

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER One

Tent Dwellings

IN THE BIBLE, living in tents is of ancient origin. It goes back before the days of Abraham. The first reference in the Scriptures to tent life is concerning the man Jabel, of whom it is said, "he was the father of such as dwell in tents" (Genesis 4:20). Following the Flood the Sacred Record says, "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27).

The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived most of their lives in tents, in and around the land of Canaan. It was said of Abraham that he "pitched his tent" in the vicinity of Bethel (Genesis 12:8), that Isaac "pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar" (Genesis 26:17), and Jacob "pitched his tent before the city (of Shechem)" (Genesis 33:18).

The Children of Israel lived in tents during their forty years in the wilderness. Moses said of them, "The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp" (Numbers 1:52) . And Balaam "lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes" (Numbers 24:2).

For many years after the entering of the Promised Land, Israel still lived in tents. In the days of David it was said to the king, "The ark and Israel and Judah, abide in tents" (II Samuel 11:11), indicating that many of the people at that time were tent-dwellers. Even at the time of the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam and their separation from Judah, the cry went forth, "To your tents, O Israel" (I Kings 12:16).

When the tribes gathered together at such small places as Gilgal, and Shiloh, they undoubtedly brought their tents with them. And after the temple was built at Jerusalem the people would make their pilgrimages there to celebrate the feasts of the LORD, and many thousands of them would sleep in tents on the mountains surrounding the city.

Like the Jews of old, the Nomad or Bedouin Arabs of Palestine, and especially those of Trans-Jordan, have been living in tents for centuries, and their manner of life is strikingly like unto that of the early Bible characters. A study, therefore, of these tent structures of Bible lands of today will throw much light on how the men of early Bible times actually lived. By such a study one can build the proper background for understanding the life and contributions of these men of the long ago.

TENT MATERIAL

The Bedouin's home is his tent, which is made of black goat's hair. He calls it *beit sha'ar*, i.e., "house of hair." It is made of coarse, heavy fabric, and serves to protect the family in winter from the cold winds;

in the summer the sides are usually lifted, and the tent serves as a sunshade.

This goat's hair cloth that is used in making these tents is porous when it is dry, but becomes waterproof after the first rains have shrunk it together. The Song of Solomon refers to these black goat's hair tents thus: "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar" (Song of Solomon 1:5).

The material that makes up the Bedouin tent is the same as the sackcloth of Bible days. It must be remembered that this Oriental sackcloth is not at all like the Occidental burlap, but is rather a material made of prickly, coarse goat's hair.

The Apostle John compares darkness to this sackcloth: "The sun became black like sackcloth of hair" (Revelation 6:12). In Bible times sackcloth was worn as a sign of sorrow (Genesis 37:34; II Samuel 3:31), as a sign of humility (I Kings 21:27; II Kings 19:1), or as a sign of repentance (Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:5).

TENT ENCAMPMENTS AND MANNER OF SETTING UP OF TENTS

If the Bedouin Arabs live together as a tribe or a clan, as they often do, or if more than one family dwell with each other, then their tents are not pitched in a promiscuous cluster, but more likely in a large circle to make it possible for at least some of their flocks to be protected inside the circle. By the side of the sheik's tent stands a long spear as an emblem of his authority (cf. practice of King Saul in I Samuel 26:7). His tent is generally larger than the others.

The Bible says that some of the sons of Ishmael lived in tent villages or encampments (Genesis 25:16). The number of tents that made up the encampment of Abraham must have been large, for in his warfare against the confederacy of kings that took Lot captive, it is stated that he used a band of three hundred eighteen trained soldiers born in his household (Genesis 14:14). The arrangement of his tents was doubtless much like that of the wealthier Bedouin Arabs of today.

The main overhead portion of the Bedouin's tent is composed of one large awning which is held up by poles, and the ends of the tent cloth are drawn out by cords which are tied to pegs and driven into the ground.

It was one of these tent pins that Jael used in killing Sisera (Judges 4:21).

INSIDE ARRANGEMENT OF TENT

The Oriental tent is usually oblong in shape, and is divided into two, and sometimes three apartments by goat's hair curtains. The entrance leads into the apartment for the men, which also serves as the reception apartment. Beyond this is the apartment for the women and children. And sometimes there is a third apartment for servants or for cattle.

The women in the inner apartment are screened from the view of those in the reception room, but they can hear what goes on in that room.

Thus Sarah in her apartment overheard what the angel guest said in the reception apartment of Abraham's tent (Genesis 18:10-15). In some cases there is a separate tent for the women. It took several tents to care for the large family of Jacob. Reference is made to Jacob's tent, to Leah's tent, to Rachel's tent, and to the tent of the two maidservants (Genesis 31:33).

INSIDE FURNISHINGS OF TENTS

The shepherd's tent is always subject to perpetual removals, as Hezekiah indicated in his song of thanksgiving, after his recovery from sickness (Isaiah 38:12). Therefore, the furnishings of that tent must include only the necessities.

Rugs cover the ground, but at night the bedding is brought out, which is composed of mats, or carpets on which to sleep; and their outer garments worn by day become their coverings by night. Sacks of grain are apt to be piled around the middle tent posts. Sure to be about the tent some place are the handmill, and the mortar, in which the grain is pounded. And hanging from the poles will be the skin bags or bottles, for water and other liquids. Also there will be a leathern bucket with which to draw water from any well that may be available, and an earthen pitcher, used by the women to carry the water. Cooking utensils will not be many, but will include pots, kettles, and pans. Serving dishes will include mats, platters, or larger dishes, and there will be cups for drinking. A primitive lamp burning olive oil will illuminate the tent by night (see "lamp," in chapters 2 and 6). If the family is fortunate enough to have a camel, then the camel furniture will be used for sitting upon inside the tent, as Rachel was doing when her father searched the tents for the lost teraphim (Genesis 31:34 cf. Chapter 13).

Little else than these furnishings would be needed for the simple life of the tent-dwellers.

The hearth is of course upon the ground. A hole is dug in the earth where there is a fire kindled, and several stones are put around it, and the cooking utensils are placed on these an over the fire. One of these hearths is inside the tent, and another one is outdoors, quite likely near to the women's quarters.

In the hot weather the cooking is done outside rather than inside the tent.

PATCHING A TENT AND ENLARGING THE QUARTERS

New tents are very seldom made among the Bedouins. About the only time this happens is when a young groom and bride set up housekeeping for themselves in a different location from that of the groom's parents, and this rarely happens. The usual procedure is to accumulate the goat clippings of a year or so, and with these make a new strip with which to repair the old tent. The women do this work. The section of the tent roof that is most worn is ripped out, and a new piece of the cloth replaces it. The old piece is then used for a side curtain. Each year new strips of cloth replace old ones and the "house of hair" is handed down from father to son without its being completely new or completely old at any

one time.

As the tent -dweller's family grows larger, or as he becomes richer and wishes to enlarge his tent, he does so by simply adding another section to his old tent, very much like the Occidental would build another room on to his house; but there is this difference: instead of building a new tent they just continue patching.

Isaiah had this process in mind when he compared the prophetic prosperity of Israel to a Bedouin tent. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen

THE CHARACTER OF TENT-LIFE

The Westerner does not begin to appreciate the pilgrim character of the Oriental tent-dweller. One traveler among these nomads had this to say about them:

The Arab's tent is his home: yet the word "home" does not mean to him what it means to us. Of our idea of home he has no conception . . . His home is the little spot where his tent is pitched and his flocks are gathered at night. His country - his fatherland - is the limited district over which he roams in summer.

We must always remember that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were pilgrims in the Land of Promise. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:9). And the writer to the Hebrews goes on to say of these patriarchs, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

Tent- life with its simplicity, and so much of the time spent out-of- doors, has a real charm for those who are used to it. Most of them would not live otherwise if they had the choice to do so. And because the Jewish ancestors were tent-dwellers, their descendants considered such a life in the spirit of true dignity.

This explains the numerous references to tent-life in sacred poetry and prophecy (cf. Psalm 84:1-10; Song of Solomon 1:5; Jeremiah 4:20, etc.).

TEST

Manors and Customs of Bible Land

Chapter One

- (1) Who was the father of such as dwell in tents?
- (2) The Bedouin's home is his tent, which is made of
- (3) In Bible times sackcloth was worn as a sign of what three things
 - (4) Why were tents pitched in large circles
 - (5) The Shepherds Tent was furnished with what?
 - (6) Who normally did the repairs to the tents?
 - (7) The Arabs tent is his home, where is his home?
- (8) Were new tents made that often, and what did they do as the family grew?

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CHAPTER TWO

Houses of One Room

AFTER ISRAEL had been in the land of Canaan many years and had settled down from the nomadic life to the more stable agricultural pursuits, houses began to take the place of tents as places of abode.

The average home of the common people was a one-room dwelling dwelling.

Dr. Thomson thinks that because the poor widow who entertained Elijah had an upper room in her house, it indicates she was not of the poorer class but was in straits only because of the terrible famine. (cf. I Kings 17:8-19).

PURPOSES OF THE HOUSE

In Bible times men did not build houses with the idea in mind that most of their daily living would be spent inside them. Their first interest was in spending as much time as possible in GOD's out-of-doors. The house served as a place of retirement. For this reason the outside walls of the humble house were not inviting. There was no effort to attract attention to this place of retirement.

The purpose of these dwellings is borne out by the meaning of the Hebrew and Arabic words for

"house." Abraham Rihbany, who was born in Syria and spent his early life there, has made a very illuminative statement about the meaning and purpose of the Palestinian house: The Hebrew word *bavith* and the Arabic word *bait* mean primarily a "shelter." The English equivalent is the word "house."

The richer term, "home," has never been invented by the son of Palestine because he has always considered himself "a sojourner in the earth." His tent and his little house, therefore, were sufficient for a shelter for him and his dear ones during the earthly pilgrimage.⁴

Because the Palestinians lived out-of-doors so much, the sacred writers were fond of referring to GOD as a "shelter" or as a "refuge," rather than as a "home." Such expressions in connection with Deity are numerous in the Book of Psalm and also in the prophetic writings (cf. Psalm

61:3; Isaiah 4:6).

FLOOR AND WALLS OF THE HOUSE

Concerning the nature of the floor of these Oriental houses, Dr. George A. Barton says:

"The houses generally had no floor except the earth, which was smoothed off and packed hard. Sometimes this was varied by mixing lime with the mud and letting it harden, and sometimes floors of cobblestones or stone chippings mixed with lime were found. In the Roman period mosaic floors, made by embedding small smoothly cut squares of stone in the earth, were introduced."

The walls of the houses were often made of bricks, but these were not ordinarily burned, but were composed of mud dried in the sun. Job speaks of these kinds of dwelling as "houses of clay" (Job 4:19). They are similar to the adobe houses so common in Mexico today, and often seen in the southwestern states of America, where the Spanish influence of the past is still felt.

But sometimes the walls were made of rough sandstones, so common in the land. These were of varying sizes and were set in mud. The joints between them were apt to be wide and irregular. It was only the palaces or houses of the wealthy that were constructed of hewn stones, like the palaces of Solomon (I Kings 7:9), and the rich of Isaiah's day, who boasted they would replace fallen down brick walls with walls of hewn stones (Isaiah 9:8-10).

CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROOF

The roof of these humble Palestinian houses is made by laying beams across from wall to wall, then putting on a mat of reeds, or perhaps thorn bushes, and over it a coating of clay or earth; sand and pebbles are scattered over this, and a stone roller is used to make it smooth and able to shed rain. This roller is usually left on the house top and the roof is rolled again several times, especially after the first rain in order to keep it from leaking.

A low parapet or wall, with spaces to allow the rain water to flow off, was expected to be built on these houses in Bible times, in order to prevent people from falling off. The failure to build such a wall in modern times has often caused accidents.

The law of Moses was very definite in commanding the erection of such. Its regulation says: "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence" (Deuteronomy 22:8). The common use of the houseroof for so many purposes, as shall be seen, made this law essential.

ITEMS OF INTEREST GROWING OUT OF THE CHARACTER OF THE ROOF AND WALLS

Grass on the housetops. With the roofs of the houses made largely of dirt or clay, one can easily imagine how grass could grow on the tops of the houses as Bible references indicate. "Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it growth up" (Psalm 129:6; see also II Kings 19:26, and Isaiah 37:27).

Examples of this in connection with similarly built roofs in modern times have often been seen. One book published in the latter part of the nineteenth century carries a picture of a Palestinian roof all covered with growing grass. The notation beneath the picture says: "This is a good example of the appearance of 'grass upon the housetops.' After the winter rains, every flat and mud-roofed building is overgrown with grass and weeds, which soon perish."

Leaky roofs. With a dirt roof it can be understood how natural it would be for a heavy rainfall to produce a leak, which would make it quite inconvenient for those inhabiting the house at the time. Travelers who stop for the night at one of these dwellings, have sometimes had to change their sleeping quarters, because of the dripping of the rain water.

The Book of Proverbs compares this dropping to a contentious woman (Proverbs 19:13; 27:15).

Digging through of thieves. Since the walls of the houses are so often built of clay or dirt, or of stones with mud between them, it makes it an easy task for a robber to dig through and get into the house. Job referred to this: "In the dark they dig through houses" (Job 24:16). JESUS also spoke of the same thing in His great Sermon on the Mount: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19; cf. Matthew 24:43).

Snakes in house walls. Because the walls of the stone houses were built so that the joints between the stones were wide and irregular, therefore a snake might readily crawl into the crevices and unexpectedly come in contact with an inhabitant.¹⁴ Concerning this kind of house the prophet Amos said that a man "leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (Amos 5:19).

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Windows. The Oriental has few windows that open on the street side of the house, and those that do are usually high. As a rule the window has wooden bars serving as a protection against robbers, while the lower half of the window is screened by a framework of latticework. The

Book of Proverbs speaks of such a window: "For at the window of my house I looked through my casement [lattice]" (Proverbs 7:6). Wooden shutters close the windows at night. When the window is open, those inside may see out without themselves being seen.

Doors. The doors as well as windows were ordinarily built of sycamore wood. It was only for ornamental purposes of the wealthy that cedar wood was used (cf. Isaiah 9:10). These doors turned on hinges, as the familiar proverb about the sluggard makes mention of the turning of a door upon its hinges (Proverbs 26:14). If the doors were fastened when shut, bars were usually used for this purpose (Proverbs 18:19).

The door of the peasant's one-room house is opened before sunrise in the morning, and stays open all day long as an invitation to hospitality. The Book of Revelation speaks thus: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door" (Revelation 3:8). For such a door to be shut would indicate the inhabitants had done that of which they were ashamed (cf. John 3:19). At sunset the door is shut and remains shut during the night (cf. Luke 11:7). The rule about the open door for the simple house does not hold for the city houses of more than one room. The reference to the Master knocking at the door has to do with such a door (Revelation 3:20; cf. Chapter 3). The distinction between the house of the villager and of the city dweller must always be made, in order to understand the scriptural references to houses.

FURNISHINGS OF THE HOUSE

The furnishings of a one-room Palestinian house were and still are very simple. Mats and cushions are in use to sit on by day, and carpets or mats are slept on at night. There will be vessels of clay for household needs, with perhaps some cooking utensils of metal. There will be a chest for storing bedding, a lamp either placed on a lampstand or a bushel, a broom for house

cleaning, and a handmill for grinding the grain, and the goatskin bottles in which liquids are kept. The fireplace would be on the floor often in the middle of the room. This gives a general picture of the furnishings of the average Palestinian home.

More details regarding some of these items will be given as the study proceeds.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

The Parable of the Importunate Friend which JESUS told, if understood in the light of an Oriental one-room house, will give information about sleeping arrangements.

"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee (Luke 11:5-7).

Among the common folks of the Holy Land individual beds in separate bedrooms have been unknown. Instead the arrangements for sleeping in the parable, and today in Syria and Palestine among the peasants, have been thus described:

The cushion-mattresses are spread side by side in the living room, in a line as long as the members of the family, sleeping close together, require. The father sleeps at one end of the line, and the mother at the other end, "to keep the children from rolling from under the cover." So the man was absolutely truthful when he said by way of excuse, "My children are with me in bed."

LIGHTING OF THE HOUSE

Biblical use of the word candle. The use of the word "candle does not carry the meaning of the word as we would be familiar with it, but rather with lamps.

Character of the lamp. When the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land they adopted the lamp used by the Canaanites, which was an earthenware saucer to hold the olive oil, and a pinched lip to hold the wick. A thousand years later a Mesopotamian lamp was imported and used in some sections.

This lamp had a closed tube for the wick, and thus could be carried about without spilling the oil so readily. In the fifth century B.C. Greek lamps of a beautiful black glazed variety were imported and became popular. By the third century B.C. the old saucer-type lamp had all but disappeared, but in the second century, the Maccabeans revived the use of that type of lamp, as being more in line with the old Jewish traditions. But when the Roman Empire began to dominate the land of Palestine, the lamps in use were either imported, or made under foreign models. The Virgin's Lamp in use in the time of CHRIST was an improvement over the old saucer type, having sufficient covering to keep the oil from spilling.

The lampstand. In early Bible times, lampstands were not in common use, and the lamps would be put on a place such as a stone projecting from the wall. In the days of CHRIST lampstands were in quite general use. They were tall and were usually placed on the ground. Archaeologists

have unearthed some bronze lampstands fourteen inches high that had been used in palaces. They were made for holding bowls or lamps. The poor no doubt had a less expensive type.

If the family had no separate lampstand, the bushel placed on the ground upside down would serve for a lampstand, as well as a table from which the meal would be served. The lamp was to be put on the bushel and not under it (Matthew 5:15).

The prophet's reference to smoking flax. Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah was that "the smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isaiah 42:3). Dr. Thomson tells of seeing ancient clay lamps in use illustrating this text. The wick was often made of a twisted strand of flax, and this was put into the olive oil in the shallow cup of the lamp. When the oil was almost used up it would give forth an offensive smoke. This was an indication it was time to replenish the supply of oil. The implication was that the quenching of the fire was sometimes done purposely. If the wick was well worn, the housewife would quench the fire, and then put a new wick in to take its place. GOD's servant would not thus treat the poor, weak, and despairing specimens of humanity. He would replenish the oil, trim the wick, and make the dimly burning flame to burn brightly. What a picture this is of our Saviour's desire to help the helpless and lift the fallen and save the lost.

Using the lamp to find the lost coin. The Saviour's Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15) needs to be understood from the Oriental point of view. Abraham Rihbany as a boy often held an Oriental earthen lamp while his mother hunted for a lost coin or some other object of value. The house had one door and one or two small windows having wooden shutters. For this reason the house was always dimly lighted, and especially so in winter. The mats, cushions, and sheepskins covering the floor would be turned over, and the floor swept. When the lost coin was found, the women neighbors and friends would be called in to rejoice with her, because the loss of a coin would bring down upon the woman the wrath of her husband, and her women neighbors and friends would have a fellow feeling for her, and would keep what had happened as a secret from the men folks.²⁵ (See also reference to the lost coin," in chapter 9, The headgear of Bethlehem women.)

The significance of light in a Palestinian house. A lamp is considered to be the Palestinian peasant's one luxury that is a necessity. When the sun sets in the West, the door of his house is shut, and then the lamp is lit. To sleep without a light is considered by most villagers to be a sign of extreme poverty. The Bible makes synonymous such terms as lamp, light, and life. A late traveler looks to see a light in a house, and then he knows there is life there. To wish that a man's light be put out would be to wish him a terrible curse. Concerning the wicked man, Bildad in the Book of Job said: "The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle [lamp] shall

be put out with him" (Job 18:6). But the psalmist considered himself blessed of the LORD when he said of himself in relation to GOD, "For thou wilt light my candle [lamp]" (Psalm 18:28). It was to Orientals who appreciated the value of even a humble earthenware lamp in the dark of night, or even in the obscurity of a darksome house, that JESUS originally said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

COOKING ARRANGEMENTS

The stove or fireplace. Like the Nomads who live in tents, the peasants who live in one-room houses, carry on as much of their meal-cooking outside as the weather will permit. These operations are transferred inside only when the cold winter weather makes it desirable. The Occidental would hardly call what they use in cooking their meals either a stove or a fireplace, but it serves the purpose. Often the place for the fire is on the floor in the middle of the room. A small open clay-baked box, or else a thick jar with holes at the sides, is what usually serves as a stove.

The fuel used. The peasant often uses dried dung as fuel for his fire. Some of the poorer classes use this themselves, and sell the sticks they find to those who can afford to buy them.

A reference in the prophecy of Ezekiel indicates this use of fuel was common in Bible times (see Ezekiel 4:15).

In the Orient fuel is usually so scarce that dried grass and withered flowers are apt to be carefully gathered into bundles and used for making a fire. There are Bible indications that this was often done in those days of old. JESUS said: "The grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven" (Matthew 6:30; Luke 12:28).

Another popular fuel for fires in Palestine is thorns. There are many kinds of thorny shrubs that grow there, and the people gather them and make good use of them. Bible passages indicating such use of them are numerous (II Samuel 23:6, 7; Psalm 118:12; Ecclesiastes 7:6; Isaiah 9:18; Isaiah 10:17; Isaiah 33:12; Nahum 1:10).

The widow of Zarephath was gathering sticks to build a fire (I Kings 17:10), but the fire built in the courtyard of the high priest's house, where Simon Peter warmed himself, was built of charcoal (John 18:18). JESUS cooked breakfast for His disciples on a charcoal fire (John 21:9).

The chimney. The Fellabin Arabs have various ways of taking care of smoke from the interior fires. Sometimes they have an opening in the ceiling that serves as a chimney, or an aperture in the side of the house will serve the purpose. Often, when the fireplace is in the corner of the room, there is a hood over it with an outlet for the smoke. Frequently, charcoal fires are started in a brazier outdoors, and when most of the smoking is over, and the coals are red hot, then it is taken indoors.

The prophet Hosea refers to "smoke out of the chimney" (Hosea 13:3). A high latticed opening in the wall of the house would serve both as window and chimney in certain of the peasant homes. But no doubt, most of the chimney arrangements used by the Arabs as mentioned above, were also in use in Bible times. The Psalmist's comparison of himself with "a bottle in the smoke" (Psalm 119:83), could be an indoor figure; other scriptural references to smoke, that are often spoken of as being indoors,

could just as well be outdoors (Proverbs 10:26; Isaiah 65:5, etc.). It can safely be assumed that Bible houses were not always as full of smoke as many have assumed to be the case.

Kindling a flame. The method used in early Old Testament times to produce a fire was to make sparks by the striking of stone and flint, or by the friction of pieces of wood, afterwards igniting a blaze. There are indications that Israel in later times produced fire by striking steel against

flint. In Isaiah 50:11, where it speaks of kindling a fire, the Hebrew word 'Kindle' means "to strike," and evidently refers to the striking of flint on steel.

USES MADE OF THE ROOF OF THE HOUSE

The roof of an Oriental house is used today for a great variety of purposes, much like it was used in the days of the prophets and of the apostles.

Used as a place to sleep. The roof is a popular place for the Oriental to sleep.

For a great part of the year the roof, or "housetop," is the most agreeable place about the house, especially in the morning and evening. There many sleep during the summer, both in the city and the country, and in all places where malaria does not render it dangerous. The custom is very ancient.

An example in the Bible of this practice, is the incident of Samuel calling Saul, who had slept on the house-top (I Samuel 9:26).

Used as a place for storage. The flat Oriental roofs so exposed to the air and sunshine are well suited for storing grain or fruit to be ripened or dried. This custom is a common one in the East.

Rahab hid the spies with the stalks of flax which she had on her roof (Joshua 2:6).

Used as a gathering place in times of excitement. In Isaiah 22:1 the prophet says: "What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?" Thus is described a typical Oriental city in the midst of a time of great commotion. Just as the Westerner at such a time gathers in the streets, so the Easterner goes to the housetops, where he can see down the streets, and discover what is happening.

Used as a place for public proclamations. In the days of JESUS as well as in modern times the villages of the Holy Land have had town criers. The orders of local governors are thus proclaimed from the top of the highest house available. Such a proclamation is usually made in the evening, after the men have returned from their work in the field. The long drawn out call becomes familiar to the residents, and they learn to listen for what follows.

The call of the town crier is said to resemble a distant, prolonged railroad whistle. JESUS must have often heard the call of the town crier. To his disciples he said: "what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27). As a warning against the impossibility of hiding our sins in the day of judgment, he said, "That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 12:3).

Used as a place of worship and prayer. The Scriptures indicate that roofs of houses were used for true worship of GOD, and also for idolatrous worship. The prophet Zephaniah speaks of "them that worship

the host of heaven upon the housetops" (Zephaniah 1:5). And Luke tells us that Peter at Joppa "went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour" (Acts 10:9). It would be natural for those worshipping the heavenly bodies to do so on the roof, and no doubt Peter retired to the housetop where he could be alone with GOD.

Used as a way of escape in time of evil. In a day when escape from evil was necessary, the inhabitants of villages in CHRIST's time could do so by going from roof to roof, because the houses were located so close to each other. Dr. Edersheim describes the situation thus:

From roof to roof there might be regular communication, called by the Rabbis "the road of the roofs." Thus a person could make his escape, passing from roof to roof, till at the last house he would descend the stairs that led down its outside, without having entered any dwelling. To this "road of the roofs" our LORD no doubt referred in His warning to His followers (Matthew 24:17; Mark 13:15; Luke 17:31), intended to apply to the last siege of Jerusalem, "And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein."

BETHLEHEM HOUSE AND MANGER

The humble scene of the birthplace of the Baby JESUS is so often interpreted with Occidental instead of Oriental flavor that it would be well for Westerners to have the description of the kind of a Bethlehem house in which the Saviour was doubtless born, as given by John D. Whiting.

Entering the door of this one-room Bethlehem dwelling one sees that two-thirds of the space is given over to a "raised masonry platform, some eight to ten feet above the ground and supported by low-domed arches."

This space that is raised is occupied by the members of the family, and the lower part of the house is for the cattle and flocks. Narrow stone steps lead up to where the family lives, and there are only two small windows in the room and these are high up from the ground. In winter weather the sheep and goats are kept inside the house, also a few work cattle, and perhaps a donkey. Primitive mangers for the cattle are to be seen around the walls, and these are built of rough slabs of stone placed on edge and plastered up with mortar."

The owner of the animals often sleeps on a small raised place, where he can keep watch over newly born lambs.

To know the heart of the land, to have learned the hospitality of its people, which is always offered, no matter how primitive or simple, makes it easy to picture Mary and Joseph returning from the inn, already filled with guests, and turning aside into a home such as we have described, the regular dwelling portion of which may have been none too large for the family which occupied it. It may have been crowded with other guests, but they find a welcome and a resting-place for the babe in a manger.

TEST

Manners and Customs of Bible Lands

Chapter Two

- (1) What type of home did the average common person live in during Bible times?
- (2) In Bible Times, the house was not for living in. What was it primarily for?
- (3) The Hebrew word "bavith" and the Arabic word "bait" mean primarily
 - (4) What type of floor did most of the Biblical homes have?
 - (5) Why was there a small wall built around the roofs of homes?
 - (6) What were two main problems with having walls built out of clay?
 - (7) What did they use to sit on in most Biblical Homes?
- (8) In your own words describe the sleeping arrangements in most households during Bible times.
 - (9) What were a couple types of fuel used in the common home?
 - (10) List four uses for the roof area.
- (11) The houses were usually built in two levels, and upper area and a lower area. What were the two areas used for?

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER THREE

Houses of More Than One Room

AMONG THE ARABS of Palestine villages and towns, houses of more than one room are owned by those who are more or less prosperous. The Arabic word meaning "house" also means "a room," The same thing was true of the houses belonging to the ancient Hebrews. As a rule the houses of one room were in the villages, and those of more than one room were in the cities.

BUILDING A HOUSE OF TWO, THREE, OR MORE ROOMS

If a house of two rooms is to be built, the Oriental does not place them side by side, as the Occidental builder would do. Rather the breadth of a room is left between the two rooms, and a wall is constructed between the ends, and as a result of this arrangement, the house has an open court. If the builder expects to have three rooms, then a room would be substituted for the wall at the end of the court, and there would be three rooms around a courtyard. If there are to be more than three rooms in the house, the additional rooms are added to those at the side, making the court of greater length.

THE APPEARANCE AND ARRANGEMENT OF ROOMS

There is a great difference between an Oriental and Occidental house of more than one room. The exterior of the Occidental house is made to be as beautiful as possible, and especially the part that fronts on the street. But the exterior of the Oriental house presents an appearance that is mean and blank by comparison. The Oriental house fronts inwardly toward the court, rather than outwardly toward the street, as does the Occidental house. The general plan of the Oriental house is a series of rooms built around an open courtyard. The reason for this arrangement is that seclusion is the chief thought in mind.

THE ORIENTAL COURTYARD

Open to the sky. It is important for the Westerner to realize that at the center of the Oriental house of several rooms is a courtyard that is open to the sky. The courtyard is an important part of the house. A person can be in the court and thus in the house, and yet he would be outdoors from the point of view of the Westerner. As an example, Matthew 26:69 says: "Now Peter sat without in the palace." Now this simply means that Peter was outside the rooms of the palace, and yet he was in the open courtyard, located in the central portion of the building.

Although the court is open to the air above, at times an awning is drawn over a portion of it.

And some houses have a gallery around the sides of the court.

Often planted with trees, shrubs, or flowers. These Oriental courtyards are often made beautiful by the presence of trees, shrubs, or various flowers.

The Psalmist refers to such a practice with the familiar words: "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God" (Psalm 52:8). And again he said: "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalm 92:13). He is illustrating divine truth by referring to trees so often planted in courtyards of houses. Actually trees were never planted in the Temple courts.

Cisterns often built in courts. The interesting story of two men in the days of David who hid from Absalom is told in II Samuel 17:18, 19. "But they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down. And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon: and the thing was not known." The "well" mentioned here was actually a "cistern" which is often dug in Oriental courtyards in order to catch the rain water. When these cisterns are dry, they make good places for fugitives to hide. Because the mouth of these cisterns is at the level of the ground, it makes it easy to cover it over with some article, and then spread grain over that, and thus the place of hiding can be kept secret.

Fires often kindled in courts in cold weather. This practice is illustrated in Simon Peter's experience of denying Jesus. A fire was built in the courtyard of the high priest's house where JESUS was being tried. John 18:18 says: "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."

Courtyard as a bathing-place. When the Scripture says that David from his palace roof saw the beautiful Bathsheba bathing (II Samuel 11:2), it needs to be understood, that she was in the courtyard on the inside of her house, not visible to ordinary observation, yet the king from his palace roof saw her and was tempted to sin.

Meals often eaten in the courtyard. Today, as in the days of JESUS, meals are often eaten in the interior court of the Oriental house. No doubt JESUS was entertained at meals which were served in the open court of His host's house.

THE DOOR AND THE PORCH

Location and appearance of the door. The door or gate was located in the middle of the front side of the house. This entrance was usually so arranged that nobody could see into it from the street. Sometimes a wall was built in front of it to serve this purpose.

Oriental gates, or large doors often have small doors like a panel within them. The small door is in use for ordinary occasions, and the large gate or door is opened only on extraordinary occasions.

Acts 12:13 speaks of Peter knocking "at the door of the gate," which doubtless means the smaller door within the larger gate.

The use of keys. The Oriental key of modern times is like the key of Isaiah's days, and most certainly not like the small occidental variety. Isaiah 22:22 says: "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder ." Dr. Thomson tells of seeing different keys in Palestine that would be large enough to lay on the shoulder of a man. He saw one key about a foot and a half in length. The keys were usually made of wood. The lock is placed on the inside of the gate or door, and to make it possible for the owner of the house to unlock it, a hole is cut in the door, and he thrusts his arm through this hole, and then inserts the key. In Song of Solomon 5:4, the bride says: "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door." She saw him thrust his hand through the hole, that he might unlock the door and then go in.

The porch and duties of the porter. The passageway inside the door and leading to the courtyard itself is called the porch. It is most often furnished with some kind of seats for the porter or for the servants.

It was in this porch that one of Peter's denials, took place. "And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth" (Matthew 26:71; Mark 14:68).

It is the duty of the porter (or servant or member of the family serving in that capacity) to parley with any visitor who knocks on the door desiring admission.

The purpose of this is to give opportunity to recognize the voice of the visitor, and identify him as a friend. So it is not expected that the door will be opened as soon as the knock is heard. The one inside will call out, "Who?" And the outsider, instead of giving his name, will rather answer, "I." Acts 12:13, 14 says: " And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness." When Rhoda had listened to Peter's voice then she recognized who it was outside the gate.

The familiar words of Revelation 3:20 present the same idea: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him," (for additional light on Revelation 3:20, study the relation between host and guest as given in Chapter Seven of this book). We must recognize the voice of the Saviour who is knocking. When JESUS came walking on the water to the fearful disciples in the storm, He did not say: "It is Jesus, be not afraid," but rather, "It is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20). They heard His voice and recognized that it was the voice of Jesus. The Oriental is trained to listen to a voice and be able to recognize a friend.

THE UPPER ROOM

The upper room or chamber is a well- known part of many Oriental houses today, and is frequently referred to in the Bible (cf. II Kings 1:2; 23:12; Acts 9:37; 20:8, etc.) . Those who cannot afford such a room are content with booths or arbors on the roof of their houses. But when it is possible to do so they construct a room. It provides a place of coolness in the hot weather, a place of retreat, and a distinguished guest is given accommodations there. If more than one room is built on the roof, it is called a summer house, in contrast with the winter house which is downstairs.

The most famous upper room of Old Testament times was the prophet's chamber built for Elisha, that he might have a place of retirement suited to a man of prayer. There was doubtless an outside stairway leading to it, so that the prophet might come and go without disturbing the people in the house. The furnishings of the room included a bed, a table, a stool and a lamp stand (candlestick) (II Kings 4:10).

In the New Testament there are several notable uses of the upper room. JESUS sent two disciples to secure the use of a guest chamber for the Passover meal. A large upper room was put at their disposal. With thousands of Jews from all over Palestine in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, it was expected that anybody having such a room would gladly let it be used for that purpose. (See Mark 14:12 -16; Luke 22:7-13) And then the prayer meeting that preceded Pentecost was held in an upper room (Acts 1:13). Perhaps it was the same room where JESUS had celebrated the Passover with them. At any rate, it had come to be their fixed place for meeting. Upon the death of Dorcas, Luke says her body was washed and placed in an upper chamber, according to the custom of those times. The miracle of her being raised from the dead followed Peter's going up into that upper room (Acts 9:36-41).

LETTING THE SICK MAN THROUGH THE ROOF TO JESUS

A knowledge of the Oriental house is necessary in order to understand the story of the palsied man, who was let down through a hole in the roof, in order to get him to JESUS to be healed. Mark and Luke both give this aspect of the story. Mark says: " They uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed" (Mark 2:4). Luke puts it this way: " And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus" (Luke 5:19). These accounts present some difficulties, and several interpretations have been offered in solving them. The two most plausible ones will be given here.

The simplest explanation is that advocated by Dr. Thomson. He suggests that the sticks, thorn-bush, mortar, and earth of the roof were broken up, and thrown aside sufficiently, to let the sick man down into the house. He says that this could be done and the place could be repaired easily. Often this very thing is done in order to let grain, or straw or other things through. He testifies to having seen it done himself. The one difficulty about such a process, with the crowd below, would be the amount of dust caused. It would seem that Luke's account mentioning the letting down of the man through the tiling presents a difficulty to this interpretation. But some have considered "the tiling" to be a reference to the ordinarily constructed roof in the Orient. The Greek word for "tiling" means, "pottery ware," and such a word could describe a dirt roof when rolled and allowed to harden into clay.

Other teachers of the Word have a different idea of what was done with the man. Advocating this view, Dr. Edersheim has this to say:

It is scarcely possible to imagine that the bearers of the paralytic would have attempted to dig through this into a room below, not to speak of the interruption and inconvenience caused to those below such an operation. But no such objection attaches if we regard it not as the main roof of the house, but as that of the covered gallery under which we are supposing the LORD to have stood . . . In such case it would have been comparatively easy to "unroof" the covering of "tiles"; and then "having dug out" an opening through the lighter framework which supported the tiles, to let down their burden "into the midst before Jesus."

In this connection Edersheim indicates that there were outside as well as inside stairways leading up to the roof.

MORE ELABORATE FURNISHINGS

The simple furnishings of a one-room house, where the common people lived, have already been described.

Houses of more than one room were inhabited by those in a better situation. The wealthy usually had upper rooms as well as lower rooms, and of course, the furnishings were more elaborate. The divan or raised seat was located around the borders of the room. The rich adorned these and floored them. They were used for seats during the daytime, and beds were put on them at night. Amos speaks of the luxury of ivory beds in his day (Amos 6:4). The bed customarily in use was a mattress and pillow that could be placed where desired. In wealthy homes, carpets, curtains, and awnings were present in abundance.

The Oriental custom was to sit on the divan with the lower limbs of the body crossed.

TEST

Manners and Customs of Bible Land Chapter Three Test

- (1) List several uses for a court yard.
- (2) What was the duty of the "Porter"?
- (3) List several uses for the upper room.

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER FOUR

Foods and Their Preparation for Eating

WHAT KINDS OF FOOD did the ancient Jews eat? "The ordinary food of the average Hebrew of Bible times was bread, olives, oil, buttermilk and cheese from their flocks; fruits and vegetables from their orchards and gardens; and meat on rare occasions." Only a few more varieties would have to be added to make this a complete list of foods eaten in those days.

THE USE OF RAW GRAIN AND PARCHED GRAIN

The eating of raw grain is a modern custom in Palestine that dates back to very ancient days. (See also "eating grain in the field." Chapter 19). The Arabs today often pluck the ears of grain and rubbing them in their hands, eat them. The Mosaic Law said: "Ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your GOD" (Leviticus 23:14; cf. Deuteronomy 23:25; II Kings 4:42). The disciples of JESUS ate raw grain in the fields. "His disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands" Luke 6:1; cf. Matthew 12:1, Mark 2:23). So it can be readily seen that this custom of eating raw grain has prevailed for thousands of years.

Another food common in the Orient today and in use in Bible times is parched grain. This is prepared from the grains of wheat that are not fully ripe. They are roasted in a pan or on an iron plate. Such grain is eaten either with or without bread. Jesse sent some of it to his sons in the army by the hand of David (I Samuel 17:17). Abigail included some of it in her present to David (I Samuel 25:18). And David received some of it from friends at the time he had fled from Absalom (II Samuel 17:28). These Scriptures show that parched grain has been in use for centuries.

BREAD

Bread the principal food. In the Orient it has been estimated that three-fourths of the people live entirely upon either bread or upon that which is made from wheat or barley flour. It is unquestionably

the principal food of the East.

In the Bible such an expression as "eating bread" is often used when Occidentals would say: "eating a meal." When the Bible says, "The Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews" (Genesis 43:31, 32), it means that they could not eat a meal with them (See also Genesis 37:25; Exodus 2:20; I Samuel 28:22-25).

Sacredness of bread. The Palestinians are brought up to think of bread as having a mystic sacred meaning. In some places they have such a reverence for bread that they will not arise to salute a guest, if they are in the midst of breaking bread together, but will wait till they are finished. Such is their attitude toward bread.

It may be said that this attitude of the people toward bread is essentially religious. Everything about bread from the sowing of the seed to the baking of the loaves is done in the name of GOD. These Orientals sense the importance of the petition in the disciple's prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). It was to men who really appreciate the value of bread, that JESUS first said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

Since there is this attitude of sacredness in relation to "the staff of life," there grows out of it the universal Eastern custom of breaking bread and not cutting it. One who has lived in Palestine says about the natives of the country: "They never put a knife to bread, holding it to be absolutely wicked to cut it, but always break it into pieces with their fingers."

To cut bread would be thought of as cutting life itself. This custom of breaking bread rather than cutting it, is found throughout the Scriptures. In Lamentations 4:4 we read: "The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them." Thus the expression "breaking of bread" came to mean the taking of a meal whatever was included in the meal. Because CHRIST broke bread when He instituted the ordinance of the LORD's Supper, the expression came to refer to that ordinance. Matthew 26:26: "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples."

Thus we read in Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them."

Kinds of bread used. Two kinds of bread were in use in the days when Bible events were being enacted: wheat bread, and barley bread. Both of these are in use in Palestine today. There is this distinction between them: barley bread is used by the poorer classes, whereas if a family is able to have wheat bread, it is considered to have arrived at a place well up in the comfort scale.

This same distinction was true in the Old Testament days and also New Testament times. When the "cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian" in the dream of the Midianite soldier (Judges 7:13), it was an indication that the enemy despised Israel, as a more favored people eating wheat bread would despise eaters of barley bread, and yet GOD was to use the despised Israelites of Gideon's army to overpower those proud Midianites.

The lad who had his five barley loaves and gave them to Jesus, and saw Him multiply them to feed five thousand (John 6:9), must have come from the poorer class, but his humble contribution made possible a great miracle, and the crowd was satisfied with that kind of bread.

Form of loaves. In the Holy Land where the old customs prevail, bread takes three forms: First, there are the small loaves which somewhat resemble the light bread biscuits of this country. It was this kind the lad had and gave to Jesus.

Second, there are the larger loaves, nearly as heavy as the modern loaves of the West, but round instead of rectangular. The ten loaves which Jesse sent by David to the camp of Israel were probably of this form (I Samuel 17:17).

Third, there are the flat loaves which are thin like paper. These are something like American hot cakes only bigger around and much thinner. When served some of these, one man from the West thought they were napkins and started to use them as such.

This kind of bread is used to take the place of the knife, fork, or spoon of the Occidental; Easterners "cup it up" and use it to dip into the food sauces (see Chapter 6). It is quite pliable; and the men fold it up and put it in their scrip, and take it with them, so they can eat it as needed.

Baking of bread. The most primitive method of baking bread was the laying of cakes of dough on heated stones.

A Scriptural example of this is from the experience of Elijah. (I Kings 19:6): "And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head."

Another simple method of baking is the digging in the ground of a hole four or five feet deep, and three feet in diameter, and after this oven is heated, the dough is rolled out until it is no thicker than a person's finger, and then it is struck against the oven's sides where it instantly bakes.

Sometimes a great stone pitcher is used as an oven. In the bottom of it a fire is made among small flints that retain the heat. The dough is placed on these and is quickly baked. Sometimes the dough is rolled out quite thin and is stuck on the outside of the hot pitcher where it bakes.

Some have thought that it was this pitcher-oven that was meant in Leviticus 2:4, where two types of unleavened bread were to be baked. The cakes of fine flour would be baked inside the pitcher- oven, and the wafers would be baked on the outside of it.

Another type of simple oven is a large earthenware jar, into which the fuel is placed, and when the jar is hot enough the thin cakes are laid on the outside to cook.¹⁴ When bread was baked individually by each family in Bible days, some such method as has been described was probably used by the ordinary homes.

But often today, as in the days of Sacred Writ, bread was and is baked in either a semipublic oven, or in the oven of a public baker. Sometimes each town might have several of these ovens. One type of such an oven consists of a big earthen tube, some three feet in diameter, and about five feet long. It is sunk in the ground inside a hut. The women take their turn in baking their bread. The fuel is thrown into the tube, and when the fire gets hot, and billows of smoke and tongues of flame come from the deep hole, the hut, without any chimney in it, begins to resemble an active crater. Malachi must have seen such an oven when he wrote the words, "For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven: and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble" (Malachi 4:1).

Another type of Oriental oven "is a long, low, stonebuilt vault, like half a railway-engine's boiler,

with a stone pavement down the middle, and a long narrow strip at each side for the firewood.

Each night the ashes are taken out, and often the children of poor families will bring a piece of tin, or of a broken water jar, and carry home on this some of the embers of the fire with which to start the fire at home for the evening meal.

Hosea makes mention of "an oven heated by the baker" (Hosea 7:4). This would indicate that some of

the people brought their bread to a baker to do the baking. The city of Jerusalem had its Baker's Street in the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:21).

VEGETABLES

The two most widely used vegetables in Bible times were beans and lentils. The prophecy of Ezekiel mentions both of these in one verse (Ezekiel 4:9). Beans are included in the articles of food which David's friends brought to him when he was in flight from Jerusalem, because of Absalom's rebellion (II Samuel 17:28). The most famous Biblical use of lentils was of course, the selling of Esau's birthright for a meal including lentils with bread (Genesis 25:33, 34).

Thomson tells of being invited to a meal of lentils which he found to be very savory with its "appetizing fragrance and substantial taste, that to a hungry man must have been very tempting. In eating this dish, he did as his hosts did, doubled "some of their bread spoon-fashion," and then dipped it into the saucepan. He suggests that Esau no doubt used the same kind of spoon of bread in eating the pottage of lentils.

The Israelites' Egyptian diet included the vegetables: leeks, onions, and garlic (Numbers 11:5). Most of these were probably used sometimes in Palestine. The prophet Isaiah mentions a "garden of cucumbers" (Isaiah 1:8). Gourds were also used, as suggested by two Scripture passages (Jonah 4:6-10; II Kings 4:39). The "pulse" which Daniel and his companions wanted as their diet, when they were captives, was probably vegetables (Daniel 1:12). The word means primarily, "something sown," and therefore would include edible seeds that are cooked, such as lentils, beans, peas, etc. It was a simple vegetable diet that was wanted instead of the rich, unwholesome food of the king's table.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

Milk. Milk in Bible times was considered, not simply as something that was added to their food in cooking, but was regarded as a substantial food for all ages. Babies were fed mother's milk (Isaiah 28:9). The Hebrews not only used cow's milk, but also sheep's milk (Deuteronomy

32:14), goat's milk (Proverbs 27:27), and, no doubt, camel's milk (Genesis 32:15). The Promised Land was often called "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8; 13:5; Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5). This would indicate that Palestine's broad pasture lands would produce an abundance of milk.

A form of milk that is in common use among the Arabs today is called by them "leben," which means, "white." It is like our sour milk curds. In order to make it, they pour milk in a dish and then put yeast in it, which starts it to working. They cover it over with a warm cloth, and after it sets for about a day it is ready to serve. The Arabs are very fond of it. They say of it, "It makes a sick man well." If they have money for only one dish, they would usually ask for leben.

It was probably this "leben" that Abraham gave to his guests (Genesis 18:8), and also that Jael gave to Sisera (Judges 4:19; 5:25).

Butter. It is generally agreed among Bible scholars, that in most of the cases where the word "butter" appears in our generally used translation, it does not mean the kind of butter known by the Westerner, but rather curdled milk or "leben." There are two passages that do refer to butter, but even that is in a different form from that used by those people who live outside the Orient.

The first passage mentions "butter of kine" (Deuteronomy 32:14), and the second refers to the process of making butter, "the churning of milk bringeth forth butter" (Proverbs 30:33). The Bible-time method of making butter was doubtless the same as used by the Arab Bedouins of today.

Thomson describes the process and the resulting butter thus:

What are those women kneading and shaking so zealously in that large black bag suspended from that tripod? That is a bottle not a bag, made by stripping off the skin of a young buffalo. It is full of milk and that is their method of churning. When the butter has come they take it out, and boil it, and then put it in bottles made of goatskins. In winter it resembles candied honey, in summer it is like oil. That is the only kind of butter they have in this country.

Concerning the passage in Proverbs (30:33), "Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood," Thomson calls attention to the fact, that the word churning, and the word for wringing are the same word in the Hebrew. He says:

It is the wringing of milk that bringeth forth butter, just as these women are squeezing and wringing the milk in that skin bottle. There is no analogy between our mode of churning, and pulling a man's nose until the blood comes, but in this native operation the comparison is quite natural and emphatic.

Buttermilk is not itself mentioned in the Bible, but it was without doubt used, because the process of churning, as has already been referred to, is mentioned.

Cheese. In Palestine the Arabs are fond of cheese. It is convenient for them to take cheese along with them. Their cheese is somewhat like Western slices, only larger and thicker. They are about as thick as a man's hand. They are found stacked up in the markets.

David's father gave him ten cheeses to take to the army captain (I Samuel 17:18). Also Barzillai brought cheese to King David (II Samuel 17:29).

MEAT

When meat was eaten and what kinds. As a rule, Bible characters, like Orientals in modern times, have not eaten meat, except on special occasions. When a stranger or guest was entertained, or when a feast was made, then meat would be served.

Kings and other wealthy men had meat often. The daily provision of meat for King Solomon's court is given in Scripture. Four kinds of meat for the king's daily menu are mentioned: beef, mutton, game, and fowl (I Kings 4:23). Abraham served veal to his guests (Genesis 18:7). Gideon's guest was provided with a kid (Judges 6:19). On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, fish was a common article of food in the days of JESUS. CHRIST referred to this when he spoke of a son begging his father for a fish (Luke 11:11). This Scripture might imply that these dwellers near the lake lived mostly on fish.

How meat was cooked and served. The method of preparing meat has thus been described: Roasting on a spit was perhaps the oldest way of cooking flesh, but less common among the Israelites than boiling, roast flesh being used as a rule only by the rich and better classes, as is still the case in the East.

The servants of Eli's sons said to those bringing offerings, "Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw" (I Samuel 2:15). After the meat was cooked it was divided up into small pieces, and a broth was prepared to serve with it, and this would often have vegetables in it. Such a broth was used in the days of Gideon and of Isaiah (Judges 6:19,20; Isaiah 65:4).

EGGS

Sometime between the days of Elijah and the time of CHRIST the domestic fowl and the everyday use of eggs was introduced into Palestine.

There would seem to be one early Old Testament reference to what might be the egg of a hen. It is Job 6:6: "Is there any taste in the white of an egg?" We know that the use of eggs, among the Galileans around the lake, was common in CHRIST's time, for JESUS speaks of a son asking for an egg from his father (Luke 11:12).

HONEY

GOD had promised Israel, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8; 13:5; Joshua 5:6; Jeremiah 11:5). The numerous references to honey or honeycomb in GOD's Word, are proof that Palestine abounded with the product of the bees. Without doubt, the Jews took care of bees in order to produce honey.

However, many of the Scriptural citations indicate that wild honey was very common. The favorite haunts of the bees were in the cavities of trees, where Jonathan discovered and ate some of the honey (I Samuel 14:25-27); in the holes of the rock, where it was often extracted (Psalm 81:16); and sometimes the dried carcasses of animals, as when Samson ate honey from the carcass of the lion he had slain (Judges 14:8,9).

The poetical books of the Hebrew Bible abound with comparisons to honey.

- The judgments of GOD's Word are compared to it (Psalm 19:10).

- Pleasant words are likened unto it (Proverbs 16:24),

- Knowledge and wisdom to the soul (Proverbs 24:13,14).

- And the bride and bridegroom of Solomon's Song speak of honey (Song of Solomon 4:11; 5:1).

In New Testament times John the Baptist lived on locusts and wild honey from the wilderness (Matthew 3:4). And when JESUS wanted to prove to the disciples that His resurrection body was a real body, He asked for food and was given a piece of broiled fish with some honeycomb

(Luke 24:41-43).

Dr. Thomson relates how "in the clefts of a precipice overhanging Wady el Kurn swarms of bees made their home." A man was let down over the rock by ropes, and being protected from assault from the bees, he was able to extract a large quantity of honey.

Such an incident is reminiscent of the expression of Moses in his farewell song: "He made him to suck honey out of the rock" (Deuteronomy 32:13).

FRUIT

Olives and olive oil. Some use is made of the pickled berry of the olive, but the bulk of the fruit is used to make oil. In the Orient, olive oil usually takes the place of butter, and is largely used in cooking meals. A survey of several Scriptures will indicate how important a food olive oil was considered to be. The widow who fed Elijah said to him: "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse" (I Kings 17:12). She had been depending largely on bread and oil for her food, but the supply of both was about gone. The miracle of Elijah was the multiplication of that supply, "And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah" (I Kings 17:16). The Meal Offering of the Mosaic law called for unleavened fine flour mingled with oil baked in a pan (Leviticus 2:5). And the prophet Ezekiel in reciting to Jerusalem all its past blessings from JEHOVAH said of her, "Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil" (Ezekiel 16:13). (See also section on "olive tree," Chapter 21).

Figs. This fruit was often used in Old Testament times, especially dried figs. Abigail took two hundred cakes of figs to David (I Samuel 25:18). A cake of figs was given the Egyptian to revive him (I Samuel 30:12), and cakes of figs were brought to David at Hebron, at a time of great rejoicing (I Chronicles 12:40). (See also section on "the fig tree," Chapter 21).

Grapes and raisins. During the months of September and October, the fresh ripe grapes are eaten along with bread as one of the principal foods. Canaan must have been a land of very fine grapes, for two of the spies brought back a great cluster of grapes on a branch carried on a staff between them, and secured from the Valley of Eshcol (Numbers 13:23). Raisins were widely used in the days when the Jews lived in Palestine. Abigail gave David one hundred clusters of raisins (I Samuel 25:18). Raisins were brought to David at Hebron (I Chronicles 12:40) and again, when he was fleeing from Absalom, he received a quantity of them (II Samuel 16:1). (See also section on "use of grapes," Chapter 20).

Pomegranates. There are several varieties of sweet and sour pomegranates in the land. The juice of the sour variety is used in the absence of lemons for the purposes of that fruit. The

pomegranate was greatly esteemed as a fruit in early Bible times, for it was mentioned by Moses as one of the excellencies of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 8:8). The Song of Solomon makes mention of

the pomegranate fruit, trees, and spiced wine from its juice (Song of Solomon
4:13; 6:11; 7:12; 8:2).

TEST

Manners and Customs of Bible Land chapter Four

- (1) What were some of the ordinary foods eaten by Hebrews during Bible Times?
- (2) What was the main thing eaten in Bible Times, and approx. what proportion was it eaten?
 - (3) To cut a piece of bread was likened unto cutting what?
 - (4) Name the two types of bread normally eaten.
 - (5) What type of bread was eaten by the poorer population?
 - (6) What type of bread took the place of knives and forks?
 - (7) What were the two main types of vegetables eaten?
 - (8) What were olives used for mostly?

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER FIVE

Customs at Mealtime

EASTERN HABITS, connected with the eating of a meal, are such a decided contrast to Western habits, that much care should be given to the study of them, if the many references in the Bible to eating, are to be interpreted accurately.

WASHING OF HANDS BEFORE EATING

Oriental are careful to wash their hands before a meal, but they would think that the Occidental way of washing in the water already made dirty by the hands, to be very untidy and disgraceful. The servant or whoever takes his place, pours water on the hands to be washed as they are held over a basin. Often the basin has a concave cover with holes, so as to allow the dirty water to run through and thus be out of sight. The method of eating without knives, forks, or spoons, makes this washing a necessity.

That this method of washing was in vogue in the days of the prophets is seen by the way Elisha was characterized by the king's servants: "Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah" (II Kings 3:11). Elisha had served as Elijah's servant, and pouring water, so that his master could wash his hands, was an important part of his duties.

When the Pharisees complained against the disciples of JESUS, because they ate bread without washing their hands (Matthew 15:1,2; Mark 7:1-5), it was concerning a lengthy ceremonial washing of hands that they spoke. The Jewish hierarchy of that day had given forth a positive injunction as to exactly how this ablution should be done. It was not a law of Moses but a tradition of the elders. JESUS refused to sanction it as a rule that was binding. It was not the custom of washing hands before eating that JESUS objected to, but the authority the rabbis claimed to have in telling the people the exact and detailed manner in which it must be done.

POSITION WHILE EATING

According to general Arabic custom, the seemly posture while eating is "to sit erect on the floor at the low table, with the legs either folded under the body, or thrown back as in, the act of kneeling

Thus in the desert tent of the Bedouin, or in the simple house of the Fellahin, this would be the position of those eating a meal. And we can be sure that this was the posture of the common people of Bible days in most cases. The exception to this rule is the custom of the wealthy, or the habit of the people on special occasions such as suppers or feasts; and this will be dealt with in a later section. It is easy to imagine Elisha and the sons of the prophets eating in the usual Oriental position, when it says concerning them: "And the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot" (II Kings 4:38).

USE OF TABLE, CHAIRS, AND DISHES

Table. In many cases the Arab custom would seem to indicate to the Westerner that they use no table at all when serving a meal. Actually, a mat spread upon the ground serves the purpose of a table. This is especially true of the tent Arab.

This was the early Semitic table of Old Testament times, for the Hebrew word "Shool-khawn," usually translated "table," has as its root meaning, "a skin or leather mat spread on the ground."

With this sort of a table in view, the Psalmist can be understood when he said concerning his enemies, "Let their table become a snare before them." David's meaning would be, "Let their feet become entangled in it, as it is spread on the ground."

If the Arabs use more of a table than this mat, then it is likely to be a polygon stool, no higher than about fourteen inches, and those eating would sit on the floor around this stool.

Chairs. With such an Oriental table in general use, it would follow that Occidental chairs would be largely missing. In regard to making use of chairs in ancient Bible days it has been said: "On ordinary occasions they probably sat or squatted on the floor around a low table, while at meals of more ceremony they sat on chairs or stools."

The scriptural instances of chairs or stools used at mealtime, include Joseph's brothers sitting on seats at a banquet in Egypt (Genesis 43:33); and David's having a seat at the table of King Saul (I Samuel 20:5, 18). Both of these cases are connected with royalty or high position. On ordinary occasions the "chair" used by the vast majority of Israelites was the ground or floor on which would be spread a carpet or a mat.

Dishes. At an Oriental meal the only dishes are those in which the food is placed on the table; there are no dishes given to each one having a part in the meal. Often there is only one dish for the food, and it is usually a tray of basketwork, or a copper dish.

JESUS spoke of His betrayer as "he that dippeth his hand with me in the dish" (Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20). In entertaining his guest, Gideon put the meat in a basket, and the broth in a pot (Judges 6:19).

SAYING GRACE AT MEALS

Before the Arabs begin their meal each person repeats after the Master of the house some such a grace as, "In the name of God," or, "Praise Allah," or, "God be praised."

In the Old Testament era the Jews were in the habit of saying grace at meals, and if a prophet was to be present he was expected to do it for them. Concerning Samuel when Saul was to eat the sacrifice with him, it was said, "He doth bless the sacrifice: and afterwards they eat that be bidden" (I Samuel 9:13). In relating the miracle of JESUS feeding the five thousand John says, "And Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples . . ." (John 6:11). And concerning the feeding of the four thousand, Matthew is careful to include the blessing in his description: "And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks" (Matthew 15:36).

Dr. Edersheim suggests that CHRIST may have prayed an extemporaneous prayer for grace, or He may have used the formula widely used by the Jews of His day as a mealtime grace. Here is the formula: "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our GOD, King of the world, who causes to come forth bread from the earth."

Also it was customary for the Jews in those days to have a second prayer of thanks at the end of the meal. Their authority for this was Deuteronomy 8:10: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee ." In the saying of these graces it was customary for one of the guests to give the thanks in a loud voice, and for the rest to say Amen, or to repeat some of the words of the grace.

USE OF HAND INSTEAD OF KNIFE, FORK, OR SPOON

In general it may be said that the Arabs in eating do not use knives, plates, or napkins which are considered so essential in the West. They say: "What does a man want of a spoon when GOD has given him so many fingers?" Sheets of bread, about as thick as heavy flannel; take the place of spoons or forks to some extent. A piece from this bread is broken off and shaped so as to put some of the food on it.

They use this bread to scoop up any partially liquid dish, such as soups, sauces, or gravies. Each torn off piece of bread that thus serves as a spoon is eaten along with the food it contains.

Meat is usually served in a single large dish and is eaten with the fingers. Broth is served in a separate dish and it is used to moisten the bread. This method of eating is actually not as untidy as might be supposed.

The invitation Boaz gave to Ruth to eat with his workers, indicates that these same customs must have been in operation in those days: " And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar" (Ruth 2:14). And at the last supper JESUS said to His disciples, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (Matthew 26:23).

Furthermore, He spoke of dipping a choice portion of the meat called the sop into the dish (John 13:26). More will be said of this under the section dealing with suppers and banquets. Suffice it to say, that most of the Oriental customs of today in regard to eating date back, not only to the days of our Saviour, but also to the Old Testament era.

WASHING AFTER THE MEAL

After a typical Oriental meal, washing the hands again is of course essential. If there is a servant, he is the one to bring in the pitcher of water and basin, and the water is poured over the hands of those who have eaten the meal. A napkin is placed over the shoulder so that the hands may be dried. They do this for each other if there is no servant to do it for them.

That this method of pouring water to wash hands was used in ancient times has already been seen concerning the washing of hands before eating.

TEST

Manners and Customs of Bible Lands Chapter Five

- (1) Why was it important to wash hands before eating in Bible Times?
- (2) In Mark 7:1-5, What was Jesus objecting to?
- (3) Who were most likely to have actual chairs in Bible Times?
- (4) What two things normally took place before, and after a meal?

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by

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CHAPTER SIX

Special Suppers and Banquets

SINCE THE DAILY MENU of the ordinary Oriental meal is and always has been very simple, something needs to be said about those special occasions when a more elaborate and expensive meal is served. The Scriptures abound in accounts of these formal occasions, such as weddings, birthdays, or other times when special guests are invited and a sumptuous meal is served.

BANQUET INVITATIONS

In some parts of the East a custom of double invitations to an entertainment has been observed. Some time before the feast is to be served, an invitation is sent forth; and then, when the appointed time draws near, a servant is sent again, this time to announce that everything is ready.

There are several examples of this custom in the Bible. Ahasuerus and Haman were invited by Esther to a feast, and then when it was ready the king's chamberlains went to get Haman (Esther 5:8; 6:14). Another example is in the Parable of the Wedding of the King's Son. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding" (Matthew 22:2, 3).

Again, the Parable of the Great Supper has this double invitation in it: "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:16,17).

"COMPELLING" GUESTS TO ATTEND

The following words of CHRIST's parable need to be understood from an Oriental point of view: "And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23).

The usual brief invitation in America, and the ready acceptance of it would be considered in the East

entirely undignified. In the East the one invited must not at first accept, but is expected rather to reject the invitation. He must be urged to accept. Although all the time he expects to accept, he must allow the one inviting him the privilege of "compelling him" to accept.

It was thus that Lydia must have extended, and Paul and his companions must have finally accepted hospitality. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house,

and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16:15). When one of the Pharisees invited JESUS to a meal, the Saviour did not at first accept the invitation, although He did go finally: "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him" (Luke 7:36).

All of this was in keeping with Oriental customs.

WHY EXCLUSION FROM A FEAST WAS CONSIDERED TO BE SO TERRIBLE

Ancient banquets were usually held at night in rooms which were brilliantly lighted, and anybody who was excluded from the feast was said to be cast out of the lighted room into the "outer darkness" of the night.

In the teachings of JESUS, such exclusion is likened unto the day of judgment. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12). "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness" (Matthew 22:13). "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). This expression "outer darkness" takes on new meaning, when it is realized what a dread the Oriental has for the darkness of the night. In the East a lamp is usually kept burning all night. To sleep in the dark as the Westerner usually does would be a terrible experience to the Oriental. Because of this fear of the darkness, the Saviour could have chosen no more appropriate words than "outer darkness" to represent the future punishment of the unrighteous.

POSTURE WHILE EATING AT FEASTS

It has already been observed that on ordinary occasions the people of the Bible age mostly sat or squatted on the floor around a low table at mealtime. In the king's circle, or at other times of special ceremony, seats were sometimes provided. The prophet Amos is the first sacred writer to refer to the custom of "[stretching] themselves upon their couches" when eating (Amos 6:4).

By the time of JESUS, the Roman custom of reclining on couches at supper had been adopted in some Jewish circles. The Roman table and couches combined was called a triclinium. There were three couches which were located on the three sides of a square, the fourth side being left open, so that a servant could get on the inside to assist in serving the meal. The guest's position was to recline with the body's upper part resting on the left arm, and the head raised, and a cushion at the back, and the lower part of the body stretched out. The head of the second guest was opposite the breast of the first guest, so that if he wanted to speak to him in secret he would lean upon his breast.

This custom at a banquet table throws light on several passages from the four gospels. The Apostle John asked JESUS a question while in this position at supper (John 13:23 -25). In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, when JESUS said that "the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22), he doubtless meant to imply that he was reclining at a heavenly table next to Abraham where he could lean upon his breast. This is clear in the light of CHRIST's description of that heavenly feast: "Many shall come from the east and the west; and shall sit down [recline] with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). Also this position of reclining at table explains how the

woman could come during a dinner and take her position behind at the feet of JESUS and wash them (Luke 7:38).

PLACES OF HONOR AT THE TABLE

When the Pharisees were invited to a banquet, they were very covetous of having the highest places of distinction at the table. JESUS condemned them for this proud spirit. He said concerning them: They ". . . love the uttermost rooms at feasts" (Matthew 23:6). When JESUS was guest at a meal in a Pharisee's house, He gave the guests a parable, when He noticed how they sought the chief places at the table. (Luke 14:8-10):

"When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say unto thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee."

In many native homes one room has a higher floor, and in this room the guests of honor are assigned places, and those of less honor on the lower floor or level. A place of special honor would be on the right of the host, and the next highest place on his left. James and John asked for such positions in CHRIST's kingdom (Mark 10:37). But JESUS advised guests to take the last place. Where was this place located? It was on the lower level and nearest the door. The guest who would take this humble place might be invited by the master of the house to take a place on a higher plane and farther from the door.

FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT AT BANQUETS

The prophet Amos, although he denounced extravagant luxuries and sinful excesses, nevertheless has given us a description of the eating, drinking, and other customs at an Oriental banquet. This is the way he describes it:

"And stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments" (Amos 6:4-6).

The meat eaten at these suppers included the best lambs from the flock and calves that had been stall-fed. The drinking of wine at the feast was considered an important feature. Playing on stringed instruments was another activity and the guests evidently vied with one another in anointing their bodies with very costly ointments.

Dancing was often a part of the entertainment at these feasts. When the Prodigal Son returned home, and his father celebrated with a feast, there was music and dancing (Luke 15:24, 25). Dancing was a social diversion of the Hebrew women and girls, especially when they made merry. Men did sometimes engage in it, as when David danced when the ark was brought to Jerusalem (II Samuel 6:14). But more often, it was the activity of the fair sex (cf. Jeremiah 31:4).

But there is no Scriptural record that the Jewish men danced with the women, as is the modern custom of the West. Neither is there indication that there were public female dancers, as is true in some Eastern places today. The dancing of the daughter of Herodias (Matthew 14:6) before men at a sensual banquet was the kind introduced among the Jews by corrupt Greek influence.

DIPPING INTO THE DISH AND GIVING THE SOP

Oriental customs of eating must be kept in mind in order to understand the meaning of the words and action of JESUS, in relation to Judas Iscariot at the last supper. Mark's account reads:

"Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish" (Mark 14:18-20).

Some have supposed that Judas was in the position where he would be dipping at the same time with JESUS into the dish, and that he was thus singled out as the betrayer. But this could hardly be, since the other disciples did not discover who the betrayer was from these words of JESUS.

Since they all had been eating from the same large dish, these words of JESUS, he "that dippeth with me in the dish," did not identify anyone of them. All of them, as well as Judas, had been dipping into the dish with Jesus. JESUS was simply informing them that one of them now eating with Him would become His betrayer.

Again, CHRIST's giving of the "sop" to Judas was in accordance with certain Eastern custom still observed in modern times. John reports what was done and said:

"He then lying on Jesus' breast said unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot" (John 13:25, 26).

What is meant by the "sop"? It is the most tasty morsel of food being served at the feast. It may be served in the "bread spoon," but is more often picked up by the host with his thumb and finger, and handed directly to one of the guests.

But why is a sop given to one of the guests? A native and resident of Bible lands says that certain villagers there have this custom of giving the sop today, and he describes the purpose of the act thus: It is with them a mark of special respect for the master of the feast to hand to a guest portions of what is before him, or to insist on putting morsels or sops into his mouth with his own hand. I have had this

done to me several times, when the intention was certainly to honor and manifest good will.

The meaning of what CHRIST did then was most certainly to extend love and friendship to the very one who was going to betray Him. The act has been described as if the LORD were saying to the traitor:

Judas, my disciple, I have infinite pity for you. You have proved false, you have forsaken me in your heart; but I will not treat you as an enemy, for I have come not to destroy, but to fulfill. Here is my sop of friendship, and "that thou doest, do quickly."

TEST

Manners and Customs of Bible Lands Chapter Six

- (1) Describe the custom of double invitations
- (2) Give several Biblical examples of Double invitations.
- (3) What connection is there between the phrase "outer darkness" and lamps in Bible Lands?
- (4) What were Roman tables and couches being combined called?
- (5) Did they ever dance in Bible Times, and if so, when?

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Sacred Duty of Hospitality

ORIENTAL ATTITUDES ON ENTERTAINING A GUEST EATING ALONE DISLIKED

IT IS A PART of Oriental etiquette to want to share hospitality with others. After a meal has been prepared, an Arab has been heard to call out three times from a high spot in the neighborhood, inviting men to come and partake of the meal. These men of the desert do not like to eat their meal alone. The patriarch Job felt that way about it in his day: "Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof" (Job. 31:17).

Guests believed to be sent by GOD

These men of the East believe that a person who becomes their guest is sent to them by GOD. Thus their hospitality becomes a sacred duty. When one such a host entertained Westerners, he was so happy that he wept tears of joy that "Heaven had sent him guests."

When Abraham entertained three strangers who proved to be angels, he showed much the same attitude. His enthusiasm in receiving the guests would indicate his belief, that those he was to entertain were sent to him by the LORD. It is said that he "ran to meet" the three men, that he "hastened into the tent unto Sarah" to get her to make ready food, that he "ran unto the herd," and that he "fetcht a calf," and that he "hasted to dress it" (Genesis 18:2-7).

KINDS OF GUESTS

Friends as guests

In the East a friend is always welcome to receive hospitality. The Romans of New Testament times had a token of hospitality between two friends, which consisted of a tile of wood or stone, which was divided in half. Each person wrote his name on one of the two pieces, and then exchanged that piece with the other person. These were often kept and handed down from father to son. To produce the

counterpart of one of these pieces would guarantee the hospitality of a real friend.

The Book of Revelation no doubt refers to this custom in one of the promises to overcomers: "And will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written" (Revelation 2:17).

Strangers as guests

There is an Oriental proverb that says, "Every stranger is an invited guest." The Bedouin Arab of today, like Abraham of old, will sit in the entrance way of his tent, in order to be on the watch for stranger guests (Genesis 18:1). The inspired apostle gave command concerning hospitality to this type of guest: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). When Paul exhorted the Roman believers to be "given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13), he was referring to the same thing, for the Greek word he used for hospitality, "fil-ox-en-ee-ah," means, "love to strangers."⁵ (See also "entertaining fellow-believers in N.T. times," Chapter 13).

Enemies as guests

One remarkable feature of Oriental hospitality is that sometimes an enemy is received as a guest, and as long as he remains in that relationship, he is perfectly safe and is treated as a friend. There are certain Oriental tribes of tent-dwellers who have the rule that an enemy who has "once dismounted and touched the rope of a single tent," is safe.

PROVISION MADE FOR GUESTS

Among tent-dwellers

If a guest is entertained by one who lives in a tent, there is no separate place provided, nor would it be expected. Usually, the first section of tent within the entrance is the regular guest apartment, which serves as dining room and sleeping quarters. The men eat with their guest and sleep with him. It was in this guest-apartment of his tent, that Abraham entertained his angel guests, when Sarah in the adjoining woman's apartment, overheard what was said (Genesis 18:1-10).

In the villages and cities

If a village was not provided with a community guest room, then a guest would be entertained in one of the houses, and since most of these had but a single room, that one room would serve as reception room, dining room, and sleeping quarters. This room would be much like the reception apartment of the tent.

But in many of the villages and cities, a public guest chamber is provided

The food for guests entertained here is supplied by the families providing the room. Often a servant is hired to care for the room. The guest-room may be an upper room, or in summer, the shade of a large tree might serve as the guest-room. This room is the social gathering place for the men of the village. Women are not allowed in these guest chambers. So, if a man has his family with him when traveling, he does not go to this public reception room, but waits until someone invites them into his house.

The Book of Judges tells of a Levite traveling with his concubine and a servant, and how he was thus entertained by an old man (Judges 19:15-21). As many families sleep on the housetop in summer weather, a guest is often given that place for the night. Saul was entertained overnight on the roof top and Samuel called to him early in the morning (I Samuel 9:26).

In the cities or where there are houses of more than one room, built around a courtyard, the guest room is usually at the end of the court. As a rule this room is more open than other family rooms. This would correspond to the raised divan in some one-room houses, which serves as the place of honor for guests. In large houses a well-furnished room is provided near the door, so as not to disturb the family. If there is an upper room, a distinguished guest is often accommodated there.

The man of GOD was provided such a room as a place of retirement (II Kings 4:10).

CUSTOMS WHEN A GUEST ENTERS A HOME

Bowing

When a guest is received into an Orient home, bowing between the guests and host is quite apt to take place. In Western lands such bowing would be of the head only, but in the East there is a more expressive custom of saluting with the head erect and the body a little inclined forward, by raising the hand to the heart, mouth, and forehead. The symbolic meaning of this action is to say something like this: "My heart, my voice, my brain are all at your service."

But those who are used to this custom on many occasions enter into a more complete bow. They do not wait to do this only for royalty, but when they want to express thanks for a favor, or supplicate for a favor, and at many other times of meeting they often fall on their knees, and then incline the body touching the ground with their head, and kissing the lower part of the other person's clothing, or his feet, or even the dust at his feet. To those not acquainted with such manners, it would seem that one person was worshiping the other like he would worship GOD; but ordinarily, worship of this sort is not involved in the action.

Cornelius is said to have worshiped Peter: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him" (Acts 10:25). Of course Peter rejected this lest it might involve divine worship. Concerning the enemies of the Philadelphian church, the Book of Revelation records these words of our LORD: "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan. . . I will make them to come and worship before thy feet" (Revelation 3:9). The Revisers have a marginal note in explanation of the word "worship" in both of these Scriptures: "The Greek word denotes an act of reverence, whether paid to a creature or to the Creator." There are many examples in the Bible of this Eastern custom of bowing in varying degrees of intensity (cf. Genesis 18:2,3; 23:7, 12; Matthew 18:26; Revelation 19:10).

Greeting

Upon entering an Arab house or a Bedouin tent, the greetings used are something like this: The host will say: "Salam alakum" which means, "Peace be on you." The guest will respond with the words: "Wa alakum es-salam," meaning, "And on you, peace."

Knowing that these Arabic customs date back for centuries, how significant then are the instructions of JESUS to his disciples, who were to be entertained in certain homes: "And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house, and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again" (Luke 10:5, 6).

Kissing

Guests in Holy Land homes expect to be kissed as they enter. When entertained by a Pharisee, JESUS commented on his reception by saying to him, "Thou gavest me no kiss" (Luke 7:45). The difference between the Oriental and the Occidental way of greeting each other is made clear by one who lived in Palestine many years.

Here men shake hands when they meet and greet, but in Palestine, instead of doing this, they place their right hand on their friend's left shoulder and kiss his right cheek, and then reversing the action, place their left hand on his right shoulder, and kiss his left cheek. In this country men never kiss each other's faces; there it may be constantly seen. But how the practice lights up the numerous allusions in Scripture which are naturally lost to a Westerner! Once grasp the fact that their kiss answers to our hearty handshake between friends and social equals, and how much - how very much becomes plain that was before obscured Scriptural examples of men kissing men might be multiplied. Jacob kissed his father (Genesis 27:27). Esau kissed Jacob (Genesis 33:4). Joseph kissed his brothers (Genesis 45:15). Jacob kissed the sons of Joseph (Genesis 48:10). Aaron kissed Moses (Exodus 4:27). Moses kissed Jethro (Exodus 18:7). David and Jonathan kissed each other (I Samuel 20:41). The Father kissed the Prodigal (Luke 15:20). The elders of Miletus kissed Paul (Acts 20:37). This custom is frequent in the Orient in modern times.

Removing the shoes

Upon entering a house to be entertained, a guest does as all Orientals would do, he takes off his boots, shoes, or slippers before entering a room. This becomes necessary since they sit on a mat rug, or divan, with their feet beneath them, and shoes would soil the couch and the clothes: and would also make a very uncomfortable seat. The idea of defilement from the shoes led to the custom of removing the shoes upon entering sacred places.

Thus at the burning bush the LORD told Moses, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

Washing the feet. After bowing, greeting, and kissing, the Eastern guest is offered water for washing his feet. Wearing of sandals would naturally necessitate foot washing, but it is often done when shoes have been worn. A servant will assist the guest by pouring the water upon his feet over a copper basin, rubbing the feet with his hands, and wiping them with a napkin.

When JESUS and his disciples were gathered together, the Saviour took the place of the servant, and washed the feet of His disciples, who themselves had disdained to do such a humble task. John tells us that He "laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel" (John 13:4, 5). Paul gave as a recommendation of a widow: "If she have washed the saints' feet" (I Timothy 5:10). This custom was also common in Old Testament days (Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; 1 Samuel 25:41, etc.).

Anointing the head with oil

The custom of anointing guests with oil is an ancient one among nations of the East. Olive oil alone was often used, but sometimes it was mixed with spices. Simon the Pharisee was accused of lack of hospitality because he failed to anoint JESUS (Luke 7:46). This would indicate the custom was quite common in the days of the Gospel accounts. David immortalized the custom when he wrote his shepherd psalm and exclaimed: "Thou anointest my head with oil" (Psalm 23:5).

Travelers in the Orient in recent times have discovered that this practice of anointing still exists in some quarters.

CARING FOR A GUEST AFTER ENTRANCE

The guest given a drink of water

One of the first things done for a guest who has been received, is to offer him a drink of water. The doing of this is recognizing him of being worthy of peaceful reception. Thus to give a drink of water is the simplest way to pledge friendship with a person. When Eliezer, Abraham's servant, sought a welcome, he did so by requesting of the maiden who came to the well to draw water (Genesis 24:17, 18), "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." And when she made answer, "Drink, my lord," it was an indication that he was welcome to be a guest at the nearby home. With this significance

attached to a drink of water, the promise of JESUS takes on new meaning (Mark 9:41), "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

The guest served a meal

The sharing of food in the East is a very special act of hospitality. It means far more than it means in the West. It is a way of making a covenant of peace and fidelity.

When Abimelech wanted a permanent covenant with Isaac, the confirmation of that covenant came when Isaac "made them a feast, and they did eat and drink" (Genesis 26:30).

An Oriental considers as sacred the expression, "bread and salt." When it is said, "There is bread and salt between us" it is the same as saying, "We are bound together by a solemn covenant." A foe will not "taste the salt" of his adversary unless he is ready to be reconciled to him.

In some rural districts of Syria today there is a custom that a person on a mission of importance will not eat bread and salt of his host until first the purpose of his errand is made known. They think that the covenant of "bread and salt" must not be entered into until the attitude of the host is known regarding the mission of the guest.

Thus Abraham's servant refused to eat at the table of Laban, until first he made known his mission of seeking a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:33).

Dr. Thomson, Syrian missionary, was once guest in a Bedouin sheik's tent. The host dipped a bit of bread in some grape molasses and gave it to the missionary for him to eat. Then he said to him, "We are now brethren. There is bread and salt between us. We are brothers and allies."

When the Gibeonites sought a covenant of friendship with Israel in the days of Joshua, it was said that the Israelites "took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD" (Joshua 9:14).

Once having entered into this covenant, Israel was bound to keep it.

The guest made lord of the house. An Eastern proverb runs thus: "The guest while in the house is its lord." This is a true statement of the spirit of the hospitality of the East. One of the first greetings a Palestinian host will give his guest is to say, "Hadtha beita" i.e., "This is your house." This saying is repeated many times. Thus actually the guest during his stay is master of the house. And whenever the guest asks a favor, in granting it the host will say, "You do me honor."

There must have been the same attitude between host and guest in the days of Lot. The host was considered to be a servant, and the guest was lord. Thus Lot spoke of himself and his guests:

"Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house" (Genesis 19:2).

Privacy not expected by the guest. An Oriental guest would think he was ill-treated if he were left alone at any time. He does not need privacy at night, because he sleeps with his clothes on. He is happy to have others sleep with him. If a sleeping place is assigned to him in an upper room, then some of the family sons sleep alongside of him that he might have their companionship. He would feel he was being deserted if treated the way he would be if entertained in the West, just as a Westerner would feel oppressed by the constant attentions of an Oriental host.

PROTECTING A GUEST

In the lands of the East, when a host accepts a man to be his guest he thereby agrees at whatever the cost to defend his guest from possible enemies during the time of his entertainment. Dr.

Cyrus Hamlin, an American missionary in the East, was entertained by a governor. The host took a piece of roast mutton and handed it to the missionary, saying as he did so, "Now do you know what I have done?" In answering his own question he went on to say: "By that act I have pledged you every drop of my blood, that while you are in my territory no evil shall come to you. For that space of time we are brothers."

The Psalmist felt utterly secure, though he had enemies close by him, when he knew that GOD was his host. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psalm 23:5).

THE ABUSE OF HOSPITALITY

Among Eastern nations it is considered a terrible sin indeed for anybody who has accepted hospitality from a host to turn against him in the doing of an evil deed. This feeling goes back to very ancient times and is often alluded to by various writers.

The prophet Obadiah refers to this sin: "The men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee . . . They that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee" (Obadiah 7). The Psalmist David speaks of this terrible evil, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). And the LORD JESUS quotes this very passage from the Psalm as having its fulfillment in the treachery of Judas the betrayer, who ate at the same table with Him (John 13:18).

RENEWING A BROKEN COVENANT

Among oriental people, when a covenant of friendship has been once broken, it may be renewed by those involved once again eating together. After His resurrection, JESUS ate at least three times with various disciples of His, and this was no doubt done in order to renew the covenant, which had been broken by their disloyalty to Him during the days of His passion (cf. Luke

24:30, 41-43; John 21:12, 13).

In the Old Testament we have an example of this when Jacob and Laban were in strained relationship. They restored their friendship by eating together, as well as entering into an oath (Genesis 31:53,54).

THE DEPARTURE OF A GUEST

When the time comes for a guest to depart, a Syrian host will do his best to delay the departure. He will beg him to stay for one more meal, or to wait until the morrow before he leaves. In Judges nineteen is the finest example in the Bible of this custom of delaying the guest. The host said to the guest: "Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way." After the meal he urged him, "Tarry all night." The next day the guest was persuaded to tarry until afternoon. But when urged to stay over another night, the guest decided it was time to insist on departing, which he did. This is typical Oriental procedure (Judges 19:5-10).

When a guest departs, the usual salutation is as follows. The guest will say: "With your permission."
And the host will make answer, "Depart in peace."

Isaac must have used just such a salutation when Abimelech and his men departed, after having been entertained by Isaac at a meal. Scripture says: "And they departed from him in peace" (Genesis 26:31).

When a host desires to do special honor to his departing guest, he will walk with him out of the town a distance. Sometimes this walk will last for an hour, and will come to an end only after the guest has urged his host that he need not go any farther.

Thus Abraham walked with his departing guests "to bring them on the way" (Genesis 18:16).

TEST

Manners and Customs Chapter Seven

- (1) Do men of the desert like to eat alone?
- (2) The men of the East believed that visitors were sent from who?
- (3) The Greek word he used for hospitality, "fil-ox-en-ee-ah," means?
- (4) Was it a practice in the middle east to extend a hand of hospitality to an enemy?
- (5) During the summer, a guest might be put up in several different places, name a few of them.
- (6) When greeting a guest, placing the hand over the heart, mouth and forehead meant what?
- (7) Why were shoes removed before entering holy places
- (8) What type of oil was used to anoint guest?
- (9) vTrue or False, once a person was accepted as a guest in someones home, their protection also fell upon the host.

TRUE
FALSE

- (10) When a host wanted to express special honor upon a guest, what would he do upon their departure?

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER EIGHT

Daily Program of Activities EARLY RISING

CONCERNING THE HOUR OF RISING, one writer has summed up the matter thus:

The habit of early rising is all but universal in Palestine. The climate makes this a necessity for the greater part of the year, the heat being so great that hard labor is oppressive a few hours after sunrise.

At early dawn laborers go to their work and travelers start on their journeys.

Many Bible passages indicate that the custom of early rising was practiced in those days. The Genesis account mentions an occasion when "Abraham rose up early in the morning" (Genesis 22:3). The Book of Exodus tells that "Moses rose up early in the morning" (Exodus 34:4). And Scripture says that on a certain day "Job... rose up early in the morning" (Job 1:5). Concerning the people who wished to hear CHRIST's teachings, Luke says, "And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him" (Luke 21:38). And Mark says of JESUS, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Other such examples of early

rising in Scripture times could be added.

GRINDING OF THE GRAIN BY THE WOMEN

The first sound to greet the ear in the early morning in many a Palestinian village will be the sound of the grinding of the grain. Today, as in the long ago, many of these people resort to the handmill for this purpose. A traveler passing by these humble homes will hear the hum of the handmill morning or evening and sometimes after dark. This sound of the grinding is not exactly musical, and yet many love to go to sleep under it. In the mind of those who live in the East this sound is associated with home, and comfort, and plenty. The women are the ones who engage in this task, and they begin it early in the morning, and it often requires half a day to complete.

When Jeremiah foretold judgment upon Israel for her sins, he said concerning what GOD would take from her: "I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle" (Jeremiah 25:10). From this it can be seen that the sound of these handmills is an indication of life and activity, and the absence of them would be a sign of utter desolation.

The Bible references to the grinding mills are true to Oriental customs. The task is for servants if

the family has them, and if not the women do the job, but the men would consider it beneath them to engage in such a menial task. Part of the judgment upon Israel at the destruction of Jerusalem was that the enemy "took the young men to grind" (Lamentations 5:13). And the Philistines punished Samson in this way, for it says of him, "and he did grind in the prison house" (Judges 16:21).

Although there are simple handmills made for the use of one person, more often two women operate one together. The mill is composed of two stones eighteen to twenty-four inches in diameter. The two women sit at these stones facing each other. The upper stone turns upon the lower one by means of an upright handle which the women alternately pull and push. Here is how the process works:

The upper stone rotates about a wooden pivot fixed in the center of the lower. The opening in the upper stone for the pivot is funnel-shaped to receive the corn, which each woman throws in as required with her disengaged hand. The flour issuing from between the stones is usually caught on a sheepskin placed under the mill.

Job speaks of a heart being as "hard as a piece of the nether millstone" (Job 41:24). Thomson says that the lower millstone is not always harder than the upper, but he had seen the nether made of a very compact and thick sandstone, while the upper was of lava no doubt because being lighter it would be easier to drive it around with the hand.

TIME OF MEALS

Meals are not always served at the same time in the Orient today, and the nature of the meals varies in different sections. The same was also true in Biblical times. In the main it may be said that the Hebrews had only two meals a day, breakfast, and dinner. The time for breakfast varied all the way from early morning to noon.

JESUS served breakfast to a group of hungry fishermen early in the morning (John 21:12). In commenting on the negligence of the guards of King Eglon (Judges 3:24), the Jewish historian Josephus says: "It was then summer time, and the middle of the day, when the guards were not strictly on their watch, both because of the heat, and because they were gone to dinner." Attention is called to the fact that the word Josephus uses for "dinner" is the word meaning "breakfast" as used in the New Testament.

It would appear from this that the Jewish historian was indicating that sometimes breakfast was served as late as noon in his day. No doubt it was more often served in the middle of the morning.

In the Parable of the Wedding of the King's Son, the message went forth to the invited guests, "I have prepared my dinner [the word for 'breakfast']" (Matthew 22:4). The marriage feast here

would be similar then to the English "wedding breakfast." Both meals of the Jews are mentioned by JESUS in an exhortation he gave his host, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper" (Luke 14:12). The evening meal would in most cases be the main meal, but not always, depending on the nature and place

of the men's work. The custom in some modern cities of having breakfast anywhere from nine to twelve o'clock, and dinner in the evening, would correspond quite closely with the two meals of the Jews of Bible times.

WEAVING CLOTH AND MAKING CLOTHES

The Jewish women were responsible for making the clothing for the family. The wool which was used came from their flocks. It had to be spun into yarn without the use of modern spinning wheels. Concerning this process, the Book of Proverbs in its tribute to the ideal mother, describes it thus: "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff" (Proverbs 31:19). The ancient Egyptians and Babylonians, being experts in weaving, had large looms, but for the most part the common people of Palestine used a very primitive loom and the weaving process was of necessity a slow and tedious one. Of course there were no sewing machines or steel needles. Their needles were coarse ones made of bronze or sometimes of splinters of bone that had been sharpened at one end, and with a hole through the other end.

It is said that today most of the spinning in Syria is done by the older women. It gives occasion for these spinners to get together. And they spin while they talk, or even sometimes while they are eating in an informal way. When Scripture says, "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff" (Proverbs 31:19), it is the same way as saying, "She is never idle," or as the Syrians would say, "Her spindle is never out of her hands."

WASHING CLOTHES

The Arab women in washing their clothes today usually go to nearby sources of water such as streams, pools, or watering troughs. They will dip their clothes in and out of the water, and then placing them upon flat stones which abound in Palestine, they will beat them with a club which is about a foot and a half long. They carry the water in goatskins and have a vessel for rinsing purposes. That this sort of process was used in the time of David is indicated by the prayer of his penitential psalm: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity" (Psalm 51:2). His picture here comes from the process of washing clothes. Alexander Maclaren says concerning it: "The word employed is significant, in that it probably means washing by kneading or beating, not by simple rinsing. The psalmist is ready to submit to any painful discipline, if only he may be cleansed. "Wash me, beat me, tread me down, hammer me with mallets, dash me against the stones. do anything with me, if only these foul stains are melted from the texture of my soul."

That soap was used in washing is clear from the Scriptures. The word occurs in The common translation of the books of Jeremiah and Malachi (Jeremiah 2:22 and Malachi 3:2). This form of soap was doubtless a vegetable alkali. Job said: "If I wash myself with snow water . . ." (Job

9:30). This was a vegetable alkali. There are two references in the Bible to mineral alkali which was called nitre (Proverbs 25:20 and Jeremiah 2:22). This was probably the "natron" used so largely in Egypt.

CARING FOR THE GOATS BY THE GIRLS

Among the Beduin Arabs where camels engage the attention of the men folks, the task of caring for the goats is assigned to the young women of the home. These shepherdesses sometimes have a difficult time in watering their flocks, if perchance the camel herders come in from one of their five-day waterless periods of grazing. These girls are not apt to get much consideration from these men. The Sacred Record tells how Moses befriended Jethro's daughters when they had to fight for an opportunity to give water to their flocks. One of these girls afterwards became the wife of Moses (Exodus 2:15-21).

THE MIDDAY SIESTA

In Palestine during the summer season the time of greatest heat is from noon to three o' clock in the afternoon. There is cessation of most activity during that time in many parts of the land. They rest at home or wherever they may be and can find a suitable place. A laundry or shop will often be discovered to be closed during those hours. This midday time of rest was common in Old Testament days. Genesis says that Abraham "sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day" (Genesis 18:1). Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was sleeping at midday. "Who lay on a bed at noon" (II Samuel 4:5). And when Saul entered the cave where David and his men were located, he no doubt did so in order to have his middle-of-the-day nap. "And Saul went in to cover his feet" (I Samuel 24:3).

DAILY CONVERSATION

Use of GOD's name in conversation. In Anglo-Saxon lands the name of GOD is seldom mentioned in daily conversation except by those who are profane. But among the Arabs of Bible lands, GOD's name is constantly on the lips of these people. An astonished person will exclaim, "Mashallah," i.e., "What hath GOD wrought!" which is the very expression used by Balaam centuries ago (Numbers 23:23). If a man is asked if he expects to do a certain thing, he will make answer, "If GOD wills." And this is the kind of answer recommended by James in his Epistle (James 4:15). If a baby is held up that you may admire it, the grandmother will say, "Behold the gift of GOD," words which are reminiscent of the Psalmist's declaration, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). When a farmer greets his workers he says to them, "The LORD be with you." And they will answer him, "The LORD bless thee." These are the same greetings used centuries ago when Boaz came to his workers (Ruth 2:4). Such pious expressions, of course, could be used so constantly that they become meaningless, and on the lips of insincere people would soon lose their value. But such conversation is a great contrast to what is heard in the West.

From the days of the patriarchs to the times of the Apostles, daily conversation among the Jews included many references to Deity. No doubt there were insincere lips that spoke the name of GOD carelessly, but when this custom was carried out by godly people, how beautiful it was! The Book of Ruth has a number of examples of such conversation, as for example, when Naomi's women friends exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord!" (Ruth 4:14). It would be well if modern Christians had more of GOD in their daily conversation.

Use of figurative language and exaggerated expressions. Often the oriental manner of speech is to picture what is meant, or perhaps to demonstrate it. A good example of this is given us by Luke in his account of Paul's experiences: "There came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle" (Acts 21:10-11).

If John the Baptist had spoken like some speakers in the West, he would have said, "Your pretensions to virtue and good birth far exceed your actual practice of virtue." Being a real Oriental he actually said:

"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3:7-9). The large use of figures of speech in its teaching and conversation make the Book a typical Oriental book.

The Oriental frequently makes statements that to the Westerner sound like uncalled-for exaggeration. One man will say to another, "What I say to you is truth, and if it is not, I will cut off my right arm." Or he will say, "I promise you this, and if I fail in fulfilling my promise, I will pluck out my right eye." In those lands nobody would ever dream that such a resolution would be carried out. The statement simply means that the speaker is in earnest.

An Oriental can fully appreciate what JESUS meant when he said, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee... If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee" (Matthew 5:29, 30). Many expressions of JESUS need to be understood in the light of

daily conversation of His day. Here are examples of a few. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of GOD" (Matthew 19:24). "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). When reading such passages of Scripture, men from the Occident must remember the fondness of the Oriental for the hyperbole.

Dealing with delicate subjects in mixed company. Visitors to Palestine from other parts of the world are often embarrassed by the way the daily conversation of the natives may include matters never spoken of in polite circles in the West. The Oriental considers it to be perfectly proper to talk about anything that is natural in the presence of men, women, and children. And this is done in refined circles. A respectable woman from the Holy Land cannot understand why some critics of the Bible have condemned the Scriptural mention of certain matters deemed wrong for Westerners to talk about. The story told in Genesis of the details concerning the birth of twin boys, Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:23-26), would be told in a public gathering in the East, with even more details, without a blush coming to any face. Several hundred years ago this same thing was true in England.

GOING OF THE WOMEN FOR WATER

It is the task of the women to go for the household water to the well or spring. And they do it today in many places in the East just like it was done when the Genesis account speaks of it being "the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water" (Genesis 24:11). The women are trained to do this from girlhood, for Saul and his servant "found young maidens going out to draw water" (I Samuel 9:11). The chief time for doing this is in the late afternoon or evening, although it is often done early in the morning. Earthenware pitchers (Lamentations 4:2) are used for the purpose, and they have one and sometimes two handles.

It has been customary for Syrian women to carry the pitcher of water on their shoulder, although sometimes it is carried on the hip. Most Arabs of Palestine carry it upon their head.

Scripture says that Rebekah carried her pitcher on her shoulder (Genesis 24:15). Carrying a pitcher of water was all but universally done by women. It must have been a picturesque sight to see them going and coming with the pitcher poised gracefully upon the head or shoulder. When JESUS instructed two of his disciples, "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him" (Mark 14:13), that would be an easy way of identifying the person, for it is exceedingly uncommon to see a man carrying a pitcher of water, which is a woman's task.

When larger supplies of water are needed, men use large skins of sheep or goats for carrying the supply. The pitchers are reserved for the use of the women. There is nothing left at the well that may be used for drawing water from a depth. Each woman who comes for water brings with her, in addition to the pitcher in which to carry the water, a hard leather portable bucket with a rope, in order to let it down to the level of the water.

The Samaritan woman whom JESUS met at Jacob's well had brought all this with her, but JESUS did not have such equipment with him. Hence she said to him: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (John 4:11). In response to his request for a drink, she drew from the well and gave to Him.

TEST

Manners and Customs Chapter Eight

- (1) In Palestine, why is it important to rise early?
- (2) What is one of the first sounds to greet your ears on a typical Palestine morning?
- (3) In regards to meals, what time of day would breakfast be served in bible times?
- (4) Who normally made the clothing, and where did the wool come from?
- (5) What type of soap did they have during Bible times?
- (6) Who cared for the goats?
- (7) Was it custom for people in Bible times to mention God? Explain your answer.
- (8) Who normally gathered water?

Manners And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER NINE

Dress and Ornamentation

THE STYLES OF DRESS in Anglo-Saxon lands are undergoing a constant change, whereas, in Eastern countries, the manner of dress today is largely the same as it was centuries ago. There is a prevalent view in Bible lands that it is morally wrong to change anything that is ancient. Thus the prevailing Palestinian dress of modern times (except of the Jews who have gone back to their land from various parts of the globe) is much as it was in the epoch that produced the Bible.

THE INNER GARMENT - TUNIC OR SHIRT

The tunic (often translated "coat") was a shirt which was worn next to the skin. It was made of leather, haircloth, wool, linen, or in modern times, usually of cotton. The simplest form of it was without sleeves and reached to the knees or sometimes to the ankles. The well-to-do wore it with sleeves and extending to the ankles. Women as well as men wore it (see Song of Solomon 5:3), although there was no doubt a difference in style and pattern in what was worn by the two.

Among the lower classes, the tunic was often the only dress worn in warm weather. Persons of higher rank might wear the tunic alone inside the house, but would not wear it without the outer garment outside, or when they were to receive a caller. In the Bible the term "naked" is used of men clad only with their tunic (cf. Isaiah 20:2-4; Micah 1:8; John 21:7). To be dressed in such a scanty manner was thought of as "nakedness." As a rule the Jews of CHRIST's day had at least a change of apparel. A man would be considered poor to have only one garment.

Yet Joh uke 3:11). And when JESUS sent out the Twelve on a preaching and healing mission, He told them not to take an extra undergarment with them (Matthew 10:10). The apparel which Jacob gave to Joseph (Genesis 37:3) is rendered in our English translations, "coat of many colors." But the Hebrew expression here is the same as the one used for the garment worn by Tamar the daughter of King David, and translated in the Greek and Latin, "a sleeved tunic." (See II Samuel 13:18) For this reason many Bible scholars believe it was a long undergarment with sleeves: The working classes usually wore a short tunic, whereas the aristocracy wore a long tunic with long sleeves. Thus it would be a mark of distinction for Joseph to wear the latter. But some are inclined to think it was a robe worn over the tunic.

The garment of JESUS for which the Roman soldiers cast lots was a tunic without seam (John 19:23). It has often been referred to as a robe, but this is not correct, for it was not His outer garment,

but rather His undergarment.

THE OUTER TUNIC OR ROBE

In Bible times there was a looser and longer kind of tunic that was sometimes used but not by the ordinary people. Scripture indicates its use by kings (I Samuel 24:4), prophets (I Samuel 28:14), nobles (Job 1:20), and sometimes youths (I Samuel 2:19). Some Bible scholars believe it to have been a third garment, i.e., in addition to the ordinary tunic and outside mantle. But others have thought of it as a special robe that was worn over the undergarment, and thus might have taken the place of the mantle.

THE GIRDLE

If the tunic was ungirded it would interfere with a person's ability to walk freely, and so a girdle was always worn when leaving home for any kind of a journey (See II Kings 4:29; Acts 12:8). There were and are today two kinds of girdles. One, a common variety, is of leather, usually six inches broad and furnished with clasps. This was the kind of girdle worn by Elijah (II Kings 1:8), and by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4). The other, a more valuable variety, is of linen (See Jeremiah 13:1), or sometimes of silk or embroidered material. It is generally a handbreadth wide. The girdle served as a pouch in which to keep money (II Samuel 18:11) and other things that might be needed (Mark 6:8). The girdle was used to fasten a man's sword to his body (I Samuel 25:13). Thus the girdle was a very useful part of a man's clothing.

The Scriptures often make symbolic use of the girdle. When JESUS said to His disciples: "Let your loins be girded about" (Luke 12:35), it was as if He had said: "Be as men who have a long race to run; gather up the folds of your flowing robes, and fasten them with your girdle; that nothing may keep you back or impede your steps."

In Bible language, "be girded" means: "to be ready for action" (cf. Psalm 18:39). The prophet Isaiah spoke of righteousness as the girdle of Messiah's loins when He rules the world (Isaiah 11:5). And Paul calls truth to be the Christian's girdle in his warfare with Satan (Ephesians 6:14).

THE OUTER GARMENT, OR MANTLE

The outer garment which the Palestinian villager wears, is a large cloak which would serve the purpose of a Westerner's overcoat. It is made of wool or goat's hair and sometimes of cotton. It is dark brown and different shades with whitish perpendicular stripes. It serves as a shelter from the wind and rain, and as a blanket at night. It is a more or less common sight to behold a man walking on a hot day wearing his heavy cloak, and if he should be asked why he does so, his answer would be, "What keeps out the cold, keeps out the heat also." It was this outer garment or mantle with which Elijah smote the waters of Jordan and crossed over with Elisha, and when he was taken up to Heaven this mantle became the property of Elisha (II Kings 2:8-13). The three young men who were cast into the fiery

furnace were clad in their mantles as well as their tunics and other garb (Daniel 3:21). The Law of Moses contained an explicit commandment regarding this outer garment. This is the way the law reads:

"If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious" (Exodus 22:26, 27).

The need for this commandment is easily understood when it is known how the mantle is used at night. Going to bed at night is a very simple matter for the Bedouins or peasants. Mats, rugs, or mattresses are used to lie upon, but the host does not provide any covering. Each person provides his own which consists of his mantle. Being closely woven, it is warm, and if he sleeps out-of- doors, this covering is even waterproof.

It was because this outer garment was a man's covering by night that the law did not allow anybody taking this as a pledge or security, for this would deprive him of his means of keeping warm while sleeping. Such a garment if taken at all had to be returned by sunset.

A knowledge of this law and its purpose is an aid in understanding certain statements of CHRIST. On one occasion He said: "Him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat [undergarment] also" (Luke 6:29). This order is understood easily, because the outer garment would be the one most easily seized by a robber. But on another occasion He said. "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat [undergarment], let him have thy cloak [outer garment] also" (Matthew 5:40). A Jewish court would not award an outer garment as judgment, because of the rule of the Law of Moses already referred to, but could award an undergarment. In such a case JESUS advocated going the "second mile" by giving the outer garment also.

Because of the fullness of the mantle it served as a means of carrying various things therein. The lap was often filled with grain or fruit. JESUS said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38).

Ruth could put six measures of barley into her mantle (Ruth 3:15). Thus the upper garment served many useful purposes.

HEADDRESS

The Jews of Bible times gave much attention to the care of their hair. The young people loved to wear it long and curled (Song of Solomon 5:11), and they were proud to have thick and abundant hair (II Samuel 14:25,26). Middle-aged men and priests would occasionally cut their hair but very little.

Baldness was scarce and suspicion of leprosy was often attached to it. Thus when the youth said of Elisha, "Go up, thou bald head" (II Kings 2:23), it was using an extreme curse, for the prophet being a young man, may not actually have been bald-headed. Men would not cut their beards, but allow them to grow long (II Samuel 10:4,5). Beards would be anointed with oil often. In public the Jews always wore a turban, for at certain seasons of the year it is dangerous in Palestine to expose the head to the rays of the sun. This turban was of thick material and passed several times around the head. It was somewhat like our handkerchief and was made of linen, or recently of cotton.

The patriarch Job and the prophet Isaiah mention the use of the turban as a headdress (Job 29:14; Isaiah 3:23). In place of the turban, the Palestinian Arabs today for the most part, wear a head veil called "Kaffieh" which hangs down over part of their garment.

*** The Bible teaches that it is a shame for a man to have long hair, and is a sign of rebellion against authority, according to 1 Corinthians 11. Absalom clearly was a rebel. Even in the OT, men (especially the priests, the examples to the rest of Israel) cut their hair short - see Ezekiel 44:20. ***

SANDALS

The shoes as worn by the majority in New Testament times were no doubt what we would call sandals. They consisted of a sole of either wood or leather, which was fastened to the foot by leather thongs. Some people wore that which was more like an Occidental shoe. With these, either the entire foot was covered, or the toes were left bare. Such shoes were probably considered to be a luxury, for the Bible references to footwear indicate the universal use of sandals.

The Old Testament often makes mention of the sandals. The prophet Amos said, ". . . because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes [sandals]" (Amos 2:6). And Abraham spoke of the sandal thongs (Genesis 14:23). The New Testament references to sandals are also numerous. The angel told Peter, "Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals" (Acts 12:8). And John the Baptist refers to the latchet (thong, Robertson) of Messiah's sandals (Mark 1:7).

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WOMEN'S DRESS AND MEN'S

The law of Moses forbade a man to wear a woman's clothing, and a woman to wear a man's clothing (Deuteronomy 22:5). Among the Bedouin Arabs of Palestine there is a great care that either sex shall not imitate the other in matters of dress. A traveler one day discovered a Bedouin man who had put on a woman's garment while doing some rough work. He was hired to be a guide, but the man was very careful that none of his countrymen should see him in a woman's garb, and hurried away as soon as possible to change into a man's apparel.

The difference between the dress of women and men needs to be noted carefully.

"The dress of women was different in detail rather than of kind. They too wore tunic and cloak. We may suppose that in every case their dress was a little more elaborate. Doubtless they wore longer tunics, larger mantles than their menfolk. And if they did, they may be said to have had every right to them, for they generally made not only their own clothes but those of their lords."

The veil was the distinctive female wearing apparel. All females, with the exception of maidservants and women in a low condition of life, wore a veil. They would usually never lay it aside, except when

they were in the presence of servants, or on rare occasions. This custom has prevailed among the Eastern women down to the modern era. When traveling, women may throw the veil over the back part of their head, but if they see a man approaching, they place it back in its original position. Thus Rebekah, when she saw Isaac approaching her camel caravan, covered her face with her veil (Genesis 24:64, 65).

When women are at home they do not speak to a guest without being veiled and in the presence of maids. They do not enter the guest's chamber, but rather, standing at the door, they make it known to the servant what is wanted (See II Kings 4:12, 13). It is well to remember that prostitutes went unveiled. Today, as in olden times, virgins and married women may be seen wearing veils in Bible lands.

The old customs are not being observed strictly by some Moslem women, for they are now going unveiled. Although it was the custom for women to wear a veil entirely covering their head, when they were in public, this custom was not always strictly enforced among the Hebrew women. They were allowed more liberty than the Arab women are allowed today. The Egyptians saw Sarah's face (Genesis 12:14). While Hannah was praying, Eli "marked her mouth" (I Samuel 1:12).

When a woman kept her veil down, it was forbidden for anyone to lift it, but she was free to do so if she chose. JESUS said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). All these Scriptures indicate that women sometimes exposed their faces to view. Young girls were more apt to be veiled than a married women.

The headgear of Bethlehem women is of interest in throwing light on Biblical customs. It was of two parts. First, there was what might be called a high cap on the front of which have been sewn rows of gold and silver coins. It would have to be a dire circumstance that would ever cause her to part with any of these coins. If she lost one of these, an evil meaning would be attached to the loss, and so it would be considered a great shame. Thus the woman whom JESUS told us about (Luke 15:8-10), had not merely lost a coin that could be used for buying articles, she had lost a part of that which was an ornament to her and which was also her dowry. Reflection was cast upon her character.

Second, there was the veil, which was quite a large affair perhaps six feet long and some four feet wide, and so placed over the cap as to cover the entire headgear, with the exception of the coins. Most of these veils are made of heavy white linen. Some have embroidery work on them, and some are nearly covered with needlework.

ORNAMENTATION

As a rule, Jewish men did not indulge in extravagances of dress, and there was little ornamentation among them. They often carried a cane or staff, which would be ornamented at the top, but it served the useful purpose of protecting them from half-wild dogs that abounded in the country, and was not much of an ornament. Certain men wore a ring on their right hand or, suspended by a cord or chain around the neck.

Actually this was the signet ring or seal, and served as the personal signature of its owner, and so was not usually worn as an ornament. (For Scriptural examples of the ring, see Genesis 38:18; Song of

Solomon 8:6; Luke 15:22, etc.) Among the women there was more apt to be ornamentation than among the men. Peter and Paul condemned an elaborate braiding of women's hair (I Peter 3:3; 1 Timothy 2:9), and the use of ornaments may possibly have been involved in the custom. Earrings were at one time worn by the women of Jacob's family (Genesis 35:4). And the golden earrings of the Israelitish women contributed to the making by Aaron of the golden calf (Exodus 32:2). These earrings, as now worn in the East, have as their main design the form of balls, long pendants, crescents, or disks. On behalf of his master, Abraham's servant had two bracelets ready to give Rebekah (Genesis 24:22).

In recent years these are made of gold, silver, brass, or colored glass. In the third chapter of his prophecy, Isaiah lists many feminine ornaments. Necklaces or pendants are referred to also (Isaiah 3:19). Today they take the form of balls, squares, or hollow cylinders. Anklets, now having bells and disks attached, are also mentioned in this chapter (Isaiah 3:18). These are worn by Bedouin women today. Noserings also worn by these women were a part of Isaiah's list of feminine ornaments (Isaiah 3:21) Amulets were worn in Isaiah's day (Isaiah 3:20) and still are worn in the East as a charm to protect a person from various kinds of evil.

SPECIAL DRESS OF THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees in their religious garb, took two articles of dress which were worn by other Jews and emphasized them in a special way until they became their distinctive apparel. One of these was the phylactery. It was a little box of metal, or bands of parchment which was fastened to the hand or forehead by straps. It contained passages of Scripture referring to the Passover and the redemption of the first-born from Egypt. The custom was based on certain Scriptural admonitions (Exodus 13:9, 16).

And the Jews still bind them upon their arms and foreheads.

The other special feature of the Pharisees' dress was the blue fringes placed at the corners of the mantle, as the law of Moses commanded (Numbers 15:37,38; Deuteronomy 22:12). The Pharisees had unusually broad phylacteries, and very long fringes (Matthew 23:5). It was for this proud use of these things without an appreciation of their value, that JESUS condemned them so severely.

THE DRESS OF CHRIST

How was JESUS CHRIST dressed? Artists, who have painted pictures of Him for us, have not always given an accurate view. One writer of the past century has attempted to describe His dress. It is worthy of careful study: Upon His head He must always have worn the turban, the national headgear, used alike by rich and poor . . . The turban He wore was probably white. It was fastened under the chin by a cord, and at the side fell down to the shoulders and over the tunic. Under His turban He wore His hair rather long, and His beard uncut. His tunic, the underneath vesture, was of one piece without seam, it was therefore of some value, and had probably been given Him by one of those women who "ministered unto Him of their substance." Over this He wore the talith, loose and flowing. This mantle was not white, for we are told it became white during transfiguration. It was not red, for that was only the military color; it is possible it was blue, for blue was then very common; or it may have been simply white with brown stripes. In any case, JESUS had at the four corners of this mantle, the ciccith [fringe] . . . He wore sandals on His feet, as we learn from John the Baptist; and when He was traveling, going from place to place, He doubtless wore a girdle around the loins, and carried a stick.

TEST

Manners and Customs Chapter Nine

- (1) Why is the manner of dress largely the same in Eastern Lands?
- (2) Describe the Tunic.
- (3) Name a couple of uses for the girdle.
- (4) Name a couple of uses for the mantle.
- (5) In Bible times, was it a sign of rebellion to have long hair?
- (6) What are some differences that might be noted between men and women's clothing?

Manner And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER TEN

Parental Position in the Home

POSITION OF THE FATHER

ORIENTAL MEANING attached to the word, "father." The Oriental idea of the family is a little kingdom within itself, over which the father is supreme ruler. Every company of travelers, every tribe, every community, every family, must have "a father," who is the head of the group. A man is said to be "the father" of what he invents. Jubal "was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe." Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle" (Genesis 4:20, 21). Because he was a preserver and protector, Joseph said that GOD made him "a father to Pharaoh" (Genesis 45:8). The Oriental mind cannot conceive of any band or group without somebody being "the father" of it.

Supremacy of the father under the patriarchal system. Under the patriarchal administration, the father is supreme in command. This authority which the father has, extends to his wife, to his children, his children's children, his servants, and to all his household, and if he is the sheik, it extends to all the tribe. Many of the Bedouin Arabs of today are under no government except this patriarchal rule.

When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in tents in the Land of Promise, they were ruled by this same system. And when the law of Moses was given to Israel, the authority of the parents, and especially the father, was still recognized. One of the Ten Commandments is "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12). In many ways the father was the supreme court of appeal in domestic matters.

Succession of authority. In a majority of cases, the great authority which the father had, was handed down to his eldest son, who took over the position of leadership upon the death of the father. Thus Isaac became the new "sheik" over his father's household upon the death of Abraham. He and Rebekah had been living in that household under his father's authority; but the succession of authority passed on to him as the son. Ishmael, being son of the handmaid, did not succeed to the place (Genesis 25). In some cases, the father bestowed the succession of authority on other than the eldest son, as when Isaac bestowed it upon Jacob instead of Esau (Genesis 27). Reverence of the children for the father.

Reverence of children for their parents, and especially the father, is well-nigh universal in the East down to modern times. Among the Arabs, it is very seldom that a son is heard of as being undutiful. It is quite customary for the child to greet the

father in the morning by the kissing of his hand, and following this, to stand before him in an attitude of humility, ready to receive any order, or waiting for permission to depart. Following this, the child is often taken upon the lap of the father.

Obedience to parents was demanded by the Mosaic Law, and a rebellious and disobedient child be punished by death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). The Apostle Paul reiterated the injunction that children must obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1; Col. 3:20).

POSITION OF THE MOTHER

Position of the wife in relation to the husband. The wife held a subordinate position to that of her husband, at least in office, if not in nature. The ancient Hebrew women did not have unrestrained freedom as the modern women of the Occident have. In the Orient, social intercourse between the sexes is marked by a degree of reserve that is unknown elsewhere. Dr. Thomson says, "Oriental women are never regarded or treated as equals by the men." They never eat with the men, but the husband and brothers are first served, and the wife, mother, and sisters wait and take what is left; in a walk the women never go arm in arm with the men, but follow at a respectful distance; the woman is, as a rule, kept closely confined, and watched with jealousy; when she goes out she is closely veiled from head to foot.

This attitude toward women can be illustrated from the Bible. Notice how Jacob's wives when traveling were given places by themselves, and not with him (Genesis 32). And nothing is said about the prodigal's mother being present at the feast which the father served his son (Luke 15:11-32). All this is in keeping with Oriental custom. But while these things are true, it must be understood that the Old Testament does not picture the wife as a mere slave of her husband. She is seen to exert tremendous influence for good or ill over her husband. And he showed great respect for her in most cases. Sarah was treated by Abraham as a queen, and in matters of the household: she ruled in many ways. Abraham said to her, concerning Hagar, who had given birth to Ishmael, "Behold thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee" (Genesis 16:6). The tribute to a Hebrew wife and mother in the Book of Proverbs indicates she was a person of great influence with her husband: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Proverbs 31:11). "She openeth her mouth with wisdom" (Proverbs 31:26). "Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also; and he praiseth her" (Proverbs 31:28).

Position of the mother in relation to the children . Children in the East show nearly the same respect toward the mother as they do toward the father. The mother is believed to be entitled to honor and to have authority from GOD. Actually, the father and mother are looked at, as being the representatives of GOD in the matter of authority. They are considered as having this position no matter how poorly they fulfill their obligations.

Hebrew children in general held their mothers in great respect, even when they became adults. This may be illustrated by the great influence exerted by queen mothers on the kings of Judah and Israel (I Kings 2:19; II Kings 11:1; 24:12, etc.).

Position of Jewish women superior to that of heathen women. The degradation of women in the Orient is a matter of common knowledge. In many cases she is more like a drudge, or a slave, or a plaything for the man, than she is the man's companion, as in the West. This situation has been in

existence for centuries. But the position of Hebrew women was far superior to that of heathen women, long before Christianity had its origin among them.

Concerning this superiority in relation to the Arabs, Dr. Thomson testifies: The position of women among them was far higher than with the Arabs, and the character of Hebrew women must have been, on the whole, such as to command and sustain this higher position. The Arabs can show no list of pious and illustrious ladies like those who adorn the history of the Hebrews. No Bedouin mother ever taught, or could teach, such a "prophecy" as King Lemuel learned from his; nor could the picture of "a virtuous woman," given in the last chapter of Proverbs, have been copied by an Arab. The conception by him of such a character was a moral impossibility.

TEST

Manners and Customs Chapter Ten

- (1) The Oriental idea of the family is a....?
- (2) In Bible times, who was the supreme leader of the family?
- (3) Upon the death of the father, who would normally take over the leadership of the family?
- (4) The mother and father are regarded as having authority from who?

Manner And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Birth and Care of Children

DESIRE OF JEWISH WOMEN FOR CHILDREN

THERE WAS AMONG the Jewish wives a universal longing for, and joy in, the giving birth to children.

That longing was well expressed in the words of Rachel to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die" (Genesis 30:1). The LORD had originally said to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). And the promise to Abraham was, "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16). The law of GOD taught that children were a sign of GOD's blessing: "Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body" (Deuteronomy 28:4). The Psalmist pictured a man blessed of the LORD, and says of him, "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house" (Psalm 128:3).

Sterility in marriage was considered to be a divine visitation or curse. Hannah's barrenness was "because the LORD had shut up her womb" (I Samuel 1:6). To have a child after being a long time barren, as was the case of Elisabeth, meant that the LORD had taken away her reproach among men (Luke 1:25).

PREFERENCE FOR BOY BABIES

Among the Palestine Arabs there is always a desire on the part of the mothers and fathers that the baby shall be a boy rather than a girl. A parting blessing often used by the Arabs is:

May the blessings of Allah be upon thee, May your shadow never grow less, May all your children be boys and no girls.

Boys are wanted because they tend to increase the size, wealth, and importance of the family group or clan. When they grow up and marry, they bring home with them their wives, and children of such unions perpetuate the father's house. If boys increase the house, girls are thought of as decreasing it. When they marry they usually go to live in the house of their husbands.

This attitude among present-day Arabs, was also the attitude of the Hebrew people in Old and New Testament times. Except among the Christian Jews, there was an added reason why every Hebrew expectant woman wanted a boy. She always hoped that her son should be the Messiah. The Messianic promises of Holy Writ, no doubt, were often on the lips of Hebrew women. "The sceptre shall not

depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49:10). "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). These kept alive the hope of a coming Messiah, and caused the Hebrew mother to desire at each birth a boy baby, that perhaps she might be the mother of Shiloh.

CARE OF INFANT CHILD

For years the Orientals of Bible lands have cared for an infant child much as it was done when JESUS was born. Instead of allowing the young baby the free use of its limbs, it is bound hand and foot by swaddling bands, and thus made into a helpless bundle like a mummy. At birth the child is washed and rubbed with salt, and then with its legs together, and its arms at its side, it is wound around tightly with linen or cotton bandages, four to five inches wide, and five to six yards long. The band is also placed under the chin and over the forehead.

The prophet Ezekiel indicated that these same customs at a child's birth were practiced in his day. "And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all " (Ezekiel 16:4). And we are all familiar with the words of Luke, as to how they cared for the baby JESUS: "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

JEWISH RITES AND OFFERINGS AT BIRTH OF A CHILD

Jewish boys were circumcised eight days after birth. The one who Circumcised the child spoke the following words: "Blessed be the LORD our GOD, who has sanctified us by His precepts, and given us circumcision." Then the father of the boy would go on with these words: "Who has sanctified us by His precepts, and has granted us to introduce our child into the covenant of Abraham our father." Because it was said that GOD changed the names of Abraham and Sarah, at the time He gave the covenant of circumcision, therefore they would name the boy on the day he was circumcised. After doing this they had a family meal.

The rite of circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. GOD had said to Abraham, "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:10). JESUS was circumcised the eighth day after birth and he was named "JESUS" at that time (Luke 2:21).

After childbirth, the Jewish mother passed through a period of purification of seven days for a boy and fourteen days for a girl, and then she still remained at home thirty-three days for a boy, and sixty- six days for a girl. Then she was to go up to the Temple to make her childbirth offerings. If she was rich she would bring a lamb to be offered, but if she was poor then she was allowed to present two young pigeons or a pair of turtledoves (Luke 2:21; cf. Leviticus 12).

NAMING OF CHILDREN

The Arabs are fond of compounding the name of Allah into the name given their children. It was a very common custom for the Hebrews to include a name for GOD as a part of their children's names.

A few samples of such Hebrew names are here given together with their meanings:

Abijah - "Whose father GOD is"

Ahaziah - "Held by JEHOVAH"

Azariah - "Helped by JEHOVAH"

Obadiah - "Servant of JEHOVAH"

Daniel - "GOD is my Judge"

Elijah - "My GOD is JEHOVAH"

Elkanah - "Whom GOD created"

Ezekiel - "GOD will strengthen"

Another custom was practiced by Jews in naming their sons. After the birth of the first son, the father and mother were known as the father of so-and-so, and the mother of so-and-so. And the son added the father's first name after his own. Thus JESUS spoke of Peter as, "Simon Bar-jona" (Matthew 16:17), which means, "Simon, son of Jona." The Arabs giving such a name today would simply omit the word "son" and call the child "Simon Jona."

Sometimes Jews had double names in CHRIST's time. This was true of Thomas. John's Gospel refers to him as, "Thomas, which is called Didymus" (John 11:16). Both of these names mean "a twin." The name "Thomas" was Aramaic, and the name "Didymus" was Greek. When traveling in foreign countries, Jews often assumed a Greek, or Latin, or other name, which had a meaning similar to their own.

Jewish names given to girls, were often taken from beautiful objects in nature, or pleasant graces of character were used. "Bible examples are Jemima (dove), Tabitha or Dorcas (gazelle), Rhoda (rose), Rachel (lamb), Salome (peace), Deborah (bee), Esther (star)."

Naomi told the Bethlehem women, "Call me not Naomi, call me Marah." Our Bible margins give the meanings of these names thus: "Call me not, Pleasant, call me Bitter" (Ruth 1:20).

DUTY OF PARENTS IN TRAINING OF CHILDREN

It is quite clear from the Scriptures that the mother did most of the training of the children in their earlier years. The Book of Proverbs speaks of "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him" (Proverbs 31:1). And concerning Timothy, Paul said, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures" (II Timothy 3:15). Earlier in the Epistle, Paul refers to the faith of Timothy's

mother and grandmother (II Timothy 1:5). Young children then were taught by their mothers.

The daughters, doubtless remained under the guidance and oversight of their mothers until their marriage. As the boys grew up, they were more and more taught by their fathers, although they would never get away from the mother's training altogether. Proverbs often refers to a father's instruction of his son. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father" (Proverbs 1:8). "My son, keep thy father's commandment" (Proverbs 6:20). Only in well-to-do families was instruction turned over to tutors. King Ahab had tutors for his many sons (II Kings 10:1, 5}. Schools for training boys were not in operation until comparatively a late date for Jewish youth in the land.

TEST

Manners and Customs Chapter Eleven

- (1) What was one of the biggest desires for Jewish women?
•
- (2) are boy babies preferred over girls?
- (3) Jewish babies were circumcised at what age?
•
- (4) It was a Hebrew custom to include the name of God when naming what?
- (5) Jewish names given to girls, were often taken from ?
- (6) The daughters, doubtless remained under the guidance and oversight of their?
- (7) As the son became older, they fell under the guidance of who?

Manner And Customs of Bible Lands

by

Fred H. Wight

CHAPTER TWELVE

Education of Youth

A STUDY OF EDUCATION in Bible lands from early to late Biblical days will have bearing on the manners and customs of the people, and will throw light on certain Bible passages.

SCHOOLS AT UR WHEN ABRAHAM WAS A BOY

The archaeological expedition conducted by Sir Charles Leonard Woolley at Ur of the Chaldees, from 1922 to 1934, has proven that there were schools in the city of Abraham's youth. Clay tablets were uncovered that indicate some of the subjects taught in these schools. The pupils had writing lessons on tablets, and dictation lessons in vocabulary. In arithmetic, they had the multiplication and division tables, and more advanced scholars had square and cube roots, with lessons in practical geometry. Grammar lessons included paradigms of the conjugation of verbs.

These revelations together with other discoveries at Ur, substantiate the view that Abraham came from a city of high civilization. No doubt he attended one of these schools. It is certain that Abraham and Sarah were familiar with the laws of Hammurabi, having been taught this Babylonian law code from their youth. The explanation for Sarah's action in giving her maid Hagar to Abraham as a secondary wife (Genesis 16) is that the law of Hammurabi allowed such to be done. Similar action was repeated in Jacob's family relations (Genesis 30). But after the law of Moses came into being, this custom disappeared in Israel.

SCHOOLS IN EGYPT WHEN MOSES WAS A YOUNG MAN

Stephen has given us the statement that Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). A wealth of information has come to us from the land of the Nile to let us know how valuable was the law-giver's education at the expense of Egypt. Tradition has it that Moses went to school at the Temple of the Sun in Heliopolis. It was here then that he no doubt learned how to read and write. There is every indication that he had lessons in arithmetic, using duodecimal and decimal scales of notation. He must have studied geometry enough to make him familiar with the art of land-measuring. And his knowledge of mathematics would take in trigonometry. Astronomy was also studied by the Egyptians, as was architecture. The Egyptians had some proficiency in medical science and dentistry, and were acquainted with anatomy, chemistry, and had a knowledge of metals, for they had gold mines, and copper mines, and were familiar with the use of iron and the manufacture of bronze. Music was also an important subject in Egyptian schools. Moses must have been well educated according to the

standards of ancient Egypt, which were of a high caliber.

EDUCATION UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES

The duty of the educating of the youth was delegated by the Mosaic law especially to the Hebrew parents. The home was to be a school and the parents were to be teachers. The regulation read thus:

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

The feasts of the law such as the Passover were designed to cause the young to ask the question: "What mean ye by this service?" (Exodus 12:26), and thus give the parents an opportunity to explain its true meaning. The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, were meant to be object lessons in divine truth. At each seventh year on the Feast of Tabernacles, the priests were to read the law before all the people. Thus the priests and Levites were also teachers in the land. And then an order of prophets arose, beginning with Moses, and continuing through a long and illustrious line, who were indeed valuable teachers of the youth of the land. Special schools for the training of young prophets were developed by them, as will be seen.

THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS

Because of the moral decline of the priesthood under Eli and his wicked sons, Samuel was led to form a school of the prophets wherein young men, mostly Levites, were trained to teach the Law of GOD, to the people. There was such a school at Ramah, over which Samuel presided, and David fled there for a time when Saul sought to kill him (I Samuel 19:18-21). There would seem to have been one at Gibeah where Samuel mentions "a company of prophets" (I Samuel 10:5, 10). In the days of Elijah and Elisha, reference is made to "the sons of the prophets" (I Kings 20:35), as living together at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho (II Kings 2:1, 3, 5; 4:38). About one hundred prophets ate with Elisha at Gilgal (II Kings 4:38-44). There may have been that many at Jericho, for mention is made "of fifty men of the sons of the prophets" (II Kings 2:7) that went to hunt for the body of Elijah. These schools were no doubt for the study of the law and history of Israel, and also the cultivation of sacred music and poetry. The writing of sacred history came to be an important part of the labor of the prophets. These young men were given mental and spiritual training in order that they might be able to exert a greater influence for good upon the people of their day.

THE SYNAGOGUE SCHOOLS WHEN JESUS WAS A BOY

When JESUS grew up as a boy in the village of Nazareth, he no doubt attended the synagogue school. The Jewish child was sent to school in the fifth or sixth year of his life. The pupils either "stood, teacher and pupils alike, or else sat on the ground in a semicircle, facing a teacher."

Until the children were ten years of age, the Bible was the one text book. From ten to fifteen the

traditional law was the main subject dealt with, and a study of theology as taught in the Talmud was taken up with those over fifteen years of age. The study of the Bible began with the Book of Leviticus, continued with other parts of the Pentateuch, and then went on with the Prophets, and lastly, the Writings. Because of the remarkable familiarity of JESUS with the Holy Scriptures, we may be fairly certain that His home in Nazareth had in it a copy of the Sacred Book as a whole. Doubtless He loved to ponder its pages at home after having studied its teachings in the school.

THE RABBINICAL SCHOOL OF PAUL'S DAY

In the times of Paul, there were two rival schools of rabbinical theology, the school of Hillel which he attended at Jerusalem, and the school of Shammai. The former was the more liberal school as we would think of it today, and placed tremendous emphasis upon Jewish oral traditions. As a young man of thirteen years of age, Saul of Tarsus came to Jerusalem to begin his training under the great leader, Gamaliel. He graduated from this school to become a typical Pharisaical rabbi. Concerning his training he himself said: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" (Acts 22:3).

The training of JESUS as a boy had been under the other school, where there was less stress upon tradition, and more upon spiritual teachings of the law and the prophets. In his unconverted days, how Saul would have resented what JESUS said to the Pharisees, " Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" and, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:3, 6)!

THE ROMAN SCHOOLS OF THE FIRST CENTURY

It is now known that there were twenty grammar schools in the great city of Rome when the Apostle Paul first visited the city. Girls as well as boys were allowed to go to school, but there is evidence that more boys than girls availed themselves of the privilege.

Paul's reference to the "schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24) of these Roman schools, was formerly misunderstood by many, until papyri writings threw light on his meaning. The individual called in our translation "schoolmaster" was actually not headmaster or teacher, but rather a faithful slave whose duty it was to conduct his master's sons to and from school and prevent them from getting into mischief. Paul was comparing CHRIST with the real teacher, and the law was like the slave whose duty it was to conduct the pupil to the teacher.

Discoveries of the archaeologists at Ephesus indicate that the School of Tyrannus that {Paul engaged as a hall in which to preach (Acts 19:9) was probably an elementary school, where the teacher taught for a few hours early in the morning and for a while in the afternoon. Thus the room would be available for Paul's use when he wanted it. Such schoolrooms were usually adjacent to a street and thus would suit his purpose admirably.

TEST

Manners and Customs Chapter Twelve

- (1) Archaeological expeditions have confirmed that there were schools as far back as who?
 - (2) Moses went to school where?
 - (3) The duty of educating the youth fell upon who?
 - (4) Who formed the School of Prophets?
- (5) At the synagogue schools, what were the main courses for students under the age of 15?
 - (6) In Galatians 3:24, who was the "School Master"?
- (7) The School of Tyrannus where Paul preached was actually what type of school?