Chapter V

SOCIAL ASPECT OF JUDAISM
The idea of corporate personality is not something unique in Israel. In Jewish life, community is given a prominent place. To consider the community as an organic unit involves attention to its members individually, and to consider persons individually involves attention to the society which comprehends them. Most of the Jewish socio-religious laws and practices are for the growth, security and strength of the whole and not for the welfare and happiness of the individual.

The Hebrews left a series of historical documents covering several centuries and revealing a specific evolution in social concepts. The social thought of the Hebrews was born of group suffering. It expresses the feelings and sympathies born of conflict. The nomadic life of the early Hebrews compelled them a kind of thoughtfulness about the forces of nature. The group loyalty and patriotism grew out of the struggle among the Hebrews on the question of faith. The conflicts occurred in the Euphratic Valley sent Abraham out of his native land to the perilous journey to Canaan and the grim spectre and famine, drove the Hebrews to
Egypt. Through out the years of migration, exile and suffering Abraham and his people developed a remarkably well-balanced and social personality. The laws of the social concepts which the people drew out won for Israel the distinction of being, "the leading social teachers of the human race."\(^1\) The economic and social development was the result of the interaction between a nomadic tradition and the urban social order. The Hebrew culture was an elaboration of the semetic cultural traditions which the Akkadians and Babylonians under Sumerian influence had shaped.

Judaism holds physical observances as symbols of God's call to a disciplined and holy way of life to fit His chosen people for their great spiritual responsibilities as heralds of the one true God. All the phases of Jewish pattern of group life have been regarded as direct commands of God. Religious practices and feasts and fasts have the same note of holiness in Jewish thought. The superior sanctity of the appointed seasons lies in the fact that they are all days of rest or abstention from work. The Bible enumerates six such festivals. They are the Subbath, the three pilgrimage festivals and the Days of Blowing of the Trumpet and Atonment. The three pilgrimage festivals are the Passover or the spring festival; Pentecost or the day of the First Fruits, and Succoth or the feast of Ingathering. They are

\(^1\) Charles F. Kent, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 4.
primarily agricultural festivals. The pilgrimage festivals are also commemorative of great historical events recalling God’s special recalling with Israel. Circumcision, marriage and prayers are some of the fundamental observances of the Jewish people, which assure them of their membership in that community. It is only in and through socialising these observances that one is recognised as a Jew by the community.

Sabbath is one of the fundamental observances which is distinctive of Judaism. It is the central pattern from which radiates the ramification of Jewish life and culture. Hence the Greeks and Romans who aimed to suppress the religion put the Sabbath among the first of their prohibitions. Sabbath has been restorative of the vigour of Judaism. It is apt to say that the Sabbath has kept Israel rather than Israel has kept the Sabbath. It is the institution that most contributed to the survival of Judaism. The Sabbath exalts the Jew and fortifies him against the cruel persecution which seeks to destroy him. It gives him spiritual strength to oppose barbaric aggression from all sides. It banishes fear and hate, and leaves the Jew with a solemn consciousness of peace so that he strives constantly to maintain a constructive harmonious relationship with a diversity of neighbours.
The word Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew word Shabath - meaning to rest from labour.* It is an 'eternal covenant' an 'eternal sign' between God and Israel. Its origin is explained not from a human but from a Divine stand point. It is a solemn commemoration after the work of creation. It belongs to the God and is sacred unto Him. He calls them my Sabbaths. "For the Jews colonized in Babylonia or scattered in other lands, the Sabbath alone of all the sacred calendar remained and its importance was thus greatly enhanced."² The Sabbath holds a place of far greater importance after the exile than it did in earlier times. "Since the beginning of civilization, the Sabbath has been recognized and observed as a day that is especially significant and sacred to Jewry."³

The institution of Sabbath has both religious and socio-ethical significance. "The first institution in history answering to the human need for regularly recurrent day of release and refreshment, no less admirable in its recognition of the

* Four in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus, 20:8-11).


universality of that need, it ranks among the foremost contributions of the Hebraic spirit to personal happiness and social welfare." The social significance of the Sabbath lies in the fact that it is a symbol of the emancipation of the slave. Aristotle holds that leisure is a valuable condition for spiritual development, but it is restricted to a small class of people who own slaves. But Judaism prescribes leisure to all class of people irrespective of any social status. It is a day of light and rejoicing and day of rest. "The Sabbath is to the Jew, the day of ecstacy and good cheer, not of restraint." Sabbath proves the fundamental equality of all men. All the people irrespective of their differences must take rest on the day. It is a day of rest not only for human beings but also for cattle. The religious significance of the Sabbath is presented as the symbol of creation as well as the end of creation. It is a day for higher spiritual life. This aspect of Sabbath makes it not merely a day of rest, a cessation of labour, but a Holy Day. The Lord blessed the Day of Sabbath and sanctified it. Yahewh rested from his great work of creation on the seventh day of making the world and thereafter he made the seventh day a Holy day. Man is god's partner in the


work of creation. God laboured and then he rested. Man labours to perform his creative tasks and he too, must rest. "The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their host. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His works, which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all creation." The children of Israel have kept and observed Sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant. "It is a sign between He and the children of Israel for ever, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested." 

The Law of Sabbath prescribes prohibition of all kinds of labour on Sabbath day. "Everyone shall stay where he is on the seventh day, no one is to go out."

The principal categories of work which are forbidden on the Sabbath are thirty nine in number. Sabbath is a day of rest from all secular labour or employment because God rested on that day from His work of creation. On this day the Jews refrain from all kinds of work or secular activity, even travelling, buying a newspaper, or writing letters. On Sabbath, "the pious Jew was then expected to speak as

7. Exodus, 31-12-17.
little as possible, light no fire in his home, and spend hours at
the synagogue and in prayer." 9 The justification for the
observances of Sabbath is two fold, to rest, symbolic of God's
rest from creation and to commemorate the deliverance from
Egyptian bondage. "The reason given for the command to keep the
Sabbath holy is that those who serve must rest." 10 Breaking the
Sabbath is a breach of what is holy. Therefore the whole life of
Israel depends on its maintenance. Any one who works on that day
shall be punished by keeping him out from the midst of his people.
"Blessed is the man that keepth the Sabbath, from polluting it,
and keepeth his hand from doing any evil." 11 Nehemiah made the
people pledge themselves to abstain from trade on the Sabbath.
The Talmud principle is that "the Sabbath is committed to you not
you to the Sabbath. Who ever desecrates it shall surely be put to
death." Once a man who was found gathering wood on Sabbath was
put to death. "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone
him outside the camp." 12 Another penalty for abandonment of the
Sabbath is the complete cut off from the rest of the people for
ever.

9. Will Durant, The Age Of Faith (New York: Simon & Schirster,


11. Isaiah, 1-4-2.

The rise of the synagogue and its growing importance in the religious life of Judaism gave to the Sabbath another character. The fact that the Sabbath was a day of leisure made it the natural day for such assemblies, and in course of time a larger and larger part of it was occupied by them. Mere abstinence from work on the Sabbath is not enough. It is not merely a day of bodily rest. It is a covenant between man and the creator and its purpose is to release man from labour and worldly cares for the sake of moral cultivation and a deeper understanding of his own spiritual personality. Sabbath has become a day set aside for religious worship, and religious instructions and it is distinguished by special readings from the Bible, prophets and discourses and instructions given by religious teachers. It also includes visit to the sick, the house bound and the bereaved. The holiness of the Sabbath makes it a day of religious inwardness and moral regeneration. It was not obligatory to attend the synagogue on Sabbath days but it came by custom the popular way of spending the Sabbath in the synagogues. "Sabbath is rendered holy and honourable by making it a day of delight, joy cheerfulness and gladness; and many of the regulations observances, and customs attached to the Sabbath as designated to engender on the Jew such
a spirit."13 Sabbath finds meaning only in observances and practice.

"The weekly Sabbath falls on a Christian Saturday and it is day of rest and rejoicing."14 Friday is a preparatory day for the Jews. Every Jew must rise early Friday morning to hasten the preparation for the Sabbath. It implies that one should prepare for Sabbath as early as possible. Preparation for Sabbath is a personal obligation and should not be left to servants. "It commences traditionally with the setting of the Sun on Friday and concludes with the appearance of the stars the following evening."15 Every routine work must cease on Friday afternoon, and all the members of the family should participate in helping to welcome the Sabbath. All cooking must be done on Friday and no cooking is permitted on Sabbath. The Sabbath is greeted on Friday evening by the kindling of lights by the housewife. The kindling of light marks the distinction between light and darkness as well as between the holy and profane. Minimum of two lights are lighted in order to correspond the two fold significance of the


Sabbath. The lighting of candles invoke God's blessings upon the household. The man of the house recites a special benediction (kiddush) preferably over wine and bread. "Surrounded by his family and his guests, he took a full cup of wine, pronounced a benediction over it, drank and passed the cup along for guests and wife and children to drink."16 Good Sabbath or 'Sabbath Shgalam' is the formal greeting exchanged on the Sabbath. This is followed by a festive meal. Sabbath being a joyful day, fasting is prohibited on the Sabbath. The evening meal is preceded by the recital of proverbs eulogizing the good housewife, after which the children are blessed by the parents. The evening meal is introduced by the Kiddush or sanctification, a benediction recited over a cup of wine in sanctification of the day and in praise of God for the gift of the Sabbath. The meals are accompanied by table songs (zemiroth) of which the most popular is the one with the refrain. The hymns give the real spirit of the Sabbath. The Jews celebrate the Sabbath richly with the poetry of custom and ceremony and depiction of the spiritual significance of the day through songs prayers and percepts. There is another table custom on Sabbath. The two loaves of bread used at each meal are a symbol of the double portion of manna that fell on Sabbath eve.

The loaves are plaited, symbolic of a bridal wreath. In olden days Sabbath was personified as a bride.

Orthodox Jews begin the observances of the Sabbath by attending synagogue services on Friday before dinner. Some Conservative and Reform Jews attend to late evening service. For all these groups, however, Saturday is a day of synagogue worship, and families attend synagogue for worship and thanks giving. During the service, seven people are called up to follow the reader, who recites from the prescribed section of the sacred Torah, and to offer a thanks giving for the gift of the Torah. An eighth person then reads a selection from the Prophetic Books and the service is concluded by an exhortation, or an interpretation, or a Sermon on the Torah. The family then returns home for a festive meal. The rest of the afternoon is spent either in studying the Torah or in leisure. Worshippers are called back to the synagogue where a section of the following weeks portion of the Torah is read.

Just as the coming of the Sabbath is greeted with a special benediction, the kiddush, its going out also is accompanied by a special benediction, Haudalah. Haudalah is in praise of God for the distinction between the Sabbath and six working days of the week. At night the symbolic ceremony in the home concludes the Sabbath. Now too, there is a recitation, over a cup of wine or any other popular beverage and over lights, by
the youngest member of the house. Spice-boxes are passed around from member to member for the family to sniff. It is accompanied by an appropriate benediction, a rite which is explained as affording a kind of comfort to the soul which grieves at the departure of the Holy day of Rest. It is to signify the sweetness of the Sabbath as it closes. All of them then greet each other with the following words, Shabuato, a good week.

Passover is the oldest and the most important family festivals in Judaism. "Foremost among the yearly feasts is the passover when the Jewish people give their thanks for their deliverance from bondage in Egypt."17 It represents the human freedom under the covenant of God. For the Jews it was God's deliverance and the covenant consolidated them into the 'people of God.' Passover is pictured in the Bible as a miraculous occurrence interpreted as a sign of God's care of and purpose for them. "This is a day you are to commemorate, for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord a lasting ordinance."18 It is a holiday surrounded with picturesque ceremonies, and observances which grew out of historic memories. "In the feast of the Pesach, Pascha or Passover, the scene of

flight of the Israelites, its darkness its hurry, its confusion, was acted year by year, as in a living drama." Originally it was observed as a spring festival, long before the Jews settled in Egypt. Many of the customs are traceable to pastoral and agricultural celebrations of spring. Today the festival commemorates the deliverance or Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. "It is designated the season of our (Israelites) freedom." It begins on the eve of the fourteenth day of Nisans (March-April) and lasts for eight days. It is observed as a family festival which the Jews have preserved from the very beginning. The major parts of the celebrations take place in houses and the upper chamber of the private house is the room prepared for the passover feast. Feast of the Unleavened Bread is the Bible designation for the passover holiday. Eating of the unleavened bread is one of the conspicuous features of the passover celebrations. The unleavened bread is (mazzab) the symbol of hasty flight of Israel from Egypt. One day before the festival begins, the entire house is examined in order to remove all traces of leavened bread. On the first two nights of Pesach each Jewish family holds a special bouquet known as Sedar. Sedar means order, for the service


follows a definite order. Sedar table is arranged for the occasion with special symbolic foods. During the meals four cups of wine are drunk in succession as a symbol of four stages through which the Israelites' redemption was achieved. The key person of the Sedar is the child, who must carry on the Jewish ideals which the celebration calls to life, and understand the meaning of freedom and its obligations. The child asks some basic questions concerning the occasion and the father answers them.

In Temple times the festival is inaugurated by the paschal lamb. The paschal sacrifice and sprinkling of the blood commemorate the act of God who caused the angel of death to 'passover' the homes of the Israelites. Yahweh smiting the first born of the Egyptians, 'passedover' those houses whose door post had been sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. The paschal lamb is slaughtered on the previous day and eaten on the same evening with the unleavened bread. "The sacrificial lamb was symbolic of the suffering from which the Hebrew people had been freed; the cakes of unleavened bread represented the bitter years of their bondage in Egypt."21 The ancient observances attending the Pascal meal are still retained to the present day. At the time of the meal they stand round the table on their feet. The feet usually bare are shod as if for a journey. Even the women hold a staff as

if for an immediate departure. Custom of sharing blessings with the less fortunate and special synagogue services are also held to mark the occasion.

Pentecost - the feast of the weeks or the day of the first fruit falls on the sixth of Siwah (May-June). It marks the end of the wheat harvest. Pentecost is commemorative of the revelation at Sinai when the Law was given. It is the anniversary of the delivery of the Commandment from Mount Sinai. In Temple times it was celebrated by the bringing of the first fruits and offerings of the two wheaten loaves. The custom is preserved by decorating the synagogue with plants and flowers. Today the festival is chiefly associated with the Siniatic Revelation, the giving of the Ten Commandments. It is also known as Atzereth - the closing festival to the passover.

Succoth is the Feast of Ingathering celebrated on the fifteenth of Tishri (September-October). It is also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. It is designated the season of our Rejoicing. "It is an occasion of rejoicing since it makes the harvest festival of thanks giving."22 The gathering of harvest is celebrated with a feast. In olden days the close of the ingathering season was an occasion of joyous thanks giving to God.

22. Solomon Nigosian, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
Succoth is connected with the migration of Israelites in the wilderness. It is to keep fresh in memory the tents which formed their homes during the forty years of sojourn in the wilderness. The festival is commemorative by specially erected bough covered booths in which meals are taken during the seven days. "Live in booths for seven days, All native born Israelites are to live in booths, so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt, I am the Lord. Your God." 23 The God had commanded the people to remove from their permanent dwellings and live for seven days in booths or Tabernacle, so that they may be directed to Him. "During these seven days all the people lived in booths made of boughs of trees and that is why it is called the feast of booths." 24 Men feel protected beneath the starry sky for they believe God is there to guard them. "Symbolic expression of gratitude for God's protection is the Sukkah, the festive booth, symbolic expression of His blessings in the festive plant offering." 25 The four plants connected with the festival are the citron, palm branch,


myrtle, and willow. "The symbols of the festival are branches of the palm, bound with springs of myrtle and willow and citron."26

The four plants are brought into the Synagogue in a procession and Psalm of Thanks giving is recited. During the last day of the festival there is a glorification of Torah known as Simchat Torah. On this occasion the last chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy and the first chapter of the Genesis are read. This is done to keep the continuity in reading the Torah throughout the year.

The Day of Atonement or Yomkippur is the chief of all festivals excepting Passover. It is the holiest day of the year starting after Sun set on the 9th day after the New Year. In the Bible it is described as a day given unto self affliction (fasting) and Solomn sacrifice. It is marked by 24 hours of prayer and fasting in emanation of God's angels who neither eat nor drink, but continuously praise God. This day is called the sabbath of sabbaths. It is a day of forgiveness for them and they feel a personal sense familiarity and comfort with God. Except on Yomkippur, the Jews believe that the Satan condemn them. Private and unison prayers are conducted for confession of sin and guilt.

* The four spheres of plants used in the festival represented the four elements of nature such as air, water, earth and fire. Citron represents fire since its colour is bright yellow. Palm grow high so it represented air. Since myrtle grows close to the ground it represents earth. The willow grows near to water and hence stands for water.

"Yom kippur, the Day of Atonement, a Solemn white fast during which from dusk to dusk the faithful partake of neither food nor drink in taken of penitence, but through prayer and confession scrutinize their lives, abjure their evil doing, and seek regeneration, at returning to God and goodness." 27

Synagogue from its very origin and throughout its long history has been a socialising and democratizing institution. It has a deep concern with the social aspect of Jewish life. References of synagogues are seen during the period of Moses. He ordained the people to leave their occupation once in a week and listen to the law. "Jethro advised Moses to teach the people the prayers they should offer in their synagogue." 28 The origin of the synagogue can be traced to Babylonian scene, back to the fourth and fifth century B.C. It is thought that synagogues arose out of the needs of the Babylonian exile, where the Jews, deprived of their Temple would gather together on sabbath day for instruction in the sacred books, for prayers and for mutual comfort. Synagogue had been established long before the beginning of the Christian era. After the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, they did not try to rebuild it. Instead the Jews met on Sabbath days out the house of the rabbi. These meeting grew into synagogues. Synagogues is a Greek word which originally

meant an assembly and then came to mean a building. It was a
municipal centre before it became a place of worship. "The
Synagogue replaced the Temple and prayer took the place of
sacrifices." It serves as a house of prayer, study and house of
people. Religion is discussed and practised in the synagogue.
The institution of Sabbath has been preserved by the synagogue.
In the synagogue attention is directed to lift up men's thought to
God and his word. The synagogues are built with the most
architectural style and contains places for the sacred Ark. The
Ark which contains the Torah, is the symbol of Jewish faith.

Prayer is one of the most holy observances in
Judaism. It is as old as Judaism. The term for prayer is
'mitzvot'. All activities in life are encompassed in the term
mitzvot. It is based on an intimacy with God. Any act pleasing
God represents a mitzvot. "Prayer is a bridge between man and
God." Prayer runs through the pages of Torah like a silken
thread, holding together its history and people and linking man to
God. It is an unconditional faith that combines respect with
love and reverence with intimacy. It is like the relationship of
the child to his father. "Thus each mitzvot is an end in itself

31. Leo Trepp. op. cit., p. 110.
and its observances has an absolute value."  

Prayer is the most intensely personal expression of the human soul. It enables one to establish a soul to soul interchange with God. Prayer differs with the different moods, temper and purpose of the man. Judaism prescribes three orders of daily prayer morning, noon and evening prayers. * There are also prayers assigned to meals to holy days, to the Torah, to the months of the year and so on. There is slight difference in the individual prayer and public service in the synagogue. Prayers offered communally by congregation** are more meaningful than those offered individually. "Although prayers may be recited in the home and when 'thou walkest by the way' it is believed that they find greater merit when uttered in unison with other worshippers."  

Prayer offered in communion is less likely to be selfish. Certain prayers such as the exalted prayer for the coming of the kingdom of God are to be recited only

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* The morning prayer or shaharit is a guidepost for the day. In the morning they start with special preparation. The afternoon prayer or Hinhah serves as a reflection in the midst of their work. The evening prayer or Maarib is the review of the day's accompaniments and calls to worship.

** Congregation or minyas is a group of ten men gathered together for the purpose of worship. Reciting of Kaddish and Torah requires the presence of minyan. The Congregation represents the House of Israel, and it upholds and sustain the individual.

when there is a quorum of at least ten male worshippers assembled. Jewish prayers are performed in association with several external symbols like tallith, tefillin, mezuzah and skull cap.*

Inscriptions enclosed by the mezuzah and the tefillin are hand written and include a quotation which is a prayer known as shema.** The entire passage in Deutoronomy 6:4-9 is called shema because the first word it begins with 'Shema' - 'Hear'.

* Tallith is a prayer shawl decorated with tassels or fringes on all aides and is worn by male worshippers. Two small leather boxes containing four biblical selection shapped to the arm or forehead by male worshippers constitute the tefillin. Skull cap is worn by male worshippers on all occasions. Mezuzah is a small scroll encased in wood, metal or glass secured at an angle on door-posts of Jewish home and offices symbolises God's presence.

** "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your Soul, and with all your might. Take to heart these words which I command you this day. Teach them diligently to your children. Recite them when you are in your house, and when you are away, when you be down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as front lets between your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your homes and on your gates."
Circumcision is another fundamental observance of Jews which is a divine institution given by God to Abraham for himself and his posterity. It is a covenant which the Israelities received with joy and rejoice in keeping. "And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between He and you." 34 Circumcision is the external symbol of child's status representing the covenant of Abraham. 35 "The sign of membership in the holy community was circumcision." 36 It has been a social rite making the stage for a youth to be admitted to the full membership in the holy community and participation in worship. Circumcision is an indispensable requirement for every son of Israel and an uncircumcised Jew is excluded from the community of Israel. It is the duty of the father to have his son circumcised. If the father fails to do so the son can have his circumcision when he reaches maturity. Otherwise he will be subjected to the penalty of Karet (circumcision). The court has the right to step in and order circumcision against the will of the father. "If the father or master neglected this obligation, rabbinical law made it the duty

34. Genesis, 18-5-11.
of the court to have the circumcision performed." 37 Eventhough the
day of the circumcision can be postponed due to illness of the
child, the child has to be circumcised eight days after the birth.
The act of circumcision is performed by a professional person
called a Mohel. "The rite of circumcision is performed by a
mohel, a pious Jew, especially trained to undertake this surgical
operation." 38 To be a mohel is an honour and great distinction
and to be called an officiating mohel is a privilege eagerly
sought for. Two benedictions are recited at the circumcision, one
by the mohel and the other by the father. The man who holds the
child ruling the operation becomes his god father and the lady who
brings the child becomes his god mother.

MARRIAGE

Marriage is the basis and source of family life. It occupies an important place and represents an exalted phase in Judaism. "Ethically and religiously it is given the highest place among the human relations." 39 According to the Book of Genesis, marriage was instituted by God himself at the very beginning of the creation of man. "Marriage was regarded not only as the

39. Israel Mattuck, Jewish Ethics (London: Hutchinson's
normal state, but as a divine ordinance." 40 "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." 41 is the will of the God. Increase and multiplication is one of the 613 precepts obligatory upon the Jews to obey. It is the duty of man to bring to the world holy people through whom God's glory will be increased. Hence the world depends upon the holiness of the union between man and woman. Marriage establishes this holy relation between husband and wife. The holiness is derived from the spirit they bring to it and maintain on it. "In truth all experience of the Divine Unity and Holiness depends on the union between man and woman, for the ultimate meaning of this act is very lofty." 42 Marriage is both legal and divine. The Jewish marriage law has made the celebration of marriage a divine service. "Marriage is a legal contract, as two people assume certain obligations, but it is more than that." 43 "It is not good for man to be alone." 44 imparts the importance of man and woman. Man's life is not complete in the state of singleness. Man and woman should be united, then only the Divine presence enter their lives. "A man

42. Arthur Hertzberg, op. cit., p. 80.
43. Leo Trepp, op. cit., p. 223.
44. Genesis, 2-2.
that lives single till his twenty, is looked upon as profligate, unless he makes it appear, that he cannot find a person that suits the disposition of his mind."  

"Children guarantee the physical survival of the group and safeguard the spiritual survival. Procreation is a social, spiritual and moral obligation of parents and those who does not fulfil this duty is compared to a murderer. Voluntary celibacy or childlessness is a major sin in Judaism. "Through marriage one carries out the biblical command to have children." Propogation of species is the primary purpose of marriage. It also aims at an ideal state for the promotion of sanctity and purity of life. God created man and woman and together named them as 'man.' Man is a whole consisting of two parts, man and woman, whose union makes a whole human being. "A man's obligations to his helpmate exceed even his obligations to his father and mother."  

Monogamy is the ideal form of marriage in Judaism. The utterances like "The lord hath been a witness between thee and the wife of thy youth against whom thou hast dealt treacherously yet, she is thy companion and the wife thy covenant" indicate that


monogamy was the general practice. The notion of unmarried man or woman as half person and becomes complete after marriage also emphasises monogamy. Soul in its pre-existent state consists of masculine and feminine elements. At the time of descent it splits into two, each going to their corresponding bodies. At the time of marriage these two halves unite and form a whole. This also shows monogamy as the proper marriage. In Talmudic and post Talmudic times, monogamy was the rule. The Israelites who are loyal to the religion of Moses marry only one wife in accordance with the ideal made explicit in the teachings of the prophets. The description of the ideal woman, the emphasis of religion in home, and the influence it attained through the religious atmosphere created by the mother, points to monogamous family. Among the poor people monogamy has been the practice, since a payment has to be made to the father in order to have the bride. But there are references to men who had more than one wife in the Old Testament. Polygamy was an oriental institution which the Jews adopted when they lived in the orient. Since the maintenance of the family and begetting children are the greatest of all, polygamy became an ethical demand of the Israelites. It was recognized as legal and was practised only by kings and the wealthy people who could afford more than one wife.

Marriage is a matter that concerns the individual as well as the family. The initial step of marriage is taken by the parents and usually arranged by them. They take the
resolution and carry it out. It is one of the duties of a father to give his son a wife, and to get a husband for his daughter.

"The marriage was formally arranged however by the bride grooms people and not by the young man." 48 But a father cannot marry off a minor daughter until she is able to choose the man herself. A marriage without the consent of the father and his daughter is invalid. Forced marriage is unlawful and void. So also no marriage is fully legal without the consent of both the bride and the bridegroom. Hence marriage is essentially by consent. If a young man finds a suitable woman for him, he must not be reluctant to inform his parents who will readily agree if found suitable. No fixed age is set for marriage. A man must be able to support his wife before he marries. But early marriages are favoured for sound moral and social reasons. But betrothal and marriage of very young male are invalid and has no legal status. According to the rabbis a man should marry at eighteen, and if he passes the age of twenty without taking a wife, he transgresses a divine command and incur God's displeasure. Late marriages are allowed in the case of students of Law since they have to concentrate on their studies.

Marriage ceremonies have been divided into two parts. The Eruswion or betrothal and the marriage proper.

48. E. W. Heaton, op. cit., p. 70.
Betrothal consists of the kiddushion ceremony. Kiddushion is derived from the word which means holy and hence has religious association. It is a formal act by which the woman is consecrated legally as the man’s wife, set apart for him exclusively. They could not thereafter separate except by a bill of divorce. Betrothal gives the pair the status of a married couple. "From the moment of their formal betrothal, the young couple were married and not simply engaged." The betrothal takes place in a synagogue and draws an agreement between the bride and the bridegroom. It is the scribe who draws out this agreement. By the act of betrothal a woman enters the first stage in the sanctification of the union. Since marriage is a legal contract it requires witnesses in whom’s presence the bridegroom makes a declaration to the bride, 'Be thou consecrated unto me in accordance with the usage of Moses and Israel.' Betrothal consists in placing a ring on the fingers of the bride pronouncing the formula, 'Thou art betrothed unto me with this ring in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel.' "The passing of a ring or any object of value, [Marriage age: In Jewish law the attainment of majority with regard to marriage for boys and girls are 13 and 12 respectively. A young woman is called a Naarah and matured woman is called Boyeret. During the period of minority and young womanhood she is under the protection of her father. The attainment of 13 for boys earns him the status of a man, both legally and religiously.]

49. ibid., p. 70.
from groom to bride represents a contract which is valid if it is witnessed by two other adult male Jews. Relative of both the parties are invited and there would be a great feast and rejoicing at the time of betrothal. It was customary to be betrothed 6 months or one year before marriage and the man was exempt from military service during this period.

Wedding ceremony completes the kiddushin. It is a ceremony in which the bride is taken to the home of the bridegroom for the consummation of the marriage and thus sanctifying the union. The bridegroom wears a special dress and in a procession goes to meet the bride at her father's house. The bride veiled and in a wedding dress accompanied by maid servants goes to the bridegroom's house. The marriage ceremony includes three legal acts. The first act is that the two people may become man and wife by living together and building a home. The second act is that the man may acquire a wife by handing to her something of value with the expressed declaration that he wishes to marry her by this gift. The third act is that the contract legalises marriage. When the groom has placed the ring upon the finger of the bride, the rabbi reads the contract previously witnessed, the ketubah. Ketubah is a marriage document in which the willingness of both parties to enter into the contract of marriage is expressed and some of the mutual duties are specified. It is

50. Arthur Hertzberg, op. cit., p. 84.
drawn upon before the consummation of the marriage. It is instituted with an object of protecting the wife against hasty divorce. So no woman can enter matrimony without being in possession of this safeguard to her marital security. Marital relations are forbidden so long as the ketubah has not been completed. If ketubah has been lost they have to abstain from marriage relationship until another one has been made out. The canopy or Huppah is an essential factor of Jewish marriage. The canopy symbolises the couple's home in which their vows are enshrined and fulfilled. "The Canopy symbolizes the couple's home in which their vows are enshrined and fulfilled."\(^\text{51}\) Nowadays the betrothal and marriage ceremonies are combined. "The pair are brought under a canopy and the benedictions called Birkat Erusin, referring to the sanctity of betrothal and marriage is pronounced over a cup of wine."\(^\text{52}\) There is a custom of shattering the wine cup on the conclusion of the marriage ceremony. It is a symbolic recognition of the sorrow of Israel since the time of dispersion. It reminds them even in the moments of supreme happiness, of those who have burdened for them in the past. Faithfulness and charity are two factors that bind the family as a spiritual and moral unit. "A virtuous wife is a crown to her husband, but an immoral wife is a rottenness in his bones."\(^\text{53}\)

52. Mayer Waxman, op. cit., p. 119.
53. Proverbs, 12-4.
Family is the primary basic unit of society. It is regarded in Judaism as a religious institution, designed to foster ideals of holiness. "Second only to synagogue in holiness is the Jewish home." 54 The ideals of sanctity of the life are fostered and inculcated in the home; and the home is founded upon the sacred character of the Jewish marriage." 55 The rabbis usually think of individuals not as isolated entities but as originally connected to their families and their people. According to the Bible and the Jewish Tradition the whole nation sprang and developed from a single family. The Jewish family replicates in miniature the greater covenant community. It may be called the society in miniature. The unity of the family is so strong because it rests upon a solid foundation, that is common descent, which makes common blood, flesh and bone. Its integrity and purity must be guarded as a sacred obligation. To make a home and a family is a religious mandate and first of the 613 precepts of the Law.

Family works as the training ground for the society. It is the family that has transmitted culture and tradition. The family receives the children and the basic

55. Solomon Nigosian, op. cit., p. 182.
training for them is received from there. Social consciousness and social behaviour are formed within the family. Social ideals of love, brotherhood, co-operation, freedom, responsibility and justice are first applied within the family. "Education, religion and care of the sick, and the production of the necessities of life all were centered in the home." Thus family works as the training ground for society.

In the semi-nomadic days the life of the family was inevitably bound up with the life of the larger family of the clan and the tribe. On it they depended for protection. When the social set up changed the pattern of family also changed. When men became farmers the larger unit became less important. By the time of settlement in Palestine the singling out of family based on the father's house came into existence.

POSITION OF WOMEN

In the early stage of society in Israel we can see a line of female descent prior to the paternal descent. Women appear to have occupied an important place in early Hebrew society. For centuries it was the right of the mother to name the children. In primitive societies the sons belonged to those who

named them. It was the custom to name the son with the name of the mother's father or one of her brothers. This was a common pattern accepted by all matrilineal families. Thus the children belonged to the mother's clan. Moreover after marriage the woman lived with her parents and the husband was only an occasional visitor. In the matrilineal communities the uterine brother or the maternal uncle of the wife was the head of the family. In Jewish magical formulas the name of the person concerned was coupled with the name of his mother and not his father.

The position of wife in the family is one of the foremost. The position of the wife in the family is characterised by her being baal taken by her husband. The relation between man and woman is an intimate one. The naming of wife as companion of husband by God indicates the equal position given to her in the home. She is an indispensable help mate in the maintenance of the family. Her duty is to give birth to children and thus assisting her husband in creating a home. "Her task is to bear him children."57 Motherhood is the patent of nobility of a woman. She acquires her place in life and share in the family through motherhood. According to rabbis the supreme perfection of woman is perfect motherhood and that of man is perfect fatherhood. "She

was the mother of the sons of the house and this status won for her privileges commensurate with its great responsibilities. 58 A mother is always respected. Even the slave woman is exalted when she becomes a mother. As a mother a woman has her share in the authority of the husband over the children. As a primary agent the place of a woman in the household is highly regarded. As a domestic economist also the wife is important and upon her wise management the welfare of the family depends. In the proverbs a woman is described as "who looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." 59 The education of the children is the responsibility of the mother. She has a special responsibility in rearing her daughters in morality.

Legally, women have been considered inferior from the beginning. "The position of woman was legally low, morally high." 60 She has to veil her hair or even cut it short at the moment she enters her husband's house. Her voice should not be heard in the public and she cannot judge or witness. She cannot initiate a divorce bill, but has the right to refuse a bill of divorcement. She cannot even leave her husband because he owns her. Instead she can be sent away by her husband at a moments

58. E. W. Heaton, op. cit., p. 69.
60. Will Durant, op. cit., p. 381.
notice. She is exposed to the humiliation of finding herself as second fiddle to a new wife whom her husband has recently acquired and preferred. Moreover she has no right to inherit the property and her state of widowhood is with that of the orphans and the poor. Women are exempt from certain religious obligations. They are exempted from all positive commandments, for the performance of which a fixed time is set. The recitation of the shema and the wearing of phylacteries on the head and left arm are prohibited to women. They are also exempted from attending the three annual festivals. But there are certain laws which apply exclusively to women. The separation of Hallah, lighting of the Sabbath lamp, and attending to their own pollutions are such religious duties solely for women. In the temple they have a separate woman court and raised gallery. "In the synagogue, women occupied a separate place in the gallery or behind the men a dumpy compliment to their distracting charms; and they could not be counted toward making a quorum."61 Woman is pictured as an after thought in the creator's plan and a help mate of man. She derives her life from her male companion and is dependant on him for her Salvation. There is a general idea among the Jews that Jewesses have no soul. The Jews are reluctant to have daughters. In spite of the handicaps, in Hebrew society women enjoy a more favourable position than elsewhere in the orient. They are not shut up in a harem, and can mingle freely in the social life of the community.

61. ibid.
Paternal authority is a potential factor in Hebrew society. According to the Jews the nation is a family that has increased and multiplied and traced its descent from a single father. The authority of the oldest father in the home is almost an absolute one. His authority is exercised with a sternness that never quite conceals a passionate love. He is the priest and judge and the supreme head of the household. He is the head of his widowed mother, his wives, his concubines, his children, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, his slaves etc. The patriarch is the absolute owner of all the materials in the family. He arranges the marriages of the children and even has the power to sell his children to slavery or even to sacrifice them. His supreme authority is revealed in his power to divorce his wife without accepting any responsibility for her maintenance. "In Israel it is the man who dominates, the family being called a father's house." The name of the father always spells authority. His position in the family is expressed by his being its baal. The term baal means possessor and the master. It tells us something of the character of his rule. He is the centre from which strength and will emanate. It is his life which is to be continued in the family. When the formation of a family arises, a man is nearest to the family of his father than to his mother. The

father's brothers are a closer relation than the mothers' brothers.

As the supreme authority of the family, the father has certain duties to perform. The most important duty of the father to his sons is to make provision for teaching him the Torah. In the Deuteronomic laws we find the duties of parents to children and of children to parents. Parents primarily are made responsible for moral and religious education in the home. The children are under the obligation to obey their parents. Parents assume a positive, definite attitude in regard to child nurture. They must see that their children are actually trained in the ways in which they should go. The child must assume his share of responsibility. "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which thy Lord thy God giveth thee." 63 The father should teach his son a trade or profession by which he could earn a living. The most important duty of a father towards his daughter is to give her in marriage. To marry off an orphan girl or to help the poor parents in marrying their daughters is the highest type of benevolence for the Jews. There was hardly any Mitzavah greater than HaknoobatKallah. (to help to marry off a young woman.) Another important duty of the father is to get

63. Exodus, 20-12; Deuteronomy, 6-15; Leviticus. 19-3.
his sons circumcised at due time. Father, mother and God have to be honoured and revered since they are joint partners in bringing the child into life. Reverence requires that a son should not sit on the place where his father usually sits or talk interrupting his father or contradict him. Providing the father with food, drink, clothing and conducting him in and out are honouring him.

A male attains majority, the status of a man both legally and religiously at thirteen. The entrance of the boy in the religious fellowship is the act of putting on phylactaries at the week day morning prayers. Upto the age of thirteen the young are exempt from the duty. But from that age onwards the religious obligations are imposed upon him. "Beginning with the age of thirteen the on set of puberty - the boy is considered responsible for his religious acts; upto that time the responsibility rests with the father."64 He is held responsible for any deeds of infringement or transgression of the law and is subject to all the prescribed punishments. In the earlier times the entry of the young men into the full membership was considered natural and ordinary. But in later times the event assumed a more ceremonial aspect and was marked by special ceremony. It was given a special name 'Barmitzavah' means that henceforth he receives the yoke of

64. Leo Trepp, op. cit., p. 222.
Mitzvot. It was celebrated as a family festival on the Sabbath of the week during which the boy becomes thirteen years old. At the morning service in the synagogue, the celebrant is called to the reading of the law and is given the Maftir passage of the Torah. He then reads the prophetic portion with the benedictions preceding the following it. The reading of the Law and chanting of the 'Haftorah' serves a kind of public ceremony of initiation into the religious community. The father reads special benedictions in which he thanks God for his release from the responsibility which he hitherto bore for the conduct of his son. The celebrant has to deliver a short speech of religious nature in the synagogue or in the family. Bar Mitzvah is considered the most outstanding event in the religious life of the young Jew and it forms the only link which connects him with the religion of the people. Bar Mitzvah is so considered that the parents never neglect to celebrate it, though they forget to educate them.