

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF

TALMUD TORAH

IN JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE AS

REFLECTED IN R. ISRAEL IBN

AL-NAKAWA'S MENORAT HA-MAOR

BY

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To my dear parents  
JOSEPH and BETTY ANN  
whose inspiration has led me  
into the realms of  
Talmud Torah  
these pages are gratefully dedicated.

"Turn it and turn it over again, for everything  
is in it; and contemplate it, and wax grey  
and old over it; and stir not from it; for  
you can have no better rule than this."

Aboth 5.25

"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge  
of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Isaiah 11.9

תלמוד תורה כגון כלי,

Mishnah, Peah 1.1

## PREFACE

Our study of the concept of Talmud Torah, as the title indicates, was primarily based upon R. Israel Ibn Al-Nakawa's treatment of this important Jewish ideal in his Menorat Ha-Maor, beautifully edited by Dr. H.G. Enelow [Vol. III.], covering some one hundred and seventy pages of Hebrew text.

In our discussion of the subject, however, we did not completely confine ourselves to the material as set forth by Al-Nakawa, but sought, rather, to supplement his collation by utilizing numerous other sources. Conscious of the limitations inherent in such a study as this, we make no claim to comprehensiveness; certainly, we by no means exhausted the infinite possibilities of our subject. However, we did endeavor, circumscribed though we were by time and space, to elaborate upon certain vital aspects of the subject which Al-Nakawa either disregards or dismisses in a very cursory fashion.

Strangely enough, he fails to discuss curriculum, as such, in any wise. Likewise, his treatment of pedagogic devices and classroom procedures is most minimal. The education of women he dismisses with a few terse sentences. As we might expect, an evaluation of the differences which motivated Greek, Roman, Hebrew, and modern pedagogic philosophies and principles was not within our



author's purview.

We should like to express our deepest appreciation to Professor Samuel S. Cohon of the Hebrew Union College, revered by the writer and all his students as one reflecting the true spirit of the Talmid Hakam of old, for his sage counsel so generously given, and whose numerous suggestions we have sought to incorporate in this work. We are also indebted to Dr. Emanuel Gamoran, himself an authority on Talmud Torah, for his invaluable bibliographical assistance. The staff of the Hebrew Union College Library has been most kind in placing the library facilities at our disposal.

We must confess the deep feelings of exhilaration which we experienced, a sense of lifting a curtain from the past's misty haze, as, working in 1942, comfortable in a well-lighted study, working with type-writer and fountain pen, and at our command all the neatly-catalogued volumes of, perhaps, the finest collection of Judaica in America -- an America which, in Al-Nakawa's day, lay uncharted and undreamed of -- we busied ourself with a fourteenth century tome.

In our mind's eye we sometimes conjured up pictures of the past -- glimpses of a bearded sage with quill in hand, whose parchment oft-revealed a strange admixture of candle-wax and tears; a saintly scholar whose library, the

sânctuary of Israel's noblest dreams, was printed indel-  
ibly upon his mind.

Such thoughts made us deeply humble, and we trust  
that our saintly Spanish sage will forgive the halting  
student who now, reverently, disinters his words.

כך דברך עזרנו.

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J.F.F.

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CHAPTER ONE

AL-NAKAWA -- THE MAN AND HIS WORK

"His work is great in quantity and quality,  
and there is blessing in it."

--Solomon Buber

## CHAPTER ONE

### AL-NAKAWA -- THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Of the life of R. Israel Ibn Al-Nakawa [ישראל בן נקוא], the author of the Menorat Ha-Maor we, unfortunately, know but very little. He lived, he produced a lasting work, he died a martyr to his faith. For what little information concerning him we do have, we are eternally indebted to the late Dr. Hyman G. Enelow, who, as a young rabbi reading R. Elijah Di Vidas' Reshit Hokhma ["The Beginning of Wisdom"], was struck with the resemblance between some parts of Al-Nakawa, mentioned by Di Vidas, and parallel passages in the well known work of Aboab [Menorat Ha-Maor].

While visiting the Bodleian Library at Oxford, England, Enelow found access to the only remaining manuscript of Al-Nakawa's work, an examination of which convinced him that Al-Nakawa had provided the source of Aboab, as well as of other writers. With this realization, Enelow set about the editing and publication of Al-Nakawa's work, truly a labor of love, a specimen of the contents of which first appeared in the Hebrew Union College Annual of 1927. [1]  
The entire work, edited from the manuscript of six hundred and sixty-six pages, was later published in four volumes, [2]  
implemented with copious notes.

Although we have very little information about Al-Nakawa himself, we can gain some insight into the author's motives in creating his Menorat Ha-Maor ["The Lamp of Illumination"] by glancing at the conditions of the Jews of Spain during the second half of the fourteenth century. During the reign of Alfonso XI [1325-1350], Spanish Jewry enjoyed great privilege and prosperity. Don Pedro, his successor, accorded them such favor that his foes often charged him with being of Jewish descent, and his mistress, Maria De Padilla, was suspected of being a Jewess.

But the wheel of fortune quickly turned, and all the position and influence which the Jews had wielded was quickly dissipated with the defeat of Don Pedro in 1369, slain and succeeded by his illegitimate half-brother, Enrique de Trastamara. The wake of this fratricidal conflict, in which the Jews had loyally supported their patron, Don Pedro, brought gloom and misery and darkness in the place of their former garandeur. A period of tragic suffering now ensued which was to culminate in the fearful massacre of 1391. Thousands of Jewish men and women were either killed or baptized. Synagogues by the score were razed to the ground, or converted to churches; Jewish schools were demolished and their libraries burned. As might be expected, spiritual and intellectual disintegration was the inevitable concomitant of such material disabilities. In this connection,

the historian, Graetz, comments: "Disorganization proceeded with great strides. Indifference to scientific work resulted in so general an ignorance that what formerly every tyro was familiar with, now passes for transcendant wisdom". [3] The glory of Israel in Spain had become but a "melancholy memory"!

Yet despite this catastrophic upheaval, the spirit of Israel was not completely crushed, did not vanish altogether. A few great souls there were who recognized the pressing needs of their distraught age, and who undertook to preserve the traditions of Israel even among the ruins. Such intrepid spirits were R. Menahem b. Zerah with his Sedah La-Derek; Samuel Ibn Zarza with his Mekor Hayyim; R. Nissim b. Reuben Gerundi who composed his Talmudic annotations at this time; R. Isaac b. Sheshet Barfat, who gained distinction as an authority on rabbinic law, and R. Hasdai Crescas who gained great prominence as a remarkable philosophic writer. To these great names we may well add that of R. Israel Ibn Al-Nakawa, who, amid the darkness which encompassed his unfortunate co-religionists, "felt there was a particular need for the diffusion and perpetuation of the light of Israel's religion-- the Torah". [4]

The family of Al-Nakawa was very prominent in the annals of Spanish Jewry, the first mention of whom occurs



late in the twelfth century. Family epitaphs which have been preserved reveal their piety, charity, devotion to their people, and their support of scholarship. In Hebrew, the ~~the~~ name occurs as  $\text{נחמיה}$ ,  $\text{נחמיה}$ , and some believe is the same when found  $\text{נחמיה}$  or  $\text{נחמיה}$ . The name appears in modern works as Alnaqua, Alnequa, Aluncawi, and Ankoa. Enelow adopted the spelling of Al-Nakawa, which he believes most closely conforms to the Hebrew. Having come originally from the Iberian peninsula, the family later spread to Northern Africa and Turkey, where they intermarried with very prominent families and became leaders in their respective communities. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries members of the family are outstanding as scholars and philanthropists in Turkey. Their genealogical tree, prepared by Zunz, may be found in the Jewish Encyclopedia.<sup>[5]</sup>

Israel Ibn Al-Nakawa lived in Toledo and died there at the stake, together with R. Jehuda b. Asher, during the massacres of the summer of 1391. His son, R. Ephraim, fled to Algeria in that calamitous year, where he founded the Jewish community at Tlemcen. He soon gained a remarkable reputation in Northern Africa as a physician, scholar, and wonder worker. Many legends still abound about his fantastic exploits.<sup>[6]</sup> Strangely enough for a Jewish author, Ephraim at no time mentions the name of his illustrious

father in his Shaar Kevod Adonoy, dedicated to his own son,  
[7]  
Israel.

Al-Nakwa's Menorat Ha-Maor cannot in any sense be considered an isolated literary effort, but rather a link in the great chain of ethical literature which was produced throughout Europe between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. There were a number of reasons for the great production of such works. [8] First, the Talmud, which was regarded as the authority in Jewish life and the great source of information, was often inaccessible. Engaged in building up new communities, the people had very little time to become acquainted with that storehouse of Jewish information and inspiration. True, there were a few scholars who kept alive the Talmudic tradition, but they did not attract the masses.

Secondly, the lack of a systematic representation of the ethical material in the Talmud was seriously felt, and authors of ethical works sought to remedy this deficiency.

Thirdly, the tragedies which the Jews now began to experience throughout Europe, created the crying need for a strengthening of their faith and morale. Authors now began to plead for adhesion to the spiritual teachings of Judaism as a means of survival in this hour of darkness.

Fourthly, Jewish writers were stimulated as a result of their contacts with non-Jewish authors and their ethical works, many of which were translated into Hebrew.

All these factors, and no doubt there were others, stimulated a great flow of ethical literature; some in prose, others in poetry; some dealing with Biblical themes, others expounding the Talmud; some were letters bemoaning the moral conditions of the day; others were ethical testaments bequeathed to children. But all reflected a unanimity of purpose with regard to the necessity of retaining and upholding the majestic ethical ideals of the Jewish people.

In composing his own Menorat Ha-Maor in the latter part of the fourteenth century, Al-Nakawa was not only influenced by such works as Hobot Ha-Lebabot, Sefer Hasidim, Sefer Ha-Yashar, Orhot Hayyim, and Sefer Ha-Middot, all of which had become widely known and imitated, but also by the strong literary tradition of ethical idealism which had become associated with his native city of Toledo. It was there, for example, that Ibn Daud had composed his Emunah Ramah, Gerondi had produced his Sha'are Teshubah, and Menahem Ibn Zerah his Sedah La-Derek. It was at Toledo that many ethical testaments had been written and had achieved wide-spread popularity. Here, too, R. Asher b. Yehiel had taught, seeking to keep alive the ethical tradition of Jewish literature.

Yet, despite the inspired work of his predecessors and contemporaries, and despite the ethical traditions that

characterized Toledo, there was still a demand for a new presentation of the material. Copies of the older books were difficult to obtain because of the labor of copying them, and the fact that Jewish books by the hundreds were being thrown to the flames by Israel's fanatical enemies.

Recognizing the spiritual disintegration of his people, their pride and ostentation, the envy and unscrupulous rivalry of the wealthy, Al-Nakawa determined to offer them the moral fortification that was so sorely needed. Convinced as he was that a wholesome moral life was the chief aspiration of Judaism, he devoted the major part of his Menorat Ha-Maor to an emphasis of the ethical phases of life -- his topics, incidentally, anticipating those discussed by Kant in his Lectures on Ethics, some four  
[9]  
hundred years later.

In his introduction, after a poetic praise of the Torah, Al-Nakawa tells us that after a long period, during which he carried in his mind the plan to compose his book, the actual incentive came as the result of a vision in which the lighted menorah appeared, thus suggesting the title of his Menorat Ha-Maor, and he was exhorted to undertake the task. In beautiful rhythmic prose, the author tells us of the circumstances which impelled him to assume the book's composition: the dearth of scholarship, the growing indifference on the part of the people toward study,

and the desirability of a systematic representation of Jewish lore.

That A-Nakawa was not alone a man of deep piety, but also ideally equipped as a student to undertake this great work to enlighten the minds and stimulate the religious impulse of his readers, is revealed in the vast body of Jewish literature which he utilizes so adroitly as source material. These sources he enumerates in his Introduction: The Bible, Mishnah, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmud, Tosefta, Mekilta, Siphra, Siphre, Pesikta, Pirke R. Eliezer, Halokot Gedolot, Sefer Hekalot, Midrash Hashkem, Midrash Tanhuma, Midrash Hazit, Midrash Yelammedenu, Midrash R. Nehunyah b. Ha-Kanah, Responsa of the Gaonim and other Responsa, Hupat Eliyahu Rabbah and Zutta, Midrash Rabbah, Pirke R. Meir, the works of Maimonides and Nachmonides, the Turim of R. Jacob b. Yehiel, and the Siddurim of R. Saadia and R. Amram.

In addition to these sources, mentioned by the author in his Introduction, he has occasion throughout his Menorat Ha-Maor to refer to the following materials, for which scholars are greatly in his debt, since many of these sources can no longer be found, and others are quite rare. Among these are the Sha'are Teshubah and the Hayye Olam of R. Jonah Gerondi, the Sefer Mitzwot Godol by R. Moses of Coucy, the Hilkot Teshubah by R. Eleazar of Worms, the

Emunot we-Deot of R. Saadia Gaon, R. Bahya Ibn Pekudah's Habot Ha-Lebahot, the Orhot Saddikim, Sefer Ha-Yashar, and the Sefer Ha-Zohar or Midrash Yehi 'Or [a Hebrew version of the Aramaic Zohar, of which Enelow maintains Al-Nakawa was the author],<sup>[10]</sup> and the works of R. Isaac Al-Fasi, R. Asher b. Yehiel, R. Abraham b. David, and R. Israel Ibn Israel. With reference to these sources, Enelow comments: "At a time when the burning of Jewish books was adopted by fanatical orators as one means of turning Jews into Christians -- to say nothing of those actually devoured in the days of siege and famine, and those hidden in wells and perhaps never recovered -- it was not the least of Al-Nakawa's merits that he included in his work numerous excerpts from older authors, thus assisting not only his own contemporaries,<sup>[11]</sup> but also future students".

Al-Nakawa does not often project anything of his own personality into his Menorat Ha-Maor, and very little of its content is original. The author's contribution lies in his skillful selection and combination of the various authoritative materials he utilizes, managing to effect thereby a vigorous argument for the perpetuation of the various phases of the religious life he espouses. Occasionally one may discern something of a personal note reflecting the author's own troubled times.

The Menorat Ha-Maor is divided into twenty chapters.

each of which is introduced by a verse containing an acrostic of the author's name. The chapters which include every phase of the practical religious life, both ethical and ritual, combining persuasiveness with authority in their presentation, appear in the following order: Charity, Prayer, Repentance, Humility, Study, The Commandments and their fulfillment, Acts of Mercy, The Observance of the Sabbath and Holy-Days, the Honoring of Parents, Marriage, The Education of Children, Upright Conduct in Business, The Proper Administration of Justice, Contentment, Equanimity, Avoidance of Flattery and Deception, Love of Comrades and their Considerate Treatment, Cleanness of Speech, Keeping a Friend's Secret, and Good Manners.

[12]

Although Al-Nakawa's work was never printed and only one complete manuscript has survived to the present day, his Mengwat Ha-Maor exercised a considerable influence and was extensively imitated, notably in the sixteenth century. R. Abraham Zacuto quotes a passage from it in Sefer Yuhasin. R. Elijah Di Vidas in his Reshit Hokhma borrowed from Al-Nakawa quite liberally, transcribing several whole chapters, but occasionally overlooked naming his source. R. Elijah Azkari makes reference to it in his Sefer Haredim. [13]

R. Judah Ibn Kalaaz, living in the sixteenth century in Northern Africa, published the Sefer Ha-Musar, which is nothing but a direct extract from Al-Nakawa's work, the only

originality resulting from a re-arrangement in the order of the chapters, and a Kabbalistic supplement added to each chapter by his grandson. It is quite possible, Enelow suggests, that no conscious plagiarism was intended here but that the elder Kalaaz simply copied the extracts from Al-Nakawa for his own personal use, and that his grandson, R. Moses b. Eleazar Ibn Kalaaz, finding the manuscript and probably being unaware of its true origin, published it as the work of R. Judah.

Still another channel through which the ethical influence of Al-Nakawa's work spread throughout the Jewish world was the publication of the Yiddish book Leb Tob, by R. Isaac b. Elyakim in 1620. It has recently been disclosed that the major portion of this highly popular ethical work, recommended by eminent rabbis for its fervor and "scholarship", is nothing more than a translation of Sefer Ha-Musar, the authorship of which we have considered above.

However, the greatest use, by far, of Al-Nakawa's work was by a man who gave the world another Menorat Ha-Maor, attributed erroneously to R. Isaac Aboab. By a strange twist of fate, the original work by Al-Nakawa has been all but forgotten [had it not been for Enelow's endeavors to right this literary injustice], while Aboab's work, an adaptation and imitation of Al-Nakawa, has not only enjoyed a remarkable success as one of the most popular ethical works



in Jewish literature, but, ironically enough, has been used by modern scholars as a source for correct versions of ancient Hebrew texts. Such credit, both for its contents and older quotations, justifiably belongs to Al-Nakawa.

Enelow goes to great lengths in proving the originality of Al-Nakawa's work, and his well-documented arguments on the latter's behalf lend great credence to his contention. First, every subject discussed in the printed Menorat Ha-Maor is covered by Al-Nakawa, but the arrangement of the material by the latter is more logical.

Second, the more learned and scholarly Al Nakawa [14] usually names his sources, whereas the "Pseudo-Aboab" omits them.

Third, Al-Nakawa's work, in addition to his purely ethical teachings includes many Halachic provisions and an arrangement of ritual observances, which Aboab's work omits with the feeble protest "this is not the place for them".

Unfortunately, the limitations of our study do not permit a detailed discussion of Enelow's claims for Al-Nakawa's originality. For those who wish to probe more deeply into this interesting controversy, we are confident that Enelow's explanations will prove to be completely convincing. [15]

Al-Nakawa owed much to his predecessors, a debt

which he readily acknowledged. It is regrettable that those who utilized his work were so ingracious as to ignore their indebtedness to him. Perhaps his great work may someday gain wider recognition, brought to the light once again as it has been under the aegis of an appreciative modern scholar. At any rate, Enelow's hope that Al-Nakawa's work might someday be published has been realized. Perhaps the Menorat Ha-Maor of this saintly author who died as a martyr to his faith, may again serve as a "lamp of illumination" to those who struggle in darkness.

CHAPTER TWO

TALMUD TORAH --- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

## CHAPTER TWO

The Hebrew concept of דריש דין [The Study of the Law, or of Divine Revelation] is most complex, and more than a little difficult for the modern mind to comprehend. For it is much more than mere "Jewish Education", as it is so frequently rendered. It is more than mere "study". It is not only a deep integration into religious life and lore, for it also embraces secular knowledge within its vast scope.

Education has always been both the pride and cherished ideal of the Jewish people. In the words of Simon the Just, Torah is the first of the three pillars upon which the world is established. Torah became the rule, the guide, the dynamic of Jewish religious life. "Touching and illuminating every phase of life, the Torah has welded religion and life into an indissoluble union." [1] Indeed, Judaism is the religion of the Torah -- a religion whose very matrix is knowledge and understanding. Hence, Talmud Torah was a religious duty to the Jew, the fulfillment of which is requited in this world, but whose full reward is reserved for man in the here-after; it was a religious duty like that of honoring father and mother, benevolence, and making peace between a man and his fellow, but the study [2] of Torah, we are taught, is equal to all of these.

Jewish education, unlike the educational motivations of other peoples, is not based upon the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of culture, per se, but rather upon conduct! It was neither extraneous to life, nor an instrument which, having prepared for life, could later be abandoned when its value was exhausted. Rather, Talmud Torah was synonymous with life -- giving life direction and purpose. Although the term תורה תמידי, literally considered, must be translated "the study of the Torah", it would be grossly incorrect to equate "Torah" here with its customary, but often improper, rendition -- "Law". Some scholars have even gone so far as to state that Torah should never be translated "Law", and that it [3] is often desirable not to translate it at all.

The term "Torah" as used here, and throughout our treatment of this subject, does not mean merely "the Law", but implies the whole body of laws and traditions of Israel. [4] Moore has pointed out that the study of revelation does not end with the study of Scripture; it included all the branches of learning which dealt with the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the application of their teachings to life -- exegesis, legal rules, and religious and moral lessons. The Rabbis taught that "one who loves the Torah will not be satisfied with Scriptures alone but will go [5] on to Mishnah and Talmud."

The Talmud and the Midrash, then, represent the Torah as it was interpreted, its contents and teachings made explicit rather than implicit. Hence, Talmud Torah means the study of revelation made through all of Judaism's historic literary documents through which the Divine Thought and Teaching was imparted and disclosed. Next to prayer, and closely approximating it, Talmud Torah was the medium of closest approach to the Holy One. To the truly pious, to study Torah was to "think God's thoughts after Him." Torah, thus, was of universal application, and Talmud Torah, rather than being confined to the study of one book, or one code of laws, was a process, as endless, as intricate, and as subtle as life itself; a process, if you will, which completely integrated life! As Herford so beautifully states: "To live for the Torah, by the Torah and with the Torah was the ideal.....; that was what the Jew must strive for, work for... must give the devotion of his whole life -- a devotion without qualification or reserve, a whole-hearted allegiance to the will of God set forth in the Torah."

[6]

[7]

Moore has suggested that the study of Torah, to the Hebraic mind, was, like prayer, considered worship, and like it called abodah. Similar in thought is Cohon's statement that "Torah is the first of the three pillars upon which the Jewish world rests. The other two, namely, worship and philanthropy, derive their inspiration and

[8]  
vitality from Torah." After the destruction of the Temple, study of Torah -- the totality of spiritual culture-- was presented by the Rabbis as a substitute for the sacrifices at the altar. Study became a part of every-day living, and the truly pious devoted some time to it both morning and evening. Those who hastened from their prayers to the

עֲרֵבָה נֶאֱמָר [House of Study], were deemed especially praiseworthy and deserving that the Shechinah [Divine Presence] rest upon them. Every Synagogue was not only a place of worship but a place of study. Indeed, study was a part of worship. Enelow points out that "some of the most familiar and most cherished Jewish prayers -- such as the Kaddish -- originated in connection with study, having [9] been recited by scholars before or after their lectures."

We recall, in this connection, the famous prayer attributed to R. Samuel which has become an integral part of our liturgy. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hath sanctified us by Thy commandments, and [10] commanded us to occupy ourselves with the words of the law."

[11]  
Enelow points out in one of his monographs that one of the noteworthy developments in recent years in the field of education, is the growing recognition of the necessity of adult education. There was a time, not so very long ago, when the tasks of education were almost exclusively identified with the child. Schools were for the edification of the young, and a parent was considered to have

discharged his responsibility, if he provided for his child's education. However, recent trends have indicated that a change in our thinking has taken place. The realization has now come that education is also man's and woman's business, and is not to be completely relegated to the child and the youth. For it encompasses the whole of life, and, indeed, is a vital part of life -- as the "new" approach insists.

With Judaism, this "new approach" of the modern pedagogue is not new at all; it has existed from the very beginning. Jewish history reveals that the adult was the principal object of educational endeavor. This idea is expressed in the words of Moses, our great teacher, "Assemble the people, the men and women and the little ones, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God" [Deut. 31.12]. Thus we see that education began with the adults, and, after them, came the children. It might also be observed that the stranger was also included in this "call to study", a most significant contrast with Roman educational opportunities, wherein only the free-man, possessing full rights of citizenship, was entitled to enjoy the advantages of a liberal education. That the Jew well obeyed this injunction "to



learn and observe to do all the words of this law" is attested by his very survival today, despite the vicissitudes of his stormy journey down the long corridors of time.

It should be apparent by this time that this concept of Talmud Torah with which we are dealing, and which for simplicity's sake we may call "education", is completely unique when compared with the educational programs of other peoples. Influenced by the well-known educational philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, historians and educators have frequently failed to comprehend its true significance. Jewish education is generally considered as "education with Jewish content". Josephus, the eminent Jewish historian, writing in the first century of the Common Era, reveals a true understanding of Jewish educations, as distinguished from other systems, when he writes:

"Indeed, the greatest part of mankind are so far from living according to their own laws, that they hardly know them; but when they have sinned, they learn from others that they have transgressed the law.

Our principal care of all is this: to educate our children well; and to think it to be the most necessary business of our whole life to observe the laws that have been given us, and to keep those rules of piety that have been delivered down to us." [12]

The superiority of study over all else springs from the the fact that the knowledge of God's precepts must pre-cede their performance! For that reason nothing must be permitted to interrupt it. Most important was the emphasis

laid upon the fact that Talmud Torah was never an end in itself; the knowledge gained as a result of study furnished one with the equipment which aided him to live aright.

Josephus recognized this, too, for he says:

"Our legislator [Moses] carefully joined the two methods of instruction together; for he neither left the practical exercises to go on without verbal instruction; nor did he permit the hearing of the law to proceed without the exercises for practice." [14]

During the Hadrianic persecutions, when edicts were issued forbidding the Jews to observe their religious ordinances or to study the Torah, a Rabbinical conference was held at Lydda, at which one of the questions under debate was the relative importance of study or practice. R. Tarphon maintained that practice was greater, while R. Akiba held fast to the conviction that study was more important. The majority of the assembled Rabbis agreed with R. Akiba, declaring that study is more important, inasmuch as it leads to practice. [15]

In this same connection Al-Nakawa tells us that a man should study Torah and proper conduct in order that he may be beloved by God and respected by men. For his knowledge and his conduct sanctify God and glorify the Torah. When one who studies Torah conducts his business ethically and is pleasant in social relationships, he brings credit not only to his parents and teachers who instructed him, but to the very Torah itself. Of such a man it may be said, "Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified"

[Isa.49.3]. But if one studies Torah and does not exemplify its teachings, he brings discredit upon the Torah. R. Jose said: "Whoever honors the Torah will himself be honored by mankind, but whoever dishonors the Torah, will himself be dishonored by mankind." [16] It is indeed significant that the Hebrew conception of Talmud Torah, with its emphasis upon the whole of life -- upon learning in order to do; in fact, upon learning by doing, anticipated by some fifteen hundred years the most modern "progressive" pedagogic principles. History certainly moves in strange cycles!

The Rabbis never tired of expatiating upon the duty of devoting oneself to the study of Torah, and the following passages are but a few of the myriad illustrations which could be cited.

"Greater is study than the rebuilding of the Temple", [17] one teacher exhorted. Another taught: "A person should not withhold himself from the House of Study and from the words of Torah", even at the hour of his death." [18] R. Joshua b.

Levi said that it is permissible to sell a Synagogue in order to acquire a school. [19] "The study of Torah is more meritorious than saving a life, building a sanctuary, and honoring parents." [20] The Rabbinic opinion maintains that

"a bastard scholar ranks higher than an ignorant high priest." [21]

In later times, Maimonides declared: "Every man of Israel is obliged to study Torah, be he poor or rich, well or afflicted, young or very old and feeble; even a poor man living on charity and going about seeking alms, or one who has the care of a wife and children, must set aside periods, day and night, for the study of the Torah. And thus he must do until the day of his death. For, whenever he fails to devote himself to study he is sure to forget." [22]

The study of Torah was regarded as so important that the Rabbis maintained that even dire poverty was no excuse for its neglect. Even the revered Hillel worked as a wood-cutter in order to earn his tuition fees to the academy of Shemaiah and Abtalion. On the other hand, great wealth was not accepted as an excuse for the neglect of Torah. [23] Unlike the Greeks and Romans, the Jews did not entrust the education of their children to slaves. Slaves were never taught Torah and were never used as teachers. [24]

[25]

Drazin suggests that there were four basic ideals that molded and directed the practice of Talmud Torah during the periods of the Second Commonwealth and the Tannaim.

#### I. The Nationalistic Ideal

During the Babylonian Captivity, the Jewish people observed the great wealth and power which was their conqueror's, only to witness within another generation a world

upheaval which was to enthrone a new dynasty, Persia. Permitted to return to their native land by the benevolent Cyrus, the people, aware now of the ephemeral nature of a nation's physical strength, paid new attention to the Prophetic word: "Not by might, and not by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" [Zech.4.6]. These ringing words were now interpreted to mean that Jewish nationhood must henceforth rest on spiritual foundations. Traditional customs and laws were revived and re-emphasized; there came now, too, an awakened concern with the necessity for education. "The nationalistic ideal of the Second Commonwealth aimed to make religious education the goal of Jewish nationality", Drazin states. The expression of this ideal is to be found in the Deuteronomic injunction: "for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that, when they hear all these statutes, they shall say 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people' [Deut.4.6].

## II. The Religious Motive

The ideal of religious piety, which transcends all other ideals because of the very nature and content of Jewish education, when analyzed is found to have a dual aspect: a complete knowledge of the Torah and a strict observance of it in practice. Judaism invested education with sacredness. To observe all the laws of his faith,

the Jew had to be a highly educated person; "an empty-headed man cannot be a sin-fearing man, nor can an ignorant person be pious" [Aboth 2.5]. Talmud Torah was so constituted as to obviate the modern educational problem of how to relate attitudes to behavior and thought to action. Torah directed all conduct; every action must be performed in conformity with the law. In this regard, Josephus comments:

"For there are two ways of coming at any sort of learning, and a moral conduct of life; the one is by instruction in words, the other by practical exercises. Now other lawgivers have separated these two ways in their opinions, and choosing one of those ways of instruction, or that which best pleased every one of them, neglected the other..... But our legislator [Moses] carefully joined these two methods of instruction together....beginning immediately from the earliest infancy.... he left nothing of the very smallest consequence to be done at the pleasure and disposal of the person himself...." [26]

Al-Nakawa teaches that "one should strive to study Torah and pay no heed to wealth, but should sacrifice all his worldly possessions in order to study. He should sell the dross -- for this is money, and acquire the praiseworthy -- for this is *דִּיּוּרָה תְּרַבָּה*; 'she is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her' [Pr.3.15]. One who does so will

be happy, and happy will be his portion, for he is selling  
temporal life [money], and acquiring eternal life [ <sup>27</sup> ]  
[27] <sup>27</sup> ]."

### III. Universalization of Education

The third ideal -- that of the universalization of Jewish education -- is expressed in the Prophetic utterance: "and all they children shall be taught of the Lord" [Isa.54.13]. By the end of the Second Commonwealth, the leaders in Israel did not want the full knowledge of Torah to be confined to the select few, like the priests or the prophets, as had been the case in earlier periods. Advanced studies in the Torah, with all the benefits which accrue from such study, were henceforth not to be the special privilege of any class, but all men were to be equal in the acquisition of the "crown of Torah". As Moore states, "Learning is a pure democracy, [28] in which the private person is on an equality with a king."

### IV. Torah and the Good Life

In whatever activity one engaged, be it work, thought, or talk, he had to ever be conscious of God's presence, and be guided by His will. This was the fundamental rule of Jewish ethics. The Rabbis taught that man should imagine the whole world to be hanging in balance, with the merits of the people over-compensating for their transgressions. "Happy is the man that causes the good deeds of the whole

world to over-balance its sins, and woe to the man who does  
the contrary." [29] All of man's activities had to be pleasing  
in the sight of the Almighty, before whom nothing is con-  
cealed. [30] Since "all Jews are sureties for one another", any  
error or default in conduct by an individual, brought dis-  
credit upon the entire group. If a transgression was un-  
wittingly committed, a person must do penance, and bring a  
sacrifice to the Temple at Jerusalem. When the Temple was  
destroyed, however, and all sacrifices ceased, prayer and  
study became the surrogates for sacrifice.

The obligatory religious duties which were incum-  
bent upon every Jew were also educational in nature, since  
"an ignorant Jew could not be pious." Prayers were recited  
morning, afternoon, and evening. Numerous benedictions  
expressing gratitude to the Creator for His daily blessings  
had to be memorized and recited. Blessings were offered in  
connection with the "Tefillin" and "Tallit in the recita-  
tion of the daily prayers. Sections from the Pentateuch  
were read at the services four times weekly, twice on the  
Sabbath, and once every Monday and Thursday mornings. [31]  
One must be familiar with all the minutiae of Sabbath and  
festival observance. In addition, one was enjoined to set  
aside a fixed period for daily study. Thus we see that the  
Jewish life was a religious life, a holy life, if you please,  
which demanded an observance of the mitzwot, knowledge of  
which could be gained only through a study of Torah!



We conclude this discussion by citing the five virtues [ *חַסְדֵּי נְהִי* ] which, according to Al-Nakawa, accrue to one who occupies himself with the study of Torah, for all of which there is abundant reward both in this world and in the here-after.

The first virtue: Upon anyone who occupies himself with Torah and studies it in order to fulfill the mitzwot, God bestows life in this world and in the world to come, as it is written, "Keep My commandments and live, and My teaching as the apple of thine eye" [Pr.7.2]; and "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein, for then shalt thou make thy ways prosperous and shalt have good success" [Josh.1.8]-- "make thy ways prosperous" -- refers to this world; "and have good success" -- refers to the world to come.

The second virtue: When one occupies himself both in Torah and in an occupation whereby he may sustain himself, thus accepting both the yoke of the Torah and of labor, he frees himself from sin, for he has not the leisure to sin; as it is taught, "for labor in the two of them makes sin forgotten" [Aboth 2.2].

The third virtue: When one engages in Torah, he understands the punishment of transgressors, and, consequently,

separates himself from them. He does not fall into the hands of death in this world -- through the agency of the

עִיּוֹן, nor in the world to come -- through the  
פְּסוּל הַדַּעַת. For we are taught, "An empty-headed man cannot be a sin-fearing man" [Aboth 2.5].

The fourth virtue: When one engages in Torah, he attains thereby the attribute of perfection and clings to his Creator. For when one studies Torah, his soul reaches a state of "completion", and he is cleansed of iniquity and free from sin. And by reason of this, he clings to his Creator, who is the True Foundation and the Infinite Good, as it is said, "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not taken My name in vain, and hath not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" [Ps.24.3].

The fifth virtue: When one engages in Torah, he becomes virtuous and cause others to become virtuous, inasmuch as men honor him and are influenced by his behavior, as we read, "Moses was virtuous and caused the many to be virtuous, and their virtue is ascribed to him" [Aboth 5.18]. [32]

CHAPTER THREE

THE TORAH --- ITS ROLE IN JEWISH THINKING

### CHAPTER THREE

"The comprehensive name for the divine revelation, written and oral, in which the Jews possessed the sole standard and norm of their religion is <sup>[1]</sup> Torah". This -- the full and inexhaustible revelation of God was the focal point of Judaism. While the content of that revelation was to be sought, in the first instance, in the written text of the Pentateuch, the real Torah -- for the Rabbis -- was the meaning of what was written there, the true meaning as it was unfolded by successive generations of inspired and devoted teachers. Herford suggests that "the written text of the Pentateuch might be compared to the mouth of a well; the Torah was the water which was drawn from it." <sup>[2]</sup>

To study the inspired Writings, to meditate upon them, was both the chief privilege and the greatest duty of the Jew. They not only provided practical knowledge, and an illumination of the mind, but served to direct both the will and the emotions towards Judaism's noblest ideals. Hence, as Al-Nakawa points out, one should strive to engage in Torah all his days, for in the hour of death, neither silver nor gold will accompany him, but Torah and good works alone. <sup>[3]</sup>

Cohon indicates that Torah initiates the Jew into

[4]

Judaism along the four lines which constitute religion. First, Torah associates and identifies the Jew with the community of Israel, for by virtue of its continued study the individual comes into possession of his communal heritage. Second, it keeps awake the consciousness of the holy. Third, it vitalizes the practices of religion. Fourth, the study of Torah fosters an ethical consciousness.

By the eloquent testimony drawn from the tractate Aboth, we may well observe what a pre-eminent role the Torah occupied in the life of the Jew. It was not merely the foundation of the moral life, but was considered the very basis of the entire cosmic order. The Torah, it was believed, must have existed before the creation of the world, else there would have been moral chaos. [5] According to one opinion, the Torah preceded Creation by two thousand years; [5a] another view holds that the Torah lay in the bosom of the Almighty for nine hundred and seventy-four [5b] generations before the creation of the world.

The thought that the world order is dependent upon Torah is expressed in the following manner: "The Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with the works of Creation, and said to them, 'If Israel accepts the Torah, you will endure; if not, I will again reduce you to chaos.'" [6] Al-Nakawa tells us that God recognized, in the very beginning, that Israel would accept the Torah, for had Israel refused,

"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" [Mal.2.7]. As long as Torah issues from one's lips, he is like a ministering angel, but if not, then he is like a wild beast, an animal who knoweth not his master. [11]

### The Giving of the Torah

There are endless stories and reflections about the giving of the Torah, and Al-Nakawa seizes upon this opportunity to reveal the vivid imaginative powers of Rabbinic authors. We shall select a few of the most representative interpretations.

Why, it is frequently asked, was the Torah given in the wilderness? One opinion maintains that had it been given in שׁוֹמְרֵי הַבְּרִית, the tribe in whose territory it had been presented might have considered itself superior to the other tribes. It was given, therefore, in the wilderness where all are equal. Just as in the wilderness there is no sowing or reaping, so they remove the yoke of worldly occupation from him who accepts the yoke of the Torah. [12] Or, again, he who fulfills the Torah makes himself like unto an empty wilderness in that he disregards all extraneous, frivolous influences. [13]

The Rabbis taught that the Torah was given in three

things: in fire, in water, and in the desert. In fire, "And Mt. Sinai was altogether in smoke" [Ex.19.18]; in water, "The clouds dropped water" [Judg.5.4]; and in the wilderness, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai" [Num.1.1]. The Torah was given in this manner to teach that just as fire, water, and the wilderness are given gratis to all the world's inhabitants, so, too, the words of Torah were given gratis to mankind. [14]

The Torah was given publicly and openly, in a place to which no one could lay claim, in order that anyone who desired to accept it might feel completely free to come and do so. Had it been given in *Seir* *Seir*, the other nations might have declared, "We have no portion in it!" [15]

It is truly gratifying to note the highly universalistic temper which pervades those midrashim which discuss the offering of the Torah to all the nations of the world. Whether it was a genuine spirit of universalism or rather a rationalization on the part of Rabbinic authors to explain God's "choice" of and partiality for Israel, we shall not endeavor to answer. One of the clearest illustrations of this "choice" which was offered to the nations, only to be rejected, is the following selection.

God first revealed Himself to the children of Esau, the wicked, "The Lord came up from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them" [Deut.33.2], and asked them if they would

accept the Torah. "What is written therein?", they inquired. He answered, "Thou shalt not murder!". "But", they replied, "the inheritance which our father bequeathed us is 'By thy sword shalt thou live' [Gen.27.40]" -- and so they could not accept it.

Then the Lord appeared to the children of Moab and Ammon and offered them the Torah, but they could not accept it because it contained the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery!", and they were the descendants of an adulterer. When God proffered it to the children of Ishmael, they refused to accept it because of the prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal!"

The Almighty then sent messengers to all the peoples of the earth, offering them this great gift, but they were forced to reject it because in it was written, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me!" The nations thereupon suggested that God offer it to Israel, and upon so doing, they answered with one accord, "All that the Lord has said, we will do and we will obey" [Ex.24.7]. Israel thus accepted the Torah unhesitatingly, without even inquiring into  
[16]  
the nature of its contents. We learn, in this connection, that God accounted it especially praiseworthy that Israel accepted the Torah, with all its positive and negative commands, without asking what their reward might be -- nor did they inquire as to the reasons for certain restrictions and prohibitions; they accepted the Torah in sincerity and



simplicity, and said, "We will do them!" [17]

Al-Nakawa further tells us that after the Lord had established the paths of the Torah, examined it and found it to be entirely upright, with all its ways pleasantness and its paths peace, and nothing in it that was perverse or crooked -- "All the words of My mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing perverse or crooked in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge" [Pr.8.8f] -- then did He give it to Israel to work therein, that they might merit eternal life. [18]

#### Israel's Acceptance of the Torah

We have observed in connection with the foregoing discussion of the giving of the Torah that, although the Torah was offered to many nations, that no one might later claim "Had we been asked, we might have accepted it", the inevitable result was that the Torah was accepted by Israel and it became theirs to fulfill. Now they became known as "God's people", whereas, formerly they had simply been called Israel. Al-Nakawa states that had Israel refused the Torah, they would have been returned to <sup>לעולם ולעולמים,</sup> [19] and the world would never have been populated.

When Israel accepted the Torah, we learn, the earth rejoiced while the heavens wept. God said to the heavens,

"You, whose place is above, should have given praise to My glory and to My daughter, even more than the earth has done." They replied, "Sovereign of the Universe, the earth may well give praise since it is to her that the Torah has been given; but we, from whom the Torah goes forth, how can we give praise and not be grieved?" [20]

When the Torah was about to be given to Israel, it is said that a terrifying noise went forth, from one end of the earth to another. The terrorized people gathered together and spoke to Balaam, "What is this tremendous noise which we have heard? Is another flood coming upon the earth?" Balaam assured them that God had promised never again to send another flood. "But, perhaps He is going to send a flood, not of water, but of fire", they replied. Balaam consoled them with the thought that the Lord had sworn never again to destroy all flesh. "Then what was that tumultuous noise?", they demanded. Balaam replied, "God has a precious treasure in His storehouse which has been stored there for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the creation of the world, and now He proposes to give it to His children." With this reassurance, the people were comforted, and replied, "May God bless His people with peace." [21]

Most interesting in this regard are two legends associated with the great prophet and lawgiver, Moses,

when he accepted the Torah on behalf of Israel. The first tells of the occasion when, Moses having already come down from Sinai, Satan appeared before the Heavenly Throne and demanded, "Where is the Torah?"

"I have given it to the earth", the Lord replied.

When Satan confronted the earth with his query, it replied, "God [alone] knows the way thereof" [Job 28.23]. Then Satan went to the sea, but it answered, "It is not with us" [Job 28.14], so he then returned to God and complained, "I have inquired all over the earth but have not found it."

"Go to the son of Amram", the Lord replied. After Satan had sought out Moses, he inquired, "Where is the Torah which God gave you?" Moses replied, "What am I that God should have given the Torah to me?" Then God rebuked him, "Moses, are you a liar?" Whereupon Moses answered, "This lovely and hidden thing in which day by day Thou didst take Thy pleasure, should I take credit of it?" Then God said, "Because you have made yourself humble, therefore it [the Torah] shall be called by thy name", as it is written, 'Remember the Law of Moses, My servant' [Mal.3.2].  
[22]

Another legendary narrative concerns itself with Moses' dispute with the angels. R. Joshua b. Levi recounts that when Moses went up to the Almighty, and the angels realized that he had come to claim the Torah, they complained

to the Holy One, blessed be He, "Do you intend to give this beautiful Torah to one of flesh and blood?" The Lord replied, "Moses, thou answer them!" Moses was terrified at this challenge, lest the angels burn him with their fiery breath, but, reassured by God, he said, "What is written in the Law which Thou gavest me? 'I am the Lord your God who brought you forth from Egypt'; did you -- addressing the angels-- go down to Egypt? Were you enslaved by Pharaoh? What need do you have of the Torah? It is written, further, 'Ye shall have no other gods'; do you dwell among the uncircumcized who practice idolatry? It further says, 'Remember the Sabbath day'; do you do any work that you need a day of rest? It says, 'Honor thy father and thy mother'; have you fathers and mothers? It states, 'Do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery'; is there any envy, any evil inclination among you? So hearing, the angels praised God and [23] became the friends of Moses.

In concluding this comment on Israel's acceptance of the Torah, we quote directly from Al-Nakawa. "Great is the Torah, for on the day that it was given to Israel the Lord shone forth from His holy heights and was revealed to His people. There is a parable of a king who possessed a beautiful crown which he desired to give to his son upon his wedding day. The king mused, "If I send the crown to

my son through the agency of a messenger, I shall be unable to witness his delight when he receives it; therefore, I shall deliver the crown to him myself". Thus the Lord said, "Although I shall give the Torah to Israel through the hands of Moses, I, personally, desire to be with them when they receive it"; therefore, it is written, 'He shone forth from Mt. Paran, and He came from the myriads holy; [24] from His right hand was a fiery law unto them' [Deut.33.2]."

### The Virtues of the Torah

The virtues which Rabbinic writers ascribe to the Torah are both varied and manifold. We shall attempt here to describe but a few, limited as we are by time and space. Of paramount importance is the principle that the Torah is not the personal property of any single individual but is, rather, the inheritance of the entire household of Israel, "Moses commanded us a law; an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" [Deut.33.4] [25]. Moreover, it is accessible to all, especially to the humble. Why is it written, "It [the Torah] is not in heaven, neither is it beyond the sea" [Deut.30.12]? R. Abdimi b. Hama b. Dosa answered that 'it is not in heaven' -- for were it there, one would be obliged to go up after it and study it; and if it were 'beyond the sea', it would be necessary, likewise, to cross the sea after it. Raba said that 'it is not in heaven' refers to the fact that the Torah is not to be found with him who,

because he possesses knowledge of it, towers in his pride  
[26]  
as high as the heaven.

Torah possesses another advantage in that, unlike  
all the most precious of ornaments which depreciate in  
value as they grow old, its words are enhanced with age,  
and become even more praiseworthy. "Wisdom is with the  
aged men, and understanding in length of days" [Job 12.12]. [27]

That the Torah is greater than sacrifice, Al-Nakawa  
proves by the following midrash. King David said to the  
Almighty, "Master of the Universe, you have heard those  
who cry, 'When will this old man [David] die, that Solomon  
might come and build the Temple, so that we may go and re-  
joice therein'". God answered him, "For a day in Thy courts  
is better than a thousand" [Ps. 84.11]. "Better to Me is  
one day spent in occupation with My Torah than a thousand  
burnt-offerings which your son, Solomon, will sacrifice  
before Me upon the altar." [28]

Indeed, not only was the Torah greater than sacri-  
fice, but it served as a surrogate for the Temple. Where,  
before, sacrifices would have atoned for certain types of  
sins, now that the Temple no longer stands, the Torah, if  
men occupy themselves with its study, serves as an equiva-  
lent. The Rabbis taught that God foresaw that the Temple  
would be destroyed, and He said: "While the Temple exists

and you bring sacrifices, the Temple atones for you; but when the Temple is no longer there, what shall atone for you? Busy yourselves with *שְׂרָתָם וְרִצְתָם*, for they are [28a] equivalent to sacrifices, and they will atone for you."

The holiness of the Torah is derived from the verse, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the All-Holy is understanding" [Pr.9.10]. Great is its holiness, Al-Nakawa teaches, for in order to receive the Torah, Moses sanctified himself by abstaining from food and drink for forty days. Certainly if Moses honored the Torah by so abstaining from food and drink, which themselves are pure, how much the more should the average man sanctify and glorify *שְׂרָתָם וְרִצְתָם* by keeping them far from any obscenity, i.e., one must be careful [29] not to engage in the study of Torah in an improper place.

It is indeed significant that we frequently find the Torah extolled as an instrument of peace. Al-Nakawa states: "Great is the Torah for it is peace and all its paths are peace -- 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace' [Pr.3.17]." It is further written, "Thou hast established equity" [Pr.99.4]; if a man have a grievance against his associate, the two of them appear before the court for judgment, and, accepting the judge's decree, harmonious relationships are restored between them. Behold, "Thou hast established equity!"

"Or, he continues, "let us take the example of a man who is journeying on the highway, when he notices the ass of his enemy lying prostrate under its burden. He goes over and helps him release it. Immediately, the two men become friends; and what brought about this happy state of affairs? The fact that they observed what is written in the Torah: "If thou seest the ass of him that hateth thee lying under its burden, thou shalt forbear to pass by him; thou shalt surely release it with him." Truly, he concluded, 'her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.'<sup>[30]</sup>"

R. Alexandri taught that whoever busies himself with the Torah, for its own sake, establishes peace among both the heavenly and earthly households; while Rab adds, "It is as if he built the heavenly and earthly Temples."<sup>[31]</sup>

Still another illustration in this regard is the midrash which recounts God's reluctance to give the Torah to Israel, immediately after they had departed from Egypt, for they were a quarrelsome band. "Let us appoint a chief and return to Egypt", they shouted. At Sukkoth, Etham, and Meribah, it is recorded that they [Using the plural verbal form] encamped in contention. However, at Rephidim, they were reconciled and became united into a single band,



for when Israel arrived there it is written, "He encamped face to face with Sinai" [Ex.19.2]. Then God said, "The Torah, all of it, is peace; to whom shall I entrust it? Surely to a people that loves peace. Henceforward, 'all its paths [i.e., Israel's] are peace.'" [32]

From a statement in Aboth we learn that the Torah is greater than either the priesthood or royalty, inasmuch as royalty demands thirty qualifications, the priesthood twenty-four, while Torah is acquired by forty-eight. [33] Moreover, we read further that the Torah is one of the five possessions which the Holy One, blessed be He, made especially for Himself in the universe; the others being and [34] heaven, earth, Abraham, Israel, and the Temple.

Whether or not we subscribe to their viewpoint, the Rabbis maintained that still another virtue of the Torah lies in the fact that "it separates Israel, His people and His inheritance, from the nations of the world." [35]

The thought that only in the atmosphere of the Torah can men lead a wholesome, ethical existence is derived from the verse, "Thou makest men as the fishes of the sea" [Hab.1.14]. Why are men likened to fishes? To tell you that just as fishes immediately perish when they come upon dry land, so do men immediately perish when they separate themselves from [36] ה' ואלוהיו!

### The Perfection of the Torah

The Torah, reflecting as it does the Divine Mind, is considered perfect in every respect. Such absolute perfection, such love for the Torah was expressed in a very unique mode through endearing, metaphorical epithets, and by comparisons [not necessarily subtle, for subtlety was not their purpose] with those common things which are understood and prized by men.

Most vivid in its praise of the Torah's perfection is this magnificent midrash. "The words of Torah are likened to water, wine, oil, honey, and milk. To water -- 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters' [Is.55.1]. As water extends from one end of the world to another, so the Torah extends from one end of the world to another. As water is life to the world, so is the Torah. As water descends from heaven, so does the Torah. As water refreshes the soul, so does the Torah. As water cleanses from defilement, so the Torah purifies the unclean [Morally]. As water makes the body clean, so the Torah makes the body clean [physically]. As water descends drop by drop and becomes many streams, so with Torah -- a man learns two legal dicta today and two tomorrow, until he becomes a flowing fountain of knowledge. As with water, which is not pleasant to the body unless a person be thirsty, similarly the Torah is not pleasant to him unless he yearns for

it. As water leaves a higher level and goes to a lower level, so the Torah abandons him whose mind is haughty and cleaves to him whose mind is humble. As water does not remain fresh in gold and silver vessels, but in the commonest of vessels, so the Torah does not keep except with a person who makes himself lowly like an earthenware jug. As with water, even a great man is not ashamed to say to one inferior to himself, 'Give me to drink'; so with words of Torah, a great man should not be ashamed to say to an inferior, 'Teach me one chapter, or one verse, or even one letter'. As with water, if a man does not know how to swim he may eventually be drowned; so with

תורה, if one does not know how to "swim in them" and come to decisions with respect to them, he too will be overwhelmed."

The midrash continues with a comparison to wine. "If you would argue that as water grows stagnant in a flask, so do the words of Torah stagnate, let them be compared to wine. As wine improves with keeping, so do תורה improve as they become older in the body; as wine gladdens the heart, so do words of Torah. If you would argue that wine, at times, is bad for the head and body, so are words of Torah injurious, then let them be compared to oil. As oil is a comfort to head and body, so do תורה bring them comfort. If you would argue that as oil is bitter at first and sweet in the end, so it

is with *דבש וטורה*, then let them be compared to honey and milk -- as they are sweet, so are words of Torah sweet. If you would argue that as in honey there are wax-cells which are unpleasant, so possibly there are distasteful things in *דבש וטורה*, then let them be compared to milk. As milk is pure, so are the words of Torah pure. If you would argue that as milk is insipid in taste, so, possibly, the words of Torah, then let them be compared to a mixture of honey and milk. As they, together, cannot be harmful to the body, so, likewise, *דבש וטורה* can never be deleterious." [37]

R. Oshaia taught, "Why are *דבש וטורה* likened to these three liquids: water, wine, and milk? To teach that just as these three liquids can only be preserved in the most inferior of vessels, so, too, the words of Torah endure only in him who is humble; and just as these three liquids can become unfit for consumption only through inattention, so *דבש וטורה* are forgotten only through inattention." [38]

Al-Nakawa advises men to bethink themselves of the fact that the Torah is compared to bread, water, wine, silver, gold, honey, the honey-comb, and everything in the world that is precious. This is to teach that just as it is impossible for a man to endure in the world without bread and water, so it is impossible for a man to en-

dure without the Torah he has learned. And just as water may be secured gratuitously, so, too, words of Torah may be acquired without price. <sup>[39]</sup> Wine, he continues, is beneficial to the old, and milk to the young. Just as milk nourishes the child and causes him to grow, and just as wine brings strength, comfort, satisfaction, and brightening the eye to the old, so, too, Torah gives strength to him who occupies himself with its words, brightening his eye and satisfying his soul -- "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" <sup>[40]</sup> [Ps.19.8f].

The Rabbis delighted to compare the Torah with oil. Just as oil is at first bitter but in the end, sweet, so, too, with <sup>דבר מורה</sup>. As oil cannot mix with other liquids, so Israel cannot mix with the other nations. Just as oil, when mixed with other liquids, will rise to the surface, so will Israel rise above the other nations [through <sup>[41]</sup> its study of Torah]. As oil is made good only by beating, so only through suffering does Israel repent. As oil on the top of another liquid, when the cup is full, does not flow over with the other liquids, so <sup>דבר מורה</sup> do not flow over the lips in connection with words of frivolity. As oil in a full cup drives out a drop of water which has fallen into the cup, so the words of Torah drive out frivolous words from one's heart; so, too, do frivolous words

As the oil brings light to the world,, so Israel gives light to the world, as it is writte, 'The nations shall walk at thy light' [Isa.60.3].  
[42]

What is the meaning of the text, "Whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof" [Pr.27.18]?, the Rabbis ask. Why is the Torah compared to a fig? In all fruits there is a part which is refuse. In dates there are stones, in grapes kernels, in pomegranates husks; but the whole of the fig is edible. Similarly, in the words of Torah there is no refuse.  
[43]

The words of Torah, moreover, are compared to fire, since both fire and the Torah were given from heaven, and both are eternal. If a man draws near the fire he derives benefit, while if he keeps afar he is frozen. So with

אורחיהם; if a man separates from them, they will kill him, while if he toils in them, they are life to him. One makes use of fire both in this world and the next, and so, too, with words of Torah. As those who work with fire are easily recognizable [44] [by their soiled clothing], so are they who toil in the Torah; for students of the Torah are recognized in the street by their speech, their walk, and their dress.  
[45]

Taking the verse, "His legs are as pillars of marble" [Cant.5.15], the Rabbis suggest that "marble" refers to the words of Torah, and "pillars" imply that the Torah shall

[46]  
endure eternally.

A favorite technique employed by the Rabbis is the analysis and interpretation of a verse, section by section; this is exemplified in the following selection. "That which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold" [Gen.2.11] -- these are *אבן שפירא* which are more precious than fine gold; "and the gold of that land is good" [Ibid.] -- this teaches that there is no Torah like the Torah of Israel, and no wisdom like the wisdom of Israel; "there is bedellium and the onyx stone" [Ibid.] -- this is Scriptures, and Mishnah and Tosofot, and Agadah. [47]

Al-Nakawa teaches us that just as with golden vessels, when a man polishes them they glisten and shine, so, too, the words of Torah -- as long as a man studies and repeats them, his countenance beams [Ps.19.9 --see above]. But if a man cast the words of Torah aside, they shatter like a glass vessel. [48]

Another fine example of the keen exegetical touch of the Rabbis is seen in the following. "Receive my instruction and not silver; and knowledge rather than fine gold" [Pr.8.10] -- receive the instruction of the Torah! "Wherefore do you spend money" [Isa.55.2] -- why do you spend money [have any traffic] with the sons of Esau? "For that which is not bread" [Ibid.] -- because you are not satisfied with the bread of the Torah! "Wherefore do ye spend

your gain for that which satisfieth not?" [Ibid.] -- why  
are you hungry and the nations of the world satisfied?  
Because you are not satisfied by the wine of the Torah;  
"Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have  
mingled" [Pr.9.5].<sup>[49]</sup>

Implicit in the Rabbinic concept of the perfection  
of the Torah, is their insistence that it can never be im-  
proved upon and that the Holy One, blessed be He, will  
never supercede the Torah by another revelation. This  
dogma is derived from the text, "It is not in heaven"  
[Deut.30.12], which is expounded thus: That you shall not  
say 'Another Moses will arise and bring us another Torah  
from heaven', I have already made it known to you that "IT  
is not in heaven" -- i.e., there is nothing left of it  
[or comparable to it] in heaven.<sup>[50]</sup>



CHAPTER FOUR

SEFER TORAH

## CHAPTER FOUR

Having discussed in the preceding chapter the rabbinic conception of Torah, we now turn to a more practical consideration of the ספר תורה [Book or Scroll of the Law] itself. We have observed what a pre-eminent role the Torah played in the life of the Jew; truly, it was Israel's beauty, its strength, its comfort, its adornment -- yea, its very life, both in this world and in the world to come! It is to be anticipated, therefore, that there should develop a plethora of customs, regulations, prohibitions, and manners of honoring and glorifying the Sefer Torah, which, shall we say, served as the symbol or epitome of the broader concept of Torah.

Al-Nakawa informs us, first, that it was obligatory for every Jew to read the weekly Scriptural portion, פרשה. The Torah [in this chapter we shall most frequently refer to the Torah in its most limited sense of Pentateuch, or Five Books of Moses] is divided into fifty-three portions, corresponding to the number of weeks -- excluding the portion ויקרא, which has no special week of its own, as do the others portions. This פרשה is set aside for the second day of חג שמחת תורה, which is Simchat Torah.  
[1]

All of the six hundred and thirteen commandments -- the תרי"ג מצוות -- are contained in thirty-seven parashas of the Torah. This fact is substantiated by the verse,

וַיִּצְוֶנִי אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁבְעִים מִצְוָה. "Oh that thou wouldst hearken to My commandments! [Isa.48.18]", where the numerical Hebrew equivalent of the the word שִׁבְעִים is thirty-seven. That the remaining sixteen [thus making a total of fifty-three] portions contain no commandments whatsoever, is derived from the verse, לֹא בִי, "It is not in me" [Job 28.14], where the numerical value of the word לֹא בִי is sixteen.  
[2]

One is required to read the Scriptural portion twice each week, and the Targum [the Aramaic translation -- see below] once. If a parasha has no Targum, as for example, Reuben, Simon, Levi, and Judah, then one should read it three times. The parasha should be read between Wednesday until Sabbath before midnight. Even if one reads it disjointedly [שִׁבְעִים], he has fulfilled his obligation, as long as he completes the reading on Sabbath before midnight.  
[3]

Al-Nakawa represents God as having said to Israel: "My children, if you read the parasha in its proper time, year by year, I will account it unto you as if you, yourselves, stood before Me at Sinai and received the Torah!" Moreover, if one reads the parasha weekly, it is as if he fulfilled all the six hundred and thirteen commandments;



Rabbis taught, "Moses laid down a rule for the Israelites that they should inquire and give expositions concerning the subject of the day, i.e., the laws of Passover on Passover, the laws of Pentecost on Pentecost, and the laws of Sukkoth on Sukkoth; "Moses declared unto the children of Israel the appointed seasons of the Lord" [Lev.23.44].

R. Simon b. Eleazar said, "He who reads a verse in its proper season, brings good to the world, as it is written, [7] 'And a word spoken in season, how good it is' [Pr.15.23]".

Al-Nakawa warns that it is forbidden to read a verse from the Pentateuch or the Prophets in the banquet hall, if it is not in its proper season, thus making the Torah a subject of jest or of secular amusement; for the Rabbis taught that one who recites a verse of the Song of Songs, and treats it as a secular tune, and one who recites a verse in the banquet hall unseasonably, brings evil upon the world. Because the Torah girds itself in sack-cloth and stands before the Holy One and laments, "Sovereign of the Universe, Thy children have made me as a harp upon which they frivolously play!". He replies, "My daughter, when they are eating and drinking, with what should they occupy themselves?" To which she replies, "If they possess Scriptural knowledge, let them engage in Torah, Prophets and Writings; if they are students of Mishnah, let them occupy themselves in Mishnah and Agadah; and if they are students

of Talmud, let them engage in the laws of Passover, Pentecost and Sukkoth, on the respective festivals". [8]

It was incumbent upon every Israelite to write a Sefer Torah for himself; this is derived from the verse, "Now, therefore, write ye this song for you and teach thou it the children of Israel" [Deut.31.19], where the word "song" is construed to mean "Torah". Even though one may inherit a Sefer Torah from his father, it is a mitzwah to write one for oneself. One receives a greater reward if he writes it himself than if he were to purchase a Sefer Torah in the market; purchasing a Sefer Torah is like "grabbing a mitzwah"! Scripture accounts it to one who writes his own scroll as if he, himself, received it at Mt. Sinai. Al-Nakawa adds that "if one pronounces but one letter of it, it is as if he wrote it himself". [9]

The king, moreover, is required to write a second Sefer Torah for himself, in addition to the one he wrote as a commoner, "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites" [Deut.17.18]. The official Bible, by which the king is guided, should be the Bible of Ezra. [10] [11]

It is forbidden to sell a Sefer Torah, even if one have nothing to eat, or even if one have many פ' דוד,

or even to sell an old one in order to purchase a new one. Selling a Sefer Torah is permitted only for one of two reasons: to study Torah with the proceeds of the sale, or to marry with such proceeds. [12]

We now turn to a consideration of the manner in which the Sefer Torah must be honored, and under what conditions it is desecrated. First, we learn, whenever one sees a Sefer Torah he should stand in its presence. [Here Al-Nakawa refers to the Sefer Torah in the Synagogue.] All should stand as long as the individual who is carrying it remains standing, or until it is brought to its place, or until it is hidden from their view; only then it is permissible for them to be seated. [13]

If one journeys on the road and carries a Sefer Torah with him, he may not place it in a sack, set it upon the back of an ass and ride upon it. Only in the event that one fears robbers on the road is this permitted. But if there be no danger from brigands, he must place the Sefer Torah next to his bosom, close to his heart. [14]

When one sits in the presence of a Sefer Torah, he should do so with reverence and awe, since it is the "faithful witness" for all Israel, "that it may be there for a witness against thee" [Deut.31.26]. One, therefore, should honor it with all his might, for "whoever honors the Torah

will himself be honored by mankind, but whoever dishonors  
the Torah will himself be dishonored by mankind". [15]

Al-Nakawa teaches us the relative importance of the Biblical books by the following selection. "One may place a Sefer Torah on top of another Sefer Torah, or on top of a Chumosh [Five Books of Moses]. Or one can place a Chumosh on top of the Nebiim [Prophetic Books] or Ketubim [Hagiographa]. But it is forbidden to place the Ketubim on top of the Nebiim, or on top of the Chumosh. Similarly, one cannot place the Chumosh on top of a Sefer Torah". [16]

It is forbidden to throw away any holy writings. If a Sefer Torah becomes worn out and unfit for ritual use סיד, one places it into an earthen vessel and buries it next to a scholar. It is "hidden" in order to prevent desecration -- סב'ד. The bands of the scrolls, when worn out, should be made into shrouds for the dead. They, too, are hidden against desecration. Anything connected with the Sefer Torah, i.e., the chest or ark -- ארון in which it is placed, the ornaments, etc. -- all are considered holy ornaments -- כלי קודש -- and must not be cast out when they are no longer fit for ritual use. All must be hidden to obviate desecration. However, the Bimah and the slates upon which the children study are not considered holy. [17]



Most revealing is the permission granted to Gentiles, and even menstruating women [or anyone "unclean"] to take hold of a Sefer Torah and read from it, for the words of Torah cannot be made unclean!, for it is written, "Is not My word like as fire?, saith the Lord" [Jer.23.29]. Just as fire cannot be rendered unclean, so, too, דבר ה' נשקף! But one is enjoined to wash his hands before taking hold of the Torah; they must not be damp or filthy. It is a mitzwah to set aside one special place for the Sefer Torah [18] and to honor that particular place.

How, then, is the Sefer Torah desecrated? Al-Nakawa tells us that it is forbidden to spit near a Torah, or to stand unclothed before it, to remove one's shoes in its presence, or to turn one's back toward it, unless he is at least ten hand-breadths removed from the Sefer Torah. It is not permissible to have intercourse in a house where there is a Torah, until one takes it outside, or places it in a special container, or erects a partition between himself and the Sefer Torah -- higher than ten hand-breadths. This latter applies only if one has no other house, but if one has another house, it is forbidden, under all circumstances, to have intercourse until the Torah is removed. [19]

One is restricted from bringing a Sefer Torah into a toilet, bath-house, or cemetery, even though it be wrapped in its bands [ מכוסה ], and enclosed in its

sheath [פ'ש]. It is forbidden to read in the Sefer Torah unless one is four cubits distant from a toilet, a corpse, or a grave. It is likewise forbidden to sit upon a bed [20] if a Sefer Torah is on it.

In his treatment of the Sefer Torah [and one's obligation to read from it each week], our author feels impelled to interject a few words about the authorship of the Targum, a discussion of the Oral and Written Law, and the relationship of the Mishnah and the Talmud to the Torah.

The Targum of the Pentateuch, we are apprised, was composed by Onkelos, the proselyte, under the guidance of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua. [21] The Targum of the Prophets was composed by Jonathan b. Uzziel, under the guidance of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and thereupon the land of Israel quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs, and a Bath Kol came forth and exclaimed: "Who is this that has revealed My secrets to mankind?" Jonathan arose and answered, "It is I who have done it, but surely it is fully known to Thee that I have not done this for my own honor, but for Thy honor I have done it, in order that dissension [resulting from misinterpretations of the Prophetic writings] may not increase in Israel". He further sought to reveal, by a Targum, the meaning of the Hagiographa, but a Bath Kol went forth and said, "Enough!" For what reason? Because the date of the Messiah is foretold in it [probably

[23]  
referring to the Book of Daniel].

A fundamental issue with the Rabbis appears to have been the acceptance of a traditional or Oral Torah, transmitted from one generation to the next by word of mouth, side by side with the written text. It was therefore claimed that the Oral Law emanated from the revelation on Sinai, at least in principle if not in detail. Al-Nakawa [24] reveals that God gave the Torah to Israel in writing, and the Oral Law is its interpretation, as it is written, "And He declared unto you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, even the Ten Words; and He wrote them upon two tablets of stone" [Deut.4.13] -- this is the Written Law! Whence do we derive the Oral Law? It is written, "And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances that you might do them" [Deut.4.14]. [25]

This dual revelation served as the theme for many controversies, and is mentioned in conversations about Judaism with non-Jews, of which the following is an illustration. "It happened with a heathen that he came before Shammai and asked, 'How many Toroth have you?' Shammai answered, 'Two -- the Written and the Oral'. The non-Jew said, 'With respect to the Written Torah, I believe you, but not with respect to the Oral Torah. Accept me as convert on the condition that you teach me the former only'.

Shammai rebuked him and drove him out with contempt. Coming before Hillel with the same request, he was accepted as a convert. On the first day, Hillel taught him the alphabet in the correct order, but on the next day he reversed it. The heathen said to him, 'Yesterday you taught me differently!' Hillel replied, 'Have you not to depend upon me for the letters of the alphabet? So must you, likewise, depend upon me for the interpretation of the Torah'". [26]

One of the excellencies of the Oral Law lay in the belief that it served as a symbol that Israel was the chosen people adopted by the Holy One. It served almost as a secret formula, or mystic password. That this may well be so is reflected in the following midrash. R. Judah b. R. Shalom remarked, "Moses desired that the Oral Law should also be written. But God foresaw that the Gentiles would one day translate the Torah and read it in Greek, and say, 'The Jews are not [the true] Israel'. God said to Moses, 'The nations and Israel will both claim to be [the true] Israel, and the sons of God -- and the scales will be evenly balanced' [since both have a Written Law]. So God said to the nations, 'Why do you claim to be My sons? I know him only who has My mystery in his possession; he is My son'. Then the Gentiles asked, 'What is this mystery?' [27] God replied, 'It is the Mishnah' [i.e., the Oral Law].

R. Johanan maintained that the Torah was transmitted in separate scrolls, while R. Simeon b. Lakish said that it was transmitted as a whole unit. R. Eleazar contended that "the greater part of the Torah is contained in the Written Law", while R. Johanan, on the other hand, declared that "the greater part of the Torah was transmitted orally". [28]

And now a concluding word with regard to the relationship of the Oral to the Written Law. Al-Nakawa holds that the Mishnah and the Talmud enhance the Torah, inasmuch as they embrace both the Oral and the Written Law and their commentaries. The Rabbis taught: "They who occupy themselves with the Bible alone, are but of indifferent merit -- *ענין בלבד ענין*; with Mishnah, they are indeed meritorious and are rewarded for it; with Talmud [Gemara] -- there can be nothing more meritorious; yet always run to the Mishnah more than to the Talmud! Now this is self-contradictory. You say, on the one hand, 'With Talmud -- there can be nothing more meritorious'; and then you say, 'Yet always run to the Mishnah more than to the Talmud!'

R. Johanan said, 'This teaching [that Talmud is of greater merit than Mishnah] was taught in the days of Rabbi; thereupon, everyone forsook the Mishnah and occupied himself with Talmud; hence, he [Rabbi] subsequently taught them, 'Yet always run to the Mishnah more than to the Talmud.' [29]

[30]

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REWARDS OF TORAH

## CHAPTER FIVE

Beyond any question, a great deal of the ethical teaching of the Rabbis rests upon the doctrine of reward and punishment. This has frequently provided the allegation that Rabbinism attached an undue importance to the motive for right conduct; that the only reason for fulfilling the commandments was the expectation of reward, either in this life, or in the after-life. Perhaps there is some measure of validity to this charge, but it must be said that if the word "reward" has a disagreeable, mundane connotation when used in connection with acts done in the service of God -- if it sound a bit like Satans's question, "Doth Job serve God for nought?", we must understand, first, the deep-rooted, fundamental nature of this important concept.

[1]

Herford points out that the "Pharisaic doctrine of merit and reward is, like nearly everything else in their system, a development of what is found in the Old Testament". In the fourth commandment we note that the idea of reward is attached to its observance; "I, the Lord, Thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments"

[Ex.20.5-6]. Throughout the Book of Deuteronomy runs the oft-repeated refrains, "That thou mayest prolong thy days" and "that it may be well with thee," etc. Obviously, the intention of the Biblical authors was to stimulate the observance of the commandments by an assurance of benefits to be derived. Not only this, there seems to have been no reluctance to describe the reward in terms of material welfare and prosperity! The Pharisees, while they "inherited" the idea of reward, refined the older conception, and developed it along their own lines of thought. Herford suggests that this newer development by the Pharisees was based upon three fundamental convictions of their religious belief, namely, first, that God is just; second, that there is an intrinsic difference between right and wrong doing; third, that the whole duty of man is to do the will of God. These axioms, he maintains, "express the essence of Judaism, as a religion which places before everything else the doing of the will of God because He wills the right and abhors the wrong, being in Himself perfectly righteous, just, holy and good". The distinctive contribution of the Pharisees lay in their development of these three axioms, especially the last, in terms of Torah!

A righteous and a just God, who recognizes the distinction between proper and improper conduct, cannot treat the righteous and the sinner in the same way. The condition of a man who does right must be better by virtue of



God's justice. Reward, therefore, was the expression of that "better condition", but the Pharisaic description of that reward tended toward a higher and more spiritual conception than the grossly material prosperity expressed in the Old Testament passages which we have cited above. Although the old idea of material compensation was never entirely abandoned, it was replaced, in most instances, by the new Rabbinic tendency to defer the actual reward -- interpreted in diverse manners -- to the future life. For the constant vicissitudes of Jewish existence must have convinced them that the reward of the righteous must be achieved in the hereafter. Yet the fulfillment of the Torah on earth was, in a sense, its own reward! The observance of the divine commandments, to the Rabbis, was never an irksome duty to be performed, never a burden to be silently suffered, but, rather, a joy and a delight. The Torah was studied because it was the word of God; it was fulfilled because, out of an observance of its laws, one could attain that holiness which the Holy One had enjoined His creatures to achieve.

Al-Nakawa describes, at considerable length, the nature and the abundance of those rewards which God has laid up for those who occupy themselves with the words of Torah. It was expounded by R. Judah b. R. Simeon, we are told, that "he who blackens his face [undergoes privation and want] for the study of Torah, in this world,

the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause his luster to shine in the next world -- "His countenance shall be as the Lebanon" [Cant.5.15]. R. Tanhum b. R. Hanilai said, "He who starves himself for the sake of the study of Torah in this world, will be fully satisfied by the Holy One in the hereafter -- "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house" [Ps.36.9]". [2]

R. Jose said, "If you wish to know the reward of the righteous in the world to come, consider the case of Adam. One single negative commandment was given him. This he transgressed, and see how many deaths have been decreed for him and for all his generations unto the end of time. Now, which is greater, the attribute of reward, or that of punishment? Surely the attribute of reward! If, then, the attribute of punishment, which is of lesser import, caused all these deaths, how much more will he who is righteous [by his occupation with Torah] bring blessing to himself and to all his generations to the end of time". [2a]

In commenting upon the text, "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laugheth at the time to come" [Pr.31.25], it was taught, that the entire reward of the righteous is kept ready for them in the here-after, and that the Holy One, blessed be He, shows them, while they are yet in this world, the reward He is to give them in the future-life; their souls are then satisfied, and they

fall asleep [die]. R. Eleazar said in this connection, "This may be compared to a banquet arranged by a king, who invited the guests, and on the night preceding the banquet they visualized, in a dream, everything that they were to enjoy at the banquet on the morrow; whereupon, their souls were satisfied. Similarly, God shows the righteous, while yet in this world, the reward which He intends to give them in the future, and thus they "fall asleep" with satisfied souls". [3]

"How do we know", the question is asked, "that when two people sit and occupy themselves with Torah, that the Shechinah [Divine Presence] dwells among them?" Because it is said, "In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned, I will come and bless thee" [Ex.20.21]. [4] Whenever two scholars lead one another in the paths of Halacha, then God will hearken unto them; this is derived from the text, "Then they that feared the Lord spoke one with another, and the Lord hearkened and heard" [Mal.3.16]. Moreover, their name will be entered in the book [of life], --"And a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name" [Ibid.]. [5]

How great is the reward of Torah we learn from the example of Moses, our teacher, for as a reward for having hid his face [Ex.3.6] he was granted the "beaming countenance". And if Moses, who was only the agent through which

God gave the Torah to Israel, merited this great reward that his face should so beam that it was impossible for the Israelites to draw nigh unto him, how much greater will be the reward of one who has fulfilled the entire Torah! [6]

In commenting upon the verse, "Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; Thy judgments are like the great deep" [Ps.36.7], R. Ishmael interpreted as follows: To the righteous who accepted the Torah, which was revealed on the mountains of the Lord, Thou showest righteousness reaching unto the mountains of God; but as for the wicked, who did not accept the Torah, Thou dealest strictly with them, even to the great deep. Yea, the righteous shall eat of the fruit of their doings, but woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the work of his hands shall be done unto him. Al-Nakawa adds: "The deeds of the righteous lead him directly to *לְעוֹלָם*, while the evil works of the wicked lead him directly to *לְעוֹלָם*". [7]

Torah is precious because God causes those who study it to inherit both this world and the world to come; for we read in the Mishnah, "These are the things, the fruit of which a man enjoys in this world, while the capital thereof is laid up for him in the world to come:- honoring father and mother, deeds of loving-kindness *פְּרָט וְחֵן*."

making peace between a man and his fellow; and the study  
[8]  
of the Torah is equivalent to all of them".

Study of Torah brings prosperity and success, for we read, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then shall thy ways prosper, and thou shalt have good success" [Josh.1.8]; "prosperity" refers to this world, while "good success" shall be enjoyed in the world to come. [9] R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Hanina: "In the world to come, God will be a crown on the head of every righteous man, for them that do His will [10] and await His glory".

R. Joshua b. Levi taught: "It is written in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and emphasized a third time in the Writings, that anyone who occupies himself in the Torah will prosper in all his enterprises". [11] R. Dimai b. Hama taught that the Lord will fulfill all the desires [12] of him who occupies himself with the Torah.

Al Nakawa further proves, through appropriate Biblical citations, that the reward of *עושה מצות* is greater than the reward of saving lives, building the Temple, or honoring one's parents. [13]

That one of the rewards of Talmud Torah was life itself is revealed in this interesting narrative. There was a family in Jerusalem, it is related, the members of which had the misfortune to die at the early age of eighteen years. Members of the family came and told Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai of their tribulation. He suggested, "Perhaps you are of the family of Eli, to whom it was said, 'and all the increase of thy house shall die young men' [I Sam.2.33]". Rabban Johanan's advice to them was "Go and study Torah, and you may live!" The family immediately began to occupy themselves with Torah, and they lived [to a ripe old age]. Thereafter, they used to call that family "The family of Johanan", in honor of his name. [14]

Al-Nakawa tells us, further, that if a man occupies himself in Torah, and his lips move in it, God stretches over him His tabernacle of peace. [15]

Indeed, Israel was redeemed because of its study of Torah. This we learn from the following selection. "Great is Torah for because of its merit Israel was redeemed from the hands of its enemies, as it is written, 'Remember ye the law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel; even statutes and ordinances', and following this, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord' [Mal.3.22]. Because they occu-

pied themselves in Torah in Egypt for four days, Israel was redeemed! How do we know that it was only for four days? Because of what is written, 'In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them a lamb, etc.'" [Ex.12.3]. And they were redeemed on the night of the fifteenth of the month. Now, if our fathers, who occupied themselves in Torah but four days, merited to be redeemed, how much the more will he, who studies each day of his life, deserve redemption".  
[16]

Resurrection is a further reward of those who delve into the realms of Torah, for we are taught, "Whoever makes use of the light of Torah, the light of Torah will revive [after death]".  
[17]

The simple confidence of the Rabbis in the certainty of heavenly reward is well illustrated by the following narrative. Once R. Gamliel, R. Eleazar, R. Joshua, and R. Akiba were journeying, when they heard the tumult issuing from the city of Rome from afar. The first three wept, but R. Akiba laughed! "Why do you laugh?", they inquired. "Why do you weep?", was his reply. They answered, These heathen, who pray and burn incense to idols, dwell in peace and security, whereas in our case, the House [Temple], which was the foot-stool of our God, is burnt with fire; why should we not weep? R. Akiba answered, "That is why I laugh! If this is the lot of those who transgress His

will, how much more glorious shall be the lot of those  
[18]  
who perform His will!"

The reward of study and the love of God may even be martyrdom, as this strange tale testifies. R. Judah said in the name of Rab: "When Moses went up to God [to receive the Law], he found God sitting and putting small crowns on the top of the letters of the Law. 'Who is it', Moses asked, 'who forces Thee to put crowns on the letters' --[after they had already been written by the Holy One], Moses inquired. The Lord replied, 'A man is to appear on earth after many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound for each tip of every letter many, many Halakot'. Then Moses said, 'Show him to me'. The Holy One replied, 'Turn around!' So Moses did, and went and sat at the end of the eighth row [students were sitting in rows listening to Akiba expound the law]. But he could not understand anything of what was being said, and his strength abated [was crestfallen]. However, when Akiba came to a certain matter, and his disciples inquired as to the source of his interpretation, he replied, 'This is a teaching which was delivered to Moses on Sinai'. This remark quieted the mind of Moses, and going back to the Almighty, he said, 'Thou hast a man like this, and yet Thou givest the Torah through me?'. God answered, 'Be silent; thus it has seemed good to me'. Then Moses said, 'Thou hast shown me his knowledge of the Torah;



show me now his reward!' Then God said, 'Turn around'.  
Moses did so, and saw the flesh of Akiba being weighed  
in the market place. Then he said, 'With such a knowledge  
of the Torah, is such his reward?' God answered, 'Silence!  
[19]  
-- thus it has seemed good to me'".

### The Protection of the Torah

Very closely identified with the rewards of Torah,  
is the conception that the Torah vouchsafes protection un-  
to those who hold fast to it. As Al-Nakawa remarks, "If  
a man guard and observe the Torah, he in turn will be guarded  
by the Lord -- 'If ye will keep My covenant, then shall ye  
be Mine own treasure from among all peoples' [Ex.19.5]". [20]

Even the illustrious Joshua did not attain greatness  
except through his study of Torah, and the assistance which  
it afforded him. At the time that the Israelites were en-  
gaged in combat with the Amorites, Joshua took the  
and, showing it to the sun, declared, "Even as I have not  
stood still from [studying] this, so do thou stand still  
before me". Immediately, "The sun stood still and the  
moon stayed" [Josh.10.13]. [21]

R. Menahem expounded in the name of R. Jose, "For  
the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is light" [Pr.6.23]  
-- as a lamp offers but temporary illumination, so the ful-

fillment of a commandment offers but temporary protection; but as light protects permanently, so, too, the Torah. A parable is told of a man who is walking along the road at night in the midst of thick darkness, and who is not only afraid of the thorns, thistles, wild beast and bandits, which he may encounter, but is also confused in regard to the proper path he must follow. If a lighted torch is prepared for him, he is saved the discomfort of the thorns and thistles, but still fears the wild beasts and robbers, nor does he yet know the proper path to take. However, [22] when dawn breaks, all his problems are dissipated.

Al-Nakawa relates a similar tale to illustrate the protective powers of the Torah. A king once commanded his son to go to the palace. The son replied that he feared the brigands on the road. Hearing this, the king took his staff and inscribed it with certain magical charms, and handed it to his son, saying, "With this staff in your hand, you need have no fear of any creature". Likewise, God said to Israel, "My children, occupy yourself [23] in Torah and you need have no fear of any man".

The vitalizing power of the study of Torah is a theme which the Rabbis delight in re-emphasizing. R. Judah the son of R. Hiyya remarked, "Come and see how the dispensation of mortals is not like that of the Holy One, blessed be He. In the case of the former, when a man ad-

ministers a drug to his fellow, it may prove to be beneficial to one limb, but injurious to another, but with God it is not so. He gave a Torah to Israel and it is an elixir of life for man's entire body, as it is said, "And healing to all his flesh" [Pr.4.22].<sup>[24]</sup>

The study of Torah is a panacea for all ills, for R. Joshua b. Levi stated that if a man is on a journey and has no companion, let him occupy himself with the study of *דברים וזכר*, for "they shall be a chaplet of grace" [Pr.1.9].<sup>[25]</sup> If he feels pains in his head, let him study Torah, for "they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head" [Ibid.]. If he feels pains in his throat, he should study Torah, for "and chains around thy neck" [Ibid.]. If he has a pain in his bowels, he should study Torah, because "It shall be a healing to thy navel" [Pr.3.8]. If he feels pains in his bones, he should study, for it is written, "and marrow to thy bones" [Ibid.]. If he feels pain in his whole body, let him study Torah, as it is said,<sup>[26]</sup> "and healing to all his flesh" [Pr.4.22].

That protection against the evil inclination is afforded by Talmud Torah is reflected in the following parable. A king, whose son had suffered a severe wound, medicated it with a plaster, and warned: "My son, as long as this plaster is on your wound, you may do whatever you

like and you will suffer no harm. But if you remove the plaster from your wound, you will get a bad boil". So God told Israel, "I created within you the evil inclination, but I offered you the Torah as a medicinal antidote. As long as you occupy yourselves with Torah, the evil inclination will not rule over you". [27]

Moreover, Talmud Torah saves man from the doom of *Psidd*, for we find Isaiah inquiring of the Lord, "Sovereign of the Universe, what must a man do to be saved from

*Psidd*? God replied, "Let him give charity...let him not behave haughtily to his fellow-men; let him busy himself in the Torah and its commandments; let him live in humility and not speak in pride of spirit. I testify that he who has these qualities will inherit the future life, and will be saved from doom". [28]

#### Study Is Its Own Reward ---- Torah Lishmah

Although it is frequently said that Rabbinic Judaism is a "legal" religion, placing undue emphasis upon the fulfillment of the commandments, it must be noted that the Rabbis realized full well that the motive or intention [*kawwanah*] of the deed was often more important than the act itself. Even though the commandments may first have been fulfilled as a duty, it hoped that, ultimately, they might be fulfilled in joy and out of love for their Creator.

Hence, merely to study Torah as an opus operatum was not considered praiseworthy; it could only be tolerated on the ground that it might eventually lead to study from the higher motive -- *mes*, or "for its own sake"!

In the Tractate Aboth this exhortation to study, not for the purpose of selfish, ulterior motives -- for self-aggrandizement, but to study lishmah -- from pure and disinterested motives, is frequently encountered. Al-Nakawa tells us that even though the reward of a student of Torah is great, in the world to come, yet his purpose in so studying should be not merely to receive the prospective reward, but to study for its own sake! For we read, "Be not like servants who serve the Master on the expectation of receiving a gift, but be like servants who serve the Master not on the condition of receiving a gift. And let the fear of heaven be upon you" [Aboth 1.3]. Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai said, "If you have learned much Torah, ascribe not any merit to yourself, for thereunto were you created" [Ibid.2.9].

R. Zadok said, "Make not of the Torah a crown whereby to aggrandize yourself, nor a spade whereby to dig" [Ibid.4.7]. The lesson is, Al-Nakawa comments, that the Torah must never be made a means of personal gain; no teacher of Torah must earn his livelihood by teaching, per se. In fact, Hillel used to say, "He who makes a worldly use

of the crown of the Torah shall waste away" -- hence, any-  
one who derives a personal profit from the words of Torah  
[29]  
is helping in his own destruction [ibid].

It was taught, "That thou mayest love the Lord thy  
God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou  
mayest cleave to him" [Deut.30.20]. This verse was inter-  
preted to mean that one should not say, "I will read Scrip-  
ture in order that I may be called a Sage; I will study  
that I may be called Rabbi; I will study in order to sit  
in the Assembly of the Elders"; but learn out of love, and  
honor will come in the end! R. Eliezer the son of R. Zadok  
said, "Do good deeds for the sake of their Maker, and speak  
of them for their own sake. Make not of them a crown with  
which to magnify thyself, nor a spade with which to dig.  
And this follows a fortiori: If Belshazzar, who merely  
used the holy vessels which had been profaned, was driven  
from the world, how much the more so one who makes [a worldly]  
[30]  
use of the crown of Torah!"

The fear of deriving any personal profit from his  
study of Torah was carried to such an extreme by R. Tarphon  
that he could never reconcile himself to the fact that he  
had taken advantage of his great reputation as a scholar in  
order to save his life. The celebrated R. Tarphon, it is  
told, was walking along the road one day when he noticed

a vineyard. Being very hungry he decided to enter and take those grapes which were lying on the ground [the ripe grapes had already been gathered], for these were free for the taking, and did not constitute theft. However, it appears that the owner of the vineyard, having been troubled with thieves stealing his produce, was on the lookout for trespassers in the vineyard, so that when R. Tarphon entered, the owner, not recognizing him to be the eminent scholar, seized him, as he imagined him to be the culprit for whom he had been watching.

He was about to throw R. Tarphon into the river, when the Rabbi, so close to death, cried out: "Woe unto Tarphon that he should meet with such a fate!" At these words, the owner of the vineyard was mortified at his error, and immediately released the Rabbi with profuse apologies. Yet R. Tarphon regretted the incident all his life, and was wont to exclaim, "Woe is me that I made use of the crown of the Torah". [31]

R. Eleazar asks, "What is the meaning of the verse, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness -- תורת חסד -- is on her tongue" [Pr. 31.26]? Is there really a law of חסד, and one which is not חסד? The explanation offered is that תורה לשמה is חסד, while that which is not studied חסד is תורה שאינה לשמה. [32]

What are the results of study lishmah? R. Alexandri said: "He who studies the Torah without ulterior motives makes peace among both angels and men". Rab said, "It is as though he built the heavenly and earthly Temples". R. Johanan said, "He also shields the whole world from the consequences of its sins". R. Joshua b. Levi [33] said, "He also hastens the redemption".

R. Bana'ah used to remark: "If one studies Torah lishmah, it becomes to him an elixir of life; but if he studies it not for its own sake, it becomes a deadly poison to him". This he derives by a play upon words, a device which the Rabbis employ with great delight and effectiveness, "My doctrine shall drop [ שֶׁלֶט ] as the rain" [Deut.32.2]; and וְיָבֹשׁ surely means death, as it is said, "And they shall break [ וְיָבֹשׁ ] the heifer's neck there in the valley" [Deut.21.4] [34]

Al-Nakawa assures us that when one occupies himself with Torah lishmah, and studies in a place that is seemly and at a proper time, not only does he bring good into the world, but the Holy One, blessed be He, shows him the mission of the world, and opens his eyes to its glories. He vouchsafes to him intelligence and knowledge in order that he may understand the world's mysteries. R. Hiyya said: "There is a parable of a king who prepared



a feast for all his servants, but those who were his favorites he placed directly before him. Similarly, God gave the Torah to all Israel and placed it before them as a prepared table. But those who studied the Torah for its own sake, God taught out of His own wisdom, and revealed to them things unknown except to those who know Him intimately and think of His name". [35]

The more stringent opinion is that "one who does not fulfill the Torah lishmah, it were better had he never been created", while the more liberal, and, incidentally, the more fruitful viewpoint is that one should study Torah and occupy himself with the precepts even not lishmah, since from his doing it not lishmah, he will ultimately come to do it for its own sake. [36] Rab said, "One should study Torah even if it is not lishmah, for as a reward for the forty-two sacrifices which Balak offered upon the altar, he merited to become the ancestor of Ruth". [37] This same thought is suggested in several other passages. [38] [39]

In bringing our treatment of study lishmah to a conclusion, we consider it most appropriate to cite that passage from Aboth which describes so completely the Rabbinic attitude towards this ideal. [40] "Whosoever labors in the Torah for its own sake merits many things; and not only so, but the whole world is indebted to him. He is called friend, beloved, a lover of the All-present, a lover of mankind,

It clothes him in meekness and reverence, fits him to become just, pious, upright and faithful; it keeps him far from sin, and brings him near to virtue. Through him the world enjoys counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and strength, as it is said, "Counsel is mine, and sound knowledge; I am understanding; I have strength" [Pr.8.14]. It also gives him sovereignty and dominion and discerning judgment; to him the secrets of the Torah are revealed; he is made like a never-failing fountain, and like a river that flows on with ever-sustained vigor; he becomes modest, long-suffering, and forgiving of insults; and it magnifies and exalts him above all things".

CHAPTER SIX

THE NEGLECT OF TORAH

## CHAPTER SIX

We have observed in the preceding chapter how manifold are the rewards of one who occupies himself in the study of Torah, especially if this study be lishmah. Now we turn to a brief consideration of "the other side of the coin". Just as Israel was encouraged to study God's word by the assurance of abundant benefits, so were they cautioned against the neglect of Torah by the grievous disabilities which are incurred by such neglect. Al-Nakawa pointed out that the Rabbis taught: "Over three types of persons the Holy One, blessed be He, weeps every day:- over him who is able to occupy himself with the study of Torah and does not; over him who is unable to so occupy himself but does so nonetheless; and over a leader who [1] domineers over the community".

Moreover, we learn that if two people sit and fail to study Torah, they cause that the Shechinah depart from Israel, "Make haste [flee] my love, and be thou like to a gazelle..." [Cant.8.14]. As a punishment for neglect of Torah, "spoil and sword increase, pestilence and famine comes, people eat but are not satisfied, and eat their bread by weight, for it is written, "And I will bring a sword upon you that shall execute the vengeance of the covenant" [Lev.26.25] -- now "covenant" means nothing

else but "Torah"<sup>[3]</sup>.

Appealing to the parental instincts, the Rabbis warn that children are the victims for [parents'] failure to study Torah, for they taught, "Children perish as a punishment for [unfulfilled] vows." R. Judah Ha-Nasi said, "For the sin of neglect of Torah, for it is written, "Have I smitten your children for nought? They have received no instruction!" [Jer.2.3]."<sup>[4]</sup> R. Hamnuna said that Jerusalem was destroyed only because the children did not attend school, but loitered in the streets.<sup>[5]</sup>

One who neglects the Torah and indulges in idle gossip, of him, R. Levi taught, "He will be made to eat glowing coals of juniper", for it is said, 'The roots of juniper are their food' [Job 30.4]. Why is it written, "And Thou makest man as the fishes of the sea, and as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them" [Hab.1.14]? Why is man compared to the fishes of the sea? To tell you that just as fishes of the sea die when they leave the water and come upon dry land, so also man incurs destruction when he abandons the Torah and its precepts.<sup>[6]</sup>

A further punishment for the neglect of *דברי תורה* is consumption by fire; "and the fire shall devour them" [Ezek.15.7]. R. Dimi said, "Whosoever departs from the words of Torah falls into *פסד'ע*; "The man that strayeth out of the way of understanding, shall rest in the

congregation of the shades[ *PSD'c* ]" [Pr.21.16]. [7]

R. Katina said, "Rain is withheld only because of the neglect of Torah. Because of the sloth displayed by Israel in not occupying themselves with the Torah, the enemy of the Holy One becomes poor." [8] [9] In this same connection R. Joshua b. Levi said: "Every day a Bath Kol goes forth from Mount Horeb and proclaims, saying, 'Woe to mankind because of their insulting the Torah, for everyone who is not occupied with Torah is called "reprobate"'. [9a]

In commenting upon the text, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" [Gen.27.22], R. Simeon [R. Berekiah] said: "When Jacob speaks wrathfully with his voice [complaining and murmuring against God], the hands of Esau [Rome] have dominion; but when Jacob's voice rings out clearly[ which [9b] Al-Nakawa interprets to mean "engaged in study and prayer"] [10] then the hands of Esau have no dominion. Isaac said to Esau: "If thou seest thy brother, Jacob, throw off the yoke of the Torah, then decree his destruction, and thou wilt become his master." [11]

R. Judah said in the name of Rab, "What is meant by 'Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken that he may declare it, why the land perisheth' [Jer.9.11]?"

This question could not be answered by the Sages, or by the Prophets, until the Lord Himself resolved it, as it is written, "And the Lord said, 'Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them'" [Jer.9.12]. Rabbi Judah said, "This means that they did not first utter a benediction over the Torah before studying it." [12]

How diligent were the Rabbis not to neglect their studies, no matter the exigency of the particular situation, or the material benefits to be derived from such laxness, is reflected in the following narrative. R. Jose b. Kisma said: "Once I was walking by the way when I chanced upon a man who greeted me, and I returned his salutation. 'Whence comest thou', he inquired. 'From a great city of wise men and scribes', I replied. He then said to me, 'Rabbi, if it please thee to dwell with us in our place, I will give thee much silver and gold!' But I replied, 'If thou were to give me all the silver and gold in the world, I would not dwell save in a place of Torah, for thus it is written, 'The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver' [Ps.119.72]." [13]

Nor is ignorance of Torah an excuse for its neglect. This we derive from the following striking illustration. The prophet Elijah was once walking along the road when he met a man who was scoffing and blaspheming [his Creator]. The prophet asked, "My son, what will you answer to your

Father on the Day of Judgment?"

"Rabbi, I have an answer", he replied.

"And what is it?", Elijah inquired.

"God did not grant me knowledge or understanding!"

"What is your occupation, my son?"

"I am a fisherman", came the reply.

"Tell me, who taught you to take the flax, to weave nets of it, so that you could cast it into the sea and bring forth fish? For this, knowledge and understanding were granted you, but for Torah, about which it is said, 'But the word is very near unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it' [Deut.30.14] -- for this thou wast not granted understanding!"

Immediately, the man began to weep. Elijah comforted him, "My son, let it not be evil in your eyes, for whenever men depart from Torah, the work of their hands reproves them -- 'they that work in combed flax...shall be ashamed!' [Isa.19.9]."<sup>[14]</sup>

We note how the indolent were condemned in this satirical selection. People say to the sluggard, "Your teacher is in the province; go and learn Torah from him!" But he replies, "I fear the lion in the road." Then they answer, "Lo, your teacher is in the city; arise and go to him!" But the lazy one counters, "I fear lest there be a lion in the streets!" They say to him, "But he lives



very near your house," and he replies, "The lion is outside!" But, they entreat, "He is in the very house!" To this the sluggard replies, "If I go and find the door locked, I shall have to return." Determinedly, they now cry, "But the door is open!" Finally, not knowing what further to reply, the indolent one answers, "Be the door open or closed, I desire to sleep a little longer!" When he arises from his sleep in the morning and food is placed before him, he is too lazy to put it into his mouth, as it is said, "The sluggard burieth his head in the dish, [15] and will not so much as bring it back to his mouth" [Pr.19.24].

Severe opprobrium was attached alike to one who forgot that which he had learned, as well as to him who neglected his study altogether. R. Joshua said: "He who studies Torah and then forgets it, is like a woman who bears [16] a child only to bury it." And we read, further, that "who-so forgets one word of his study, him Scripture regards as if he had forfeited his life", as it is written, 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou [17] forget the things which thine eyes have seen' [Deut.4.9].

No excuse was accepted by the Rabbis for the neglect of one's studies, as the following illustration forcibly demonstrates: A poor man, a rich man, and a wicked man presented themselves before the heavenly tribunal. The poor man was asked, "Why did you not occupy yourself with

Torah?" If he answer that he was poverty-stricken and worried about his sustenance, they say, "Were you any poorer than Hillel!" It is related of Hillel the Elder that for his daily work he only earned half a denarius; but he gave half of it to the doorkeeper of the על שם ת"כ for admission, and spent the remainder on the maintenance of himself and his household. On one occasion, he was without work and consequently earned nothing at all, and the doorkeeper refused him admittance to the House of Study. So he climbed up [upon the roof] and sat outside the window so that he might hear the words of the living God expounded by Shemaiah and Abtalion. Tradition has it that the day referred to was the eve of the Sabbath, in midwinter, and snow fell heavily.

At the break of dawn Shemaiah said to Abtalion, "My colleague, usually the room is light [at this time] but today it is dark; perhaps it is cloudy". They chanced to look up at the window and saw the form of a man. Going outside, they found him covered with three cubits of snow. Releasing him from his position, they brought him down and washed and rubbed him [to restore circulation], even placing him before a fire, saying, "This man is deserving that the Sabbath be profaned on his behalf".

Even though this saint was in dire straits, he still studied Torah and raised up many disciples who were brilliant and consecrated scholars, truly the great men of their gen-

[18]  
eration. For we read that Hillel had eighty disciples, thirty of whom were deserving that the Shechinah rest upon them as upon Moses, our Teacher, and thirty of whom merited that the sun should stand still for them as it had for Joshua ben Nun, and the remaining twenty were only of average merit; the most outstanding among these was Jonathan b. Uzziel, while the one of least importance was Johanan b. Zakkai. [It is said of Jonathan b. Uzziel, that whenever he sat and toiled in the Torah, the birds that flew overhead were burned (by the brilliance which emanated from the scholar)].

The rich man is asked, "Why did you not occupy yourself with Torah?" If he answers that he was rich and consequently worried about his possessions, they say to him, "Were you more wealthy than R. Eleazar b. Harsom, of whom it is related that his father bequeathed to him a thousand cities and a corresponding fleet of a thousand ships; yet every day he slung a bag of flour over his shoulders and went from city to city and from province to province in order to learn Torah. On one occasion his servants, who did not know him personally, seized him for forced labor. He said to them, "I implore you, let me go that I may study Torah". They answered, "By the life of R. Eleazar b. Harsom, we will not release you." Although they were his servants, <sup>never went to see them, but</sup> ~~he still~~ sat day and night engrossed in the study of Torah.

The wicked man is asked, "Why did you not occupy yourself in Torah?" If he answers that he was handsome, and troubled by his passions, he is asked, "Were you more handsome than Joseph? It is related of Joseph the righteous, that Potiphar's wife tempted him every day. The dresses which she donned for his sake in the morning, she did not wear again in the evening, and vice versa. Though she threatened him with imprisonment, with bodily disfigurement, with blinding, and even attempted to bribe him with large sums of money, he refused to yield to her.

Thus, the example of Hillel condemns the poor, [19]  
R. Eleazar b. Harsom the rich, and Joseph the wicked.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STUDENTS OF THE TORAH

## CHAPTER SEVEN

If, as we have seen in a previous discussion, the study of Torah, the occupation with God's incomparable revelation, was considered one of the most pre-eminent of Israel's ideals or mitzwot -- called, like prayer, worship [abodah] and oft-times superceding it in import -- we can then well understand the position of high honor and esteem which the *תלמידי חכמים* ["Disciples of the Wise"] enjoyed. They were the torchbearers of Torah, par excellence! If Israel recognized any aristocracy at all, after Jewish Statehood had come to an end, it was the aristocracy of learning! That this is no mere cliché is attested by the opinion which states that if a scholar and the King of Israel be taken captive at the same time, the scholar must be ransomed first, since he cannot be replaced, while any Jew is qualified for kingship. [1] The scholar was venerated, no matter how humble his station in life otherwise, out of deference for the honor due the Torah. Birth, riches, and other advantages are as nothing in comparison with learning; indeed, "a scholarly bastard takes precedence over an ignorant high priest." One who displays hatred or scorn for a scholar incurs the penalty [2] of excommunication.

What were the qualities and qualifications, the merits and privileges, the duties and obligations of these *ר'נחמ'א'נדא*? To this question we now address ourselves in the present chapter.

The Talmid Hakam was accorded the greatest honor because he was the teacher of the law. It was written, "if ye shall reject My statutes" [Lev.26.5] -- these are the teachers of "My statutes!" Hence those who show contempt for scholars have no portion in the world to come. R. Judah taught, "Jerusalem was destroyed only because the people scorned the scholars." [3] So highly regarded was the scholar by the masses of people that, although it was customary to accompany home the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, if he emerged from the Holy of Holies unharmed, it happened that when the people were giving an ovation to the High Priest on such an occasion, and two sages, Shemaiah and Abtalion, chanced to pass by, the people deserted the High Priest and followed the sages, to the former's displeasure. [4]

The program according to which the Talmid Hakam was to regulate his entire life is set forth in the opening chapter of Derek Erez Zuta: "The way of the wise is to be modest, humble, alert, and intelligent; to endure injustice, to make himself beloved of men; to be gracious even in intercourse with subordinates; to avoid wrong-doing; to judge each man according to his deeds; to act in accordance

with the motto, 'I take no pleasure in the good things of this world, seeing that life here below is not my portion.' Wrapped in his mantle, he sits at the feet of the wise; no one can detect anything unseemly in him; he puts pertinent questions and gives suitable answers."<sup>[5]</sup>

Humility is one of the pre-requisites of true learning. "As wine does not keep in vessels of gold or silver but in the most common of vessels, earthenware, so the words of Torah keep only in one who humbles himself;" and "just as water flows from a higher level to a lower, so, too, the words of Torah endure only with the humble"<sup>[6]</sup>. This saying was current among the Rabbis of Jabneh, and may be considered expressive of the true Rabbinic spirit:- "I am a creature and my fellow is a creature; my work is in town and his work is in the field; I rise early to my work and he to his. As I do not consider his occupation superior to mine, so I do not consider mine superior to his. Perhaps you may say, 'I accomplished much and he little,' but we are taught: It matters not whether much or little, if only a man directs his mind to Heaven."<sup>[7]</sup> In this connection Moore comments, "The scholar and the peasant respect each other's calling, and the scholar recognizes that in God's sight it is not the nature of a man's work, nor its intrinsic importance that counts, but the whole-heartedness of the thought of God with which it is done."<sup>[8]</sup>



Although modesty and humility are among the cardinal virtues of the Talmid Hakam, he is enjoined to uphold his rank and not to compromise his dignity. Indeed, Al-Nakawa tells us that the scholar is not permitted to allow anyone to omit the performance of any act of reverence due him, nor may the public scorn of a scholar remain unchallenged, inasmuch as in him and through him the Torah, itself, is honored or slighted. Therefore, the Rabbis said, "Any scholar who does not avenge himself and retain anger [9] like a serpent, is no real scholar." [10] But if he, who shows contempt for the scholar, scorning him publicly, immediately repents and seeks forgiveness, the scholar must forgive him his sinful conduct, for the way of the Lord is to be forgiving.

The independence and freedom which the Talmid Hakam enjoyed were due, in a measure, to the fact that his frugal needs were readily satisfied. His guiding principle was: "This is the path of the Torah -- a morsel of bread with salt shalt thou eat; thou shalt drink water by measure, and shalt sleep upon the ground, and live a life of trouble, the while thou toilest in the Torah. If thou doest thus, happy shalt thou be in this world, and it shall be well with thee in the world to come." [11] Al-Nakawa adds that the early *P'arshon*, for example, Hillel, Shammai, and Hanina b. Dosa, occupied themselves in Torah, even though they

were in dire need. With reference to Hanina b. Dosa, a Bath Kol went forth and declared, "The entire world is sustained only because of Hanina, My son." It is told that he subsisted on a kab of carob-beans from one week to another.

Likewise, Jonathan b. Amram, R. Joshua b. Hanina, and R. Jose paid no attention to financial security but rejoiced in their portion and worked industriously in Torah, despite the pressure of the mundane world. They sustained themselves by their own labor and took no benefit from the crown of Torah -- for wealth and worldly possessions are ephemeral -- "For riches make themselves wings" [Pr.23.51], and the only true wealth which endures forever is the wealth  
[12]  
of the Torah.

R. Joshua [Judah] b. Hiyya taught: "Anyone who occupies himself in Torah in the midst of poverty, his prayer will be heard by God", for it is said, "And though the Lord give you sparing bread and scant water, yet shall not Thy teacher hide Himself anymore, but thine eyes shall see Thy Teacher" [Isa.30.20]. R. Abahu added, "He is sustained by the radiance of the Shechinah." Certainly if the poor man is obligated to study Torah in the midst of personal distress, how much the more is it incumbent upon the rich  
[13]  
man to study Torah.

Although the *פ'נח יא'נח* were content to live

a most frugal existence, it was, nonetheless, incumbent upon the community to maintain them. We recall the incident of R. Tarphon who gave R. Akiba a large sum of money to invest for the maintenance of students, but who, instead, distributed the money among the scholars, feeling that such [14] was the soundest investment. But less familiar is the story of Bar Bohin, upon whom the Rabbis called in connection with a collection of contributions for the maintenance of students. Overhearing him order his sons to purchase the cheapest of withered endives for food, they expected to obtain very little from such a miserly person. However, they later approached him, and he recommended them to go to his wife, who would give them a contribution. Approaching her with their request, she inquired, "Shall I give you a heaped measure of denarii or an exact one?" They replied, "Your husband did not specify which." "I will give you a heaped measure," she said, "and if my husband complains, I shall tell him I gave it from my dowry." When the Rabbis returned to the husband, he asked, "What did she give you -- a heaped or an exact measure?" They replied, "Although we did not specify which, she gave us a heaped measure." He said, "Just so was it my wish to you -- why didn't you come to me first?" They answered, a bit shamefacedly, "We overheard you telling your sons to purchase the cheapest kind of endives, and we thought

'Does a man who has so much money eat endives of which one gets two measures for a mina?' To this he replied, "In what concerns myself, I can do as I like, but in regard to that which is commanded me by my Creator, I have no power or authority."<sup>[15]</sup>

It should not be imagined from the foregoing discussion that the life of the Talmid Haham was altogether one of travail and disability. There were certain privileges and courtesies which he enjoyed out of deference to his status. Al-Nakawa tells us that there are certain cases wherein the Rabbis permit scholars to derive benefit from the Torah, namely, a scholar might give his money to others to invest for him in business, and one who so invests a scholar's money is deemed praiseworthy and certain of future reward. Preference was always given a scholar -- in purchasing merchandise and in disposing of it. This is their just due, Al-Nakawa maintains, just as was the

משלם תלמוד, in order that scholars might be provided for with fitting honor. "These above mentioned courtesies really do not constitute a benefit from Torah; it is merely that scholars should be paid greater honor than ordinary men, for the latter are <sup>[16]</sup> *שולחן ערוך*."

Maimonides tells us that it is a mitzwah to respect every Talmid Hakam, even though he be not one's master [teacher], by rising in his presence, from the

time that the scholar is within four ells of a person; this is derived from "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old men" [Lev. 19.32]-- the old man herein mentioned is the old man who has acquired wisdom. [17]

We further learn that "the *ר' חכמי' סנה* do not go forth personally to work with the rest of the population on construction and digging for the state, or like labor, so as not to expose themselves to possible degradation by the *ש' ו' כ' ד' ח' ט' י' י"א*. They are not levied [taxes] for the erection of a wall, repairing of the gates, wages for the watchman, etc., nor for the king's gift-fund. They are not obligated to contribute to taxes, whether a specific city tax, or a general head tax. If he is involved in a trial, and is standing awaiting his turn among the other litigants, he should be given a seat and his case should be given preference!" [18] A later opinion gives the Talmid Hakam the right to decline to present himself as a witness in legal litigations involving financial matters, before a judge who is his inferior in knowledge. [19]

We have observed that a true scholar must be modest and humble, and that he must not make his knowledge of Torah a source of personal aggrandizement. What were some of his other qualifications, First, he is enjoined to

be fluent with Torah, in its entirety, so that if one inquires about a matter, he may answer with authority, and according to Halacha! "He should be scrupulous to say of a thing that is right, "right", and of a thing that is wrong, "wrong"! About a matter with which he is unfamiliar, he should not hesitate to admit "I have not heard", and similarly, if he does not understand [a point of law], he should admit his deficiency. He should be most cautious lest he err in the Law and be guilty of declaring "the unclean to be clean", and vice versa, or permitting the prohibited, etc. His knowledge should be on "the tip of his tongue" [ ל'פניו ידבר ], in order that he may answer a questioner properly. The rabbis taught, "You shall teach your son diligently" that ל'פניו ידבר may be sharp in his mouth. For if a man inquire of you, you shall not hesitate, but answer immediately. "Say unto wisdom--'Thou art my sister', and call understanding thy kinswoman" [Pr. 7.4], and say, "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be put to shame when they speak with their enemies in the gate" [Ps. 127.5].

The Talmide Hakamim were the interpreters of Torah, for it was taught at the school of R. Anan: What is the exposition of the Scriptural text, "Ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit on rich cloths, and ye that walk by the

way, tell of it" [Judg.5.10]? "Ye that ride on white asses" refers to the scholars who travel from town to town, and from province to province to study the Torah; "white" means that they clarify it like noon-day [a word-play on *לִבְיוֹם* and *לִבְיוֹם*]; "that sit on rich cloths" means that they render true judgments for the sake of the truth; "that walk" refers to the students of Scripture; "by the way" refers to the students of the Mishnah; "tell of it" refers to the students of the Talmud, for all their talk consists of *גַּבְרֵי תוֹרָה*. [21]

A scholar, moreover, is warned to guard against complacency. Al-Nakawa says: "Let a scholar not imagine that he has reached the acme of all wisdom, and that he understands the ultimate of its meaning, but, rather, what a man studies one day, let him repeat again and again on the morrow, for each time he may discover something which he previously failed to perceive; "Turn it and turn it, for all is in it, and look in it, and grow grey and old in it, and turn not away from it, for there is no better rule for thee than it" [Aboth 5.25]. [22]

Study is an endless endeavor, for R. Hiyya b. Ashi taught: "Scholars have no respite from studying words of Torah, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, [22a] for it is said, 'They go from strength to strength' [Ps.84.8]."

Closely associated with the quality of humility which the scholar is exhorted to manifest, is the insistence that he keep an open mind in his relationship with his colleagues and students, for even a great mind may learn from a lesser one. Al-Nakawa teaches us that one should associate himself with a scholar in order to study Torah with him, but in the event that a scholar is unobtainable, then one should find a student, even one of lesser intellectual attainments, for out of their discussions of Torah they will learn from one another. "For just as the scholar teaches the student, so, too, does the teacher learn from the student, especially if he be an apt pupil; but even if the student is not particularly gifted, the instructor may profit from his questions." In this regard, R. Nahman b. Isaac asked: "Why is the Torah compared to wood [Pr.3.18]? Just as in the case of wood, a small faggot may set ablaze a larger branch, so an insignificant scholar may stimulate a superior scholar." [23]

This is in agreement with the thought of R. Hanina, who said, "I have learned much Torah from my teachers, more from my associates than from my teachers, but from my students I have learned more than from all of them." [24] Ben Zoma said, "Who is wise? He who learns from every man, as it is said, 'From all my teachers I get understanding...' [Ps.119.99]." [25]



True scholars must never be jealous of one another, begrudging the other's knowledge, but should assist each other at all times. It is taught that if two scholars, residing in the same city, do not support each other in the study of Torah, "one dies and the other goes into exile." [26] Tradition has it that R. Akiba had twelve thousand disciples, from Gabbath to Antipatris, and all of them died at the same period -- because they looked grudgingly upon each other. Eventually Akiba raised seven [new] disciples, and admonished them: "My sons, the previous ones died only because they begrudged each other the knowledge of Torah; see to it that you do not act in like manner." It is told that they heeded well this admonition, and eventually [29] filled the whole land of Israel with Torah.

We can deduce from the following statement that there must have been poseurs in Israel who sought to pass as ר'נחמיה אבא, in order to achieve status, or to derive the benefits which accrued to one of that position. R. Tubi [R. Shizebi] said in the name of R. Eleazar [ben Azariah]: "What is the meaning of the verse, 'The slothful man shall not hunt his prey' [Pr.12.27]? It means that he who is, as it were, a cunning hunter [he who poses as a scholar without having acquired knowledge] does not deserve to live or to have length of days." [30]

Study Combined With An Occupation

The exaltation of labor seems to appear on almost every page of Jewish literature. No doubt the Rabbinic conception of man as a co-worker with the Creator provides the key to the Jewish attitude toward labor. "Of all the nations of antiquity, Israel alone recognized that labor holds the secret springs of joy, and emphasized the greater dignity of labor than that of warfare..... work, no matter of what nature, provided it be honest and in a good cause, exalts and dignifies man, and renders him a true child of God." [31] The Rabbis taught that a man is not termed "complete" except through labor. [32] Labor is even mentioned in connection with the creation of the world, for we read, "And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made" [Gen.2.2]. R. Eleazar said, "Even Adam was commanded to work, and he did not taste food until he had done his work, as it is written, 'The Lord took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it', after which He said, 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest eat....' [33] [Gen.2.15-16]"

Just as the Lord enjoined Israel concerning the observance of the Sabbath, so did He charge them with reference to labor, "Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it; six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work..." [34] [Ex.20.8-9].

Labor, again, was exalted inasmuch as Israel's greatest heroes were occupied in it: Jacob [Gen.30.31]; Moses [Ex.3.1]; David [Ps.78.70]; Amos [7.14]; etc. <sup>[35]</sup> Moreover, the Shechinah did not appear unto Moses [Ex.3.-2], to Elisha [I Ki.19.19f], or to Israel [Ex.39.43; 35.8], except through work. With respect to the latter, how did Moses bless them? He said: "May it be acceptable that the Shechinah may abide with the work of your hands" -- then <sup>[36]</sup> 'The cloud filled the tabernacle' [Ex.40.34f.].

Although God created a multitude of creatures in His universe, the privilege of labor was granted only to human beings. R. Meir used to say, "Have you ever seen a lion that was a porter, a bear that was a fruit-picker, a fox a merchant? Or have you seen any of the wild animals doing any type of work? Why was the privilege of labor not granted to the animals? Not because they are lowly creatures, but because labor is a precious gift." <sup>[37]</sup>

Having now seen how great was the Rabbinic idealization of labor, we may well ask: Is the study of Torah to absorb the entire time and energy of the scholar, or is the oft-repeated injunction in regard to labor, one which the *פנח א'נח*, too, must observe? The generally accepted view of the Rabbis is that study of Torah should be combined with a worldly occupation, in order that he may sustain himself, and not become a burden upon the com-

munity. For, as we have previously seen, he may not derive any personal benefit from the "crown of the Torah", inas-  
[38] much as its rewards are reserved for the world to come. Rabban Gamliel, the son of Judah the Prince, taught that "study of Torah along with worldly occupation is praiseworthy, for labor in the two of them causes sin to be forgotten" [Aboth 2.2]. Al-Nakawa comments that by combining an occupation with one's studies, he will have no leisure time to sin, and if one labors at an occupation, his studies will consequently prosper. He will not covet or steal the property of others, and will not become a burden upon his community, saying, "Provide a living for me, for I am  
[39] a scholar."

Our author further teaches that "all who study Torah and do not earn a livelihood for themselves through gainful labor, will ultimately steal from mankind, for we read, "All Torah without labor ends in failure and occasions  
[40] sin' [Aboth 2.2]". In this connection R. Meir taught, "One who does not work incurs the death penalty! How? If he is idle for several days and has nothing to eat, he goes out and steals. He is then seized and reported to the government authorities, who force him to work on the Sabbath. And what was the cause of his working on the Sabbath, and thus desecrating it? He, himself, inasmuch  
[41] as he was unwilling to work during the week."

Perhaps we may discern in the following citation, a Rabbinic protest against the life of the recluse, who withdrew himself from the work of the world to devote himself entirely to spiritual reflection. "Greater is he who enjoys the fruit of his labor, than he who fears Heaven, for with regard to the latter it is written, 'Happy is the man that feareth the Lord' [Ps.112.1]; but with regard to him that enjoys the fruit of his labor it is written, 'When thou eatest the labor of thy hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee' [Ps.128.2] -- 'Happy shalt thou be'-- in this world; 'and it shall be well with thee'-- in the world to come. About the one who merely fears Heaven ~~it~~ is not written 'and it shall be well with thee'." [42]

The early *P'arabim* strove to make a livelihood by laboring in some manner of work, and, although some of them were *P'arabim*, and heads of academies -- truly the great ones of their generations -- they did not consider themselves too important to sustain themselves by performing even the most menial of tasks. Thus, R. Jose carried wood, and, boasting of his work, rejoiced in his portion. R. Joshua was a charcoal-burner, R. Isaac a blacksmith, and R. Johanan a sandelmaker. R. Hilkiyah, the nephew of Hillel, was a hired hand employed in the vineyards, while Abba Saul served as a grave-digger!

Hillel the Elder, even though he was a Nasi in Israel and a grandson of King Judah, was a simple hewer of wood. Yet all these pious ones whose work was arduous and who earned a livelihood from these menial occupation, were, nonetheless, very scrupulous in their studies, knew much Torah, and raised up many disciples. [43]

Yet, although labor is precious and highly praiseworthy, one should make his study of Torah fixed [primary], and his occupation provisional [secondary]. For although labor sustains him in this world, the study of Torah leads him to the life of the world to come. [44] Shammai taught: "Make thy Torah a fixed [matter]. Say little and do much!" [Aboth 1.15].

The middle course, the happy medium, was the ideal which the Rabbis advocated; both extremes, all study and no labor, and vice versa, were to be avoided. On the one hand, we have the statement: "Come and see that the later generations are not like the former generations. The former generations made their Torah their principal concern and their work only secondary, and both flourished; whereas, the later generations made their work their principal concern and their Torah only occasional, and neither flourished!" [45] On the other hand, the extreme opinion for complete abstinence from labor is reflected in this selection, "I set aside all worldly work and teach my son

nothing but Torah, the fruit of which a man eats in this world, and the capital remains for the world to come. With worldly occupations it is otherwise: when a man falls ill, or grows old, or is suffering and unable to continue with his work, he dies of hunger. With Torah, however, it is not so; but it guards him from all evil in his youth and gives him a hopeful future in his old age." [46]

Perhaps this latter opinion is a "minority report", as it were; no doubt there were those devotees of this philosophy who neglected their livelihood for a complete absorption in their study of Torah. To some extent it may explain the exhortation to be generous in offering hospitality to students. In fact, for a wealthy man to accept a *רצח א'נדן* for a son-in-law, thus freeing him from the responsibility of earning a living, so that he might devote his complete energies to the acquisition of knowledge, was considered most meritorious. [47]

This minority feeling must have derived much of its motivation from the teaching: "He that takes upon himself the yoke of the Law, from him the yoke of worldly care shall be removed" [Aboth 3.5]. R. Simon b. Yohai, it is recorded, is one who successfully lived by this ideal, and was provided for in a miraculous manner. [48]

The Merit of the Righteous

With his discussion of the Talmide Hakamim, Al-Nakawa calls to mind the great merit of these righteous ones who lived their lives in Torah -- how the world endures only by virtue of their existence -- that mankind is benefited by their lives and sorely grieved at their passing. Indeed, the Rabbis taught: "When the wicked enter the world, wrath enters therein; when the wicked perish from the world, good comes into the world. When the righteous departeth from the world, evil enters therein; and when the righteous enter the world, good cometh into it." [49]

It was said that when R. Adda b. Ahwah wished for rain to fall, he would remove one of his boots [to go bare-foot, and fast]; if he took off both boots, a flood would deluge the land. If a house was in danger of falling, he would place one of his disciples nearby, until all the goods in the house were removed, or he might even stand by the house himself. The Rabbis sent to ask him: "What good deeds have you done [to merit this]?" He replied: "No man entered the Synagogue before me, and none remained there when I departed. I never walked four cubits without thinking about Torah; I never made mention of Torah in an unclean place. I never spread my bed in order to have a fixed sleep. I never strutted among my fellow-scholars, or gave one of them a nick-name, or rejoiced when one stumbled. No curse



of any one of them ever came upon my bed [he forgave one who did him a wrong before nightfall]. I never walked by the side of my debtor [to embarrass him]; I never flew into a passion in my house, so as to fulfill the words of the Psalmist: 'I walk within my house with a perfect heart' [Ps.101.2]."

Another telling illustration of the merit of the Talmide Hakamim is the following selection. Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah said, "Let thy house be a meeting place for the wise; sit amidst the dust of their feet, and drink deeply of their words" [Aboth 1.4]; for when sages and their disciples enter a man's house, it is blessed through their merit. So Jacob brought blessing to Laban through his merit, Joseph to Potiphar, and the Ark -- through its merit-- to the House of Obed-Edom. Now this is a case of a fortiori. If the Ark, which contained only the two tables of stone, and no more, could bring blessing into a house, how much more can living sages and their disciples do so through their merit.

Al-Nakawa teaches us that no righteous man departs from the world except for the iniquities of the men of his generation. For whenever Israel sins before the Holy One, blessed be He, He removes the righteous from their midst in order that they might be spared the punishment which God executes upon Israel for its transgressions, and so that the good which has accrued to Israel because of the

merit of the righteous, might be removed. The Rabbis taught that when Aaron died, the clouds of glory departed because of his merit, and, similarly, when Miriam died, the well disappeared. R. Judan b. Shalom asked, "Why is the section dealing with the death of Aaron placed in juxtaposition to the section dealing with the breaking of the tables of stone?" This teaches that the death of the righteous is as grievous to God as was the breaking of the tables on which the Torah was given. [52]

Will the revered teachers, the renowned men of great knowledge be forgotten after their death? To this question, Al-Nakawa hastens to reply emphatically in the negative. For, he says, the verse, "Sweet is the sleep of a laboring man, whether he eat little or much; but the satiety of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" [Eccl.5.11] refers to those "rich" in Torah! What, then, does it mean? Only that if a man teach Torah to many, his students will not permit him to "sleep", for whenever they are engaged in Torah, they will speak of his reputation, and reverently mention his name. Similarly, Moses our Teacher, of blessed memory, instructed Israel in Torah and fixed [the order of] the parashas to be read each week, on the Festivals, and the New Moons. Moses said to the Almighty: "Master of the Universe, when I am dead I shall not be remembered"; to which God replied, "Surely, just as you live today, so shall you continue to live whenever Israel reads the Torah!" [53]

Al-Nakawa illustrates the point that the world endures because of the righteous, and that their merit guides all Israel both in this world and in the here-after, by the following midrash. When R. Eliezer fell sick, he was visited by four of his disciples: R. Tarphon, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Akiba. R. Tarphon observed: "Thou art more dear to Israel than rain -- for rain is precious in this world, while thou art so, both in this world and in the world to come."

R. Joshua remarked: "Thou art more valuable to Israel than the sun's orb -- for it is but for this world, while my master is for both this world and the next."

R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: "Thou art better to Israel than a father and a mother -- these are for this world, while my master is both for this world and the world to come."

But R. Akiba observed: "Suffering is precious!" Thereupon, the sick R. Eliezer said to them, "Support me that I may hear the words of Akiba, my disciple, so that I may be inscribed in Heaven by repentance."<sup>[54]</sup>

Good departs with the righteous when they pass away, for we are taught: "When Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah<sup>[55]</sup> and Jose b. Judah of Jerusalem died, the grape-clusters ceased", as it is written, "There is no cluster to eat"

[Micah 7.1]. What does "grape-clusters" [<sup>וְיִסְדִּיכֶם</sup>] mean?

R. Judah said: "A man in whom there is everything [<sup>וְכָל דָּבָר עִינֵי</sup>]"<sup>[56]</sup>

When the soul of R. Huna departed, they thought of placing a scroll of the law upon his bier, but R. Hisda objected: "Should one do for him now, something that he did not permit during his lifetime?" Then the bier was unable to pass through the door-way, which was too narrow, so they thought of letting it down from the roof. R. Hisda objected, "The honor of a *פון א'נדר* requires that his bier should pass through the door". Then they thought of transferring the body to a smaller bed, but R. Hisda said, "The honor of a *פון א'נדר* requires that he be taken out on the first bier." Thereupon they broke open the door-way and brought out the bier.

In opening the funeral address, R. Abba said, "Our master was worthy that the Shechinah should abide with him, but the fact of his being in Babylon prevented it!" [57]

Our author comments that when the former prophets died, the Urim and Thummim ceased, and when the latter prophets [Haggai, Zecahriah and Malachi] passed away, the Holy Spirit [Divine inspiration] departed from Israel.

On one occasion a group of Rabbis were sitting in the upper chamber of Gurya's house in Jericho, when a Bath Kol announced: "There is one man in your midst who is deserving that the Shechinah should alight upon him, but his generation is unworthy of it!" They all looked in the direction of Hillel the Elder, and when he died they la-

mented over him, "Alas, the pious man! Alas, the humble  
man! Disciple of Ezra!" [58]

On the day when Rabbi died, a public fast was decreed, and prayers for divine mercy were offered. It was announced, furthermore, that whoever said that Rabbi was dead, would be put to death by the sword!

At the time of his passing, Rabbi raised his ten fingers heavenward and said, "Sovereign of the Universe, it is revealed and known to you that with these ten fingers I have labored in דברים רבים, and that I enjoyed no worldly benefit [therefrom], even with my little finger. May it be Thy will that there be peace in my final resting place." A Bath Kol echoed forth announcing, "He shall enter into peace." [Isa.57.2] [59]

Al-Nakawa informs us that all the great men of the generation are obliged to occupy themselves with the burial of the righteous, for the Mishnah teaches, "Joseph earned merit by burying his father, and there were none among his brothers greater than he. And whom have we greater than Joseph, since none other than Moses occupied himself with his [Joseph's] burial. Whom have we greater than Moses, since none other than the Lord, Himself, was occupied with his burial. And not only Moses but all the righteous, as it is said, 'And thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward' [Isa.58.8]." [60] [61]

R. Eleazar stated that when a righteous man departs from the world, he is welcomed by three companies of ministering angels. The first exclaims: "Come into peace"; the second calls, "He who walketh in his uprightness"; while the third cries, "He shall enter into peace." Whereas, when a wicked man passes away, he is met by three groups of angels of destruction. One announces, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked;" the second tells him, "He shall lie down in sorrow"; while the third announces, "Go down and be thou laid among the uncircumcized."  
[62]

There are many clear implications in the poignant and tragic story, related by Al-Nakawa, of the martyrdom of R. Akiba. When the evil government [Rome] issued a decree forbidding the Jews to study Torah, R. Akiba, ignoring the edict, gathered a multitude of Jews and preached to them. A certain Pappos b. Judah found him thus teaching and inquired: "Master, do you not fear the government?" Akiba replied: "Are you the Pappos who has the reputation of a sage; verily, you speak like a fool. Let me tell you a parable of which you remind me.

Once there was a fox who was walking along the river bank when he noticed the fish swimming to and fro in the water. The fox asked them: 'Why are you running so?' 'We are afraid of the hooks and nets', the fish replied.

'Then why not come out of the water and dwell with me on dry land, as our fathers formerly lived together?', the fox asked. The fish replied, 'Are you the beast who is considered the most clever of all animals? Surely, you are a fool! If we fear for our lives in our natural habitat, how much the more would we be endangered on dry land!'

And R. Akiba continued to Pappos, "If now we fear for our lives while engaged in the Torah, of which it is written, "For it is thy life and the length of thy days" [Deut.30.20], how much the greater would be our danger if we ceased to study Torah!"

Not long afterwards, R. Akiba was seized by the [Roman] authorities and cast into prison, and shortly thereafter Pappos was thrown into an adjoining cell. He called to Akiba: "Happy art thou, R. Akiba, who have been apprehended because of your labors in the Torah, but woe unto me, Pappos, for I have been cast into prison because of inconsequential matters."

Tradition has it that when they brought out R. Akiba to execute him, it was the time for reciting the Shema. They scraped his flesh with combs of iron, yet all the while he continued with his prayers, accepting death because of his love of God. His students said to him, "Master, you have prayed long enough". But Akiba replied, "All my life I was troubled by the words, "And thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul' [Deut.6.5], which means that even if men tear your heart and take your soul from you, still must you love him. And so, realizing at last the true meaning of this commandment, he continued to pray, and dwelt so long on the word שמך, that his soul departed while he was yet speaking of God's Unity.

Then the ministering angels said to God, "O Lord, King of the Universe, is this the reward for the Torah that Akiba should perish in such a manner? It were much better had he died of old age by Thy hand, and not such a miserable death at the hands of the heathen." Then a Bath Kol came down from heaven and declared, "Happy art thou, Akiba, that thy soul departed with the word שמך; [63] Thou art ready to enter into eternal life!"

Talmid Hakam and Am Ha'aretz

The term "Am Ha'aretz" [ אמ הארץ ], literally translated, means "the people of the land", or the rural population. In common parlance it was used in the sense of "ignoramus", and was particularly applied to one ignorant of Jewish matters. The term came to denote those country people who were inaccessible to the teachings of the synagogue. The term may have had its origin as early as the exile, when it was said "none remained, except the



poorest sort of the people of the land." [II Kings 24.14]  
 Later the Hasidim, or pious ones, separated [hence the term  
Pharisees, or Separatists] from the "vulgar mob", shunning  
 such contact with the impure as being defiling, and united  
 in their own groups [Haberim] for common worship and en-  
 deavor. This exclusiveness only intensified the ill-feel-  
 ing between the סוֹדֵי נִיחַ and the Pharisees, and the  
 latter, placing all its emphasis on Torah and on learning,  
 held the former in utter contempt. It is maintained by  
 some that this hostile attitude which the Pharisees de-  
 played towards the masses of the people, made possible  
 the ultimate triumph of the Church, which appealed to and  
 chiefly recruited its followers from the ranks of the com-  
 mon, untaught masses.. [64]

Al-Nakawa reveals the bitter animosity which the Tal-  
mid Hakam and the Am Ha'aretz manifested for one another  
 in the following selections. "A scholar before a סוֹדֵי נִיחַ  
 is like a golden vessel; if he converses with him, he is  
 like an earthen vessel." All the vessels were passing by  
 the market-place and no one was able to perceive what was  
 in them, but when the glass vessel passed by, all could  
 tell its contents. So the אֲדָמָה קַח is distinguished  
 from the סוֹדֵי נִיחַ by his mantle, by his walk in the  
 market place, and by his business. [65]

Our Rabbis taught: Who is an Am Ha'aretz? R. Meier

said, "He who does not recite the Shema, with its accompanying benedictions, morning and night"; the sages say, "Whoever does not put on the Tephillin [phylacteries];" Ben Azzai says, "Whoever has not the fringe upon his garment." R. Jonathan b. Joseph says, "Whoever has sons and does not rear them to study Torah." Others say, "Even if he learned Scripture and Mishnah, but did not attend upon scholars, he is an *שורץ* *פר*. If one learned Scripture but not Mishnah, he is a boor; if he learned neither Scripture nor Mishnah, concerning him it is written, "I will sow the House of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast." [66]  
[Jer.31.27]

R. Judah b. Ilai taught: "What is the meaning of the verse, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word?" [Isa.66.5] - - this refers to scholars; "your brethren" - - to students of Scripture; "that hate you" - - refers to students of Mishnah; "that cast you out" - - refers to the ignorant." Ab-Nakawa adds that "the hatred which the ignorant have for the scholarly, is greater than that which the heathen nations have for Israel." [68]

R. Meir [Rabbi] taught: "An *שורץ* *פר* may not eat of the flesh of cattle, as it is said, 'This is the law [ *שורץ* ] of the beast and of the fowl' [Lev.11.46]; whoever engages in the study of Torah may eat the flesh of beast and fowl, but to him who does not so engage [the

Am Ha'aretz], they are forbidden."

R. Eleazar said, "It is permissible to stab an אכזרי on the Day of Atonement, even if it should fall on a Sabbath!" His disciples replied, "Master, do you imply 'to slaughter' him? He returned, "The one [ritual slaughter] requires a benediction; whereas, the other [stabbing] does not." [69]

R. Eleazar further said, "It is forbidden to associate with an Am Ha'aretz on the highway, for it is written, 'For that [Torah] is thy life and the length of thy days.' [Deut.30.20] If the אכזרי has no care for his own life [by forsaking the Torah], how much less thought will he have for the life of his companions!"

R. Hiyya taught, "Whoever studies Torah in the presence of an Am Ha'aretz, it is as if he had intercourse with the latter's betrothed in his very presence - - so great is the affrontery! For it is written, 'Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance [אשר] of the congregation of Jacob' [Deut.33.4]; do not read אשר, but אשר [70] [betrothed]!"

The Rabbis, moreover, taught six things in connection with the אכזרי: "We do not commit testimony to them; we do not accept testimony from them; we do not entrust them with a secret; we do not appoint them as guardians of orphans; we do not appoint them as custodians

of the charity-box; and we must not associate with them on the road. Yet, withal, the punishment of a scholar, if he sin, is greater than that of an *סורקן* PY who sins." [71]

In this regard, R. Simeon b. Halaftha said, "If one learns *שלושה עשר* and does not fulfill them, his punishment is more severe than that of him who has not learned at all! It is like the case of a king who had a garden which he let out to two tenants, one of whom planted trees and then cut them down, while the other neither planted trees nor cut them down. With whom is the king angry? Surely with him who had planted trees only to cut them down. Likewise, whosoever learns the words of Torah and does not fulfill them, his punishment is more severe than that of him who never learned at all, for it is written, "Let favor be shown to the wicked; he has not learned righteousness" [Isa. 26.10]. But no favor is shown to him who has studied but has not fulfilled; hence the force of "to observe to do all His commandments" [Deut. 28.1]. [72]

R. Abba taught in the name of R. Simeon b. Lakish, "Even if a scholar is vengeful and bears malice like a serpent, gird him upon thy loins; whereas, even if an *סורקן* PY is pious, do not dwell in his vicinity." Al-Nakawa comments that one should cleave to a scholar, in any event, since one can profit from his knowledge, but that the piety of the *סורקן* PY is tainted by his

ignorance. Hence, he expatiates, "a man should always cleave to the good, the upright, and the wise, in order that he may learn from them and emulate their example; for we learn, 'Let thy house be a house of meeting for the sages; sit in the dust at their feet, and drink thirstily all their words' [Aboth 1.4] -- let the words of the scholars enter your heart, and receive them as a thirsty man or parched earth receives water."<sup>[73]</sup>

In concluding our discussion of the *Shic' D' P'v* on a more moderate note, we cite the following beautiful narrative. ~~period~~. Rabbi once opened his storehouse in a year of scarcity, proclaiming: "Let those enter who have studied Scripture, Mishnah, or Talmud -- but the unlearned may not enter!" R. Jonathan b. Amram forced his way through the crowd and cried, "Master, give me food!" Rabbi asked him, "Have you studied Scripture?" He answered, "No." "Then have you studied Mishnah?" "No," again was the reply. "Then how can I give you food?", Rabbi asked. He replied, "Feed me as the dog and the raven" [referring to Ps. 147.9]. So Rabbi gave him some food.

After he had departed, Rabbi was remorseful, crying, "Woe is me that I have given my bread to an ignorant man!" R. Simeon ventured, "Perhaps it was Jonathan b. Amram, who was unwilling to derive any material benefit from the honor of the Torah. Immediately they investigated, and found that such was the case. Whereupon, Rabbi said, "Let everyone now enter!"<sup>[74]</sup>

CHAPTER EIGHT

EDUCATION IN TORAH

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Development of the School

The Jewish school came into being only after a long process of gradual growth, a process retarded and accelerated at various times by the impacts of social, economic, and political forces. In tracing the line of development of the Jewish school, we note that inasmuch as no mention of the school is made in either the Old, or New Testaments, it is safe to conclude that the school, per se, did not exist in the period covered in Biblical literature.<sup>[1]</sup>

Nonetheless, from the very beginnings of their history the Jews regarded the moral and religious training of their children as one of the principal concerns of life. Throughout the Bible there are numerous injunctions concerning "telling," "relating to," and "teaching" children. We recall, particularly, the Deuteronomic refrain "and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," [Deut. 6.8] etc., and in the story of the Exodus, "and thou shalt relate to thy son." But, remarkably enough, popular education began with the teaching of adults, and gradually extended downwards until, eventually

[2]  
[some hundreds of years later] it reached the child!

At a very early stage the entire law was utilized for public instruction. The Deuteronomic law was written clearly on large stones along the highways in order that the people might familiarize themselves with its contents. [3]  
For a long while, the Priests and Levites [Deut. 31.9] were entrusted with the law and its instruction to the people, "and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people [II Chron. 17.9], and, "for the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." [Mal. 2.7].

Meanwhile, the children were not neglected entirely, but were instructed and trained in the law by their fathers. [4] The parents were regarded as the child's natural instructors, "Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother." [Pr. 1.8]. Parents were admonished to "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." [Pr. 22.6]. Perhaps physical disciplinary measures were not infrequently administered for "he that spareth his rod, hateth his son." [Pr. 13.24.]

From the hands of his parents, the child passed into the hands of professional instructors, the *P's'sen*



[Neh. 8.7], and the *ר'ש'ען* [Dan. 11.33]. Here, in this early period, we note a tentative use of the term, which, in later Jewish development, came to be permanently associated with the teacher -- *ר'ש'ען* [Ps. 119.99], and the use of the term *ש'ען* [Chron. 25.8] which has remained in use down to the present day.

Morris demonstrates that the fate of Judaism hung in the balance at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., for two spiritual tendencies were struggling for the upper hand -- the one, represented by the reactionary priestly element, with their emphasis on the minutiae of ceremonialism -- the other, by the prophet, representing the dynamic viewpoint, with its universalistic emphasis. When the Temple was destroyed, and as if at one stroke the whole priestly system was annihilated, it was then that the people, in their great need, began to turn to the prophetic teachings. There arose now a new institution, an expression of the universalism of Prophecy, an institution which Herford describes as "the greatest achievement of the Jewish people" -- The Synagogue!

The Synagogue became the first "popular university." Here adults would assemble to hear the Scriptural passages explained by those more learned *ר'ש'ען*, and here the liturgy developed, growing out of their discussions of

Torah. The development of the Synagogue, at this time, served only as an indirect educational font for the children, who assumedly accompanied their parents to these religious gatherings.

From the hands of the priest, the education of the people successively passed from the prophet to the scribe, [70/0], a period introduced by Ezra the Scribe, who is extolled as the "restorer of the Torah." [5] Under the discipline of post-exilic times, the religious teachings of the Law and the Prophets had crystallized into a definite shape. The contribution of the Scribes lay in their practice of transcribing and preserving the older traditions which now came to be commonly accepted as the belief and religion of the people. The P'70/0, who are described [Dan. 12.3] as the teachers, P'8'70/0, "they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn the many to righteousness," confined their educational activities to the adults, delivering lectures in Synagogues and schools ע"י המדרש.

Morris and Drazin concur in the development of the thesis that the evolution of the Jewish school proceeded through three distinct stages: first, the establishment of academies for higher learning; second, the development of secondary schools for adolescents; and finally, providing universal elementary schools.

Morris makes the interesting observation that in each case an external political event served as the stimulus for the process of inner growth. [7]

These three stages of educational development are attributed respectively to the Men of the Great Assembly, [8]  
[9] Simon b. Shetah, and Joshua b. Gamala. [10] In support of this theory, the following statement is offered as evidence, a statement, incidentally, which in all likelihood is the most significant historical document for Jewish educational research. For the sake of clarity, the quotation is divided into three paragraphs.

"Verily, let this man be remembered for good, and Joshua b. Gamala is his name, for had it not been for him, Torah would have been forgotten in Israel. At first, everyone that had a father was taught Torah [by the father], but he that had no father did not learn Torah. So they ordained that teachers for children should be set up in Jerusalem! Whence did they deduce this idea? From 'For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' [Isa.2.3]".

"But this measure sufficed not, for that he that had a father was brought by him there [Jerusalem] to be taught, but he that had no father did not go there. In consequence of this, they ordained that teachers should be set up in every district, to whom children should be

sent at the age of sixteen or seventeen years.

"Still, when a teacher became angry with a pupil, the latter rebelled and walked away. In this condition, education remained until the time of Joshua b. Gamala, who ordained that in every province and in every town, teachers should be set up to whom children should be brought at the age of six or seven years." [11]

This reform by Joshua b. Gamala, Drazin holds, was instituted about the year 64 C.E. Schools were widely established in the towns and provinces, and parents were exhorted to discharge their religious obligation to teach their children, by sending them to these elementary schools, where they might receive competent instruction. Those recalcitrant parents who refused to send their children to the schools, were branded and ostracized as *שׂוֹמְרֵי תַּלְמוּד*, which term of opprobrium we have discussed in a preceding chapter. Drazin concludes that "this is the first instance in recorded history that we find an institution of universal and compulsory elementary education established." [12]

The question of the "compulsory" and "universal" nature of this educational system appears to be a moot question and a subject for a great deal of controversy. Morris, for example, disagrees most vociferously, and pointing out, perhaps justifiably, that the existence of

a large illiterate class, the *ש"ס נ"ח*, and the contradictory disparity in time between the men, who according to tradition were the founders of the school system, would lead one to the conclusion that the real development of the elementary school as a public institution did not reach its <sup>culmination</sup> conclusion until the fourth century C. E. In justification of this viewpoint, he cites the following conversation which took place between two Rabbis of the third century. [13] "When R. Hanina and R. Hiyya had an argument, R. Hanina said, 'How can you argue with me? If the Torah, God forbid, were forgotten in Israel, I would restore it by my dialectic powers.' Said Hiyya, 'How can you argue with me? I am preventing the Torah from being forgotten in Israel. I go and plant flax and weave nets and catch gazelles. Their flesh I give to orphans for food; of the skins I make scrolls on which to write out the Five Books of Moses. Then I go up to a town where there are no teachers for children, and teach five boys to read the five books, each a different book'". [14]

One is inclined to feel that perhaps Mr. Morris is reading a bit too much into this selection. As Drazin points out, and we believe with justice, "although elementary education had theoretically been made compulsory and universal for boys by the decree of Joshua b. Gamala, that

did not preclude the possibility of certain villages being without facilities for education, especially in the days of the dispersion. While it may be true that schools were not established in every community, they certainly were established in the larger communities, and a great many, also, in the smaller ones. By the fourth century C. E., when one scholar asks another, "Is it possible to find anyone without elementary school knowledge?", the other replies, "Yes, it is possible in the case of a child who was taken captive among non-Jews!"<sup>[15]</sup> Not wishing further to prolong the controversy, we conclude our discussion of the development of the school on this note.

### The Teacher

So lofty was the role of the teacher in Rabbinic thought that God, Himself, is represented as being "engaged part of each day Teaching Torah to little children."<sup>[16]</sup> The patriarch, Abraham, is traditionally considered as the first Jewish teacher, and the verse, "And in His law doth he meditate day and night" [Ps.1.2], is applied to him. Since Abraham had no teacher himself, how then -- the Rabbis ask -- did he learn Torah? The Holy One, blessed be He, made Abraham's two kidneys serve him as teachers of Torah, as it is written, "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inmost parts; make me, therefore, to know wisdom in mine inmost heart" [Ps.51.8].<sup>[17]</sup>

Resh Lakish taught that "one who teaches Torah to his neighbor's son is regarded by Scripture as though he had fashioned him." R. Eleazar said, "It as though he, [18] himself, had created the words of the Torah." How do we know, Al-Nakawa asks, that when one teaches Torah to his companion it is as if he formed him, and brought him into the world? Because it is written, "And if thou bring forth the precious out of the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth" [Jer.15.19]; "the precious" refers to Torah, while "the vile", necessarily, must refer to the *שנין פה*. [19]

The teacher was lauded as one who brings peace into the world, for Hillel taught, "Be of the disciples of Aaron; loving peace and pursuing it, loving your fellow-creatures, and bringing them nigh to the Torah" [Aboth 1.12]. [20] Moreover, the Rabbis considered the very existence of the world to be dependent upon the teachers. Once an eminent commission of Rabbis was sent from Palestine to establish schools and to appoint teachers. Upon their arrival at a certain city, they found no teacher of Bible or Mishnah. Addressing the inhabitants, they called, "Bring us the guardians of the city!" Thereupon the town's municipal officers were brought forth. The Rabbis asked, "Do you call these the guardians of the city? They are the des-troysers of the city!" Dismayed, the people then inquired, "Who, then, are the guardians of the town?"

The answer came, "The teachers of Bible and Mishnah, as it is said, 'Unless the Lord guard the city, the watchman wakes but in vain' [Ps.127.1]."

The importance of the teacher's role is well illustrated by this story. "Rab came to a certain place where he ordained a fast because there was a drought. The leader of the congregation conducted the service, and when he uttered the words, 'He causes the wind to blow,' the wind at once began to blow; and when he spoke the words, 'He causes the rain to fall,' the rain immediately began to come down in torrents! Rab said to him, "What is your exceptional merit [that these things occurred]?" He answered, "I am an elementary teacher, and I instruct the children of the poor exactly the same as I teach those of the rich. If any one is unable to pay me a fee, I forego it; I also have a fish-pond, and when I find a pupil negligent in his studies, I bribe him with some of the fish so that he comes regularly to study." [21]

The saintly regard in which the teacher was held is reflected in the thoughts, "Let the reverence for thy teacher be like thy reverence for Heaven;" [22] "Thy father gives thee but the earthly life, thy teacher eternal life!" [23] "If one's father and one's teacher be incarcerated in a prison, the teacher should be freed before the father;" [24]



"He who learns from his associate one chapter, one Halacha, one verse, one saying, or even one letter, must pay him honor."  
[25]

Al-Nakawa tells us that "a man should acquire for himself both a teacher from whom he may learn, and an associate with whom he may study; 'Provide yourself with a teacher, and get yourself a companion.' [Aboth 1.6] For all who hearken to the words of Torah from the mouth of a sage, in this world, will merit to hear Torah from God, Himself, in the world to come, 'If thou wilt hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord, Thy God...' [Ex.15.26]. A companion is necessary, for when two associates study Torah together, and sharpen each other's minds in Halacha, Scripture accounts it unto them as if they had offered a sacrifice to the Lord. Moreover, a man should study with many teachers, for one who studies Torah from [only] one teacher, will never see a sign of blessing."  
[26]

Our author insists that if a man knows Torah, he is under obligation to teach it to others; even to one's enemies; for we learn, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat"-- the bread of the Torah!, and we read that "whoever learns Torah and does not teach it, is like a myrtle in the desert."  
[27]

#### Qualifications of the Teacher

Although the chief qualification of a teacher was

his possession of sufficient knowledge of Torah, learning was by no means "the be all and end all" that one might expect. Qualities of character and piety were emphasized almost as much as erudition. Al-Nakawa comments that "if a teacher stray from the right path, even though he may be a learned scholar, people must not study with him until he returns to the proper way of life, for it is said, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" [Mal.2.7]. Thus, one may not study with a teacher unless he is like "the messenger of the Lord of hosts."  
[28]

Physical appearance was not overlooked in the selection of a teacher. No man was considered a true scholar unless his outer appearance and his inner life corresponded with each other. He was enjoined to be neat and tidy in his dress, for "the scholar upon whose garment there is a stain is guilty of death" [for he sullies the honor and brings to low estate the esteem due the Talmid Hakam], and it is to the discredit of a man of learning to go about in patched shoes.  
[29]

The teacher is admonished to be moderate in his food habits, and not to drink over-much, for this leads to forgetfulness. He must be modest, patient with children, for "a passionate man cannot teach" [Aboth 2.6], in

order that he might not become infuriated with his pupils if it becomes necessary to repeat a lesson many times in order that they understand it clearly. He had to have a love for his profession, to enjoy teaching lishmah, to be faithful and conscientious in his duties, and to treat with equality the children of the rich and the poor. A [30] woman was not permitted to be a teacher of children, nor [31] was an unmarried man.

Almost of necessity a teacher had to be an idealist, for since payment for teaching, per se, was forbidden, his monetary compensation, always a meager subsistence at best, merely represented a remuneration for his loss of time or [32].

Time was -- payment for "watching" the children. Frequently, teachers who could so afford, taught without payment. Under such conditions, a man who undertook the teaching profession was, necessarily, a man of high character, and must have been inspired with the feeling that his was a sacred calling. Since no livelihood was at stake, a teacher might frequently turn over his class to another whom he considered more competent than himself. In the final analysis, the real reward of the teacher lay in the position of esteem which he had earned in the grateful hearts of his pupils.

### The Pupil

Almost from birth the child would begin to receive

moral and religious training in the home. The father was considered the natural teacher of the child, and as soon as the lad was able to speak, his father taught him the Shema and the rudiments of the Hebrew language. Here, in the home, the child was introduced to the customs and ceremonies of his faith. The father was responsible for the child's early tutelage, even to the extent of teaching him to swim. [Josephus, for instance, relates that when his boat was ship-wrecked in the Adriatic Sea, he swam all night until rescued by another ship.] Even after the child was brought to school, it was the parent's duty to supervise the child's instruction to the point of visiting the school to ascertain if the child was faithfully applying himself to his studies.

It appears that the age at which the child was first brought to the Beth Ha-Sefer [33] was not very rigid. Some parents brought their children at the age of five; others deferred the age of entrance until six or seven, often depending upon the child's physical condition. This latter age, we recall, was the age suggested by Joshua b. Gamala in his revision of the school system [see above]. On the other hand, there is the oft-repeated statement, "At five years [one is ready] for the Scripture, at ten years for the Mishnah, at thirteen for the commandments, at fifteen [34] for Talmud, at eighteen for marriage."

From the third century C. E., we have the advice given to a teacher: "Do not admit a child under the age of six; from that age and onward admit him, and cram him like an ox." In post-Talmudic times the entrance age of the child was gradually relaxed, until it became quite common for children of four, and even younger, to be sent to school.

The size of the class was limited to twenty-five boys for each teacher; if there were forty pupils, an assistant teacher was appointed, and an additional teacher for fifty. The Rabbis maintained that having more teachers served to raise the pedagogic standards, as the teachers were thereby stimulated to give their best because of the spirit of competition. [35]

School hours in Talmudic times were very long, the children being taken to the school at sunrise, and after a whole day there, would return home in the evening. Holidays were infrequent, the only recess being the religious holidays and fast days. Instruction was given only part of the day during the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Ab. [36] Gollancz suggests that the reduction of school hours during this period [days of sorrow for the destruction of Jerusalem] was due to the fact that the pious teachers were in a despondent mood at

this time, and the pupils, themselves, may not have been overly strong, physically, due to the meat restrictions. Attendance was required even on the Sabbath, although no new work was introduced, the time being utilized for a review of old lessons. [37]

Al-Nakawa teaches us that the teachers were required to carefully examine and scrutinize the students [before their admission] to ascertain if they possess the proper character qualifications, "for one does not teach Torah to a student whose character and deeds are unseemly, or to a simpleton. But if a student had strayed from the proper paths of conduct, they admonish him and lead him back to the upright path, and after examining him they bring him to the ערנן נ"ב and teach him. For it is said, "Whoever teaches an improper student, it is as if he cast a stone at Mercury [i.e., it is of so little avail]"; "As a small stone in a heap of stones, so is he that giveth honor to a fool" [Pr.26.8] -- and honor, here, may be equated with Torah." [38]

Modern educators would, unquestionably, be interested in the amazing fact that the Rabbis were cognizant of the principle, known in present-day psychological terminology as "individual differences"! Although this concept is usually associated with the modern techniques of scientific testing and measurement, the Rabbis not only were

aware of the relative differences which existed among pupils, but attempted to classify them. We read, for instance, "There are four types among pupils; swift to hear and swift to lose -- his gain is cancelled by his loss; slow to hear and slow to lose -- his loss is cancelled by his gain; swift to hear and slow to lose -- this is a happy lot; slow to hear and swift to lose -- this is an evil lot!" [39] This classification obviously refers to the retentive powers of the student, while another, referring to the intelligence of pupils, is the following: "There are four types among them that sit in the presence of the sages: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer, and the sieve;" the sponge" -- which absorbs everything; the "funnel" -- which receives at one end and lets it out at the other; the "strainer" -- because it permits the wine to flow out, while retaining the dregs; the "sieve" -- which permits the coarse meal to escape, and retains the fine flour." [40] Similarly, R. Johanan b. Zakkai characterized one of his disciples as a "plastered cistern which does not lose a drop!", and another as "an ever-flowing spring."

Probably the first classification, referred to above, was employed in the elementary and secondary schools where retentiveness in memorizing Biblical passages, and the translation of new words played a vital role. Imagina-

tion and intelligence were of primary importance in the colleges of higher learning where the exposition of a text or the solution of a legal problem was involved. The classification along the lines of the "individual differences" in students was utilized by the teachers by giving additional drill and further explanation to those pupils slow to understand or deficient in retentive powers, and also by assigning the brighter pupils, who had mastered a subject, to coach the less proficient.

#### Student-Teacher Relationships

Al-Nakawa points out that "a student should be most zealous in honoring his teacher and should stand in his presence out of reverence for him, "Let the fear [respect] of thy teacher be as thy fear of Heaven". <sup>[41]</sup> A student should pay strict attention to his teacher that he may quickly understand, and that he not trouble his master to repeat many times unnecessarily. At all times the pupil should be humble before his teacher, and should strive to serve him [pupils were frequently assigned small tasks by the teacher]. for thus serving him, the pupil will ever be by the side of his master, and will benefit thereby. When the student hears a Halacha from his teacher, he should never take issue with him, nor should his intention be to provoke his teacher -- for one who quarrels or complains,



or thinks disparagingly of his teacher, it is as if he  
[42]  
quarreled with the Shechinah!

A student is forbidden, moreover, to give a legal decision in the presence of his teacher, under penalty of death, a prohibition derived from the case of Aaron's sons who died only after they had given a legal decision in the presence of their Master, Moses. R. Eliezer once had a disciple who gave a legal decision in his presence. The Rabbi remarked to his wife, "I wonder whether this fellow will live through the week," and the man actually did not  
[43]  
live through the week!

The teacher, Al-Nakawa urges, should be most patient with his pupils, not becoming angry with them when, because of the complexity of the subject matter, or their meager knowledge, they fail to comprehend the lesson. Rather, the teacher should never proceed to new material until he is certain that all have mastered the old lesson; he is enjoined to pause and review the subject under discussion as many times as is necessary. On the other hand, a pupil should not tell the teacher that he understands the discussion until it is absolutely clear to him, but is exhorted to ask questions until he fully comprehends. Should the teacher become annoyed with his numerous questions, let the student say, "Master, I must study Torah, but my intellectual capacity is insufficient to grasp it!" The

student should never be ashamed to ask questions because his fellow students have apparently already mastered the subject, for if he hesitates to inquire, the result will be that his coming to the *ענין נ"ז* is for nought -- "A shy person does not learn, nor can a passionate person teach!" <sup>[44]</sup> A teacher should never grow impatient with his students if they fail to understand the Halacha, unless he suspects that they have been indolent in pursuing their studies, in which case he is obliged to give them a "tongue-lashing", shaming them and impressing upon them the necessity of proper study. <sup>[45]</sup>

Students were required to adhere to a strict procedure in asking their questions, Al-Nakawa observes. "One should not ask the master a question unless it deal with the subject under immediate discussion *נ"ז*, and should never ask a question unless it be earnest. When two students ask a question at the same time, one pertinent, and the other extraneous, the former is answered. If one ask a question involving Halacha, and another on Midrash, the one on Halacha takes precedence; on Midrash and Agadah, Midrash takes precedence [just what difference between the two Al-Nakawa understands, is not quite clear]; a question on Agadah and one on a *נ"ז*, the latter takes precedence; a question of *נ"ז*, and one of *נ"ז*, the latter has priority. If a *נ"ז* and a student

ask a question, deference is shown to the former, while if a student and an *87107 P8* ask a question at the same time, the student is the first to be answered. If two people of equal status ask questions of equal merit, than discretionary power is given to him to whom the question is addressed. [46]

A student should never ask his master a question immediately upon entering the classroom, but should wait until he has rested and his thoughts are composed. [46a] Further, he must never ask a question in which another question is implied; nor should he ask the master a question extraneous to the matter under discussion, lest he embarrass the teacher who might be unfamiliar with the matter about which the student asked. However, the teacher may ask questions of the students, not directly impinging upon the subject under discussion in order to ascertain if they remember what he has previously taught them. [47]

One should not imagine from the foregoing discussion that the teacher was a stern martinet. On the contrary, he encouraged freedom of expression on the part of his pupils, helping them to overcome their shyness, and developing self-reliance. He endeavored to make the subject pleasant to the students, by his use of midrashim, ma'shalim, and even jokes, in order that the young ones might come

to love Torah. The relationship between teacher and pupil was a reciprocal one -- each could learn from the other. In commenting upon the combined verses, "The rich and the poor meet together; ....the Lord giveth light to the eyes of them both" [Pr.22.2; 29.13], the Mekilta teaches: If the disciple [poor] attends the master [rich], and the latter is willing to teach him, then "the Lord giveth light to the eyes of them both" -- both master and disciple acquire eternal life! [48]

#### Discipline

With regard to discipline, the Rabbis employed the wise psychological principle, "always push away [the pupil] with the left hand, and draw him to you with the right!" [49] Hence, the teacher should appear to be strict with his students, yet, at the same time, win them to him as friend and advisor. The injunction to "throw gall among the pupils" [50] [i.e., to introduce firm discipline], was not frequently followed, lest the results parallel those in the case of Gehazi, the pupil and servant of Elisha, who became a rebel and led the people astray after a chastisement from the prophet.

Maimonides tells us that "the teacher may inflict punishment upon the school children that they may fear him; but he must not smite them with hatred and cruelty;

he should, therefore, not strike them with rods or sticks but with a small strap.<sup>[51]</sup> That this "strap" may have been resorted to on occasion we may infer from the following amusing, although semi-tragic story. The boy Samuel [later famous as physician and astronomer] was once found weeping by his father. Questioned as to the cause of his tears, the boy replied, "My teacher beat me!"

"But why?", the father interrogated.

"Because he said to me, 'You were feeding my son [domestic duties were often assigned by teachers to their pupils], but you did not carry out the religious observance of washing your hands before doing so'".

"And why did you not wash your hands?", the father asked.

"It was his son who ate, so why should I wash?"

"It is not sufficient that your teacher is ignorant of the Law, but he also beats you!", the father angrily retorted.<sup>[52]</sup>

However, patience rather than corporal punishment was the general rule. Al-Nakawa tells us that a teacher should be strict and should never be flippant in the presence of his pupils, neither bantering nor fraternizing with them. "He should always seek to inspire them with awe and the sincerity of his purpose that they might quickly learn."<sup>[53]</sup>

There is also a certain respect which is due the

לִמְדָה יֵשׁ itself, as our author explains. "One may not speak in the House of Study, except words of Torah. Neither may one sleep in the לִמְדָה יֵשׁ, not even a short nap, for the punishment of one who so dozes is that his wisdom will turn to rags, as it is written, "And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" [Pr.23.21]. Even if one sneezes in the school, they may not respond with " בָּרַךְ " -- health! And it goes without saying, of course, that other matters are strictly forbidden, for קְדוּשַׁת יֵשׁ הַלִּמְדָה מְאֹד מְאֹד מְאֹד הַכִּסֵּא -- the sanctity of the House of Study is greater than that of the House of Assembly [the Synagogue]. [54]

#### Desiderata for Proper Study

One should study Torah every day, for it is written, "And the people went out and gathered the thing of a day in its day" [Ex.16.4] and "Blessed be the Lord, day by day He beareth our burden, even the God of our salvation" [Ps.68.20]. God said to Israel, "By the measure by which a man measures it, so shall it be measured to him. I, indeed, have given you the Torah, that you may work in it every day." [55]

The Torah that a man learns is imperishable, for Al-Nakawa tells us: "Great is Torah for it cannot be exchanged for another matter! R. Simeon said, 'There is a parable of two business men who said, 'Come, let us trade

our merchandise.' They exchanged their wares and when the transaction was completed, neither had that which had been originally been his. Contrast this with '723

5712. When two scholars meet, one of whom has studied 2814 720, and the other 71756 720, and they decide to exchange what they have learned by teaching one another, the result is that ultimately both of them have [56] double the knowledge that they had formerly."

Even if one study Torah diligently and lead a pious life, performing numerous meritorious acts, let him not say, "It is unnecessary for me to continue to do so in my old age!" But let him bethink himself of the sun, the moon, and the other heavenly constellations which rise and set, day after day, in order to do the will of their Creator. They do not say, "I have already paid my homage in the morning; why should I do so again at night?" Nevertheless, they make obeisance to God at night. Therefore a man should say: Just as these heavenly bodies rise and set each day to do the will of their Creator, even though they need no sustenance, how much the more should I, who am dependent upon God for sustenance both in my youth and [57] old age, do His will. R. Ishmael said, "If you have studied Torah in your youth, study it in your old age, because [58] you do not know which you will retain."

The value of intensive rather than extensive study is beautifully reflected in the following fantasy, which, since he gives no source, may have originated in the fertile mind of Al-Nakawa. A story is told of a student who lived all alone and who studied the tractate Hagigah. This embraced the entire scope of his scholarship, but he studied this one tractate so well that he mastered it completely, even to the extent of knowing it from memory. All his life was spent in the company of this one book, and when he died, no one even realized his departure, for all that survived him in his household was the tractate Hagigah.

But strangely enough, as his body lay unattended, a woman appeared as if from nowhere, and began to weep and lament as if she were mourning for her husband. Her wailing soon attracted a large gathering, to which she appealed: "Weep for this chasid and bury him with great honor, and pay homage at his bier, for he honored me all his days, and I was not forsaken or forgotten while he lived.

Immediately all the women sat round about the coffin and made a great <sup>e</sup>hespid for the scholar, while the men busied themselves with the shrouds and other matters necessary for his burial, and they laid him to rest with great honor. All the while the woman wept bitterly, and



when the people asked her name, she replied, "Hagigah"!  
 After they buried the saintly student she disappeared,  
 and the people realized that she had been the tractate  
Hagigah who had appeared to them in the guise of a woman.  
 For she had come, when the student died, to mourn for  
 him -- who had no other mourners -- and to bury him res-  
 pectably, since he had faithfully studied her throughout  
 his lifetime. And if this chasid who studied but one  
 tractate during his life was so honored, how much greater  
 will be the reward of him who studies much Torah and Tal-  
 mud, and raises up many disciples. [59]

One should not study תורה alone, but should  
 study with a companion. This we derive by analogy. Since  
 the words of Torah are compared to fire, "Is not My word  
 like as fire?" [Jer. 23.29], and we know that fire does not  
 ignite of itself or burn when isolated, so the words of  
 Torah are not preserved by one who studies them alone. [60]

One should study when he is young for "He who  
 learns when a youth is like ink written on new paper;  
 while he who learns when he is old is like ink written  
 on erased paper." [61] That which one studies in his youth  
 will be retained longest, while that studied in one's  
 old age will be retained only with difficulty. One should  
 set fixed times for his study and should not say אני אקדים  
אני, "when I have leisure I will study" --

[62].

for perhaps you will never have the leisure. A man should not say to himself: I have learned Torah and Mishnah today, tomorrow I need not learn; I have given charity and done good deeds today, tomorrow I need not. But he should reflect that after a while comes death, and he will have to render account unto his Creator.

A student must give his undivided attention to Torah and must concentrate upon his studies, for we read, "He who is walking by the way studying [Torah] and breaks off his study to say, 'How fine is that tree, how fine is that fallow!'", Scripture regards him as if he had forfeited his life." [Aboth. 3.9]

The Rabbis made numerous recommendations regarding the proper time for study, pointing out that study at night was particularly advantageous. Al-Nakawa suggests that "if a man is unable to study the entire day, it is sufficient if he studies two Halachas in the morning and two in the evening. And let a man not say 'I have already engaged in Torah this morning; it is sufficient.' But if he study Scripture in the morning, let him review again in the evening, in order to fulfill the Biblical injunction: "And thou shalt speak of them when thou liest down [this is the evening], and when thou risest up [this is the morning]." [Deut. 6.7]. But if one does not so, but says that *YNE NIK'7P* in the morning is enough, of

such a person Scripture says: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." [Pr. 28.9] R. Joshua said, 'If a man studies two Halachas in the morning and two in the evening, and during the day he labors at his occupation, it is accounted [63] unto him as if he had fulfilled the Torah.'

The Rabbis ordained that those who study Mishnah should study it both morning and night, in order to fulfill the Biblical injunction, "The Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth and you shall meditate upon [64] it day and night." [Josh.1.8] R. Hozekiah and R. Isaac arose at midnight to busy themselves in Torah. R. Isaac opened [his discourse] with the Scriptural verse, "Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, that stand in the house of the Lord in the night sessions." [Ps. 134.1] Who are the servants of the Lord? Those who trust in Him and His Law; who arise at midnight to study Torah and [65] proclaim the unity of His Holy Name.

The precedent for studying Torah at night comes from Moses. "And [Moses] was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water." [Ex. 34.28] He ate no bread -- but the bread of Torah; and drank no water -- but the water of Torah. Moses studied Torah during the day and repeated it during the night -- by himself, doing so in order to teach Israel to

occupy themselves in Torah both day and night. [66]

Al-Nakawa repeats the tradition that "God creates Israel anew each day because of the merit of the Torah in which they steep themselves during the night." [67] Further, the Torah that a man studies at night is easier to grasp and makes him wiser than that studied during the day, "Where is God who giveth songs in the night; who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and it maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven." [Job. 35.11] [68] Not only this, but the Torah that a man studies by night will be retained better than that studied by day. R. Eleazar taught, "A house in which no words of Torah are heard at night will be consumed by fire, "A fire not blown by man shall consume him [it]." [Job. 20.26] [69] Resh Lakish said, "Whoever is busy with Torah at night has a ribbon of grace drawn over him by the Holy One, "By day the Lord will command His loving-kindness [Shema], and in the night His song shall be with me." [Ps. 42.9] All who occupy themselves in the Torah in this world -- which may be compared to the night, God will draw a ribbon of grace in the world to come -- which may be compared to the day. [70]

The place in which a man occupies himself in Torah is also a matter of serious consideration. Although Raba says that a man should study in any place that his heart desires, [71] Al-Nakawa urges that a man should always fix a

regular place for his studies, not to study one day in one place, and the next day in another; "If one fixes a regular place for his studies, his enemies will fall before him." [72] He quotes further, "They who strive to study in the *בית המדרש* and in the *בית המדרש*, their studies will be established, for it is written, 'All who labor in their studies in the House of Assembly will not quickly forget [their studies].'" [73]

Scholars, even though engaged in a journey, are obliged to occupy themselves in the Torah, for "Thou shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way" [Deut.6.7]. It is taught that if two *תלמידי חכמים* proceed on a journey, and there are no words of Torah between them, they are deserving of being burned with fire! [74] Moreover, a student is obliged to change his residence, moving from his own city if there is no teacher, to another city where he may find a teacher with whom to study. "Great will be the reward of one who moves from one city to another in order to study." Most significant, is the observation: "Even if one is a great sage, he will receive more respect in a city other than his own." [75]

A student is enjoined to study Torah before he marries, for if he marries before he has studied, his mind will no longer be free for study. But, notwithstanding of life's realities, the Rabbis ordained that "if one's sensual desires prevail upon him to such an extent that he cannot dismiss them from his mind, then such a man should marry,

[76]

and afterwards should devote himself to study." As a matter of fact, the Rabbis maintained that study conquers the evil inclination, for the School of R. Ishmael taught: "My son, if this repulsive thing [the evil inclination] assail thee, lead him to the עֲרֵכָה נִזְכָּר. If he is of stone, he will dissolve; if of iron, he will be shattered to fragments, for it is written, 'Is not My word as fire, saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'" [Jer.23.29] [77]

#### Pedagogic Methods and Principles

It is significant that the teachers had no need to resort to their own unguided judgment in the matter of teaching methods and principles, for there was a large body of rules and traditions at their ready command, methods and principles, incidentally, which anticipate by some two thousand years the pedagogic practices in vogue by our most modern educators.

First, the subject matter had to be commensurate with the age and capacity of the child. Hence, the prescription: "At five years, Mikra, the language and substance of the Holy Writings; at ten years, the Mishnah, the study of practical laws and duties; at fifteen, Gemara, the deeper study of religion." God revealed Himself on Sinai to the adult, the aged, and the children,

according to the capacity of each class; and education  
[78]  
should proceed along similar lines.

Teachers, furthermore, were advised to be concise in their speech, and to teach rather than preach. Explanations were to be clear and succinct, which probably accounts for the terseness of expression of the Tannaitic writings. Teachers obeyed the dictum: Always teach your pupils in  
[79]  
the shortest manner. Pupils were encouraged to use only clean and wholesome language, emulating the speech of their masters.

The principle of multum non multa was a fundamental law encouraged by the sages. "Grasp much and you will retain nothing; grasp a little and you will retain something." Raba said in the name of R. Huna: "What is the meaning of the verse, 'Wealth gotten by vanity shall diminish, but he that gathers little by little shall increase?' [Pr.13.11]. If one takes his studies by heaps at a time, he will benefit but little, but if one gathers [knowledge] little by little, he will acquire a great deal." R. Shesheth said that the wise scholar who gathers his knowledge little by  
[80]  
little, will amass a great store of knowledge.

Teachers sought to make their instruction interesting, so that the pupils would be stimulated and eager to acquire knowledge. Raba was in the habit of introducing

his remarks with something bright and sparkling, thus placing his auditors in a joyous mood, before proceeding to the subject of his discourse. [81] Other similar techniques employed were the cross-questioning of students to sustain their attention, and sharpen their critical faculties, and varying the themes to sustain interest [and early recognition of the limited "attention span" of young children]. Sometimes the teacher might even present his pupils with a false statement in order to sharpen their wits. In correcting the teacher in such an instance, the pupil must say very humbly, "Have you not taught us before the contrary, our Rabbi?" [82]

However, the teacher was most careful not to expose the pupils to error, for Akiba advised his disciples, "When you teach your son, teach him out of a corrected book." [83]

How were the classes conducted? Pupils followed the Biblical precept, "thine eyes shall see thy teachers" [Isa.30.20], for in facing the teacher the pupil could better hear and understand his words. Maimonides tells us that "the master sits at the head[ of the class], and the disciples sit in a graland-shaped semi-circle before him, so that all can attend the master's words. The master shall not sit on a chair and his students on the



ground, but they should either all sit on chairs or upon the ground. In the days of yore, the custom was for the master to sit, and the disciples to stand during instruction, but before the destruction of the Second Temple, the universal rule was inaugurated to instruct with the students seated.<sup>[84]</sup>

Lessons were recited audibly by the students, for the purposes of retention and comprehension. The Rabbis taught that one who studies aloud [hears his own voice], his studies will be established, while one who does not study in this wise, will quickly forget.<sup>[85]</sup> It may appear curious to us that the "mouth" is the organ connected with the study of the law; with us it would be the eye. But apparently, the ancient world maintained that all true study was accomplished by reading aloud. Reading with them was almost always "reading aloud." Thus, what we term "Scripture", they called "Mikra"-- "reading aloud" or "lecture". It is said that a pupil of R. Eliezer forgot in three years what he had learned, because he studied without speaking his lessons aloud.<sup>[86]</sup>

Usually students would memorize their lessons by repeating them with an intonation in a form of a song.

Drazin suggests that this would explain the words of R.

<sup>[87]</sup>  
Akiba:

פ"י סגל נאס , פ"י סגל נאס

["A song each day"], as meaning simply: be certain to study

[88]  
Torah every day of your life! It was believed that such study by means of cantillation assisted in better retention, and the swaying of the body during study was supposed to serve a similar beneficent purpose. Some teachers employed [88a] mnemonic devices to aid the students in memorization.

Another fundamental pedagogic principle employed was repetition. [repetitio est mater studiorum], the abandonment of which, Moore claims, "in the vagaries of 'educational psychology' is one of the chief causes of the inferiority of our 'new' education." Constant repetition, the Rabbis taught, not only assured retentiveness but also produced greater clarity. It was Hillel's suggestion that one who studied his exercise one hundred and one times, [90] was superior to him who studied it but one hundred times.

The tradition to repeat one's lesson four times, Al-Nakawa teaches, comes directly from the precedent of Moses. For the Rabbis taught: What was the procedure of instruction [in the Oral Law]? Moses learned directly from the Almighty. Then Aaron entered and Moses taught him his lesson. Aaron then moved aside and sat at Moses' left hand. Thereupon Aaron's sons entered and Moses taught them their lesson. The sons then moved aside, Eleazar taking his seat on Moses' right hand, and Ithamar on Aaron's left. [R. Judah stated: "Aaron was always on Moses' right!"] Thereupon the elders entered and Moses

taught them their lesson, and when the elders moved aside, all the people entered and Moses taught them their lesson.

Thus it followed that Aaron heard the lesson four times, his sons three times, the elders twice, and all the people once. Then Moses departed and Aaron taught [the remaining ones] his lesson, after which Aaron departed and his sons taught them their lesson. The sons then withdrew and the elders taught the people their lesson. It thus follows that everyone heard the lesson four times! R. Eliezer therefore inferred: It is a man's duty to teach his pupil his lesson four times. For if Aaron, who learned from Moses -- who received it directly from the Holy One, blessed be He, had to learn his lesson four times, how much the more so an ordinary student who learns from an ordinary teacher! [91]

Since most of the studies had to be memorized by the pupils, it became customary for the teacher to repeat the lesson four times, generally following the procedure of introducing a new lesson in the evening, repeating it in the morning, again at noon, and finally in the afternoon. R. Akiba said: Whence do we learn that a lesson should be taught until the students are well versed in it [ ל'פניו ונרדע ]? From the verse, "Put it in their mouths!" [Deut. 31.19]. And whence do we learn that a man should repeat his lesson, systematically, four times before teaching it publicly? From the verses,

"Then did He see [one] and declare [two] it; He established it [three], yea, He searched it out [four]" [Job. 28.27, 28]. And only after that, "And unto man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.' [93] Truly, one who does not repeat what he has learned, is like one who sows but does not reap! [94]"

Al-Nakawa continues that "when one occupies himself in the study of Torah regularly, each time he will discover something new and it will be as dear to him as if he were reading it for the first time. We recall that with reference to the text, "Loving hind and graceful roe" [Pr. 5.19], R. Samuel b. Nachmani expounded: Why are *חיה נקיה* compared to a "hind"? To teach you that just as the hind is loved by its mate at all times as much as at the first hour of their meeting, so it is with the words of Torah. They are loved by those who study them at all times as much as at the hour when they first made their acquaintance. "And a graceful roe"? Because [95] the Torah bestows grace upon all those who study it."

One is encouraged to review his studies in order not to forget them, "Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw." [Deut. 4.9] This teaches that when one forgets Torah he transgresses two negative commandments [ *לשכח דבר מצוה, וכן, וישכח* ]. When one forgets

words of Torah, they become very remote to him. This is illustrated by the following parable: two travellers separated from one another at the crossroads, one going a mile to the north, while the other went a mile southward. Thus they are now two miles distant from each other, although neither of them actually traversed more than one mile! [96]

Resh Lakish urged his students to systematize their studies, for he said, "If you see a student to whom his studies [come to him] as hard as iron, it is because he has not systematized his studies, as it is said, "If the iron be blunt, and one does not whet the edge, etc." [Eccles. 10.10]. What is his remedy? Let him attend the school more regularly, "then must he put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct" [Ibid.] -- how much more profitable would his efforts have been, had he systematized his studies! Resh Lakish made it his custom to repeat his studies forty times, in systematic order, corresponding to the forty days during which the Torah was given, and only then would he appear before R. Johanan. R. Adda b. Abahu made it his practice to repeat his studies in systematic fashion twenty-four times, corresponding to the twenty-four books which constitute the Tenach, and only then would he appear before Raba. The story is told of R. Akiba, who, while in the Synagogue, was called up on by the *71235 n'se* to come up and to read from the Torah. [97]

Akiba refused this honor, inasmuch as he had not prepared  
[98]  
the parasha beforehand.

In concluding this treatment of pedagogic methods and principles, we cite that Tannaitic statement which presents the forty-eight qualities by which true learning of Torah is acquired, in which a number of the principles discussed above are included. "Torah is greater than priesthood or kingship; for kingship is acquired by thirty excellences, and the priesthood by twenty-four; but Torah by forty-eight. And these are they: by study, by the hearing of the ear, by distinct pronunciation, by the understanding of the heart, by awe, by reverence, by humility, by cheerfulness, by attendance on the sages, by consorting with fellow-students, by close argument with disciples, by sedateness, by knowledge of the Scripture, by knowledge of the Mishnah; by moderation in business, in worldly occupation, in pleasure, in sleep, in laughter; by long-suffering, by a good heart, faith in the sages, resignation under chastisement, by being one who recognizes his place, that rejoices in his lot, that makes a fence around his words, that claims no merit for himself; by being one that is beloved, that loves God, that loves mankind, that loves well-doing, that loves rectitude, that loves reproof, that shuns honor, that boasts not of his learning, that delights not in making decisions of law,

that helps his fellow to bear his yoke, that judges him favorably, that establishes him in the truth, that establishes him in peace, that occupies himself assiduously in his studies, that asks and makes answer, that hearkens and adds thereto, that learns in order to teach, that learns in order to practice, that makes his teacher wiser, that retells exactly what he has heard, and that reports a thing in the name of him that said it." [99]

#### The Content of Education -- Curriculum

Although Al-Nakawa has not a word to say about the specific content of education [other than Torah in general] in his long chapter on Talmud Torah, we feel that our study would be incomplete if we failed to add a brief word in this regard.

The subject matter of the elementary school was relatively uniform, consisting of Mikra [the study of Scriptures or reading], which embraced the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa. The major emphasis, however, was always placed upon the Pentateuch or Torah, since it contained the Divine Law which guided the lives of all Jews. The child was first introduced to the Hebrew alphabet, and was required to identify each letter by name, sound, form, and perhaps even the numerical value of the letters. That the alphabet was utilized for moral and religious instruction is illustrated by a remarkable Talmudic passage. [100]

After mastering the alphabet, the child was taught to identify complete words, which was not altogether a simple task, inasmuch as Hebrew has very few vowels; hence, the child had to become familiar with the meaning of the context. Tradition has it that the first Biblical book to which the child was introduced was not Genesis, as might be expected, but Leviticus. The reason for this choice is thus stated: "Why do we start the children with Leviticus and not Genesis? The Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'Since the children are pure and the sacrifices are pure, let the children come and occupy themselves with things that are pure.'" [101] It has been suggested that the custom of reading Leviticus first originated after the destruction of the Temple by Titus, in order that the child might become aware of Israel's lost glories, and the significance [102] that the Temple held in Jewish life and hopes.

Since the majority of the people spoke Aramaic in the Talmudic period, the child was taught to translate the Biblical text in that language. Pupils were expected to memorize whole passages verbatim. For text-books, the Bible was written on separate scrolls, the Pentateuch being thus transcribed on five different scrolls.

Although Mikra was truly the all-inclusive subject matter of elementary instruction, we must remember that it was not taught as literature but as life! It was the Book



[Book] of Life, by virtue of whose study the child learned religion, ethics, and morality. Knowledge was <sup>so</sup>/closely intertwined with practice that the two were practically indissoluble! The elements of arithmetic, geography and history were probably taught in conjunction with the reading of Torah. The child also learned to memorize certain prayers of the Synagogal liturgy, to compute the Jewish calendar year, and even mastered oral Hebrew through the study of the Bible. We have already observed in another chapter that the child entered the school with a certain basic knowledge acquired from his parents in the atmosphere of the home.

The content of secondary education was Mishnah. Unlike Mikra, which was written, the Mishnah, or Oral Law, had to be memorized by constant repetition. Such study provided a great deal of indirect learning, for since the complicated details of the laws of Torah involved many subjects, the student soon became familiar with the mathematics and sciences extant in those times. For example, in learning the laws of permitted and prohibited foods, and the laws dealing with the various imperfections which render animals unfit for sacrifice, the student acquired some conception of physiology, zoology and medicine. In learning to reckon the Jewish calendar, he became familiar with the elements of mathematics and astronomy. Some knowledge of botany and agriculture was obtained when he studied the laws applicable to mixing and planting seeds.

The elements of architecture were present when the laws relating to the building of the Temple and the tabernacle were discussed. These subjects, of course, were never approached directly, but were associated with the chief content of education -- Torah!

The content of higher education was known as Talmud or Midrash, the latter term referring to the method of exposition employed in the academies of higher learning. Talmud, the more general term, meaning "study" or "learning" refers to the already formulated expositions.

Was the study of secular knowledge encouraged? The study of foreign languages furnishes an excellent illustration. Unquestionably, many Jews undertook the study of Greek during the Hellenistic period, and we have some [103] evidence that some even attempted to learn all the languages current at that time, about seventy in toto. Indeed, in proof of this, many foreign words are found in Tannaitic writings. Most interesting in this connection [104] is the testimony of Josephus. "I have taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks and to understand the elements of the Greek language, although I have so long accustomed myself to speak our own language, that I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness; for our own nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations...because they look upon

this sort of accomplishment as common,... but they give him the testimony of being a wise man, who is fully acquainted with our laws, and is able to interpret their meaning."

The following statement recorded in the Talmud would seem to indicate that secular knowledge was encouraged. "The man who understands astronomy and does not pursue the study of it, of such a man Scripture says, 'They regard not the work of the Lord, neither have they considered the operation of His hands' [Isa. 5.12]."<sup>[105]</sup> We also note that many Jews were skilled in gymnastics and military affairs. After the dispersion of the people with the dissolution of the Jewish state, education was greatly influenced by the various countries in the Diaspora.

From the thirteenth century and onward, the seven sciences [ *שבע מדות* ]<sup>[106]</sup> comprised the prescribed curriculum among Jews as well as Christians. The Cure of Souls, written by Joseph b. Judah ibn. Aknin, of Granada, at the close of the twelfth century [a work with which Al-Nakawa must have been familiar], recommends the pursuit of the following order of studies: reading, writing, Torah, Mishnah, Hebrew grammar, poetry, Talmud, philosophy of religion, logic, arithmetic, geometry, optics, astronomy,<sup>[107]</sup> music, mechanics, medicine and metaphysics. Why then,

one may speculate, does Al-Nakawa completely disregard the important aspect of curriculum in his treatment of Talmud Torah in the Menorath Ha-Maor? Either he did not consider it germane to his treatment of the subject, or perhaps, because of the troublous nature of his times, he may have felt a compelling urge to cast off the sophisticated secularism which characterized his age, and to return, nostalgically, to the "old paths and the good ways" of his fathers -- to gain comfort, strength and inspiration from the vitalizing words of Torah.

#### The Education of Women

Before one can begin to speak of feminine education, he must first be cognizant of the status enjoyed by the Jewish woman. Judging from certain legislation which one finds, it would be difficult not to draw the conclusion that women were regarded as inferior to men. Women, for example, were not permitted as witnesses or judges. They could not be included in the minyan required for worship services. Like slaves and minors, they were exempt from observing a number of precepts, and a wife was subject to the will of her husband in regard to divorce. On the other hand, we note certain statements recorded that sound an entirely different note, as for example the prophetic utterance: "She is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant" [Mal.2:14], or "let a man see to it that he pay the

proper respect to his wife, for it is through her that  
[108]  
a blessing will rest upon the house."

It would appear that parents usually desired sons in preference to daughters, since the latter required a great deal more care and anxiety; a morally derelict daughter was regarded as the greatest calamity that could befall parents. But a more important factor, and much more idealistic, for the preference of sons was that since women were exempt from fulfilling most of the positive precepts of the Torah, the observance of which was res-  
[109]  
tricted to a certain time or season, they were thus limited in their ability to serve the Almighty. Sons, however, might serve Him completely, without such limitations.

Girls and women were not included by law in the sphere of the educational program. Girls were not accepted as students in any of the schools, nor were women permitted to teach. Fathers were not obligated to teach their daughters Torah, not, for that matter, were women required to teach it to their sons. This does not mean that the girl received no instruction whatsoever; to the contrary, they did receive training in Mikra, the reading of Scripture, from their parents. Since parents were particularly concerned about the moral education of their daughters, they were careful to instruct them in those

Biblical maxims that stressed proper conduct and upright moral behavior. Since the education of the girl was received solely from her parents, it, consequently, varied in direct proportion to the knowledge which the latter possessed. Perhaps for this reason the Rabbis advised that a man should endeavor to marry the daughter of a scholar, "for if he die or be exiled, he may rest assured that his children will be scholars."<sup>[110]</sup>

Women did attend worship services on Sabbaths and holidays, at which times they sat in special galleries or halls provided for them. They could not lead the congregation in worship, but could participate in all the prayers, and attend the sermons. Some women there were, so imbued with a love for Torah, as in the case of R. Akiba's wife,<sup>[111]</sup> that they encouraged their husbands to devote themselves completely to its study, while they assumed all the financial responsibilities of the household.

Al-Nakawa dismisses the subject of women's part in the scheme of Talmud Torah with the terse statement: "A woman who studies Torah will receive her reward, but it will not be equal to that which a man receives, for she is not commanded to study Torah; if one fulfills a commandment which he has not been commanded, his reward

[112]  
is but half." In fact, our sainted author must <sup>not</sup> have  
looked with favor upon the education of women [higher  
education] since he declares that they lack the intellect-  
ual capacity for such study, and since we find him citing  
the stern admonition: "Whoever teaches his daughter Torah,  
it as though he taught her obscenity." [113] Similar is the  
strong assertion by the Rabbis: "Let the words of the  
Torah rather be destroyed by fire than imparted to women." [114]

These strong utterances probably refer to "higher  
education" and the study of the Oral Law, for since most  
religious obligations, with the exception of those noted  
above, devolved upon both women, as well as men, they,  
consequently, required at least a basic instruction in  
Torah. Reluctance to permit women to pursue advanced  
studies may stem from the examples of Greece and Rome,  
where the education of women brought them into close  
association with men and resulted in their moral laxity.  
Perhaps the apprehension of similar consequences in Israel  
accounts for the use of the word "obscenity" cited above.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION



## CHAPTER NINE

In view of the fact that the concept of Talmud Torah or Jewish Education, if you will, is so deeply rooted in the misty past, possessing a longer record of continuous existence than perhaps any educational philosophy or system in Europe -- if not in the world -- it is difficult to understand how writers of general educational literature could have passed it by with almost complete silence, or refer to it in such an incidental fashion.

[1]  
Thus, Monroe devotes hundreds of pages to Greek and Roman education, but gives not a single line to Jewish education.

[2]  
Cubberley, likewise, dismisses all of Jewish history, religion, and education in but a few pages, half of which are given to a collection of Talmudic maxims. Perhaps this is due not so much to their conviction that Judaism contributed little to educational thought, as to the inaccessibility of source materials relating to the origin and nature of the singularly Jewish concept of Talmud Torah. What references as do exist are widely scattered throughout the vast Rabbinic literature. And although the Talmud delves into almost every conceivable educational detail, there is no single section devoted to Talmud Torah, per se. Perhaps the Rabbis were too occupied with their own study

of Torah, too concerned with living it, to take the time to write of it in an objective fashion.

That Talmud Torah, originating before the Common Era, was able to survive the vicissitudes of Jewish existence and to continue, uninterruptedly, to our present day, is indeed a tribute to its intrinsic merit and to the pre-eminent role that it occupied in the life and thought of the Jew. Or should we not say, more correctly, that Judaism -- the religion, literature and unique way of life -- owes its very preservation to the ideal of Talmud Torah. It was the largest single factor in Jewish life, equal in importance to all others combined -- תלמוד תורה כנפש כלוקח ! Although the maxim has it that "more than Israel kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath kept Israel", it would be closer to the truth to say : "More than the Jew preserved the Torah though his occupation in it, Talmud Torah is responsible for the preservation of the Jew!"

Since modern educational writers bestow so many encomiums upon the Greek and Roman systems of education, it might be well, in all fairness, briefly to compare those systems with that of the contemporary Hebrew conception of Talmud Torah. Possibly the outstanding points of departure between Hebrew education, on the one hand, and Greek and Roman, on the other, is the nature of the aim and content of the respective systems. For the Greek,

the chief aim of education was to insure good citizenship. Since this demanded the fullest development of both mind and body, great stress was placed upon physical and military training. As for Higher education, the Socratic goal was the development of the power of thinking. Since reflective thinking, per se, was regarded as man's singular function, the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge was considered the summum bonum. Since higher education, to the Greek philosopher, consisted primarily of philosophical speculation, only a select few were considered capable of appreciating such studies. Moreover, it was concerned but little with practical problems, but was devoted, rather, to a search for ultimate truth. Roman educational aims were much the same, preparing for citizenship, with the orator regarded as the epitome of the good citizen!

Certainly it will not be gainsaid that the Hebrew ideal was much more noble, for with them the religious motive was the pre-dominant factor, and the acquisition of knowledge, as we have already seen, was only important insofar as it led to practice. Talmud Torah, hence, was a practical ideal, as it integrated all of life's activities. If the intellectual faculties were stimulated and developed in the process of studying and devoting one's very life to God's incomparable revelation, it was only an incidental by-product -- never an end in itself!

Hostile to physical and military education, the Jewish spirit sought to excell only in the knowledge and observance of their laws; their dream was never one of conquest and empire, but the realization of the Prophetic word when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

In regard to the content of education, it is but natural that with their emphasis upon beauty and grace, the Greek schools, presided over by the Nine Muses, stressed such subjects as music and dancing. The Laws of the Twelve Tables, which included history, biography and the study of Roman law, was the chief content of Roman education. The "curriculum" of Hebrew education was Torah -- the all-inclusive subject matter, considerably more extensive than the Twelve Tables. Further, in addition to the Written Law, the student had to master all the intricate involutions of the many oral expositions. If the Hebrew recognized "grace and beauty", it was the grace of a good name and a pure heart, and the beauty of holiness!

The attitude held by both Greek and Roman that all manual labor was degrading was not shared by the Hebrew, who, although a man possessed of great knowledge, still was enjoined to make his livelihood by virtue of some occupation, no matter how menial; never was he to take any personal benefit from the "crown of the Torah".

Another striking point of contrast is apparent in the respective regard for and social position of the teacher. Greeks and Romans alike entrusted the education of their children to slaves whom they acquired by conquest. The teacher's position was that of a menial, although he may have possessed greater knowledge than that of his citizen-master. With the Hebrew, however, the reverse was true. None but those of the highest character and piety, and who possessed abundant knowledge, were qualified to teach. The teacher and scholar, not the military hero, was the Jewish equivalent of the "good citizen".

As a matter of fact, the Jewish concept of Talmud Torah, as we have viewed it in all its many facets, compares quite favorably with modern education, even that enjoyed in America. Its pedagogic methods and principles, modern psychology notwithstanding, evidenced considerable practical wisdom, and anticipated a goodly number of our most "progressive" principles of education. Modern educators have <sup>never</sup> been as successful in combining the theoretical with the practical, as were the פ'נח 'ש'נח of old. Talmud Torah, moreover, was compulsory, as we have observed, and was practically universal in its scope, a condition most recent [and probably to be found only in America] in modern educational history. Study for the Jew was not merely a matter of "graduation" from school; the Hebrew

mind recognized no graduation. Talmud Torah was a life-long affair, and the Jew was exhorted to devote some portion of each day to study.

Nor must we conclude that this conception has only a sentimental and archeological value for us today, to be viewed, moist-eyed, as an echo out of the distant past. For, although the origins of Talmud Torah are remote, it has continued without a break down to our own day -- witnessing the rise and decline of the Greek and Roman schools, shedding what little light there was in the "Dark Age" of medievalism, teaching its adherents to think critically in an era when men were content to follow blindly and credulously. It survived the movements of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and lived to enjoy the rich benefits of the "new enlightenment" and the democratization of society. The Hebrew University reared on Mt. Scopus in Palestine, where once the Temple stood, stands as a shining symbol of Israel's undying love for and imperishable devotion to the ideal of Talmud Torah.

Throughout the centuries the Jew strove to live by this Torah ideal. Through the pursuit of his studies, he not only came to know and to appreciate the rich heritage which had been bequeathed him by the past, but he came into possession of a sure guide to the "good life" to be lived in the present, and acquired a firm faith in

the future.

If modern Jewish living is too emasculated to be meaningful, too closeted and anemic in its practices to elicit the enthusiastic emotional attachment and loyal devotion of its adherents, may it not be due, in no small measure, to the fact that we have forsaken our heritage of Talmud Torah. There is great need today for a modern equivalent of this Torah ideal, for our people, drifting into an uncertain nowhere, need to be re-educated in the ideals and achievements of the past, in order that they may more intelligently face the rigorous demands of an uncertain future. Israel has withstood trials and tests, misfortunes and persecutions without number, for it ever drew new strength and inspiration from the Torah -- but an ignorant Israel, which has abandoned Talmud Torah cannot long endure.

The modern Jew must be taught to approach the ideal of Talmud Torah in the same spirit of consecration, recognizing it as a sacred and pious duty, and as a spiritually elevating mitzvah, as did his fathers. Achieving this, we need have no fear of the future, for, as Al-Nakawa concludes: "Whoever engages in the Torah, him God directs in the good and upright path, and spreads over him His tabernacle of peace, and delivers him from all evil. The Lord guards his soul from all evil, watches all his ways and paths, and keeps his steps from stumbling, for it is said, 'Great peace have they that love Thy law; there is no stumbling for them' [Ps.119.165]. \*\*\*\*\*

N O T E S

CHAPTER ONE

1. Hebrew Union College Annual, Vol. 4, 1927, p. 311 ff.
2. Menorat Ha-Maor--H.G. Enelow edition, 4 vols. Bloch Publishing Co.
3. Graetz, H., History of the Jews, Vol. 4, p.140
4. Enelow, op. cit., Vol. 1, Intro. p. 16.
5. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, article on Al-Nakawa, Vol. 1, p.43
6. Slouschz, Travels in Northern Africa, p. 324 ff.
7. Enelow, op. cit., Vol. 1, Intro. p. 17.
8. Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 18 ff.
9. Ibid., p. 28
10. Ibid., p. 29 ff.
11. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 24.
12. The Jewish Encyclopedia [Vol. 1, p. 437] states that  
Al-Nakawa's Menorat-HaMaor was printed in 1578, but  
no copy has ever been found.
13. Enelow, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 16; the copy which has  
come down to us was written in Spain in 1441 by Moses  
the Hazzan. Part of it is the work of a later hand.
14. Enelow contends that Isaac Aboab is a creation of Zunz.  
"I think it is certain that had Zunz seen Al-Nakawa's  
manuscript, he would not have created an Isaac Aboab  
who must have written his book not later than the  
year 1320". [Intro. Vol. 1, p. 22.]
15. Intro. Vol. 1, p. 17 ff; H.U.C. Annual, op. cit.,  
"Midrash Hashkem Quotations", p. 315 ff.



## CHAPTER TWO

[The Arabic numerals below and in following chapters refer to page and line of the Menorat Ha-maor -- Enelow edition, Vol. III, chapter 3. For the sake of simplicity, the symbol "ff" has been omitted].

1. Cohon, Samuel S. -- "Judaism as a Way of Living", p. 133.
2. Mishnah, Peah 1.1
3. Etymologically speaking, פיש is derived from the Hebrew root פ, meaning, "to shoot"; hence, it successively came to mean, "to obtain a decision", "To establish a precedent", and finally "law". However, the meaning has been extended so that now it denotes "the highest conception of fundamental goodness, the basic morality which is a pre-requisite of civilization".
4. Moore, G. F., "Judaism", Vol. II, p. 240.
5. Lev. R. 22.1
6. Herford, R.T., "The Pharisees", p. 58.
7. Moore, op. cit., p. 240.
8. Cohon, op. cit., p. 133.
9. Enelow, H. G., "Adult Education in Judaism", p. 7
10. Ber. 11b
11. Enelow, op. cit., p. 1
12. A modern Hebrew term for education -- פיש -- from a root in the Bible meaning "to train", etymologically means "dedication" or "Initiation", and hence may refer to the fact that the child, upon receiving training in Talmud Torah, was dedicating his life to the service of God and to the observance of His laws. This was the characteristic essence of Talmud Torah from earliest times.
13. Josephus, Contra Apionem, Book I, 12.
14. Ibid., Book II, 19
15. 357.6; Kid. 40b

16. 320.7
17. Meg. 16b
18. Shab. 83b
19. Jer. Meg. 3.1
20. Meg. 16b
21. Hor. 13a
22. Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Talmud Torah, 1.8
23. Yoma 71b
24. Ket. 28a
25. Drazin, N. "History of Jewish Education", p. 15ff.
26. Josephus, op. cit., Book II, 17ff.
27. 312.6
28. Moore, op. cit., p. 246
29. Kid. 40b
30. Sotah 37b
31. B. K., 82a
32. 370ff.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Moore, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 263
2. Herford, "Pirke Aboth", p. 15
3. 247.4
4. Cohon, op.cit., p. 137 ff.
5. 327.3
- 5a. Gen. R. 8,2
- 5b. Gen. R. 28,4
6. 207.10; Shab 88a
- 6a. 206.7
- 6b. 206.1
7. Eccles. R. 1,4
8. 210.14
9. 204.1
10. 220.9
11. 221.16; Sifre *מקד*, 119
12. This is not the generally accepted view with regard to labor.
13. Num. R. 19,26
14. Num. R. 1,7; cf. Mikilta, *מקד*, 5.
15. Mekilta, *מקד*, 1.
16. 212.20; cf. Mekilta, *מקד*, 5.
17. Mid. Psalms, 119,1
18. 328.19
19. 211.15; 206.12
20. Pesik. R. 95a
21. Zeb. 116a

22. Shab. 89a
23. Shab. 88b
24. 331.6
25. 290.3
26. 246.14; Erub. 55a
27. 374.13; Shab. 152a
28. 321.20; Shab. 30a
- 28a Tanhuma B. *תנחומא ב', 35a*
29. 375.21
30. 376.13
31. 210.18; Sanh. 99b
32. Tanhuma B., *תנחומא ב', 37b*
33. Aboth 6.6
34. Ibid., 6.10
35. 213.18
36. Ab. Zarah 3b
37. Cant. R. 1,2
38. Ta'an. 7a,b
39. 215.3; 213.20
40. 214.13
41. 213.20
42. Cant. R., 1,3
43. Erub. 54a,b
44. This would seem to imply humility, since artisans who work with fire would presumably wear soiled garments.
45. Sifre, Deut., 343
46. 209.19

47. 216.19

48. 215.13

49. 216.4

50. Deut. R. 8,6

CHAPTER FOUR

1. 326.22
2. 327.4
3. 326.18; Mish. Torah, Hilkot Tefillah, 13.25
4. 328.5
5. 328.14
6. 329.19; Meg. 32a
7. 329.16; Meg. 32a; Sanh. 101a
8. 329.6; Sanh. 101a
- 8a. The word mitzwah can be equally well translated "commandment" or "good deed". To the Rabbis the two are identical. Every good deed, in our modern sense, is also a fulfillment of a commandment, and every fulfillment of a commandment is a good deed.
9. 323.20; Men. 30a; cf. Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Sefer Torah
10. Evidently there were a number of conflicting versions extant at this time.
11. 323.20; Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Sefer Torah, 7.2
12. 324.10; Meg. 27a; Mishneh Torah, op.cit., 10.2
13. 326.8; Kid. 33b
14. Ibid.; Mish Torah, op.cit., 10.11
15. Ibid.; Aboth 4.8
16. 325.2; Meg. 32a
17. 324.14; Mishneh Torah, op.cit., 10.4
18. 325.19; Ber. 22a
19. 325.14; Ber. 25b
20. 325.7; Sanh. 21b; Mishneh Torah, op.cit., 10.5
21. A Greek translation of the Bible was composed under the guidance of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua by a proselyte

named Aquilas. The Aramaic Targum probably took shape about the same time, but there is no authority except this passage for associating it with Onkelos, except this reference. Assumedly, there was some confusion between the two translations. [see Meg. 3a -- Soncino edition -- note.]

22. Since Jonathan was a disciple of Hillel, he could hardly have had any direct contact with the Prophets named. What is probably meant is that he was influenced by traditions handed down from them.

23. 327.8; Meg. 3a

24. This claim on behalf of the Oral Law met with strenuous opposition from the Sadducees and naturally had the effect of making the Rabbis lay exceptional stress on its importance and validity. Josephus refers to the controversy in these terms: "The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers; and concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them".-- [Josephus, "Antiquities" XIII, 10.6]

25. 217.8; on the two-fold Torah, cf. Ber. 5a; Git. 60b

26. Shab. 31a

27. Pesik. R. 14b

28. 217.7; Git. 60a,b

29. Judah Ha-Nasi, c. first half of the third cent., C.E.

30. 316.15; B.M. 33a,b

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CHAPTER FIVE

1. For a comprehensive treatment of the theme of merit and reward, see Herford's The Pharisees, Cp.5, p. 123ff.
2. 245.8; Sanh. 100a
3. 260.1; Gen. R. 62,2
4. 309.20; Ber. 6a
5. 310.13
6. 264.16; Ber. 7a
7. 268.1
8. 256.8; Mishnah Peah, 1.1
9. 256.8; Joshua 1.8
10. 264.6; Meg. 15b
11. 204.18; Ab. Zarah 19b; the verses to which he refers are Deut.29.8; Josh.1.8; Ps.1.2-3
12. 203.16
13. 330.12; see Meg. 16b; Ezra 2.2; Neh.7.7
14. 240.13; R.H. 18a
15. 207.7
16. 376.4
17. Ket. 111b
18. Mak. 24b; Lam. R. 5,18
19. Men. 29b
20. 374.15
21. 265.1; Gen. R. 6,9
22. 228.15; Sotah 21a
23. 221.1
24. 239.9; Erub. 54a



25. A play on the word , which means both "com-  
panions" and "ornament".
26. 232.15; Erub. 54a
27. Sifre Deut., Ekeb, 45.
28. Pesik. R. 198a
29. 304.14
30. 306.5; Ned. 62a
31. 305.3
32. 365.9; Suk. 49b
33. 210.18; Sanh. 99b
34. 233.1; Ta'an. 7a
35. 330.1
36. Ber. 17a
37. 365.13; Naz. 23b
38. Ibid.; Hor. 10b
39. Ber. 16b; Pes. 50b; Sanh. 105b
40. Aboth 6.1

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#### CHAPTER SIX

1. 248.8; Hag. 5b
2. 310.16
3. 250.13; Shab. 33a
4. 250.8; Shab. 32b
5. Shab. 119b
6. 250.1; Ab. Zarah 3b
7. 248.4; B. B. 79a

8. A euphemism for God Himself.
9. 255.3; Ta'an. 7b
- 9a. Aboth 6.2
- 9b. On the basis of Isa.38.14.
10. 254.11; Gen. R. 65.20
11. Ibid.; Gen. R. 67,7 -- The Rabbis rationalize Israel's defeat at the hands of Rome, on the basis of the former's neglect of study.
12. 252.15; B. M. 85a,b
13. 252.9; Aboth 6.9
14. 315.13
15. 315.1; Deut. R. 8,7
16. 370.8; Sanh. 99a
17. Aboth 3.10
18. B. B. 134a
19. 307.4; Yoma 35b

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CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Hor. 13a
2. 365.19; Al-Nakawa digresses here to give a summary of the twenty-four transgressions which incur the penalty of excommunication, and the treatment accorded an excommunicant. Cf. Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Talmud Torah, 6,4; Ibid. 7,4-13.
3. 365.19; Shab. 119b
4. Yoma 71b
5. Derek Erez Zuta, 1
6. Sifre, Deut. 4, 8; Ta'an. 7a
7. Ber. 17a; see Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Talmud Torah 3,9
8. Moore, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 246
9. This statement is interpreted by reference to Gen.3.5: "And I will put enmity between thee [serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; they shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise their heel." Thus, man will endeavor to kill the serpent by crushing it, whereas the serpent retaliates only by bruising the heel, a non-vital part of the body. Hence, "serpent-like", the scholar should retaliate most moderately, even when greatly wronged. The saying may also be a reaction to too humble a scholar who, by reason of his extreme forbearance, encourages impudent people in their nefarious conduct.
10. 369.5; Yoma 23a
11. Aboth 6.4; This note of asceticism, Herford explains [Pirke Aboth], is infrequently sounded in Talmudic literature. The general attitude towards the indulgence in the enjoyable things of life tended toward self-control and moderation, rather than complete abstinence. This was one of the essential characteristics of the separation between the Pharisee and the Essene. "One of the grand foundations of Judaism ..... is that the world, as God made it, is good.
12. 306.15
13. 308.22; Sotah 49a

14. Lev. R. 34,16
15. Esther R. 2,3
16. 305.15
17. Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Talmud Torah 6,1
18. Ibid., 6,10
19. Shulchan Aruk, Hoshen Mishpat, 28 [cited in Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, p. 679.]
20. 322.4; Kid. 30a
21. 316.4; Erub. 54b
22. 317.13
- 22a. 278.1
23. 311.15; Ta'an. 7a; cf. Mak. 10a; Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Talmud Torah 5,13
24. Ibid.
25. Aboth 4.1
26. 311.6
27. In the territory of Dan
28. A town northwest of Jerusalem, founded by Herod the Great, and named after his father.
29. 318.14; Gen. R. 61,3
30. 370.5; Ab. Zarah 19a; cf. Erub. 54b
31. Cohon, Judaism as a Way of Living, p. 96
32. 301.3
33. 299.20
34. 302.4
35. 301.15
36. 301.22
37. 301.7; Kid. 82b

38. 299.5
39. Ibid.
40. 299.13; cf. Kid. 29a, 30b.
41. 300.5
42. 300
43. 303.7
44. 302.14
45. 302.18; Ber. 35b
46. Kid. IV.14
47. Ber. 63b
48. Ber. 35b; cf. Shab. 33b
49. 266.11; Sanh. 113b
50. T.J. Ta'an. III, 13, 67a
51. Ab. R. N., 11, 14a
52. 269.12; Ta'an. 9a
53. 277.9
54. 363.5; Sanh. 101a
55. This term was utilized to describe men of profound learning. The two scholars here mentioned were the first of the *shidim* or "pairs" of teachers who preserved the traditions of the Men of the Great Assembly; they lived in the first half of the second century, B.C.E.
56. 279.1
57. 284.7; Moed Katan 25a
58. 279.5; Sotah 48b
59. Ket. 104a
60. Mishnah Sotah I.9
61. 276.12

62. Ibid.

63. 243.13; cf. Gaster, Exempla of the Rabbis, p. 16 for variants of this story.

64. See Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. I, p. 484f.

65. 215.17

66. 355.17; Sotah 22a

67. There was a great rivalry between those who devoted themselves exclusively to Mishnah, and those who had developed a Gemara upon it.

68. 355.4; B. B. 33b

69. While these statements convey the feelings of strong antipathy which existed between the <sup>פני אדם</sup> and the <sup>הגוי</sup>, it must be realized that they were probably spoken in jest, and should so be understood.

70. 356.1; Pes. 49b

71. Ibid.

72. 357.6; Deut. R. 7.4

73. 355.10; Shab. 63a

74. 356.19; B. B. 8a

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Morris, op. cit., p. 3f.
2. Ibid., p. 13
3. Deut. 27.1-8
4. See Deut. 6.4-9, and 11.13-21
5. Sotah 20a
6. The word 70/10 may also mean "one who counts". The Talmud insists that there were called 70/10 because, so devoted were they to their task, they actually counted the words and the letters of the Pentateuch and classified its contents; see Kid. 30a
7. Morris, op. cit., p. 13
8. An institution which functioned during the period of the Soferim, c. 515 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E.
9. A brother of Queen Salome, and one of the presidents of the Sanhedrin during the last century of the Jewish state.
10. High Priest during the last days of the Second Temple.
11. B.B. 21a
12. Drazin, op. cit., p. 46
13. Morris, op. cit., p. 22
14. Ket. 103b
15. Shebu. 5a
16. Ab. Zarah 3b
17. 204.5; Gen. R. 61.1
18. Sanh. 99b
19. 359.17; cf. Gen. R. 39.13 for parallels
20. 360.3

21. Ta'an. 24a
22. Aboth 4.15
23. B.B. 33a
24. Mishneh Torah, Hilcot Talmud Torah, 5.1
25. Aboth 6.3
26. 204.3; 309.12; 319.9
27. 359.4; Gen. R. 54,1; R.H. 23a
28. 360.15
29. Yoma 72b; Shab. 114a; Ber. 43b
30. Ned. 37a; Ta'an 24a
31. Kid. 4.13
32. A system instituted by Abba Arika [Rab].
33. The literal meaning is "House of the Book" [Bible].  
It may also mean the "house where the children  
are instructed in letters". This was the primary  
school where Bible was taught. Those higher schools  
where Talmud was instructed were called Beth Talmud  
or Beth Ha-Keneseth.
34. Aboth 5.24
35. B.B. 21a
36. Gollancz, op. cit., p. 96
37. Ned. 37a
38. 360.9; Hul 133a; Mishneh Torah Hilcot Talmud Torah 4.1
39. Aboth 5.12
40. Ibid. 5.15
41. Ibid. 4.15
42. 363.8
43. 364.9; Erub. 63a
44. 360.20; Aboth 2.5; Mishneh Torah Hilcot Talmud Torah 4.4-5
45. 361.10; Mishneh Torah, Ibid.



46. 362.14

46a Similarly, a teacher upon entering the classroom, and finding the students engaged in study, should not immediately plunge into the discussion, but should wait until he has ascertained the topic being studied.

47. 362.6

48. 360.6; Mekilta [ed. Lauterbach] Vol II, 190

49. Sotah 47a

50. Ket. 103b; advice by Rabbi to his eldest son, R. Gamliel

51. Mishneh Torah Hilcot Talmud Torah, 2,2

52. Hul. 107b

53. 361.14

54. 363.2; Sang. 71a

55. 216.9

56. 375.14

57. 319.1

58. 318.11; Gen. R. 61,3

59. 275.14

60. 310.20; Ta'an. 7a

61. Aboth 4.25

62. Ibid., 2.5

63. 375.1

64. 298.10

65. 295.1; Men. 110a

66. 296.20; Ex. R. 47,5

67. 294.21

68. 294.10

69. 298.7

70. 287.13; Ab. Zarah 3b; Mishneh Torah Hilkot T.T., 3,13
71. 203.18
72. 321.7; Ber. 7b
73. 362.22; T.Y. Ber. V,1 [9a]
74. 316.9; Sotah 49a
75. 313.18
76. 372.5; Mishneh Torah Hilkot T.T., 1,5; Kid. 29b
77. 372.20; Kid. 30b
78. Mid. R. 2,3
79. Pes. 3b
80. 370.1; R.H. 4b; Yoma 80a; Ab.Zarah 19a
81. Pes. 117a
82. Mishneh Torah Hilkot Talmud Torah, 5.9
83. Pes. 112a
84. Mishneh Torah, Ibid., 4.2
85. 363.1; Erub. 54a
86. Ibid., 53b
87. Sanh. 99b
88. Drazin, op. cit., p. 112
- 88a Men. 11.4
89. Moore, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 247
90. Hag. 9b
91. 323.1; Erub. 54b
92. Men. 18a
93. 323.12; Gen. R., 24.5
94. 323.18; Sanh. 99a
95. 316.23; Erub. 54b

96. 369.13; Men. 99b
97. 322.16; Ta'an. 7b, 8a
98. 323.16
99. Aboth 6.6
- 100 Shab. 104a, quoted in extenso in Morris, op. cit., p. 148
- 101 Lev. R. 7.3
- 102 Drazin, op. cit., p. 83; in this section dealing with the content of education we are greatly indebted to Drazin's fine discussion, pp. 81-99.
- 103 Shek. 5.1
- 104 Antiquities of the Jews, Bk 20, 11.2
- 105 Shab. 75a
- 106 For a list of medieval Jewish authors who insisted upon placing education on a scientific basis, see the Jewish Encyclopedia, article "Education".
107. Ibid.
108. B.M. 59a
109. The legal ruling is : "Women are exempt from commands of 'Thou shalt' [positive commands], the observance of which depends upon a definite point of time" -- Kid. 1.7
110. Pes. 49a
111. Ned. 50a
112. 372.7
113. Sotah 3.4;
114. Sotah 19a

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