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A FAST DAY - HEBREW CEREMONIES - THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Israelites of the City have participated largely during the present month in the Festivities incident to the commencement of their Civil year.

The Hebrew calendar begins nearly at the point where ours ends. The middle of the month of September is the first of the Civil Year. The first month ends in the middle of our October. It has two names, Ethanim and Tisri. The sacred or religious year begins with the month of Abib or Nisan - corresponding to our March and April. At this season of the year, the festivities which correspond to those of the Christian New Year, occupy the attention of the Israelitish portion of our population. It is their grand Holiday season. Active labor is suspended. The hum of commercial business, even, is partly hushed. The devout among the Hebrews religiously observe these days, and punctiliously attend the Synagogues - to make their atonement for the sins of the year, and, in obedience to the requirements of the old Levitical law, to review the mercies which have been vouchsafed to them during the twelve (illegible) months of the Civil Year and the occasion of festivities month which has passes. But while this is the (illegible) is also marked by the occurrence of one great Fast Day - the Day of Atonement, an epoch of the Sacred Year, and an occasion of high importance in the faith.

The law requires that on the tenth day of the seventh month, (this year, Sept. 22,) "there shall be a Day of Atonement; it shall be a holy convocation unto you; and *ye shall afflict* Your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord."

The Day began as the sun went down last night, and it ends as the sun sets this day, - twenty-four hours even to even. Work is forbidden to all devout believers for all of to-day. It is a Hebrew Sabbath, especially sanctified. Neither food nor drink are to be (illegible) so long as to-day's sun peeps over the horizon. The Day is a holy day. "It shall be to you a Sabbath of rest."

Accordingly, in suitable commemoration of the day, the Synagogues of the City were all opened at sundown last evening. They remained open during the night, and the prayers and ceremonies appointed by the Law are now proceeding. The Israelites have pretty generally laid aside their active labors and the Synagogues are well filled. It will be an instructive spectacle to look in to-day at any of the churches. We append a list of them:

Ahabat Chesed, Columbia Street; Anshai Chesed, Norfolk Street; Beth Abraham, Henry Street; Beth El, Broadway; Beth Elohim, Division Street; Beth Hamidrash, Pearl Street, Beth Israel and Bikkur Cholim, Chrystie Street; Bnai Israel, Thompson Street; Bnei Jeshurun, Greene Street; Rodeph Shalom, Clinton Street; Shaarai Rachamim, Attorney Street; Shaarai Shamayim, Attorney Street; Shaarai Tephila, Wooster Street; Shaarai Zedek, Henry Street; Shearith Israel, Crosby Street; Temple, Twelfth Street

Rabbi RAPHALL officiates at the Green Street Synagogue (Bnai Jeshurun;) Mr. ISAACS in Wooster Street; Mr. Henry at Shaarai Zedek in Henry Street. At the Chrystie Street Sanctuary (Beth Israel) is a large and very finely tuned organ. Mme. RACHEL suspended her performances last evening, in order to participate in the ceremonies of the evening at the Twelfth Street Temple, and to permit her family to enjoy the like privilege. Preaching will take place between 10 and 2 o'clock to-day, in Rabbi RAPFALL's and Rev. Mr. Isaac's desks.

The Forms of Prayer used by the Israelites on this occasion may not be familiar. We have taken some pains to procure a literal translation of the Hebrew form, and extracts are given below.

The following is not unlike, in general character, to the Litany of the modern Protestant Episcopal Church: For the sin which we have committed against thee by extortion and usury. And for the sin which we have committed against Thee by immodest discourse. For the sin which we have committed against thee by chattering. And for the sin which we have committed against thee by the twinkling of our eyes. And for the sins for which we were obliged to bring a trespass-offering, for either a certain or doubtful sin. And for the sins for which we have incurred the penalty of extirpation and being childless. For the sin which we have committed against thee by embezzlement, and for the sin which we have committed against thee by ecstasy.

At the end of this supplication - "O may our supplication ascend at eventide, our prayer approach the divine presence in the morning, and our praise be conspicuous until even."

The Ark is opened. A hymn is sung, entreating the Supreme Being to accept the prayers of the faithful - "for the merit of our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who originally arranged the Forms of Prayer; as also for the merit of Moses and Aaron, David, Solomon and the Prophet Samuel."

The priest utters the following: May he who answered Aaron with the censer, answer us. May he who answered Elisha in Jericho, answer us. May he who answered Jonah in the belly of the fish, answer us. May he who answered the virtuous, pious, perfect and upright, answer us.

The phrases employed are very peculiar. For instance: They by whose tuneful song the vestibule is shaken, say Holy. They whose cheeks are comely, like a swallow they (illegible) and say Holy and Blessed. They whose formation is four faces and no back, say Holy. They whose feet are straight, say Holy. The tranquil angels, in whose abode is peace, say Holy,

The contrite acknowledgement is: "We have trespassed, we have dealt treacherously, we have stolen; we have spoken slander; we have committed iniquity and done wickedly; we have acted presumptuously; we have committed violence; we have framed falsehood; we have counseled evil; we have uttered lies; we have scorned; we have rebelled; we have blasphemed; we have revolted; we have acted perversely; we have transgressed; we have oppressed, we have been stiff-necked; we have acted wickedly; we have corrupted; we have done abominably; we have gone astray, and have caused others to err; we have turned aside from the excellent precepts and institutions, and which hath not profited us; but thou art just concerning all that is come upon us, for thou hast dealt most truly, but we have done wickedly."

When the Law is elevated, the people say: "And this is the Law which Moses set before the children of Israel, by the command of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. It is a tree of life to those that lay hold on it; and the supporters thereof are happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace. Length of days is on its right, and on its left are riches and honor. The Lord was pleased for his righteousness' sake to magnify the Law and adorn it."

The Forms of Prayers in general use is that of LEVI, published in several (illegible) volumes, by ABRAHAM, London, Anno Mundi 5,594. The Books of Prayers possess the peculiarity of the Hebrew language of reading from back to front - or from right to left. The service is performed in Hebrew; the men sitting with covered heads; the Priest standing at his desk in the center of the Synagogue, chanting the prayers.

The crown of hearers and doers of the Law ebbed and flowed last night. The severity of the weather had an influence. It is permissible to leave the Synagogue and return, - if not done too often, and if performed in a manner so quiet as not to disturb the worship.

The occurrence of this Feast of the Chosen People is but once in the year, and it is the more honored in consequence of the fact that it comes so seldom. The general tendency of these ceremonies is to elevate the standard of morality among the Israelites; the Day of Atonement recalls to their recollection the sins they have committed, and the devout repent their misdeeds. The type of this ceremony foreshadows also the faith which underlies the Christian creed.

Editor's Note: This interesting window into mid-19th century American thought about Jews predates the adoption in America of the terms "Jew," or "Jewish," which, when eventually introduced, had a pejorative connotation. From colonial times until the turn of the 20th century, we were known as Israelites or Hebrews, terms of great respect in Protestant America. L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu, V'Gemar Chatimah Tovah.