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ODE TO ZION.

(Words of Love and Honour to the Holy Land, and of strong Longing to see her and to abide in her.)

JEHUDAH HALEVI (1086).

ZION, wilt thou not ask if peace's wing
 Shadows the captives that ensue thy peace,
 Left lonely from thine ancient shepherding?
 From west and east and north and south—world-wide—
 From all those far and near, without surcease,
 Take Peace—and Peace to thee from every side.
 And Peace from him that in captivity
 Longeth, and giveth tears like Hermon's dew,
 Yearning to shed them on the hills of thee.
 To weep thy woe my cry is waxen strong:—
 But dreaming of thine own restored anew
 I am a harp to sound for thee thy song.
 My heart to Bethel sorely yearneth yet,
 Peniel and Mahanaim; yea, where'er
 In holy concourse all thy pure ones met.
 There the Shechinah dwelt in thee; and He,
 God thy Creator, lo, He opened there
 Toward the gates of Heaven the gates of thee.
 And only glory from the Lord was thine
 For light; and moon and stars and sunshine waned
 Nor gave more light unto thy light divine.
 O I would choose but for my soul to pour
 Itself where then the Spirit of God remained,
 Outpoured upon thy chosen ones of yore.

Thou art the royal house ; thou art the throne
Of God ; and how come slaves to sit at last
Upon the thrones which were thy lords' alone ?

Would I were wandering in the places where
God's glory was revealed in that time past,
Revealed in thee to messenger and seer !

And who will make me wings that I may fly,
That I may hasten thither far away
Where mine heart's ruins 'mid thy ruins lie ?

Prostrate upon thine earth, I fain would thrust
Myself, delighting in thy stones, and lay
Exceeding tender hold upon thy dust.

Yea, standing by the burial-places there
Of mine own fathers, I would wondering gaze,
In Hebron, at each chosen sepulchre ;

And pass into thy forest, and incline
To Carmel, and would stand in Gilead's ways
And marvel at the Mount Abarim thine ;

Thy Mount Abarim and thy Mountain Hor,
There where the two great luminaries sleep,
Which were thy teacher and thy light before.

The life of souls thine air is ; yea, and thou
Hast purest myrrh for grains of dust ; and deep
With honey from the comb thy rivers flow.

Sweet to my soul 'twould be to wander bare
And go unshod in places waxen waste—
Desolate since thine oracles were there ;

Where thine Ark rested, hidden in thine heart,
And where, within, thy Cherubim were placed,
Which in thine innermost chambers dwelt apart.

I will cut off and cast away my crown
Of locks, and curse the season which profaned
In unclean land the Nazarites, thine own.

How shall it any more be sweet to me

To eat or drink, beholding, unrestrained,
Dogs rend thy tender whelps unsparingly?

Or how shall light of day at all be sweet

Unto mine eyes, while still I see them killed—
Thine eagles—caught in ravens' mouths for meat?

O cup of sorrow! gently! let thy stress

Desist a little! for my reins are filled
Already, and my soul, with bitterness.

I, calling back Aholah's memory,

Drink thine hot poison; and, remembering
Aholibah, I drain the dregs of thee.

Zion! O perfect in thy beauty! found

With love bound up, with grace encompassing,
With thy soul thy companions' souls are bound:

They that rejoice at thy tranquillity,

And mourn the wasteness of thine overthrow,
And weep at thy destruction bitterly;

They from the captive's pit, each one that waits

Panting towards thee; all they bending low
Each one from his own place, towards thy gates;

The flocks of all thy multitudes of old

That, sent from mount to hill in scattered flight,
Have yet forgotten nevermore thy fold;

That take fast clinging hold upon thy skirt,

Striving to grasp the palm-boughs on thine height,
To come to thee at last with strength begirt.

Shinar and Pathros—nay, can these compare

With thee in state? And can thy purity,
And can thy light¹ be like the vain things there?

And thine anointed—who among their throng

Compareth? Likened unto whom shall be
Levites and seers and singers of thy song?

¹ Thummim and Urim.

Lo! it shall pass, shall change, the heritage
Of vain-crowned kingdoms; not all time subdues
Thy strength; thy crown endures from age to age.
Thy God desired thee for a dwelling-place;
And happy is the man whom He shall choose
And draw him nigh to rest within thy space.
Happy is he that waiteth;—he shall go
To thee, and thine arising radiance see
When over him shall break thy morning glow;
And see rest for thy chosen; and sublime
Rejoicing find amid the joy of thee
Returned unto thine olden youthful time.

NINA DAVIS.