HISTORY OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEBREWS.

(From the 14th century B.C. until the destruction of the first temple in the 6th century B.C.)

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CHAPTER I.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL.

The cradle of the Hebrew Nation commonly known as Palestine, extends from Dan on the north to Beersheba in the south, and is limited by the Mediterranean on the west and the desert on the east.

Being geographically a part of Syria, Palestine presents the same physical features as that country. The chief topographical characteristic of the whole district is a great chasm running from north to south.

The Syrian mountain range of the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon divided by the Bekka plain, is continued in Palestine and is represented by a unique gorge formed by the Jordan and its lakes, dividing the country into two sections: the east and west Jordan land.

The Jordan starts at the foot of Mount Hermon and the Lebanon and descends rapidly to the lake of Galilee; after numerous windings, it throws itself into the Dead Sea. After leaving the lake of Galilee, it receives three tributaries:

1. The Yarmuk from the east, a stream of considerable volume.
2. The Jalali, coming from the west, a few miles below the Yarmuk.
3. The Jabbeke, coming out of the hills of Gilead, on the east and joining the Jordan before it enters the
the Dead Sea.

The greatest part of the Jordan valley is hardly cultivable as it does not lend itself to agriculture. Only at exceptional spots to the south where some springs exist, it displays phenomenal fertility.

The topographical features of Palestine divide it from west to east into four zones, namely:

1) The plain running along the coast, narrow at the north, broader towards the south and extremely fertile.

2) The central mountain range west of the Jordan, the main feature of which is a chain of mountains traversing the country from north to south until the desert. This chain is composed of the Carmel, branching off to the sea, to the south of which is Mount Tabor (Djebel el Tour) a high isolated plateau. Mount Tabor is separated from the remaining part of the central range by a rich and fertile plain, the plain of Jerusalem, which is adapted to agriculture. To the south of this plain the mountain range is composed of Mounts Ephraim and Judah on the latter of which Jerusalem is situated.

3) The valleys of the Jordan fertile at certain places only.

4) The fourth zone is itself divided into three parts:
   a. Bashan and Hauran, very fertile lands,
   b. The central part, Gilead, broken hills and fertile valleys, wooded and possessing numerous springs.
   c. The plateau of Moab to the south, irrigated by several rivulets, the largest of which is the Arnon.
The geographical situation of Palestine gave it a peculiar importance. It was the highway connecting Asia with Africa and at the same time the meeting place of the oldest civilisations of the oriental world, those of the Nile and the Euphrates valleys.

Two main roads passing through Palestine connected Babylonia, Phoenicia and Syria, with Arabia and Egypt:

1) The one running to the east of the Jordan, just on the edge of the country, which is actually the Haj route to Mecca.

2) The one running along the coast and which is today the highway connecting Egypt, Palestine and Syria.

PEOPLE.

The first wave of Semites immigrating into Palestine was mainly composed of Canaanites coming from Babylonia. The earlier immigrants established themselves on the central hills of the country, and those who came later found an abode on the plains along the sea coast and developed an agricultural civilisation.

The second wave of immigration came also from Babylonia more centuries later. The new immigrants settled to the east of the Jordan and were the ancestors of the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites. The Ammonites settled east of the Jordan to the north of the Sea of Galilee, on the fertile tillable land and gradually became an agricultural people. The Moabites established themselves to the east of the Dead Sea, and the Edomites found their abode to the south of the Dead Sea, on the rocky hills, their life depended on their flocks and on their plunderings from passing caravans.

About the middle of the 15th century B.C., the ancestors
of the Hebrews, like the earlier nomadic hordes of Semites came from the east of the Jordan and settled temporarily on the unoccupied uplands of Canaan.

At about the same time at which Canaan was invaded by the Hebrews from the east, the Philistines coming from Crete or Southern Asia Minor invaded the sea coast from the west and settled along the coast south of Joppa. They succeeded in establishing a developed national life and formed soon five federate cities of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gath.

From Joppa northward the coast plain was occupied at about the same time by the Phoenicians.

Being the only bridge, in those days, connecting Babylonia with Arabia and Egypt, Palestine had a commanding position from a strategic as well as from a commercial point of view. And this made it a bone of contention among the neighbouring great nations.

In fact, Babylonia conquered Palestine about the 18th century B.C. and continued to rule it for two centuries. Palestine then passed into the hands of the Egyptians and formed part of their Empire until the collapse of the 19th dynasty (in the 16th century B.C.) at which time Egypt lost its Asiatic possessions.

During the occupation of Palestine, Babylonia and Egypt two great powers of Antiquity introduced in the country their advanced culture and highly developed civilization which constituted a valuable inheritance to the Hebrew invaders.

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CHAPTER II.

NOMADIC AND PASTORAL STAGE.

In entering Palestine, the Hebrews came in contact with the Canaanites, an agricultural people who had reached quite an advanced stage of civilisation, as a result probably to the influence they had received from the Babylonians and Egyptians. Their main industry was the tilling of the land.

But the Hebrews retained their nomadic habits and wandered continually in the country particularly toward the south to Beersheba, until part of them at least reached the borders of Egypt and settled in the land of Goshen where they made quite a long sojourn.

Throughout this period their main occupation was the raising of cattle the feeding of herds; they were shepherds. The following are some instances of their pastoral life which we find recorded in the book of Genesis:

When Jacob comes to Laban, he finds flocks in the field (Gen. 30). Rachel, daughter of Laban, comes with the sheep in the evening from the field (Gen. 30:4). Jacob himself accepts the function of shepherd over the flocks of Laban (Gen. 37:22).

The Patriarchs in general were rich pastors possessing large numbers of cattle and sheep. (Gen 37:12).

When the house of Jacob came to settle in Egypt, as a result of a famine in Canaan, they were presented to Pharaoh as shepherds, for their trade had been to feed cattle and they have brought with them, their flocks and their herds (Gen. 46:3).
While in Egypt the Hebrews lived in the land of Goshen, a land rich in pasturage and their main occupation continued to be that of herdsmen.

They were still in the pastoral stage. Moses himself, the liberator of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt and their leader in the desert was, before assuming the leadership, a shepherd keeping the flocks of his father-in-law, the priest of Midian (Ex. 2:1). Throughout their stay in Egypt they kept their cattle, their only means of subsistence, which they consequently insisted on taking away with them when they decided to leave Egypt (Ex. 10:9, 26, 28 and Exod. 12:32).

HABITATIONS

In this stage of their history, the Hebrews did not have fixed abodes. As they had not yet attained the stage in which man helps nature to increase its production, they depended merely on its spontaneous products. Consequently they had to move from place to place in order to find new pasture land for their herds and flocks, and were compelled to live a nomadic life. As they could not have fixed habitations they lived in tents, probably similar to those still used for the same purposes by the Bedouins of the desert.

Abraham sitting at Mamre at the door of his tent (Gen. 18:1) Isaac bringing Rebecca to his father's land leads her to his mother's tent (Gen. 24:67). Jacob buys a piece of land to pitch his tents.
Living a similar nomadic life in the land of Canaan and throughout their wanderings in the desert, the Hebrews have undoubtedly used tents for habitation.

These tents were made of black cloth woven of goats hair and were divided into two or more sections. The one situated at the back was reserved for women. However the wives of the Patriarchs had their special tents. (Gen. 24:67, 31:33).

DIVISION OF LAND

The increase of population as well as the increase of herds and cattle led to frequent collisions and warfare between neighbouring tribes. (Gen. 36:20) But this was not always the case. The book of Genesis records similar crises that were solved in a peaceful and brotherly way.

Abraham and Lot, chiefs of two different tribes living side by side, seeing their number and cattle increase decided to separate for settling on other lands where their flocks could feed adequately and freely, as "the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together" (Gen. 13:6, 7, 12). A similar incident took place sometimes later when Jacob and Esau, also heads of two tribes that were neighbours and whose flocks had increased, separated for the same reason; "the land could not bear them because of their cattle." (Gen. 50:7).

These incidents besides showing that the Hebrews had passed the purely savage stage, denote also a clear consciousness on their part, about the feeding capacity of the land.

It is well to state in this connection that except for a very few cases (Gen. 22:6) we do not find private ownership of
land existing among the Hebrews in this stage of their economic development.

It is not however to be inferred from this fact that social and economic justice prevailed among them in their nomadic and pastoral stage, since the private ownership of land, considered by many as one of the main factors that cause social and economic inequality, did not exist. On the contrary the pastoral industry tended to encourage the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. This will explain the formation of the great wealth accumulated by the influential heads of the tribes and particularly by the Patriarchs. Gen 37-12.

PASTORAL LEGISLATION

The tribal system was the basis of the social organization of the Hebrews at this stage of their history. They had no common system of legislation, in the sense of what is today known as law, governing all the people. Every tribe had its own usages and customs.

Nevertheless, there seems to have existed among them certain regulations that were adopted by all the tribes.

Most of these common usages and customs are mainly concerned with the regulation of the water supply. One has to remember that water is very scarce in Palestine and this is the reason why water was considered at all times by the Hebrews as important and precious. This will explain also the fact that in the Books of Genesis and Exodus we can find numerous laws regarding the water supply and wells.
Running water in a pasture land was public property and all people could use it.

Wells on the other hand were the property of the people who dug them out or discovered them. (Gen. 31:35, 36-15 to 22)

The wells were to be covered with a large stone (Gen. 39:2) (Exod. 31:38) to prevent the occurrence of accidents.

If a person omitted by inadvertence to cover his well and a neighbour's animal fell into it, he was required to make good the loss (Exod. 31:38, 39).

Another regulation of a different kind was in existence in that society, i.e., the holding of the shepherd responsible for the stolen cattle and flocks that are entrusted to his care. (Gen. 31:39).

AGRICULTURE

As has already been pointed out, the main occupation of the Hebrews throughout their nomadic stage was cattle raising. Having to move continually they had not yet developed like the Canaanites a sedentary life. In spite of that, it is not improbable that some of them occasionally cultivated the land in places where their sojourn was prolonged.

When Isaac settled in Gerar, he is said to have sown the land and received in the same year hundredfold. (Gen. 26:12)

A similar instance in the life of Jacob while living with Laban shows some agricultural activity. When his son Reuben "went out to the fields in the time of the wheat harvest." (Gen. 30:14)

These instances demonstrate that besides their pastoral occupation some tribes had learned to cultivate the land.
Joseph dreaming he was, "with his brothers in the field binding sheaves" (Gen. 37:7) is another instance of those glimpses of agricultural activities of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan.

It is very probable, that during their stay in the land of Canaan, Egypt, they also cultivated the land, although no records are available to show that they had done so.

**TAXATION**

Taxation in the true sense of the word did not exist among the Hebrews all the time they were nomads.

They had probably to pay from time to time tribute to the Lordson whose lands they pitched their tents and settled with their cattle and flocks. The covenant of good neighbourhood made between Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheva is one of those instances (Gen. 21:26, 27).

However, the first rudimentary idea of taxation in the economic history of the Hebrews came into existence when they decided to build the tabernacles while they were in the desert. An appeal was then made to every member of the congregation to bring forth offerings, for the building of the Sanctuary.

The contributions that every man brought were in kind: gold; silver, brass, goat-skin, oil etc. (Exod. 25:2 to 7)

It is the first recorded instance in the life of the Hebrews when all contributed liberally for one common purpose. It was not an imposed, but a liberal contribution.

**MONEY ECONOMY**

In a nomadic and pastoral stage—the first step in the
economic development of a people—barter is the natural means for the exchange of commodities.

In entering Palestine, barter was according to all probabilities in existence among the Hebrews, and evidently continued to be practised among them in the patriarchal age for their dealings among themselves, although no reference to it can be found in the books of Genesis and Exodus.

The Hebrews were however, living in contact with a people who had already attained a more advanced social and economic stage. They were consequently compelled to have recourse to the medium of exchange in use among the inhabitants of the country when they had to deal with them.

According to the Tell Amarna letters, dating centuries earlier than the Hebrew invasion of Palestine, the medium of exchange of the Canaanites were, gold and silver as money by weight.

In view of above we find two systems existing side by side, in the pastoral and nomadic stage of the Hebrews: Payment in kind, and the use of precious metals as medium of payment.

PAYMENT IN KIND. In the early days of his invasion of the land of Canaan, being not very familiar with gold and silver as a means of payment, the Hebrew had recourse to payment in kind. Abraham as we have already seen, pays his tribute to Abimelech in terms of cattle and sheep (Gen. 21:24, 37). The agreement made between Jacob and Laban, furnishes us with a similar example: Jacob accepted to keep the flocks of Laban, and to receive in payment of his services some goats and sheep, (Gen. 30, 28; Gen. 30, 32-34).
Thus the Hebrews conserved as much as they could their primitive habits of payment in kind.

**USE OF PRECIOUS METALS.** But it was not always possible for them to use such system of payment. They had to have recourse to precious metals in most of their dealings with their neighbours.

For example, Abraham weighed 400 shekels of silver in payment of the piece of land he bought for burying his wife Sarah. (Gen. 23:6,15,16). Later on, when Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to purchase corn, he had recourse to money by weight. Gen. 43:21.

Throughout the patriarchal age, their sojourn in Egypt and their forty years journey in the desert, the Hebrews were in their nomadic and pastoral stage. It was not until their conquest of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and their settlement in it, that they reached the next stage of their economic development and became an agricultural people.
CHAPTER III

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

I.- CONQUEST OF THE LAND: The Hebrews coming from the desert succeeded easily in conquering the land lying to the east of the Jordan, inhabited by the Amorites, Moabites and Edomites.

As this narrow strip of land could not sustain them all, they crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua and undertook the conquest of the land lying to the west of the Jordan.

According to the book of Joshua XIII the conquest of the greatest part of the land was accomplished by one generation and that before his death Joshua divided it among the tribes.

The book of Judges I offers on the other hand a more credible account. It appears from its narrative that the conquest was gradual and protracted, resulting from the invasions and warfare of the individual tribes who settled each on the territory it succeeded in conquering.

II.- DIVISION OF THE LAND AMONG THE TRIBES: No matter to which of the above two accounts one may give credit, it is a well-known fact, that long before the consolidation of the monarchy every tribe was settled permanently on a well-defined land proportionate to its numbers.

Thus it appears that the Mosaic commandment "To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to the few thou shalt give the less inheritance" was put into application.
The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half that of Manasseh settled to the east of the Jordan (Jos.13) and the remaining nine and a half tribes established themselves to the west of the Jordan (Jos.14).

Forty eight cities evenly distributed over the whole country were reserved for the Levites, of which six, known as the cities of refuge, were destined to give shelter to people who had unwillingly committed murder.

III:4: LEARNING TO TILL THE LAND: In entering the land of Canaan the Hebrews were shepherds and had brought with them their cattle and flocks. Their main occupation continued to be, for a certain time, cattle raising. Until a late date some of the tribes, particularly those established to the north east of the Jordan as well as those who settled in the uplands to the west, near Mount Carmel, devoted their time to raise cattle (Sam 25:12). But in general the Hebrews gradually learnt from the people whom they subjugated the art of tilling the soil, and at the time of the Judges we find the majority of them already occupied with agriculture. When the Israelites had sown the Midianites destroyed it (Judges 6:3). The son of Gideon threshing wheat (Judges 6:11). They were reaping the harvest in the valley (1 Sam.6:12).

Little by little the Hebrews abandoned their pastoral life and adopted agriculture as their main industry, and became an agricultural people.
From the time of their establishment in the land of Canaan until the latter part of the reign of Solomon the Hebrews were an agricultural people.

The codes of laws that were regulating their life in this stage of their history are still preserved in the Pentateuch and are commonly known as the Mosaic Laws. They formed the Constitution of the Hebrews.

Upon examination these laws reveal an advanced stage of an agricultural people. They further show that the legislator or legislators attempted to solve one of the most important social problems that has been, from time immemorial, bothering humanity: They aimed at the establishment of an economic and social equality among the Hebrews.

The fact that an equal distribution of wealth can be more easily maintained in an agricultural society than in any other kind of social organization, has probably induced these law-givers to make agriculture the basis of the Hebrew Constitution.

The fundamental principles of this constitution, as will be seen in this chapter, aim at the equal distribution of land and wealth among the people, and the maintenance of such an economic equality by preventing the accumulation of property in the hands of the few.

AGRICULTURE

As it has already been pointed out in the first chapter, the land of Canaan is not a very fertile land and most of it
being broken up by mountains and hills, does not lend itself to agriculture. However, the lands lying to the east of the Jordan were of phenomenal fertility. According to the Bible the mountainous regions of Samaria, Gilboa and Carmel were celebrated for their fertility. This is explained by the rabbis by the fact that the people terraced the cliffs and brought up soil to them from the valleys below, as is done in present time by the peasants of the Lebanon.

Agriculture in Palestine depended solely on the rains. Fall as it did not possess abundant water supply like Egypt and Babylonia. The "first and latter rains" were thus of special importance. (Lev.26:3-5, Deut.11:13, 16). The first rains began in the middle of November, (Deut.11:16, Jer.5:24). They were followed by heavy rains during winter and finally by the spring rains, the "latter rains".

The cereals that were most planted by the Hebrews were:
1. Wheat: the most important. It was produced in large quantities sufficient for the needs of the home consumption and leaving even a surplus for exportation. (I Kings.4:22, 22, 27:18)
2. Barley: used for bread by the poorer classes. (Ruth 5:16)
3. Spelt: (Xmas) intermediate grain between wheat and barley.
4. Millet.

A few days later by barley, and wheat remaining the last of all.

Before plowing the soil was cleared of stones. (Is.5:2) and manure was used (Is.28:10) to increase its fertility. The

Sayce, Patriarchal Palestine, gives an identical explanation.
institution of the Sabbath year, details of which are given later, was a valuable factor in maintaining the fertility of the soil.

**PLowing:** Animals: The animals used in plowing were:

a) oxen (Amos 6:12, Job 1:4)

b) camels (1 Sam.6:7)

c) asses (Deut.22:10, Eze.30:24)

**Impluents:** The implements used by the Hebrews were of great simplicity. They were the plow, hoe or mattock, and harrow. The plow was made of wood, shod with iron at the point (1 Sam.13:20) very simple in construction and light. It is probable that it was similar to the plow actually still used by the Lebanese and the Arab peasants of the Haurom. This kind of plough could not penetrate the soil to a great depth and was worthless on stony land. For that kind of land the hoe was used.

The animals pulling the plow were stimulated by the farmer with his goad or dordan, a big staff provided at its extremity with a sharp point for that purpose, and at the other with a broad piece of metal for clearing the plow point (1 Sam.13:21).

The harrow was used to brush the seed after sowing, to protect it from insects and birds.

**Harvest:** The harvest started on the 2nd day of Passover for barley. It was followed after a few days by that of the wheat, and by Pentecost grain harvesting was completed.

**Impluents:** In harvesting the farmers used the sickle (Deut.23:5, Joel 5:12) which was probably made of iron. They
collected the ears of corn in handfuls (Ps.129) tied them into sheaves (Gen.37:7, Ps.126:16, Ruth 2:16) which were piled into heaps (Ruth 3:7, Lev.23:10, Job 24:10) that were then transported in wagons to the threshing floor (Amos 8:15).

The threshing floor was a round place with a plain surface situated in the fields.

**THRESHING**: Three methods were used for threshing:

a) The corn was beaten with sticks or flails (Ruth 2:17) this method was used for small quantities of corn.

b) It was made by having the corn trampled by cattle (Gen.25:4, Is.28:28, Hosea 10:11, Micah 4:13)

c) or by means of a rectangular board of wood, made heavy by stones or persons sitting thereon, that was dragged by cows or oxen over the corn spread on the threshing floor. (Is.28:27)

The under side of this board was full of holes, filled with small stones projecting to the outside (Is.28:27, Is.41:15) I Chr.21:23). This implement resembles according to all probabilities, the one still in use in most parts of this country for the same purpose.

When threshing was terminated, the wheat was thrown to the wind by means of fans, forks, or shovels (Is.20:24, Jer.15:7) The chaff and the straw were blown away and the grain fell at the winnower’s feet. The grain was then cleaned by means of a sieve (Amos 9:9, Prov.6:10, Joel 1:17, Ps.146:15, I Kings 9:19).
These were the implements and ways that were used by the Hebrews for tilling the land, sowing and harvesting and which we see today, after more than two centuries, we find still in usage among the peasants of Lebanon and Syria.

II. AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

The Sabbath: The Sabbath is one of the most important institutions of the Hebrews. It has an agricultural background as on that day the Hebrew, his servants and his beasts were forbidden to do work of any kind. It was the day of rest par excellence. It had a special significance for a people who employed men and beasts in agricultural labor. “Six days shalt thou work but on the 7th thou shalt rest in sowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest” (Exod.34:21).

The three main feasts of the Hebrews which are observed up to date, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, marked three important yearly events in the life of an agricultural people.

THE PASSOVER: It lasts seven days and has two aspects, a national and an agricultural one. First it commemorates the delivery of the Hebrews from the bondage of Egypt. Secondly, it marks the time for the beginning of the harvest. It is known as the feast of the harvest of barley. On the 2nd day it was customary to present to the sanctuary a sheaf of barley of the new crop.

THE PENTECOST: This feast occurs seven weeks after Passover and lasts one day. It is called the feast of the harvest (Exod.23:16) and is the complement of the Passover.

The harvest of barley starting in Passover, was followed
by the sheaf harvest which terminated in Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the termination of the harvest was celebrated. This feast is also connected with another event in the national life of the Hebrews. It commemorates the day on which Moses received the Tables of the Law from Mount Sinai.

THE TABERNACLES: Swiftly) This feast occurs toward the beginning of fall. It lasts seven days, during which the Hebrews live in tents. Like the first two feasts, it has two aspects, a national one in commemoration of the nomadic life of the ancestors of the Hebrews in the desert (Lev. 23:42; 43) and an agricultural one marking the termination of all kinds of harvests and fruit ingathering (Exod. 23:16, Lev. 25:39).

These three feasts, although associated with important historical events in the life of the Hebrews, while in Egypt and in the desert, are mainly feasts that have an agricultural significance and they mark as already shown, particular yearly period in the life of a people whose main occupation was agriculture.

III. - AGRICULTURAL LAW

The agricultural laws that are preserved in the Bible denote quite an advanced stage of an agricultural society.

I) FALLOW LAND: One of the most important agricultural laws is the one commanding that the land should lie fallow every seventh year. This shows that they were conscious of the fact that the land needs rest for recuperating its fertilizing ingredients. Every seventh year, known as the Sabbatical year the field, vineyard and oliveyard, the law commanded, were not to be tilled. (Exod. 23:10, 11 Lev. 25:5-6), they were to lie fallow.
The spontaneous yield of the soil was to be consumed by the owner, his servants and strangers and domestic animals. The Sabbatical year has still another significance for the cancellation of debts, about which more will be said under another section of this chapter.

3) Plowing: As already stated the animals used for plowing were: oxen, cows and asses. The law prohibited the putting together, under the same yoke, two different kinds of animals (Dt.22:10). The aim of such a law was first to prevent ill treatment and suffering that would unmercifully result to weak animals yoked with others of stranger kind - an ox and an ass for instance - and secondly in order to enable the people to plow their land in an efficient way.

4) Sowing: It was prohibited to sow in the same field heterogeneous seeds (Lev.19:19). This would exhaust the soil or its chemical constituents and very poor results would be obtained.

4) Reaping: While reaping the law commanded the owner not to reap what grew on the limits of his field, not to go back to the place where the scythe had passed without cutting every-thing, not to pick up what fell down on the way, nor fetch a sheaf that was forgotten in the fields. These belonged of right to the widow, to the orphan and to the poor in general be they Hebrews or strangers. (Lev.19:19-22; 22:12; Deut.24:19-22.)

The humanitarian aim of these laws is of course obvious and does not need any emphasis.
5. PROTECTING BOUNDARIES: Among the agricultural laws there are some which aim at the protection of the boundaries of the fields. Thus the wrath of God is called on the man who removes the landmarks of his neighbour's field in order to aggrandize his own (Deut. 19:14, 23:17).

6. PROTECTION OF HARVEST: If a man let his cattle breed in his neighbour's field, he has to make good from his field the damages done by his beasts (Exod. 23:5). Similarly a man who causes a conflagration to take place, that destroys the corn of his neighbour, he has to make good the damages sustained by his neighbour from his own field.

IV. AGRARIAN LAWS

Unequal distribution of wealth is the problem which confronts humanity since the beginning of history and which has always called in the intervention of governments, yet it is still, up to the present times, far from being satisfactorily solved. The private ownership of land is believed by many to be one of the causes of social and economic injustice. The Hebrews had to face the same problem and their legislators worked out a system of laws aiming at the maintenance of a fairly equal distribution of wealth. These laws are known as those of the Sabbatical and Jubilee year, and are in fact the work of genius.

The institutions of the Sabbatical and Jubilee year aim at the preservation of an equal distribution of movable and immovable property. Under the first category we have money and slaves, and under the second landed estate.
These laws will be dealt with here, only in connection with the maintenance of an even distribution of immovable property among the Hebrews; their importance in regard to the cancellation of debts and the emancipation of slaves will be considered later on, in this chapter.

We have seen that after the complete conquest of Canaan, the land was divided among the Hebrews in shares proportionate to the number of souls constituting each household.

But the piece of land allotted to each household was not its private property. From the outset it was made clear that the land was the property of God, while all the Israelites were but his tenants (Lev.25:23). In this way the land could not be sold for prosperity. It could however be leased or its crops sold, but in the Jubilee year, the 50th year, the land was to be returned to its original owner: “And ye shall hallow the 50th year and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a Jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession and ye shall return every man unto his family (Lev.25:10).

In a similar agricultural society sickness or financial embarrassment might have led to the sale, not of the soil, but of the crops expected until the Jubilee year. The law however makes a provision in favor of the original owner for the recognition of his property before the Jubilee year. It was in fact possible for him to claim his land at any time he chose by refunding the value of the number of harvests remaining until the 50th or Jubilee Year. If the owner could not redeem it himself, the right to redeem it devolves upon his nearest relative.
Houses in villages were considered as land and could be redeemed; if not they are restituted to the original proprietor in the Jubilee year (Lev.25:11). But houses in walled cities are redeemable within the first year of the sale only, otherwise they become the permanent property of the buyer (Lev.25:29-30).

In order to maintain the land pertaining to every tribe and prevent the transfer of property from one tribe to another, which may result through the inheritance of girls, these girls are married in their own tribes (Numb.36:6-8).

The aim of these laws was to prevent the concentration of land in the hands of the few. They did not allow the formation of rich and poor classes. On ground of these laws, land was redistributed evenly among the people every fiftieth year and in this way the equal distribution of wealth was maintained among the Hebrews all the time they observed these regulations.

--- SLAVERY
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Slavery in ancient times was an important institution. Through slave labor agriculture and industry progressed. It accomplished what machinery accomplishes in modern times. It was an institution necessary to such an extent that even the great Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle could not conceive of a state as existing without slavery.

When the Hebrews settled in Canaan they lived among people who considered slavery as a natural institution. In becoming agricultural people they needed more labor than they could themselves supply and consequently obtained it from among the people they subdued and the strangers.
Yet slavery in the proper sense of the word did not exist among the Hebrews. There never existed a class distinction and special class considered as inferior as could be found among the peoples of antiquity.

In the life described in the books of Judges and Samuel, we find high and low equally engaged in pastoral and agricultural employment. When the deputies of Jabesh Gilead came to meet Saul, Israel's future king, they found him returning with a yoke of oxen from his field. (I Sam III:8).

It is said and sometimes rightly that the character of a people can be generally gleaned from its language. And it is worthy of note here that in the entire Hebrew vocabulary which is very rich, there is no such word as "slave" to be found. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew had neither slaves nor slavery. Their laborer they called 'Abod and labor they called 'Abodah'.

In Hebrew, prayer and labor had one and the same meaning; thus the sacred labors of the high priest within the sanctuary ('Abodah) and the labor of the common day worker were synonymous. They were not different conceptions to the Jews of antiquity in Palestine. There was therefore no class distinction in Palestine there were only free laborers.

While among the Greeks and Romans labor was considered as dishonorable and left to the helots and slaves, it was considered by the Hebrews as a mark of honor appreciated and praised. "Labor" says the Talmud "not only supports but also enables mankind".

The law allowed the Hebrew to have Hebrew and non-Hebrew servants, and commanded him to treat them equally with kindness and consideration.
HEBREW SERVANTS: There were two kinds of Hebrew servants:

1) Those sold without their consent.
2) Those who willingly sold themselves.

Sold without consent. A man is sold without his consent by the court only, as a means of punishment in case of theft (Exod.21:2). He was never sold to a stranger. His term of service was six years. In the seventh Sabbatical year he was free (Deut.15:12).

If he desired to stay with his master and prolong the period of his servitude, his right ear was to be pierced at the doorpost in the presence of the neighbours. In such cases, he continued to serve until the Jubilee year, at which time he became free. He also had the chance to regain his liberty when his master died.

Sold willingly. As a result of extreme poverty a man could sell himself. He could not sell himself either to a woman or to a stranger. In case he did so it became the duty of the community to redeem him. His period of servitude was usually 10 or 20 years. He could sell himself to either a Hebrew or non-Hebrew. If he sold himself to a Hebrew, he became free at the Jubilee year. In case the master died before the period of servitude expired, he was not freed but passed on as an inheritance to the son.

HEBREW BONDMaid. The law was milder for a Hebrew bondmaid, and offered her great facilities for the obtention of her liberty. According to tradition, a Hebrew woman could not sell herself nor was she sold by the court for theft. However, a man may sell his daughter as a bondmaid (Exod.21:7) when he is extremely poor and as a last resort before he sells himself. This applies only when the daughter is minor i.e. less than 12 years.
1) The maximum period of servitude for a girl is six years. In
the seventh she goes free.
2) If the Jubilee year occurs before the expiration, she is
discharged.
3) She goes free if her master dies. Although he leaves heirs,
she does not pass on them as an inheritance.
4) She may be redeemed at a reduced price.
5) She has also other facilities to obtain her freedom, e.g.:
when her signs of puberty appear:
   a) As soon as she attains puberty, her master ought to
      marry her, or
   b) betroth her to his son.
   c) If he neither marries her nor betrothes to his son,
      he must emancipate her.

PARTING GIFT: When a Hebrew dismisses his manservant or maidserv-
vant he must not let them go their hands empty, but must provide
them liberally from his own flocks, wheat and wine (Deut.15:13-16)
in order to enable them to start well equipped their new free life.

NON-HEBREW SERVANTS: The Hebrews, as already mentioned, could
acquire bondmen and bondwomen from among the strangers (Lev.25:44-46)
Bondwomen and bondmen were the possession of their masters and
were transmitted to the heirs as an inheritance. The master was
however compelled by the law to treat humanly his servants and
was prevented from ill-treating them. His absolute power over
them was limited.

If a master strikes a slave so as to cause him the
loss of an eye or a tooth, the slave goes free.
In general slaves were well treated; they were not required to do work on the Sabbath (Exod. 20:10) instituted to give them the opportunity to rest and refresh themselves (Exod. 25:2) Lev. 5:14). They could share with the poor the natural product of the land during the Sabbatical year (Lev. 25:4)

What a difference exists between these humanitarian laws and the harsh and barbarous treatment that the slaves had to bear under the Greeks and the Romans.

With the Hebrews intelligent slaves could attain high positions as counsellors, managers of the affairs of their masters, etc. They could even aspire to become the heirs of their masters if the latter left no children (Gen. 15:13).

VI.- MONEY ECONOMY

It has been pointed out in the preceding chapter that when the Hebrews invaded for the first time the land of Canaan in the 18th century B.C., they found gold and silver already in use among the people of the land as money by weight. The Hebrews themselves had to use these precious metals in the patriarchal age as a medium of exchange for their transactions with the Canaanites and neighboring peoples with whom they had to deal.

When two centuries later they conquered the land to settle in it as an agricultural people they had to adopt the same medium of exchange that was still in existence among the Canaanites. MONEY BY WEIGHT: In the earlier period of their agricultural life, the Hebrews used also gold and silver as money by weight (II Sam. 12:15; I Kings 20:39). This necessitated the carrying of a balance and weights with the precious metals in a bag attached to the girdle
The weights were probably of stone (Prov.16:11, stones of the bag). The Hebrew code of laws contain several recommendations to prevent the use of falsified balances and unjust weights. (Amos 8:5, Mic. 6:10, Prov.11:1 & 20:10, 23) The usage of unjust balances and weights was considered a great punishable offense and an abomination. (Deut.25:13-16, Lev.19:35-36).

Money by Tale: A little later we find ingots of known weights in circulation among the Hebrews, and thus we have the beginning of a rudimentary kind of money by tale.

Saul's servant had an ingot of 1/4 of a shekel (I.Sam.9:3).

With the beginning of the use of these ingots it was no longer necessary to weigh the metals for every small transaction. But nevertheless, it was a transitional period and the two systems existed side by side. When the payment of large amounts was necessary between parties unknown to each other, money was both weighed and told (Jer.32:9-10, Is.46:6).

The metals used as medium of exchange were gold, silver and bronze, of these three silver seems to have been most commonly used and to such an extent that the word "kesser" silver was often used instead of money.

The exact shape which the circulating precious metals had is not known. At the corresponding period, the metals used in Babylonia as medium of exchange were in the shape of bars of ingots, while in Egypt they were ring shaped. According to all probabilities, both shapes existed in Palestine, the latter being the bridge and place of rendez-vous for caravans coming from North Africa and Asyria and Babylonia.
What is known with certainty is the fact that the system of weight used in Palestine was borrowed by the Canaanites from the Babylonians, and was later adopted by the Hebrews.

Three main units existed: the talent, the mana and the shekel. A talent was equal to 60 manos, and a mana to 60 shekels. A talent weighed 60 kilograms approximately and a mana's weight was consequently equivalent to 1 kilo, and a shekel to about 10 grams 8.5.- [Jew. Ency.].

The values of these units in Sterling Pounds is equivalent to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shekel</td>
<td>£ 2.1.0</td>
<td>2. c. 2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mana</td>
<td>£ 0.10.10.0</td>
<td>2. 6.15.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talent</td>
<td>£ 0.6150.0.0</td>
<td>2. 410. 0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(James Hastings)

Dicit; Bible

Until the destruction of the first temple and the Babylonian exile in the 6th century B.C., money by weight remained the medium of exchange in Palestine. Real money-coins of uniform shape and known weight guaranteed by the stamp of the state was later introduced by the Persians after their conquest of the land.

The Hebrews developed also their own numismatics which started at a much later date, in the 1st century B.C. under the Maccabees.

VII.- LEADING OF MONEY

In an agricultural society where every household possesses
its own land, from which its livelihood is derived, loans are
made as an assistance and not for the promotion of trade or
commercial enterprises.

The Hebrews at this stage of their life were an agricul-
tural people and their trade was in the hands of the Canaan-
ites and foreigners.

Consequently it was only when people found themselves
in financial embarrassment, as a result of a misfortune - failure
of crop, destruction of harvest by fire etc. - that they applied
to their well-to-do neighbours for help.

The well to do Israelite was commanded by the law to
always assist his distressed brother in granting to him loans
for helping him out of his difficulties.

These loans had to be made without any charge and the
taking of interest was very rigorously prohibited by the law.

Protection of Lender's right. The law protected the
lender's right by allowing him to take a pledge (Exod.22:25,
Deut.25:1, Deut.24:6,17) as a guarantee of the loan. In most
cases however the pledges were taken only as a guarantee of the
payment of an overdue debt (Deut.24:6, 12, 13, 17 Exod.22:25).

Protection of Debtor. But the power of the lender is
limited by the law. He could not claim as a pledge an implement
on which the livelihood of the debtor depended. A milestone in
such a society an implement necessary for the preparation of
the family daily bread, could not be taken as a pledge (Deut.24:6).
The creditor was not to claim a widow's garment (Deut.24:17)
or a widow's (Job.24:18) as a guarantee.

Thus a person who was in financial embarrassment was helped by his wealthy neighbours and was aided with a view to enabling him start anew his struggle for existence. As soon as his condition improved, it was his most sacred duty to pay back his debts.

But should the circumstances not favor him for several years, he was protected against the exactions of his creditors by the year of release or Shemitta, during which all debts were cancelled. (Deut.15:1-12). The Shemitta year coincided with the Sabbatical year and occurred consequently at every cycle of seven years.

Fearing lest the year of release might incite many people to abstain from lending to their poor neighbors, the law commanded as a religious duty to give help to the needy despite the fact that the year of Shemitta may be at hand: "Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto him and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need. Beware that there be no base thought in thine heart saying, the seventh year, the year of release is at hand, and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother and thou gave him nought" (Deut.15:9-10).

These laws regulating the lending of money had three aims:

I.- In forbidding the Hebrews from taking interest they did not allow them to derive any profits from the excess of their production and consequently made impossible the formation of a rentier class. The Hebrews were as a consequence
compelled to continue cultivating the land, and agriculture continued to be their main industry.

2.- They protected those who by accident or misfortune became poor and afforded them an opportunity to regain their economic independence and start anew honorably their life.

3.- Those who were prosperous had to share their excess with those who were poor, in form of loans. By the cancellation of the unsettled loans every seventh year, if debtor's condition had not improved to enable him to acquire his obligations, an almost equal distribution of wealth among the people was maintained.

The year of release was thus the occasion for the reestablishment of the equilibrium of wealth among the Hebrews, as the Jubilee year was the occasion for the equal redistribution of land among them.

VIII.- CITIES OF REFUGE

In describing the economic life of the Hebrews in their agricultural stage, it is not possible to keep silent about one of their important social institutions which substantiates further the fact that the primordial aim of the laws of the Hebrews in general was the establishment of social justice.

The importance of the cities of refuge, cannot be fully well realised until one remembers that from the time of their conquest of the land until the consolidation of their monarchy in the 11th century B.C. the Hebrews had not yet developed into a strong organised nation and no centralised government existed. Consequently at that time the lex talionis was still in full
application and in case of homicide, it was the sacred duty of the killed nearest relative to avenge him by killing the criminal. He was called the "Blood Avenger". A man who failed to fulfill such a duty was considered without dignity and honor.

But sometimes homicides were accidental and in order to protect the unfortunate author from the angry "avenger" special asylums were assigned where a criminal could seek refuge and be safe. They were called the cities of refuge. These cities were intended only for unintentional murderers. (Deut.4:42, Jos.20:15, Numb.35:11 to 16). A wilful murderer was punished. In fact as soon as the murderer reached a city of refuge, the elders of the city where the murder took place assembled as a tribunal and judged the case. If the offender was found guilty, he was fetched from the city of refuge and delivered to the avenger of blood (Deut.19:11,13). If he was found to be innocent, he was left unmolested in the city of refuge where he was to remain until the death of the High priest, after which he was free to return to his home (Num.35:25).

Six out of the 40 cities assigned to the priests were the cities of refuge. They were evenly distributed all over the country: Kafzeh in Ephraim, Bezeq in Gilead, Hebron in Juda, and east of the Jordan Bezer in Ruben, Ramleh in Gad, Golan in Manasseh (Jos.20:7-8). The roads leading to them were to be marked in order that the refugees might reach them easily. These laws applied to the Hebrew as well as to the foreigners (Numb.35:15)

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IX. TAXATION
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Hebrew society kept throughout its agricultural stage - from the time of the conquest of the land until the reign of Solomon - the tribal organisation of its nomadic and pastoral life. The tribes of the Hebrews were practically independent and no kind of an organised government seems to have existed. The elders of the tribes, had great influence and authority. Their long experience in life made them the natural advisors of the people. They were the judges and formed a kind of a jury to deal with criminal matters (Deut. 1:19, 25:13, 25:7).

The Hebrews at that time had no standing army. In case of war they all united under the leadership of an energetic person, a judge, and later under the king and marched against the common enemy. In such events every tribe sent a number of young men, fully armed, to take part in the battle for the common cause.

The lack of a standing army as well as the simplicity of the life of the judges and early kings did not necessitate the imposition of taxes on the people.

But on the other hand all the tribes had to contribute for the maintenance of an institution of another nature, which played a very important role in their life: The priesthood and sanctuaries.

Sanctuaries existed in practically all the important cities and the main one was at Shiloh where the Ark and Tabernacle were deposited until the time of the building of the temple at Jerusalem by Solomon. These sanctuaries were entrusted
to the care of the body forming the priesthood i.e. the priests or Kohanim and the Levites.

Both groups belonged to the tribe of Levi. The Kohanim are said to be the descendants of Aharon while the Levites are the descendents of his other brothers.

The function of the Kohanim or priests, was to perform the sacrifices and to conduct the religious services, and to teach the law, while that of the Levites consisted in attending to the menial work of the sanctuaries, the collection and administration of taxes.

The Levites, as mention has already been made, had not received a portion of land like the other tribes. In its place they were given 48 cities evenly distributed over the whole country wherein to live. They had to devote all their time to the service of God. Having no property and consequently no revenues, they were to be supported by the contributions of the people.

**Free gifts:** These contributions were at the beginning in the form of free gifts: "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors Exod 22:29, Deut 26:2.

But sometimes later they seem to have adopted the tithes, the system in use among the inhabitants of the land, and it is from that time that real taxation starts among the Hebrews.

**The Tithes:** It was an obligatory yearly contribution levied on all kinds of revenues by the Levites. It consisted in the payment of one tenth of the revenues of the land and one tenth of the increase of the cattle and herds (Lev. 27:30, 32 Numb. 18:21).
Being levied only on the increase, on the revenues it was a kind of income tax similar to that actually in application in most modern countries.

The payment of this tax was in most cases effected in kind. But in case of places that were separated by great distance from the sanctuary, which made the transportation of the tithe a great encumbrance, the contributor was allowed to convert his tithe in terms of precious metals and to send same to the sanctuary. (Deut.14:26,29).

HEAD TAX.- Besides the tithe, the Hebrews had to pay a yearly head tax of one half of a shekel.

It was levied from every male Hebrew, rich and poor, above twenty. (Exod.30:15).

Although the collection of this tax is mentioned only once in the Bible in connection with the building of the Taber-
nacle, it continued apparently to be levied every year until the destruction of the 1st Temple.

According to Josephus, this same tax was also levied from the people in the exile in Babylon (Ant.III 9:1) and when later they came back to Palestine 2 drachmas an amount equivalent to one half shekel, was collected yearly (Wars VII 6:6).

Up to the present time, a vestige of this same head tax exists in all the Jewish Communities of the world.

In every community a uniform sum called "half shekel" the value of which varies according to the currency of the respective country, is still collected yearly from every male above twenty.
In Beirut, for example, half a Syrian Pound is considered as the equivalent of the "half shekel". The funds raised are devoted at present, for philanthropic purposes.

The head tax and the tithe served to defray the expenses of the Levites as well as those of the sanctuaries, and were the only taxes levied from the Hebrews until the latter part of the reign of David.
CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE COMMERCIAL STAGE

The constitution of the Hebrews, as is apparent from the preceding chapter, was mainly based on agriculture. It was designed to suit a purely agricultural people, and did not encourage commerce, the development of which would have wrecked the social and economic equality that it was aiming to maintain among the Hebrews.

Consequently commercial activity would have never been developed among them had they observed to the letter the Mosaic laws.

Since their settlement in the land, the trade of Palestine was mainly in the hands of the Canaanites. (Job 41:6; Prov. 31:24; Hosea 12:7). The Hebrew farm was, according to all probabilities, in the early period of their settlement, economically independent; it made its own food, clothing and necessary implements. Sometimes later, after the unification of the tribes under David, the exchange of products of the various districts started among the people. From this resulted a primitive division of labor which was further procted by the pilgrimage at the occasion of the three great feasts, that concentrated at the place of the central sanctuary a very large number of people from every part of the land.

Two factors introduced trade among the Hebrews and induced them to deal in commerce:

1°. The geographical situation of Palestine,
2°. The establishment of the monarchy.
In fact placed between two commercial nations, the Phœnicians and the Arabs, and possessing one of the important caravan routes, the Hebrews could not remain passive spectators to the great commercial enterprises that were being transacted by these two nations.

As for the other factor, e.g. the establishment of the monarchy one has to remember that under the first two kings the tribal organisation of the Hebrews was maintained and they continued to live a simple and sober life.

But with the accession of Solomon to the throne, the great change in the social and economic life of the Hebrews started. King Solomon had a standing army equipped with the up to date armaments, chariots and horses; he built immense and costly palaces and temple, had a numerous body of cultists. All this necessitated a very large expenditure that he derived partly from the taxes levied from the people and to a great extent from his commercial enterprises.

Having inherited a vast and powerful empire, Solomon devoted much of his time to foreign trade, from which he seems to have derived large profits.

Up to the latter part of his reign the foreign trade of Palestine was conducted by the king and his agents. It was a kind of state monopoly.

Foreign trade started as a kind of barter. Solomon it will be remembered entertained friendly relations with all the neighbouring kings and princes from whom he received donations the produce of their land, which he, in his turn paid back in kind. This exchange of donations constituted nothing less
than barter conducted on a large scale.

Aside from these, Solomon undertook commercial enterprises with the surrounding countries.

He first established commercial relations with South Arabia and Ophir "probably India". Allied with Hiram king of Tyre, Solomon sent to those countries every three years from the port of Ezion Geber, on the Red Sea, a fleet, manned by Phoenician sailors (I Kg. 9:26 to 28) and imported gold silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. (I Kg.10:22)

Solomon then contracted an alliance with Egypt which he confirmed by marrying the daughter of the reigning king. This alliance enabled him to give a greater development to his trade with Egypt from where he was already importing chariots and horses for his army. Besides his needs, he imported these articles in large quantities which he sold to the Hittites and the Syrians of the north. (I Kg.10:25-29).

Thus Solomon seems to have reserved to himself the only right to import these martial articles from Egypt and to sell them to the neighbouring countries. He was acting as the sole distributor of the Egyptian chariots and horses to the northern districts.

Solomon did not fail to establish also friendly terms with Phoenicia, which resulted in trade development between the two countries.

The building of the Temple and great palaces at Jerusalem under his reign gave further impulse to the exchange of goods between Palestine and Phoenicia.
The main building materials for the erection of the Temple and palaces were imported from Phoenicia. Tyre, king of Tyre supplied Solomon with timber from the dense cedar forests that in those days seemed to have covered the actually named Lebanon mountains, and with skilled workmen. (I Kg. 5:10).

As a result of these alliances and friendly relations large quantities of foreign goods and products poured into Palestine, and this would have constituted an unfavorable balance of trade with its accompanying detrimental consequences had Solomon not been wise enough to reimburse his neighbors with the products of his own land.

In payment of his timber, and the services of his workmen Tyre received wheat, oil, wine. (I Kg. 5:11-12). Likewise he exported these articles to Egypt to cover the value of horses and chariots he brought from that country.

As can be seen from above, trade among the Hebrews began in the form of royal monopoly and the large commercial enterprises were conducted by the king and for his own private account.

Gradually enterprising people attracted by the commercial centers that soon developed, were induced to leave their land, and concentrate in cities where they discovered that trade was more lucrative than agriculture.

Toward the end of the reign of Solomon, commerce seems to have spread among the people, to such an extent that he found it possible to derive a great income by taxing the merchants, Hebrews and Canaanites, who came to Jerusalem to transact business. (I Kg. 10:15). Thus toward the latter part of his reign commerce
had ceased to be entirely concentrated in the hands of the king and his agents.

Under the descendants of Solomon and after the schism the prosperity of Palestine decreased. Expeditions to south Arabia and Ophir were no more possible, Judah lost its free access to the Red Sea, the port of Ezion-Gaber having been conquered by the Edomites. The kings of both kingdoms, tried to continue the foreign policy of their predecessors, but their efforts were not always successful. As a consequence the large and lucrative trading enterprises that were undertaken by Solomon seem to have ceased.

But on the other hand, external trade was much more propagated among the Hebrews. Instead of the kings, the people themselves handled business transactions with the neighbouring countries and more particularly with Syria. And when the kings were powerful enough, they concluded commercial treaties, by virtue of which certain privileges were secured for their subjects to trade in foreign countries. Ahab, for instance obtained from Ben Hadad, king of Syria, the right for the Hebrews to have "Heroot" special streets in the market of Damascus. (I Kings 20:34)

It is worthy of note that the above instance, is the first recorded commercial treaty contracted by the Hebrews with a neighbour country.

In both the kingdom of Judah, and that of Israel, commerce and exchange of commodities, seem to have continued to exist and to have been particularly prosperous toward the middle of the 8th century B.C. as can be inferred from the writings of the prophets of that period. The luxurious life described
(Isa.6:1-17; 3:12-24; Hos.3:6; Joel; 12:1,7,8; 13:18, Amos 5:3-6 Amos.8:5) implies a demand for foreign articles and consequently an active commerce.

From that time to the fall of Samaria, and a little later that of Jerusalem, the commercial activities decreased. The continual incursions of the land of Israel and that of Judah by their enemies annihilated foreign trade and reduced greatly internal commerce. With the fall of Jerusalem and the carrying of the Hebrews into exile, naturally, all commercial activities ceased as the community that remained was very poor.

TRANSPORTATION OF COMMODITIES

The transportation of goods from one district to the other, was usually made by means of donkeys (Gen.43:27; 43:18 Gen.45:22) mules (2 Kings 5:17, 1 Chr.12:40), oxen (1 Chr.12:40) Commodities were also carried in case of short distances by slaves (2 Kings 5:23)

For the long distances and in the case of the transportation of goods to foreign countries, camels were mostly used.

IMPORTS OF PALESTINE

It has been already pointed out that the Hebrew trade was developed under Solomon and his descendants with Phoenicia, Egypt, Arabia and Ophir.

The Hebrews imported from Phoenicia, timber for building purposes as well as artisans (I Kgs.5:11)

They brought from Egypt, horses and chariots, for their armies and for sales among the northern people. (I Kgs.10:28, 29)
With Arabia and Ophir, trade was particularly prosperous only in the time of Solomon. Gold, silver, spice timber, precious stones ivory apes and peacocks were imported. (I Kgs. 10:10 to 12)

**EXPORTS OF PALESTINE**

In payment of these importations, the Hebrews exported from the produce of their country: to Phoenicia, they exported honey, balms, wheat and oil. (I Kgs. 5:11) and to Egypt they sent spices balm, myrrh, honey, pistachio nuts, almonds, oil. (Gen. 27:25, 45:11, Hosea 13:1)

**TRADE ROUTES**

Its geographical situation, made of Palestine a highway through which the caravans coming from Babylonia and Syria had to pass in order to reach Egypt and Arabia.

From very old times two highways existed traversing Palestine from north to south. Both routes started at Damascus. The first goes straight to Petra, traversing the country to the east of the Jordan, and ends at Elath on the Red Sea. The second takes a south west direction to Ascho and continues along the coast through Joppa and Gaza to Egypt.

With the development of trade in Palestine, Jerusalem became the main commercial center of the country. This led to the creation of new routes to connect it with the various districts. Four main routes existed: The first connected it with the districts situated to the east of the Jordan. It started in Gilead, crossed the Jordan and ended at Jerusalem. The second starting from Jerusalem went south west to Gaza. The third connected Jerusalem directly with Joppa and the fourth passed north-
ward through Samaria and ended at Aschoh.

**T A X A T I O N**

Since the time of the establishment of the monarchy the Hebrews became burdened with taxation.

First of all they had to pay to the Levites and the sanctuary the holy impositions: the tithe and the 1/2 shekel head tax.

**FORCED LABOR.** In the time of King David, forced labor seems to have been instituted among the Hebrews. Having no standing army, every tribe had to supply a number of men whose age was not less than twenty and fit for warfare. This levy was entrusted to a special official who kept record of the valid persons and saw to it that they joined the army in case of need.

His successor Solomon adopted the same system for the building of the Temple. Instead of levying from the people in form of taxes the funds necessary to pay hired labor for the erection of the Temple, and his palaces, the king required of every tribe to send proportionate numbers of persons to help for the building of these edifices. (1 Kg.5:13 to 17)

This was a kind of direct tax. It meant the taking off from every farm a certain amount of labour, which resulted in the decrease of the revenues of the people.

Solomon levied other taxes from the people to defray the exorbitant expenses of his luxurious life, as well as the expenses of his officials and army. These taxes were according to all probabilities levied when the king needed funds. No details regarding the system of taxation prevailing in those
days can be found in the Bible, but numerous references exist to show that these irregular taxes constituted a heavy burden on the shoulders of the general mass of the people. It is a "grievous yoke" that they resented with great bitterness. (I Kg. 12:4). This heavy system of taxation dissatisfied the people and was by the way one of the factors that caused the schism among the Hebrews.

This defectuous system of taxation continued to exist in both the kingdom of Israel and that of Judah, and the lack of energetic government encouraged the shifting of these charges from the aristocracy and nobility to the general mass of the people.

TRIBUTE TO NEIGHBOURS. These oppressive taxes were not all. It will be remembered that after the schism, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, were not always independent. They were several times before their final collapse, reduced to vassalage, by the strong neighbour states, Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. This necessitated the payment of a yearly tribute that was naturally levied from the people.

Before closing this chapter wherein the introduction of commerce among the Hebrews, as well as their internal and external trade, have been considered, the following observation is necessary:

It ought not to be inferred that commercial activity spread among all the Hebrews from the time of the reign of King Solomon until the exile of Babylon. The main occupation of the majority of the people remained agriculture and commerce.
was in the hands of a small fraction of the people, composed mainly of the princes, courtiers and grandees.

At the same time one has to bear in mind that while the expansion and development of trade under King Solomon and his descendants increased the national wealth and prosperity of the country, their effect was detrimental to the general welfare of the mass of the people. To the study of these consequences as well as to the reaction they produced among the Hebrews, the next chapter is devoted.

...
CHAPTER I.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF COMMERCE AMONG THE HEBREWS

The sudden growth and expansion of commerce among the
Hebrews, in both the kingdom of Israel and Judah, destroyed the
social and economic equality that the Mosaic laws aimed to con-
serve among them.

In order to be able to realise the immense change that
occurred in their life from the 9th century B.C. until the exile
to Babylon, it will be well to throw a retrospective glance at
the social condition of the Hebrews before that period.

We have seen that during the period running between the
12th and 9th centuries B.C. the Hebrews were an agricultural
people. And if we are to judge from the laws prevailing in those
days, we may conclude that equal distribution of the land was
maintained by means of the restitution every half century, of
the land that had in the interval changed owner, to the original
proprietor. To those who were in financial embarrassment loans
were granted without any charge, interest being rigorously pro-
hibited. And at every cycle of seven years, those debts, if un-
settled were cancelled thus an automatic distribution of wealth
was reestablished. Bondmen and bondwomen were emancipated every
seventh year and in the Jubilee year. No class distinction exis-
ted, all the people were equal. That, according to all probabili-
ties, was the condition of the Hebrews all the time they were an
agricultural people.
Let us now turn and examine the social condition of the Hebrews since the time of Solomon.

The simple and sober way of living of the agricultural Hebrew is no more. Instead a luxurious life full of extravagance prevailed in all the cities of Palestine and particularly at Jerusalem and Samaria. In place of the portable Tabernacle, an imposing and costly Temple has been erected at Jerusalem, and in place of the humble and small houses, large and expensive palaces adorn the cities.

The courts were no more composed of the elders of the people assembling in simple clothes to hear and judge the cases brought before them; they were now composed of a sovereign sitting on a throne incrusted with silver and gold, clothed in fine and costly clothes surrounded by similarly richly dressed body of courtiers, holding their meetings in a luxurious palace, the palace of the king.

The Hebrews had a king who did not exist before.

In fact the establishment of the monarchy, which was in itself a departure from the Mosaic laws, marked a turning point in the political as well as in the economic and social life of the Hebrews. It meant the introduction of luxury and extravagance the building of opulent palaces, a numerous court and a standing army which had detrimental consequences on the general welfare of the people.

The erection of the Temple and palaces as well as the standing army meant new taxation, new burdens placed on the shoulders of the people. And the growth of commerce had still a far reaching effect in destroying one of the corner stones of
of the constitution of the Hebrews: The young and enterprising people abandoned little by little their fields and pasture lands, and rushed to the cities where they could more easily make up their fortunes by dealing in commerce. As a natural result, the cities increased in number, wealth accumulated and luxury spread among the people; but most important of all agriculture ceased to be the chief source of national wealth.

Agriculture lands were bought up by wealthy city dwellers who had enriched themselves through commercial enterprises and the original owners, impoverished and harassed by heavy taxation became to a considerable extent tenants and serfs. Land was acquired for good, and not until the Jubilee year, the law of the Jubilee year was no longer observed. Bondmen and bondwomen were no longer returned unto their families in the seventh year. People in financial embarrassment were helped and loans granted to them at exorbitant high rates, whereas the law condemned as has already been pointed out, the taking of interest. The laws of the Schamitta year ceased to be observed and debts were not cancelled in the seventh year. The rich pushed their harshness to such an extent as to sell their insolvent debtors or their children as slaves to obtain the reimbursement of their money.

This is what became the people of Moses in the 8th and following centuries B.C., among whom no class distinction should exist, who had only to deal in agriculture and among whom equality in the full sense of the word should be maintained.

However this great change and transformation of the social and economic life of the Hebrews was not accomplished in one day by a single stroke of a magic wand. It was a gradual
change that started as already pointed out, with the establishment of the monarchy and particularly in King Solomon’s time, and kept on developing until the fall of Samaria, the destruction of the Temple and the captivity of Babylon.

The development of foreign trade led to the continual contact of the Hebrews with the neighboring peoples and more particularly with the Syrians and Canaanites. As a consequence the corrupt luxuries of those peoples together with the depravation that was mingled in their religious services and manifestations were little by little introduced among the Hebrews. Even the full worship of the Canaanites was adopted by the Hebrews of the northern kingdom and official sanction was given to it by certain of their kings. Idolatry spread quickly in the land (Hos.4:14, 8:4-5, 13:2, Mic.1:7, Isa.2:8) and the law of Moses seems to have been forgotten.

The religious corruption was so much propagated that it even gained particularly in Israel, the majority of those spiritual leaders whose function was the conservation of the law: the priests. ( Mic.3:15, II).

If one remembers that the Mosaic laws regulated the actions of the Hebrew in every domain of his activities as an individual and as a member of society, it becomes easy to understand why the social and economic conditions of the Hebrews changed since the time these laws ceased to be observed.

Another great factor that has contributed to promote this disorderly state of affairs was the fact that most of the kings who reigned after the achive were unstable and weak. Instead of striving for the improvement of the conditions of the country and their people, they were continually busy with
the intrigues plotted against them by the various political factions, and had always to be on the look out to safeguard their own life. The lack of energetic sovereigns encouraged the abuses on the part of the courts, judges and the grandees.

Justice and righteousness, two principles that are at the basis of the Mosaic constitution existed by name only in those days. The courts were corrupt and the judges pronounced decisions in favour of the higher bidder (Amos 5:7, 10, 12 Micah 3:11, 7:5).

The corruption of the spiritual leaders on the one hand and the weakness of the rulers on the other, induced the princes and courtiers and in one word the aristocracy to deal very harshly with the common people and to treat them with great iniquity.

Leading an extravagant life full of corrupt luxury, (Amos 6:5-6) their one aim was to become rich. As no real force existed to censure their actions, they sought by every means to seize the farms, vineyards and even the houses of the common people (Is 5:8). Their unscrupulous actions are described by one of the writing prophets of that period in the following terms: "They covet fields and take them by violence, and houses and take them away; so they oppress a man and his house even a man and his heritage" (Mic 2:8).

By such inhumane and oppressive ways, the grandees accumulated large properties which were cultivated by the poor peasants that they had reduced to servitude. The outcome of this chaotic state of affairs was:

I- An unequal distribution of land and wealth. The princes and courtiers and the merchants succeeded easily in
accumulating large properties and large fortunes at the detriment of the general mass of the people. The comparative even distribution of land and wealth that seems to have prevailed in the early days of their establishment in the land of Canaan was no more.

2°—The formation of two distinct social classes: The few wealthy merchants and princes on the one hand, and a large number of poor and destitute people on the other. The gap between these two classes widened continually; the rich continued to mock the blood of the poor by usury and every kind of fraud, and the latter who formed the majority of the people, who at one time constituted the hope of the nation were in a lamentable condition. The unceasing wars with the neighbouring countries sapped their strength; they were overburdened with heavy taxation and harassed by the exactions of the aristocracy. They were in one word ground down by oppression.

But this immoral and disorderly state of affairs, could not exist permanently among the people. Morality, justice and plenty had also their representatives who protested energetically and finally succeeded to compel the people to hear them.

Since the 10th century B.C. after the schism a school of prophets was started, whose aim was to censure the actions of the king and leaders and blame their unjust doings. The exponents of that school were Elijah and Elisha. This school still subsisted down to the 6th century B.C. when social inequality and injustice as well as religious perversion seem to have reached a very high pitch. In those times young and intelligent people began to assemble around their masters and raised their voice high in protest against religious perversion, luxury and immorality that were
frightfully gaining ground daily among the people. In the pre-
sence of king and grandees, in public assemblies, the members
of this school attacked the Baal worship and the harshness of
the rich. The most important members of this school of prophets
were: Amos and Hosea in Israel, and Isaiah & Micah in Judah.

Amos, the first exponent of that movement lived in the
early part of the 8th century B.C. He was a simple herdsman
from Tekoa in Judah, and a collector of sycamore figs (Amos 7:14).
He left his herds and went to Bethel in Israel, criticized in da-
lung terms the vices and iniquities of the officials and the aris-
tocracy and proclaimed the great punishment that awaited them in
case they continued to live such an immoral life of depravity
and irreligion. He condemned existing systems because they led to
the encouragement of injustice and barbarous treatment of the
poor. He had no project of reformation to propose. He admonishes
the people to come back to God and be righteous:

"I will not hear the melody of thy viols, but let judg-
ment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty
stream (Amos 5:22, 24)."

Seeing that the people did not hear his exhortations
and did not repent, he foretold their destruction. It was the
only solution for purging the land. He foretold their exile to
a foreign land far from their homes (2:14 to 16, 3:12-25,
4:2,5,12; 5:8, 7:8, 9:1-4,5,7) and that all the people will be
married into captivity. But all will not perish, the good and
righteous will come back to the land. Palestine will then be
purged of sinners (9:8-10), the kingdom will be reestablished;
the vineyards and the land will produce abundantly equality
and prosperity will prevail a new among the people. Hosea, a contemporary of Amos, is the next important prophet who raised his voice high to criticize the corruption of the people and to exhort them to come back to the right way of God.

He was a man of the kingdom of Israel; his own private life permitted him a good allegory that he applies to the relation between Jehovah and Israel. His wife proved unfaithful and in abandoning him, sank to a very low social level. His great love for her induced him to forgive her past infidelity and to take her back. This he applies to the relations of Jehovah and Israel. Jehovah is the loving husband who is forgotten by his spouse Israel. Israel is perverted and attracted by other gods, the Samia. Hosea's protest is in fact directed against the prevalent social corruptions of his days, but more particularly against the religious corruption and the widespread idolatry.

As the injustice, deprivation and irreligion had gained the general mass of the people, Hosea like Amos finds no other solution for purging the land, of the sinner than by removal, deportation. The approach of the Assyrians was at hand, and it was consequently easy for him to predict precisely that the people will be carried into captivity (II:6). The captivity will be a kind of purgatory and purification, after which God will make a new covenant with Israel, as he made one with their ancestors in the wilderness when he brought them out of Egypt (II:7-17).

Considering the miracle and usurpation of the kings of his own days, Hosea desires a state similar to that which existed at the time of Moses and Joshua, not a monarchy (6:1; 8:4) 13:9-12). He desires direct personal relation of the people with God.
Isaiah is the first prophet of mark in Judah, he lived toward the latter part of the 8th century B.C. He belonged to the aristocracy, apprently to a princely family. Nevertheless he was dissatisfied with the evil that he saw about him. The religious perversion, judicial corruption and the iniquities that also existed in Judah, though to a lesser degree than in Israel, produced on him the same effect that had produced on Amos and Hosea similar corrupt and immoral religious and social conditions of the northern kingdom.

Isaiah protested and raised his voice high denouncing the prevailing vices and iniquities: "Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil learn to do well seek justice relieve the oppressed judge the fatherless plead for the widow" (Isa.1:16,17).

His exhortations having found no echo like his predecessors, he predicted the coming punishment of God, destruction of the fields, gardens and vineyards, by the invading armies of Assyria sent by God to punish the sins and the iniquities of the Jews.

The aim of this punishment is not complete annihilation; only the wicked and the sinners will perish and out of Jerusalem will flourish again a new branch of the family of Israel (Is.6:12) This remaining branch of the people will come back to the land of its fathers and will be ruled by a king of the Davidic descent (Is.11:10-16).

Micah was a contemporary prophet of Isaiah, in Judah, from the town of Moresha on the Philistines border. Unlike Isaiah he belonged to the common people and therefore he condemned and censured more vehemently the existing disorders and vices.
As a punishment, he foretold that all Judah and Jerusalem will be destroyed (Micah.3:12) and the people led into captivity.

But Israel’s good remnant will be brought back and a new state, true religion will prevail, and Zion will become a source of spiritual inspiration: “for the law shall go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Mic.4:12)

All the prophets have one thing in common: they are dissatisfied and revolted by the existing conditions; they denounce idolatry, iniquities, vices and perversions.

None of them however, presents or suggests a definite program to remedy this state of affairs. The only solution they find is the destruction of the sinners at the hand of the foreigners sent for that purpose by Jehovah.

Their prophecies about the conditions of the remnant of Israel that will be brought back to Palestine, constitute hardly a constructive program.

They however, all agree that in the new state will reign as in the old good days the basic principles of the Mosaic constitution: Justice, equality and righteousness.

....

The exile had a salutary effect on the Hebrews. It was the realisation of what the prophets had predicated, the calamity inflicted by Jehovah the true god of their ancestors to punish them for their vices perverted life and ill doings. Inspired by energetic spiritual leaders, they gradually came back to God, and devoted much of their time to the study of the law. It is worthy
of note here, that a great portion of the Talmud, was the product of the rabbinical studies and religious speculations of that period; and this will show to what extent the study of the law was propagated.

The prophecies of Amos and his followers, were realised. The exile was a kind of purgatory. It had beneficial effect on the general mass of the people. And those who came back to Palestine were of the best elements who again re-established on the land of their fathers to deal in agriculture and commerce.

If in that new society, perfect economic equality reigned among the Hebrews is not known, but what is known with certainty is that, they lived in Palestine after their return from the exile, a quiet and moral life; and we find no more in the records of that period any reproach or criticism against demoralisation, religious corruption and social iniquities as those described by the prophets of the 6th century B.C.

Thus, those who returned to Palestine formed seemingly the "good remnant" of Israel spoken of by the prophets, and lived a better life than their fathers.

CONCLUSION

Since the destruction of the 1st Temple in the 6th century B.C. the waves of Jewish emigration to the Mediterranean basin and western Europe started. This movement was greatly enhanced after the destruction of the second Jewish kingdom by the Romans. The Jews were carried in great numbers to Greece, southern France and Spain.

They lived quietly in these countries and devoted much
of their time to the study of the law. Where enough liberty
was granted to them, they were very active, and produced intellec-
tual leaders and political advisors, who rendered great services
to the country in which they were living. Spain under the Maures
domination is one of these examples.

But the status of the Jews changed with the coming of
the middle ages. In fact the Dark Ages mark the beginning of the
understandable horrors and sufferings that they had to bear, as
well as one of the most immoral and inhuman tragedy in the
history of the world. Confiscation of their properties, extor-
quations of their money, expulsions were nothing to compare with the
severe and barbarous treatment that they had to suffer at the
hand of the Inquisition of Spain, the example of which was followed
in other countries.

But their faith in Jehovah, who had delivered their ances-
tors from the bondage of Egypt, and later from the Babylonian
exile, kept the fire of hope burning in their breast and enabled
them to survive to the unbearable horrors and miseries that they
had to endure for several centuries. They looked forward with
joy, to the day, when Jehovah will again have compassion upon
their destitute conditions, and will gather them again to replant
them on the land of their ancestors.

Being strangers and having no body to protest their rights
they were treated without mercy in practically all the countries
of Europe. Their social activities were limited. They were compel-
led to live in the cities, and in isolated quarters. They could
not own land, nor cultivate it. All professions and trades were
prohibited to them except money lending.
They had continually to pay tribute and taxes to the nobility and kings in order to be left unmolested. But these continual sacrifices were in most cases made in vain, because as soon as they had succeeded to amass some wealth, they were immediately dispossessed, by the lords and kings in a very simple way: they were deported from the country and all their wealth confiscated. A few years later they were called back and the same process of deportation and confiscation was again and again repeated. And wherever they went the same fate was awaiting them.

In order to meet the immoderate exactions and cupidity of the rulers and nobility, they had to work very hard in the only and unique trade permitted: money lending.

As a consequence the Jews finished by having a very wide experience in money affairs and acquired a particular skill in finance which they kept on developing. This will explain the fact among the present day leading financiers of the world, there are certain persons bearing the name of Cohen, Kahn, Levy and other Jewish appellations.

This particular ability and skill in finance have neither been developed in the Jew by his religion nor have they been transmitted to him as an inheritance by his Hebrew ancestors.

The religion of the Hebrews as well as their constitution as has been pointed out in the previous chapters, were mainly made to suit an agricultural life and not a life of financial activities.

This special ability in some Jews could not but be the outcome of the exactions and limitations imposed upon them.
by the people of the Middle ages and their descendants until the latter part of the 19th century.

As when finally after twenty centuries of continual expulsions, ill treatment and sufferings, the civilised nations decided unanimously to offer to the Jew the same ancestral land as a place of refuge and for rebuilding in the future his national home, he remembered the true teachings of his ancestors, and it is to till the land and to agriculture that he came back first.

The Jewish colonies, which form a chain of flourishing oasisas in modern Palestine are the first palpable result of this agricultural activity.

In settling on the land of their fathers, the Jews recalled the agrarian principles of their ancestors the aim of which as we have seen, was the maintenance of economic and social equality among the people.

These same principles with a slight modification are nowadays applied in most of the Jewish Colonies of Palestine: The colonist is given a piece of land which remains his property all the time he cultivates it. But his right of ownership is limited. He cannot sell it, he cannot dispose of it. It remains his property all the time he works it himself, as no salaried labor is admitted. Thus in that "small and poor land, but which is fertile in miracles" as Charles Gide calls Palestine ¹ a new experiment in land property drawing its inspiration from the teachings that were studied in the previous chapters has been started.

¹ La Propriété Foncière dans les Colonies Sionistes par Charles Gide Rev. d'Economie Politique No 6, Novembre-Décembre 1926.
The perpetual ownership of land does not exist in these colonies but is replaced by a limited temporary ownership closely connected with personal labor. Its aim is to prevent the occurrence of the double scourge that usually result from the private property of land:

a) The concentration of large property in the hands of the few,

b) and the consequent formation of two classes, the few rich land owners and the large number of poor rural proletaires.

The land on which the colonist settles in Palestine is not his own private property, in the common sense of the word, but it remains the permanent property of the Jewish Nation.
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