them to a multifarious ritual, of which the ceremonial parts were ſolemn and ſplendid, fitted to engage and fix the at­tention of a people whoſe hearts were groſs ; to inſpire them with awful reverence, and to withdraw their affections from the pomp and pageantry of thoſe idle superſtitions which they had ſo long witnessed in the land of Egypt. To keep them warmly attached to their public worship, that worſhip was loaded with operoſe and magnificent rites, and ſo com­pletely incorporated with their civil polity as to make the same things at once duties of religion and acts of ſtate. The ſervice of God was indeed ſo ordered as to be the constant busineſs as well as entertainment of their lives, ſupplying the place of all other entertainments ; and the ſacrifices which they were commanded to offer on the moſt ſolemn occaſions, were of ſuch animals as the Egyptians and other Hea­thens deemed ſacred.

Thus a heifer without blemiſh was in Egypt held ſacred to the goddeſs Isis, and actually worſhipped as the repreſentative of that divinity ; but the ſame kind of heifer was by the ritual law of the Hebrews commanded to be burnt without the camp, as the vileſt animal, and the water of separation to be prepared from her aſhes@@\*. The goat was by the Egyptians held in great veneration as emblematical of their ancient god Pan, and ſacrifices of the moſt abominable kind were offered to the impure animal (ſee Pan) ; but God, by his servant Moſes, enjoined the Israelites to offer goats themſelves as ſacrifices for sin, and on one occaſion to diſmiſs the live animal loaded with maledictions into the wilderneſs@@\*. The Egyptians, with singular zeal, worſhipped a calf without blemiſh as the ſymbol of Apis, or the god of fertility ; and it appears from the book of Exodus, that the Iſraelites themſelves had been infected with that ſuperſtition. They were, however, ſo far from being per­mitted by their Divine lawgiver to conſider that animal as in any reſpect ſacred, that their prieſts were commanded to offer for themſelves a young calf as a ſin offering@@\*. No animal was in Egypt held in greater veneration than the ram, the ſymbol of their god Ammon, one of the heavenly conſtellations. It was therefore with wiſdom truly divine, that Jehovah, at the inſtitution of the paſſover, ordered his people to kill and eat a young ram on the very day that the Egyptians began their annual ſolemnities @@\* in honour of that animal as one of their greateſt gods ; and that he en­joined the blood of this divinity to be ſprinkled as a ſign upon the two side poſts and upper door poſt of the house in which he was eaten. Surely it is not in the power of ima­gination to conceive a ritual better calculated to cure the Iſraelites of their propenſity to idol worſhip, or to keep them ſeparate from the people who had firſt given them that propenſity, than one which enjoined them to offer in ſacrifice the very creatures which their ſuperſtitious masters had worſhipped as gods. “ Shall we (ſaid Moſes) ſacrifice the abominations of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not ſtone us ?”

But it was not againſt Egyptian idolatry only that the ritual law was framed: the nations of Syria, in the midſt of whom the Iſraelites were to dwell, were addicted to ma­ny cruel and abſurd ſuperſtitions, against which it was as necessary to guard the people of God as againſt the brute- worship of Egypt. We need not inform any reader of the books of Moſes that thoſe nations worſhipped the sun and moon and all the hoſt of heaven ; or that it was part of their religion to propitiate their offended gods by occaſionally ſacrificing their ſons and their daughters. From ſuch wor­ſhip and such ſacrifices the Iſraelites were prohibited finder the ſevereſt penalties; but we cannot conſider that prohibi­tion as making part of the *ritual* law, ſince it relates to prac­tices impious and immoral in themſelves, and therefore de­clared to be abominations to the Lord. The Phoenicians, however, and the Canaanites, entertained an opinion that every child came into the world with a *polluted nature,* and that this pollution could be removed only by a lust*ral fire.* Hence they took their new born infants, and with particu­lar ceremonies made them paſs through the flame of a pille ſacred to Baal or Moloch, the symbols of their great good the ſun. Sometimes this purgation was delayed till the children had arrived at their tenth or twelfth year, when they were made either to leap through the flame, or run ſeveral times backwards and forwards between two contiguous ſacred fires ; and this luſtration was ſuppoſed to free them from every natural pollution, and to make them through life the peculiar care of the deity in whoſe honour it was performed@@\*. The true God, however, who would have no fellowſhip with idols, forbade all ſuch purgations among his people, whether done by fires conſecrated to himſelf or to the bloody deities of the Syrian nations. “ There ſhall not be found (ſays he) among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to paſs through the fire @@\*.”

There are, in the Jewiſh law, few precepts mere fre­quently repeated than that which prohibits the ſeething of a kid in its mother’s milk @@; and there being no moral fit ness in this precept when conſidered abſolutely and withouιt regard to the circumſtances under which it was given, infidel ignorance has frequently thought fit to make it the subject of profane ridicule. But the ridicule will be forborne by thoſe who know that, among the nations round Judea, the feasting upon a kid boiled in its mother’s milk was an essential part of the impious and magical ceremonies celebrated in honour of one of their gods, who was ſup­poſed to have been ſuckled by a ſhe-goat. Hence, in the Samaritan Pentateuch, the text runs thus ; “ Thou ſhalt not ſeeth a kid in its mother’s milk ; for whoever does ſo, is as one who ſacrifices an abominable thing, which offends the God of Jacob@@\*." Another precept, apparently of very little importance, is given in theſe words : “ Ye ſhall not round the corners of your heads, neither ſhalt thou mar the corners of thy beard@@\*." But its wiſdom is ſeen art once, when we know that at funerals it was the practice of many of the heathens, in that early period, to round the cor­ners of their heads, and mar their beards, that by throwing the hairs they had cut off upon the dead body, or the ſuneral pile, they might propitiate the ſhade of the departed hero ; and that in other nations, particularly in Phoenicia, it was cuſtomary to cut off all the hair of their heads except what grew upon the crown, which, with great ſolemnity, was conſecrated either to the fun or to Saturn @@\*. The un­learned Chriſtian, if he be a man of reflection, muſt read with ſome degree of wonder ſuch laws as theſe; “ Thou ſhalt not ſow thy vineyard with divers feeds, lest the fruit of thy ſeed which thou haſt town and the fruits of thy vine­yard be defiled. Thou ſhalt not plow with an ox and an aſs together. Thou ſhalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, or of woollen and linen together@@\*.” But his wonder will ceaſe when he knows that all theſe were practices from which the Sabian idolaters of the east expected the greateſt advantages. Their belief in magic and judicial aſtrology led them to imagine, that by ſowing different kinds of corn among their vines they ſhould propitiate the gods which were afterwards known in Rome by the names of Bacchus and Ceres ; that, by yoking animals ſo heterogeneous as the ox and the aſs in the ſame plough, they ſhould by a charm ſecure the favour of the deities who presided over the affairs of huſbandry ; and that a garment compoſed of linen and woollen, worn under certain conjunctions of the ſtars, would protect its owner, his flocks, his herds, and his field, from all malign influences, and render him in the higheſt

@@@[m]\* Num. xix.

@@@[m]\* Levit. xvi.

@@@[m]\* Lev. ix.

@@@[m]\* Spencer de Legibus Heb. Rit.

@@@[m]\* Spencer, lib. ii. cap. 13.

@@@[m]\* Deut. xvii. 10. xii. 29. and Levit. xx. 2, &c.

@@@[m]\* Exod. xiii. 19. xxxiv. 26. Deut. xiv. 21.

@@@[m]\* Spencer, lib. ii. cap. 9.

@@@[m]\* Levit. xix. 27.

@@@[m]\* Spencer, lib. iii. cap. 18.

@@@[m]\* Deut. xxii. 9, 10, 11.