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A Guide for Preachers on Composing and Delivering Sermons: The Or-ha-Darshanim of Jacob Zahalon

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point is chapter 5 on anger—virtue or vice? He describes the debilitating effect of anger in terms of being the underlying cause for many emotional, mental, physical and emotional problems. In simple and clear terms he illustrates how anger emerges in a range of life experiences. Contrary to common Christian conceptions he points out positive aspects of anger as highlighted in one sentence “Truly, anger is necessary for healthy communication” (31).

The book is written in popular style, it reflects the wisdom gained from experience, and illustrates that the author has his feet firmly planted within his own religious tradition. In an era where there is an emphasis on self-fulfillment it was refreshing to read the chapter on giving, which he says is based not only on feeling but on “basic commitment”. It is rather startling to read that, “Love is just as strong, and even stronger, when we give ourselves to another without accompanying good feelings as it is when we give with warm enthusiasm” (74–75).

The book is well worth reading for the professional and lay reader alike. His chapters on “God’s Will”, “Giving”, “Compassion”, and “Change” stand out as examples of treating old themes with a freshness that draws one back to the text more than once. Among the many popular books available on personal and spiritual growth Padovani’s stands out as one that belongs on the bookshelf of the serious reader.

Ralph A. Lebold

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A Guide for Preachers on Composing and Delivering Sermons. The *Or ha-Darshanim* of Jacob Zahalon: A Seventeenth Century Italian Preacher’s Manual. Volume XI in the *Moreshet Series*, Studies in Jewish History, Literature and Thought.

Henry Adler Sosland

New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1987/5747

xiv + 194 + 54 pp.

10 November 1694. Instruction is herewith given that this book may never be printed in any form, nor may it be returned to anyone claiming ownership of it. Instead, it shall remain in the chancellory of the Holy Office.

So the “honored Inquisitor” of the Holy Office consigned Rabbi Dr. Jacob Zahalon’s manual to incarceration in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, accessible only by a group of six Dominican theologians commissioned to “defend the faith with the writings of Thomas Aquinas” (93 f.).

Nevertheless, one copy of the *Or* got to England and another eventually to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. In itself, the manual was not offensive to the Holy Office, but it was a supplement to a much larger work which was. The story of the *Or ha-Darshanim* ("A Light for Preachers") is a chapter in the long history of anti-Semitism.

Jacob Zahalon (1630-1693) was a medical doctor who became a leading rabbi in the Jewish communities in Rome (where he was born) and Ferrara (where he died). He became a medical doctor, yet studied the humanities, philosophy, Latin, and religion as well. An intensely vigorous mind and a profoundly devout spirit got him preaching at the age of 22; in 1651 he was called to preach, and in 1660 became one of three teachers to teach *Torah* in Rome. He wrote extensively: works on medicine, philosophy and ethics, homiletical commentaries, prayers, and sermons, while maintaining his medical practice and his rabbinic responsibilities and acting as secretary to the Jewish community as well.

The context of his preaching was the Jewish ghetto in Rome (and later Ferrara). In 1555 Paul IV had segregated Roman Jewry to a small area along the Tiber. Fire, flood, and collapsing buildings were constant dangers. Passes were needed to go outside the ghetto; on certain Christian holidays Jews were not permitted to look out of their windows; badges of identification had to be worn; adult Jews and children could be snatched and forcibly baptized; on Sabbaths the entire Jewish community had to listen to conversionist sermons; regularly and ritually Jews were humiliated.

Little wonder that in 1665-72 a messianic fervour gripped the Jewish community. Preachers of the Sabbatien movement incited the ghetto with "bizarre sermons with forced, weird conclusions" and "depraved theology". As one who cared for his community and normative doctrine, Zahalon saw the need for good preaching and the need of instruction for preachers.

He had already prepared a compilation of rabbinical comments on Scripture to help him (and subsequently others) to prepare sermons. To it he appended the *Or ha-Darshanim*, "A Light for Preachers" in which he drew together all he had learned about preaching. While there had been some homiletical treatises prior to the *Or*, it is one of the first—if not the first—comprehensive Jewish preacher's manuals ever written. Though brief, it contains 13 sections: (1) What should be the content and the subject of the sermon? (2) The quality of the sermon. (3) The length of the sermon. (4) The order of the sermon. (5) The manner of composing the introduction. (6) On the use of one's voice. (7) Concerning one's manner of speaking. (8) On the use of gestures. (9) What the preacher should do before he goes up to preach. (10) The purpose of preaching sermons. (11) On concluding and closing the sermon. (12) Caring for one's health as a means to more effective preaching. (13) After concluding the sermon.

Some examples: "A preacher must avoid having too many parts in his sermon... 'Where there is excess there is confusion.'" "When the preacher begins to sense that his congregation is becoming tired and restless, he should relate some suitable story that will awaken interest in the people and

delight them." "Chanting is appropriate with prayers, not in a sermon." The preacher "should be careful not to jump up or down or pound the rostrum, nor to stand constantly in one fixed position like a tombstone." "The object and intention of the preacher should be to refine the people and to draw them ever closer to the service of the Lord." "He should always place at the end of the sermon a verse of comfort and redemption for Israel, which gives promise of future salvation for the Jewish people."

Three emphases may be noted in Zahalon's homiletical instructions: a profound concern for "orthodoxy"; an insistence that nevertheless something "new" or "original" must be said along with traditional interpretations and materials ("There can be no homiletical interpretation without some new insight"); a concern that what is said must be fitting and appropriate to the time, the hearers, the tradition, and the preacher. Clearly Zahalon was a deeply sensitive person, tuned to the pain and yearning of his congregations and, equally, to the Lord of Abraham and their Lord.

Sosland has performed an immense task of editing the text of the *Or* and introducing it. Historically the *Or* is of very great importance; homiletically it is a rare window into Jewish preaching in times of terrifying oppression and desperate expectation. We are deeply in Sosland's debt.

It is a pity a sample of Zahalon's preaching was not included. Sosland has, however, added two appendices: one is a tribute to the *Or* by a contemporary; the other is Zahalon's "Prayer for One Who Preaches Publicly or for a Head of a *Yeshiva*." From these, as well as from Sosland's extensive footnotes and quotations we can get a tiny glimpse of what they heard when Zahalon rose to preach.

A critical edition, in Hebrew, of the *Or ha-Darshanim* based on three manuscripts is included at the end of the book, together with a bibliography, an index of sources (Scripture, Talmuds, Midrashim, and other texts), and a subject index.

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Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources

Cyrille Vogel

Revised and translated by William G. Storey and Niels Krogh

Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1986

xix + 443 pp. U.S. \$24.95

This book is not for everyone. But, for the growing group of Lutherans who are concerned about their own liturgical formation and the pre-Reformation liturgical tradition of the Western church, it will be important.

Cyrille Vogel, the great Alsatian liturgical scholar, died in 1982. This volume is a translation of the 1975 revision of *Introduction aux sources*