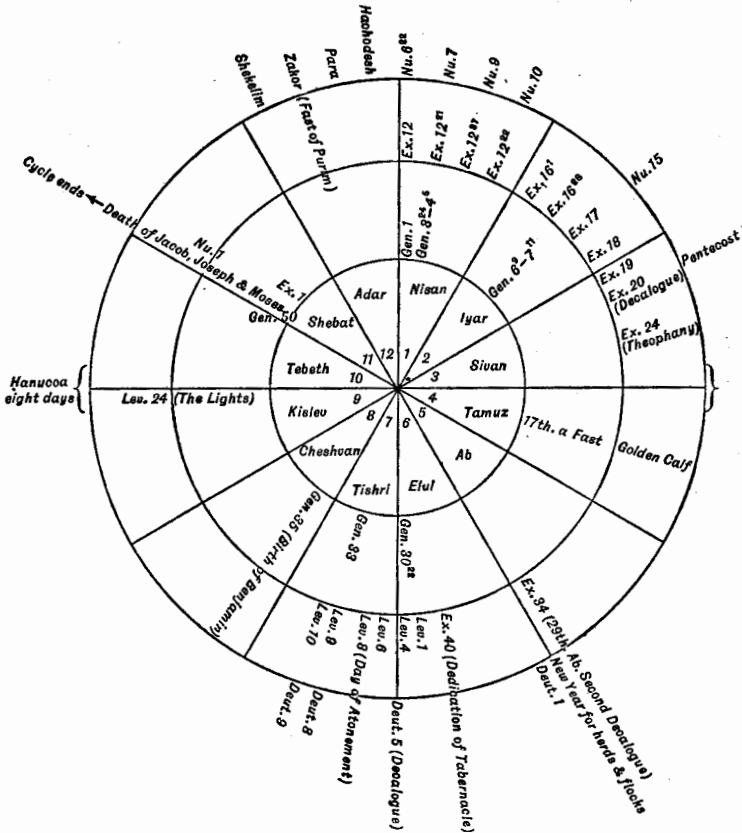


THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRIENNIAL CYCLE UPON THE PSALTER.

IN Palestine, in early times, the Pentateuch was read through consecutively in a cycle of three years, a portion (*seder*) being appointed for each Sabbath (*T. B. Meg.* 29^b. See article by Dr. A. Büchler in *Jewish Quarterly Review* Ap. 1893). This triennial cycle may possibly have arisen from the fact that the

TABLE I.



lunar months would require an intercalated month once every three years to reconcile them with the solar year.

We will assume, with Dr. Büchler, that the cycle commenced in the first month (*Nisan*); it may then be indicated by three concentric circles, as in the accompanying diagram, in which

a sufficient number of the Sabbath-readings are given to shew the arrangement of the whole.

Thus—the first year read Gen. i—Ex. xi.

the second year read Ex. xii—Num. vi 21.

the third year read Num. vi 22—Deut. xxxiv.

The way in which the triennial cycle coincides with tradition is most suggestive. A few instances may suffice. Thus:—

The first month, Nisan. Here the first year opened with Gen. i, the Creation of the World; accordingly we find (*Rosh Hash.* 10^b) that the world was created on the 1st of Nisan. The Sabbath nearest to the Passover read the Sacrifice of Cain and Abel (Gen. iv), which in Jewish tradition (*Pirke R. Eliezer*) is associated with the Passover.

The reading for Nisan in the second year of the cycle was Ex. xii–xv, i.e. *the Institution of the Passover* and the *Song of Moses*; accordingly we find, in the *Mechilta* on Ex. xiii, that the passage through the Red Sea took place on 7th of Nisan.

The third year of the triennial cycle, for Nisan read Num. vi 22 ff, i.e. *the Priestly Blessing*, also the *Offerings of the Princes at the Dedication of the Tabernacle* (Num. vii), and a *second Institution of the Passover in the Wilderness* (Num. ix 1–14). This last reading is most interesting, especially as it would seem to be a later addition to the Priest-code.

If we study the context we shall see that the writer, P^s, goes back to the *first* month. Thus:—

‘And YHVH spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, *in the first month of the second year* after they were come out from the land of Egypt, saying, Moreover, let the children of Israel keep the passover in its appointed season,’ &c. Thus he interrupts his story, which had begun with the *second* month (Num. i with vii 1, see critical commentaries), in order to insert a passage about the Passover in Nisan. We begin to suspect that the arrangement of the documents in the Pentateuch was not altogether uninfluenced by the Calendar.

We now pass to the *second* month.

The second month, Iyar. P. tells us (Gen. vii 11) that, ‘*in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this same day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up.*’ Whence did P. derive this precise date?

Is it a mere coincidence that Gen. vii 11 is read in the triennial cycle about the seventeenth day of the second month? As on the second 'day' the waters were divided from the waters for man's good, so in the second month the waters are mingled with the waters for man's destruction.

The third month, Sivan. The Feast of Pentecost usually occurs on the sixth of this month. In the first year of the cycle the readings from Genesis would have reached chap. xi, i. e. the Story of Babel and the *Confusion of Tongues*, at the season of Pentecost. Now it is certain that the writer of Acts ii associated the Confusion of Tongues with the Day of Pentecost, the Gift of the Spirit being a reversal of the curse of Babel. Again, we know that a very early Jewish tradition connected the *Giving of the Law* with the Feast of Pentecost. The origin of this tradition is not to be found in the Old Testament, but, if we turn to the triennial cycle, we see that in the second year of that cycle the Decalogue (Ex. xx) was the Sabbath-reading for Pentecost. According to the present arrangement of the Pentateuch the Decalogue was written twice, each occasion being marked by a Theophany. On the first occasion Moses is forty days in the mount; then comes the sin of the Golden Calf, the breaking of the Tables followed by a second period of forty days, after which Tables are rewritten (Ex. xxxiv). Thus, assuming that the Law was given on Pentecost (6th of Sivan), we should expect to find a second Giving of the Law eighty days later, i. e. on 29th of Ab. This expectation is fully borne out. Dr. Büchler says: 'We are able to assign Ex. xxxiv as the reading on the last Sabbath of the month Ab, with which opinion tradition is in accord (*Seder Olam* vi), inasmuch as it informs us that Moses went up Mount Sinai with the tablets of stone on the 29th of Ab, which occurrence is related in Ex. xxxiv.' If this chapter be studied it will be found to contain the elements of a second Decalogue by J., originally independent of the Decalogue by E. in Ex. xx. Thus the 29th of Ab practically marks a second 'Giving of the Law', and we may note the fact that, in the third year of the cycle, Deuteronomy began on this day. If we divide the interval between Pentecost and 29th Ab into two equal periods of forty days each we arrive at 17th *Tammuz* as the date for the sin of the Golden Calf (Ex. xxxii). Now this exactly agrees

with Jewish tradition. 'The fast of the fourth month took place on the 17th of Tammuz. . . . To this tradition adds, that it was also the anniversary of making the golden calf, and of Moses breaking the Tables of the Law' (Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 297).

Every Old Testament scholar knows that the duplicate stories of the Giving of the Law by E. and J. involve a great critical difficulty. I suggest that the Jehovist records originated with a race that began its year at the Summer Solstice, while the Elohist records dated their year from the Vernal Equinox. Thus the 29th Ab would, in the Jehovist year, have been two months after the Solstice, exactly as Pentecost was, in the Elohist year, two months after the Vernal Equinox. In other words each system would have had a similar Festival at the end of its second month. When P. came to arrange these records in the form in which they have come down to us, he found these two traditions located in their respective months, and was therefore obliged to make two events out of what was originally one.

I merely give this as an example of the way in which a study of the Calendar would throw light upon the criticism of the Pentateuch. Perhaps on this subject I may be allowed to refer to my *Letter to Old Testament Critics* (Deighton, Bell & Co.).

We now turn to

The Sixth Month, Elul. The 1st of Elul was, for some purposes, reckoned as a New Year's Day (Mishna, *Rosh Hash.* I i). Thus we are led to compare it with the 1st of Tishri (Rosh Hashana) when, as we shall see, the Decalogue was again read.

In *Elul* in the second year of the cycle, the closing chapters of Exodus were read, in which P. describes the Dedication of the Tabernacle. To this we shall have occasion to return.

The Seventh Month, Tishri. This month opened with Rosh Hashana, or 'New Year's Day'. The *Seder* for this day, in the first year of the cycle (see Büchler), was Gen. xxx 22 ff, which records the birth of *Joseph*, and derives the name from the root *Asaph* (אֶסַפ). To this I shall again have occasion to return when I speak of the position of the *Asaph* Psalms in the triennial cycle of the Psalter.

Dr. Büchler calls attention to the fact that, in the Midrash, the 1st of Tishri is given as the birthday of Joseph. The tradition arose from the reading of this passage in the triennial cycle.

The second year of the cycle read, for this day, Lev. iv with the

thought of Atonement for Priests and People (cf. Ezek. xlv 18, 20 Heb.), while the third year read Deut. v, containing the Deuteronomic version of the Decalogue. Büchler tells us that there was a practice (assigned to Ezra, *T. B. Meg.* 31^b) of reading the curses at Pentecost and Rosh Hashana with the Decalogue. So too we find that the section Deut. v-xi, which is complete in itself, begins with the Decalogue and ends with the Blessings and the Curses. The Samaritans had also the custom of reading the Decalogue on Pentecost and Rosh Hashana (Petermann, *Reise im Orient*, p. 290, quoted by Büchler). Thus the custom dates from very early times. I shall have occasion to return to this point when I speak of the triennial cycle of the Psalter and the Psalms of Imprecation. We now return to the study of Table I. It is important to observe that the Book of Genesis ended (with the death of Jacob and Joseph) on the first Sabbath in *Shebat* (the eleventh month), and that the Book of Leviticus also ended on this same Sabbath. As to the end of Deuteronomy there are two traditions, preserved in the *Mechilta* to Exod. xvi 35; R. Joshua asserts that Moses died on the 7th of *Adar*, while R. Eliezer places the death of Moses on the 7th of *Shebat* (Büchler). In other words, the chapter of Deuteronomy which records the death of Moses was read either on the first Sabbath of *Adar*, or on the first Sabbath of *Shebat*. I have no doubt but that the date given by R. Eliezer, i. e. 7th of Shebat, is the more correct, since it agrees with the death of Jacob and Joseph. If this be so we note that the first, third, and fifth books of the Pentateuch ended on the same day, that day being the first Sabbath of the eleventh month (*Shebat*). It is interesting to note that P., or the editor of Deuteronomy, agrees with this tradition, for he assigns the Book of Deuteronomy to the *first of the eleventh month*, 'And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel' (Deut. i 3). The Song of Moses and Death of Moses are evidently placed on the same day (cf. Deut. xxxi 22, xxxii 48 ff. (P.)): indeed the Book of Deuteronomy is but the episode of a day between Num. xxvii 12-15 and Deut. xxxii 48 ff. The Appendix containing the Song of Moses and the Blessing of Moses would supply Sabbath-readings for the remaining Sabbaths in *Shebat* and *Adar*.

There were four additional Sabbath-readings for the twelfth month, consisting of special lessons which were not in the order of the *Sedarim*. These were (i) *Shekalim* (see Exod. xxx 11); (ii) *Zakor*, i. e. 'Remember Amalek' (Deut. xxv. 17), chosen doubtless because of the season of *Purim*; (iii) *Para* (see Num. xiv) and (iv) *Hachodesh* (Exod. xii). These may possibly have served the purpose of an intercalary month. We have seen that precise dates, e. g. for the Birth of Joseph, the Death of Moses, the Giving of the Law, the Sin of the Golden Calf, &c., were evolved by the Scribes from the cycle of Sabbath-readings; may we go back still further and suggest that the precise dates which are so characteristic of the Priest-code were evolved in a manner not wholly unlike, in so far as they were influenced by the Calendar? We cannot now discuss this question, since our object is to determine the influence of the Calendar not upon the Pentateuch but upon the Psalter. Before we leave Table I we must call attention to a fact noted by Büchler, viz. 'that the first Book of the Pentateuch commenced on the 1st of Nisan, the fifth on the 1st of Elul, the third on the 1st of Tishri, the second and fourth on the 15th of Shebat, thus corresponding to the four dates given in the Mishna (*Rosh Hash. i 1*), as first days of the year for various subordinate purposes, e. g. the tithing of animals and fruit.'

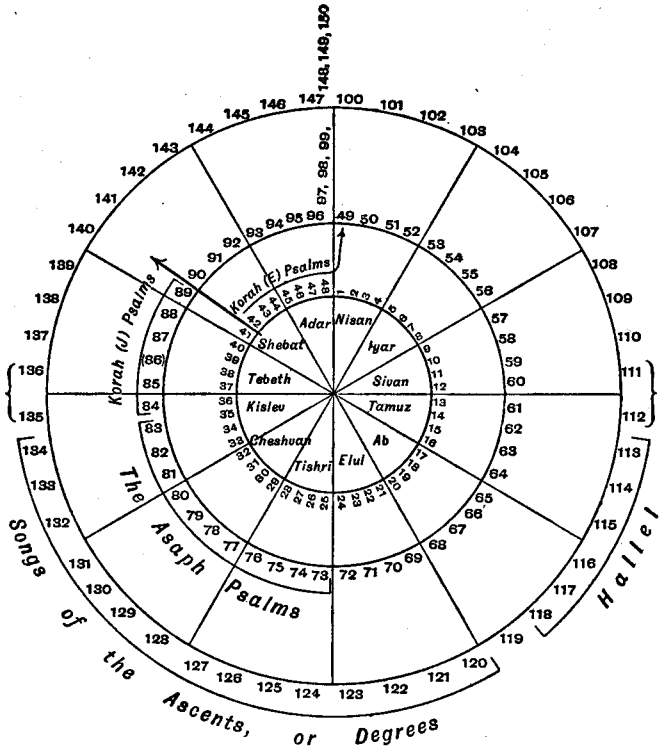
We now proceed to arrange the Psalter for a triennial cycle of 147-50 Sabbaths (Table II).

In examining this plan we are at once struck by the fact that *the first and third Books of the Psalter end in Shebat, exactly as the first and third Books of the Pentateuch end in Shebat*. We also note that *the second Book of the Psalter ends* (Ps. lxxii) *at the close of Elul, exactly as the second Book of the Pentateuch ends at the close of Elul*. The benediction at the end of this second book attains a new meaning if we read it in connexion with the closing words of Exodus and the closing year. The prayer 'May the whole earth be filled with His Glory' (Ps. lxxii 19), should be compared with the words of Exod. xl 34, 'And the Glory of YHVH filled the tabernacle'; we may also compare the words 'The Prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended', with 'So Moses ended the work' (Exod. xl 33).

The 'Asaph' Psalms (lxxiii-lxxxiii) would begin in the seventh

month, i. e. at the Feast of *Asiph*, at the season when, in the first year of the cycle, Gen. xxx 22 f was read, which tells of the birth of *Joseph*, and derives the name from the root *Asaph*. I have shewn¹ on independent grounds that the Asaph Psalms were connected with this season of the *Asiph* and with the house of *Joseph*. In the second year of the cycle *Leviticus* began at this season, and the Asaph Psalms are essentially 'Levitical' Psalms.

TABLE II.



Again, if we observe the position of Ps. xc in the triennial cycle we find that it comes at the very time which tradition associated with the *Death of Moses*. I venture to think that this is the origin of the title which assigns this Psalm to *Moses*. This title is as follows:

'A Prayer of *Moses the man of God*', which is almost identical

¹ 'The Psalms in Three Collections' Part 2 pp. v-x.

with the heading of the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii 1) which was read at this time in the order of the *Sedarim*. If this be correct, Pss. xc-c, which form one group, ought to have points in common with the *Song of Moses* and the *Blessing of Moses*, i. e. with Deut. xxxii, xxxiii, which were read at the same season. This is abundantly borne out by the facts of the case. Thus:—

Ps. xc	Title	Deut. xxxiii	1
"	v 1 'dwelling-place', used of God	"	27
	also in Ps. xci 9		
xc	13	xxxii	36
"	15	"	7
xc i	4	"	11
"	6	"	24
"	7	"	30
"	13	"	33
xc ii	10	xxxiii	17
"	15 (a triple allusion)	xxxii	4
xc iv	1	"	35; xxxiii 2
xc v	8	xxxiii	8 (cf. xxxii 51)
xc vii	7	xxxii	43 (Sept. text).

If the references be studied they will abundantly prove that this group of Psalms has been influenced by Deut. xxxii, xxxiii. We may also add that the mention of 'A New Song' (Pss. xcvi 1, xc viii 1) contains an allusion to the *Song of Moses* as the Old Song, an allusion which would be very evident when they were used together at the same season in the Temple worship.

Another characteristic of the group of Psalms xc-c is the Kingship of God on earth, 'YHVH is become King' (Pss. xciii 1; xcvi 10; xcix 1), the only other passage which is exactly parallel being found in the Korah Psalm xl vii 8. This Psalm has many other parallels with the group.

Compare Ps. xlvii	2	with xcvi	4
"	"	8	" xcvi 10
"	"	1	" xc viii 4
"	"	6-8	" xc viii 4-6
"	"	10	" xc vii 9.

Indeed the Kingship of God is characteristic of the Korah

Psalms exactly as it is of group xc-c. But if we turn to Table II we shall see that the Elohistie Korah Psalms xlii-xlix occupy exactly the same place in the *first* year of the cycle that the Psalms xc-c do in the *second* year, while Pss. cxliv-cl, which were sung in the third year of the cycle, also speak of the 'New Song' (cxliv 1, cxlix 1) and of the Kingship of God (cxlv 1, cxlvi 10); and this too at a time when, in the order of the *Sedarim*, the Song of Moses, which is the *locus classicus* for the Kingship of God, was recited. Can this all be accident?

Another group of Psalms (cxx-cxxxiv) known as the *Songs of Degrees*, or the *Songs of the Ascents*, is, rightly or wrongly, associated in tradition with the Pilgrimage of the Station-men who brought up the firstfruits (*biccurim*) to the Temple. These firstfruits could not be brought *before* Pentecost, while the *last* day for offering them in the Temple was 25th Kislev, i. e. *Hanucca*.

But, if we turn to Table II, we shall see that these Songs of Degrees occupy the fifteen Sabbaths *from 1st Elul to Hanucca*. Thus, in the third year of the triennial cycle, these Psalms would be the Sabbath Psalms in the Temple during those very months in which the constant processions of pilgrims were bringing the firstfruits.

Again, we have already seen that the 'Curses' were, according to Jewish tradition, read as a sort of Commination Service at the seasons of the Decalogue, i. e. at Pentecost and Rosh Hashana. We have also seen that the 29th Ab was, practically, a second Pentecost; consequently, if the Psalms of Imprecation have any connexion with the 'Curses', we should expect to find them at these seasons. If we turn to Table II what do we find? The two Psalms of Imprecation quoted by St Peter (Acts i 20) are the 69th and the 109th; of these Ps. lxix comes *immediately after the 29th Ab*, while Ps. cix comes *immediately after Pentecost*. We also note that Ps. lix, which is another Psalm of Imprecation, comes at the season of Pentecost, in the second year of the cycle; and that Pss. lxviii and cxix, which are Psalms of the Law, both come on the Sabbath nearest to the 29th Ab. Many other illustrations might be given; but we will conclude by calling attention to a fact which all commentators have observed but which none have explained, viz. the striking similarity between the closing Psalms of Book I and the closing

Psalms of Book II, this similarity extending at times to practical identity of several verses, e.g. Ps. xl 13-17 with Ps. lxx 1-5; Ps. xli 7 f with Ps. lxxi 10 f.

If we study Pss. xxxv, xxxviii-xli, and also Pss. lxix-lxxii, we notice that they are not only closely related to one another but also that they are penitential in character, and, like Ps. xxii, full of references to Jeremiah. Now if we turn to Table II we see that Ps. xxii and also Pss. lxix-lxxii came in the sixth month, *Elul*, which, coming as it did before New Year, was *the penitential month of preparation* (see Dr. Schiller-Szinessy in *The Prayer Book Interleaved*, p. 257). We also see that Pss. xxxviii-xli, which close Book I, came in the *tenth* month, i. e. *at the close of the cycle*. It will be remembered that, even in the days of Zechariah, there was a '*fast of the tenth month*' even as there was a '*fast of the seventh month*' (Zech. viii 19). Indeed, as I have already suggested, if the Jehovist traditions were derived through a race which began its year at the Summer Solstice, then the month which we call the tenth would have been the seventh. This will account for the practical identity of the Feasts of Tabernacles (seventh month) and *Hanucca* (tenth month). It will also explain the similarity between the '*Asaph*' Psalms (seventh month) and the '*Korah*' Psalms (tenth month).

If we study Table II we see that, though the *Jehovistic* Korah Psalms are in their proper place at *Hanucca*, the *Elohistic* Korah Psalms are removed from that feast by six (or seven) Sabbaths. Yet these *Elohistic* Korah Psalms are most closely related to the *Jehovistic*¹, and undoubtedly belonged to the same Feast. This suggests a cycle beginning, not as the triennial cycle did in *Nisan*, but on the second Sabbath in *Shebat*. In other words, we are led to suspect that, just as in the triennial cycle, the Second and Third Collections of the Psalms began in *Shebat*, so at a still earlier time the First Collection began in *Shebat*.

If the reader will make this correction in pencil on Table II he will see that the forty-one Psalms of the First Collection exactly occupy the Sabbaths from the second Sabbath in *Shebat* up to the Sabbath before *Hanucca*, so that the *Elohistic* Korah Psalms (xlii-xlix) would come in their right place at *Hanucca*.

According to this arrangement Ps. xiv comes in the second

¹ '*The Psalms in Three Collections*' Part 2 pp. xiii, 173, 181 f, 190.

month, in which we find Ps. liii, with which it is identical¹. Pss. xx, xxi, which are Psalms of the 'King', come in the month *Tammuz*, in which we have already found Pss. lxi, lxiii, which are Psalms of the 'King'.

Ps. xxx, which has the singular title *For the Dedication of the House*, would come on the 3rd Sabbath in *Elul*, on which day, in the order of the *Sedarim* (see Table I), Exod. xl was read, *recording the Dedication of the Tabernacle*. We may also mention the fact that Ps. xxvii, which was recited morning and evening throughout the month of *Elul*, would come immediately before the opening of that month.

Let me only remark, in conclusion, that I have no thought of suggesting that the Psalms were originally written for consecutive Sabbaths, but I do maintain that certain groups of Psalms belonged to certain definite points of the Calendar, that the triennial cycle was a natural developement of this earlier thought, and that this triennial cycle was known to the editor who arranged the Psalter in Five Books.

EDW. G. KING.

¹ In my Commentary on Ps. xiv, before I had any suspicion of the triennial cycle, I had occasion (p. 74) to point out the striking allusions to Gen. vi 1-4; it is certainly a remarkable coincidence that Gen. vi 1-4 should have been read in the order of the *Sedarim* at this season (see Table I).