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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
OLD AGE IN THE BIBLE

by

Donald Heskins

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-
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Cincinnati, Ohio
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Referee:
Professor Sheldon H. Blank

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PREFACE

I have treated old age in four chapters. Each of these chapters deals with a different problem of old age and is a separate entity.

The first chapter deals with numerical age and its relation with old age. There are five categories of numerical age. They are arranged from longest life span to the shortest. The longest life spans are considered as those of mythological figures and the fourth section contains the life span of genuine historical figures. Thus I show that this division is expressive of a gradual emergence of man as a mortal from the state of a divine-like being. The category gives four references to numerical age which appear in miscellaneous books.

The second chapter discusses the terminology of old age. I examine the contexts of all the terms of old age and try to determine therefrom the meaning of these terms. I show where at times the terms do not exactly mean "old" but rather that they mean "elder" in the comparative sense of "older than." I show that the term for "elder" is used to designate certain professional groups. These groups are made up of men who are older and more mature in experience. I also point out that there are certain descriptive terms for old age such as: gray hair, sated with days, well advanced in years, and decrepit.

The third chapter discusses the manifestations of old age both physical and emotional. I show that the Bible recognizes certain signs of deterioration in old age and at the

same it sees certain qualities which remain in a person whether he be young or old. There is a lack of a concentrated emphasis upon the deterioration of age.

The last chapter discusses the attitudes toward old age. It shows that both old and young are responsible for the sins of society, but that all must be treated equally severe for these sins. There are numerous compensations in old age such as grandchildren and protection by one's own children. Not to have any children in old age is a serious tragedy. The function of the aged is important in biblical society. The old man also puts his affairs in order before his death by settling his estate with his heirs and by giving them a charge and blessing before his death. The aged are also to be included equally in the benefits of messianic and apocalyptic times. They are an equal part of society.

CHAPTER I

NUMERICAL AGE AND ITS RELATION TO OLD AGE

In this chapter we attempt to find out at what numerical age a person is considered to be old. We shall divide the material into five sections. These divisions are made mainly on the basis of length of life and treatment of numerical age in each. The five sections shall be designated: Mythical I, Mythical II, Legendary or Semi-Historical, Normal Old Age, and finally a Miscellany containing a few passages which cannot be included in the other divisions.

MYTHICAL PERIOD I

The first mythical period covers the time from Adam to Noah.⁽¹⁾ The ages of people in this period are given in the fifth and ninth chapters of Genesis. We find the presentation of the ages in Chapter 5 as follows:

(a)

(a) When --- had lived --- years, (2)
he became the father of ---,

(b)

(b) ----lived after the birth of -- years, and
had other sons and daughters.

(c)

(c) Thus all the days of ---- were --- years and
he died.

We find three variants of this formula in Chapter 5.⁽³⁾ We can see that each man listed is the father of a first born son and that each has sons and daughters after his first child. We see from the following chart that these persons

father children at a late age by our standards. Particularly important for our purposes is the fact that there is no suggestion that these people are old when they become fathers although they do become fathers at a fantastically old age. The range of fatherhood is from sixty-five to 500 years!

<u>CHILD</u>	<u>FATHER</u>	<u>FATHER'S AGE</u>	<u>VERSE</u>
Seth	Adam	130 yrs.	3
Enosh	Seth	105 "	6
Kenan	Enosh	90 "	10
Mahalel	Kenan	70 "	12
Jared	Mahelel	65 "	15
Enoch	Jared	162 "	18
Methusaleh	Enoch	65 "	21
Lamech	Methusaleh	180 "	25
Noah	Lamech	182 "	28
Shem			
Ham	Noah	500 "	32
Japheth			

The last birth differs greatly from the others with the birth of triplets and the father's great age at their birth. It is probably due to the fact that so much attention is to be given to Noah as one of the patriarchs who was saved from the flood. The ages descend down to Jared and then fluctuate in no particular pattern. It has been suggested that the name Jared is derived from $\gamma\gamma$ ¹ and means that there was some sin which caused this shortening of life.⁽⁴⁾ However there is not enough evidence in the Massoretic Text to warrant a positive statement about this theory.

In connection with the age of these people at death see the following table. We also find no mention of the fact that they were old when they died nor any mention of the fact that they had lived long.

<u>PERSON</u>	<u>AGE AT DEATH</u>	<u>CHAPTER V VERSE</u>
Adam	930 yrs.	5
Seth	912 "	8
Enosh	905 "	11
Kenan	910 "	14
Mahalel	895 "	17
Jared	962 "	20
Enoch	365 "	23
Methusaleh	969 "	27
Lamech	777 "	31

We can also include Noah's 950 years. His death is recorded in Gen. 9:28. There is no evidence of a definite pattern in this list and only Lamech and Enoch stand out as decided variants. Pfeiffer mentions the similarities between this Genealogy and that of the Antediluvian kings of Babylonian mythology.⁽⁵⁾ Also it has been mentioned that there is a similarity between the age of Enoch and the 365 days of the solar year. There is mention of a son of the sun god in Babylonian mythology who ruled 324 years. He went forth daily into the Western Sea and came forth again from the (Sunrise) mountains.⁽⁶⁾ It is interesting to note in passing that the Massoretic Text speaks of Enoch קִנְיָנוּ with God. He goes back and forth with God. It is possible that there is some idea of mythology involved here. The reason that we mention this passage in particular is that we have designated this section the mythological period and we feel that this is a possible hint as to the type of era that the author wishes to portray. These Antediluvian figures are god-like in their fantastic ages and their fertility at late ages. As we will see later the idea of fertility in old age plays an important role in the Bible. We feel that the omission of the concept

of these people growing old and the fact that they do show fertility in advanced years suggests that these people are semi-divine. They live in primeval times and are not meant to be historical but rather to be purely mythological figures. For our purposes the important thing to see is that these persons do not become aged and decrepit; they merely live an extraordinarily long life.

MYTHICAL PERIOD II

The next list of ages is contained in the genealogy from Noah to Abraham in Gen. 11. Again we have a formula with the third part (part c, p. 1) omitted. It is necessary for the reader to total the ages and find out how long these people lived.

Genealogy Chapter 11

<u>CHILD</u>	<u>FATHER</u>	<u>FATHER'S AGE</u>	<u>VERSE</u>
Arpachshad	Shem	100 yrs.	10
Shelach	Arpachshad	35 "	12
Eber	Shelach	30 "	14
Peleg	Eber	34 "	16
Reu	Peleg	30 "	18
Serug	Reu	32 "	20
Nahor	Serug	30 "	21
Terach	Nahor	29 "	24
Abram	Terach	70 "	26
Nahor			
Haran			

We notice that after the first person there is a big drop in the age of becoming a father. The first born is still a boy and the father still has sons and daughters after him. These people are much younger than their predecessors. How-

ever the order does not show any pattern. One should notice the similarity between Abraham and Noah (pg. 2). They both have triplets and they both are much older when they first become fathers than their forebears were. We might say that the writer means to suggest their greater fertility in that they both have triplets and also in that they have them much later than the others (Arpachshad excepted). They still are not called old when they become fathers.

We shall next examine the record of their deaths.

<u>PERSON</u>	<u>AGE OF DEMISE</u>	<u>CHAPTER II VERSE</u>
Shem	600 yrs.	10
Arpachshad	438 "	12
Shelach	433 "	14
Eber	464 "	16
Peleg	239 "	19
Reu	239 "	21
Serug	230 "	23
Nahor	148 "	25
Terach	205 "	32

We see that, though great, the ages are less than those of the other group. Shem stands alone in greatness of age possibly because he is the son of Noah. Then the next three are grouped together in the four hundreds. Then the next three go down to the two hundreds. It might be noted that the first name of this group is עֶשְׂרֵה which means to divide. Is this more than just coincidental? Unfortunately there is no other evidence to substantiate any theory. The last two stand alone. It might be that the reason Terach has a greater age is that he is the father of Abraham and thereby merits it. Again more evidence is lacking.

In this second group of ages these people are not called old when they die. They do live a shorter period of time. The reason may be that according to the author we are closer to historical times because these people immediately precede Abraham who is a semi-historical character. The authors are trying to show us that we are about to leave mythological times and enter into a new age.

As to the interpretation that there is a growing amount of sin and so the lives of these people grow less as a result there is little evidence within these passages to support this interpretation. The only evidence for an interpretation such as this is to be found in Gen. 6 1-4.

"When men began to multiply on the face of the earth sons and daughters were born to them

"the sons of God saw that the women were fair; and they took wives from those they chose."

"Then the Lord said, "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."

In this an interpretation of what has gone on in the fifth chapter of Genesis? Are these $\text{אֱלֹהִים בְּאִמָּה}$ 'א the men including Adam to Noah? Are they $\text{אֱלֹהִים בְּאִמָּה}$ semi-divine?⁽⁷⁾ This could be an interpretation of what happened when angels or some other type of semi-divine beings married women of the earth. However there is not enough evidence to show anything definite here. The limiting of man's life certainly does not follow because as we will see, many semi-historical characters such as Ishmael and Jacob live over 120 years. (Gen. 25:17, Gen. 47:28) Is this an explanation of Moses' living 120 years (Deut. 34:7)? There is too little evidence again to make any definite statement. It looks as if this is another strand of legendary material leading up to an explanation of the flood. In Gen. 6:4 there is a strong possibility that there is in chapter 5 an interpretation of the prehistorical world.

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of fame.

There is something superhuman about these mysterious creatures of the past. Yet one wonders: if a semi-divine being marries a mortal woman would not their offspring be mortal? Gradually over a period of time would not man thereby live a more limited number of days? Perhaps this passage presents a rather

ancient picture of the history of man's mortality. This seems to be different from the preceding passage. There is no mention of offense in v. 4 as there was in vv. 1-3 that distinguishes the two passages.

The two mythical sections seem to contain a concept of the growth of man. Man slowly becomes through these passages more human, mainly by virtue of his diminishing life span and so we are ready to turn from Mythological to the Legendary or Semi-Historical period.

LEGENDARY OR SEMI-HISTORICAL PERIOD

In the following passages we are to consider the period from the time of Abraham through and including the death of Joshua. We shall see that in this section the age of the individual begins to be thought of in a different perspective.

In Gen. 12:4b we are told that Abraham left Haran at the age of 75.

and Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

This passage does not suggest that he was old and nothing is unusual about a man of seventy-five travelling. The next passage to note is Gen. 16:16, where Abraham is eighty-six when Ishmael is born.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

We notice that there still is no comment about Abram's fertility at such a late age.

The next passage is Gen. 17:1,2; at ninety-nine Abraham is promised great progeny by God.

2b- I will multiply you exceedingly.

The emphasis throughout the passage is on the covenant rather than upon the fact that Abraham was still to be fertile at the age of ninety-nine years. This then is still similar to the former passages as far as its treatment of the subject of fertility in old age is concerned. It is in the next passage that we first encounter a new reaction to fertility at such an age. God has just promised to make Abraham and Sarah fertile so that Isaac can be born. Abraham when he hears the news has the following reaction. (Gen. 17:17)

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed
and said to himself, "Shall a child be born
to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall
Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a son?"

This passage shows that being fertile at this age was unusual and that Abraham at least from this passage was conceived of here as more of a human being and less of a vague, pre-historical mythological figure. For the first time we are told that with age one's fertility diminishes. Specifically the ages of ninety and one hundred are a peculiar time to become a mother or father.

The reference to Abraham's age of 100 years in Gen. 21:5 has no accompanying commentary saying that he was old nor that it was unusual for him to be the father of Isaac at the age of 100.

and Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac his son was born to him.

Regarding the death of Sarah and the death of Abraham there are two different statements. In the passage which records the death of Sarah we have just the simple statement of her demise.

Gen. 23:1

and Sarah lived 127 years, and these were the years of the life of Sarah

This is all that we read of her death and her age. However when we turn to the record of Abraham's death we find something different for after the statement of his age and death in Gen. 25:7,

and these are the days of the years which Abraham lived; 175 years.

We have a commentary upon the age and the physical state of Abraham at the time of his death,

Gen. 25:8

and Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, old and full (of days) and he was gathered to his people. (8)

In this passage we have either a statement by the editor that Abraham was old at 175 years which would make us ask why Sarah was not old at 127 years? Is this a different author in this passage? Or is v. 8 merely an addition put in later on to say that 175 years is a long time to live and that one would be good and old at that age? Again in this passage we have an opinion expressed about a great age. The author again is impressed with the great age and with the fact that Abraham is old at the time of his death.

Later in the chapter we have a statement of the age of Ishmael at the time of his death. Here there is no commentary as to his physical condition.

Gen. 25:17

and these are the years of the life of Ishmael, 137 years; and he breathed his last, and he died, and he was gathered to his people.

The language is similar to that in the account of Abraham's death, with the omission of וַיִּגְדַּל וַיָּמָוֶה, but we have no commentary on Ishmael's physical condition, maybe because of his character and reputation.

But, one is prompted to ask, if old age is a blessing and Ishmael was a renegade, why did he live so long? Why did not God shorten his life? We believe that this passage is by an author who wants to show the number of years of Ishmael's life and who is not concerned with the fact that long life and a good life are related.

In Gen. 25:20, we are told that Isaac is forty when he takes Rebecca for a wife. This is not considered unusual nor is the passage in Gen. 25:26b where he is sixty when the twin sons are born to Rebecca.

Gen. 25:20

and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Padan-Aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, for his wife.

Gen. 25:26b

and Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

We are told that Esau also was forty when he took wives. Is this just coincidence with Gen. 25:20?

Gen. 26:34

And Esau was forty years old and he took to wife, Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

The next passage is like Gen. 25:7,8; as in that notice of Abraham's death it tells of Isaac's death and comments on his physical state at the time.

Gen. 35:28, 29

- 28) And the days of Isaac were 180 years.
- 29) And Isaac breathed his last, and he died, and he was gathered to his people old, and full of days, and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.

This passage adds the fact that he was old and full of days but omits טובה , good old age; also ימים , where ימים is omitted in the former passage.

The difference in age is only five years; therefore we can say that there is a similarity of concept as to what may be considered old. Notice that Isaac became a father at a younger age than did Abraham. There seems to be a bigger gap in the middle of Isaac's life according to the ages given here. Abraham does not start out on his journey from Haran until he is seventy-five years old. Certainly the picture presented of Isaac's life seems to be more realistic than that of Abraham's.

The next passage dealing with age is Gen. 41:46; Joseph is in attendance at Pharaoh's court at the age of thirty.

And Joseph was thirty years old when he attended Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and Joseph went out from before Pharaoh and passed through the land of Egypt.

According to ages so far Joseph is a child prodigy when he enters the service of Pharaoh. Verses 46 to 49 concern the seven years of plenty when Joseph was preparing for the famine. In verse 50 we are told that Joseph has two sons one year before the famine. Now if we were to say that six years passed since Joseph assumed the leadership under Pharaoh and Joseph was thirty at that time when he would be thirty-six when he becomes a father.

Gen. 41:50

Before the year of famine came, Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.

We feel however that the writer would have explicitly stated the age of Joseph had it seemed significant to him. We cannot therefore count this as a legitimate passage dealing with age. We might note in passing that no ages have been given for the early life of Jacob. The writer evidently is not interested in these matters.

Our next passage is a most curious one because we cannot be sure exactly what it means.

Gen. 47:9

And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojournings are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of my life, and they have not attained to the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.

Does Jacob mean to say that he is young? His years are not as long ^{many} as his ancestors and so he is yet a young man at 130. Which ancestors did he mean? The antediluvian ones or the later ones? We are told that Abraham had more wives after Sarah died and had more children. Now if he was 100 when Isaac was born he might well have been older than Jacob's 130 when he was still fathering children. Jacob by this time has had all of his children. Possibly he is comparing himself with his ancestors on this score. But again these solutions are all conjecture and we feel that the safest answer is that Jacob is thinking of the men of old who lived a long time and that by their standards he was yet a young man. This we believe is the closest we can get to any definite theory on the basis of the existing evidence here.

In Gen. 47:28, we are told of Jacob's death. It is the only other information we have on the age of Jacob.

Gen. 47:28

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and the days of the years of Jacob were 147 years.

Although the text does not explicitly state that Jacob died the next verse does state that he was ready to die at this time.

Gen. 47:29a

And the days of Israel drew near to death --

We see that Jacob dies at a younger age than the other two patriarchs but still there is a great deal of unreality about the age of his death. Also notice that there is no suggestion here that he was old when he died whereas with the other two patriarchs we had statements to this effect. Whether this is significant or not must remain undecided because of lack of evidence. This passage differs in language from the other two and so may be by yet another editor.

The last verse in the book of Genesis tells of the death of Joseph in Egypt. He dies even younger than his father Jacob and there is no statement that he dies an old man. Notice again the still different structure from that of the other such statements.

Gen. 50:25

And Joseph died 110 years old, and they embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt.

Notice that there has been a lessening of life span since the time of Isaac: i.e. Isaac - 180 years; Jacob - 147 years; Joseph - 110 years, when they died.

Our next passages are listed in the genealogies of Ex. 6. There is merely a statement there of the age of three

members of the tribes of the children of Israel at death.

a) Ex. 6:16b-

and the years of the life of Levi were
137 years.

b) Ex. 6:16b-

and the years of the life of Kohat were
133 years.

c) Ex. 6:20b-

and the years of the life of Amram were
137 years.

The probable reason for the mention of these numerical ages here is to show the good lineage of Moses whose ancestors were long lived and to fill out the 100 years mentioned in Gen. 15:13 and Ex. 12:40. 400
- 430

Gen. 15:13

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years.

Ex. 12:40

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel,
who dwelt in Egypt was 430 years.

We are told in Ex. 7:7 that Moses and Aaron were eighty and eighty-three respectively when they went before Pharaoh. This seems to revert back to the Abraham type of notice because both have many more years to live according to the bulk of material left. With forty years in the desert yet to come and with the death of Aaron at 123 (Nu. 33:39) and that of Moses at 120 (Deut. 34:7) the numbers agree.

Ex. 7:7

And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron
eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

We read of Aaron's death in Nu. 33:39,

And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on
Mount Hor.

There is nothing here about his being old or any other comment. Notice that we do have a different structure in the statement of his death.

The next two passages are in Deuteronomy and they give the age of Moses. The first is found in Deut. 31:2 -

And he (Moses) said to them, today I am 120
years old, I am no longer able to come in or
go out, and the Lord has said to me, You shall
not cross this Jordan.

Here we have the statement of age from Moses' own lips. He also tells the people that he is feeble. For he is not able to be as active as he used to be. The terms נֶאֱמַר and נֶאֱמַר are vague and therefore we must assume that they mean general activity.

Our next passage also states that Moses was 120 but the rest of the verse is quite different from the former.

Deut. 34:7

And Moses was 120 years old when he died, his eye had not dimmed, nor his vigour disappeared.

Here we have just the opposite of the preceding statement. Moses was not weak and feeble at the age of 120. This was the heroic stature of the man. This was part of the Moses legend of an almost super human individual who lived not only to the age of 120 but who retained all his vigour until the end. The author knows that normally this age would be accompanied by great feebleness and senility but he wants precisely to show that Moses was the great exception. The former passage (Deut. 31:2) takes a less extreme view and suggests that there was a dwindling of power with this extreme age of Moses. Moses in the former passage is not a completely legendary figure but possesses some relation to a normal old person.

Finally we have in this section some passages from the book of Joshua. First of all in Chapter 14 we have a statement by Caleb.

14:10 - And now, behold the Lord has kept me alive, as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel walked in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day eighty-five years old.

14:11 - I am still as strong to this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming.

In this passage the author is trying to show that eighty-five is not old. Caleb at eighty-five is like Moses at 120 (Deut. 34:7). He has this legendary strength and is still strong physically and mentally. The last passage we are to examine is a simple statement in the last chapter of Joshua.

Josh. 24:29 -

And it came to pass after these matters that Joshua the son of Nun, servant of the Lord, died 110 years old.

The author does not state that Joshua is old; he makes only this simple statement. He dies somewhat younger than the former personages but the same age as Joseph. It is with this passage that we come to the end of this section. This

period as we have seen goes from Abraham to the death of Joshua. The range of ages that it covers goes from 110-180 years. There seems to be no pattern to the ages.

<u>PERSON</u>	<u>AGE AT DEATH</u>	<u>CHAPTER-VERSE</u>
Abraham	175 yrs.	Gen. 25:7
Ishmael	137 "	Gen. 25:17
Isaac	180 "	Gen. 35:29
Jacob	147 "	Gen. 47:28
Joseph	110 "	Gen. 50:26
Levi	137 "	Ex. 6:16
Kohat	133 "	Ex. 6:18
Amram	137 "	Ex. 6:20
Aaron	123 "	Nu. 33:39
Moses	120 "	Deut. 34:7
Joshua	110 "	Josh. 24:29

The reason that we have designated this period as legendary or semi-historical is that there is more data given than just the ages of the individuals. They become more than just a list of personages who are exceedingly long lived and who stay fertile until extraordinarily late ages. For these people it is unusual to father a child at 100 yrs. There is an actual change of life in the course of these many years. Indeed this is the first section where a person is considered to be old at a certain age. The authors are aware that there is something about these figures different from human experience in the age in which they wrote and their comments are indicative of this. In these three periods we see that a person was quite on in years before he was considered old. Was this a special merit? We cannot answer this question because we do not have enough evidence. But there is a suggestion of an affirmative answer from the evidence given.

NORMAL OLD AGE

We now come to a discussion of the passages which speak of what we mean by Normal Old Age. There are not as many of these passages as there were of the others. We find that normal age is mentioned, for the most part, in the legal portions and in the historical books. In the legal codes we shall see that there is a certain age at which a person's function in society was thought to decline in value. In the historical books we shall see that the account of the deaths of kings corresponds to the normal length of life as we know it today.

The section in the legal codes which deals with age is contained in the book of Leviticus Chapter 27:2-7. We see that there a valuation is placed on persons involved in a vow and the code is giving instruction on how to value vows.

Lev. 27:2 - Introduction

Say to the people of Israel, when a man makes a special vow of persons to the Lord at your valuation.

Lev. 27:3 - Formula

then your valuation of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels of silver according to the shekels of the sanctuary.

This is the standard formula and the whole list of valuations goes on from here. Below we will see what the valuations are on each group according to age and sex.

CHART OF VALUATIONS OF VOWS

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>VERSE</u>
20-60	Male	50 shekels	3
20-60	Female	30 shekels	4
5-20	Male	20 shekels	5 a
5-20	Female	10 shekels	5 b
1 mo.-5 yrs.	Male	5 shekels	6 a
1 mo.-5 yrs.	Female	3 shekels	6 b
60 up	Male	15 shekels	7 a
60 up	Female	10 shekels	7 b

We see that the most active (i.e. valuable) span of life is from the ages of twenty to sixty. Somewhere between fifty and sixty the decline begins. Male and female are both equal in regard to maturity and decline. This is interesting in regard to maturity particularly in light of present day concepts of relative maturation of females and males. However our main interest is in the decline period for here we see some conception of the time when old age begins to set in. Certainly this is quite different from what we have had before. We see an awareness of the diminishing of powers at the age of sixty and therefore less value for the individual in the society. His function becomes less important. We must keep this point in mind for later reference for it is crucial for an understanding of old age in the Bible. We might mention in passing that twenty is also a very important age in the legal codes.⁽¹⁰⁾ We might also note that these

laws of valuation are included in the so called five books of Moses and were given in the wilderness by Moses when he was somewhere between the age of eighty (Ex. 7:7) and 120 (Deut. 31:2). Certainly Moses according to the final editors of the book had no diminishing of mental powers past sixty such as "ordinary" people. This concludes our discussion of old age in the legal codes as this is the only reference to normal old age.

The next section is from Samuel and Kings and Chronicles. We shall deal first with two persons who are not kings and then our discussion will turn to the chronologies of the kings.

Our first reference to old age is found in I Sam. 4:15.

Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes
were dim so he could not see

Certainly this is to imply that Eli was old and that his blindness was a result of his age. Because every age given in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles is a normal one, with one exception in Chronicles (II Chron. 24:15). Therefore we can assume fairly safely that ninety-eight is thought to be old. Our next passage will also serve to bring out this point.

II Sam. 19:32a

Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years
old, ---

In this passage we can see further that eighty is to be considered quite old. Therefore certainly ninety-eight is even

older. But there is even more detail here in v. 36.

- 36) I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voices of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?

This is a very complete description of an old man. The most complete that we have had so far. This passage and the former one concerning Eli both make sense when compared with the chart of valuations of Lev. 27. We might notice too that eighty years is said to be very old. We might ask whether the term 31cN 173 refers to the physical condition of Barzillai or to his numerical age. It probably refers to both, the emphasis of 31cN 173 being supplied mostly by his physical condition.

We now come to a consideration of old age in the chronologies of the kings. First of all we see David at the age of seventy as an old man, who has become ill. He dies at this age but yet is considered old. He cannot get warm and his sexual desire has waned.

II Sam. 5:4

David was thirty years when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

This would make him seventy at his death. (11)

I Kings 1:1-4

Now King David was old and advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. Therefore his servants said to him, "Let a young maiden be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait upon the king, and be his nurse; let her lie in your bosom that my lord the king may be warm. So they sought for a beautiful maiden throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The maiden was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and ministered to him; but the king knew her not.

P We have examined three examples of age in the Historical books. We have seen that old age is seventy and above. Yet we have found no passage which says that at a certain age a person is old. It is possible that there is a difference between living many years and being old. The legal passage on valuation shows that after sixty there is a dwindling of strength but it is not definite as to how the strength diminishes. It is very possible that the condition of old age was thought to be something which sets in at any time after sixty; at seventy, eighty or perhaps ninety-eight. We have certainly experienced this ourselves when we have seen

people at certain ages over sixty whom we could not call old.

We have another passage in Kings to consider. For we can ascertain the meaning of '38' in this literature by an examination of this passage.

I Kings 12:8

And he (Rehoboam) forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him, who were standing before him.

How does this passage deal with numerical age? If we look at I Kings 14:21 we will see that Rehoboam is forty-one years old and if these men are his contemporaries and are called '38' therefore they are forty-one or thereabouts.

I Kings 14:21 a

And Rehoboam was forty-one when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem.

We shall have reason to discuss this passage in another section dealing with the elders.

We have seen that the patriarchs died at very late ages and all of them natural deaths. What of the kings? We see that those Kings who died natural deaths were all from Judah and the age range is from thirty-six to sixty-seven. Both good and bad kings are included and good kings do not necessarily live longer than the bad ones. We do not

feel that there is enough evidence to say that the life span is shorter in this period because of the increase of sin. We would rather say that the approach is historical and gives great detail as to the reigns of Kings and this is the reason why the ages are less than in the Pentateuch. In the chart below we cannot see any pattern in the ages of the Kings.

KINGS WHO DIED NATURAL DEATHS

<u>KING</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>CHAPTER-VERSE</u>	<u>"GOOD" OR "EVIL"</u>
Rehoboam	58	I K. 14:21;	E
Jehoshaphat	60	I K. 22:42;	G
Jehoram	40	II K. 8:16,17;	E
Jotham	41	II K. 15:32; (II Ch. 27:8)	G
Ahaz	36	II K. 16:2 (II Ch. 28:26)	E
Hezekiah	54	II K. 18:12 (II Ch. 29:1)	G
Manasseh	67	II K. 21:1 (II Ch. 33:1)	E

One other passage although it does not speak of old age is relevant here. This is the selection from Psalm 90 which gives the average age of man's life. The age given is within the range of this section of the chapter.

Psalm 90:10a

The of our years are seventy or by reason
of strength eighty ---

This is just the normal length of life. Here we are not considering the unusual. This is the general approach of this whole section; namely to show the normal length of a life, normal old age. The authors here are not concerned

with giving large ages in order to make the characters have greater proportions as legendary heroes.

MISCELLANY

In the miscellany are four passages which could not be included above. All of the passages deal with long lives. With one exception they are found in the Hagiographa. They do not however have anything in common.

Our first passage is in the book of Chronicles and is in one of the numerous genealogies.

I Chr. 2:21

And afterwards Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, and he took her (for a wife) and he was sixty years old and she bore him Seguv.

This is the only reference to age in this genealogy. The age is rather late to marry and to become a father and while not the extreme that we had in some of the earlier portions it merits mention. It is placed in this section because it appears in a semi-historical book and is not one of the usual approaches of the book.

The next passage also appears in Chronicles.

II Chr. 24:15

But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died; he was 130 years old at his death.

The passage uses two forms verbally. This will be discussed in a later chapter. We notice that this priest dies at this advanced age and is considered old and full of days. This is unusual because it is the only such great age given in Chronicles. We should notice that it is possible that this age is a reward for services rendered by the priest. We know that the Chronicler had a positive attitude toward the priest hood and certainly one who ministered well would be deserving of reward. In this case the reward was a long and full life.

The passage in the appendix of the book of Job tells us that he lived 140 years after the restoration of his property.

Job 42:16,17

16) And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations.

17) And Job died, an old man, and full of days.

The age of Job must have been very large because this follows upon the restoration and that is long after his youth for he had a wife and ten children. This would make him older than all of the patriarchs from Abraham on. It would place his age in the category of our second section. Certainly this does not make him a semi-divine being for we are told here that he dies an old man whereas earlier we were not told this

about any of the other men. [This age is a compensation, as is the restoration, for all the suffering he underwent earlier. We see here a passage expressing age as a recompense for suffering] and we include it here because it is in a book not containing any other such material.

Our last passage appears in Isaiah.

Is. 65:20

No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the child shall die a hundred years old,
and he who misses (12) a hundred years shall be accursed.

This is the picture of a new world to come. This society will revert back to the antediluvian days when there were "men of renown" on the earth. The whole structure of age shall be new, for one a hundred years old shall be but a child. This means that one who is 100 years old will still be fertile; that he is able to live this long will be a reward. It will be a divine gift. Therefore the great age of the antediluvians was also a divine gift which was removed at the time of the flood. It is also possible that this author is familiar with Gen. 6:3 and sees God restoring to man the days which he took away in anger. Although this verse could have been included with the first section as a commentary thereupon we have included it here because of its

location in the Bible and because it does complete a cycle which we started in Genesis 5. It is also unique in the attitude it expresses. For it is the hope for the lengthening of life and the slowing down of the process of growing old.

SUMMARY
CHAPTER I

There are four basic divisions to numerical age. The divisions were made according to the range of age and to the books in which they appeared.

In the first section we saw that the figures lived for an extraordinarily long time. They were fertile at late ages and that there is nowhere any mention of their growing old. We have suggested that they were mythological figures rather than historical.

In the second section we saw that these figures also lived for an extraordinarily long time. All the same data was given about them. The main differences in this second group was that these figures lived shorter lives than the first group. There was little evidence of growing sinfulness to account for the shortening of the life span of these people. The only suggestion of sin is found in Genesis 6:1-4. But here too there is too little evidence. This lessening of the life span suggests the emergence of man as an ordinary mortal.

The third section included legendary or semi-historical persons. From Abraham to the death of Joshua their lives are given in greater detail. The evidence does not relate long life to special merit.

In the fourth section persons lived to what we consider normal old age. In this section no single numerical age can be considered old. A man or woman is old at sixty

according to Lev. 27:7, from sixty to eighty years is considered the period of decline. The individual is valued less after the age of sixty which seems to be the dividing line. At ninety-eight one is considered old according to I Sam. 4:15; at eighty according to I Sam. 19:32; and seventy according to II Sam. 5:4; and according to Psalm 90:10, the normal length of a man's life is seventy or eighty years.

The fifth section dealt with four passages which could not be included in the other sections because of their content and their location in the Bible. Two of the passages are to be found in Chronicles and one deals with a man's marrying at the age of sixty (I Ch. 2:21); the other of 130 years of life for service to the Temple as a priest. (II Ch. 24:15). According to the third passage Job lived 140 years after the restoration of his property (Job 42:16,17) and the last passage is from Isa. 65:20 and describes the life span in the messianic age. A person of 100 will still be considered a child. Society will revert to antediluvian days.

Our general conclusion is that there is no certain age at which a person is considered old. Rather old age depends upon physical factors. Numerical age is merely a measurement of the number of years of a person's life.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER I

1. Robert H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1948, suggests four eras in the Priestly Document. The Priestly Document has each era begin with a divine revelation and in the second and third period there is also a divine covenant. Each era shows a decrease in the life span of man.
2. I have used as an English translation for the Hebrew passages:
Revised Standard Version, Old Testament. New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952. Any place where there is a difference with this translation it will be noted.
3. Genesis 5:3

When Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

Something like God who created man in his own image.

Genesis 5:22, 24

22) Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methusaleh three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

24) Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.

Genesis 5:28, 29

When Lamech had lived a hundred eighty-two years, he became the father of a son, and called his name Noah saying, "Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands."

3. Pfeiffer, op. cit. p. 200.
4. Ibid. p. 204-5.
5. James B. Pritchard, Editor: Ancient Near Eastern Texts, Relating to the Old Testament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955) p. 266a.
6. פ'אֱלֹהִים נְאֻם 'נא is used in Job. 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 of angels or divine beings attached to the court of God.
7. Rudolph Kittel. Biblia Hebraica. Stuttgart: Privileg. Wurtf. Bibelanstalt, 1949. The editor of the Biblia Hebraica reads פ'אֱלֹהִים נְאֻם in place of נְאֻם in agreement with six manuscripts of the Septuagint and Peshitta. This is the usual idiom. If we do not change the text to read נְאֻם may be an ellipses.
8. נְאֻם to be discussed later.
9. The age of twenty played a crucial role in the codes. At the age of twenty one became a part of the נָזִיר Nu. 1:17. One was counted in the census for the first time,
 Ex. 38:26
 Nu. 1:3
 Nu. 3:14, 15
 Nu. 26
 I Ch. 27:23
 I Ch. 31:17

- One became eligible for the Army Nu. 1:3
II Ch. 25:5
- One was accountable for sins (no longer
a minor) Nu. 14:29
- One participated in general activities II Ch. 34:3
- One could begin Levite training Nu. 8:23,24,25
Nu. 26:62
I Ch. 23:3,24
Ezra 3:8
- One qualified for high priest Nu. 4:3

10. See also I Kings 2:11 and I Ch. 3:4.

11. Sheldon H. Blank, Text Notes for Bible 8. Cincinnati.

Hebrew Union College, Revised Reprint, 1949.

pg. 18, נא לא נא | נא | נא Perh. who misses
88 (i.e. does not attain) the age of 100 shall be
(accounted) accursed.

CHAPTER II

TERMINOLOGY OF OLD AGE

The purpose of this chapter will be to present and discuss the terms for old age.

The first term is יָשָׁן which is the most frequently used of all terms for old age. It occurs 227 times. It appears as a verb, noun and adjective as follows: The list will show its appearances and how it appears.

Verb יָשָׁן

a) Qal

3 M.S. 15 times - Gen. 18:12; Gen. 19:31; Gen. 24:1; Gen. 27:1; Josh. 13:1; Josh. 23:1; I Sam. 2:22; I Sam. 4:18; I Sam. 8:1; I Sam. 17:12; II Sam. 19:33; I Kings 1:1; I Kings 1:15; II Kings 4:14; I Chron. 23:1.

3 F.S. 1 time - Prv. 23:22.

2 M.S. 2 times - Josh. 13:1; I Sam. 8:5.

1 P.S. 6 times - Gen. 18:13; Gen. 27:2; Josh. 23:2; I Sam. 12:2; Ps. 37:25; Ru. 1:12

3 P. Pl. - Gen. 18:11

3 M.S. Imp. (with Waw) - II Chron. 24:15

b) Hiphil

3 M.S. 2 times - Prv. 22:6; Job. 14:8.

Singular Noun

3 M.S. 20 times - Gen. 19:4; Gen. 25:8; Gen. 35:29; Lev. 19:32; Deut. 28:50; Josh. 6:21; I Sam. 2:31; I Sam. 28:32; Isa. 3:2; Isa. 9:14; Isa. 47:6; Isa. 65:20; Jer. 6:11;

Jer. 51:22; Ezek. 9:6; Job. 42:17; Eccles. 4:13; Lam.
2:21; Esth. 3:13; II Chron. 36:17.

Adjectival

9 times

Gen. 43:27; Gen. 44:20; Judg. 19:16,17,20,22;

I Kings 13:11,25,29.

Singular Construct

1 time

Gen. 24:2

Plural Noun

Masculine - 45 times.

Ex. 24:14; Nu. 11:25; Deut. 22:16; Deut. 25:7,9; Josh. 24:31;
Judg. 2:7; I Kings 12:6,8,13; I Kings 20:8; I Kings 21:8;
I Kings 21:11; II Kings 6:32; II Kings 6:32; II Kings 10:1;
II Kings 10:5; Isa. 20:4; Jer. 31:12; Ezek. 7:26; Ezek. 9:6;
Joel 1:2; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:16; Zech. 8:4; Ps. 107:32; Ps.
119:100; Ps. 148:12; Prv. 17:6; Prv. 20:29; Job 12:20; Job
32:4,9; Ru. 4:9,11; Lam. 4:16; Lam. 4:16; Lam. 5:12,14; Ezra
3:12; Ezra 10:8; I Chron. 21:16; I¹ Chron. 10:6,8,13.

Masculine Construct - 81 times

Gen. 50:7; Ex. 3:16,18; Ex. 4:29; Ex. 12:21; Ex. 17: 5.6;
Ex. 18:12; Ex. 19:7; Ex. 24:1.9; Lev. 4:15; Lev. 9:1; Nu.
11:16,16,24,30; Nu. 22:4,7,7; Deut. 21:3,4,6,19,20; Deut.
22:15,17,18; Deut. 25:8; Deut. 27:1; Deut. 31:9,28; Josh.
7:6; Josh. 8:10; Josh. 20:4; Josh. 24:1; Judg. 8:16; Judg.
11:5,7,8,9,11; Judg. 21:16; I Sam. 4:3; I Sam. 8:4; I Sam.
11:3; I Sam. 15:30; I Sam. 16:4; I Sam. 30:26; II Sam. 3:17;

II Sam. 5:3; II Sam. 12:17; I[†] Sam. 17:4,15; II Sam. 19:12;
 I Kings 8:1,3; I Kings 20:7; II Kings 19:2; II Kings 23:1;
 Isa. 3:14; Isa. 37:2; Jer. 19:1; Jer. 26:17; Jer. 29:1; Ezek.
 8:1,11,12; Ezek. 14:1; Ezek. 20:1,3; Ezek. 27:9; Prv. 31:23;
 Ruth 4:2,4; Lam. 2:10; Ezra 10:14; I Chron. 11:3; I Chron.
 15:25; II Chron. 5:2,4; II Chron. 34:29.

With Pronominal Suffixes - 13 times

לָקַח

Lam. 1:19

לָקַחְתִּי

Josh. 9:11

לָקַחְתִּי

Ex. 10:9

לָקַחְתִּי

Deut. 21:2; Deut. 32:7

לָקַחְתִּי כִּי

Deut. 5:20; Deut. 29:9; Joel 3:1

לָקַחְתִּי

Josh. 8:33; Josh. 23:2; Isa. 24:23; Ps. 105:22

לָקַחְתִּי

Judg. 8:14

Feminine Plural - 1 time

לָקַחְתִּי

Zech. 8:4

Abstract Noun

לָקַחְתִּי

Masc. - 1 time

Gen. 48:10

לָקַחְתִּי

Fem. - 6 times

Isa. 46:4; Psa. 71:9,18

Fem. Const.

קָדַח

I Kings 11:4

With Suffix.

קָדַחְתִּי

I Kings 15:23

קָדַחְתָּהּ

Gen. 24:36

Plural Abstract Noun - 4 times

קָדַחִים

Gen. 37:3; Gen. 44:20

With Suffix.

קָדַחְתִּים

Gen. 21:2,7.

The next most frequently used term is from the root קָדַח. It appears twenty-two times. It is used as both a noun and verb. The following list gives its occurrences.

Verb קָדַח

3 times: 1 pers. sing. I Sam. 12:4.

3 M.S. I Kings 14:4

Infin. with Suff. Job 15:10

Noun קָדַחִים

13 times: Gen. 15:15; Gen. 25:8; Lev. 19:32; Deut. 32:26; Judg. 8:32; Isa. 46:4; Hos. 7:8; Ps. 71:18; Ps. 92:15; Prov. 16:31; Prov. 20:29; Job. 41:24; I Chron. 29:28.

Construct קָדַחְתִּי

Gen. 44:31

Suffixes - 6 times

יָנֵן

Gen. 42:38; Gen. 44:29,31.

יָנֵן

Ru: 4:15

יָנֵן

I Kings 2:6, 9.

The next most frequent term is a noun יָנֵן. It appears five times.

Sing. - 2 times - Job. 15:10; II Chron. 36:17.

Plural - 3 times - Job. 12:12; Job. 29:8; Job 32:6.

Next we have a phrase which is used to describe old age. We find it six or possibly seven times.

יָנֵן יָנֵן

3 M.S. - Gen. 24:1; Josh. 13:1; Josh. 23:1; I Sam. 17:20(?)

1 Pers. sing. - Josh. 23:2

2 pers. sing. - Josh 13:2b

3 pers. plural - Gen. 24:2

The term יָנֵן is used six times with יָנֵן to describe old age.

Gen. 25:8; Gen. 35:29; Job. 42:17; I Chron. 23:1; I Chron.

29:28. II Chron. 24:15

The word יָנֵן is used 9 times.

Verb - 7 times

3 f.s. - Ps. 6:8.

3 m.s. - Gen. 26:22; Prv. 8:18; Job 9:5; Job 14:8; Job 18:4

Job 32:15

Plural Noun - 2 times

Isa. 28:9; I Chron. 4:22

This word leads us to the Aramaic portions of the Bible where we find the same word used as a noun.

Sing. Construct. ^{ר'טו}

Dan. 7:9,13,22.

The word 'ר'ט is used five times in the book of Ezra as a plural construct - Ezra 5:5,9; Ezra 6:7,8,14.

Now that we have shown the occurrence of the terms, we will attempt to define their meaning. First of all, we have the term which is used as a stative verb in the qal. e.g. the state of being old.

Example: Gen. 24:1

Abraham was old, well advanced in years;

The only other conjugation in which ^{ר'טו} appears is the Hiphil. Here it is used as an inner causative and means to become old.

(like: ^{ר'טו} to grow up)

Example: Prv. 22:6

Train up a child in the way he
should go,
and when he is old he will
not depart from it.

The use of the verb is seen best in the Hebrew and the translation should really be "becomes old". In all uses of the verbal form there is no doubt as to the meaning of the word.

When we examine ^{ר'טו} as a noun and attempt to define it, we find that it offers great difficulties. The difficulty is mainly due to the fact that we cannot define all the usages

of זקן in terms of old age. That is to say that, in certain cases, we cannot be sure that זקן means old age. By examining its occurrences and classifying them we shall attempt to show the problem.

Our first category will include those passages in which זקן definitely means old.

Categories of Usage of זקן as a noun.

I - Contrasted with זעב (youth).

Gen. 19:4; Ex. 10:9; Deut. 28:50; Josh. 6:21; Isa. 3:5; Isa. 20:4; Isa. 65:20; Jer. 51:22; Ps. 148:12; Lam. 2:21; Eccles. 4:13; Esth. 3:13.

Example - Gen. 19:4

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man surrounded the house.

The passages use זקן in comparison with זעב -- and contrast the terms. But every passage here speaks in some way of youth and age.

We might supplement this list with one passage wherein

זקן is used as an adjective in the comparative degree.

Job 32:4

Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he.

All these passages are clear and there is no ambiguity.

II - זקן used in passages with זעב, בנות, בנות, זעב.

Jer. 6:11; Jer. 31:13; Ezek. 9:6a; Joel 3:1; Job 12:12; Job 15:10; Job. 32:6; II Chron. 36:17.

In these passages we see there are references to groups of citizens according to different age groups. Young and old are spoken of in the same phrases but in different terms than the first division. There is a greater variety of terminology in these passages as can be seen in our example below.

I¹ Chronicles 36:17 - Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged; he gave them all into his hand.

III - |רָא as a noun used with נָאֵל , and פְּנֵי זָקֵן .

Gen. 25:8; Gen. 35:29; Job 42:17. We have seen that

|רָא also appears as a verb with these terms (p. 44) but here it is a noun in three instances.

Gen. 25:8 - Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

These three passages speak very clearly about old age. We are never in doubt as to the meaning of |רָא in these contexts.

IV - Various Physical Signs of Old Age.

The following passages make reference to physical signs of old age and therefore clearly indicate that the noun |רָא here means old.

a) Zech. 8:4,5

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, "Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand for very age.

And the streets of the city shall be
full of boys and girls playing in its
streets.

The passage shows conclusively that these are old people.
First of all it is the only appearance of זקנים in the Bible.
Then too, we have the phrase which speaks of their holding a
staff for support because of their ages. And finally v. 5
tells us of the boys and girls who will also be in the streets.
With all these factors we can then conclude that this is a
genuine reference to old age.

b) Prv. 17:6

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged
and the glory of sons is their fathers.

This verse refers to זקנים as those people with grandchild-
ren and therefore they are old.

c) Prv. 20:29

The glory of young men is their strength,
but the beauty of old men is their gray
hair.

This not only contrasts זקנים with בחורים but gives a phy-
sical description of what זקנים are like.

d) Job 32:9

It is not the many⁽¹⁾ that are right
not the aged that understand what is
right.

This passage deals with old age because the whole section of
this chapter deals with Elihu's speech about old age. There-
fore because of the context of vv. 6-14 we can consider זקנים
as meaning old age here.

V - Miscellany

In this category we have two passages which do not fit above but which do give the same meaning of קָדַשׁ .

a) I Sam. 2:31,32

Behold, the days are coming when I
will cut off your strength and the
strength of your father's house, so
that there will not be an old man in
your house.

God will cut off Eli's house and everybody will die young.

b) Isa. 47:6

I was angry with my people
I profaned my heritage;
I gave them into your hand,
you showed them no mercy;
on the aged you made your
yoke exceedingly heavy.

This passage is Deutero-Isaiah's judgment on Babylon. She will no longer be a ruling power and one of the main reasons is that she oppressed especially the aged of Israel. If the קָדַשׁ were anything else the passage would not have the intended meaning, i.e. if the קָדַשׁ were a professional class as will be suggested below. Such are the passages containing קָדַשׁ which definitely from the context define קָדַשׁ as old, an old man.

The next series of passages offer serious difficulties. First of all we can see that by context these passages show a different meaning of the term קָדַשׁ . We cannot be exactly

sure as to the definition of the term but we can generalize and say that in these passages זקן is a professional title.

I - Witnesses and officials under the Jurisdiction of Moses and Joshua.

Ex. 3:16,18; Ex. 4:29; Ex. 12:21; Ex. 17:5,6; Ex. 18:12; Ex. 19:7; Ex. 24:1,14. Lev. 4:15; Lev. 9:1; Deut. 27:1; Deut. 29:9; Deut. 31:9,28; Josh. 8:10, 33; Josh. 23:2; Josh. 24:1; Judg. 2:7.

Examples: Ex. 19:7

So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him.

The passage says nothing about the numerical age of the elders; it simply states the fact that these elders were witnesses.

All of these passages have in common the fact that the age of the זקן is not mentioned. These elders are merely witnesses or officials who appear with Moses and Joshua on different occasions. These are men who share a certain amount of responsibility of leadership. We therefore feel that the term זקן in this case and probably in the categories to follow means elder in the sense that these men are older in years and thus older in experience and are therefore able to accept greater responsibility in the community.

II - Judges

Deut. 21:2,3,4,6,19,20; Deut. 22:15,16; Deut. 25:7,8,9; Josh. 20:4; I Kings 20:7; Jer. 26:17; Ezek. 7:25; Ezek. 14:1; Ezek. 20:1,3; Ezek. 27:9; Prv. 31:23; Lam. 5:12,14; Ru. 4:2,4; Ezra 10:8.

These passages have in common the fact that they all deal with urban societies. They speak of the elders as a group that sits by the gate.

a) Prv. 31:23

Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of
the land.

b) Lam. 5:14

The old men have quit the city
gate, the young men their music.

This passage serves to point out the fact that the elders were older men for in this passage they are contrasted with the young men. However, they are also professional men because they sit by the gate in the city and act as judges. (see also Ru. 4:2; Prv. 31:23) We also notice that their exact age is not specified.

III - Custodians of the Ark

I Sam. 4:3; I Kings 8:1; I Chron. 15:25;
II Chron. 5:2,4.

a) I Chron. 15:25

So David and Elders of Israel, and the
commanders of thousands, went to bring
up the ark of the covenant of the Lord
from the house of Obbedom with rejoicing.

The elders share the custody of the ark and the responsibility of bringing it up to Jerusalem. The age of these functionaries is not mentioned.

IV - Elders appoint and anoint the Kings.

I Sam. 8:4; I Sam. 15:20; II Sam. 3:17;
II Sam. 5:3; I Chron. 11:3.

a) II Sam. 3:17

And Abner conferred with the elders

of Israel, saying, For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you.

18a) Now then bring it about, --

b) II Sam. 5:3

So all the elders came to the king at Hebrew; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron.

We have seen that in these passages the elders have authority to appoint and anoint the kings. Their age is of no consequence.

V - Political Faction and Government Official.

Gen. 50:7; Josh. 9:11; Judg. 8:16; I Sam. 16:4; I Sam. 30:26; II Sam. 17:4,15; II Sam. 19:12; I Kings 12:6,8,13; Isa. 3:2,3,14,15; Isa. 24:23; Ps. 105:22; Lam. 1:19; Lam. 4:16; II Chron. 34:29; Ezra 10:8.

In the passages below we see the difference between old men in general and professional elders specifically.

a) Isa. 3:14

The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people.

b) Isa. 3:5

---and the youth will be insolent to the elder.

These two passages compared show that there is a different meaning in the terms as they are used. The former speaks of an official and the latter passage speaks of a young and old man. In vv. 2-3 the professional status of the elder is even more noticeable.

Isa. 3:2,3

The mighty man and the soldier, the judge
and the prophet, the diviner and the elder,
the captain of fifty, and the man of rank,
the counselor and the skillful magician,
and the expert in charms

These are called by Isaiah the "staff and stay" of Jerusalem. Then the author here is classifying people as professionals. We can now readily see the difference between the two passages. There are two distinct types of זקן , the old man and the elder. The situation is different when we examine a passage such as that in I Kings 12:8:

But he forsook the counsel which the old
men gave him, and took counsel with the
young men who had grown up with him and
stood before him.

In the first chapter we talked of the numerical age of these men. We see that the זקן were the established advisory council to the King. They are compared to the young men in this passage and when Rehoboam turns from the counsel of the older group to that of the younger group his action is considered heretical. We see that the attitude toward the older men as the authoritative body is positive as compared to a negative one toward the young inexperienced men. Although we are not told the age of these older men we know that they are past the age of forty-one because the younger ones grew up with Rehoboam and he was forty-one at this time. We can see that the status of the older group is higher in the society and that the older man of more experience is more esteemed as the senior member of the group.

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 VI - Mourners; Proclaimers of Fasts.

Josh. 7:6; II Sam. 12:17; II Kings 19:2;
 Isa. 37:2; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:16.

a) II Sam. 12:17

And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them.

b) Joel 1:14

Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.
 Gather the elders and all the inhabitants
 of the land.

Make
 This category gives no reference to numerical age.

VII - Diviners.

Nu. 22:7

So the elders of Moab and the elders of
 Midian departed with the fees for divination
 in their hand

This is the only such passage and there is no allusion to
 numerical age.

nts
 VIII - Participate in the Temple Cult

Ezek. 9:6; Ezek. 8:11,12

Ezek. 8:12

Then he said to me, Son of Man have you
 seen what the elders of the House of
 Israel are doing in the dark, every man
 in his room of pictures?

Ezekiel with his concern with the Temple cult has implicated
 the elders in the apostasy which exists. But he does not say
 any more about the elders. Notice the distinction made in
 Ezek. 9:6.

slay old men outright, young men and
 maidens, little children and women,
 but touch no one upon whom is the mark.

And begin at the sanctuary. "So they began with the elders who were before the house."

This verse is in two parts and as in Isaiah Ch. 3 it speaks of זקנים in two different ways. Again the context reveals the meaning of the words.

These passages have revealed the functions of the *} style* elders as professionals. These passages have been very clear as to the function and duties of the elders. The following passages must be considered separately because there is some doubt as to their meaning (whether they deal with professional elders or with old men.)

I - Gen. 24:2, II Kings 19:2 and Jer. 19:1 are related *style* in their problem. Gen. 24:2 speaks of (Eliezer) the servant of Abraham, as the זקן of his household. Now there is nothing *where as he named* else in the passage to indicate why he is called the זקן of the house. Our problem is to try to define זקן as old or as senior. Probably "senior" is the meaning best suited for this passage because certainly an old servant would not be expected to take such a grueling journey as (Eliezer) does. Therefore he is probably the oldest in length of service and therefore is the most trustworthy for such a mission. Also being the oldest in length of service he is probably the one highest in status and responsibility. Therefore it would be safe to assume that in this case זקן means more the senior member of the household staff than an old servant. The other two passages deal with the זקני הכהנים . Our problem again is how to define this term. Were they old

priests or were they oldest in point of service? Let us first look at the two passages.

a) II Kings 12:2 (Isa. 37:2)

And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz.

b) Jer. 19:1

Thus said the Lord, "Go, buy a potter's earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests ---

What do these two passages have in common? The function of the *זקני' הכהן* in the two passages is different. In the first passage they are mourning for the oncoming destruction. The second passage shows us that they are to be witnesses to Jeremiah's symbolic action involving the potter's vessel. Probably in these passages all that is meant is the senior members of the priesthood. These men too are not necessarily old. They are rather probably senior in length of service. Thus all three passages deal with people who have the longest service in their tasks who therefore merit special consideration. *style*

Our next passage is Deut. 32:7.

Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations, ask your father and he will show you; your elders and they will tell you.

This passage is concerned with the telling of history of the past. We might say that the elders are historians who recount

the oral tradition of past history. We might say that the old men are the ones who do this task because they have lived the longest and have accumulated the most traditions and history. However, on the basis of the evidence we can but say that this is conjecture. The connection with old age cannot be surmised because of the sparse evidence.

Two Psalm passages are next to be discussed.

a) Ps. 105:22

To instruct his princes at his pleasure
and to teach his elders wisdom.

The Psalm is an historical Psalm and deals in this section with the life of Joseph. The instructor and teacher is Joseph and the elders are the official body of Pharaoh's court (See Gen. 50:7).

b) Ps. 119:100

I understand more than the aged for
I keep thy precepts.

Are these elders as in the first passage or are these old people who are supposed to be wise? (We must assume) on the basis of the evidence (that this passage could be referring either to the elders as above or to old people. *style*)

Joel 1:2

Hear this, you aged men, give hear,
all inhabitants of the land! Has such
a thing happened in your days or in the
days of your fathers?
2) Tell your children of it and let your
children tell their children and their
children another generation.

The *וְגֵרֵי* in Joel 1:2 should be old people because the author wants to speak of some phenomena. He wants those

who can to search their memories and to see if they can find any evidence in their lifetime for such a happening. Obviously those who have lived the longest would be the ones who would remember; it would seem logical that the author means old people in this passage. He also wants the future generations to know about the event and he tells these people to tell their children about it and to let the children pass on the information. We cannot be sure that the author meant these people to be grandparents. But we can safely assume that these people are old.

The last of these passages occurs in the book of Ezra.

Ezra 3:12 -

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of father's houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy.

These men are probably old, because the Temple was started on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius (521-485 B.C.) (Haggai 1:15).⁽²⁾ That would make it sixty-six years since the destruction of the first Temple in 586. Therefore these men who were spectators were quite old by this time, if we go by this chronology. Certainly **173** in this passage means old. Note too, the air of sentimentality that is given by those passages particularly if we take **173** to mean "old," for therefore the whole idea of the return from captivity and the former glory of the Temple are juxtaposed in this one verse.

We have attempted to define זקן as a noun. We have divided the usages into two basic sections. We know that in the first group the זקני are old men and we know that in the second group they are a professional group but our problem is whether the professional elders are old men. Pederson⁽³⁾ suggests that the elders were grown, mature men of powerful families who "de facto", had power to rule. The word זקן has nothing to do with age but means a man with a beard. Does that mean that a man of twenty could be an elder? Certainly a man of twenty is old enough to have a beard. We have seen that twenty is a crucial age.⁽⁴⁾ According to Pederson⁽⁵⁾ זקן , זקל and זקנא are used promiscuously. "The elders of the House" are possessed of authority.⁽⁶⁾ The late authors make them a connecting link between Moses and the people.

In the urban society the Elders are judges as Morgenstern also suggests.⁽⁷⁾

זקן is used nine times as an adjective. It modifies three words זקן , זקני and זקנא . It means old: Gen. 43:27; Gen. 44:20; Judg. 19:16,17,20,22; I Kings 13:11, 25,29.

Ex.: Gen. 43:27

Is your father well, the old man of whom
you spoke? Is he still alive?

(We assume that) in these cases זקן means "old" because (it mentions the fact that) the person asking the question (Joseph) is curious as to whether Jacob is still alive.

Also appears as an abstract noun in three different forms. The word means "old age" in all of these forms.

1 - אָלד 1 time
Gen. 48:10

Now the eyes of Jacob were dim with age
so that he could not see

2 - אָלט 6 times

Gen. 24:36; I Kings 11:4; I Kings 15:23;
Isa. 46:4; Ps. 71:9,18

Example: Isa. 46:4

Even to your old age I am he, and to
gray hairs I will carry you.

The third type of abstract noun is אָלטײט .⁽⁸⁾ It is
found four times: Gen. 21:2,7; Gen. 37:3; Gen. 44:20

Example: Gen. 44:20

We have a father, an old man, and a
young brother, the child of his old
age.

אָלע appears as both a verb and a noun. When used as a
verb it means "to be gray". I Sam. 12:2; I Kings 14:4;
Job 15:10

Example: I Sam. 12:2

And I am old and gray

When it appears with אָלט it means "old age" as a noun.
Gen. 15:15; Gen. 25:8; Judg. 8:32; I Chron. 29:28.

Example: Gen. 15:15

you shall be buried in a good old age

It can also mean "hoary" or "gray-haired one".

Lev. 19:32; Deut. 32:26; Isa. 46:4; Hos. 7:9; Ps. 71:18;
Prv. 16:21; Prv. 20:29; Job 41:24.

It is used both with אָלד and alone.

a) Lev. 19:32

You will rise up before the hoary head,
and honor the face of an old man.

b) Prv. 16:31

A hoary head is a crown of glory; it is
gained in a righteous life.

שֵׂיב is used seven times with suffixes. In six of them,
it means "gray hair" symbolizing old age; in the other passage
it means old age. Gen. 42:38; Gen. 44:29,31; I Kings 2:6,9.

a) Gen 44:29

If you take this one also from me, and
harm befalls him you will bring down my
gray hairs to Sheol

b) Ruth 4:15

He shall be to you a restorer of life,
and a nourisher of your old age.

In the second passage although שֵׂיב literally means gray
hairs, it is better to translate the term as old age, as
this is the meaning conveyed by the passage. While the
other passages speaking of old age use gray hairs or gray
head poetically. Perhaps the expression also is used be-
cause of some fear of speaking of a person going to Sheol
and so the Bible uses the term gray head to symbolize the
person's death before he dies.

זָקֵן is used four times. The Lexicon defines זָקֵן as
decrepit (9) "aged". It appears only in Chronicles and Job
so we can see that it is a late word. In Chronicles it is
used with זָקֵן. ←

II Chron. 36:17

and had no compassion on young men, or
virgin, old man or aged.

In this case קל' is contrasted with זקן , and so probably means a further degree of age -- namely, decrepit.⁽¹⁰⁾ In Job 12:12 זקנים is used in the plural and means "old men or aged." Certainly from the context it cannot mean anything else. Physical weakness could not be a symbol of great wisdom.

Job 12:12

Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.

We might say that זקנים are people who have lived a long time and not the opposite of the term זמן . In Job 15:10, it is used in the singular and contrasted with זקן .

Job 15:10

Both the grayhaired and the aged are among us, older than your father.

Here קל' might mean a physically weak person because we have seen that זקן symbolizes age. However it is a weak person with all his mental faculties. This can be seen by examining the context of the section in which Eliphaz is rebuking Job and telling him that these other men are older and wiser than he.

The last appearance is found in Job 32:6. קל' merely means aged here as distinguished from the term זקן , old in English.

Job 32:6

I am young in years, and you are aged

The translation of קל' as aged into English rather than "old" we think gives the general difference in meaning. It is subtle but important.

וְנִ'אֵלָּא is used six or seven times. In all but one case it is used with יָרָם.

Gen. 24:1; Gen. 24:2; Josh. 13:11; Josh. 13:2a; Josh. 13:2b

Example: Gen. 24:1

Now Abraham was old, advanced in years.

The translation, "advanced in years", seems to lend itself to all occurrences of the phrase. It adds to the meaning of יָרָם. It conveys the added meaning that the יָרָם is well along in years. As a matter of fact in good colloquial English we might translate the term as "well along in years". We have yet another passage which might use the same term or a variation thereof: I Sam. 17:12.

In the days of Saul the man was already old and among men.

What sense does "among men" make? We cannot find any sensible translation for the term as it now stands. However there are two possibilities. One is that it might be changed to פְּנֵי אָדָם as it is found in the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate.⁽¹¹⁾ However this would be the only occurrence of the term in the Bible. We have no other passage in the Hebrew which we can cite as a parallel. The meaning would be comparable to that of וְנִ'אֵלָּא. In fact, it is most probable that on the basis of other pairings of וְנִ'אֵלָּא and יָרָם this is the precise meaning of the passage.

זָקֵן is used six times to refer to old age. In all the occurrences it means "sated with days". We might say that it is a stronger statement than וְנִ'אֵלָּא. While וְנִ'אֵלָּא means well along in years, זָקֵן means the same in a super-

lative degree. It is never used alone but always in combination with either לְבָנָה or לְבָנָה. It appears with לְבָנָה one time.

I Chron. 29:28

Then he died in a good old age, full of days
Notice that this passage also uses the phrase as a predicate adjective. The same usage appears in Gen. 25:8; Gen. 35:29 and Job 42:17. In I Chron 23:1 and II Chron. 24:15 it is used as a verb with לְבָנָה verbally.

II Chron. 24:15

But Jehoiada grew old and full of days
Verbally the term may mean that Jehoiada grew sated with days. We think that the term should be translated this way in order to distinguish it from לְבָנָה.

We mention one usage of a verb which means old in the sense of worn out. לְבָנָה from the root לְבָנָה.

Gen. 18:12

- "After I have grown old and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"

In this passage the word means the same thing as לְבָנָה. It is a poetic form for לְבָנָה. Literally it would mean "worn out", i.e. Deut. 8:4

your cloth did not wear out upon you .

לְבָנָה has two meanings; it means removed or to move, advance; and it means to grow old both in the sense of wasting away and enduring. The following passages do not have anything to do with old age: Gen. 26:22; Isa. 28:9; Job 9:5; Job 14:8; Job 18:4; Job 32:15.

This verb does have something to do with age in the following passages.

a) Ps. 6:8

My eye wastes away with grief; it grows weak because of all my foes.

In this sense the word means really wear away because of tears. In this sense the eye grows old.

b) Prv. 8:18

Riches and honor are with me enduring wealth and prosperity.

The author is speaking of wisdom. The word here is used as an adjective and means enduring and lasting rather than wasting away as in the last passage. We see that the word has the meaning of growing old either by enduring or by wasting away.

c) Job 21:7

Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?

One of the central themes of Job is stated here using the term *q-nh* to mean endure. Certainly that is the meaning in this context.

d) I Chron. 4:22

and Jokim, and the men of Cozaba, and Joash, and Saraph, who ruled in Moab and returned to Lehem (now the records were ancient)

This is one of the genealogies of the Chronicler and he evidently wants to give in the parenthesis the fact that these records with which he is dealing are indeed very old. This is the meaning in this passage.

We are now ready to examine the terms for old age in biblical Aramaic. The occurrence of terminology for old age is slight. Both Daniel and Ezra contain different terms and again we have the problem in Ezra as to whether the term there means old age.

In Daniel ܩܝܢܐ occurs three times. The occurrences all come in the same chapter and the word appears the same way all the time. ܩܝܢܐ is the derivative of the Hebrew term which have been discussed above. It means ancient here in these passages in the sense of enduring, for the passage refers to God.

Dan. 7:9

As I looked thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like pure wool.

If this is a passive participle then it could mean "the one, possessed of many days". The meaning here seems to suggest that it is a description of God not as an old man but as one who is eternal. This seems to be the meaning of ܩܝܢܐ rather than old in the physical sense with ܕܝܢܐ .

Finally we have the five occurrences in the book of Ezra. The term means elders and corresponds to זקן in the Hebrew. But the author has taken the word from another term ܩܝܢܐ .

Ezra 5:9; Ezra 6:9, 14, 18.

Ezra 5:5

But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews.

The elders of the Jews are mentioned in the same context throughout the book. They are connected with the building of the Temple. There is a similarity in the position that the elders hold in the community in Ezekiel and Ezra. Ezekiel mentions the elders in the Temple (9:6) and Ezra tells about them in relation to the Temple. As to the possibility that these were old men we feel that here also there is not enough evidence to say anything different than we have said in the preceding section on the Hebrew terms. The probability is strong that these are not the same as the זְקֵנֵי cited in Ezra 3:12. It is the tendency of the author to repeat phrases throughout the book (elders of the Jews) as in the Hebrew passages. So it is possible that had these been the same men who had seen the old Temple the author would have mentioned it even though the two passages are in different dialects.

SUMMARY CHAPTER II

We have discussed and examined the terms for old age in the Bible. We have dealt with eight different terms.

זקן is the most frequently used of the terms. It appears as a verb in the gal and the hiphil. In the gal it is a stative and in the hiphil it is an inner causative. There is no problem with the meaning of **זקן** as a verb in either conjugation.

It is when we come to an examination of **זקן** as a noun that we run into difficulty. We first dealt with **זקן** in occurrences when it definitely meant old. We showed that in certain contexts its meaning was clear. It was contrasted with **צעיר**; it was used with **זקן וצעיר** and it was used with **זקן**. All these passages gave a clear indication that **זקן** meant old. We then examined the word as it was used in passages that included physical features of old age, so that **זקן** clearly meant "old" in these passages. Next we had a miscellany of passages which did not fit into any of the other categories but which showed that the term meant "old".

When we came to the next series of passages we noted the difficulties which existed in defining **זקן**. We saw that **זקן** was also a noun designating a professional group and that the **זקן** could be divided into several groups according to their function and status in society. They were witnesses and officials under the jurisdiction of Moses and

Aaron, judges, custodians of the Torah, appointers and annointers of the king. They formed political factions and were government officials. They were professional mourners and proclaimers and keepers of fasts. They participated in the temple cult at the time of Ezekiel, and they were senior priests. Then, there were some passages which did not clearly define their function nor did they explicitly say anything about the elders being old.

There are some passages where they ^{וְזָקֵן} are professionals but there is no numerical age specified for them. These passages do not answer the question "How old is old"? These men are probably called because they are senior members of the society. They are "older" men.

We examined ^{זָקֵן} as an adjective and found that it meant "old". We found that it was used three times as an abstract noun. All three variants meant old age.

We saw that זָקַן was used as both verb and noun. We saw that it meant both "old age" and "gray-hair". It was primarily a descriptive term for old age.

The next term was זָקָה which appeared only four times. It is found only in the late books of Chronicles and Job. It probably means "aged". When contrasted with זָקֵן it probably means decrepit and when used with the other terms it means aged. It is never used alone but always appears with other terms of age.

וְזָקָה וְזָקֵן meant "well advanced in years". It in all but one case was used with זָקֵן and it was a descriptive term which

added meaning to ^{קדש}קדש . We had one passage in which ^{קדש}קדש appeared and possibly could have meant something similar to

^{קדש}קדש .

^{קדש}קדש was a more specific term for old age and was used in all six of its occurrences with another term. It was used both as a verb and noun.

We showed that ^{קדש}קדש in one occurrence meant to become old in the sense of wear away.

Our last term was ^{קדש}קדש which means: to proceed, advance, wear away, and endure. We showed how it meant to be old either in the sense of endurance or in the sense of decaying. It was used also in the Aramaic portions of Daniel to describe God as the Ancient of Days. We concluded that it meant that God was the one who had endured many days. We preferred this definition to that of his being an old man. We also examined the term ^{קדש}קדש in the Aramaic portions of Ezra and decided that although it corresponded to ^{קדש}קדש in meaning, it came from the root ^{קדש}קדש . It meant a professional group connected with civil matters during the time of Ezra and the return from captivity.

This concludes our discussion of the terminology of old age. We might note in conclusion that there are eight terms for old age in Biblical language. (12)

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER II

1. Old Testament. Revised Standard Version. New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952. p. 1039, reads "old" for "many".
2. Haggai I:14b-15
 14b and they came and worked on the house
 of the Lord of Hosts, their God
 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the month
 in the sixth month.
3. Pederson. Israel, Its Life and Culture. Oxford University Press. London, 1954. vol 1, p. 36.
4. Ibid, p. 36
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Morgenstern. Book of the Covenant, Part II, Hebrew Union College Annual. Cincinnati, 1930, vol. 7, section 4, pp. 208 to 241.
8. Brown, Driver, Briggs. Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Oxford University Press, 1952. p. 956.
9. A plural abstract noun such as $\text{p}'\text{r}\text{h}\text{h}$.
10. Op. Cit. Hebrew and English Lexicon, p. 450.
11. loc. cit. Biblia Hebraica p. 431. See notes on text.
12. The term p' means "old" but is not used for human subjects. Therefore it has been omitted from this paper.

Excerpt in Sect 4.25

CHAPTER III

MANIFESTATIONS OF OLD AGE

In this chapter we shall examine the manifestations of old age. The chapter will be divided into two parts corresponding to physical manifestations in the first part and to other signs on old age in the second part.

Because there are only two extended and informative passages about the physical signs of old age and because these passages offer certain problems and difficulties, we shall first analyze these two sections and then proceed to a general discussion of the physical aspects of old age.

Our first passage is II Sam. 19:33. It deals with Barzillai and King David. We have in the previous chapters made reference to it:

I am this day eighty years old,
Can I discern what is pleasant and
what is not?

Can your servant taste what he eats
or what he drinks?
Can I still listen to the voice of
singing men and women?
Why then should your servant be an
added burden to the King?

The first statement in Hebrew reads $\text{אני נא} \text{ל} \text{נא}$ for pleasant and what is not? Our problem here is to establish a definition of $\text{אני נא} \text{ל} \text{נא}$ in this context. There are several alternatives. The first could be that this phrase is linked to the following two. In other words, because he cannot

taste what he eats and drinks Barzillai cannot tell what is pleasant (to taste) or what is pleasant (to drink). The second alternative could be that after a certain age a man's ability to make moral or other value judgments is diminished. This would suggest that the age of eighty is past the age of ability to be reliable, (see Chapt. 1, pp. 22-24). In the passage of Leviticus 27 we saw that the worth of the vowed person decreases after the age of sixty. We can also see in the following two passages the use of $\gamma\eta\ \alpha\iota\ \epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota\ \nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\iota$ to mean judgment.

II Sam. 14:17

" My Lord the King is like the angel of God
to discern good and evil."

I Kings 3:9

Give thy servant therefore an understanding
mind, to govern thy people, that I may discern
good and evil; for who is able to
govern this great people?

We think then that the passage describes three manifestations of old age; dwindling of mature judgment, deadening of taste, and growing deafness. That is how we interpret this first passage descriptive of old age.

Our next passage is an extended description of old age. It is found in the book of Ecclesiastes. There is a section on old age preceded by a few introductory verses which are also relevant to our subject.

Eccles. 11:7; 12:8

7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to
behold the sun.

- 8 For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.
- 9 Rejoice O young man in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.
- 10 Remove vexation from your mind, and put away pain from your body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.
- 12:1 Remember also, your Creator in the days of youth, before the evil days come and the years draw nigh, when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"
- 2 Before the sun and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain
- 3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent; and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the window are dimmed
- 4 and the doors on the street are shut, when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low.
- 5 They are also of what is high, and terrors are in the way, the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets
- 6 before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern
- 7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it
- 8 Vanity of vanities says the Preacher all is vanity.

In chapter 11, verse 7 probably refers to life in general, if one connects it with the following verse. For as we see in the next verse ?en 'N' means death. Light therefore is the

symbol for life and the second part of v. 7 is also metaphoric language contrasting life with death. In life one can see the sun. Verse 8 uses the term מָוֶת 'N' which here means "death". Gordis suggests that the term is an epithet for death,⁽¹⁾ (see also Eccles. 6:4; I Sam. 2:9; Job 10:21; Job 17:13; Job 18:18; Ps. 88:13; Prov. 20:20.) The injunction to enjoy life in one's youth narrows the subject down to old age and youth and implies now that old age is a time of trouble (v. 8). The author soon gives the answer when he tells us to walk in the way of our heart and eyes. These are the symbols of desire (see Nu. 15:39) and certainly desire decreases in the days of old age. If the author places his chief value on these functions then of course old age is not a time to enjoy life! Also the passages which follow show that any pleasure diminishes with the advent of old age. Verse 11:9c appears not to fit into the rest of the verse. Here the author is moralizing and he seems to contradict what has already been said about enjoying the physical joys of youth. We would suggest the possibility that this phrase is a gloss. In verse 10, we seem to have a repetition of the thought expressed in v. 9a. Then in 10b we have another difficult phrase which does not seem to fit into the general category for the author here is negating youth when he has just said before to enjoy it to the fullest. We would suggest another writer as the author of this part of the verse. It is interesting to note in passing that this part of v. 10 denies the pleasures and activities of youth.



The passage allegorizing old age actually begins with Chapter 12:1. In verse 1 the thought of 11:8 is repeated, only it is changed to a comparison of youth and old age rather than of life and death. Just as in 11:8 man will have no pleasure during the days of darkness so in 12:1 he will have no pleasure during the time of old age. The term קִנְיָן is used for old age as קִנְיָן was used for death in 11:8.

In 12:2 there is a description of old age as similar to the winter season of the year. It is a time of constant winter. The clouds return after the rain. One difficulty comes after another during the time of old age. The author of this book is concerned with seasons and times (see 3:1). Old age has been pictured as season of life in other books (Ps. 71:9). We also note that old people have a difficult time keeping warm (I Kings 1:1). This too would be a reason for the use of winter as a metaphor for old age. Another association with winter would be that the sun is seen very little in wintertime and therefore it is dark; old people do not see very well and therefore it is like winter all the time, and the "sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened" (See also Gen. 27:1; Gen. 48:10; and I Sam. 3:2.)

Starting with verse 3 we have a list which seems to correspond to the various parts of the body and what happens to them at the time of old age. First we are told that the "keepers of the house tremble". These seem to be the arms. Many times the hands and arms of old people shake from feebleness. "The strong men", are the legs which bend as one becomes

older. It could mean men in general but since the language in this passage is figurative it is more likely that these men are the legs which have a difficult time holding up the body. "The grinders" are the teeth and the clue is in the following phrase which tells us that they are few.

"The lookers through windows are dimmed"; these are the eyes which as we will see later are known to deteriorate in old age. 12:4 begins with a description of $\text{p}'\text{on} \delta^3$ in the dual form. This could apply to the mouth and jaws or if used in the context of the whole "a" part of the verse the passage speaks of the ears which can no longer hear as well the sound of the grinding of the mill. The grinding of the mill could be the sound of daily chores in the household or of the outside daily hubbub. The sound that is not heard well is a sound of routine work which stays at a fairly constant pitch and has little variety. The next phrase is difficult because it does not suggest deterioration of any particular organ, rather if translated literally, "one rises up at the voice of the bird", means that one is easily awakened in the morning by the twitter of birds. Some suggest that the phrase be read קוֹלֵי שׁוֹרִי' , to be translated and his voice is high like a bird. This would describe the man as having a high pitched voice as men do when they become extremely old. ⁽²⁾ None of the versions has this reading. The man does not hear music well as "all the daughters of song are brought low". Notice that Barzillai also does not hear music well (II Sam 19:35). The "daughters of son" are probably the notes of the music.

The old person is also afraid of height (v.5) and terror is everywhere, because he is feeble and can be easily injured in the streets. ⁽³⁾ In verse 12:5b we have three very difficult figures. The first phrase, "the almond tree blossoms", could be a picture of nature at its height when all spring is in bloom. However, it is also possible that the almond tree is a symbol for the white hair of old age. The phrase, "the grasshopper will become a burden", is probably the vaguest term in this section. Many suggestions have been offered and the alternatives are many. (see Gordis: 335). Two possibilities are offered here with no degree of certainty. The first possibility is that the man is so feeble that the grasshopper will be a burden to him. The very lightest moving object is too much for the old man. The second possibility is that the grasshopper is a figure for the old man himself. The aged are usually feeble, shrunken up, and very thin. Then an even more advanced age would show a person so feeble that he could barely carry himself along and thus barely walk. Notice that the verb  is used reflexively. Therefore the phrase could be translated, "the grasshopper burdens himself". Or translated more freely -- "the grasshopper becomes a burden to himself". The third phrase refers to the caperberry, which is a sexual stimulant (see Gordis p. 336). The word  can be translated "is useless". Old age then, is a time not only of sexual sterility but when even a sexual stimulant will not be of any use. The rest of v. 5b through verse 8 deals with death and is really not related to our study of old age. We

will see below that most of the ideas expressed in this section have no parallel in Biblical literature, which fact makes the interpretation of the passage more difficult.

We can now turn to a general consideration of the physical manifestations of old age. The first one is failing eyesight. We have seven passages in which the diminishing of eyesight is mentioned as a result of old age (Gen. 27:1; Gen. 48:10; Deut. 34:7; I Sam. 3:2; I Sam. 4:15b; I Kings 14:4; Eccles. 12:3). In Biblical Hebrew the eyes are spoken of as being dim אֵינִי (Gen. 27:1; Deut. 34:7; I Sam. 3:2) or as being darkened (Eccles. 12:3) פָּקַח, or as fixed in one position אֵינִי as in I Sam. 4:15b and I Kings 14:4. Also the verb אָבַח is used in Gen. 48:10 to describe the eyes of Israel which were "heavy with age". Notice particularly that the author of Deut. 34:7 tells us that Moses' eyes "were not dim" even though he was 120 years old when he died. Moses was different from the other old men in that, at time when vision should be bad, his was not.

The next sign of old age is that of sexual sterility. It is considered unusual for men and women who are old to be able to bear children. Thus the whole birth of Isaac is built around the miracle of fertility in old age (Gen. 17:17; Gen. 18:12,13; Gen. 21:7). Thus the reaction was to laugh because the idea of fertility at this age was so preposterous. This miraculous birth theme is also to be found in Gen. 19:33 with the birth of Lot's descendents; he is old and drugged with wine and so helps his own daughters bear children. The miracle

is that he can still be a father in his old age. Notice further how this theme of fertility in a time when sterility is usual is continued according to the following table:

Gen. 11:26	Abram, Nahor Haran	born to Terach at 70.
Gen. 16:16	Ishmael	" " Abraham at 86
Gen. 21:5	Isaac	" " Abraham at 100
Gen. 25:26	Esau and Jacob	born to Isaac at 60

The age of Joseph when he is a father is more reasonable and corresponds more to the normal age.

Gen. 41:46 Manasseh-Ephraim born to Joseph at 40

This ends the cycle of miraculous birth stories. We see that King David at the age of seventy years can no longer have sexual relations (I Kings 1:4). Ruth as an old lady is sterile (Ruth 1:12). We have already mentioned Eccles. 12:5b in conjunction with the fact that not even a sexual stimulant will produce sexual desire in the aged. In Gen. 18:12 Sarah uses the term נִצְּחָה for sexual pleasure. The word נִצְּחָה means pleasure, delight and we would suggest translating it in this manner. Finally we have a passage in Psalm 92:15 according to the righteous will bear fruit in old age (יִנְחָהוּ בַּזָּקִים). Is this a promise that some day conditions will return wherein the righteous people will become like Abraham and the other semi-historic figures? The passage seems to mean just this: Some day fertility will persist in old age.

Our next passages associate weakness and feebleness

with old age. Moses is pictured as having his strength all the way to the end of his life (Deut. 34:7). We have seen in the former section that his sight did not fail him; so also his strength did not leave him. In direct contrast to this passage is the one where Eli drops dead from shock because he was old and "heavy" at ninety-eight years (I Sam. 4:15b). We have also in Zech. 8:4 a picture of old people who are weak and must have staffs to hold them up because of the many years of their lives *וְיָנִי אֶנְיָן*. Prov. 20:29 suggests that strength leaves in old age, contrasting an old man with the young. The young are those who have the strength. A similar thought is found in Psalm 71:9. Job 5:26 expresses the popular idea that the righteous can go to the grave with all their manly vigor. "You will go with vigor to the grave". The lexicon gives *וְיָנִי* the meaning of constant strength. Finally Eccles. 12:3 as we have seen presents a picture of the tottering limbs of the old man. And we have mentioned that the figure of the grasshopper in v. 5 might be an allusion to the old man. Other symptoms which might be mentioned are the declining of the sense of taste (II Sam. 19:35), also of hearing (II Sam. 19:35), loss of teeth (Eccles. 12:3), difficulty in keeping warm (I Kings 1:1), fear of height (Eccles. 12:5), and either a high-pitched voice or *lingua* light sleeper (Eccles. 12:4).

Then there is the possession of gray hair which is a physical sign of old age (Lev. 19:32; Deut. 32:26; Isa. 46:4), (Also see p. 59 Chap. II) This concludes our discussion of the physical signs of old age.

We now consider a few allusions to the emotional and mental state in old age. There are very few references which present this factor clearly. The first passages are to be found in the book of Genesis. They concern the laughing done by Abraham and Sarah. We merely suggest that it is possible that while they are overjoyed about this miraculous event at the same time they are prompted to laugh because they are old and childish. There is no more evidence for this feature; it is merely suggested.

The second feature concerns the relationship between father and son when the son is the child of the father's old age. This is clearly shown in the passage where Abraham gives Isaac all that he has because he is the son of Abraham's old age (Gen. 24:36). But the main reference to this relationship is that which concerns the love of Jacob for Joseph. Gen. 37:3 tells that he favored Joseph because he was the son of his old age. This certainly points out an emotional reality which would exist in an old person. Certainly people who have children later in life are more possessive. The author goes on to show how this led to Joseph's downfall but we are mainly concerned only with the fact and that it is a verity in life. The theme appears again in Gen. 44:20 with Benjamin. Now the brothers of Joseph say that Benjamin is the son of Jacob's old age and that to take him away from Jacob would be disastrous. The theme is repeated, but not as effectively as in the former passage.

We have two references to growing senility. The first we have already mentioned is in II Sam. 19:35 and the second reference is in I Kings 11:4. Although it is not clearly stated that Solomon had any traits of senility; nevertheless, his age is used as an excuse for his apostasy. The references in Samuel and Kings to old men not knowing the difference between $\gamma\gamma\text{! } \gamma\text{!}\gamma$ suggest the possibility that Solomon's mature judgment had gone. We mention this even though there is another reason given. If he had not been old the possibility of his apostasy would have been less.

We have two other passages which contain an opposing view, but which both concern emotional features of old age. The first is Prov. 22:6. Here the author suggests that good training in youth cannot disappear in old age. He hints that other things might happen in old age such as physical deterioration, but the old will not turn from good training. This passage suggests that moral judgment is not the factor that will leave the aged but that only judgment in other matters and areas are more difficult in old age (II Sam. 19:35). Finally we have Eccles. 4:13 which tells that a king can be old and foolish and not listen to advice. This is another feature in old people. They become set in their ways and do not want to change. This is what the author here describes. He presents quite an iconoclastic view as we shall see in the next chapter where we shall deal with youth and old age. He does however recognize this feature of old age.

SUMMARY

CHAPTER III

We first considered in this chapter two longer passages which dealt with old age and its manifestations. The first passage suggested that in old age a man can lose his power of judgment and his sense of taste and hearing. The second passage presented a complete picture of physical deterioration in old age. It is the most complete in the Bible. The picture was of old age as a dark time of life. The language was all metaphor and therefore obscure in part, and difficult to translate. Old age is like a time of winter, for the body gives little heat and the eyes have difficulty seeing. The limbs tremble and are weak; teeth are few; hearing even of usual daily sounds is difficult; one has trouble sleeping or has a high pitched voice; the sound of music is not heard; the old person is feeble and totters; he drags himself along as skin and bones; and even sexual stimulants cannot awaken his desire.

It is frequently noted that the eyesight is bad in old age. For it to be good at the age of 120 as in the case of Moses is unusual. Sexual sterility is common to old people except in the case of certain people who merit fertility in old age. Abraham merited this miracle but there are others who cannot have sexual intercourse in old age, as is said of Ruth and David.

Weakness is another manifestation of old age. People need canes to hold them up. They are frequently bent over with age. Moses was the exception at the age of 120 years.

One also loses other senses such as: taste, hearing, teeth, bodily heat. Also there is fear of height. Old people possess gray hair.

Old people are especially possessive of late born children. They lose a sense of judgment and they can become stubborn and unyielding. But good training in morals and ethics never leaves them no matter how old. Old age cannot wipe out the basic goodness of man.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER III

1. Robert Gordis. Koheleth, The Man and His World.
Bloch Publishing Co, 1955, p. 332.
2. Ibid, p. 336
3. Ibid, p. 336
4. loc. cit. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, p. 480.

CHAPTER IV

ATTITUDES TO OLD AGE

In this chapter we shall consider the various attitudes to old age. Our first category deals with the young and the old and how they are considered in biblical literature.

We have seen that the age of twenty was the age where-
 ✓ in one could become a citizen of the congregation. (See footnote 9, Chapter 1) We also referred to the valuation chart in Lev. 27:1 (see Chapter 1, pp. 22-24). This chart put less value on those under twenty years of age. Along with these passages we have others which do not specify age but which do show that the youth is not capable of accepting all the responsibility of an older man. Solomon speaks of himself as a 7-6-J who cannot "go in or out" (I Kings 3:4). This going in and out gives the idea of responsibility because thereupon Solomon asks for an understanding heart. We can surmise from this passage that youth was thought to possess mature judgment. Incidentally there is also an age when again the person is thought to lose this sense of mature judgment (Barzillai, II Sam. 19:35; see Chapter 3). Jeremiah (1:6) offers a parallel case when he refuses to accept responsibility because he has not yet reached the right age. Were Solomon and Jeremiah under twenty years of age? There is not enough evidence to give a definite answer. From these two cases we can also recognize that the older group of people is considered more important than the younger group. This is

a conventional attitude. The Rehoboam passage in I Kings 12 is a good example of this type of thinking. Rehoboam has thrown aside all protocol by consulting with the younger group rather than the older. The other presentation of the conventional thought that the young are not as stable as the older group is Job 32:6. Elihu tells us that he waited until the aged has spoken before he proceeded. He was "timid", he repeated the conventional platitudes about older people: "Let days speak and many years teach wisdom." These are the most specific examples of the attitude toward young and old. However, there are a few other examples. Isaiah pictures the decadence of society through the accession of young people to the head of the government. -- Isa. 3:4 -- "And I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them", and in verse 5 he shows an example of further decadence, "the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base fellow to the honorable." Notice that Isaiah puts the phrase "base fellow to the honorable", parallel to the "young against the old." Society will decay when the young usurp the power and status of the old. Lev. 19:32 demands that one "rise up" and "honor" the aged. Job tells with great impact that he was honored by the older men in the gate and that they arose when he came by (Job 29:8b). This of course would be the ultimate honor that could be bestowed upon a person. But also there was disgrace which came to Job for he tells us in 30:1,2 that the men who were younger than he, now mock him. In light of the attitudes which demanded the respect of young for old certainly

this was a terrible blow to Job.

Proverbs speaks of what is necessary for a youth. Prv. 1:4 suggests that "knowledge and discretion" must be given to youth. This, then, is a quality which is not possessed by the young. But according to Prv. 22:6, once he has acquired it, it will last. Finally, it is necessary for the child to respect his mother, "even though she is old" (Prv. 23:22). All these passages present conventional ideas and attitudes about youth and old age.

There are two passages which express an entirely different opinion. They both come from the wisdom literature and concern young and old. In Job 32:9 Elihu says that it is not the old that are wise nor the aged that have understanding but it is "the spirit in man, the breath of the almighty, that makes him understand". This is an iconoclastic statement from the point of view of the Bible. It breaks down for us the stereotype view of young respecting old without reservations. Then we have the view that "a poor and wise youth is better than an old and foolish king". Neither of these passages exalts old age above all other considerations. They do not show what we could call disrespect for an old person but they show rather a more realistic attitude, at least in modern terms. According to biblical viewpoints these are iconoclastic views.

Destruction of Young and Old

Now that we know the conventional biblical view toward old age we can appreciate the strength of those passages that

refer to destruction and exile. The passages become all the more forceful when we realize that the aged had status in the community and that they were physically weak and helpless. Therefore to kill or maim an old person was especially cruel.

If we examine some of these passages we find that the Jews and foreigners both completely destroyed and exiled whole communities. When Jericho fell Joshua destroyed the whole population, young and old. The expression כָּל־אָדָם is an idiom which means "everybody"; but sometimes as we shall see, it is more than just a conventional phrase.

In Isa. 20:4 we have a picture of Assyria's exile of Egypt and the treatment of the aged. They exile them barefoot and naked. In light of our study of the physical manifestations of age we can point out here that exile with less clothing for an old person is even more frightening and the inclusion of the aged in this description adds to the horror of the situation. Ezekiel sees in 9:6 that any one who does not have the mark upon his head is condemned whether old or young. In Jer. 6:11 God is pictured as destroying both young and old. That God should destroy indiscriminately makes the passages all the more telling.

II Chron. 36:17 makes even a greater distinction for ^{were taken captive,} it says that not the old people only/but also the decrepit ones.

According to Deut. 28:50 Israel will be punished by a people of בְּנֵי־אָדָם stern countenance who will destroy both young and old. In Lam. 2:21; 5:12,13,14 we have a picture of this complete destruction of Jerusalem. But such

conduct is condemned by Deutero-Isaiah in 47:6. He is predicting the fall of Babylon and one of his main reasons for accusing Babylon is that they strengthened the yoke on the aged. In light of the conventional attitudes toward the aged we can see why the prophet is so incensed at the Babylonians for their cruelty.

Compensations of Old Age

We have discussed deterioration in old age (Chap. 3). But we must now consider the compensations which come with age. We have seen that the aged are to be honored because of their wisdom and their experience.

One of the first compensations which come in old age is the "crown of the hoary head" (Prov. 16:31). It is gained by a righteous life. The crown is a metaphor. This royal symbol is a sign of real accomplishment and dignity and therefore the "crown" of the hoary head is something to be earned and something to be highly esteemed. The author of Proverbs constantly emphasizes the reward of long life for righteous acts, as do other authors in the Bible. The "crown" of a hoary head is a compensation for righteous acts. This physical sign of old age is not considered a deterioration but is taken to be a sign of honor. It is the substitute for strength which the young possess (Prov. 20:29). This is a physical compensation for old age.

There is another compensation for old age and it is connected with a man's heritage. That is the crown of his

grandchildren (Prv. 17:6). All the disabilities of old age can be balanced by joy in one's grandchildren. But also to have children in one's youth so that they can protect one in old age is important (Ps. 127:4): "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth"... for when a person grows old they can protect him. So this is a further compensation which is offered in old age. Psalm 92:14 says that the righteous will not only be happy in old age but that they shall "bring forth fruit". Is this a passage wherein constant fertility is promised or could these be the grandchildren of the righteous?

It is possible that the Psalmist is speaking here of the grandparents who will see the fruit of their old age... their grandchildren.

One difficult passage may not deal with our thought.

Ps. 103:5

who satisfies you as long as you live.

The difficulty is with the term ²¹³⁸. If it comes from

318 and has something to do with the duration of one's life then it means that God compensates every age group. He "renews one's youth like the eagle's." God compensates a man in his old age. The lexicon⁽¹⁾ suggests that '38 (ornaments) be changed to 318. Then the whole meaning is changed and if so, the verse is for our purposes. This concludes our section on the compensations of old age.

Duties of the Aged

In Gen. 24:1,2 Abraham sends out a servant to get a wife for his son. It is also the function of the old man to bless his oldest son and to take care of his "affairs" before he dies (Gen. 27:1,2; Gen. 48:10; Gen. 49).

Eli is old and has no heir and so is much dismayed (I Sam. 3). It is also general trend of thought for the old man to make confession before the community before his death (I Sam. 12:1-5). We see also the aged Joshua giving the charge to the people at ^{Schechem} (Josh. 23-24). All of these men are old and before they die they set their affairs in order. If they are heads of the community they come before the community to set things in order before their death. This is one of the duties of the aged.

We have dealt with the functions of the $\gamma' \gamma \gamma$ as a social body in Chapter 2. Their official function was as judges in the gates, as a city council, and numerous other such duties. They achieved these positions by reason of their maturity. ¹¹Ps. 71 may be a prayer of an old man.

In thee, O Lord, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame!
In thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline thy ear to me, and save me!
Be thou to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress, to save me,
for thou art my rock and my fortress.

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.
For thou, O Lord, art my hope,
my trust, O Lord, from my youth.
Upon thee I have leaned from my birth;
thou art he who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of thee.

I have been as a portent to many;
 but thou art my strong refuge.
 My mouth is filled with thy praise,
 and with thy glory all the day.
 9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
 forsake me not when my strength is spent.
 For my enemies speak concerning me,
 those who watch for my life consult together,
 11 and say, "God has forsaken him;
 pursue and seize him,
 for there is none to deliver him."

O God, be not far from me;
 O my God, make haste to help me!
 May my accusers be put to shame and consumed;
 with scorn and disgrace may they be covered
 who seek my hurt.
 14 But I will hope continually,
 and will praise thee yet more and more.
 My mouth will tell of thy righteous acts,
 of thy deeds of salvation all the day,
 for their number is past my knowledge.
 With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come,
 I will praise thy righteousness, thine alone.

O God, from my youth thou hast taught me,
 and I still proclaim thy wondrous deeds.
 So even to old age and gray hairs,
 O God, do not forsake me,
 till I proclaim thy might
 to all the generations to come.
 Thy power and thy righteousness, O God,
 reach the high heavens.

Thou who hast done great things,
 O God, who is like thee?
 Thou who hast made me see many sore troubles
 wilt revive me again;
 from the depths of the earth
 thou wilt bring me up again.
 Thou wilt increase my honor,
 and comfort me again.

I will also praise thee with the harp
 for thy faithfulness, O my God;
 I will sing praises to thee with the lyre,
 O Holy One of Israel.
 My lips will shout for joy,
 when I sing praises to thee;
 my soul also, which thou hast rescued.
 And my tongue will talk of thy righteous help
 all the day long,
 for they have been put to shame and disgraced
 who sought to do me hurt.

Verses 1 to 3 are identical with Psalm 31:1-3. From these verses there is no indication that an old man is speaking. In verses 4-6 the psalmist says that he has leaned upon God from youth and even from his birth and that he has trusted him. But still there is no exact statement that the speaker is old. Verses 7 and 8 are not informative. Verse 9 is a plea that he not be cast off in his old age when his strength fails, but nowhere does the psalmist say that already he is old. He seems to be speaking of the future. Verse 10 again is not informative and 11 could be a quote by his enemies who see him as an old man enfeebled and so say "God has forsaken him", but there is not enough evidence for this conclusion. The next verse that might allude to old age is 14, which might mean that the author prays more and more to God because he is old and must do so. But again the evidence is too slight. In verses 17 and 18 the psalmist prays that God not forsake him in his old age. The structure which seems to indicate that this is not old age that the psalmist speaks of is the use of נַא נָא 36 in 17b and then the use יְהוָה יִשְׁׁע in 18a. The rest of the Psalm seems to be a message of hope of one facing old age. The writer yet wants to tell of God's might to generations to come. Therefore we feel that this is the prayer of an old man facing old age; perhaps a man of middle age who is awaiting old age with some apprehension. If it is a passage dealing with middle age this would be the only passage of its type in the Bible. Certainly all the fears and apprehensions of a middle aged man are present in this Psalm. There is nothing definite in the language to say that the author is

old. The words 33 and 38 seem to be the key to this interpretation.

The Aged in the Future

The passage wherein Jeremiah speaks of the return of the exiles, which contains words of consolation. The aged and the young shall be merry. They shall rejoice in the streets together (Jer. 31). Just as the aged were to be destroyed with the young ones and were held responsible along with the young (see above, pp. 87, 88, 89) so the aged will rejoice with the young people in the restoration after the exile. Zechariah (Zech. 8:4) speaks also of the old who will sit again in the streets and lean on their canes. They will be surrounded by boys and girls playing the streets. The old will partake completely in the restoration after exile.

But what of the time of the future in pre-Messianic times? What will happen then? Joel tells us that God's spirit will be in everyone (like the pre-literary prophets?); the old men shall dream dreams. Is this a figure or something literal? Does it mean telling the future by means of dreams? It is followed by the passage which tells us that young men will have visions. This is probably all meant to be taken literally as it seems to be an apocalyptic passage (2-4). The point we should consider for our purposes here is that even in the apocalyptic age the aged will have a function along with the younger people.

We end with the passage from Trito-Isaiah, Isa. 65:20.

Here we go back to the beginning for the prophet promises to mankind that which existed in pre-historic times. The Yin' S18 will be lifted and there will be long life again without old age. Just as we saw in antediluvian times all of these features we return to the same idea at the end of our analysis. In the future man shall return to the bliss of Paradise. Ps. 92:12 speaks of the righteous bearing fruit in old age. This is a similar passage to that found in Isa. 65:20 in that it refers to a return to the mythological times when man shall become a father in late years and will "flourish like the palm-tree" which is supposed to be a long lived tree.

SUMMARY CHAPTER IV

In this final chapter we have attempted to show the main attitudes which are presented about old age. In this chapter we have seen that the conventional approach in the biblical society was to honor the man who was older. The young man cannot yet be a spokesman in his society just as the older man loses mature judgment and is not qualified to be the spokesman. When the youths differ with the elder people, then society begins to deteriorate. A later biblical view is that man can be stubborn and foolish in old age. A complete homage to age to the point of making it a fetish without recognizing any "young blood" is also a gross mistake.

We have also shown that the old are just as guilty as the young for sins of the society and God sanctions their capture and even death by the enemy. The descriptions of the destruction and capture of a community are made more horrible by reason of the fact that the aged are taken and slain. However, the country that treats the aged more harshly than the others should also be punished because all citizens share the responsibility of guilt and the aged being weaker should not be punished the most severely.

There are compensations for old age. They are the gray hair which is an earned honor similar to the crown of a king. There is the compensation of grandfatherhood, and the protection afforded by the children of one's youth.

Righteous actions are to be rewarded by gray hair and

by fruitfulness in old age.

The function of the aged is to take care of certain matters before their death. They must settle their affairs. They must bless those who are to inherit from them. They sometimes make confession before the community and they deliver the charge to the community to carry on in the name of God. They usually present the past history and show how the present community is a part of the past and must carry on. If they have no progeny they have suffered a serious tragedy in their old age.

The middle aged man may look forward to old age with some apprehension but he prays for faith and hopes in God. God never deserts the aged. He is good to all ages equally.

Even in days of the future the aged will have an equal place with the rest of society. In the return from exile they will be merry and will sit in the streets watching the young ones play. In the days of apocalypse they shall have dreams and visions just as the others. And the very far future society shall return to the antediluvian days wherein only long life shall exist without old age.

FOOTNOTE
CHAPTER IV

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