

Manner And Customs of Bible Lands

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO -

Trades and Professions

THE POTTER

THE GREAT DEMAND FOR POTTERS IN THE ORIENT. This is because copper vessels are so expensive, because leather bottles are not suitable for some domestic purposes, and because earthenware vessels are so easily broken and must therefore be replaced often. Porous earthenware jars are in much demand to keep drinking-water cool through the process of evaporation. In a warm climate, courtesy usually demands that "**a cup of cold water**" be given (Matthew 10:42).¹

Ceramic quarters in Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of visiting one potter in Jerusalem, but the writer of Chronicles tells of a ceramic quarter in the city. "**These were the potters . . . there they dwelt with the king for his work**" (I Chronicles 4:23). Thus it would seem that there were in ancient times families or guilds of potters, and also royal Potters.²

Preparation of the clay for the potter. It was trodden by the feet in order that it might become of the right consistency.³

The prophet Isaiah speaks of this action when he says: "**He shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay**" (Isaiah 41:25).

The equipment and method of the potter. Today the potter plies his trade in many sections of the East, just like his predecessors have done for centuries. His workshop is very rude. He works behind a coarse wooden bench. His equivalent consists of two wooden discs or wheels, with an axle standing up from the center of the lower disc: The upper wheel thus turns horizontally when the lower one is put into action by the foot. He keeps a heap of clay lying on his bench, and from this he places a lump of clay that has been previously softened, upon the upper wheel. He makes this wheel spin around, as he shapes the clay with his hands into a coneshaped figure. Then he uses his thumb to make a hole in the top of the whirling clay, and keeps opening it until he can put his left hand inside of it. As it is necessary, he sprinkles the clay with water from a vessel which he keeps beside him.

He uses a small piece of wood with his righthand to smooth the outside of the vessel as it continues to rotate. He is thus able to make the vessel into whatever shape he desires in keeping with his individual skill.⁴

Jeremiah referred to the work of the potter in his message, the inspiration of which came while he was visiting the potter's house: "**O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as the potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel**" (Jeremiah 18:6).

The Apocrypha contains an interesting description of the potter and his work in that day:

"So is the potter sitting at his work, and turning the wheel about with his feet, who is always anxiously set at his work, and all his handiwork is by number; he will fashion the clay with his arm, and he will bend its strength in front of his feet; he will apply his heart to finish the glazing; and will be wakeful to make clean the furnace" (Ecclesiasticus 38:29, 30).

Marring the vessel. Dr. Thomson visited a large pottery at Jaffa and watched a potter work much like the one whom Jeremiah saw in his visit to the potter's house. The prophet of old noted one thing: "**And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it**" (Jeremiah 18:4).

The Palestinian missionary says he had to wait a long while before he saw the same thing happen, but at last it did. Perhaps because of some defect in the clay, or because he had used too little of it, the potter very suddenly crushed the jar that had been progressing, into a shapeless mass of mud; and then, starting all over again, he set out to make something different.⁵

Paul refers to such action in his Epistle to the Romans, "**Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?**" {Romans 9:20, 21}.

Baking the pottery. After the potter is through working with the vessel on the wheel, he places it on a shelf where there are rows of other vessels, and where they are kept from the direct rays of the sun, and yet where they are exposed to the wind from all directions. The brickkiln where they are baked is a shallow well of stone or brick around four feet deep and eight to ten feet in diameter, which has a small brick oven at its base. The vessels are piled up over this oven in cone-shape, sometimes to a height of twelve feet. It is then covered thickly with brushwood in order that the heat may be kept in and that there may come no sudden chilling. The fire is made to burn until the pottery is hardened sufficiently.⁵

The prophet Nahum refers to the preparation for baking pottery when he says: "**Make strong the brickkiln**" (Nahum 3:14). Sometimes inferior products are made by insufficient burning of vessels.

The fragility of pottery. Eastern pottery is indeed very brittle, especially when modern methods of glazing are unknown. Many times the young woman going for the family water supply has had to come home without it, because she put down her water pitcher too suddenly. The writer of Ecclesiastes has this in mind when he says: "**The pitcher be broken at the fountain**" (12:6). When only a slight blow will break pottery into pieces, intentional dashing of a vessel of clay to the ground will result in complete ruin, and this is the picture often used by Biblical writers of divine judgment upon GOD's enemies, or upon His people who disobey Him.⁷

"Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9). "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers" (Revelation 2:27). "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again" (Jeremiah 19:11).

Use of broken fragments of pottery. Broken pieces of earthen vessels are to be seen about a potter's place, and also in many other places in the East. Some of these pieces which happen to be of suitable size and shape are of practicable use for the peasants. Isaiah gives two uses for them: **"And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit" (Isaiah 30:14).** In the evening time it is a common sight to see children coming to the public ovens with sherds of pottery in their hands, and go away with a small amount of hot coals or hot embers, which the baker has placed on each child's sherd, in order that the homes represented might be able to warm up their evening meal. Then at the spring, well, or cistern, sherds that are of the right size and shape to hold water are often left there that they might be used as ladles for filling the container, or as drinking cups.⁸

In ancient times when parchment was so expensive to possess, peasants would use fragments of pottery on which to scratch memoranda of business transactions. Many of these have been uncovered by archaeologists, and have proven to be of great value in revealing past history. They are called "ostraca."⁹

THE CARPENTER

Palestine carpenters. Oriental carpenters have plied their trade in the Holy Land in much the same way through the centuries. Visitors to towns like Nazareth or Tiberias have found these workmen to be quite primitive. About the only modern innovation they have adopted has been to have a workbench instead of sitting on the floor beside their working board, as some men, engaged in related crafts, actually do even in modern times. Instead of working, however, always at this bench, they are seen to do much of their work at the doorsill where the light is much better.¹⁰

This occupation has undergone little change from the days when they said of the young Messiah, **"Is not this the carpenter?"** (Mark 6:3).

Carpenter's tools. With but few exceptions, the tools used by the carpenter in Bible times are those used by these primitive Palestinian carpenters of today. The prophet Isaiah names four instruments used by the carpenter of his day. **"The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass"** (Isaiah 44:13). The "rule" was no doubt a *measuring line*; the "line" was a *marking tool or stylus*, taking the place of our pencil; the "plane" was a *scraping tool*; and the "compass" was an *instrument for making a circle*, as it is today.

The "ax" was used in olden times to shape timber as well as to fell trees. It had an iron head usually fastened by means of thongs to a wooden handle, and so it was easy for the head to slip off. Deuteronomy 19:5 and II Kings 6:5).¹¹

Excavations at the city of Gezer revealed that the people of Palestine in Bible times had developed ribbon-flint knives into saws by making their edges irregular. Finds there also indicate that they used saws that were made of thin, flexible strips of metal that had been set in frames of wood.¹²

Isaiah mentions the use of the saw: "**Shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?**" (Isaiah 10:15). Jeremiah refers to the use of hammer and nails: "**They fasten it with nails and with hammers that it move not**" (Jeremiah 10:4). The archaeologists have found an abundance of bronze and iron nails. The hammers they have brought to light were made mostly of stone. Thus CHRIST must have made use of both hammer and nails in his Nazareth carpenter shop.¹³

The Bible mentions twice the use of the awl (Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17). these boring instruments as found at Gezer were usually set in bone handles. Chisels found there were made either of bronze or iron. CHRIST must have used this tool also.¹⁴

Products of the carpenter. There are several products of the Eastern carpenter's skill. Many have wondered what JESUS as a carpenter made. There is an old tradition that has come down to us, that he was a maker of plows and yokes.¹⁵

The yoke, and most of the plow, with the exception of the iron ploughshare, are constructed of wood, and so would be the task of the carpenters. As there were many farmers among the ancient Hebrews, as there are among the Arab peasants today, there would be a great demand for yokes and plows. Other products of the carpenter would include wooden locks and wooden keys for houses, doors, roofs, windows, low tables, chairs or stools and chests for storage use. The carpenter's most ornamental work would include paneling of the roof, latticework for windows, and decorative art on house doors.¹⁶

The skill of the Oriental carpenter. Because of the use of what seems to the Westerner to be very crude and primitive tools, some have thought that these workmen are lacking in skill, but this is not so. In many ways he is able to use his simple tools in a way that displays great skill. Much personal attention is given the product, and great pride is taken in the resulting handiwork.¹⁷

HUNTERS

Nimrod the first hunter recorded by Scripture. He was called "**a mighty hunter before the Lord**" (Genesis 10:9). Of Ishmael it is said that he "**dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer**" (Genesis 21:20). Esau was "**a cunning hunter**" (Genesis 25:27). Isaac said to Esau, "**Take, I pray thee; thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison**" (Genesis 27:3). Hunting was common in Egypt, and Israel must have been acquainted with it when she dwelt there. There was also, no doubt, some hunting of the Israelites during the wilderness wanderings on the Sinai Peninsula.

Upon entering Canaan, it was necessary for Israel to engage in hunting since otherwise their occupation of the land would have been made more difficult. the LORD had said to them, "**I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee**" (Exodus 23:29). The Law of Moses made provision for

hunting for food. **"And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust"** (Leviticus 17:13).

Hunting to protect the sheep. Hunting has been undertaken through the years in Palestine of necessity as a means of protecting the flocks of sheep and goats. In Bible times the chief enemies of the sheep included the lion, the bear, the leopard, the wolf, and the hyena. The shepherd's activities along these lines have already been dealt with.

Animals killed for food. Among the wild animals, different species of the deer were sought after especially by the Jewish hunters for food. It was venison that Isaac asked Esau to bring him (Genesis 27:3). The Law refers to the roebuck (gazelle) and the hart as being desired by Israel for meat (Deuteronomy 12:15). The dinner table of King Solomon was served with the meat of harts, roebucks, and fallowdeer (I Kings 4:23).

Fowl killed for meat. GOD's wholesale supply of quail for Israel in the wilderness is indication of the popularity of that kind of meat among ancient hunters. The Arabs today have often captured quantities of this bird, and after much of the meat is consumed, the rest of it is preserved for future use by being split and then laid out for the sun to dry it.¹⁸

This is just what Israel did with its excess supply of quail meat: **"And they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp"** (Numbers 11:32). Doves and pigeons were also popular as food among the Israelites. Many of them were tamed, but wild ones were often sought after for food as well as for sacrificial purposes. The Bible speaks of their nesting in the clefts and holes of the rocks. **"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock"** (Song of Solomon 2:14).

The methods used by hunters. In modern times, the use of the gun is gradually doing away with ancient customs of hunting with more primitive weapons in Bible lands. But the Bible has given us a clear picture of those methods which have been practiced for years. Pitfalls for larger animals were often employed. These pits were covered over with a thin covering of rushes and brush so as to hide their presence, and sometimes approaches were constructed to the place of the pit, which made it possible to force the animal into the hole.¹⁹

The prophet Ezekiel tells of this method of catching a lion. **"And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit"** (Ezekiel 19:3, 4).

Some animals such as the wild bull or antelope were sometimes caught by using a net. Isaiah mentions this method. **"As a wild bull [antelope] in a net"** (Isaiah 51:20). The net used by the Hebrews was probably of two varieties. The one was long and had several ropes and was supported on poles that were forked and were of different lengths according to the inequalities of the ground which the net covered. The other type of net was smaller and was utilized in order to stop gaps.²⁰

When the pitfall or net was not used, then the hunter made use of one of the following methods: the arrows, slingstones, the spear or the dart. All of these are referred to in the LORD's message to the patriarch Job: **"The arrow cannot make him flee: the slingstones are turned with him**

into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear" (Job 41:28-29).

In catching birds, the snare was often used. David was evidently acquainted with bird traps, for he compared his escape from his enemies to the escape of a bird from a trap. **"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped"** (Psalm 124:7). This bird trap was made in two parts and when set, and spread upon the ground, was fastened slightly by means of a trap stick. When the bird touched this stick, the parts flew up and enclosed the bird in the net.²¹

Hide-outs for wild animals. Palestine and Syria have their hide-outs for wild animals and fowl. Wild beasts have lived in the wild parts of the Lebanon Mountains to the north of the Holy Land through the years, but this was more the source of these animals for Syria rather than for the main part of Palestine itself. The marshes immediately north of Lake Merom have through the centuries been the haunt of many waterfowl, and the reeds thereby have provided lairs for various animals, especially the wild buffalo. When Herod the Great was a young man he used to come here to hunt game.²²

Today, the Jews are busy draining much of this swampland that it may be used for agricultural purposes.

The principal hide-out for wild animals that bother the citizens of Palestine, and especially Judea and Samaria, is the Zor of the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is called by the Arabs, The Ghor, i.e., the Rift. Within the Ghor is a narrow and deep valley called The Zor, in the center of which the river flows. For much of this distance the Zor is a jungle of tropical plants, shrubs, and trees. It is thus a hideout for all kinds of wild animals. During the part of the year when the river overflows, the wild beasts are driven from their haunts, but return there when the river recedes.²³

Most of the wild animals that have raided the habitable parts of Palestine through its history have come from these haunts in Jordan Valley. Thus Jeremiah says: **"Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong"** (Jeremiah 49:19). The scene of the temptation of JESUS was doubtless the Wilderness of Judea. Mark says of Jesus: **"And he . . . was with the wild beasts"** (Mark 1:13). Quite probably most of these animals had come up from the Zor which was near at hand.

FISHERMEN

Places for fishing. In Palestine the main fishing places have been along the Mediterranean coast, and in the Sea of Galilee, with some little done in the streams of water. The Israelites in the wilderness said: **"We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt"** (Numbers 11:5). Most interest centers in the Galilee fishing, because of the Gospel incidents connected with the LORD JESUS and his early fishermen disciples. The Jews engaged in a large fishing business in the days of JESUS in the waters of Galilee. A few years ago A. C. Haddad, a native of Syria and a twentieth century resident of Palestine, counted sixty men, all of them Arabs, as earning their living as Peter did, by fishing in the Sea of Galilee.²⁴

Their methods of work have been very similar to those used by the disciples of JESUS. Such methods will fast disappear from this region now, since the new state of Israel controls this body of water, and up-to-date Western fishing equipment is taking the place of former more primitive methods. The new government has subsidized the fishing industry on Galilee.

Angling. It is not thought probable that the disciples in Galilee used this method of fishing very extensively. That it was used on occasions is seen from the account of Peter's catching a fish with a hook and discovering the coin in its mouth with which he paid the temple tax (Matthew 17:27). Isaiah speaks of it in connection with fishing in the streams: "**The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament**" (Isaiah 19:8). Amos makes reference to this type of fishing when he says, "**He will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks**" (Amos 4:2). The excavation at the mound of Gezer brought to light an actual fishhook, indicating the ancient use of the angling method of fishing.²⁵

spearing of fish. The book of Job refers to this method of fishing. "**Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?**" (Job 41:7). That such method was practiced in Egypt is proven by inscriptions picturing Egyptians using fishing-spears.²⁶

The cast net or handnet. Two of the disciples were busy with such a net when JESUS called them to be fishers of men. "**Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men**" (Mark 1:16, 17). This sort of net is in circular form about fifteen feet in diameter, with fine meshes. Around the edge it has lead sinkers. A long piece of line is attached to the center of the net. This line is held by the left hand, and the net is gathered up in the right hand, and is cast with a broad sweep of that arm over shallow water near the shore wherever a shoal of fish is observed to be. The middle of the net is then drawn by the cord, and the fisherman is able to wade into the water to get what he has caught.²⁷

The dragnet or drawnet. JESUS used this sort of fishing as the basis for one of his parables. "**Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away**" (Matthew 13:47, 48). This net is a long one, sometimes hundreds of feet in length and about eight feet broad. Ropes are furnished the ends of the net. Corks are attached along one of the long sides of the net to keep it buoyed up, whereas the other long side has lead sinkers attached to it to make it sink. Sometimes the net is set between two boats in the sea, being stretched between them. The boats are rowed so as to enclose a circular space and when the boats meet, then the net is hauled into the boats, the circle becoming smaller. The bottom rope is pulled in faster than the top one and thus the fish are enclosed in a bag and are pulled into the boats. Sometimes the net is set and then drawn from the land. The one end is then taken as far as possible by a boat seaward. Then this boat brings that end of the net around with a sweep to the place of starting, where men use the same method of pulling in the nets and landing the fish. Again, two boats sometimes stretch the net between them at a distance from shore, and then they will sweep in to the shore, forcing the fish to come with them. There must be no rocky obstructions for this method to be successful.²⁸

This way of fishing illustrates the value of co-operative effort. A number of men will work

together. Some of them will row the boats, some will have to pull the rope with great strength, and some will throw stones or in other ways seek to keep the fish from getting away by frightening them. As they get close to the shore, the edges of the net are held, and it is dragged to land and the fish must be seized. Afterward the fish caught are sorted, as indicated in the parable of Jesus. What an illustrative lesson this is in co-operative soulwinning!²⁹

Fishing at night. Galilee fishermen often have fished at night. They light their way with a blazing torch, and sighting fish they let fly their fishing spear, or fling their net into the sea.³⁰

But sometimes they fish all night with no results, as was the case with Simon Peter and his comrades. "**Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing**" (Luke 5:5).

The location of shoals. A Galilee fisherman was seen one day to use his hand net as he waded into the waters of the sea. He cast his net several times and it came up empty. But presently the man's companion on the shore shouted to him to cast to the left, and when this was done, the net was drawn up with fish in it. Shoals of fish are sometimes seen by those on the shore when they are hidden from the view of the fishermen in the water.³¹

Such was what happened with JESUS and his disciples as reported by John: "**But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes**" (John 21:4-6). This ability to see from the shore what the fishermen in a boat fail to see, does not do away with a miracle taking place with the disciples. It was the power of JESUS that brought the great number of fish to the particular spot where the disciples could catch them in their nets.³²

MASONS

Expert masons have always been in demand in Bible lands through the years. The building of house walls and terrace walls usually called for stone or brick. This trade is of interest to the student of Scripture because of the numerous illustrative references to it in the Bible.

Foundations and cornerstones. In building foundations it is important to get down to rock or otherwise the shrinkage and expansion due to the summer heat and the winter rains will do damage to the construction. JESUS tells of a good mason who "**digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock**" (Luke 6:48). Deep trenches are dug, and filled with stone and lime, and this is allowed to settle all it will. All this being below the surface of the ground is invisible afterwards, and therefore it is considered a lack of courtesy for one man to build upon another man's foundation, as Paul mentions (Romans 15:20). The cornerstone is another important part of the mason's work of which Scripture speaks. When the first layer of oblong stones is laid on the foundation, a broad square stone is selected for each corner where two walls meet. A thinner square block is usually put at each corner of the top rows of stones where the roof-beams are to rest. When trimming the oblong stones forming the bulk of the walls, it is easy for the mason to pass by the stone suitable for the cornerstone because of its uninviting shape. Thus the Psalmist said: "**The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner**" (Psalm 118:22).³³

The mason's equipment. The plumbline is composed of a small inverted lead cone which is fastened by a cord to a cylindrical piece of wood made of the same diameter. The mason puts the wood to the newly set stone, and the suspended lead should barely touch the wall. To be a permanent one, every wall must stand the test of the plumbline. The prophet Amos compared the LORD's test of Israel to the mason's use of a plumbline. "**Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel**" (Amos 7:8). The prophet Ezekiel describes a man making use of a measuring reed (Ezekiel 40:3). This was used by a mason in laying the foundation and in the construction of the walls. It is a straight cane around twenty feet long, and is used to measure wall spaces, especially between windows and doors. Sometimes a shorter reed is also used. The prophets said of the LORD, "**I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria**" (II Kings 21:13). Evidently this was a leveling line which was strung from stones at each end of the wall being built. It was used in conjunction with the plumbline.³⁴

METAL WORKERS

A study of working with metal would need to begin with "Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron" (Genesis 4:22). That is, he was the forger of every cutting instrument of brass [copper] and iron. The Orientals who lived three to four thousand years ago were very advanced in the mechanical arts. Some of the work of those skilled ancient workmen, as brought to light by archaeologists is superior to anything the world has produced since.³⁵

Blacksmiths. In the days of King Saul the Philistines put a ban on Hebrew blacksmiths. "**Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears**" (I Samuel 13:19). The Philistines required the Hebrews to bring their coulters and mattocks to the vicinity of Ramle to be sharpened, and this district in the Valley of Ajalon for many years afterward came to be known as the Valley of Smiths.³⁶

But Jewish blacksmiths were active in the days of Isaiah, for he said: "**The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers**" (Isaiah 44:12). Isaiah refers to the blacksmith's anvil (Isaiah 41:7), and Jeremiah makes mention of his bellows (Jeremiah 6:29). The primitive type of anvil that has been in use for centuries is simply a cube of iron that has been inserted in a block of oak log. The old type of bellows, which is worked by hand, is made of the skin either of a goat or of a cow with the hair left on it.³⁷

Coppersmiths. Moses described the land of Canaan as being "**a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass [copper]**" (Deuteronomy 8:9). Deposits of copper and iron have been discovered along the length of Wadi Araba which leads to the Gulf of Akaba. An excavation at Tel el Kheleifeh, which is the site of ancient Ezion-geber, King Solomon's port city, has revealed that some of Solomon's copper and iron refineries were located there. The builders of the smelters at Ezion-geber faced their furnaces toward the prevailing wind which was northwest. Winds that continued steadily blew through flue holes and kept the fire in the furnace rooms burning. Thus in those days the same principle essentially was employed as that of the Bessemer blast furnace of modern times.³⁸

Solomon must have carried on a thriving business in copper. Scripture says: "**And the pots, and the shovels, and the basons: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to King Solomon for**

the house of the Lord, were of bright brass [i.e., burnished copper]" (I Kings 7:45).

Silversmiths and goldsmiths. Nehemiah mentions the presence of goldsmiths (Nehemiah 3:8), and the most famous example of a silversmith is Demetrius, whose business was interfered with by the evangelistic work of the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:24). The Apostle Peter used the goldsmith's task as an illustration of the trial of the Christian's faith. "**That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth . . . might be found unto praise and honor**" (I Peter 1:7). The apostle is describing an old-time goldsmith who places his crude ore in a crucible and then applies the heat to melt it. When the impurities come to the surface they are skimmed off. When the workman is able to see his face reflected clearly in the surface of the molten liquid, he takes it away from the fire, and knows that he has pure gold left.³⁹

TANNERS AND DYERS

The tanning business. This has always been an important business in Bible lands. Peter stayed at the house of Simon the tanner when he was at Joppa (Acts 9:43). In recent years the important tanneries have been located at Hebron and at Jaffa. Sheepskins are sometimes used for making shoe leather, although goatskin leather is generally considered to be superior to that made from sheepskins. Goatskins are used largely for the making of bottles for carrying water or other liquids. Except for the neck, legs, and tail, the goatskins are stripped off whole, the holes where the legs and tail were located are sewn up, and the end where the neck was, becomes the mouth of the bottle. These goatskins when laid out in rows for the sun to cure them, look much like pigs with head and legs missing. Sheepskins are treated in a similar way and made soft, and then they are dyed a yellow or red color when used in the making of shoes.⁴⁰

Oriental dyeing. The Orientals have some very fine dyes. Their favorite color is a bright crimson, and the dye they use to make this color comes from a worm or grub that feeds on oak and other plants. Indigo is made from the rind of pomegranate. Purple is made from the murex shellfish which can still be found on the beach at the city of Acre.⁴¹

Luke tells of Lydia, "**a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira**" (Acts 16:14). She was a merchant who sold the purple dye to tanners, weavers, and others. This business of dyeing with which she was connected, had long been centered in the city of Thyatira. Inscriptions have been discovered that refer to "a guild of dyers" that was located in that vicinity.⁴²

TENTMAKERS

Because of the large use of tents by the Hebrew people, there has been a great demand for tentmakers. Besides the ordinary tent used as a dwelling, many portable tents were made for the use of travelers. In New Testament times it was the custom to teach every Jewish boy some trade. As JESUS was a carpenter, so Paul was a tentmaker. Paul practiced this trade in company with Aquila at Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). Rough goat's hair was used in making these tents, and Paul had learned to cut the cloth straight, even as he did the straight interpretation of GOD's word⁴³ (cf. II Timothy 2:15).

Dr. Edersheim says: "In Alexandria the different trades sat in the synagogue arranged into guilds, and Paul could have no difficulty in meeting in the bazaar of his trade with the

likeminded Aquila and Priscilla with whom to find a lodging."⁴⁴

MERCHANTS

The merchant's place of business. In the Oriental city or village, the market place is an important place for the doing of business. It is not always located in the same place. It may be near the city gates, or it may be in the open streets of the town. The market is not always in operation in some districts, but is open for business whenever there is something to be sold. The arrival in town of a camel caravan would be one great occasion for setting up the market place and the selling of produce, especially the "blessed grain."⁴⁵

Also, many goods are sold in the oriental bazaar. This is usually a covered arcade containing a row of narrow shops on each side, and those of like trade often having their shops together, such as those selling dry goods, grocery items, tin utensils, leather goods, sweetmeats, etc. Jeremiah speaks of the bakers' street (Jeremiah 37:21).

Oriental buying and selling. This is quite different from purchasing in the West. No fixed price is put upon whatever is to be sold. Ordinarily the buyer must expect to spend from a few minutes to an hour or so to complete a purchase. The merchant begins by asking a high price and the buyer by offering a low price. Then the bargaining continues in earnest. To a stranger this process of "striking a bargain" is a tedious one indeed, but the true Orientals enjoy it greatly. Among them, haggling over prices, and controversy, argument, and excitement usually become heated.⁴⁶

When the sale is made, the buyer will go away to boast of his splendid bargain, and will be greatly admired by the seller. The Book of Proverbs pictures such a purchaser: "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14). The word "naught" means "bad."

Payment for goods. Payment is not always in cash or coins for goods purchased. Barter and trade originally took the place money. There was exchange of goods in kind. In early Old Testament times the giving of money took the form of weighing precious metals to be given the seller. Thus "**Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth**" (Genesis 23:16). This was the purchase price for the Cave of Machpelah. Concerning the money in the sacks of Joseph's brethren, Scripture says: "**Every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight**" (Genesis 43:21). The first coins did not appear until about 700 B. C. The New Testament refers to the coinage of the Roman Empire which was in general use in those days for business transactions. But the Oriental seller does not always receive cash. Debt is common among many. Sometimes a poor peasant will sow seed he has borrowed, on borrowed land, using borrowed tools, and will even live in a borrowed house.⁴⁷

The parable JESUS told of the unjust steward refers to men who owed their lord various amounts such as "**an hundred measures of oil,**" and "**an hundred measures of wheat**" (Luke 16:5-7).

Oriental method of measuring grain. In selling grain in Bible lands it is the custom that each measure must run over.

Likewise such liquids as oil or milk should run over a small amount into the buyer's vessel. A

bushel measure is used for measuring the grain. As this measure begins to be full to the brim, the grain is pressed down, and then two or three shakes are given from side to side to settle the grain. The man who is doing the measuring then puts more grain on top, and repeats the shaking process until the measure is actually full clear to the brim. He then presses gently on the grain and makes a small hollow place on top and taking additional handfuls of grain he makes a cone on the surface. He builds up the cone until it can hold no more, some of it beginning to run over. Following this the grain is emptied into the buyer's container. Such is Oriental measure.⁴⁸

JESUS said, "Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). The word translated "bosom" means "lap," it is not in his bosom but in the skirt of his garment that there is ample room, and there the Oriental carries his grain, like a woman among us might carry things in her folded apron.⁴⁹

MONEY-CHANGERS AND BANKERS

Money-changers. Although the modern section of Jerusalem has had its Western type of banks with capital running into the millions of dollars, the old section of the city has always had its money-changers. These men change people's money from one type of currency to another, and also provide change within the same currency. The money-changer sits beside the narrow street and behind a little glass-top table, under which his coins are on display. A charge of about ten per cent is made for the transaction. this profession has been necessary because of the great variety of coinage in Palestine and Syria, and also because of so many tourists from all over the world.⁵⁰

In the days of JESUS, the money-changers sat in the spacious Court of the Gentiles, or in one of the adjoining porches of the Jerusalem temple, and carried on their business there. When the Jewish nation was numbered, it was required by the law of Moses that every male Israelite who was twenty years or older, pay into the temple treasury a half-shekel as an offering to the LORD (Exodus 30:13-15). This had to be paid by using the exact Hebrew half-shekel, and the money-changer provided the right coins for the multitudes that came to Jerusalem for the feasts. The Jewish Talmud says that the rate of twelve per cent was charged by the changers for each transaction. In addition to the need for the half-shekel tribute money, the money-changers would provide the exact coins necessary to purchase the animals or doves required for the sacrifices for the temple. It has been estimated that these changers would reap a profit of from forty to forty-five thousand dollars.⁵¹

The business of money-changing was considered to be a legitimate business, although there were unscrupulous practices connected with it, but JESUS condemned these men largely because of bringing their business into the temple courts where men should have come in the spirit of true prayer and worship.

Bankers. Borrowing money at a rate of interest has been practiced in Palestine in modern times among the natives. Two references from JESUS indicate it was done in his day:

"Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury [interest]" (Matthew 25:27). "Wherefore then

gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury [interest]" (Luke 19:23).

The Greek word for *bank* means "table" or "bench" across which the money was paid out or received. The Phoenicians invented the money-lending system, and it was in full operation in the various provinces of the Roman Empire in CHRIST's time. The law of Moses did not allow the Israelites to lend to one another upon interest (Deuteronomy 23:19, etc.). But it did allow them to charge interest upon loans made to Gentiles (Deuteronomy 23:20). JESUS did not here condemn the charging of interest by a bank, for the word translated "**usury**" is the same as "*interest*." ⁵²

TAXGATHERERS

Tax collection under the Turkish government. In the days when the Turkish government controlled Palestine, a system of farming out import and export duties, excise taxes, and government produce tithes, was in force. A company would guarantee the government a certain sum for a tax, and then, having the monopoly of this, would charge the public enough to make sure a good profit for the deal. Much oppression and injustice was fostered by such a system, but it was continued so long that the public finally accepted it as a necessary evil.⁵³

Tax collection under the Roman Empire. A somewhat similar system to the Turkish system was in operation in the Roman Empire in New Testament times. The office of publican, or tax collector, was in itself legitimate enough, as it was necessary to have government taxes, and important to collect them. But there was resentment on the part of the Jews against paying taxes to a Gentile government. This resentment was increased all the more because among these tax collectors there was much graft and oppression, as charged by John the Baptist: "**Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you**" (Luke 3:12,13). Because of this situation, the publicans came to be associated by the Jews with notorious sinners. Such expressions as "**the publicans and the harlots,**" and "**publicans and sinners**" were in common use among them (Matthew 9:11; 21:31).

Because JESUS sought to be friendly with, and bring help to, the lowest of men, certain men of His day gave Him the title, "**friend of publicans and sinners**" (Matthew 11:19).

Matthew was a publican who had his customs office not far from Capernaum on the road from Damascus to Acre, where he could examine the goods of travelers along this highway, and could collect the required taxes. Holding this office he had of necessity to violate the Pharisaical Sabbath observances, and would therefore cause wrath to be upon him. But JESUS called Matthew to follow Him. "**And saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me**" (Luke 5:27).

Zaccheus was not an ordinary tax collector, but rather a tax commissioner, who farmed out a whole district, and had other tax collectors under his jurisdiction. His conversion was so thorough that he agreed, "**If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold**" (Luke 19:8).⁵⁴

PHYSICIANS

Physicians among Orientals today. Orientals have two names for their men who practice the art of healing. They call him "*the wise man*," and also term him, "*the holy man*." The first title indicates the skill they think necessary in him, and the second shows their belief that a holy man has power from GOD to heal. Often one after another doctors are summoned, which reminds one of the poor woman who "**had suffered many things of many physicians**" (Mark 5:26), before she was healed by JESUS. The most common ailments from which the people of the East suffer include: eye infections, skin diseases, consumption, and malarial and typhoidal fevers. The Orientals have a proverb which emphasizes the importance they attach to faith: "Have faith, though it be only in a stone, and you will recover." They have a strong conviction that, although they believe it a duty to use what means are available, the real power to heal is Divine.⁵⁵

Physicians in Old Testament times. Physicians were present from early Bible times. The Code of Hammurabi, under which Abraham grew up as a young man in Babylonia, specified that if a surgeon should operate on a man's eye, using a copper lancet, and the man should lose his eye because of the operation, then the doctor's eye should be put out with a copper lancet.⁵⁶

Job talks of "**physicians of no value**" (Job 13:4) when referring to his friends who were trying to comfort him. The law of Moses contained an ordinance providing that a man wounded in a brawl should have his loss of time paid for by the one responsible for his wounds, and adds, "**and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed**" (Exodus 21:19). Circumcision was an operation in surgery.

The Sacred Writer indicates that King Asa put his confidence in physicians instead of the LORD when he reports: "**And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers**" (II Chronicles 16:12, 13).

Physicians in New Testament times. In New Testament times there were many physicians. Among them were, no doubt, many who were not worthy of the name. Concerning the poor woman who had been to many doctors, Mark adds, "**and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse**" (Mark 5:26), indicating that these physicians had harmed her rather than helped her. But there were sincere practicing physicians, and Luke was a notable example. In his Epistle to the Colossians, Paul called him: "**Luke, the beloved physician**" (4:14). In the ruins of the city of Pompeii, there "was found a number of instruments exactly such as our best surgeons now use."⁵⁷

The Bible recognizes the presence of physicians, but does not give a prominent place to them. GOD's power to heal sickness is emphasized in both the Old and New Testaments. (See also Sickness in Bible Lands, Chapter 16).

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9. See Miller. *Encyclopedia of Bible Life*. p. 136.
10. See Geikie, op. cit., Vol. II. p. 274.
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50. Mackie, op. cit., p. 83; Haddad, op. cit., p. 163.
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54. See A. T. Robertson, op. cit., pp. 193-195.
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