

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a large body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a long, shimmering path of light that reflects across the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and some wispy clouds. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by shades of brown, gold, and orange.

Legends of the Jews

The Creation of the World

A Crud Factory e-book

Excerpted from “The Legends of the Jews,”
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the German manuscript by Henrietta Szold.

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The First Things Created



In the beginning, two thousand years before the heaven and the earth, seven things were created: the Torah written with black fire on white fire, and lying in the lap of God; the Divine Throne, erected in the heaven which later was over the heads of the Hayyot; Paradise on the right side of God, Hell on the left side; the Celestial Sanctuary directly in front of God, having a jewel on its altar graven with the Name of the Messiah, and a Voice that cries aloud, "Return, ye children of men."

When God resolved upon the creation of the world, He took counsel with the Torah. Her advice was this: "O Lord, a king without an army and without courtiers and attendants hardly deserves the name of king, for none is nigh to express the homage due to him." The answer pleased God exceedingly. Thus did He teach all earthly kings, by His Divine example, to undertake naught without first consulting advisers.

The advice of the Torah was given with some reservations. She was skeptical about the value of an earthly world, on account of the sinfulness of men, who would be sure to disregard her precepts. But God dispelled her doubts. He told her, that repentance had been created long before, and sinners would have the opportunity of mending their ways. Besides, the Temple service would be invested with atoning power, and Paradise and hell were intended to do duty as reward and punishment. Finally, the Messiah was appointed to bring salvation, which would put an end to all sinfulness.

Nor is this world inhabited by man the first of things earthly created by God. He made several worlds before ours, but He destroyed them all, because He was pleased with none until He created ours. But even this last world would have had no permanence, if God had executed His original plan of ruling it according to the principle of strict justice. It was only when He saw that justice by itself would undermine the

world that He associated mercy with justice, and made them to rule jointly. Thus, from the beginning of all things prevailed Divine goodness, without which nothing could have continued to exist. If not for it, the myriads of evil spirits had soon put an end to the generations of men. But the goodness of God has ordained, that in every Nisan, at the time of the spring equinox, the seraphim shall approach the world of spirits, and intimidate them so that they fear to do harm to men. Again, if God in His goodness had not given protection to the weak, the tame animals would have been extirpated long ago by the wild animals. In Tammuz, at the time of the summer solstice, when the strength of behemot is at its height, he roars so loud that all the animals hear it, and for a whole year they are affrighted and timid, and their acts become less ferocious than their nature is. Again, in Tishri, at the time of the autumnal equinox, the great bird ziz flaps his wings and utters his cry, so that the birds of prey, the eagles and the vultures, blench, and they fear to swoop down upon the others and annihilate them in their greed. And, again, were it not for the goodness of God, the vast number of big fish had quickly put an end to the little ones. But at the time of the winter solstice, in the month of Tebet, the sea grows restless, for then leviathan spouts up water, and the big fish become uneasy. They restrain their appetite, and the little ones escape their rapacity.

Finally, the goodness of God manifests itself in the preservation of His people Israel. It could not have survived the enmity of the Gentiles, if God had not appointed protectors for it, the archangels Michael and Gabriel. Whenever Israel disobeys God, and is accused of misdemeanors by the angels of the other nations, he is defended by his designated guardians, with such good result that the other angels conceive fear of them. Once the angels of the other nations are terrified, the nations themselves venture not to carry out their wicked designs against Israel.

That the goodness of God may rule on earth as in heaven, the Angels of Destruction are assigned a place at the far end of the heavens,

from which they may never stir, while the Angels of Mercy encircle the Throne of God, at His behest.

The Alphabet

When God was about to create the world by His word, the twenty-two letters of the alphabet descended from the terrible and august crown of God whereon they were engraved with a pen of flaming fire. They stood round about God, and one after the other spake and entreated, "Create the world through me! The first to step forward was the letter Taw. It said: "O Lord of the world! May it be Thy will to create Thy world through me, seeing that it is through me that Thou wilt give the Torah to Israel by the hand of Moses, as it is written, 'Moses commanded us the Torah.' " The Holy One, blessed be He, made reply, and said, "No!" Taw asked, "Why not?" and God answered: "Because in days to come I shall place thee as a sign of death upon the foreheads of men." As soon as Taw heard these words issue from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, it retired from His presence disappointed.

The Shin then stepped forward, and pleaded: "O Lord of the world, create Thy world through me: seeing that Thine own name Shaddai begins with me." Unfortunately, it is also the first letter of Shaw, lie, and of Sheker, falsehood, and that incapacitated it. Resh had no better luck. It was pointed out that it was the initial letter of Ra', wicked, and Rasha' evil, and after that the distinction it enjoys of being the first letter in the Name of God, Rahum, the Merciful, counted for naught. The Kof was rejected, because Kelalah, curse, outweighs the advantage of being the first in Kadosh, the Holy One. In vain did Zaddé call attention to Zaddik, the Righteous One; there was Zarot, the misfortunes of Israel, to testify against it. Pe had Podeh, redeemer, to its credit, but Peshah: transgression, reflected dishonor upon it. 'Ain was declared unfit, because, though it begins 'Anawah, humility, it performs the same service for 'Erwah,

immorality. Samek said: "O Lord, may it be Thy will to begin the creation with me, for Thou art called Samek, after me, the Upholder of all that fall." But God said: "Thou art needed in the place in which thou art; thou must continue to uphold all that fall." Nun introduces Ner, "the lamp of the Lord," which is "the spirit of men," but it also introduces Ner, "the lamp of the wicked," which will be put out by God. Mem starts Melek, king, one of the titles of God. As it is the first letter of Mehumah, confusion, as well, it had no chance of accomplishing its desire. The claim of Lamed bore its refutation within itself. It advanced the argument that it was the first letter of Luhot, the celestial tables for the Ten Commandments; it forgot that the tables were shattered in pieces by Moses. Kaf was sure of victory; Kisseh, the throne of God, Kabod, His honor, and Keter, His crown, all begin with it. God had to remind it that He would smite together His hands, Kaf, in despair over the misfortunes of Israel. Yod at first sight seemed the appropriate letter for the beginning of creation, on account of its association with Yah, God, if only Yezer ha-Ra' the evil inclination, had not happened to begin with it, too. Tet is identified with Tob, the good. However, the truly good is not in this world; it belongs to the world to come. Het is the first letter of Hanun, the Gracious One; but this advantage is offset by its place in the word for sin, Hattat. Zain suggests Zakor, remembrance, but it is itself the word for weapon, the doer of mischief. Waw and He compose the Ineffable Name of God; they are therefore too exalted to be pressed into the service of the mundane world. If Dalet Wad stood only for Dabar, the Divine Word, it would have been used, but it stands also for Din, justice, and under the rule of law without love the world would have fallen to ruin. Finally, in spite of reminding one of Gadol, great, Gimel would not do, because Gemul, retribution, starts with it.

After the claims of all these letters had been disposed of, Bet stepped before the Holy One, blessed be He, and pleaded before Him: "O Lord of the world! May it be Thy will to create Thy world through me, seeing

that all the dwellers in the world give praise daily unto Thee through me, as it is said, 'Blessed be the Lord forever. Amen, and Amen.' " The Holy One, blessed be He, at once granted the petition of Bet. He said, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And He created His world through Bet, as it is said, "Bereshit God created the heaven and the earth." The only letter that had refrained from urging its claims was the modest Alef, and God rewarded it later for its humility by giving it the first place in the Decalogue.

The First Day



On the first day of creation God produced ten things: the heavens and the earth, Tohu and Bohu, light and darkness, wind and water, the duration of the day and the duration of the night.

Though the heavens and the earth consist of entirely different elements, they were yet created as a unit, "like the pot and its cover." The heavens were fashioned from the light of God's garment, and the earth from the snow under the Divine Throne. Tohu is a green band which encompasses the whole world, and dispenses darkness, and Bohu consists of stones in the abyss, the producers of the waters. The light created at the very beginning is not the same as the light emitted by the sun, the moon, and the stars, which appeared only on the fourth day. The light of the first day was of a sort that would have enabled man to see the world at a glance from one end to the other. Anticipating the wickedness of the sinful generations of the deluge and the Tower of Babel, who were unworthy to enjoy the blessing of such light, God concealed it, but in the world to come it will appear to the pious in all its pristine glory.

Several heavens were created, seven in fact, each to serve a purpose of its own. The first, the one visible to man, has no function except that of covering up the light during the night time; therefore it disappears every morning. The planets are fastened to the second of the heavens; in the third the manna is made for the pious in the hereafter; the fourth

contains the celestial Jerusalem together with the Temple, in which Michael ministers as high priest, and offers the souls of the pious as sacrifices. In the fifth heaven, the angel hosts reside, and sing the praise of God, though only during the night, for by day it is the task of Israel on earth to give glory to God on high. The sixth heaven is an uncanny spot; there originate most of the trials and visitations ordained for the earth and its inhabitants. Snow lies heaped up there and hail; there are lofts full of noxious dew, magazines stocked with storms, and cellars holding reserves of smoke. Doors of fire separate these celestial chambers, which are under the supervision of the archangel Metatron. Their pernicious contents defiled the heavens until David's time. The pious king prayed God to purge His exalted dwelling of whatever was pregnant with evil; it was not becoming that such things should exist near the Merciful One. Only then they were removed to the earth.

The seventh heaven, on the other hand, contains naught but what is good and beautiful: right, justice, and mercy, the storehouses of life, peace, and blessing, the souls of the pious, the souls and spirits of unborn generations, the dew with which God will revive the dead on the resurrection day, and, above all, the Divine Throne, surrounded by the seraphim, the ofanim, the holy Hayyot, and the ministering angels.

Corresponding to the seven heavens, God created seven earths, each separated from the next by five layers. Over the lowest earth, the seventh, called Erez, lie in succession the abyss, the Tohu, the Bohu, a sea, and waters. Then the sixth earth is reached, the Adamah, the scene of the magnificence of God. In the same way the Adamah is separated from the fifth earth, the Arka, which contains Gehenna, and Sha'are Mawet, and Sha'are Zalmawet, and Beer Shahat, and Tit ha-Yawen, and Abaddon, and Sheol, and there the souls of the wicked are guarded by the Angels of Destruction. In the same way Arka is followed by Harabah, the dry, the place of brooks and streams in spite of its name, as the next, called Yabbashah, the mainland, contains the rivers and the springs. Tebel, the

second earth, is the first mainland inhabited by living creatures, three hundred and sixty-five species, all essentially different from those of our own earth. Some have human heads set on the body of a lion, or a serpent, or an ox; others have human bodies topped by the head of one of these animals. Besides, Tebel is inhabited by human beings with two heads and four hands and feet, in fact with all their organs doubled excepting only the trunk. It happens sometimes that the parts of these double persons quarrel with each other, especially while eating and drinking, when each claims the best and largest portions for himself. This species of mankind is distinguished for great piety, another difference between it and the inhabitants of our earth.

Our own earth is called Heled, and, like the others, it is separated from the Tebel by an abyss, the Tohu, the Bohu, a sea, and waters.

Thus one earth rises above the other, from the first to the seventh, and over the seventh earth the heavens are vaulted, from the first to the seventh, the last of them attached to the arm of God. The seven heavens form a unity, the seven kinds of earth form a unity, and the heavens and the earth together also form a unity.

When God made our present heavens and our present earth, "the new heavens and the new earth" were also brought forth, yea, and the hundred and ninety-six thousand worlds which God created unto His Own glory.

It takes five hundred years to walk from the earth to the heavens, and from one end of a heaven to the other, and also from one heaven to the next, and it takes the same length of time to travel from the east to the west, or from the south to the north. Of all this vast world only one-third is inhabited, the other two-thirds being equally divided between water and waste desert land.

Beyond the inhabited parts to the east is Paradise with its seven divisions, each assigned to the pious of a certain degree. The ocean is situated to the west, and it is dotted with islands upon islands, inhabited

by many different peoples. Beyond it, in turn, are the boundless steppes full of serpents and scorpions, and destitute of every sort of vegetation, whether herbs or trees. To the north are the supplies of hell-fire, of snow, hail, smoke, ice, darkness, and windstorms, and in that vicinity sojourn all sorts of devils, demons, and malign spirits. Their dwelling-place is a great stretch of land, it would take five hundred years to traverse it. Beyond lies hell. To the south is the chamber containing reserves of fire, the cave of smoke, and the forge of blasts and hurricanes. Thus it comes that the wind blowing from the south brings heat and sultriness to the earth. Were it not for the angel Ben Nez, the Winged, who keeps the south wind back with his pinions, the world would be consumed. Besides, the fury of its blast is tempered by the north wind, which always appears as moderator, whatever other wind may be blowing.

In the east, the west, and the south, heaven and earth touch each other, but the north God left unfinished, that any man who announced himself as a god might be set the task of supplying the deficiency, and stand convicted as a pretender.

The construction of the earth was begun at the centre, with the foundation stone of the Temple, the Eben Shetiyah, for the Holy Land is at the central point of the surface of the earth, Jerusalem is at the central point of Palestine, and the Temple is situated at the centre of the Holy City. In the sanctuary itself the Hekal is the centre, and the holy Ark occupies the centre of the Hekal, built on the foundation stone, which thus is at the centre of the earth. Thence issued the first ray of light, piercing to the Holy Land, and from there illuminating the whole earth. The creation of the world, however, could not take place until God had banished the ruler of the dark. "Retire," God said to him, "for I desire to create the world by means of light." Only after the light had been fashioned, darkness arose, the light ruling in the sky, the darkness on the earth. The power of God displayed itself not only in the creation of the world of things, but equally in the limitations which He imposed upon

each. The heavens and the earth stretched themselves out in length and breadth as though they aspired to infinitude, and it required the word of God to call a halt to their encroachments.

The Second Day



On the second day God brought forth four creations, the firmament, hell, fire, and the angels. The firmament is not the same as the heavens of the first day. It is the crystal stretched forth over the heads of the Hayyot, from which the heavens derive their light, as the earth derives its light from the sun. This firmament saves the earth from being engulfed by the waters of the heavens; it forms the partition between the waters above and the waters below. It was made to crystallize into the solid it is by the heavenly fire, which broke its bounds, and condensed the surface of the firmament. Thus fire made a division between the celestial and the terrestrial at the time of creation, as it did at the revelation on Mount Sinai. The firmament is not more than three fingers thick, nevertheless it divides two such heavy bodies as the waters below, which are the foundations for the nether world, and the waters above, which are the foundations for the seven heavens, the Divine Throne, and the abode of the angels.

The separation of the waters into upper and lower waters was the only act of the sort done by God in connection with the work of creation. All other acts were unifying. It therefore caused some difficulties. When God commanded, "Let the waters be gathered together, unto one place, and let the dry land appear," certain parts refused to obey. They embraced each other all the more closely. In His wrath at the waters, God determined to let the whole of creation resolve itself into chaos again. He summoned the Angel of the Face, and ordered him to destroy the world. The angel opened his eyes wide, and scorching fires and thick clouds rolled forth from them, while he cried out, "He who divides the Red Sea in sunder!"—and the rebellious waters stood. The all, however,

was still in danger of destruction. Then began the singer of God's praises: "O Lord of the world, in days to come Thy creatures will sing praises without end to Thee, they will bless Thee boundlessly, and they will glorify Thee without measure. Thou wilt set Abraham apart from all mankind as Thine own; one of his sons Thou wilt call 'My first-born'; and his descendants will take the yoke of Thy kingdom upon themselves. In holiness and purity Thou wilt bestow Thy Torah upon them, with the words, 'I am the Lord your God,' whereunto they will make answer, 'All that God hath spoken we will do.' And now I beseech Thee, have pity upon Thy world, destroy it not, for if Thou destroyest it, who will fulfil Thy will?" God was pacified; He withdrew the command ordaining the destruction of the world, but the waters He put under the mountains, to remain there forever. The objection of the lower waters to division and Separation was not their only reason for rebelling. The waters had been the first to give praise to God, and when their separation into upper and lower was decreed, the waters above rejoiced, saying, "Blessed are we who are privileged to abide near our Creator and near His Holy Throne." Jubilating thus, they flew upward, and uttered song and praise to the Creator of the world. Sadness fell upon the waters below. They lamented: "Woe unto us, we have not been found worthy to dwell in the presence of God, and praise Him together with our companions." Therefore they attempted to rise upward, until God repulsed them, and pressed them under the earth. Yet they were not left unrewarded for their loyalty. Whenever the waters above desire to give praise to God, they must first seek permission from the waters below.

The second day of creation was an untoward day in more than the one respect that it introduced a breach where before there had been nothing but unity; for it was the day that saw also the creation of hell. Therefore God could not say of this day as of the others, that He "saw that it was good." A division may be necessary, but it cannot be called good, and hell surely does not deserve the attribute of good. Hell has seven divisions,

one beneath the other. They are called Sheol, Abaddon, Beer Shahat, Tit ha-Yawen, Sha'are Mawet, Sha'are Zalmawet: and Gehenna. It requires three hundred years to traverse the height, or the width, or the depth of each division, and it would take six thousand three hundred years to go over a tract of land equal in extent to the seven divisions.

Each of the seven divisions in turn has seven subdivisions, and in each compartment there are seven rivers of fire and seven of hail. The width of each is one thousand ells, its depth one thousand, and its length three hundred, and they flow one from the other, and are supervised by ninety thousand Angels of Destruction. There are, besides, in every compartment seven thousand caves, in every cave there are seven thousand crevices, and in every crevice seven thousand scorpions. Every scorpion has three hundred rings, and in every ring seven thousand pouches of venom, from which flow seven rivers of deadly poison. If a man handles it, he immediately bursts, every limb is torn from his body, his bowels are cleft asunder, and he falls upon his face. There are also five different kinds of fire in hell. One devours and absorbs, another devours and does not absorb, while the third absorbs and does not devour, and there is still another fire, which neither devours nor absorbs, and furthermore a fire which devours fire. There are coals big as mountains, and coals big as hills, and coals as large as the Dead Sea, and coals like huge stones, and there are rivers of pitch and sulphur flowing and seething like live coals.

The third creation of the second day was the angel hosts, both the ministering angels and the angels of praise. The reason they had not been called into being on the first day was, lest men believe that the angels assisted God in the creation of the heavens and the earth. The angels that are fashioned from fire have forms of fire, but only so long as they remain in heaven. When they descend to earth, to do the bidding of God here below, either they are changed into wind, or they assume the guise of men. There are ten ranks or degrees among the angels.

The most exalted in rank are those surrounding the Divine Throne on all sides, to the right, to the left, in front, and behind, under the leadership of the archangels Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael.

All the celestial beings praise God with the words, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts," but men take precedence of the angels herein. They may not begin their song of praise until the earthly beings have brought their homage to God. Especially Israel is preferred to the angels. When they encircle the Divine Throne in the form of fiery mountains and flaming hills, and attempt to raise their voices in adoration of the Creator, God silences them with the words, "Keep quiet until I have heard the songs, praises, prayers, and sweet melodies of Israel." Accordingly, the ministering angels and all the other celestial hosts wait until the last tones of Israel's doxologies rising aloft from earth have died away, and then they proclaim in a loud voice, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." When the hour for the glorification of God by the angels draws nigh, the august Divine herald, the angel Sham'iel, steps to the windows of the lowest heaven to hearken to the songs, prayers, and praises that ascend from the synagogues and the houses of learning, and when they are finished, he announces the end to the angels in all the heavens. The ministering angels, those who come in contact with the sublunary world, now repair to their chambers to take their purification bath. They dive into a stream of fire and flame seven times, and three hundred and sixty-five times they examine themselves carefully, to make sure that no taint clings to their bodies. Only then they feel privileged to mount the fiery ladder and join the angels of the seventh heaven, and surround the throne of God with Hashmal and all the holy Hayyot. Adorned with millions of fiery crowns, arrayed in fiery garments, all the angels in unison, in the same words, and with the same melody, intone songs of praise to God.

The Third Day



Up to this time the earth was a plain, and wholly covered with water. Scarcely had the words of God, "Let the waters be gathered together," made themselves heard, when mountains appeared all over and hills, and the water collected in the deep-lying basins. But the water was recalcitrant, it resisted the order to occupy the lowly spots, and threatened to overflow the earth, until God forced it back into the sea, and encircled the sea with sand. Now, whenever the water is tempted to transgress its bounds, it beholds the sand, and recoils.

The waters did but imitate their chief Rahab, the Angel of the Sea, who rebelled at the creation of the world. God had commanded Rahab to take in the water. But he refused, saying, "I have enough." The punishment for his disobedience was death. His body rests in the depths of the sea, the water dispelling the foul odor that emanates from it.

The main creation of the third day was the realm of plants, the terrestrial plants as well as the plants of Paradise. First of all the cedars of Lebanon and the other great trees were made. In their pride at having been put first, they shot up high in the air. They considered themselves the favored among plants. Then God spake, "I hate arrogance and pride, for I alone am exalted, and none beside," and He created the iron on the same day, the substance with which trees are felled down. The trees began to weep, and when God asked the reason of their tears, they said: "We cry because Thou hast created the iron to uproot us therewith. All the while we had thought ourselves the highest of the earth, and now the iron, our destroyer, has been called into existence." God replied: "You yourselves will furnish the axe with a handle. Without your assistance the iron will not be able to do aught against you."

The command to bear seed after their kind was given to the trees alone. But the various sorts of grass reasoned, that if God had not desired divisions according to classes, He would not have instructed the trees

to bear fruit after their kind with the seed thereof in it, especially as trees are inclined of their own accord to divide themselves into species. The grasses therefore reproduced themselves also after their kinds. This prompted the exclamation of the Prince of the World, "Let the glory of the Lord endure forever; let the Lord rejoice in His works."

The most important work done on the third day was the creation of Paradise. Two gates of carbuncle form the entrance to Paradise, and sixty myriads of ministering angels keep watch over them. Each of these angels shines with the lustre of the heavens. When the just man appears before the gates, the clothes in which he was buried are taken off him, and the angels array him in seven garments of clouds of glory, and place upon his head two crowns, one of precious stones and pearls, the other of gold of Parvaim, and they put eight myrtles in his hand, and they utter praises before him and say to him, "Go thy way, and eat thy bread with joy." And they lead him to a place full of rivers, surrounded by eight hundred kinds of roses and myrtles. Each one has a canopy according to his merits, and under it flow four rivers, one of milk, the other of balsam, the third of wine, and the fourth of honey. Every canopy is overgrown by a vine of gold, and thirty pearls hang from it, each of them shining like Venus. Under each canopy there is a table of precious stones and pearls, and sixty angels stand at the head of every just man, saying unto him: "Go and eat with joy of the honey, for thou hast busied thyself with the Torah, and she is sweeter than honey, and drink of the wine preserved in the grape since the six days of creation, for thou hast busied thyself with the Torah, and she is compared to wine." The least fair of the just is beautiful as Joseph and Rabbi Johanan, and as the grains of a silver pomegranate upon which fall the rays of the sun. There is no light, "for the light of the righteous is the shining light." And they undergo four transformations every day, passing through four states. In the first the righteous is changed into a child. He enters the division for children, and tastes the joys of childhood. Then he is changed into a youth, and

16

enters the division for the youths, with whom he enjoys the delights of youth. Next he becomes an adult, in the prime of life, and he enters the division of men, and enjoys the pleasures of manhood. Finally, he is changed into an old man. He enters the division for the old, and enjoys the pleasures of age.

There are eighty myriads of trees in every corner of Paradise, the meanest among them choicer than all the spice trees. In every corner there are sixty myriads of angels singing with sweet voices, and the tree of life stands in the middle and shades the whole of Paradise. It has fifteen thousand tastes, each different from the other, and the perfumes thereof vary likewise. Over it hang seven clouds of glory, and winds blow upon it from all four sides, so that its odor is wafted from one end of the world to the other. Underneath sit the scholars and explain the Torah. Over each of them two canopies are spread, one of stars, the other of sun and moon, and a curtain of clouds of glory separates the one canopy from the other. Beyond Paradise begins Eden, containing three hundred and ten worlds and seven compartments for seven different classes of the pious. In the first are "the martyr victims of the government," like Rabbi Akiba and his colleagues; in the second those who were drowned; in the third Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai and his disciples; in the fourth those who were carried off in the cloud of glory; in the fifth the penitents, who occupy a place which even a perfectly pious man cannot obtain; in the sixth are the youths who have not tasted of sin in their lives; in the seventh are those poor who studied Bible and Mishnah, and led a life of self-respecting decency. And God sits in the midst of them and expounds the Torah to them.

As for the seven divisions of Paradise, each of them is twelve myriads of miles in width and twelve myriads of miles in length. In the first division dwell the proselytes who embraced Judaism of their own free will, not from compulsion. The walls are of glass and the wainscoting of cedar. The prophet Obadiah, himself a proselyte, is the overseer of this

first division. The second division is built of silver, and the wainscoting thereof is of cedar. Here dwell those who have repented, and Manasseh, the penitent son of Hezekiah, presides over them. The third division is built of silver and gold. Here dwell Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Israelites who came out of Egypt, and the whole generation that lived in the desert. Also David is there, together with all his sons except Absalom, one of them, Chileab, still alive. And all the kings of Judah are there, with the exception of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, who presides in the second division, over the penitents. Moses and Aaron preside over the third division. Here are precious vessels of silver and gold and jewels and canopies and beds and thrones and lamps, of gold, of precious stones, and of pearls, the best of everything there is in heaven. The fourth division is built of beautiful rubies, and its wainscoting is of olive wood. Here dwell the perfect and the steadfast in faith, and their wainscoting is of olive wood, because their lives were bitter as olives to them. The fifth division is built of silver and gold and refined gold, and the finest of gold and glass and bdellium, and through the midst of it flows the river Gihon. The wainscoting is of silver and gold, and a perfume breathes through it more exquisite than the perfume of Lebanon. The coverings of the silver and gold beds are made of purple and blue, woven by Eve, and of scarlet and the hair of goats, woven by angels. Here dwells the Messiah on a palanquin made of the wood of Lebanon, "the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom of gold, the seat of it purple." With him is Elijah. He takes the head of Messiah, and places it in his bosom, and says to him, "Be quiet, for the end draweth nigh." On every Monday and Thursday and on Sabbaths and holidays, the Patriarchs come to him, and the twelve sons of Jacob, and Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, and all the kings of Israel and of Judah, and they weep with him and comfort him, and say unto him, "Be quiet and put trust in thy Creator, for the end draweth nigh." Also Korah and his company, and Dathan, Abiram, and Absalom come to him on every Wednesday,

and ask him: "How long before the end comes full of wonders? When wilt thou bring us life again, and from the abysses of the earth lift us?" The Messiah answers them, "Go to your fathers and ask them"; and when they hear this, they are ashamed, and do not ask their fathers.

In the sixth division dwell those who died in performing a pious act, and in the seventh division those who died from illness inflicted as an expiation for the sins of Israel.

The Fourth Day



The fourth day of creation produced the sun, the moon, and the stars. These heavenly spheres were not actually fashioned on this day; they were created on the first day, and merely were assigned their places in the heavens on the fourth. At first the sun and the moon enjoyed equal powers and prerogatives. The moon spoke to God, and said: "O Lord, why didst Thou create the world with the letter Bet?" God replied: "That it might be made known unto My creatures that there are two worlds." The moon: "O Lord: which of the two worlds is the larger, this world or the world to come?" God: "The world to come is the larger." The moon: "O Lord, Thou didst create two worlds, a greater and a lesser world; Thou didst create the heaven and the earth, the heaven exceeding the earth; Thou didst create fire and water, the water stronger than the fire, because it can quench the fire; and now Thou hast created the sun and the moon, and it is becoming that one of them should be greater than the other." Then spake God to the moon: "I know well, thou wouldst have me make Thee greater than the sun. As a punishment I decree that thou mayest keep but one-sixtieth of thy light." The moon made supplication: "Shall I be punished so severely for having spoken a single word?" God relented: "In the future world I will restore thy light, so that thy light may again be as the light of the sun." The moon was not yet satisfied. "O Lord," she said, "and the light of the sun, how great will it be in that day?" Then the wrath of God

was once more enkindled: "What, thou still plottedst against the sun? As thou livest, in the world to come his light shall be sevenfold the light he now sheds." The Sun runs his course like a bridegroom. He sits upon a throne with a garland on his head. Ninety-six angels accompany him on his daily journey, in relays of eight every hour, two to the left of him, and two to the right, two before Him, and two behind. Strong as he is, he could complete his course from south to north in a single instant, but three hundred and sixty-five angels restrain him by means of as many grappling-irons. Every day one looses his hold, and the sun must thus spend three hundred and sixty-five days on his course. The progress of the sun in his circuit is an uninterrupted song of praise to God. And this song alone makes his motion possible. Therefore, when Joshua wanted to bid the sun stand still, he had to command him to be silent. His song of praise hushed, the sun stood still.

The sun is double-faced; one face, of fire, is directed toward the earth, and one of hail, toward heaven, to cool off the prodigious heat that streams from the other face, else the earth would catch afire. In winter the sun turns his fiery face upward, and thus the cold is produced. When the sun descends in the west in the evening, he dips down into the ocean and takes a bath, his fire is extinguished, and therefore he dispenses neither light nor warmth during the night. But as soon as he reaches the east in the morning, he laves himself in a stream of flame, which imparts warmth and light to him, and these he sheds over the earth. In the same way the moon and the stars take a bath in a stream of hail before they enter upon their service for the night.

When the sun and the moon are ready to start upon their round of duties, they appear before God, and beseech him to relieve them of their task, so that they may be spared the sight of sinning mankind. Only upon compulsion they proceed with their daily course. Coming from the presence of God, they are blinded by the radiance in the heavens, and they cannot find their way. God, therefore, shoots off arrows, by the

glittering light of which they are guided. It is on account of the sinfulness of man, which the sun is forced to contemplate on his rounds, that he grows weaker as the time of his going down approaches, for sins have a defiling and enfeebling effect, and he drops from the horizon as a sphere of blood, for blood is the sign of corruption. As the sun sets forth on his course in the morning, his wings touch the leaves on the trees of Paradise, and their vibration is communicated to the angels and the holy Hayyot, to the other plants, and also to the trees and plants on earth, and to all the beings on earth and in heaven. It is the signal for them all to cast their eyes upward. As soon as they see the Ineffable Name, which is engraved in the sun, they raise their voices in songs of praise to God. At the same moment a heavenly voice is heard to say, "Woe to the sons of men that consider not the honor of God like unto these creatures whose voices now rise aloft in adoration." These words, naturally, are not heard by men; as little as they perceive the grating of the sun against the wheel to which all the celestial bodies are attached, although the noise it makes is extraordinarily loud. This friction of the sun and the wheel produces the motes dancing about in the sunbeams. They are the carriers of healing to the sick, the only health-giving creations of the fourth day, on the whole an unfortunate day, especially for children, afflicting them with disease. When God punished the envious moon by diminishing her light and splendor, so that she ceased to be the equal of the sun as she had been originally, she fell, and tiny threads were loosed from her body. These are the stars.

The Fifth Day



On the fifth day of creation God took fire and water, and out of these two elements He made the fishes of the sea. The animals in the water are much more numerous than those on land. For every species on land, excepting only the weasel, there is a corresponding species in the water, and, besides, there are many found

only in the water.

The ruler over the sea-animals is leviathan. With all the other fishes he was made on the fifth day. Originally he was created male and female like all the other animals. But when it appeared that a pair of these monsters might annihilate the whole earth with their united strength, God killed the female. So enormous is leviathan that to quench his thirst he needs all the water that flows from the Jordan into the sea. His food consists of the fish which go between his jaws of their own accord. When he is hungry, a hot breath blows from his nostrils, and it makes the waters of the great sea seething hot. Formidable though behemot, the other monster, is, he feels insecure until he is certain that leviathan has satisfied his thirst. The only thing that can keep him in check is the stickleback, a little fish which was created for the purpose, and of which he stands in great awe. But leviathan is more than merely large and strong; he is wonderfully made besides. His fins radiate brilliant light, the very sun is obscured by it, and also his eyes shed such splendor that frequently the sea is illuminated suddenly by it. No wonder that this marvellous beast is the plaything of God, in whom He takes His pastime.

There is but one thing that makes leviathan repulsive, his foul smell: which is so strong that if it penetrated thither, it would render Paradise itself an impossible abode.

The real purpose of leviathan is to be served up as a dainty to the pious in the world to come. The female was put into brine as soon as she was killed, to be preserved against the time when her flesh will be needed. The male is destined to offer a delectable sight to all beholders before he is consumed. When his last hour arrives, God will summon the angels to enter into combat with the monster. But no sooner will leviathan cast his glance at them than they will flee in fear and dismay from the field of battle. They will return to the charge with swords, but in vain, for his scales can turn back steel like straw. They will be equally unsuccessful

when they attempt to kill him by throwing darts and slinging stones; such missiles will rebound without leaving the least impression on his body. Disheartened, the angels will give up the combat, and God will command leviathan and behemot to enter into a duel with each other. The issue will be that both will drop dead, behemot slaughtered by a blow of leviathan's fins, and leviathan killed by a lash of behemot's tail. From the skin of leviathan God will construct tents to shelter companies of the pious while they enjoy the dishes made of his flesh. The amount assigned to each of the pious will be in proportion to his deserts, and none will envy or begrudge the other his better share. What is left of leviathan's skin will be stretched out over Jerusalem as a canopy, and the light streaming from it will illumine the whole world, and what is left of his flesh after the pious have appeased their appetite, will be distributed among the rest of men, to carry on traffic therewith.

On the same day with the fishes, the birds were created, for these two kinds of animals are closely related to each other. Fish are fashioned out of water, and birds out of marshy ground saturated with water.

As leviathan is the king of fishes, so the ziz is appointed to rule over the birds. His name comes from the variety of tastes his flesh has; it tastes like this, zeh, and like that, zeh. The ziz is as monstrous of size as leviathan himself. His ankles rest on the earth, and his head reaches to the very sky.

It once happened that travellers on a vessel noticed a bird. As he stood in the water, it merely covered his feet, and his head knocked against the sky. The onlookers thought the water could not have any depth at that point, and they prepared to take a bath there. A heavenly voice warned them: "Alight not here! Once a carpenter's axe slipped from his hand at this spot, and it took it seven years to touch bottom." The bird the travellers saw was none other than the ziz. His wings are so huge that unfurled they darken the sun. They protect the earth against the storms of the south; without their aid the earth would not be able

to resist the winds blowing thence. Once an egg of the ziz fell to the ground and broke. The fluid from it flooded sixty cities, and the shock crushed three hundred cedars. Fortunately such accidents do not occur frequently. As a rule the bird lets her eggs slide gently into her nest. This one mishap was due to the fact that the egg was rotten, and the bird cast it away carelessly. The ziz has another name, Renanin, because he is the celestial singer. On account of his relation to the heavenly regions he is also called Sekwi, the seer, and, besides, he is called "son of the nest," because his fledgling birds break away from the shell without being hatched by the mother bird; they spring directly from the nest, as it were. Like leviathan, so ziz is a delicacy to be served to the pious at the end of time, to compensate them for the privations which abstaining from the unclean fowls imposed upon them.

The Sixth Day



As the fish were formed out of water, and the birds out of boggy earth well mixed with water, so the mammals were formed out of solid earth, and as leviathan is the most notable representative of the fish kind, and ziz of the bird kind, so behemot is the most notable representative of the mammal kind. Behemot matches leviathan in strength, and he had to be prevented, like leviathan, from multiplying and increasing, else the world could not have continued to exist; after God had created him male and female, He at once deprived him of the desire to propagate his kind. He is so monstrous that he requires the produce of a thousand mountains for his daily food. All the water that flows through the bed of the Jordan in a year suffices him exactly for one gulp. It therefore was necessary to give him one stream entirely for his own use, a stream flowing forth from Paradise, called Yubal. Behemot, too, is destined to be served to the pious as an appetizing dainty, but before they enjoy his flesh, they will be permitted to view the mortal combat between leviathan and behemot, as a reward for having denied

themselves the pleasures of the circus and its gladiatorial contests.

Leviathan, ziz, and behemot are not the only monsters; there are many others, and marvellous ones, like the reem, a giant animal, of which only one couple, male and female, is in existence. Had there been more, the world could hardly have maintained itself against them. The act of copulation occurs but once in seventy years between them, for God has so ordered it that the male and female reem are at opposite ends of the earth, the one in the east, the other in the west. The act of copulation results in the death of the male. He is bitten by the female and dies of the bite. The female becomes pregnant and remains in this state for no less than twelve years. At the end of this long period she gives birth to twins, a male and a female. The year preceding her delivery she is not able to move. She would die of hunger, were it not that her own spittle flowing copiously from her mouth waters and fructifies the earth near her, and causes it to bring forth enough for her maintenance. For a whole year the animal can but roll from side to side, until finally her belly bursts, and the twins issue forth. Their appearance is thus the signal for the death of the mother reem. She makes room for the new generation, which in turn is destined to suffer the same fate as the generation that went before. Immediately after birth, the one goes eastward and the other westward, to meet only after the lapse of seventy years, propagate themselves, and perish. A traveller who once saw a reem one day old described its height to be four parasangs, and the length of its head one parasang and a half. Its horns measure one hundred ells, and their height is a great deal more.

One of the most remarkable creatures is the "man of the mountain," Adne Sadeh, or, briefly, Adam. His form is exactly that of a human being, but he is fastened to the ground by means of a navel-string, upon which his life depends. The cord once snapped, he dies. This animal keeps himself alive with what is produced by the soil around about him as far as his tether permits him to crawl. No creature may venture to

approach within the radius of his cord, for he seizes and demolishes whatever comes in his reach. To kill him, one may not go near to him, the navel-string must be severed from a distance by means of a dart, and then he dies amid groans and moans. Once upon a time a traveller happened in the region where this animal is found. He overheard his host consult his wife as to what to do to honor their guest, and resolve to serve "our man," as he said. Thinking he had fallen among cannibals, the stranger ran as fast as his feet could carry him from his entertainer, who sought vainly to restrain him. Afterward, he found out that there had been no intention of regaling him with human flesh, but only with the flesh of the strange animal called "man." As the "man of the mountain" is fixed to the ground by his navel-string, so the barnacle-goose is grown to a tree by its bill. It is hard to say whether it is an animal and must be slaughtered to be fit for food, or whether it is a plant and no ritual ceremony is necessary before eating it.

Among the birds the phoenix is the most wonderful. When Eve gave all the animals some of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the phoenix was the only bird that refused to eat thereof, and he was rewarded with eternal life. When he has lived a thousand years, his body shrinks, and the feathers drop from it, until he is as small as an egg. This is the nucleus of the new bird.

The phoenix is also called "the guardian of the terrestrial sphere." He runs with the sun on his circuit, and he spreads out his wings and catches up the fiery rays of the sun. If he were not there to intercept them, neither man nor any other animate being would keep alive. On his right wing the following words are inscribed in huge letters, about four thousand stadia high: "Neither the earth produces me, nor the heavens, but only the wings of fire." His food consists of the manna of heaven and the dew of the earth. His excrement is a worm, whose excrement in turn is the cinnamon used by kings and princes. Enoch, who saw the phoenix birds when he was translated, describes them as flying creatures,

wonderful and strange in appearance, with the feet and tails of lions, and the heads of crocodiles; their appearance is of a purple color like the rainbow; their size nine hundred measures. Their wings are like those of angels, each having twelve, and they attend the chariot of the sun and go with him, bringing heat and dew as they are ordered by God. In the morning when the sun starts on his daily course, the phoenixes and the chalkidri sing, and every bird flaps its wings, rejoicing the Giver of light, and they sing a song at the command of the Lord. Among reptiles the salamander and the shamir are the most marvellous. The salamander originates from a fire of myrtle wood which has been kept burning for seven years steadily by means of magic arts. Not bigger than a mouse, it yet is invested with peculiar properties. One who smears himself with its blood is invulnerable, and the web woven by it is a talisman against fire. The people who lived at the deluge boasted that, were a fire flood to come, they would protect themselves with the blood of the salamander.

King Hezekiah owes his life to the salamander. His wicked father, King Ahaz, had delivered him to the fires of Moloch, and he would have been burnt, had his mother not painted him with the blood of the salamander, so that the fire could do him no harm.

The shamir was made at twilight on the sixth day of creation together with other extraordinary things. It is about as large as a barley corn, and it possesses the remarkable property of cutting the hardest of diamonds. For this reason it was used for the stones in the breastplate worn by the high priest. First the names of the twelve tribes were traced with ink on the stones to be set into the breastplate, then the shamir was passed over the lines, and thus they were graven. The wonderful circumstance was that the friction wore no particles from the stones. The shamir was also used for hewing into shape the stones from which the Temple was built, because the law prohibited iron tools to be used for the work in the Temple. The shamir may not be put in an iron vessel for safe-keeping, nor in any metal vessel, it would burst such a receptacle asunder. It

is kept wrapped up in a woollen cloth, and this in turn is placed in a lead basket filled with barley bran. The shamir was guarded in Paradise until Solomon needed it. He sent the eagle thither to fetch the worm. With the destruction of the Temple the shamir vanished. A similar fate overtook the tahash, which had been created only that its skin might be used for the Tabernacle. Once the Tabernacle was completed, the tahash disappeared. It had a horn on its forehead, was gaily colored like the turkey-cock, and belonged to the class of clean animals. Among the fishes there are also wonderful creatures, the sea-goats and the dolphins, not to mention leviathan. A sea-faring man once saw a sea-goat on whose horns the words were inscribed: "I am a little sea-animal, yet I traversed three hundred parasangs to offer myself as food to the leviathan." The dolphins are half man and half fish; they even have sexual intercourse with human beings; therefore they are called also "sons of the sea," for in a sense they represent the human kind in the waters.

Though every species in the animal world was created during the last two days of the six of creation, yet many characteristics of certain animals appeared later. Cats and mice, foes now, were friends originally. Their later enmity had a distinct cause. On one occasion the mouse appeared before God and spoke: "I and the cat are partners, but now we have nothing to eat." The Lord answered: "Thou art intriguing against thy companion, only that thou mayest devour her. As a punishment, she shall devour thee." Thereupon the mouse: "O Lord of the world, wherein have I done wrong?" God replied: "O thou unclean reptile, thou shouldst have been warned by the example of the moon, who lost a part of her light, because she spake ill of the sun, and what she lost was given to her opponent. The evil intentions thou didst harbor against thy companion shall be punished in the same way. Instead of thy devouring her, she shall devour thee." The mouse: "O Lord of the world! Shall my whole kind be destroyed?" God: "I will take care that a remnant of thee is spared." In her rage the mouse bit the cat, and the cat in turn threw herself upon

the mouse, and hacked into her with her teeth until she lay dead. Since that moment the mouse stands in such awe of the cat that she does not even attempt to defend herself against her enemy's attacks, and always keeps herself in hiding. Similarly dogs and cats maintained a friendly relation to each other, and only later on became enemies. A dog and a cat were partners, and they shared with each other whatever they had. It once happened that neither could find anything to eat for three days. Thereupon the dog proposed that they dissolve their partnership. The cat should go to Adam, in whose house there would surely be enough for her to eat, while the dog should seek his fortune elsewhere. Before they separated, they took an oath never to go to the same master. The cat took up her abode with Adam, and she found sufficient mice in his house to satisfy her appetite. Seeing how useful she was in driving away and extirpating mice, Adam treated her most kindly. The dog, on the other hand, saw bad times. The first night after their separation he spent in the cave of the wolf, who had granted him a night's lodging. At night the dog caught the sound of steps, and he reported it to his host, who bade him repulse the intruders. They were wild animals. Little lacked and the dog would have lost his life. Dismayed, the dog fled from the house of the wolf, and took refuge with the monkey. But he would not grant him even a single night's lodging; and the fugitive was forced to appeal to the hospitality of the sheep. Again the dog heard steps in the middle of the night. Obeying the bidding of his host, he arose to chase away the marauders, who turned out to be wolves. The barking of the dog apprised the wolves of the presence of sheep, so that the dog innocently caused the sheep's death. Now he had lost his last friend. Night after night he begged for shelter, without ever finding a home. Finally, he decided to repair to the house of Adam, who also granted him refuge for one night. When wild animals approached the house under cover of darkness, the dog began to bark, Adam awoke, and with his bow and arrow he drove them away. Recognizing the dog's usefulness, he bade

him remain with him always. But as soon as the cat espied the dog in Adam's house, she began to quarrel with him, and reproach him with having broken his oath to her. Adam did his best to pacify the cat. He told her he had himself invited the dog to make his home there, and he assured her she would in no wise be the loser by the dog's presence; he wanted both to stay with him. But it was impossible to appease the cat. The dog promised her not to touch anything intended for her. She insisted that she could not live in one and the same house with a thief like the dog. Bickerings between the dog and the cat became the order of the day. Finally the dog could stand it no longer, and he left Adam's house, and betook himself to Seth's. By Seth he was welcomed kindly, and from Seth's house, he continued to make efforts at reconciliation with the cat. In vain. Yes, the enmity between the first dog and the first cat was transmitted to all their descendants until this very day.

Even the physical peculiarities of certain animals were not original features with them, but owed their existence to something that occurred subsequent to the days of creation. The mouse at first had quite a different mouth from its present mouth. In Noah's ark, in which all animals, to ensure the preservation of every kind, lived together peaceably, the pair of mice were once sitting next to the cat. Suddenly the latter remembered that her father was in the habit of devouring mice, and thinking there was no harm in following his example, she jumped at the mouse, who vainly looked for a hole into which to slip out of sight. Then a miracle happened; a hole appeared where none had been before, and the mouse sought refuge in it. The cat pursued the mouse, and though she could not follow her into the hole, she could insert her paw and try to pull the mouse out of her covert. Quickly the mouse opened her mouth in the hope that the paw would go into it, and the cat would be prevented from fastening her claws in her flesh. But as the cavity of the mouth was not big enough, the cat succeeded in clawing the cheeks of the mouse. Not that this helped her much, it merely widened the mouth

of the mouse, and her prey after all escaped the cat. After her happy escape, the mouse betook herself to Noah and said to him, "O pious man, be good enough to sew up my cheek where my enemy, the cat, has torn a rent in it." Noah bade her fetch a hair out of the tail of the swine, and with this he repaired the damage. Thence the little seam-like line next to the mouth of every mouse to this very day.

The raven is another animal that changed its appearance during its sojourn in the ark. When Noah desired to send him forth to find out about the state of the waters, he hid under the wings of the eagle. Noah found him, however, and said to him, "Go and see whether the waters have diminished." The raven pleaded: "Hast thou none other among all the birds to send on this errand?" Noah: "My power extends no further than over thee and the dove." But the raven was not satisfied. He said to Noah with great insolence: "Thou sendest me forth only that I may meet my death, and thou wishest my death that my wife may be at thy service." Thereupon Noah cursed the raven thus: "May thy mouth, which has spoken evil against me, be accursed, and thy intercourse with thy wife be only through it." All the animals in the ark said Amen. And this is the reason why a mass of spittle runs from the mouth of the male raven into the mouth of the female during the act of copulation, and only thus the female is impregnated. Altogether the raven is an unattractive animal. He is unkind toward his own young so long as their bodies are not covered with black feathers, though as a rule ravens love one another. God therefore takes the young ravens under His special protection. From their own excrement maggots come forth, which serve as their food during the three days that elapse after their birth, until their white feathers turn black and their parents recognize them as their offspring and care for them.

The raven has himself to blame also for the awkward hop in his gait. He observed the graceful step of the dove, and envious of her tried to emulate it. The outcome was that he almost broke his bones without

in the least succeeding in making himself resemble the dove, not to mention that he brought the scorn of the other animals down upon himself. His failure excited their ridicule. Then he decided to return to his own original gait, but in the interval he had unlearned it, and he could walk neither the one way nor the other properly. His step had become a hop betwixt and between. Thus we see how true it is, that he who is dissatisfied with his small portion loses the little he has in striving for more and better things.

The steer is also one of the animals that have suffered a change in the course of time. Originally his face was entirely overgrown with hair, but now there is none on his nose, and that is because Joshua kissed him on his nose during the siege of Jericho. Joshua was an exceedingly heavy man. Horses, donkeys, and mules, none could bear him, they all broke down under his weight. What they could not do, the steer accomplished. On his back Joshua rode to the siege of Jericho, and in gratitude he bestowed a kiss upon his nose.

The serpent, too, is other than it was at first. Before the fall of man it was the cleverest of all animals created, and in form it resembled man closely. It stood upright, and was of extraordinary size. Afterward, it lost the mental advantages it had possessed as compared with other animals, and it degenerated physically, too; it was deprived of its feet, so that it could not pursue other animals and kill them. The mole and the frog had to be made harmless in similar ways; the former has no eyes, else it were irresistible, and the frog has no teeth, else no animal in the water were sure of its life.

While the cunning of the serpent wrought its own undoing, the cunning of the fox stood him in good stead in many an embarrassing situation. After Adam had committed the sin of disobedience, God delivered the whole of the animal world into the power of the Angel of Death, and He ordered him to cast one pair of each kind into the water. He and leviathan together thus have dominion over all that has life. When the

Angel of Death was in the act of executing the Divine command upon the fox, he began to weep bitterly. The Angel of Death asked him the reason of his tears, and the fox replied that he was mourning the sad fate of his friend. At the same time he pointed to the figure of a fox in the sea, which was nothing but his own reflection. The Angel of Death, persuaded that a representative of the fox family had been cast into the water, let him go free. The fox told his trick to the cat, and she in turn played it on the Angel of Death. So it happened that neither cats nor foxes are represented in the water, while all other animals are.

When leviathan passed the animals in review, and missing the fox was informed of the sly way in which he had eluded his authority, he dispatched great and powerful fish on the errand of enticing the truant into the water. The fox walking along the shore espied the large number of fish, and he exclaimed, "How happy he who may always satisfy his hunger with the flesh of such as these." The fish told him, if he would but follow them, his appetite could easily be appeased. At the same time they informed him that a great honor awaited him. Leviathan, they said, was at death's door, and he had commissioned them to install the fox as his successor. They were ready to carry him on their backs, so that he had no need to fear the water, and thus they would convey him to the throne, which stood upon a huge rock. The fox yielded to these persuasions, and descended into the water. Presently an uncomfortable feeling took possession of him. He began to suspect that the tables were turned; he was being made game of instead of making game of others as usual. He urged the fish to tell him the truth, and they admitted that they had been sent out to secure his person for leviathan, who wanted his heart, that he might become as knowing as the fox, whose wisdom he had heard many extol. The fox said reproachfully: "Why did you not tell me the truth at once? Then I could have brought my heart along with me for King Leviathan, who would have showered honors upon me. As it is, you will surely suffer punishment for bringing me without my heart.

The foxes, you see," he continued, "do not carry their hearts around with them. They keep them in a safe place, and when they have need of them, they fetch them thence." The fish quickly swam to shore, and landed the fox, so that he might go for his heart. No sooner did he feel dry land under his feet than he began to jump and shout, and when they urged him to go in search of his heart, and follow them, he said: "O ye fools, could I have followed you into the water, if I had not had my heart with me? Or exists there a creature able to go abroad without his heart?" The fish replied: "Come, come, thou art fooling us." Whereupon the fox: "O ye fools, if I could play a trick on the Angel of Death, how much easier was it to make game of you?" So they had to return, their errand undone, and leviathan could not but confirm the taunting judgment of the fox: "In very truth, the fox is wise of heart, and ye are fools."

All Things Praise the Lord



Whatever God created has value." Even the animals and the insects that seem useless and noxious at first sight have a vocation to fulfil. The snail trailing a moist streak after it as it crawls, and so using up its vitality, serves as a remedy for boils. The sting of a hornet is healed by the house-fly crushed and applied to the wound. The gnat, feeble creature, taking in food but never secreting it, is a specific against the poison of a viper, and this venomous reptile itself cures eruptions, while the lizard is the antidote to the scorpion. Not only do all creatures serve man, and contribute to his comfort, but also God "teacheth us through the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wise through the fowls of heaven." He endowed many animals with admirable moral qualities as a pattern for man. If the Torah had not been revealed to us, we might have learnt regard for the decencies of life from the cat, who covers her excrement with earth; regard for the property of others from the ants, who never encroach upon one another's stores; and regard for decorous conduct from the cock, who, when he desires to unite

with the hen, promises to buy her a cloak long enough to reach to the ground, and when the hen reminds him of his promise, he shakes his comb and says, "May I be deprived of my comb, if I do not buy it when I have the means." The grasshopper also has a lesson to teach to man. All the summer through it sings, until its belly bursts, and death claims it. Though it knows the fate that awaits it, yet it sings on. So man should do his duty toward God, no matter what the consequences. The stork should be taken as a model in two respects. He guards the purity of his family life zealously, and toward his fellows he is compassionate and merciful. Even the frog can be the teacher of man. By the side of the water there lives a species of animals which subsist off aquatic creatures alone. When the frog notices that one of them is hungry, he goes to it of his own accord, and offers himself as food, thus fulfilling the injunction, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."

The whole of creation was called into existence by God unto His glory, and each creature has its own hymn of praise wherewith to extol the Creator. Heaven and earth, Paradise and hell, desert and field, rivers and seas—all have their own way of paying homage to God. The hymn of the earth is, "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, glory to the Righteous." The sea exclaims, "Above the voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty."

Also the celestial bodies and the elements proclaim the praise of their Creator—the sun, moon, and stars, the clouds and the winds, lightning and dew. The sun says, "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation, at the light of Thine arrows as they went, at the shining of Thy glittering spear"; and the stars sing, "Thou art the Lord, even Thou alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee."

Every plant, furthermore, has a song of praise. The fruitful tree sings,

“Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy, before the Lord, for He cometh; for He cometh to judge the earth”; and the ears of grain on the field sing, “The pastures are covered with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.”

Great among singers of praise are the birds, and greatest among them is the cock. When God at midnight goes to the pious in Paradise, all the trees therein break out into adoration, and their songs awaken the cock, who begins in turn to praise God. Seven times he crows, each time reciting a verse. The first verse is: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.” The second verse: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.” The third: “Arise, ye righteous, and occupy yourselves with the Torah, that your reward may be abundant in the world hereafter.” The fourth: “I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!” The fifth: “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?” The sixth: “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.” And the seventh verse sung by the cock runs: “It is time to work for the Lord, for they have made void Thy law.”

The song of the vulture is: “I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them, and they shall increase as they have increased”—the same verse with which the bird will in time to come announce the advent of the Messiah, the only difference being, that when he heralds the Messiah he will sit upon the ground and sing his verse, while at all other times he is seated elsewhere when he sings it.

Nor do the other animals praise God less than the birds. Even the beasts of prey give forth adoration. The lion says: “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; He shall cry, yea, He shall shout aloud; He shall do mightily against his

enemies.” And the fox exhorts unto justice with the words: “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and giveth him not his hire.”

Yea, the dumb fishes know how to proclaim the praise of their Lord. “The voice of the Lord is upon the waters,” they say, “the God of glory thundereth, even the Lord upon many waters”; while the frog exclaims, “Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever.”

Contemptible though they are, even the reptiles give praise unto their Creator. The mouse extols God with the words: “Howbeit Thou art just in all that is come upon me; for Thou hast dealt truly, but I have done wickedly.” And the cat sings: “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.” ❖

