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The World of Jesus in the Words of Jesus

Robert L. Einspahr

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_einspahrr@csl.edu

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THE WORLD OF JESUS IN THE WORDS OF JESUS

**A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity**

by

Robert L. Einspahr

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Approved by:

Arthur J. Kline
Advisor

Arthur C. Kapp
Reader

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 to the world of the first century after Christ. These
 terms and phrases were then arranged into related categories
 as indicated by the chapter headings. Intensive read-

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The endeavor to supply local coloring to the words of Jesus, in so far as they reflect the customs, manners, institutions, and people of Jesus' time should be made a matter of vital importance to every Bible student. The language of Scripture, as any language, takes its character in a measure from that of the country and the times. Thus the picture language employed in Scripture becomes meaningful only if we are able to throw ourselves back into the culture of Biblical times. We must walk the paths which Jesus trod, enter the homes and buildings, fish in the Sea of Galilee, follow the shepherd and his flock, stand in the marketplace of the village and city, hear the whirring of the millstones, tread grapes in the winepress, and see the grain ready for harvest, to adequately understand many passages of Scripture.

The scope of this thesis is limited to the words of Jesus as found in a Red-letter edition of the Authorized Version of the Bible. From these words of Jesus, terms and phrases were chosen that had, or appeared to have allusions to the world of the first century after Christ. These terms and phrases were then arranged into related categories as indicated by the chapter headings. Intensive read-

ing was then done in the works and writings of missionaries and travelers in Palestine, of professional archaeologists and Orientalists. In this reading special attention was given to data which shed light on the background of these terms and phrases used by Jesus. It must be pointed out here that the religious life of Jesus' time was not treated. Such a study would be a lengthy treatise in itself.

Of the books that may be profitably consulted, the old standard work of reference is Thomson's The Land and the Book. Its arrangement is that of a pilgrimage under the charge of a well-informed guide, rather than a treatment of different subjects.

... nations, especially Egypt and Syria, which made the cultivation of the soil their chief business, arose in a short period to wealth and power.¹ To these nations just mentioned may be added that of the Jews, who learned the value of the art while remaining in Egypt, and ever after that they were famous for their industry in the cultivation of the earth.

Loss of Moses with regard to Agriculture

Moses made agriculture the basis of the Jewish nation. He apportioned to every citizen a quantity of land, gave him the right of selling it himself, and of selling it to

¹John John, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas G. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 33.

CHAPTER II

AGRICULTURE

In the primitive ages of the world, agriculture, as well as the keeping of flocks, was a principal employment among mankind. Agriculture is an art which has ever been a prominent source both of the necessities and the conveniences of life. Noah, after he had escaped from the deluge, was impressed with the importance of agriculture, and bestowed his attention upon it.

"Those states and nations, especially Babylon and Egypt, which made the cultivation of the soil their chief business, arose in a short period to wealth and power."¹ To these nations just mentioned may be added that of the Jews, who learned the value of the art while remaining in Egypt, and ever after that they were famous for their industry in the cultivation of the earth.

Laws of Moses with Regard to Agriculture

Moses made agriculture the basis of the Jewish nation. He apportioned to every citizen a quantity of land, gave him the right of tilling it himself, and of willing it to

¹John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 33.

his heirs. The person who had thus come into possession could not alienate the property for any longer period than the coming jubilee. This was a regulation which prevented the rich from coming into possession of large tracts of land, and then leasing them out in small parcels to the poor. It was another law of Moses, that the vendor of a piece of land, or his nearest relative, had a right to redeem the land sold whenever they chose, by paying the amount of profits up to the year of jubilee.² Another law enacted by Moses was that the Jews should pay a tax of one-tenth of their income unto God.³ The custom of marking the boundaries of lands by stones was confirmed in the time of Moses by an express law. A curse was pronounced against him who without authority removed them. It was Joshua who divided the whole country which he had occupied, first among the respective tribes, and then among the individual Jews, setting it forth with the aid of a measuring line.⁴

Agriculture was held in esteem by the people of Palestine. It is estimated that the average Jewish farmer received six to ten acres on which to provide a living for his family. Being assured that these acres were his and that after his death this land would pass on to his heirs, the

²Euth 4:4; Jer. 32:7.

³Lev. 27:30; Deut. 12:17-19.

⁴Josh. 17:5,14.

farmer was willing to work hard to continually improve his plot of land that it might bear bountiful crops.

The Land and Land Improvement

The land of Palestine was rugged. It required devoted farmers and a number of years of patient labor to bring it to its highest productivity. The small family plot might include widely varying types of soil. Yet, the soil of Palestine was very fruitful, if the dews and the early and late rains were sufficient. To increase the fertility of the soil the Jewish farmer would clear away the stones and bushes and weeds with shovel, axe, and mattock. Little by little he would divert pasture areas into excellent farm land. The gentle hillsides also would be contoured with terrace and retaining walls, and thus another area would be readied to plant a little more wheat and barley. As years passed many acres of useless land would be reclaimed and put to productive use.

The soil was also enriched by means of ashes, to which the straw, the stubble, the thistle, the thorns and grass, were reduced. The burning over of the land also had another good effect, and that was of destroying the seeds of noxious weeds and herbs. The soil was also manured with dung.⁵

To what extent the Jews employed the processes of ir-

⁵Ps. 83:10; Is. 25:10; Lk. 15:34,35.

rigation which they learned in Egypt we do not know. The land contained many rivers and brooks and springs. If they were at a high enough level to flow into a field or garden area the Jews would surely avail themselves of these benefits to enrich the land.

Different Kinds of Grain

The Hebrew word קִיָּץ , which is translated variously by the English words grain, corn, etc., comprehends in itself different kinds of grains, such as wheat, barley, millet, spelt, lentils, cummin, and others. Rye and oats do not grow in Palestine or in any warmer climate. Maize was also unknown in Palestine, as is hay, as the Western farmer raises it.

Wheat and barley are the common grains sowed in Oriental lands, followed next by a kind of millet. Barley mixed with broken straw is the fodder or hay for the beasts of burden. The barley found in Eastern countries is usually six-rowed, that is, it produces six rows of grains in the ear. The wheat of Palestine is similar to that of barley in appearance, in that it has many heads in the stalk, and many rows of grain in the head. Our Western varieties have only one head to the stalk with four to six rows of grain in the head.⁶

⁶Jahn, op. cit., p. 33.

Instruments of Agriculture

The cultivation of the soil was at first very simple, being performed by no other instruments than sharp sticks. With these the ground was loosened, until spades and shovels and plows were invented. All these instruments were well known in the time of Moses.⁷

The first plow was nothing more than a stout limb of a tree which was sharpened at one end. A rope would then be fastened a couple feet above the sharpened end of the limb and then put around the neck of the beast of burden. The farmer would hold the limb at an angle in the ground and the plowing animal would drag it through the soil. This plow would do little more than scratch the surface of the ground. The later plows were improved, or rather, nature was used more efficiently, and the farmer would make use of a naturally forked bough of a tree. One long branch formed the beam or tongue which could be attached to the yoke. Another branch extending at a somewhat acute angle from the first, was cut off and sharpened to become the plowshare. Still another branch extending in the opposite direction to the plowshare, furnished a short handle by which the farmer guided his plow. Such a plow was very light and could easily be carried on the farmer's shoulder. To make such a

⁷Deut. 23:13; Gen. 45:6; Job 1:14.

plow as efficient as possible, it was necessary for the farmer to bear down with all his might with his one hand on the handle of the plow, and with the other hand to prod the animal onward with a goad, while at the same time keep his eyes directed ahead to avoid rocks and large stones. The Lord's words are accurate, and carry with them added significance for kingdom workers. He says, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."⁸

Because of the scarcity of naturally forked branches, it became necessary to make the draft beam or tongue in two pieces, pegged and bound together.

Pegs were set into the front end of the draft beam and a broad mortice was cut at an angle near the opposite end to receive the share beam and the handle, which was then tightly bound or clamped into place. The share might be shod with a stone or iron point.⁹

Yet such a plow was very little more efficient than the all-wooden instruments above, since the share was only designed to tear up the ground and not to cut a furrow and turn over the ground.

The yoke was the harness of the beasts of burden. The yoke fastened the animals to each other. It also was hitched to the beam or tongue of the agricultural implement. The

⁸Luke 9:62.

⁹Arthur W. Klinck, Home Life in Bible Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 20.

yokes were of wood and constructed in various ways. The simplest was the horn yoke, which was a branch of a tree four to five feet in length and from two to three inches in diameter. This yoke was then fastened to the horns of the two animals as they stood side by side. The square yoke consisted of two beams horizontally fastened together in such a way as to provide two rectangular openings in which the necks of the animals were placed and then secured by vertically placing long pegs into holes at the ends of the horizontally separated beams. Round yokes were made by bending green saplings into U-shaped neck pieces and then inserting them into holes in the yoke beam. These U-shaped neck pieces were bound fast or held in place by small horizontal pegs. The Syrian yoke was made of a beam of wood about five feet long, with four round or even flat pieces of wood some fifteen to twenty inches in length, extending down below and almost perpendicular to the beam, one on each side of the animal's neck. This yoke was then made fast to the animal's neck by tying together, underneath the animal's neck, stout leather thongs which were attached to the extremities of the extending pieces of wood. To any of these yokes might be fastened a tug rope or the tongue of the implement. Some of these yoke beams might have a hole in the center into which the tongue of the implement was placed and then pegged or bound into place.

The primary purpose of the yoke was to enable the

animal to draw a load. It is true that some yokes are lighter than others, and some by fitting better afford the animals much greater comfort in working. When the yoke fits properly then the work is made easier. Too many people have been trying to pull the load of life with a yoke of their own that does not fit. How fitting, then, are the words of Christ, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."¹⁰

The goad was a pole about eight feet in length, at the largest end of which was fixed a flat piece of iron or bronze for clearing the mud from the plowshare, and the other end was sharpened to a point or fitted with a pointed piece of iron or bronze for spurring on stubborn oxen. It was this latter use to which the risen Jesus referred when He told Saul of Tarsus, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."¹¹ The goad might also serve well as a spear as it did for Shamgar.¹² Sometimes a scourge was applied to urge on stubborn oxen.¹³

Animals used in Agriculture

The beasts of burden that endured the toils of agri-

¹⁰Matt. 11:29,30.

¹¹Acts 9:5.

¹²Judges 3:31.

¹³Is. 10:26; Nahum 3:2.

culture were bulls and cows, he-asses and she-asses. But it was forbidden to yoke an ass with an ox.¹⁴ The animals which in the Scripture are called oxen were bulls, for the Jews were prohibited from castrating animals, although the law was sometimes violated.¹⁵

Bulls in the warmer climates, especially if they are not greatly pampered, are not so ungovernable, but that they may be harnessed to the plough. If indeed any became obstinate . . . their nostrils were perforated, and a ring made of iron or twisted cord, was thrust through, to which was fastened a rope, which impeded his respiration to such a degree that the most turbulent one might easily be managed.¹⁶

Preparing the Soil for Sowing

The Palestinian farmer with his crude plow had to wait until the ground was saturated and softened by rains, however late in the season they might be, before he could think of doing any effective plowing. After the plow had torn up the soil, the farmer would walk through the field and break up the large lumps of earth with a mattock of wood or of iron. He might then yoke his oxen to a harrow made of brushwood and drag this across the ground to rake it fine. If the farmer was progressive, his harrow might consist of a wooden platform in which were driven bits of iron or

¹⁴Deut. 22:10.

¹⁵Mal. 1:14.

¹⁶Jahn, op. cit., p. 35.

stone, or his harrow might consist of a framework of heavy branches or beams into which long spikes had been driven.

The preparation of the soil took place usually in late October, after the first early rains had softened the soil.

Sowing the Seed

Either immediately before the ground had been plowed or immediately afterward, "A sower went out to sow his seed."¹⁷ This expression of Jesus implies that the sower lived in a village and that his field was some distance from his home.

"Some farmers have their best grain fields six or eight miles from their homes."¹⁸ We can picture the farmer starting out early for the field, with a little donkey carrying the plow and the seed-bags. (The plow animals were usually free of any load while going to and from the fields.) Having arrived at the field, the donkey is turned loose to browse,¹⁹ and the farmer throws aside his upper garments and tucks the corner of his shirt into his belt. Then placing the grain in a basket or a sack, or even in the fold of his garment which would be held between his left arm and his body, he walks back and forth across the field, sowing

¹⁷Luke 8:5; Matt. 13:3; Mark 4:3.

¹⁸W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 84.

¹⁹Job 1:14.

the seed broadcast with his right hand as evenly as possible over the ground. No matter how careful the farmer was in his sowing, it happened that some grain fell by the wayside and was trodden down, and the birds of the air devoured it, while some fell upon a rock or among thorns. Most of it, of course, fell on good ground.²⁰

In sowing they [farmers] allow one third of the seed for the birds which settle down upon the fields in countless flocks. Another third is supposed to be destroyed by mice and insects, and only one third of the seed sown actually comes to maturity. Thus a man sows three bushels, and if he reaps a hundred, it is a hundred fold according to his mode of calculation, but according to ours it would be only thirty-three.²¹

After sowing a given area the farmer either plows the same, or, if this has been done, he will commit the seed to the soil by harrowing or by driving his oxen and donkey onto the field. Their sharp hooves would trample the seed into the ground. After the job of sowing was done, the seed was left to the processes of nature.²²

The quantity of ground plowed by a yoke of oxen in one day was called a yoke, or an acre.

The farmer was careful to sow "good seed in his field."²³ The seed would be carefully selected from the field during

²⁰Luke 8:5-15.

²¹Thomson, op. cit., p. 83.

²²Mark 4:26-29.

²³Matt. 13:24.

the previous harvest; it would be thoroughly sifted and blown upon to free it from all impurities and obnoxious weed seeds.

After the grain was sown, more rains came. The grain quickly sprang up so that the fields were green by mid-November. Throughout the colder winter months, the grain remained fairly short, but began to grow quickly with the aid of the late rains toward the end of February. When the heat and dry weather of spring finally came, the seed head matured in quick order and the fields became white for the harvest.²⁴

Enemies of the Grain

Besides the fowl of the air,²⁵ thorns²⁶ and tares²⁷ were the worst enemies of the grain. Thorns or briars were perennial foes of the farmer. Even though he would chop them off and plow the ground thoroughly, yet if a piece of their root remained in the ground, from this would spring forth a quickly growing thorn bush, which would grow taller than the grain and readily sap away the moisture the grain needed, so that the grain would be choked and then produce

²⁴John 4:35.

²⁵Luke 8:5.

²⁶Luke 8:7.

²⁷Matt. 13:37-43; Matt. 24:30.

only shriveled kernels.

The tare has broadish leaves, so that as long as it is growing, and before the ears appear, it is practically indistinguishable from wheat. They cannot be mistaken when they are mature. "On the darnel [tares] the 'spikelets' stand with their edge against the main stem, whereas in wheat they are placed sideways upon it."²⁸

The tare is a very light grain, easily blown about by the wind; that a thousand little birds are ever carrying and dropping it over the fields; that myriads of ants are dragging it in all directions; that moles, and mice, and goats, and sheep, and nearly every other animal are aiding in this work of dispersion; that much of the tares shell out in handling the grain in the field; that a large part of them is thrown out by the wind at the threshing floor, which is always in open country; that the heavy rains, which often deluge the country in autumn, carry down to the lower levels this outcast zizanon, and sow them there: . . . It is my belief that in these and similar ways the tares are actually sown, without the intervention of an enemy.²⁹

Blasting and mildew also affected the grains. In the month of February, when the grain has reached about eighteen inches in height, it is frequently injured by cold winds and frost so that it does not ear. The effect thus produced upon the grain is called blasting. Sometimes even in November the grain is annoyed by easterly winds so as to turn yellow, and never to come to maturity. This calamity is called mildew.³⁰

The people were fairly respectful of the rights of the

²⁸G. Henslow, The Plants of the Bible (London: Masters and Co., 1906), p. 275.

²⁹Thomson, op. cit., p. 422.

³⁰Jahn, op. cit., p. 35.

owners of the grain that grew near the paths and roads.³¹
 The passing traveler was allowed to pluck a few heads of grain and eat them, but he was forbidden to use a sickle in the grain field and carry away sheaves of grain.³²

Cutting and Binding and Transporting the Grain

The grains in the southern part of Palestine and in the plains come to maturity about the middle of April; but in the northern and mountainous sections they do not become ripe until May or even the first part of June. The barley harvest always precedes the wheat harvest by a few weeks; then the spelt and millet follow the wheat gathering.³³

The time of harvest was a festival. The reapers were men, women, children, servants and hired laborers. Often babies were taken along in their cradles. Merry and cheerful, the reapers were intent upon their labor, and the song of joy might be heard on every side.³⁴ A rich harvest was attributed to the goodness of God. A plenteous harvest called for many laborers.³⁵

It was especially favorable for the reapers if mists

³¹Matt. 12:1.

³²Deut. 23:25.

³³Ruth 1:22,23.

³⁴Isaiah 9:3; Psalm 126:6.

³⁵Matt. 9:37; Luke 10:2.

prevailed at night during the time of the cutting. The moisture kept the heads of the grain from becoming brittle and so allowing the kernels to easily fall off. Then, too, the work of reaping was much pleasanter if cooler weather prevailed for a few days.

An ancient method of reaping was to pluck off only the heads, or to pull the stalks up by the roots, which is still the custom in some eastern countries. The Jewish farmer harvested his grain with a sickle so that the stubble remained in the earth.

In the early periods, sickles were flints set in an animal's jaw-bone, or in a curved piece of wood. "Sickles of metal are, however, rarely found. They were expensive, while flint was abundant and cheap."³⁶ The metal sickles that have been found were the more efficient modern-looking sickles of bronze and iron set in wooden handles. The sickles were made in many shapes and sizes, from almost straight knife-like blades to our own familiar crescent-shaped type. Some even had saw teeth near the pointed end of the cutting edge.

In reaping, the grain stalks were cut low down with the sickle, as the reaper moved through the field. When out, the stalks were gathered up by the arms and bound into

³⁶George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1927), p. 176.

bundles with straw. At length the bundles were collected into a heap. God's law forbade the binder to pick up what had fallen to the ground, or what had been missed when he gathered the grain stalks. This was required to be left for the poor.³⁷

Since rains during the harvest season were so unusual it was not necessary to set the bundles of grain up in shocks as in America. The bundles were instead gathered into large piles a few feet apart and secured with a rope. Then a donkey or a camel was placed between the piles and they were fastened to a rack on the animal's back. Under their loads, only the slender feet and faces of the donkeys could be seen. They looked like walking haystacks. Sometimes the bundles were hauled to the threshing floor in a cart fitted with a rack, or two men might carry the grain on a litter-like frame of light poles.

Threshing and Winnowing

The threshing floor was in some elevated part of the field, and was nothing more than a circular space, thirty to sixty feet in diameter, where the ground had been leveled and beaten down until its surface resembled that of a clay tennis court. Usually a low wall of stones marked the edge of the actual threshing area. Some threshing floors were

³⁷Deut. 24:19; Ruth 2:2,23.

quarried out of the natural limestone rock, the rock surface was smoothed and the cracks or depressions were filled with clay. The farmers would thoroughly clean the area around the threshing floor. Dr. Thomson tells us, "The farmers . . . set fire to every ant city they find in the neighbourhood of their threshing floors."³⁸ The ants would pilfer from the floor and were considered the "greatest robbers in the land."³⁹

When all was ready for threshing, the bundles were thrown by hand or with a pitchfork cut from a tree, in circular beds on the floor. "The heap of bundles may be four feet high and fifteen or more feet across."⁴⁰ When the threshing was finished, the heap might be but a foot deep.

Mid-day was the best time for threshing, as the stalks are then brittle and the grain rubs out easily.

The actual threshing was done in various ways. It was commonly trodden out by the hooves of animals. Cows, calves, sheep, and donkeys were driven around and around the floor. Their hooves would force the kernels from the heads and also break up the straw. The driver of these animals would follow them with a kind of basket on the end of a

³⁸ Thomson, op. cit., p. 509.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 137.

pole to catch the manure and prevent it from falling into the grain. The animals wore no muzzles, as they do today in Palestine, for the Law of Moses commanded, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn."⁴¹

Besides the use of cattle, several types of threshing machines or instruments might be used. One was a wooden platform, bent up slightly in the front to enable it to slide easily over the straw. It was fitted on its bottom surface with bits of stone or sharp pieces of iron so that it might tear the straw and rub the kernels from the seed heads.

Another was composed of four beams joined so as to form a square, between which were set three revolving cylinders or broad rollers. Each roller was fitted with three or four iron disks, which might have teeth like a saw, which cut and ground and crushed the grain as it was pulled by oxen about the threshing floor.

Dr. Klinck thus describes another instrument,

The ancient Egyptians used another threshing device, which also may have been introduced into Palestine by the Israelites. It looked very much like a small diving board firmly fixed in the ground at one end and sloping upward toward the free end at an angle of perhaps twenty degrees. From the free end projected several rows of long wooden or metal spikes. The thresher swung a sheaf up over his head, then brought it down sharply so that the head ends of the stalks were forced between the spikes. Then he pulled the sheaf upwards, stripping the ripe wheat out of the ear. The

⁴¹Deut. 25:4.

grain and chaff fell to the ground below the board, while the straw was thrown aside. The fundamental principle of this device is still used in the ordinary spike-cylinder threshing machine of today.⁴²

Sometimes the farmer used a flail to beat out the grain. The flail was used especially if the crop was poor or the acreage was small, and only a small quantity of threshing had to be done. The flail consisted of a short wooden handle bound by means of a rope or leather thong to a narrow paddle-shaped board. The farmer would hold the bundle to the floor with one hand, and then beat the heads in a downward-outward motion until all the kernels were knocked out.

The threshed grain was piled onto the middle of the threshing floor and was then thrown up with a wooden fork into the wind. This separated the broken straw and chaff, so that the kernels and clods of earth with grain cleaving to them, and the heads not thoroughly threshed, fell to the ground, while the straw and chaff were carried away by the wind. The clods of earth were collected, broken in pieces, and separated from the grain by a sieve. The heap thus winnowed, which still contained many heads that were not fully threshed out, was again exposed to the threshing floor for the purpose of threshing out the remainder of the grain.

⁴²Klinck, op. cit., pp. 25 f.

At length, the grain mingled with the chaff was again exposed to the wind by a fan. The chaff was blown away and the heavy wheat fell upon the floor in a pile.

The winnowing fans consisted either of two short flat boards about six inches by fourteen inches with which the farmer dug into the pile of grain and chaff and then threw this into the wind, or the fan may have been a shovel, consisting of a short flat board to which a handle was attached.

The scattered straw was gathered and used to make bricks or used as feed and bedding for the cattle during the winter months. The chaff was almost worthless. Some of it might be gathered and used for fuel in the home or in the village baking ovens. More often the chaff was burned in the field.

Sifting and Storage

Before the grain was stored away it was sifted by the women with different grades of sieves. Then the men put the sifted grain into jars, sacks, or baskets, and slung them over the backs of donkeys, and took them home. At home the wife would once more sift the grain and wash it thoroughly before storing it away in large vermin-proof jars, or in bins of sun-baked clay bonded together with straw or fiber, until the family needed it for food.

The sieves were either copper bowls punctured with

many tiny holes or might consist of a box-shaped container with its open bottom covered with a close-meshed screen of linen or fiber cords. When Christ said to Simon Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat,"⁴³ the following thorough process was no doubt referred to. The woman always did the sifting. She took the sieve and half-filled it with wheat. At first she shook the sieve from right to left a number of times, until any particles of crushed straw and chaff that still remained in the wheat came to the surface. Most of this she was able to gather up and throw away. Then she held the sieve in a slanting position, and for a considerable length of time jerked it up and down, blowing vigorously across it all the while with her mouth. This part of the manipulation had three results. First, the dust, earth, fine grass seeds, and small or broken grains of wheat fell through the meshes of the sieve on to the ground at her feet. Next, chiefly by blowing, the remaining crushed straw and chaff were either dispersed or collected in that part of the sieve farthest from her. Thirdly, the best of the wheat went to the bottom in the center of the sieve in one heap, while at the same time the small stones and rocks were collected together in a pile by themselves, on that part of the sieve which is nearest her chest. She then

⁴³Luke 22:31.

removed with her hands the stones, straw, chaff, and other rubbish. After this she set the sieve down and carefully went over the wheat and picked out any impurities which might yet remain. Then the sifting was complete and the wheat was ready for storage or baking.⁴⁴

We should also throw some light on the "barns" and "storehouses" Jesus refers to in the Parable of the Rich Man.⁴⁵ Barton relates that,

In the excavation of Gezer it was found that granaries formed an important class of buildings. Some of these were connected with private homes and evidently belonged to individuals, but some of them were so large and so much grain was stored in them that it was rightly held they must have been public granaries . . . Most of the granaries were circular structures, . . . They varied greatly in size. One was but 2 feet 8 inches in diameter; another was 4 feet 9 inches across and 6 feet 9 inches deep.⁴⁶

Wells and cisterns were also used by farmers to store their grain.

These cisterns are cool, perfectly dry, and tight. The top is hermetically sealed with plaster, and covered with a deep bed of earth; and thus they keep out rats, mice, and even ants.⁴⁷

⁴⁴James Neil, Palestine Explored (13th edition; London: James Nisbet and Co., 1908), pp. 245 f.

⁴⁵Luke 12:18, 24.

⁴⁶Barton, op. cit., p. 175.

⁴⁷Thomson, op. cit., p. 509.

CHAPTER III

THE VINEYARD

Among the objects of agriculture, the vine and vineyard must be considered worthy of particular attention. In the fifth chapter of Isaiah there is a brief but practically complete summary of the work involved in preparing and caring for a vineyard. The Gospel writers also have recorded four noteworthy parables of Jesus in which the background of the vine or a vineyard, or a part of the operation of a vineyard is set forth.¹

The vine has always had an important place among the industries of Palestine. The culture of the vine is one of the leading characteristics of the land.² The Jews were no less diligent in the culture of vineyards than of fields for grain; thus the soil of Palestine yielded great quantities of the best wine.

The Location of Vineyards

Vineyards are found all over Palestine, but in the area of Hebron the vineyards are the most extensive, the best

¹Matt. 20:1-16; Luke 20:9-16; Mark 12:1-9; Matt. 21:33-41; John 15:1-8; Luke 5:37; Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22.

²Deut. 8:8; Ps. 80; Is. 5; Ezek. 17.

kept, and the most productive.³ The position most favorable for a vineyard is the hillside, or the gently sloping ground at the foot of a hill. The vine likes open, loose soil, but will thrive with very little soil since its roots will penetrate all the fissures of the lime-rock of the hillside and reach the moisture that drips down over the surface of the mountain rock. Some vineyards "are hid away in the wadies and out on the wooded hills."⁴ Above ground the vine must have plenty of air and sunshine.

Preparing a Vineyard

The vineyard required a great deal of preparatory work. The soil of Palestine is very irregular and rocky. The ground must be levelled and laid off in terraces, and the large rocks broken up and with other stones removed. The rocks and stones are put to good use however. When the sloping hillsides were levelled off, terraces were built of these rocks and stones, one below the other on the slope, and in varying height and breadth according to the steepness of the hillside. These terrace walls varied in height from two feet to six feet. The levelled ground between the successive terrace walls varied in width from one to four

³W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 583.

⁴Ibid., p. 448.

or five yards.

In contrast with the grain fields, which are never enclosed, the vineyard must have a wall of stones about it, to prevent large animals from trampling on the vines, and to keep out jackals and "the little foxes that spoil the vines."⁵ The walls would also serve to some extent, to discourage thieves from entering the vineyard and carrying off bunches of grapes or newly made wine. This wall around the vineyard was similar in height and width to that of a sheepfold. The base of the wall was from four to six feet in width and tapered off to a width of one to two feet at the top. The height of the wall varied from six to eight feet. On the top of this wall cut thorns and briers would be laid, while in some instances thorns and briers would be planted on top of the wall. Again in place of briers and thorns the owner of the vineyard may set a "thin row of fine stones along the top of his wall in such a way that a night marauder might necessarily rattle them down and thus awaken him."⁶ In rare cases, where stones and rocks were not sufficient to build a wall around a vineyard, the owner might plant a thorny hedge around it.⁷

⁵Song of Sol. 2:15.

⁶Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 37.

⁷Matt. 21:33; Mark 12:1.

After the ground has been cleared of large rocks and the many stones, the terrace walls built, the ground levelled, and the vineyard walled or hedged in, then came the arduous task of clearing away the thorns and thistles. Next the soil was dug with hoes and mattocks. Then the soil was turned over. "One man usually holds the handle of the shovel and two men pull the blade with ropes."⁸ In the case of a large vineyard a winepress had to be dug, and a tower or booth made for the watchman.⁹ It is the sum total of such labors that is spread to view when the question is asked, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"¹⁰

Planting of Grapevines

At the time of the Hebrew conquest the land of Palestine was covered with vineyards bearing clusters of grapes that amazed the spies Moses sent in from the wilderness.¹¹ After the Israelites moved in they built up and expanded this industry. It was a rather simple matter to take slips from the domesticated vines and to replant them in the prepared

⁸George H. Scherer, The Eastern Colour of the Bible (London: The National Sunday School Union, n.d.), p. 28.

⁹Is. 5:2.

¹⁰Is. 5:4.

¹¹Num. 13:23-27.

soil of the new vineyard. In some areas of Palestine wild vines grew freely, but the fruit of these vines was not suitable for domestic use. It would have been an almost impossible task to remove these vines, and furthermore, to do so would have been foolish, for these vines were well rooted and healthy. The industrious Jew took advantage of the situation and cut away the wild branches and grafted a domestic grape branch to the wild stock so good grapes would be produced. Fortunate was the man who could take advantage of such a situation and save himself the planting of a vineyard.

The domesticated vine slips were planted about twelve feet or more apart to give space for the running branches. These newly-planted slips grew very fast. Since the young vine was not allowed to bear fruit till after the third year¹² it was cut back. This pruning made for a healthier and sturdier vine.

The vines of the field are seldom trained upon a trellis-work or wound around stakes. The proverbial phrase of sitting under one's own vine and fig tree, that is, enjoying a prosperous and happy life, must be considered.¹³ These latter mentioned trained vines were found more readily in a smaller garden spot or growing on a trellis on the wall of

¹²Ex. 24:26.

¹³Micah 4:4.

the home. Usually the vines grow along the ground, being raised on stones just sufficiently to keep the fruit off the ground, or if the soil was quite pebbly the vines would not be raised. The tendrils of the vine would then droop over the terrace walls and run over any remaining large boulders. To prevent these wandering tendrils from mingling with each other, the owner would dig circular trenches around the vine. Occasionally a vine would take possession of a nearby tree growing in the vineyard, and "brighten its quiet foliage . . . wave from its topmost branches in a perfect riot of life and endless energy."¹⁴ It is such a rich, happy, and triumphant life that is described by the figure, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."¹⁵

There may be many kinds of grapes, even in one vineyard, both of the purple and green sorts. The grapes of Palestine, however, "are mostly red or black, whence originated the phrase 'blood of grapes.'¹⁶

Some villages are celebrated for this variety, . . . others are famous for the perfection to which they brought one particular kind. . . . Names are suggested by something in the size or colouring of the grape or the general appearance of the cluster. Thus we have on Lebanon, Bride's fingers (of long tapering

¹⁴George M. Mackie, Bible Manners and Customs (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), p. 44.

¹⁵John 15:5.

¹⁶John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 37.

form, very smooth and translucent), Maiden's cheeks (with a blush of colour on each side), Mule's head (a large clumsy-looking purple grape), and Hen-and-chickens (a cluster having large green grapes surrounded by many small seedless ones about the size of currants).¹⁷

Watchtower and Booths

Before the vines produce their first crop a watchtower must be built, from which the watchman can guard the vineyards and grapes. The watchtower was frequently built as a part of the wall which surrounded the vineyard, but more often it was built in the midst of the vineyard. If the winepress was enclosed by high walls and covered with a roof, the watchtower was sometimes built on top of this. The watchtower was of elaborate and stable construction, being built of the stones and rocks removed from the vineyard. These towers were approximately thirty feet square and sometimes rising to a height of eighty feet, though the average height was from thirty to fifty feet. From this summit the watchman had a commanding view of the surrounding country. The watchman was appointed over a vineyard or a group of vineyards. He was there day and night to frighten away the animals and to challenge and report upon intruders. He roams about at night, and in the daytime he sits atop the tower and watches. On top of the tower a

¹⁷Mackie, op. cit., p. 44.

booth may be erected to give shade from the heat of the day. This booth is made of four stout poles or branches set on the tower to form a square. These poles are braced with other branches and covered on the top and sides with leaves, grass, or a coarse mat.

In the hollow interior of these towers the greater number of workers dwell during the busy weeks of the vintage season. This interior of the tower can also be used as a temporary storage place for new wine, or as a place in which syrup can be made if the weather should prove rainy at the time. Such a rain may come in an October vintage, but otherwise rain hardly ever falls in summer.

It is not every owner of a vineyard that can afford to erect such an elaborate and expensive tower. If he is a prudent man, he will sit down first and count the cost.¹⁸ So in place of a watchtower a booth, as described above, might well be built on some elevated spot in the vineyard. A number of these booths scattered throughout a large vineyard would serve the purpose of one large tower, and perhaps provide more thorough protection for the vineyard. During the grape harvest usually an older person mans the tower or booth, and if help is needed he can easily call on the younger harvest hands to help him.

¹⁸Luke 14:28.

Winepress

In the lower portion of the vineyard or in the valley beneath, the owner "dug a winepress."¹⁹ The winepress consisted of two vats which were either built of stones and covered with plaster, or more frequently hewn out of solid rock. One vat is higher than the other and bigger. The upper vat is roughly square or circular in shape, from six to twelve feet in diameter and from a foot to four feet deep. The lower vat is about one-half the size of the upper and separated by a partition about six inches thick left between them. A small channel or hole is cut in this partition to allow the grape juice to run from the upper vat into the lower. From the lower vat the juice is dipped into jars or wineskins. Barton speaks of one type of lower vat as follows,

Some of these vats are surrounded by "cup marks" or hollow places cut in the stone in order to hold pointed-bottom jars upright. Sometimes the cup-marks are connected with the vat by tiny channels through which any of the grape juice that might drain from the outside of the jar, after the jar had been dipped in the vat, might run back.²⁰

If the position of the rock allows it, a hole can be drilled near the bottom vat, and a plug made to fit the hole. By re-

¹⁹Matt. 21:33; Mark 12:1.

²⁰George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 178.

moving the plug the juice can be drained into the jars or wineskins collecting it.

Grape Harvest

The grape season is the happiest of the year. Grapes in Palestine were sometimes ripe in June or July, which arose perhaps from a triple pruning, in which case there was also a second and third vintage. The first vintage, however, was usually ripe in August, the second in September, and the third in October. Whole families go to live in the vineyards during the season of ripening grapes. Usually members of a family or relatives have a joint interest in the vineyard and do the harvesting themselves. In contrast to this we have the sole owner of a very large vineyard, who early in the morning goes to the marketplace "to hire laborers into his vineyard."²¹

When a vintage of grapes was ripe they had to be picked immediately or they would be unfit for making good wine or for drying into raisins. This explains why the householder of the vineyard went into the marketplace and hired laborers all hours of the day.²²

The grape harvest was carried on with shouting on all sides. The grapes were picked or cut off with knives or

²¹Matt. 20:1.

²²Matt. 20:3-6.

sickles and gathered into large baskets and taken at once on the backs of men or of donkeys to the wine press to extract the juice before decay or fermentation had set in. The grapes were poured into the upper vat about a foot deep. The men in bare feet and legs tramped around and around in the slippery mass until they had reduced the grapes to pulp and the juice flowed freely through the channel or hole into the lower vat. Here the seeds and other solid matter settled to the bottom. One of the workers then dipped off the juice into large jars or directly into wineskins, which he then loaded on carts or on the backs of donkeys and transported home.

The treading of the winepress was laborious, and not very favorable to cleanliness. The garments of the persons thus employed were stained with the red juice, and treading in the grapes was also very slippery and they held to each other's hands or to branches of a convenient tree to keep from falling. Yet the burden and work was lightened by singing, accompanied with musical instruments. As the tempo of the music increased the workers quickened their step, making the treading all the more effective. As they tramped and jumped they shouted $\uparrow \uparrow \uparrow$ (ho-up).²³ Compare this scene of joy and enthusiasm and social gladness with the prophetic picture of the suffering and solitude Christ

²³Is. 16:9,10; Jer. 25:30; Jer. 48:32,33.

in Gethsemane saying, "I tread the winepress alone."²⁴

After thus being pressed by the feet the grape skins are collected into a heap, a large flat stone is placed upon them, and they are subjected to pressure from a weighted beam. The remaining juice flows into the lower vat. Some sources²⁵ tell us that white clay was thrown in- to the center of the winepress, mixed with grape skins, formed into a huge mass in the press, and tied around with vines. A heavy stone was then placed upon this mass and the last drop of juice was extracted by pressure from a long pole placed across the top of the stone and used as a lever upon which human pressure was exerted, or upon which additional heavy stones were placed.

Other methods of pressing grapes were no doubt also used in ancient Palestine. The Egyptian monuments show a sack filled with grapes hung horizontally in an up- right wooden frame. By means of a stick inserted through the end of the sack the workers gradually twisted the sack until they had wound it up tightly, thus expelling all the juice.²⁶

When the grapes have all been picked from a vineyard the smaller animals, the sheep and goats, are turned in to eat the leaves from the vines.

²⁴Is. 63:3.

²⁵Scherer, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁶Arthur W. Klinck, Home Life in Bible Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 26.

Grape and Vine Products

The greater part of the grape crop was made into wine. After the grapes were harvested and pressed out the juice was taken home where it was allowed to go through the first process of fermentation, which usually took place within a few days. After several weeks or a month had passed the owner poured the wine off the lees or dregs²⁷ and allows it to ferment again. Then the wine was stored away until needed. Sometimes the wine was preserved in large stone jars which could be buried in the ground or left standing upon the earth. More likely, however, they would use wineskins for storage purposes. These wineskins are the bottles of the Bible. The Jews used goatskins for this purpose, which were sewed together where it had been cut to remove it from the carcass. This formed a large sack which could be filled through the neck and there tied and hung up from the roof of the house, tent, or cave dwelling. The resilience of the new skin took up whatever expansion might result from fermentation. The old wineskins from the previous year were unsafe for this purpose. "No man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles perish. But new

²⁷Is. 25:6.

wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved."²⁸

Wine is used by Orientals mostly in the winter season, especially at meals and feasts. The Oriental is not inclined to excessive drinking. It is regarded as a shameful vice and when it does occur it is kept out of sight.²⁹ The warm climate makes excessive drinking a cause of discomfort and disease. Wine is also used for medicinal purposes.³⁰

Vast quantities of fresh grapes were consumed during the grape season. Half-grown grapes were sometimes eaten with salt on them. In order to preserve fruit for the long winter season large bunches of grapes were made into raisins. These grapes were dried in a prepared level corner of the vineyard or on the clay housetops. The grapes to be dried were picked, before they were too ripe, then dipped into olive oil, and laid out in the sun to dry. Though the heat of the summer was often unbearable for man and beast, the heat was ideal for drying grapes. Throughout the drying process the grapes were frequently sprinkled with olive oil to keep the skin moist. The grapes were also turned quite often. This operation was performed until the grapes were completely dehydrated. Since raisins are rich in

²⁸Luke 5:37; Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22.

²⁹1 Thess. 5:7.

³⁰Luke 10:34.

minerals and vitamins they became an important part of the diet, especially among the peasantry. Sometimes these dried grapes were soaked in wine and pressed a second time and a sweet wine was made, which was also called new wine.³¹ At the early date of Pentecost it was then possible to have new wine made from a June vintage, which occasionally did occur, or new wine made in the latter way.³²

Whether the Jews drank fresh grape juice in season is debatable. Mackie contends, "There is no custom of drinking newly-strained grape-juice such as might be suggested by the dream of Pharaoh's butler."³³ However, it seems more plausible to believe that fresh grape juice was drunk. The laborious work of treading out the grapes would call for frequent refreshment and fresh grape juice would be available and ideal for this purpose. It was impossible, however, to keep the juice in fresh form for more than a couple of weeks at the most. The hot climate and the lack of the science of canning made such impossible. Nevertheless, to preserve some of the fresh grape flavor the Jewish woman would boil the grape juice over a slow fire until it resembled a thick syrup. This consistency was known as "honey," as it was intensely sweet. The grape honey was

³¹Jahn, op. cit., p. 38.

³²Acts 2:13.

³³Mackie, op. cit., p. 46.

used for sweetening and for flavoring. This grape honey must not be confused with the regular honey which was very plentiful in Palestine.

The grape juice that was obtained from the pressed mass of grape skins was of a poorer grade and this was usually allowed to become sour for use as vinegar.

The uses of the vine itself are limited, but one interesting use should be mentioned. Dr. Jahn says, "Some vines . . . when supported by trees, grow to a great height and magnitude; of such are made the staves and sceptres of kings."³⁴

Care of a Vineyard

Caring for a vineyard is a never ending process. Each winter the vines had to be pruned. This pruning was usually done in December or January when the vine was dormant. If the vine was pruned when it was in blossom and foliage, it would bleed profusely and could be stunted or even die. The vine was pruned back to leave three joints on every small branch that was spared in this rigorous process. The owner must be able to distinguish which branches to remove because they are no longer living, and which to prune in order that they might bring forth more abundantly.³⁵ After

³⁴Jahn, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁵John 15:2.

this pruning process the vineyard "looks like a field filled with gnarled and crooked sticks lying in rows."³⁶

Besides the pruning treatment, the branches and vines that were cut off had to be burned.³⁷ Then there was the needed repair to the vineyard and terrace walls which may have given way during the heavy winter rains. As summer approached the soil would have to be dug and tilled and the perennial thorns and briars removed. The winepress also must be cleaned and readied for use. This work involved the whole family or a number of hired day laborers. Considering all this labor, the joy of a good harvest would be manifold.

Dangers to a Vineyard

The chief enemies of the vineyard were the locusts, the hot east winds from the Syrian desert which would wither the grapes with their dry heat, and the south-west wind bringing excessive mist and moist warmth from the sea. Then there were also the wild animals, such as the jackals, foxes, and bears to contend with, plus the petty thefts of passing travelers. In this last connection it should be remembered that the owner was commanded not to prohibit the passing traveler from plucking the grapes

³⁶Scherer, op. cit., p. 29.

³⁷John 15:6.

which he wished to eat, provided he did not carry them off in a vessel.³⁸

Renting a Vineyard

The vineyards were usually tended by their owners. Occasionally an owner would let out or rent his vineyard to a husbandman who would receive half of the produce for his labor or an agreed upon daily wage.³⁹

³⁸Deut. 23:24.

³⁹Matt. 21:33 f.

CHAPTER IV

PASTORAL LIFE

The Shepherd and His Equipment

The shepherds are a very ancient people.¹ They are numerous to this day in Palestine, and occupy large areas of land. Their mode of life has many things to recommend it, especially their freedom. The shepherd's home is with his flock whether that be in the desert, the valley, or the mountainous areas. The shepherd himself is usually a kind, understanding, and patient person, yet powerful and brave.

The shepherd's outfit consisted of a cloak, gourd and wallet for his own needs, and a rod, staff, and a sling for the protection of his flock.

The cloak is made of sheepskin or of a heavy cloth woven of wool, goat hair or camel hair. The cloak is draped over his shoulders and held in with a sash at the waist. With it he protects himself from the rain and cold of the day. At night he uses it as a cover by literally wrapping himself up in the cloak. A large inner pocket provides a place for a new-born lamb, or one injured and unable to travel with the flock.² If the cloak is not provided with

¹Gen. 3:18,21.

²Is. 40:11.

a pocket the shepherd could find room for a lamb in a fold above the sash near his bosom.

The gourd, or a large earthenware vessel of a similar shape, was used to carry water between springs, or for milk. More often though, in place of the gourd, as the shepherd could drink fresh milk from the goats or sheep if he became thirsty, the shepherd would carry a horn taken from a ram or an ox. This he would fill with olive oil for use in treating the wounds and bruises he or his flock may experience. A few shepherds would carry both the gourd and the horn of oil.

The wallet was really a large leather bag in which he carried his food: bread, olives, parched wheat, dried raisins or figs. The purse also contained the shepherd's sling and a few stones for use in defense against man or wild beast. With the usual square cotton cloth on his head held in place about his temples by a wrapping of wool, the shepherd was ready to protect himself from the elements or intruders.

For the defense of his sheep the shepherd had a very formidable weapon in his rod. The rod was generally made from oak. It was about two feet long, with a huge rounded head, into which could be driven a number of heavy iron nails. The rod was attached to the shepherd's leather belt or girdle by a piece of leather thong passed through a hole in the handle of the rod. In this way it hangs from the

girdle during the day while the shepherd carries his staff in his hand.

During the night the shepherd thrusts the staff down his back under his cotton shirt, and taking the rod from his girdle, and twisting the leather thong twice round his wrist, so that if it is struck out of his hand in a fight it will not be dropped.³

The staff is a pole made from a branch of a tree or a sapling. It is about six to eight feet long, "quite plain and straight, tapering at one end, without the crook of Western pictures."⁴ The staff was used to rescue the sheep from danger, to rule the stragglers into order, to administer needed chastisement, and to knock off twigs and leaves from the trees and large bushes as food for the sheep. The shepherd also used it to assist himself in climbing the steep and rocky hillsides as he searched for a lost sheep, or for water, food and shelter for his flock.

The sling might well be the sash of the shepherd, or it might be a woven goat's hair rope with a fitted leather pouch for the stone. Holding one end of the sash firmly by winding it around his fingers and gripping the other end between his thumb and forefinger, a stone was then placed in position in the loop thus formed. The shepherd would then swing the sling rapidly at arm's length until it had

³James Neil, Everyday Life in the Holy Land (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), p. 51.

⁴George Scherer, The Eastern Colour of the Bible (London: The National Sunday School Union, n.d.), p. 25.

reached a great momentum, then he would release the end held between his thumb and forefinger and the stone would fly to its target. The sling was used to kill or drive off wild animals, to cast a stone at a sheep that starts to wander away, or the shepherd might wile away some time by improving his skill with the sling. Thus the shepherd stands prepared to do battle as "a good shepherd," to "lay down his life for the sheep."⁵ If the shepherd is killed the sheep will surely become scattered.⁶

The Sheep and the Goats

The sheep are horned, and commonly white. Black ones are very rare; some are covered with small spots; some with larger ones; others are streaked, and again others are distinguished by variegated hoofs, or, as some say, by circular streaks round the body like rings.⁷

Dr. Jahn further lists three different breeds of sheep in the East.

I. The common, of which we have specimens every day among ourselves. II. The deformed breed, with short legs, macerated body, and rough wool, . . . III. A breed larger than ours, and of very fine wool. Of this class of sheep there are two kinds; the one having immense tails, about four feet long and five inches thick, the other having short tails, and large clumps

⁵John 10:11,15,17.

⁶Mark 14:27.

⁷John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 28.

of fat on the haunches.⁸

The sheep of Palestine were profitable to their owners for their milk, their flesh, and particularly for their wool, which is shorn twice a year. "The sheep bring forth twice a year, namely, in the spring and the autumn; . . . but the spring lambs are esteemed preferable to those of the autumn."⁹

The goats of Palestine are of a black color, or sometimes they may be a grayish-black. Goats were kept for their milk, which was considered more precious than any other;¹⁰ for their flesh, but especially for their hair and skins. From the hair of the goats the women made tent materials, while from the skins bottles were made. The skins of the kids were used to make small bottles or flasks. When these skins were used to hold water or other liquids the hairy side of the skin was turned out, with the exception that when used as wine bottles the hairy side was always turned in.¹¹

The flocks of sheep and goats might be as small as a dozen, they might consist of at least a hundred,¹² or the

⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Prov. 27:27.

¹¹Jahn, op. cit., p. 29.

¹²Luke 15:4.

flocks might be vast, such as Jacob had.

The Sheepfold

The shepherd might well utilize one of the many caves found in the limestone cliffs of Palestine as an enclosure for his sheep. In front of this cave he might build a wall of stones to form a courtyard where the sheep could be protected from their enemies and yet sleep in the open air in pleasant weather. If a cave was not available the shepherd would then avail himself of the numerous stones of Palestine and build an enclosure. In the latter case he would have to roof over one end with branches and logs and clay to provide a weatherproof stable. In the southern parts of Palestine the flocks spend most of the time under the open sky in an enclosed area.

The walls of the sheepfold were made of rough, shapeless stones laid carefully together. The large pieces were usually put on the outside and the small within. The wall was about three feet wide at the base tapering up to about one foot wide at the top, while the wall would be from four to eight feet high. No mortar of any kind was used, the irregular stones were laid so as to fit closely and firmly together. The foundation of the wall was the smoothed surface of the ground. The top of the wall was crowned with sharp thorns which a prowling wolf will rarely attempt to jump.

The leopard and the panther . . . when pressed with hunger, will overleap this thorny hedge, and with one tremendous bound land among the frightened fold. Then is the time to try the nerve and the heart of the faithful shepherd.¹³

The sheepfold in reality has no door, the one entrance being a narrow opening in the wall. "Here, when guarding the sheep at night or admitting them . . . the shepherd takes his place, and quite blocking up the entrance, is himself virtually the door."¹⁴ Now this is surely the allusion of our Lord, when, speaking of the fold of His sheep, He says, "I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the door: through me if anyone come in he shall be saved, and he shall come in and go out, and find pasture."¹⁵

Before the shearing, the sheep are collected in the sheepfold. "The object of this is, that the wool may be rendered finer by the sweating and evaporation which necessarily result from the flock's being thus crowded together."¹⁶

Pastures

The grazing lands of Palestine consist largely of the

¹³W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 202.

¹⁴Neil, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁵John 10:7,9.

¹⁶Jahn, op. cit., p. 29.

lonely, unfenced, uncultivated desert hills and plains where no dwelling is to be seen except the tents of other shepherds. The farming lands around a village are often used by the shepherds when the land lies fallow, or after the grain has been harvested. The flocks sometimes feed on the leaves and twigs of the grape vines after the harvest is finished.

As spring and summer approached the shepherd took his flock to the higher and greener ranges of the mountains. The flock was continually on the move in the mountain areas as the shepherd led them to grassy slopes or to pastures in the recesses of a winding ravine. At such times the only enclosure at night might be a stout palisade of tangled thorn bushes, or a walled in end of a canyon.

The shepherd was constantly on the lookout for good water supplies, especially for quiet, still water where the flock could drink without the danger of falling into a swift current or threatening rapids. During the day the shepherd would let the flock rest under the open sky, under some shady trees, or where some rock would cast a welcome shadow. While the sheep rested the shepherd might play some simple music on his shepherds pipe as he watched over the flock.

Whenever the flock was moved the shepherd would take the lead and the sheep would follow after. A dog, which

the shepherd might have, would bring up the rear.¹⁷ Dr.

Thomson says of these dogs,

The oriental shepherd dogs, . . . are a mean, sinister, ill-conditioned generation, kept at a distance, kicked about, and half starved, with nothing noble or attractive about them. Still they lag lazily behind the flocks, making a furious barking at any intruder among the charge.¹⁸

By midafternoon, or earlier in case of a threatening storm, the shepherd would call his sheep together and head for the night's enclosure. In starting out early the shepherd would avoid the dangers of darkness, and this also would permit the tired and weary sheep to travel at a slow rate of speed. In extremely warm weather the shepherd might keep his flock in a shaded area during the day, and then take them out to feed during the evening hours.

The Relationship of the Shepherd and Sheep

Jesus said that the good shepherd, "when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him."¹⁹ This statement is true to the letter. The sheep are so trained that they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold just where he pleases. Often times a number of shepherds may

¹⁷Job 30:1.

¹⁸Thomson, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁹John 10:4.

have ownership of a sheepfold and thus keep their flocks in the same fold at night. When morning comes each shepherd calls to his flock and they come to him "for they know his voice."²⁰ Each shepherd then takes a different path as he goes in search for pasture. It is necessary, therefore, that the sheep should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of grain which may lie so temptingly on either side of the path. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind the flock of his presence. They know his voice and will follow on; but, if a stranger calls, they stop quickly, lift their heads in alarm, and if the strange voice is heard again, they will turn and flee because they do not know the voice of the stranger.²¹

The sheep are also very dear to the shepherds. They give them all a name that perhaps describes some habit or characteristic of the sheep. A lamb is sometimes taken into the shepherd's village home or his tent and tended and brought up as a special pet. Some sheep always keep near the shepherd and thus become his special favorites. For them the shepherd often gathers a handful of grass or some leaves. The greater body of sheep, as they feed, run from bush to bush, searching for variety or delicacies, and only

²⁰John 10:4.

²¹John 10:5.

now and then lift up their heads to see where the shepherd is. A few of the flock are seemingly always restless and discontented, jumping into everybody's field, climbing into bushes and even into leaning trees, where they often fall and break their legs. These cause the shepherd constant trouble. At times a sheep may fall into a pit a hunter dug to catch wild animals.²² Then there are those which are incurably reckless, which stray far away,²³ and are often utterly lost even though an intensive search was made for it.

When the flock is put into the sheepfold or a hedged in enclosure for the night the shepherd stands straddle-legged in the narrow entrance. As each sheep and goat passes between his legs the shepherd inspects them for bruises and wounds that may have been caused by thorns or sharp rocks. If such is found, olive oil is applied from the horn at the shepherd's side. At times lice may be found on the heads of some of the flock and the shepherd anoints the head with olive oil.²⁴ Once inside the enclosure the sheep and goats are separated to prevent the energetic goats from butting and disturbing the resting sheep.²⁵

²²Matt. 21:11.

²³Matt. 18:12-13; Luke 15:4-7.

²⁴Ps. 23:5.

²⁵Mt. 25:32 f.

The Hireling

If the shepherd owned a vast flock of sheep he would often hire a number of servants to care for them, or he might divide the flock and put part of it in the charge of one such servant, while he himself would tend the others. If the servant was very faithful, the owner might give him a portion of the young flock as his reward. Then again, the servant may be lax and indifferent since the flock is his only to tend. When dangers would arise he would no doubt quickly flee, as he really cared only for himself. It is the servant that loves the shepherd and the shepherd's flock that is sought after to lead and feed the sheep.²⁶

The Swineherd

Swineherds were kept by the non-Jewish population, for hogs were unclean according to the Mosaic law.²⁷ Hogs were raised in the far country where the Prodigal Son wasted his substance and finally had to make a living herding the hogs of a heathen man. The hogs were herded under the carob tree to eat the pods that had fallen to the ground; they were also taken to the areas around the threshing floors to search for any grain that may have spilled or was blown out

²⁶John 21:15-17.

²⁷Lev. 11:7.

of the threshing floor by a strong gust of wind.

In the country of the Gadarenes, east of the Jordan, large herds of hogs were also raised.²⁸

²⁸Mark 5:11 f.

The Potter

The work of the potter was most important in the life of the eastern nations. The housewife needed bowls and cups and other dishes for her home. Large jars were needed to carry water from the village fountain or springs; other jars were needed for the storage of grain, oil, honey, dried grapes and figs; travelers and shepherds often carried a small flask with them. Since these earthen vessels were also very fragile they often had to be replaced. Thus the potter was never lacking business. The good supply of clay in Palestine made his work less difficult.

In a place where there was a good deposit of clay, the potter would scrape off the topsoil down to the layer of soft clay. Then he dug a hole in this clay, filled it with water, and tramped in it with his bare feet until he had worked it to mud. He then shoveled this mud into a pile so the water could drain off. Then it was loaded in baskets, placed on the back of a mule or on a cart pulled by oxen or donkeys, and taken to his shop. Finally he piled the mud on a heap outside his shop where it was left until he needed it for his trade.

The place where the potter dug his clay was called the

CHAPTER V

TRADES AND PROFESSIONS

The Potter

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In a place where there was a good deposit of clay, the potter would scrape off the topsoil down to the layer of pure clay. Then he dug a hole in this clay, filled it with water, and tramped in it with his bare feet until he had reduced it to mud. He then shoveled this mud into a pile so the water could drain off. Then it was loaded in baskets, placed on the back of a donkey or on a cart pulled by oxen or donkeys, and taken to his shop. Finally he piled the clay on a heap outside his shop where it was left until he needed it for his trade.

The place where the potter dug his clay was called the

"potter's field." When the last layers of clay were removed the resulting pit was often used as a dumping ground. Thus we find the Jewish leaders buying a potter's field with the money which Judas had received for betraying Jesus.¹

Crude pottery may be shaped by hand without any mechanical device as no doubt early Jewish pottery was made. However the potter's wheel greatly improved and speeded up the process.

Nothing perhaps could be more rude than the workshop of the potter. Dr. Geikie says, "no stable in England is half so wretched as some of them."² There was a coarse wooden bench, behind which the potter sat at his wheel. The wheel was a thick disc of wood, in the center of which a hole was made and an upright shaft was passed through the hole and rested on a stone place on the floor so that it could rotate easily. The shaft was also placed through a hole in the bench. On top of this shaft was fastened another disc very similar to the seat of a piano stool. With one foot on the bottom disc the potter would rotate the discs. A simpler potter's wheel consisted only of the top disc and a shorter axle set in a socket of stone. With one hand the potter would twirl the wheel, while sitting cross-

¹Matt. 27:7.

²Cunningham Geikie, The Holy Land and the Bible (London: Cassell and Co., 1903), p. 240.

legged on the ground in front of it. The first mentioned wheel was more commonly used and will be considered in describing the following operation.

On the upper disc the potter placed a heap of softened clay from a pile of it which was lying on his bench. The disc was made to spin by his foot, while he shaped the clay into a low cone with both hands. Then he made a hole in the top of the swirling clay with his thumb and continued to make the hole larger until he could put his left hand inside. He sprinkled it, as needed, with water from a vessel beside him. With the right hand he smoothed the outside, while the other hand smoothed and shaped the inside. Both hands were thus used to give whatever shape he desired to the vessel. Often, from some defect in the clay, or from some mishap, there was a failure. The vessel is quickly crushed and by squeezing the clay together again into a cone the potter began again, perhaps making it into something quite different.³ When finished with the piece of pottery, the potter would carefully place it on a shelf, out of the wind and sun, where it could dry uniformly and not too quickly for several days so that it will not crack.

When a sufficient number of pieces are finished, the potter was ready to bake or fire them in the kiln of stone or brick he had built for that purpose. The kiln was a

³Jer. 18:4.

circular enclosure built over a fire place. The pottery pieces were then placed in the kiln and a fire was built. Fuel is gradually added until the fire becomes very hot, causing the clay of the vessels to become fused or melted together. The fire is then permitted to die down and go out, and the kiln is allowed to cool off gradually for a day or two. When it has completely cooled the potter carefully removes the vessels. Some, of course, come out of the baking mis-shapen or broken, and these are thrown on the heap of fragments at the side.

Did Christ have the picture of the potter in mind when He referred to Paul as a "chosen vessel?"⁴ Should a person request the potter to choose a vessel for him, "He will hand you his chosen vessel, saying, 'I will never be ashamed to send this vessel to any part of the world, for I have chosen it and I know it will never put me to shame. It is a chosen vessel.'⁵ The vessel may look the same as the other vessels but it will stand the test.

Clay vessels were put through a process called glazing if they were intended for the storage of water and other precious liquids. In unglazed pottery liquids would gradually seep through. Glazing material was a thin solution

⁴Acts 9:15.

⁵Barbara M. Bowen, Strange Scriptures That Perplex the Western Mind (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1944), p. 98.

made of fine clay containing silica. The pottery was either dipped in or painted with it, and then was baked again in the kiln. This process produced a glossy-smooth finish on the pottery. Dr. Geikie informs us, "None of it is now glazed, for the art of glazing appears to be lost among Eastern potters."⁶

The Carpenter

When we speak of the carpenter we immediately think of Jesus, the son of the carpenter Joseph. No doubt Jesus spent His early years working in an ordinary carpenter shop. Yet it strikes us as rather strange, that among the many parables of Jesus there are none that deal with the carpenter.⁷ In the words of Jesus only two references can be found which deal with the trade of the carpenter.⁸

The carpenter's shop might well be a small building in the market place, an awning erected on poles, or a room in his own home. In this shop he had a bench made of heavy beams or planks on which to do his work. He would either have several wooden trestles which he used to handle and saw long material, or a sawing post set in the earthen floor of the shop. To this post he tied the wood he wished to

⁶Geikie, op. cit., p. 241.

⁷Mark 6:3.

⁸Matt. 11:29; Matt. 7:3.

saw. Some carpenters had both trestles and sawing post.

The carpenter's saw was made of a thin blade of bronze or iron, and had teeth cut into one edge. This blade was then set in a wooden handle. Some ribbon-flint knives with an irregular edge were also used for sawing purposes.

The carpenter's awl was also a very useful tool. It was heated and used to make a hole in timber without splitting it. The awl was a pointed piece of metal set in a bone handle. The sharp point of the awl could also be used for scratching marks on the wood. The chisel was a necessary tool along with the awl. The chisel was used to smooth wood, cut notches in beams and in frames. The chisel was usually made of bronze, although iron chisels have been found.

The carpenters also used two similar chopping tools, the axe and the adze, for splitting or smoothing off wood. The axe and adze heads were made of iron and fastened to a long wooden handle. The butt of the axe head was often perforated to receive a thong to lash it to the handle. How necessary this was is shown by passages in Deuteronomy and Kings.⁹

Hammers of iron in various shapes were fitted with wooden handles, similar to those we have today. Some stone hammers have been found. Numerous nails, made of bronze

⁹Deut. 19:5; 2 Kings 6:5.

and iron, have also been found in Palestine, indicating their common usage. The mallet consisted of a large, knotty piece of wood into which a wooden handle was inserted.

The carpenter's drill was a shaft of wood about two feet long, with a bowstring, which was wound once around the shaft. A drill point of stone or metal was inserted on the end of the shaft. Drill points varied in size and were interchangeable, so that many sizes of holes could be drilled. In operating the drill the carpenter set the point in the desired place, held the shaft upright under pressure of a block of wood held in one hand, and worked the bow with the other hand, thus spinning the shaft with its sharp drill point.

To make a long straight line the carpenter used a chalk line which was stretched over the surface and then quickly snapped leaving a chalk mark on the wood. The chalk line was wrapped on a reel when not in use. A plumb bob, made of wood or metal, and fastened to a cord, was used to determine a line perpendicular to the ground.

The carpenter was usually called upon to make frames for doors and windows, lattice-work for the house, furniture and wooden utensils used in the home, beams which supported the roof, yokes for the oxen, agriculture implements, wooden sandals, locks for the door, and other related tasks. The carpenter usually employed a young boy to assist him in carrying the tools, running errands, holding the wood while

it was being assembled, and many other similar jobs. The carpenter of Palestine was not primarily a builder of homes as he is today in our country.

The Hunter

When the Jews first occupied Palestine they were compelled to hunt in order to secure themselves from the attacks of wild animals. The meat of wild animals and fowl was also considered a delicacy. At the same time it supplemented their meat supply. Thus by eating wild life the Jews could spare their domestic flocks and herds. The "clean" animals consisted of the deer, gazelle, antelope, mountain sheep and goats and others, plus also the "clean" fowl such as partridge and pigeons.¹⁰

The weapons used in hunting were usually the same as those of warfare. The bow and arrow was most commonly employed. The bow, made of wood, was about twenty-six inches long. It was strung with a cord made of linen or cotton, or with a thong of gut or sinew. The arrows were made of straight reeds or branches of lead-pencil thickness. They were tipped with flint, bronze, or iron arrowheads. A quiver, made of leather and slung over the back, would hold a dozen or more arrows.

The sling was a favorite weapon of the shepherd. It

¹⁰See Leviticus 11 for "clean" and "unclean" foods.

might be his own sash, or a woven cord fitted with a leather pocket.

For close hunting the dart was used, the longer spear or javelin for long distance throwing, as well as the lance. These consisted of shafts of wood in length varying from three to seven feet, ending in flint, bronze, or iron spear-heads.

In order to catch smaller animals and birds, the hunter used various types of nets and snares.¹¹ The snare was a noose of strong cord, one end of which was tied to the end of a sapling which the hunter would bend over and peg to the ground. Bait was put in the center of the noose as it lay on the ground. When a bird or animal pulled or scratched at the bait, the peg released the sapling, which jerked the noose upward, catching and suspending the victim in mid air. Large nets were also thrown over small ponds to trap water fowl. Coarse nets were strung between trees in the route followed by birds in flight. Larger animals as gazelles, lions, jackals and other beasts of prey were commonly caught in a pit.¹²

The pit was a large hole dug in the path the animals were accustomed to follow. The pit was covered with a loose framework of small tree branches and leaves, which was

¹¹Luke 21:35.

¹²Luke 14:5.

then covered with a thin layer of earth. The slightest pressure on this unsuspected framework would cause it to give way and the animal would fall in and be at the mercy of the hunter.

The Fisherman

The Sea of Galilee was well stored with fish. Some of Jesus' disciples had made their living by fishing on the lake. The reference to a "fish gate"¹³ as one of the entrances to the city of Jerusalem no doubt indicates that a fish market was in the vicinity.

The Galilean fisherman used nets of various types in his fishing. This appears to have been his favorite way of fishing. When using the casting net, the fisherman stood on the shore, or waist deep in the water, and threw the net in front of him. This net was shaped like the top of a tent, with a long cord fastened to the center of it. It was so folded that when it was thrown it expanded to its utmost circumference of about ten feet. Around the edge were strung beads of lead to make it drop suddenly to the bottom and to confine the fish within it. The fisherman then drew up the center of the net by the cord and dove down and removed the fish. The drag net was a long straight net, eight to ten feet wide, with floats on the upper edge and weights on the

¹³Nehemiah 12:39.

bottom edge. To the ends of the net ropes were fastened. At sea the net was fastened to two boats and dragged toward the shore, enclosing whatever fish happened to be in its path.¹⁴ The dip net consisted of a small cone-shaped mesh held open by a bent sapling. To this was attached a handle. Again there were the bag-nets and basket nets of various kinds, which were so used and manipulated as to enclose fish out in deep water.¹⁵ Fishing on Lake Galilee was carried on largely at night when the fish would come in closer to the shore.

Fishhooks were also used by the fisherman.¹⁶ Various sizes of hooks were used, depending on the type of fish one wanted to catch. These hooks were made of bronze and iron and resembled those of our own day.

Angling requires patience, and great perseverance and caution. The line must be fine and the hook carefully concealed by the bait. A mistake in any of these will defeat the purpose. When Christ told the experienced fisherman Peter to cast a hook¹⁷ into the Sea of Galilee, Peter was surely careful in his preparation. That a fish would grab the bait would not be unusual, but a fish with a coin in

¹⁴Luke 5:4-5; Matt. 13:47-49.

¹⁵John 21:3-6.

¹⁶Matt. 17:27; Amos 4:2.

¹⁷Matt. 17:27.

its mouth, when a coin was needed, was surely a miracle.

The sword which Peter drew in the garden of Gethsemane¹⁸ might well have been his large fishing knife, which he used in cleaning fish and in repairing nets. The Greek term *μάχαίρα* is used to designate various sizes of cutting instruments.

The Seller of Birds

This merchant might have an awning-covered shop along the busy market street. On a rack of several tiers he would hang various birds, such as doves, pigeons, sparrows,¹⁹ and blackbirds. This merchant might also call out his wares as he walked back and forth in the streets of the city or village. Some of these men specialized in doves only and would set up their shop near the temple area so the poor could buy them for sacrifices.

The Money Changers

The money changer "has a small table, or boxlike stand, with a large, four-cornered, deep tray, divided into compartments, covered with a wire netting to protect the coins

¹⁸Mt. 26:51.

¹⁹Luke 12:6.

below."²⁰ In Palestine coins from many different nations were used. Also being a land through which people from many countries passed, it was necessary to have someone to change the foreign coin into the currency of Palestine. Change was seldom made for the large coins except in the better city shops, so these large coins would be exchanged by these men for a certain fee. "The peasants refuse to accept damaged coins or any coins that arouse their suspicions as to genuineness or weight."²¹

Money lending was common in Palestine and often the rates were very high. "Seldom is the rate less than ten per cent, and more often it is twenty."²² A clever man doing business in such a corrupt way can soon become quite wealthy. It was this dishonest trade that made our Lord angry when He overthrew the tables of the money changers and said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."²³

²⁰James Neil, Everyday Life in the Holy Land (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), p. 162.

²¹Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 148.

²²Ibid., p. 149.

²³Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17.

The Taxgatherers

The class designated by the word publican²⁴ in the New Testament writings were employed by the Romans as collectors of revenue. The Roman senate farmed out the direct taxes and the custom's duty to capitalists who undertook to pay a given sum into the treasury (in publicum), and so they received the name of publicani. Contracts of this kind naturally fell into the hands of the richest class of Romans. They in turn appointed the actual custom officials and the tax gatherers, who were commonly natives of the province in which they were stationed.

These men examined each bale of goods, exported or imported, assessed its value more or less arbitrarily, wrote out a ticket, and enforced payment. The system was a vicious one. They overcharged whenever they had an opportunity,²⁵ they brought false charges of smuggling in the hope of getting hush money,²⁶ and they opened letters on mere suspicion. It was the basest of all professions and was in the ill favor of Jews everywhere. The position of Zacchaeus as a "chief among the publicans,"²⁷ implies a gradation

²⁴Luke 7:34; Matt. 11:9.

²⁵Luke 3:13.

²⁶Luke 19:8.

²⁷Luke 19:2.

among the people thus employed. These publicans were stationed at harbors, piers, bridges, fords of rivers, and the gates of the cities.

The strong feeling of the Jews as to the absolute unlawfulness of paying tribute made matters worse.²⁸ "Matthew, who sat 'at the place of custom,' was probably the one in Capernaum who collected the tax on fish, and would thus be especially disliked by the disciples who had been fishermen."²⁹

The Scribe

The scribes were so called because they wrote out the law, classified and arranged its precepts, and even counted every letter and clause the law contained. They devoted themselves to a careful study of the text and laid down rules for transcribing it. As time passed on the words of the scribes were honored above the law. It was a greater crime to offend against them than against the law of Moses. Some of their traditions were considered more binding than the law of Moses. We can understand therefore why Jesus constantly denounced them along with the Pharisees.

Of course not all scribes were engaged solely in the

²⁸Matt. 22:15 f.; Mark 12:17 f.

²⁹George Scherer, The Eastern Colour of the Bible (London: The National Sunday School Union, n.d.), p. 51.

studying and copying of Scripture. There were those who drew up letters for people who could not write, and who drafted legal documents and contracts. They would sit at prominent street corners or in the gates of the city to offer their services for a fee.

The equipment of the scribe consisted in a horn of ink fastened to his girdle, a stylus of reed or of wood, some paper or parchment, and a saucer of sand to sprinkle on his writing. He did not need a table as he held the writing material in his hand when he wrote.

The Teacher

The word teacher is the one by which Jesus was most commonly addressed. It was a common title of honor and respect and meant one who was learned or taught, a master. "It is thus applied to any master workman who is recognized to have professional knowledge, whether or not it be his occupation to teach others."³⁰ Jewish boys were apprenticed out to well-known masters for training. After a few years of training they became journeyman workers and later masters. Jesus was probably thinking of this when He said, "The disciple is not above his master; but everyone that is perfect shall be like his master."³¹ The Christian humbly accepts

³⁰Scherer, op. cit., p. 53.

³¹Luke 6:40.

His warning, "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ."³²

The Day Laborer

Inside every city or town there was a well known place where men gathered at dawn seeking employment for the day.³³ Such employment would include gardening, ditching, repairing walls, harvesting, and portering. The laborers would bring their spade, hoe, rope, axe, or whatever they were accustomed to use. Some came without any tools.

The common time of engagement was shortly after sunrise. If they were not hired within a couple hours they would go elsewhere in search of small jobs. These day laborers lived from hand to mouth. Each day's wage was needed at sunset,³⁴ to purchase the family supper, which was always the chief meal of the day.

The porter or burden-bearer was among the simplest of these laborers, and yet is the picture behind these words of Christ, "for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers."³⁵

³²Matt. 23:10.

³³Matt. 20:1.

³⁴Deut. 24:15.

³⁵Luke 11:46.

The narrow streets and the lack of many carts called for the services of these porters. Their sole equipment was a thin pad for their backs and a rope about five yards long with a knot at one end. The porter, when taking up his load, crouched down with his back against the heaped-up articles. With his rope arranged without any ties, so as to catch and hold all the articles, he rose with a sudden spring and brought the whole weight to rest upon his shoulders and the upper part of his back. In their efforts to rise the porters had a practice of emptying their lungs by the expiration of breath in a loud grunt. This prevented the danger of breaking a blood vessel.

The loads these porters carried was truly amazing. Travelers have seen a single porter carrying a piano. His piled up burden often extends far beyond his head. After the burden was upon the porter's back it was difficult to lay it down until he had reached his destination. When he became very weary and needed a little rest, he would call to a passer-by. The latter would stoop under the load a few minutes, and take the weight of the burden off the porter. "Bear ye one another's burdens."³⁶

³⁶Gal. 6:2.

CHAPTER VI

TREES AND PLANTS

The Olive Tree

Olive trees were a very ancient and profitable object of agriculture. Its branches have been from earliest times¹ a symbol of peace and prosperity among nations. Olives in Palestine were of the best growth and yielded the best oil; thus Palestine was often extolled on account of this tree, and especially in opposition to Egypt which lacks good olive trees.²

Land that is barren, sandy, dry, and mountainous, is favorable to the production of the olive. The olive tree will thrive where other fruit trees have difficulty in keeping alive. The olive is pleasant to view, having widely extending branches and leaves of a gray-green color which remain green in winter.

It was customary to raise the tree from a shoot of a cultivated tree, which was transplanted. The olive also may be grown from seed or grafted with fresh twigs from an older tree. In grafting, the wild olive was cut down close to the ground and the tame olive was grafted on to the wild tree by

¹Gen. 8:11.

²Num. 18:12; Deut. 7:13.

inserting the tame olive into a slit formed in the wild olive. Where the two are joined together a fiber wrapping was securely bound, and soon the incision was healed over. The olive tree grew very slowly, requiring many years before it bore its first crop. It flourishes for about two hundred years, and even while it is living, young olives spring up from the exposed roots of the tree near the trunk. Considering these constantly appearing new growths some olive trees in the Near East are said to be as much as two thousand years old.

The trunk of an aged olive tree attains a great girth and a gnarled knobby look. Sometimes a large part of these huge trunks will be hollowed out by decay, in which case the peasant will fill up the cavity with a score of stones. The tree goes on bearing with chief dependence on the state of the bark for its healthy condition.³

The olive required no other cultivation than digging the soil around the tree and a pruning of the branches. Pruning was done with saws and pruning hooks.⁴ The pruning saw was very much like our own with its pistol-grip wooden handle and curved blade. The pruning hooks were sharply bent knives at the end of a long pole by which the smaller branches were cut off with a quick downward pull of the handle.

³Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 40.

⁴Is. 2:4.

After ten or fifteen years of growth the olive tree will bear its first good crop. The olive harvest begins in August. The fruit was picked by hand, shaken, or knocked off the tree with long poles. This knocking process damages the branches and twigs to such an extent that the grower only counts on one good crop every other year. This was a very poor way to gather the best olives, but inasmuch as the olives were used chiefly for oil in Palestine it made little difference. The olives were then gathered into baskets and carried to the olive press on human shoulders or on the back of a donkey.

The methods of extracting the oil varied. A reference in Micah⁵ tells us the oil was trodden out by the feet. This process would no doubt be carried on in the winepress, or in a similar type of vat arrangement. Another press might consist of a medium sized rock which was hollowed out. Into this a few olives were placed and then ground to a pulp with a stone held in the hand or rolled by hand over the fruit. In a more efficient system the olives were crushed in huge circular stone basins, by rolling over them a large mill stone. Through the center of this mill stone a long pole was passed to which a donkey or an ox was harnessed. The mill stone was turned as the animal walked around and around the press. The animals were often blindfolded to keep them

⁵Micah 6:15.

from getting dizzy. Barton speaks of an olive press which comprised in addition to a vat,

an upright stone with a large hole in it. In this hole a beam was inserted. This beam rested on the olives which were to be pressed, extending far beyond the receptacle containing the olives, and weights were hung on the end farthest from the stone.⁶

Large olive trees, in a good season, would yield from ten to fifteen gallons of oil. The best grade of olive oil was obtained when the pressing first started. This oil was very light and transparent and considered a first grade product. As the pressing and crushing continued the oil would become discolored by the brownish tinge of the broken pits and the green of the olive skins. Ripe olives also yielded oil of a less valuable nature. This poorer grade of oil the owner would use about his own household for cooking, and as fuel for his torches and lamps. The best oil was mixed with spices and used for ointment,⁷ anointing the body,⁸ and also some of it was sold in the market.

The oil was used in the ritual of consecration to the priesthood⁹ and the kingship.¹⁰ The shepherd carried olive

⁶George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 178.

⁷Luke 10:34.

⁸Luke 7:46.

⁹Ex. 29:7.

¹⁰1 Sam. 16:13.

oil in containers made from the hollow of animal horns, and used the oil on the wounds and bruises of his flock.

To what extent the Jews ate whole olives is not known. Various authors tell us that the fruit was very pleasant, but then conclude by saying that nearly all the olives were thrown into the presses.

The Sycamore

The sycamore tree is referred to in the New Testament as the "sycamine" tree.¹¹ The sycamore in size and figure resembles the mulberry tree. It is very common not only in Egypt, but in Judea, especially in the low lands.¹² Its trunk is large and its branches very numerous; growing nearly in a horizontal direction. The branches are easily accessible and easy to climb.¹³ The sycamore "is generally planted by the wayside, and in open spaces where several paths meet, just where Zaccheus found it."¹⁴

The sycamore is easily propagated, merely by planting a stout branch in the ground and watering it until it has struck roots into the soil. This it does very quickly and

¹¹Luke 17:6.

¹²1 Chron. 27:28; 2 Chron. 1:15.

¹³Luke 19:4.

¹⁴W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 326.

to a great depth. Its roots become enormous, as thick, as numerous, and as wide spread into the deep soil below as the branches extend in the air above. The sycamore is the very best type of invincible steadfastness. It was surely to this latter fact that our Lord selected it to illustrate the power of faith.¹⁵

The sycamore "is always green. Its wood, which is of a dark hue, endures a thousand years, and was therefore much used in building."¹⁶ The fruit of the sycamore resembles the fig, though it does not have seeds. It is produced on the stems and not on the leafy branches or among the leaves.

The fruit does not ripen unless it is opened by a nail or a piece of iron, so that the juice, which resembles milk, may be emitted; then as the wound grows black, it comes to maturity. Amos 7:14.¹⁷

Henslow says,

The reason for cutting the figs open is to liberate the small insects which always infest the sycamore figs, But by allowing these to escape it becomes edible. . . . that it will not ripen unless it be cut open may be perhaps explained by the fact that the grubs of the flies feed upon the juices within, so that the fig cannot form sugar. If, however, the insects be removed, sugar is produced which renders the figs intensely sweet.¹⁸

¹⁵Luke 17:6.

¹⁶John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 39.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁸G. Henslow, The Plants of the Bible (London: Masters and Co., 1906), pp. 20 f.

The fruit is so sweet that it is harmful to the stomach, and it is therefore not eaten except for the want of something better. "The tree is very productive, yielding fruit seven times a year, and affording a supply of food for the poor, during four months of the year."¹⁹

The fruit is shaken down or picked as it ripens, and is eaten without any preparation.

The instruments used to open the fruit of the sycamore are quite small. They consist of a wooden handle about six inches long, into which a small hook is inserted, or a piece of iron with the cutting edge sharpened.

The Fig Tree

The fig trees are one of the commonest of all the trees of Palestine. They flourish everywhere, in the open country or near the house. They thrive especially in a dry and sandy soil. The fig tree is fairly tall, not altogether erect, but very leafy. It tends to spread out its branches and thus offer an abundance of shade. The shade of the fig tree was very pleasant and well known to the Jews.²⁰ Times of peace and plenty were pictured as "every man sitting under his own vine and under his own fig tree."²¹

¹⁹Jahn, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁰John 1:48.

²¹Nicah 4:4.

Fig trees begin to awaken at the time of the vernal equinox which is March 21.²² The fruit makes its appearance before the leaves and blossoms.²³ The foliage expands about the end of March. The fruit of the fig tree is of three kinds: (1) The untimely fig, which puts forth its fruit at the vernal equinox, and before it is ripe it is called the green fig; but when it is ripe, the untimely fig.²⁴ It comes to maturity the latter part of June, though some may ripen by the end of May. This fig is not nearly of as fine a quality as the later figs, but they are eagerly awaited and considered a special delicacy because they are out of season. (2) The summer or dry fig. This fig appears about the middle of June, and comes to maturity near the end of July to the middle of August. This is the regular yield of fruit from the tree. Besides the untimely fruit and the regular crop of figs, there are also occasionally the third kind. (3) The winter fig, which germinates in August and does not ripen until about the end of November. This fig is longer and of a browner color than the others. With these three crops of figs, the fig tree bears nearly half of the time.

The fig fruit itself is a remarkable structure.

²²Luke 21:29,30; Matt. 24:32.

²³Matt. 21:19; Mark 11:13.

²⁴Hosea 9:10; Jer. 24:2.

It is really a stalk, the upper end of which has taken the form of a bag, which is covered all over the inside with the real flowers. When the fig is ripe the little fruits, one to each flower, resemble round seeds.²⁵

Jesus cursed the fig tree, not because it failed to bear figs at the proper season, but because by sending forth its leaves it gave the impression that it was already bearing fruit. As stated before, the fruit makes its appearance before or at the same time as the leaves. His curse is therefore a warning against hypocrisy.²⁶

The only care a fig tree needed was an occasional digging of the soil around it, and the applying of some fertilizer.²⁷ The fruit of the fig tree is easily picked by hand. All figs when they are ripe, but especially the untimely fig, fall spontaneously to the ground.²⁸

Figs furnished a very nutritious fresh fruit over a long season of each year. They were also dried in the sun and packed away in jars, either separately or in matted cakes, and were available for use all the year round. Henslow tells us, "The milky juice of the fig has the peculiar property of making tough meat tender, if wrapped up in the

²⁵Henslow, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁶Mark 11:13.

²⁷Luke 13:8.

²⁸Nahum 3:12.

leaves."²⁹ There may have been some real use in the application of a fig poultice to certain kinds of sores and pains that required caustic application.

The Carob Tree

The carob tree grows wild in various places in the fields and on the hillsides. The swineherd would take his pigs under the trees and let them eat the fallen husks.³⁰ The husks are fleshy pods from six to ten inches long and about an inch wide. These pods are lined inside with a gelatinous substance and contain bean-sized dark-brown seeds. When they are thoroughly ripe they are not too unpleasant to the taste.³¹ The pods are often eaten by the poorer people.

Flax

Flax has grown from time immemorial from Egypt to Mesopotamia. Flax will thrive almost anywhere. The plant has a yellowish, slender, wiry stem with narrow, pointed leaves and bright blue flowers. It grows from a small, flat, shiny-brown seed, into a tall straight stem, ending in several tufts of seed heads and leaves. When the seed is

²⁹Henslow, op. cit., pp. 16 ff.

³⁰Luke 15:15.

³¹Luke 15:16.

fully formed, but not quite ripe, the flax is pulled up by the roots and bound into sheaves. These sheaves are then dried by the sun in the field or taken to the housetops to dry. Rahab hid the spies of Joshua under such bundles of flax. The root contains an oil, and after the oil is pressed out, the root is used as feed for cattle. The seeds are also threshed out with a flail or stick, to be used as food for men and animals, or to be ground and pressed for the linseed oil which they contain.

The usual process of preparing and loosening the fiber from the pitch and bark of the flax stem is, first, to soak the stems in water for a number of hours. Then by a crushing and combing process³² the useful fiber is separated from the rest of the tissues of the stem. The rough un-combed fiber is called "tow." Since water is precious in many places in Palestine, the flax stems were given a longer drying in the sun before they were crushed and combed. The tow of flax stems was used for the wicks of the oil lamps.³³

The Mustard Plant

It is generally agreed that the mustard tree of Scripture is the black mustard plant and belongs therefore to the herb family. The mustard plant often grows to several

³²Is. 19:1.

³³Matt. 12:20.

feet in height. Dr. Thomson says, "I have seen this plant on the rich plain of Akkar as tall as the horse and the rider."³⁴ The possibility of birds building nests in the mustard plant is very unlikely; but it can surely be said that the birds would come and settle on the mustard plant for the sake of the seeds, of which they are fond, or merely for a short period of rest.³⁵

When the mustard seed was called the "least of all seeds"³⁶ it was no doubt meant to denote a very small seed. "We are not to suppose that the mustard seed is the least of all the seeds in the world; but it was the smallest which the husbandman was accustomed to sow."³⁷ The seed was used mainly in the Jewish diet as a condiment.

Mint and Rue

The garden mint³⁸ is a cultivated form of the wild horsemint. The horsemint is common by the ditches and banks in Palestine and probably has long been cultivated there. Like all other species of mint, it is strongly scented.

³⁴Thomson, op. cit., p. 414.

³⁵Matt. 13:32; Luke 13:19; Mark 4:32.

³⁶Matt. 13:31; Mark 4:31.

³⁷Thomson, op. cit., p. 415.

³⁸Luke 11:42.

Rue is mentioned only once in Scripture.³⁹ The rue spoken of is no doubt the shrubby plant of about two feet high, of strong medicinal virtues. Rue is a native of the Mediterranean coasts.

The Talmud regards rue among the kitchen-herbs and therefore free of tithes as being a plant not cultivated in the gardens. In our Lord's time, however, rue was no doubt a garden plant and therefore tithable.⁴⁰

The Reed

The reed⁴¹ is an aquatic-like plant which thrives along the Arabian gulf, the Nile river, and along the lakes and rivers of Palestine. The reed generally grows to a height of eight or ten feet, and it is about as thick as a man's thumb. Various kinds of reeds were used for making paper, shoes, sails, ropes, pens, and measuring rods.

Lilies

When Jesus said, "consider the lilies of the field,"⁴² it has been suggested that He was not necessarily referring to any one particular plant, because there are many beautiful

³⁹Luke 11:42.

⁴⁰William Smith, A Dictionary of the Bible, revised and edited by F. N. and M. A. Peloubet (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1948), p. 542.

⁴¹Luke 7:24; Matt. 11:7.

⁴²Matt. 6:28; Luke 12:27.

wild flowers in Palestine. However, Jesus uses a word which has a specific meaning in Greek, κρίνον, of which Pliny says, "There is a red lily known to the Greeks by the name of krinon."⁴³ The red lily is abundant throughout all of Galilee.

⁴³Henslow, op. cit., p. 110.

CHAPTER VII

THE FAMILY

In every land the home is the nursery of all that is best and most beautiful. A large family was regarded by the Jews as the greatest of blessings.¹ On the other hand, to be without children was the greatest calamity, indeed a positive reproach.²

Nothing bewilders and shocks the Oriental mind more than the paragraphs of police news sometimes copied from English into Arabic newspapers about the desertion and ill-treatment of children by their parents.³

Birth

In oriental countries childbirth is not an event of much difficulty, and mothers at such a time were originally the only assistants of their daughters, as any further aid was deemed unnecessary. Exodus 1:19. In cases of more than ordinary difficulty, those matrons who had acquired some celebrity for skill and expertness on occasions of this kind were invited in; and in this way there eventually rose into notice that class of women denominated midwives.⁴

When a child was born two or three local musicians were

¹Gen. 24:60.

²Gen. 30:23; Luke 1:25.

³George M. Mackie, Bible Manners and Customs (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), p. 117.

⁴John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 74.

usually waiting outside to know if the new arrival was a boy or girl. If it was a boy they played upon the instruments they had, and sang improvised rhymes complimentary to the dignity of the family. If it was a girl there was no music or gaiety. Nevertheless, a child of either sex was welcomed as a gift of God.

Immediately after birth the child was bathed, rubbed with salt powder, and wrapped tightly in folds of cotton. The baby would look more like a mummy than a happy human child. Jesus was surely cared for in this manner by His mother Mary.⁵

On the eighth day the son was circumcised according to God's command. By the fulfillment of this rite it was consecrated to the service of God. A name was given to the male child at the time of its circumcision. Among the Orientals the name given was always significant. We find that the child was named in many instances from the circumstances of its birth, or from some peculiarities in the history of the family to which it belonged.⁶ In New Testament times names were usually selected from those of the progenitors of a family.⁷ The names of female children are usually taken from beautiful objects in nature, or graces

⁵Luke 2:7.

⁶Gen. 25:25; 35:18; 1 Sam. 1:20.

⁷Matt. 1:12; Luke 1:61; 3:23.

of character. Biblical examples are Dorcas (gazelle), Rhoda (rose), Rachel (lamb), Esther (star).

After a period of forty days in the case of a boy, and twice as long in the case of a baby girl, the mother went into the temple and offered a sacrifice of purification. A lamb of a year old might be offered, or if she was poor, two turtle doves or two young pigeons would be sacrificed.⁸

The infant child was generally nursed by its mother. "Babies are not weaned early. Some are nursed for two years, the last baby may not be weaned until it is four or five years old."⁹ The children could talk and understand what they were told, in many instances, before they were weaned.¹⁰ The day a child was weaned was an occasion for a big feast.¹¹

Education of the Children

The early education of the children was carried on by the mother. The girls remained under their mother's care throughout, but the boys came into the charge of their father's hands in their fifth year. The fathers taught

⁸Lev. 12:1-8.

⁹Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 66.

¹⁰Matt. 21:16.

¹¹Gen. 21:8.

them the arts and duties of life, the Mosaic law, love and respect and obedience to parents, and all parts of their country's history.¹² Those who wished to have their sons further instructed would employ a tutor, or send them away to a school dedicated to the instruction of youth.¹³ The girls spent their time learning the domestic arts and other arts befitting a woman's situation and character. By the time the girl reached the comparatively early marriageable age she knew how to handle a household of her own.

Marriage Ceremonies

The ceremonies preliminary to and attendant on a Jewish marriage differ in many respects from the usage with which we are familiar.

Girls were considered of marriageable age by the time they were thirteen. In general, though, girls were married by the time they were fifteen or sixteen, and men a year or two older.

The important office of the selection of a bride the suitor does not undertake in his own person, but places on his parents or on a friend.¹⁴ If a son had a preference for any girl as his wife, he asked his father to obtain her from

¹²Deut. 6:20-25.

¹³1 Sam. 1:24-28.

¹⁴Gen. 24:1-4.

her father.¹⁵ On the favorable reception of the proposal by the parents of the girl, a formal engagement was entered into, accompanied by a feast and by the presentation of gifts from the bridegroom to the bride. He might also give one to the parents.¹⁶ "In Jewish practice betrothal was of great significance. A betrothed girl was a widow if her betrothed died before the actual wedding."¹⁷

Between the espousal and the marriage itself an interval elapsed, varying from a few days to several months. During the whole of this interval the bride elect was regarded as the wife of her future husband. She was subject to the law of divorce and to other legal punishments, just as if she had been actually married. This explains the passage related to our Savior's birth.¹⁸ During this interval the bridegroom communicated with his bride by means of a friend, who was named the "friend of the bridegroom," and who naturally took a great interest in the proceedings.¹⁹

When the day of the marriage had arrived, the bride adorned herself with choice wedding attire, ornaments, veils,

¹⁵Judges 14:1,2.

¹⁶Gen. 34:11-12.

¹⁷R. V. G. Tasker, The Old Testament in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 109.

¹⁸Matt. 1:18-20.

¹⁹John 3:29.

and perfumes. The wedding ceremony itself usually took place late in the evening. At the appointed hour the bridegroom went forth from his own or his father's house, accompanied by a procession of friends, all of whom were dressed in wedding attire. The friends would bear lamps and torches, and would shout and sing.²⁰ Often musicians were employed. The bridesmaids watched anxiously for the bridegroom's arrival, and as soon as he was seen a shout went up, "The bridegroom cometh!"²¹ Then the bride was taken by the bridegroom from the hands of her parents and escorted back to his own home with greater pomp and noise than ever. As they returned a party of maidens was often waiting at a certain point to join the procession. The greatest watchfulness and readiness were necessary in order to catch the procession as it swept by. This is the feature in the marriage which our Lord selects as the symbol of Christian watchfulness in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.²²

Marriage Feast

As the bride was about to enter the home of her husband "A waterjar was placed on her head and her hand was assisted to plaster a piece of bread-dough on the jamb of the door-

²⁰Matt. 9:15.

²¹Matt. 25:6.

²²Matt. 25:1-13.

way. These signs were in token of good housewifely qualities."²³ After the bride had been seated inside the house her women friends were granted their entry and she allowed them to uncover her face. Then she consented to exhibit her jewelry, silver bracelets, head-coins, ear-jewels, and so forth.

The marriage feast which then took place was as elaborate as the family or the bridegroom could afford. The wealthy would provide wedding garments for the guests.²⁴ The guests were seated according to their rank or according to the honor which the groom wished to bestow on them.²⁵ The wedding feast would often last a number of days and much rejoicing and feasting took place. It was considered a disgrace not to have enough food and drink for everyone. Thus we find Mary very much concerned at the wedding in Cana when the wine began to get low.²⁶

The Married State

"It was counted an affliction if the new wife was not a mother in due time."²⁷ A large number of offspring was

²³ Grant, op. cit., pp. 58 f.

²⁴ Matt. 22:4,11,12.

²⁵ Luke 14:7-9.

²⁶ John 2:3-5.

²⁷ Grant, op. cit., p. 63.

considered an instance of the divine favor of the highest kind. Sons were more desired because they transmitted the name of the father in genealogies, and when they married they brought home their wives and thus increased the size, force, wealth, and importance of the family. Girls would go to strengthen another house.

Divorce

Marriage involved a lifelong obligation for both parties. God's arrangement that "a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh,"²⁸ was to be observed by the people. No one had the right to dissolve a marriage,²⁹ and though the Mosaic law recognized the possibility of divorce, Jesus says it was because of the people's hardheartedness,³⁰ and permissible only on account of fornication.³¹ A husband could not put away his wife without giving her a "writing of divorcement."³² In the time of Christ "the school of Hillel contended that the husband might lawfully put away the wife for any cause,

²⁸Gen. 2:24.

²⁹Matt. 19:6.

³⁰Matt. 19:8; Mark 10:5-7.

³¹Matt. 5:31-32.

³²Matt. 5:31.

even the smallest."³³ Jesus agreed with the school of Shammai, as far as this, that the ground of divorce should be one of a moral nature.

If a wife was suspected of being unfaithful,

the power was given to the husband who suspected his wife of infidelity of exacting from her, in the temple or tabernacle, what may be termed the ordeal oath. Num. 5:11-31. To this oath were attached such dreadful penalties that a person really guilty certainly could not take it without betraying her criminality by some indications, unless she possessed the extremity of hardihood. . . . Dreadful as it was, there were not wanting wives who set it at defiance; licentiousness increased, and adulteries were manifold, especially in the later periods of the Jewish state. The Talmudists themselves state, that the law in regard to the suspected wife was abrogated as much as forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The reason they assign for it is, that the men themselves were at that period generally adulterers, and that God would not fulfil the horrid imprecations of the ordeal oath upon the wife alone, while the husband was guilty of the same crime. Comp. John 8:1-8.³⁴

Death

When anyone took sick in the family, the whole family group was disturbed. So little was known about disease and sickness and its treatment that illness caused general fear and even terror. The Jews were inclined to regard death as a formidable enemy. Physicians were called and various remedies were used. Prayers also were said, for the Jews knew that God, who sent the illness, could also cure it if it was

³³Jahn, op. cit., p. 73.

³⁴Ibid.

His will.³⁵

The whole family would crowd into the sickroom to show their sympathy, while by their tears and crying, and the congestion caused, they only made recovery more difficult. If the patient should die "the customs of the people demand that there should be loud, boisterous, uncontrollable weeping, mourning, beating of the breast, and every other external manifestation of great sorrow."³⁶ These cries continued for some time and were taken up by the neighbors so that it soon penetrated the whole community. In hearing such Christ said, "Why make ye this ado and weep?"³⁷

Besides the mourning a person's grief was shown by rending his garments, scattering dust and ashes on his head, and fasting for a time.

Burial

The body of the deceased was washed and wrapped in many folds of linen called "grave clothes."³⁸ This was then sprinkled with sweet-smelling balms, as "spikenard"³⁹ and

³⁵Ps. 103:3; Matt. 9:21.

³⁶W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 577.

³⁷Mark 5:39.

³⁸John 11:44.

³⁹Mark 14:3.

"myrrh and aloes."⁴⁰ The body was then placed on a stretcher or bier and carried by friends or relatives to the burying place and laid to rest. The mourners walked along beside the bier mourning and wailing as they went. Even the dogs would start a pitiful crying and howling.

A family often selected a cave as a burying place, if one could be found, which they would trim and square and cut in it as many niches as they expected to need. Their posterity would cut new niches as occasion required. When the original room was full a new one could be cut out behind it in the soft limestone rock. This enlarging could be done as long as the family existed.

Other graves might consist of a hole dug in the side of the rock, thus forming an artificial cave, in front of which a stone could be rolled to serve as a door.⁴¹ A grave might also be a hole dug in a rock with a slab of limestone serving as a lid. These lids were whitewashed; a very striking picture of those "whited sepulchers"⁴² the hypocritical Pharisees, beautiful without, but full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness within. "In the time of Christ the tombs of Israel's heroes were adorned and ven-

⁴⁰John 19:39.

⁴¹Matt. 28:2; Mark 16:3; Luke 24:2; John 20:1.

⁴²Matt. 23:27.

erated. Jesus alludes to this in Luke 11:47,48.⁴³

⁴³George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), pp. 225 f.

... differ from ours with regard to color, texture, and value. Cotton cloth was most common, and ... Next in importance was woolen and linen cloth. The cloth made from the hair of animals was considered of least value. There is no early mention of silk, however it is clear that Alexander found silk in Persia. Silk was used in Christ's time largely for the dress of women of means.

Colors of Cloth

White was considered the most appropriate colour for ordinary cloth, purple for the others. On festival days the rich and powerful robed themselves in white cotton, which was considered the most splendid dress.⁴

White cloth was colored purple by the blood taken from the side of a shell fish. The scarlet color was extracted from the insects, or their eggs, found on a species of oak. The deep blue color was extracted from the cuttle-fish. Many colors obtained were also worn by the Jews.

⁴John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas D. Spang (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Nelson and Co., 1877), p. 60.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRESS OF PALESTINE

Oriental dress differs from ours with regard to material, shape, and color. Cotton cloth was most common, and esteemed the most valuable. Next in importance was woolen and linen cloth. The cloth made from the hair of animals was esteemed of least value. There is no early mention made of silk, however it is clear that Alexander found silks in Persia. Silk was used in Christ's time largely for the outer cloak of women of means.

Colors of Cloth

White was esteemed the most appropriate colour for cotton cloth, purple for the others. On festival days the rich and powerful robed themselves in white cotton, which was considered the most splendid dress.¹

Cotton cloth was colored purple by the blood taken from the veins of a shell fish. The scarlet color was extracted from the insects, or their eggs, found on a species of oak. The dark blue color was extracted from the cuttle-fish. Many-colored clothes were also worn by the Jews.

¹John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 60.

The Tunic

This was the most simple and perhaps the most ancient garment. It was a piece of cloth, commonly linen, which encircled the whole body, and descended to the knees. It had either short sleeves or no sleeves at all. Those who were clothed with only a tunic were sometimes said to be naked.² The orientals, when they find it necessary to emit urine, seek an obscure place, and in a sitting position discharge themselves upon the earth; with the exception of the very lowest class of people, who often defile the walls.³

The Girdle

The tunic, when it was not girded, impeded the person who wore it in walking. The girdle was either a sash or belt of leather. The leather girdle was about six inches wide and furnished with clasps with which it was fastened around the body.⁴ The sash was a more valuable form of girdle. It was made of cotton or flax, and sometimes of silk or an embroidered fabric. It was about a hand's breadth broad and often had clasps to fasten it to the body. If clasps were not provided, the sash was tied. The girdle

²Jeremiah 21:7.

³1 Samuel 25:22,34.

⁴Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:6.

also answered the purpose of a pouch to carry money or other necessary things.⁵ Girding stands as a figure of preparation for, or engaging in work, travel, service, or warfare. The girdle is the only tight fitting part of Oriental dress.

The Cloak

This was the garment immediately over the tunic. In the Authorized Version of the Bible it is also called the "garment," "raiment," or "vesture." It is the ἱμάτιον and ἔνδυμα of the Greek New Testament. The cloak was a piece of cloth nearly square, eight or nine feet long and five or six feet wide, and was wrapped around the body. When the weather was nice it was more conveniently worn over the shoulders than wrapped around the body. The two corners, which were drawn over the shoulders, were called the skirts or wings of the garment. Frequently this garment was hung over the left shoulder, where it hung lengthwise, partly over the back and partly over the breast. It was fastened by the two corners under the right cheek.

While it answered the purposes of a cloak, it was so large that the fold above a second sash was used to carry food, a lamb, or even a measure of grain.⁶ The whole cloak might be used to carry grain or other burdens by tying it

⁵Matt. 10:9; Mark 6:8.

⁶Luke 6:38.

together at the corners and carrying it on the back. The poor wrapped themselves up in this cloak at night. Thus, if it was taken as security for a debt, it could not be kept overnight, for without it "wherein shall he sleep?"⁷

In the time of Christ the creditors did not take the cloak, but the tunic, which agrees with the representation of Jesus in Matthew 5:40. Moses enacted a law that there should be a fringe upon the four corners of this garment, together with a blue ribband, to remind the people of His statutes.⁸

The *χλαμὺς κοκκίνη*, which is mentioned in Matt. 27:28, and Mark 15:17, was a red robe of the Roman military which extended down to the knees and was fastened over the breast.

The cloak mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:13, was a Roman garment meant for protection against the rain, and to be worn on journeys. It was closed throughout, but had an opening for the neck, by which it was placed over the head and supported on the shoulders.

Sandals

In order to keep the feet from being cut by sharp rocks, or burnt by the hot sand, small pieces of wood or

⁷Exodus 22:25.

⁸Matt. 9:20; Luke 8:44.

leather were bound to the bottom of the feet. The sandal was usually a stout piece of leather bound to the foot by a thong.⁹ The people took off their sandals when they entered a house, and put them on when they left it. To loose and to bind the sandals was the duty of the lowest servants.¹⁰ They often carried their masters' sandals.¹¹ Since the wearers did not have on stockings, their feet became dusty and soiled; accordingly, when they took off their sandals and entered a house, they washed their feet, which was also the duty of the servants. In some instances where the guests were distinguished men, the master of the house washed their feet.¹²

The Headdress

The headdress might be any one of a number of types, depending on the time and place in which it was worn. It might be a large piece of cloth which was wound around the head several times, then the ends of the cloth were tucked into the folds to secure it. Or a turban headdress, consisting of a long strip of cloth wound around the head, might be used. Also there was a square cloth, folded diag-

⁹Mark 1:7; Luke 3:18.

¹⁰Mark 1:7.

¹¹Matt. 3:11.

¹²Genesis 18:4; Luke 7:44.

onally, and held on the head by several coils of woven goat hair. This last is the napkin or handkerchief of Luke 19:20; John 11:44; 20:7; Acts 19:12.

The Veil

The difference between the dress of men and women was small. The difference consisted chiefly in the fineness of the materials and in the length of the garment. Other marks of distinction were the wider girdle, the badger skin shoes of wealthy women, and especially the veil.

The veil was worn by all females, except the maids and others in a low condition in life. When at home, they did not speak with a guest without being veiled. When traveling, the women threw the veil over the back part of the head, but if they saw a man approaching, they quickly pulled the veil over their face. The prostitutes went unveiled.

Ornaments and Jewelry

The staff was not only used by a shepherd or traveler to help him in his shepherding or traveling, but it appears that a staff was also carried merely for ornament.¹³ In imitation of the Babylonians, a seal, or signet, was suspended from the neck. The name of the owner was usually engraved on the signet. The signet might also be set in a

¹³Exodus 12:11; Genesis 38:25.

ring to be worn on the hand.¹⁴ Most of the finger rings were simple circles of metal; usually they were of bronze; sometimes of iron. Silver and gold rings were comparatively few in number and of small size. They evidently were highly regarded by well-to-do people, for in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells us that the father "put a ring on his hand" (Luke 15:22).

The ornaments of women were much more elaborate and numerous than those of the men. The women wore a number of rings upon their fingers and pendants in the ear and nose.¹⁵ The rings were made of silver and gold, or other metals, depending on the person's wealth. The pendants sometimes consisted of pearls¹⁶ suspended by a thread. The women also wore rings of silver and gold and other materials around their ankles. Necklaces and bracelets were sometimes made of silver or coral.¹⁷ Beads were highly valued from the earliest times and were made of various colored stones. Mirrors were made of molten brass and polished.¹⁸ Combs were made of bone or ivory. They were both straight and curved, ornamented and unornamented. The purse of the

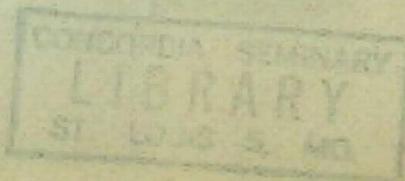
¹⁴Jeremiah 22:24.

¹⁵Genesis 24:22; Isaiah 3:21.

¹⁶Matt. 7:6; 13:45-46; Ezekiel 16:11.

¹⁷Exodus 35:20.

¹⁸Exodus 38:8.



woman was made of metal and fashioned like a cone. It was suspended from the girdle which she wore.

Cosmetics

The Jewish women copied the ideas of the Babylonians and Egyptians also in their makeup. The oils and creams they used often came from neighboring countries. The dark tint they gave to their eyebrows was a black lead found throughout the East. Another paint was made from the ashes of the alkanet plant and was used to give a yellow color to the arms and feet.

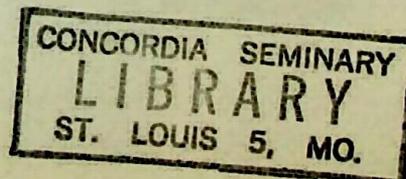
After a bath the body was anointed with perfumed oil. The most costly of all was the nard, the "spikenard," with which Jesus was anointed by Mary of Bethany.¹⁹ The poor used ordinary olive oil instead of the perfumed variety.

Hair and Beard

The Jews were inclined to let their hair grow. Sometimes the razor was used to trim the hair, with the exception of the Nazarites to whom a cutting of the hair was forbidden. Baldness was a source of contempt, while a heavy head of hair was esteemed a great ornament.²⁰ The hair was combed and anointed with ointment on special occasions.

¹⁹John 12:3.

²⁰2 Samuel 14:26.



"The color of the hair of the oriental people is commonly black, rarely red, which was esteemed a favorite color."²¹ The women usually let their hair grow very long. Thus Mary of Bethany was able to wipe Jesus' feet with her hair, after she had anointed them.²² Short hair was usually looked upon as a sign of doubtful morals.²³

The beard was considered a great ornament among the Jews. "No one was allowed to touch it except for the purpose of kissing it. To pluck or shave the beard, or to mar it in any way was considered a great disgrace."²⁴

²¹Jahn, op. cit., pp. 62 f.

²²John 12:1-3; 11:2; Luke 7:38.

²³1 Corinthians 11:15.

²⁴Jahn, op. cit., p. 62.

CHAPTER IX

FOOD AND DRINK

Bread and water were considered the two essentials of life. When water and grain were plentiful, it was truly a time of contentment.

Grains Used for Food

Of the grains grown in Palestine, wheat and barley were most commonly used by the Jews for food. Millet and spelt were also used in times of scarcity or by the very poor. Wheat was considered the best grain for bread, but barley was used to a great extent by the poorer classes. Wheat was often eaten without any preparation at all.¹ Many times though, it was picked while in the late, milky stage, and the kernels were parched over a fire. Shepherds and travelers carried parched grain in their purses.

Mills for Grinding Grain

Since there were neither public mills nor bakers, except the king's,² each family and many individuals had their own mills. It was an infringement of the law for a person

¹Matt. 12:1.

²Genesis 40:2; Hosea 7:4-10.

to take another's mill or millstone as a pledge, for without his mill he would be in a bad situation.

Perhaps the earliest mill consisted of two stones or pieces of wood which were rubbed together to crush the kernels of grain. The large mortar and pestle, similar to a druggist's, did a fairly effective job of grinding. Every family usually had one or more of these mortars and pestles. Many of these have been found in excavations at Gezer. Another mill might be a flat, saddle-shaped piece of rock on which grain was crushed by a smaller oval piece of rock. The mill common among the Jews was a rotary mill. It consisted of two circular stones about two feet in diameter and a half foot thick. The upper stone was not always as thick as the bottom stone. The bottom stone had a slight rise in the center, and was often fixed in the floor. The upper stone was movable, and in order to make it fit precisely to the bottom stone, it was slightly hollowed. In the middle of it was a hole through which the grain was admitted. Near the outer edge of the upper stone a handle was attached to turn the stone.

Two women usually sat at the mill facing each other.³ Both took hold of the handles, one put grain in the hole, and they pulled to, and pushed from, as men do with a cross-cut saw. The rotary motion drew the grain outward between

³Matt. 24:41.

the stones, which crushed and ground it to flour. The flour fell on a mat or on the floor all around the mill. The flour was then sifted to remove the bits of stone and other coarse particles of grain.

Grinding was the task of the women, and it was done nearly every day, except on the Sabbath, as the warm climate made it difficult to keep bread any longer without its becoming insipid and rough to the palate.

Baking Bread

Kneading troughs were a sort of wooden trays, in which the flour, being mixed with water, was reduced to a doughy mass, and after remaining a short time, was kneaded, some leaven⁴ being added to it. The leaven was made by adding a little sour milk to some flour and letting it stand in a warm place for several hours. In case it was necessary to prepare the bread very hastily, the leaven was left out.⁵ On festival days the Jews also ate unleavened bread.⁶

The loaves, when made, were round, and nine or ten inches in diameter. The unleavened bread was not thicker than a knife, but the leavened loaves were as thick as a man's little finger. This bread was not cut with a knife, but

⁴Luke 13:21.

⁵Exodus 12:39.

⁶Leviticus 2:11.

broken apart.

There were various types of ovens. One type was mere sand which was heated by a fire. The fire was removed and the loaves were quickly placed upon it. In a little while they were turned, and afterwards, to complete the process, were covered with ashes and hot coals. Unless they were turned they were not thoroughly baked.⁷ Another type of oven was a pit in the earth, about two to three feet in diameter and from five to six feet deep. The bottom is covered with stones; when the stones are heated the fire is taken away, the loaves are placed on the stones, and the mouth of the oven is shut. There was also a movable oven, made of brick, and sealed inside and out with clay. A fire was built within it, and the dough was placed upon the outside where it baked. Another oven was a plate of iron, slightly convex, placed upon three stones; a fire was kindled beneath it and the dough was placed on the upper surface to bake. The last type of oven we will mention was a cylindrical clay structure about three feet high and two feet in diameter, covered with a lid. A fire was built and then allowed to smolder. Small loaves were stuck to the inside surface above the live coals where they baked thoroughly.

The materials for the fire consisted of twigs, straw,

⁷Hosea 7:8.

dried animal dung, and grass.⁸

In the parable of the Importunate Friend⁹ it may sound rather strange to us that three loaves are asked for to provide a meal for his friend, for with us one would be amply sufficient. The loaf, however, was no larger than a thick pancake about nine inches in diameter, and it would take two of these to make a meal for a hungry man! It was also essential in Oriental hospitality to place before a guest more than he could eat, especially in the case of bread. These facts again show the minute accuracy of Jesus' parables.

Other Foods

Nearly every Jewish home had its small garden in which various vegetables as beans, lentils, onions, garlic, lettuce, cabbage, celery, and parsley were carefully tended. Lentils, resembling small split peas, were a special favorite of the Jews. A vegetable stew was often prepared as the main meal of the day. Besides a variety of vegetables, small bits of meat might be added to the stew to give it a full flavor.

For seasoning the Jews had salt, dill, mustard, and coriander seed. Cinnamon bark, mint, anise, and saffron were used as flavoring.

⁸Matt. 6:30.

⁹Luke 11:5-8.

Meats

The Jews were very sparing in their use of meats. To kill an ox would mean a loss in the source of milk and of power for farming. To kill a sheep or goat would mean a loss of milk and wool. Only when there was a craving for meat, or an occasion for a feast, would a "clean" animal be killed. And, then, several families had to go together on such an occasion, for every morsel had to be eaten, as the Jews had no way of preserving meat for more than a few days. Very rarely would the Jews dry meat in the sun or pack it in salt brine.

On these special festival days, especially the Pass-over, and when a long-absent relative¹⁰ returned home, or a special guest arrived, a calf, or kid, or lamb might be served. The meat was prepared similar to our barbecue method of today. After the animal was skinned and seasoned, a sharp stick was thrust through from the tail to the head of the animal; the feet were bound to the side of the carcass, and it was placed on two forked sticks on either side of the fire. Lambs and kids were generally always prepared in the above manner. A fatted calf or larger animal was usually divided into smaller pieces before it was roasted over a fire.

¹⁰Luke 15:23.

Fowl, as well as fish, were cleaned and often prepared whole over a fire.¹¹ Fish might also be thoroughly salted and dried in the hot sun, and could then be kept some time without spoiling.¹² Eggs provided a good source of protein for the Jews, and amply supplemented the meat requirements of the body.

Locusts were also commonly roasted by the people. The wings and feet were taken off and the intestines extracted, then they were salted, placed upon a sharp piece of wood and roasted over a fire. They were also prepared by boiling.

Since salt was used very much in the preparation of meats it will be well to say a few words regarding it. The salt used in Palestine was obtained from the marshes along the sea shore, from the salt lakes in the interior, and the salt beds east of the Jordan. In gathering this salt many impurities were collected with it. Some of it was so impure it could not be used at all; such salt would soon effloresce and turn to dust--not to good soil, however. Other salt, because of its impurities, when exposed to moisture would become insipid and useless. It was not only good for nothing, but actually destroyed all fertility wherever it was thrown. This is the reason why it was cast into the

¹¹John 21:9.

¹²Mark 8:7.

street to be trodden upon by man and beast.¹³

Beverages

Water was the essential beverage of the Jew, as it is of all people. The Jews depended on the rainy seasons to insure them of brooks of water, of fountains, and springs, for their water supply.

The water supply of Palestinian cities and villages came in part from the springs near which they were built. This supply was, however, seldom sufficient, so that from early days cisterns were built to catch the waters of the rainy season and conserve it for use during the dry summer months. These cisterns were often dug in the solid rock, but sometimes were pits in the ground, over the bottom of which a layer of rocks were placed.

In another place a well might be dug which reached down to an underground stream, as the famous Jacob's well.

The work of drawing water was done by the women. Thus appears the striking character of the sign which Jesus gave to Peter and John, by which they should know where to prepare the Passover, "There you shall meet a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters."¹⁴ In all probability this was the only man in the

¹³Matt. 5:13.

¹⁴Mark 14:13; Luke 22:10.

city that day carrying a waterpot. It is difficult to understand why he was doing such work.

The spring or well was often a quarter of a mile or more from the home. "When the spring or well is very small or low, and it takes a long time to fill a jar, the women and young girls will go out before it is light to get first turn at the trickling stream."¹⁵

The water was carried in a rather large earthenware vessel. "It is this practice of carrying such a heavy weight on the head that gives these women fine figures and graceful carriage."¹⁶

The Jews purified their water by letting it stand in these earthen jars. An unglazed jar, when placed in a breezy window, also proved a very effective means of keeping water cool, much the same as our canvass water bags of today.

Milk was also an important part in the diet of the family. It was kept in jars immersed in cool springs of water or in a nearby cave. Milk was provided largely by the goats. If the family had a cow, it would be milked. Sheep also were a source of milk. The shepherd used the milk of sheep as well as that of the goats.

¹⁵Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 219.

¹⁶James Neil, Everyday Life in the Holy Land (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1920), p. 10.

Soured milk was also made into cheese. Butter was made in a goatskin churn and used for cooking purposes, though olive oil was preferred.

Wine was frequently used by the Jews, generally at meals. The wine of Palestine was very rich and therefore was diluted with water. Wine was sometimes mixed with spices, especially myrrh.

Mealtime

Only two meals are mentioned in the New Testament:

ἄριστον,¹⁷ "breakfast," and *δειπνον*,¹⁸ "dinner."

There are only two formal meals a day partaken of amongst the great mass of the people in Bible lands-- breakfast at an early hour in the morning, and dinner, which, amongst all classes, is at "sundown."¹⁹

A light lunch was enjoyed by many around midday. The principal meal was dinner, for the burning heat of the day in Eastern countries diminished the appetite for food.

The Table and Method of Sitting

The table of the East was generally a piece of round leather, spread upon the floor, and upon which was placed a sort of stool. This supported nothing but a platter.

¹⁷John 21:12.

¹⁸Luke 14:12.

¹⁹Neill, op. cit., p. 79.

The seat was the floor, spread with a mattress, carpet, cushion, upon which those who ate sat with legs bent and crossed. The family and guests sat in a circle around the piece of leather, with the right side towards the table, so that one might be said to lean upon the bosom of another.²⁰ Since neither knife, fork, nor spoon was used, it was the custom to spread a cloth around the circular leather to prevent the mats from being soiled.

In the time of Christ a Persian custom also prevailed in reclining at table. Three sat upon one mat or cushion, which was only large enough to hold that many. The guests reclined on their left sides with their faces towards the table, so that the head of the second approached the breast of the first, and so on. From this Persian custom no doubt the origin of the word ἀρχιτρικλινος "The master of the feast," arose.²¹ The center place on the middle mat or cushion was for the host. The middle mat or cushion and the center position on any given mat was the most honorable and was the one coveted by the Pharisees.²²

In the time of Christ, the arrogant Pharisees, who, imitating the example of heathen philosophers, wished to secure the highest marks of distinction, sought of

²⁰Luke 7:36,38; 17:22,23; John 13:23.

²¹John 2:8.

²²Luke 14:8,10.

course the most honourable seats at the feasts."²³

The women were not allowed at the tables of the men, but had a table set in their own appropriate apartment.

Mode of Eating

Throughout the East the people, rich or poor, high or low, both carved and ate with their fingers. It was thus necessary to wash the hands before and after eating. They dipped their hands into a common dish. Drink was handed to each one in a cup or bowl made of brass or wood. The rich had cups of gold and silver, and servants standing by to fill them.

When at a meal your host desires to show you special kindness or attention, he will put his right hand into the stew, and take some dainty piece of meat or fat and put it in your mouth, or else roll up a ball of greasy rice and present it to you in the same way. . . . But it is a more delicate arrangement when the host employs the impromptu three-cornered spoon, or "sop." For this he always uses his right hand; for all the carving and eating must be done with right hand. . . . How lifelike and unspeakably solemn in this view is the evident reference to a host's act of kindness and condescension in putting a delicate morsel in the mouth of a guest, when we read in John's Gospel that Jesus said privately to him who leaned on His breast, "He it is to whom I shall give the sop when I have dipped it."

This special form of the sop is evidently the little three-cornered breadspoon which is dipped into the

²³John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 69.

dish to bring up a delicate morsel.²⁴

Formal Banquets

The occasion of a wedding, a weaning, the visit of a special guest, called for a special banquet. The guests were invited by the servants, and were requested to come at a particular time.²⁵ Grant says, "Invitations to a hospitable feast or meal are often sent out shortly before the actual hour, if not just at the very time."²⁶ It was rude to refuse an invitation at any time, inexcusable to do it at the last moment.

When the guests arrived, the host greeted them with a kiss,²⁷ and commanded his servants to wash their feet.²⁸

The guests were then anointed with precious ointment,²⁹ and conducted to the banquet room.

Upon such an occasion the food provided was not the usual stew, but the "fatted calf,"³⁰ lamb, or kid barbecued before the fire. Thomson relates, "The killing of a

²⁴Neil, op. cit., pp. 83 f.

²⁵Matt. 22:3,4; Luke 14:15-24.

²⁶Grant, op. cit., p. 161.

²⁷Luke 7:45.

²⁸Luke 7:44; John 13:14.

²⁹Luke 7:38,39; Luke 7:46.

³⁰Luke 15:23.

sheep, calf or kid in honour of a visitor is strictly required by their laws of hospitality, and the neglect of it keenly resented.³¹ It seems that the killing, roasting, and eating followed in rapid succession. Every effort was put forth to make the banquet enjoyable to all.³²

The feasts were always held towards evening. The room or rooms where they were held were lighted up by candles and torches. The banquets were often continued until early morning. The climate in Palestine gets quite cold during the night. It has been suggested that this may afford a clue to the explanation of the "weeping and gnashing of teeth."³³

From these feasts, jests, music, riddles were not excluded.³⁴

³¹Thomson, op. cit., pp. 446 f.

³²Luke 10:41.

³³Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30.

³⁴Luke 15:23-25; Judges 14:12-18.

CHAPTER X

THE CITY AND VILLAGE

The distinction between the city and village was carefully made in the law of Moses. The city had a wall around it and was entered by gates, while the village was without walls and gates.¹

Though it was not always the case, yet the greater number of Palestinian cities and villages were built on hilly sites. The chief reason for this was the need for safety and defense against marauding tribes. The houses were built close together in the villages so their walls might serve as a solid barrier. The city had a separate wall built around it for protection.

Even more important than an elevated situation was a water supply, hence all Palestinian cities of importance are near springs. The necessity of being near a spring led, in some cases, to the erection of a city on a level plain. This was the case with Jericho; . . . But a city "set on a hill" (Mt. 5:14) was a common feature of the Palestinian landscape.²

The cities and villages of Palestine, so far as appearance is concerned, vary in size merely.

The houses of a small village are oftentimes just as closely packed as the buildings in a city, so that

¹Lev. 25:29-31.

²George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 164.

the village will look like a fragment knocked off a city.³

Village Life

The farmers were the foundation of the village. Their lands laid around the village and may even extend a considerable distance from it. The farmers go out to their work in the fields and usually they do not return until sunset.

At sunset, the village cattle and donkeys that have been out all day in the neighboring common and bare fields are brought by the herdsman to the entrance of the village. There they leave him, and find their way through the village lanes each to his own place of rest for the night.⁴

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib."⁵

Life in the village was very simple. There was intimate knowledge of each other's affairs, and ready sympathy in all times of family rejoicing and sorrow. The women had much to speak about as they waited at the well to fill their water jars. The men met in the evening to discuss the village matters and to hear the latest news. A village carpenter, potter, and other merchants would supply the village needs.

The annual tax paid by each adult was figured and paid in the village in which he was born. Thus Joseph returned

³Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 43.

⁴George M. Mackie, Bible Manners and Customs (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), p. 130.

⁵Is. 1:3.

to Bethlehem.⁶

Village Growth

The growth of a village was chiefly due to the caravan routes, or its establishment as a seat of government. Villages that grew into cities were usually located in the good grain or vineyard areas. As the village grew larger the crowded conditions, the need for straight streets, and planned development became more and more evident.

Streets and Lanes

Some of the streets were so narrow and winding that they were really lanes or narrow alleys.⁷ Dr. Thomson says,

I have read all my life about crooked, narrow streets, . . . and no sidewalks, but I never understood till now. How are we to get past this line of loaded camels? Well, by bowing the head, creeping under, and dodging from side to side we have accomplished that feat; but here is a string of donkeys carrying brush and water; their bundles actually sweep both sides of the street, and there can be no creeping under this time. . . . but here is a recess in the wall into which we can step until they have passed by.⁸

There was no drainage; and refuse was thrown into the streets to be trodden under by man and animal or devoured by the dogs. The villages and cities would be ill-smelling

⁶Luke 2:4.

⁷Luke 14:21.

⁸W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 32.

places. The wonder is that the mortality rate was not much greater than it was.

The narrow streets did cast shadows, which in some degree counteracted the heat of the sun.

Walls and Gates

The material for the walls of the city was laboriously cut out of rock. As it was less trouble to cut one thick one than two smaller ones, some of these stones are of gigantic size. Some of the walls were not joined together by mortar, but held in position by their own weight. Such might have been the walls of Jericho. The walls of a more fortified city would be built up with masonry. The height and thickness of the walls was depended upon to keep out the enemy.

The city gate was large and massive. It was usually made of oak with a facing of iron or bronze. Through these gates the traffic of the main roads entered the city. The gates were closed at sunset and opened at sunrise. The gates were secured by means of locks and large bars. Sometimes there were double gates, that is, an inner and an outer gate.⁹ Above the gate or at either side, strong towers were built for the use of the watchman who guarded the city. These towers were manned by soldiers if the city was

⁹ 2 Sam. 18:24.

besieged.

Regarding the "strait gate"¹⁰ Dr. Thomson states,

I have seen these strait gates and narrow ways, "with here and there a traveller." They are in retired corners and must be searched for, and are opened only to those who knock; and when the sun goes down, and the night comes on, they are shut and locked.¹¹

Many of the gates in Jerusalem took their name from the market places within, as, the Sheep Gate and the Fish Gate.

Market Places

The market of the city or village was usually its chief street. Here the buyers and sellers met each other, here the laden camels and donkeys from the country about came with their goods, and here the people on business would meet those who could serve them. The laborers would usually meet in the market place waiting to be hired.¹²

Shops and storerooms lined the market street. The gardener with his produce, vendors of fabrics, pottery, sandals, the money changers, the scribe and many others, were found here. If no room could be found on the market street, a near adjoining street was sought.

A shop or store was a little room from six to a dozen feet square, with a door perhaps, but seldom a window, and

¹⁰Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24.

¹¹Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹²Matt. 20:2.

a counter with the necessary shelves or bins. Dr. Thomson describes the activity in the market place as follows,

The noise is incessant, and at a distance sounds like that of "many waters." Every man is crying his wares at the top of his voice, chickens cackle and squall, donkeys bray and fight, and the dogs bark. Every living thing adds somewhat to the many-toned and prodigious uproar. It is now a miscellaneous comedy in full operation, where every actor does his best, and is supremely gratified with his own performance.¹³

¹³Thomson, op. cit., p. 443.

Caves, and huts, and tents were the early dwelling places of ancient times and are still used by the Jews. Caves are not only numerous in Palestine, but many of them are built large and dry. They formed convenient dwellings, being warm in the winter and cool in the summer. One room, or more, might be built of stone in front of the cave opening, and the deeper recesses of the cave served well as storage space. Caves were frequently used by the shepherds and their flocks. Some caves served as repositories for the dead. In the time of persecution and war the caves were used as a refuge for the oppressed and vanquished. Caves also were the hideouts for robbers.¹

Hut huts were constructed of reeds, woven in a basket-like form to serve as walls, which were then plastered with mud inside and outside. Such huts were built for temporary

CHAPTER XI

DWELLINGS

In the Oriental lands the house is very specially a place of shelter from the heat, rather than a place of privacy and protection from the cold, as in other lands.

Early Dwellings

Caves, mud huts, and tents were the early dwelling places of ancient times and are still used by the Jews. Caves are not only numerous in Palestine, but many of them are both large and dry. They formed convenient dwellings, being warm in the winter and cool in the summer. One room, or more, might be built of stone in front of the cave opening, and the deeper recesses of the cave served well as storage space. Caves were frequently used by the shepherds and their flocks. Some caves served as sepulchers for the dead. In the times of persecution and war the caves were used as a refuge for the oppressed and vanquished. Caves also were the hideouts for robbers.¹

Mud huts were constructed of reeds, woven in a basket-like form to serve as walls, which were then plastered with mud inside and outside. Such huts were built for temporary

¹Luke 19:46.

use only. In Palestine they would be found largely along the Jordan valley; and would be inhabited by the seasonal gardeners, who tilled the river's bank during the dry summer months. The flood season would usually destroy these huts, but their loss was very small, and another could be very easily built.

Tents were a familiar sight in Palestine. They provided the shelter of the Israelites during the forty years of wandering in the desert, and still serve as protection for nomadic peoples. The shepherds of Palestine and travelers often relied on tents for protection. Such a tent might be only a blanket stretched across two poles, which would thus provide shade or protection from the elements.

The smaller tents are sustained by three poles only and covered with a fabric, woven of wool and camel's hair; the large ones are sustained sometimes by seven and sometimes by nine poles. The three longest of these poles, whether seven or nine in number, are erected in the middle, and on each side of the middle row are placed two or three others parallel, though shorter much than those between them; they are covered with a black cloth made of goat's hair. The pole in the middle is taller than any of the rest, though it rarely exceeds eight or ten feet.

The larger kind of tents are divided by curtains into three parts, . . . In the external division or apartment the servants lodge, and during the night the young animals also, to prevent their sucking the dam. In the second apartment are the males, but if the tent be smaller than usual, all the males of the tent, together with the animals just mentioned, are lodged together. The third or interior apartment is allotted to the women.²

²John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas C. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 22.

On the floor of the tent were mats or carpets of various sizes and textures, depending upon the wealth of the owner. Light was provided by a flax wick inserted in a shell-like dish, which was filled with olive oil. A fire place consisted of "three stones, placed so as to form a triangle. In the middle of them is a small excavation of the earth, where the fire is kindled; the vessels are placed over it upon the stones."³ On the center poles of the tent clothing, wineskins, and the lamps were hung.⁴ The millstone, cooking utensils, blankets, and the jars and baskets of food completed the furnishings of the tent.

The House

Due to a plentiful supply of rock and stone in Palestine, the majority of the houses were constructed of these materials. Some houses, however, were made of clay that had been formed into tiles.

The foundation of the house was merely a levelled area of ground. The climate of Palestine eliminated the necessity of digging down below the frost line to make a secure foundation. The builder was careful, however, to choose a site above the level of a stream or watercourse. He was

³Ibid.

⁴Luke 8:16.

sure the ground on which he built his house was solid.⁵

The walls of stone houses were constructed of rough stones of a great variety of sizes. The stones were set in clay or mud, and the spaces between them were filled with this same mud. If these spaces were not carefully sealed, serpents and scorpions might crawl into them.⁶ The largest stones were placed in the corners, and they served as a guide by which the builder was able to keep the walls of the house fairly straight.

The doorways were simply an opening about six feet in height and perhaps two to three feet wide, and made by the vertical sides left in the wall. The doorway framework was squared masonry sides or a frame of wood built into the wall. The doors were made of beams or heavy planks and were hinged onto the framework so they would open freely. The door was usually locked by a wooden bar, which was laid in hooks that were fastened on the back side of the door.

The windows were narrow slits high up in the wall. The windows were fitted with a lattice-work of wood or covered with a heavy cloth in the winter months, and then left open or covered with a thin veil during the summer time. These high narrow windows discouraged thieves, while at the same time shutting out the vision of the passer-by,

⁵Luke 6:48-49.

⁶Amos 5:19.

yet they permitted the people inside the house to see out without being seen. "Thus Solomon looked through his lattice to observe the life of the city and gather material for his proverbs (Prov. 7:6)."⁷ The windows also served as an escape for the smoke of the fires built in the house since chimneys were not used.

The houses generally had no floor except the earth, which was smoothed off and packed hard. Sometimes this was varied by mixing lime with the mud and letting it harden, and sometimes floors of stone chip-pings mixed with lime were found.⁸

The roofs of the houses were flat and rested on heavy beams set in the walls of the house. Smaller branches or split sticks of wood were laid across the beams at intervals of perhaps three inches, then others were laid across these, then a layer of reeds, straw, or weeds. Upon this was spread a coat of clay which was trodden down. Another layer of branches may then be placed down, and next a stratum of dry earth from six to eight inches deep, over which was plastered a layer of mixed straw and clay. An occasional depression on the back edge of the road, furnished with a spout, carried off the rain water. Such a roof needed constant care. After the first rains of the

⁷Arthur W. Klinck, Home Life in Bible Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 65 f.

⁸George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 167.

winter months it had to be rolled with a stone roller, which was kept on the roof for that purpose. Around the roof a parapet had to be built.⁹ This might consist of a railing or an extension of the walls of the house.

In order to reach the roof, a stairway of stone or of brick, with carefully smoothed steps and a rail, was raised from street level to roof line. Or a stairway might be built inside the house, emerging at one corner of the roof where the walls extended upward and forming a penthouse-like structure from which the family stepped out onto the roof.¹⁰

The roof was used for various domestic purposes, such as spreading flax, drying raisins and figs. During the feast of the tabernacles, booths were erected upon them. The roof was also sought as a place for prayers and private meditations.¹¹ Any public proclamation could be conveniently made from the housetops, and so our Lord says, "What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops."¹² The roof was, again, an excellent place for watching any disturbance going on in the neighborhood. During the summer months the Jews would sleep on the roof for the sake of the cooler air. Also "On old earth roofs patches of grass grow, and even grain has been seen springing up in such

⁹Deut. 22:8.

¹⁰Klinck, op. cit., pp. 66 f.

¹¹Acts 10:9.

¹²Matt. 10:27; Luke 12:3.

places."¹³

The upper room, in which Jesus ate the Passover and instituted the Lord's Supper, might well have been a room built at one side of the house "by extending the outer walls upward and adding inner walls resting on supports beneath the roof and reaching to the ground level."¹⁴

The Interior of the House

Most houses had only one room and floor level, which served as both sleeping and cooking quarters. Another type of house had a raised floor level running along one side of the wall. On this higher floor level the family lived, and on the lower floor they kept their sheep, goats, and chickens.

Furnishings

The floor of the house might be covered in part with straw mats or woven rugs. Grain and food bins would stand along one wall. Large jars might be placed against the wall or in some corner. One jar was used to hold water brought from the spring or well; another was used for olives; and a third for olive oil. The housewife also had

¹³Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 27.

¹⁴Klinck, op. cit., p. 67.

wooden bread bowls and kneading troughs, copper cooking vessels, sieves, the stone flour mill, a water bottle made from a goat's skin, and various baskets.

From the roof beams wineskins, dried bunches of raisins, and a lamp might be hanging. A recess or closet in the wall contained the bedding.

The stove, as in the tent, might be a circular hole dug in the earth and lined with stones. Cooking utensils were set on stones or hung from a tripod over the fire. The fuel consisted of straw, brushwood, or dried animal dung.

The bed in these houses was but a very lightly stuffed, flexible pallet. It could be easily rolled up¹⁵ and put in a closet by day and brought out and laid on the floor at night. On these thin, light beds the sick were often carried about. Nothing would be easier than to take such a bed rolled into a small bundle and carry it away to one's house.¹⁶

Since the house contained only one room in most cases, it must be realized in the Parable of the Importunate Friend¹⁷ that to rise, find the bread, and open the barred door would necessitate the awakening and disturbing of the

¹⁵John 5:8; Luke 5:24.

¹⁶Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:11.

¹⁷Luke 11:5-8.

sleep of the whole family.

Many times the mattresses or pallets would be laid next to each other on the floor and a common cover would be shared. This would perhaps be the picture to which Jesus referred when He spoke of "two men in one bed."¹⁸

To the Oriental it is a thing of horror to be in a darkened house, so, all night a lamp is kept burning. Even the poorest people have this burning lamp. Among the diligent domestic duties of the "virtuous woman" we read, "Her candle [lamp] goeth not out by night."¹⁹

In the earliest times lamps were simply wicks stuck into a saucer of oil and ignited. Of course the wick would easily fall down into the oil and the light would be extinguished. The earliest device to prevent this was to make a saucer of irregular shape, with a slight notch in one side in which the wick could lie. As time went on this resting place for the wick developed more and more into a spout. . . .

In the Hellenistic period two improvements in the making of lamps occurred. The first consisted in a still further development of the spout until its sides almost met and formed a nearly closed vessel. The second improvement . . . consisted in the making of a small, covered saucer. In the middle of the cover was a small round hole into which the oil was poured; and at one side a spout protruded and the wick came through this.

It was lamps such as these, probably of the Hellenistic type, to which Christ alluded in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Mt. 25:1-12). Such a lamp would not contain oil enough to burn all night, so that to carry it to a prolonged feast without a supply of oil was a striking example of improvidence.²⁰

¹⁸Luke 17:34.

¹⁹Prov. 31:18.

²⁰Barton, op. cit., pp. 186 f.

CHAPTER XII

THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Literature

The only references in Jesus' words to literature are solely to the Old Testament writings. Jesus referred to what was "written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms."¹ One reference mentioned a "proverb,"² and the term "Scripture" occurs twice.³ These writings might well be called books. They were written on skins, on linen, on cotton cloth, or on the reed papyrus. If the book was large, it was of course formed of a number of skins, of a number of pieces of linen or cotton cloth, or of papyrus, connected together. Since these were very flexible materials, they were rolled around a stick, and if they were very long, around two, from the two ends. The reader unrolled the book to the place he wanted and rolled it up again when he had read it.⁴ The leaves thus rolled around the stick, and bound with a string, could be easily

¹Luke 24:44.

²Luke 4:23.

³John 5:39; Luke 4:21.

⁴Luke 4:17-20.

sealed.⁵

A brush or a split reed were used to write upon the above materials. The ink was a mixture of water with coals broken to pieces, or with soot, with an addition of gum.

Music

The musical instruments of the Jews included the harp, the psaltery, the pipe, the trumpet, and various sorts of drums. Jesus mentions the "trumpet"⁶ and the "pipe,"⁷ which we will consider.

The trumpet was an ancient instrument. It was made of the horns of oxen and the ram's horns. It was greatly used in war or to assemble the people, and its sound resembled thunder. It is probable, that in some instances it was made of brass, fashioned so as to resemble a horn.

The pipe was

conical in shape and about 4 inches long, 1 1/8 inches wide at one end, and about 1/2 inch wide at the mouthpiece. It was perforated at the side by two holes; . . . Probably a mouthpiece of reed was fitted into it. It was possible to make several notes on it.⁸

⁵Isaiah 29:11; Revelation 5:1.

⁶Matt. 6:2.

⁷Luke 7:32.

⁸George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 196.

Medicine

The Bible contains many references to sickness and healing. Jesus speaks of the blind, the leper, the lame, the deaf, sores, plague, and the physician. Yet there is not sufficient information for us to determine just how much the Jews knew about sickness and medicine.

Some acquaintance with surgical operations is implied in the rite of circumcision. That mineral baths were deemed worthy of notice may be inferred from Genesis 36:24. The warm medical springs in the vicinity of the Dead Sea would bring relief for rheumatism, arthritis. "Acute eye infections, increased by the sun's glare and the filthy dust of the streets, often led to blindness."⁹

Many external wounds were treated by home remedies. The Good Samaritan applied olive oil and wine into the wounds of the traveler.¹⁰ Cooked figs served as poultice for boils.¹¹ The balm, or balsam, was particularly celebrated as a medicine.¹² Whatever other mixtures of herbs and roots and berries might have been used cannot be deter-

⁹Arthur W. Klinck, Home Life in Bible Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 109.

¹⁰Luke 10:34.

¹¹2 Kings 20:7.

¹²Jeremiah 8:22.

mined. We do know that all the diseases responded to the Great Physician, as is attested by His miracles of healing.

Astronomy

That the Jews concerned themselves with time and its measurements is clearly shown in their division of the day and night, weeks, months, and years. In Jesus' words we find references only to the "early morning"¹³ and the various hours of the day and night.¹⁴ We will limit our discussion to these.

The morning was divided into two parts, the first of which began when the eastern, the second when the western division of the horizon was illuminated. The householder in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard¹⁵ went to the marketplace *ἐν τῷ πρωτῷ*, "with the morning," or when only the eastern division of the horizon was illuminated. The "heat of the day"¹⁶ began about nine o'clock during the summer months.

The Hebrew day began at sunset and ended at sunset the next day. Day and night averaged twelve hours each,¹⁷

¹³Matt. 20:1.

¹⁴Matt. 20:3,5,6,9,12; Luke 12:38.

¹⁵Matt. 20:1-16.

¹⁶Matt. 20:12.

¹⁷John 11:9.

though in the summer the days would be about fourteen hours in length. The "third hour"--noon, the "ninth hour"--3:00 p.m., the "eleventh hour"--5:00 p.m.

The night watches in the time of Christ were patterned after the Roman system and consisted of four. The "first watch" was from twilight to nine o'clock, the "second watch" was from nine to twelve, the "third watch" or "cock-crowing" was from twelve to three, and the "fourth watch" was from three o'clock till day-break.

The sun dial was commonly used to measure time. This instrument was of no use during the night or on cloudy days. In consequence of this defect the water-clock was used. The water-clock was a small circular vessel, constructed of thinly beaten copper or brass, with a small hole in the bottom. It was placed in another vessel filled with water. The diameter of the hole in the bottom was such, that it filled with water in three hours and sank. A servant tended it at all times so fairly accurate time could be kept.

CHAPTER XIII

DOMESTIC ANIMALS, WILD ANIMALS, AND FOWL

The Camel

There were two kinds of camels. The one was the Turkish, distinguished by two protuberances on the back. This kind was very large and strong, and could carry up to fifteen hundred pounds on its back, yet it was very impatient of the heat. The other kind, which was in common use among the Jews, was the Arabian or one-humped camel, also called the dromedary. The dromedary was the more rapid in its movement, endured the heat better, was of a finer breed than the other, and was used for riding purposes. The dromedary is "long habituated to complaining, whether made to kneel or rise again, utters grating gutturals from his long throat. He is the Oriental striker, objecting, vocally, at least, to every new demand upon him."¹

The dromedary was able to carry about five hundred pounds. It traveled about eight or nine miles an hour and was able to keep up this steady pace for many hours. It required little food and was able to endure thirst from sixteen to forty days. The sole was also very thick and

¹Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 12.

this protected the foot of the camel from the burning sand. Before starting out on a journey, the hump of the camel was inspected to make sure it could carry the heavy load. The nostrils of the camel have valves which the camel may close against the blasts of sand.

When the camels were loaded and set out upon a journey, they followed one after another. The second was tied to the first by a woolen cord, the third to the second, and so on. The average caravan consisted of seven camels. The servant led the first one, and was informed by the tinkling of a bell on the last one if the caravan was still together. When passengers were taken on a journey they rode as on a horse; or when two went together they sat in baskets which were thrown across the camel, so as to balance each other. Sometimes they traveled in an enclosure resembling a small house, which was secured to the back of the camel. It was often divided into two apartments so the passenger was able to carry some small pieces of furniture with him, and could sit in either apartment. These enclosures were protected by veils, which were not rolled up, except in front; so the passenger had the privilege of looking out while keeping himself concealed. These enclosures were mostly used by women.² If the passenger wished to descend, the camel would not kneel down as on other occasions, but the passen-

²Genesis 31:17.

ger took hold of the servant's staff and by the aid of it alighted.³

Besides their use as transportation, the camel's milk was drunk, though it was thick. When the milk became acid, it was inebriating. The flesh was eaten by the Arabs, but was unclean to the Jews. The hair, which was shed every year, was made into clothing by the poorer people, though it was a very coarse cloth.⁴

Two proverbs, based on camels, were spoken by Jesus and recorded in Matthew's Gospel.⁵ The first of these, regarding the camel passing through the eye of a needle, has been interpreted in various ways. If any interpretation is to be accepted the following one seems to be the most plausible.

Walls of eastern cities have large wooden or iron gates. At sunset these gates are closed for the night and not opened again until sunrise. "When any person has to be admitted or allowed to leave the city by night, a small door fixed into the larger one is opened. This door is called the 'needle's eye.'⁶ Camels laden with burdens

³Genesis 24:64.

⁴Matt. 3:4.

⁵Matt. 19:24; Luke 18:25; Matt. 23:24.

⁶Barbara M. Bowen, Strange Scriptures That Perplex the Western Mind (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1944), p. 104.

would have difficulty walking through a wide gate; even an unburdened camel would need a large gate to enter into a city. Jesus' hearers surely understood that a camel could not enter the small door called the needle's eye, as could a rich man, trusting in his riches, enter heaven.

In reference to the Pharisees' straining at gnats but swallowing camels,⁷ two theories might be given in explanation. First, one might picture a watering hole for the flocks, which were found in Palestine and in the desert areas. Here came a Pharisee that was thirsty. Carefully he would strain the gnats off the water hole so he could get a drink, and yet lying at the bottom of the water hole was a dead and decaying camel which the Pharisee didn't seem to mind. Secondly, we might picture a Pharisee, walking along the road, gagging at the gnats that keep flying into his mouth, but along comes a camel which he swallows right down. Of course the first theory is the more plausible, but by the proverb Jesus would show how fussy the Pharisees were about little things, but they overlooked the important aspects of mercy and justice.

The Ass

With us the ass is a symbol of stupidity and stubbornness, while in the East it is especially remarkable for its

⁷Matt. 23:24.

patience, gentleness, meek submission, and great power of endurance. The ass was the animal of peace, as the horse was the animal of war; hence the appropriateness of Christ in His triumphal entry riding on an ass. "The most noble and honorable among the Jews were wont to be mounted on asses."⁸

The color of the ass is red, inclining to a brown. "Some are party-colored, unless perchance such are painted; for the Orientals to this day are in the habit of painting their horses and oxen."⁹ They were used in plowing, in pulling carts, as pack animals, and for transportation. When they were ridden, a saddle, consisting of a piece of cloth, was thrown over the back of the animal on which the rider sat. The ass was guided by a rein placed in its mouth. If a servant was employed he would lead the ass. When the ass had no rider, the servant would follow after with his staff and apply the staff if it was necessary to quicken the pace of the animal. The she-ass was considered the most valuable on account of her colts.¹⁰

The wild asses of the Bible are supposed to have sprung from domestic asses, which, when the occasion was available,

⁸William Smith, A Dictionary of the Bible, revised and edited by F. N. and M. A. Peloubet (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1948), p. 61.

⁹Jahn, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁰Matt. 21:28.

acquired their freedom. They are a fearful animal, swift in flight, but can be tamed if they are captured while young.¹¹ They feed on the mountains and in the salt valleys. Their sense of smell is very keen, which enables them to scent waters at a great distance. Thus travelers who are very thirsty are accustomed to follow them.¹²

The Cattle

These animals are smaller in oriental countries than among us, and they have certain protuberances on the back directly over the forefeet. There was no animal in the rural economy of the Jews that was held in higher esteem than the ox. The ox was the animal upon whose labor depended all the ordinary operations of farming. They were used for plowing, tread-out grain, for pulling all manner of farm implements, and frequently burdens were transported on their backs. Cattle were sometimes stall-fed,¹³ though as a general rule they fed in the plains or on the hills of Palestine.

The milk of the cows was commonly used as a beverage and was also made into cheese. Anciently, butter was not much used, as olive oil was preferred for all household and

¹¹Job 11:12. Proverbs 26:21; Luke 16:21.

¹²Psalms 104:11; Jeremiah 15:6.

¹³Luke 17:7.

cooking needs. The meat of the cattle was eaten. Many a fatted calf was killed for a feast.¹⁴

Chickens

Chickens were raised by the Jews, for a hen "that does not hatch its eggs" is spoken of by Jeremiah.¹⁵ Christ also referred to the hen and her brood,¹⁶ and to the cock that would crow when Peter would deny Him.¹⁷

Dogs

The dog could almost have been classified as a wild animal. As numerous as these animals were in oriental cities, they were universally abhorred, with the exception of the hunting dog. The shepherd dog was also shown some consideration. To be called a dog was a cutting reproach, full of bitter contempt.¹⁸ The appellation "dead dog" indicated imbecility.¹⁹ The reward of prostitution was called, by way of contempt, "dog's hire."²⁰ The Jews in

¹⁴Luke 15:23.

¹⁵Jeremiah 17:11.

¹⁶Luke 13:34.

¹⁷Luke 22:34.

¹⁸Job 30:1; Proverbs 26:11; Luke 16:21.

¹⁹1 Samuel 24:14.

²⁰Deuteronomy 23:18.

the time of Christ were accustomed to call the Gentiles dogs. Jesus, in order to abate the severity of the name, used the term *Κυνάρῖος*,²¹ which means "little dog," as the Jews were inclined at times to show special favors to a young pup and even keep such about the house. Impudent and contentious men were sometimes called dogs.²²

Dogs in the East, except those employed in hunting and shepherding, had no masters. They wandered free in the streets and lived upon the garbage which was thrown into the streets. Being often at the point of starvation, they devoured corpses, and in the night even attacked living men.²³ They ran about the cities and villages in large packs, and whenever any tumult arose in the night they started a terrific barking. Even when the people mourned through the streets for their dead, the dogs responded with their howls.

Jackals

These animals are about three and a half feet long, have yellow hair, a tail also of yellow, with the tip of brown. They go together in packs, lie in caves during the day, and wander about howling through the night. The

²¹Matt. 15:26.

²²Matt. 7:6.

²³Psalm 22:16,20; Psalm 59:15; 1 Kings 14:11; 2 Kings 9:37.

"foxes" Samson caught²⁴ were no doubt jackals, as the fox is solitary in his habits, but three hundred jackals might easily be cornered in a cave.

The jackals are brave enough to make their way into houses for the purpose of stealing food. Dr. Jahn relates,

They have so little cunning, that when thieving in a house if they hear one of the herd howling outside they immediately set up a responsive cry, and thus betray to the master of the house their predatory visitation.²⁵

There are vast numbers of jackals in Palestine, particularly in Galilee, and near Gaza and Joppa. These animals devour the bodies of the dead and even dig them up from their graves. Though they are ferocious, they can be kept at bay with a short club. Jackals do much damage to the vines in the vineyards.

The Fox

The fox was nearly the same size as the jackal, and was often confused with it. The fox was solitary in its habits and was one of the worst enemies of the vineyard.

The Wolf

The wolf is a fierce animal of the same species as the dog which it resembles. It was the dread of the shepherds

²⁴Judges 15:4.

²⁵Jahn, op. cit., p. 32.

of Palestine. "The common color is gray with a tinting of fawn, and the hair [of the mane] is long and black."²⁶ The wolf liked to prey at night, especially upon sheep and lambs.²⁷

Serpents and Scorpions

The term used for serpent in the Bible is the generic name of any serpent. Serpents have the habit of lying concealed in hedges, in holes of walls, and under piles of brush.

The scorpion is a well-known venomous insect of Palestine and other hot climates. It is black and shaped much like a lobster and varies in length from three to six inches. Scorpions are usually found in dry and dark places, under stones and in ruins. They are carnivorous in their habits, and move along the ground in a threatening attitude, with tail elevated. The sting, which is situated at the end of the tail, has at its base a gland that secretes a poisonous fluid, which is discharged into the wound by two minute needle-point openings at its extremity. The sting often occasions much suffering, and sometimes alarming symptoms. "There is no imaginable likeness between an egg²⁸ and the

²⁶Smith, op. cit., p. 749.

²⁷Matt. 10:16.

²⁸Luke 11:12.

black scorpion of Palestine, neither in size nor color, nor when the tail is extended, in shape."²⁹

Birds

The sparrow is a very common bird in Palestine. Dr. Thomson, in speaking of the great numbers of the house-sparrows and field-sparrows of Palestine, says,

They are a tame, troublesome and impertinent generation, and nestle just where you do not want them. They . . . build in the windows and under the beams of the roof, and would stuff your hat full of stubble in half a day if they found it hanging in a place to suit them. . . . These birds are snared and caught in great numbers, but they are small and not much relished for food, five sparrows may still be sold for two farthings;³⁰ and when we see their countless numbers, and the eagerness with which they are destroyed as a worthless nuisance, we can better appreciate the assurance that our heavenly Father, who takes care of them, so that none can fall to the ground without his notice,³¹ will surely take care of us, who are of more value than many sparrows.³²

Doves

There are many varieties in Palestine; and though they differ in color yet their habits are much the same. They are very rapid in flight; they prefer to dwell in the rocks, olive groves, and valleys, "away from the haunts of the

²⁹Thomson, op. cit., p. 246.

³⁰Luke 12:6; cf. Matt. 10:29.

³¹Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6.

³²Thomson, op. cit., p. 43.

cruel hunters, of whose society they are peculiarly suspicious."³³ Their cry is very mournful and plaintive.

"Doves delight in clear waterbrooks, and often bathe in them."³⁴ Doves are kept in a domesticated state in many parts of the East.

Eagles

At least four distinct kinds of eagles have been observed in Palestine, namely, the golden eagle, the spotted eagle, the imperial eagle, and what we know as the common eagle. Eagles inhabit the mountainous areas and will nest upon an almost inaccessible crag of rock. Eagles are known to swoop down on stray lambs or kids and carry them to their young. Like vultures, eagles frequently prey upon dead bodies.³⁵ Their power of vision is almost incredible. Flying in mid-heaven, they can spot a field mouse, then like a bolt from the sky, down they come, head foremost, with wings collapsed, suddenly, with two or three flaps of their large wings and with talons extended, they snatch their prey and continue their flight.

³³Ibid., p. 270.

³⁴Ibid., p. 271.

³⁵Luke 17:37.

Raven

The raven resembles the crow, but is larger, weighing about three pounds. Its black color is more irridescent, and its croak is harsher than that of the crow. The raven is a common bird in Palestine. It has the habit of flying "hither and thither, as if it could not rest,"³⁶ in constant search for food to satisfy its voracious appetite. This surely is the reason it was selected by our Lord as a special object of God's loving care.³⁷

³⁶Thomson, op. cit., p. 50.

³⁷Luke 12:24.

CHAPTER XIV

MONEY AND MEASURES

Commerce could not be very well carried on without money or coin, nor without a system of measures. The Jews, while in captivity used the money and measures of their conquerors, therefore, these are to be distinguished from those before and those after the captivity. Our purpose will be to discuss those in use after the captivity. In many instances, especially in measures, little difference can be noted.

Money

There is no trace of stamped coin previous to the captivity. The value of goods was estimated by a certain quantity of silver or gold. Merchants were accordingly in the habit of carrying with them balances and weights. During the captivity of the Jews and after their return from it, they made use of the money of other nations. The money or coin which the Jews used was the Persian, Grecian, and Roman. It was not until the time of the Maccabean rulers that the Jews had a mint of their own. Yet Jewish coin is not mentioned in Jesus' words.

The smallest coin mentioned in the New Testament is the Greek $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\pi\tau\omicron\nu$, "the small one" or "the bit." It was

two of these that the widow cast into the treasury.¹ The mite was, then, worth about one-eighth of a cent.

The most common silver Roman coin was the *δηνάριος*, translated in the Authorized Version as "penny" and in the Revised Version as "shilling."² Its weight varied at different times. "In the time of Christ it weighed about 61.3 grains Troy, and was worth 16 2/3 cents of American money."³ The tribute money shown to Christ was probably a denarius of Tiberius.⁴ The denarius was so named because it originally was the equivalent to ten *λεπτά* or small copper coins, but in Jesus' time the *λεπτά* was reduced to one-sixteenth of the denarius.⁵ The *λεπτά* is mentioned in Matthew 10:29 and Luke 12:6 where the Authorized Version translates it "farthing." It was worth about a cent.

The Roman coin *κοδράντιος*, or the fourth part of an *λεπτά*, was worth about one quarter of a cent. It is also translated "farthing" in the Authorized Version.⁶ A

¹Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2; 12:54.

²Matt. 20:2; Luke 20:24.

³George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible (7th revised edition; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937), p. 206.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Matt. 5:26; Mark 12:42.

Kοδραίντος was equal to two mites.

The Greek *δραχμας* mentioned in Luke is translated "piece of silver."⁷

The *δραχμας* corresponded roughly in value to the *δηνάριον*. Drachmas had been issued by many different cities and many different kings, and were still in circulation in Palestine in the time of Christ.⁸

The "piece of money"⁹ which Peter found in the mouth of the fish was a silver *στάτηρ*. The stater was worth about four drachmas or sixty-five cents.

The Greek *μυρ*, translated "pound"¹⁰ was worth approximately fifteen and a half dollars. The value of the "talent"¹¹ varied in different countries. The Greek silver talent was equal to sixty minae, or approximately one thousand dollars. Thayer thinks that in the New Testament the Syrian talent is referred to, which was equal to about 237 dollars.¹²

The changing values of the various coins provided plenty of opportunity for the money changers in the temple,

⁷Luke 15:8.

⁸Barton, op. cit., p. 206.

⁹Matt. 17:27.

¹⁰Luke 19:13.

¹¹Matt. 25:15.

¹²Joseph H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Co., 1886), p. 614.

the tax collectors, and the wise merchants to become wealthy at the expense of the ignorant and unfortunate populace.

Lineal Measures

Almost all nations have taken their measures of length from the parts of the human body. We are only able to give an approximation of this standard of measurement.¹³

The smallest length was the fingerbreadth or digit, somewhat less than an inch. Four fingerbreadths made one handbreadth or palm. A span was considered as being the length from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger, or three palms. A cubit¹⁴ extended from the elbow to the knuckles and was considered approximately eighteen inches. Another measure was the length of a man's arm. A reed was six cubits or the length of a man's body. The stadium or furlong was 606 feet. This was a Greek measure adopted by the Jews. A Sabbath day's journey seems to have been about two-thirds of a mile.¹⁵ The mile¹⁶ was a Roman measurement consisting of 4854 feet. "A little way"¹⁷ was

¹³John Jahn, Biblical Antiquities, translated from the Latin by Thomas G. Upham (3rd American edition; London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1832), p. 32.

¹⁴Luke 12:25; Matt. 6:27.

¹⁵Acts 1:12.

¹⁶Matt. 5:41.

¹⁷Gen. 48:7.

approximately four miles, about the distance one could walk in an hour. A day's journey varied from twenty to thirty miles. It was the distance one could cover in seven or eight hours of actual traveling time.

When our Lord mentioned if we were "compelled" to go one mile, we should go two (Mt. 5:41) He was referring to a well-known Persian custom. When a Persian messenger carried the message of the empire he could compel inhabitants of a locality to carry his baggage for one mile, or to perform any service the messenger commanded.¹⁸

Liquid Measure

The log was the smallest unit for measuring liquids. "The Jews figured the log as the amount of water displaced by six hen's eggs, roughly the equivalent of our pint."¹⁹ The hin was twelve logs, about six quarts, or one and a half gallons. Six hins made one bath, which was about nine gallons. The "firkins" referred to in the story of the wedding of Cana²⁰ are believed to be the same measure as a bath. The homer or cor, the equivalent of ten baths, or ninety gallons, was the largest liquid measure.

¹⁸Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 68.

¹⁹Arthur W. Klinck, Rome Life in Bible Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 119.

²⁰John 2:6.

Dry Measure

A handful is a measure that is not accurately defined.²¹ The cab was a measure of small dimensions approximately two quarts. Six cabs make one seah.²² Three seahs was the common quantity for a baking or about ten quarts. Three seahs make one ephah, roughly a bushel. The homer was ten ephahs, about ten bushels. This was the largest common unit. The Roman *modios*, translated "bushel"²³ in the Authorized Version, contains about a peck in our measure. This would be a handy size for the housewife to handle.

²¹Lev. 2:2.

²²Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:21.

²³Matt. 5:15.

CHAPTER XV

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

In describing the occupations of the Jews we cannot leave out the means of communication by which trade and ordinary intercourse were carried on. Hardly anything is more distinctive of Oriental as compared with American life, than their mode of traveling, and in this respect, as in many respects, little progress has been made through the years.

Roads

No effort was made to construct roads in the modern sense of the term, until the Roman period. The Romans introduced regular paved roads with milestones, but these have long since fallen into a state of utter disrepair, so that the simple rough foot paths that have existed from time immemorial still suffice for Palestinian travel. These paths were often very rough and winding. They were never surveyed and repaired. They were simply devoted to public use by custom. The Jew usually followed the line of least resistance across the country, through valleys and gorges, along mountain ridges, and across fords in the river. When it passed along the side of or through the field, the farmer would often pile the stones from his field on the path.

He plowed up to the very edge of the narrow path and put in his seed. There were neither fences nor ditches to separate the road from the field. It was along such a road that Jesus and the disciples were traveling when they plucked the ears of wheat on the Sabbath.¹ It was such a road to which Jesus alluded in the Parable of the Sower, "Some seed fell by the wayside."²

Mode of Travel

Foot travel is the rule among peasants. Those whose business takes them away from the home village walk the entire day with about the same endurance that they work in the fields at home. The few who own donkeys walk behind their loaded animals.³

The foot traveler carried with him everything that he needed for the way, his staff, his cloak, his purse containing dried fruit, nuts, parched wheat, and perhaps a little bread, and his gourd or jar filled with water. Thus the traveler, or a whole company, would journey to attend a festival.

When groups of peasants are on the road there is much talk, often laughter, horse-play, joking, chaffing; sometimes bickering and quarreling.⁴

¹Matt. 12:1.

²Matt. 13:4; Mark 4:4; Luke 8:5.

³Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 153.

⁴Ibid., p. 47.

Dr. Thomson relates this interesting note regarding travel.

You are going to your brethren in the neighboring villages, and the best way to get to their hearts and their confidence is to throw yourself upon their hospitality. Nor was there any departure from the simple manners of the country in this.⁵

How significant, then are the words of Christ when He says, "Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And whatsoever house ye enter into there abide and thence depart."⁶

The transport of goods and merchandise was almost all done by baggage animals. In the desert areas camels were used, and the traveling was done chiefly by night to escape the heat and the bands of robbers.

Camels can be used only in dry weather, as their large spongy feet slip on the muddy ways and they are apt to fall spread-eagle fashion and be fatally hurt.⁷

In connection with Jesus' words, "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch,"⁸ Dr. Thomson made this observation,

There is an irresistible bias in Orientals of all religions to run after the mere shadow of a prophet or miracle worker. . . . I myself saw long files of blind leading the blind, as they hastened to a sup-

⁵W. M. Thomson, The Land and the Book (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881), p. 346.

⁶Luke 9:3; Matt. 10:9,10.

⁷Grant, op. cit., p. 155.

⁸Matt. 15:14.

posed stream of wonder-working water.⁹

Travel by water was especially common on the Sea of Galilee where many fishing vessels were used. These vessels resembled very much the simple wooden boats of today. Ordinarily the boatmen had to depend on oars, though sometimes favorable winds made the use of sails possible.¹⁰

Quite probably there was a regular ferry service across the Jordan River at several points, as well as across the Sea of Galilee, just as there is today.¹¹

Accommodations for Travelers

At convenient stopping places the inn or khan did as good a business as motels and service stations do today. The inn was usually a simple structure consisting of an area surrounded by a stone wall except for an opening for a heavy, strong door. Such an inn provided protection and some conveniences for the travelers, as water and food for man and beast. The traveler would set up his own tent and camp for the night in the inn. A fire was usually built in the center of the area which provided warmth and cooking facilities.

A more elaborate inn "consisted of a courtyard into

⁹Thomson, op. cit., p. 405.

¹⁰Luke 8:23.

¹¹Arthur W. Klinck, Home Life in Bible Times (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 116.

which a roof extended inward from the walls on all sides, forming a sort of shed all around the court.¹² This inn might be two stories high, in which case the ground floor was rented to travelers for their baggage and animals, while the upper story was reserved for the people themselves. Some have suggested that in the lower story, which was reserved for the animals, Jesus was born, since there was no room in the second story where the people slept.

These inns had a keeper, who guarded and cared for the inn, while also providing a store of foodstuffs which the travelers might purchase. It was to such an inn and inn-keeper that the Good Samaritan took the man who fell among the thieves.¹³

Dangers of Travel

The greatest danger to the lone traveler or the caravan was the bands of robbers that dwelt in the rugged countryside.¹⁴

Christ sends out the Seventy, two and two (Luke 10:1), because of the dangers of traveling singly, as is evidenced by the example of the man who fell among the thieves (Luke 10:30).¹⁵

¹²Ibid., p. 114.

¹³Luke 10:30-36.

¹⁴Luke 10:30.

¹⁵George H. Schodde, Biblical Hermeneutics (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1917), p. 108.

On the Sea of Galilee, a sudden shift in the wind caught many a small boat in the treacherous waves before the boatman could bring it to shore.¹⁶

Heavy rains in the mountainous regions often caused a flash flood which endangered both man and animal traveling along a path in such areas.

Salutations

Greetings in the marketplace and on the road are formal but graceful. The greeting of "Peace be on you" (Lk. 24:36), is replied to by "My peace be on you."¹⁷

Dr. Thomson speaks of the salutation as follows,

the customary salutations were formal and tedious, . . . and consumed much valuable time. There is such an amount of insincerity, flattery, and falsehood in the terms of salutation prescribed by etiquette, that our Lord . . . desired his representatives to dispense with them as far as possible,--perhaps tacitly to rebuke them. These "instructions" were also intended to reprove another propensity which an Oriental can scarcely resist, no matter how urgent his business. If he meets an acquaintance, he must stop and make an endless number of inquiries, and answer as many. If they came upon men making a bargain or discussing any other matter, they must pause and intrude their own ideas, and enter keenly into the business, though it in no wise concerns them; and, more especially, an Oriental can never resist the temptation to assist where accounts are being settled or money counted out. The clink of a coin has a positive fascination to them. Now, the command of our Lord forbade all such loiterings.¹⁸

¹⁶Luke 8:23.

¹⁷Grant, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁸Thomson, op. cit., p. 346.

Jesus also commanded His disciples, "Go not from house to house."¹⁹

When a stranger arrives in a village or an encampment, the neighbours, one after another, must invite him to eat with them. There is strict etiquette about it, involving much ostentation and hypocrisy; It consumes much time, causes unusual distraction of mind, leads to levity, and every way counteracts the success of a spiritual mission.²⁰

The Forerunner

In the narrow streets of a village or city crowded with men and baggage animals, or on the roads outside the city, high officials had a servant walking or running in front of them. He called out to the people to move aside, stirred up the dogs lying in the path, and so cleared the way for his master. Referring to John the Baptist, Jesus said, "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."²¹

The forerunners were athletic young men, specially trained and selected. They would be able to "keep well in front of the carriage and its trotting horses, running along with the easy unspent lurch of a deer-hound."²²

¹⁹Luke 10:7.

²⁰Thomson, op. cit., p. 347.

²¹Luke 7:27.

²²George M. Mackie, Bible Manners and Customs (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), p. 149.

CHAPTER XVI

CLIMATE AND SEASONS

Life in Palestine stood closely related to the natural conditions that were beyond the control of man, such as climate, seasons, and weather. Speaking of the peasants, Grant says,

You seldom find him nervous, fretful or discontented. He never questions the wisdom of Providence. He seldom mentions weather probabilities. . . . Divine cause or permission is prominent in his explanation of any phenomena.¹

Climate

Palestine is a land of sunshine and outdoor life. Although the familiar term "from Dan to Beersheba" indicates quite a small area, about the size of our Vermont or New Hampshire, there is a considerable variety of temperature, owing to the difference of elevation. Mount Hermon in the north is nine thousand feet above sea level. Only 120 miles south lies the Dead Sea which is 1292 feet below sea level. Yet, over all, it is a land of blue skies and sunny warmth.

Snow falls in Jerusalem, but seldom remains long, and fires are needed for only a short time. Thus it was possible for the multitudes to make the annual pilgrimages to

¹Elihu Grant, The Peasantry of Palestine (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 47.

Jerusalem on foot, that the shepherds could watch their flocks by night, and that thousands could follow Jesus into the wilderness and sleep in the open if need be.

Seasons

In Palestine it is more common to speak of two seasons, the rainy and the dry, than of four as we know them. The rainy season extends from November to April, with an average of five to twelve rainy days each month. May and October may have some rain. The remaining months of the year it is dry. The characteristics of the months will now be briefly summarized.

January is the month of severest cold and heavy rainfall. The days are short. Snow falls in the Lebanon and Hermon mountain ranges. This snow remains well into April. February contains many days of the same sort. Showers and sunshine rapidly alternate. The almond trees blossom, and late barley is sown. March brings the "latter rains" of the season. These rains are often the heaviest. The winds are strong, but the sunshine is more prevalent. Apricot trees begin to bloom. April is also the month of flowers. The land looks more green and beautiful than at any other time of the year. Occasional hot winds, known as "siroccos" blow from the Syrian desert. These winds melt the snow and hasten all forms of vegetation. Harvesting of wheat and barley begins in the Jordan valley, and in parts of the

seacoast plains and Esdraelon. The olive, pomegranate, and fig trees are in foliage. In May the remaining grain harvest is completed in the plains. The sun increases in strength and the rains cease. Flowers and grass begin to wither. The spring fruits, as plums, apricots, and almonds are ready to be picked. The vines are in blossom. The harvest of grain is finished in June. By the end of June the land lies bare and brown, except for the fruit trees, vineyards, and watered gardens. During July the farmers finish their work on the threshing floors. Some grapes are ready for picking. The summer heat increases. August is the hottest month of the year. The grape and fig harvest are in full swing. Grapes are made into raisins, honey, or wine. Figs are dried for storage. In September the summer heat is often intensified by very hot and dry "siroccos." The second vintage of grapes is harvested. The pomegranates ripen and are harvested. October brings the conclusion of the grape and fig harvest. Olives are gathered and pressed. The "early rains" may now begin. November finds more rain falling. The farmers now start plowing, and wheat and barley are sown. In December the weather becomes much cooler. Oranges and lemons ripen. The husbandman begins pruning the grapevines. Some snow begins to fall in the mountains.

The Atmosphere

Except during the rainy season, the air is dry and

free from moisture. Since there are no factories, trains, nor oil refineries to pour forth volumes of smoke, the result is that the atmosphere is remarkably clear.

Travellers starting out on a day's journey of twenty-five or thirty miles can see their destination in front of them, and at first wonder why they never seem to come any nearer to it.²

As one journeys north from Jerusalem Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim soon become visible though forty miles away. From a point on the road not far from Shiloh, Mount Hermon is clearly seen on a cloudless day, sixty miles to the north.³

This condition of the atmosphere is illustrated by many passages of Scripture. The father saw his prodigal son returning home "when he was yet a great way off."⁴ Satan tempted Jesus by showing Him from the mountain peak "all the kingdoms of the world."⁵ Moses had a complete view of the land he was not allowed to enter.⁶

This clear air also makes the transmission of sound very remarkable. Saul recognized the voice of David on the distant height.⁷ When the blessings and curses were pro-

²G. M. Mackie, Bible Manners and Customs (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), p. 14.

³George Scherer, The Eastern Colour of the Bible (London: The National Sunday School Union, n.d.), p. 9.

⁴Luke 15:20.

⁵Matt. 4:8.

⁶Deut. 34:1-3.

⁷1 Sam. 26:13.

nounced between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, the words could be heard clearly by all.⁸ Proclamations were announced to all in the village from the housetops.⁹ This clear air also explains how the large multitudes could hear the preaching of Jesus.

Rainfall

In the land of Palestine moisture in the form of night-mists and rain was gratefully appreciated. The rainfall is widely distributed, varying from thirty-five inches in Galilee to ten inches in south Judea. The rains came during the interval from November to April. They are depended upon to soak the earth, fill the cisterns and pools, and replenish the springs and wells. The rains often fall for a week at a time and may be driven by raw, chilling winds and lightning. Such weather would be less easy to bear than the stronger cold of a more northerly climate.¹⁰

Sometimes four or five inches of rain would fall in an hour. One can, then, surely understand that sudden floods would result. This would cause the terrace walls of the fields and vineyards to bulge and fall, the foundations of

⁸Deut. 27:11-13.

⁹Luke 12:3.

¹⁰Matt. 24:20.

houses to be undermined,¹¹ and the lives of men and cattle to be endangered.

Wind

In a limited territory like Palestine, bordered by the mountain ranges, the desert and the sea, everything with regard to heat and cold, dryness and moisture, depended upon the direction of the wind.

The west wind is the most pleasant and refreshing. It is the prevailing wind during the end of the summer and brings clouds and showers from the Mediterranean.¹² When this wind began to blow the farmers would hurry to the vineyards and housetops to gather in the drying raisins and figs. The west wind is also dreaded on the Sea of Galilee as it comes suddenly and prevents the boats from getting back to the western shore of the lake.

The north wind has the characteristics of driving away the rain and of being cold and unpleasant. This wind deposits its moisture on the Lebanon and Hermon mountains.

The east wind is the only dreadful wind in Palestine when it prevails during the summer months, for it blows from the desert areas and brings excessive heat and carries fine sand dust. On account of its excessive heat and its

¹¹Luke 6:48,49; Matt. 7:25.

¹²Luke 12:54.

being almost as hot during the night as during the daytime, it is very trying to man and beast and crops. About the only good it serves is to dry raisins and figs. When the east wind blows in the spring it melts the snow and hurries the vegetation, but then it is not quite so hot and dry. A red sunset indicates the presence of the east wind, and is a sign that warm weather can be expected.¹³

The south wind indicates heat.¹⁴ It is a dry heat when it blows from the southeast, and soft and relaxing if it comes from the southwest. The southeast wind brings with it the locust swarms.

¹³Matt. 16:2.

¹⁴Luke 12:55.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

This study of the words of Jesus has set before us a great array of thoughts, habits, and institutions that explain and confirm many details in the Bible. It has shown us how fully and familiarly the message of revelation was adapted to human circumstances.

The impression thus left upon the mind is that the Bible is a book that is meant to be studied, and to be taken on its merits as a record of the past. Above all, it is to be loved and revered as the voice of Him who through it speaks forever, and to all nations. Dr. Geikie appropriately says,

The Bible alone finds a welcome among nations of every region over the earth. It is the one book in the world which men everywhere receive with equal interest and reverence. The inhabitant of the coldest north finds, in its imagery, something that he can understand, and it is a household book in multitudes of homes in the sultriest regions of the south.¹

¹Cunningham Geikie, The Life and Words of Christ (London: Cassell and Company, 1887), p. 11.

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