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קדשים תהיו

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# A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

SPANISH & PORTUGUESE JEWS' SYNAGOGUE,  
IN BEVIS MARKS,

ON

THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL

OF

H. R. H. Prince Augustus Frederick Duke of Sussex,

(4th IYAR, 5603, A. M.—4th MAY, 1843.)

BY

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## DISCOURSE.

נִבְרַחְתִּי בַלַּיְלָה שְׁמִיךָ יְהוָה נֶאֱשָׁמְרָה תִּרְחֶקְךָ :

“ I REMEMBER THY NAME, O LORD, IN THE NIGHT,  
AND KEEP THY LAW.”\*

MY BRETHREN,

It is a truth, which doubtless we have all at some time experienced, that there are moments in this transitory life when every object in nature seems to smile upon us. At such moments, we feel in ourselves all the vigour of manhood; around us our families prosper; the blue vault of heaven is radiant with light: and perhaps every spot on earth that meets our gaze is then decked with Nature's choicest ornaments—gently murmuring rivulets, mountains, forests and seas—all the work of the Creator, to give pleasant sensations to the soul of man,—those of joy and admiration. Then do we exclaim, with feelings of the purest gratitude, “This is the work of the Almighty hand alone!” Then do we feel so devoted to the Omnipotent, as to believe that the principles of religion are rooted in our hearts so deeply that the most searching misfortunes are unable to eradicate them: and perhaps, too, in the height of this enthusiasm, we may think that if the divine law had never

\* Ps. cxix. 55.

been given to us in the tangible shape we have it, beautiful nature, by itself, would have been sufficiently powerful to inspire us with due homage to our Maker.

But such blissful feelings, alas! are, in this terrestrial world, indeed but momentary: they pass away as the bright orb of night when tempestuous clouds arise. When clouds rise in the horizon of life; when we feel, by constant daily experience, how frail and uncertain is the tenure of human existence; when it happens, as in our world it often does, that from the pinnacle of happiness we are in an instant cast down into an abyss of sorrow; when we behold our dearest kindred, and most noble and illustrious leaders, plucked as it were from the flourishing stem of life; then that harmony in nature, which gave us such rapturous delight before, is broken: a gloom overshadows us, through which a cry of lamentation alone penetrates to our ears; and even the air we breathe, we imagine to be charged with particles of dissolved mortality. In this night of trouble we feel the necessity of a consolation more effectual than any we can derive from our own reasoning on the visible objects of nature; then do we acknowledge the force of the royal Psalmist's words, when he exclaimed:—

זָכַרְתִּי בַלַּיְלָה שְׁמֹךְ יְהוָה וְאֲשַׁמְרָה תּוֹרָתְךָ :

“ I REMEMBER THY NAME, O LORD, IN THE NIGHT,  
AND I KEEP THY LAW.”

לֵאמֹר תּוֹרָתְךָ שְׁעָשָׂעִי אִם אֲבָדְתִּי בַּעֲנִי :

“ UNLESS THY LAW HAD BEEN MY DELIGHT, I SHOULD  
THEN HAVE PERISHED IN MY AFFLICTION.”\*

\* Ps. cxi. 92.

It is, therefore, my brethren, that we have now met in this house of God, while our bosoms are charged with grief for the loss we have sustained; that we unburthen our hearts to Him, and seek that never-failing consolation which arises from His divine instruction.

We are not come to lament, nor to complain against His mighty will; for we must all feel convinced that “ His righteousness is everlasting, and that all His judgments are based on truth.” We are assembled to solace our wounded spirits by reflecting on His ordinances, and to give praise and glory to Him for whatever He, in his eternal wisdom, may deem it right that we should endure, whether it may appear to our limited understanding conducive to our happiness, or productive of pain and distress.

יְזַכְּרֶךָ יְזַכְּרֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ אֱמֶת :

“ THY RIGHTEOUSNESS, O LORD, IS LASTING FOR  
EVER, AND THY JUDGMENTS ARE IN TRUTH.”

Let us, then, my brethren, devote this solemn hour to a reverential examination of the introductory part of that portion of the sacred law read this morning; and I trust that the result, under His divine pleasure, will prove to us in blessings most abundant.

וַדַּבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר : דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי-עֵדֻת בְּנֵי

יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ בְּקִדְשִׁי :

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

“ AND THE LORD SPAKE UNTO MOSES, SAYING,  
SPEAK UNTO ALL THE CONGREGATION OF THE CHIL-

DREN OF ISRAEL, AND SAY UNTO THEM, YE SHALL BE HOLY: FOR I THE LORD YOUR GOD AM HOLY."\*

Although most of the precepts in this chapter seem perfectly comprehensible to human reason, yet it was the Divine will for the people to be instructed to shun evil things, and to practise those that were good; not because human reason suggested to them what was proper to be done, but because He, the Holy One, the Lord their God (blessed be His name!) had commanded what they should do.†

According to the explanation afterwards given, the phrase *קדשים יהיה* "Ye shall be holy," does not imply that we should not use our mental faculties (with which the Almighty has blessed us, and by which He has made man so immeasurably superior to every other animal in the creation). That the exercise of them was not interdicted, is obvious from the value attached to wisdom and knowledge throughout the sacred volume, and from the circumstance of the Almighty rewarding King Solomon for asking for the blessings of wisdom and knowledge in preference to mere wealth or honours; but it means that our human reasoning should be guided by the sacred precepts.

*ישמרו אתם ועשותם כי הוא הקמתכם וניתתם לעני העמים*

"AND YE SHALL KEEP THEM, AND DO THEM; FOR THIS IS YOUR WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE SIGHT OF THE NATIONS."‡

Were we to act in accordance

\* Leviticus xix. 1, 2.

† כמו שאמר ובלבבך כהנים כי קדשים

‡ Deut. iv. 6.

with the suggestions of our own ideas, we should soon fall into confusion, from which, by our own strength, we could never get free. We are to act in obedience to His precepts, because He is holy, and it is He, our God, from whom we received them.

Before we proceed further with this illustration, it is well to observe that the word "holy," expressed in Hebrew by the term *קדוש*, conveys to our mind a more exclusive idea than it does in any European language. Its meaning, when used in reference to the Infinite Being, is "separate;" by which we are to understand that the nature of His existence is *separate*, divided from all human comprehension; and the same word, when used in reference to mortals, signifies that they should separate and restrain themselves from excessive enjoyment in worldly things, by keeping their thoughts constantly fixed on the Divine ordinances. The Supreme Power, in delivering to us the precept *קדשים יהיה* "to be holy," or, as the Hebrew expresses it, "to sever ourselves from worldly indulgences,"\* did not intend to make us wholly insensible to the pleasures of mortal life, and that we should not partake of them in moderation: for we often find in the sacred writings that steadfast adherence to the divine mandates was also rewarded by an extension of mortal life and its enjoyments; but the divine will was, that we should not forget our own condition, as men, in this world; that we should not, like the inferior animals, be unable to regulate our desires and appetites. *קדשים יהיה* "Ye shall be holy," that is, "Ye shall separate yourselves from all enjoyments

\* פרושים מן העריות ומן העבירות, רש"י

which are improper, or which become so by excessive indulgence; and be temperate in pleasures of every kind: for

כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

'I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM HOLY,' am beyond all human comprehension, and no mortal eye can behold me." It was the Lord's will to sanctify our existence with his name; and by that act we became as it were a ray of the light emitted by his eternal sun of mercy.

In his boundless wisdom, the Almighty knew that our mortal life could never be one of unalloyed happiness, but that we should be ever passing from one state of distress to another; and that, without some strong support in the day of trial, our misery would often be too heavy for us to sustain.

In the same chapter of our text there is another precept, by which this view is fully confirmed:—

וְשָׂטָה לְפָנַי לֹא תִהְיֶה בְּבִשְׂרֵיכֶם וּבַחֲבֹת קַעֲקַע לֹא תִהְיֶה בְּכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה :

"YE SHALL NOT MAKE ANY CUTTINGS IN YOUR FLESH FOR THE DEAD, NOR PRINT ANY MARKS UPON YOU: I AM THE LORD."\*

Amongst the many revolting customs of the heathen in former days, there were some whose origin we, at the present time, are at a loss to understand, and are doubtful whether such arose at the instigation of their own strange fancies, or at the profane counsel of their leaders; but the custom of inflicting pain upon the body, in consequence of violent and painful emotions of

\* Leviticus xix. 28.

the mind, we can sufficiently comprehend; for there have been instances in our own experience, when, unfortunately, we forgot the strict line of duty to the power above. The fond father, bereaved of his only and deeply cherished son; the affectionate daughter, cast an orphan upon the intricate paths of life by the decease of a tender mother, fully exemplify the injurious force of sorrow. The melancholy event which has caused us here to assemble this day—the day on which is consigned to the silent grave the mortal part of His ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE AUGUSTUS FREDERICK, DUKE OF SUSSEX—furnishes to us a still more powerful example of this truth, because it is now immediately present to our senses. What heart is there now that does not feel the blow which has fallen upon us? Who that heareth the name of the illustrious prince, can exclude from his memory his numerous virtues? He was, in all benevolent and exalted feelings, an active and vigorous promoter of art, science, and literature; he was, on all occasions, the steadfast advocate of the innocent when in danger, and of the defenceless when threatened with oppression; and, for nearly forty years, he was a most zealous patron of our charities.

Who is he, then, amongst us, that does not feel as if a sun, whose rays to us were benignly resplendent, had set for ever; and that a gloomy night had come upon us?

At such a melancholy time as this, were we to inflict pain upon our bodies in proportion to the grief of our minds—were we to seek that consolation which would result from human reasoning alone—we should be left in

the most hopeless confusion, in the depths of unvarying anguish; for we have lost a dear friend, a help and support that can never be replaced. It is now, then, that we appreciate the truth and force of the Royal Psalmist's exclamation:—

זְבַרְתִּי בַלַּיְלָה שְׁמֵךְ יְהוָה וְאַשְׁמְרָה הַתּוֹרָהךָ :

“ I REMEMBER THY NAME IN THE NIGHT, O LORD, AND I KEEP THY LAW.”

In the night of our distress, refer to the divine word of Him who is the father and benefactor of all, call to mind His precepts, and you will learn that we should not despair; that we should fix our thoughts on more blissful realms, and not, when our friends expire, mourn them as lost to us eternally. Our root is in heaven. The good and righteous are as trees planted in heaven, whose branches are bent down to this world, that its fruits may be shared by others. We may all be considered as rays emanating from the everlasting sun of life, each illumining one fragile house — our body. Does this house break down, either from violence or the wasting effect of time, still the ray shines as gloriously as ever. And for this reason it is, that we are commanded not to commit violence upon ourselves, or to injure ourselves by despair, when it may please the Almighty to remove from amongst us *one* of our dearest friends. אֲנִי יְהוָה “ I am the Everlasting Being, saith the Lord, and it is from Me that ye spring forth.” He gave his command to Moses “TO SPEAK TO ALL THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL,”

דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל :

because every one, according to his rank and station, was required to observe this important and comprehensive precept through life, קְדָשִׁים הָיְדוּי, “ YE SHALL BE HOLY:” ye shall obey my commandments, not because it accords with human reason so to do, but because

כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם :

‘I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM HOLY:’ am separated, distinct from all human understanding, and require you to be so likewise.”

The commandment, not to give way to the effects of grief on the loss of a dear friend, which we might have thought would be supported by impressive reasons in detail, is merely supported by the words יְהוָה אֲנִי “ I am the Everlasting Being.” By this we are further led to reflect on the importance of David's aspiration—“ I remember thy *name* in the night, O Lord, and keep thy law.”

If we examine the work of any mortal legislator, we shall find laws of different degrees; and for the principal of them we may perceive reasons adduced, while those less important are given without any comment. But it is not so with our divine laws, especially those that are involved in that portion of the Scripture forming our text. All of them, those that human reason would dictate to us to follow, and those that seem to have been founded on some reasons to us incomprehensible, are alike succeeded by the affirmation אֲנִי יְהוָה “ I am the Everlasting Being:” and thus the chapter concludes—

וְשִׁמְרֵתֶם אֶת כָּל הַקִּוּי וְאֶת כָּל מִשְׁפָּטֵי וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם  
אֲנִי יְהוָה :

“YE SHALL OBSERVE ALL MY STATUTES, AND ALL MY JUDGMENTS, AND DO THEM: I AM THE LORD.”

That there is a never-ceasing Unit-Being, we cannot for an instant doubt; that He is the Creator of all that exists, must be equally free from doubt; and that He called us into life for our own felicity, and not that his divine nature should derive any advantage from our existence, is demonstrated by his own infinite existence. No further proof can be requisite to show that our spiritual days shall be prolonged, after it seems fit to Him that our mortal frame should decay, than the precept that we should not give way to the violence of mortal grief: for He is יְהוָה the Everlasting Being. Even if any doubt still remained, it must be utterly removed by the declaration—

בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תִקְדְּרוּ וְלֹא תִשְׂמוּ  
קִרְוָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמַת . כִּי עִם קְדוֹשׁ אַתֶּם  
לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וכו' :

“YE ARE CHILDREN OF THE LORD YOUR GOD; YE SHALL NOT CUT YOURSELVES, NOR MAKE ANY BALDNESS BETWEEN YOUR EYES FOR THE DEAD; FOR THOU ART A HOLY PEOPLE UNTO THE LORD THY GOD.”\*

If we are children of Him, the Eternal Unit-Being, surely we, in the soul, must be everlasting with Him.

\* Deut. xiv. 1, 2.

If we have the perishable substance of our human frame continually present to our thoughts, and He, the infinite Being, still calls us his children—declares that we have emanated from Him, surely, then, the term “children” must not apply to our body, but to the essence of life breathed by Him into our nostrils—the never-dying soul!

My brethren, think ye now that we can have a stronger assurance of our immortality, than is contained in that simple phrase, אֲנִי יְהוָה “I am the Everlasting Being!” We may read the works of philosophers, but true conviction comes not from such; because a mere terrestrial and finite being can only draw his arguments from sources equally finite. All knowledge, all wisdom possessed by a mortal, can only prove that which is within his comprehension. Whence, therefore, could we have derived consolation in our distress—what balm could we have procured to soothe our wounded spirits—had not the name of the Everlasting Being been recorded in the holy law? Are we not all led to adopt the sentiments of David, and to exclaim with him—“I remember thy name, O Lord, in the night (when the shadow of death comes over us), and I fulfil thy precepts?” In this we have an assurance that we shall live around the throne of His glory, which is without end; a consolation which is not to be obtained from all the faculties of the human mind, nor from all the maxims of all the philosophers that the world ever saw.

We are now led to consider the blessed manner of life of all those who entertained the principles conveyed in the sacred words of our text, and which they will

implant in the hearts of all that seriously and religiously study them. When we reflect, that the departing from this life cannot, with them, be termed "death," but simply the returning to that everlasting fountain of bliss from whence they sprang, we ought not to indulge, to its full extent, in the grief which we cannot help but feel at the loss of our illustrious Prince. The conduct of His Royal Highness through life fully bears us out in our present duty; for, although he was well versed in the works of most philosophers, at no time did he ever allow a day to pass without reading a portion of the divine law. He read it not as a man who had merely imposed upon himself the task as a formal duty, but he dwelt on each sentence with sincere delight and devotion; and his chief happiness consisted in discussing the beauties of the Holy Scripture. Often did he say, "If every man would adhere to the divine precepts, human legislation might be dispensed with altogether." He was sincere in all things, and the principles of justice and humanity he earnestly cherished to the last moment of his life.

So many and so great were the virtues of this prince, that I am well justified in giving a brief summary of them here.

So fervent was he in his attachment to truth, that with him it was a rule never to receive into his friendship any man who had abjured the religion in which he was born. His acquaintance with our sacred language was of such an extent, that he could appreciate the works of Rabbi Joseph Albo and Maimonides. To those who were so fortunate as to obtain his friendship,

—and no man with merit ever applied for it in vain,—he was, in word and deed, a father; and when it was within his power to do them a service, he thought no exertion for that end too great.

On returning from any festival in aid of a charity, and especially that for the benefit of the Jews' Hospital, he always expressed his gratification in the most joyous terms, if a good harvest had been secured for suffering humanity. His benefactions from his own private revenues were manifold; and seldom was any petition presented to him from the afflicted that he did not investigate, and grant relief as far as his means permitted.

On a royal prince like him, the most appropriate title which we, in this our house of God, can justly bestow, is צִדִּיק תְּמִים "the perfect righteous." And he will be numbered amongst those of whom our revered sages have said,—"They are crowned with their good deeds, and delight in the pure rays of the everlasting glory."\*

Nevertheless, my brethren, we will not murmur at this fulfilment of the divine will. The life of the departed prince, though in his 71st year, was much too short for the good which he might still have wrought. But the righteous are like the fruits of a tree when they have reached a certain point of maturity; they must be plucked, or they will fall to the earth, to be put to the use for which they were originally destined.

\* הַעֲדִיב אִין כּוּ לֹא אֵכִילָה וְלֹא שָׂתִיחַ וְלֹא פִירָה וְרִבִּיחַ וְלֹא מִשָּׂא וּמִתֵּן וְלֹא קִנְיָה וְלֹא שְׂנֵאָה וְלֹא חֲרִוּת אֲלֵא בְּדִקּוּם יוֹשְׁבֵים וְעַפְרוּתֵיהֶם בְּרַחֲשֵׁיהֶם וְנִדְחֵים מִזֵּי שְׂכִינָה (בְּרַכּוֹת י"ז ע"א)



יִזְעַץ יְהוָה יְמֵי הַמִּימִים וְנִתְחַלְתֶּם לְעוֹלָם תְּהִיָּה :

“ THE LORD KNOWETH THE DAYS OF THE PERFECT  
RIGHTEOUS, AND THEIR INHERITANCE WILL BE EVER-  
LASTING.”\*

We shall erect to our royal prince a monument; but it will not be one of marble, which time and weather may destroy; the monument we will raise to him shall be imperishable, for it shall be in the hearts of our posterity.

By the example of His Royal Highness, we will instruct our children to continue faithfully attached to the Holy Law. By that example, they will see that neither rank nor station, nor any other worldly circumstance, should impede their devotion to it. We will exhort them, in the words of our text קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיֶינָה לְךָ הוֹלִים. “Separate yourselves from all iniquities; and do so, not merely because human reason tells you what is iniquitous, but because אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֵלֵינוּ the Lord our God is holy; and as ye derived your existence from Him, so ye must fulfil all his ordinances.” We should remind our children that we are *all* children of the Lord our God אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם; and that, therefore, while we pay a just tribute to the memory of a departed friend and benefactor, we must not suffer ourselves to be utterly weighed down by that loss: for such is the custom of those only who worship the work of their own hands, and who, when they see their friends pass from this world, account them as lost and dissolved for ever. Such should not be our feelings for those

\* Psalm xxxvii. 18.

whom the sacred scripture declares to be children of the Everlasting God.

In repeating the name of His Royal Highness to our children, we shall instruct them continually to advocate and cherish truth and justice, and to sacrifice personal interest on all occasions when the necessities of the poor and the afflicted demand their zealous aid; which they should ever afford, from no other motive than a desire to please the Almighty. Our children, by this means, will become faithful to their God, loyal to the Government of the country in which they live, and good men to all their fellow-creatures whatsoever.

Thus, my brethren, while others on this day assemble round the vault to see inhumed the mortal remains of our late illustrious prince, and shrink with awe at the sight of the insatiable grave, we, in this temple of the Lord, bow in grateful adoration to Him, for all that He, in his divine wisdom, may choose for us to bear; and recite the good deeds of our deceased friend, that, even as angels, they may accompany his soul to the regions of interminable bliss. And let us ourselves, my brethren, look up to Heaven, as though we could see the departed soul amid the radiant stars that surround the glory of the Supreme Creator: for his divine law is truth and justice, and his name, and his mercy, endure for ever. Amen.

כִּי יִזְעַץ יְהוָה יְמֵי הַמִּימִים וְנִתְחַלְתֶּם לְעוֹלָם תְּהִיָּה :

כֹּחַת :

Psalm xlvi. 15.

