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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH EDUCATION.

By G. HAROLD ELLIS, Fellow in Clark University.

At the dawn of their history we know the Jews as Arab nomads settled in the hill country of Palestine and dividing their time between agriculture and war. How they came to exchange their roving life of the plain for that of the agriculturist, we have only their traditions handed down through long generations, but from them we may derive what is essential in our quest—the historical development of their religious and social institutions. What the Jews originally were can be inferred from a study of the modern Bedawin who have remained practically unchanged in historic times.

This change from a Bedawin tribe to the Jewish nation was brought about by a forced emigration from the old seat to Palestine, where the new conditions of life gradually changed them into an agricultural people.

Palestine is one of the most remarkable geological formations in the world, and the influence of the physical features of the country on the development of Jewish character has long been timidly held, but under the anthropological investigation of environment it has been made a scientific fact.

Of the factors of evolution, environment is by far the most potent and modifies both heredity and self activity. Variation in species is the proof of the one, and in the light of what has been said of it in biological studies, needs no comment here, while O. T. Mason (7)¹ has given abundant evidence of the other.

As compared with its psychical influence environment has but little to do with the physical man, and hence one must consider the intellectual development as the matter of chief concern in human evolution (8). Self expression of man is in accord with his environment. The art of the Esquimo, the California Indian, and the Pueblo is of a nature corresponding with the material accessible—walrus bone, burned brick or volcanic rock. (7. pp. 556-661.) Food, dress, and home life are all dependent upon the character of the environment. Japan is a typical example of this (6).

¹Numbers in parentheses refer to bibliography at the end of this article.

Turning to the Jew we have in his physical surrounding the explanation of his character. This is seen in their literature, is generally taught by even the most conservative of Biblical scholars, and has been recently admitted by Prof. G. F. Wright, of Oberlin, who says, "The peculiar development of Israel demanded isolation in a peculiar country. Otherwise they would have been amalgamated with the more numerous, more powerful, and more civilized heathen around them, and their exclusive religious development would have been rendered extremely difficult if not impossible." (9, p. 360.)

In religious matters the Bedawin have but little sense of moral claims, though the name of Allah is continually on their lips. In this they are closely akin to the early Jews in the Old Testament, who were crafty, treacherous, adventurous, brave and vengeful in war. These characteristics are ascribed to the Old Testament heroes. The craftiness of Jacob (Gen. 27:30, 37-43) is proverbial, while David's unkind thoughts on his death bed go uncondemned (1 Kgs. 2:5, 6, 8-10), though he elsewhere (1 Sam. 24:4, 5; 1 Kgs. 2:7) shows a different spirit. Nowhere as in the Psalms is the passionate spirit of the Jew, shown in these two aspects just given, so well expressed. From the most profound religiousness (Ps. 23, 42, etc.) the thought goes to the other extreme of most bitter imprecations against their enemies. (Ps. 35, etc.) The Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21:22-22:33) shows by its very condemnation of vices that they were alarmingly common, while the stories told of the Patriarchs (Gen. 12:10-20; 20; 26), of Samson (Judges 13-16) and David (1 Sam. 25, etc.), show that the popular conceptions of these heroes were not always edifying or even moral.

The softening influence of culture gradually brought out the higher ethical ideals, but the events of the Maccabean period and the later struggle with Rome showed that the old fire had not died out, and only needed a little fanning to kindle it into more than its old fury.

Prof. Ripley has shown (10, p. 391) that the old theory of Jewish purity of blood is a myth. Being forced by stress of environment they have adopted the language of the people among whom they settled, and mixed somewhat with them. Deprived of civil rights and persecuted they had no other refuge than their religion. In proportion as adversity comes does man rest upon God. Added force is given to this from the history of the Jews in ancient times, and also from the fact that to-day they are "orthodox" only in the countries where they are persecuted.

Our conclusion, then, must be that the Jews began low down in the scale of culture and gradually developed through

the same stages that other peoples have passed. The stages of development of a nation's educational system coincide with the periods of its life. The one is the reflex of the other.

Many works on Jewish education have failed to give a correct view of the matter because the relation of history to the mental development of the people was not recognized, or because the arrangement of historical material was made from an *à priori* dogmatic point of view. An enormous literature on Jewish education has grown up but the lack of scientific accuracy has made it almost worthless.

The treatment of the subject of the early Jewish education will be divided under the following heads, conforming to the periods of Jewish national history:

1. From the beginning of history to the Exile (c. 1000 to 586 B. C.).
2. From the Exile to the founding of Alexandria (586 to 332 B. C.).
3. From the founding of Alexandria to the fall of Jerusalem (332 B. C. to 70 A. D.).
4. From the fall of Jerusalem to the final dispersion of the Jews (70 to 135 A. D.).

I. *From the Beginning of History to the Exile.* (c. 1000-586 B. C.)

Jewish history begins with the founding of the kingdom, about 1000 B. C. During the early years of the occupation of Palestine the Jews lived in a state of anarchy. (Judges 17:6; 18:1, etc.) Several attempts had been made to unite the tribes (Judges 8:22 ff.), but with no success until the time of David. With the advent of peace came the opportunity of cultivating the arts of peace.

Education, if such can be said to exist, was domestic and private. The sons were taught to hunt and till the soil, and when approaching adolescence were taught the meaning of the simple cultus and were thenceforward treated as men.

The initiations of adolescents into the state have been carefully treated by Dr. G. Stanley Hall (11) and Dr. A. H. Daniels (12), but neither bear directly on the early significance of circumcision and initiation ceremonies among the Semites. From Joshua 5:2 ff. and Exodus 4:24-26 we have two accounts of the institution of circumcision which give us to infer that among the Jews, as among other primitive peoples generally, it was performed upon young men at adolescence and just before marriage. As the Jews grew in culture this bloody rite was modified, the original political meaning was forgotten and a religious interpretation given it. This being the case, the rite was no longer delayed until approaching manhood and mar-

riage, but was performed as soon as safe in order to bring the child into covenant relations with God as soon as possible (13-16).

This initiation constituted the whole of the boy's education, with the possible exception of the few among the higher classes who may have been taught by such of the priests as knew the art of writing. However this may be, it is certain that the people who were not educated, in a literary sense of the word, soon made progress along that line, as the Moabite stone (21) (erected by Mesha, King of Moab about 850 B. C.) and the Siloam inscription (about 700 B. C.) presupposed an ability to read on the part of the persons who would see them.

As to any education of girls, that was never thought of.

This period marks the golden age of Hebrew literature, but too much must not be inferred from this, for the greatest literature of any people is not produced in the days of its intellectual greatness, but in the transition stage from the oral to the written transmission of tradition, when written language has all the expressiveness of oral speech, and is as yet untrammelled by the artificialities of grammarians. Just in proportion as grammatical perfection has been insisted upon has literature declined.

The Jewish literature of this period covers a wide range of topics. From the stories of Samson and the patriarchs we can see that the people appreciated a good story even if it was not of the highest ethical character. The song of Deborah (Judges 5) is probably the oldest piece of Hebrew literature, and is one of the finest productions in any literature (22, 23). Higher in moral worth, though below the song of Deborah in literary value, is the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:22-23:33) which represents the thought of the people near the beginning of our period, and deals with the civil side of the life of an agricultural people. This code reveals a somewhat advanced conception of morality but only within the limits of the tribe.

One of the most remarkable phenomena that we meet in this period is prophecy. While not belonging to education in a strict sense of the word, its influence upon the mind of the people must have been stimulating to thought, and after all the object of a true education is character building.

Perhaps the most notable stimulus to educational effort by the prophets is to be found in the work of Hosea (c. 746-734 B. C.) which was instrumental in bringing out the Book of Deuteronomy the century following in the southern kingdom.

The "Schools of the Prophets" (which by the way is an un-Biblical expression) have figured prominently in many works dealing with Jewish religious and social life, and have been termed Theological Seminaries, have had no existence ex-

cept in the imagination of modern writers, and the idea of such "Schools" is based on a misunderstanding of the text of the Old Testament. All we are justified in saying is that there were a few centers where men of prophetic spirit formed brotherhoods called "Sons of the Prophets" for the purpose of stimulating devotion through a common life, much as in the monasteries of later times, in which edification not education was the object aimed at. Prof. G. F. Moore has said that the Schools of the Prophets were "schools" in exactly the same sense that schools of fish are "schools."

Though there was nothing like systematic instruction of children, we are given to infer that among the wealthy tutors (from among the priests) were not uncommon. Toward the close of this period a knowledge of reading and writing is assumed, and when the Book of Judges was compiled, it was nothing remarkable for a boy to write. (Judges 8:14.)

II. *From the Captivity to the Founding of Alexandria* (586-332 B. C.).

In 722 Samaria was taken by Sargon, and according to the Biblical account the whole surviving population was transported to Mesopotamia and Media. (2 Kgs. 17:5-6.) In 586 Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem and transported the people. (2 Kgs. 25:1-7.) There is reason to doubt this wholesale transportation and understand by it the removal of the ruling and artisan classes—the aristocracy. This left the lower classes in Palestine, and gave the better class a chance to develop in their new environment. A second winnowing occurred when Cyrus in 538 allowed the exiles to return home. The returning exiles represented the deepest national and religious element of their people.

The Exile was an active literary period, to which belong the work of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. The influence of Persian thought is seen in the development of a monotheism and a demonology.

Sacrifice was impossible in a strange land as Yahveh, their God, was localized in Palestine. (Ps. 137.) The only thing the people could do was to interest themselves in the past, and in the study of the literature they then possessed. Ezekiel 40-48 may be taken as indicating the line of interest. Psalm 137:1 gives the beginning of the synagogue.

The arrival of Ezra at Jerusalem was an epoch making event in the religious and educational history of the Jews. The account of the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah is most complicated, and is a compilation long after the events recorded, but the essential facts that interest us here are easily obtained. Ezra collected the people and read them the Law (the Book of Deuter-

onomy in a much abbreviated form). From that time the Torah was the regulating norm of life. That the change might become permanent, study and instruction in the Law were necessary. This work the synagogue was called upon to perform. Previous to the Exile the Jews were a people with a traditional religion, henceforth they appear as the people of a Book, to read and understand which was the goal of educational ideals.

The synagogue was not a place for worship as much as religious instruction. In the Gospels, *διδάσκειν* is always used with reference to the synagogue service.

We now feel sure that the command of Deuteronomy 6:7-9 was actually carried out for the first time. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." But even then there was nothing like systematic instruction.

The manner in which the great feast of the Passover was made an object lesson is a matter full of pedagogical interest: "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of Yahveh's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." (Ex. 12:26, 27.)

Other lessons of a like character are seen in Leviticus 23:43 and Joshua 4:5-7: "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days . . . that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

"And Joshua said unto them Pass over . . . into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel; that this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask in time to come, saying, what mean ye by these stones? ye shall say unto them, Because the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the Covenant of Yahveh . . . and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever."

A leading feature of this period is the rise of the Scribes, who were an independent organization devoted to the study of the Law. They identified themselves with the popular interests, and ever remained true to the faith even when the priesthood became corrupt. Gradually they supplanted the priests in the hearts of the people. At a very early date they began education of children.

III. *From the Founding of Alexandria to the Fall of Jerusalem* (332 B. C. to 70 A. D.).

The characteristic of this period is popular education, but even here, again, there was no systematic teaching. There is noticeably a reaching out of the Jewish mind after science and Greek culture. With the founding of Alexandria came the influence of Greek thought upon the Jews. Thousands of Jews were settled in Alexandria and given special privileges by the Ptolemies. Here the Septuagint version appeared. The influence of Hellenism gradually increased until the Maccabean struggle, after which it ceased to be dangerous. Greek methods were introduced even into Jerusalem. Ecclesiasticus, written in the height of Hellenistic influence, shows unconscious traces of its influence.

By the time of the author of the Book of Chronicles (c. 300 B. C.), the Scribes were an organized guild.

The Elementary Schools (Beth Hassepher or House of the Book). There is a tradition, quite generally accepted, that Simon ben-Shetach, brother of Queen Alexandra, in 75 B. C., introduced a compulsory attendance of children at the elementary schools. These schools were distinctly religious, the text-book was the Law, the teacher was a synagogue officer and the schoolroom was in the synagogue. A general idea of methods is easily obtained. Instruction was oral and accompanied by a generous use of the rod. The alphabet may have been learned by means of the "Alphabet Psalms," and numbers from some such method as seen in Proverbs 30:11-31; 6; 16-19. Another method may be seen in the Athbash in Jeremiah 51:1, 41. A remarkable parallel to this scheme of education is in the famous "New England Primer."

The Book of Proverbs is especially a pedagogical work embodying the best thought of the times. The frequent mention of the rod is to be noted; to spare it is to spoil the child. The duty of parents to their children, and of the children to their parent is often dwelt upon. A remarkable thing about Proverbs and the "Wisdom" literature, in general, is the emphasis laid upon the objective good that is the reward of "wisdom." Utilitarianism prevails; there is no appeal made to God's revealed will in any way. Viewed from a standpoint of modern pedagogy, the Book of Proverbs has much of value, but the form of the teaching (antithetical), and the negative aspect of virtue are anything but pedagogical.

Education of girls was not planned for in the elementary schools. Mothers instructed the daughters in the practical arts of the housewife (which the modern "female seminary" usually omits from its curriculum). See the acrostic on the ideal

wife—more ideal than real—in Proverbs 31:10-31. But we must not suppose that it was not customary for women to know the Law. The high position of woman among the Jews made it possible for them to learn of the Law, while Luke 1:46-55 reflects the idea that it was not unusual for women to be able to quote Scripture.

The College (Beth Hammidrash or House of Study). This institution existed for the professional training of the Scribes and priests, but of its history we know nothing, but we may feel sure that it developed from a humble beginning. About the time of Christ they were common especially in Jerusalem.

The work of the scribe was threefold:

1. To find what the Law really was. This corresponds to the modern "undergraduate" course of study.

2. To give instruction to others, especially the children. This constituted most of his work.

3. In addition to his work as a teacher, the scribe was often called upon to preside as judge in a justice court. As the Law was the civil as well as the religious code it was necessary for the two offices to be united.

In these higher schools the Halachah or scientific exegesis of the Law was the all important matter of study. Owing to the literalness of the interpretation of the Law, the differences in the codes embodied in the Torah were harmonized by casuistry, and what might have been a stimulating study became a matter of moral degeneration. In addition to this the scribe never made an interpretation of his own but quoted a decision made by some one before him, and hence originality was killed. It may be doubted whether the criticism of the Scribes and Pharisees by Jesus was directed against individuals so much as against the system.

Greek and the sciences are said to have been in the curriculum of these higher schools, but both were so uniformly looked down upon that it may be seriously doubted whether Greek was ever a common study in these schools, and as to the sciences, only enough was studied to enable one to understand the calendar.

Instruction was free, and as a means of sustenance every scribe had a trade. The only fee that could be collected was the scribe's travelling expenses. The feeling of Paul on these matters were largely due to his training in the rabbinical schools, and to the desire to do as much for Christ as he before did for the Law.

In Jerusalem the scribes taught in the temple courts. In the discussion of questions every one had a right to take part. Luke's story of Jesus among the Doctors gives a picture of the custom of the times.

The most noted of the schools were those of Hillel and Sham-mai. The grandson of Hillel, Gamaliel I, was the most noted teacher of his day, and it was a matter of pleasant memory to Paul that he had sat at the feet of the illustrious teacher.

From Paul's reference in Acts 22:3 we learn that it was customary for the pupils to sit before their teacher who probably occupied a raised seat, but Luke 2:46 gives us to infer that it was not always the case.

From the expression—"Scribes of the Pharisees," we infer that the Sadducees had scribes as well as the Pharisees.

The Gospels assume, from the frequent mention of the scribes, that the elementary schools were common, and their great influence and prominence may be seen. (Mat. 23:6, 7; Mk. 12:38, 39; Lk. 11:43; 20:46.) The title "Rabbi" was not in use until after the time of Jesus.

An interesting commentary on the education of the time is that of Jesus. He never attended one of the rabbinical schools (Mk. 6:2, 3), and this allows us to see what advantages the common people had. His knowledge of the Scriptures was very remarkable and unchallenged. He could read Hebrew, and was often called upon to officiate in the synagoge. (Lk. 4:16; Mk. 1:21, etc.) This ability was not common as the popular tongue was Aramaic. As a child the earliest thing learned was the "Shema" or Jewish confession of faith.

Even as late as 57 A. D. Greek was not commonly spoken, for to the surprise of the centurion Paul was able to speak Greek to the Hellenistic Jews, though he actually spoke to them in Aramaic. (Acts 21:37-40.) Josephus was used by Titus in 70 A. D. as interpreter, so Latin as well as Greek was not commonly known among the Jews at that time. From Paul's knowledge of Greek and from some other sources we are led to infer that it was taught in a few of the rabbinical colleges, but even there with some disfavor. The knowledge of Greek literature that Paul shows is of a popular nature and not the result of first-hand study.

IV. *From the Fall of Jerusalem to the Final Dispersion of the Jews (70 to 135 A. D.).*

The great war with Rome began in the year 66, and though Titus took Jerusalem in 70, after a long siege, the war continued until 73 when Massada fell. Peace came then, but it was the peace of the grave. Jews were forbidden to come to Jerusalem on pain of death, and the temple tax was turned to support the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. The one gathering point which remained for the Jews was the Law. About this they gathered with the firm faith that it would come again to have authority. Soon after this the Jewish temple

at Alexandria was closed and Jamnia became the chief seat of literary activity. Here the study of the Law was taken up with a zeal before unequalled. The temple ritual was carefully taught that when deliverance should come there might be those who could perform the sacred rites in proper form.

Messianic hope grew stronger, and a rebellion occurred in 115-117 under Hadrian, and in 132-135 a more violent outbreak was led by Bar Cochba, "Son of the Star," a name taken from the supposed fulfillment of Numbers 24:17. The rebellion was put down with great severity. Hundreds of thousands were put to death, and multitudes sold into slavery. Every trace of Hellenistic Judaism was destroyed by this war, and Pharasaic Judaism became supreme in the thought of the people.

One product of the school of Jamnia, and to which Christianity is forever indebted, is the Massoretic Hebrew text of the Scriptures. Renewed study of the Law brought out the need of an accurate Hebrew text. Under Rabbi Akiba a single consonant text was chosen as the archetype from which all copies thereafter were to be made, and all disagreeing manuscripts were destroyed. That violent hands were laid hold of the text a comparison of the Hebrew and Septuagint will show. The early Christian apologists accused the Rabbis of suppressing texts that gave Christianity a ground for argument. When once the Hebrew text was settled it was faithfully transmitted even to misspelled words.

Of the education of this last period we get a view from the Talmud which gives us the following interesting facts: a school could not contain over twenty-five pupils for each teacher; over twenty-five pupils there must be an assistant; and over forty pupils there must be two teachers.

The following course of study is outlined:

1. From six to ten years, the Pentateuch or Law.
2. From ten to fifteen years, The Mishna or paraphrase of the Law.
3. From fifteen to eighteen years, the Gemara or Commentary on the Mishna.

In the primary schools study was carried on by audible repetition so the school was a babel of voices. Repetition was the keynote of education—so much so that the verb *shānāh*, "to repeat" came to mean "to learn" and "to teach."

Through all the succeeding centuries Jewish education has not departed materially from the Talmudic system.

Hastily reviewing the periods passed over, they may be characterized as follows:

1. The *first period* is that of *home training* among a people hardly developed into a national life.

2. The *second period* is that of the *synagogue*. Here the unity of national life is recognized and an effort made to hold it.

3. The *third period* is that of *compulsory education*. The unity of national life is recognized as certain when each individual has been trained to contribute his share to that life.

4. The *fourth period* is that of *Judaism*, in which the ideals of education are realized and completed, and all sects are merged into one common life. This is the end toward which the effort of the earlier periods had been slowly evolving under the influence of environment.

Criticism of Jewish Education.

As a pedagogical work the Jewish Scriptures are unsurpassed except by the New Testament. The literature of other peoples contains many excellent chapters on moral subjects, but treat them in an abstract way. This is true of the Koran, but in the Old Testament the teaching is by means of concrete examples of virtue and heroism. True, the standard of morality is not always the highest and the hero is sometimes commended for things which in our days would send him to jail, but all must be read in the light of the times in which the story was written, and not in that of our advanced conception of things. And after all a man should be judged not by *what* he has done so much as by the *motive* of his actions. The need of the world is not for theories of morality so much as for efforts to live morality even be it on ever so low a plane.

The human heart has ever gone out to those who have found and lived the ideal life, and to the realization of this in its characters the value of the Old Testament is due.

No pedagogical precept is more firmly established than that one learns to make a thing much easier by following a pattern, or learns to do something by seeing that some one has done it before him. Whether we look for physical courage or moral character we find it to perfection in the Sacred Books of the Old Testament.

Jewish education had for its ideal the building of character and the fitting of the individual for the responsibilities of citizenship. Thus it realized the aim of all true educational effort. It strove to give to all alike the elements of knowledge and promised preferment to the scholar, whatever his origin.

There is a dark side, however, and which caused the emasculation of the Jewish mind. Education was unsystematic, narrow and selfish. Even though the study was graded (as above shown), it was not fitted to the child mind but the child mind to it. The confinement to their Sacred Literature was narrowing to the intellect. Much it contained was not true, in a strict sense, while many fields of profitable study were inade-

quately treated or absolutely ignored. The ignoring of the sciences and thought of other peoples cannot but eventually be a great misfortune to any nation. This narrowness developed into the idea that they were God's especially chosen people, for whom was the Law, while the Gentiles were not worthy of notice. Never in Jewish history has there been an effort to uplift the less fortunate people about them. Granting all this the fact no less remains that through Judaism has come the fundamental principles of modern education.

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