

PART TWO: THE PRACTICE OF JUDAISM IN DAILY LIFE

Rather than the theology of Judaism, Part One examined in reality the theory of the theology of Judaism. It is, however, my sincere hope that Part One will serve to assist in the understanding of the practice of Judaism today.

In many ways, viewing the modern daily practice of Judaism is very much like taking a ride in a time machine which transports you back thousands of years. As was stated before, it is interesting to note how selective Judaism has become in its practice. The twentieth century religious Jew fully realizes that there are certain of the 'Mitzvot' which he simply can no longer observe. Ever since 70 A.D., there is no such thing as a bloody sacrifice. This is in accord with the will of God. Jesus Christ offered himself as a perfect and holy sacrifice for the sins of all which means that there is no more need for the sacrifice of animals. Even the Passover lamb must be replaced by the shank bone of a lamb, a chicken or turkey leg. Why? The answer is

simple. The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world has come. Because of this perfect and holy Lamb, the angel of death has 'passed over' us all.

All of this does not diminish the fact that a knowledge of the theology and practice of modern Judaism can serve to bring many passages of both the Old and New Testament into sharper focus.

In addition to what you can see, there is what you can hear. I am grateful for the efforts and labor of the philologist/lexicographer Eliezer Ben Yehudah who persisted in speaking and writing only in Hebrew. Today the Hebrew language is once again a living language and the advantage of hearing and speaking as well as reading at times brings new insights to light. Allow me to relay one example which demonstrates what has just been said:

In 1978 during the first Seminary Summer Quarter in Israel, I was walking down the beach of the Mediterranean. Walking toward me was a small, little boy who was accompanied by a man who was quite obviously his father. Suddenly, the little fellow began to wail and cry. I don't know what the reason for his sorrow was. Maybe he had cut his foot on a sharp rock or a piece of glass. In the midst of his crying, I could make out a word that he plaintively sobbed over and over, "Abba, Abba!" Almost immediately the man took his child in his arms, began to kiss his tears away and speak reassuringly in a soft and

gentle voice. It was enough. The little boy soon began to smile and laugh once again. His 'Abba', his "Daddy" had wiped away the sorrow and pain and made it all better again.

Before that occasion, I certainly recognized that there was a difference between the Hebrew word 'av' (אָב) and the Aramaic based word 'Abba' (אָבָא). But because of Paul's words in Galatians 4:4-6 I had always connected the two words in my mind, giving them an almost identical meaning. Paul says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'" (Ga 4:4-6)

The footnote in the NIV for this passage states that 'abba' is Aramaic for "father" but among Jewish people the word 'Abba' often calls forth a warmer emotion. Even in English "Father" is a word that brings definite pictures to mind. "Wait until your Father gets home." There is the awe and the respect which loving children have for their parent which is all a part of the word "father". On the other hand, "Daddy" or "Papa" holds another connotation altogether. In the Pauline passage, you have both concepts combined in the two words that the Apostle

utilizes by divine inspiration: "Father" (אב)
 whom we hold in highest respect and awe and "Daddy"
 (אבא) who someday will wipe all tears from our eyes.

What follows is most definitely not the work of a scholar but it is simply the observations of one who was privileged to see the Bible come to life. It is with a deep sense of humility that I will endeavor to share those observations.

There is a wealth of meaning contained in what believers practiced in their daily lives at the time of Christ and even before. To be sure, many of these practices, as they are observed by the adherents of Judaism today, are tinged and tainted with empty and dead formalism but on occasion the slightest glimmer of the true meaning of the practice can still be seen. In addition, there is a warning for the church contained in the formalism of Judaism's practice. Anything done without a knowledge of the meaning is ultimately stripped of its meaning. Sponsors and the rite of confirmation can and often have become empty custom and rite devoid of their original intent. Baptism can become simply an initiation ceremony for entrance into the Christian Church. People can partake of the Lord's Supper with little or no thought of the all important words of Christ, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Prayer can become an empty, meaningless mumbling of

words and phrases at the 'proper' time and 'proper' place. So much stress can be placed upon how you should bow your head, close your eyes, fold your hands, whether or not you should kneel that it is possible to forget that prayer is a heart to heart talk with God. Hymns of praise can become a muffled muttering of what should be a full-throated song of joy. We certainly don't want to give up all these things because their meaning has been neglected or abused. So also with some of the practices which we shall examine. We must be careful to distinguish the difference between Jesus condemning a practice of his day or the abuse of that practice or custom. A case in point would be the tefillin and tallit spoken of by Jesus in Matthew, chapter 23. Notice that Jesus does not condemn the practice of wearing the phylacteries and prayer shawl but the ostentatious use made of these religious articles by the Scribes and Pharisees. Also today, I am sure that Jesus would not condemn the practice of signing with the cross. But if that ancient Church custom is practiced superstitiously as it sometimes is, Jesus would be the first to condemn the abuse of what is one of the oldest symbols of Christianity. Overstating a point is as dangerous as understating it. We must ever exercise caution that we don't in our own minds condemn what Jesus and the Word have not condemned. We could find ourselves in the reverse position of that of a

Simon Peter who dozes in the midday sun on a tanning factory roof in Joppa. (Ac 10)

With this all in mind, we shall begin our examination of JUDAISM'S PRACTICE as it is observed in:

I. EVERYDAY LIFE

II. WORSHIP

III. FESTIVALS

IV. SYMBOLS

CHAPTER 1: JUDAISM'S PRACTICE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Life Begins

In almost all the Jewish writings a respect for the sanctity of human life is evident. Children are considered to be a blessing from God himself. In fact, Jews say that a child really has three parents: mother, father, and God. For religious Jews the birth of a child is not only a time of joy for the parents but rather is the occasion for the joy of the entire Jewish community. The birth of every Jewish child is considered to be a promise of continued existence for Jews all over the world for the child is a guarantee of the Jewish future.

The Bible, of course, is filled with passages which testify to the importance and preciousness of children:

"He (the Lord) settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the Lord." (Ps 113:9)

"Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose

quiver is full of them." (Ps 127:3-5a)

"Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord."

(Ps 128:3,4)

It is the Lord Jesus who gives us the final word concerning the inestimable value of children. Jesus says:

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Mt 19:14)

"When they finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'" (Jn 21:15) This is a first and foremost command of Christ; children all are dear to him

It is of vital importance to continue to hear what the Word has to say about children especially in an age and a world such as ours in which children are often regarded as anything but a blessing and gift from God. Because of the influence of the unbelieving world, at times, even Christian couples begin to look upon children as a financial and emotional burden which should be avoided as long as possible. Rather than face the ire of women's rights

groups, even some Lutheran Church bodies have decided to give in to the pressure and bestow upon mothers and fathers the no fault, no guilt choice of being parents or executioners.

Before it seems as if only Christians have trouble with greed and selfishness when it comes to the joyful reception of God's gift of children, let it be said that there are many Jews today who have identical trouble for identical reasons.

The modern Jew who is truly religious has been taught very carefully to view the birth of a child as the occasion of great joy and family celebration. It is, however, at birth that the separation of the sexes becomes immediately evident. The first two religious ceremonies are reserved for male children and the basis for this practice is derived directly from the Mitzvot of God. These two ceremonies which are observed by Jews to this present time served in the Old Testament as a reminder of Israel's covenant with God and God's covenant with them. All male children are included under the Mitzvah of Brit Milah (בְּרִית מִיֶּלֶה) and each first born male is subject to the Pidyon HaBen (פְּדִיּוֹן הַבֵּן).

The Mitzvah reads:

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and

your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner - those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." (Gn 17:9-14)

In her book THE JEWISH PARTY BOOK, Mae Rockland states:

The popular misconception that equates the word 'brit' (bris in the Yiddish form) with circumcision sees it only for boys. Brit means "covenant" and because the concept of an eternal binding agreement between God and humanity is so central to Judaism, I am delighted that in recent years many creative people have designed brit ceremonies for girls. I like the idea very much of knowing that, whether the infant is male or female, a brit can be planned in advance for the eighth day after birth; a 'mohel' (a person to do the circumcision) is tentatively lined up in case it's a boy, but otherwise

the same preparations can be made. (THE JEWISH PARTY
BOOK p 8)

Whether it be contemporary Lutheranism or Judaism, there are always those who rejoice in seeing the Bible put to one side in the interest of keeping pace with the customs and attitudes of changing times. This is why some "Lutheran" churches now have women "pastors" and Jews have circumcision services for girls and Bat Mitzvah in addition to Bar Mitzvah. In the case of the Brit Milah, covenant and circumcision are inseparable. It is impossible to have one without the other. This, of course, presents no problem for the Reform Jew or the illegitimate Lutheran who are much more interested in being happy than being in line with what God has to say in his eternal Word. It's sad to see Christians joined to Jews by the common bond of their rejection of what God has to say in his eternal Word.

Judaism states that the Brit Milah may even be performed on Yom Kippur or Shabbat such is its importance for Jewish religious life. Although circumcisions according to Jewish law may be performed in a hospital or in the home, many synagogues have a special room built for the Brit. In accord with Halakhah, a 'mohel', one who has been specially surgically trained is the only one who can perform the Milah. Originally, the Milah was performed by the father of the child. Another important person who is to be present at

the Brit is the 'sandek' which is a word identified with the Greek word σὺν τέκνῳ meaning "with the child". The Sandek has the honor of holding the child during the circumcision, a rather dubious and difficult honor considering that the child is going to become quite agitated and scream bloody murder in accord with the relative skill of the mohel. In German and Yiddish, the sandek is called the Gottvater or Kwater.

An empty chair is reserved for the prophet Elijah who traditionally attends each Brit as a witness and to protect the child. In the synagogue Elijah's chair or bench is mounted high on the wall to assure the fact that no one sits down by mistake where only Elijah is to be seated.

A 'minyan' (ten men including the father and mohel) at a Brit enhances the observance of the Mitzvah but is not absolutely necessary. [The 'minyan' (number) required for the reading of Torah and recitation of prayers is taken from the smallest unit mentioned in the division of the people. The units go from thousands to hundreds to fifties to tens. Ten is also the number at which Abraham stopped in his pleading for the cities of the plain and therefore it is declared by Judaism that you must have at least ten men present for religious services. An old proverb states, "Nine saints (tzadikim) do not form a 'minyan', but one common man, joining them, completes the 'minyan'."]

As with all religious ceremonies, the Brit is to be performed with joy and gladness. It's a time for the whole family to get together and enjoy a festival meal.

At the time of the Brit, the name is also given to a Jewish baby boy. The girl baby is officially named during the Shabbat service following the birth. The child is given a Gentile name and a Hebrew name. The full Hebrew name is used for all religious purposes and Hebrew legal documents and follows this form: Name ben (son of) father's name or Name bat (daughter of) father's name. If the father is of priestly or Levitical descent, the title HaKohen or HaLevi is attached to his name. An example of this would be Yitzhak Ben Yohanan HaLevi. All other Jews are classified simply as Yisrael. Sephardic Jews (from Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East) often name their children after living relatives. Ashkenazic Jews (from northern and central Europe) seldom if ever name their children in honor of living relatives since they feel that it would rob a person of his full life if another member of his family carries his name during his lifetime.

Both the accounts of the Brit and naming of Jesus and of his cousin, John, are in complete accord with time honored Jewish custom with the exception of the office of the mohel. You will notice that both Jesus and John were named on the day of their circumcision. Both were

circumcised on the eighth day in accord with the mitzvah. The Brit of John was the occasion of all the relatives and friends getting together to celebrate. Of special interest is the fact that the family of Zechariah followed the Sephardic tradition: "On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah. But his mother spoke up and said, 'No! He is to be called John.' They said to her, 'There is no one among your relatives who has that name.'" (Lk 1:59,60) Of Ashkenazi and Sepharadi traditions, the older and more primitive is the practice of the Sepharadi. In other words, the Luke account is in complete accord with the custom of that time.

Once again the Mitzvah reads:

"In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine...in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman...And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons of Israel." (Nu 8:14,16,18)

"The first offspring of every womb is yours, both man and animal, that is offered to the Lord is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the temple shekel, which

weighs twenty gerahs [gerah at 1/50 of an ounce]." (Nu
18:15,16)

The Pidyon HaBen, the redemption of the firstborn son is still practiced by Judaism. According to Rabbi Donin:

The beautiful idea upon which the redemption of the first born is based is that the first and the best of everything we earn or possess is due the Lord as an offering, and not the leftovers or the mediocre that we possess. (TO BE A JEW p 276)

More questions of casuistry are asked of Rabbis about what constitutes a first born who opens the mother's womb than almost any other subject of Jewish law. What about Caesarean section? What about a stillborn?

The common practice of Judaism today declares that a Pidyon HaBen is required if the child is the first born of his mother "that opens the womb" and that the child is male and the father is not a Kohen or Levite nor is the mother the daughter of a Kohen or Levite.

There are, of course, two Hebrew words which are translated with the English word 'redemption'. There is the word 'Geulah' and then also the word 'Pidyon'. 'Geulah' comes from the verb **גָּאֵל** which basically means to redeem by avenging or buying back. 'Pidyon' comes from the verb **פָּדָה** which means to redeem by loosing or separating. This is of interest because with the Pidyon, the Jewish father redeems his first born son by loosing him from his separate, special function of being dedicated to the Lord by paying the sum of five shekelim [today the custom demands five silver dollars to be paid to the officiating rabbi]. Jesus, our Brother, who serves as our 'Goel', has redeemed us by buying us back from sin, death and the Devil by means of his innocent suffering and death and he has avenged us as far as Satan is concerned. With Judaism, the emphasis is still on Man: what can you do for your God. With Christianity, the emphasis is upon God: what God has done for us in Christ.

Concluding Thoughts: Both the Brit Milah of Jesus and John and the Pidyon Haben of the Savior are recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapters 1 and 2.

By means of the Brit Milah, a Jewish boy becomes a member of Judaism's Israel. In his flesh he bears the seal of God's Old Testament covenant. In accord with the command

of Jesus, little ones today are sealed with the Name (HaShem) of God in a special way for they are enrolled as members of the Kingdom of God's grace by the washing of holy baptism. They are baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The sign of the old covenant was circumcision. The sign of God's covenant today is to be found in the Cross. It is because of the cross of Jesus that we are redeemed, that we are at peace with God, that our eternal destiny is assured. This is symbolized in the words of the baptism liturgy: "Receive the sign of the holy cross both upon the forehead and upon the heart in token that you have been redeemed by Christ the crucified."

Isn't it a shame if being a Christian sponsor at the baptism of a child means no more than the honor of being chosen as a sandek at a Jewish Brit? The sole responsibility of the sandek is to hold the infant as he is being circumcised. Altogether too often today, the concept of being a sponsor is limited to holding the child while he or she is baptized and then buying a Bible or hymnal for the child when it is confirmation time. If we continue to follow the custom of having sponsors for little ones, it would probably be a good idea to include the Christian congregation among a child's sponsors at baptism since the congregation practically carries out the promises made by sponsors.

Life Continues

The very next step for a Jewish child is the Bar Mitzvah (in recent times also Bat Mitzvah). Most Jews will inform you that the literal translation of Bar (Ben) Mitzvah as "a son of the commandment" is erroneous and misleading. The popularly held belief is that Bar Mitzvah applies only to a young thirteen year old boy. According to Judaism, however, Bar Mitzvah is a term applied to every adult Jew in the sense of "a man of duty". 'Ben' and its Aramaic equivalent 'Bar' denotes age, membership in a certain class, or the possession of some quality. A Jewish boy at the age of thirteen and a Jewish girl at the age twelve reaches his or her religious maturity and ever after are held personally accountable for compliance to the Mitzvot.

For the thirteen year old boy, Bar Mitzvah marks the entrance into religious manhood. From that time forward, he wears the tallit and tefillin; he is responsible for his prayer life and good deeds; he is extended the privilege of reading the Torah, or being called up to the Torah, and, finally, he is counted as one of the ten men necessary for 'minyan', the minimum required for congregational worship service. It is the custom that the father of the Bar Mitzvah pronounce the following blessing: "Blessed is He

(the Lord) who has delivered me of the responsibility of this boy." This is the way that the father expresses his joy that his son has attained the age when he can independently distinguish between right and wrong.

Harry Gersh explains Bar Mitzvah in this way:

According to the Mishnah, the book of laws put together about 200 C.E., every male Jew is Bar Mitzvah at age 13. Why 13? Why 11, or 16, or 18 - or 20? Bar Mitzvah is very much like citizenship. You are born a citizen of the United States, or of Canada. In much the same way, you are a Jew the moment you are born. But you cannot vote - even though you are a citizen - until you are 18 or 21 years old. In the same way, you are not a full, responsible citizen of the Jewish community until you have reached Bar or Bat Mitzvah at the age of 13. Until a child reaches the age of 13 he is still learning the difference between right and wrong, between good and evil. The child is also learning to control his actions, so that he will have the strength to do what is right and not do what is wrong [free will]. From then on, a child is supposed to have learned enough about himself and what is expected of him - to be responsible for his own acts - for the rest of his life. That is what BAR Mitzvah means: the child has learned enough about the way of righteousness to become responsible for following it. (WHEN A JEW CELEBRATES pp 39,40)

To mark this turning point in the life of a Jewish boy, the custom is wide spread to extend to him the right to be called up for the final Aliyah (maftir) which also calls for a reading of a section from the Prophets (haftorah), thus providing him with a greater role in the service.

Depending upon the boy's ability and his training, his part in the service will range from the honor of an Aliyah to conducting a part or even the whole religious service. Among the Yeshiva (Jewish school) students, it is the practice also to deliver a learned address on some Biblical or Talmudic text. A Bar Mitzvah testifies to the fact that the child has had at least some of the basic religious training.

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is the occasion once again for the family to gather together for feasting and rejoicing. Often times, the entire synagogue is invited to a reception for the boy or girl who is so being honored. Since the Bar Mitzvah generally takes place during the regular Shabbat evening service, the number of guests can be considerable. On several occasions when I have taken my members to the synagogue to view a Shabbat service, we have been not only been cordially invited to take part in the festival meal but we were almost literally dragged to the table as honored guests. By

serving as gracious hosts to the Gentiles, the strangers within their gates, the parents of the young Bar or Bat Mitzvah feel that they not only have every reason to rejoice in their child's elevation into the Bet Yisrael but at the same time they have the opportunity to give their child an example of obedience to the mitzvah which concerns itself with human kindness.

Some words must be spoken about the heavy burden which is now laid upon the shoulders of the young Jew or Jewess. From the time they have become people of duty, they are responsible for their own strict observance of all the many ordinances of Judaism's 'Kashrut'. Kashrut is a variation of the word 'kosher' which means "fit, proper, in accordance with Jewish law". Actually, the word 'kosher' as it is used by Judaism applies not only to food but to any item which has been prepared in accordance with the 'Halakha'. Much more will be said later concerning the religious observance of 'Kashrut'.

After their entrance into adult Judaism, young people are responsible for obedience to all the laws which concern themselves with acts of kindness, which include:

- Love your neighbor as yourself (Lv 19:18)
- extend hospitality which provides lodging and food
- visit the sick and dying
- visit those who are in mourning and comfort them
- provide funds which will allow poor girls or orphaned

girls to marry

- protect the property of others and return lost possessions

The Jews call all these acts "hesed" which they translate as "Kindness".

All laws governing charity which the Jews equate as "tzedakah", literally "righteousness" but translated by Judaism as "charity" must be obeyed. They include:

- not neglecting the poor but providing for their needs
- feeding and clothing Gentile poor as well as the poor of Israel
- showing mercy in the hope of God's mercy
- giving gifts to father and mother if needed (emphasis mine)
- not pressing a creditor to 'pay up'
- not withholding the payment of a loan when the funds are available

All laws concerning slander, revenge and truthfulness must be observed by men and women of duty.

This means:

- not gossiping
- not listening to gossip
- not seeking revenge [what about the Holocaust and the seemingly never ending quest for not so much justice as revenge?]
- not carrying a grudge

- no insulting or name calling
- no breaking your word; a promise is sacred

Other laws have to do with the marketplace, kindness to animals, the prohibition of violence and the practice of moderation in all things.

Finally, there are all the laws which have to do with the observance of Shabbat and all the high festivals and feasts. All of this is an extremely heavy load for any individual not to speak of a 13 year old boy or a 12 year old girl. The girl is thought to mature earlier than the boy and this is the reason for the younger age for the Bat Mitzvah. The important thing to keep in mind about this ceremony is that the young person does not become Jewish by means of Bar or Bat Mitzvah but rather is initiated into responsible, personal Jewish ritual and practice.

How far back in history does the custom of the Bar Mitzvah extend? There is really no definitive answer to this question. It is conjectured by some scholars that Bar Mitzvah celebrations were introduced some six centuries ago which would mean that it is of rather recent origin. Just as many Jewish scholars feel that the beginnings of the custom date back to a much earlier age. They would appear to be supported in their opinion by Rabbi Yehuda ben Tema of the second century A.D. who delivered the maxim **בן שלש עשרה** למצוות, that is, on each boy of thirteen falls the responsibility of fulfilling the commandments.

An even earlier reference brings us back to a Mishnah elaboration written during the first century A.D. Concerning the age of thirteen as an appropriate age for beginning the fulfillment of all 613 Mitzvoth, Tanna (Sage) Eleazar maintains, "Until the thirteenth year, it is the father's duty to raise his son. But after that, he must say: 'Blessed be He Who has taken from me the responsibility for this boy.'" As was seen earlier, this is a declaration that is made by fathers at the Bar Mitzvah of their sons to this very day.

According to modern thinking, a boy of thirteen is still considered to be a child. In past centuries, however, the maturing process of a child was much more rapid. The statement made by the Bar Mitzvah boy, "HaYom hazeh ahni HaIsh" (Today I am a man) was almost an accomplished fact for a thirteen year old boy in ages past.

Does the Evangelist St. Luke report the Bar Mitzvah of Jesus in the second chapter of his Gospel? The answer is no. First of all, Jesus was twelve years old not thirteen. In addition is the fact that it would seem that this was not the first trip that Jesus took with his parents to the Holy City at Passover time.

Concluding Thoughts: Which came first: the Jewish custom of Bar Mitzvah or the Christian Church's rite of confirmation?

I am not sure that this question can ever be answered with any degree of certainty. One thought that does come to mind is this: like Judaism, it is more or less the declaration of the Christian rite of confirmation that from that time forward, the Church is now dealing with adults. In practice, it doesn't exactly work out that way for Jews or Christians. A thirteen or fourteen year old boy does not become a voting member of the congregation. There is no record of a sixteen year old boy being elected chairman of the Church Council. Twelve year old girls do not generally join the Ladies Aid nor are they invited to join at that age. In other words, because of a long standing tradition which doesn't necessarily apply today, we continue to have confirmation at the custom honored time in a Christian boy or girl's life and what we say is not what in reality we practice. A Jewish youth at Bar or Bat Mitzvah accepts a heavy and burdensome responsibility of duty. A Christian young person at confirmation should realize the great privilege of truly being one of the chosen of God. Confirmation is not a rite of passage into the adult Christian world but rather a personal reaffirmation of the amazing grace of God.

In keeping with these thoughts is something that I purposely omitted in the discussion above. It is one more important obligation that is considered part of the duties

that a Jew must accept and that is prayer. As Rabbi Donin explains:

To engage in prayer is the most obvious and the most universal reflection of man's relationship with God. Prayer at its most sincere levels is called a 'service of the heart,' (avodah she'blev) and constitutes one of the many ways by which love of God is expressed...

Originally prayer was unstructured and informal. To engage in prayer at least once a day, however short or long, was the minimal obligation, although many did so more often (emphasis mine).

Although prayer in its most ideal expression should be spontaneous, expressing in words what the heart feels and the mind believes, the inability of people 'to express themselves adequately and accurately,' the lack of command of language by the average person 'to adequately express needs or to praise God,' led Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly "to institute the Eighteen Benedictions in their present order. The first of the Eighteen Benedictions contain praise to God; the last three thanksgiving; and the intermediate petitions are prayers for the most essential needs of the individual and community. They were set on everyone's lips and learned, so that men of inarticulate speech might offer prayer as clearly as those who speak an eloquent Hebrew. For this reason, they instituted all other blessings and

prayers which are arrayed on the lips of all Israel, to make each blessing readily available to the stammerer or the one unfamiliar with the language." (Hi. Tefilah 81:4) (TO BE A JEW pp 159,160)

Even though prayer is the most natural expression of faith, Judaism now made this "service of the heart" the official substitute for the sacrifices which no longer could be offered in the temple. The temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and since that time no further animal or grain sacrifice was possible.

For this reason, three worship services were instituted to take the place of the sacrifices. The morning (shachrit) service is supposed to correspond to the morning sacrifice, the afternoon service (mincha) to the afternoon sacrifice, and the evening (maariv) to the evening sacrifice. The normal order of these services is reproduced on the final page of this section.

A major portion of each service is the 'Amidah', the main prayer which is said while standing (אָמֵד). It is said while facing in the direction of the Land of Israel. There is a widespread custom of taking three steps back after completing the Amidah. In Oriental lands, this is the way that a servant or subject takes leave of his master or king. Women are not bound to the formal prayer service nor to the set times designated for the three daily

services, nor are they required to join in the public congregational worship. Women are to pray but they can do so at any time convenient to them.

One tradition of interest which is followed by my friend, Yitzhak, is that each morning before he breaks his fast, he takes a piece of bread, tears a section of it away, salts that small section, speaks his blessing with a covered head and then eats the salted bread. He tells me this is his morning sacrifice which he makes to God. I could not ascertain how widespread this custom is.

Prayer is a part of daily Jewish religious life. To be sure, by legalistic regulations, Judaism has made prayer a formal act of work righteousness in addition to the fact that the prayers are not addressed to the true God. This abuse of prayer, however, points up two dangers which continually face the Christian in his prayer life.

First of all, the Apostle Paul in his first Letter to the Thessalonians exhorts, "Pray continually!" (I Th 5:17) In the King James Version, this is translated as, "Pray without ceasing!" Often for Christians, there is a danger of ceasing without praying. Prayer is not always the breath of Christian daily life. The privilege of being able to take everything to God in prayer is not always realized and utilized.

The second danger is that prayer for the Christian

can also become so formal and ritualized that it no longer is the heart to heart talk with God that God intended it to be.

Both of these dangers are eliminated by God who by means of his Holy Spirit impresses the fact upon Christians that prayer is not a duty and responsibility but a privilege and a joy.

THE ORDER OF THE PRAYERS
WITHIN EACH SERVICE

SHAHARIT: The Morning Service

The Morning Blessings

The Verses of Song

THE SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS

THE AMIDAH

Supplications (on weekdays)

Hallel (on festivals)

THE READING OF THE TORAH

(only on Sabbaths, Mondays & Thursdays)

MUSAF: ADDITIONAL AMIDAH

(only on Sabbath, festivals & Rosh Hodesh)

Concluding Psalms, Hymns, & Aleinu

* * *

MINHA: The Afternoon Service

Ashrei (Psalm 145)

THE AMIDAH

Aleinu

* * *

MAARIV: The Evening Service

THE SHEMA AND ITS BLESSINGS

THE AMIDAH

Aleinu

Life Is Shared

Rabbi Donin says:

In its general attitude toward marriage, the Jewish tradition recognizes the fact that procreation, the begetting of children, is one of the major purposes of marriage. To sire children is to fulfill the mitzvah, the Biblical commandment, "Be fertile and increase."... Marriage has its own legitimacy, significance and meaning apart from children. It has its own sanctity. Before God commanded, "Be fertile and increase," he set about creating a wife for Adam because "it is not good that the man should be alone...I will make him a help-mate..."...While the importance of having children is stressed, the marriage itself, the coming together as man and wife, has also been a prime target of rabbinic concern. "God waits patiently for man to marry"(Kidd. 29b). "One who does not marry dwells without blessing, without goodness...without peace" (Yeb. 62b). "One who does not marry is in constant sin and God forsakes him." (Kidd 29b, Pes 113a)... "No man without a wife, neither a woman without a husband, nor both of them without God" (Gen Rabbah 8:9), sums up the Jewish concept of marriage. This is the Jewish ideal, which applies to

all without distinction - rabbi, layman, priest and prophet. (TO BE A JEW p123)

Up until modern times, the 'shadchan', the professional Jewish matchmaker or matrimonial agent was an important personage. The shadchan was the one who made the financial arrangements between the two families of the bride and the groom. He received for his labors a small percentage of the bride's dowry. The profession of the shadchan was followed from the early twelfth century and maybe even before that time. Perhaps the oldest or chief servant of Abraham served somewhat in the capacity of shadchan as his duty, of course, and not for remuneration (Gn 24).

From ancient times, there have traditionally been two parts to a Jewish wedding ceremony: first the 'erusin', the betrothal or engagement from the Hebrew אָרֶשׁ meaning "to erect or build a bed or couch with a canopy, to serve as a bed fellow; in the plural 'to be betrothed'" (another popular word for the betrothal is 'tena'im' literally meaning "conditions"). The second part of the ceremony is called 'nisuin' which comes from the Hebrew verb נָשָׂא meaning "to lift up, take up, receive". The Hebrew word for marriage is 'Kiddushin' which basically means "what is sanctified, consecrated, made separate". This word certainly conveys the Biblical concept which is so

sadly ignored so often in our day: namely, that marriage is set apart and consecrated by God for his special purpose.

In ancient times, the 'erusin' would take place months or even a year before the actual marriage. This was most certainly the case with Mary and Joseph of Nazareth. "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." (Mt 1:18)

At the betrothal, which took place generally in the home of the bride, a legal document called the 'tena'im' was drawn up stating what responsibilities, obligations and material possessions each party was bringing into the marriage. At this time, a date was also set for the actual marriage which would take place in the house of the groom. Now that the two ceremonies have been combined into the one, two cups of wine are used in the modern wedding service - one for the erusin and one for the nisuin.

Today's 'tena'im' can include emotional commitment and also some of the more mundane subjects such as who does the dishes and who takes out the garbage. The bride and the groom sign the 'tena'im' signifying their joint willingness to abide by the conditions mutually agreed upon. Following this, the groom places a ring on the bride's finger and pronounces the formula, "Be sanctified to me with this ring

in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel." With this statement and the bride's consent, she becomes his wife. There must be two qualified witnesses present.

The bride and groom now stand beneath the 'Chuppah' which can either symbolize the chamber to which the bride and groom retired in ancient times or to the 'kippah', the dome of heaven. Often the chuppah is constructed from a tallit or prayer shawl. It is then that first of all the formal marriage contract, the 'Ketubah' is formally read. This contract serves as a legal protection in the case of widowhood or divorce. The rabbis, however, also catalogued a whole list of offences which would cause the wife to forfeit any claim to her husband's possessions or protection which included walking indecently or having her hair uncovered in public or even serving her husband non-kosher food if only by mistake. A little later we shall discuss Jewish divorce or the 'get' in more detail.

After the ketubah, which means simply "writing", has been read, the seven blessings are pronounced. This means that a minyan is required. The rabbi, by the way, is optional although most couples request his presence and blessing.

Both bride and groom drink from a second cup of wine after which either the cup itself or a small glass is broken by the groom. This is done in remembrance of the

destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Immediately following this somber act, the joyous 'mazel tov' (a good star) or 'siman tov' (a good omen) is shouted out by the wedding guests. Both expressions have their roots in the superstition of astrology which the Jews never seem to have gotten completely out of their system. It is now high time for all the feasting, drinking, dancing and celebrating which are common to all Jewish weddings.

In accord with Jewish tradition, wedding ceremonies are not to be conducted during Shabbat nor on the festivals, nor during the three weeks from the seventeenth of Tammuz to Tisha b'Av, nor during the thirty day period during Sefira, nor on a regular fast day.

No child even if born out of wedlock is considered to be illegitimate under Jewish law. The Hebrew term for bastard refers only to the children born of forbidden incestuous unions as identified by the Torah. The marriage of a Jew and a non-Jew is also sternly opposed in that such mixed marriages weaken the essential core of Judaism.

The groom's gift to the bride is a ring. Her gift to him is often a tallit which he will wear until he dies and then he will be buried in it. A favorite day for a Jewish wedding is Tuesday since it was on the third day of creation that God repeated the words "ki tov", "It is good."

From this time on, it is the husband's duty to

continue to study Torah and to provide a living for his wife and family. The wife's duties are more carefully delineated. She is to:

Make the lighting of candles on Shabbat her duty including also the preparation of the two unsliced loaves known as 'hallah' (white bread).

Exercise extreme care in keeping herself separate from her husband for the prescribed time before, during and after her period 'niddah'. This also includes ritually cleansing herself in the 'mikvah' following her period. She is responsible for the following of all the laws having to do with "family purity."

Assure that all laws of 'Kashrut' are followed meticulously. Those laws include food - clean and unclean foods, koshering meats by salting, soaking or broiling; the complete separation of dairy and meat products in accord with Exodus 23:19; 34:26;

Deuteronomy 14:21, "You will not boil a baby goat in his mother's milk." [This, of course, is a primary example of the 'fence of the Torah' at work]

Laws of 'Kashrut' also include the prohibition of mixing wool and linen (Dt 22:11; Lv 19:19).

Two reasons are advanced to explain why the Lord prohibited the boiling of a kid in its mother's milk. One explanation is that taking a nursing baby animal from its

mother and cooking it in its mother's milk would be an inhumane action unworthy of God's People. Luther is of this opinion. A more recent explanation is offered by archaeology. It would seem that the practice which is condemned by the Lord was a cultic sacrifice of heathen worship. Because of the position that this prohibition is placed in the Exodus passages, I would be inclined toward this latter explanation. One thing is certain: Judaism's use of this passage to support a complete separation of meat and dairy products is based not upon Scripture but upon human embellishment.

At this time, a few words should be spoken concerning Judaism's attitude toward women. All Jewish apologists are quick to try to explain away the following words but the explanations are weak and untenable. During his early morning prayer, the pious Jew expresses his gratitude to his Creator that he was "not born a pagan...a slave...or a woman. (emphasis mine)"

Much has been written and spoken about the 'Jewish mama' but the fact remains that according to traditional Judaism the woman has no rights and is to be considered to be a 'second class citizen' in the truest sense of that expression.

Nowhere is this brought out so clearly as in the tradition regarding divorce that is still followed by

traditional Judaism to this very day. The letter of the law is observed but the spirit is still neglected and forgotten.

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. (Dt 24:1-4)

The important word in this portion of Scripture is the word ערוה which also modern Hebrew recognizes as being lewd, naked, indecent. In fact, this is the word for the genitals and a lewd display of them. It is clear that more is spoken of than simply some physical defect or fault. In the light of what the Bible has to say about adultery, what we see in this passage is a Scriptural reason for a divorce occurring.

Nathan Ausubel says:

There were only two absolute grounds for the divorce of a wife by her husband: infidelity or childlessness. The

two great rival Rabbinic schools—those of Hillel and Shammai—were at loggerheads on the subject of divorce during the second century C.E. in Judea. The astringent, "zealous" School of Shammai was dead set against divorce on any ground except infidelity, preferring to follow the old Israelite tribal mores. The School of Hillel, on the contrary, was accommodating and easygoing. It advanced this legal proposition: "A wife may be divorced by her husband even if he has nothing against her other than that she spoiled the cooking." To this, the usually sedate Rabbinic Sage Akiba, with unaccustomed levity for him, added, "A husband may even divorce his wife for the sole reason that he has found someone who is prettier than she." When the subject of infidelity was brought forward, Akiba quite seriously expressed the view that any wife about whose doings there was much scandalous gossip should be divorced even if no proof of infidelity could be furnished. His Rabbinic colleague, Yohanon ben Nuri, was aghast. "If we accept your opinion, Akiba," he retorted, "not a single daughter of Abraham will be safe with her husband." (THE BOOK OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE p 132)

Rabbi Donin also speaks at length concerning divorce:

Where despite every effort to preserve the peace of the home and the harmony of husband-wife relationship, bitterness, continuous strife, and the flames of

dissension nevertheless prevail, it is better that the couple should be parted and not continue to live together. In such instances, the Torah provides for the bonds of marriage to be dissolved by a divorce...The law allowing divorce is based upon a Biblical precept. Its procedure is governed by the halakha. [emphasis mine-how easy it is to avoid the fact that the Bible says nothing about divorcing your wife because you can't get along so the rule of oral tradition is trundled out in support] The Hebrew term for a Jewish divorce is 'get' (גֵּט). (TO BE A JEW p 135)

Not all religious Jews look upon divorce as something which is not all that serious. My good Israeli friend and his wife have had no bond between them for the past thirty years and yet he feels that it is too much of a disgrace to bear to obtain the 'get.' Only the Jewish male is able to initiate divorce proceedings.

The ease with which a husband could obtain a divorce is already evident at the time of Christ. It is most certainly the 'get' which Joseph is considering as it is recorded in Matthew chapter 1:19, "Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly."

The contents of the 'sefer kerithuth' (סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוּת), of course, is not mentioned in Scripture.

It is the Mishnah which gives the formula for a 'get'.

גְּרִיּוֹתָּ comes from the root verb קָרַת which means "to cut off", in this case, cutting off a marriage.

The Mishnah says that the 'get' is to be inscribed with these words: "Let this serve as a bill of divorce from me, as a letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that you may marry any man you wish." This bill, written on parchment or paper, must be in perfect condition without any erasures and has to contain the exact names of the husband and wife plus the exact date and location of the granting of the divorce. The husband hands this bill to his wife with the proper declaration of what he is doing. Three judges, two witnesses and a scribe are necessary in order for this act to take place. The scribe must write the 'get' in perfect Hebrew in twelve lines (the numerical value of the word גֵּט is twelve). The writing and the actual delivering of the bill of divorcement must take place during the daylight hours, but not on days immediately preceding Rosh Hodesh, Shabbat or a holiday. Although the husband may remarry immediately following the divorce, the wife must wait for three months in order to establish the paternity of any child that she bears after the divorce.

The usually conservative Rabbi Donin looks upon Judaism's attitudes toward divorce as being commendable and laudable. Donin states:

A religious marriage that is consecrated according to

'the Law of Moses and Israel' is not dissolved by the decree of a judge in a civil court who acts in accordance with the secular laws of the State but must be severed also 'according to the Law of Moses and Israel...The State assumed jurisdiction in the area of divorce because classical Christianity had no provision for it in its religious statutes. The indissoluble everlasting bond of the marriage was central to Christian teaching. The 'till death us do part' was not merely a romantic ideal enunciated by lovers in a marriage ceremony, but a church law that tolerated no divorce and made no provision for it. (TO BE A JEW p135)

Life Ends

Burn out, my life, burn quick,
Not much is left now of the wick.
Let there be light on my last day,
To point the way.
Don't flicker, life, burn clear,
Then like a spring-thought disappear.
I hate to stint! Life blaze away!
Let me have light at least one day.

(Abraham Reisen, Yiddish poet)

According to Judaism, it doesn't matter how long life is, but how good it is. Everyone is confronted with the certainty of death. No one can escape it. Rabbi Brasch has this to say:

"For we are strangers before Thee and sojourners, as all our fathers were: our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding." The rabbis, adopting this Biblical simile, added, "Would that life were like the shadow cast by a wall or a tree. But it is like the shadow of a bird in flight." Yet to fear death is wrong. Judaism believes in the immortality of the soul. Death is not the end, but merely the limit of human vision, life as far as man can see it. Death is not the

closing of a door, but the opening of a gate to a brighter and fuller existence, the spirit's return to Him who gave its heavenly spark. The journey done, the summit attained, the barrier falls and man becomes one with God's love. The body is only a temporary abode for the immortal spirit, something to be used and then discarded, as the butterfly discards the chrysalis...The sages of the Talmud felt, therefore, that this homecoming should not be cause for grief, but almost for rejoicing. In a parable they contrasted the sailing of a ship, which was given a boisterous send-off by jubilant masses of people, with a boat entering a harbor in quiet dignity, with no band playing and no crowds cheering! "You should not rejoice over a ship that has set out as nobody knows what lies ahead of it, what rough seas and storms it may encounter; but when the ship reaches its harbor all should be joyfully grateful that it arrived in safety."

The reader will notice that while Rabbi Brasch bears testimony to a vague and clouded concept of an eternal existence of some kind or other, he is deathly silent about the Biblical teaching of the resurrection. It was noted earlier that in ancient times the Pharisees contended with their arch enemies, the Sadducees, concerning not only the immortality of the soul but the reality of a physical

resurrection. This became an article of faith for Maimonides. His thirteenth and final Article of faith states that he firmly believes "that there will take place a revival of the dead at the time which will please the Creator..."

According to Judaism, there are two very basic considerations that come into play when a death strikes. One principle involves 'kevod hamet', the treatment of the dead with reverence and respect. The other consideration is 'kevod hechai', a concern for the welfare of the living. These two considerations form the basis for many of the customs having to do with death and mourning and their observance are quite ancient.

The only land that Abraham ever owned in the Promised Land during his lifetime was a cemetery which he purchased from the Hittites. It is noteworthy that the very first place of burial was a cave.

So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre - both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the border of the field - was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site. (Gn 23:17-20)

Judaism erects the fence around the Torah by commanding two practices regarding burial right down to our modern time. The basis for the two new 'rules' is the 'mitzvah' recorded in Deuteronomy:

If a man guilty of a capital offence is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. (Dt 21:22,23)

Notice first of all that this is a special situation involving the dead body of a criminal whose body had been hung on a tree after the execution (it is evidently not crucifixion which is spoken of in this passage but rather the custom of hanging the convicted by his hands from a tree after he is dead). According to God's command, the bodies of criminals are also to receive burial after justice has been executed. The stench of a rotting human body pollutes and defiles the land which the Lord has given to his people. The command also states that the burial must take place before sundown.

Completely ignoring the context of the 'mitzvah', Judaism has deduced that the Lord commands that all dead bodies must be interred before nightfall and that the burial must be in the earth. Another passage listed in Judaism's

declaration that burial must be in earth is Genesis 3:19, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and unto dust you will return." In spite of Judaism's claim that earth burial is the only interment acceptable to God on the basis of this passage and the Deuteronomy passage, the fact remains that the Hebrew word which may be loosely translated "to bury" in its literal root means "to heap up or erect a mound over". Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah were buried under a mound of solid rock (the cave of Machpelah). The custom of cave burial continued into Rabbinical times, the most famous example of such cave burial being the catacombs of Beth Shearim in northern Israel. Whether in the ground or in a burial cave or mausoleum or in the crematory, the Biblical announcement will become reality: the human body will return to the dust of the earth.

One form of the disposition of human remains that has always been opposed by Judaism is the practice of cremation. Probably because of its usage by the heathen, cremation is rejected by pious Jews as a means of returning the human body to dust. In fact Rabbi Donin states categorically:

When cremation takes place and the ashes are not buried in the earth but kept in an urn above the ground or scattered over the sea, the family of the deceased is

not required to observe the period of shiva (mourning).

(TO BE A JEW p 298)

Two things should be noted in this discussion of Jewish aversion to cremation. First of all, it is often said that but for the efforts and concern of Joseph and Nicodemus the body of Jesus would have been burned on the rubbish heap in Gehenna. This is incorrect on two counts: the attitude of the Jews toward cremation and the command in Deuteronomy concerning the burial of the bodies of those who had been executed. The second thought that comes to mind is the horror and rage of religious Jews at the thought of millions of the bodies of their countrymen being consumed in the crematoriums of Nazi Germany. According to commonly held beliefs, the Jews whose bodies were destroyed by the flames of the furnaces have no part in the Messianic resurrection. With this in mind it is possible to see why so many Jews continue to stoke the flames of bitterness, hatred and revenge. According to their religious beliefs their families, relatives and friends have been robbed of eternal life.

With the exception of the prohibition of anything but earth burial with attendant customs and the twenty four hour ban (which may be extended for the influential), burial practice of Judaism today gives us an adequate picture of what was "in accordance with Jewish burial customs" (Jn 19:40) of two thousand years ago and beyond.

Today when a pious Jew dies, his body is washed, his nails and hair are cut and he is prepared for burial almost immediately. The body is then wrapped in the תבנית, the white linen burial shroud. The shrouded body is placed in a wooden coffin. A soft wood such as pine is preferred for the construction of the coffin since soft wood will decay much more quickly than hard woods. The idea is that the body should return to the earth as soon as possible. At times, holes are drilled in the bottom of the coffin in order to bring about decomposition more quickly. In Israel, no coffin is used at all. The burial takes place within forty eight hours. Embalming is strictly forbidden as is also the custom of a reviewal of the corpse. Judaism considers the former to be a mutilating of the body and thus a lack of respect and the latter also as a dishonoring of the corpse. It is forbidden to bury the dead on Shabbat or the first day of festivals. Caring for the dead, preparing them for burial, watching over them, and handling the burial itself is a sacred religious task which only the most pious and worthy members of a Jewish community were called upon to do. The organized communal society that concerns itself with this task is called the Sacred Society (Hevra Kadisha). If possible the body ideally should be buried in Eretz Yisrael since in accord with Judaism's Messianic beliefs when Messiah comes those buried in Israel and in particular

in the Valley of the Kidron will rise first. If such a burial is impossible, a bag of earth from Eretz Yisrael is often placed in the coffin so that the body may roll to Israel at the onset of the Messianic Age. There is also a wide spread belief that the Palestine earth has the power to atone. There is no formal funeral service but the body is taken directly to the cemetery. In the recent past not only the family and friends but the entire Jewish community followed the body to the cemetery. All members of the priestly family are prohibited from contact with the dead with the result that they must halt at the entrance to the cemetery. Before the body is lowered into the grave, the mourners make the traditional tear in the clothing (Hebrew - 'keria'). Such a custom is demonstrated again and again in the Bible as a sign of deep mourning. It is Judaism that has mandated in stone that the tear must be made on the left for parents (closest to the heart) and on the right side for son, daughter, brother, sister or spouse. The tear must be lengthwise not cross wise and no less than four inches in length. (An identical tear is made in the clothing if a son or daughter converts to Christianity - so much for the Judeo/Christian myth and sentiments.)

Mourning and the comforting of mourners are also carefully regulated by Judaism. The first period of mourning is called 'Shiva' (שִׁבְעָה -seven) and is observed

for father, mother, wife (husband), son, daughter, brother or sister. Mourners sit on low stools or even on the floor during this time period (hence the term "sitting shiva"). Mourners do not wear leather shoes. Males do not shave or have their hair cut. Females use no cosmetics. Bathing is only allowed for cleanliness not pleasure. No sexual relations, no new or laundered clothes during Shiva. A Jew cannot even read and study Torah except for books and chapters of books that deal with mourning and grief and anguish prophets such as Job and parts of Jeremiah. The mourner may not go to work at his normal employment. Shiva is suspended during Shabbat observances. The establishment of seven days as the first and most intense period of mourning is based upon an interpretation of Amos:

And I will turn your feasts [which usually lasted seven days] into mourning, and all your songs into lamentations; and I will bring sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son; and the end thereof as a bitter day. (Am 8:10)

The Rabbis interpret these words of Amos to mean that just as festivals such as Passover, Tabernacles, etc., were celebrated for seven days, so the initial period of mourning must also extend seven days. What is strange is that the Rabbis do not also enforce shaving the head as a sign of

sorrow. Of course, this would be in direct conflict with the mitzvah in Deuteronomy 14:1 in which God commands, "Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead...", but it would serve as an excellent example of the Oral Torah taking precedent over the Written Torah.

Another reason given for the seven day mourning period is that Joseph mourned for Jacob for seven days.

The second period of mourning is called 'shloshim' which means "thirty". Attending parties, getting married, shaving or cutting one's hair is forbidden during this month. The end of the thirty days marks the conclusion of mourning for all but a mother or father.

The third period observed for a mother or father is known simply as 'avelut' which means "mourning". It terminates at the end of twelve Hebrew months from the date of death. During this year's time, joyous events, dinners with music, theaters, and concerts are to be avoided. 'Kaddish' (sanctification) is spoken daily by sons for eleven months of the year. After the year is over, it is forbidden to continue practices or restraints that openly indicate the continuation of grief. In other words, there must be an end to grief and a continuation of life.

A son is duty bound to recite Kaddish at daily religious services. This devotion is regarded as an act of reverence for a deceased parent. There must be a minyan for

Kaddish to be recited. The language of Kaddish is not Hebrew but Aramaic except for the concluding verse. Contrary to popular opinion, Kaddish is not a prayer for the dead. It is a prayer of praise to God and acceptance of his divine will. Rabbi Donin says:

If, in the midst of grief and personal loss, when the tendency to blame and reject God might arise, a person nevertheless rises publicly to express these words of faith and trust in God - this is an act of great merit to the soul of the deceased, for the deceased is credited with having raised a child capable of such an act of faith. (emphasis mine) In this sense only can the Kaddish be regarded as an indirect 'prayer for the dead.' Its recitation accrues to the merit of the soul in the judgment that takes place in the world to come.

(TO BE A JEW p 306)

Both the Kaddish and traditional memorial prayers are reproduced on the following pages. It is the custom to say Kaddish with the feet together while standing. In most Jewish congregations, it is customary for all the mourners to recite the Kaddish in unison. The congregants who hear the Kaddish recited are required to respond with the words "Yehai shmai rabba m'vorakh l'olam ul'almai almay," "may His great Name be blessed forever and ever...Amen.

As far as the memorial prayers, the El molai

Rachamim and the Yitzkor, many Jews consider it to be tempting fate if they remain present while these prayers are being recited if they are not in mourning.

SELECTED MEMORIAL PRAYERS

The following memorial prayer may be recited when visiting the grave of a deceased.

For a man:

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה
 מסת בגפי השכינה, במעלות קדושים ומתורים כבוד תרומע
 מותרים, את נשמת... * שְהִלָּךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. בעבוד שְאֵנִי נודר
 צדקה בעד סוכרת נשמתו, בגו ערו תהא מנוחתו. לכו בעל
 תרחמים וסתרתו בסתר בגפיו לעולמים, ויצרוד בצרוד
 סחיים את נשמתו. יי הוא נחלתו; ונתח על משקבו בשלום,
 ונאמר אמן.

For a woman:

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה
 מסת בגפי השכינה, במעלות קדושים ומתורים כבוד תרומע
 מותרים, את נשמת... * שְהִלָּכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ. בעבוד שְאֵנִי
 נודר צדקה בעד סוכרת נשמתה, בגו ערו תהא מנוחתה.
 לכו בעל תרחמים וסתרתה בסתר בגפיה לעולמים, ויצרוד
 בצרוד סחיים את נשמתה. יי הוא נחלתה; ונתח על משקבה
 בשלום, ונאמר אמן.

* The name of the deceased is supplied.

God, full of compassion who dwells on high, grant perfect rest to the soul of — — — — — who is recalled this day in blessed memory. May he (she) be under the wings of Thy Divine Presence in the celestial realm of paradise, in the sphere of the holy and pure who shine resplendent as the luminous firmament. In his (her) memory I offer charity. Bind up his (her) soul in the bond of life with Thee as his (her) eternal heritage. God of Mercy, may he (she) rest evermore in the shelter of Thy wings at peace and let us say, Amen.

The Yizkor Memorial prayer is recited in the synagogue on Yom Kippur and on the last day of Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot.

In memory of a father:

יְזַכֵּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אָבִי מוֹרִי... * שְׁהֵלָה לְעוֹלָמוֹ. בְּעִבּוֹר
שְׁאֵנִי נוֹדֵר צְדָקָה בְּעָרוֹ, בְּשִׁבְרֵי יְהוָה, תְּהִי נִפְשׁוֹ צְדָקָה
בְּצָרוֹר סְסִיִּים עִם נִשְׁמוֹת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שָׂרָה
רַבֵּקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, וְעִם שְׂאֵר צְדִיקִים וְצְדִיקוֹת שְׁבָנוֹ עָרוֹ.
אָמֵן.

In memory of a mother:

יְזַכֵּר אֱלֹהִים נִשְׁמַת אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי... * שְׁהֵלָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ.
בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁאֵנִי נוֹדֵר צְדָקָה בְּעָרָה, בְּשִׁבְרֵי יְהוָה, תְּהִי נִפְשָׁהּ
צְדָקָה בְּצָרוֹר סְסִיִּים עִם נִשְׁמוֹת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב,
שָׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, וְעִם שְׂאֵר צְדִיקִים וְצְדִיקוֹת שְׁבָנוֹ
עָרוֹ. אָמֵן.

* The name of the deceased is supplied.

God, remember the soul of my beloved — — — — who
has been called to his (her) eternal home. In his (her) memory
I offer charity. May his (her) soul be bound up in the bond of
life with the souls of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca,
Rachel, Leah, and all the other righteous ones in eternal bliss,
Amen.

Kaddish

וְתַגְדֵּל וְיִתְכַבֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּה בְּעֲלָמָא דִּי בְרָא בְרַעוּתָהּ;
וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ * בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בְּעֲגָלָא וּבְזִמְנוּ קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּה מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם, וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְסַבֵּר,
וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא, בְּרִיד תּוּב, לְעַלְמָא מִן כָּל
בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁדְתָּא, הַשְׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחְמַתָּא, וְאָמְרוּ בְּעֲלָמָא,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּה מִן שְׁמַיָּא, וְסוּיִים, עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִדְרוֹמֵינוּ, הוּא גַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

*In nusach Sephard add:

וְיִצְמַח פּוֹרְקָנָהּ וְיִקְרַב מְשִׁיחָהּ

Magnified and sanctified be His great Name in the world which He hath created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom during your life and during your days, and during the life of all the house of Israel, even speedily and at a near time, and say Amen. Let His great Name be blessed forever and to all eternity. Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He; though He be high above all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations, which are uttered in the world; and say Amen. May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel; and say Amen. He who maketh peace in His high places, may He make peace for us and for all Israel; and say Amen.

Following the burial, the mourners' first meal should not consist of their own food. It should be prepared by neighbors, relatives, or friends. It is regarded as mitzvah by Judaism to prepare this first meal for mourners in accord with Ezekiel 24:7 which says, "...and eat not the bread of men." The meal is called the meal of comfort and is not intended for visitors but only for the mourners. When entering a house of mourning, it is tradition not to speak with those who are in grief since words cannot express the proper sympathy. Before leaving the house of mourning during shiva, Judaism directs the traditional formula of sympathy which is the form of a prayer:

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂעַר אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

May the Lord comfort you with all
the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Generally, the tombstone is not placed over the grave for one year. This is not really one of the mitzvot of Judaism but it almost always observed. One reason for the one year wait is that because Kaddish is said for the deceased and therefore there is no need for a further reminder. The other reason advanced is much more practical: one year will allow the ground to settle before placing a heavy tombstone on it. The reason for a tombstone is to mark a grave lest someone defile himself by contact with the dead.

The Bible records that Jacob erected a monument (matzevah) over the grave of Rachel, and "to this day that pillar (matzevah) marks Rachel's tomb." (Gn 35:20). II Samuel 18:18 makes mention of the 'matzevah' that Absalom erected for himself to keep his memory alive because he had no son. To this day it is called יָד אֲבִשָׁלִים, Absalom's monument (incorrectly identified with the Hellenistic tomb in the Kidron Valley).

It should be noted that when stones are seen scattered on a gravestone, this does not mean that the grave has been desecrated. Visitors, family and friends place stones on the gravestone as a sign that they still remember the one who is buried at that place. Tombstones with engraved hands on them mark the grave of a priest (kohen) while a cup or laver symbolizes the function of the Levites.

Before closing this section and chapter, a few observations should be made.

The first observations have to do with 'sitting shiva'. I am not so sure that the three friends of Job were not sitting shiva for him. Job had already rent his garment and shaved his head in mourning over the loss of his children. Satan had afflicted him with an excruciatingly painful form of open boils. When Job's friends first saw him, they hardly recognized him. Perhaps, they felt that he was afflicted with the dread disease of leprosy. They began

to weep, they tore their own clothing, they sprinkled dust on their heads and they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights without saying a word to him - all of which indicates to me that Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar considered their friend the same as someone who was already dead. If this is indeed the case, it only serves to add more pathos to the sacred account of Job's sufferings.

My attention is also drawn to the New Testament record of the death of Lazarus in Bethany. It was the fourth day following his death if he were buried on the same day that he died. Martha and Mary were in their home with those who had come to comfort them. Were they involved in 'sitting shiva'? There are some strong indications that this custom of seven day deep mourning was already an established practice by the time of Christ. If this were the practice already at the time of Job, it is of ancient origin indeed.

Another example of Judaism's modern practice revealing a common New Testament record is the case of the young man who died in the city called 'Pleasant' (Naim). As they were carrying him out to be buried, almost the whole town followed as an example of community grief. Of special interest is the bier that they used to carry him outside the city walls. In Greek it is called a $\sigma\omicron\pi\acute{o}\varsigma$. The Hebrew equivalent is מִטָּה . Both in modern and

in ancient Hebrew the meaning is the same - "a bed". This is the term for a conveyance to the tomb and yet negative critics try to tell me that the concept of a resurrection is a quite late post exilic concept.

Still other observations have to do with the burial of the Savior. His death on a Friday is certified by the fact that he had to be buried before sundown of the great Shabbat. He was buried in a cave sepulchre (at that time, Judaism hadn't yet decided that this was in violation of Judaism's law). He in all probability was not buried in a shroud. This custom did not come into vogue until Gamaliel II of Acts of the Apostles fame "shuffled off this mortal coil". It was Gamaliel who insisted that he be buried in a simple linen shroud since the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the prince and the beggar are all the same in death. At the time of Christ, it was still the custom to anoint the body (not to embalm it) with precious ointment before wrapping it in strips of linen cloth. This was in accord with the burial customs of the Jews at that time. While it is true that Matthew, Mark and Luke only mention the Greek word σινδών which simply means "a piece of unused linen", John gives us further information. John says, "Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen." (Jn 20:40) The Greek word is ῥομόλιον. I am amazed that no one that I have

read on the subject of the Shroud of Turin has bothered to see what the Scripture itself has to say about the authenticity of the shroud.

A final observation has to do with a custom that has with modifications found its way into Christian custom. I am referring to what I call the 'Totensmahl'. This is the meal generally provided by the Ladies Aid for mourners upon their return from the cemetery. There is no doubt that it is an act of love upon the part of the Christians who provide the meal and it is therapeutic in nature for those who mourn the loss of a loved one but who at the same time are faced with getting on with the business of living.