

CHRONICLES OF JERAHMEEL.

COMPILER'S PREFACE.

BEHOLD I have sworn not to lend anybody this book to take away, with the exception of three, whom I shall mention by name, but whoever desires to read it at my house is at liberty to do so.

Behold I am the youngest of all my family. I, Elazar, son of R. Asher, the Levite, have set my mind upon writing from precious and valuable secular books, for my spirit bore me aloft and filled me with enthusiasm in the days of my youth, when I was easygoing and keen-witted. For I saw many books scattered and dispersed here and there. I then resolved to collect them, and unite them in one book. I then made a collection of the words of the wise and their aphorisms, and wrote them down in a book for the use of those who love parable and history, and for wise men generally who are not otherwise occupied, in order that they may reflect upon these things, so that they may see, understand, and know the truth concerning a few of the events which have taken place under the sun, and of a few of the troubles and afflictions which our ancestors endured in their exile, and what vicissitudes they underwent when the tempest swept over them, so that they may not be forgotten by their seed. Therefore I called this book the 'Book of Chronicles,' wherein may be recorded many varied events. For I have collected in this book records of all events and incidents which have happened from the creation of the world until the present day as it is written in this book, and as I found, so I copied, and I have deftly woven the materials to form one book.

Nor did I write them to make myself a great name, but to the glory of my Creator, who truly knows, and so that this book should be a memorial for future generations; and whoever

chooses to add to this book may add, and may blessing fall upon him. Behold I hope that God may make my son worthy of inheriting this Book of Chronicles, which I have collected from many books. I wrote it, and laid aside many affairs for its sake, so. as to be able to complete it. The bulk of it I wrote in the autumn and winter, for I only had leisure at that time. 'In the day the drought consumed me, and the cold at night, and drove my sleep from my eyes.' And many events have happened, and what I was not able to do in the daytime, I did at night, for I neither rested nor reposed until I had completed its composition. For I gave a long time to it, and I was constantly occupied upon its composition, and I was continually busy with it, and I worked and laboured vigorously until I had selected each subject and placed it in its proper position, like a pearl in its setting and like a hook in its eye, and had I done it for payment no sum would have satisfied me, for I dwelt upon it days and years until I had completed its composition, for I had not always the books to copy it from, nor had I often the leisure, whilst occasionally I was not in the humour, on account of many misfortunes which befell me in my captivity. Therefore I conjure and command my son—since I bequeath him this Book of Chronicles—that I hand it to him on his undertaking to fulfil the solemn conditions which I impose upon him, a father to his son. He may not sell it, nor may he give it away nor pledge it, neither he nor his posterity, neither may he exchange it nor substitute anything else for it. For what will a small amount of money avail him, since he could not succeed in purchasing its equal or its like in the whole world, either for a large or small sum of money? For I have searched in many places before I composed it; for this reason rather let a man pledge or sell the cloak from his back before he disposes of this. For I know that nobody can obtain half its worth or value, for no scribe could be found to write it for less than six small pieces of gold, to

say nothing of the parchment. And who sells it will soon squander the money on frivolity; then he will immediately repent his transaction, but in vain. Moreover, I can assure him that he will never obtain its like, inasmuch as I know full well that no man would compose another such work, on account of the magnitude of the task; further, I know that nobody is broad-minded enough to resolve to compose and publish such a book as this, for it appears at first sight a collection of tales. Nevertheless, if he wishes to dispose of it to one of his sons or to one of his brothers, he may do so, but the one who acquires it may not override my conditions, but must observe everything as set down here. And he may only bequeath this book to one of his sons, or, failing male issue, he should bequeath it to one of his brothers, but not to one of his daughters, who have no portion or inheritance in it, that this book may not pass from one tribe to another. And do not, my sons, resolve to divide the work into two or three portions, so that each one of you may have a share in it, but let the one who inherits it receive it in one volume. May the one who ignores my writing, transgresses my command, or does not fulfil my words, be cursed; but blessed be my descendants, and may they be established if they fulfil my wishes. Neither scoff at me when you notice in what detail I have communicated my wishes concerning this book to my sons, for do ye not know that whatever man completes by the labour and toil of his hands he values highly? And I knew that unless I did it myself, unassisted, I should never have completed it. For who can depend upon scribes in the case of a book of this kind? Besides, even if I had the will, could I order scribes to be present just as books came to my hand; and where could I get the books from? Therefore I said, 'If I do not do it for myself, who, then, will do it for me?' And God enlightened me, and I girded my loins like a mighty man, and

composed this Book of Chronicles. May God remember it for me for good!



I. (1) WITH the help of God I commence to write this my book without interruption. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created on the day when the Lord God made heaven and earth. R. Eliezer, son of Hyrkanos, began his homily thus: 'Who can express all the mighty acts of God?' Is there anybody who can possibly give utterance to the mighty deeds of God and proclaim all His praise? Not even the ministering angels can do this. It is only possible to recount part of His mighty deeds, to explain what He has done and what He in future will do, so that His great name may be exalted among the creatures whom He has created from one end of the world to the other, as it is said, 'Every generation shall praise Thy works.' Before the world was created God and His name alone existed. When it entered His mind to create the world, He drew the plan of a world, but it would not stand. This may be compared to the action of a man who wishes to build a palace: unless he plans out its foundations, its exits and its entrances, he cannot commence to build. Thus God planned the world before Him, but it would not stand until He created repentance. (2) Seven things were created prior to the creation of the world, viz.: the Law, repentance, the throne of glory, the Garden of Eden, Gehinnom, the site of the temple, and the name of the Messiah, and for all these things proof is to be found in the Scriptures.

(3) Eight things were created on the first day, viz., heaven and earth, light and darkness, that which was without form and void (Tohu va-Bohu), air and water; and the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the waters. Some say day and night were also included in the first day of the creation, as it is said: 'And it was evening, and it was morning, one day.' Eight things were also created on the second day: The well (of Miriam), manna, the rod (of Moses), the rainbow, the letters

and the writing, the clothes (of Adam and Eve), and demons (Maziqim).

(4) Ten things were paramount in the thought of God at the creation, viz.: Jerusalem, the spirits of the patriarchs, the ways of the righteous, Gehinnom, the flood, the double tables of stone, the Sabbath, the temple, the ark, and the light of the future world. (5) Wherefrom were the heavens created? From the brilliancy of God's covering which He took up and spread as a garment, and the heavens went on extending until He said unto them, 'Be stayed,' and they stopped. (6) Whence was the earth created? From the snow beneath the throne of glory. God took it up and scattered it upon the waters, then the waters were congealed and became the dust of the earth, as it is said, 'For He says unto the snow, Become earth.' The boundaries of the heavens touch the waters of the ocean, for the waters of the ocean (Oqeanos) flow round the extremities of the heavens and the earth, and the extremities of the heavens are spread upon the waters of the ocean, as it is said, 'Who layeth the foundation of His upper chambers in the waters.' The heavens rise to an immense height in the form of a tent that is spread out, and mortals stand beneath it; its extremity is below, and its centre is above. This is the form of the heavens, their extremity is below and their centre above, so that all (God's) creatures, as it were, sit beneath it as in a tent, as it is said, 'He spread them out as a tent for dwelling therein.' (7) Four winds were created in the world, viz., the winds coming from the east, south, north, and west. From the eastern corner the light of the world goeth forth; from the south, the dews of blessing descend upon the world; from the west emanate the stores of snow, hail, cold and heat, and rains for the benefit of the world; the north corner of the world He created, but did not complete, for He said: Whoever declares himself to be God, let him come and finish this corner which I have left, and then shall all know that he is a God. There the

demons, earthquakes, evil spirits, and Shiddim dwell, and from there they come forth to the world, as it is said, 'Out of the north evil shall break forth' (Jer. i. 14).

(8) On the second day He created the firmament, the angels, the heat of the living bodies, and the heat of Gehinnom. But were not the heavens created on the first day? as it is said, 'In the beginning God created the heavens.' What, then, is this heaven which was created on the second day? R. Eliezer says: That firmament which is above the heads of the four holy creatures, as it is said, 'In the likeness of a firmament above the holy creatures.' It appears like unto hoar-frost, consisting of precious stones and pearls; it lights up the whole heavens as the light which lights up the house, and as the sun which lights up the world at noon, as it is said, 'And light dwells with Him.' Similarly the righteous are destined in the future to enlighten the world, as it is said, 'And the wise will shine as the brightness of the firmament.' And if the firmament had not been created on the second day, the whole world would have been drowned by the waters from above, but the firmament now separates the upper from the lower waters. These angels, which were created on the second day, when sent by God, become winds, as it is said: 'He made His angels winds.' When they minister before Him, they become like fire, as it is said, 'His ministering angels are a flaming fire.' (9) Four bands of angels minister unto God, the first band, under Michael, on His right, the second, under Gabriel, in front of Him, the third, under Erich, on His left, and the fourth, under Raphael, behind Him. The Divine presence of God sits in the centre on a high and exalted throne, which is exceedingly majestic, and is suspended above in the air, and the appearance of its glory is like unto a carbuncle, one half is as fire, and the other half is as snow; a resplendent crown of glory rests upon His head, and upon His forehead is written the ineffable name of 'God.' His eyes overlook the whole earth; on His right is life, on His

left death; a sceptre of fire is in His hand; a curtain is spread out before Him, (10) and the seven angels which were created first minister before Him within the curtain. His footstool is like fire and hail, and beneath the throne of glory, it has the appearance of sapphires; fire plays round about it; righteousness and justice are the supports of His throne; clouds of glory surround it, and the wheel, the ophan, the cherub, and the holy creatures sing praises unto Him. The throne is like sapphire; it stands upon four legs, and four holy creatures are attached to it; on each side are four faces and four wings, as it is said: 'There were four faces, which were four angels.' (11) When He speaks from the east, from between the two cherubim, He speaks in the direction of the face of man; when He speaks from the south, He speaks in the direction of the face of the lion; when from the west, He speaks in the direction of the oxen; when from the north, in the direction of the eagle; and opposite Him are the ophanim and the wheels of the chariot. When He sits upon the throne, high and exalted, and looks round the earth, His chariot being upon wheels, through the noise caused by the wheels of the chariot, lightnings and earthquakes are caused in the world. But when He traverses the heavens, He rides upon a swift cherub, as it is said, 'And He rode upon a swift cherub.' When He hastens to do a thing, He flies upon the wings of the wind, as it is said, 'And He flew upon the wings of the wind.' (12) Two seraphim stand near Him, one on His right side and another on His left, each of which has six wings; with two each of them covers his face to prevent them gazing upon the Shekinah, and with two they each hide their legs so as not to remember the sin of the golden calf, and with two they fly, exulting in, and sanctifying, His great name. One answers while another proclaims, and one proclaims while the other answers, and they say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.' (13) The holy creatures stand with reverence and awe, with