

DANCING AND PENTATEUCH CRITICISM IN CORRELATION.¹

PEOPLE danced in olden times, and they danced in after times; much dancing was done then, and not a little has been done since; they danced of old at festivals, and in later days people were not wont to hang down their heads at festivals.

It is the modern Criticism of the Pentateuch to which we oppose these assertions. We do not call in question the deliverance that the middle books of the Pentateuch present the latest form of the Mosaic law, but we deny that this legislation has impoverished for these festivals the exuberant natural joy of former times.

We are not now speaking of the Judaism of the Talmud and of the Ghetti, but of the people of the post-exilian restoration age. We are told these people are not so much a nation as a sect.² But they have heroically wrested their independence in the Maccabæan age from the Seleucidan tyranny, and then this re-acquired independence bled out its life in an incomparably tragic struggle in two insurrections against the Roman domination under the emperors Vespasian and Hadrian. The histories of these two struggles for liberty are, I ween, in reality great national histories.

¹ An address delivered in an Academic evening-circle at Leipzig. Revised with additions, for THE EXPOSITOR.

² Wellhausen, *Prolegomena* (1883), p. 29: "From the exile there returned not the nation, but a religious sect, those who had devoted themselves body and soul to the reformatory ideas." Smend, in Stade's *Zeitschrift*, ii. 94: "The ancient Israel was a nation and a national state, Judaism is a religious community."

And why are the post-exilian people to be thought a sect? Unity of religion and unity of worship, and a central sanctuary, are surely not things which destroy the essential character of a people. The Arab tribes, and the nationalities which with one accord pray with the face turned towards the Kaba in Mecca, and know no greater bliss than to make a pilgrimage thither at least once in their lives, are not on that account considered to be sects.

But, we are told, the legislation of the post-exilian priestly codex has deprived the cultus of its fresh popularity, since it has regulated the same by statute and restricted it to the Temple of Jerusalem, and since it has given to the sacrifices the preponderant reference to sin and expiation, and has made of the old feasts of nature, whose name *haggim* (חגים), denotes "dances," general ecclesiastical festivals with historic bearings. "Threshing-floor and winepress, corn and must, were the motives of the ancient Israelite religion; pure mirth, noisy jubilation its expression."¹

We maintain that this remained so in later times also. The post-exilian practice divested the festivals of their former heathen character, and elevated them to national festivals of a monotheistic people, without diminishing the festive mirth. The love of dancing remained the same after as before. Some festive scenes from the life of the people, and those taken from the rather sombre than cheerful period of the Herodian vassal sway and the Roman supremacy, may suffice to prove this.

On the north side of the hill on which lies, at a distance of an hour and a quarter northwards from Jerusalem, Anâtâ, the birthplace of the prophet Jeremiah, stands a group of the inhabitants eagerly gazing into the distance. In the pure air of Palestine sound travels more quickly and fully

¹ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 102, 112.

and to a greater distance than with us. They have caught the notes of distant music. After a long time of waiting, a procession descends from a height beyond, and amidst the strains of music crosses the valley. The music ceases while they move up the rising ground to Anâtâ. Meanwhile the intelligence has spread throughout the whole locality. From the flat roofs of the higher houses people wave kerchiefs as a salutation to those who are approaching. The youth of the place run through the streets on all sides with the joyful cry *chalilayya!* (flutes) *maythayya debikkurayya!* (bringers of the first-fruits).¹ Soon after this the procession has crowned the ridge of the hill, the music resounds again, and from every house of the locality people swarm forth. At the head of the procession walks a splendid ox, his horns overlaid with gold and a wreath of olive branches upon his head. Then come flute-players who peal forth exhilarating airs; then asses with baskets, some plain, some adorned with gold and silver, full of fresh figs and clusters of grapes, and others with baskets full of dried figs and raisins, and others with cages full of young doves and turtles; last of all the representatives of the district of Michmash, who now convey its first fruits to the Temple. The flute is properly the instrument which calls to the dance, as accordingly in the Lord's parable of the children playing in the market-place, the ones in displeasure say to the others, "We have fluted to you and ye have not danced" (Luke vii. 32). The whole population of Anâtâ seems to have been smitten by the tarantula. When the procession, after staying for some refreshments, striking up afresh, sets itself again in motion and descends into the verdant hollow, old and young march behind, mothers wave their little ones upon their hands as though for a dance, maidens skip in dance—step to the front and form circles, which dissolve again without delaying the procession, choirs

¹ חליליָא מַיְתַיָא דְבִיקּוּרַיָא

of men sing national melodies, such as "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." Many follow the procession to the vicinity of Jerusalem, where it halts and sends forward messengers into the city to announce its arrival. In the meantime the firstfruits are ornately arranged, and the finest of the grapes, pomegranates and other fruits are placed around as a garland. Deputies of the Temple present themselves, honourably to receive the newcomers; and when, now amidst strains of music, they enter Jerusalem, the craftsmen who are working on the street in front of their houses pause in their labour, stand up and greet the incoming ones, "Brethren, men of Mīchmash, welcome!" Then the full baskets, with the doves tied to their sides, are by the bringers of them carried upon their shoulders up the Temple hill, and are met upon their entrance to the court of the Temple with Levitical chant of psalms. The doves are offered as burnt-offerings, the ox as a peace-offering, and of the latter the bringers receive a portion for a festive repast, which could be held anywhere in Jerusalem where they might lodge.¹ Is not all this popular in its character, genial, fair and mirthful, and was it not natural that, after the people possessed its own land, land and people in their totality should render the tribute of gratitude out of the abundance of the blessing bestowed? No limit was thereby set to the self-denying zeal of the individual.

The land was divided into twenty-four districts; and there was thus hardly a trade route in the country those dwelling near which had not an opportunity of witnessing, between Pentecost and Tabernacles, the enchanting spectacle of such Bikkurim-procession. The days of the Feast of Tabernacles, too, showed in manifold ways that the post-exilian festal ritual left the festive joy in the things

¹ Main sources: Mishna, *Bikkurim*, iii. 2, 3, and the Palestinian Gemara thereon.

of nature undisturbed. One could then see, even before the dawn of the first day of the feast, if this was not a sabbath, a joyous throng pouring forth from the Jaffa Gate at Jerusalem. The way leads at first through stony land, and then winds down a long descent into the Wadi Chanina, above which on the right hand lay the villages Moza (מוצא) and Kolonia (קלניא). The verdure of the orchards, refreshed with the first showers of the early rain, is hailed by the people with shouts of joy, as they scatter on either side of the bridge which crosses the brook fringed with tall poplar-osiers,¹ some in order with their own hands to pluck branches for the festive display, others to look on at the men who have been honoured with the commission to fetch from Kolonia the festal leafy adornment of the altar. They seek out right long and goodly branches of these poplar-osiers and cut them off, and then the reunited host returns in procession, with exultant shouts and singing and jesting, to Jerusalem, as far as the Temple hill, where the great branches of poplar-osier are received by the priests and set upright around the sides of the altar, so that they bend over it with their tips. Priestly trumpet-clang resounded during this decoration of the altar with foliage, and they went on that feast day once, on the seventh day seven times, around the altar, with willow branches, or the festive posy² entwined of a palm branch (*lulab*) and branches of myrtles and willows, amidst the usual festive shouts of Hosanna; exclaiming, after the completed encircling, "Beauty becomes thee, O altar! Beauty becomes thee, O altar!"³ One

¹ ערב (ערבה), *populus Euphratica*; different from צפצפה, *salix*, though both belonging to the family of the *salicinae*.

² Composed of the so-called four kinds (ארבעה חינים).

³ Mishna, *Succa*, sec. iv. Maimonides, *Hilchoth Lulab*, vii. 21-23; comp., as regards what was borne in the hands in encompassing the altar, *Succa*, 43 b. The court of the priests (except the space between the altar and the porch) was accessible to the male Israelites. See Mishna, *Ketim*, i. 8, 9.

may regard this post-exilian festive custom as pleasing or otherwise; in no case is it morose and gloomy. Our Luther, translating the 27th verse of Ps. cxviii: "*Schmücket das Fest mit Maien bis an die Hörner des Altars,*"¹ compares those branches of poplar-osier to the birches which we set up as May-poles at Whitsuntide, and around which the May or Whitsun dance is held. For the world of nature has its festivals, and the world of spirit has its festivals, and there is nothing more joyous and sensible than the interpenetration of the two.

To those which are strictly festivals of dance we come only now. One of the most gladsome days of the people was the 15th Ab, a July or August day, the closing day of the woodcutting for the altar of burnt-offering, upon which, even when no offering was being presented, a glimmering fire was to be maintained day and night by a renewal of the layer of wood. As the Græco-Roman spectacular contests are one of the main reasons why the lion has disappeared from Palestine and the region of the Mediterranean in general, so has that altar, which consumed an immense quantity of wood, to bear the main part of the blame, that in a wide circle around Jerusalem there are no forests properly speaking, only jungles of brushwood, devoid of trees, or with only a tree here and there. At the time, however, to which we transport ourselves back, the state of matters was otherwise, notwithstanding the previous desolating wars; then there were still to be found, not far from Hebron, and especially upon the mountains of Ephraim and Benjamin, forests of lofty trees, and the duty of providing the altar thence with wood was an affair of honour for the priestly, Levitical, and patrician families who had tendered their services therefor,

¹ The English version, "*Bind the sacrifice (collectively: the multitude of victims) with cords, even unto the horns of the altar,*" corresponds better to the original text.

and among whom the instalments were determined by lot. Nehemiah, in the Biblical book excerpted from his *Memorabilia*, attaches great importance to the now completed organisation for this wood supply, or, as it is called, this wood-offering (קרִבֵּן הָעֵצִים). The 15th Ab was the closing day of the tree-felling, on which all without distinction of family could take part in the procuring of the wood, the festival of the Xylophoria (ἡ τῶν ξυλοφοριῶν ἑορτή) as Josephus names it. Old and young, rich and poor, betook them to the precincts of the forest; the fairest adornment was the axe upon the shoulder; and the jubilation with which the wood was conveyed in carriages, or on beasts of burden, especially oxen, or upon stalwart shoulders, within the precincts of the Temple, was no whit inferior to the jubilation of harvest festivities.¹ For a people is, and always will be, a natural quantity and no spiritual one, and therefore it celebrates religious festivals too with natural frolic, sheer joy, boisterous mirth. To do so belongs to the nature of a people as such.

Even the deep seriousness of the Day of Atonement was transformed on the evening of the same day, into light-hearted merriment. "Nothing," we are told, "is more characteristic of the post-exilian cultus, which in contrast with the ancient everywhere directs its view to sin and expiation, than that it culminates and attains its climax in a great festival of the expiation of sin."² The later observance of this day, however, in the garb of mourning, is only as it were a dark shadow of the primitive observance. The observance in the Temple was accomplished in a significant drama which was fascinating from beginning to end. When the high priest came forth from the Most

¹ Sources: Mishna, *Taanith*, sec. iv.; with Neh. x. 35 [A.V. 34]; xiii. 31; Josephus, *B. J.*, ii. 17, § 6; cf. Herzfeld, *Gesch. Israels*, i. 67 sq., 144 sq., ii. 126, 182 sq. Rosenzweig, *Das Jahrhundert nach dem babyl. Exile* (1885), p. 126.

² Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, p. 116.

Holy Place, after the performance of his functions there, this was for the people a consolatory, gladsome sight, for which poetry can find no adequate words: "like the peace-proclaiming arch in painted clouds; like the morning star, when he arises from the eastern twilight; like the sun, when opening his bud, he unfolds in roseate hue."¹ And when he had committed the goat for banishment into the wilderness (the goat for Azazel) to the man who was to conduct it down from the Temple court into the city, this was a highly joyous interlude, to which the people so greatly crowded to see the goat, to pull it, and to chase it, that it and its leader had need of a strong guard for their protection.² And when the solemnity was over, the high priest was escorted with a guard of honour to his dwelling in the city, where a banquet awaited his more immediate friends. The young people, however, cared little about these things, but prepared to repair to the vineyards; for about Jerusalem are mountains, likewise vine-mountains (vineyards)—upon the calcareous mountain ranges of Judæa, and in particular near Jerusalem, grows a wine which surpasses the German, and even the Spanish, in spirit. Twice in the year, on the closing day of the wood-offering and on the Day of Atonement, there was a diversion of dancing in the vineyards.³ The maidens attired themselves all in simple white, in fresh-washen white garments which they had borrowed; the wealthy also were obliged to borrow them, in order that they might not shame the poor. The climax of the enjoyment was reached in the chain-dances; youths and maidens stood facing each other in rows, and moved towards each other in dancing step as they sang; the song was a song of men, but under the refining influence of the important day, the event took the

¹ See my *Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie* (1836), p. 21 sq.

² Mishna, *Joma*, vi. 3-6.

³ Mishna, *Taanith*, iv. 8; comp. *Gesch. der jüdischen Poesie*, p. 195 sq.

form of a muster, or a choice of brides on a large scale. In the Book of Judges (ch. xxi.) we read that a like dancing festival was held every year by the maidens of Shiloh in the vineyards without the town. This festival is there called the feast of the Lord. Nor was the dance of the daughters of Jerusalem, any more than that of the daughters of Shiloh, without a religious sacredness. On this side, thus, the statement receives no confirmation, that the legislation of the priestly codex has turned the piety, which till then had been habit and custom of the people, into exercises of individuals. It is true, Mosaism has at no stage of its development made dancing a constituent part of the cultus, neither however has it banished it therefrom, but has left it undisturbed, after the Captivity as well as before it, as a habit of the people, hallowed by religious occasions and bearings. Festivals were dances before the exile, and continued to be dances after the exile. History proves this.

For we have still to mention a non plus ultra, the joy of the *Bêt Hashoëba*, or solemnity of the torchlight dance, concerning which the proverb said, that he who had not seen this joy had not seen any joy in his life. The Feast of Tabernacles was, as the festival of the close of harvest, the merriest festival, and was therefore by the inventive popular genius endowed with graceful enlivening rites far beyond that which is prescribed by the letter of the Pentateuchal law. Among these was the illumination of the Temple and the torchlight dance on the minor-holiday nights, upon which a high authority, the royal dancing master at Berlin, Rudolf Voss, in his wonderfully-erudite and noble book, *Der Tanz und seine Geschichte* (1868), bestows the only too great and excessive encomium: "No people on earth is able until the present day to show a dance which, in point of sublimity and magnificence of idea and execution, could be placed on a level with this sacred torch-dance."

When the day of high solemnity with which the festival opens was at an end, priests and Levites put together a double gallery for the spectators in the "court of the women" pertaining to the Temple, the upper for the women and the lower for the men. Upon gigantic candelabra were affixed golden bowls, four to each candelabrum, which were supplied with oil by four young priests by means of ladders placed against them, and in each of these four bowls were laid innumerable wicks. When the lamps which crowned these candelabra began to sparkle and to twinkle, and then in addition the many torches shed their light, not only was the Temple converted as into a sea of flame, but all Jerusalem, to the remotest quarters, was irradiated thereby. It was not women but men, the leading and most honoured men of Jerusalem, who exhibited the spectacle of the torch-dance. They danced with torches, which they hurled into the air and caught again—a skill acquired by long practice, wherein many performed astonishing feats; and with dancing and jugglery alternated choral singing of festal hymns, sometimes also impromptu verses. Music and song resounded incessantly; for upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the men to the court of the women stood the Levites, with lyres, harps, cymbals, and many other instruments, and rendered hymn after hymn. Then above the fifteen steps, at the Gate of Nicanor, two priests awaited the first cock-crowing, to announce by threefold trumpet-signal the break of day, with which the libation of the water of Siloah was made to succeed to this nocturnal carnival. Simultaneously with the wine libation at the time of the morning sacrifice, there was poured out upon the altar water drawn from the fountain of Siloah—a sensuous representation of the words of promise: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."¹ One

¹ See on the *שִׁמְחַת בֵּית הַשְּׁוֹאֵבָה* (torchlight solemnity), *Mishna, Succa*, v. 1-4, and on the *נִסְכַּי הַמַּיִם* (libation of water), iv. 1, 9 sq., compare Maimonides, *Hilchoth Lulab*, viii. 12 sq.; *Gesch. der jüdischen Poesie*, p. 194 sq.

of the discourses of Jesus on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 37-39) was spoken with allusion to this pouring of the water of Siloah.¹

It is no doubt possible that the tabernacles of the closing festival of harvest owe their origin primarily to the custom of repairing to the vineyards and there at the time of harvest of spending the night in the open air.² But was the festive mirth curtailed or falsified by the tabernacles receiving another stamp in commemoration of the huts in which the people liberated from the Egyptian bondage were wont to encamp on the way to Canaan? Such historic significance given to the festivals of nature, so far from burying the natural occasion under a load of rubbish, rather idealises it.³ The Passover, or Easter festival, remained for the Church, as for the people of the Old Testament, a festival of spring; spring in nature avails us as a type of the spring which has dawned in God's kingdom of grace through the resurrection of the Conqueror of death. The Sunday after Easter was called in the early Church the Pasch of Flowers, and Gregory of Nazianzus concludes a sermon on Low Sunday with the words: "It is now natural spring (*ἔαρ κοσμικόν*), spiritual spring; spring for the life of the soul, spring for the life of the body; visible spring, invisible spring."

If you were placed in company with a human being from whose face beams forth to you full and pure love of a kindred soul, in the midst of a magnificent sunset of the Gulf of Naples, and had to choose whether this gracious countenance or this ravishing panorama of nature should grow pale and disappear, your choice would not waver for a moment. The personality of a single human being out-

¹ Even Herzfeld regards this as probable.

² Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, p. 88.

³ Against Wellhausen, *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 105: "Vergeschichtlichung der Feste = Denaturalisation."

weighs the whole unconscious world of nature; and human history is a mirror of the Godhead which reflects the person of God much more deeply and abundantly than the variations in the world of nature. Therefore a festival gains in festivity when it ceases to be a mere festival of nature and becomes an analogous festival of history; as when with the festival of Pentecost, the ancient festival of the vintage, there combines in post-biblical times the festival of the giving of the law,¹ and afterwards that of the founding of the Church, or when with the festival of the winter solstice there is combined the celebration of the more radiant half of the world's history begun with the birth at Bethlehem. The joy in that which is good and glorious in the world of nature suffers no diminution thereby. The self-same Psalm lxx., which extols God as the controller of history: "By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation," closes in notes of praise: "Thou hast crowned the year with Thy goodness, and Thy paths drip with fatness. The pastures of the wilderness drip, and the hills gird themselves with joy. The meadows have clothed themselves with flocks, and the valleys veil themselves in corn; all things rejoice, all things sing." And Isaiah, standing in spirit at the cradle of the holy Christ, confesses with an upward glance to God, the Giver of the wondrous Child (ix. 3): "One rejoices before Thee according to the joy in harvest." Jubilation of the reapers and sheaf-binders, jubilation of the grape-gatherers and pressers, was and is proverbial.

And as natural joy and dancing, so also joy and dancing over events of history prove to be inseparable in the post-exilian age, as in the præ-exilian. As Miriam, the sister of Moses, as choir-leader of the women celebrates with dancing and music the discomfiture of Pharaoh, and the daughter

¹ See *Pesachim*, 68, where it is said that the observance must be a so much more joyous one on that account.

of Jephthah the victory of her father over the Ammonites, and the women of Jerusalem the victory of Saul and David over the Philistines, so the composer of the sixty-eighth Psalm, which we are to regard forsooth as post-exilian, describes a celebration of victory in the Temple: "They see Thy procession, Elohim, the procession of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers go before, the players on instruments follow after: among them are the damsels playing with timbrels." And in the post-exilian historic fiction of the Book of Judith the whole feminine world engages in dances in honour of the liberatress from Holofernes, all crown themselves with wreaths of olive, and she advances at the head of the women, who, received into the midst of the crowned and praise-singing warriors, enter into the liberated Bethulia.

The legislation of the priestly codex has thus changed nothing in the people's love for dancing. The love of dancing rather increased than fell off in the later as compared with earlier times; for it even laid hold of the worship, without any consciousness of being in contradiction with the law. The very hymn book of the congregation, which is not now allowed to contain anything of a præ-exilian origin,¹ concludes with summoning to the festive dance: "Let them praise His name in the dance: with timbrel and harp let them sing praises unto Him" (Ps. cxlix. 3); and "Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and the pipe!" And just in the latest prophetic pictures of the future does the dance become a characteristic trait. When Jerusalem shall have become the spiritual metropolis of the nations, then shall

¹ Wellhausen, *Skizzen* (1884), p. 89: "The Psalms, all of them, belong to the period of the post-exilian Judaism." Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel* (1881), p. 85: "The psalter is no product of Israelitism, but of the post-exilian Judaism"; and p. 298: "That opinion, that David is the father of the psalm poesy, is a product of the post-exilian Judaism."

she, as is predicted by a Korahite poet and seer in the eighty-seventh Psalm, confess with singing, and moreover with dancing: "All my springs," my fountains of life and joy, "are in Thee." And Jeremiah, the prophet of Anâtâ, who saw the kingdom of Judah sink in ruins and Jerusalem dissolve in flames, consoles his people, inasmuch as God says by him (xxx. 4): "Again will I build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry." Nay, even in the discourses of our Lord and Saviour such images taken from the dance are not wanting. Who knows not the parable of the Prodigal Son? The lost son is the Gentile world, and the elder son, pluming himself on his virtue, is the people of the law. When the lost son has returned to the open arms of his father, the elder son, as he comes homewards, hears with offended surprise *συμφωνίας καὶ χορῶν*, that is, as Luther translates, *Gesänge und Reigen*, thus music and dancing (Luke xv. 25). The whole house shares the joy of the father, and is in transports of excitement.

Who could find fault then with me, a Christian theologian, for the nature of my theme? I have taken this opportunity to show for once, by instances given, in presence of an audience which equals that gathered around him by Robertson Smith in Edinburgh and Glasgow and by Kuenen in London and Oxford, that not everything holds water in the newest reconstruction of the præ-Christian history of Israel; and that in relation to it one ought to take up a position not offhand negative, but yet critical, without suffering oneself to be spell-bound. The Book of Ecclesiastes says: "There is a time to mourn and a time to dance," but it is equally true that it is *always* a time for testing. And an old Hebrew proverb¹ says indeed:

¹ אַם בְּכֶשֶׁת לִיחַנֵּק הַחֵלֶה בְּאֵילַן גְּדוּלָּה. See Düker, *Rabbinische Blumenlese* (1844), p. 111.

If you wish to hang yourself, hang yourself upon a great tree; *i.e.* if you will make yourself dependent on an authority, choose for yourself a great one. The proverb, however, speaks conditionally; for is it not more advisable, is it not better, not to hang oneself at all? But enough now of gossip!

FRANZ DELITZSCH.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

XIX.

THE NEW NATURE WROUGHT OUT IN NEW LIFE.

“Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.”—COL. iii. 9-11 (Rev. Ver.).

THE limits of the former paper obliged us to break the close connexion between these words and the preceding. They adduce a reason for the moral exhortation going before, which at first sight may appear very illogical. “Put off these vices of the old nature because you have put off the old nature with its vices,” sounds like, Do a thing because you have done it. But the apparent looseness of reasoning covers very accurate thought which a little consideration brings to light, and introduces a really cogent argument for the conduct it recommends. Nor do the principles contained in the verses now under examination look backward only to enforce the exhortation to put aside these evils. They also look forward, and are taken as the basis of the following exhortation, to put on the white robes of Christ-likeness—which is coupled with this section by “therefore.”

I. The first thing to be observed is the change of the