

## A MISUNDERSTOOD QUESTION IN THE YERUSHALMI

By A. MARMORSTEIN, London

RECENTLY texts of the Grace after Meals have been discovered and published, which represent the Birkat ha-Mazon after the old Palestinian rite. None of them has the words asking for food and sustenance, as expressed in our texts by the words *וּפְרִיטָנוּ וְרַעְנוּ נוֹנוּ* in the third benediction. Yet, the Palestinian Talmud (Shabbat 15b), and Midrash (Leviticus rabba 34, 16) leave no doubt whatsoever that this passage was in vogue in the Grace after Meals during the third century in Palestine. For R. Zeira inquired of R. Hiyya bar Abba, whether this wording of the prayer does not contradict the rule that one must not ask for his own needs in his prayers on Sabbath. Dr. L. Finkelstein, who dealt with the text of the Birkat ha-Mazon in the last number of this REVIEW (XIX. 1929, 211–262), comes to grips on p. 232 with this problem as well. He suggests, in order to remove the contradiction between the new texts from the Genizah on one side, and the Rabbinic evidence, on the other, that since the two Amoraim were of Babylonian origin their discussion does not refer to the Palestinian text of the Grace after Meal at all but to the Babylonian version, to which they were accustomed. Such a solution would be welcomed, if we could ascertain with some probability that the Babylonian text of the Birkat ha-Mazon actually differed in the third century from that of the Palestinian version. No evidence can be adduced to make Dr. Finkelstein's suggestion acceptable. Besides, there is no need for such a solution. It is true that a good many differences between Palestine

and Babylon in Talmudic and Gaonic writings have been pointed out and discussed. This one is not among them. Of course, our list is not complete, yet, if the raised difficulty can be removed otherwise, why should we go on increasing the already long list of Hillufim? Do the texts really contradict the new finds from the Genizah? The latter have not the wording of רענו זוננו. That is quite true. But the omission is only in the Birkat ha-Mazon for Week-days, for the Sabbath they actually have had these words, in the additional paragraph, beginning with יי' אלהינו. R. Zeira did not ask about the Grace after Meals used for week-days, but for Sabbath, and that prayer contained the words.

Dr. Finkelstein refers p. 239, note 53a to the Palestinian version of the Birkat ha-Mazon, which I discovered in MS. British Museum, no. 5557. C. 1-7, and published in the *Blau Festschrift (Hazofe, X. 213)*, where I was enabled to offer the right interpretation of the Yerushalmi. That this insertion for Sabbath was known in the Talmudic period is evident from the words of the Talmud: ובשבת מתחיל בנחמה: "and on Sabbath a prayer is added, which begins with נחמה, and ends with נחמה."<sup>1</sup> Alfassi<sup>2</sup> gives us further particulars about this prayer, saying: מתחיל בנחמה שאומר נחמינו ה' אלהינו בבנין עידך ומסיים בנחמה שאומר והעלנו לתוכה ונחמנו בה כי אתה הוא בעל הנחמות. ברוך אתה ה' מנחם עמו ישראל בבנין

<sup>1</sup> Ber. 48b. Baraita, v Rashi s. v. ובשבת, and Tosafoth s. v. מתחיל בנחמה.

<sup>2</sup> Berakoth . 178. There is a difference of opinion between Rashi and followers on one side, who allow either רחם, or נחמו with an additional insertion for Sabbath, and Alfassi on the other side, who knows for Sabbath only one prayer, namely נחמנו. The wording of the Baraita agrees more with Alfassi than with his opponents. It is sure that in the XIth cent. the customs were still at variance. It is the period, when the old-Palestinian rite was in its final stage of existence.

<sup>3</sup> The Genizah text omits הנחמות, Maimonides, Berakoth II.4 begins ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו בירושלים עידך נחמנו ה' אלהינו וכו' עד ונחמנו בה כי: the following text: נחמנו ה' אלהינו וכו' אתה בעל הישועות ובעל הנחמות, באי מנחם ציון ובונה ירושלים, differing in two



preserved the custom in its most original form. Yet there are still a few words to be said on this subject. It appears rather puzzling that the Birkat ha-Mazon for Sabbath should have such a request, and why is the same omitted from the daily Grace after Meals? Since one should not ask, or claim for one's need on Sabbath, there is really no place for such an insertion. This difficulty can easily be settled. The Grace after Meals for week-days needed, neither in Palestine, nor in Babylonia, a special request for food and sustenance, since that supplication found proper expression thrice daily in the 'Amidah, in the special blessing called ברכת השנים, where this request is specially mentioned (v. B. AZ. 8a. אם צריך לפרנסה אומר בברכת השנים). Consequently it was superfluous to add a separate request about food etc. in the Grace after Meals on week-days. Not so on Sabbath, when the request for food was not mentioned in the 'Amidah. It had to be inserted in the Grace after Meals.

There is still one more point to be discussed. How is the present custom to be accounted for? We have in the Grace after Meals רענו וזנו in the third benediction. No rite has as far as we can ascertain the old formula of נחמנו in the Grace after Meals for Sabbath. This point requires some elucidation. We saw that Alfassi knew the old order, which is verified and confirmed by the Genizah fragment of the British Museum. The Gaonic sources offer little help to settle our question. Zedekiah b. Abraham, the author of the שבלי הלקט, ed. Buber § 94, informs us that the proper insertion is נחמנו, and not רחם, according to R. Isaiah di Trani, with whom the Halakoth Gedoloth agrees. Aptowitz (in the edition of the ראביה, I, p. 116) pointed out that this passage is neither in the Vienna, nor in the Berlin edition of the Halakoth Gedoloth. Yet, ed. Vienna, p. 11d has plainly: בשבת ובחדשים ויו"ט מתחיל בנחמה ומסיים וגומר קדושת היום באמצע והלכה כחכ' דאמרי אין אמרה אלא בנחמה, which agrees with R.

Isaiah, who distinguishes between נחמה and רחם. Based on this quotation Zedekiah b. Abraham was quite justified to enumerate the Hal. Gedoloth among the authorities who prescribe נחמנו for Sabbath instead of רחם. Yet, a Gaonic responsum (קהלת שלמה, no 57) teaches that some Gaon decided that the prayer על ישראל, רחם, or על ירושלים, with the ending בונה ירושלים was meant by the term נחמה in the Talmud. Moreover, the author of the Halakoth held the same view, which contradicts our text and the inference of the Shibbale ha-Leḳeṭ from his copy of the Hal. Ged.<sup>5</sup> The Gaon's decision is the same as the explanation offered in the Commentary on Berakoth, ascribed to R. Seadya Gaon (ed. Wertheimer, Jerusalem, 1908, p. 16b f.). How is this contradiction to be solved? If we consult our Midrashim, and Gaonic responsa, we shall see that they knew the present רצה והחליצנו prayer, which is also a part of the נחמנו, yet, since in both sources נחמנו is given as the catchword of the insertion for Sabbath, but רצה והחליצנו, consequently one must assume that נחמנו was not said in their ritual. Let us now consult our sources. First the Midrashic ones. First Lev. r. 34. 16. the verb חלץ is explained as meaning ישמיט according to Dt. 25, 9, further יזיין, acc. to Dt. 3. 18,<sup>6</sup> and ישוב, see Ps. 140, 2, where Targum reads יתי. For the fourth meaning יניח there is no reference to Scriptures, but a remark מכאן קבעו חכמים לומר רצה והחליצנו בשבת. This, of course, does not prove yet, that the insertion began with these words. Mid. Lam. ed. Buber p. 111 has in brackets המדרא החליצני ה' אלהי במצותך מכאן קבעו חכמים. There is no such verse as החליצנו. The phrase is taken from the prayer, and not from the Scriptures. In the Pesikṭa of R. Kahana,

<sup>5</sup> Wertheimer's text reads: וכבר באר זה מחבר ההלכות וזה בראש גמרת פרק: v. Hal. Ged., ed. Hildesheimer, 69.

<sup>6</sup> V. Ps. Jon. Targum, which translates מויינן for חלוצים, which T. Onkelos reads מוריין, in the first place both have for וחלצה וחשרי and Ps. Jonathan.



8; combined 3027, 4. give the following text: V ברך עלינו

י' אלהינו את השנה הזאת לטובה טללי ברכה בכל מיני תבואתה  
תקרב מהרה<sup>11</sup> [שנת נאולתינו שנת שלומים לריב ציון]

MSS. Adler 3810, 4 and 2461 furnish another type:

VI ברך עלינו את ... טלליך ותן ברכה במעשה ידינו והוריד  
עלינו נשם ברכה למען שמך עשה עמנו.

MS. Adler 3240 has:

VII י' אלהינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה בכל מיני תבואתה  
וברכה עלינו כשנים הטובות בא"י.

MS. Adler 920, 10 reads:

VIII ברוך עלינו י' אלהינו את השנה הזאת בכל מיני תבואתה לטובה  
וברכה כברכת השנים הטובות ותן ברכה והצלחה בכל מעשה ירנו  
ושבענו מטובה בא"י.

Of these eight texts I, II, V, and VI represent the Palestinian rite; III, VII and VIII the Babylonian. The chief difference between them is that the latter have no reference to future redemption, the former have. This is one of the chief differences between the Pal. and Bab. texts of the 'Amidah. Another variant between the two is of a similar type in the first benediction. The Babylonian mentions the Redeemer, the Palestinian does not contain such a reference. The Pal. version has preserved the natural connection between the second group and the next of the 'Amidah. Benediction IV-VII comprise one group. It is a mistake to assert that no. VII is either out of place, or entirely superfluous. Neither one, nor the other is the case. The prayers for knowledge, return to God, forgiveness of sin and redemption belong, formally and logically, together. Wisdom and learning leads to repentance, repentance to the step leading to forgiveness of sin. Atonement causes redemption. These are preparatory means of the eschatological benedictions X-XVI. Benedictions VIII-IX are closely connected with our material and physical well-

<sup>11</sup> The text in brackets is supplied by MS. Adler 30274.

being, and are placed in the middle of these two groups. The blessing for the years is one of them. Since it found a place in the 'Amidah of the week-days, there was no need for repetition in the Grace after Meals. On Sabbath it was omitted from the 'Amidah; it had therefore to be placed in the Grace after Meals.

These few remarks may be followed by some notes of a bibliographical nature, P. 213 a fuller investigation on the resemblances between the Jewish and early Christian Grace after Meals can be found in Ed. Freiherr v. d. Goltz, *Tischgebete und Abendmahlsgebete in der altchristlichen und in der griechischen Kirche*, Leipzig 1905, p. 218. As to the institution of the fourth benediction (הטוב והמטיב) in Jabneh, and the anachronistic report about the הרוני ביתר, v. M. Auerbach in *Jeschurun*, vol. XI, Hebr. part p. 15, P. 220. That the term אלהינו ה' was used in the first century, has been shown by me in my *Doctrine of God*, I London 1917. 70-72.