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THE BURNING OF THE LAW.

(*Ey Rabbi Meir of Ruttenberg, Teacher of Rabbenu Asher,*
5046 = 1285.)

Ask, is it well, O thou consumed of fire,
 With those that mourn for thee,
 That yearn to tread thy courts, that sore desire
 Thy sanctuary ;
 That panting for thy land's sweet dust¹, are grieved,
 And sorrow in their souls ;
 And by the flames of wasting fire bereaved,
 Mourn for thy scrolls ;
 That grope in shadow of unbroken night,
 Waiting the day to see,
 Which o'er them yet shall cast a radiance bright,
 And over thee ?
 Ask of the welfare of the man of woe,
 With breaking heart, in vain
 Lamenting ever for thine overthrow,
 And for thy pain ;
 Of him that crieth as the jackals cry,
 As owls their moaning make,
 Proclaiming bitter wailing far and nigh ;
 Yea, for thy sake.
 And thou revealed amid a heav'nly fire,
 By earthly fire consumed !
 Say how the foe unscorched escaped the pyre
 Thy flames illumed !

¹ Amos ii. 7.

How long shalt thou that art at ease abide
 In peace unknown to woe,
 While o'er my flowers, humbled from their pride,
 Thy nettles grow¹?

Thou sittest high exalted, lofty foe!
 To judge the sons of God;
 With judgments stern thou bringest them down low
 Beneath thy rod.

Yea more, to burn the Law thou dared'st decree,
 God's word to banish hence:
 Then blessed he who shall award to thee,
 Thy recompense²!

Was it for this, thou Law, my Rock of old
 Gave thee with flames begirt,
 That in thine after days should fire seize hold
 Upon thy skirt?

O Sinai! was it then for this God chose
 Thy mount of modest height,
 Rejecting statelier, while on thee arose
 His glorious light?

Wast thou an omen that from noble state
 The Law should lowly be?
 And lo! a parable will I relate
 Befitting thee.

'Tis of a king I muse, who sat before
 The banquet of his son,
 And wept: for 'mid the mirth he death foresaw;
 Thus thou hast done.

Cast off thy robe; in sackcloth folds of night,
 O Sinai! cover thee;
 Don widow's garb, discard thy raiment bright
 Of royalty.

¹ Prov. xxiv. 31.

² Ps. cxxxvii. 8.

Lo, I will weep for thee until my tears
 Swell as a stream and flow
 Unto the graves where thy two princely seers
 Sleep calm below.

Moses, and Aaron on the Mount of Hor;
 I will of them inquire:
 Is there another to replace this Law
 Devoured of fire?

O thou third month most sacred! woe is me
 For treason of the fourth,
 Which dimmed the sacred light that shone from thee
 And kindled wrath;

And brake the tablets, yea, and still did rage:
 And lo, the Law is burnt!
 Ye sinful! is not this the twofold wage
 Which ye have earnt¹?

Dismay hath seized upon my soul; how then
 Can food be sweet to me,
 When, O thou Law! I have beheld base men
 Destroying thee?

They cast thee out as one despised, and burn
 The wealth of God Most High;
 They that from thine assembly thou would'st spurn
 From drawing nigh.

I cannot pass along the highway more,
 Nor seek thy ways forlorn;
 How do thy paths their loneliness deplore,
 Lo! how they mourn!

With wine, as honey to my mouth, 'tis sweet
 To mix my tears like rain;
 Yea, and 'tis pleasant to my shackled feet
 To bear thy chain.

¹ Isa. xl. 2.

Ah! sweet 'twould be unto mine eyes, alway,
 Waters of tears to pour,
 To sob and drench thy sacred robes, till they
 Could hold no more.

But lo! my tears are dried, when, fast outpoured,
 They down my cheeks are shed;
 Scorched by the fire within: because thy Lord
 Hath turned and sped.

Taking his holy treasure¹, he hath made
 His journey far away²;
 And with him hath not thy protecting shade
 Vanished for aye?

Yea, I am desolate and sore bereft,
 Lo! a forsaken one:
 Like a sole beacon on a mountain left³,
 A tower alone

I hear the voice of singers now no more,
 Silence their song hath bound,
 For broken are the strings on harps of yore,
 Viols of sweet sound.

In sackcloth I will clothe, and sable band,
 For well-beloved by me
 Were they whose lives were many as the sand,
 The slain of thee.

I am astonished that the day's fair light
 Yet shineth brilliantly
 On all things; but is ever dark as night
 To me and thee.

Call with a bitter cry to God above
 Of anguish and of pain:
 Ah! that he would remember yet his love,
 His troth of eigne⁴!

¹ Prov. vii. 20.² Prov. vii. 19.³ Isa. xxx. 17.⁴ Jer. ii. 2.

Gird on the sackcloth of thy misery
For that devouring fire,
Which went forth ravenous, degrading thee
To ruins dire.

Even as when thy Rock afflicted thee
He will assuage thy woe,
And turn again the tribes' captivity
And raise the low.

Yet shalt thou wear thy scarlet raiment choice
And sound the timbrels high,
And glad amid the dancers shalt rejoice,
With joyful cry.

My heart shall be uplifted on the day
Thy Rock shall be thy light,
When he shall make thy gloom to pass away,
Thy darkness bright.

NINA DAVIS.