

A STUDY OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION  
OF HYGIENIC LAWS  
AMONG THE EARLY HEBREWS

by

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TO MY MOTHER

At whose feet I learned His Name,

In whose life I saw His Face.



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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Problem

That the Jews excelled in medicine in the Middle Ages, except in Germany, we are aware. That they attended the poor without charge we are certain. That the Jewish physicians of Spain and Italy were unrivalled, except by the Moors, we are certain. It was their scientific skill which gave Jewish rabbi-statesmen their peculiar position at the court of Spain and Portugal. Many rabbis followed the medical profession because this calling fell within the rabbinical function.

While many are aware of the importance of the Jewish physicians in the Middle Ages, few are cognizant of the great wealth of hygienic laws found in the Old Testament and obeyed by the early Jews. Through this survey the writer hopes to demonstrate the unusual medical knowledge of the Jews, based on the law of Moses, and to bring greater understanding and appreciation to the average layman of many parts of the Old Testament hitherto passed over as monotonous regulations of a long out-moded past.

Ada Sterling, in her book "Jews and Civilization" states:

"There is every evidence that in the Biblical times, in those times in which the Scriptures were assembled, which preceded Hippocrates by a hundred or more years, Jews were at least inquiring into and observing physiological facts, and concerning themselves with the very questions that today occupy the scientific mind; namely, of how to prolong life, how to improve health, and to assuage pain, and this not by magic, or by pagan rites, but by their laws of health. This is revealed in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. These laws may not be set aside as something borrowed from the Greeks or the Babylonians who had not yet appeared in any notable instance as physicians or law makers. There is corroborative evidence that very important dietary laws



were understood and obeyed by even the Jewish children who astonished the learned in Babylon by their refusing to eat the king's meat."<sup>1</sup>

Among the Jews, unlike other primitive nations, the priests did not monopolize the art and science of healing. Moses assigned to them only the task of police supervision in cases of contagious diseases. Prophets are known to have practised occasional healing as in the case of Elijah,<sup>2</sup> Elisha,<sup>3</sup> and others.

We may well consider Moses a great man if for no other reason than the association of his name with the health laws of a forward-looking people. Alexander Rattray, noted British surgeon, maintains that:

"As a whole the Mosaic law forms the oldest hygienic system extant; as it was divulged at least 900 years before the era of the oldest of our noted physicians, Aesculapius."<sup>4</sup>

Virchow, the distinguished German pathologist, went so far as to call Moses, "the greatest physician of all times." It is also evident that Solomon enjoyed great fame as a physician. His works show that he was possessed of considerable knowledge of remedial treatment.<sup>5</sup> It was said of King Asa that, "...in his disease he sought not to the Lord,<sup>6</sup> but to the physicians." Isaiah's treatment of Hezekiah indicates some knowledge of medicine.<sup>7</sup>

Further knowledge of the Jewish attitude toward health proves interesting. To the Jew neglect of one's health was regarded as a sin, but, more than this, the aim of most of the Biblical sanitary laws was

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1. Ada Sterling: The Jews and Civilization, p. 224
2. I Kings 17:17-22
3. II Kings 4:18-20, 34-35, I Kings 13:4-6
4. Alexander Rattray: Divine Hygiene, Vol. I, p. 53
5. Proverbs 17:22; 20:30
6. II Chronicles 16:12b
7. II Kings 20:7, Isaiah 3:7

purity--not only physical, but also moral and religious. In fact, medicine was an integral part of religion to the Jews, who felt that health and purity emanated from the same Divine source. God was the Physician of His people, and it was their duty to look to Him for relief. (Exodus 15:26)

#### B. Method of Procedure

This survey will be an inductive study to see what the Old Testament reveals of hygienic life. The various phases of community and personal health will be studied to determine the extent of knowledge in olden days covering these fields. We shall consider the provisions made by the early Jews relative to community sanitation; the achievement of cleanliness through ablutions, isolation and disinfection; times of rest and festivity; the choice and preparation of foods; the practice of surgery, together with their knowledge of obstetrics and care of the child; and the prevalent diseases, including their treatment and known remedies. Our conclusions will not only summarize our findings, but will attempt to suggest the extent to which the Mosaic health laws have anticipated modern scientific discoveries. Can it be that by this unique combination of religion and health we have a method or principle of permanent value and of fundamental importance to our own age?

#### C. The Delimitation

It will readily be seen that this subject covers a vast field. We shall confine our research to the period extending from the time of Moses to the Captivity, with emphasis on the Pentateuch. For the purpose of this study we will consider the book of Leviticus

as a unit--yet connected with the other books of the Pentateuch. We will not believe it justifiable to separate any portion of it from the rest of the book.

#### D. The Sources

Dr. Rattray speaks of "...what a deep mine of most important<sup>1</sup> medico-hygienic information the Holy Bible is"; and for this reason the Old Testament is used as our chief source. Of the sixty-six Biblical books, the five earliest and oldest, those of the Pentateuch, give by far the most varied hygienic information. This comprises valuable tuitional and practical matter on almost every sanitary subject, so as to form in the aggregate a complete system of sanitation, in which every one of its departments is represented: medical, surgical, obstetrical and gynecological.

Aside from this principal source we shall use the Talmud, the Jewish Encyclopedia and books dealing with ancient history, archaeology and Old Testament health laws.

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1. Rattray, Alexander ..., Divine Hygiene, p. 52

CHAPTER I  
PROVISIONS MADE BY THE EARLY JEWS  
FOR COMMUNITY SANITATION

## CHAPTER I

### PROVISIONS MADE BY THE EARLY JEWS FOR COMMUNITY SANITATION

The Jewish people made many provisions for the betterment of their community life. We find evidences of great interest in public health measures, such as regulations relative to the cleanliness and inspection of the water supply, yearly inspection of homes, disposal of refuse, situation of cemeteries and manner of embalming. The safety of each individual was insured by observance of strict laws concerning construction of buildings and compensation for injuries sustained. These topics are the concern of this chapter.

#### A. Yearly Inspection of Homes

The purpose of this annual inspection by the priests was the thorough cleansing of the family dwelling place, during which time the whole family moved out into the open and lived in tree-arbor houses.<sup>1</sup>

To achieve absolute cleanliness of the entire dwelling, all floors, crannies, cupboards, storage places, furniture and bedding were scoured and disinfected; all metallic vessels were cleansed by scalding; all earthenware vessels were destroyed; walls and ceilings<sup>2</sup> were often distempered and woodwork repainted. Such stringent measures were necessary because of the reaction of any unwholesome element upon the plaster, mortar, wood or porous stone. Just as salt in plaster absorbs moisture, which in dry weather evaporates, leaving marks of

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1. Gillespie, C.G.K., Sanitary Code of the Pentateuch, pp. 69-70
2. Ibid.

efflorescence, so any other improper and unhealthy element is found<sup>1</sup> to show itself after a lapse of time (as in the case of leprosy). This rabid determination to be clean also entailed destruction of all dead reptiles and polluted vessels in, or near, the dwelling, and proved highly efficacious in checking the spread of infection. If signs of uncleanness continued to appear in the house it was deserted and razed, and the wreckage was removed<sup>2</sup> to the dump heap outside the city wall.

One of the main features of the annual inspection was the search in the dwelling for leaven or sour dough.<sup>3</sup> This substance was excluded from all sacrificial offerings because of its putrefactive action. Strangely enough, science has now confirmed this dictum that "Leaven is born from corruption and corrupts the mass with which it is mixed."<sup>4</sup>

#### B. Public Safety and Health Measures

The Talmud states that if one defined the Law as saying, "It is no one's affair if I wish to expose myself to danger," he was punishable with stripes; for life was considered as belonging to God and not to man.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, many public safety and health measures were adopted.

These measures may be considered under the following headings: first, construction of buildings; second, compensation for injuries; third, situation of cemeteries; fourth, manner of embalming; and fifth, disposal of refuse.

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1. Leviticus 14:35-37
2. Leviticus 14:45
3. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 68
4. Gillespie, Ibid.
5. Yad: Razeah XI

### 1. Construction of Buildings

When a house was erected in Israel it was required to have a battlement around the roof to lessen the danger of falling from it. This parapet had to be at least three feet high and strongly constructed.<sup>1</sup> All pits and wells in the village had to be covered; and one could not keep a broken ladder or a vicious dog. It was also<sup>2</sup> against the law for a person to walk alone at night.

### 2. Compensation for Injuries

In case of theft, restitution in proportion was required.<sup>3</sup> Other forms of punishment included deprivation of beards, destruction of houses, imprisonment with fetters, yokes, stocks, and a diet of bread and water.<sup>4</sup> In case of manslaughter, confinement in cities of refuge was essential until the death of the high priest.<sup>5</sup> Talio, or like for like--either literally, or by compensation with money--was<sup>6</sup> observed.<sup>7</sup> According to William Brown in "Antiquities of the Jews":

"In cases of bodily pains, therefore, the Hebrew doctors taught that the party offending was bound to a five-fold satisfaction. 1. The hurt in the loss of the member. 2. The damage for the loss of labour. 3. The damage for the pain or grief occasioned by the wound. 4. The damage for the charge of curing it. And 5. For the blemish or deformity it occasioned."

### 3. Regulation and Care of Jewish Cemeteries

Jewish cemeteries were always located outside the city. From Levitical cities they were positively distant 3,000 feet; and from<sup>8</sup> others, a considerable space--usually seventy-five feet. Jerusalem

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1. Deuteronomy 22:8
2. B. K. (Talmud) 15a
3. Exodus 22:1-4
4. Brown, William, Antiquities of the Jews, Vol. II, p. 96
5. Numbers 35:25-28
6. Exodus 21:23-25
7. Brown, op. cit., pp. 96-97
8. Brown, op. cit., p. 355

was the only city within whose walls any individuals were ever buried;  
and even these were limited to the Davidic family and the bodies of  
Jehoiada, the high priest, and Huldah, the prophetess. "...Jehoiada...  
died...and they buried him in the city of David among the Kings, because  
he had done good in Israel..."

Burying places were either public or private and every city  
had a public cemetery for those inhabitants who had no sepulchres of  
their own. Each family owned a portion of it, walled in like a garden,  
where flowers were planted, and evergreens over the grave which seemed  
to grow from the body. Family sepulchres were commonly caves, either  
in gardens or in some dry, elevated place. Here the families were  
buried in niches, with heads outward, and on stone tables. Servants  
were often placed on the floor. The ancient graves of Jerusalem were  
peculiar. Berkhof states that:

"Originally natural or artificial caves served as burial places,  
but alongside of these there were also simple cavities dug out of  
the earth. Four kinds of graves were known: (1) Recess graves,  
that were about six feet long by one and a half square and hewn  
lengthwise into the wall of the chamber; (2) Sunken graves like  
those used in the Occident, but covered with stone; (3) Bench  
graves, made bench-like in the walls of the chamber, 22 inches  
high and often arch-roofed; (4) Trough-graves, being a combination  
of (2) and (3)."

There were certain regulations concerning public burial  
grounds. Thus--they were without cities, to prevent infection; no  
stream of water was allowed to pass through them, for fear of injuring

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1. Brown, op. cit., p. 355
2. II Chronicles 24:16
3. Hasselquists' Travels, pp. 28-29.
4. Isaiah 22:15-16
5. Brown, op. cit., p. 362
6. Berkhof, Louis, Biblical Archaeology, p. 93
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 356



the graves; no public road was permitted, to increase the veneration for the dead; no cattle were allowed to graze in them; and every person on entering them laid aside his phylacteries.<sup>1</sup>

There was a general law,<sup>2</sup> that on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, all sepulchres should be painted white with chalk and water; and as the rains were then past and the dry season of six months then commenced, that whitewashing made them perfectly visible till the three great festivals were over and lessened the danger of pollution by accidental touching.

The firm belief of the Jews in the resurrection of the body<sup>3</sup> made them take great pleasure in strewing the graves of departed relatives with green leaves, flowers, branches of palm and myrtle, and surrounding them with shrubs and flowers.<sup>4</sup> Building, repairing and garnishing the tombs of the prophets was considered meritorious among the Jews.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. The Treatment of the Dead by the Early Jews

When a Jew breathed his last breath, his nearest relatives tore their upper garments from head to foot and the mourners began raising their dismal cries.<sup>6</sup>

The corpse was then extended on a cloth, on the floor or table, with the face covered, and washed with a warm solution of camomile flowers and dried roses.<sup>7</sup> This was done to restore life if<sup>8</sup>

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1. Brown, op. cit., p. 356; Lightfoot, Chorograph, Ant. of Israel c. 100
2. Brown, op. cit., pp. 368-369; Lightfoot, Hebrew and Talmud Exercise on Matthew 23:28
3. Job 19:25-27
4. Brown, op. cit., p. 369
5. Matthew 23:29-30
6. Buxtorff, The Jewish Synagogue, cap. 49, Job 1:20
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 344
8. Buxtorff, op. cit., cap. 49

suspended and to make the perfumes enter the pores more easily. After washing, the body was laid on a table, all the vents shut up and the body embalmed.<sup>1</sup> The most common way was to anoint the body with a solution of some odoriferous drugs, and wrap it in linen, or shroud it.<sup>2</sup> For persons of affluence spices were used,<sup>3</sup> and palm wine, oil of cedar, myrrh, cinnamon and cassia were employed as embalming drugs.

The burial usually came within twenty-four hours after death.<sup>4</sup> The standing of a person determined the dignity of his funeral.<sup>5</sup> Books were often laid on the coffin of a Rabbi, and a warrior was often buried in his armour.<sup>6</sup> A stone was placed on the bier of a person dying under excommunication.<sup>7</sup>

During the first seven days after the funeral, the beds of the stricken family were dismantled and taken down and the family sat on the floor; they neither washed thoroughly nor walked with sandals. They ate no flesh, drank no wine and refrained from worldly business. During the thirty days of mourning they were forbidden to shave or bathe.<sup>8</sup> Suicide cases and libertines were not mourned.<sup>9</sup>

#### 5. The Disposal of Refuse

The disposal of refuse was carefully regulated. The law required that all human wastes be covered with earth and put in a special place outside the city, or camp, following the principle of

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1. Brown, op. cit., p. 345
2. Ibid.
3. II Chronicles 16:14
4. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 39
5. Brown, op. cit., p. 348
6. Ezekiel 32:27
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 348
8. Brown, op. cit., p. 354
9. Buxtorff, Synagogue, cap. 49

an earth closet. There is reference in Deuteronomy to a wooden paddle<sup>1</sup> used in covering the refuse. Lightfoot and Hangstenberg suggest that the perpetual fires kept burning in the valley of Hinnom, outside the gates of Jerusalem, were for the purpose of consuming the refuse of the city, while the fluid matter from the sewers was discharged into<sup>2</sup> the brook Kidron.

Dovecotes were forbidden to be erected within seventy-five feet of the city walls lest the pigeons should injure the gardens. No trees were allowed to grow within thirty-eight feet of the city; and threshing floors and tanneries were not permitted nearby. Chim-<sup>3</sup>neys and lime kilns were forbidden because of the smoke, and gardens and orchards requiring manure were prohibited because of the smell<sup>4</sup> and the weeds.

#### C. Healthful Aspects of the Holy Land

The land of the Jews provided great contrast in climate and atmosphere. The cold was great on the mountains of Sinai and Lebanon, and in the valleys the heat was excessive. (Persons who have visited these mountains have reported having had to use furs during the night.) The days and night in this climate were antipodes: for the nights were very cold, even when the mornings were warm and the days excessively hot. This atmosphere provided restful nights<sup>5</sup> and healthful days under the beneficial rays of the sun. Hastings states that:

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1. Deuteronomy 23:12-15
2. Hastings, Dictionary of Bible, p. 333; Gillespie, op. cit., p. 59  
Leviticus 8:17
3. Brown, op. cit., p. 131
4. Hastings, Ibid.; Gillespie, op. cit., p. 58 from Bana Kama
5. Hastings, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 321

"Compared with other countries in the same latitude, Palestine is, and probably was in Bible days, a fairly healthy land. It has few sluggish streams, and most of its valleys are windswept... the conditions of life contemplated in the Priestly Code are those of a community of agricultural freeholders; and the social and moral enactments of the law provide for the maintenance of a healthy discipline, and for the repression of excesses injurious to health".

Dews in the Holy Land were abundant, and hail and rain were generally violent.

#### B. The Water Supply

The procurement of water for the inhabitants of Palestinian cities was no easy task. Part of the water supply came from the never-failing springs near which the cities were built. To provide water for all, pools were built for the reception of water in the rainy seasons and springs were conducted at great expense for considerable distances. "In time of war cities were compelled to yield for want of water, especially if the spring was located outside the city. Many cities secured access to a spring without exposure to the enemy. One of the greatest of these was discovered at Gezer." The passage leading to the spring was cut in solid rock and was 130 feet long.

Nearly every family had its own cistern which was examined yearly prior to the Passover celebration. Barton says that:

"these cisterns were often excavated in the solid rock, but sometimes were simple pits in the earth, over the bottom of which a coating of lime or cement had been spread."

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1. Barton, George, Archaeology of the Bible, Vol. III, p. 321
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 130
4. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 57
5. Barton, op. cit., pp. 129-130

Many of the pools, of ancient construction, evidence  
1 thoughtful planning. The Pools of Siloam, near Bethlehem, retain  
2 today a store of 44,147,000 gallons of water, and tradition says of  
3 the Pools of Solomon that King Solomon shut up these springs and kept  
the door sealed with his signet in order to preserve the waters in  
their natural freshness and purity for his own drinking. The stored  
water was conveyed to Jerusalem by a conduit. These conduits were  
often open gutters, either of mason-work or hewn out of rock. "The  
most famous of these is the Shiloah-tunnel, partly built through one  
4 of the mountains, along which the water is carried to Jerusalem."

#### Summary

Many provisions were made by the early Jews for the health  
and betterment of their community. In the practical life of a com-  
munity revering the one God, the Mosaic system of sanitary law appealed  
to every man as his brother's keeper. The value placed on human life  
by these early people is evidenced by the public safety and health  
measures which they adopted and strictly observed.

Homes were inspected yearly by the priests and thoroughly  
cleansed, one of the main features of this inspection being the search  
for leaven or sour dough because of its putrefactive action -- the  
wisdom of which dictum science has now confirmed. The disposal of  
refuse was carefully regulated; and gardens and orchards requiring  
manure were prohibited. Chimneys and lime kilns were forbidden be-  
cause of the smoke; and tanneries and threshing floors had to be  
located a considerable distance from a city.

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1. Barton, op. cit., pp. 129-130
2. Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV., p. 18
3. Cf. G.A. Smith, Jerusalem I, pp. 124-131; Eccl. 2:6
4. Berkhof, Biblical Archaeology, p. 93

Buildings were required to have strongly constructed battlements around the roof to lessen the danger of falling. All pits and wells had to be covered; and one could not keep a broken ladder or vicious dog. There was provision for compensation for injuries of various kinds. Tallio, or like for like -- either literally, or by compensation with money -- was observed. The forms of punishment were varied; in case of manslaughter, confinement in cities of refuge was essential until the death of the high priest.

Jewish cemeteries were always located outside the city, at various required distances. Jerusalem was the only city within whose walls any individuals were ever buried, and even these were strictly limited to the Davidic family and the bodies of Jehoiada and Huldah. Burying places were either public or private, and there were certain stringent regulations concerning public burial grounds. The manner of embalming was prescribed, and speedy burial of the dead was required. Certain precautionary health measures were taken by the stricken family after the funeral.

The procurement and cleanliness of the water supply was insured by careful planning, regulation and yearly inspection. The value of "living fountains of water" was not underestimated by these people. They built ingenious pools, with conduits, to bring the water from the hills and to store it for future use. The most famous of these pools were the ones at Siloam and those named after Solomon. Cisterns, for family use, were common and were either excavated in the solid rock or were simple pits in the earth coated with lime or cement.

The land of the Jews provided an atmosphere of restful nights and healthful days under the beneficial rays of the sun, and

their system of community sanitation was an added protection. These, plus the agricultural pursuits of the people, developed a strong and healthy Hebrew race.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CLEANLINESS THROUGH ABLUTIONS, ISOLATION AND DISINFECTION



## CHAPTER II

### THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CLEANLINESS THROUGH ABLUTIONS,

### ISOLATION AND DISINFECTION

In early Judaism, a clean body was considered the index to a clean soul and thus an approximation to holiness.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, when preparing to visit the shrine of God at Beth-el, Jacob commanded his household to purify themselves and change their garments.<sup>2</sup> And God, ere He spoke to His people from Mt. Sinai, commanded Moses to tell the people to sanctify themselves and wash their garments.<sup>3</sup> David, in his great confessional hymn, prayed God to wash and cleanse him from sin and purge him with hyssop and make him whiter than snow.<sup>4</sup>

Cleanliness was mainly achieved through bathing or washing, which took place in natural fountains, in spring or rain-water supplies from cisterns,<sup>5</sup> or in streams — "And Elisha sent a messenger with him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."<sup>6</sup> The water used for the ritual of bathing or washing had to be absolutely pure,<sup>7</sup> absolutely clear and absolutely fresh.<sup>8</sup> According to Berkhof:

"The principal cleansing medium was water, and specifically living, i.e., running water, representing the idea of life, and symbolizing in its application, the restoration of life."

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1. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 68
2. Gen. 35:2-3; Cf. Ezek. 36:24-25; Cf. Clow, W.M.: The Bible Reader's Encyclopaedia and Concordance, p. 42
3. Exodus 19:10-11; Cf. William Brown; Antiquities of the Jews, Vol. II, p. 55
4. Psalm 51:2-10
5. Barton, George A.: Archaeology and The Bible, p. 129; II Kgs. 18:31
6. II Kings 5:10
7. Ezekiel 36:25
8. Berkhof, Louis: Biblical Archaeology, p. 153

When one considers the scarcity and great value of water in the Orient, its lavish prescription for ritual purposes was doubly remarkable.<sup>1</sup>

The pouring on of water is a sign of discipleship today, just as it was in Biblical times. Thus, it is said of Elisha "...that he poured water upon the hands of Elijah, meaning that he was his disciple."<sup>2</sup>

#### B. The Kinds of Ablutions

There were three kinds of ablutions known to the Jews: first, the washing of hands; second, the washing of hands and feet;<sup>3</sup> and third, the bathing or immersion of the whole body.

1. The first ablution, that of washing the hands, was performed before a holy act and before and after meals; and after an unclean body function or contact with an unclean person or thing.<sup>4 5 6 7</sup>

"The ritual washing of the hands is not explicitly prescribed by the Bible, but is inferred by the Rabbis (Hol. 106a) from the passage, Lev. xv. 11, in which it is stated that if a person afflicted with an unclean issue have not washed (or bathed) his hands his touch contaminates. The passage, Ps. xxvi. 6, 'I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord,' also warrants the inference that Ablution of the hands is requisite before performing any holy act."<sup>8</sup>

2. The second ablution, that of washing the hands and feet, was required to be performed only by the priests, according to

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1. Joshua 9:21,23; Cf. Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 133-134
2. II Kings 3:11; Cf. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 68; John 13:3-15
3. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 68
4. Leviticus 16:2-4; Psalm 26:8; Berkhof, op. cit., p. 129; Brown, op. cit., p. 55; Clow, op. cit., p. 393
5. Schaff, Philip: Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. II, p. 1451; Brown, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 214
6. Shulhan Aruk, Orah, Hayzim, 116, 4, 6, 7
7. Leviticus 15:11-12
8. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 68

Mosaic law-- "...Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet..."<sup>1</sup> This act took place before the laver in the tabernacle.<sup>2</sup>

3. The third ablution, that of bathing or washing the entire body was required to take place in a natural fountain or stream,<sup>3</sup> or in a properly constructed mikweh, or ritual bath, containing at least 120 gallons of water.<sup>4</sup> A full bath was required for purification or consecration in the following cases:<sup>5</sup> a leper, a sufferer from an unclean issue,<sup>6</sup> or a menstruous woman;<sup>7</sup> a person contaminated by contact with a diseased person, or any unclean animal or object,<sup>8</sup> or a corpse;<sup>9</sup> the high priest on the Day of Atonement (who was required to "wash his flesh with water in the holy place..." after sending off the scape-goat), the liberator of the scapegoat and the burner of the bullock and the goat for the sin-offering (each of whom was required to "wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water...");<sup>10</sup> the priest who prepared the ashes of the red heifer (who also was required to "wash his clothes, and ... bathe his flesh in water..."),<sup>11</sup> and he who burned the red heifer; and any Gentile who wished to become a proselyte.<sup>12</sup> A full bath was required of all appearing before God,<sup>13</sup> or before a king or prominent person,<sup>14</sup> for the first requisite of "purity" was bodily cleanliness and --

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1. Exodus 30:19-21, 40:31; Cf. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p.69
2. Exodus 30:18, 40:30
3. Leviticus 15:2, 13
4. The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. II, p. 597
5. Leviticus 22:4-6, 14:2,8,9
6. Leviticus 15:2,13; II Kings 5:10; Cf. Gillespie, C.G.K.: The Sanitary Code of the Pentateuch, pp. 64-65
7. II Samuel 11:2; Leviticus 15:19-27; Leviticus 20:18
8. Leviticus 22:4-6
9. Numbers 19:11-19
10. Leviticus 16:21, 24:26-28
11. Numbers 19:2, 3, 5-8
12. Clow, op. cit., p. 307; Cf. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 69
13. Exodus 40:30-35
14. Ruth 3:3; Judith 10:3

"...one could no more come unclean into the presence of God than before the king. Consequently a man washed not only himself (Gen. xxxv. 2; Ex. xxx. 17 at seq.), but also his clothes (Ex. xix. 10 at seq.) ..."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, "...the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes."<sup>2</sup>

### C. The Enforcement of Isolation

The Bible prescribes isolation in case of the following diseases: elephantiasis tuberculata (v. 4), ulcerations (v. 21), carbuncles (v. 26), and leprosy of the head (v. 31).<sup>3</sup> Quarantine was imposed upon the sick Jew for a long or short period according to the kind of disease he had. If there was suspicion of leprosy or any permanent affection of kindred character, the patient was segregated from the healthy for seven days.<sup>4</sup> At the end of this period, if examination disclosed that the disease was arrested, he was "shut up... seven days more."<sup>5</sup> At the end of this second seven-day period, upon careful examination, the priest declared him either clean or unclean; and, if clean (cured), he was formally restored to community life after the prescribed washing of clothes and person in "running, 'living' water" on the first and seventh days after examination, with the added precaution of admission to "camp" but exclusion from family life during this last period.<sup>6</sup>

If the patient remained uncured (unclean) and was pronounced to be a leper, measures of permanent segregation were enforced,<sup>7</sup> with the comfort of the sufferer and the safety of the public in mind.

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1. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, p.
2. Exodus 19:10
3. Leviticus 13:4, 21, 26, 31
4. Leviticus 13:4, 31
5. Leviticus 13:5, 33; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 64
6. Leviticus 14:2-32; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., 64, 65
7. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 61

Such a diseased person was required to bear and to give distinct signs of warning and to dwell apart from the undiseased, but was permitted to associate with the others similarly afflicted. The four leprous men at the gate of Samaria rendered a real service to the Samaritans by their discovery of the flight of the Syrians.

Isolation for a day was imposed upon anyone contaminated by contact, with a person having an issue, with an unclean object, with an unclean animal, or with a carcass; upon anyone entering, eating or lying in a plague-stricken house; and upon the priest who prepared the ashes of the red heifer, upon the one who burned her, and upon the man who gathered the ashes of the heifer for the water of separation. Isolation for a week was imposed upon anyone having a suspicious eruption; upon a woman having an issue; upon anyone cured of an issue, in order to insure absolute immunity; and upon anyone touching a corpse or entering or touching anything in a tent (house) in which someone had died, or touching "a bone of a man, or a grave."

#### D. Methods of Disinfection

St. Jerome, the learned Latin father, who made his home in the Holy Land for many years, wrote of the "soap" of Jeremiah 2:22 that it was made from an herb abundant in the marshes. Vatablus

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1. Leviticus 13:45; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 62
2. Leviticus 13:46; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 62
3. II Kings 7:3,10; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 62
4. Leviticus 22:4-7, 15:2-11; Numbers 19:22
5. Leviticus 11:24-25, 28, 31, 39-40; 17:15
6. Leviticus 14:34, 46-47
7. Numbers 19:2,6,7-10; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 63, 64
8. Leviticus 13:26,28; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 63
9. Leviticus 15:19,28
10. Leviticus 15:13; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 64
11. Numbers 19:11-12,14,16

identified this herb as cudwort. And, while the Levitical law suggested no chemical detergents, natron (nitre)<sup>1</sup> -- a sesqui-carbonate of soda -- was used extensively in Egypt for washing linens, etc. The giloo (soap plant), found in Egypt, needs only to be crushed for use. There is no reason to doubt that these substances and many others<sup>2</sup> were used for cleansing purposes in the earliest days.

The copious use of water, particularly springwater, as prescribed by Mosaic Law, indicates an amazing grasp by the early Jews of the general principles of disinfection, which many believe "work<sup>3</sup> quite as effectively by dilution as by direct chemical agency." Their recognition of the fact that running water purifies itself is demonstrated in Leviticus 11:36.

The treatment of contaminated garments whether of woolen, linen or skin included washing, tearing away of any stained or spotted part, and total destruction by fire. Following examination by the priest, the contaminated garment was put aside for seven days and then re-examined by him to determine if the contamination had spread.<sup>4</sup> If the contamination had spread in any way at all, the garment was<sup>5</sup> considered as hopelessly infected and was destroyed by burning. If the contamination had not spread, the garment was washed to ascertain if the polluting stain consisted of soluble matter which could be diluted and expelled. If the stain disappeared after washing, the<sup>6</sup> garment was washed again and pronounced clean. If the stain remained unchanged in color after washing, the garment was considered badly

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1. Jeremiah 2:22; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 63,84
2. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 83-84
3. Ibid, p. 84
4. Leviticus 13:47-51
5. Leviticus 13:51-52
6. Leviticus 13:54,58

infected and was destroyed by fire.<sup>1</sup> If the stain darkened after washing, the spotted part was torn from the garment and, then, if there was no further evidence of contamination, the garment was washed again and pronounced clean.<sup>2</sup> If, however, traces of contamination remained after the tearing away of the spotted part or parts, the infected garment was destroyed by fire.<sup>3</sup> These scrupulous precautions did much to prevent the spread of the dread disease of leprosy and other highly contagious diseases and were truly scientific in their thoroughness.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we find a constant insistence upon the washing and rewashing of the clothes of a person cured of leprosy;<sup>5</sup> upon the washing of clothes after contact with a person having an unclean issue, or with anything touched by him;<sup>6</sup> upon the washing of clothes after touching a corpse, or after entering a tent (house) wherein someone had died or touching anything therein;<sup>7</sup> and upon the washing of clothes after touching a carcass.<sup>8</sup> Garments infected by contact with unclean animals were treated by steeping in water for several hours.<sup>9</sup>

The thoroughness of the process of disinfection followed by the early Jews is further demonstrated by their recognition of the susceptibility of water and other liquids to pollution and, hence, the danger of their becoming the carriers of contagion and disease. This is confirmed by the distinction made as to the contamination of sowing seed in Leviticus 11:37-38 and by the specified uncleanness

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1. Leviticus 13:55
2. Leviticus 13:56,58
3. Leviticus 13:57
4. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 85
5. Leviticus 13:6,34; 14:8-9
6. Leviticus 15:2-11; 15:19-22; 24-27
7. Numbers 19:11, 14,19; 31:19,24
8. Leviticus 11:25,28
9. Leviticus 11:32; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 85

(pollution) of water that had been used for steeping or cleansing contaminated vessels, and of water or other liquids such as wine, milk, etc. contained in contaminated vessels. The only instance where a vessel exposed to contamination was considered as not defiling its contents and, hence, escaped disinfection or destruction, was that of a tightly closed or sealed vessel (i.e., a vessel with a "covering bound upon it...").

Household utensils, such as wooden vessels, bags of skin or other material, infected by contact with unclean animals were cleansed by steeping in water for several hours (i.e., by being "put into water...until the even..."). Wooden vessels defiled by the touch of a person having an issue were cleansed by rinsing in water. Household vessels or utensils of earthenware defiled in any way at all had to be destroyed by breaking. A "brassen pot" used for the sin offering was cleansed by scouring and rinsing in water, but an "earthen vessel" used for the same purpose had to be destroyed by breaking. This indicates that the early Hebrews were aware of the fact that porous materials were potential carriers of disease due to their properties of absorption. Spoils of war made of wood were purified by washing in water; those made of metal were purified by fire.

The regulations concerning the disinfection of a plague-stricken house were unusually thorough. The house was carefully examined by the priest and, if certain specified signs of infection appeared, the house was quarantined ("shut up...seven days"). At

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1. Leviticus 11:32, 34; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 76-77
2. Numbers 19:15
3. Leviticus 11:32; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 85
4. Leviticus 15:12
5. Leviticus 11:33,35; 15:12
6. Leviticus 6:28
7. Numbers 31:20,23
8. Leviticus 14:34-38



the end of that time the priest re-examined the house and ordered the plague-infested parts such as plaster, mortar, or stones to be cut away and removed to the disposal ground for unclean things outside the city. New stones were then fitted in and the house replastered.<sup>1</sup> If, after all these precautions, the original signs of infection recurred, the house was torn down and the materials removed to the specified disposal ground outside the city.<sup>2</sup>

Both cedarwood and hyssop seem to have been used as disinfectants -- as in the rites of cleansing and purification of persons and houses in case of leprosy.<sup>3</sup> The fragrant vapour of burning cedarwood was considered hostile to corruption, and its oil was used by the Egyptians and Romans to preserve their documents.<sup>4</sup> The savin bush, a plant akin to cedarwood and abundant in the Holy Land may have been the "cedarwood" of Biblical times.<sup>5</sup> Though little is known of hyssop, it appears to have been aromatic and to have possessed detergent qualities.<sup>6</sup> According to Gillespie -- "In the ashes of the heifer, Num. xix, there may be a premonition of the use of animal charcoal as a disinfectant."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the covering with dust of ashes of the blood of slaughtered animals indicates:

"...care exactly analogous to that now recommended in the disposal of putrescible matter. That the chemical constituents of blood are practically identical in all respects with those of flesh, shows the value of this law on the sanitary side, while the excellence of the innoxious manure so compounded is well known."

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1. Leviticus 14:39,40,41,42
2. Leviticus 14:43,44,45
3. Leviticus 14:4,6,7; 49:51-52
4. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 88-89
5. Ibid, p. 89
6. Numbers 19:18; Cf. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 89
7. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 88

## Summary

To the Jew, "cleanliness was next to Godliness," and Godliness demanded cleanliness in the form of ablutions of three kinds.

(1) The washing of hands was performed before a holy act, before and after meals, after contact with an unclean object, and after an unclean body function. (2) The washing of hands and feet was required only of the priests and took place before the laver in the tabernacle.

(3) The immersion or washing of the entire body was required for purification in case of contact with a diseased person, a menstruous woman, an unclean animal or object, or a corpse; for the priest who tended the scapegoat and its liberator, the priest who tended the red heifer and he who burned her; for anyone visiting a person of prominence, or appearing before God; and for any Gentile who desired to become a proselyte.

Isolation or quarantine was imposed upon anyone who evidenced signs of disease. The period might be a day, a week, or longer, or permanent segregation, according to the nature of the disease and its duration. A permanently isolated individual such as a leper, was required to bear and give distinct signs of warning and to dwell apart from the undiseased, but was permitted to associate with those likewise afflicted. Isolation for a day was also imposed upon anyone contaminated by contact with a diseased person, with an unclean animal, with an unclean object, or with a carcass.

Disinfection was mainly accomplished by washing with simple detergents in copious amounts of water. Cedarwood (probably the savin bush) and hyssop were considered purifying in action. Impure garments and household articles were cleansed by washing and by tearing out stained and spotted parts, and by scouring and rinsing; or were

destroyed by fire. Disinfection of plague-stricken houses was accomplished by rebuilding and replastering; but in cases of recurring infection the houses were torn down and the materials removed to a specified disposal ground outside the city. The blood of slaughtered animals was carefully covered with dust or ashes.

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### CHAPTER III

#### TIMES OF REST AND FESTIVITY IN EARLY ISRAEL

### CHAPTER III

#### TIMES OF REST AND FESTIVITY IN EARLY ISRAEL

While there were no prescribed times of rest for the Jews, except the Sabbath day, there were times when atmospheric conditions more or less demanded cessation from labor. Religious feasts provided the laborer with a period of rest from his daily work and John McClintock speaks as follows concerning the pleasure taken in these feasts:

"The rest would be the more pleasant, salutary, and beneficial, because of the joyous nature of the religious services in which they were, for the greater part, engaged. These solemn festivals were not only commemorations of great national events, but they were occasions for the reunion of friends, for the enjoyment of hospitality, and for the interchange of kindness."<sup>1</sup>

Wedding festivals and feasts for the entertainment of guests of special importance also broke the monotony of daily labor.

##### A. The Noon-Day Rest

When Laban pursued Jacob and overtook him in the Mount of Gilead, Jacob described his long days in Haran thus: "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah also spoke of the heat of the day and the frost of the night.<sup>3</sup> This condition necessitated rest during the noon day. The writer of Ecclesiasticus asserts that: "The heat of the day was so great at noon in summer that delicate people, or persons of rank, frequently retired to rest."<sup>4</sup>

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1. John McClintock: Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. III, p. 538
2. Genesis 31:40
3. Jeremiah 36:30
4. Ecclesiasticus 43:3,21

Isaiah refers to the building of "...a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge..."<sup>1</sup> Neibuhr tells us:

"That in Arabia it is so hot in July and August, that except in cases of necessity, nobody goes out from eleven in the morning till three in the afternoon; and that the Arabs seldom work during that time but employ it in sleeping in apartments, into which the air is let from above."<sup>2</sup>

The Bible alludes to this type of rest in the case of Eglon and Tshbosheth during the noon-day heat, and David seems to urge using these hours of rest for serious meditation when he says, "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches."<sup>3</sup> It is known that those on a journey never travelled "in the heat of the day but from necessity, since the violence of the sun's rays generally invited to rest and sleep."<sup>4</sup> Those who unwisely continued working during the noonday hours endangered their physical well being, as did the little lad who worked during noontime heat with his father.<sup>5</sup>

#### B. The Sabbath Rest

The Fourth Commandment given at Mt. Sinai was strictly obeyed by the Jews, who observed the Sabbath as "a day of rest or public devotion"<sup>6</sup> and put to death any Sabbath breaker.<sup>7</sup> They

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1. Isaiah 4:6
2. Brown, op. cit., p. 436
3. Judges 3:20,24
4. II Samuel 4:5
5. Psalm 63:6
6. Brown, op. cit., p. 228
7. II Kings 4:18-20
8. Exodus 20:8-11
9. Deuteronomy 5:12-15
10. Numbers 15:32; Exodus 31:14

gathered no wood,<sup>1</sup> kindled no fire in their houses,<sup>2</sup> prepared no  
victuals,<sup>3</sup> sold no goods,<sup>4</sup> and carried no burdens.<sup>5</sup> It was considered  
a holy day on which no man, servant, or beast labored. The wisdom  
of the Sabbath rest is commended by Gillespie, in these words:

"The literature of the seventh-day rest is sufficiently extensive to render unnecessary more than brief reference here to its hygienic value. Physiologists have long recognized that short intermissions of work at regular intervals constitute the form of variety most conducive to health, and that no other period has been found so suitable as that of seven days for the balancing of physical and mental waste and reparation."<sup>6</sup>

### C. The Jewish Feasts

Mary Entwistle states that there were "festival days in  
the life of the early Jews."<sup>7</sup> These were either in the form of annual  
or family feasts and were celebrated by all the people. The three  
most important feasts, historical and seasonal, of the year, were  
the feast of Passover, the feast of the Harvest, and the Feast of  
Tabernacles.

#### 1. The Feast of the Passover

The Feast of the Passover, a sacrificial feast, referred  
to in Exodus,<sup>8</sup> was held in the spring at the time of the full moon  
and lasted a week.<sup>9</sup> On the tenth day of the first month an un-

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1. Numbers 15:32-36
2. Exodus 35:3
3. Exodus 16:23
4. Nehemiah 13:15
5. Jeremiah 17:21-22
6. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 53
7. Mary Entwistle; The Bible Guide Book, p. 169
8. Louis Berkhof; Biblical Archaeology, p. 161
8. Exodus 13:3-10
9. Exodus 12:15

blemished, one-year-old, male lamb, or goat, was chosen, and on the fourteenth day was killed. Not a bone of the animal was allowed to be broken. Then the blood was sprinkled upon the posts of the door and upon the lintel. The flesh was roasted that night and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (called "bread of affliction" in Deut. 16:3)<sup>1</sup> and anything left had to be burned. The celebration of the Feast took place in the Temple, or in the home with the family parties gathered to "eat the Passover" together. The searching for leaven and the story of the escape from bondage in Egypt were highlights of the celebration. The supper was eaten in apparent haste with the feasters holding their staffs in their hands and wearing their sandals as if preparing for a journey. The first and last<sup>2</sup> days of the Feast were days in which no servile work might be done.

## 2. The Feast of the Harvest, or Pentecost

This Feast took place fifty days after the Passover, when<sup>3</sup> the corn was gathered in. The presentation of the first fruits gave<sup>4</sup> this day its distinctive character. It was held for a day in remembrance of the giving of the Law (Exodus 20). In the Temple the<sup>5</sup> people made offerings of two wheaten loaves for the priest to "wave", or offer, before the altar of the Lord. Ottley says, "the joy of the Feast was shared by all classes of the community, the slave, the<sup>6</sup> stranger, the fatherless and the widows".

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1. Exodus 12:1-28
2. Leviticus 23:7
3. Leviticus 23:12-20
4. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 167
5. Ibid, p. 167
6. R.A. Ottley: A Short History of the Hebrews to the Roman Period, p. 304



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### 3. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths

The third Festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, required<sup>2</sup> the attendance of every male and was held in the fall. It commemorated their wilderness wanderings and their thankfulness to God for the bountiful harvest of fruit, oil and wine. For a whole week the people lived in tree-arbor homes,<sup>3</sup> or booths, in memory of the tent life in the wilderness.

"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days: all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths; that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the Land of Egypt:..."<sup>4</sup>

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The booths were made of the branches of trees and were erected on the top of the house, in private courts, temple courts or streets.<sup>6</sup> On the important day all the people who came for the Feast gathered at the city gates and entered singing Psalms. When the priests met them they proceeded to the Temple gates, each carrying a harvest gift. They marched to the music of pipe, symbals and trumpets. Work was forbidden on the first and last day of the celebration.

### 4. The Feast of Purim

The Feast of Purim was held to celebrate the deliverance<sup>7</sup> of the Hebrew people by Esther, and lasted for two days. It was kept on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month<sup>th</sup> Adar. At the feast the story of Esther was read aloud in the Synagogue and hymns of thanksgiving were sung. During the reading of the story,

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1. Leviticus 23:23-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-17
2. Deuteronomy 16:16-17
3. Exodus 23:16; Numbers 29:12-40; Leviticus 23:34
4. Leviticus 23:42-43
5. Nehemiah 8:16; Leviticus 23:40
6. Nehemiah 8:16
7. Esther 9:26; 3:7

at the mention of Haman's name, the people hissed and shouted, "Let his name be blotted out!"

#### 5. The Wedding Feast

Weddings were great occasions for feasting and merrymaking in Palestine. The bridegroom always gave the feast, and sometimes<sup>2</sup> celebrated it at night. The bride, dressed in silk and heavily veiled, rode on a camel to the house of the bridegroom, with her friends following. After the Feast, the bridegroom, following happy women bearing torches, was escorted to his house. The excitement<sup>3</sup> of the wedding party increased as they neared the house. The wedding festivities lasted from seven to fourteen days,<sup>4</sup> and feasting<sup>5</sup> and dancing, with music, were staples of the occasion.

#### 6. The Special Feasts

At an early date we find hospitality practised, as in the case of Lot and his invitation to the two angels, to "turn in, I pray you into your servant's house...and he made them a feast..."<sup>6</sup> There were feasts of honor given at which music was played on the harp, viol, tabret and pipe,<sup>7</sup> and where the people drank wine out of bowls while reclining on couches.<sup>8</sup> Food in abundance was served at these feasts. When the master of a house wished to honor a person at a feast, he sent him a larger portion of food, exactly as Joseph<sup>9</sup> did Benjamin.

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1. Berkhof: op. cit., p. 182
2. Genesis 29:22
3. Entwistle: op. cit., p. 173
4. Berkhof: op. cit., p. 65
5. Hastings, H.L.: A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. III, p. 272
6. Genesis 19:3
7. Isaiah 5:12
8. Amos 6:4-6
9. Genesis 43:34

Brown says there was little restraint as to the indulgence<sup>1</sup> in wine, as it was thought to rejoice the heart of man and was regarded as a blessing.<sup>2</sup> But, Berkhof states that, "The use of wine, however, was restricted because of its intoxicating character and because it took possession of the brain".<sup>3</sup> Wine was kept in new leather bottles, cooled by the mountain snows, and covered with straw--hence the words of Solomon, in Proverbs 25:13, which evidently alluded to the custom of cooling wine for the feast.<sup>4</sup> Portions of food were sent to all those who were absent from the feast, and in higher life the men and women had separate tables at their festivities.<sup>5</sup> Occasions of domestic joy were hailed with feasting; thus, in Genesis 21:8, Abraham "made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned."<sup>6</sup> Birthdays were also celebrated by festivity. Sheepshearing feasts<sup>7</sup> and vintage celebrations were known to the Jews.

#### Summary

Although the Sabbath day was the only prescribed time of rest for the Jews, religious feasts, wedding festivals, and feasts for the entertainment of guests of special importance provided the laborer with a welcome period of rest from his daily work. Then, too, the noonday rest was made imperative by atmospheric conditions.

The noonday rest during summer was a matter of practical

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1. Psalm 104:15
2. Genesis 49:11-12
3. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 54
4. Brown, op. cit., p. 212
5. Esther 9:22
6. I Samuel 25:2,11
7. Judges 9:27

necessity because of the intense heat. Laborers and travelers alike sought refuge from the violence of the sun's rays. Those who were unwise enough to ignore this fundamental rule of health courted disaster.

The Sabbath rest, in obedience to the Fourth Commandment, was strictly observed by the Jews. It was considered a holy day, on which no man, servant or beast labored. The wisdom and suitability of the Sabbath rest for the preservation of health has been confirmed by the findings of present-day physiologists.

The three most important religious feasts of the year in the life of the early Jews were the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of the Harvest, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These were historical and seasonal, and were in the form of annual or family feasts celebrated by all the people. The Feast of Purim, the wedding feast, and special feasts in honor of invited guests were also celebrated by the Hebrews; as were the historical and agricultural feasts - the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Octave. Their times of celebration included the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of the New Moon, the Sabbatic Year and the Year of Jubilee. It was stipulated in the law of Moses that the priests should blow the silver trumpets on the Feast of the New Moon and on other festive occasions.

The Feast of the Passover was a sacrificial feast that was held in the spring at the time of full moon, and lasted a week. It was associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The searching for leaven and the story of the escape from bondage in Egypt were highlights of the celebration. The Feast of the Harvest, or Pentecost, in remembrance of the giving of the Law, took place fifty days after the Passover and lasted one day. It was distinguished by the presentation

of the first fruits. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, was held in the fall for a whole week, and required the attendance of every male. During the feast, the people lived in tree-arbor homes, or booths, in commemoration of their wilderness wanderings and their thankfulness to God for a bountiful harvest. The Feast of Purim lasted two days and celebrated the deliverance of the Hebrew people from their planned destruction by Haman, through Esther, a Jewish maiden. It was kept on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar.

Weddings were occasions for feasting and merrymaking in Palestine. The bridegroom always gave the feast, which lasted from seven to fourteen days and was characterized by dancing and music. Lavish hospitality was characteristic of the early Jews, and special feasts were given in honor of invited guests. Feasts were also given in celebration of occasions of domestic joy such as birthdays, etc.; and sheepshearing feasts and vintage celebrations were also known to the Jews.

The feasts of Israel made them the peculiar people of God -- and their celebrations testified to Israel's felicity in enjoying the bounties of God. Hardly had the people of Israel left Egypt when they sang praises to God on the shores of the Red Sea. Truly, they were a happy people who could rejoice in their God. Their times of rest, both public and private made them a healthy people -- and aided in their immunity from disease.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHOICE AND PREPARATION OF FOODS BY THE EARLY JEWS

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### THE CHOICE AND PREPARATION OF FOODS BY THE EARLY JEWS

The need for good, nourishing food was just as great in early Judaism as it is today--and the proper choice and preparation as important. Hence, a large portion of the Old Testament study which we will make covers the choice and preparation of foods. The Jews were fortunate in having the Law of Moses to serve as a guide. In the Mosaic Law they found rules for choosing the right kind of food and rules for slaughtering. The Bible makes many allusions to the attitude of these early people toward cooking and eating, the kinds of food they ate, their methods of preparation and the types of kitchen vessels and furniture used.

#### A. Jewish Attitudes toward Eating

The allusions to eating in the Bible are numerous. The writer of Deuteronomy speaks of a "rebellious son," who was among  
<sup>1</sup> other things, a glutton. Solomon, in his Proverbs, reproves a  
<sup>2</sup> gluttonous eater of flesh and predicts a future of poverty for him. According to Solomon, one of the three things which caused the earth  
<sup>3</sup> to tremble was "a fool when he is filled with meat." He also warns  
<sup>4</sup> that overeating of honey will produce nausea. He further observes that "the full soul loatheth a honeycomb, but to the hungry soul  
<sup>5</sup> every bitter thing is sweet."

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1. Deut. 21:20
2. Proverbs 23:20-21
3. Proverbs 30:21-22
4. Proverbs 25:16,27
5. Proverbs 27:7

The rabbis prescribed certain dietary regulations. They emphasized an early breakfast;<sup>1</sup> advised eating only when hungry,<sup>2</sup> and then in silence;<sup>3</sup> prescribed the kinds of food;<sup>4</sup> and warned against eating heavy meals immediately before retiring.<sup>5</sup> After all solid food they suggested eating salt; and after all beverages the drinking of water.<sup>6</sup>

#### B. Foods Prohibited by the Mosaic Law

Certain foods were designated as clean and others as unclean. Those unclean were forbidden by Mosaic Law. "The basis of distinction between clean and unclean animals lay in the despicable character of certain animals and their association with sin and death."<sup>7</sup> And Munster notes --

"as the spirit of Jewish belief, that unclean food generates putrefaction and various ailments which hinder men in the service of God, making them listless and weary toward good works."<sup>8</sup>

Nearly all prohibited food were animals. Only six of these are mentioned by name in the Bible--the camel, rockbadger (coney), hare, pig, weasel and mouse. All predatory quadrupeds, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects and molluscs were forbidden foods. The following were also disallowed to the Jews: (1) those animals that died of themselves, (2) flesh torn by beasts or birds,<sup>9</sup>

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1. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 6
2. Ber. 62b, 54a, Jew. Ency. Vol. 6
3. Ta'an 5b
4. Ber. 44a
5. Yad De'ot IV 5
6. Ber. 40a
7. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 16-17
8. Louis Berkhof, Biblical Archeology, p. 53
9. Ex. 22:31



(3) blood of all kinds, (4) fat, especially if massed, (5) sinew of hollow of thigh, (6) a gored ox, (7) kids seethed in their mother's milk, and (8) flesh torn or cut from live animals. The penalty for eating of animals that died of themselves was a day's uncleanness and the need of purification. Blood of all kinds was forbidden by Moses: "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood; for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh." Hastings says:

"the use of blood as food was forbidden in the great primary law given to Noah, when flesh was first permitted to be eaten. It is well understood that the blood, which is the life, is also the chief seat of most diseases. Hence the propriety of this prohibition."

In the year 1770, Dr. John Hunter established the truth of the "life in the blood" beyond all controversy. Every part of the body is made from the blood.

Fats, especially if massed, "of the inwards and kidneys" were not allowed. The fat had to be sacrificed to God on the altar. At an early date, leprosy, scrofula and disfiguring cutaneous diseases were thought to be caused by the use of fat as food. An ox gored, or stoned for goring, was totally forbidden. Sinew of the hollow of the thigh was forbidden because God "touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank." Kids seethed in their mother's milk

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1. Deut. 14:21a
2. Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:16,23; Lev. 7:26-27
3. Hastings, The Separated Nation, p.144; Lev. 7: 24,25
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5. Brown, op. cit., p. 217; Ex. 29:22; Lev. 1: 12;34; 8:16; Lev. 3:17
6. James Orr, Int. Standard Bible Ency., Vol. II; p. 1099, Lev. 3: 16, 7:30
7. Ibid. p. 1099
8. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 31
9. Gen. 32: 32
10. Ex. 23: 19b; Deut. 14: 21b

and flesh torn or cut from live animals was forbidden.<sup>1</sup> The latter was a custom among the heathen neighbors of the Jews.

<sup>2</sup>  
According to Hastings;

"it was Moses who gave such rigid precepts concerning diet, bathing, disinfection and sanitary science. The animals which he excluded from his dietary are precisely those which are especially liable to parasites, as swine, rabbits, hares, etc., and in proscribing the use of the blood, and requiring the burning of the fat, he was only prohibiting what is especially liable to be the means of communicating disease. The germ-laden air, causing fermentation, decay and disease, was long ago anticipated by the law of Moses, which declared that in any tent where a death occurred 'every open vessel which hath no covering bound upon it' was unclean."

The meats specifically prohibited without exception by Mosaic Law were camel, rockbadger, hare, pig, weasel and mouse. The flesh of a camel is rank-smelling and is hard and unwholesome. The rockbadger, hare and weasel are carnivorous or multiparous animals. The pig has a tendency to skin diseases, swine fever (typhoid), and her dirty habits are repellent. The fatal effects of trichinosis and tapeworm are both well known now. It is well known that the mouse is noxious and defiles all it touches.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup>  
Hastings further states that:

"Hogs are rejected as a food. In many cases the lungs of these animals are diseased. If the examiner finds any token of adhesion or disease the lungs are placed in a vessel of water; and if bubbles arise, indicating the slightest defect in the lungs which allowed the air to escape into the water, the carcass is at once condemned as diseased and unclean, and turned over to the Gentiles. Experiments have clearly shown that those lumps which occur in what is called 'measly pork' are simply tapeworms waiting for some human being to devour them, then they proceed to develop their growth within the human body."

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1. Orr, op. cit., p. 1099
2. Hastings, B. S., p. 144; Numb. 19:5
3. Hastings, op. cit., B. S., p. 144
4. Ibid.

Swine were not raised by the Arabs, and were regarded as unclean by the Phoenicians, Ethiopians and Egyptians. In Egypt, however, a pig was sacrificed and eaten on the annual festival of the moon-god and Osiris.<sup>1</sup>

According to Gillespie:

"the flesh of forbidden birds or bipeds, all carnivorous, is rank, unwholesome and subject to parasites. The forbidden fish; sheat, lamprey, eel and skate are carrion-eaters and unwholesome."<sup>2</sup>

Swineherders were not allowed to enter the Temple, and were even made to marry among themselves.<sup>3</sup>

The gate, on the south wall of the city of Jerusalem, named Fish Gate,<sup>4</sup> seems to indicate that fishing was a matter of extensive trade. Catches were gotten from the Mediterranean and the sea of Galilee. Large quantities of these catches were salted.<sup>5</sup> Dietary laws limiting the eatable fish to those having both fins and scales still left for food an immense supply.<sup>6</sup> "There are thirty six species in the waters of the Jordan Valley alone."<sup>7</sup> The snail is the only mollusc forbidden for eating. Tyre was prophesied to become a "place for the spreading of nets," by Ezekiel.<sup>8</sup> This prophecy has been fulfilled today, for the Syrian fishermen spread their nets on the site of Tyre.<sup>9</sup> Isaiah, the prophet, predicts days when "the fishers shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the

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1. Davis, Dictionary of Bible, p. 713
2. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 29
3. Farbridge in Ency. of Religious Ethics, Vol. XII, p. 133
4. Nehemiah 3:3
5. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 28-29
6. Habbakuk 1:16; Ezekiel 47:10
7. Orr, op. cit., p. 1123
8. Ezekiel 26:5a
9. Orr, op. cit., p. 1115, Vol. II

brooks shall lament and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish.<sup>1</sup> This would indicate that fishing was a well-known industry.

Reptiles, or creeping things, were deemed clean, with the exception of the serpent, caterpillar, worm, crocodile, lizard, tortoise, chameleon, centipede and millipede.<sup>2</sup> Among the insects "going upon all fours," only four kinds were sanctioned: the locust, bald locust, beetle and grasshopper. "The Targum of Palestine brands as unclean the fly, wasp and bee, but permits the honey-bee."<sup>3</sup>

#### C. Foods Permitted by Jewish Law

The principal articles of food for the Jews were bread and milk supplemented by fruits and vegetables. Abraham, when he entertained the three angels, "took butter, and milk...and set it before them."<sup>4</sup> And Moses sings of God's mercy and His provisions of "butter of kine, and milk of sheep."<sup>5</sup>

##### 1. Bread

"Bread both was, and is the principal food of the eastern nations," according to Brown.<sup>6</sup> The bread of the Israelites was made of wheat or barley.<sup>7</sup> Berkhof tells us that:<sup>8</sup>

"The Bible speaks of two kinds of flour, a coarser and a finer variety. The bread of the Israelites was generally leavened by means of a piece of thoroughly seasoned dough left over from the previous day, but unleavened bread was also eaten, especially in times of great haste and at the 'Feast of Unleavened Bread'."

"A cake of barley bread" tumbling down into the host of Midian was

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1. Isaiah 19:8
2. Rattray, op. cit., p. 217; Lev. 11:29-30
3. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 30; Lev. 11:21-23
4. Gen. 18:8
5. Deut. 32:14
6. Brown, op. cit., p. 203
7. Judges 7:13
8. Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 54-55

dreamed of by a man in the book of Judges.<sup>1</sup> The barley was thrashed or bruised, and dried in the sun. Then it was mixed with oil and made into dough and soft cakes.<sup>2</sup> Many cakes were made by mixing a porridge<sup>3</sup> of corn, water, salt and butter with oil and fruits, though oil was<sup>4</sup> used in cakes only on festive occasions, since it was expensive.

"The word translated cracknels, in 1 Kings xiv. 3, is understood by Harmer to mean either small biscuits full of holes like a honey-comb, by means of eggs, or a solution of soap; or else that kind of bread<sup>5</sup> which is spotted or strewed over with various seeds." Eleanor King,<sup>6</sup> in referring to the manna of the wilderness gives two explanations:

"Part of the manna is believed to have come from the lichens... sometimes they are lifted by the wind and carried away to be deposited in places where the lichen is unknown except when it falls out of the sky. In 1854 a shower of these lichen fell in Persia during a great famine...a similar lichen grows on the Sahara Desert and is gathered regularly by the natives for food in time of scarcity. It can be cooked in various ways and made into bread.

"An alga of the genus NOSTOC is supposed to have been a part of the manna...This alga has been known to grow with unbelievable rapidity during the night when there is an abundant fall of dew and the surface of the ground is wet. Being very soft and gelatinous, these algal growths disappear as soon as the sun comes up and dries the surface of the ground. Ex. 16:21 indicates that this type of manna was present:

'And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.' "

Relishes were often eaten with bread, as in the case of Boaz, who invited Ruth, the Moabitess, to "eat of the bread, and dip the morsel in the vinegar (sour wine)."<sup>7</sup> Meat gravy, or broth,<sup>8</sup> was eaten by the Jews.

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1. Judges 7:13
2. Exodus 29:2; Num. 15:20; II Sam. 13:6,8,10;
3. Rattray, op. cit.
4. Lev. 2:5;
5. Brown, op. cit., p. 203
6. Eleanor King, Plants of the Bible, Journal of New York Botanical Garden #495, Vol. 42
7. Ruth 2:14
8. Judges 6:19-20

## 2. Fruits and Honey

When the spies of Canaan returned with their evil report, they brought with them a large cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs.<sup>1</sup> George Barton quotes Macalister as follows:<sup>2</sup>

"In the course of the excavation of Gezer dried figs, grapes, pomegranates, and olives were found...In one trench what appeared to be a pile of charred pistachio nuts was found. Acorns, terebinth, and apricot seeds were also discovered."

We read of raisins,<sup>3</sup> apples,<sup>4</sup> and melons,<sup>5</sup> in those early times.<sup>6</sup> Nuts and almonds were also eaten by the Jews.

Honey, from the bee and wild, was used as a sweetening.<sup>7</sup> It was eaten either alone or with butter and milk.<sup>8</sup> Barton speaks of some archaeological finding thus:

"A number of inverted jars, each pierced with a number of circular holes, were found. It seems that these were rude beehives."

## 3. Vegetables

Though vegetables were considered poor fare, many succulent vegetables were eaten.<sup>9</sup> The Bible mentions the following: (1) roasted pulse,<sup>10</sup> (2) lentils,<sup>11</sup> (3) beans,<sup>12</sup> (4) leeks,<sup>13</sup> (5) onions and

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1. Numb. 13:23
2. Geo. Barton: Archaeology and the Bible, p.136
3. I Chron. 12:40; I Sam. 25:18; II Sam. 16:1
4. Song of Sol. 2:5; Proverbs 25:11
5. Numb. 11:5
6. Gen. 43:11
7. Isaiah 7:15,22; I Sam. 14:27
8. Barton, op. cit., p. 139
9. Proverbs 15:17
10. II Sam. 17:28
11. Ibid, Gen. 25:29,34
12. Ibid.
13. Num. 11:5

garlic,<sup>1</sup> (6) cucumbers,<sup>2</sup> and (7) lettuce, or "bitter herbs."<sup>3</sup> The pulse of Daniel 1:12 denotes edible "herbs."<sup>4</sup> Vegetables were usually eaten in the form of pottage, such as Jacob prepared for his brother Esau.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Cheese, Butter and Eggs

Job speaks of a curdled cheese in his book,<sup>6</sup> and there is reference to cheese of kine in II Samuel 17:29. Brown thinks that the ancient Jewish cheeses were shaped like penny loaves.<sup>7</sup>

Butter, in the form of curdled or clotted milk,<sup>8</sup> was used extensively by the early Jews in the preparation of food, and sometimes spread on their bread.<sup>9</sup> Eggs were considered a delicacy.<sup>10</sup>

#### 5. Beverages

The principal beverages of the Jews were water, milk,<sup>11</sup> barley water and fig-cake water.<sup>12</sup> According to Berkhof:

"Wine was regarded as a blessing, Gen. 49:11,12, making glad the heart of man, Ps. 104:15, but its use was restricted because of its intoxicating character and since it took possession of the brain, Hos. 4:11."

There is sufficient evidence that the wealthy partook of intoxicants.<sup>13</sup> These were in the form of boiled grape-juice, wine,<sup>14</sup> strong drink,<sup>15</sup>

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1. Numbers 11:5
2. Ibid.
3. Rattray, op. cit., p. 239; Ex. 12:8; Numbers 9:11
4. Daniel 1:12
5. Gen. 25:29; II Kings 4:38-40; Rattray, op. cit., p. 239
6. Job 10:10; I Samuel 17:18
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 207
8. Ibid., p. 206; Prov. 30:33; Job 29:6; II Sam. 17:29
9. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 55
10. Jewish Ency.; Isaiah 10:14
11. Rattray, op. cit., p. 254
12. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 54
13. Rattray, op. cit., p. 254
14. Nehemiah 2:1
15. Leviticus 10:9

fermented fruit juice, and sour wine or vinegar.<sup>1</sup> Beer, made from  
barley, and honey wine were drinks considered refreshing by the Jews.<sup>2</sup>  
The "spiced or perfumed wine of the juice of the pomegranate" was the<sup>3</sup>  
drink with which the spouse desired to treat the bridegroom.

#### 6. Seasonings

There were a few seasonings known in the early days. Isaiah,<sup>4</sup>  
the prophet, makes some mention of cummin; but the chief condiment  
was salt. It was eaten with every meal and employed as a symbol of  
friendship.<sup>5</sup> According to Orr,<sup>6</sup> "a 'covenant of salt' was held invio-  
lable" - i.e., the breaking of bread with a person, and the use of  
salt at the meal, made their friendship binding. It was also well  
known as a preservative. The advice of the Rabbis was -- "after all  
solid food eat salt, and after all beverages drink water."<sup>7</sup> Myrrh,  
cinnamon, calamus and cassia were used as spices,<sup>8</sup> and mint, rue,  
anise and mustard are mentioned in the New Testament. The mustard  
plant is common in Palestine, and is a tree among herbs, growing  
sometimes to a height of eight to ten feet.<sup>9</sup>

#### 7. Meats and Fish

Meats and fish were divided into two classes - clean and  
unclean - under the Mosaic Law (see following chart--from Rattray's  
"Divine Hygiene"). Those designated as clean were permitted as food.

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1. Ruth 2:14
2. Rattray, op. cit., p. 254
3. Brown, p. 213; Song of Solomon 8:2
4. Isaiah 28:25
5. Rattray, op. cit., p. 240
6. Orr, op. cit., p. 1123, Vol. II; Num. 18:19; II Chron. 13:5 (ISBE)
7. Ber. 40a
8. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 265
9. Clow, op. cit., p. 265



LIST OF CLEAN AND PERMITTED, AND UNCLEAN AND DISALLOWED ANIMALS IN  
THE MOSAIC DIETARY (Deut. 12:15, Deut. 14, Leviticus 11)

From Alexander Rattray's - Divine Hygiene Vol. I p. 217

No.	Species	Clean and Permitted for Food	Unclean and Forbidden for Food
1	Quadrupeds or Mammalia  Lev. 11:27	<p>Cow Ox Sheep Goat Wild Goat Hart Roebuck Fallow Deer Bison Wild Ox Chamois</p> <p>All hoof-parted, cloven-footed, two clawed and cud-chewing.  Leviticus 11:4</p>	<p>Camel Coney Hare  Swine  Weasel Mouse Ferrett Mole</p> <p>Cud-chewers not hoof-divided Leviticus 11:5-6  Hoof-divided Lev.11: Not cud-chewers 7-8  Smaller animals Leviticus 11:29  Whatever goes on all fours or paws-Lev.11:29</p>
2	Birds or Bipeds  Lev. 11: 13-19	<p>Doves Quails Fowls Etc.</p> <p>All Vegetarians with Savory Flesh</p>	<p>Eagle Ossifrage Ospray Vulture Kite Raven Owl Night-Hawk Cuckoo Hawk</p> <p>Little owl Great Owl Cormorant Swan Pelican Stork Heron Lapwing Bat</p> <p>All Carnivorous</p>
3	Fish  Lev. 11:9-10	<p>All having fins and scales, non-carnivorous, sea-weed eaters. Flesh wholesome, nutritious, edible and palatable. (Barbel and Bream in Jordan river)</p>	<p>All without fins and scales. (e.g. the shark tribe, etc.) Lev. 11:10 Usually carnivorous, voracious, flesh of coarse fiber and unsavoury.</p>
4	Insects Lev. 11:2-23	<p>Locusts Bald Locust Beetle Grasshopper</p> <p>All with leaping legs above their feet</p>	<p>All flying, creeping creatures on all fours, mostly forbidden. Carcase deemed unclean</p>
5	Reptiles  Leviticus 11		<p>Serpents Caterpillars Worms</p> <p>all going on their belly</p> <p>Crocodile Lizards Tortoise Chameleon</p> <p>on all fours</p> <p>Centipedes Millipedes</p> <p>many-footed</p>
6	Molluscs Lev. 11:30		<p>Snail</p>

It is evident that the Jews enjoyed "savoury" or highly<sup>1</sup>  
spiced meat.<sup>2</sup> Venison was much favored by these people, as were goat<sup>4</sup>  
and sheep.<sup>5</sup> Fish, too, was a welcome addition to their diet. Berkhof<sup>6</sup>  
believes that the Jews generally did their fishing at night, using large<sup>7</sup>  
dragnets, but also the hook and line, the trident, and the spear.

#### D. The Butchering of Animals

The slaughtering of animals and the dressing of meat was done<sup>8</sup>  
by the men. The priests always wrung the necks of birds brought for<sup>9</sup>  
sacrifice. Rams and bullocks were probably killed by cutting the throat.<sup>10</sup>  
Rattray maintains that:

"The way in which Jews butcher their meat divests it in the shortest possible time of almost every drop of blood. The throat is cut so quickly and thoroughly at a single blow and the animal placed in such a position that the blood spouts out so as to drain the flesh quickly."

Qualified butchers were certified by the Rabbis in later years,<sup>11</sup>  
and received certificates such as the following:

"Today (in such a month and year) I saw and examined the excellent and remarkable N, the son of N, and found him skilled in the art of killing, both by words and hand, therefore I permit him to kill and examine cattle; and whatsoever he hath killed and examined, may be freely eaten, on this condition, that for a year to come he shall peruse diligently the directions for killing and examining; the second year once a month; and during the rest of his life every three months only. --- Attested by Rabbi M."

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1. Genesis 27:4,14.
2. Berkhof, op.cit., p.55; Ezekiel 24:10.
3. Genesis 25:28; 27:3,4.
4. Genesis 27:9; Judges 6:19; Clow, op.cit., p.163.
5. II Samuel 17:29.
6. Psalm 105:29.
7. Berkhof, op.cit., p.76; Job 41:1,7; Isaiah 19:8.
8. Genesis 18:7.
9. Leviticus 5:8; 1:15
10. Rattray, op.cit.
11. Brown, op.cit., p.217

Today, the Jews are still particular about their meat. They demand "kosher" (clean) meat. Further information on this subject is<sup>1</sup> given by Gillespie, who says:

"In the present day the slaughterer (shoghet), who is an officer of the community, highly trained, and certified after severe examination, as in Talmudic days, is stringently bound, after killing the animal in the prescribed manner, to examine the viscera for any mark of disease; and on his report his colleague, the watcher (shomer), certifies the meat as clean (kosher) by a metal seal on each joint, without which no Jew may accept it for food."

#### D. The Preparation of Food

The duties of a woman were manifold, but centered mainly in the household, such as drawing water, grinding flour, baking, preparing the meals, etc.<sup>2</sup> Even ladies of rank thought it not degrading to cook,<sup>3</sup> as in the case of Princess Tamar. The culinary skill of Rebekah was<sup>4</sup> apparent in her ability to prepare kid flesh to taste like venison.

Meat was commonly boiled in pots or caldrons of various shapes<sup>5</sup> and sizes. Usually, the meat was cut up, the priest's joint (the right shoulder)<sup>6</sup> being first taken off. Then the bones in the remaining portion were broken and the flesh cut off and boiled in water or milk over<sup>7</sup> a wood fire. The sauce in which the meat was cooked was greatly relished.<sup>8</sup> The Jewish people were forbidden to seethe (boil) a young lamb<sup>9</sup> or kid in its mother's milk. Some meats were prepared by roasting, i.e., by placing the meat directly on or over the coals or by using a

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1. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 73-74
2. Prov. 31:10-31; Cf. Brown, op. cit., pp. 220-221
3. II Samuel 13:8
4. Genesis 27:6
5. Judges 6:19; I Samuel 2:14; Cf. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 55
6. Rattray, op. cit., p. 254; Leviticus 7:32
7. Ibid.; Berkhof, op. cit., p. 55; Exodus 16:23; Ezek. 24:3,4,5
8. Judges 6:19
9. Exodus 23:19

1  
pit or an oven. Roasting over an open fire was required in the case  
2  
of the Paschal Lamb.

Baking of bread and cake was usually a daily task. The dough  
3  
was mixed with leaven, formed into loaves, and then baked. According  
4  
to Brown:

"the most ancient way of baking of which we have any account, is  
that by Sarah for the angels, in Gen. xviii. 6, when she baked 'upon  
the hearth,' and which is still one of the methods used in the East."

Sometimes, the loaves of prepared dough were placed inside the oven on  
clean pebbles or on a baking tray; and sometimes, in the form of flat  
5  
discs, they were plastered on the outside of the oven. Thus, Berkhof  
6  
states:

"Baking was done in various ways, the most primitive of which was to  
place the prepared dough upon or underneath hot coals. Sometimes it  
was laid on heated stones or on a flat pan. Ovens, both portable and  
fixed, were in use also at an early date, the former being the most  
common. In most cases these were merely large pots or jars with an  
opening at the bottom for the fire and often another in the side for  
putting in the dough."

Macalister discovered some of these ovens in Palestine in the strata of  
Gezer made of plain tile, and some covered over with potsherds to retain  
7  
the heat longer.

8  
Because of the scarcity of wood for fuel, that most commonly  
9  
used by the early Jews was dung, of animal and, sometimes, human origin.  
10  
They also used thorns, vine twigs, furze, grass, withered stock of herbs

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1. Exodus 12:8,9; I Samuel 2:15; Cf. Rattray, p.254.
2. Exodus 12:3,7,8,9; Berkhof, op.cit., p.55.
3. Rattray, op.cit., p.254; Brown, op.cit., p.201; Berkhof, op.cit., pp.  
(54-55).
4. Brown, op.cit., p.201.
5. Barton, op.cit., p.149.
6. Berkhof, op.cit., p.55.
7. Barton, op.cit., p.149.
8. Brown, op.cit., p.199
9. Ibid., p.200
10. Ezekiel 15:2,4,6.

and flowers, and sticks. Jesus spoke of "...the grass of the field...  
cast into the oven..." in Matthew 6:30. Ezekiel also mentions the use  
of animal bones as fuel.

#### F. The Kitchen and Its Furnishings.

The first place for the preparation of food mentioned in the Bible was a tent by the oaks of Mamre—where Sarah was. "Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth." This was very primitive and probably was composed of two or three stones, beneath which fire was lighted on the mud floor. "Ovens, both portable and fixed, were in use also at an early date, the former being the most common." From the Old Testament it appears that the early Hebrews sat on the ground to eat their meals, which seem to have been "a midday meal or dinner and an evening meal or supper."

Among the devices and utensils used in connection with early Jewish kitchens, the most important were the handmill, the kneading trough, earthen vessels such as cooking-pots or caldrons, pitchers, jars, jugs, goat-skins for holding liquids, spoons, knives and forks, and baskets and brooms.

##### 1. Handmill.

The grinding of grain was a process which had to be done in

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1. I Kings 17:10,12; Brown, op.cit., p.200.
  2. Ezekiel 24:5,10.
  3. Genesis 18:6.
  4. Brown, op.cit., p.198.
  5. Berkhof, op.cit., p.55.
  6. Ibid.,pp.55-56.

each home, and by the women or by servants.<sup>1</sup> This was accomplished by crushing or pounding the grain in a mortar, or by grinding it in a simple handmill.<sup>2</sup> According to Barton:<sup>3</sup>

"The process of rubbing or grinding was accomplished either by a flat saddle-shaped stone over which another was rubbed, or by crushing between two stones, the top one of which was revolved somewhat as a modern millstone. It required two women, as Jesus said, to grind at such a mill—one to feed it, while the other manipulated the rubbing stone. Such stones were made of hard igneous rock procured from the region east of the Sea of Galilee, and are called 'querns'...The upper stone was apparently rotated by twisting the wrist. It could be thus turned half-way round and then back again...The lower millstone was always made of the harder stone. Because of this and of the grinding and pounding to which it was subjected it became a symbol of firmness (Job 41:24)."

This grinding was a noisy process, and was a familiar sight to the early Jews.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Kneading Trough.

Bread was commonly mixed in a wooden bowl or kneading trough, as it is called in Exodus 8:3 and 12:34, in which the dough was mixed with leaven. It was then formed into loaves, and baked.<sup>5</sup>

## 3. Pottery or Earthenware.

Duncan speaks of the Hebrew pottery, during the period of David and Solomon, as being "distinctly Hebrew."<sup>6</sup> Sandstone<sup>7</sup> and perhaps limestone<sup>8</sup> clays were used by the Hebrew potters. The shoulders of jars and jugs are more marked, and broad ribbing appears on the sides<sup>9</sup> of the vessels. The jars have flat shoulders and cylindrical bodies.

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1. Ex. 11:5; Numbers 11:8; Matt. 24:41; Cf. Berkhof, op.cit., p.54
2. Numbers 11:8; Cf. Berkhof, op.cit., p.54, 136.
3. Barton, op.cit., p.136.
4. Jeremiah 25:10; Brown, op.cit., p.221.
5. Brown, pp.200-201; Berkhof, Op.cit., pp.54-55.
6. J. Garrow Duncan, Digging up Biblical History, pp.238-239.
7. Barton, op.cit., p.142.
8. Duncan, op.cit., p.239.
9. Ibid., p.239.

Barton describes their pottery as presenting great variety and states that the large jars had ledge and loop handles and averaged about two feet in height.<sup>1</sup>

Large earthen jars or pitchers were used by the Hebrews for water and meal.<sup>2</sup> Later they were used for wine.<sup>3</sup> Water and wine were also preserved in goat-skins.<sup>4</sup> These skins were "made by cutting off the head and feet of a he-goat or kid, drawing out the carcass without opening the belly, sewing up the holes, and tying them round the neck when full."<sup>5</sup> Oil and honey were kept in small earthen jugs (cruses) or goat-skin bottles.<sup>6</sup> The family meal was cooked (seethed) in a large earthen vessel called a pot, or kettle, or caldron.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. Spoons, Knives and Forks.

The use of these implements was reserved for the preparation of meals, and not for the table. "Meat and bread was simply taken with the fingers, while thin slices of bread rolled up often served to convey liquid food to the mouth."<sup>8</sup> Barton states that the spoons of these people apparently were adapted from shells; but that the wealthy had ladles of metal--probably when affected by foreign influence.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Barton, op.cit., pp. 142,143.
2. Gen. 24:16-18; I Kings 19:6; Brown, op. cit., p.198; Duncan, p.239.
3. Brown, p.198.
4. Ibid, p.212.
5. Ibid., p.198; Clow, op.cit., p.163; Berkhof, op.cit., p.80.
6. Brown, p. 198.
7. I Kings, 17:12,14; Clow, op.cit., p.92; Berkhof, p.81.
8. Exodus 16:3; Judges 6:19; I Samuel 2:13-14; II Kgs.4:38-40; Duncan pp. (239-41)
9. Berkhof, p.56.
10. Barton, p. 150.

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Barton states further that:

"The earliest knives of Palestine were flint, which is in that country very abundant...When, about 1000 B.C., iron came in, it, too, was employed for knife-making...Flint knives were always cheaper than those of metal and were probably always employed by the common people."

Knives are mentioned in connection with the intended slaying of Isaac by his father, Abraham, and with the sacrificial slayings by the priests. Knives for shaving are mentioned in Ezekiel. Flint knives were preferred for the rite of circumcision.

Forks were used to handle meat when it was cooking.

This type of fork was used by the sons of Eli in I Samuel 2:13,14:

"...the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself."

Firetongs and shovels were also used by the priests.

#### 5. Baskets and Brooms

Baskets were used for many purposes by the Hebrew people, and were probably made of rope, straw, or reeds. Perhaps one of the most unusual uses for a basket was the use put to one by the mother of Moses, when she "daubed it with slime and pitch," and put her son therein. Pastries and fruits were often kept and

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1. Barton, op. cit., p. 152
2. Genesis 22:10
3. Ezekiel 5:1,2
4. Exodus 4:25; Joshua 5:23; Barton, op. cit., p. 152
5. Barton, op. cit., p. 151
6. Isaiah 6:6; I Kings 7:40
7. Barton, op. cit., p. 153
8. Exodus 2:3
9. Exodus 29:2,3; Judges 6:19-20
10. Deut. 26:2; Jer. 24:2; Amos 8:1,2



carried in baskets. Amos dreamed of "a basket of summer fruit" as  
a warning of the nearness of Israel's end. <sup>1</sup> Excavations at Gezer  
<sup>2</sup>  
brought to light evidence concerning the ancient baskets:

"One of them had been left on some soft earth in the tunnel, and  
although the basket itself had long ago decayed, the form of it  
was still visible on the hardened clod on which it had rested..."

Joseph, while in prison, interpreted the dream of Pharoah's chief  
baker -- of the birds eating from the three white baskets on his  
head filled with bakemeats for Pharoah -- as meaning three days of  
<sup>3</sup>  
life for the baker, after which he would be hung.

<sup>4</sup> Brooms and brushes were made from sorghum inflorescence  
spikes.

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1. Amos 8:1,2
2. Barton, op. cit., p. 153
3. Gen. 40:16-19
4. Eleanor King, op. cit., p. 58

## Summary

Good, nourishing food was relished by the early Hebrews. They were instructed to be moderate in eating, and were fortunate in having the Mosaic Law as a guide in the choice of food. Certain foods were designated as "clean" and others as "unclean" under Mosaic Law. Those unclean were prohibited as food. Among the foods disallowed were torn meats, blood, fats, and flesh torn or cut from live animals or those animals that died of themselves. In almost every instance, modern science has confirmed the wisdom of the ban against foods designated as unclean.

The principal articles of food for the Jews were bread and milk, supplemented by fruits and vegetables. Bread and cakes made of wheat or barley flour were much enjoyed. Cakes were sometimes mixed with oil and fruits for festive occasions. Relishes of vinegar or sour wine were sometimes eaten with bread, and meat gravy or broth was a great favorite. Many fruits, such as grapes, pomegranates, figs, raisins and others, were eaten -- as were nuts and almonds. Honey was eaten either alone or with butter and milk, and was also used as a sweetening. Vegetables such as lentils, beans, cucumbers, lettuce, leeks, onions and garlic, etc., were usually eaten in the form of pottage (stew). Butter in the form of curdled or clotted milk was used extensively in the preparation of food and sometimes spread on bread. Cheese and eggs were eaten -- though eggs were considered a delicacy.

The family meal of meat or vegetables was usually prepared in a pot or caldron. Meats were generally boiled or roasted; and venison, goat and sheep were favorites of the Jews. These people enjoyed "savoury" or highly spiced meat, and their foods were always

seasoned with salt. A 'covenant of salt' was held inviolable -- i.e., the breaking of bread with a person, and the use of salt at the meal, made their friendship binding. Other spices such as cummin, myrrh, cinnamon, calamus and cassia were known and used. The principal beverages of the early Jews were water and milk, although intoxicants such as fermented fruit juices were indulged in by the wealthy. Beer made from barley and honey wine were considered refreshing.

The slaughtering of animals and the dressing of meat was done by the men. In later years, qualified butchers were certified by rabbis and authorized to designate meat as clean (kosher) or unclean -- for Jews were permitted to eat only kosher (clean) meat. The duties of Jewish women were manifold, but centered mainly in the household. Every day, they ground grain into flour, fetched water, baked bread and cakes, and prepared the customary afternoon and evening meals. These Jewish women -- even ladies of rank -- were skilled in the art of cooking.

The furnishings of the kitchen were simple. A rude hearth of two or three stones or a primitive oven supplied heat and served for the necessary cooking and baking. Since wood fuel was scarce, that most commonly used was animal dung supplemented by vine twigs, grass, furze, etc. Handmills, operated by two women, ground the grain into flour, and the bread dough was then mixed in a wooden bowl or kneading trough. Large earthen vessels such as jars and pitchers were used for holding and storing water and meal; and, later, for wine. Water and wine were also preserved in goat-skins. Spoons, in the form of adapted shells, and knives and forks were used in preparing meals -- not at the table. Knives were made of flint and, later,

of iron; and forks, of three teeth, were used in handling meat in the process of cooking. Metal ladles were sometimes used by the wealthy; and firetongs and shovels were used by the priests.

Baskets, probably made of rope, straw or reeds, were used for carrying and keeping pastries and fruits. Brooms and brushes were used and were made of sorghum inflorescence spikes.

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CHAPTER VZ

SURGERY AS PRACTISED BY THE EARLY JEWS

## CHAPTER V

### SURGERY AS PRACTISED BY THE EARLY JEWS

#### A. Their Limited Understanding of Anatomy

The early Jews knew little of anatomy. They do not seem to have had the love of the human form that was so characteristic of their pagan neighbors. They associated nakedness with the Garden of Eden and also with the idolatrous practices of the heathen. When the children of Israel, under the leadership of Aaron, made a golden calf and worshipped it, they made themselves naked "unto their shame among their enemies."<sup>1</sup> The worship of Baal, Ashteroth, Molech and Astarte was practised by the heathen Canaanites--prostitution of both men and women being the most common sacrifice to the goddess, Astarte.<sup>2</sup> Solomon, however, in his Proverbs and Song of Solomon shows his appreciation of the human form as in the case of the lovely Shulamite maiden.

Because it was considered and declared pollution to touch a dead body, the early Jews knew little of anatomy and had little opportunity for the study of the body. They gained some knowledge from the examination of butchered animals, from the care of their flocks,<sup>3</sup> and from tradition. They knew the essential parts of the body, but had no knowledge of histology. The touching of corpses or meaty bones was sufficient to make the Jew unclean; or if a pile of bones

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1. Exodus 32:25

2. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 175

3. McClintock and Strong, Biblical Ency., Vol. VI, p. 30

representing more than half of the skeleton was touched their infecting power was equal to that of a corpse. Hence, it was imperative that the number of bones in the body should be ascertained.<sup>1</sup> The Jews thought the bones of the body included the bone of Luz. This bone was the supposedly indestructible nucleus, a sort of seed, from which the body was to be resurrected.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>  
According to Haggard:

"there are only two surgical operations mentioned in the Old Testament, that of circumcision and the operation on Adam for the formation of Eve."

Wounds in the body caused by different weapons - sword, arrow, hammer, etc. -- are mentioned in Bible (II Sam. 2:23, 3:27, 4:6, 18:14, 20:10) and elsewhere. These wounds were treated by applying bandages of wine and oil or sutures.<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 1:6; Jeremiah 8:22; 46:11, 51:8; Deuteronomy 28:27. Castration was forbidden by the Law.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Awls for boring ears and roller-binders for fractures are mentioned in the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup>

#### B. Pregnancy

<sup>8</sup>  
Philip Schaff, in regard to this phase of life among the Hebrew women, says:

"pregnancy was said by the Talmud to last from 270 to 273 days

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1. Jewish Encyclopedia, Ch. 1-8, Vol. VIII, p. 410
2. H.W.Haggard, p. 130
3. Howard W. Haggard, Devils, Drugs and Doctors, p. 129
4. Jewish Ency., Vol. VIII, p. 413
5. Ibid.
6. Exodus 21:6
7. Ezekiel 30:21
8. Schaff-Herzog, op. cit., Philip Schaff, Vol. I, p. 1456

(now reckoned at from 280 to 300 days), and to be unrecognizable before the fourth month. It was thought that out of the male element the bones, sinews, brain, and white of the eyes were produced; while from the female element came the skin, flesh, black of the eye, etc.; but God gave the soul."

### C. Childbirth

The Talmud states that a woman during confinement is recommended to particular attention; and her death was ascribed to negligence of the duties especially prescribed for Jewish women.<sup>1</sup>

From the days in the Garden of Eden woman has suffered in childbirth.

Jeremiah speaks of "...a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child..."<sup>2</sup> It has been woman's heritage to suffer, even as God promised: "...in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."<sup>3</sup> The pain and the fortitude with which she met it are not new with modern civilization. It is said of the parturient in Biblical times-- "...and the heart of the mighty men of Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs..."<sup>4</sup>

Jewish women faced childbirth with, or without, a midwife.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, they were assisted by their friends and relatives.<sup>6</sup> Delivery as described in Genesis 30:3, "she shall bear upon my knees" can be taken literally. Birthstools, or "bearing stools" were frequently used by the Hebrew women.<sup>7</sup> Concerning these chairs Haggard says:<sup>8</sup>

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1. Talmud, Shab. 2:6, Jewish Ency., Vol. IV, p. 27
2. Jeremiah 4:31
3. Genesis 3:16
4. Jeremiah 48:41
5. Genesis 38:28, Exodus 1:15
6. I Samuel 4:20
7. Exodus 1:16
8. Haggard, op. cit., pp. 12-13



"It was not until the 19th century after Christ that the obstetrical chair ceased to be a necessary professional equipment of the midwife, which she trundled from patient to patient. Mauriceau, of France, in the 17th century started the innovation of using a bed for childbirth."

Midwives were employed for Rachel and Tamar, but usually they were only called in for rare or difficult cases. The names of the two midwives in Egypt were given as Shiphrah and Puah. The Talmud implies that these were not real names, but indicated their functions--the former name meaning "one who trims the child", and the latter meaning "one who talks to the child", or "the one who whispers". (i.e., the midwife who whispered in the woman's ear in order to facilitate parturition). The midwives, according to the Talmud, were allowed to profane the Sabbath in order to discharge their duties. All concessions were granted them in saving human life, and they were known to assist domestic animals in labor. The exact work of the midwife is not known, but probably they rendered the services mentioned in Ezekiel:

"...in the day thou was 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."

In cases of difficult births, the women in labor were comforted until they died, as in the case of the wife of Phinehas. Any woman who miscarried was considered unclean, according to the Mosaic law, if the fetus was completely formed and its features well differentiated. The Bible also mentions punishments for causing a

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1. Jewish Ency., Vol. VIII, P. 512
2. Exodus 1:15
3. Talmud-Shab. 1. c. Yer, Shab. (18):3
4. Talmud-Hul 43a
5. Ezekiel 16:4
6. I Samuel 4:19-20

miscarriage.<sup>1</sup> Monstrosities were exempt from this law. Talmudists gave diligent study to embryology because of this rule. Legend says<sup>2</sup> that King David devoted a great deal of time to these investigations.

#### D. The Care of the Child

As soon as the baby was born it was washed in water, anointed with oil, rubbed with salt, at least in part, swaddled with a long bandage around the middle, and wrapped in some comfortable clothing or swaddling clothes.<sup>3</sup> If the child made no sound after birth it was rubbed with cloths and with afterbirth.<sup>4</sup> Air was breathed into the mouths of the inanimate ones. Hot coals were held near the mouth of one that refused the breast--to stimulate the facial muscles of the babe.<sup>5</sup> The mother usually nursed the child, but occasionally a wet nurse was employed.<sup>6</sup> Children, of whatever sex, were enjoined by tradition to have their heads covered till the age of thirteen--after which girls continued covered, but boys went with the head bare and the feet covered.<sup>7</sup> On the eighth day after birth the child, if a male, was circumcised.

The cradle was first said to have been used in Isaac's time. On it were hung<sup>8</sup> bells, which generally were used as amulets to guard against demons. Weaning of a child took place anywhere from thirteen months to three years, and though often long deferred it was accompanied<sup>9</sup> by sacrifices and festivities.

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1. Exodus 21:22
2. Jewish Ency., Vol. VIII, p. 411
3. Ezekiel 16:9,10; Schaff, Dictionary of Bible, p. 177
4. Jewish Ency., Vol. IV, p. 29
5. Talmud-Shab. 134a; Wundervar II in Orient, Lit. p. 104, Jewish Ency., Ibid.
6. Exodus 2:7-9, III Macc. 50:20
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 166
8. Talmud- Gen. R 53:10, Jewish Ency., Ibid.
9. Brown, op. cit., p. 165, II Macc. 7:27, Gen. 21:8, Schaff, Ibid.

## E. Circumcision

When God made His covenant with Abraham, He demanded of him and his seed the rite of circumcision as a seal to the covenant, in these words:<sup>1</sup>

"every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you...and he that is eight days old shall be circumcised...and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant...and the uncircumcised man child...shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

<sup>2</sup>  
Though such a demand may seem curious to us, Dr. Orr points out that:

"The process of generation excited the wonder and awe of primitive man. The prosperity of the tribe depended on the successful issue of the marriage bond, and a part of the body which had so much to do with the continuation and numerical strength of the tribe would naturally be fixed upon in connection with the covenant blood. In confirmation of the last explanation it is urged that in the case of the covenant between Jehovah and Abraham circumcision was the rite that ratified the agreement."

On the eighth day after birth, whatever day of the week it was, the child was circumcised. This rule was not followed if the child was sick; but seven days after recovery. It was circumcised on the lid of the coffin in the cemetery. Bastards and children born in adultery were circumcised, but never in the synagogue.<sup>3</sup>

The operation was generally performed by laymen to whom the act had been taught by others, who, by experience, had acquired the necessary knowledge and skill.<sup>4</sup> In case of an emergency, the mother performed the operation.<sup>5</sup> The tests of a good operator, or mohel, were: that he should perform his work quickly, safely as to its immediate

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1. Genesis 17:10-14
2. Orr, ISBE, Vol. I, p. 657
3. Brown, op. cit., p. 163
4. Jewish Ency., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 99
5. Exodus 4:25-26

effect, and successfully as to the condition which the parts would<sup>1</sup>  
permanently assume. Accidents were rare.

The operation consisted of three parts: (1) milah- the  
washing of the parts with soap and water and the excise of the foreskin;  
(2) peri'ah--the tearing off of the inner lining, and (3) mezizah--<sup>2</sup>  
sucking of blood from wound and the application of oil to the part.<sup>3</sup>  
In the early days flints were used as knives for this operation.

The act of circumcision was generally accompanied by some  
ceremonial, which took place either in the home or in the synagogue -  
<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup>  
in the presence of the congregation. In preparation for the rite:

"three stools were set in the house, or in the synagogue; one  
for the person who held the child; one for the operator, whose  
official name was mul, or the cutter off; and one for Elias, who  
was supposed to be spiritually present as a zealous defender of  
the divine law. (The latter stool was called the "chair of Elijah".)  
The attendants were commonly ten in number, some of whom carried  
torches of twelve wicks, to represent the twelve tribes of Israel,  
and others a knife for the operation, a cup of red wine to act as  
a styptic, a basin of sand, into which to throw the prepuce, a  
basin of olive oil to anoint the part, and a towel and water."

6

After the operation, the operator prayed for the child thus:

"O Lord, our God, the God of our fathers, strengthen this child,  
and preserve him to his parents. May his name be among the  
people of Israel, (here he, or the father, or mother, or neighbors,  
gave him his name, Ruth 4:17, I Samuel 4:21)"

7

Feasts usually followed the operation.

8

Rattray observes that:

"circumcision has been accepted as a religious rite, but it is of  
interest to know there are advantages that accrue the individual  
from this act."

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1. Jewish Ency., op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 99
2. Ibid.
3. Exodus 4:25, Schaff, op. cit., p. 186
4. Jewish Ency., Vol. IV, p.99
5. Jewish Ency., Vol. IV, p. 102
6. Brown, op. cit.
7. Brown, op. cit., pp. 160-161
8. Rattray, op. cit.

#### F. Purification of the Mother

On the fortieth day after the birth of a son,<sup>1</sup> and on the eightieth after that of a daughter,<sup>2</sup> the mother was required by Mosaic law to present herself at the temple for purification and to bring such a sacrifice as her means allowed--as set forth in Leviticus:<sup>3</sup>

"And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled,...she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle..., unto the priest: who shall...make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood...and if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles (turtledoves), or two young pigeons;..."

<sup>4</sup>  
Philip Schaff indicates that the Hebrews knew something of gynecology since they:

"distinguished between menstruation and metrorrhagia; seven days of purification following the former, during which marital relations were forbidden---another excellent hygienic rule."

#### G. The Jewish Attitude Toward Children

The great desire of the early peoples for children is evidenced in Psalm 127: "the man who has his "quiver full of them... shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate."<sup>5</sup> Rachel expressed her longing when she said to her husband, Jacob, :<sup>6</sup> "Give me children, or else I die"; and the parting wish of Rebekah's

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1. Leviticus 12:4
2. Leviticus 12:5, Schaff, Dictionary of Bible, p. 177
3. Leviticus 12:6-8
4. Schaff-Herzog, Ency. of Rel. Knowledge, Vol. II, p. 1455
5. Psalm 127:5
6. Genesis 30:1

relatives was: "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions".<sup>1</sup> Berkhof<sup>2</sup> explains this desire thus:

"this passionate longing for the blessing of children found its explanation in a combination of desires, viz., the desire to live on in one's progeny, to have great influence in social life, to mitigate the curse resting on woman, and to give birth to the Redeemer of the world."

The birth of a son always was an occasion for great re-<sup>3</sup>joicing. This preference for male children lay in the fact that females finally merged into other families; also, the belief anciently prevailed that the birth of a girl entailed longer suffering and<sup>4</sup> peril.

Sterility was considered a curse by the Jews. The most<sup>5</sup> pleasing expression of good will to persons in wedlock was--"that they might be the parents of many children." The reproach of barrenness<sup>6</sup> was expressed by Hannah in her prayers for a son. This condition was<sup>7</sup> thought curable by the use of mandrakes. Thus, Rachel sought mandrakes<sup>8</sup> of Leah. This plant was supposed to have soporific qualities.<sup>9</sup>

#### H. The Privileges of the First-Born

The first-born son of the father (not that of the mother, for then there might be several first-born sons in a family) had special privileges. So, in the case of Esau's blessing and birthright,

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1. Genesis 24:60
2. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 67
3. Orr, ISBE, Vol. I, p. 606
4. Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 60-61
5. Schaff, Philip, Dictionary of the Bible, p. 176
6. I Samuel 1:5-10
7. Genesis 20:18
8. Genesis 30:14-16, Schaff, Ibid., p. 543
9. Haggard, op.cit., p.95

1:  
which his brother Jacob obtained by foul means, Isaac's words were:

"God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; cursed be every one that curseth thee; and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

2  
Berkhof states that:

"after the death of the sire the first-born became the head of the family, received a double portion of the inheritance, and, in the time of the patriarchs, also seemed to have served as family priest. Even the son- of a concubine was eligible to these privileges... The one having these privileges was in duty bound to provide for his mother and for other dependent members of the household, as f.i. his sisters, who received no portion of the inheritance."

There is evidence that the first-born settled internal differences  
3  
and in all things had pre-eminence.

4  
Berkhof further states that:

"for a first-born son redemption money to the amount of five shekels had to be paid, since the Lord, after sparing Israel's first-born in Egypt, claimed them as his own."

There was a ceremony, connected with the redeeming of the first born, which took place on the 30th day. Orr describes the ceremony thus:

"Friends of the family were invited to the feast, the rabbi also being present. The child was placed in the hands of the priest. The father carried some gold or silver in a cup or vessel. The priest asked the mother whether this was her firstborn, and, on being answered in the affirmative, claimed the child as Jehovah's. The father offered the redemption money, which was accepted in exchange for the child."<sup>5</sup>

#### I. The Name of the Child

The mother usually named the child, and on the eighth day.

Sometimes the name of the child was given at birth, as in the case of

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1. Genesis 27:29
2. Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 68-69
3. Brown, op. cit., pp. 168-169
4. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 67, Numbers 3:44
5. Orr, ISBE, Vol. I, p. 606, Exodus 13:2-15

<sup>1</sup>  
Ruth and Phinehas' wife. There were no surnames, only personal names, but to distinguish persons of the same name, that of the father was added. Names were derived from the circumstances attending the birth, from the physical features of the infant, and from animals--as desiring the child to possess the outstanding characteristic of the animal. To illustrate: Leah (wild cow), Rachel (ewe), Jonah (dove) and Deborah (bee).<sup>2</sup> Events in later life often led to a change of name,<sup>3</sup> as in the case of Gideon. Names were given to those infants who died before they were eight days old, that they might be known at the resurrection of the just, but no prayers were offered on the occasion.<sup>4</sup>

#### Summary

The early Jews' knowledge of anatomy was necessarily limited by the religious tabu against the touching of a dead person or animal. What little they knew, they learned from the care of their flocks, from the slaughter of animals, and from tradition. Only two surgical operations are mentioned in the Old Testament -- that of circumcision and the operation on Adam for the formation of Eve. There is some mention in the Bible of wounds caused by weapons and their treatment. Castration was forbidden.

The Talmud's estimate of the period of pregnancy falls short of present-day reckoning by about ten to thirty days. Hebrew women received particular attention during confinement, and, if death resulted, it was ascribed to negligence. Suffering was expected as the

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1. Ruth 4:17, I Samuel 4:19-20
2. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 68
3. Judges 6:32
4. Brown, op. cit., pp. 160-162



necessary concomitant of childbirth. Sometimes, these women were assisted by relatives or friends; sometimes, by midwives, who were well trained. The birthstool was frequently used by Hebrew women.

As soon as the child was born, it was washed, anointed with oil, rubbed with salt, and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Emergency measures were used if the child was inanimate or made no sound. Mothers usually nursed their own babies, but wet nurses were occasionally employed. Babies were weaned anywhere from one to three years. The cradle, with bells on it to guard against demons, was first used in Isaac's time.

The rite of circumcision was sacred to the early Jews and always practised by them. It took place on the eighth day after birth, unless the child was sick. In case of sickness, the circumcision was performed seven days after recovery. In case of death before the eighth day, the circumcision took place in the cemetery. Usually, the operation was performed by skilled laymen, but in case of emergency, by the mother. Accidents were rare. The operation took place in the home or in the synagogue against a background of great ceremony, and was usually followed by feasting.

The mother presented herself at the temple for purification after fulfilling her days according to the sex of the child. She brought a lamb and a young pigeon or turtledove; or two turtledoves; or two young pigeons -- according to her means -- for a burnt offering and for a sin offering. The Jewish rules for purification seem to indicate a slight knowledge of gynecology.

Children were greatly desired by these early people. A man who had many children was considered fortunate and wealthy. Barrenness was a great calamity to Hebrew women, and they prayed fervently for

children. Sterility was considered a curse by the Jews. The birth of a son always was a greater occasion for rejoicing than that of a daughter -- partly because daughters eventually merged into other families, whereas sons could carry on the race and remain in their own families; and partly because of the ancient belief that the birth of a girl entailed greater suffering and peril.

The first-born son of the father (not that of the mother) inherited special benefits and privileges, and also certain responsibilities. On the death of the father, he became head of the family, received a double portion of the inheritance, and thereafter was in duty bound to provide for his mother and sisters. He had pre-eminence in all family matters.

The child was usually named by the mother on the eighth day -- although sometimes it was named at birth. The choice of a name was determined by circumstances at birth, by physical features of the child, or by the desire to have a child possess outstanding characteristics of certain animals. If a child died before it was eight days old, it was named, so that it might be known at the resurrection of the just.

## CHAPTER VI

### HEBREW DISEASES AND THEIR TREATMENT

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Disease and death were looked upon by the Jews as direct afflictions sent by God, mostly in punishment of sin; for the Jews had no knowledge of those changes in the tissues of the body which constitute disease. This attitude did not, however, prevent the Israelites from seeking to stay the ravages of disease, and from reverencing Him spoken of by David as the One "...who healeth all thy diseases..."<sup>2</sup> God spoke to Moses thus--"...for I am the Lord that healeth thee."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup>

Berkhof speaks of the work of the physicians as consisting mainly of applying remedies externally; such as balm and oil, plasters and salve. Hot baths were eagerly sought as a cure for disease.

A. Known Diseases

The following maladies are mentioned in the Bible:

1. Fever and Burning Ague (Lev. 26:16 )

In general, the fevers of hot climates are violent and come to a crisis quickly.<sup>5</sup> Fever was threatened by Moses as punishment for disobedience: "...the Lord shall smite thee...with a consumption, and with a fever..."<sup>6</sup> According to Brown, "the original word signifies 'a burning inflammatory fever.'<sup>7</sup>

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1. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 72,88; Schaff-Herzog, Ency. of Rel. Knowledge Vol. II, p. 1454; Deut. 32:39, Ex. 9:15,26, II Kings 1:4,5, 5:27, Job 2:6,7
2. Psalm 103:3
3. Exodus 15:26
4. Berkhof, p. 88
5. Brown, op. cit., p. 331
6. Deut. 28:22
7. Brown, op. cit., p. 331

## 2. Consumption

Consumption, or a "wasting away", was threatened as punishment in Leviticus, "I will even appoint over you..., consumption, and the burning ague".<sup>1</sup> Neglected colds often developed into consumption, which frequently proved fatal.

## 3. Eye Ailments

Inflammation of the eyes, due to heat, night dews, sea breezes, flying sand, injuries, etc. which was often followed by blindness.<sup>2</sup> Ophthalmia may have affected Leah--who was "tender-eyed".<sup>3</sup> i.e. had eyes weak or wanting in clearness and brilliancy. Moses warns the disobedient Israelites in these words: "the Lord shall smite thee...with blindness."<sup>4</sup> Even a slight blemish of the eye disqualified him for the priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

## 4. Head Ailments

Eastern peoples were frequently affected by head ailments. Sunstroke and lunacy were both well known to the Hebrews. David speaks of the evil effect of the sun and moon, in Psalm 121:6: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." Sunstroke is referred to in the cry of the Shunammite boy to his father--"My head, my head!"<sup>6</sup> and in his subsequent death. Elisha treated the boy with animal heat by contact, and raised him from the dead.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Leviticus 26:16, Cf. Orr ISBE, Vol. II, p. 705
2. Schaff-Herzog, Ency. of Rel. Knowledge, Vol. II, p. 1454
3. Genesis 29:17 - Cf., William Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 978
4. Deuteronomy 28:28
5. Alexander Macalister - ISBE, Vol. II, p. 1070
6. II Kings 4:19-20
7. II Kings 4:34,35

5. Dysentery (II Chron. 21:15,19)

Bowel complaints were common among the Hebrews. Priests were peculiarly susceptible because they were required to go barefooted during services in the temple.<sup>1</sup> Jehoram was cured of a disease<sup>2</sup> believed to have been dysentery.

6. Emerods (probably hemorrhoids or piles)

This ailment was prevalent among the Hebrews.<sup>3</sup> It was with this disease that God struck the inhabitants of Ashdod for capturing the ark.<sup>4</sup> The "emerods" are thought by some to be the plague, or the bites of poisonous insects,<sup>5</sup> or dysentery.

7. Skin Diseases

Diseases of the skin, such as scab and incurable itch, are mentioned by Moses, and were painful and marring to the body. They, also, were prophecied as punishment for disobedience by God.<sup>6</sup> If a man were "scurvy or scabbed" he could not serve as a priest.<sup>7</sup> Animals, so diseased, could not be offered as sacrifices.<sup>8</sup> Anointing with oil was used as a remedy for cutaneous diseases.<sup>9</sup>

8. Boils

These are spoken of in II Kings 20:7 in connection with the illness of King Hezekiah, and in connection with the plague of Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Isaiah healed Hezekiah's boil with a poultice of figs.<sup>11</sup> Figs were used

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1. Brown, op. cit., p. 332
2. II Chronicles 21:15,19
3. Deuteronomy 28:27
4. I Samuel 5:6
5. Schaff, op. cit., p. 1455, Vol. 2
6. Deuteronomy 28:27
7. Leviticus 21:20
8. Leviticus 22:22
9. Brown, op. cit., p. 336
10. Exodus 9:10
11. II Kings 20:7

as poultices because of their power of retaining heat and moisture.<sup>1</sup>

"Modern practitioners", states Brown, "are agreed that figs are employed with success in ripening imposthumes, healing ulcers and

quincy."<sup>2</sup> The botch of Egypt was a variety of boil characterized by swelling tumorous sores caused by drinking water from the Nile at its overflow stage.<sup>3</sup>

#### 9. Elephantiasis

This is a disease of the skin which causes the skin to become very thick and fissured. This disease, according to Brown, and other scholars, was inflicted upon Job.<sup>4</sup> It begins with boil-like eruptions attended by burning and itching. Later, the boils become ulcerous. In its advanced stages, the patient's face swells; the voice becomes hoarse; the breath offensive, the skin, unusually loose, wrinkled, hairless and ulcerated. The patient suffers, without rest, as did Job when he said, "I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day."<sup>5</sup> He further bemoans, "my skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat."<sup>6</sup>

#### 10. Leprosy

This disease was the most fearful of ancient times. "The Hebrews were sorely afflicted with it before leaving Egypt (indeed the banks of the Nile, with their humid atmosphere, seem to have been a cradle of the disease.)<sup>7</sup> The Jews believed that pig's milk caused leprosy."<sup>8</sup>

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1. Clow, p. 142
2. Brown, op. cit., p. 335
3. Ibid., p. 331
4. Ibid.
5. Job 7:4
6. Job 30:30
7. Schall, op. cit., p. 1304, Vol. II
8. Maurice H. Farbridge in Ency. of Rel. and Ethics, Vol. XII, p. 133

Seven days of isolation were demanded on suspicion of the  
1  
disease. Haggard affirms that:

"the method of control, avoidance of contact with the sick, had  
been employed by the ancient Jews and is set forth in the Bible."

2  
Dr. Smith in his Dictionary of the Bible adopts the theory:

"that the leprosy of the Mosaic dispensation (Lepra Mosaica) is  
not one disease, but an enumeration of certain symptoms, which on  
account of their frightful character and tendency to spread, would  
render the individual an object of aversion, and demand his sepa-  
ration."

It is thought that four different degrees of leprosy are described in  
Leviticus. Elephantiasis tuberculata (Leviticus 13:4), ulcerations  
(Leviticus 13:21), carbuncles (Leviticus 13:26), and leprosy of the  
3  
head (Leviticus 13:31).

The most marked symptoms of leprosy were "...a rising, a  
scab, or bright spot,...in the skin of his flesh..." (Leviticus 13:2).  
A more advanced case is described in Leviticus 13:10,11: "...if the  
rising be white in the skin, and it have burned the hair white, and  
there be quick raw flesh in the rising; it is an old leprosy." In  
verses 29 and 30 we have the disease appearing as a scall in the beard  
or in the hair of the head. This was considered a great calamity to  
the men since they were so proud of their beards. Lepers were con-  
sidered unclean (Leviticus 13:44-46) and had to tear their garments  
(except in the case of women), cover their faces, go with unkempt  
hair; and cry, "Unclean, unclean." They were forced to live outside  
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of the city or camp, and had parts of the synagogue reserved for them.

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1. Haggard, p. 194
2. William Smith, Dictionary of the Bible, American Ed., Vol. II,  
p. 1630
3. G. T. Jackson, Article on Leprosy in Schaff-Herzog, Ency. of  
Rel., Vol. II, p. 1305
4. Ibid, p. 1304



Whenever a leper recovered, he presented himself to the priest for examination. If it appeared that he had lost the disease, he was sprinkled with the water of purification (Leviticus 13 and 14). He then brought to the priest two clean birds, cedarwood, scarlet, and hyssop. One of the birds was killed in an earthen vessel with running water. The live bird, together with the cedarwood, scarlet and hyssop, was dipped in the blood of the other. The leper was sprinkled seven times and the live bird, freed, symbolically carrying off the uncleanness. Then, the leper washed his clothes, shaved off all his hair, and bathed his body. On the seventh day thereafter, he once more washed his clothing, shaved, and bathed. On the eighth day he brought for his offering two male lambs, one ewe lamb, meal, and oil. If he were poor he could bring one lamb and two turtle-doves, or two pigeons together with a smaller offering of meal and oil. Finally, the leper was anointed with the oil and with the blood of the trespass offering on the tip of his right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot, a portion of the oil also being poured on his head.

#### 11. Venereal Diseases

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Morris, in a paper entitled, "Discussion of Syphilis", says:

"...the Jewish code, in Leviticus 15, contained an early, if not the earliest known, mention of venereal disease; and though presumably that disease was not syphilis the restrictions which applied to one applied also to the other...the distinctive feature of the Israelitic religious law was the discouragement of irregular sexual intercourse...by moral methods..."

<sup>2</sup> There is, perhaps, an allusion to gonorrhea in Leviticus 15:2.

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1. Sir Henry Morris - DISCUSSION OF SYPHILIS
2. Schaff-Herzog, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 1455

### B. Treatment of Diseases

There were four general methods of treating diseases used<sup>1</sup> by the early Hebrews: (1) External application, such as bathing or washing. (II Kings 5:10) The hot baths of Calirrhoe and Tiberias<sup>2</sup> were eagerly sought by these people. When Elisha sent Naaman to the Jordan to dip seven times in order to cure him of leprosy, Naaman<sup>3</sup> retorted with these words:

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?"

(2) Binding with ointment for sores. (Isaiah 1:6). All ointments<sup>4</sup> were of a vegetable character, such as balm, oil and salve. Jeremiah<sup>5</sup> refers to this type of treatment in the 30th chapter, thus:

"...Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up; thou hast no healing medicine."

(3) Plasters or poultices of figs for boils, etc., (Isaiah 38:21) as in the case of Hezekiah. Roots and leaves were used to effect<sup>6</sup> cures. (4) Animal Heat by contact for certain ailments, including old age. I Kings 17:19 and II Kings 4:34 are instances when heat was used. I Kings 1:2 refers to the latter usage.

### C. Known Remedies

"The Lord created medicine out of the earth; and a prudent man will have no disgust at them."<sup>7</sup> -- Eccles. 38:4

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1. Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. III, p. 332
2. Frederick de Sola Mendes- in Jewish Ency., Vol. II, p. 597
3. II Kings 5:12
4. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 88
5. Jeremiah 30:12-13
6. John D. Davis, Dictionary of Bible, p. 468; Ezekiel 47:12, War 2:6,8
7. Ecclesiasticus 38:4

Though the Jews had knowledge of many plants, their materia medica was scant, so far as we can learn. Figs and fish galls were<sup>1</sup> used. The only thing like a prescription found in the Bible is that for the holy anointing oil, consisting of myrrh, cinnamon, sweet calamus,<sup>2</sup> cassia, and olive oil. Oil from the olive and oleaster trees was used in great abundance by these peoples in religious ceremonies and for healing purposes.<sup>3</sup> Mention is made of the apothecaries and their highly developed art in II Chronicles 16:14 in regard to King Asa's funeral. He was buried in a bed "...filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art..."<sup>4</sup> Later, the apothecaries were formed into a guild; and it was this guild that repaired the walls of Jerusalem under the leadership of "Hananiah, the son of one of the apothecaries."

Medicaments were applied and given in the form of liniments, plasters, decoctions, syrups, etc.; and, in addition water, wine, vinegar, honey, milk and oil. Mustard, pepper, salt, wax, poppy, laurel, saliva and other stuffs were used. Special attention is given to the following:

1. Balm

The value of the balm of Gilead and of myrrh was early known and their healing properties were highly esteemed. The company of Ishmaelites, who bought Joseph as a slave, were "...from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it to Egypt..."<sup>5</sup> And Jacob sent a present to his son, the Egyptian monarch,

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1. Schaff-Herzog, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 1455
2. Exodus 30:23-25, 35; 37:29, Ecc. 10:1
3. Clow, op. cit., p. 274
4. Nehemiah 3:8
5. Genesis 37:25

Joseph, including "...a little balm...and myrrh..."<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah refers to this product thus, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?"<sup>2</sup> The balm of Gilead came from several trees and plants which yielded fragrant gums and resins and was used as medicine or as an external application to wounds.<sup>3</sup> It may have been used as a local sedative--according to Hastings.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Myrrh

Myrrh, a fragrant gum, grew chiefly in Arabia and Ethiopia,<sup>5</sup> but not in Palestine. It was an ingredient of the anointing oil,<sup>6</sup> and was also used for embalming. It was brought as a gift to the infant Jesus by the Magi.<sup>7</sup> Myrrh was of more agreeable odor than opium and possessed similar but weaker qualities, for which it was valued. This substance was also put in wine to give it a spicy taste and smell; and this unintoxicating wine was a favorite with the ladies.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. Gall

The Hebrew word "rosh" is translated in Hosea 10:4 as "hemlock". It was evidently a bitter vegetable extract from a common plant, perhaps the poppy.<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy refers to the bitterness of gall thus: "...their grapes are grapes of gall..."<sup>10</sup> This substance was probably mixed with vinegar and was used to alleviate suffering--

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1. Genesis 43:11
2. Jeremiah 8:22
3. Clow, W.M., Bible Readers Ency. & Concordance, p. 40
4. Hastings, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 234
5. Exodus 30:23
6. John 19:39
7. Matthew 2:11
8. Schaff-Herzog, op. cit., Rudolf Ruetschi, Vol. II, p. 1602
9. Clow, op. cit., p. 156
10. Deuteronomy 32:32, 29:18

it was given to Jesus on the cross.<sup>1</sup>

Deadening of pain by soporific potions was known even to primitive people says Dr. Haggard.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, wine was given to allay pain; as was wormwood (noted for its bitterness), dissolved in wine or spirit.<sup>3</sup> The Talmud speaks of a narcotic called "sanne de shinta" and also mentions the mandrake.<sup>4</sup> The latter had narcotic properties and was said to arouse passion. The mandrake, a member of the potato family, grows in Palestine and exudes a pungent odor.<sup>5</sup> The Arabs call it "Devils Apple," from its property of arousing the appetites.<sup>6</sup>

The following plants were used as carminatives in the early days: mint, anise, rue and cummin. These were used for the relief of colic and flatulence. Mint is mentioned as a substance for tithing; also anise, or dill, allied to the caraway seed. Isaiah refers to cummin thus: "...neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin;..."<sup>7</sup> pertaining to the process of beating the ripe plant to detach its seeds.<sup>8</sup> Rue was a cultivated plant of little value, but when dried it was used as medicine.<sup>9</sup> It was used as a tithe by the Pharisees;<sup>10</sup> had it been wild, it would not have been a tithable plant.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Matthew 27:34
2. Haggard, op. cit., pp. 94-95
3. Clow, op. cit., p. 405
4. Genesis 30:14-16; Song of Solomon 7:13
5. Schaff-Herzog, op. cit., Rudolf Ruetschi, p. 1395
6. Clow, op. cit., p. 246
7. Isaiah 28:25,27
8. Davis, op. cit., p. 150
9. Cowl, op. cit., p. 334
10. Luke 11:42
11. Davis, op. cit., p. 626

### Summary

Although the Jews looked upon disease and death as direct afflictions sent by God in punishment of sin, they revered Him as the Healer of all diseases and tried to be obedient to the Laws and to fight the ravages of disease. The Jewish physicians used external remedies, mainly, in their fight against disease.

Many ailments are mentioned in the Scriptures. Fever and burning ague were particularly violent in the hot climate of Palestine; and consumption, which developed from neglected colds, often proved fatal. Many Hebrews were afflicted with eye ailments: among these were Leah - and perhaps Paul of Tarsus. Sunstroke and lunacy were common in Israel - hence, the effect of the sun and of the moon was feared. Bowel complaints, in the nature of dysentery, were prevalent among the Hebrews, especially the priests. Emerods (hemorrhoids) were inflicted upon the inhabitants of Ashdod for capturing the ark.

Skin diseases, such as scab, itch and scurvy, are referred to in the Old Testament. Oil was used in treating the skin. Boils were treated with poultices of figs, as in the case of King Hezekiah. The botch of Egypt, a type of boil, was caused by the drinking of the impure water of the Nile at its overflow stage. Elephantiasis, the disease inflicted upon Job, was dread and painful. It is no wonder that his wife urged him in his agony to "...curse God and die." Leprosy was the most fearful disease of ancient times, and the Hebrews were sorely afflicted with it before leaving Egypt - where it flourished in the humid atmosphere along the banks of the Nile. It is thought that four degrees of leprosy are described in Leviticus. Isolation was demanded of all suspects. Symptoms of the disease

were: risings, scabs, or bright spots in the flesh; white in the skin and hair of a rising and quick, raw flesh. If a leper recovered, he presented himself to the priest and was sprinkled with the water of purification. Seven days thereafter, he returned and was anointed with oil. There is some evidence of venereal disease - perhaps gonorrhea - in early times, but the moral code of the Jews prevented its spread among them.

There were four general methods used by the early Hebrews in treating diseases, viz.: bathing, binding with ointment, application of plasters or poultices, and animal heat by contact.

The known healing remedies were many, and mostly vegetable. The only prescription mentioned in the Old Testament is that for anointing oil. Oil from the olive and oleaster trees was used in great abundance in religious ceremonies and for healing purposes. Figs and fish galls were also used. Other medicaments applied and given were liniments, decoctions, syrups, etc.; and, in addition, water, wine, vinegar, honey, milk and oil. Mustard, pepper, salt, wax, poppy, laurel and saliva were also used. Balm of Gilead was greatly esteemed for its healing properties. It was early known and was obtained from several trees and plants which yielded fragrant gums and resins. Myrrh, grown in Arabia and Ethiopia, was an ingredient of the anointing oil, and was also used for embalming. It possessed weak, narcotic qualities - and was used to make wine spicy. Gall, a bitter vegetable extract, was mixed with vinegar to alleviate suffering. Wine, too, was given to allay pain; as was wormwood, dissolved in wine or spirit. The mandrake and "samme de shinta" had narcotic properties and were used to deaden pain. The former was also said to arouse passion. Mint, anise, rue and cummin were used in the early days as carminatives for the relief of colic and flatulence.

## CONCLUSION



## CONCLUSION

We have considered the wise provisions of the early Jews relative to community sanitation; the achievement of cleanliness through ablutions and segregation; times of rest and festivity; the choice and preparation of foods; the practice of surgery, together with their knowledge of obstetrics and care of the child; and the prevalent diseases, including their treatment and known remedies.

Surely, one is struck forcibly with the great and unusual wealth of hygienic knowledge of the Jews and with the modernness of these laws based upon the Mosaic standards established over three thousand years ago. Not without reason were the ancient Hebrews called the real founders of the science of public health. The belief too commonly exists that our age is immeasurably ahead of all preceding times. Solomon knew the folly of such attitudes when he said, "...and there is no new thing under the sun...it hath been<sup>1</sup> already of old time..." We may have progressed in scientific study but we owe to men of ancient times the germs of many modern helps to healthy living. The late Dr. Angus Smith proved, not long ago, that in the field of disinfection the ancient Egyptians knew much -- and that much has been forgotten, and rediscovered by modern<sup>2</sup> research.

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1. Ecclesiastes 1:9,10
2. Gillespie, op. cit., p. 10

Moses, the great law-giver, born about 1600 B.C. gave numerous hygienic precepts, many of them as well worth following today as when they were promulgated. He was not only mighty in words and deeds, but "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."<sup>1</sup> It is evident that he practiced what he preached -- for he lived to be one hundred and twenty years old, and "his eye was not dim,<sup>2</sup> nor his natural force abated." We can but conclude that Moses was a truly great man. But, more than this, we must conclude that these laws were God-given -- for no man, of himself, could have developed such advanced ideas in early times. Even the heathen neighbors of the early Hebrews were amazed at this Code of Laws and the obedience of the Jewish people to them. The lasting quality of these Laws strengthens our belief in their Divine origin. Dr. Kellersberger, for twenty-five years a doctor in Africa, states that he has often used the Mosaic laws in his work with the primitive natives in order to develop hygienic measures among them.

The laws of the Hebrews, given by Moses, were of a unique nature. Obedience to these laws has been responsible for the survival of this race as a strong and separate people. Many have marvelled at the indestructibility and personal robustness, both mental and physical, of the Jews. Barring the extreme refinements of modern civilization, the development by the Israelites in the Holy Land of measures insuring public health and social hygiene bears a striking resemblance to our own progress in these directions.

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1. Acts 7:22
2. Deuteronomy 34:7

There is much in the Code which we can with advantage adopt, or adapt, in our daily life.

The remarkable immunity from certain diseases and the longevity of life among the Hebrew people bears testimony to the worth-whileness of the Hebrew Code. Incorporated in these laws were principles dealing with cleanliness, both public and private; rest, both physical and mental; and purity of air, food, earth and water. The sturdiness of these people was reinforced by their high morality, regular habits, early married life, strength of Hebrew mothers, intense family feeling, and care of the needy and the poor. The serenity of the Jewish mind, springing from a deep faith in Jehovah, reduced their susceptibility to diseases of many<sup>1</sup> kinds. They gloried in the covenant God gave to Abraham:

"I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

So, in closing, we can but pray the prayer of the Psalmist: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us...That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations."

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1. Genesis 17:7
2. Psalms 67:2

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