

QUESTIONS FROM THE PEW.

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THE PLACE FOR SACRIFICING.

(Lev. xvii: 1-9; Deut. xii. 8-15.)

WE now turn to a question concerning the Mosaic legislation. How adjust the above passages to one another? The former is from legislation purporting to have been given at Mount Sinai, quite at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings; the latter at the close of these wanderings, some thirty-eight or forty years later. Both are said to have been from God, and are announced to the people by Moses. They both have to do with the place where sacrifices may be offered, and both deal with the slaughtering of animals for food.

The Leviticus passage is: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them; This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, saying, What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it without the camp, and hath not brought it unto the door of the tent meeting, to offer it as an oblation unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the LORD: blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people: to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they sacrifice in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the LORD, unto the door of the tent of meeting, unto the priest, and sacrifice them for sacrifices of peace offerings unto the LORD. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD at the door of the tent of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the LORD. And they shall no more sacrifice unto the he-goats (or satyrs), after whom they go a whoring. This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generations."

"And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of
 "the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them,
 "that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto
 "the door of the tent of meeting, to sacrifice it unto the LORD; even
 "that man shall be cut off from his people."

In respect to clearness and severity this passage would seem to leave nothing to be desired. The value of such an enactment at the alleged time can be largely appreciated without difficulty. It would tend powerfully to preserve the purity of the worship of Jehovah. Multiplicity of worships prevailed in those regions, many of them corrupt; and the killing of animals for food was at least very likely to be a sacrificial act. The chief question before us however is the comparison of this passage with the one in Deuteronomy. The latter with some of the preceding context, is: "These are the statutes and
 "the judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land which the
 "LORD, the God of thy fathers hath given thee to possess it. . . . Ye
 "shall surely destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye
 "shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon
 "the hills, and under every green tree: and ye shall break down their
 "altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim with
 "fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods; and
 "ye shall destroy their name out of that place. Ye shall not do so
 "unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your
 "God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even
 "unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come; and
 "thither shall ye bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and
 "your tithes. . . . Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here
 "this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes; for ye are
 "not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD
 "your God giveth thee. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell
 "in the land which the LORD your God causeth you to inherit, and he
 "giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell
 "in safety; then it shall come to pass that the place which the LORD
 "your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall
 "ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings and your
 "sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and
 "all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: and ye shall
 "rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons and your
 "daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the
 "Levite that is within your gates. . . . Take heed to thyself that thou
 "offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in
 "the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there

"thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there shalt thou do all that I command thee. Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh within all thy gates, after all the desire of thy soul, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee."

In the first place we would direct attention to the practice referred to in the words, "all the things which we do here this day" (verse 8). In the future they were not to do after all these things. The time contemplated for the change was presumably in the near future, when the people should be established in the peaceable possession of the promised land. At this time they should not do according to the then prevailing custom, but should offer all their sacrifices at one place. This is evidently the meaning of verses 8-11. Of course the existing custom referred to was sacrificing in *many* places. Without such practice the allusion of verse 8 would be meaningless.

It is to be noticed that Moses here refers with manifest complacency to a practice every instance of which, *according to a divine law promulgated by himself*, was to be visited with death. He declares or implies the frequency of the practice, and says not a word against it. He accounts for it however by the unsettled condition of the people: "for ye are not yet come to the rest and the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth thee." Neither of course had the people come to these thirty-eight years before, when ostensibly, the Leviticus legislation was given, given to be of force forever. "This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generations."

Now how could all this have been? How could Moses have possibly done as is declared by the Deuteronomy passage after the legislation of the Leviticus passage? Of course this bears upon the relative date of these passages. If the one in Leviticus can not be considered to have preceded the one in Deuteronomy, then the former must be later than the latter.

The Deuteronomy passage moreover is in great need of adjustment to the other one because of what it permits. "Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh within all thy gates, after the desire of thy soul, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee." This is expressly forbidden in the Leviticus passage; and the prohibition is to be binding forever. How can God be considered to have been the author of both these enactments? With the opposite to be enacted by himself within a few years how could he have imposed the Leviticus prohibition, making it "a statute forever unto them?" A plea of meeting changed con-

ditions, if there were such, can hardly be admitted as satisfactory. The argument would bear in the other direction. The very fact of the changes so soon to be made would, it would seem, most certainly have precluded the possibility of the prohibition in Leviticus in the form in which it is there given. What theory of divine authorship or inspiration can be made to fit this case?

Moreover, on *any* theory of the origin of these passages, it is difficult to see how that in Leviticus could have preceded the other. After promulgating the Leviticus law, supposing it to have come from himself, Moses could have hardly permitted such well-known violations of it as the Deuteronomy passage implies, and even have referred to them without the least censure. The express permission also in Deut. xii. 15 of what in the other passage was forbidden under pain of death, and to be so forever, appears strange, to say the least, even on the theory of human authorship, if both passages are of Mosaic origin.

But whatever difficulties the case may present on the theory of the human origin of these passages, they are very much less than those which attend the theory of their divine origin, and of the inerrancy of the records. Must not the Leviticus passage be the product of a later age in which early history was colored by opinions then prevailing?