, the Levites, and the people fell upon their faces to the earth. The goat Azazel was then taken to the gate of Nicanor. The high-priest returned to the bullock, made a new confession over it, for the sins of himself and his house, and the sons of Aaron, and then slew it, a priest receiving the blood in a basin. The high priest took coals from the altar of burnt offering, and laying incense upon them, went through the holy place into the most holy, and there burnt the incense before Jehovah. He kept his face towards the holy of holies while returning into the court, and then taking the blood carried it as he had done the incense, and dipping his finger in it, sprinkled it once in the air, and seven times on the ground towards the place where, in the former Temple, the ark of the covenant had stood.

¹ Azazel, in Hebrew, **אַזָּזֵל**: literally, goat of departure, or escaped. Scape-goat, as our translation has it.

When he returned into the court, the goat for Jehovah was brought to him. He slew it, carried the blood into the holy of holies, for the sins of himself, his house, and the sons of Aaron, as well as of the whole people, and sprinkled it as before. Then coming back into the holy place, he sprinkled the veil which was between them seven times; first with the blood of the bullock, and then with that of the goat; then mingling their blood, he dipped his finger in it, and let a few drops trickle down the horns of the altar of incense. He cleared the altar from ashes, and sprinkled the place seven times with blood. He next went to the goat Azazel, laid his hands upon his head, and confessed over him the sins of the people, as he had before confessed those of himself and his house. As often as the name of Jehovah was pronounced, the people fell on their faces and said, "Praised be the holy name of His kingdom for ever and ever." The goat was then taken by an Israelite into the wilderness, 12,000 paces¹ from Jerusalem, and full of rocks; from the summit of one of these he drove the goat down, that he might bear the sins of the people into the Desert.

The high-priest then took the skin and inward parts, with the rest of the body of the bullock and of the goat which was for Jehovah, and sent them to be burnt outside the city. The men who performed this office, as well as he who carried the scape goat to the wilderness, were unclean the rest of the day.²

¹ About nine miles.

² The ceremonies of the Day of Atonement which are not to be found in Scripture, are derived from Rabbinical authority. See *Levit. xvi.* and *xxiii. 27*; *Numb. xxix. 7*; also *Josephus' Antiquities*.

These ceremonies made a deep impression on Eldad, and brought to his mind the words of the Old Man of the Temple. He followed the high-priest into the Court of the Women, and listened while he read the portion of the Law which related to this day. (Levit. xxiii. 26.) After reading the Law, the high-priest bathed himself, laid aside his linen garments, and put on his pontifical dress, his ephod, his robe with the balls and the pomegranates, his breastplate, and his turban, with the name of Jehovah. In these garments he approached the altar, and offered a ram as a burnt offering for himself, and another for the people; with seven lambs of the first year, and the fat of the sin offering for himself and the people.

When evening drew on, the high-priest offered, before the usual sacrifice, a bullock for a burnt offering, and a goat for a sin offering. After the evening sacrifice he bathed himself, washed his hands and feet, changed his pontifical robes for his linen garments, went again into the holy of holies, and brought out the censer. This was the fourth time that he entered it on this day, the only day in the whole year when he appeared before the ark of the covenant. Having bathed again, and put on his pontifical robes, he burnt incense in the holy place, and lighted the lamps; concluding by giving his benediction to the people, who prostrated themselves to receive it. This ended the fast which had lasted from evening to evening. The people had remained all day in the Temple: the hearing of the Law being the principal occupation between the sacrifices.

Eldad had felt, during the solemnities of this day, the weight removed from his mind which had

so long pressed upon it. He prayed in the words of the Psalmist,—

“Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered ;”

* * * *

Psalm xxxii.

and his peace and joy increasing as he poured out his soul before the Lord, he naturally passed from the 32nd Psalm to the 103rd, and joyfully exclaimed,—

“Praise the Lord, O my soul :
And all that is within me praise his holy name.
Praise the Lord, O my soul :
And forget not all his benefits ;
Who forgiveth all thy sin :
And healeth all thine infirmities ;”

* * * *

At evening he returned to the cell of the Old Man. A calm peace had overspread his mind, to which he had long been a stranger. He no longer prided himself on his imaginary self-righteousness, but he felt the satisfactory assurance that his “transgression was forgiven, and that his iniquity was pardoned ;” and in the midst of his gratitude to Jehovah, he did not forget his thankfulness to the venerable man whose counsels had taught him how to seek rest to his soul.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.—THE PROSELYTE OF THE GATE.

THE Feast of Trumpets had been the beginning of a series of solemnities, which were now to be crowned by the Feast of Tabernacles, lasting for a week. It began on the fifteenth day of the month; four days, therefore, were to elapse between it and the great Day of Atonement. Eldad returned to the house of Ithiel. In the country some of the people were gathering in the latest fruits of the earth, and others preparing for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem; some, again, who were compelled to remain at home, were beginning to dress their green bowers, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were collecting branches from the country, to decorate their tabernacles in the vallies round the city.

Eldad said nothing to his friends of what had passed; but they all perceived immediately that he was become a new man. He embraced Sussannah with a pure affection, and a humbled consciousness of his past injustice; his manner towards all around was full of mild benevolence. There was none of the outward warmth and vehemence which he had exhibited before; yet his mind was full of activity and joy. The calm composure of his whole demeanour, was that of a man to whom the mysteries of life are solved, and

who feels that omnipotent love defends and guides him through time and eternity. His thoughts and desires seemed all directed towards an invisible, eternal, future good ; and yet never had his heart been more open to all the joys of nature, or more susceptible to the tenderest feelings of human affection. Susannah had never loved him so much, and had never been so much beloved by him. The true happiness of her married life now began : all that had passed was forgotten. She bloomed again in more than her former beauty ; like the rose of Jericho, when the morning sun drinks from its fragrant leaves the heavy dew which had weighed them down.

On the 13th day of the month Tisri, the companies of pilgrims began to arrive from every side. The native of Lebanon, the inhabitant of Beersheba, of Peræa, and of Galilee, the dwellers on the sea shore, and the strangers from Syria, Asia Minor, Cyprus, and Libya, all after their toilsome journies, greeted the city and temple of their God. From the roof of Ithiel's house Eldad and Susannah looked down on the festal throng. On the following day, which was the day of preparation, they beheld a sight which could nowhere be seen but at Jerusalem. The courts of the Temple, the roofs of all the houses, the Mount of Olives, as far as its highest pinnacle, the valley of the Kidron, and the environs of the city on every side, were covered with a sudden verdure. The whole neighbourhood had been parched by the heat of the sun ; the gardens and fields had assumed the yellow hues of autumn, and the vineyards were already stripped ; but at once spring and summer appeared to return, the palms, the

firs, the myrtles, and the pomegranates, having yielded their more lasting foliage to the leafy tabernacles. The busy hands of women, as well as men, were everywhere in full activity; even the children gave their help, and, as if by magic, Jerusalem seemed at once transformed into an encampment of green bowers. It was a lively and refreshing contrast to the mournful barrenness of the hills, which formed the background of the picture.

By the evening all was ready. The citrons and apples of Paradise glowed amidst the dark green of the bowers; their walls were hung with tapestry; their floors were covered with carpets; and the large lamp burnt in the middle. When the evening star appeared in heaven, above the western sea, every family, after the customary ablutions, left its dwelling to occupy its tabernacle. Ithiel had resigned his house to strangers, and had erected a tabernacle in a vineyard on the Mount of Olives, to which he, and the family of Shemida, repaired, and placed themselves round the richly furnished table. Ithiel then offered up his supplication before drinking the first cup of wine, "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, thou King of all the earth, who hast sanctified us by thy precepts, and commanded us to dwell in tabernacles!" He then emptied the cup, the rest followed his example; and the same thing was done, almost at the same instant, in all the other tabernacles. The thousands of lamps in the bowers, on the Mount of Olives, in the vale of Kidron, and on the roofs of the houses in the city, seemed like stars of the earth, answering to those by which the heavens were already over-

spread. A gentle wind just stirred the leaves of the bowers, and the sounds of festivity and mutual congratulation echoed on every side, amidst songs and the music of cymbals and flutes. Well may they rejoice whose sins are removed ; if the people afflicted themselves before the atonement was made, it was natural that after it they should indulge in the mirth of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Towards midnight the lamps were gradually extinguished, and all was silent in the tabernacles. The women, the children, and the weakly and aged, returned to their houses, and the men laid themselves down to rest on the floor. But scarcely had the first beams of morning reddened the summits of the Arabian hills, when they all left their bowers to fill the courts of the Temple. The usual ceremonies of putting out the lamps, killing the lamb, burning incense in the holy place, and offering the morning sacrifice, were first gone through ; the eight priests then ranged themselves on the sloping ascent of the altar, each with that part of the sacrificial instruments which was entrusted to his care ; the last being the priest who bore the golden vessel, with the wine of the drink offering. At once, all the instruments of music struck up, the Water Gate was opened, and through its lofty folding doors a priest entered with a golden ewer full of water, which he had drawn from the spring of Siloah, whose softly flowing stream runs at the south-eastern foot of Mount Moriah. All was silent, except the sound of the silver trumpets. The people made a wide opening for the priest, who approached the altar of burnt offering, and was met by him who bore the vessel of wine. As soon as they saw each other, they

both exclaimed, "With joy we draw water from the wells of salvation:" and the people around repeated, "With joy we draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah xii. 3.) The priest, who had descended from the altar, then took from the other the ewer of water, and mingled it with the wine. The Hallel was sung, in the meantime, by the Levites, the people who filled the courts holding a citron in one hand, and a bundle of palm, willow, and citron branches in the other.¹

This was the solemnity of which it was commonly said in Israel, "He who has not seen the joy of the drawing of water has seen no joy." Eldad regarded it as not only an expression of thankfulness for the early and the latter rain, to which the fruits of the earth, now gathered in, had owed their abundance; but as a memorial of the water which gushed forth in the wilderness at the stroke of Moses' rod; besides that still higher meaning, which it remained for the Messiah fully to disclose.²

On this day the priests of all the courses were on duty; there were at least four hundred and sixty-four. A number of Levites, skilled in music, were placed on the fifteen steps; and the great Hallel was sung by them and the assembled thousands of the people. When they came to the Hosanna in the 118th Psalm, the people and priests moved round the altar, in imitation of the journey of Israel through the wilderness; holding

¹ The Jews, both in ancient and modern times, have interpreted the command in Leviticus xxiii. 40, "And ye shall take unto you the boughs of *goodly trees*," to mean branches of citron. They make them into a bundle, with the other boughs there mentioned.

² John vii. 37.

as before, a citron in one hand, and a bundle of palm and myrtle branches in the other; and repeating, "Oh Lord, help: Oh Lord, grant us success!" As they passed the high-priest, they showered the fragrant leaves and fruit upon him; heaping the choice gifts of the earth upon the person of highest sanctity among the people. To the worshippers in general this ceremony united a grateful acknowledgment of the goodness of Jehovah in giving them plenteously the fruits of the earth, with a remembrance of the most important event in the history of His chosen people. But some few, with Eldad, looked forward to a time when all the promises of Jehovah should be fulfilled; and when to the shout of "Hosanna!" should be added, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Psalm cxviii. 26.)

When the circuit of the altar was completed, and the high-priest, from the top of the fifteen steps, had given his blessing to the people, one part of them presented their own thank offerings, another repaired to the porticoes to hear the Law read and expounded. (Neh. viii. 18.)

Immediately after the evening sacrifice, when the water of Siloah had been again mingled with the wine of the drink offering, the multitude crowded to the Court of the Women, which was illuminated by lamps of unusual size, disposed on four candelabra, fifty cubits in height. The Levites, with their instruments, stood on the fifteen steps, which led from the Court of the Women to the Court of Israel; and from the galleries over the porticoes, the women were spectators of what passed below. The members of the Sanhedrim, the elders, and chief men of the people,

took torches in their hands, sang psalms, and performed sacred dances in honour of Jehovah; the youths displayed feats of corporeal strength and dexterity; and the festal assembly was not closed till a late hour of the night.

The feast lasted eight days; the first and the last being kept with great strictness; while on the intermediate days civil occupations might be pursued. The traffic, which was usual at all the great festivals, was especially active at the Feast of Tabernacles. The productions of Egypt, the manufactures of Tyre, and its distant imports, with the spices of the East, the corn and cattle of Galilee, and the balsam of Gilcad, were all to be seen, and every one bought what was necessary against the approaching season of winter. Eldad had no pleasure, however, in looking upon what he considered as a profanation of the service and house of God, and withdrew to the tabernacle of Ithiel, on the Mount of Olives, during the chief part of every day. On the third, he presented his thank offering, which was truly to him what its name implied, an offering of peace. While Susannah was engaged in preparing the meal from that part of the victim which belonged to the offerer, Eldad availed himself of the permission which the priests enjoyed on festival days, to go into the holy place, and see its magnificence.

Standing at the altar of burnt offering, which was itself raised forty-two steps above the Court of the Gentiles, a space intervened between the spectator and the Temple. The altar, therefore, was not within but in front of the Temple. The blood of atonement, which was to reconcile man to God, being shed between the two. Twelve

steps led up from the level of the base of the altar to the Temple itself, which consisted of three parts, the portico, the holy place, and the holy of holies. The entrance to the portico was open, but opposite to it was the curtain which closed the passage into the holy place. There stood the golden candlestick, the golden altar of incense, and the golden table of shew-bread. A second curtain was suspended between the holy place and the most holy. In this Temple, the holy of holies was empty. In Solomon's Temple, it had contained the ark of the covenant, with the tables of the Law, above which was the mercy-seat, and over that the two cherubims, between which the glory of Jehovah dwelt. On the sides, and over the roof, of the holy and most holy places, were three stories of chambers, entered by doors in the portico. These chambers served as repositories for the treasures of the Temple. The whole of this part of the building was ceiled with plates of gold, and the flat roof furnished with gilded iron spikes, to prevent the birds settling upon it.

It was with sacred awe that Eldad looked upon the dwelling-place of Jehovah. In company with the other priests he ascended the twelve steps with deep humility, and in mental prayer. They were led through the treasure chambers above and around the holy and most holy places; and then descended again into the portico. The curtain before the holy place was now withdrawn. Eldad in his ministrations in the Court of the Priests, had often seen thus far, and with veneration contemplated the abode of the glory of Jehovah; but now his trembling foot entered its hitherto untrodden precincts. On the southern side was the golden lamp-stand,

whose seven lamps were kindled every evening ; towards the north was the table of shew-bread, on which the twelve loaves were placed every week ; and in the middle the altar of incense, on which, morning and evening, a priest burnt incense, while the lamb was offered up in the daily sacrifice. The foot of a priest only might enter the holy place ; into the most holy, the high priest's only, and that but once in the year, on the Day of Atonement.

What gave a deeper interest to the feelings thus excited in Eldad's mind, as he stood within the holy place, was the company of the Old Man of the Temple, who had dissuaded him from entering at the Feast of Pentecost, promising to be his guide at the Feast of Tabernacles. He had prepared himself and Eldad by long and fervent prayer, and now they trod the holy place together. The Old Man manifested a very unusual degree of emotion. On ordinary occasions his mind was calm and still ; equally removed from grief or joy, from anxiety or indifference ; but now he was visibly agitated, and his venerable figure seemed to acquire a superhuman dignity from the restraint which he laid upon his inward feelings. In passing through the sacred building, profound silence was always observed ; but when they had left it, the Old Man still remained silent ; and Eldad, much as he wished to ask the meaning of all he saw, would not disturb his meditations. Silently then he followed, as the Old Man led the way, till they came to Solomon's Porch, where he had taken Eldad the first evening.¹ He pointed to the courts

¹ See page 192.

of the Temple, which were within their view, and, after a long silence, during which he was strongly agitated, he said: "Kneel down, my son! I will give thee my blessing. I promised thy father and thy uncle to do for thee what I have done. I am hastening where they already are. May we meet there again. Jehovah has guided thee by my means; be thine own spirit henceforth thy guide, for thou wilt see me no more on earth." Eldad, astonished and overpowered, sank upon the ground, and received the Old Man's blessing; and he had disappeared before Eldad rose up again. He went to his cell—it was open, but no one was within. He hastened to Shemida, who told him that it was often thus; that the Old Man would often disappear for a long time; but that, absent or present, his words always proved true.

After the feast upon the sacrifice of the peace offering, they returned to the tabernacle of Ithiel on the Mount of Olives. They were scarcely seated, when the figure of a stranger appeared among them, whom they did not at first recognize. It was Lysis. In their surprise they seemed doubtful how to act. Ithiel was inclined to thrust him out by force, when Lysis, whose pale face and shrunk figure had prevented their knowing him at first, exclaimed, "Let Eldad decide!" and turning to him, he said,—“On the day when my foolish thoughtlessness gave a second blow to the happiness of your life, I fled into the wilderness of Judea. A priest found me wandering, brought me back to Jerusalem, and received me hospitably. He told me what had befallen you; and I testified to him my deep remorse and

penitence. He seized the opportunity to persuade me to abandon the fables and the follies of the religion in which I had been brought up; and to turn to the worship of the one true God. This evening, an aged and venerable man entered the house of my host, and bade me seek thee out, and tell thee in his name that thou shouldest receive me not only into thy friendship, but into thy faith. Behold me ready to become a proselyte!"

"This," exclaimed Eldad, "must be the Old Man of the Temple; his word shall be obeyed." He then embraced the friend of his youth, and begged him to forgive his groundless suspicions. "Oh," said he, "had Melchi but lived to see this day! He always hoped that thou wouldest some day be one of us. Did I not too always predict, that if thou shouldest see Israel in all its glory in the Land of Promise, thou wouldest desire to become a partaker in their hopes?"

"The God who hath made heaven and earth hath done this," said Lysis. "He has severely punished my folly; and in the midst of my chastisement made me to know your Law and your hopes. I now understand why, in every land, I have found prophecies which pointed to Judea for their accomplishment."

"Praised be Jehovah," exclaimed Ithiel, "who increaseth His people Israel, and hath spoken by His prophet the word of which this day we behold the accomplishment: 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee; for behold darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but Jehovah shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon

thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light.'” (Isaiah lx. 1, 2.)

Lysis, with his usual precipitation, pressed his speedy reception as a proselyte, and his friends were not unwilling that his conversion should be made still more solemn by taking place openly during this great festival; it was therefore so arranged. Such conversions from heathenism to the Jewish faith had become very common, and were regarded by the Jews as a pledge of the approach of the time when the promises of God should be fulfilled; which, as they understood them, implied the sovereignty of Israel over the whole earth.

Ithiel and the priest with whom Lysis had lodged endeavoured to prevail on him to submit to circumcision and baptism, and so enter into the family of Abraham, and become an heir of the promises; after which, on the offering of three turtle doves, he would become a proselyte of righteousness, and be permitted to bring his sacrifice, like a native Jew, into the Courts of the Priests. Lysis was more inclined to become only a proselyte of the gate; and Eldad took his part, and asked what more was necessary, since he could thus enjoy the benefits of the Law, could be a partaker of the civil privileges of God's chosen people, and dwell in their gates? “Would there not too,” he asked, “be danger that he should be seduced by the Hellenists to join the worship at Leontopolis, if he returned to Egypt in every respect a Jew?”¹

On the following morning Lysis was taken be-

¹ See note 1, page 36, Part I.

fore the tribunal, which sat in the gate of Nicanor. In the presence of three witnesses, Eldad, She-mida, and the priest his host, he solemnly abjured idolatry, professed his belief in all the truths that are revealed in the Law, and promised obedience to the seven Noachic precepts, as they were called ; namely, to abstain from idolatry, to worship only the true God, to avoid incest, not to commit theft, or robbery, or murder, to maintain judgment and justice, and to abstain from blood and all that contained blood, consequently from things strangled. He then presented his offering ; but he was not allowed to come any farther than to the enclosure between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of Israel. From this time he bore the name of a "devout man," one that feared God, a stranger, or "proselyte of the gate."

As Eldad and Lysis spent the last day but one of the feast, in Ithiel's tabernacle on the Mount of Olives, Eldad read to him the description which Nehemiah gives of the first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles after the captivity. (Nehemiah viii. 13.)

"It is not to be denied," said Lysis, when Eldad had finished reading—"It is not to be denied, that the Dionysian festivals of the Greeks have considerable resemblance to the Feast of Tabernacles ; the mixed offering of wine and water reminds me of the gift of Bacchus ; the bundle of palm, willow, and myrtle branches, of the Thyrsus ; the Hosanna, of the Evøe ; the procession round the altar, of the Dionysian train ; the dances in the Court of the Women, of the dances of the Grecian youths. The torch, too, is, in both cases, in the hand of the votary. But

the resemblance between the Grecian festival and the Feast of Tabernacles is that of a distorted image to the true picture."

"You might have gone further," said Eldad, "and have added, that such is the relation generally of heathenism to Judaism. The heathens have mingled poetry and fable with the traditions which they have received from the family of Noah; they have disfigured, by human inventions, the divine truths which they learned from the Jews. How, indeed, could it be otherwise, since Jehovah found it necessary to preserve this knowledge pure in Israel, by renewing and deepening the impression of it by the ceremonies of the Law?"

"I can understand now," replied Lysis, "many allusions which I have heard you make, and I see a new light shed upon history. The Greeks differ from the Egyptians only in giving their distorted images a more graceful form."

"Bless Jehovah," said Eldad, "that thou hast at last been brought to the source of all truth; and pray to Him that all the heathens may likewise be drawn to it. The advent of the Messiah, who shall accomplish this, cannot be far distant. He shall be the light of the Gentiles, and the consolation of Israel. The sceptre is already in some sort departed from Judah, for it is in the hand of Levi; and the seventy weeks of Daniel are hastening to their close."

"And tell me," rejoined Lysis, "my friend formerly, but now my brother in faith,—tell me, shall my heathen brethren in those days become proselytes of the gate, or proselytes of righteousness? To me it seems,—if I may venture to tell you my thoughts on such a subject—to me it

seems, that this very distinction points to an important difference in the Law itself. I have bound myself by an oath to obey those precepts of universal morality which belong equally to the Noachic and Mosaic Law ; and I have professed my belief in all the truths which your law-giver taught ; but I have not bound myself to all the rites and ceremonies by which your nation is now distinguished in its worship. How, then, if the former are what is truly valuable, what all nations alike need, and in the days you speak of shall alike know ; and if the latter are only important as helping to preserve the others ?”

“ It may be so,” replied Eldad musingly. “ The Old Man of the Temple has taught me that the sacrifices are but a visible prophecy, commanded because the people are wanting in spiritual faith. But I will neither deny nor affirm aught in this matter. The Messiah comes who will remove all our doubts. Meanwhile let us rejoice in the belief, that, though we know not in what manner it may be, Jehovah has certainly in His counsels decreed that ‘ the Law shall go forth from Zion, and his word from Jerusalem.’ (Micah iv. 2.) He shall teach the nations His ways, and they shall walk in His paths.”

The friends then embraced each other, and descending from the Mount of Olives, Eldad went up to the altar in the Temple. The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of all. The drawing of water, the Hosanna, the illumination and the dance, had been repeated every day and night,¹ and the seventh day was

¹ See page 336.

called the great Hosanna, and the day of willows. The altar of burnt offering was decked with branches of willows, all bent inwards, as an emblem that earthly glory must bow before the majesty of God. Instead of once, the people went seven times around the altar, with their branches and their citrons. The last meal was taken in the tabernacles, whose green decorations had already begun to fade; but they still charmed the eye, bearing upon them the remembrance of seven festive days of happiness passed beneath their shade. The father of the family pronounced a blessing over the last cup of wine which was to be drunk there; and when it was emptied, gave his benediction to the company, who left the tabernacle with that feeling of calm melancholy with which we quit a spot where we have enjoyed much happiness. The women and children, and even Lysis and Eldad, carried away a citron, a pomegranate, a branch, or a leaf, as a memorial of the festival. In the evening, the illuminations and the dances before described were repeated. This part of the festivity, as well as the drawing of water, ceased on the eighth day, which was added as a special Sabbath to the full week of the feast. On this eighth day, no circuit was made round the altar, and the offering consisted only of one bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of a year old, as a burnt offering, with their usual meat and drink offering, and one goat for a sin offering. Besides Azereth (Day of Convocation, or Day of Assembly,)¹ this day was called the "Day of rejoicing in the Law," because every

¹ See page 248.

year on this day the reading of the Law and the Prophets was concluded, and began afresh on the following Sabbath. Thus, what every one had begun in his own synagogue at home, he finished here in the midst of the assembled people. This took place on the twenty-second day of the month Tisri, in which, up to this time, there had been only four common days.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE tabernacles were now broken up; scattered leaves, flowers, and garlands, alone showing where they had once been. The pilgrims were preparing for their departure, and exchanging farewell salutations. Many took leave of Jerusalem never to behold it again. The autumn wind blew chill, and where a solitary tabernacle was still standing as a monument of the festival, its green was changed to an autumnal yellow. The circle of the Jewish feasts was closed, the half year of harvest was at an end, and the dark and rainy season of winter was fast approaching, when no pilgrim's song would be heard on the roads to Jerusalem. It was a winter which to many would prove the winter of death.

The companies of travellers arranged themselves for the journey. Shemida and his family, together with Lysis, took the road by Bethany to Jericho. As they passed through the hollow between the southernmost and middle summit of the Mount of Olives, Eldad thought of the tears he had shed on that spot when he had separated himself from his friends after the Feast of Pentecost. Then he had exclaimed, "The path of obedience is rough and arduous!" Now, returning a happy

husband, and with the peace of God in his heart, he was inclined to say, "Easy is the path of obedience to him who walks in it with faith!" The halt at noon was at the Oasis, beneath the palms, and they arrived late in the evening at Jericho. On the following day the Galileans of the party crossed the Jordan to their homes.

Eldad, Susannah, and Lysis, began at once to make preparations for their departure to Alexandria, whence they were to bring the mother of Eldad. As they were about to begin their journey, symptoms of the plague showed themselves at Jericho. This most terrible of all diseases is as rapid as the leprosy is slow, in running its fatal course. The termination of both is equally miserable. Those who are seized with the plague, are suddenly attacked with pains in the head and loins, the speech becomes inarticulate, and not unfrequently is lost altogether, as well as the sense of hearing. The eyes become dull and heavy, lethargy succeeds, the strength is prostrated, fever, delirium, and melancholy, seize upon the sufferer, who commonly dies on the third day, unless a plague boil preserves him to a miserable life. If the disease spreads, all intercourse even between the nearest neighbours is at an end. The streets, the fountains, the houses, are heaped with the bodies of the dead; infected persons are abandoned even by their own kindred; and despair and licentiousness walk hand in hand. The people call the plague the arrows of God.

As the plague commonly rages most destructively on its first breaking out, Shemida regarded its appearance as a divine warning to withdraw from Jericho with his family. He determined to

accompany his daughter and Eldad to Egypt. Preparations were speedily made, friends and household were commended to Jehovah, and the City of Palms was abandoned, as if the curse of God were upon it. They hastened by Bethel, Gibeon, and Lydda, to Joppa, where Eldad's host was requested to procure for them, as speedily as possible, an opportunity of crossing over to Alexandria in a Phœnician vessel.

Eldad looked from the heights of Joppa to the hills of Judah, and blessed the beloved land which had been to him not only a land of promise, but a land of fulfilment. The image of his pious mother, all whose expectations he was about to accomplish and surpass; her joy at seeing him again, and the prospect of returning with him to the land of her fathers, and visiting the grave of her husband; the blessing she would so joyfully bestow on him and on Susannah,—all this filled his mind with delightful anticipations. Meanwhile his host appeared uneasy. Eldad thought he might be apprehensive lest they had brought with them the infection of the plague, and he hastened to set his mind at ease on the matter. His host, however, shook his head in reply to Eldad's assurances, gazing at him with a look of sorrow. At length he said, "It is not for myself, but for thee, that I feel. Collect all thy firmness; in vain dost thou go to Alexandria to bring back thy mother. She is dead! The tidings of the death of Melchi, and the rumour of thy wife's unfaithfulness, reached her together, and her heart broke under its double weight of sorrow."

Susannah uttered a piercing shriek, and Lysis wept at this intelligence with grief, shame, and

remorse. Eldad felt all that a dutiful and affectionate son must feel when bereaved of his mother, but he knew that the hand of Jehovah guided him; that the Lord woundeth, but also healeth; that His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. "Comfort me, O Jehovah!" he exclaimed, and raised his eyes to heaven; "comfort me as one is comforted by his mother!" Then seating himself on the ground in a corner, he gave vent to those tears which soften the anguish of the heart, and melt it in tender sorrow.

Notwithstanding this sad intelligence, it was determined to continue the voyage to Alexandria, where the presence of Eldad was now absolutely necessary. Shemida, with his wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, and his grandson, and Eldad, Susannah, Jetur, and Lysis, all embarked together on board a Phœnician vessel. They ran swiftly along the coast, and Jabneh,¹ Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Raphia, were soon left behind. The mind of Eldad was clear and serene as the sea, which reflected, as in a mirror, the bright blue heavens above. His grief for the death of his mother seemed to have deepened his trust in the Divine mercy, which had bestowed upon him that perfect peace of mind, which neither in life nor death sees anything to fear. One morning they were watching the red dawn announcing the approach of day. Eldad, full of tranquil joy, was relating to his friends, as they sat around him on the deck, the course of Divine Providence through the year which they had just completed, and how he had been led by it, to find at last that true peace, which he had sought in vain before.

¹ Now Jebna. It is mentioned in 2 Chron. xxvi. 6.

The religious feelings of all were excited, while Eldad exclaimed,—

“Praise Jehovah, all the world,
Serve Jehovah with joy,
Come into his presence with rejoicing,
Confess that Jehovah is God,
He has made us, and we are his.”

“Through all the changes of life, in joy and in sorrow, even in death itself, the words of the last of the prophets shall be my comfort.”

“The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple,
The messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in,
Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”—*Mal.* iii. 1.

While he thus spoke, a heavenly hope seemed to take possession of his soul. All who sat around him were silent—all seemed to have been brought under the influence of the faith which animated him. Suddenly, confused voices were heard throughout the vessel. “A storm! a storm!” was in every mouth. The heavens grew black with clouds, the tempest rose, and the waves beat up against the ship on every side. The sailors endeavoured to avoid the shore, which was rocky, and where the breakers threatened to overwhelm any vessel that came within their reach. The Phœnicians called upon their gods, the children of Israel prayed to Jehovah. Eldad stood tranquil, and full of confidence, amidst terrified men and threatening waves. On a sudden the ship received a violent shock, and instantly sprung a leak. All efforts to save her were vain. Susannah flew into the arms of Eldad, and each repeated to the other passages from the Psalms.

All hope was gone, and cries and lamentations were heard on every side. The ship struck violently again upon a rock, and went to pieces at once. All on board were plunged into the sea—no one could bid another farewell! Eldad supported himself for a few minutes on a plank, and looking round saw Susannah and her father sink. Alone and scarcely conscious, he yet struggled instinctively with the stormy waves. One of tremendous height came rolling onward; amidst the uproar of the elements, Eldad exclaimed,—

“The angel of the covenant—
Behold he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts.”

and was then buried in the waters.

After an hour the storm had ceased; and the storms of this world, too, had ceased for those who had found death in the waves, and life in the bosom of their God!

THE END.

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