

Sketches of Jewish Social Life - Part 2

by Alfred Edersheim

The Rabbis' position towards the kingdom was one of coldness and distance, and they were slow to accept the new faith of Christianity, which spread rapidly in Judaea.

Scripture: Matthew 15:4

Topics: "Jewish Family Life", "Childhood Education"

Description

Alfred Edersheim delves into the Jewish perspective on the upbringing of children, highlighting the deep reverence and tenderness that Jewish parents had towards their offspring. He explores the various stages of child-life in Hebrew terminology, illustrating the care and attention given to children from birth to maturity. Edersheim also discusses the traditional Jewish practices and teachings regarding the education and training of children, emphasizing the importance of early instruction and the gradual progression towards adulthood and responsibility.

Transcript

As for the Rabbis, the leaders of public opinion, their position towards the kingdom was quite different. Although in the rising of Bar Cochab the great Rabbi Akiba acted as the religious standard-bearer, he may be looked upon as almost an exception. His character was that of an enthusiast, his history almost a romance. But, in general, the Rabbis did not identify themselves with the popular Messianic expectations. Alike the Gospel-history and their writings show not merely that anti-spiritual opposition to the Church which we might have expected, but coldness and distance in regard to all such movements. Legal rigorism and merciless bigotry are not fanaticism. The latter is chiefly the impulse of the ill-informed. Even their contemptuous turning away from "this people which knoweth not the law," as "accursed," proves them incapable of a fanaticism which recognises a brother in every one whose heart burns with the same fire, no matter what his condition otherwise. The great text-book of Rabbinism, the Mishnah, is almost entirely un-Messianic, one might say un-dogmatical. The method of the Rabbis was purely logical. Where not a record of facts or traditions, the Mishnah is purely a handbook of legal determinations in their utmost logical sequences, only enlivened by discussions or the tale of instances in point. The whole tendency of this system was anti-Messianic. Not but that in souls so devout and natures so ardent enthusiasm might be kindled, but that all their studies and pursuits went in the contrary direction. Besides, they knew full well how little of power was left them, and they dreaded losing even this. The fear of Rome constantly haunted them. Even at the destruction of Jerusalem the leading Rabbis aimed to secure their safety, and their after history shows, frequently recurring, curious instances of Rabbinical intimacy with their Roman oppressors.

The Sanhedrim spoke their inmost apprehensions, when in that secret session they determined to kill Jesus from fear that, if He were allowed to go on, and all men were to believe on Him, the Romans would come and take away both their place and nation (John 11:48). Yet not one candid mind among them discussed the reality of His miracles; not one generous voice was raised to assert the principle of the Messiah's claims and kingdom, even though they had rejected those of Jesus of Nazareth! The question of the Messiah might come up as a speculative point; it might force itself upon the attention of the Sanhedrim; but it was not of personal, practical, life-interest to them. It may mark only one aspect of the question, and that an extreme one, yet even as such it is characteristic, when a Rabbi could assert that "between the present and the days of the Messiah there was only this difference, Israel's servitude."

Quite other matters engrossed the attention of the Rabbis. It was the present and the past, not the future, which occupied them--the present as fixing all legal determinations, and the past as giving sanction to this. Judaea proper was the only place where the Shechinah had dwelt, the land where Jehovah had caused His temple to be reared, the seat of the Sanhedrim, the place where alone learning and real piety were cultivated. From this point of view everything was judged. Judaea was "grain, Galilee straw, and beyond Jordan chaff." To be a Judaeon was to be "an Hebrew of the Hebrews." It has already been stated what reproach the Rabbis attached to Galilee in regard to its language, manners, and neglect of regular study. In some respects the very legal observances, as certainly social customs, were different in Judaea from Galilee. Only in Judaea could Rabbis be ordained by the laying on of hands; only there could the Sanhedrim in solemn session declare and proclaim the commencement of each month, on which the arrangement of the festive calendar depended. Even after the stress of political necessity had driven the Rabbis to Galilee, they returned to Lydda for the purpose, and it needed a sharp struggle before they transferred the privilege of Judaea to other regions in the third century of our era (Jer. Sanh. i. 1, 18). The wine for use in the Temple was brought exclusively from Judaea, not only because it was better, but because the transport through Samaria would have rendered it defiled. Indeed, the Mishnah mentions the names of the five towns whence it was obtained. Similarly, the oil used was derived either from Judaea, or, if from Peraea, the olives only were brought, to be crushed in Jerusalem.

The question what cities were really Jewish was of considerable importance, so far as concerned ritual questions, and it occupied the earnest attention of the Rabbis. It is not easy to fix the exact boundaries of Judaea proper towards the north-west. To include the sea-shore in the province of Samaria is a popular mistake. It certainly was never reckoned with it. According to Josephus (Jewish War, iii, 35-58) Judaea proper extended along the sea-shore as far north as Ptolemais or Acco.

The Talmud seems to exclude at least the northern cities. In the New Testament there is a distinction made between Caesarea and the province of Judaea (Acts 12:19, 21:10). This affords one of the indirect evidences not only of the intimate acquaintance of the writer with strictly Rabbinical views, but also of the early date of the composition of the Book of Acts. For, at a later period Caesarea was declared to belong to Judaea, although its harbour was excluded from such privileges, and all east and west of it pronounced "defiled."

Possibly, it may have been added to the cities of Judaea, simply because afterwards so many celebrated Rabbis resided there. The importance attaching to Caesarea in connection with the preaching of the Gospel and the history of St. Paul, and the early and flourishing Christian churches there established give fresh interest to all notices of the place. Only those from Jewish sources can here engage our attention. It were out of place here to describe the political importance of Caesarea, as the seat of the Roman power, or its magnificent harbour and buildings, or its wealth and influence.

In Jewish writings it bears the same name by which we know it, though at times it is designated after its fortifications (Migdal Shur, M. Zor, M. Nassi), or after its harbour (Migdal Shina), once also by its ancient name, the tower of Straton. The population consisted of a mixture of Jews, Greeks, Syrians, and Samaritans, and tumults between them were the first signal of the great Jewish war. The Talmud calls it "the capital of the kings." As the seat of the Roman power it was specially hateful to the Jews.

Accordingly it is designated as the "daughter of Edom--the city of abomination and blasphemy," although the district was, for its riches, called "the land of life." As might be expected, constant difficulties arose between the Jewish and Roman authorities in Caesarea, and bitter are the complaints against the unrighteousness of heathen judges. We can readily understand, that to a Jew Caesarea was the symbol of Rome, Rome of Edom--and Edom was to be destroyed! In fact, in their view Jerusalem and Caesarea could not really co-exist.

It is in this sense that we account for the following curious passage: "If you are told that Jerusalem and Caesarea are both standing, or that they are both destroyed, believe it not; but if you are told that one of them is destroyed and the other standing, then believe it" (Gitt. 16 a; Meg. 6 a). It is interesting to know that on account of the foreign Jews resident in Caesarea, the Rabbis allowed the principal prayers to be said in Greek, as being the vernacular; and that, from the time of the evangelist Philip, good work was done for Christ among its resident Jews. Indeed, Jewish writings contain special notice of controversies there between Jews and Christians.

A brief summary of Jewish notices of certain other towns in Judaea, mentioned also in the New Testament, may throw some additional light on the sacred narratives. In general, the Mishnah divided Judaea proper into three parts--mountain, Shephelah, and valley (Shev. ix 2), to which we must add the city of Jerusalem as a separate district. And here we have another striking evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament, and especially of the writings of St. Luke. Only one intimately acquainted with the state of matters at the time would, with the Rabbis, have distinguished Jerusalem as a district separate from all the rest of Judaea, as St. Luke markedly does on several occasions (Luke 5:17; Acts 1:8, 10:39). When the Rabbis speak of "the mountain," they refer to the district north-east and north of Jerusalem, also known as "the royal mount." The Shephelah, of course, is the country along the sea-shore. All the rest is included in the term "valley." It need scarcely be explained that, as the Jerusalem Talmud tells us, this is merely a general classification, which must not be too closely pressed. Of the eleven toparchies into which, according to Josephus (Pliny enumerates only ten), Judaea proper was arranged, the Rabbis take no notice, although some of their names have been traced in Talmudical writings. These provinces were no doubt again subdivided into districts or hyparchies, just as the towns were into quarters or hegemonies, both terms occurring in the Talmud. The Rabbis forbade the exportation of provisions from Palestine, even into Syria.

Travelling southward from Caesarea we are in the plain of Sharon, whose beauty and richness are so celebrated in Holy Scripture (Cant 2:1; Isa 35:2). This plain extends as far as Lydda, where it merges into that of Darom, which stretches farther southwards. In accordance with the statements of Holy Scripture (Isa 65:10) the plain of Sharon was always celebrated for its pasturage. According to the Talmud most of the calves for sacrifices were brought from that district. The wine of Sharon was celebrated, and, for beverage, supposed to be mixed with one-third of water. The plain was also well known for the manufacture of pottery; but it must have been of an inferior kind, since the Mishnah (Baba K. vi. 2) in enumerating for what proportion of damaged goods a purchaser might not claim compensation, allows not less than ten per cent for breakage in the pottery of Sharon. In Jer. Sotah viii. 3, we read that the

permission to return from war did not apply to those who had built brick houses in Sharon, it being explained that the clay was so bad, that the houses had to be rebuilt within seven years. Hence also the annual prayer of the high-priest on the Day of Atonement, that the houses of the men of Sharon should not become their graves (see The Temple). Antipatris, the place where the foot soldiers had left St. Paul in charge of the horsemen (Acts 23:31), had once been the scene of a very different array. For it was here that, according to tradition (Yoma, 69 a), the priesthood, under Simon the Just, had met Alexander the Great in that solemn procession, which secured the safety of the Temple. In Talmudical writings it bears the same name, which was given it by Herod, in memory of his father Antipater (Ant. vi, 5.2). The name of Chephar Zaba, however, also occurs, possibly that of an adjoining locality. In Sanh. 94 b, we read that Hezekiah had suspended a board at the entrance of the Beth Midrash (or college), with the notification that whoever studied not the Law was to be destroyed. Accordingly they searched from Dan to Beersheba, and found not a single unlettered person, nor yet from Gebath to Antipatris, boy or girl, man or woman, who was not fully versed in all the legal ordinances concerning clean and unclean.

Another remarkable illustration of the New Testament is afforded by Lydda, the Talmudical Lod or Lud. We read that, in consequence of the labours of St. Peter and the miracle wrought on Aeneas, "all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron...turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:35). The brief notice of Lydda given in this narrative of the apostle's labours, is abundantly confirmed by Talmudical notices, although, of course, we must not expect them to describe the progress of Christianity. We can readily believe that Lydda had its congregation of "saints," almost from the first, since it was (Maas. Sh. v. 2) within an easy day's journey west of Jerusalem. Indeed, as the Talmud explains, the second tithes (Deu 14:22, 26:12) from Lydda could not be converted into money, but had to be brought to the city itself, so "that the streets of Jerusalem might be garlanded with fruits." The same passage illustrates the proximity of Lydda to the city, and the frequent intercourse between the two, by saying that the women of Lydda mixed their dough, went up to Jerusalem, prayed in the Temple, and returned before it had fermented. Similarly, we infer from Talmudical documents that Lydda had been the residence of many Rabbis before the destruction of Jerusalem. After that event, it became the seat of a very celebrated school, presided over by some of the leaders of Jewish thought. It was this school which boldly laid it down, that, to avoid death, every ordinance of the Law might be broken, except those in regard to idolatry, incest, and murder. It was in Lydda, also, that two brothers voluntarily offered themselves victims to save their co-religionists from slaughter, threatened because a body had been found, whose death was imputed to the Jews. It sounds like a sad echo of the taunts addressed by "chief priests," "scribes and elders," to Jesus on the cross (Matt 27:41-43) when, on the occasion just mentioned, the Roman thus addressed the martyrs: "If you are of the people of Ananias, Mishael, and Azarias, let your God come, and save you from my hand!" (Taan. 18, 6).

But a much more interesting chain of evidence connects Lydda with the history of the founding of the Church. It is in connection with Lydda and its tribunal, which is declared to have been capable of pronouncing sentence of death, that our blessed Lord and the Virgin Mother are introduced in certain Talmudical passages, though with studiously and blasphemously altered names. The statements are, in their present form, whether from ignorance, design, or in consequence of successive alterations, confused, and they mix up different events and persons in Gospel history; among other things representing our Lord as condemned at Lydda. *

* May there not perhaps be some historical foundation even for this statement? Could the secret gathering of "the chief priests and Pharisees," mentioned in John 11:47, have taken place in Lydda (compare vers. 54, 55)? Was it there, that Judas "communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him

unto them?" There were at any rate obvious reasons for avoiding Jerusalem in all preliminary measures against Jesus; and we know that, while the Temple stood, Lydda was the only place out of Jerusalem which may be called a seat of the Rabbinical party.

But there can be no reasonable question that they refer to our blessed Lord and His condemnation for supposed blasphemy and seduction of the people, and that they at least indicate a close connection between Lydda and the founding of Christianity. It is a curious confirmation of the gospel history, that the death of Christ is there described as having taken place "on the eve of the Passover," remarkably bearing out not only the date of that event as gathered from the synoptical gospels, but showing that the Rabbis at least knew nothing of those Jewish scruples and difficulties, by which modern Gentile writers have tried to prove the impossibility of Christ's condemnation on the Paschal night. It has already been stated that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, many and most celebrated Rabbis chose Lydda for their residence. But the second century witnessed a great change. The inhabitants of Lydda are now charged with pride, ignorance, and neglect of their religion. The Midrash (Esther 1:3) has it, that there were "ten measures of wretchedness in the world. Nine of those belong to Lod, the tenth to all the rest of the world." Lydda was the last place in Judaea to which, after their migration into Galilee, the Rabbis resorted to fix the commencement of the month. Jewish legend has it, that they were met by the "evil eye," which caused their death. There may, perhaps, be an allegorical allusion in this. Certain it is, that, at the time, Lydda was the seat of a most flourishing Christian Church, and had its bishop. Indeed, a learned Jewish writer has connected the changed Jewish feeling towards Lod with the spread of Christianity. Lydda must have been a very beautiful and a very busy place. The Talmud speaks in exaggerated terms of the honey of its dates (Cheth. iii. a), and the Mishnah (Baba M. iv. 3) refers to its merchants as a numerous class, although their honesty is not extolled. *

* The Mishnah discusses how much profit a merchant is allowed to take on an article, and within what period a purchaser, who finds himself imposed upon, may return his purchase. The merchants of Lydda are certainly not placed in this discussion in the most advantageous light.

Near Lydda, eastwards, was the village of Chephar Tabi. We might be tempted to derive from it the name of Tabitha (Acts 9:36), if it were not that the names Tabi and Tabitha had been so common at the time in Palestine. There can be no question of the situation of Joppa, the modern Jaffa, where Peter saw the vision which opened the door of the Church to the Gentiles. Many Rabbis are mentioned in connection with Joppa. The town was destroyed by Vespasian. There is a curious legend in the Midrash to the effect that Joppa was not overwhelmed by the deluge. Could this have been an attempt to insinuate the preservation and migration of men to distant parts of the earth? The exact location of Emmaus, for ever sacred to us by the manifestation of the Saviour to the two disciples (Luke 24:13), is matter of controversy. On the whole, the weight of evidence still inclines to the traditional site. *

* Modern writers mostly identify it with the present Kulonieh, colonia, deriving the name from the circumstance that it was colonised by Roman soldiers. Lieut. Conder suggests the modern Khamasa, about eight miles from Jerusalem, as the site of Emmaus.

If so, it had a considerable Jewish population, although it was also occupied by a Roman garrison. Its climate and waters were celebrated, as also its market-place. It is specially interesting to find that among the patrician Jewish families belonging to the laity, who took part in the instrumental music of the Temple, two--those of Pagarim and Zippariah--were from Emmaus, and also that the priesthood were wont to intermarry with the wealthy Hebrews of that place (Er. ii. 4). Gaza, on whose "desert" road Philip preached

to and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, counted not fewer than eight heathen temples, besides an idol-shrine just outside the city. Still Jews were allowed to reside there, probably on account of its important market.

Only two names yet remain to be mentioned, but those of the deepest and most solemn interest. Bethlehem, the birthplace of our Lord, and Jerusalem, where He was crucified. It deserves notice, that the answer which the Sanhedrists of old gave to the inquiries of Herod (Matt 2:5) is equally returned in many Talmudical passages, and with the same reference to Micah 5:2. It may therefore be regarded as a settled point that, according to the Jewish fathers, Messiah, the Son of David, was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah. But there is one passage in the Mishnah which throws such peculiar light on the Gospel narrative, that it will be best to give it in its entirety. We know that, on the night in which our Saviour was born, the angels' message came to those who probably alone of all in or near Bethlehem were "keeping watch." For, close by Bethlehem, on the road to Jerusalem, was a tower, known as Migdal Eder, the "watch-tower of the flock." For here was the station where shepherd watched their flocks destined for sacrifices in the Temple. So well known was this, that if animals were found as far from Jerusalem as Migdal Eder, and within that circuit on every side, the males were offered as burnt-offerings, the females as peace-offerings.

*

* Formerly those who found such animals had out of their own means to supply the necessary drink-offerings. But as this induced some not to bring the animals to the Temple, it was afterwards decreed to supply the cost of the drink-offerings from the Temple treasury (Shek. vii. 5).

R. Jehudah adds: "If suited for Paschal sacrifices, then they are Paschal sacrifices, provided it be not more than thirty days before the feast" (Shekal. vii 4; compare also Jer. Kid. ii. 9). It seems of deepest significance, almost like the fulfilment of type, that those shepherds who first heard tidings of the Saviour's birth, who first listened to angels' praises, were watching flocks destined to be offered as sacrifices in the Temple. There was the type, and here the reality. At all times Bethlehem was among "the least" in Judah--so small that the Rabbis do not even refer to it in detail. The small village-inn was over-crowded, and the guests from Nazareth found shelter only in the stable, * whose manger became the cradle of the King of Israel.

* In Echa R. 72 a, there is a tradition that the Messiah was to be born "in the Castle Arba of Bethlehem Judah." Caspari quotes this in confirmation that the present castellated monastery, in the cave of which is the traditional site of our Lord's birth, marks the real spot. In the East such caves were often used as stables.

It was here that those who tended the sacrificial flocks, heaven-directed, found the Divine Babe--significantly the first to see Him, to believe, and to adore. But this is not all. It is when we remember, that presently these shepherds would be in the Temple, and meet those who came thither to worship and to sacrifice, that we perceive the full significance of what otherwise would have seemed scarcely worth while noticing in connection with humble shepherds: "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" (Luke 2:17,18). Moreover, we can understand the wonderful impression made on those in the courts of the Temple, as, while they selected their sacrifices, the shepherds told the devout of the speedy fulfilment of all these types in what they had themselves seen and heard in that night of wonders; how eager, curious crowds might gather around to discuss, to wonder, perhaps to mock; how the heart of "just and devout" old Simeon would be gladdened within him, in

expectation of the near realisation of a life's hopes and prayers; and how aged Anna, and they who like her "looked for redemption in Israel," would lift up their heads, since their salvation was drawing nigh. Thus the shepherds would be the most effectual heralds of the Messiah in the Temple, and both Simeon and Anna be prepared for the time when the infant Saviour would be presented in the sanctuary. But there is yet another verse which, as we may suggest, would find a fuller explanation in the fact that these shepherds tended the Temple flocks. When in Luke 2:20 we read that "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God," the meaning in that connection * seems somewhat difficult till we realise that, after bringing their flocks to the Temple, they would return to their own homes, and carry with them, joyfully and gratefully, tidings of the great salvation.

* Compare here verses 17, 18, which in point of time precede verse 20. The term *diagnorizo*, rendered in the Authorised Version "make known abroad," and by Wahl "*ultra citraque narro*," does not seem exhausted by the idea of conversation with the party in the "stable," or with any whom they might meet in "the field."

Lastly, without entering into controversy, the passage from the Mishnah above quoted in great measure disposes of the objection against the traditional date of our Lord's birth, derived from the supposed fact, that the rains of December would prevent the flocks being kept all night "in the field." For, in the first place, these were flocks on their way to Jerusalem, and not regularly pasturing in the open at that season. And, secondly, the Mishnah evidently contemplates their being thus in the open thirty days before the Passover, or in the month of February, during which the average rainfall is quite the largest in the year. *

* The average rainfall in Jerusalem for eight years amounts to fourteen inches in December, thirteen in January, and sixteen in February (Barclay, *City of the Great King*, p. 428).

"Ten measures of beauty," say the Rabbis, "hath God bestowed upon the world, and nine of these fall to the lot of Jerusalem"--and again, "A city, the fame of which has gone out from one end of the world to the other" (Ber. 38). "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, and eternity." This--explains the Talmud--"is Jerusalem." In opposition to her rival Alexandria, which was designated "the little," Jerusalem was called "the great." It almost reminds one of the title "eternal city," given to Rome, when we find the Rabbis speaking of Jerusalem as the "eternal house." Similarly, if a common proverb has it, that "all roads lead to Rome," it was a Jewish saying, "All coins come from Jerusalem." This is not the place to describe the city in its appearance and glory (for this compare the two first chapters of my volume on *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*). But one almost feels as if, on such a subject, one could understand, if not condone, the manifest exaggerations of the Rabbis. Indeed, there are indications that they scarcely expected their statements to be taken literally. Thus, when the number of its synagogues is mentioned as 460 or 480, it is explained that the latter number is the numerical equivalent of the word "full" in Isaiah 1:21 ("it was full of judgment"). It is more interesting to know, that we find in the Talmud express mention of "the Synagogue of the Alexandrians," referred to in Acts 6:9--another important confirmation, if such were needed, of the accuracy of St. Luke's narratives. Of the hospitality of the inhabitants of Jerusalem accounts are given, which we can scarcely regard as much exaggerated; for the city was not reckoned to belong to any tribe in particular; it was to be considered as equally the home of all. Its houses were to be neither hired nor let, but freely thrown open to every brother. Nor did any one among the countless thousands who thronged it at feast-times ever lack room. A curtain hung before the entrance of a house intimated, that there was still room for guests; a table spread in front of it, that its board was still at their disposal. And, if it was impossible to accommodate within the walls of Jerusalem proper the vast crowds which resorted to the city, there can be no doubt that for sacred purpose Bethany and Bethphage were

reckoned as within the circle of Jerusalem. It calls forth peculiar sensations, when we read in these Jewish records of Bethany and Bethphage as specially celebrated for their hospitality to pilgrim-guests, for it wakes the sacred memories of our Lord's sojourn with the holy family of Bethany, and especially of His last stay there and of His royal entrance into Jerusalem.

In truth, every effort was used to make Jerusalem truly a city of delight. Its police and sanitary regulations were more perfect than in any modern city; the arrangements such as to keep the pilgrim free to give his heart and mind to sacred subjects. If, after all, "the townspeople," as they were called, were regarded as somewhat proud and supercilious, it was something to be a citizen of Jerushalaimah, as the Jerusalemites preferred to write its name. Their constant intercourse with strangers gave them a knowledge of men and of the world.

The smartness and cleverness of the young people formed a theme of admiration to their more shy and awkward country relatives. There was also a grandeur in their bearing--almost luxury; and an amount of delicacy, tact, and tenderness, which appeared in all their public dealings. Among a people whose wit and cleverness are proverbial, it was no mean praise to be renowned for these qualities. In short, Jerusalem was the ideal of the Jew, in whatever land of exile he might tarry.

Her rich men would lavish fortunes on the support of Jewish learning, the promotion of piety, or the support of the national cause. Thus one of them would, when he found the price of sacrifices exceedingly high, introduce into the Temple-court the requisite animals at his own cost, to render the service possible for the poor. Or on another occasion he would offer to furnish the city for twenty-one months with certain provisions in her struggle against Rome. In the streets of Jerusalem men from the most distant countries met, speaking every variety of language and dialect.

Jews and Greeks, Roman soldiers and Galilean peasants, Pharisees, Sadducees, and white-robed Essenes, busy merchants and students of abstruse theology, mingled, a motley crowd, in the narrow streets of the city of palaces. But over all the Temple, rising above the city, seemed to fling its shadow and its glory. Each morning the threefold blast of the priests' trumpets wakened the city with a call to prayer; each evening the same blasts closed the working day, as with sounds from heaven.

Turn where you might, everywhere the holy buildings were in view, now with the smoke of sacrifices curling over the courts, or again with solemn stillness resting upon the sacred hills. It was the Temple which gave its character to Jerusalem, and which decided its fate. There is a remarkable passage in the Talmud, which, remembering that the time to which it refers was in all probability the very year in which our Lord died on the cross, reads like an unwilling confirmation of the Gospel narrative: "Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, its doors opened of their own accord.

Jochanan, * the son of Saccai, rebuked them, saying: O Temple, why openest thou of thine own accord? Ah! I perceive that thine end is at hand; for it is written (Zech 11:1): 'Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars'" (Yoma 39 b). "And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matt 27:51)--blessed be God, not merely in announcement of coming judgment, but henceforth to lay open unto all the way into the Holiest of All.

* Caspari suggests that this was the same as the high-priest Annas, the name having only the syllable indicating the name of Jehovah prefixed.

Chapter 6

Jewish Homes

It may be safely asserted, that the grand distinction, which divided all mankind into Jews and Gentiles, was not only religious, but also social. However near the cities of the heathen to those of Israel, however frequent and close the intercourse between the two parties, no one could have entered a Jewish town or village without feeling, so to speak, in quite another world. The aspect of the streets, the building and arrangement of the houses, the municipal and religious rule, the manners and customs of the people, their habits and ways--above all, the family life, stood in marked contrast to what would be seen elsewhere. On every side there was evidence that religion here was not merely a creed, nor a set of observances, but that it pervaded every relationship, and dominated every phase of life.

Let us imagine a real Jewish town or village. There were many such, for Palestine had at all times a far larger number of towns and villages than might have been expected from its size, or from the general agricultural pursuits of its inhabitants. Even at the time of its first occupation under Joshua we find somewhere about six hundred towns--if we may judge by the Levitical cities, of about an average circumference of two thousand cubits on each side, and with probably an average population of from two to three thousand. But the number of towns and villages, as well as their populousness, greatly increased in later times. Thus Josephus (Life, 45) speaks of not fewer than two hundred and forty townships in Galilee alone in his days. This progress was, no doubt, due not only to the rapid development of society, but also to the love of building that characterised Herod and his family, and to which so many fortresses, palaces, temples, and towns owed their origin. Alike the New Testament, Josephus, and the Rabbis give us three names, which may be rendered by villages, townships, and towns--the latter being surrounded by walls, and again distinguished into those fortified already at the time of Joshua, and those of later date. A township might be either "great," if it had its synagogue, or small, if it wanted such; this being dependent on the residence of at least ten men, who could always be reckoned upon to form a quorum for the worship of the synagogue (the so-called *Batlanin* *); for service could not be celebrated with any less number of males.

* From "betal," to cease--as the glossary to Baba B. 82 a explains: men without reproach, who gave up their work to give themselves wholly to the work of the synagogue. Such had a claim to support from the synagogue revenues.

The villages had no synagogue; but their inhabitants were supposed to go to the nearest township for market on the Monday and Thursday of every week, when service was held for them, and the local Sanhedrim also sat (Megill. i. 1-3). A very curious law provided (Cheth. 110), that a man could not oblige his wife to follow him if he moved either from a township to a town, or the reverse. The reason of the former provision was, that in a town people lived together, and the houses were close to each other; hence there was a want of fresh, free air, and of gardens, which were enjoyed in townships. On the other hand, a woman might object to exchange residence in a town for one in a township, because in a town everything was to be got, and people met in the streets and market-place from all the neighbourhood.

Statements like these will give some idea of the difference between town and country life. Let us first think of the former. Approaching one of the ancient fortified towns, one would come to a low wall that protected a ditch. Crossing this moat, one would be at the city wall proper, and enter through a massive gate, often covered with iron, and secured by strong bars and bolts. Above the gate rose the watch-tower. "Within the gate" was the shady or sheltered retreat where "the elders" sat.

Here grave citizens discussed public affairs or the news of the day, or transacted important business. The gates opened upon large squares, on which the various streets converged. Here was the busy scene of intercourse and trade. The country-people stood or moved about, hawking the produce of field, orchard, and dairy; the foreign merchant or pedlar exposed his wares, recommending the newest fashions from Rome or Alexandria, the latest luxuries from the far East, or the art produce of the goldsmith and the modeller at Jerusalem, while among them moved the crowd, idle or busy, chattering, chaffing, good-humoured, and bandying witticisms.

Now they give way respectfully before a Pharisee; or their conversation is hushed by the weird appearance of an Essene or of some sectary--political or religious,--while low, muttered curses attend the stealthy steps of the publican, whose restless eyes wander around to watch that nothing escape the close meshes of the tax-gatherer's net. These streets are all named, mostly after the trades or guilds which have there their bazaars. For a guild always keeps together, whether in street or synagogue.

In Alexandria the different trades sat in the synagogue arranged into guilds; and St. Paul could have no difficulty in meeting in the bazaar of his trade with the like-minded Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2,3), with whom to find a lodging. In these bazaars many of the workmen sat outside their shops, and, in the interval of labour, exchanged greetings or banter with the passers-by. For all Israel are brethren, and there is a sort of freemasonry even in the Jewish mode of salutation, which always embodied either an acknowledgment of the God of Israel, or a brotherly wish of peace.

Excitable, impulsive, quick, sharp-witted, imaginative; fond of parable, pithy sayings, acute distinctions, or pungent wit; reverent towards God and man, respectful in the presence of age, enthusiastic of learning and of superior mental endowments, most delicately sensitive in regard to the feelings of others; zealous, with intensely warm Eastern natures, ready to have each prejudice aroused, hasty and violent in passion, but quickly assuaged--such is the motley throng around.

And now, perhaps, the voice of a Rabbi, teaching in some shady retreat--although latterly Jewish pride of learning forbade the profanation of lore by popularising it for the "unlearned"--or, better far, at one time the presence of the Master, gathers and keeps them spell-bound, forgetful alike of the cravings of hunger and of the lapse of time, till, the short Eastern day ended, the stars shining out on the deep blue sky must have reminded many among them of the promise to their father Abraham, now fulfilled in One greater than Abraham.

Back to the town in the cool of even to listen to the delicious murmur of well or fountain, as those crowd around it who have not cisterns in their own houses. The watchman is on the top of the tower above the gateway; presently, night-watchers will patrol the streets. Nor is there absolute darkness, for it is customary to keep a light burning all night in the house, and the windows (unlike those of modern Eastern dwellings) open chiefly on street and road. Those large windows are called Tyrian, the smaller ones Egyptian. They are not filled in with glass, but contain gratings or lattices. In the houses of the rich the window-frames are elaborately carved, and richly inlaid. Generally the woodwork is of the common sycamore, sometimes of olive or cedar, and in palaces even of Indian sandal-wood. The entablature is more or less curiously carved and ornamented. Only there must be no representation of anything in heaven or on earth. So deep was the feeling on this point, that even the attempt of Pilate to introduce by night into Jerusalem the effigies of Caesar on the top of the Roman standards led to scenes in which the Jews showed themselves willing to die for their convictions (Josephus, Ant, xviii, 59); while the palace of Herod Antipas at Tiberias was burned by the mob because it was decorated with figures of animals

(Josephus, Life, 62-67). These extreme views, however, gave way, first, before the tolerant example of Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul, who made use of a public bath, although adorned by a statue of Venus, since, as he put it, the statue was intended for the embellishment of the bath, and not the bath for the sake of the statue. If this argument reminds us that Gamaliel was not a stranger to Christianity, the statement of his grandson, that an idol was nothing if its worship had been disclaimed by the heathen (Ab. Sar. 52), recalls still more strongly the teaching of St. Paul. And so we gradually come down to the modern orthodox doctrine, which allows the representation of plants, animals, etc., but prohibits that of sun, moon, and stars, except for purposes of study, while, though doubtfully, it admits those of men and even angels, provided they be in sunken, not in raised workmanship.

The rule of these towns and villages was exceedingly strict. The representatives of Rome were chiefly either military men, or else fiscal or political agents. We have, indeed, a notice that the Roman general Gabinius, about half a century before Christ, divided Palestine for juridical purposes into five districts, each presided over by a council (Josephus, Ant. xiv, 91); but that arrangement was only of very short duration, and even while it lasted these councils seem to have been Jewish. Then every town had its Sanhedrim, * consisting of twenty-three members if the place numbered at least one hundred and twenty men, or of three members if the population were smaller. **

* The name "Sanhedrim," or "Sunedrion," is undoubtedly of Greek derivation, although the Rabbis have tried to paraphrase it as "Sin" (=Sinai) "haderin," those who repeat or explain the law, or to trace its etymology, as being "those who hate to accept the persons of men in judgment" (the name being supposed to be composed of the Hebrew equivalents of the words italicised).

** An ingenious attempt has lately been made to show that the Sanhedrim of three members was not a regular court, but only arbitrators chosen by the parties themselves. But the argument, so far as it tries to prove that such was always the case, seems to me not to meet all the facts.

These Sanhedrists were appointed directly by the supreme authority, or Great Sanhedrim, "the council," at Jerusalem, which consisted of seventy-one members. It is difficult to fix the limits of the actual power wielded by these Sanhedrims in criminal cases. But the smaller Sanhedrims are referred to in such passages as Matthew 5:22, 23, 10:17; Mark 13:9. Of course all ecclesiastical and, so to speak, strictly Jewish causes, and all religious questions were within their special cognisance. Lastly, there were also in every place what we may call municipal authorities, under the presidency of a mayor--the representatives of the "elders"--an institution so frequently mentioned in Scripture, and deeply rooted in Jewish society. Perhaps these may be referred to in Luke 7:3, as sent by the centurion of Capernaum to intercede for him with the Lord.

What may be called the police and sanitary regulations were of the strictest character. Of Caesarea, for example, we know that there was a regular system of drainage into the sea, apparently similar to, but more perfect than that of any modern town (Josephus, Ant. xv, 340). The same holds true in regard to the Temple-buildings at Jerusalem. But in every town and village sanitary rules were strictly attended to. Cemeteries, tanneries, and whatever also might be prejudicial to health, had to be removed at least fifty cubits outside a town. Bakers' and dyers' shops, or stables, were not allowed under the dwelling of another person. Again, the line of each street had to be strictly kept in building, nor was even a projection beyond it allowed. In general the streets were wider than those of modern Eastern cities. The nature of the soil, and the circumstance that so many towns were built on hills (at least in Judaea), would, of course, be advantageous in a sanitary point of view. It would also render the paving of the streets less requisite. But

we know that certain towns were paved--Jerusalem with white stones (Josephus, Ant. xx, 219-223). To obviate occasions of dispute, neighbours were not allowed to have windows looking into the courts or rooms of others nor might the principal entrance to a shop be through a court common to two or three dwellings.

These brief notices may help us better to realise the surroundings of Jewish town life. Looking up and down one of the streets of a town in Galilee or Judaea, the houses would be seen to differ in size and in elegance, from the small cottage, only eight or ten yards square, to the mansions of the rich, sometimes two or more stories high, and embellished by rows of pillars and architectural adornments. Suppose ourselves in front of a better-class dwelling, though not exactly that of a patrician, for it is built of brick, or perhaps of undressed, or even of dressed stone, but not of marble, nor yet of hewn stone; nor are its walls painted with such delicate colours as vermilion, but simply whitewashed, or, may be, covered with some neutral tint.

A wide, sometimes costly, stair leads from the outside straight up to the flat roof, which is made to slope a little downwards, so as to allow the rainwater easily to flow through pipes into the cistern below. The roof is paved with brick, stone, or other hard substance, and surrounded by a balustrade, which, according to Jewish law, must be at least two cubits (three feet) high, and strong enough to bear the weight of a person. Police-regulations, conceived in the same spirit of carefulness, prohibited open wells and pits, insufficient ladders, rickety stairs, even dangerous dogs about a house.

From roof to roof there might be a regular communication, called by the Rabbis "the road of the roofs" (Babba Mez. 88 b). Thus a person could make his escape, passing from roof to roof, till at the last house he would descend the stairs that led down its outside, without having entered any dwelling. To this "road of the roofs" our Lord no doubt referred in His warning to His followers (Matt 24:17; Mark 13:15; Luke 17:31), intended to apply to the last siege of Jerusalem: "And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein."

For ordinary intercourse the roof was the coolest, the airiest, the stillest place. Of course, at times it would be used for purposes of domestic economy. But thither a man would retire in preference for prayer or quiet thinking; here he would watch, and wait, and observe whether friend or foe, the gathering of the storm, or--as the priest stationed on the pinnacle of the Temple before the morning sacrifice--how the red and golden light of dawn spread along the edge of the horizon.

From the roof, also, it was easy to protect oneself against enemies, or to carry on dangerous fight with those beneath; and assuredly, if anywhere, it was "on the housetops" where secrets might be whispered, or, on the other hand, the most public "proclamation" of them be made (Matt 10:27; Luke 12:3). The stranger's room was generally built on the roof, in order that, undisturbed by the household, the guest might go out and come in; and here, at the feast of Tabernacles, for coolness and convenience, the leafy "booths" were often reared, in which Israel dwelt in memory of their pilgrimage.

Close by was "the upper chamber." On the roof the family would gather for converse, or else in the court beneath--with its trees spreading grateful shade, and the music of its plashing fountain falling soothingly on the ear, as you stood in the covered gallery that ran all around, and opened on the apartments of the household.

If the guest-chamber on the roof, which could be reached from the outside, without passing through the house, reminds us of Elisha and the Shunammite, and of the last Passover-supper, to which the Lord and

His disciples could go, and which they could leave, without coming in contact with any in the house, the gallery that ran round the court under the roof recalls yet another most solemn scene. We remember how they who bore the man "sick of the palsy," when unable to "come nigh unto Jesus for the press," "uncovered the roof where He was," "and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus" (Mark 2:4; Luke 5:19).

We know, from many Talmudical passages, that the Rabbis resorted in preference to "the upper room" when discussing religious questions. It may have been so in this instance; and, unable to gain access through the door which led into the upper room, the bearers of the sick may have broken down the ceiling from the roof. Or, judging it more likely that the attendant multitude thronged the court beneath, while Jesus stood in the gallery that ran round the court and opened into the various apartments, they might have broken down the roof above Him, and so slowly let down their burden at His feet, and in sight of them all.

There is a significant parallelism, or rather contrast, to this in a Rabbinical story (Moed K. 25 a), which relates how, when the bier on which a celebrated teacher was laid could not be passed out at the door, they carried up their burden and let it down from the roof--on its way, not to a new life, but to burial. Otherwise, there was also a stair which led from the roof into the court and house. Approaching a house, as visitors ordinarily would do, from the street, you would either pass through a large outer court, or else come straight to the vestibule or porch.

Here the door opened into the inner court, which sometimes was shared by several families. A porter opened to callers on mentioning their names, as did Rhoda to Peter on the eventful night of his miraculous deliverance from prison (Acts 12:13,14). Our Lord also applies this well-known fact of domestic life, when He says (Rev 3:20), "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

Passing through this inner court, and through the gallery, you would reach the various rooms--the family room, the reception room, and the sleeping apartments--the most retired being occupied by the ladies, and the inner rooms used chiefly in winter. The furniture was much the same as that now in use, consisting of tables, couches, chairs, candlesticks, and lamps, varying in costliness according to the rank and wealth of the family. Among articles of luxury we mention rich cushions for the head and arms, ornaments, and sometimes even pictures.

The doors, which moved on hinges fastened with wooden pins, were barred by wooden bolts, which could be withdrawn by check keys from the outside. The dining apartment was generally spacious, and sometimes employed for meetings.

We have been describing the arrangements and the appearance of towns and dwellings in Palestine. But it is not any of these outward things which gives a real picture of a Jewish home. Within, everything was quite peculiar. At the outset, the rite of circumcision separated the Jew from the nations around, and dedicated him to God. Private prayer, morning and evening, hallowed daily life, and family religions pervaded the home. Before every meal they washed and prayed: after it they "gave thanks." Besides, there were what may be designated as special family feasts. The return of the Sabbath sanctified the week of labour. It was to be welcomed as a king, or with songs as a bridegroom; and each household observed it as a season of sacred rest and of joy. True, Rabbinism made all this a matter of mere externalism, converting it into an unbearable burden, by endless injunctions of what constituted work and

of that which was supposed to produce joy, thereby utterly changing its sacred character. Still, the fundamental idea remained, like a broken pillar that shows where the palace had stood, and what had been its noble proportions. As the head of the house returned on the Sabbath-eve from the synagogue to his home, he found it festively adorned, the Sabbath lamp brightly burning, and the table spread with the richest each household could afford. But first he blessed each child with the blessing of Israel. And next evening, when the Sabbath light faded out, he made solemn "separation" between the hallowed day and the working week, and so commenced his labour once more in the name of the Lord. Nor were the stranger, the poor, the widow, or the fatherless forgotten. How fully they were provided for, how each shared in what was to be considered not a burden but a privilege, and with what delicacy relief was administered--for all Israel were brethren, and fellow-citizens of their Jerusalem--those know best who have closely studied Jewish life, its ordinances and practices.

But this also is rather a sketch of religious than of family life. At the outset, we should here say, that even the Hebrew name for "woman," given her at her creation (Gen 2:23), marked a wife as the companion of her husband, and his equal ("Ishah," a woman, from "Ish," a man). But it is when we consider the relations between man and wife, children and parents, the young and the aged, that the vast difference between Judaism and heathenism so strikingly appears. Even the relationship in which God presented Himself to His people, as their Father, would give peculiar strength and sacredness to the bond which connected earthly parents with their offspring. Here it should be borne in mind that, so to speak, the whole purpose of Israel as a nation, with a view to the appearance of the Messiah from among them, made it to each household a matter of deepest interest that no light in Israel should be extinguished through want of succession. Hence, such an expression as (Jer 22:10), "Weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more," was applied to those who died childless (Moed K. 27). Similarly, it was said that he who had no child was like one dead. Proverbial expressions in regard to the "parental relation" occur in Rabbinical writings, which in their higher application remind us that the New Testament writers were Jews. If, in the impassioned strain of happy assurance concerning our Christian safety, we are told (Rom 8:33), "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," we may believe that St. Paul was familiar with a saying like this: "Shall a father bear witness against his son?" (Abod S. 3). The somewhat similar question, "Is there a father who hateth his own son?" may recall to our minds the comfort which the Epistle to the Hebrews ministers to those who are in suffering (Heb 12:7), "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

Speaking of the relation between parents and children, it may be safely asserted, that no crime was more severely reprobated than any breach of the fifth commandment. The Talmud, with its usual punctiliousness, enters into details, when it lays down as a rule that "a son is bound to feed his father, to give him drink, to clothe him, to protect him, to lead him in, and to conduct him out, and to wash his face, his hands, and his feet"; to which the Jerusalem Gemara adds, that a son is even bound to beg for his father--although here also Rabbinism would give preference to a spiritual before a natural parent, or rather to one who teaches the law before a father! The general state of Jewish society shows us parents as fondly watching over their children, and children as requiting their care by bearing with the foibles, and even the trials, arising from the caprices of old age and infirmity. Such things as undutifulness, or want of loving consideration for parents, would have wakened a thrill of horror in Jewish society. As for crimes against parents, which the law of God visited with the utmost penalty, they seem happily to have been almost unknown. The Rabbinical ordinances, however, also specified the obligation of parents, and limited their power. Thus a son was considered independent whenever he could gain his own living; and, although a daughter remained in the power of her father till marriage, she could not, after she was of age,

be given away without her own express and free consent. A father might chastise his child, but only while young, and even then not to such extent as to destroy self-respect. But to beat a grown-up son was forbidden on pain of excommunication; and the apostolic injunction (Eph 6:4), "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath," finds almost its literal counterpart in the Talmud (Moed K. 17 a). Properly speaking, indeed, the Jewish law limited the absolute obligation of a father (a mother was free from such legal obligation) to feed, clothe, and house his child to his sixth year, after which he could only be admonished to it as one of the duties of love, but not legally constrained (Chethub. 49 b; 65 b). In case of separation of the parents, the mother had charge of the daughters, and the father of the sons; but the latter also might be intrusted to the mother, if the judges considered it for the advantage of the children.

A few notices as to the reverence due to age will appropriately close this brief sketch of Jewish home life. It was a beautiful thought--however some may doubt its exegetical correctness--that just as the pieces of the broken tables of the law were kept in the ark, so old age should be venerated and cherished, even though it should be broken in mind or memory (Ber. 8 b). Assuredly, Rabbinism went to the utmost verge in this matter when it recommended reverence for age, even though it were in the case of one ignorant of the law, or of a Gentile. There were, however, diverging opinions on this point. The passage, Leviticus 19:32, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," was explained to refer only to sages, who alone were to be regarded as old. If R. Jose compared such as learned of young men to those who ate unripe grapes and drank of new wine, R. Jehudah taught, "Look not at the bottles, but at what they contain. There are new bottles full of old wine, and old bottles which contain not even new wine" (Ab. iv. 20). Again, if in Deuteronomy 13:1, 2, and also, 18:21, 22 the people were directed to test a prophet by the signs which he showed--a misapplication of which was made by the Jews, when they asked Christ what sign He showed unto them (John 2:18, 6:30)--while in Deuteronomy 17:10 they were told simply "to do according to all that they of that place inform thee," it was asked, What, then, is the difference between an old man and a prophet? To this the reply was: A prophet is like an ambassador, whom you believe in consequence of his royal credentials; but an ancient is one whose word you receive without requiring such evidence. And it was strictly enjoined that proper outward marks of respect should be shown to old age, such as to rise in the presence of older men, not to occupy their seats, to answer them modestly, and to assign to them the uppermost places at feasts.

After having thus marked how strictly Rabbinism watched over the mutual duties of parents and children, it will be instructive to note how at the same time traditionalism, in its worship of the letter, really destroyed the spirit of the Divine law. An instance will here suffice; and that which we select has the double advantage of illustrating an otherwise difficult allusion in the New Testament, and of exhibiting the real characteristics of traditionalism. No commandment could be more plainly in accordance, alike with the spirit and the letter of the law, than this: "He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death." Yet our Lord distinctly charges traditionalism with "transgressing" it (Matt 15:4-6). The following quotation from the Mishnah (Sanh. vii. 8) curiously illustrates the justice of His accusation: "He that curseth his father or his mother is not guilty, unless he curses them with express mention of the name of Jehovah." In any other case the sages declare him absolved! And this is by no means a solitary instance of Rabbinical perversion. Indeed, the moral systems of the synagogue leave the same sad impression on the mind as its doctrinal teaching. They are all elaborate chains of casuistry, of which no truer description could be given than in the words of the Saviour (Matt 15:6): "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

Chapter 7

The Upbringing of Jewish Children

The tenderness of the bond which united Jewish parents to their children appears even in the multiplicity and pictorialness of the expressions by which the various stages of child-life are designated in the Hebrew. Besides such general words as "ben" and "bath"--"son" and "daughter"--we find no fewer than nine different terms, each depicting a fresh stage of life. The first of these simply designates the babe as the newly-"born"--the "jeled," or, in the feminine, "jaldah"--as in Exodus 2:3, 6, 8.

But the use of this term throws a fresh light on the meaning of some passages of Scripture. Thus we remember that it is applied to our Lord in the prophecy of His birth (Isa 9:6): "For a babe" ('jeled') is born unto us, a son ('ben') is given to us"; while in Isaiah 2:6 its employment adds a new meaning to the charge: "They please themselves (or strike hands) with the 'jalde'--the 'babes'--of strangers"--marking them, so to speak, as not only the children of strangers, but as unholy from their very birth.

Compare also the pictorial, or else the poetical, use of the word "jeled" in such passages as Isaiah 29:23, 57:4; Jeremiah 31:20; Ecclesiastes 4:13; 1 Kings 12:8; 2 Kings 2:24; Genesis 42:22; and others. The next child-name, in point of time, is "jonek," which means, literally, "a suckling," being also sometimes used figuratively of plants, like our English "sucker," as in Isaiah 53:2: "He shall grow up before Him as a sucker"--"jonek." The word "jonek" occurs, for example, in Isaiah 11:8, and in Psalm 8:2.

On the other hand, the expression in the latter passage, rendered "babes" in our Authorised Version, marks a yet third stage in the child's existence, and a farther advancement in the babe-life. This appears from many passages. As the word implies, the "olel" is still "sucking"; but it is no longer satisfied with only this nourishment, and is "asking bread," as in Lamentations 4:4: "The tongue of the 'jonek' cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the 'olalim' ask bread."

A fourth designation represents the child as the "gamul," or "weaned one" (Psa 131:2; Isa 11:8, 28:9), from a verb which primarily means to complete, and secondarily to wean. As we know, the period of weaning among the Hebrews was generally at the end of two years (Chethub. 60), and was celebrated by a feast. After that the fond eye of the Hebrew parent seems to watch the child as it is clinging to its mother--as it were, ranging itself by her--whence the fifth designation, "taph" (Esth 3:13, "The 'taph' and the women in one day"; Jer 40:7; Eze 9:6).

The sixth period is marked by the word "elem" (in the feminine, "almah," as in Isa 7:14, of the virgin-mother), which denotes becoming firm and strong. As one might expect, we have next the "naari," or youth--literally, he who shakes off, or shakes himself free. Lastly, we find the child designated as "bachur," or the "ripened one"; a young warrior, as in Isaiah 31:8; Jeremiah 18:21, 15:8, etc. Assuredly, those who so keenly watched child-life as to give a pictorial designation to each advancing stage of its existence, must have been fondly attached to their children.

There is a passage in the Mishnah (Aboth. v. 21), which quaintly maps out and, as it were, labels the different periods of life according to their characteristics. It is worth reproducing, if only to serve as introduction to what we shall have to say on the upbringing of children. Rabbi Jehudah, the son of Tema, says: "At five years of age, reading of the Bible; at ten years, learning the Mishnah; at thirteen years, bound to the commandments; at fifteen years, the study of the Talmud; at eighteen years, marriage; at twenty, the pursuit of trade or business (active life); at thirty years, full vigour; at forty, maturity of reason; at fifty, of counsel; at sixty, commencement of agedness; at seventy, grey age; at eighty, advanced old age; at ninety, bowed down; at a hundred, as if he were dead and gone, and taken from the world." In the

passage just quoted the age of five is mentioned as that when a child is expected to commence reading the Bible--of course, in the original Hebrew. But different opinions also prevailed. Generally speaking, such early instruction was regarded as only safe in the case of very healthy and strong children; while those of average constitution were not to be set to regular work till six years old. There is both common sense and sound experience in this Talmudical saying (Cheth. 50), "If you set your child to regular study before it is six years old, you shall always have to run after, and yet never get hold of it." This chiefly has reference to the irreparable injury to health caused by such early strain upon the mind. If, on the other hand, we come upon an admonition to begin teaching a child when it is three years old, this must refer to such early instructions as the of certain passages of Scripture, or of small isolated portions and prayers, which a parent would make his child repeat from tenderest years. As we shall show in the sequel, six or seven was the age at which a parent in Palestine was legally bound to attend to the schooling of his son.

But, indeed, it would have been difficult to say when the instruction of the Hebrew child really commenced. Looking back, a man must have felt that the teaching which he most--indeed, one might almost say, which he exclusively--valued had mingled with the first waking thoughts of his consciousness. Before the child could sp

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alfred-edersheim/sketches-of-jewish-social-life-part-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net