

Part II

OLD
TESTAMENT

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Life and Customs of Bible Times

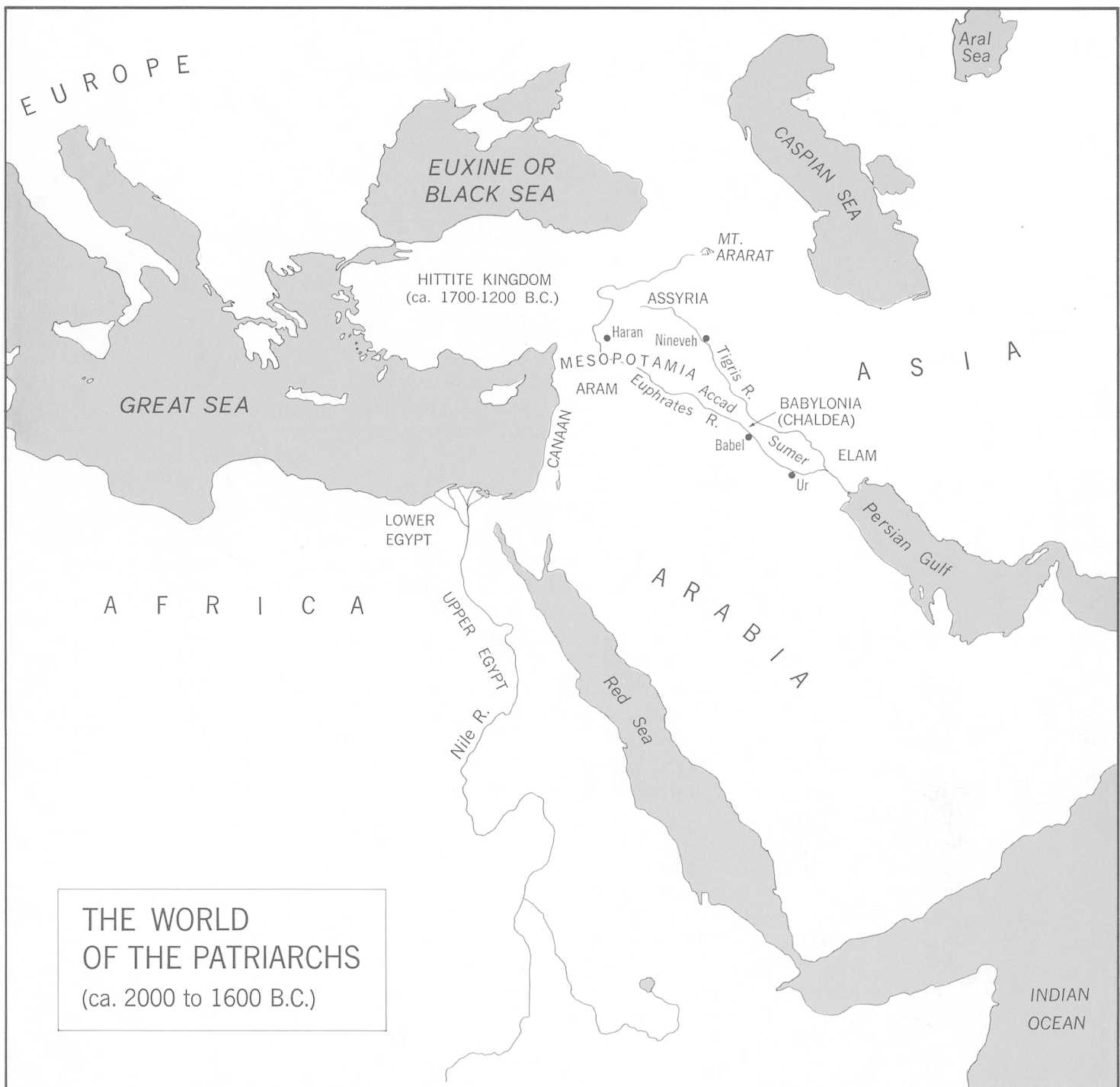
The unfolding drama of Biblical history is set against the life of the Middle East—a life essentially Oriental and one that sometimes seems completely foreign to today’s complex society. The customs of the Hebrew people sprang from the driving forces that molded their destiny, much as the aspirations of the Pilgrims for religious freedom resulted in a new culture in North America. A knowledge of Hebrew customs is essential to a richer understanding of the Bible because they are interwoven as warp and woof of daily living into the Biblical record and form the colorful fabric of its background. Although these ways of life relate mainly to the Hebrews, many were common property with the other peoples of the ancient Middle East—Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians. We know through archeological finds that these more powerful nations possessed highly developed civilizations and forms of religious worship, but it is the Hebrew culture that has left its lasting imprint on Western thought in the Judaeo-Christian heritage and is therefore the one that claims our chief attention.

Israel’s historians, prophets, priests, poets, and scribes wrote to their small nation to remind it of its destiny. These men were seers with a vision of the one God, and they manifested the special genius of the Hebrew mind in translating history, everyday occurrences, and material objects into spiritual lessons and spiritual counterparts. The expressive metaphors, symbols, and figures that abound in their writings were frequently drawn from the social and religious life of their periods. Because this is true, everything we can learn today about how the ancient Israelites lived and thought contributes to our appreciation of the written text of the Bible. We can better understand, too, why the Messiah came forth from this distinctive culture. Jesus’ reference to many of these customs, and his retention of religious forms so familiar to his people—as well as his fulfillment of their types—served to intensify the meaning of his ministry, sacrifice, and victory.

The modern reader of the Bible often studies the social and religious customs

of the Hebrews chiefly for the light they throw on the historical past, but if he restricts himself to this level one can lose sight of their inspirational value. If he will not relegate these customs to a bygone age, he can see something of their deeper meanings for today, making the transition from literal to spiritual, and will be able to apply these to his own Christian

experience and progress. His own life might be likened to that of the Israelite, in which he is no longer a nomad in a wilderness world but a dweller in the promised kingdom, his real home not a temporal abode of the flesh but an imperishable habitation of the spirit, his worship advanced beyond the ceremonial to inner self-surrender and dedication.



Nomadic Life

The Semites, of whom the Hebrews were a small branch, were, according to the Biblical record, descendants of Shem, the eldest son of Noah. The original home of these pastoral nomads was the desert reaches and fertile oases of the Arabian peninsula, the extensive region that stretched from the Persian Gulf on the east to the Red Sea on the west and from the Armenian mountains on the north to the Indian Ocean on the south.

Driven by the necessity for survival, hordes of Semites poured out of the desert periodically from about 3500 to 1500 B.C., carrying with them their desert ideals and nomadic ways. An early migration wave went into Africa to fuse with the inhabitants of the upper Nile valley; another later invaded the lower Nile valley to rule as the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings of Egypt's XVth and XVIth dynasties (*ca.* 1720 to 1550 B.C.). Another wave pushed to the north to settle in the seacoast plains above Palestine to found the maritime nation of Phoenicia. But of particular interest to us are the Semites who swept into the Tigris-Euphrates valley to the northeast. Many of these settled in Upper Mesopotamia, the northwestern portion of this valley, to form an element of the later Assyrian Empire (*ca.* 1110–606 B.C.), while others settled in Lower Mesopotamia (Accad and Sumer), the rich alluvial plain in the southeastern portion of this valley, there to mingle with the Sumerians. With the rise to power of the city-state of Babylon they became known as the Babylonians.

Babylonia became a great civilization, making remarkable advances in the sciences of astronomy, numbers, and architecture, all of these closely allied to a highly sophisticated polytheistic religion. From its culture sprang cuneiform writing and one of the oldest codes of law known to history—the Code of Hammurabi. From Babylonia new migrations swept west across the Fertile Crescent above the Arabian desert (*ca.* 2500 B.C.) to locate in Syria (Aram) and Canaan; the Canaanitish colonies thus founded reproduced Babylonian culture and worship in their city-states. The Semitic tribes that continued to live a nomadic life in the deserts of Arabia, Syria, and Africa are known as Arabs (Bedouins).

Abram (Abraham), termed the father of the Hebrew race, and his nephew Lot, direct descendants of Shem, followed the arc of the Fertile Crescent as they migrated from the ancient city of Ur in southern Babylonia to Haran in upper Mesopotamia and thence to Canaan (*ca.* 2095 B.C.). From Abram sprang the Israelites, Ishmaelites, Edomites, and Midianites; from Lot came the Ammonites and Moabites. The early Hebrews were proportionately

much less significant to any of the powerful nations in the Old Testament period than they are to the religiously aware people of the Western world today. Yet this relatively insignificant segment of the Semitic family provided the soil in which a monotheistic religion would develop, flourish, and flower in the Advent of the Christ.

The call of Abram by the Almighty took him out of Babylonian polytheism and set his feet in the path of monotheism; worship of one God was fostered by his son Isaac, his grandson Jacob, and their descendants. The distinctive religion that began with Abraham was given form nearly seven hundred years later by the great lawgiver Moses when Israel became the covenant nation and received the Sinaitic law. Henceforth the Israelites regarded themselves “a chosen people,” set apart from other nations to the service of God. The covenant provisions of Sinai set the pattern of the nation's religious beliefs and shaped the laws of its singular society. To preserve the purity of monotheistic worship from sensual heathen rites and to prevent a pernicious mixture with paganism they were forbidden by Mosaic law to serve heathen gods, have social intercourse with idolatrous neighbors, or marry their neighbors' sons and daughters. Israel's leaders and prophets labored throughout the centuries of Old Testament history to keep Israel a separate people, faithful to God's covenant.

Hebrew life in the Patriarchal Age (from Abraham to Moses) was nomadic and the mores of the people grew out of an austere nomadic life. The mode of existence of Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants in Canaan was largely dictated by the ruggedness of their environment—“a desert land . . . the waste howling wilderness” (Deut. 32:10).

Canaan, the early name for Palestine, was the small territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River and from Syria to the border of Egypt. This narrow strip (some 150 miles long and ranging from 20 to 60 miles wide) was dominated by the Central Range of mountains running north and south close to the deep valley of the Jordan on the east, while to the west lay the productive coastal plains.

In the northern portion of the land were rich highlands, well watered by springs; in the central portion, bordered on the north by the fertile Plain of Esdraelon and intersected by the spur of the Carmel range, were high mountain peaks, rolling hills, and deep valleys. Its southern portion was a barren mountainous plateau broken by numerous gorges and valleys that dropped precipitously on one side into the Jordan-Dead Sea rift and on the other sloped gently toward the seacoast into the fruitful lowlands or Shephelah. Much of southern Canaan was wilderness terrain, particularly the desert strip along the Dead Sea. Today we are inclined to think of a desert as a wasteland of sand, but the wildernesses of the

Judaeen highlands, although semi-arid and treeless and watered by scanty springs, furnished rich herbage for animal subsistence, especially after periods of seasonal rainfall. (*Wilderness* is often translated *desert* in AV and is frequently a synonym for it.)

As shepherds, the patriarchal families roved central and lower Canaan, including the parched Negeb desert to the south, finding it well suited to pastoral life (Ho. 9:10). They also may have roamed the rich plateaus east of the Jordan, territory that later became a part of Palestine. They lived in tents, moving from place to place as pasturage was exhausted. Their habits were tribal, their laws the harsh justice of the desert, their ritual worship colored by that of their Semitic ancestors (see *Worship*, p. 47). Many of their nomadic customs are still practiced among Bedouin tribes in the twentieth century.

Cattle Breeding

The chief occupation of the Hebrew nomads was the care and breeding of their livestock: sheep, goats, oxen, bullocks, heifers, donkeys, and camels. They measured their wealth by their flocks and herds—from the poor man with his one ewe lamb (II Sam. 12:2,3) to the tribal chieftains with their vast numbers of sheep and goats. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were typical tribal chieftains (Gen. 12:16; 26:14; 30:43; 32:3–15). Job's

A Bedouin shepherd leads his flock through the hills near Bethlehem. The garb of these modern inhabitants is much like that of their ancestors as are many of their customs.



wealth included thousands of animals (Job 1:3), as well as land and other possessions.

Goats thrived on the rough pasturage of the rocky hills, while sheep preferred the soft green grasses of the lower levels. Goats supplied milk and meat, and their skins and hair were used as material for tents and clothing. Sheep also provided meat and oil for food, as well as skins and wool for clothing. Both were used as sacrificial offerings (see *Sacrifice*, p. 55).

Every man and boy was more or less a shepherd. The shepherd walked ahead to lead his flock to pasturage and water. He protected them day and night against the attacks of wild beasts, tended their wounds, sought the strays, and carried the young on his shoulders. At evening he counted them as they passed under his rod into the sheepfold.

Hebrew writers and prophets drew some of their most telling metaphors from this pastoral occupation, so common to Israel. As a shepherd was to his flock, so was God to His people, guiding, nourishing, and guarding them with His love: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom" (Is. 40:11). "I [will] seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day" (Ezek. 34:12; compare Jer. 31:10). "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," sang the Psalmist David (Ps. 23). Israel's expected Messiah was portrayed as a shepherd feeding his flock (Ezek. 34:23).

Jesus Christ was the Good Shepherd, calling men to enter the kingdom of heaven and patiently showing them the way. He fed their souls, ministered to their needs, and rejoiced in their salvation (Jn. 10:1–18; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 2:25).

Oxen were beasts of burden and a source of food in Abraham's day. In Canaan, after the Wandering, they became draft animals for plowing and threshing (Deut. 25:4; I Ki. 19:19). Like sheep and goats, they were designated "clean" animals by Levitical law (Lev. 11:3) and were used in great numbers as sacrificial offerings (22,000 oxen were sacrificed as a peace offering at the dedication of Solomon's Temple [I Ki. 8:63]). The domesticated donkey (ass) was also a valuable burden-bearer because of its tractable nature and its surefootedness over mountain terrain. The ass was a symbol of patience, peace, and humility; a white ass the symbol of royalty. On the day of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus rode from Bethphage on a donkey colt (Jn. 12:14,15).

Camels were highly valued for desert traveling. They were bred by the Hebrews for sale to merchants and traders who traveled the great caravan routes between Egypt, Arabia, and Mesopotamia; fittingly have they been termed "ships of the desert." The



The vegetation of this oasis near Jericho contrasts sharply with the stark nearby mountains and the wastes of the Judean desert. Israel Government Tourist Office.

one-humped camel was most common in Biblical lands. Provided by nature with a heavy coat of hair that insulated it against external temperatures, with the ability to retain the water content in its blood plasma even when the water in the tissues had been greatly depleted, with a hump that stored fat and thick padded soles that could resist the burning sands of the desert, this species was particularly well adapted to desert travel. It could carry loads weighing from 500 to 700 pounds and travel tirelessly as long as 18 hours at a stretch. It supplied milk, hair, and leather for the

Hebrew economy, but its meat was forbidden as food (Lev. 11:4). (See Gen. 12:16; Job 1:3.)

Horses

Hebrew nomads do not appear to have possessed horses. The first mention in Scripture of such animals is of those owned by the Egyptians in the time of Joseph (Gen. 47:17; 49:17; 50:9), used to draw the



Two Bedouin tribesmen pose for the author near Jericho.

chariots of the Pharaohs and as mounts for their warriors (Ex. 14:9). Not until the reigns of David and Solomon (1013–932 B.C.) were horses introduced into Palestine in any great number (II Sam. 8:4). Since the mountain regions of Palestine did not readily lend themselves to the use of horses for travel, these animals were employed mainly for war. Solomon imported thousands from the Egyptians and also carried on an extensive trade in horses with the Hittites of Asia Minor (II Chron. 1:16,17). Twentieth-century archeological excavation at Solomon's chariot city of Megiddo unearthed stables for hundreds of horses, confirming the Biblical record (II Chron. 1:14). Deuteronomic law forbade Israelitish kings to amass horses for war (Deut. 17:16; compare Ps. 20:7; 33:17; Is. 31:1). Throughout Palestinian history, in fact, the usual beasts of burden were the donkey and the ox, not the horse.

Solomon's stables at Megiddo provided space for 450 horses or more. Two stone feed troughs (mangers) stand in the center. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.



A white horse was symbolic of conquest and of victory, and in the book of Revelation Christ as "King of kings" rides the white horse of victory and leads the armies of heaven (Rev. 17:14; 19:11-16).

Tents

During the centuries the Hebrews were nomads they were tent-dwellers; their portable lodgings were particularly suited to their mode of life. Made of black cloth of woven goat's hair sewn together in strips, tents were easy to set up, take down, and transport by donkey or camel. The women wove the cloth and pitched the tents.

A tribal encampment sometimes included hundreds of tents. The average tent in Biblical times was probably much like that of the modern Bedouin. It had nine poles, six to seven feet high, in three rows;

over these the water-resistant cloth was stretched taut by cords pegged into the ground. The center row of poles stood somewhat higher to provide a slanting roof, and the door and side curtains were rolled up during the day to catch the breeze. An inner curtain hung along the center poles, dividing the tent home into two sections. The front part was open to all members of the household and to guests; the back part was reserved for the women and children and used for cooking and storage. The floor was of earth, either bare or covered with a simple woven matting. A wealthy man often had a tent for himself, one for each of his wives with her children and female slaves, and others for his animals. (See Gen. 13:5; 25:27; 31:33; Num. 1:52.)

The Hebrews dwelt in tents during the Wilderness Wandering; even their place of worship, the Tabernacle, was a tent, and after their entrance into Canaan it continued to serve as their principal sanctuary until Solomon erected the Temple in Jerusalem (Ex. 26; II Sam. 7:6; II Chron. 1:3,4).

More solid dwellings of sunbaked brick or of stone supplanted the perishable tents when the Israelites settled in the cities and villages of the Promised Land. Their former manner of life was not

Ancient cistern in the Negeb, lined with rough-hewn stone blocks, with terraced fields in the background. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus & Geroux, Inc. from *Rivers in the Desert* by Nelson Glueck, copyright 1959 by Nelson Glueck.



forgotten, however, for annually during the Feast of Tabernacles the people erected boothlike structures on the flat roofs of their houses to commemorate the Wilderness Wandering (see Feast of Tabernacles, p. 61).

By New Testament times tentmaking had become an honorable profession in which men participated; the one famous tentmaker of whom we know was Paul the Apostle (Acts 18:3).

Springs *Wells* *Cisterns*

Water was precious in semi-arid Palestine, where no rain fell for six months of the year. The country lacked small rivers and the one great river, the Jordan, lay too far below sea level to irrigate more than its own valley. Numerous springs or fountains rose in the chalky limestone hills but many of these, particularly in southern Palestine, were short-lived and flowed abundantly only after the two rainfall seasons of autumn and spring, drying up in the summer.

As a result of these seasonal conditions the people were dependent on wells and cisterns for a continuous supply of water (Gen. 29:2,3). Wells were difficult to dig and to maintain free from shifting sands and from the devastations of marauders. Isaac redug the wells first put down in the days of Abraham, wells that Isaac's jealous Philistine neighbors had choked with sand and stones (Gen. 26:18). The wells were often located at some distance from the villages, and to the women fell the burdensome task of drawing water and carrying it home upon their shoulders in earthen vessels (Gen. 24:11; Ex. 2:16). During the periods of heavy rainfall water was stored in cisterns or reservoirs, pits usually hewn out of limestone, to provide for subsequent months of drought (Pr. 5:15). These, like the wells, were covered with a large flat stone. The water of wells, fountains, and springs was considered "living water," far

more desirable and satisfying than the stale, lifeless water of the cisterns (Jer. 2:13).

In many Scriptural passages the words *water*, *wells*, and *fountains* are used figuratively: of God as the source of salvation and blessing (Ps. 36:9; 107:35; Is. 12:3; Jer. 17:13); of understanding and wisdom (Pr. 16:22; 18:4); of a righteous man (Pr. 10:11; Is. 58:11); of Christ's gospel (Zech. 13:1; Jn. 7:38); of spiritual refreshment (Mt. 10:42; Rev. 7:17); of false teachers (II Pet. 2:17); of heaven's "pure river of water of life" (Rev. 22:1). One of Jesus' most telling metaphors is found in his use of *water* and *well*: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Jn. 4:14).

Agricultural Life

When Israel settled in Canaan under the leadership of Joshua (*ca.* 1410 B.C.), its people ceased to be nomads. (Dr. Nelson Glueck asserts in his *Rivers in the Desert* that, as a result of his study of the potsherds of Edom and Moab, the entrance into Canaan should not be dated earlier than 1300 B.C.) The change to a permanent mode of life added many new customs. The Israelites lived in villages and towns, and adopted the advanced agricultural practices of the Canaanites who had occupied the land for a thousand years. They adapted to their own religious use the Canaanitish harvest festivals and took over ancient Canaanitish sanctuaries for their God Jehovah.

Palestine not only supplied an environment fitted to pastoral life, it also possessed one suitable for agriculture. Its plains and terraced hills were rich and fertile, and where there was water they provided arable land. The chief farming areas lay in the Maritime Plain (the Plain of Sharon to the north and the Plain of Philistia to the south, inhabited by the Philistines), the Plain of Esdraelon, the plains of Galilee, the plains of Shechem and Dothan, the Jordan Plains, the valley of Jericho, the Shephelah of Judaea, and the tablelands east of the Jordan.

When the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, began to subdue the Canaanites and finally succeeded in conquering them during the period of the judges, they dispossessed them of their well-cultivated fields. Settling down, the Israelites turned to farming as their principal means of livelihood and,

Stone water pots. *Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia*.





Similar nomads' tents have been pitched near oases for centuries. The Bettmann Archive, Inc.

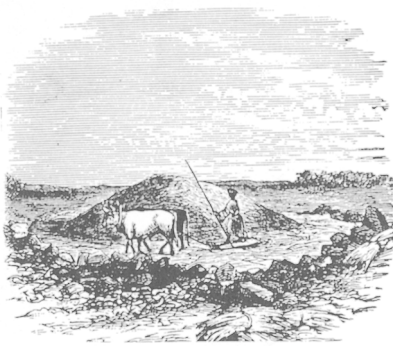
following the successfully tested methods of the Canaanites, became proficient agriculturists in the growing of grain and the cultivation of vineyards and olive orchards (Josh. 24:13). Each husbandman received an allotment of ground—as much as one yoke of oxen could plow in a day (I Sam. 14:14) or as much as a designated amount of seed would sow (Lev. 27:16). Some Israelites, however, chose to continue pastoral pursuits, grazing their flocks and herds in the stony plateaus and hills adjacent to the villages, as such uncultivable land remained common property.

Palestine's intermittent and heavy seasonal rains fell from October through April—the “former rain” of autumn (October–November) and the “latter rain” of spring (March–April). Plowing began as soon as the sun-baked soil was softened by the first showers, and the planting season extended from the middle of October to mid-December. Deuteronomy 11:14 reads: “I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.” Cereal grains such as wheat, barley, millet, and rye were the chief food crops; flax was grown for the

weaving of linen. The harvest season fell between the middle of April and the middle of June. Reaping was done by sickle, and the sheaves were carried to the threshing floors on the backs of men and of donkeys or in carts.

The first fruits of the land were dedicated to God, the land being regarded as His possession (Lev. 25:23) and its fruitage the manifestation of His blessings to His people (Lev. 26:3–5). This immemorial concept that the land belonged to a deity was incorporated in the Mosaic legislation enacted for the care and use of the land: for its rest each seventh year (Ex. 23:10,11; Lev. 25:3–5), for sowing a field with but only one kind of seed (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:9), for tithing (see p. 57), for thank offerings of the people (see p. 55), for agricultural festivals celebrating harvesting (see Feasts, p. 59).

It was natural that this common daily preoccupation with the growing things of the earth should furnish Israel's writers and seers many beautiful metaphors and spiritual lessons. Israel is termed “the choicest vine,” “the vineyard of the Lord” (Is. 5:2,7); the suffering Messiah “a tender plant,” “a root out of



A threshing floor. *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*.

a dry ground" (Is. 53:2). The Psalmist promised that "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126:5). Hosea admonished "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground" (Ho. 10:12).

Jesus likewise drew many of his vivid parables and metaphors from the familiar lessons of nature and life on the land, among them the parables of the sower and the seed (Mk. 4:1–20), the tares and the wheat (Mt. 13:24–43), the mustard seed (Mk. 4:30–32). In agricultural terms Paul admonished the early Church against sin: "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7,8). In the Apocalypse John sees Christ reaping with his sickle the harvest of the earth (Rev. 14:15–19).

Threshing Floors

The threshing floor, usually situated on a hill not far from the village, was a circular piece of hard level ground where the ripened grain was separated from its stalks. The harvested sheaves laid upon this floor were either beaten with a hand flail—a wooden handle from which a short stout stick hung loosely—or trampled under the hooves of unmuzzled oxen as they paced round and round (Deut. 25:4). The winnowing or separating of the chaff from the grain took place toward evening, when the breeze was strongest. The winnower tossed the grain up into the wind by means of a fan or pronged fork so that the chaff was blown away. After a thorough sifting of the kernels in one or more sieves, the grain was carefully stored in dry pits or in specially built granaries.

Joseph mourned the death of his father at the threshing floor of Atad (Gen. 50:10). Gideon was threshing when he was called to lead his people against the Midianites (Ju. 6:11). Boaz, a wealthy Bethlehemite, was winnowing barley when Ruth the Moabitess, daughter-in-law of Naomi, sought his protection as a kinsman (Ru. 3:2). David purchased the threshing floor of Araunah (Ornan) to build an altar to God, and later his son Solomon built the Temple on the site of that threshing floor (II Sam. 24:21; I Chron. 21:18–22:11).

The prophets likened the whole earth to God's great threshing floor, subject to sifting by His judgment. Isaiah prophesied "a new sharp threshing

instrument having teeth" which would thresh the mountains as chaff (Is. 41:15). Jeremiah wrote of Babylon as a threshing floor whose time of harvest was imminent (Jer. 51:33). Daniel predicted the four heathen kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream would become "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors" (Dan. 2:35). Amos spoke of Israel as being sifted "like as corn is sifted in a sieve" (Amos 9:9). John the Baptist referred to the Messiah as coming with the winnowing fan of judgment in hand to garner into the kingdom of heaven the righteous of the earth (Mt. 3:11,12). (See also I Cor. 9:10.)

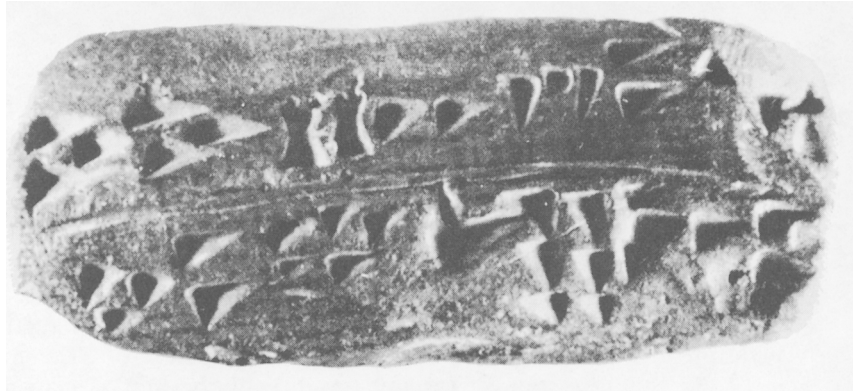
Hebrew Society

Scriptural history presents family life as patriarchal; the wife became a member of the husband's tribe and progeny was traced through the father. The foundational unit of Hebrew society was the *family*, frequently designated *house* or *household*. This unit was often a large one; it included the father, his wives, his concubines, the children of his wives and concubines, the offspring of his sons and daughters, the hired servants, and slaves (Gen. 7:7; 17:23; Job 1:3). The household was ruled by the father, whose

A storage jar of Jeremiah's time was found in the ruins of Bethshemesh (modern Ain-Shems). (From Grant, Ain Shems Excavations). Courtesy of the American Schools of Oriental Research.



Cuneiform tablet from the twelfth century B.C., found at Tel Ta'annek (Biblical Taanach), a Canaanite town five miles southeast of Megiddo. Cuneiform writing consisted of ideographic characters impressed by a sharp stylus into wet clay tablets that were later baked. Courtesy of the American Schools of Oriental Research.



word was law. He owned his wife and children and exacted their unquestioning obedience. In his hands lay the power of life and death over his children (Ju. 11:30–39), the right to sell his daughters into slavery (Ex. 21:7) and to arrange the marriages of both sons and daughters (Gen. 24:4; 28:2). He guarded the security of the family, managed its business affairs, acted as its head in all religious matters and—in early Hebrew society—as its priest at sacrificial offerings. On him rested the responsibility of educating his sons and instructing his household in the traditions of family and tribe.

As the single family expanded into a group of many families, they became a **clan** united by the ties of kinship on the father's side and by blood brotherhood. A number of clans formed a **tribe**. The tribe was headed by one patriarch, or father, who exercised absolute authority. It was an important social entity, the whole functioning under primitive tribal laws for its own protection. A prime example of this development from family to tribe is seen in Hebrew history—from Abraham to the twelve tribes of Israel fathered by the sons of Jacob (Gen. 46:27; see p. 102). (See also Josh. 7:14; Ps. 122:3,4; Rev. 7:4–8.)

In the patriarchal period the single family unit was almost wholly merged in the larger household interest which in turn was overshadowed by the communal life of the clan and tribe. But after the tribes of Israel settled in Canaan, life was no longer economically dependent on tribal cohesiveness and the individual family gained the place of first importance.

Marriage

Marriage was instituted from earliest times among primitive races to safeguard the sanctity of human relationships and home and to further the welfare and influence of the family; it was the basis of Hebrew society. **Polygamy**, the practice of having more than one wife, was common in nomadic times. There were contributing causes: the necessity for numerous progeny, the barrenness of a wife, the preservation of the clan and tribe from the exigencies of desert life and from decimation by tribal feuds. Hebrews often took

to wife women captured as spoils of war (Deut. 21:10–14). The first mention in Scripture of polygamy is in connection with Lamech in the line of Cain, who had two wives (Gen. 4:19). A wealthy man might possess as many wives as he could afford, a restriction that acted as a curb on polygamy, while a poor man possessed only one. Both David and Solomon had many wives (II Sam. 3:2–5; 5:13; I Ki. 11:1,3). **Concubinage**, the cohabitation of a master with his female slaves or with the handmaids of his wife or wives, was also prevalent and countenanced for the same reasons as polygamy (Gen. 25:6).

Monogamy, the union of one man with one woman, was the ideal state of marriage, although no disgrace was attached to polygamy or to concubinage. Scripture presents monogamy, wherein woman is “an help meet” for man, as a prime ordinance of God (Gen. 2:18,24). The Code of Hammurabi of Babylon, which incorporated Sumerian laws in force long before Hammurabi's own reign and nearly a thousand years before the time of Moses, adhered to monogamy as a fundamental principle.

(The Code of Hammurabi was engraved on a six-foot black diorite pillar set up by Hammurabi, sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon [*ca.* 1728–1686 B.C.]. This stele, today a treasure of the Louvre in Paris, was discovered at Susa, the ancient capital of Elam, by archeologist M. J. de Morgan, in 1901–1902. It contained 51 columns of Babylonian cuneiform characters, seven of which had been erased but whose contents scholars have been able to supply from fragments of other copies of the Code. It records 282 highly systematized laws that regulated the social and commercial life of Babylonia. Certain similarities of style and legislation are apparent between this Code and Mosaic Law.)

The concept of monogamous marriage was in consonance with Israel's monotheistic religion. Mosaic Law disapproved of polygamy and concubinage, restricting but not expressly forbidding them (Deut. 21:15–17). After the Exile, as a purer monotheism emerged, these practices among the Jews gradually faded out and by New Testament times monogamy had become the accepted standard.

Levitical law gave the first specific regulations relating to chastity and marriage among the Israelites

(Lev. 18; 20:11–21). These forbade marriage with near relatives and prohibited the incestuous pollution practiced by the Egyptians and the Canaanites. Mixed marriages, between Israelites and non-Israelites—particularly with the Canaanites—were forbidden, lest the chosen people be tempted to the sin of idolatry and a consequent adulteration of monotheism (Deut. 7:1–3; Josh. 23:11–13). Even so, mixed marriage continued a widespread practice. When Ezra returned from Babylon (458 B.C.) he found so many Israelites with alien wives that he legislated that Israelites “put away” their strange wives (see Ezra 10:2,3). (See also Neh. 13: 23–25.)

Under Levitical law a priest was forbidden to marry a harlot, a divorcee, or a woman who had been violated; he was, however, permitted to marry a widow (Lev. 21:7). A high priest could not even marry a widow, but only a virgin of Israel (see also Lev. 21: 13,14).

Deuteronomic law laid on a brother-in-law of a childless widow or on the next of kin the duty of marrying the widow to perpetuate the brother’s family name (Deut. 25:5–10; compare Gen. 38:8). This was called a **Levirate** marriage. Such a duty was not binding and could be voided by a formal act of agreement in the presence of both parties and of witnesses. A clear example of this practice is seen in the marriage of Boaz the Bethlehemite to Ruth the Moabitess, widow of his kinsman Mahlon. When Boaz ascertained that her nearest of kin chose not to redeem his right, Boaz purchased all that belonged to Naomi’s husband Elimelech and their two sons Chilion and Mahlon, and made Ruth his wife (Ru. 3:12,13; 4:5–10).

Jesus’ teachings upheld in principle the Edenic institution of monogamous marriage as a divine decree for the human race (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:4–6). His presence sanctioned and blessed the marriage in Cana (Jn. 2:1–11). Only in one instance did Jesus touch on the subject of celibacy, saying of this state “He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Mt. 19:12). And in his discourse to the Pharisees regarding resurrection he pointed to the higher life wherein there is no marriage: “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Lu. 20:34–36).

Paul upheld marriage as honorable. The apostle saw its necessity for mankind as a moral safeguard against fornication. He advised marriage as a general rule, to be mutually observed in love, but he commended celibacy, which left a person freer of the cares of the world so that he might “attend upon the Lord without distraction” (I Cor. 7).

Betrothal

Parents frequently promised their children in marriage in infancy and the marriage of the young people usually took place in the years of adolescence, for physical maturity came early to the peoples of the East. The choice of a wife for a son or a husband for a daughter was a matter of grave consideration, affecting the interests not only of the family but of the whole clan and tribe. A daughter might be returned to her home discredited if she were unpleasing to her husband or mother-in-law; this could become a source of tribal dissension. The attempt was made to keep the marriage within the tribe in order to safeguard tribal power and wealth. Abraham chose a wife for Isaac from among his kindred (Gen. 24); Isaac sent Jacob to take a wife from among his mother’s family (Gen. 28); Hagar chose an Egyptian wife for Ishmael from among her people (Gen. 21:21).

At the time of the formal betrothal the bridegroom or his father gave a dowry of thirty to fifty shekels to the father of the bride. This *mohar* was accompanied by gifts to the bride and her family (Gen. 34:12; Ex. 22:16,17; Deut. 22:28,29; Ru. 4:5,10). Sometimes the dowry took the form of service as in the betrothal of Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:18). Gifts made to the bride by father or bridegroom remained her private property (Gen. 24:22,53; 29:24,29; Josh. 15:18–19); often she brought considerable wealth to the marriage, as in the case of daughters who had inherited property (Num. 27:1–8; 36:1–12) and in the case of Abigail (I Sam. 25:39–42). The betrothal contract was considered legally binding at the time of the dowry payment.

During the period of betrothal, which in the Patriarchal Age might last only a few days or in later times as long as twelve months for a virgin or one month for a widow, the bride-to-be remained in the home of her parents or of a friend. Inasmuch as betrothal was considered virtual marriage, any act of unfaithfulness by the bride during this interval was regarded as adultery, punishable by death, in which case the husband-to-be could break the contract by a bill of divorcement (Deut. 22:23,24; 24:1; Mt. 1:18,19). A betrothed or newly married man was exempted from military service for a year (Deut. 20:7; 24:5).

The Hebrew prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Malachi employed the metaphors of betrothal and marriage to depict the inviolable covenant between God and His people Israel—“thy Maker is thine husband” (Is. 54:5; compare Jer. 3:14); “I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness . . . in judgment . . . in lovingkindness . . . in mercies . . . in faithfulness . . .” (Ho. 2:19,20). Paul described the Church as a chaste virgin “espoused” to Christ (II Cor. 11:2).

Wedding

In patriarchal days and for many centuries thereafter the wedding ceremony appears to have been the simple act of the father's leading the bride, veiled and jeweled, into the bridegroom's tent (Gen. 24:67). The marriage was celebrated by a feast that lasted seven days or longer, to which the friends of the family were invited, as in the marriages of Jacob and Samson (Gen. 29:21–23,28; Ju. 14:10–12).

In later times and certainly by Jesus' day, guests were invited to the feast by personal messengers; they were expected to come dressed in wedding garments, borrowing them if they had none of their own. To refuse such an invitation was an insult to the host—reflected in Jesus' parable of the wedding supper, in which the guests bidden to the wedding of the king's son made light of his invitation (Mt. 22:2–14). This custom of personal invitation to a banquet is also seen in Revelation 19:9: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." The **bride** was dressed in an elaborate wedding garment and veiled from head to foot. The **bridegroom**, too, was clothed in a festive robe (Is. 6:10). The central feature of the marriage ceremony was the wedding procession, a colorful event marked by singing, music, and the carrying of lighted torches. It took place late in the evening when the bridegroom, in the company of his friends or "children of the bridechamber," led his bride and her attendants to his house or the house of his parents. Then followed a joyful marriage supper and a week of festivities, a custom that still prevails among the peoples of Arabia and Armenia.

The appellation *bridegroom* was applied to Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in describing his pre-eminence (Jn. 3:29), and was also used by Jesus of himself to illustrate his enduring union with his faithful followers (Mt. 9:15; 25:1–12). *Bride* is used figuratively in the book of Revelation to denote the perfection and beauty of Christ's Church and of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2,9).

Status of Wife

The wife was the property of her husband; he was her master and owner and she was regarded as a chattel. Theoretically, in a polygamous marriage wives had equal status, but in practice there was bitter rivalry among them for the husband's favor, and the standing of each wife was determined largely by the husband's affection and by her ability to bear him children. Such rivalry is apparent in the marriages of Jacob to the sisters Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:30,31) and in those of Elkanah to Hannah and Peninnah (I Sam.

1:2–7). A concubine, although she lived in her master's house and mothered his children, did not have the legal standing of a wife (Gen. 21:9,10).

Despite the fact that marriage was a commercial contract, the love of young people for each other often played a part in the choice, and the joys of conjugal love and happy family life were abundantly evident in Hebrew society. To the women fell the cares of motherhood and the heavy duties of the household. One cannot find a more exquisite portrayal of a virtuous wife and mother than that in Proverbs 31:10–31, which eulogizes "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Hebrew women were given recognition and freedom beyond that accorded women of other Oriental nations, and Mosaic legislation protected their human dignity. Some women of strong character manifested independence of spirit and rose to positions of authority and importance. Sarah gave wise counsel to Abraham, Rebekah acted independently of her husband to assure her son Jacob the birthright, Deborah became a judge in Israel, Abigail graciously proffered David the hospitality her husband had refused, Huldah became a prophetess.

Christianity accorded women a much higher recognition of their intrinsic worth, and they actively participated in the work of the early Christian Church (see p. 357).

Divorce

Divorce was prevalent among the Hebrews and other peoples of the East. Because a wife was the property of her husband, he had the traditional right of putting her away if she did not please him (Gen. 21:14). Mosaic law acknowledged this right but tended to restrain it, offering some measure of protection to a wife from the sudden loss of her home and children. The husband could send his wife back to her family if, because of some uncleanness, she had lost favor with him. Specifically, a man could divorce his wife if she were not a virgin (Lev. 21:7,14) or if she had committed adultery (Ex. 20:14), but he was denied the right of divorce in two cases where he himself was at fault (Deut. 22:13–19,29). He could not, however, act capriciously; he was required to take legal steps in the presence of witnesses and to give his wife a written bill of divorce (Deut. 24:1; Is. 50:1; Mal. 2:11–16). A divorced woman could remarry, but in the case of a second divorce or the second husband's death she could not remarry her first husband (Deut. 24:1–4).

In Jesus' day the rabbinical schools of Shammai and Hillel (see p. 296) held greatly divergent opinions as to the permissible grounds for divorce as given in Deuteronomy 24:1, the former confining its interpretation of this passage to adultery or unchaste conduct, the latter extending it to include trifling acts that displeased a husband. Although Jesus acknowledged that Mosaic Law permitted divorce, he condemned this social evil as not in accord with the divine will (Mk. 10:2–12).

Paul taught the Christian that the mutual bond of wedlock was one not to be lightly dissolved. In marriages where one partner was a Christian and the other not, it was Paul's judgment that, if the nonbeliever was willing, they should remain together, for the unconverted one as well as the children would be brought within the pale of Christian influence (I Cor. 7:10–16).

Children

Children played a vital part in the welfare and happiness of the household. They were regarded as treasured gifts, tokens of God's favor, "an heritage of the Lord" (Ps. 127:3–5). Male children were especially esteemed; a father who had many sons was a rich and honored man. Levitical law specified that a male child should be circumcised on the eighth day after birth, at which time he received his name (Lev. 12:3; Lu. 1:59; 2:21).

During their early years Hebrew children were raised by the mother and from her received their first religious instruction. The daughter remained under her mother's care until marriage. It became the father's duty to take over the religious education when a son reached the age of five—to teach him the history of the nation and the exploits of its great leaders, the sacred Law, and other portions of Scripture. This responsibility ceased on the boy's thirteenth birthday, at which time he reached his religious majority and became a "son of the Law," obligated to practice its moral and ritual requirements. This paternal training is clearly portrayed in Proverbs: "My son, hear the instruction of a father. . . ." "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord. . . ." "My son, attend unto my wisdom. . . ." After synagogues were instituted, children from the age of six attended them for instruction in the Law and the Prophets (see p. 230). By New Testament times elementary schools other than those of the synagogue had been introduced into Palestine, and Talmudic schools (secondary schools or colleges) for the advanced study of Judaism were numerous.

Children were required to render unqualified obedience to their parents—an imperative stated in

the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12). Paul called such obedience "the first commandment with promise" (Eph. 6:1–3). The authority of the father over his children was not restricted to any given age; it certainly extended to the time of marriage, as seen in the father's control of the marriage arrangements for his offspring. Abraham through his servant chose Rebekah for his son Isaac (Gen. 24). Jesus rendered filial obedience to Joseph and Mary beyond the age of twelve (Lu. 2:51). Children held their parents in great honor and reverence; any case of insubordination or disrespect was a serious breach of the Fifth Commandment, and a rebellious or wicked son was subject to capital punishment if his parents concurred in placing a complaint before the town elders (Ex. 21:15,17; Deut. 21:18–21).

The Hebrew prophets lamented the disobedience of Israel against God, their loving Father, seeing it as the crime of rebellious children, and they struggled to wake Israel to her filial obligation (Is. 30:9; 63:8–10; Ezek. 2:3–5; Mal. 1:6). Jesus' obedience was perfect: "I do always those things that please [the Father]" (Jn. 8:29; compare 5:19). Jesus loved little children; he taught that their purity, simplicity, and receptivity were essential qualities for entrance into the kingdom (Mk. 10:14–16). Paul specifically designates as the children of God those "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom. 8:14).

First-born

The first-born son of the Hebrew family was held in special esteem. To him fell the **birthright**—the right to succeed his father as head of the family, clan, or tribe, and the right to inherit a double portion of his father's estate. Abraham gave all he possessed to his son Isaac (Gen. 25:5). To the birthright was usually added the father's blessing, a confirmation that had the force of a modern will (Gen. 27:4). The first-born was reckoned as the son who in point of time was born first in the household, whether the mother was a wife or a concubine (Deut. 21:15–17). The law of primogeniture was not always adhered to, however, as in the case of Ishmael, first-born of Hagar, who was dispossessed at Sarah's word (Gen. 21:10); of Esau, who by his own consent sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob, and later the father's blessing was conferred upon the second-born (Gen. 25:33; 27:1–41); of Jacob, who blessed Ephraim above Manasseh (Gen. 48:8–20); of David, who chose Solomon instead of his eldest living son Adonijah to succeed to the throne (I Ki. 1:29,30).

If there was no male issue, the father's estate was inherited by the daughters, with the provision that they marry within their own tribe, a precedent set in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 27:1–8; 36:1–12).

From the beginning of the nation's religious history the male first-born of the Israelites were considered sacred to Jehovah. Just before the Exodus they were consecrated to the service of God to commemorate their preservation from the tenth plague, which took the lives of Egypt's first-born (Ex. 13:2). When the Mosaic system was instituted at Sinai, the tribe of Levi was substituted for the first-born consecrated in Egypt and was given priestly pre-eminence. Twenty-two thousand Levites replaced the first-born of the other tribes, the 273 remaining males were redeemed at a price of five silver shekels (one shekel = approximately 64 cents), a payment which went to the support of the priests (Num. 3:11,12,40-51). Through succeeding generations every first-born Jewish male child at the age of one month was "presented before the Lord" and redeemed at the same price (Num. 18:15,16), although if a Levite he was exempted. The child Jesus was redeemed by his parents according to this law of Moses (Lu. 2:22,23).

In the Old Testament Israel is called God's son, "my firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). The term *first-born* is applied to Christ—among many brethren (Rom. 8:29), of every creature (Col. 1:15), the "first begotten" of the dead (Rev. 1:5). Those whose names are written in heaven are called "the church of the first-born" (Heb. 12:23).

Barrenness

A marriage without children was a bitter sorrow to both husband and wife and was accounted a reproach from God. The wife not only grieved because she had no children but also feared for her position as a wife. She was subject to the ridicule and scorn of the other women of the household and the neighborhood. Both Sarai (wife of Abram) and Hannah (wife of Elkanah) suffered this humiliation (Gen. 16:4; 21:9; I Sam. 1:7). The disgrace felt by a barren wife sometimes caused her to give a handmaid to her husband as a secondary wife that she might, through her, lay claim to children and so retain her husband's favor. Sarai, when she saw she was barren, gave Abram her Egyptian slave Hagar (Gen. 16:1-3) and Rachel sought a child of Jacob through her handmaid Bilhah (Gen. 30:1,3). The children of polygamy or concubinage were regarded as legitimate and were welcome members of the household.

Slavery

Slavery was an institution recognized and practiced in all ancient civilizations. In Scripture the slaves of the Hebrews are called manservants, maidservants, handmaids, bondservants, or servants. Most of these

were non-Hebrew: spoils of war, purchased slaves (often from the slave-traders of Phoenicia), or those born of slave parents. As chattels, they constituted part of the family wealth. The standard price of a slave from five to twenty years of age was 30 silver shekels (Ex. 21:32)—Joseph's brethren sold him for 20 pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28).

To the slaves fell the menial domestic duties and the hard labor of the fields, for the father and sons of a well-to-do Hebrew household held themselves superior to such work. Both male and female slaves served as personal attendants—the men often rising to trusted positions, as did Abraham's stewards (Gen. 15:2; 24:2-4; compare Pr. 17:2), the women becoming secondary wives and concubines. Non-Hebrew slaves could be held in perpetuity; their wives and children were also the property of the master and at his death were bequeathed to his heirs (Lev. 25:44-46).

In Hebrew society, slavery was practiced on a more humane basis than among neighboring nations. The slaves of the Hebrews were accorded many religious rights and privileges: as members of the family group they came under the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants, male slaves being circumcised (Gen. 17:13; Deut. 29:10-13); were granted the Sabbath rest (Ex. 20:10); permitted participation in national festivals (Ex. 12:43,44; Deut. 12:11,12,18; 16:10-14); and given instruction in the Law (Deut. 31:10-13; Josh. 8:33-35).

Under Mosaic Law a measure of civil protection and justice was afforded slaves against inhumane treatment by masters; where serious injury was incurred through cruelty, they were given their freedom (Ex. 21:26,27). An escaped slave was not to be returned to his foreign master (Deut. 23:15,16). The penalty of death was imposed for the murder of a slave as well as for that of a freeman (Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17), and punishment was meted out where flogging had resulted in immediate death (Ex. 21:20,21).

Hebrew law expressly forbade "man-stealing," specifically the kidnaping of one Hebrew by another for sale as a slave (Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7). Hebrews could, however, find themselves reduced to slavery through poverty, debt, or theft. Daughters could be sold at will by the father (Ex. 21:7); a widow's children could be taken in payment of a father's debt (II Ki. 4:1); a man could be sold when he was unable to make restitution for a theft (Ex. 22:3); a man could sell himself voluntarily, as could a woman. Such a slave was not to be treated "with rigour" but as a hired servant. This servitude was not a lasting state, for no Hebrew could remain permanently a slave to another Hebrew since he was regarded as freeborn and primarily a servant of God (Lev. 25:39-43).

A man might be released from his bondage in three ways: by remission of all the claims against

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him; by the occurrence of the Year of Jubilee (see p. 59); by the expiration of a six-year period (Ex. 21:2–4; Lev. 25:40; Deut. 15:12; compare Jer. 34:8–17). The Law enjoined that upon his release he be given liberal supplies with which to start a new life (Deut. 15:13,14). The servitude of a female slave was permanent, however, because her position was usually that of a wife or a concubine. If she did not please her master as a wife she could be redeemed by her family: he was not at liberty to sell her to an alien. If he bought her for his son, he was to treat her as a daughter. If he himself took another wife, he must still retain the slave as a wife and treat her justly; if not, her freedom was to be granted without repayment of the purchase money (Ex. 21:7–11). If slaves loved the master and desired to stay with him, the ear of the slave was pierced with an awl and he or she remained a servant forever or until the Year of Jubilee. (Ex. 21:5,6; Deut. 15:16,17).

If a Hebrew became the slave of a “stranger,” a non-Israelite, he could redeem himself or be redeemed by his kinsmen, or be set free in the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:47–55).

A **hired servant** or a **hireling** was one who voluntarily labored for a wage for a stipulated period of time (Is. 21:16). The Law forbade his oppression (Deut. 24:14,15).

Righteous men of Scripture were termed “servants of the Lord,” among them Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and the prophets. Israel was called “my servant.” The Messiah himself came in “the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). Paul called himself “a servant of Christ,” as did Peter, James, Jude, and John.

In the Graeco-Roman world of New Testament times slavery with all its attendant evils was still rampant. Jesus did not attack the practice of human slavery, his great concern being to free men from the greater bondage of suffering and sin (Lu. 13:16; Jn. 8:32,34–46); but the spiritual principles of love and brotherhood he taught and exemplified became an irresistible moral force that began at once to dissolve the foundations of this social evil.

Neither did Paul, as he journeyed through the Roman Empire, make a militant assault on the institution of slavery; he counseled obedience and faithfulness on the part of the slave, justice and kindness on the part of the master (Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–4:1; Philemon). At the same time Paul declared the spiritual freedom found in Christ: “He that is called in the Lord, being a servant [slave], is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant” (I Cor. 7:22). In this connection he proclaimed: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The simplest article of clothing of all primitive civilizations was the **loincloth** made from animal skins or cloth; it was a garment in use by the Hebrews. This was the leather girdle of Elijah and John the Baptist (II Ki. 1:8; Mt. 3:4) and the linen girdle of Jeremiah (Jer. 13:1). Gradually the loincloth was replaced by a close-fitting sleeveless garment—a shirt or tunic (AV coat) of wool, linen, or cotton—reaching to the knees. This was the workaday garment worn by all classes, men and women alike—the sheet or shirt of Judges 14:12, the coat of Luke 6:29. The seamless coat of Jesus stripped from him by the Romans at crucifixion was this same inner garment (Jn. 19:23).

The well-to-do adopted a **second tunic** that had wide sleeves and reached to the ankles. This was the “coat of many colours” Jacob gave to his favorite son Joseph (Gen. 37:3) and the garment of Tamar, the daughter of King David (II Sam. 13:18).

Wound around the tunic at the waist was a sash or **girdle** of cloth or leather, varying in size from a single rope to a strip about five inches in width so folded as to provide pockets for miscellaneous articles of money and food, or as a sword belt for a weapon. When a man undertook arduous labor or a journey, he often fastened his girdle securely about his loins, pulling up the tunic until it hung loosely over the girdle. Thus the expression “gird up the loins” came to symbolize vigorous or decisive action. The Israelites ate the first Passover with their loins girded for the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:11). Job was commanded “Gird up now thy loins like a man” when God challenged him to answer Him (Job 38:3). Peter urged the Christian “Gird up the loins of your mind” (I Pet. 1:13).

The ordinary outer garment was the **mantle** or **cloak** (Heb. *símlah*)—a long rectangular piece of cloth similar to a blanket, sometimes plain, sometimes striped, seamed at the shoulders but open down the front and sides, hand-woven of wool, goat’s hair or camel’s hair. So necessary was this article of clothing as a protection against inclement weather and as a covering for warmth at night that, if its owner gave it as a pledge, Mosaic Law required its return before the setting of the sun (Ex. 22:26,27). In many English versions of the Bible the word *símlah* is translated variously as raiment, clothes, garment, apparel. This was the “garment” with which Noah’s sons covered their father’s nakedness (Gen. 9:23), the “clothes” Jacob rent when he mourned the loss of Joseph (Gen. 37:34), the “raiment” Joseph gave his brethren (Gen. 45:22), the “raiment” of Ruth (Ru. 3:3), and the “apparel” David changed after the death of his child (II Sam. 12:20). The Psalmist spoke of

God as "clothed with honour and majesty . . . with light as with a garment" (Ps. 104:1,2).

The mantles of men of high rank are referred to as robes, differing from the *simlah* mainly in quality and decoration. Linen robes, valued for their coolness and cleanliness, were worn by royalty and by the priests (for the distinctive garments of the Aaronic priesthood, see pp. 53–54). Women's robes were similar to men's except in ornamentation.

By New Testament times another type of mantle had come into use, a rectangular woolen or linen cloth with tasseled corners, similar to the Greek *himation* and the Roman *pallium*. This was wrapped around the body and draped over the left shoulder.

These garments varied according to desert or town life as well as in their simplicity of design, texture, and quality, depending on the individual's economic status and occupation. The poor often possessed only one set of raiment. Today the Syrian peasant and the Bedouin still wear flowing robes like those of the ancient Hebrews, finding them highly suitable and adaptable to the rapid changes and extremes of Middle East temperatures.

People of all classes wore **sandals**, plain soles of leather or wood bound onto the feet by thongs or shoelatchets. Within their homes and in places of worship they removed their sandals (Ex. 3:4,5). The priests went barefoot in the performance of their temple duties. To appear in public without shoes was a sign of mourning or an indication of great poverty. When Absalom usurped the kingdom, his father David fled from Jerusalem weeping and barefooted (II Sam. 15:30). The prophet Isaiah, as a warning to Israel not to rely on Egypt and as a sign of the coming captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia, walked barefoot for three years (Is. 20:2–4).

The **headdress** of the Hebrew nomad was like that of the modern Bedouin, a square or rectangular piece of cloth folded triangularly to protect the head, neck, and shoulders from the burning rays of the sun. In later times the Israelites wore more elaborate head-dresses of cloth wound round and round to form a turban. This particular headdress (RV turban) is termed in AV a "hood" (Is. 3:23), a "royal diadem" (Is. 62:3), a "mitre" (Zech. 3:5). The priestly turbans were called "bonnets" and were made of fine linen (Lev. 8:13); the high priest's headdress with its frontal plate of gold was also called a "mitre" (Lev. 8:9).

The women wore veils. These varied in length, falling to the waist or ankle, and could be drawn over the face or wrapped around the body to provide concealment in the presence of men or strangers. A bride wore a veil in the presence of her betrothed. Rebekah veiled herself at her first meeting with Isaac (Gen. 24:65). Ruth used her veil to carry barley into the city (Ru. 3:15). Moses wore a veil over his face

when he gave the people the Decalogue the second time (Ex. 34:33–35). Paul spoke figuratively of the veil upon the hearts of the Jews who could not see that the glory of Christ's grace superseded the glory of Mosaic Law (II Cor. 3:7–16).

Meals

From earliest Biblical times food was prepared by the women. The early breakfast and late morning meal were light, the principal meal being eaten after sunset. The food was served in one earthenware bowl placed on a woven mat on the tent floor. The Hebrew family ate together, either sitting or squatting around this simple table surface, as do the Bedouins and Egyptian fellahin today. Each dipped his hand into the one main dish or scooped its contents with a sop of bread.

A first-century earthenware bottle from Petra, capital of Nabataea (formerly Edom and Moab); 5½ x 1¾ inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of William H. Shehadi, 1953.



The fare was chiefly vegetarian. It might consist of parched grains; lentils and beans (often stewed as pottage, Gen. 25:29,34); coarse bread of barley, wheat, or spelt (AV rye); fruits such as grapes and raisins, olives, dates and fresh or pressed figs; nuts, honey, milk and its products. The meat of flocks and herds, particularly of sheep and goats and of certain game, was relished, but meat was enjoyed by the poor only at family feasts and in the entertainment of a guest. When the Israelites settled in Canaan they added to their diet fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic—foods to which they had been introduced in Egypt (Num. 11:5). The simplicity of the meal served to David and his band of men—grain, pulse [beans, lentils, peas], honey, butter, sheep, cheese (II Sam. 17:28,29)—contrasted strongly with the sumptuous fare of Solomon's table—fine flour, meal, fat oxen, sheep, fattened fowl, and several kinds of game deer (I Ki. 4:22,23).

Mosaic Law carefully prescribed the "clean" meat—animal, fish, fowl—permitted for food, and the prohibited "unclean" meat (Lev. 11). Some of these restrictions were imposed on religious grounds, others for hygienic and sanitary reasons. Clean animals, domesticated and wild, were those that both chewed the cud and had cloven hoofs (ruminating animals digested food better and thus produced healthier meats). Fish that had fins and scales and fowl that did not subsist on carrion were also considered clean. Unclean animals were the camel, rabbit, and hare (which chewed the cud but did not have cloven hoofs), swine (which had cloven hoofs but did not chew the cud), rodents, and reptiles. Also unclean were fish such as shellfish and eels (which resembled serpents, credited with demon spirits), birds of prey and carrion-eating fowl, winged insects (with the exception of four kinds of locusts).

When the Israelites built permanent homes in Canaan their eating habits changed and they advanced to the use of seats or stools and low wooden tables. Gradually the Syrian custom of reclining on low couches at mealtime gained favor among men of the wealthy classes (Amos 6:4; Es. 1:6,RV), and by the third century B.C. this custom was widespread. The guests were seated, according to rank, the most honored being given the "highest" place (Lu. 14:8–10). In New Testament times the Greek and Roman way of reclining two or three to a couch, each man resting on his left elbow, was in vogue. The description of John as "leaning on Jesus' bosom" points to this custom (Jn. 13:23), as does the account of a penitent woman who was able to reach and wash the feet of Jesus while he was dining (Lu. 7:37,38).

An invitation to special feasts was extended in advance by the host; on the appointed day when all was in readiness a reminder was sent. The guest arrived in festive garments, for to come dressed in

less than his best was an affront to the host. These courtesies are reflected in the parables of the Great Supper and the Marriage of the King's Son (Lu. 14:16–24; Mt. 22:2–13). Other courtesies were observed by the host: the washing of the guest's feet on his arrival, the bestowal of a kiss, the anointing of his head with fragrant oil—all referred to in the narrative of the supper Jesus attended in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lu. 7:44–46). Jesus himself washed the feet of his apostles at the Last Supper (Jn. 13:4,5).

Hospitality

Hospitality comes from a Greek word meaning "love of strangers." Hospitality was a virtue highly esteemed among all nomadic peoples, being extremely important as a counterbalance to the harshness of desert travel. Proffering this kindness brought blessing; withholding it brought rebuke. The traveler regarded it as his right and the host considered it his duty. Hospitality provided the stranger with shelter, water, food, and protection both for himself and for his animals (Gen. 24:31–33). The laws relating to hospitality were scrupulously observed, for a man never knew when he might find his own life dependent on this courtesy.

The traveler was treated as an honored guest and all the master of the house possessed was placed at his service. The host did not delegate these responsibilities to his servants but waited on his guest himself. The account of Abraham's hospitality to three strangers furnishes an exact picture of that still practiced among today's Bedouins (Gen. 18:1–8). Abraham ran to meet them as they approached his tent; bowing himself to the ground he extended a welcome. He offered water for their feet and rest in the shade of a tree. With his own hands he laid food before his guests and stood while they ate. Lot's observance of the duty of hospitality illustrates the lengths to which a host might go (Gen. 19:1–8; compare Ju. 19:15–21).

Three days was the proper length of stay but the visitor could, by claiming the hospitality of others, remain in the tribal encampment indefinitely. Under the law of hospitality even an enemy or one seeking blood revenge was received as a guest once he entered a tent or so much as touched a tent cord (see Blood Revenge, p. 45). After sharing a meal, he and his host were mutually bound to protect each other during his

stay (see *Bread and Salt Covenants*, p. 46). An avenger could claim the right of exemption from pursuit for at least a day and a half after his departure.

Hospitality to the stranger persisted after Israel entered village and city life. Sometimes a room was set apart in a home as a guest chamber—the Shunammite woman, for instance, made “a little chamber . . . on the wall” for the prophet Elisha (II Ki. 4:10). The number of a man’s guests and his liberality in their entertainment added to his merit and prestige. Kings and men of wealth seated many at their tables. Job’s hospitality to travelers gave witness to his virtue (Job 31:32). The lavish provision for Solomon’s table indicated that daily he entertained many (I Ki. 4:22,23). Jezebel fed four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah at her table (I Ki. 18:19). Nehemiah seated more than a hundred fifty daily at his board (Neh. 5:17). A poor man extended the little he had, often at great personal sacrifice (Ju. 19:20).

In the more advanced society of New Testament times this custom was not so much a necessity to life as a social kindness. It was accounted to a man as righteousness. Jesus and the Twelve relied on hospitality as they journeyed from village to village (Mt. 10:11–14), as did the Seventy (Lu. 10:5–8). Jesus extended hospitality by feeding the five thousand and the four thousand (Mt. 14:14–21; 15:32–38); the Twelve were his guests at the Last Supper (Mt. 26:17–20); and after Resurrection he invited seven of his apostles to partake of a morning meal by the Sea of Galilee (Jn. 21:9,12). His teachings and his own example infused into the spirit of hospitality a deeper sense of mercy, compassion, and brotherhood, as seen in his parable of the good Samaritan (Lu. 10:30–37) and in his admonition to the Pharisees that they feast the poor and unfortunate (Lu. 14:12–14). He made it a divine demand when he taught his followers that to practice kindness and good deeds wherever there is human want or distress is to do it as though to the Son of God: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Mt. 25:40).

The spread of apostolic Christianity throughout the Roman world owed much to the custom of hospitality. With full assurance Paul and other Christian missionaries relied on it wherever they went. Hospitality became a Christian virtue that strongly fostered unity among the brethren.

Blood Revenge

The practice of blood revenge was both an ancient custom and a primitive law of the desert, the outgrowth of the necessity to safeguard a man’s life and person. This law is mentioned early in Genesis: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6; compare Gen. 4:8–15,23,24). It had its roots deep in the ties of blood kinship. Any grave injustice to a member of the tribe or the killing of one of its members was considered a tribal injury that demanded restitution by the entire tribe. But in actual practice it devolved primarily on the nearest of kin to avenge the wrong, as when two of the sons of Jacob avenged the defilement of their sister Dinah (Gen. 34:25–27) and as when Solomon ordered the death of Joab for his murders of Absalom and Amasa of the house of his father David (II Sam. 18:14; 20:9,10; I Ki. 2:1,5,6,31). This stern law of retaliation served as a restraint against acts of violence among families and tribes.

With Israel’s ethical development the practice of blood revenge was tempered with a measure of mercy. Mosaic Law still demanded “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Ex. 21:23–25; Lev. 24:17–22), but modified it with provisions of justice (Deut. 19:15–21). Careful distinction was made between murder and accidental killing, and six Levitical **cities of refuge** were appointed in Palestine where any man who had caused the death of another could find refuge until a fair trial could be held to determine whether the deed had been done wittingly or unintentionally (Num. 35:6,9–32; Deut. 19:1–13; Josh. 20). Three of these cities lay west of the Jordan—Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron. Three lay east of the Jordan—Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer. They were so chosen that a man could reach one within a day’s journey, a distance of about thirty miles.

A deliberate murderer was turned over to “the avenger” (Num. 35:19), but the one who had committed the crime without premeditation could find sanctuary in his city of refuge. If he ventured beyond its borders the avenger could justifiably take his life. Only after the death of the high priest was he at liberty to return to his home. These Mosaic provisions removed the law of retaliation from the sphere of private revenge and feuding and brought the administration of justice under civil magistrates.

Jesus’ teachings completely abrogated this ancient law of personal vengeance by the higher law of love. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mt. 22:39). “Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other

also . . . ” (Mt. 5:39). “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven . . . (Mt. 5:44,45). The Church extended the spirit and application of this teaching. Paul wrote “Recompense to no man evil for evil” (Rom. 12:17) and urged men to leave prayerfully to God the execution of justice (Rom. 12:19; compare Rev. 19:2).

sacred binding character (Gen. 31:44–54). Blood was used to seal the national covenant between God and Israel (Ex. 24:6,8): “Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. . . . And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you. . . .” The blood covenant idea was implicit in the Mosaic sacrificial system of worship.

Ultimate refinement of the blood covenant came with the action of Jesus during the Last Supper when he took the cup and said, “This is my blood of the new testament [new covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt. 26:28).

Covenants

The general meaning of the word *covenant* (Heb. *berith*) was that of an agreement or contract between two parties. It was considered a solemn pledge whereby men bound themselves to a mutual obligation. Covenants existed not only between individuals but among clans, tribes, kings, and nations. In its definitive religious use *the covenant* designates the compact of God with men, or of men with God.

It was customary to seal a covenant in one of three principal ways: by blood, bread, or salt. There were also several less important ways of concluding covenants: by lifting up the hand (Gen. 14:22), by giving a gift (Gen. 21:28–31), by placing the hand under the thigh (Gen. 24:2–9; 47:29), by setting up a pillar of stones (Gen. 28:22; Josh. 24:26), by the act of taking off and giving of a shoe (Ru. 4:7), by a handshake (II Ki. 10:15; Ezra 10:19).

Blood Covenant

Reaching far back into early Semitic culture, the oldest known form of ratification of an oath between men was the shedding of blood to establish blood kinship. Men entered into this blood covenant either by drinking a drop of each other's blood or by dividing a sacrificial animal in halves and walking between the two parts (Gen. 15:9–18; Jer. 34:18,19). Blood typified life (Gen. 9:4), thus a contract ratified by the shedding of blood—men's own or that of their animals—made the agreement inviolable. The making or confirming of an oath often took place at a shrine or before an altar or pillar stone to invoke the witness of the deity, and this was followed by a sacrificial meal. Such a ceremony gave the compact a

Bread and Salt Covenants

Bread and salt covenants conveyed the same basic idea of kinship as did the blood covenant. Both bread and salt were essential to man's sustenance and thus were considered life-giving substances. When a man ate of another's bread or salt, it typified a pledge of friendship and loyalty, for he shared in the hospitality of the house, as when Abimelech covenanted with Isaac for peace (Gen. 26:28–31) and Laban with Jacob (Gen. 31:44–55).

Bread denoted not only baked foodstuffs but in a general sense the various foods of the table. Christ Jesus gave this term a spiritual meaning when he prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread [Cruden, All things necessary for this life]” (Mt. 6:11). He revealed himself as “the bread of life” sent from heaven, of which if a man partook he would live forever (Jn. 6:35,51).

Salt was used as a seasoning, as a preservative in food (Job 6:6), and also as an antiseptic and a purifier (II Ki. 2:20–22). Every newborn infant was washed and rubbed with salt (Ezek. 16:4). The Hebrews' supply of salt was abundant, readily obtainable from the waters of the Dead Sea by evaporation or from the cliffs of rock salt on its southern border. Salt, as an emblem of purity, accompanied every meat and meal offering, giving each a covenant meaning (Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; Ezek. 43:24). It was an essential ingredient of the incense offerings of the sanctuary. A salt covenant implied an agreement free of hypocrisy or duplicity. Jesus referred to salt in its symbolic sense as an essential and vital ingredient of Christian character: “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” (Mt. 5:13). “Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another” (Mk. 9:50). One's speech should be seasoned with the salt of grace (Col. 4:6).

God's Covenant

The word *covenant* has a rich Scriptural significance, as it is through the covenant idea that God made known His relation to men. "The covenant of God with His people is an expression of His love for them. It may be called the divine constitution or ordinance, which is designed to govern human relations with Himself."¹ This divine promise is everlasting and inviolate. The essential requirement on the part of men is that of obedience; Israel was blessed in proportion to its obedience.

In the **Adamic Covenant** God promised a Savior who would redeem mankind from sin (Gen. 3:15).

In the **Noahic Covenant** of grace He promised the continuance of the order of natural law on earth for the benefit and sustenance of men, and Noah ratified it with a blood covenant of sacrificial offerings (Gen. 8:20–9:17).

In the **Abrahamic Covenant**, the greatest in historical importance, the sacred covenant became definitive. In it God promised Abraham a land and a seed, that seed to be a blessing to all nations: "Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1–3). It was renewed with Abraham after he came up from Egypt to Canaan (Gen. 13:14–17) and later confirmed by the solemn ceremony of the blood covenant (Gen. 15:2–21). At a still later ratification the promise was amplified: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee . . . for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." At this time circumcision was instituted as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:2–14). This promise was renewed to Abraham's son Isaac and to Isaac's son Jacob (Gen. 26:2–5; 28:13–15).

In the **Sinaitic or Mosaic Covenant** God renewed His promise to the nation of Israel as a whole. This renewal was accompanied by a theocratic constitution for the nation that was to govern the social and religious life of Israel (Ex. 20–23). When the people swore obedience, Moses sealed the covenant by sprinkling blood of burnt sacrifices first on the altar and then on the people (Ex. 24:5–8). It was renewed with the new generation of Israel in the plains of Moab prior to their entrance into Canaan, and infused with a new vigor by Moses' rehearsal of God's many mercies to the nation and by his warnings of penalties for disobedience (Deut. 29; 30).

In the **Davidic Covenant** God promised David an everlasting seed and an everlasting kingdom: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (II Sam. 7:8–16). In due time this

oath was renewed with David's son Solomon (I Ki. 9:1–7).

The covenant relation between God and Israel was also renewed from time to time on the part of men. Joshua and Israel promised to serve God only (Josh. 24:1–27); Jehoiada and the people of Judah covenanted to be God's people (II Ki. 11:17); King Hezekiah and Judah in solemn ceremony agreed to purify their worship (II Chron. 29:10–36); King Josiah and Judah swore obedience to the Book of the Law (II Ki. 23:2,3); Nehemiah, Ezra, and the returned remnant of Judah pledged themselves to obey Mosaic Law (Neh. 9:2,3,38; 10:1–39).

Because Israel willfully violated her sacred obligation by persistent idolatry, the prophets foretold the **New Covenant** which God would make with spiritual Israel, wherein His law would be written on the heart (Jer. 31:31–34) and mediated by His Messiah (Is. 42:6; Mal. 3:1). (See also *The Covenant between God and Men*, p. 148.)

God's covenant reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Immanuel, "God with us." He was the Savior promised through the seed of the woman (Gal. 4:4) and the house of David (Acts 13:23), the blessing promised to Abraham (Gal. 3:16), the fulfillment of the Law through love (Mt. 5:17; 22:37–39), and the establisher of God's spiritual kingdom on earth (Eph. 1:10,11; Rev. 11:15). He was the mediator of the New Covenant, the perfect example of obedience (Mk. 14:36; Heb. 9:15–28; 10:9–17).

Worship

Several Hebrew and Greek words are translated simply *worship* in the Authorized Version. The Hebrew words include those that mean literally "to prostrate," "to fall down," "to bow down," "to reverence"; those in Greek include the meanings "to make obeisance to," "to adore," "to serve," "to praise."

From remote times man has been impelled by an innate religious instinct to the worship of a power outside himself. This instinct appears first to have been expressed in an animistic belief that all natural objects—or nature in general—had conscious life or vitality. Environed in a mysterious universe, wholly at the mercy of its unpredictable moods, men were led to the worship of nature gods of sky, earth, and water. Men's fear and wonder at nature's phenomena

in time tended rapidly to multiply lesser deities and to adore natural objects such as the sun, moon, stars, trees, rivers, springs, stones, animals, birds, and the like. The pictographic writings of Sumer indicate a development in Sumerian worship from the sky-god Anu and "the Queen of Heaven" Innini to a pantheon of gods numbering in the thousands. The principal divinities, worshiped at numerous temple towers that dotted the land of Babylonia, were the sun-god Marduk (Bel [Baal] of Is. 46:1 and Merodach of Jer. 50:2), the moon-god Sin, the sea-god Ea, and Ishtar, the goddess of love. In the pantheon of Egypt's deities were the sun-god Ra (Amon, Aton), the Nile-river god Osiris, the fertility goddess Isis, and such lesser gods as the bull, hawk, crocodile, beetle, ibis, and cat.

Men also worshiped the unseen forces of nature: the rising and setting of the sun, the ebbing and flowing of tides, the succession of the seasons, birth and death, thunder, lightning, and rain. All these became personified gods. The malignant forces men could neither comprehend nor control, often called evil spirits, they propitiated with sacrificial offerings even their own children; the beneficent or life-giving forces they conciliated with gifts.

It is difficult to determine how many of these polytheistic beliefs were accepted and practiced by the Semitic nomads, but they formed the religious background from which the Hebrews emerged. Remnants of these beliefs are found in Genesis: in the concept of God as attached to certain localities, as seen in the narrative of Jacob's experience at Beth-el (Gen. 28:16,17); in Rachel's possession of numerous household gods stolen from her father Laban (Gen. 31:19; 35:2,4); in animal sacrifice in general; in child sacrifice, as in the near-offering of Isaac (Gen. 22) and in the offering of Jephthah's daughter (Ju. 11:30-39).

The life of the Semitic nomads removed them from the corrupt and often lewd practices of the polytheistic temple worship of Babylonian civilization. Their simple, austere manner of living in the awesome stretches of the desert made them men of courage, discipline, and idealism, receptive to lofty conceptions. To the nomad Abram first came the divine call to emerge from polytheism; to him God first revealed Himself as the Almighty God, commanding "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Through the revelation of the divine Spirit Hebrew monotheism was born, not through the evolution of current ethnic religions.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob further revealed Himself to Moses at Horeb as the I AM THAT I AM—Jehovah, the supreme self-existent One, who by His will called out Israel and separated it from heathen nations (Ex. 3:14). When His law was imparted at Sinai (Horeb), its first two commandments explicitly forbade idolatry: "Thou shalt

have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Ex. 20:3-5).

Though Israel rejected the visible for the invisible, the many gods for the One, the realization that there was no other god came only gradually; the release of the anthropomorphic concept of Him was also slow and a matter of spiritual growth, as the Old Testament attests (see Names of God, p. 142, and Second Account of Creation, p. 145).

In the matter of religious practise: (1) Some practises, as idolatry, polytheism, human sacrifice, sensual ceremonies, were utterly condemned from the beginning of the worship of J" [Jehovah]. That they survived, or intruded themselves at later periods, in no wise proves that they were not felt to be condemned by the inward nature of J" worship. It began to make and mark its distinctiveness at the very start, or it could never have done so later. (2) Some practises, as circumcision, sacrifice, feasts, purification, perhaps the Sabbath, which were already in use, or were taken over in Canaan, were gradually changed in form and meaning. Hence we may well expect to find, as we do, that the use and value of these are found to alter from one stage to another, as the growing revelation of God flung its light upon them. (3) Other practises, as the observation of sacred places, stones, trees, animals, etc., continued for a while without explicit condemnation, but were found to be inconsistent with the worship of J", when His self-revelation had become more familiar to the general thought of the people.²

The moral and spiritual teachings of the prophets, who labored faithfully to combat the sin of Israel in going after other gods, lifted the standard of religious worship. Though the nation underwent the chastisement of captivity for its idolatry, it emerged with a purer monotheism, a preparatory step for the reception of its Messiah.

Jesus laid his whole emphasis on a spiritual worship, a love of the one omnipotent Father of all. He refined worship in this context in the ultimate way: "God is a Spirit [Moffatt, God is Spirit]; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). The practice of idolatry dominated the Gentile world into which Paul carried the gospel of Christ. It was this gospel which in time was to wean the Gentiles from their pantheistic and polytheistic beliefs to the worship of God as Spirit.

Altars

From earliest times the altar was an essential feature of worship, varying in structure, design, and materials according to different cultures. The primitive

altar of the Semites consisted of a single stone, a mound of earth, or a rounded heap of unhewn stones. The stone might be a table altar upon which the sacrificial animal was laid, a natural flat rock with a groove or depression where the blood could run off (Ju. 6:20; I Sam. 14:32–35). Here the lifeblood, the essence, of the sacrifice was dedicated to the deity and regarded as coming into contact with him. The altar marked the temporary abode or nearby presence of the deity; it was simultaneously the place of a man's propitiatory offering and self-surrender and that of his deity's acceptance—the point of reconciliation and union between them.

Archeological excavations have furnished numerous examples of primitive Canaanite altars: among them (from Gezer) a four-sided limestone block with horns, about fifteen inches high and ten inches square; from Megiddo have come several small specimens of horned incense altars, also of limestone, as well as a huge sacrifice altar of unhewn stones measuring twenty-six feet in diameter and four and a half feet high.

The first mention in Scripture of a man-made altar is of that built on a mountain top by Noah to tender his thanksgiving for the preservation of his family from the Flood; the "sweet savour" of his sacrifice rose up before God (Gen. 8:20,21). The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob built memorial altars to mark the particular sites at which God had spoken with them or given them visible manifestation of His presence—a theophany (Gen. 12:7; 26:24,25; 28:16–18). Cairn altars, heaps of stones, also marked spots on which the Hebrews ratified covenants with each other in the sight of God.

When the Mosaic system of worship was developed (see p. 51), the Law specified that altars should be simple structures made of earth or unhewn stones, without steps; any Israelite might build his own and make animal sacrifices and grain offerings upon it (Ex. 20:24–26; Deut. 27:5–7). Family altars and those at local sanctuaries were in use until the reign of King Josiah (638–608 B.C.).

The Tabernacle erected by command of Moses contained three altars: the brazen altar, which stood in the Court of the Congregation; the golden altar, which stood in the Holy Place; and the table of shewbread, also in the Holy Place (see p. 160). The brazen altar (altar of burnt offering) was a hollow structure five cubits square and three cubits high (one cubit equals approximately eighteen inches) made of acacia (shittim) wood overlaid with brass. (The word *brass* in AV and ASV should be more correctly rendered bronze, since it is a metal alloy of copper and tin.) Each of the four corners of the altar had a hornlike projection overlaid with bronze as well as a bronze ring into which poles were inserted for its transportation. Below was a grate of bronze on which a fire

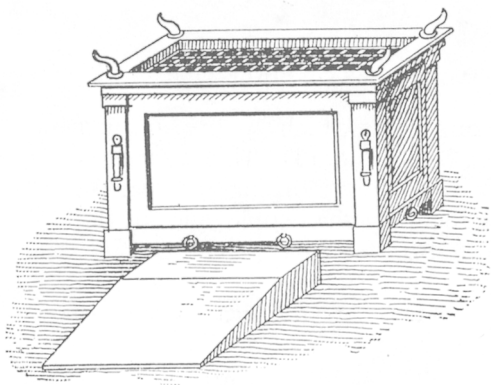
burned perpetually (Ex. 27:1–8; Lev. 6:13). This altar was used by the priests for the daily morning and evening sacrifice, for those brought by the people, and for the special sacrifices required on feast days (see Sacrifice, p. 55).

The **golden altar** (altar of incense) was also made of acacia wood, but overlaid with gold. It too was a square, one cubit long, one cubit wide, two and a half cubits high, with golden horns and golden rings for carrying. On this altar the priests offered incense morning and evening (Ex. 30:1–10; Lu. 1:8–10; compare Rev. 8:3).

The **table of shewbread** was a small rectangular altar overlaid with gold, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high (Ex. 25:23–30). Each Sabbath twelve fresh loaves of unleavened bread sprinkled with frankincense (the number represented the twelve tribes of Israel) were placed in two piles upon it, and the old loaves were eaten by the priests. These loaves were prepared by the Levites, each loaf containing about four-fifths of a peck of fine flour (Lev. 24:5–9). This bread, constantly in the presence and sight of God, was called the "Presence-bread" (RV [marg.] Ex. 25:30), "the continual bread" (Num. 4:7). "This was called the

A four-horned limestone altar of King Solomon's time, found at Megiddo, one of his fortress cities. Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.





Altar of Burnt Offering (Brazen Altar).
Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia.

Shewbread, or Bread of the Presence, which symbolized the communion of God's people with Him in the things provided by Him and used in His service."³

In Solomon's Temple the brazen altar was immense, twenty cubits square by ten cubits high, to accommodate the numerous sacrifices during Solomon's reign (11 Chron. 4:1; 7:4,5). In course of time the sacrificial worship of the people was restricted to this altar in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5–14,26,27). The golden altar was of cedar covered with gold (I Ki. 6:20), and there were ten tables of shewbread (II Chron. 4:8).

Mention is made in the Old Testament of several other altars: that of King Ahaz, patterned after a model he had seen in Damascus, which displaced Solomon's brazen altar (II Ki. 16:10–15); that of the prophet Ezekiel, a square of twelve cubits, four cubits high, built on four platforms of diminishing size (Ezek. 43:13–17); and that of the Second Temple, erected after Judah's return from exile (Ezra 3:2,3)—an altar used until its desecration in 168 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes, who placed upon it an altar to Olympian Zeus (I Macc. 1:57). Judas Maccabaeus replaced this defiled structure in 165 B.C. (I Macc. 4:44–47). The huge altar of burnt offering of Herod's Temple resembled the pattern of Ezekiel's altar and, according to historian Josephus, measured fifty cubits square by fifteen cubits high (dimensions differ in the Mishnah). It was constructed of unhewn stones and approached by a gradual incline also made of unhewn stones. That Herod's Temple contained an altar of incense is confirmed by Luke's record of Zacharias' vision as he stood near it (Lu. 1:11).

Jesus taught a further refinement of worship: no sacrifice at the altar has any merit without the moral and ethical behavior that buttresses it; one's gift to God should not be offered until all grievances with one's fellow men have been corrected (Mt. 5:23,24): "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

In Revelation there is seen in heaven only the golden altar, the spiritual counterpart of the altar of incense of the Temple (Rev. 8:3).

High Places

A high place was a local shrine or rustic temple on a hilltop or elevation, with an altar as its central object. This natural setting afforded the worshiper a feeling of exaltation and communion with his god. In time the term *high place* was applied to any sanctuary, whatever its location.

The custom of worshiping on heights was almost universal in the early world. The Babylonians had their mounds and *ziggurats* or artificial elevations (the ruins of an immense *ziggurat* unearthed on the outskirts of Babylon is believed by archeologists to have been the legendary Tower of Babel). The high places of the Canaanites were found throughout their land. The Hebrews likewise regarded hilltops and mountain slopes as natural places of worship. When Abram entered Canaan he built an altar on a mountain east of Beth-el (Gen. 12:8); when he offered Isaac he went to Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2,9). On the sacred mount of Sinai Moses received his revelations of Jehovah (Ex. 3:1,14; 34:1,2).

On its entrance into Canaan Israel found a civilization over a thousand years old, whose people lived in walled cities and villages and whose idol worship at their sanctuaries was highly developed. Chief among their gods was Baal, the male deity to whom the peasant farmer looked for fertility and productivity of his land and crops. Every town and village had its local Baal, and these many Baals constituted the "Baalim" of Canaanitish worship. Other gods Israel found in the land were Chemosh of the Moabites and Molech of the Ammonites, as well as the bull cult common to all Semitic peoples (Ju. 10:6; I Ki. 11:5,7,8); each of these had specific high places. Moses had explicitly commanded the destruction of heathen high places: "Ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places" (Num. 33: 52).

Conquering the Canaanites, the Israelites inherited the heathen shrines and came into contact with their gross rites and practices. They adapted some of these places, among them Beth-el, Shiloh (where the Ark of the Covenant rested), Ramah, and Gibeon, to the worship of Jehovah (Ju. 21:19; I Sam. 7:17; I Ki. 3:2–4). Here, as at other lesser sanctuaries, they sacrificed, tithed, and observed harvest festivals.

The **groves** so often mentioned in relation to cultic sanctuaries were wooden image poles or artificial trees erected to Ashtoreth (Gr. Astarte), a Phoenician fertility goddess, the consort of Baal. In every instance in which the word *grove* is used in the Authorized Version (with the exception of Genesis

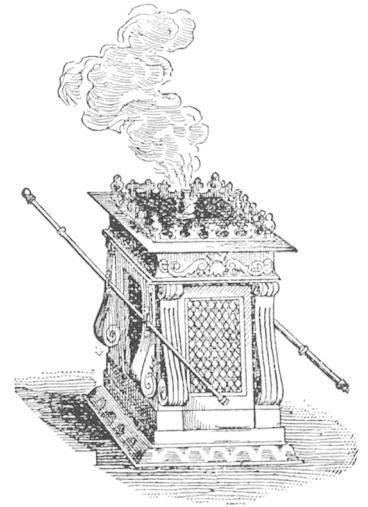
21:33, where it refers to a tamarisk tree) it is correctly translated in the Revised Version as *Asherah* (plural *Asherim*). These Asherim stood beside the stone pillars and altars of Baal, or near green trees, and were worshiped in licentious rituals (Ju. 6:25,26; II Ki. 21:3).

The Israelites failed to obey the Mosaic command to destroy the high places and groves (Ex. 34:12–16; Deut. 16:21). Instead they often worshiped side by side with the Canaanites and married their sons and daughters (Ju. 3:5–7). These sins fostered an admixture of Mosaic religious beliefs and rites with the cultic worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, and such syncretism tended to undermine Israel's monotheism throughout its national career.

Even after Solomon built the Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and decreed it the one high place where all Israel's sacrifices were to be made (I Ki. 11:36; compare Deut. 16:16), the other altars in the land were not abolished. In fact, following the division of Solomon's kingdom, Jeroboam I, first king of the northern kingdom of Israel, deliberately set up idolatrous shrines for his people's use (I Ki. 12:28–31).

The high places of Judah and Israel continued to flourish, particularly in the kingdom of Israel. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel encouraged Baal worship, feeding at their table the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the groves (I Ki. 18:18,19), while King Manasseh of Judah dared to set up an Asherah in the Temple itself (II Ki. 21:7). The early prophets sternly condemned the idolatry and immorality of these shrines and warned backsliding Israel and Judah of divine judgment. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel thundered their rebuke (Amos 2:4–8; Hos. 4:1,12–14; Is. 27:9). Jeremiah epitomized the sin of Israelitish worship at high places: “[Israel] is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot” (Jer. 3:6). Ezekiel bluntly warned: “I [God], even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places . . . that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished” (Ezek. 6:3,6). The kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah took partial measures to destroy the high places of Judah; but not until 621 B.C., when the Deuteronomic Code was found in the Temple, did King Josiah, the last of the four godly kings, take drastic and effective measures to wipe them out (II Ki. 23:1–20).

Historically for the Israelite the true high place came to be Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant (see p. 161). Zion attained a wealth of meaning in its figurative sense, typifying the heavenly sanctuary and the highest spiritual exaltation: “Out of Zion, the perfection of



Altar of Incense (Golden Altar).
Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia.

beauty, God hath shined” (Ps. 50:2; compare Ps. 48:2; Joel 3:16,17). Zion is called “my holy hill” (Ps. 2:6), “the mountain of his holiness” (Ps. 48:1), “the place of the name of the Lord of hosts” (Is. 18:7), and is the mount on which the Lamb stands with the redeemed of the earth (Rev. 14:1; compare Heb. 12:22).

Mosaic System

This religious system was instituted by Moses at the beginning of Israel's national history (*ca.* 1450 B.C.) when at Sinai God gave Israel a theocratic constitution in the Ten Commandments, the judgments, and the ordinances. These three component parts formed the Mosaic Covenant. First and foremost was the Decalogue, “the words of the covenant” that united God and Israel (Ex. 34:28). This was proclaimed by God Himself out of fiery flames from the top of the mount (Ex. 20:1–21) and engraved on tables of stone. It embodied the basic precepts of man's duty to God and man's duty to man, and was the core of all subsequent legislation. The judgments and ordinances were given orally to the people by Moses, the judgments to regulate their social life (Ex. 21:1–24:11) and the ordinances to govern their religious life, establishing a tabernacle, a priesthood, and a sacrificial worship to guard and perpetuate the divine covenant (Ex. 24:12–31:18). These three divisions comprised “the law” as used in its general sense in the New Testament (Mt. 5:17,18).

Up to this time the Hebrews had been governed principally by the tribal laws of the desert and by social customs which had assumed the force of law; this was true even during their long sojourn in Egypt. Also in their traditional background was the influence of Babylonian law and justice (see Code of Hammurabi, p. 37), undoubtedly known to them to a degree, for Abram had come from Ur into Canaan and Canaan itself was generally Babylonian in

culture. It was natural that some of this ancient civil law should be incorporated in the Mosaic system; but here it received a new moral impetus, being identified in every aspect with the worship of Jehovah.

The Law was first developed orally by Moses and by judges, to whom he delegated authority for the administration of justice (Ex. 18:25,26; Deut. 16:18), as well as by priests and Levites as they taught the Law to the people (Deut. 17:8–11; 19:15–18). This method of oral law (torah) survived long in Israel, adapting itself to the nation's changing economic and social conditions. The decisions of the courts and the royal word of kings contributed to changes in the administration of justice; and the teachings of the prophets, emphasizing the moral requirements of Israel's religion, exercised a great influence on the codifiers of Israel's law.

Through the centuries this legislation crystallized into various law codes which were incorporated in the final redaction of the Pentateuch or Torah (ca. 500–450 B.C.): the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:22–23:33), Deuteronomic Code (Deut. 12–26), Holiness Code (Lev. 17–26), and Priestly Code (portions of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers). (See *Preservation of Text*, p. 4.) These codes detailed the elaborate ceremonial, civil, and criminal legislation of the Mosaic system: ceremonial laws relating to the sanctuary, priesthood, cleanness and uncleanness, sac-

rifices, sacred dues, sacred days; constitutional laws relating to the government and the army; criminal laws defining crimes against God, morality, persons, and property; humane laws protecting animals and the poor. Legislation also extended to personal and family rights of parents and children, to marital relations, and to rights of master and slave; to property rights; and to obligations to God.

It was the duty of the priests and Levites to teach the Law to the nation and the obligation of every Hebrew father to instruct his sons in its precepts. Passages from the Law were written on the doorposts of Hebrew homes and inscribed on phylacteries worn by the pious on arm or wrist (Deut. 6:6–9). Later the Law was taught and expounded in the synagogues.

During the intertestamental period, along with the written Torah appeared an oral Torah, minute and numerous interpretations of Mosaic legislations by the scribes and Pharisees (see p. 216). This resulted in a stringent Judaism which governed every facet of Jewish daily life by New Testament times. (Strictly speaking, Judaism refers to the rites and doctrines of the Jews expressed in the written and oral Torah.) Judaism laid on the people the most rigid observance of the letter of the written Law and of the oral traditions they had inherited, so that worship became a heavy burden to the conscientious worshiper. From this burden the Jew was set free by the law of love and grace found in the teachings of Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17). Jesus did not set aside the Mosaic Law but taught its true practice: "Whatsoever they [scribes and Pharisees] bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Mt. 23:3). He summed up the essence of the Law in two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:37–40).

High priest's breastplate. This nine-inch folded linen square was trimmed with twelve jewels representing the twelve tribes of Israel. *Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia*.



Aaronic Priesthood

The Aaronic priesthood, drawn from the tribe of Levi, was an essential element of the Mosaic system. This tribe was first set apart to the service of God at Mount Sinai. The Levites rallied to Moses' side when he found the Israelites worshiping the golden calf and aided him in carrying out the punishment of the obstinately idolatrous (Ex. 32:26–29). Because of their loyalty, this tribe was chosen to replace all the first-born of Israel who had been sanctified to Jehovah on the day of exodus from Egypt (Num. 3:11–51; see *First-born*, p. 40).

Moses appointed a hereditary priesthood in the

family of his brother Aaron, and Aaron and all his sons became priests (Ex. 30:30). An elaborate ceremonial was prescribed for their consecration and that of their successors: ablutions, investiture to their office with priestly garments, anointing of the head with holy oil, and the offering of special sacrifices (Ex. 29). Through succeeding generations the duties of the priests varied with the development of the Mosaic system of worship and the priestly institution reached its most highly organized form with the dedication of the Second Temple (515 B.C.).

The first **high priest** was Aaron; the succession of the high priesthood descended through his third son Eleazar and in turn through Eleazar's son Phineas (Ex. 29:9; Lev. 8; Num. 20:28; 25:10–13). This line did not remain intact, however, for in the days of Samuel, Eli had attained the rank of high priest at the sanctuary in Shiloh although he was descended from Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron, not from Eleazar. After the death of Eli (I Sam. 3:11–18; 4:15–18), Abiathar of Eli's house shared the high priesthood with Zadok of the line of Eleazar in the reign of David (I Sam. 23:6; I Ki. 1:39). But because Abiathar supported Adonijah's attempted usurpation of his father's throne while Zadok remained loyal to David (I Ki. 1:5,7,8), King Solomon banished Abiathar and gave the high priesthood to the house of Zadok (I Ki. 2:26,27). During the Maccabean period (167–63 B.C.) the office of high priest ceased to be hereditary; it became a political prize.

In the performance of his ceremonial duties the high priest wore the special vestments of his office in addition to the usual garments of a priest (Ex. 28). His outer tunic, "the robe of the ephod," consisted of one woven piece of blue linen, sleeveless and edged at the hem with tassels and bells. The *ephod* worn over this robe was a short, richly embroidered, two-piece linen garment joined at the shoulders by onyx and fastened at the waist with an elaborate girdle. Over the ephod was worn the "breastplate of judgment," a folded square of fine twined linen on which were set twelve precious stones in four rows, each stone bearing the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. On his official headdress or linen mitre was a headband of gold engraved with the signet HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

The high priest was dedicated wholly to God's service and revered as the spiritual head of the nation (Lev. 10:6–11; Num. 4:16). According to Levitical law, to preserve his personal holiness and the dignity of his office he was forbidden the outward signs of mourning for the dead, even for his father and mother, which would have defiled him. He was to live within the sacred precincts of the sanctuary, and he could marry only a virgin from among his own people (Lev. 21:10–15).

The seven-branch golden candlestick, the flame of which burned perpetually in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. *Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopaedia*.



As the nation's representative, the high priest consecrated himself each morning and evening by a meal offering on the brazen altar (Lev. 6:19–23). Each morning and evening he also offered incense on the golden altar, the smoke and fragrance symbolic of ascending prayer, and each evening he lit the seven-branch golden candlestick in the Holy Place (Ex. 30:7,8; Lev. 24:1–4).

When there was need for divine guidance in public or national emergencies, the high priest placed two objects or oracles—the Urim and Thummim ("the Lights and the Perfections," Ex. 28:30, RV marg.)—within an inner pouch of the breastplate of judgment so that they rested over his heart, and then went into the Holy Place of the Tabernacle to stand before the veil of the inner sanctuary. Little is known of these two sacred objects, but it is thought they were small carved or marked stones by means of which he cast lots as he sought to divine the will of God (Lev. 8:8; I Sam. 14:41,42; 28:6). This method of seeking divine direction appears to have been discontinued by the time of the prophets, when the will of God was made known to Israel through its spiritually minded seers (but see Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65).

One of the holiest duties of the high priest was the yearly atonement for the people. He alone could enter the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctuary, and this he could do only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to make solemn expiation for his own sins, for the sins of the priests, and for those of the people (see Day of Atonement, p. 62).

The office of the Aaronic high priesthood typified and foreshadowed the priestly office of Jesus Christ and his atoning work, a point elucidated in particular in the Epistle to the Hebrews (7:26). Jesus Christ came after the higher order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:17), being divinely anointed not with material oil but "with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows"; "by his own blood" he won redemption for men and entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 1:9; 9:12,24).

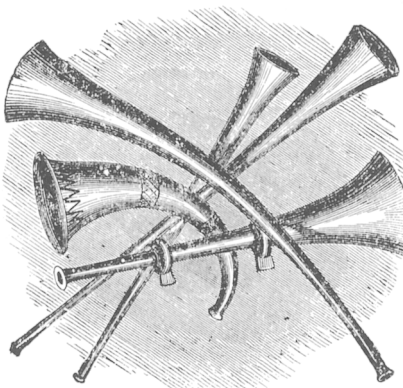
The **priests** were the lineal male descendants of

Aaron other than the high-priestly line (Ex. 40:12–15), standing in rank and power below the high priest and above the Levites (see p. 54). In the historical record, however, the terms *priest* and *Levite* were often used synonymously until after the Exile. Their sacrificial and ceremonial duties were designed to keep the Israelites ever aware that they were a holy and separate people. In the performance of their office they wore special garments consisting of linen breeches or trousers, embroidered robes, sashes, and turbans (Ex. 28:42; 29:8,9; Lev. 8:13).

A priest was forbidden to mourn the dead, except those of his own family, or to marry a harlot or a divorced woman, that he might be “holy unto his God.” While serving in his priestly capacity he must be without blemish; he could not eat of holy things while ceremonially unclean (Lev. 21:1–9,16–24; 22:1–9).

It was a priestly duty to keep the fire burning day and night on the brazen altar in the outer court of the Tabernacle. Daily on this altar priests made a morning and an evening sacrifice of a lamb on behalf of the people, accompanying it with meal and drink offerings (Ex. 29:38–42; Num. 28:1–8). On the Sabbath the offering was doubled (Num. 28:9,10). At the close of the daily services they pronounced the priestly blessing as prescribed, which assured the people of God’s presence and care: “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num. 6:22–27).

The priests daily supplied the high priest with pure olive oil for the golden candlestick (Ex. 27:20, 21), and each Sabbath set out fresh loaves of shewbread and ate the old (Lev. 24:5–9). In later times they also offered incense on the golden altar each morning and evening at the hour of prayer (Lu. 1:8–10). They officiated at the sacrificial offerings brought by the people (Lev. 1–7; see Sacrifice, p. 55) and at special sacrificial ceremonies on feast days (see Feasts, p. 59). They acted as judges in questions concerning that which was ceremonially unclean or profane and administered the rites of purification (Lev. 11–15).



Ancient trumpets.
*Peloubet's Bible Dic-
tionary.*

Priests blew the sacred silver trumpets, a privilege reserved to them alone, to assemble the congregation of Israel for journeys during the Wilderness Wandering and for war (Num. 10:1–9). They also sounded the trumpets for the New Moon festivals, for the Feast of Trumpets (Num. 29:1), for set festivals and fasts (Num. 10:10), for the inauguration of the Jubilee year (Lev. 25:9), and for other special occasions such as the crowning of a king (I Ki. 1:39).

Last, one of the principal activities of the priests as well as of the Levites was to teach the people the Mosaic statutes, a service that remained almost wholly their prerogative until after the Exile, when the interpretation of the Law was taken over by the scribes or *sopherim* (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 24:8; 33:10; compare Ezek. 44:23). The priests were supported by redemption money, tithes, firstfruits, and various offerings of the people.

In the religion Jesus Christ founded there was no ecclesiastical organization such as the Aaronic priesthood, for through his redeeming work all true Christians become “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”—through his sacrifice he “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father” (I Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6).

Levites

The Levites as a class were comprised of the non-Aaronic descendants of Levi through his three sons Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. They were the servants of the priests, entering upon their duties at the age of thirty and continuing to the age of fifty (Num. 4:3); the age requirement was later lowered by Moses to twenty-five (Num. 8:24), and to twenty by Hezekiah (II Chron. 31:17; compare Ezra 3:8). The Levites were entrusted with the transportation and care of the Tabernacle, its furniture, and its holy vessels during the Wilderness Wandering (Num. 3:5–9,17–39; 4:1–33). As aides of the priests, they assisted in the lesser tasks of ritual worship (I Chron. 23:27–32), and like the priests were teachers of the Law.

The tribe of Levi received no territory in Canaan, so in lieu of this they were allotted forty-eight cities, known as *Levitical cities*, according to the promise of Moses (Num. 35:1–8). Thirteen of these lay within the territories of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon and were allotted to the Aaronic priesthood; the remaining thirty-five were located in the territories of the other tribes (Josh. 21; I Chron. 6:54–81). All were centers of religious education for the people. The sites chosen for these priestly cities proved wise, for centuries later when the United Kingdom was divided after the death of Solomon the core of the

priesthood was preserved in all its strength to the southern Kingdom of Judah. Six of these Levitical cities were particularly designated cities of refuge, sanctuaries to which a man might flee for safety if he had taken a life without premeditation (see p. 45).

The Levites were maintained by the tithes of the people. Their religious duties were enlarged by King David to include those of judges, musicians, singers, porters, treasurers, and officers of the king. David made provision for the organization of the Temple service, dividing the Levites and priests into twenty-four courses or orders; the men of each course came up to the Temple to serve in rotation twice a year for a week at a time (I Chron. 23–26). In the service of the Second Temple the Levites were reduced to a subsidiary order.

Sacrifice

Animal sacrifice was an almost universal custom among primitive peoples and constituted an essential element of worship. It was a highly developed ritual of the great civilizations of Babylonia and Egypt and was a long-established practice among the Semites.

The principal thought underlying the sacrifice of animals and fowls appears to have been the substitution of the life of some innocent creature—a lamb, kid, bullock, turtledove—for the offerer's own life. It was considered a conciliatory gift and by this vicarious means the worshiper hoped to obtain a degree of immunity from the deity's anger and caprice. The most common sacrifice of the early Semitic worshiper was the "peace offering," in which the blood of the victim was poured either on the altar or on the ground and its fat offered to be burned as a "sweet savour"; he and his family ate what remained as a communal feast. A rarer form of animal sacrifice was the "burnt offering," in which the whole animal was offered to the deity and its "sweet savour" rose to heaven.

Offerings, oblations other than living things, were drawn from the fruits of the ground—cereals, vegetables, oil, fruits, salt, wine, incense—and were also propitiatory. Whatever the nature of the sacrifice or offering, it was a personal possession, a thing of value to the individual—the firstling of his flock or the firstfruit of his land—tendered in fear, homage, or thanksgiving.

Up to the time of the Exile in 586 B.C. (before Mosaic Law crystallized into the Levitical law of the Pentateuch) sacrifices were made by the head of the family, the priests receiving only a portion of the animal as their share (I Sam. 1:4; 2:13–16).

The first Biblical record of sacrifice concerns the lamb sacrifice of Abel and the fruit offering of Cain

(Gen. 4:3,4). Noah's sacrifice was the incense of a burnt offering of animal and fowl (Gen. 8:20,21). Child-sacrifice was rare among the Hebrews, and in the case of Abraham's intended offering of his son Isaac, a ram was providentially substituted (Gen. 22:13). At the institution of the Passover a lamb was slain by the head of each Israelite household to preserve the life of its first-born (Ex. 12:3–13).

With the inception of the moral law of Sinai came a greater consciousness of sin and guilt for sin, and thus arose a national need for expiation and purification. Sacrificial worship and a priesthood were made an integral part of the Mosaic system to afford the Israelite a means of atoning for his sins and attaining holiness in the sight of God.

The English word *atonement* translates the Hebrew *kaphar*, meaning "to cover," "to cancel," "to expiate." All killing of animals was sacrificial in intent, making use of the blood covenant (Lev. 17:1–9). Every blood sacrifice prefigured in type "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The eating of blood was prohibited: "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls" (Lev. 17:11–14; compare 7:26,27). The fat, considered as sacred as blood, was never eaten but always burned on the altar—"all the fat is the Lord's" (Lev. 3:16; 7:23–25). Sacrificial animals were drawn from the flocks and herds and were required to be without blemish, never having borne a yoke or been sheared (Lev. 22:18–24; Num. 19:2). Provision was made for the poor, allowing them to substitute turtledoves or pigeons, or even meal offerings, for the more expensive animals. The people's sacrifices were made through the priests in the outer court of the sanctuary according to prescribed ritual for both offerer and priest.

Sacrifices were burned on the altar, either in whole or in part. Any offering burned on the altar was a holy offering, being purified by fire, and any person who touched or partook of that offering was himself made pure.

Fire was long associated with the deity by the peoples of antiquity. "Fire is a frequent emblem of God in the Scriptures on account of its illuminating, purifying, and destructive properties, and appears as the accompaniment and indication of His presence. . . ." ⁴ A sacred fire had sealed the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:17), marked the presence of God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:2–4), guided and protected the Israelites by a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21; 14:19,20), been manifest on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19:18), accompanied the translation of Elijah (II Ki. 2:11), and was the sign to Elisha of preservation from the Syrian army (II Ki. 6:17).

In some instances sacred fire signified divine

approval in the acceptance of offerings: the “fire of the Lord” consumed the sacrifices of Aaron (Lev. 9:24), of Gideon (Ju. 6:21), of David (I Chron. 21:26), of Solomon (II Chron. 7:1), of Elijah (I Ki. 18:38). As an instrument of God’s power, fire was also a symbol of divine judgment, terrible and consuming. Fire from heaven destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness (Gen. 19:24), consumed Nadab and Abihu for their desecration of the altar (Lev. 10:1,2), and so on. God’s angels are likened to “a flaming fire” (Ps. 104:4). The baptism of the Holy Ghost comes with fire (Mt. 3:11)—“cloven tongues like as of fire” marked the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Paul warned that fire would “try every man’s work of what sort it is” (I Cor. 3:13–15), and that Christ at his Second Coming would be revealed in “flaming fire” (II Th. 1:7,8). Repeatedly in the book of Revelation fire is used as a descriptive symbol of divine power and judgment.

With the systematizing of sacrificial worship as found in the book of Leviticus the voluntary or freewill offerings of the people fell into five groups (Lev. 1–7). Each type of sacrifice was designed to make a man holy and had its order and purpose in reconciling the worshiper with God.

1. Whole Burnt Offering (Lev. 1). This was an animal sacrifice from the herd or flock, a male “without blemish” or, in the case of the poor, a fowl. The offerer, by placing his hand on the head of the animal, identified himself with it, making it a vicarious offering of himself. In the court of the congregation he killed, flayed, and cut the offering into pieces. The priests sprinkled the blood around the altar and laid all the parts on the altar, where they burned all night till consumed—“an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.” The next morning the priests carried the ashes outside the camp (Lev. 6:8–11). The skin of the animal became the property of the officiating priest (Lev. 7:8). *This offering signified the offerer’s complete self-dedication, self-surrender, and atonement* (see Rom. 12:1).

A burnt offering of a lamb was made each morning and evening for the community as a whole by the priests—the “continual burnt offering” (Ex. 29:38–42).

2. Meal Offering (Lev. 2; designated *meat offering* in AV). This was a vegetable offering of fine flour mixed with oil, seasoned with salt, and accompanied by incense (see Salt, p. 46). It could be presented raw or baked; if baked it contained no leaven or honey; these caused fermentation of the natural substances and thus corrupted them. A handful was burned on the altar as “a sweet savour” and the remainder

became the property of the priests, to be eaten by them (compare Lev. 6:14–18; 7:9,10). If of firstfruits, this offering consisted of parched corn from green ears. *This offering signified thankfulness for the bounty of God in the plentifulness of earth’s increase, and sought His favor.*

A meal offering also accompanied the daily burnt offering made by the priests for the congregation (Ex. 29:40,41).

One of the high priest’s duties was to make this consecration offering daily, morning and evening, on his own behalf. He did not eat of his sacrifice; it was wholly burned (Lev. 6:20–23).

3. Peace Offering (Lev. 3). This was an animal sacrifice of the herd or flock, a male or female without blemish—an offering which served as a sacred feast in which God, His priests, and His people jointly partook. Its blood was sprinkled on the altar. Only the internal fat (and, in the case of sheep, the fat of the tail) was offered to be burned as “a sweet savour.” The choice parts were waved or heaved before God and then eaten by the priests as their share of the sacrifice (Lev. 7:28–34).

This blood sacrifice was accompanied by a meal offering of four varieties of cake, one of which contained leaven. One cake was also waved and then became the possession of the priests (Lev. 7:11–14). The remaining flesh and cakes were eaten by the offerer and his family in a sacrificial meal (Lev. 7:15–21). Peace offerings were of three kinds: thank, votive, and voluntary offerings. *These were expressive of fellowship, communion, and harmony between God and the offerer.*

4. Sin Offering (Lev. 4:1–5:13). This was an animal sacrifice, the victim varying according to the status of the offerer: for the high priest a bullock, for the congregation (represented by the elders) a bullock or a male goat (Num. 15:24), for a ruler a male goat, for one of the people a female goat, a ewe lamb, a pigeon, or a meal offering.

When the sin offering was made for the high priest or for the congregation, the blood was sprinkled seven times before the veil of the sanctuary; some was smeared on the horns of the altar of incense; the remainder was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. In the case of a ruler or a lay member, some of the blood was smeared on the horns of the altar of incense, the remainder poured at the foot of the altar of burnt offering. The fat was burned in atonement and the remaining flesh boiled and eaten by the priests (Lev. 6:29); however, in the case of the offering of the high priest and of the congregation the fat was burned on the altar and the carcass taken outside the camp to be burned (compare Heb.

13:10–14). The high priest did not eat of his own sacrifice (Lev. 6:30).

This sacrifice was made for a sin done in ignorance (RV unwittingly) against the laws and ordinances of God and subsequently brought to the offender's knowledge. It was designed to atone for three specific sins: failing to bear testimony, touching an unclean thing, and making rash oaths. *It signified expiation and atonement.*

Mosaic Law explicitly stated that no atonement was possible for the man who sinned willfully or presumptuously (Num. 15:30; compare Heb. 10:26–29). There were, however, certain permissible exceptions (see next paragraph).

5. Trespass or Guilt Offering (Lev. 5:14–6:7). This was a ram sacrifice offered by one who had unwittingly committed sacrilege by defrauding the sanctuary either by consuming what belonged to the priests (Lev. 2:3) or by withholding his full due of tithes, firstfruits, and the like. This guilt offering was to be accompanied by full restitution of what was due plus one-fifth. After the blood and fat of the victim had been offered, what remained was eaten by the priests (Lev. 7:1–7). The trespass offering was also permitted one who had deliberately defrauded his neighbor through lying or deceit but had made full amends plus one-fifth. *It signified penitence, expiation, and atonement.*

Sacrifice also played a part in the purification ritual for uncleanness: the purification of women from childbirth (Lev. 12), cleansing of lepers (Lev. 14), cleansing from bodily discharges (Lev. 15).

Special sacrifices attended the consecration of the priesthood (Ex. 29; Lev. 8; 9).

Extraordinary sacrifices were specified for the Day of Atonement, the Sabbath, the three national festivals (Passover, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Tabernacles), as well as for lesser feasts (see pp. 58–62).

In time this intensive ceremonialism tended to divert Hebrew thought from the real spirit and purpose of sacrifice so that outward symbols took the place of inward purification. The Hebrew prophets (800–400 B.C.), seeing the inadequacy of this system, taught the ethical nature of worship. They did not condemn the sacrificial system as such but spoke out against its hollow ritual, decrying the lack of righteousness, mercy, and justice (Is. 1:11–17; Jer. 6:19,20; Amos 5:22,24; Mic. 6:6–8). Their teachings poured into Israel's devotions a fresh spiritual stimulus which directed the Hebrew mind anew to the exercise of the moral principles of the Law. Hosea epitomized their message: "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Ho. 6:6). The Psalmist declared: "The sac-

rifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"; and "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 51:17; 141:2).

The types of worship instituted by the Mosaic system were fulfilled in Jesus Christ as God's Messiah. As "the Lamb of God" he literally and figuratively fulfilled the symbolism of blood sacrifice by laying down his life for the sins of men. He himself regarded the giving up of his human life as the great propitiation for sin: "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26:28). New Testament writers saw his sacrifice as a basic and vital fact of Christianity. They related it to that of the paschal lamb (I Cor. 5:7), to the national sin offering of the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:12), and to the mediation and sealing of the New Covenant with spiritual Israel (Heb. 9:14,15). Peter wrote: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things. . . . But with the precious blood of Christ" (I Pet. 1:18,19; compare Rom. 3:25; I Jn. 1:7). Jesus' supreme sacrifice, "once for all," abrogated the old sacrificial system. His selfless love gave men the true and "living way" of atonement, whereby through faith and life in him they might be reconciled to God (Rom. 5:11; Heb. 9:26; 10:10).

Jesus taught that love itself—love for God and love for one's neighbor—alone keeps the Commandments and is superior to all other sacrifices (Mk. 12:33). Paul urged the believer to present all the faculties of his being as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," man's reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

Tithing

Tithes were long paid as a tax or tribute to a conqueror or ruler (Gen. 47:24; I Sam. 8:15,17). Scripture records that Abram tithed his spoils of war to Melchizedek, king of Salem (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:1–10), and Jacob vowed a tithe to God after his vision at Beth-el (Gen. 28:22).

Tithing to the sanctuary stemmed from an early religious belief of the peoples of the East that the land and all it yielded belonged to a supreme deity who was to be thanked for bountiful crops or to be propitiated in the hope of future blessings. The word *tithe* denotes one-tenth. Mosaic Law required that a tenth of a man's produce of the land and of his flocks and herds be given to God each year as His rightful due, a thank offering for His goodness. Since the tribe of Levi was apportioned no territory in Canaan, this method of tithing furnished the priests and Levites their subsistence in payment for their service

to the sanctuary and for their religious instruction of the people (Num. 18:8–24; compare Deut. 18:1–8). The Levites in turn tithed to the priests (Num. 18:25–30). The tithe of the land was of its firstfruits (Deut. 26:2–4,10), and that of flocks and herds was every tenth animal, good or bad, which passed under the owner's rod as he numbered his cattle (Lev. 27:32,33).

Legislation relating to tithing was modified from time to time to meet changing social and economic conditions. Deuteronomic law dictated that the tithe be presented at the central sanctuary, there to provide a feast for the offerer's household and for the Levite (Deut. 12:17–19). Where the journey was too long to transport the offering, it could be converted into money to be spent at the sanctuary or given to the Levites (Deut. 14:22–27). Levitical legislation added one-fifth to the tithe value when agricultural produce was exchanged for money, but the animal tithe could not be commuted (Lev. 27:30–33). Every third year the tithe was stored in local villages to be shared with the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, and the Levite (Deut. 14:28,29).

During religious lapses the practice of tithing to the Levites was slighted. King Hezekiah in his reforms enforced this duty by royal mandate (II Chron. 31:5–7); the prophet Malachi after the Exile sternly reproved the people for withholding their tithes, for by so doing they were defrauding God (Mal. 3:8,9); Nehemiah made tithing an important part of law-keeping (Neh. 10:35–38). The well-known passage of Malachi (3:10), "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . .," describes the benediction God pours out on those who tithe in gratitude and trust.

In the first century A.D. the Pharisees tithed with great literalness, giving a tenth even of their garden herbs. Jesus did not condemn their meticulous attention to detail on this point, but he did rebuke their neglect of the more important moral and spiritual dues of righteous judgment, mercy, and faith (Mt. 23:23).

Festivals

Festivals or feasts occupied a natural and important place in the social and religious life of the Hebrews after their entrance into Canaan. With the exception of the Day of Atonement, these were days and seasons of rejoicing before God. The religious festivals can be grouped under three headings: (1)

festivals connected with the Sabbath; (2) the three great national festivals; (3) lesser historical feasts.

Sabbath

The festivals connected with the institution of the Sabbath were reckoned on the basis of the sacred number seven, for on the seventh day God rested from His creative work—each seventh day was sacred, as was each seventh month and each seventh year. Principal among these feasts was the weekly Sabbath. The word *Sabbath* is derived from the Hebrew *shabbath*, "to break off," "to repose," "to desist." Its origin as a day of rest is uncertain, but it perhaps arose from ancient Babylonian and Canaanitish observances based in some form on the ever-recurring cycles of the moon. Whatever its origin, a periodic day of rest was probably customary in the lives of the nomadic Hebrews.

The first specific mention of the Sabbath occurs in the time of Moses, when the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue consecrated the seventh day of the week as a holy day commemorating the completion of God's creation (Ex. 20:8–11; compare Gen. 2:2,3). "The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath . . . for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Ex. 31:16,17). The Sabbath began at sundown on the sixth day and terminated at sundown on the seventh; it was a day of cessation from all servile and gainful labor, thus one of rest and refreshment for man and beast. No fire was kindled in the home. Principally this day was one of worship and meditation. A public convocation was held originally in Tabernacle and, later, Temple. For those who could not attend, it was observed faithfully in the home (Lev. 23:3) but its manner of observance is not prescribed.

On this day the priests doubled the burnt offering of the morning and evening sacrifice, and replaced the consecration offering of the shewbread with fresh loaves (Lev. 24:5–8; Num. 28:9,10). Under Mosaic Law the observance of the Sabbath was mandatory (Ex. 35:2,3; Num. 15:32–36).

Sabbath-keeping became a distinguishing mark between the Hebrews and their neighbors, although little is recorded about the Sabbath from the time of Moses to the Exile other than the prophets' exhortations to keep the Sabbath holy (Is. 56:2–7; Jer. 17:22–27) and their rebukes of its repeated desecration: "The house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness . . . and my sabbaths they greatly polluted. . . ." (Ezek. 20:13). The Sabbath proved a strong cohesive bond among the Jewish captives in Babylon.

With the development of the synagogue in the intertestamental period, the Sabbath became not only a day of rest and worship but also one devoted to the study of Scripture (see Synagogue, p. 216). With the rise of Judaism in the same period, observance of the Sabbath became a paramount religious duty. So many restrictions were added under scribal and Pharisaic interpretations of the Law that Sabbath-keeping became a heavy burden to the pious Jew.

Jesus took sharp issue with the minutiae of regulations that in his time had so buried the spirit and purpose of the Sabbath, and both by his teaching and his healing he restored to this day its original blessings (Mt. 12:1–13; Mk. 2:27,28; see also Charge of Sabbath-breaking, p. 268).

In the early Church the first day of the week, the day on which Jesus' resurrection had taken place, was called "the Lord's day," and in time this Sabbath replaced for Christians the Jewish Sabbath of the seventh day (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).

Sabbatical Feasts

Feast of Trumpets or New Year Festival (Rosh Hashana) This was a lunar festival observed on the first day of Tishri, the first month of the civil year, the first new moon of the seventh month of the sacred year.* All work was suspended and the day was celebrated by a sacred convocation accompanied by the blowing of silver trumpets, as well as by special sacrificial offerings (Lev. 23:24,25; Num. 29:1–6; Ezra 3:6; Neh. 8:2). It was the most honored of the New Moon festivals.

New Moon

The appearing of the new moon marked the beginning of each month, and the occasion was observed by

the blowing of trumpets and by special burnt and peace offerings (Num. 10:10; 28:11–15; Is. 66:23; Amos 8:5).

Sabbatical Year

Following the sabbatical principle of a day of rest for man and beast, every seventh year was designated a sabbatical year of rest for the land, during which it was to lie fallow. Throughout the course of this year whatever the land yielded spontaneously was common property, to be shared with the poor and the stranger (Ex. 23:10,11; Lev. 25:1–7). The Law prescribed

that in this seventh year Hebrew slaves were to be freed (Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12–18); Hebrew poor were to be released from payment on their loan debts during this period (Deut. 15:1–4); and the Law was to be read publicly to the people during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 31:10–13; Neh. 8). There is no evidence in the Old Testament that all these sabbatical ordinances were strictly adhered to; they were nevertheless held up before the nation as social ideals.

Year of Jubilee

Every fiftieth year, the one following a seventh sabbatical, was called the Year of Jubilee and was inaugurated on the tenth day of Tishri, the great Day of Atonement, with the sounding of the silver trumpets (Lev. 25:8–55). As with the sabbatical year, the land was to lie uncultivated; Hebrew slaves and their families were to be freed by their Hebrew owners. Every man's inheritance reverted to its original owner; if land was sold, the purchase price was governed by the number of years yet to run till jubilee. Therefore land could not be sold in perpetuity, a regulation that prevented the acquisition of large estates and preserved the property inheritance of tribe and family. Although there are allusions to the Year of Jubilee by the prophets, there is no indication in Old Testament history that its provisions were faithfully observed.

*Before the Exile the Hebrew civil calendar had begun in the autumn, but in post-exilic times an ecclesiastical calendar, following the Babylonian, was also adopted, which began in the spring with the vernal equinox, and the months were given new names. Both sacred and civil calendars were used.

Month of Sacred Year	Name of Month	Month of Civil Year
1	Abib or Nisan	7
2	Ziv or Iyyar	8
3	Sivan	9
4	Tammuz	10
5	Ab	11
6	Elul	12
7	Tishri or Ethanim	1
8	Bul or Marchesvan	2
9	Chisleu	3
10	Tebeth	4
11	Shebat	5
12	Adar	6
13	Veadar (leap year only)	

National Feasts

Directly related to the agricultural seasons were the three great annual festivals every male Israelite was required to attend at the sanctuary: the Passover (and Feast of Unleavened Bread), the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 23:14–17; Deut. 16:16). The first of these agricultural festivals saw the grain standing on the soil ready for harvesting; the second marked the full harvesting of the grain, the third observed the gathering in of the fruit of the land. Like the Sabbath, they were reckoned in relation to the sacred number seven. They were celebrated by feasting, singing, dancing, and processions. Their

celebration was a strong unifying force among the tribes; strengthening the people's religious ties with the sanctuary, promoting gratitude to God for His providence, and blending the political and social interests of Israel. After the Temple was erected in Jerusalem these feasts were always observed in the holy city.

Passover

The solemn feast of Passover originated in Egypt under divine direction immediately preceding the tenth and last plague which took the life of the first-born of man and beast. To ensure preservation from this plague, the head of each Israelitish household killed a lamb or a kid—a male of the first year “without blemish”—and sprinkled its blood on the lintel, the upper beam, and the sideposts of the door of his dwelling. Its flesh was roasted whole and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; it was eaten in haste, for the Israelites were girded for the journey out of Egypt. That night the plague struck the life of the Egyptians' first-born but “passed over” the houses marked with the token of blood (Ex. 12:1–28).

The Passover became a commemorative institution to bring to Israel's remembrance both the preservation of its first-born and its deliverance from Egypt, a family feast celebrated from sunset to sunset on the fourteenth day of the month Abib (March–April), the first month of the sacred year, the seventh month of the civil year (Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3). After the Exile this month was called Nisan (Es. 3:7).

According to Deuteronomy 16:2,5–7, the paschal lamb was no longer killed at home but sacrificed on the eve of Passover “in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there,” and the fat and the blood given to the priests. The lamb was then taken home and eaten with unleavened bread (*maz-zoth*) and bitter herbs. (Leaven was a lump of old, highly fermented dough added to fresh dough before it was kneaded to cause it to rise. Leaven thus became emblematic of corruption [Mt. 16:6,12; I Cor. 5:8] as well as of an all-pervading and transforming agent [Mt. 13:33].) This bread without leaven, heavy and unfermented, was called “the bread of affliction” to commemorate Israel's hasty departure from Egypt when the people did not linger to bake leavened loaves; the bitter herbs were to recall their rigorous bondage in Egypt. None of the flesh of the Passover lamb was left till morning. In this manner Jesus kept the Passover with his twelve apostles in an upper chamber in Jerusalem (Lu. 22:7–14; for Passover ritual in New Testament times see footnote, p. 311). No person having any bodily infirmity or ceremonial uncleanness could partake of this Passover meal, but could have a supplementary Passover on the fourteenth day of the following month (Num. 9:6–12).

The Old Testament makes mention of a number of memorial Passovers:

In the wilderness of Sinai (Num. 9:1–5)

Upon Israel's entrance into the Promised Land (Josh. 5:10)

Under King Hezekiah of Judah in his religious reforms (II Chron. 30)

Under King Josiah of Judah in his religious reforms (II Chron. 35:1–19)

Under Zerubbabel after completion of the Second Temple (Ezra 6:19,20)

Consistent with the whole Mosaic system, the paschal lamb was symbolic of the Messiah and his redeeming work. John the Baptist from the first called Jesus “the Lamb of God” (Jn. 1:29); Paul spoke of him as “Christ our passover . . . sacrificed for us” (I Cor. 5:7); Peter wrote of him as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Pet. 1:19); and Revelation repeatedly applies the title “the Lamb” to Jesus Christ as the Savior who has redeemed men from the sins of the world (Rev. 5:6; 7:17; 14:1).

Closely associated with the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which began the following day and was observed for seven days (Ex. 12:15–20; Lev. 23:6–14; Num. 28:17–25; Deut. 16:3,4,8). During this period all leaven was put out of the house. It was a happy occasion celebrating the opening of the reaping season, when the sickle was first put to the ripening grain. The first and seventh days were marked by religious convocations and all labor was suspended. The term *Passover* was often loosely applied to the whole festival period of eight days (Deut. 16:1–8; Lu. 22:1).

At this festival a sheaf of the newly ripened grain (a wave sheaf) was brought to the sanctuary and waved before the altar by the priest, thus consecrating the harvest to God. Throughout these seven days the people ate unleavened bread, and daily the priests offered for the congregation, according to Levitical law, the sacrifices of two young bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs without blemish, as well as required meal and drink offerings.

Feast of Weeks

The second annual festival, the Feast of Weeks, was also called the Feast of Harvest, the Day of Firstfruits (Ex. 34:22a; Lev. 23:15–22; Num. 28:26–31; Deut. 16:9–11). This one-day festival of rejoicing fell on the sixth of Sivan (third sacred month, May–June), the fiftieth day from the first day of Passover, and closed the reaping season of the grain harvest. On this day of holy convocation two baked loaves made of newly harvested grain, wave loaves that contained

leaven, were brought to the sanctuary, and waved before the Lord. These were accompanied by burnt offerings and meal and drink offerings.

In the New Testament this Day of Firstfruits is called **Pentecost**—its name derived from the Greek *pentecoste*, “fiftieth.” The first Pentecost mentioned in the New Testament fell fifty days from Jesus’ resurrection; it marked the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples and the “birthday” of the Christian Church (Acts 2:1), of which Jesus Christ was “the firstfruits of them that slept” (I Cor. 15:20).

Feast of Tabernacles

This feast, also called the Feast of Ingathering (Suk-koth), was the third great annual feast. It was a joyous autumn festival that lasted seven days and marked the harvesting of the fruit of the land—its grapes, figs, and olives. It opened with a holy convocation on the fifteenth day of Tishri or Ethanim (seventh month of the sacred year, September–October), and on each day of the feast special sacrifices were offered at the sanctuary (Ex. 23:16b; Lev. 23:34–36; Num. 29:12–38; Deut. 16:13–15). Every seventh (sabbatical) year the Law was read publicly to the people during the seven days of the feast (Deut. 31:10–13).

The people observed this festival by dwelling in booths (temporary shelters) made of leafy branches erected on the rooftops, in the streets, or in the open fields as a reminder to each generation that their forefathers had lived in tents during the forty years’ sojourn in the wilderness (Lev. 23:39–43; Neh. 8:16). Later, an eighth day of holy convocation was added to celebrate the entrance into Canaan (Lev. 23:36).

By Jesus’ day part of the ritual of this feast was the pouring of water from the Pool of Siloam on the brazen altar to symbolize the divine provision of water afforded the Israelites in the wilderness (see p. 279).

Lesser Feasts

Feast of Purim

Held on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar (the twelfth month of the sacred year, February–March), this festival commemorated the preservation of the Jews in Persia from the conspiracy of Haman, the king’s prime minister, through the timely intervention of Queen Esther (Es. 9:20–32; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xi, 6.13).

Feast of Wood Offering

A one-day festival was held on the fifteenth day of Abib (Nisan), when the people brought wood to the Temple that there might be a continuous supply for the fire that burned perpetually on the altar (see

Nehemiah 10: 34; Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, xi, 17.6).

Feast of Dedication or Feast of Lights (Hanukkah)

This feast commemorated the purification and rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 B.C. after its desecration by the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes. It was an eight-day period of national rejoicing which began on the twenty-fifth day of Chisleu (the ninth sacred month, November–December). Josephus called this feast “Lights” because it was observed by special illumination of the Temple, synagogues, and private homes (Jn. 10:22; I Macc. 4:52–59; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xii, 7.7; see also p. 280).

Fasts

The custom of fasting existed among the Hebrews from early Bible times as a religious discipline or as a token of grief. The one who fasted abstained from food and drink, and often afflicted himself by rending his garments, sitting in sackcloth, and pouring ashes on his head. The purpose of fasting was to foster penitence and humility of soul; its exercise was regarded as efficacious in warding off evil and in invoking divine favor. The devout employed it as a means of seeking closer communion with God (Ps. 35:13,14; 69:10,11). Fasting was practiced in times of personal or national calamity or mourning, as at the death of King Saul and his sons (I Sam. 31:13), at Job’s affliction (Job. 2:8,11–13), at Jonah’s prophecy of Nineveh’s fall (Jon. 3:4–10).

As the tendency toward formal fasting increased without proper inward repentance, the Hebrew prophets rebuked the mere outward conformity and laid emphasis on moral and spiritual regeneration as the true fast of the heart (Is. 58:1–7). Joel admonished: “Rend your heart, and not your garments” (Joel 2:13).

The practice of individual fasting increased after the Exile and by the first century A.D. the Pharisees fasted at least twice weekly (Lu. 18:12). To Jesus such formalism had little merit since it was often hypocritical, practiced to win the approval of men; he taught his followers to fast in secret in true humility and prayer, enjoining a spiritual discipline of mind and heart that would have its reward from the Father (Mt. 6:16–18). He commended a fasting from materialistic thinking, which would enable men to do the works he did, as on the occasion when he answered the apostles’ question why they had failed to heal the lunatic child: “This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (Mk. 9:29). Questioned

why his disciples did not fast, Jesus answered: "Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days" (Mk. 2:19,20).

To Paul fasting meant abstaining from evil, even from its appearance (I Th. 5:22; compare Ja. 4:7). He commended the "godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (11 Cor. 7:10; see also vv. 9,11).

Day of Atonement

On the tenth day of Tishri one national yearly fast, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), was enjoined on all Israelites by Mosaic Law. It was a high Sabbath, a day of national humiliation on which the people neither ate nor drank, refrained from all work, and assembled for a holy convocation. They were to "afflict" their souls and repent in sorrow for their sins of the past year (Lev. 23:26–32).

On this occasion the high priest made solemn yearly atonement for the sins of the people, for the priesthood, and for the cleansing of the sanctuary (Lev. 16; Num. 29:7–11). This was the one day of the year on which he could enter the Holy of Holies, "within the veil." For this ceremony he first bathed in preparation, and clothed himself in the simple linen tunic and sash of a Levitical priest, since he was atoning for his own sins as well as those of the nation.

For himself and his house (that is, the priests) the high priest brought a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering; for the people he chose two young male goats as a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, and cast lots for the goats—one to be used as a sacrifice, the other as a scapegoat. Then he killed his bullock at the altar of burnt offering, and while the blood was being received into a vessel he entered the Holy of Holies carrying a censer of live coals and a bowl of incense; there he poured the incense onto the coals, causing a fragrant cloud to rise before the Ark of the Covenant. Next he brought the blood of the bullock within the veil, sprinkled it once on the mercy seat of the Ark and seven times before it, thus making atonement for himself and the priesthood.

Outside the sanctuary, he killed the sacrificial goat and—entering within the veil for the third time—sprinkled its blood on the mercy seat as before, thus effecting figuratively the reconciliation of Israel with God.

So that God's presence and righteousness might remain with the nation, the high priest then sprinkled the mingled blood of the bullock and the goat

seven times on the altar of incense in the Holy Place to cleanse it from the defilement of sinful men to which it had been subject during the past year. And by repeating this atoning ritual on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the Court of the Congregation, he cleansed this altar also.

After this he laid his hands on the head of the scapegoat and solemnly confessed over it all the transgressions of the people (by this symbolic act transferring them to the animal); then it was led away into the desert and released. (After the Exile this ritual changed, the scapegoat being taken to a high rock twelve miles from Jerusalem and thrust over to its death.)

Divesting himself of his plain linen garments, the high priest bathed and resumed his priestly vestments. He then offered the two rams as burnt offerings for himself and the people, thereby consecrating himself and the people to God's service.

No reference is made in the Old Testament to the observance of the Day of Atonement—only to its institution by Moses. It is mentioned in the New Testament as "the fast" (Acts 27:9). It remains today the greatest of Jewish fasts, observed in penitence and prayer.

As with other sacrificial figures of the Mosaic system, Jesus also fulfilled the types of atonement prefigured by this day, not in the Old Testament form of a temporary cancellation or "covering" for sin by vicarious sacrifice, but in the destruction of sin itself by his own immaculate life and sacrifice, thus providing the true way of reconciliation with God (compare Jn. 1:29; I Jn. 2:2). The author of Hebrews identifies Jesus Christ as our holy and undefiled high priest, who has "entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24), having made atonement "once for all" (Heb. 10:10) by the sinless sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:7–12).

Lesser Fasts

After the Exile lesser national fasts were designated, principal among them the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months, days of observing national calamities which had befallen Judah (Zech. 8:19). The *fast of the fourth month* commemorated the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:2; 52:6,7); the *fast of the fifth month* memorialized the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:12–14; Zech. 7:3,4); the *fast of the seventh month* marked the anniversary of the murder of Gedaliah at Mizpah (II Ki. 25:25,26; Jer. 41:1–3); the *fast of the tenth month* recalled the opening of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (II Ki. 25:1; Jer. 39:1).

NOTEWORTHY FASTS OF SCRIPTURE:

Moses' fast of forty days on the mount before he received the Decalogue the second time (Ex. 34:28)
 David's fast of seven days in intercession for his son, child of Bathsheba (II Sam. 12:16–20)
 Elijah's fast of forty days in despair over Israel's defection (I Ki. 19:8)
 Judah's fast under King Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:3)
 Daniel's two fasts for the restoration of Judah, the second a fast of three full weeks of mourning (Dan. 9:3–19; 10:2,3)
 Esther's three-day fast and that of her people before she petitioned to the king (Es. 4:16)

Ezra's fast and that of the remnant in preparation for the return journey from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:21–23)
 Ezra's fast over the backsliding of the returned remnant of Judah in resuming a forbidden relationship with the heathen (Ezra 10:6)
 Nehemiah's sorrowful fast over the desolation of the remnant in Jerusalem (Neh. 1:4)
 Jesus' fast of forty days in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry (Mt. 4:2)
 Paul's penitent fast of three days in Damascus after his conversion (Acts 9:9)
 The Antiochan church's fast preceding Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–3)

Language

The languages spoken in southwestern Asia were Semitic, the name given to the tongues spoken by the descendants, real or attributed, of Shem.

The dialects of this Semitic family may be divided into three main branches: 1. The *Northern* or Aramaean, to which the Chaldee and Syriac belong. 2. The *Southern*, of which the Arabic is the most important, and which also includes the Ethiopic. 3. The *Central*, which comprises the Hebrew and the dialects spoken by the other inhabitants of Palestine, such as the Canaanites and Phoenicians.⁵

The Hebrew spoken by the early Israelites was close kin to the dialects of Canaan and Phoenicia. "The language of Canaan" (Is. 19:18) and "the Jews' language" (Is. 36:11,13) are the only terms by which the Old Testament mentions the Hebrew tongue.

The Hebrew language occupied a place all its own in the history of Israel. While developed contiguous to other peoples and languages, it maintained a purity quite marvelous. Outside races, however, gradually edged their way into Israel's life, language, customs, and religion. The classical period of Hebrew writing, from the eighth to the fifth century B.C., gave way before the impact of the Aramaic sweep to the south.⁶

All the books of the Old Testament are written in classical Hebrew with the exception of a few portions written in Chaldee or Biblical Aramaic (Gen. 31:47; Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4–7:28).

During the Exile Jewish captives adopted the Aramaic language of their Babylonian conquerors. This tongue was already in general use in southeastern Asia, northern Syria, and Mesopotamia. Aramaic gradually replaced Hebrew as the popular language in Palestine, until finally Hebrew was used only by scholars. Jesus spoke Galilean Aramaic.

The introduction of the Greek language into southwestern Asia came with the conquests of Alexander the Great. From 330 B.C. to 330 A.D. it was the *koine*, the international form of Greek spoken throughout the Graeco-Roman Empire. Those who adopted Hellenism spoke this vernacular tongue. Its use in Egypt by the Jews of the Dispersion resulted in the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint, *ca.* 250–50 B.C.). Jesus undoubtedly spoke this common Greek as well as Aramaic, since he grew up in the midst of a large Greek-speaking population in Galilee and later many of his audiences included Gentiles. The New Testament itself was written in Greek.

Glossary

Semite

A term employed both ethnologically and linguistically. (1) It is used of the descendants of Shem, eldest son of Noah, who overspread southwestern Asia (Gen. 10:21–31). Among the ancient Shemitic or Semitic peoples were the Arabs, Babylonians, Assyrians,

Phoenicians, Aramaeans or Syrians, Canaanites (or Amorites), Hebrews, and the like. (2) Anthropology has shown that these peoples were not so much a racial unit as a linguistic one, the uniting factor being that they all spoke some branch of the Semitic languages.

Hebrews

The chosen people were variously called Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews, but each name holds a different shade of meaning. The Hebrews were an Aramaean branch of the Semites who migrated from lands east of the Euphrates and settled mainly in Canaan. The etymology of the word Hebrew is obscure. It may have been derived from Eber, the third generation of the line of Shem, the eponymous ancestor of Abram (Gen. 10:21–24). (Some identify the Hebrews with the Habiri, a warlike people mentioned in the Tell el-Amarna letters who may have been the first wave of the Hebrew conquest of Canaan.) It may have been derived from the adverb *eber*, “beyond,” “across,” “on the other side.” It was first applied to Abram by the Canaanites as denoting the people who came from the other side of the Euphrates (Gen. 14:13). This Hebraic division included the Israelites and Edomites (descendants of Abraham), as well as the Ammonites and Moabites (descendants of Lot), but the term early became the distinctive name by which foreigners knew this Semitic people (Gen. 39:17; I Sam. 4:6).

Israelites

The descendants of the patriarch Jacob (Israel; Gen. 32:28); the Children of Israel; the national name of the twelve tribes collectively; the chosen or covenant people; Jews. This was a term used by the Hebrews of themselves. Figuratively, an Israelite is a Christian.

Jews

This term at first denoted the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Judah (II Ki. 16:6). The exiles in Babylon were called Jews because they had come from Judah. After their return to Palestine this name applied in popular usage to all Israelites. Its broader designation also included those who embraced the Judaic religion.

Gentile

The word *Gentile* stems from the Hebrew *goy* (plural *goyim*) meaning literally “people,” “nation,” “nations,” that is, non-Hebrews. The Greek equivalent in the New Testament is *ethnos*. According to Genesis 10:2–5, the *goyim* were descended from the seven sons of Japheth, Noah’s third son.

The Authorized Version of the Old Testament often uses the word *Gentile* in the sense of “heathen”; the Revised Version more precisely translates it “nations.” The Authorized Version of the New Testament occasionally translates this word from the Greek *Hellen*, Greek-speaking persons (Jn. 7:35; I Cor. 10:32); the Revised Version replaces this with the word *Greeks*.

The Jews applied the term *Gentile* to all peoples of non-Jewish faith, those not of “the circumcision,” who therefore had no part in the worship, sacred rites, and Abrahamic promises special to Israel.