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THE ORIGIN
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SABBATH
IN BIBLICAL TIMES

A

THESIS

Submitted by

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although the Sabbath is a fundamental institution there is evidence that its significance was not the same for all periods in Jewish history or even in its early adventure as a folk. Thus we find that the prophets who mentioned the Sabbath at all appeared to regard it in a derogatory sense while the exilic writers appear very much concerned with its observance. Certain incidents in the literature of ancient Israel appear to indicate that the actors if aware of the Sabbath at all were not concerned with its observance in accordance with traditional practice. Different explanations are given for the existence of the institution, one writer asserting the theory that the Sabbath was ordained as an ordinance in memory of the departure from Egypt while another would have the Sabbath built into the very structure of the physical Universe. The references to the institution differ, some referring to it as the "Sabbath" while others refer to it as "the seventh day." These facts indicate a developing institution which calls for a history.

The very indications of a developing institution call into question the source of the institution. The antiquity of the institution and its presence in the Decalogue might point to a Canaanitish origin. Its similarity to Babylonian institutions could shift it to that country. There is a demand therefore for an evaluation of each of these leaders.

This treatment will therefore attempt to answer the following questions: Where did the Sabbath originate? What was its significance in the life of pre-exilic Israel? What was the effect of the exile upon the nature of the Sabbath? What was the significance of the Sabbath in post-exilic times?

Since it is evident that the nature of the conclusions will depend almost entirely upon the evaluation of the source material, it would be fitting to point out that the results of Biblical criticism will be taken as a point of departure. Since the prophets are anterior to the law, the prophets will be taken as clues to the contemporary conditions, and the laws will be dated so as to indicate a consistency with these.

II. THE DENOTATION OF THE HEBREW WORD

Although the Hebrew word "שַׁבָּת" is usually understood to refer to the seventh day of the week on which no work is to be performed, yet an analysis of the references in the Scriptures reveal the fact that actually the term was larger in its application. In order, therefore, to understand correctly the institution with which we are dealing, it would be wise to take note of the various applications of the term.

A. AS THE OCCASION OBSERVED EVERY SEVENTH DAY

We, of course, have those references that clearly refer to the Sabbath as the occasion observed every seventh day, or at least, upon the seventh day following the regular six days of the usual week. Thus in the decalogues (Ex. 20:10 and Deut. 5:14), it is asserted that 'שַׁבָּת יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּוָם'. In the narrative of Ex. 16 the people are forbidden to gather food on the seventh day because it is שַׁבָּת. So also do other passages specify the seventh day as שַׁבָּת on which no work is to be done (Lev. 23:3, Ex. 31:15, 35:2).

It is interesting to observe that although the creation story of Gen. 2 mentions the sanctification of the seventh day as a rest day because upon that day Yahwe rested from his work, yet the day is not specified as שַׁבָּת, although the meaning is implied. So too in the decalogue of Ex. 24, the seventh day is indicated as a rest day but it is not designated as the שַׁבָּת. It is also worthy of note that in some passages the seventh day is also referred to as a /שַׁבָּת (Lev. 23:3 Ex. 31:15, 35:2, 16:23).

B. AS THE WEEK

Lev. 23:15 speaks ^{of} seven שבע to total fifty days, obviously using שבע in the sense of "week." Lev. 25:8 commands that seven שבע be counted, forty-nine years in all. The sense, therefore, of שבע is that of a week. We would thus translate, "You must count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years; you must have a full seven weeks of years, forty-nine years."¹ Isaiah 66:23 also, if we are to follow the interpretation of Duhm, reveals the use of שבע as "week."² The New Testament shows a parallel in that there too the Aramaic equivalent for שבע is also used as "week." (Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 18:12 as per Brown, Driver and Briggs) At any rate the first reference is clear.

C. THE MIDDLE OF THE MONTH

If we are to trust the judgement of some scholars, שבע at one time referred to the fifteenth day of the month, more specifically, the full moon.³ Leviticus 23:39 and 23:11-16 particularly lend themselves to this interpretation in the opinion of Jastrow, as will be discussed in a succeeding chapter of this treatment.⁴ This view is especially given substance by the parallelism between שבע, New moon and "moed" (Is. 1:13, Ezek. 46:1, 2K. 4:23, Amos 8:5). We shall therefore consider this interpretation as tentative.

D. OTHER DENOTATIONS

In addition to the above uses, we find that in Lev. 16:31 and 23:32 the Day of Atonement is referred to as יום כיפור.

1 American Translation of Old Testament, Edited by J. M. P. Smith. pg. 200.

2 Brown, Driver and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.

3 Johannes Meinhold and others.

4 M. Jastrow, "The Day After the Sabbath," A. J. of S. L., 1924 XXX 104

The seventh year, in which no agricultural work was to be done, was also designated as *שנת שמיטה* (Lev. 25:2) and a *שנת שמיטה* (Lev. 25:4). Lev. 26:24, 47 and II Ch. 36:21 also refer to the earth fulfilling its *שמיטה*. But this may refer to either the *שמיטה* as the seventh day or the seventh year although the latter is probably the correct meaning, unless both are meant. Lev. 25:6 declares that the *שמיטה* shall be for the widow and the orphan, etc. This indicates that the term was used to imply the "produce" of the ground and evidently "the produce of the Sabbatical year," in particular. II Kings 11:5-9 and II Ch. 23:4-8 relate that on the *שמיטה* the watches of the temple and court were shifted. (Usually one-third was at the temple and two-thirds at the palace but on the *שמיטה* the arrangement was reversed.) It is thus evident that *שמיטה* was used as a general term to include many institutions before it became the exclusive designation of the seventh day of the week.

E. USE OF *שמיטה*

Inasmuch as *שמיטה* is so often coupled with *שבת*, we will note the uses of the term which occurs ten times and each time in the Holiness or Priestly Code. In Lev. 23:23, it refers to the New Year's Day. Lev. 23:39 and 32 refer to the first and eighth day of the Harvest Festival. In Lev. 16:31, the Yom Kippur is so designated. Lev. 25:4-5 calls the seventh year a *שנת שמיטה*. In Ex. 16:23, 35:2 and 31:15, and Lev. 23:3 call the seventh day a *שמיטה*. According to Jastrow, this term is older or at least as old as the term *שבת*, belongs to the older strata of the language and acts as a qualifying noun.¹ The ending is an affirmative ending.

1 Jastrow, "Original Character of Sabbath," pg. 333.

F. THE MEANING OF THE ROOT

Inasmuch as the term $\text{נָחַ$ is obviously derived from the root נָח , it would be well to examine the meaning of the root. An examination reveals that the meaning is more intense than the expected "rest" or even "cessation." In the Qal and Niphal the verb calls for complete cessation of activity. Thus in Ex. 34:21, on the seventh day, one is to "cease" נָח from all labor, even during the busiest season of the year. So in Is. 17:3, "the bulwark will be stripped, ' נָח ' from Ephraim." But to really appreciate the intensive character of the verb, we turn to the Hiphil form, where we find that the verb means "cause to cease," "to exterminate or destroy," "remove," "cause to fall," as is demonstrated by many references. Psalms 46:10 declares that "war will ' נָח ' completely disappear from the earth." Ezek. 34:25 declares that God would ' נָח "exterminate" evil beasts from the land. Ezek. 23:27 declares Yahwe will "remove" נָח the shame from Israel. The verb means, therefore, "complete cessation."

III. THE CONNOTATIONS OF THE SABBATH

In addition to the specific meanings attached to the Sabbath, there are numerous associations of ideas the understanding of which are not only necessary to the meaning of the institution but which also throw light upon its origin and development. We will therefore group the various meanings attached to the word.

A. THE SABBATH AS HOLY

The Sabbath is constantly referred to as holy. This is asserted in both the decalogues of Ex. 20 and Deut. 5. The prophetic portions maintain this also, such as Jer. 17:22-27, Is. 38:13, Ezek 20:12 and many others. But it is not considered holy always in relation to the same things. The relations fall into groups of "holy to Yahwe," "holy to the land" and "holy to you."

1. Holy to Yahwe

Ex. 16:25 asserts *שבת היא יום קדש*. Ex. 20:10 says the seventh day is *שבת קדש*. Lev. 19:30 and 26:2 direct that *שבת קדש* is characteristic of Ezekiel to speak of the Sabbaths as *שבת קדש*. Is. 56:4 similarly speaks of *שבת קדש*. Thus Nehemiah speaks of *שבת קדש*. Ex. 31:15 asserts the Sabbath is *שבת קדש* while Isaiah 58:13 demands that the Sabbath be made a *שבת קדש*, "a delight," in order *שבת קדש*.

It is evidently in this spirit that Nehem. 9:14 declares that Yahwe *שבת קדש*, "made known to them," the Sabbath, while Ex. 20:11 asserts Yahwe "blessed" and "sanctified" the Sabbath. Gen. 2:3 points out that Yahwe "blessed" and "sanctified" the "seventh day."

2. Holy to the land

Lev. 26:34,35 declares that during the punishment of Israel, the land is to remain unoccupied until it has fulfilled its "Sabbaths." II Ch. 36:21 relates that the country was devastated seventy years in order to make good the unfulfilled Sabbaths of the land, in accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah, evidently Jer. 17:22-27. Although this interpretation may be due merely to the looseness of language, yet the use of the word in relation to the land does appear to retain a reminiscence of Baal worship.

B. THE TABOOS OF THE SABBATH

Attached to the Sabbath is a special vocabulary. So the Sabbath is to be "performed" according to Ex. 31:16. Ex. 20:8 declares it to be "remembered" . It is to be "guarded," , according to Ex. 31:13-16, Is. 56:2-6, Lev. 19:3,10, and 26:2, and Deut. 5:14. The warning is uttered that it is not to be "profaned" in many passages such as Ezek. 20:12,16,21,24, Is. 56:2,6. Jer. 17:21 warns that one must observe the Sabbath so as to safeguard one's life and Ex. 31:15 warns that desecration of the Sabbath may bring death.

The ritual prescribed that of that third of a shekel which the returned exiles were to give to the Temple, part was to go for the Sabbath offering (Nehem 10:32). On the Sabbath the gates of the city were to be closed to insure the observance of the Sabbath (Ezek. 46:4). Num 28:10 prescribes that "on the Sabbath, two perfect yearling male lambs and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a cereal-offering, along with its

libation, as the Sabbath burnt-offering each Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt-offering and its libation."

Nehem. 10:32 relates how the people promised not to indulge in trade. Nehem. 13:15-21 indicates that Nehemiah took drastic measures to enforce the restriction against trading. Ex. 16:21 warns that one is not to leave the house during the Sabbath. Num. 15:32-36 recounts how Moses ordered a man to be stoned to death for gathering wood on the sacred day. Ex. 31:14,15 and 16:26 prohibit work and Jer. 17:21-24 prohibits carrying. Is. 58:13 promises that "if you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, not doing your own business on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable, if you honor it by not following your accustomed ways, nor doing business, nor indulging in (idle ?) talk---then shall you find your delight in the Lord, And I will make you ride in glory over the heights of the earth."

C. REASONS FOR THE SABBATH

Several views are presented as to the origin of the Sabbath. The view is quite definite that Yahwe ordained the Sabbath. Ex. 16:29 goes so far as to say that inasmuch as He ordained the Sabbath, He will provide food for the Sabbath. Nehemiah confidently assures us that Yahwe made known the Sabbath along with other ordinances during his revelation on Mount Sinai (Nehem. 9:14).

Deut. 5:15 asserts that Sabbath was given to Israel as remembrance of the delivery from Egypt. Ex. 31:13 enjoins Israel to keep the Sabbath "as a sign between me and thee throughout all generations, so that ^{it} may be known that I, Yahwe, am consecrating you.----it is sacred unto you." Similarly Ezekiel maintains, "I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them,

in order that they might know that it was I who set them apart" (Ezek. 21:12 and 20:20).

The most prominent reason, however, for the observance of the Sabbath is that which maintains that it was given because Yahwe rested upon the seventh day after his six days of creation. This is made the climax of the creation story in Genesis (Gen. 2:3ff). The same is maintained in other passages of the Pentateuch (Ex. 16:23, 31:17, Lev. 23:38), Ex. 20:11 using the expression עֲשֵׂה כִּי יָרַח
שֶׁבַע יָמִים.

The many reasons advanced for the origin of the Sabbath indicate evidently, that the origin was uncertain in the minds of the people and that its meaning underwent a transformation.

IV. THE CHARACTER OF THE HEBREW SABBATH

A. ATTITUDE OF THE PROPHETS

When it is considered that the Sabbath is usually thought of as an institution, uniquely characterized by its humanitarian function, the most striking fact is the evident lack of approbation of the early prophets to the institution. We would expect that the early prophets as the exponents of justice and righteousness would be the chief champions of the observance of the institution. Their comparative indifference offers a valuable clue both for the origin and the character of the institution. It does not matter here, whether the Sabbath referred to is the full moon day as some maintain or whether it is the seventh day of the week. The meaning would remain the same. We will consider the three passages which can safely be attributed to their attributed authors, namely, Amos 8:4-6, Hoseah 2:13, Isaiah 1:13. We will first consider Amos.

"Hear this, ye that swallow the needy
and destroy the poor of the land
Saying, 'when shall the new moon be gone, that we may
sell grain and the Sabbath, that we may set forth corn?'
Making the ephah small and shekel great."

Amos does not necessarily attack the institution of the Sabbath. He is attacking the greed of the merchants. But the evident fact is that there is something about the observance of the Sabbath which prevents the carrying on of business. The implication is, that, either the merchants who are not pious, observe the Sabbath because they fear to break it, or else, as Meinhold suggests, that for some reason the people will not buy on the Sabbath day.¹ At any rate some restrictive character

1 Johannes Meinhold, "Sabbath und Woche im Alten Testament, pg. 4.

prevents the usual routine of business.

But although Amos does not attack the institution itself, it would appear that he does not hold it in great esteem for some reason. It is not likely that had Amos a very great reverence for the institution, that he would be sensitive to the greed of the merchants. After all, we must not suffer from the fallacy of literalness. Amos is epigrammatic and had he felt the Sabbath to be a vital institution, he would attack its desecration rather than use it as a vehicle to denounce the oppression of the poor.

Let us now examine Hosea 2:13

I will cause all of her mirth to cease
Her feasts, her new moons, and her Sabbaths.

This threat occurs in a passage in which the prophet is denouncing Israel for adopting Canaanitish institutions and utilizing Baal worship. It is therefore, a clear statement of disapproval of the Sabbath, inasmuch as the institution is mentioned in the same breath with other institutions which are vigorously denounced as Baal worship. This passage indicates, therefore, that in the opinion of Hosea, the Sabbath was associated not with Yahwe worship but with the worship of the natives.

We will now turn to Isaiah 1:13

"Bring no more worthless offering
Foul smoke it is to me
New moon and Sabbath, the holding of assemblies
Cease to do evil, learn to do good
Seek justice, restrain the oppressor:"

Here too it is quite evident, that had the institution of the Sabbath been humanitarian in character, Isaiah could not have included it in his denunciation. At least he would have qualified his statement by contrasting the proper observance of the insti-

tution with the actual one. We must conclude that to Isaiah there was no redeeming feature to the Sabbath. There was something about its character that was associated with all of the characteristics of Baal worship that he abhorred.

The silence of Jeremiah on the entire subject is worthy of attention, especially is this noticeable when we observe that it is not until the Deuteronomic reformation that we find the institution interpreted as a spiritual one. We may suppose that during the time of Jeremiah some of the old associations which were so repulsive to the prophets still clung to the Sabbath, but not enough to call forth a protest.¹ When the Deuteronomic Reformation took place, even though Jeremiah was opposed to it as Battenwieser claims² he could find no cause to condemn the humanitarian innovations of the Sabbath.

Since the prophets were the exponents of true Yahwe worship, their opposition to the institution must be interpreted as an indication that they considered it Canaanitish in character. Evidently they did not even consider it to be a perverted Yahwistic institution or we would have some record of their attempt to direct the institution to its original form. They would have denounced the folk for not observing it in its Yahwistic form. The Sabbath, therefore, during the time of the early prophets must have been definitely Canaanitish in character.

1 The single passage of Jer. 17:19-29 which lends itself to possible Jeremiac authorship is clearly shown to be contemporaneous with Ezra and Nehemiah by Battenwieser in his "Prophets of Israel" pg. 49ff., inasmuch as the spirit and the language is that of the exilic period. Furthermore the word "massa" used in this passage means "merchandise" the same as in Nehem. 13:15

2 "Prophets of Israel," pg. 35.

B. THE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Two references in the historical books are worthy of attention, II K. 11:7 and II K. 4:23. In these passages the references to the Sabbath are incidental and can therefore be considered to have no apologetic associations.

II K. 11:6 relates how the priest Jehoiada maneuvered the rebellion against Athaliah in order to place the young prince Jehoash on the throne. This was accomplished by taking advantage of the fact that upon the Sabbath, the heavy guard, which usually surrounded the palace, was transferred to the Temple. He could thus utilize them to accomplish his purpose. It is obvious, as Meinhold suggests,¹ that the reason was that on the Sabbath a larger number of worshippers assembled than usually. There is no point, however, to the contention that this indicates that this was a festival day or that it was a full moon feast. The crowd would be obliged to assemble no matter how ominous the day, and the fact that there was a large assembly indicates not that the day was a full moon celebration similar to new moon, but that the Sabbath was an important occasion. This reference indicates, therefore, only that the Sabbath was an important occasion, perhaps more important than the New Moon feast because since it was to the advantage of Jehoiada to pick that occasion when he would have the greatest military force at his command, the fact that he chose the Sabbath indicates that it was an occasion which required an unusually large police force.

We shall now consider II K. 4:23. It is here related that the son of the Shunemite woman came into the house complain-

1 Meinhold, "Sabbath und Woche im Alten Testament" pg. 6.

ing of his head, and then he died. The Shunemite woman then called for an ass and a servant in order that she might call upon Elisha, whereupon her husband asked, "Why are you about to go to him today, since it is neither New Moon/or Sabbath?"

Apart from the fact that this passage on the face of it would appear to be a ²very late prophetic Midrash, so to speak, the meaning is too ambiguous to offer a secure interpretation. Above all, it must be borne in mind that this was an emergency. The child had just died and the mother, and we may be sure the father as well, ^{was} desperate. Meinhold suggests that on Sabbath and New Moon the slaves and beasts of burden were at the disposal of the peasant and he was therefore free to use them for a journey or pilgrimage.¹ But it must be borne in mind that an emergency such as this situation describes would set aside such a consideration. The more usual interpretation is that on Sabbath and New Moon the prophets were in a better position to control the powers.² But again, in an emergency, a desperate attempt, though apparently futile, would be natural.

The only conclusion that we can draw with safety from this passage is that the Sabbath like the New Moon was an important institution in the life of the folk.

C. THE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CODES

We find a more fruitfull field of investigation in the development of the codes. It is the contention of some³ that the oldest form of the commandment in the decalogue was,

1 Meinhold "Sabbath und Woche im Alten Testament" pg. 5.

2 Hutton Webster, "Rest Days" pg. 250

3 Meinhold, Jastrow, and others.

"Thou shalt keep the Sabbath holy." However, we cannot take this view for reasons which will be discussed later and for the following reasons. It is the characteristic of laws that they are stated specifically. The law just quoted is general in its statement. It is not definite. The view that the above stated phrase is the first formulation of the law would assume that it originates from the Deuteronomic reformation while the Deuteronomic laws states specifically, "Thou shalt guard the Sabbath to sanctify it AS THOU HAST BEEN COMMANDED. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work and on the seventh is a Sabbath."

שמואל א' י"ב ה' שבת לקדש כדכר יצחק אלה' שש
ימים עבד ואש' כל-מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת

It becomes quite plain that the specific law is the older law. We shall therefore in order to ascertain its character trace the development of the Sabbath through the four following sets of laws, Ex. 34:21, Ex. 23:12, Deut. 5:12, and Ex. 20:8ff.

We first take the law in Ex. 34:21,

שש ימים עבד וכל יום השביעי כדכר יצחק אלה' שש

The last three words are additions,¹ we consider only vs. 21a.

The verb עבד implies agricultural activity alone and is equivalent to the fuller expression עבדך אדמך.²

The document in which this verse is found, the K document, is placed in the year 899 during the reformation of Asa during the

1 Morgenstern, "The Oldest Document of the Hexateuch," H.U.C.A. vol. IV, pg. 63.

2 Ibid, pg. 63.

fifteenth year of his reign.¹ This indicates that at a very early date a seventh day was observed as a day upon which no agricultural work was to be done. It leaves open the question as to whether this day was called "the Sabbath" or "a Sabbath." It indicates, however, that whatever its past history, by the time of Asa, those responsible for the worship in the Temple, considered the seventh day observance, one of the requirements of Yahwe worship. It does not preclude the possibility that there were those who did not consider it an essential Yahwe institution. It does show that in the main it had taken hold of the Hebrews sufficiently to be considered among their approved institutions.

The next step in the development of the codes is Ex. 23. The Sabbath law in vs. 12 is stated as follows:

שש ימים עמלך במעשרך וכלום השניתי תצטרך לחמך ימנו טורך וחסורך וכלך וקניך

Again we omit the second part of the verse as a Deuteronomic addition.² We find one difference between this code and that of the preceding one which turns out to be significant. Instead of שש ימים עמלך this law reads שבעה ימים עמלך , an expression which indicates a multiplicity of economic activities, not only agricultural but also commercial.³ This law is found in the C code which is a "product of the reformation of Elisha and Jehu in the Northern Kingdom in 842 B. C."⁴

1 Morgenstern, "Oldest Document of the Hexateuch," H.U.C.A., vol. IV, pg. 117.

2 Ibid, pg. 58.

3 Ibid, pg. 63.

4 Ibid, pg. 112.

pastoral institution there would be a natural tendency to find other justification for the movement. The Sabbath lending itself to humanitarian interpretation would admirably suggest a further association with an escape from an ancient slavery.

Finally, we have the law in Ex. 20:8-11. This law, since it gives as the explanation, in addition to the humane reason found in Deuteronomy, God's resting upon the seventh day, is obviously of late composition and cannot be used as a direct indication of the character of the Sabbath in ancient Israel. However, we must observe that the introduction no longer contains the warning וְיָשָׁב but exhorts one to זָכוֹר "remember." This difference indicated a transition from an ominous association.

We see therefore that the evidence in the codes indicates that in early times the seventh day was a day in which all agricultural work stopped completely. We should translate וְיָשָׁב as "cease." As the culture of the folk advanced, this prohibition included non-agricultural labor. We have no evidence from the codes that this seventh day was designated as "the Sabbath" in the early period. However, by the time of Deuteronomy, the seventh day was definitely specified as the "Sabbath." It would appear that in the earlier codes the taboos of the natives were merely transferred to Yahwe worship and unconsciously accepted as natural. The fact that the institution is accepted as part of Yahwe worship in the early codes would indicate that by the ninth century the seventh day observance was long an established institution and needed no justification in the eyes of the authorities, at least. The Deuteronomic

reformation finds it necessary to endow the institution with special sanctity and interpreted it as a remembrance of the delivery from Egypt. It still retains the flavor of the old taboos but attempts to shake off that association by stressing benefits of the day of restraint, namely, the opportunity afforded for the underprivileged to rest from their labor. The evidence still leaves open the question as to whether or not the term "שַׁבָּת" originally applied to a monthly observance. From the reformation of Jehu in 842 to the Deuteronomic Reformation in 621 two centuries elapsed so that if the "Sabbath" had a full significance at that time, there was ample time for it to coalesce with the seventh day observance. The fact, however, that Deuteronomy finds it necessary to point out that the purpose of the Sabbath was to provide rest for the underprivileged indicates an attempt to suppress a different meaning of the institution. We may, therefore, safely assume that the fact of development in the Codes indicates a transition from a taboo character to a humanitarian character. It would also be safe to infer that this transition was brought ^{about} through prophetic influence.

D. JASTROW'S THEORY

Morris Jastrow would make a very close analogy in character between the original Hebrew Sabbath and the "um-nuh libbi" of ancient Babylonia.¹ His discussion offers a very significant link in the chain of evidence leading to an understanding of the nature of the Sabbath. We will therefore discuss

¹ Morris Jastrow, "The Original Character of the Hebrew Sabbath," American Journal of Theology, April 1898, p. 312 ff.

the Babylonian Sabbath even though its discussion will again be taken up under the chapter heading "Theories as to the Origin of the Sabbath."

Jastrow calls attention to the lexicographical tablet¹ which furnishes the equation

um nuh libbi = sa-bat-tum

i.e. "day of rest of the heart = Sabbath." The literal interpretation of this phrase does not mean physical rest but "the pacification of a deity's anger." Thus the um nuh libbi was a "day of propitiation, of pacification, of atonement, of reconciliation with a deity."

According to the Babylonian calendar, every day had a special significance so that each one was either "a favorable day," "evil day," or "um nuh libbi," i.e., "favorable-unfavorable." On the favorable day, the gods were in good humor and would be benevolent to human enterprise. On an evil day the gods were in poor humor and were disposed to antagonistic to human endeavor. Between these two was the "um nuh libbi" which was a day on which the gods might be either favorable or unfavorable. There was danger of the god being evil, but if the proper precaution is taken, the evil may be turned into good. Accordingly, the intercalated month of Elul designates the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th and 19th as "um nuh libbi" and prescribed that the king must exercise certain precautions upon this day in order, evidently, as the representative of the nation, to safeguard the

¹ II Rawlinson, plate 32, l. 16 a-b.

welfare of his subjects.¹

It is this propitiary character of certain days that is important for this particular phase of the discussion because it offers an apparent parallel to an ancient Hebrew institution of similar character.

Jastrow points out the prominent part that atonement plays in ancient Hebrew life. Not only are Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur chiefly propitiary in character but so also do Hoshanah Rabba as well as the minor festivals have a trace of the Atonement spirit. It would therefore be in order to seek a term in the Hebrew like the Babylonian Sabbatum.

This term, Jastrow contends, is the Hebrew / 1520 which is not equivalent to 720 at all. This term is a general term and not a specific term. It occurs only in H. and P. and there only ten times. It is associated with the New Year's Day, first and eighth day of the Harvest festival, Yom Kippur, the Sabbatical year and the Sabbath. Although all of these passages are late, this does not represent a late form of the word 720, inasmuch as the affirmative / belongs to the older strata of the language. The references represent, therefore, a reminiscence of a very early institution, as old, if not older than the Sabbath.

The common feature of these uses is not rest but austerity, and it appears significant to Jastrow that Passover upon which rest also is commanded, is not referred to as a / 1520. For example, New Year's day is called a / 1520

1 Ibid, pg. 312-318

"a memorial day," and "teruah," "a day of agitation," which becomes intelligible when one remembers that tradition maintains that Yahwe sits in judgement upon this day and determines the fate of mankind, much as upon the Babylonian New Year's day, Marduk assembles his associates in "the chamber of fate" to determine the lot of their subjects.¹ Upon Yom Kippur the decrees of ~~Haywe~~ are sealed.² The Harvest festival is propitiary in character because the attempt is made to secure the good will of ~~Haywe~~ for a good winter season. The term ~~אָרְבָּעָה~~ is coupled with this institution four times (Lev. 23:36, Num. 29:35, Nehem. 8:18, 2 Ch. 7:9).

According to Jastrow this term means a "day of restraint and not "assembly," as is often the translation given. This he bears out by pointing out that Joel 1:14 uses ~~אָרְבָּעָה~~ as a synonym for ~~עֲרֵבָה~~. He would also render Is. 1:13 ~~סִבְיָה~~ ~~אֲשֶׁר~~ ~~אָרְבָּעָה~~ ~~וְיָאָס~~ as "I will not tolerate iniquity and fasting," inasmuch as Isaiah had just denounced "new moon, sabbath and holy assembly." Jer. 9:1 ~~עֲרֵבָה~~ ~~אֲשֶׁר~~ ~~אָרְבָּעָה~~ is not to be translated as an "assembly of faithless ones" but as "closed corporation." Furthermore Nehem 8:18 declares that during the harvest festival, for seven days ~~אֲשֶׁר~~ was held while on the eighth an ~~אָרְבָּעָה~~, thus contrasting sharply the two different aspects of the festival.

Finally, the Sabbatical year is propitiary because of the character of the institution. Since the land belongs

1 Jastrow after Pognon "Inscriptions, Babylonian du Waddi Brissa, Pls. VIII and IX and Jensen, Kosmologie der Babylonier, pp. 84-86 and 238.

2 Jastrow, A.J.T. p. 335

to Yahwe, one must not be too greedy and one must therefore set aside a certain part of the produce as his share. One must be careful not to offend him. Hence the year is שמיטה .

Accordingly, the שמיטה is the Hebrew equivalent of the Babylonian "um nuh libbi" and inasmuch as the term is applied to the Sabbath, it too, was an "um nuh libbi" day of propitiation, a favorable-unfavorable" day on which one was to be careful not to offend the deity. This would explain why the Sabbath was so easily adapted to the Deuteronomic interpretation. Inasmuch as the Sabbath was a day of propitiation, it could be reinterpreted as a memorial of the occasion when an unfavorable day was turned to a favorable day by smearing blood upon the thresholds. Thus both the association between שמיטה and שבת are explained.¹

E. SUMMARY

We observe, therefore, that from the attitude of the prophets, there must have been something about the Sabbath institution which suggested essentially Canaanitish characteristics. We have seen that the Sabbath must have been a very important institution in the life of the folk. The codes indicate there was a seventh day observance very early and that it definitely was called "the Sabbath" by the time of the Deuteronomic reformation. They indicate further that this seventh day observance was first a taboo against agricultural work and that this taboo was extended to include all sort of

1 Jastrow, "Original Character of the Sabbath."

work as the culture of the nation progressed. Furthermore, they show that this taboo character softened and was replaced by a humanitarian motive. Finally we have indicated that the Sabbath was one of the evil days of ancient Israel. For further indication of the character of the Sabbath in ancient Israel, we will wait until after a discussion of the "Theories as to the Origin of the Sabbath."

IV. THEORIES AS TO THE ORIGIN OF THE SABBATH

As has been indicated, there is very little secure evidence concerning the early character of the Sabbath. Accordingly, many theories have arisen, each with more or less justification.

A. SABBATH AND SATURN

It has been contended that the Sabbath is derived from the worship of the planet Saturn.¹ This theory does not hold because the Hebrews indicated their days by ordinal numbers and did not name them. Secondly, Saturn's day was the first day of the week while the Sabbath was the last. Moreover, the Hebrews and other Oriental peoples did not worship Saturn as a god or observe a festival in its honor. It was only in a comparatively late period that the Sabbath was associated with Saturn.² Besides as Hehn points out³ the Bible does not know of planets ruling the week. The Old Testament has a naive view of astrology and the two references which mention the planets are uncertain (Is. 14:2, Amos 5:26).

B. BABYLONIAN ORIGIN

The resemblance between certain elements of the

1 Webster, after F. Baur, "Der Hebraische Sabbat and die Nationalfeste des mosaischen Cultus." Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie, 1832, III pp. 145 sqq. A. Kuenen, "The Religion of Israel," London 1873, I pp. 262 sqq.

2 Farbridge, "Biblical and Semitic Symbols," p. 134. Hutton Webster, "Rest Days," pp. 243-4.

3 "Der Israel Sabbat", pp. 29-30.

Hebrew Sabbath and the provisions in the Rawlinson tablet has given rise to the theory of the origin of the Sabbath in Babylonia. An analysis, however, indicates that in addition to other positive factors, such as the antiquity and the agricultural aspects of the Sabbath which indicate its Canaanitish origin, there are certain marked differences between the Babylonian Sabbath and the Hebrew Sabbath that make it unlikely that one was a borrowing of the other, although it does permit the possibility of a common origin.

The calendar of Elul II provide for certain observances upon the five days specified as "um nuh libbi." They are as follows:

"An evil day. The shepherd of great peoples shall not eat flesh cooked upon the coals, or bread of the oven. The garment of his body he shall not change, he shall not put on clean (garments). He shall not bring an offering. The king shall not ride in his chariot. He shall not speak as a ruler (?). The priest shall not give a decision in the secret place. The physician shall not lay his hand upon a patient. To issue a malediction it (the day) is not suitable. At night the king shall bring^a gift before Marduk and Ishtar he shall offer a sacrifice. The lifting up of his hands will then be pleasing to god."

This table of rules, it will be noticed, apply only to the king, the priest and the physician. They do not refer to the common people. They are wholly propitiary in character. They represent the conception that the king is responsible for the welfare of the entire people. Webster ventures to suggest that even though these restrictions applied only to the king and his officials, they may in reality have been relics of an institution that formerly applied to the whole people and were now relegated to only the official circles.¹ He presents no

¹ Webster, p. 234.

proof for this assertion, however.

The Hebrew Sabbath, however, applied to every one. The Hebrew week was continuous while the Babylonian appeared to follow the moon. The Hebrew week was used as a chronological unit while the Babylonian week was not. As Webster points out, these facts indicate that the Hebrew Sabbath could not have been taken over without change.¹ This holds, of course, only if we assume that the Sabbath was always identified with the seventh day observance, then the seventh day observance could not have been so acquired. However, it is possible that before there was a continuous week, the seventh day observance followed the lunar scheme, being observed the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth of the month while the days between the twenty-eighth and the new moon were blank.² In that case, the two institutions may have had a common origin in remote antiquity, but not during the Hebraic settlement in Canaan.

C. LUNAR THEORIES

One of the most attractive theories of all is the theory that the Sabbath originated out of the observance of the phases of the moon. The length of lunation of the moon is about twenty-nine and one-half days. Accordingly, seven days would be about one-quarter of the moon and would suggest the phases of the moon. Thus the week as a seven day period arises. Incidentally, this theory would also attempt

1 Webster, pg. 254

2 I am indebted to Dr. Morgenstern for this suggestion.

to account for the apparent symbolism of the number seven.¹

This contention is supported by the very well known part that the movements of the moon play in the life of primitive and semi-primitive peoples. Just as a purely agricultural community is profoundly affected by the behavior of the sun, so a nomadic people is impressed by the moon. The first phenomenon is known to have developed sun-worship, the second, moon worship.² A nomadic people used the moon as a means to calculate time.³ Because of the heat during the day, nomads in warm climate travel by night and the moon thus becomes their guide.⁴ Even such late passages as Gen. 1:14 and Ps. 104:19 speaks of the moon as having been created *לְמַעַן יִשְׁרָאֵל*. Farbridge points out that not only did the moon figure in measuring the seasons, but it also was supposed to have had a direct influence upon human welfare, controlling health and disease, and wind and storm.⁵ It was also supposed to have had an influence upon growth and decline, on menstruation and delivery.⁶

Webster reports that not only among people of lower culture but also among people of higher culture, the time of

1 Jastrow, "Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions," pp. 170 ff. Farbridge, "Biblical and Semitic Symbolism" p. 135. Hehn, "SiebenZahl und Sabbat" pp. 17 ff.

2 Jastrow, "Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions," p. 142.

3 Ibid, p. 142. Webster, p. 173.

4 Jastrow, "Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions," p. 142.

5 Farbridge, "Biblical and Semitic Symbolism," p. 135.

6 Hehn, "Siebenzahl und Sabbat," p. 61

the full moon, new moon and sometimes the half-moons is a time of restriction and abstinence. Sometimes, the moon is associated with a god, but other instances of primitive conditions indicates that this is not necessarily so. There may be lunar taboos without their association with a deity. The fact that the moon appears to rise from the dead, and that it assumes different shapes attracts the natural curiosity of the folk and invests it with significance. "The phases of the moon thus come to be considered critical times and to be marked not only by religious exercises but also by fasting and cessation of the customary occupations."¹ Furthermore, Webster observes, the moon is used by most shepherd tribes to reckon time. In order to insure themselves for the best breed of domestic animals, it was necessary to calculate the various periods of gestation and the proper times of breeding. The moon therefore was a convenient instrument to guide the measurement of time. This fact would thus encourage the formation of a lunar calendar.²

The above facts admirably would account for the origin of the week. Proceeding on this theory, in order to understand the ominous character of the seventh day, however, we must seek for an explanation in the fact that the phase of the moon was a period of transition. Jastrow points out that periods of transition attract attention, and for that reason

1 Webster, p. 143

2 Ibid, p. 176.

it is not to be taken as accidental that the chief festivals of all religion take place at the time of transition of one season to another. The mid-winter festival, the Hanukah festival, the Saturnalia of Rome, the Yule-tide of the Teutons, and Christmas, which all occur near the winter solstice. So do most of the other religious festivals which become rationalized by association with great events and great personalities. "By the same process the 'transition' periods in the life of the individual--birth, puberty, marriage, and death--become the occasion for the official or unofficial observances and ceremonies that have their modern representatives in baptism (or in some other rite of initiation such as circumcision), confirmation, the marriage ceremony, and funeral rites of Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism."¹

This fact of transition brings about a certain element of uncertainty. The transition calls attention to the passing of the old situation and centers the attention and the apprehensions upon the mysteries of the unknown new. Sometimes this apprehension takes the form of a disguised jollity as though the attempt is being made to insure the character of the future by a sort of sympathetic magic.² It can thus be seen that the phases of the moon might thus become periods that are fraught with danger and thus result in giving the phases of the moon an atonement character. Since the day would

1 Jastrow, "Hebrew and Babylonian Sabbath," p. 146

2 Ibid, p. 147.

be considered a dangerous one, precautions would be taken against arousing the wrath of powers that might put human enterprise to nought. The day would thus become a , comparable to the Babylonian "um nuh libbi."

This theory gathers force when it is coupled with the theory that the Sabbath was originally the full moon day. Perhaps the most sweeping of these is that of Meinhold² who argues that until the time of Ezekiel the "Sabbath" did not refer to the seventh day observance but to the full moon. He bases his conclusions, however, upon the assumption that the passages in the Codes referring to the seventh day are all exilic and that the *שבת* was a joyous assembly. In the discussion upon the Codes we have shown that the seventh day laws is an old one. The translation of *שבת* as a "solemn assembly," also appears to be the more plausible one for reasons that have been pointed out in the discussion upon Jastrow's theory. The line of reasoning of Meinhold, therefore, appears to be fallacious. However, this does not preclude the general assumption that in a remoter period than the records of the Hebrews reveal, the full moon was identified with the Sabbath.

In the astrological observations of the Babylonians, there were three periods which were particularly significant, the new moon, the full moon and the disappearance of the moon at the end of the month. Before there were exact calculations, at the end of the month there was particular trepidation lest

1 Meinhold, "Sabbat und Woche," pp. 1-13

the moon do not reappear as is evidenced by the myths which attributed the disappearance of the moon to its being swallowed up by a dragon. These facts are made emphatic by the fact that even today the new moon is hailed with joy, shouting and dancing and clapping of hands by the nomadic Arabian tribes.¹ The propitiary character of the days between the disappearance and the new moon is reflected in the prayer for the new moon which is still recited in the Jewish ritual.

"Thou hast given New Moons to Thy people, as a time of forgiveness in all of these ages, when they brought before Thee acceptable sacrifice and goats for the sin-offering to atone for them; may this be a memorial for them, and the saving to their souls from the adversary."²

The full moon becomes second in significance because it marks the climax of the increasing power of the moon. Because of their inaccurate facilities for calculations the Babylonian astronomers often miscalculated the time of the appearance so that when this happened an ominous significance was attached to that fact. The day, therefore, to the Babylonians, became an "um nuh libbi." Jastrow admits that there are no records of pacification ceremonies among the Babylonians for the fifteenth day as such but he is sure that they existed.³

Jastrow is sure that the original Hebrew Sabbath was not only an "um nuh libbi" or a /'a'w , to use the Hebrew term, but that it was specifically the full moon day.

1 Jastrow, p. 148.

2 According to Dembitz, p. 152. "Jewish Ceremonies in Synagogue and Home."

3 Jastrow, pp. 147-9

As a proof he cites the coupling of "new moon" and "Sabbath" in the Biblical literature. Particularly does he call attention to the incident related in II Kings 4:23.¹ He would interpret Lev. 23:15 as referring to the full moon,² and belonging to an old strata of the Bible and reflecting a situation when the Sabbath still had a full-moon character. The fact that the spring festival upon the fifteenth of the month, appears significant inasmuch as it is associated with the Exodus from Egypt, but in reality was originally a spring agricultural festival. Likewise the fall harvest festival which also fell on the fifteenth was endowed with the rationalization of a reminiscence of a residence in the wilderness while in reality it was merely the natural outgrowth of the habit of people to live out in the fields during the harvest season. Inasmuch as harvest times and the ripening of the wheat cannot be narrowed down to a fixed date, the selection of the fifteenth appears to be due to the propitiary character attributed to it. This fifteenth day, then, was the "Sabbath."³

Although, for reasons mentioned in the discussion on "The Character of the Sabbath," the passage in II Kings 4:23 appears to be incapable of a clear interpretation, yet the rest of Jastrow's discussion appears pertinent. It would appear strange that the Hebrews who certainly regarded the moon with some significance as is demonstrated by their New

1 Jastrow, pp. 155-6.

2 Jastrow, "The Morrow After the Sabbath," American Journal of Semitic Literature, vol. 29, No. 3.

3 Jastrow, pp. 154-64.

Moon observances, should have not attached some significance to the full moon.

According to C. W. H. Jones¹ the "shabbattu" was only on the fifteenth day of the month and referred to the rest of the moon, i.e. the full moon. He maintains that we cannot conclude that the other months of the year had "um nuh libbi" days as did the intercalated Ellul, inasmuch as the "nubattu" days, the "evil" days fell on the 3rd, 17th, and 16th day of the intercalated Ellul and yet in another month the 4th is specified.

However that may be, the interpretation of sabbatu as "rest of the moon" suggests a parallel. The Babylonian creation story declares:

"Nannaru (the moon) he caused to shine, ruling the night
He set them as a creature of the night, to make known
the days
Monthly, unfailing, he provided him with a tiara.
At the beginning of the month then, appearing in the land,
The horns shine forth to make known the seasons
On the seventh day the tiara perfecting
A sabbath (sa) pattu shalt thou then encounter mid-(month)ly.² /

Clay points out³ that the "Shabattum" is a synonym for "gamaru," "to complete, to fulfill, to bring to end, to destroy." "Gamaru" is thus very similar in meaning to the root. 𒂗𒍪𒍪. The fact that there is no root in the Assyrian from which "Shabattum" might come would tend to indicate that

1 British Encyclopedia, Vol. 23, p. 961.

2 Webster, in E. R. E., vol. 10, p. 889.

3 Clay, Babylonian Texts, vol. I, pp. 78-9.

the word was of West Semitic origin.¹

The Sabbath as the fifteenth day of the month does not necessarily have to be thought of as of Babylonian origin. The word שבת may be derived from the idea that the moon "rests" upon the fifteenth day, or that its evolution is "completed" or that it has "ceased" to grow. It would thus be capable of distinctly ^{west} Semitic origin. The Sabbath as full moon could have originated either during the nomadic period of Israel's existence or would have been taken over from a similar institution in Canaan. In either case at a certain period it merged with the seventh day observance and the term שבת was applied to the latter. However, even though the full moon might be taken from a nomadic period, although appears certain that the seventh day observance did not.

As opposed to the theory that the Sabbath is of nomadic origin we have some very significant facts. The regulations found in the Codes regarding the observance of the Sabbath appear in context which indicates that the concern is agricultural rather than nomadic. A day of rest is practical in the field but in the open desert one must lead the flocks to the pasture and to water. And since herding as the chief occupation is the chief concern of nomads, it appears unlikely that they would put taboos of work upon themselves which would interfere with their livelihood. Religious practices are at bottom designed to contribute to the happiness of its observants. Such provisions could hardly be beneficent.

1 Clay, p. 78

Besides, there are references in the earlier literature to indicate either ignorance or indifference to the Sabbath. The record records that Solomon had a feast of 14 days with no indication that a Sabbath was observed. (I Kings 8:65). The early records of Judges and others do not mention the Sabbath, a fact which becomes important because had the institution existed, they would have felt obliged to exercise care in fighting on the Sabbath. Joshua never relates that Jericho was taken on the seventh day (Josh. 6). Of course, it may be pointed out that the Joshua story is very late in composition but it evidently reflects an early occurrence without any recollection of the Sabbath. At least, this can be said with impunity, to the author of the book, it did not appear out of place to perform the usual or imagined military procedures upon the Sabbath.

We can with safety, therefore, only entertain the following possibilities. The Hebrews of the desert must have celebrated a New Moon observance of some kind. The likelihood^e is that they also observed the appearance of the Full Moon. It is possible that the designation of this full moon day was "Sabbath" until some time during the settlement when it became associated with the observance of the seventh day as a day of rest.

There is this objection, however, the term "Sabbath" means a day of cessation from labor and it could therefore as easily be applied to any other taboo day, like the New Moon, as the Sabbath. We can account for this special use only if

we remember that the new moon was of far greater significance than the full moon. The full moon might mark a period of concern because of the anticipated waning of the moon. The period before the new moon would be a period of great fear and trepidation lest the moon does not reappear. It would therefore loom much larger in the importance of the folk than the full moon. The full moon is easily recognisable by its bright luster. The New moon might be delayed a day in reappearing or be hidden by clouds and cause concern. It is possible therefore that the distinguishing feature of the full moon was merely a cessation from some sort of activity, while the new moon had many taboos and ceremonies connected with it. The full moon could therefore become to be designated by the single feature which characterized it. The new moon could therefore have been considered a Sabbath and designated by the fact that it marks the new moon, while the full moon could merely have passed from the stage where it was called a Sabbath to where it was designated as the Sabbath.

We can venture another speculation where there is so little evidence upon which to base a theory from the etymological derivation of the word. The root אָמַם has the double meaning of "cessation" and "completion." The nomads watching the behavior of the moon could have thought of the full moon as having ceased its development, completed its growth, or whatever they considered the change of the moon to be. The full moon would thus be a day of "completion or cessation" as attitude might take on. This would readily account for its easy transition to a seventh day observance, since

the number "seven" also had the connotation of "completion." The institution could thus glide easily into the Canaanitish one.

This conjecture takes on substance when we consider that there is apparently no technical name in Hebrew to designate the full moon although the fifteenth of the month is the occasion for many observances. If the term "Shabbath" originally meant the fifteenth of the month, then we can understand why there is the absence. It might be that the term *שַׁבָּת* originally meant the "full moon" just as the term *מוֹצָיִם* meant the new moon.¹ In this case the full moon theory of the origin of the "Sabbath" would be weakened but not completely invalidated inasmuch as the development might represent different migrations.

However, whatever taboos the desert institution may have possessed, it could not have possessed to any but a small extent the characteristics that distinguish the seventh day observance. If the term *שַׁבָּת*, if it existed, was used to designate the full moon, or even if the term was used to cover a taboo day, if it existed, at the quarter of the moon, the taboos of the desert could have been very few and restricted to a few prohibitions. A sabbath corresponding with the rigid observance implied by Amos' utterance could not have existed under nomadic conditions. We will therefore look elsewhere for the forces producing that institution.

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Morgenstern for this suggestion.

VI. THE NUMBER SEVEN AND THE SABBATH

The frequency with which the number seven is found in Biblical literature has attracted the attention of scholars with the resulting conclusion that its occurrence for the most part is not incidental but has special significance as a word with a symbolic meaning. The number seven constantly recurs in references pertaining to periods of time. The Feast of Booths and the Matzoth Festival, are each of seven days duration. The Feast of Weeks is calculated to occur seven weeks after Passover. Every seventh year is a Sabbatical year and the year of the Jubilee is observed after seven times seven years. Not only on the fixed calendar but also in the fixing of special feasts such as that connected with the dedication of the Temple, seven days is the unit (I. K. 8:65, II Ch. 7:8, Esther 1:5). Periods of uncleanness are often of seven day duration (Lev. 15:13 ff., 12:2, 13:1-46, 14:38; Num. 19:11 ff., 31:19; Ezek. 44:26). Periods of mourning are also reckoned in units of seven days (Gen. 50:10, I Sam. 31:13, I Ch. 10:12, Job 2:13, Dan. 10:2.3). Many parallels are found for this in other Semitic sources.¹

Not only does the number seven play a prominent part in periods of time, but it is very prominent in magical ceremonies, both in Hebraic² and Babylonian practice.³ In

1 Hehn, "Siebenzahl und Sabbat," p. 42.

2 Lev. 14:7; II. K. 5:10, 14; I. K. 18:43-44.

3 Hehn, *ibid*, p. 36. Farbridge, "Studies in Biblical or Semitic Symbolism," pp. 125-6.

the Hebrew ritual, the number seven occurs very often in connection with the paraphernalia of worship and its procedure¹ and its occurrence is paralleled by Babylonian and Assyrian practices.²

It is observed that the number seven is used sometimes in a very indefinite sense. Sometimes it is used as a round number to indicate a moderately large quantity.³ The majority of cases it occurs, however, with the meaning of totality, wholeness, completeness, such as the "sevenfold" vengeance, meaning "extreme" vengeance (Gen. 4:15), the "sevenfold" brightness of the sun (Is. 30:26), in the sense of "perfect" brightness, "sevenfold" restoration of a theft, (Proverbs 6:37) as "complete" restoration, etc. A parallel is offered by the Sumerian tablet which reads VII = kis-sa-tu (totality, completeness).⁴ It is suggested that since seven was not originally a numeral,⁵ the word meant satiety at first and was then used as a numeral.⁶ The use of seven in the ritual as a holy number may also have been due to its significance as

1 Regner, "Symbolism of the Number Seven," p. 8.

2 Hehn, "Siebenzahl und Sabbat," p. 38. Farbridge, 124 and 130.

3 Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. III, p. 562. Regner, Ibid, p. 11.

4 Farbridge, p. 137.

5 Lagarde.

6 Regner, Ibid. p. 14.

a whole number. The number is thus used to indicate completeness.¹

Several theories have been advanced to explain the reason for the symbolic character of the number seven. A brief examination of these may be helpful. The first theory contends that it is due to association of ideas and speculation regarding the seven planets. This is the view which would trace the origin of the week to such observations. This theory is rejected as has already been indicated because it assumes a very close familiarity with the behavior of the heavenly bodies which can not be attributed to a period in the development of the folk so primitive as that in which the number seven originated.² Besides in Babylonian religion, the sun and moon alone were primary deities and among the Hebrews, astral religion appeared to play a small part as is evidenced by the fact that the Hebrews displayed a very imperfect knowledge of the planets. The names of the planets were attached to the days of the week at a much later period in history. This theory furthermore does not explain the significance of the symbolic character of seven in purification, magic and cult procedures.³

Some would connect the number seven with the Pleiades. Since it is noted that there are seven evil demons found in Babylonian literature, it is conjectured that these

1 Regner, Ibid, p. 14.

2 Cf. Webster, p. 243.

3 Regner, Ibid, p. 24.

are the personification of the seven stars of the Pleiades.¹

Grimme especially finds the root מלח to refer to the Pleiades although he admits that the three references to מלח the Hebrew word for Pleiades (Amos. 5:8, Job. 9:9, 38:31), refer to them simply as a natural phenomenon of the Heavens. Beer-Sheba would thus become the "well of the Pleiades," and מלח becomes the "festival of the Pleiades." The objections to this theory is that it is not certain that it is valid to connect the seven evil demons of Babylonia with the Pleiades. The connection of Pleiades with מלח is highly insecure since all of the references can better be explained on other grounds² as having references to seven other things. Even if a connection could be made between the number seven and the Pleiades, there would still have to be the explanation of how that connection came about.³

Another theory traces the origin of the symbolic character of the number seven in the fact that seven is approximate period of each phase of the moon, which would account for the week and the use of the number. This theory we have already discussed as far as its reference to the Sabbath is concerned. The chief objections to this theory lie in the fact that it does not account for the symbolic use of the

^c
1 Shradler KAT 3rd edition by Z & W, p. 459. Grimme, Hubert: "Das Israelitische Pfingstfest," p. 30.

2 Robertson Smith, "Lectures on the Religion of the Semites," and Moses Battenwieser, "The Prophets of Israel," p. 213, note 2. Webster, p. 225.

3 Regner, Ibid, p. 225.

number in magic and ritual.¹ As far as the Sabbath is concerned, while it does adequately explain the significance of a seventh day observance, it does not sufficiently explain the ominous character of the Sabbath and for that reason can be advanced as only a partial explanation of the Sabbath. Had the desert Sabbath played a very vital part in the lives of the pre-Canaanitish Hebrew there would certainly have been some very definite recollections of that fact recorded somewhere.

Some other theories would attribute the number seven to multiples of four and three or to the combinations of six and one, neither of which however is applicable to Semitic conditions.² Accordingly none of the above theories appear wholly acceptable.³

However, the key to the symbolism of the number seven is indicated by an examination of its character as demonstrated in its occurrence. It is noted that among primitive Semites today there is a very evident attempt to avoid references to the number seven which is accomplished by the use of circumlocution and euphemism.⁴ Although it is objected that seven is merely a number meaning totality,⁵ still its use in magic and ritual can be explained only upon that basis.⁶

1 Regner, Ibid. p. 33.

2 Webster, pp. 229-230 and 210-211. J.E. article on "Numbers" vol. 9, p. 349. Brinton, S.C., "Origin of Sacred Numbers," in American Anthropologist, 1894, VII, pg. 171

3 Regner, p. 34.

4 Morgenster, J. MS. chapter on "Number Seven."

5 Webster, pl 230.

6 Regner, p. 39.

The same tendency is revealed in ancient Babylonian records where seven evil spirits are referred to and only six mentioned.¹ The Bible mentions seven pre-Israelitish nations of Palestine but only names six except in three passages (Deut. 7:1, Josh. 3:10, 24:11). These coupled with the fact already noted that Sabbath is regarded as an evil day, indicates that the original character of the number seven is that of an evil number. Of special significance is Canaan's observation that the seventh day of an illness is a critical one.² Thus having observed that the number seven is unlucky, an explanation of the reasons for that fact will also cover the institution of the Sabbath.

The reason for the unlucky character of the number seven is sought in the animistic notions of primitive peoples. Primitive man projected personality which took the form of deity into natural objects, trees, rocks and animals. These deities were the causes for all natural occurrences. These facts are too well known to require elaboration. Accordingly these spirits could interfere with the activities of men for good or evil. Some of these spirits become differentiated in function so that some become specifically good and others correspondingly evil.

These demons were particularly active at birth, marriage, death and similar occasions. On these occasions their

1 Morgenstern, "Doctrine of Sin in Babylonian Religion, p. 11.

2 Canaan, T., "Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel, p. 95.

power could last for units of seven days. On the seventh day they were particularly active and if that day passed without mishap, the crisis was over. The Jewish customs of reciting Psalms on the evening before circumcision is reminiscent of this period. Since the demons would make one last effort to bring about harm to the child, special measures were taken to counteract this influence.¹ According to Dr. Lauterbach, the Jewish observances preceding a wedding for one week are due to a fear of demons.² The same is true of the customs surrounding mourning rites. Black dress deceives the demons into believing that the mourner is one of them, and taking a different route after the funeral confuses them.³ The period of intense mourning is seven days.⁴ No joyful Psalms are sung during this period.⁵ The antiquity of the custom is testified by the fact that Gen. 50:10, Joseph observed a seven day period of mourning for his father. It is interesting to note that this seven day period in later times could be interrupted by the Sabbath and stopped by the Three Festivals after three days after the funeral.⁶ By this time the Sabbath

1 From a lecture by Dr. Lauterbach.

2 J.Z. Lauterbach, "The Ceremony of Breaking a Glass at Weddings," H.U.C.A. vol II, pp. 355 ff.

3 From a lecture by Dr. Lauterbach.

4 Dembitz, p. 329.

5 Ibid, pl 330.

6 Dembitz, p. 331 on the basis of Berochoth 3:1 and Moed Katan 3:5.

had lost its somber character and acted as a charmed day when the demons were helpless, in other words the ancient, original character had been reversed by the rabbis. The Three festivals were even more potent since they could terminate the period of mourning.

When we remember that demons were considered responsible for illness, the seven day period for the course of leprosy becomes intelligible (Lev. 13). On the seventh day the climax took place and either the patient or the demon triumphed. For the same reason purification services of an individual contaminated by contact with birth, issue, or evil spirits were terminated upon the seventh day. Thus when in order to make the altar or priest consecrated, his purity must be assured, a seven day purification had to be gone through in order to give the demons an opportunity to depart.¹

Thus it is very definite that the number seven is a symbolic number denoting evil as is indicated in the above illustrations. Whatever may have been the original association of ideas that led to this conviction is immaterial. The important thing is that this idea prevailed at a very early period in the history of the Palestinian peoples and that it very profoundly controlled their conduct. It is obvious that such an idea once established would act as a very definite thought pattern in the mind of a folk. It may be expected to permeate every institution that is vital to its conduct.

¹Regner, p. 45.

It will therefore be of very special significance to observe this trend of thought illustrated in the institution of the observance of the seventh day as a day of cessation from labor.

Now then, it has been pointed out in the chapter upon the "Character of the Hebrew Sabbath" that it was in Hebrew tradition an evil day. The similarity, then, between the evil character of the Sabbath and the evil character of seven day periods is striking. We may safely look for a similar origin.

If we grant the thought pattern described in the preceding chapter, it becomes immediately clear how the seventh day should become a taboo day. It would be the most natural thing for the same fear of demons during a seventh day of an illness to be manifested upon the seventh day. This does not preclude the fear of demons the rest of the week. But upon the seventh day the demons would be especially active and therefore most likely to cause damage. It would be safe therefore to do as little work as possible. It should be observed that nowhere is there a prohibition against the labor of caring for the domestic animals. But it is evidently not considered wise to use them for any productive labor. This would readily explain why the Sabbath was rigidly observed in early times and only laxly observed in later times. In early times when the concern was the attempt to avoid demons, no one would risk their malice. However, when the motive is humanitarian and pious, the temptation to laxity was greater upon the part of the partly sophisticated. Fear is a powerful deterrent

but respect for an institution must be deeply ingrained before men respect it for itself.

Such an explanation of the Sabbath is absolutely independent of the origin of the week. It appears more logical that the seven day method of reckoning time should first be established and that the intense taboo attached to it should then follow. A definite point of departure should first be established from which a primitive folk could reckon time. The lunar theory or any which must provide this as a theory of the origin of the Sabbath. It may be that the taboos attached to the observance of the phases of the moon become intensified by the observances associated with the mystic character of the number seven.

Such a theory would also not conflict with the theory that the term "Sabbath" referred originally to the full moon. If this theory is true, then the observances of the seventh day became identified in some way with those of the full moon and coalesced at some crucial period of sudden transition. Inasmuch as the original commandment was undoubtedly 2
2
 that during the period of revision of the Codes when the folk were uprooted from their old customs and accepting comparatively new customs for ancient ones, that this reformation should be able to be accomplished. This period witnessed an attempt to do away with lunar observances and for that reason it would be a natural thing to declare the seventh day 2
 and have the two terms identified.

The origin of the Sabbath from the symbolic character of seven, therefore explains first why Sabbath was a somber day, it separates it from the origin of the week, and it permits the possibility of the term "Sabbath" having originally been identified with the full moon. It explains the indifference of the prophets and the change in its character through its various developments.

VII. THE SABBATH DURING THE EXILE

We have seen in the previous chapters how the Sabbath developed from its original taboo character to that of a humanitarian institution designed to provide an opportunity for the underprivileged to relax from the hardships of life. Before the exile, however, the Sabbath was just one of the many institutions which characterized Yahwe worship. The indications are that it was not endowed with particular significance in the cult. Its existence owed its origin to natural social forces and its development was in line with but incidental to the general tendencies of that particular society.

We discover that the disruption of the Hebrew state and its coincident disorganization of the religious worship, the Hebrew exiles in Babylon found themselves in an environment where many of their folk-ways were out of place. There was a natural temptation to fall in line with the practices and customs of the Babylonian environment.¹ The problem of the conscientious devotees of Yahwe was to make Yahwe worship significant in this foreign environment. If the people was to be preserved it must adopt some mode of action which would make it distinct and set it off from the rest of the folk.

Before the destruction of the state, the Temple served as the center of the cult. One could show his loyalty to Yahwe by bringing sacrifices at the approved altars, in

1 Kittel, "Great Men and Movements in Israel," p. 370.

the approved manner. In Babylon, however, there was no way of worshipping Yahwe according to the old method. From the time of the Deuteronomic Reformation, all other sanctuaries but that at Jerusalem were considered unfit. How much more, then, the sanctuaries of a strange land. It was inevitable, therefore, that institutions which had in the past been but incidental should now be seized upon to serve as essential institutions of the cult. These institutions would have to be such as could be performed anywhere and which would set off the Jewish community from that of its neighbors.

Two institutions, therefore, were especially adapted to serve this function, circumcision and the "Sabbath."

Before the exile, the circumcision had not played a particularly great part in the minds of Yahwe worshippers and the Sabbath had merely become a humanitarian institution, but now both of these institutions become central and to disregard them is defilement.¹ We can readily see how well such institutions would serve the purpose desired.

The Sabbath, therefore, becomes imbedded into the very foundations of the Universe. "The Lord blessed and sanctified the seventh day, because upon it He rested from all of His work" (Gen. 2:2). The Sabbaths (all of them, seventh day, Sabbatical year, etc.), are particularly dedicated to Yahwe and serve as a symbol of his consecration of Israel. "You shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that it is I

1 Smith, "Religion of Israel, pp. 230 ff. Ezek 16:23 ff.

Yahwe who consecrates you." (Ex. 31:13). For that reason the Sabbath becomes שבת to Israel. "You shall keep the Sabbath for it is sacred to you; every one who profanes it shall surely be put to death; whoever does any work therein shall be cut off from his people" (Ex. 31:14). That is why Moses ordered the execution of the man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).

Perhaps this is the best proof of all that the um nuh libbi day s of the Babylonians were not observed by the mass of the people. The purpose of the Sabbath regulations is so obviously in order set up distinctions between the loyal Yahwe worshippers and others, that it is inconceivable that the institution could have been borrowed from the Babylonians. The entire purpose of the institution would be nullified. However, it appears that although the Sabbath regulations were intended for all of the Israelites alike, yet a suggestion of the Babylonian institution appears. Perhaps this is accidental or perhaps in contemplating the reestablishment of the Hebrew state unconscious pride prevailed upon the legislators to imitate the institutions of their mighty conquerors. However, we observe that there are special duties of propitiary character for the head of the nation, which remind us strangely of the duties of the Babylonian king (Ezek. 45:17).

"It shall be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offering, the meal-offering, and the drink-offering, at the various festivals, the new moon, the sabbaths, and all the other festival seasons of the household of Israel-- at which he shall provide the sin-offering, the meal-offering, the burnt-offering, and the peace-offerings, to make atonement for the household of Israel."

It is in this light that we must understand such passages as Jer. 17:21 and Is. 56:6 which are obviously of exilic character. The alien and the eunuchs thus are admitted into the fold by observing the Sabbath which even becomes a condition of the acceptance of their sacrifices in the temple, which thus become secondary.

"The eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,
And choose the things that I delight in,
And hold fast to my covenant.--
To them will I give in my house and within my walls
A monument and a name better than sons and daughters:
I will give them an everlasting name
That shall not be cut off.
And the aliens who attach themselves to the Lord, to
minister to him,
To love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants,
From everyone who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it,
And holds fast to my covenant--
I will bring them to my holy mountains
And will make them joyful in my house of prayer;
Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be welcome upon my altar,
For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all
peoples."
(Is. 56:4-8)

Evidently it is intended that all peoples shall become Yahwe worshippers but they must accomplish this through identifying themselves with Israel and especially, by keeping those observances that make Israel distinct from the other nations. Jer. 17:21 indicates the same attitude. Jerusalem would become the center of worship for people far and wide if Israel kept the Sabbath but if not, then "will I kindle within its gates an unquenchable fire, which shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Lines like the above and particularly the last, indicate that the returned exiles had no easy task in forcing

their own rigid standards upon the people who had remained behind and to whom the Sabbath had not come to have the same significance as it did to those under the influence of the zealous and determined leaders of the community in Babylon. The people must have asked, why, if the Sabbath was ordained in the very foundations of the Universe, did not all of the nations observe them. To this Nehemiah^{iah} was forced to reply that He had made known His Sabbath only to Israel^{Israel} (Neh. 9:14). Nehemiah found it necessary to force the returned exiles to take an oath not to be tempted to desecrate the Sabbath by the laxity of the $\gamma\eta\tau\ \cdot\ \nu\mu$ (Neh. 10:32).

Neh. 13:15 indicates that Nehemiah had to take very drastic action in order to establish the Sabbath observances. Not only did he have "people of the earth" to contend with, but the leaders of the land were indifferent to the strict observance. This passage is, of course, obscure in meaning. It may be that only the foreigners desecrated the Sabbath,¹ but at any rate Nehemiah was forced to take measures to close the city gates in order that merchants should not be able to enter with their wares (Neh. 13:15 ff).

We thus see that as a result of the exile, the Sabbath from an institution that was merely of incidental importance was transformed to an institution of prime importance. The humanitarian aspects of the Deuteronomic influence were retained (Ex. 20:8 ff), but its covenant significance

1 Batten, "Ezra and Nehemiah," I.C.C. pp. 294-9.

was stressed. The Deuteronomic explanation of its origin as a symbol of the escape from Egypt was replaced with that as a remembrance of Yahwe's resting upon the second day. The ancient taboo character of the day was reintroduced in the form of rigid ritualistic requirements. The institution became a distinguishing mark of all true worshippers of Yahwe. There is the possibility that the Babylonian institution in which the king performed propitiary ceremonies for the nation was imitated in the provision requiring the head of the community to perform an atonement ceremony for the nation.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Because of its agricultural character, then, we must seek for the origin of the Sabbath as a seventh day abstinence from work in the Canaanitish environment. It was a taboo day associated with the symbolic character of the number seven. The seventh day accordingly was a day on which demons were most active and one on which evil demons could do the most damage.

There is a great probability that originally the term $\pi \text{ } \frac{2}{7} \text{ } \frac{11}{12}$ stood for the full moon, either for the agricultural inhabitants of Palestine or for the nomadic invaders or both, that this full moon also had a propitiary character and for that reason became identified with the seventh day as one of the taboo and later as THE taboo day. The probability is also open, although to a less extent that the nomadic invaders observed the phases of the moon as taboo days and that these taboo days became identified with the regular seventh day observance of the Canaanites.

The seventh day taboo day was taboo in relation to the Baalim of the land. At a very early period, however, the Hebrew invaders took over the calendar of the Canaanites¹ and with it the seventh day taboo day. However, as the institution became engrained into the life of the people, its Baalistic associations were transformed to Yahwistic association. The institution became one of the recognized forms of Yahwe worship.

¹ Morgenstern, "The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel," H.U.C.A. vol. I, pp. 13 ff.

This transformation did not take place without a protest however. The zealous Yahwe prophets expressed their contempt of the institution because of its Baalistic associations. The result was that the criticism of the institution brought about a re-evaluation. It was interpreted not as a day upon which one must rest because of fear of displeasing the deity, but in order to give the underprivileged a respite from their rigorous toil. Its propitiary character was associated with the fortunate escape from Egypt and the institution was declared a memorial of that significant event. Nevertheless, this reform was an incidental one and not considered vital.

However, during the exile, the problem presented itself to the leaders of the community of maintaining the separateness of the group. Since one could not perform the ordinary ritualistic procedures away from the sanctuary, substitutes had to be devised. The Sabbath along with the ceremony of circumcision provided this need. The Sabbath was interpreted as having been instituted into the very foundations of the Universe and revealed particularly to Israel as a symbol of his special favor for Israel. Projecting a newly formed conviction into the past, all of the calamities of the nations were attributed to the improper observance of Yahwe's day.

Accordingly, the Sabbath reverted to its old taboo character. However, because of the Deuteronomic influence, its humanitarian flavor remained in combination with the ritualistic stress to make it both a rest day for the refreshment of man and a day consecrated to Yahwe.