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RAIN CEREMONIES and KINDRED MAGICAL RITES

in

ANCIENT ISRAEL

Jacob J. Ogel

TABLE of CONTENTS

Introduction

Men, from the time that they led some manner of settled life, were made to see their complete dependence upon a favorable condition of nature. If their efforts for securing sustenance were to succeed, the co-operation of those forces that made the soil to yield and the sun to shine had to be secured. The ordinary activities that made up the life of the shepherd or husbandman were not enough; this they must have discovered early. Forces beyond those of their body, in the end, were the real arbitrators as to whether or not the food supply was to continue. And the assistance of these forces had to be enlisted; it was their most serious concern for their life depended on it. So they set to devising ways whereby this assistance might be assured.

An elaborate control over the weather was evolved and the ancient that could prove himself especially adept in the art of producing favorable weather enjoyed the highest regard. The method on which he operated was the magical control of nature The primitive science that he practiced was based on two principles, as Frazer sets them forth, homeopathic and contagious magic.(1) On the basis of the first principle "the magician infers that he can produce any effect that he desires by imitating it: from the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom it was once in contact". The "charms that are based on this law of similarity may be called Homeopathic magic, the charms based on the second, contagious magic". The law that like produces like was applied to all sorts of conditions that had to be brought under control. By the workings of this law, an enemy could be slain by destroying his effigy, a practice that was common to a large part of mankind(2) The same proceedure for overcoming a private enemy by

(1) Golden Bough, 3rd ed. vol.1, p.52ff

(2) An example of this is cited by Doutte (Magie et Religion p61) who quotes an old Arabic treatise on Magic. If one wanted to deprive a man of the use of a limb a waxen image oftimes was made and then the limb of the image was struck, corresponding to the limb of the man that was to be disabled. At the same moment, the human limb was paralyzed.

by doing violence to his image was raised from the realm of baneful black magic to the sphere of religion where it was employed to confuse and route demons.(1) In Babylonian incantations, we find a long list of evil spirits whose effigies were by the magicians, in the hope that as their images melted in the fire, so the fiends themselves would melt away. In Egypt the gods too practice magic and when Ra nightly fought off the fiendish hosts of Apepi, the priests at Thebes made magic to help him, destroying the waxen figures of the demon and his evil cohorts(2).

The use of magic as a control over the forces of nature is not confined to the backward, primitive peoples. The ancient art was practiced among people who had reached a level of culture where they should have been able to get along without it. But the method persists. It may be that the old ceremonies that simulate the action of natural forces serve only as an emotional outlet when people are distressed because of protracted drought and the like(3) It may be that the old belief persists that nature can be compelled to do men's bidding. Again, the rites may be remnants of old folkways, carried on through force of habit, long after the meaning of the rite has been lost sight of. Whatever the reason for this persistence may be, the fact that old magical rites continue is to be verified by the folk practices of many peoples that have passed out of the stage where magic was an explanation for natural phenomena.

The notion that the various processes of nature were subservient to the will of the thaumaturgist gave way to the sounder observation that man had little control over them, that he was at the mercy of the forces of nature, and that the old practice did not protect him from nature's vagaries. The magical control of the seasons was displaced or supplemented by a religious theory. But the difference between these mutually exclusive theories was not felt until quite late. For although men now attributed the annual cycle of change to corresponding changes in their deities, they still thought that by performing certain magical rites, they could aid the gods or hasten thier action. The ceremonies that that they observed for this purpose were in substance a dramatic representation of the natural processes that they sought

(1) M.Jastrow Religion of Babylon & Assyria pp 268,286
(2) Golden Bough vol.1, p67-68
(3) O.E.James Art."Rain" Hasting's Enc.

to facilitate, the same tenet that the magician followed. And as they now explained the fluctuations of growth and decay, of reproduction and dissolution by the marriage the death, and rebirth of the gods , the religious or rather the magical dramas turned in great measure on these themes. Yet these very practices that had a religious coloring, in the last analysis belong to the category of magical control. The element of prayer and sacrifice, employed to win the good-will of the god, was superimposed upon ceremonies that were once thought effective in themselves. But the older method for securing the co-operation of nature, the homeopathic charm, never lost caste completely. Perhaps the inconsistency in this behavior was not felt by the simpler man. As long as he managed to get what he wanted, he did not cavil overly much about the methods involved.

Thus a religious theory was blended with a magical practice. Indeed few religions have succeeded in wholly extricating themselves from the old trammels of magic. The same confusion of magic and religion was rife in ancient India and Egypt.(1) It has persisted among the backward classes in the countries of Western Europe. The Catholic priest in rural France is is supposed by the peasantry to be able to exert much the same sort of compulsions upon the Deity that the ancient Egyptian ascribed to his magician.(1) And similarly, we find that the same confusion in old Israel, where thewflourished magical practices of an obvious sort, only thinly veiled by an overlay of religious veneering. We meet with the people at a time when their culture had advanced beyond the primitive belief that man-- or certain gifted men-- could compel nature to do their bidding. That idea had slipped into the background. But it was not over. That the two different theories of nature and causality were never separated is indicated by the various rites that continued down to comparatively late times, rites whose only explanation is to be sought in their magical nature. And a good example of this superimposing of a religious idea upon the earlier magical practice is well illustrated by the methods they used for obtaining rain.

(1) Golden Bough vol.1 228,232. volvii intro.

We are familiar with the prayers for rain which figure in the litury of the synagogue. In the Amidah service, there are two insertions made, petitioning rain; there is the special prayer that is recited from the sixtieth day after the autumnal equinox until the Passover that is placed in the benediction ברך עלינו and there is also the "mentioning" of rain that forms part of the גבורות, beginning at Tabernacles. (1) These customs go back to the Palestinian residence, since the rainy season in that portion of the Orient extends approximately through this period. But these prayers were not the only recourse the people had when they sought rain. This custom of petitioning for rain, and invoking no other rite, is a religious ceremony and it does not fall within the province of this paper to discuss it. But along this, and anti-dating it, entirely different agencies were invoked, the success of which depended not so much on the mercy of the Deity but rather on the bending of the forces that governed rain-fall to the will of man. Certain customs, discussed in the Talmud in connection with the special services for bringing rain when it was overdue, have a slight coloring of the magical, though the religious is the predominant element. But at the beginning of the rainy season there existed a number of curious ceremonies in connection with the observance of Succoth . These rites were a regular part of the cult during the time of the Second Temple; it is probable that they existed before then. And these rites, it will be shown, are essentially magical in their nature. The religious veneer was superimposed on them too, but they are disguised only lightly. The law of similarity that the magician worked from, is very much in evidence throughout the peculiarr customs. The objects used too owed their employment to the same "law". And we want to discuss the nature of this service, its relation to the general folk-practices, especially those of the Near East, Arabia, North Africa, and the adjacent lands.

And alongside this more formal method for procuring rain, we have records of certain popular heroes who enjoyed a degree of prestige because they could control the fall of rain in times of emergency. Their office was sought in times of drought, they supplimented the more organized cult of the Temple in the bringing of rain

(1) Singer's Prayer Book (1922) p57; Abraham s Notes on the Prayerbook(1922) lxiii

after the Temple cult was established. Their labors began at a time earlier than the rites of the Yahweh Temple at Jerusalem. They seem to have been a regular part of the old folk life of the land.

This paper shall deal with these two phases of rain-making; the rain charms employed by various individuals at critical times of drought, and the ceremonies that obtained, certainly around the beginning of the common era(1), in the Temple of Jerusalem during the celebration of the Succoth.

The RAIN-MAKER

The Relation of the Deity to Rainfall

In the stage of culture in which the Biblical rain-makers are found, the idea that the supply of rain depends upon the God of the land is already firmly ingrained. The most complete legend that deals with the bringing of rain, the contest of Elijah and the priests of Baal, centers around this idea. They decide who is the Deity that tends to the district around Mt. Carmel, the border land between Israel and Phoenicia, on the basis of His power to give the fertilizing rain. The Arabs, similarly, see Allah as the giver of rain.(2) This was among the most useful of a Deity's functions since the livelihood of the people depends on a plentiful supply ofrain. In Bal.Taan. 2a, when the special keys of Heaven are discussed, the question is raised as to why there is no key for sustenance. The questioner is answered that rain and sustenance are the same thing. The importance of rain is evidenced from the things grouped with it, Birth and Resurrection. The benediction גבורות mentions the coming of rain in the same connection, the Babylonians saw in Marduk, these same powers, spoke of him as"the merciful one, with whom rests the power to restore life" and the "god who brings forth vegetation".(3)

(1) John vii
(2)Goldziher A.R.W. vol.xiii, 1910, p25
(3) J.Hochman Jerus. Temple Festivities p.87 The fact that these same attributes are associated with both Yahwen and Marduk may be due to a Babylonian influence whereby Marduk's powers were applied, out of protest, to their own Deity by the Yahweh worshippers.

The Biblical writers see in the giving of rain, God's blessing. The special virtue of Canaan that made it the land flowing with milk and honey was the fact that it did not need irrigation but drank the water as מטר השמים (Deutx:10-12), evidence that God cared for it throughout the year. And as long as people obeyed the commandments, i.e., were faithful to Yahweh, the יורה and the מלקוש would come in their proper seasons. The extreme punishment which this passage promises to those that stray into idolatry will be the witholding of rain, while the sign by which Yahweh shows His care for His people is the coming of rain at the proper season, thereby prospering the people. (Deut.xxviii:12)

In the prayer of Solomon, drought is regarded as a punishment for faithlessness to Yahweh (I Kgs. viii 35, II Chron. vi 26) sinfulness preventing rain and repentance inducing God to be merciful and restore the rainfall. The songs that the women sing in the Rain Mother processions of Arabia represent much the same theology, as regards the relation of Allah to the rainfall. They too thrust themselves upon his mercy when they need rain, the children talk of the blamelessness of their lives as a reason for deserving rain.

The prophets, time and again talk of the rain as Yahweh's special gift to the people, a proof that He cares for them. The giving of rain is His work; He is to be asked for it, and not the images and diviners. (Zech.x:1). The power of producing good harvests is Yahweh's, not Baal's (Hos.ii:10-11). When He witholds it, it is a sign of displeasure (Is.v:6); He may even give it to one city and not to another a sign that He is the one that controls prosperity, which is given only when Israel follows Him. (Am.iv:7).

The Time for Rain

The Biblical writings speak about rain in its proper time. Because Palestine is a semi-tropical country it can expect something of a definite rainy season. The period extends between the fall and spring equinoxes, the summer being practically rainless. If rain should fall during the summer, in early times it was regarded as a sign of punishment. (I Sam. 12) When the dry season has reached its close, the country is practically sterile. In the highlands of Moab, it is common for the heavy

storms to fall at the beginning of October, although Jaussen reports that in the year 1905, he witnessed a strong rainfall on Sept. 15, near the village of Na'our. The nomads call this rain"el-arif". (1) It is promise for the heavy rains of November. These heavier rain-falls occur from about the tenth of the month onward. Again, during the month of January, there is a rainy spell that keeps the ground moist until the end of February. The last rainfall of the year comes during the month of April. All the different types of rain are grouped together under the general title of "quarante de pluie" which extends from December until the 5th of February.

From this it would seem that the different rains succeed eachother with a strict regularity. The opposite is nearer the truth, the condition that impresses itself most on a visitor is the irregularity and the lightness of the rainfall.(2) The storms are violent and damaging. The rains furrow the ground and run off quickly, the soil does not hold much water. The picture in Deut. xxvii:12 is an idealization of the condition of the land.

The time for the rainy season, as it is reported by Rabbinic tradition, conforms fairly well to the dates given by Jaussen. Mishnah Taanith, in discussing the time for the prayer of גבורות גשמים would have this prayer begin on the last day of Succoth, the Shemini Azereth, according to the tradition of R.Joshua.(3) Since they had set down the principle אין שואלין את הגשמים אלא בזמן שהן יורדין, the rabbis regarded the festival of Succoth as about the time for the beginning of the autumnal rains. It was not wanted during the festival proper, it would have interfered with its celebration. If it did come down during this period, instead of being a blessing, it would have been regarded as an evil omen סימן קללה. The proper time for beginning the"mentioning" is at the Musof service, on the last day of Tabernacles and it was to continue till the first day of Passover. Thus the rainy season in Palestine

(1) Jaussen suggests that as the term has no meaning in Arabic, it may be derived from ערף, to break thru.
(2) Jaussen: Coutumes des Arabes au Pays de Moab p323-5
(3)M. Taan.i,1.
Note; The matter of "mentioning" and "asking" for rain caused a great deal of confusion since the two terms refer to different prayers. The phrase quoted above really applies to the טל ומטר prayer which was begun considerably later in the year. -- Malter. Talm. Taan.p.1, note 4

falls between these dates. As to the decision of later times for the beginning of this prayer, the tradition follows Rab, that the "mentioning" is included in the Musof service of the 21st of Nisan. (Taan. 5a top)

The rains were divided into two classes, the יורה and the מלקוש. The early rain was expected on the 3rd of Marheswan. It was due to fall on the 3rd, the 7th, and the 17th of the month, according to R.Meir. R.Judah states that it falls on the 7th, 17th, and the 23rd. R. Jose puts it still later, the 17th, the 23rd of Marheswan and the 1st of Nisan, and in his opinion special fast days ought not be instituted until Nisan 1 has passed since this was still the proper time for the early rain (M.Taan. i,3-4. Tal. Taan. 6a) The Law does not follow R.Jose. By the 17th of Marheswan the early rain is already overdue and the important members of the communities began the special fast days. When Nisan 1 had come and gone and no rain had fallen , the entire communities had to fast.

Thus the limit for the beginning of the rainy season is properly during the middle of the month of Marheswan. The first rain is then due; if it is delayed beyond that affairs take on the appearance of public calamity, entailing a series of special fasts. The period of rain closes in the month of Nisan with the fall of the latter rain. This is the time, according to the Rabbis, for the rainy season to end, and no rain is expected or wanted later. וחתנן: יצא ניסן וירדו גשמים סמן קללה הם If rain falls after Nisan, it is the sign of a curse.

The Public Magician

These beliefs about the relation of Yahweh and the coming of rain-- that He gave it and that He used it as a sign of pleasure or displeasure with His people-- belong to the realm of religion. But we find too, that the coming of rain had to be or at least, might be stimulated. And certain men were endowed with the power of hastening the fall of rain; they possessed faculties whereby they could, at will, hasten or delay its coming. This talent has no place in the field of religion but is a relic of the old days of magic. And the magician flourished in Israel as he did among all simpler people.

The earlier role that the magician filled was probably that of private

consultant. The destroying of a personal enemy, the binding up of a demon that troubled one, such were the tasks of the wonder worker in simpler societies. But as men developed, he was called in to discharge more public functions. Occasions arose in which magic had to be practiced for the entire community and when ceremonies of this sort were wanted, the magician was raised from the status of private practitioner to public official. "For when the welfare of the tribe is supposed to depend on the performance of these magical rites, the magician rises into a position of much influence and repute and may readily acquire the rank and authority of chief or king.(1) Indeed Frazer sees in the origin of the kingship largely in the evolution of the magician. He makes of this development, an expression of the "will to power" as it showed itself among the more unscrupulous and sharper witted in ancient societies The credulence of the common man may have been an invitaion for exploitation for such types. And the abler members of the magicians' guild may have practiced deliberate deceptions on their less gifted neighbors, acting the part of rogues and imposters. as Frazer suggests. But it would seem more probable that the magician believed implicitely in his own powers, believed that he was the conscious agent doing the wonders that the masses ascribed to him. This matter of going through rites at which he laughed inwardly, is from a time when the ancient art had passed into the last stages of decay. When it had enough vitality in it to be called in to avert public calamity or to settle difficult matters of state, it is only reasonable to suppose that both the miracle worker and his followers shared the same belief, that he could do what he tried to do, and that the changes in nature came about because of his effort

Naturally, the magician had to be most observant, had to be able to detect "clouds as small as a man's hand" which escaped the average observer, and thus ply his trade at a time when there was some likelihood for success. To dabble at this art was dangerous If the rites were enacted, it were best that they produced results. He could not afford too many failures, even one might be fatal. The precaution of consulting signs that were not strictly magical in their nature, was necessary. The danger of a sure tragedy enacted on his person by disappointed followers, should he fail, demanded it. But these signs were more likely regarded as a legitimate part of

(1) Golden Bough vol 1 section--TheMagician's Progress

his craft that as opportunities for imposing on the ignorant mob. They must have appeared as so many more omens that indicated that conditions were ripe for his interference. He probably drew no distinction between this sort of omen and the others which we would regard as more dubious.

One of the more important duties of the public magician is the control of weather. In the agricultural communities where the food supply demands an adequate amount of rain and sunlight to further the growing of crops, a technique was evolved to secure the proper proportions of these necessities. Rain especially was desired in Palestine, since the supply was limited to a few months fallthat was light at best, and always uncertain. So to insure an adequate water supply, the public magician was called in to exercise his powers. "The methods by which they attempt to discharge the duties of their office are commonly but not always, based on the principle of homeopathic magic. If they wish to make rain, they simulate it by sprinkling water or mimicking clouds; if their object is to stop rain, they avoid water and resort to warmth and fire."(1) This simple law of like producing like is common to the folk practices of all people; it was invoked in ancient Israel too, when rain was wanted.

The best example we have to prove that the rain-maker flourished in old Israel is to be found in the story of Elijah and the priests of Baal. The plot of the story, according to the usual interpretation, is the contest between the followers of Baal and the followers of Yahweh to decide which is the true God. As it is represented conventionally, the incident is a triumph of Yahweh over Baal, a vivid proof that Baal is unable to answer his followers and that his power over nature is nil. Imbedded in this more religious picture of the incident, there is a more primitive account of what actually did take place on Mt. Carmel. It was not only a contest between two parties to see which followed the true God, it was also a contest to see which exercised the greatest magical powers. Elijah was concerned with destroying the foreign cult that Jezebel had introduced, that element in the story is original beyond shadow of doubt. But the manner by which he proved the

(1) Golden Bough vol. 251ff

impotence of that deity was through a display of his own skill in the magician's art. The climax of the story is not only to be interpreted as the intervention of Yahweh on His own behalf, to prove to the apostate court that he was supreme. When Elijah prepared the sacrifice and poured the water, he did much more than set the stage for Yahweh to demonstrate His might. The sequel of this trial, the coming of rain(I Kgs xviii:41-46) was the real object of these ceremonies, and Elijah, champion though he was of Yahweh's cause, by bringing down the rain proves that he possessed a sound magical technique, that he possessed the "keys of rain" as the rabbis put it. Elijah was not bending impersonal forces of nature to his will; in that respect, he is not to be classed with the ordinary magician of primitive life. He probably did not conceive of himself as subduing and regulating nature. As an agent of Yahweh, he withheld and produced rain. (1) But none the less, he used methods for obtaining rain, or for inducing Yahweh to send rain, that are not to be distinguished from those of his less advanced fellow craftsmen in the art of weather making.

Before analyzing the story itself, it is well to consider its setting. It forms part of a collection of narratives of the Northern kingdom that was made by the prophetic party and these several stories have been preserved, to some extent, in their original form. The particular bias of the Deuteronomic editor can be seen in many verses but the story does reflect what happened with some degree of faithfulness. Burney argues, that from the" high descriptive power and sympathetic feeling" that these stories of Elijah show, they must be for the greatest part in their original form. The fact that nowhere is there attached any blame to the calf worship at Bethel and Dan, that the efforts of Elijah were directed only to uprooting the foreign cult of the Tyrian Baal, is hardly proof that the story is in its original form(2); negative evidence is not enough.

(1) I Kgs xvii:1. xviii; 1
(2) Burney Book of Kings,p.207 He also points to the abruptness with which chap.xvii begins as proof that the legends were taken bodily from an older source, and that the Deut. editor did little more than curtail the introduction. The stories were subjected in all likelihood to a more thorough-going revision to make them conform to the theology of the Deuteronomic school.

There occurs several verses that indicate a different original, one whose style is more in keeping with the simpler form of the conclusion, vv41-46.

The story as we have it, makes of this trial a special meeting of the people who had been summoned by Elijah. Then, after allowing the priests of Baal to perform all day, he takes charge of the assembly that he had gathered, builds a new altar to Yahweh for the occasion, and then goes through rites to bring down the fire from heaven. To make the burning of the sacrifice doubly difficult, he pours water over the entire offering and on the ground about it, to convince the people of Yahweh's might.

There occurs in the narratives several verses that would indicate a somewhat different original. The local of the contest was an old Yahweh shrine, which had been taken over by the followers of the Tyrian Baal. From I Kgs xviii 30b, we find that Elijah rebuilds a broken altar, he does not erect a new one as the subsequent verses would indicate. The editor tried to conceal the fact that here on Mt. Carmel a regular Yahweh sanctuary once existed, a Bamah. Deuteronomy had a complete legislation against these high places, Josiah is represented as destroying them. Therefore the editor could not countenance the fact that a reputable champion of Yahweh, such as Elijah was, rebuilt such a place. He made it a special event, therefore calling for a special altar. Thus he obscured the condition under which the event took place. The altar had been broken down by the followers of the Tyrian Baal, who sought to make their cult supersede that of Yahweh. The festivals celebrated in the name of these two deities would have been quite similar, at least as far as the date on which they occured, since both were developments of the general Semitic idea of an agricultural deity. The party that worshipped the Baal of Tyre simply took over a Yahweh sanctuary that was visited at times of the agricultural festivals and set up a new shrine in its place.

The manner in which the altar was built, according to vv. 31-32a, shows that these verses are an insertion. The piling up of twelve stones as representative of the twelve tribes of B'ne Ya'akob אשר היה שמו ישראל, is out of place here since it contradicts the previous verse, and the formula used occurs in Gen. xxxv 10,

another indication that the passage about the altar has been changed.

The actual time in the year when this incident took place is not given in the narrative. There is no direct evidence within the narrative to show when it happened. It is supposed to have taken place at the end of a drought that lasted three years.(1) Whether the drought was ended in the early part of the year is not stated. But the rainy period falls between the two equinoxes, lasting through the winter months. The contest between Elijah and the priests most probably came sometime in this season. The most logical time for this contest would have been at the beginning of the rainy season since that is when rain ceremonies are customarily held. The gathering of the people was not a special event, it was not called by Elijah as the later account has it, but was a regular part of the agricultural religion. It was the Succoth festival, an old institution in Canaanitish life. While the ceremonies were going on, Elijah appeared on the scene suddenly, as he was accustomed to do. The rites had for their immediate purpose the bringing down of the fire from heaven, and the contest that developed had for its object, the discovery as to which Deity could send down this fire. Either could send the fire to the altars within his own land, the question to be settled was whether Melcarte could send the heavenly fire to the altars in Israel too.. Since he was unable, and Yahweh could send down the fire that would consume the sacrifice on the Succoth, Yahweh was master of the land.

But this descent of fire was not the only purpose of the rites. Rain was wanted, this was the time of the autumnal equinox, and rain was about due. And the ceremonies practiced, certainly as far as Elijah's acts are concerned, are rain ceremonies pure and simple, ceremonies of identically the same sort as were observed in the Second Temple at the time of Succoth.

The Ceremonies:

Two different methods of procuring rain are in evidence. "From the whole tenor of the narrative it appears that the real contest between Elijah and the prophets

(1) Josephus had a different tradition as to the length of this drought. (Ant.viii 13 2 He placed it in the reign of Ittobaal of Tyre, on the basis of a citation from the historian Menander. Its duration was supposed to have been one year. Burney 217

of Baal was as to which of them could make rain in a time when rain shoul come. The prophets of Baal wrought magic by cutting themselves with knives, Elijah wrought magic by pouring water on the altar."(1) The fact that the priests of Baal fail shows that their rain charms are ineffective, or as the theologic explanation would put it, Melcarte had no power in the land. The charms that Elijah employed were potent since the conclusion of the story has him running before a torrental rain, down to Jezreel. A cloud came from the west and before Ahab could return to his palace, rain was upon the land. Meanwhile the people lay violent hands upon the prophets of Baal because they were shown to have no power-- one of the disadvantages of being an unsuccessful magician.

The particular charms used are common enough in the different folk practices. The cutting of the body has a few parallels. The dance of the priests about the altar is an extremely common rain charm. The procession and the dance are among the most familiar ritesof this sort. The pouring of water as a rain charm is wide-spread it is perhaps the most familiar of all ceremonies designed to bring rain. The affair was a contest of rain- makers and Elijah comes off victor. Later tradition recognized him as a rain maker of greatest powers שמפתחות גשמים בידו של אליהו, an arrangement that very few others enjoyed.(2)

The pouring of blood as was done by the priests of Melcarte, was intended to bring rain. It may be a part of homeopathic magic. At Ashop, a bull was wounded and allowed to bleed to death. It was forced to walk back and forth to the river bank until it died, and the heavy flow of blood was regarded as an omen favorable for a heavy rainfall. Again at the shrines of Nyakang, a bull is killed by a spear and the blood is caused to flow, while the king prays to Nyakang to send the land rain (3). In each of these rites, blood is used in such a way as to suggest the law of "like produces like." The copious flow of blood has a relation to the coming of heavy rains. The rites of the priests are somewhat similar in that they lacerate themselves to make the blood flow. It is possible that these rites are not of the same order,

(1) Golden Bough 1 p258 note 1.
(2) Tal. Taan. 23a
(3) G.B. The Dying God p30

since they were inflicted during frenzy and may have been intended to awaken the compassion of Melcarth. If he was slow in answering them, their sufferings should have aroused him to greater haste. It seems that this same type of laceration was practiced in Israel too. While this was usually a funeral rite, practiced at the time of bereavement or at the time when Adonis was supposed to die, and was thought a sign of excessive grief, there is a verse in Hosea which would suggest that self-laceration was used to move the Deity to pity and to save the withering corn. The verse(Hos.vii 14) reads יתגרו "they assembled for corn and for wine", which means little. The emendation suggested by Cheyne and Nowack would make this יתגדדו like the reading of the LXX, "they cut themselves for corn and wine", an idea that is more in keeping with the picture that Hosea draws.(1) It likewise resembles the heathen frenzy depicted in I Kgs xviii 28, in every detail. The practice is condemned by Hosea, this method of getting rain is a failure according to the Elijah story. Thus we can assume that the more familiar Canaanite rite of obtaining rain through the pouring of water was the more acceptable rite, in the eyes of Israelites.

The use of human blood in rain magic has only a few parallels. Frazer cites a blood-letting practiced by the Karamundi which is designed to produce rain. Here, blood is dissolved in water, perhaps to strengthen the spirits that control rain. In Java and Abbysinia, bloody conflicts are fought for the sake of spilling much blood and thereby insuring a plenteous rain-fall. This rite may be a propitiatory sacrifice to the spirit that controls rain, but perhaps the flow of blood is a direct imitation of rain.(2) If they are such, they must be considered a form of homeopathic magic. And it may be that the priests of Baal acted from the same belief. It is difficult to decide what was the motive in the laceration, but it can hardly be doubted that they were exercising rain charms.

The ceremonies that involve the pouring of water are perhaps the most common device in the catalogue of charmsthat were intended to bring rain. In the old Indian

(1) Folk-lore in the Old Testament, Frazer. voliii p274, note 4.
Biblia Hebraica, R.Kittel vol.ii p837
Commentary on Hosea, (Cambr 1899)p85; Minor Prophets, Century Bible p44, note 14
(2) G.B. vol.i, p257-8

sacrificial cult, water libations were poured in the worship of Agni-Altar. "Water is rain. In this manner rain is brought down. When the libation is poured upon plowed ground and not upon unplowed, the rain falls only upon the plowed ground and not upon the unplowed. If it is poured upon the untilled ground and not upon tilled, then rain falls only upon the unplowed earth. Therefore the libation is poured upon both the plowed and unplowed ground."(1) This same type of ceremony was known to the Persians too. The particular rites that Elijah performed, the pouring of water, the filling of the trench, will be discussed under the ceremonies of Simhat Bet ha-Soevah. They are homeopathic magical rites. "Les rites de l'eau ...sont destinees a assurer a la vegetation le pluie dont elle a besoin non moins que le soleil."(2)

Other Biblical Rain-Makers

The Biblical narratives include several other instances of rain making. Two of the stories center about Samuel who is given credit for the ability to control the weather. These stories seem a development of the earlier account in chapter ix, where he is portrayed as he actually was-- a private magician who could locate misplaced property and the like. The stories of rain-making that are associated with his name raise his function from private to public magician.

The return of the ark, as recounted in chap.vii, is concluded by a libation offering and a judging of the people. This would link it with the old New Year-Succoth festival and it will be considered there. The other incident is connected with his farewell address to the people, found in chap.xii.

The account in which Samuel actually brings down rain,(1 Sam xii 17-18)is late, it is in line with the latest redaction of the book of Judges where the Deuteronomic theory of history is embodied within the framework of the book. When the chapter was written Samuel is accredited with great powers over the weather.. He called for rain at a time when rain was most unlikely, when the people were working in the fields during the early summer, at the time of the wheat harvest.

(1) Scheftelowitz Altpersische Religion u.d. Judentum p123
(2) Doutté Magie et Rel. p573

In this incident, Samuel is shown rebuking the people for wanting a king, contrary to the wishes of Samuel and Yahweh. It is an act of sinfulness and as such called for punishment. And the punishment used is a rain storm at a most inauspicious time, when they were engaged in the harvest, an example to show that rain could be a ~~blessing~~ curse as well as a ~~curse~~ blessing. The method by which he brings rain is not given; we do not know whether it came merely because he asked for it in prayer or if he resorted to magical rites as well. If the story is based upon fact, this element has been suppressed. The rain ceremonies must have been recognized as pagan rites very early and they were frowned upon by the representatives of the more advanced worship of Yahweh. The fact that they are hardly ever referred to, that they are obscured when they do come in for mention, indicates this. But the historicity of the account is open to serious question. The earlier stratum of the Samuel stories makes the institution of the kingship his special work. If he ever did find it necessary to punish the people by inflicting untimely rain upon them, it could not have been for the reason here given.

The story has this value. It shows that the ruler, in ancient Israel, was supposed to be able to control the weather. The people imputed to their ruler this powerand there are several other examples in the history of early times which show that the ruler was expected to oversee the rainfall. In the example above, the ruler exercizes his power to punish the people. Elsewhere the same force as put to more beneficent purposes.

There is another legend in which the same idea is shown, that there is a relation between the ruler and theweather, that he is supposed to control it and that he is responsible for the sort of weather that the people must put up with. This idea that the ruler could be held accountable for unfavorable weather, that it was a sign of his unfitness to rule people if he could not take a hand at governing nature, is to be found in primitive society. The folk-lore of Australia and Africa afford numerous instances of this belief. In old Egypt, kings were blamed for crop failures.(1) The Chinese emperor in modern times had the same sort of

(1) G.B. i p354 cited from Ammianus Marcellinus, xxviii.5,14.

obligation.(1) Similarly we find that the Hebrew kings, like other divine or semi-divine rulers, were held answerable for famine and pestilence. It is told (II Sam xxi) that there had been a famine in the land due to the fact that the winter rains had been scanty. David, responsible for the fertility of the soil, inquired of the oracle to find how this condition could be remedied. Discreetly, the oracle blames David's predecessor for this famine. Rain was witheld because of the wrongs done to the Gibeonites. The oracle, Frazer believes, refrained from putting the blame for the famine upon David because of the king's great power. But the notion that the conduct of the royal house influenced the weather operates in this incident. Instead of making David answer for the crop failure, Saul's family had to.

As a result, seven of Saul's descendants were put to death at the time of the barley harvest and they were left hangingfrom the time of the harvest "until water poured from heaven"(II Sam xxi 10) This clearly was no punishment inflicted on Saul's house for a sin against Gibeon. No dishonor was permitted to the slain princes. The birds of prey were kept away from their bodies. And when the time was up, the bones were interred with those of Saul and Jonathan, all receiving proper burial. This is a rain charm; the rain was secured through the bones of the dead, a common belief in primitive societies. "It is a wide-spread practice in magical lore to call in the assistance of the dead to obtain rain, and in this instance it was natural to ascribe a special virtue in this respect to the bones of princes, who are often expected to give rain in their life."(2) Thus David recognizes the claim that the ruler is responsible for the weather, and he used Saul's family to obtain rain because of theirpower as rain charms.

Besides thes examples, we find that Gideon and Moses are reputed to have exercized some skill in rain-magic. Moses employs his art, according to the J narrative, to strike terror into Pharaoh. He calls down a heavy hail storm by stretching forth his hand toward heaven. This visitation is interpreted by Pharaoh as a proof of his sinfulness, just as the people at Gilgal see the rain that Samuel brought as a punishment for their rebelliousness.

(1) G.B. vol.i p355 cited from N.B.Dennis: Folk-lore in China p125. (2) G.B."Adonis" p21

The incident in the Gideon story in which rain magic is invoked, is somewhat different from the preceeding examples. The rain, or in this case dew, is not sought as an end in itself but as an omen. The other incidents cited are concerned with the bringing of rain either as a blessing to restore fertility or as a punishment to bring to the people's attention, a sign of Yahweh's displeasure. In this case, Gideon asks that dew be sent as a sign that his attack on Midian will be successful..(Jud.vi 26) If the dew comes, he knows that his foray against Midian has Yahweh's approval. The relation between this sort of magic and the previous is not remote. Rain and dew were considered about the most beneficent of Yahweh's gifts, and when they came people assumed that they enjoyed Yahweh's favor. Hence if Gideon could induce dew to collect on the wool and again of the floor, he could depend on Yahweh's assistance in the coming battle. Here the dew serves as an omen for favorable conditions.

The Rain Maker in Rabbinic Literature

The most conspicuous rain-maker in Rabbinic times is Honi ha'Agel. There are other examples magic workers in this period since the condition of the land favored the art of bringing rain. A special liturgy is given in M.Taanit for community rain prayers and ceremonies, but certain individuals acquired a reputation for their powers in this direction. The incident in which Honi brought rain is the classic example of rain making in Rabbinic times.

He was by no means a solitary figure, practicing an art that was entirely discredited. Certain of the Rabbis, like the later Christian priest and the Mohammedan Holy man turned to the same practices for relieving distressful conditions that the old medicine man used, acted the part of dream interpreter or weather doctor.(1) R.Eliezer was supposed to have mastered 300 formulas that promoted the growth of cucumbers. (Sanh.68b) The number 300 may be only a round number like that of Bar Kappara's fox stories but it does indicate how persistent was the belief in the value of magical interference in stimulating nature. Certain people according to the rabbis, had great control over demons. Solomon enjoyed this distinction and his formulas for subjugating demons were quite popular. The general notion that

(1)Scheftelowitz: Alt-Pal. Bauernglaube p 2.

words possessed supernatural powers also played a part in the folk life.

The numerous legends that surround Honi probably mean that he practiced these arts more often and more successfully than his fellow magicians and his method of rain making was deemed sufficiently important to be recorded. His particular charm, that gave him his "sir-name" is the drawing of a circle. He began his spells in this way, and then he stepped within it and uttered his prayers. The circle, it has been explained, was used to ward off demons so that they might not interfere with him and destroy the potency of his words. The circle has been used to this purpose, the warding off of demons, by many peoples even down to present day European peasantry.(1)

He is truly the magician in that he compels the elements to do his bidding. He refuses to to leave the circle until he has gotten rain to his liking--neither too heavy nor too light--and his charms are so effective that he gets the sort of rain he wanted. From this incident, he stands out as a far more primitive religionist than Elijah, in whose career, rain making was only incidental.

Even though the ancient art still continued, it was held in low repute and it was employed only as a last resort. When Honi's grandson was called in to procure rain(Taan. 23a), children were sent to fetch him. When Honi concluded his rain making, Simon b. Shetah censured him severely, thought he ought to be excommunicated (ibid.) since he he was interfering with the administration of the world. It was suspected that Honi was plying the black art even if men were being benefited; the fact that he forced nature to obey him shows that the suspicions were well grounded. It is characteristic for the the magician to resort to compulsion to effect his purpose."In ancient Egypt for example, the magician claimed the power of compelling even the highest gods to do his bidding, and actually threatened them with destruction in case of disobedience" Sometimes without going so far as that, the wizard declared that he would scatter the bones of Osiris or reveal his secret if the god prooved contumacious.(2) Honi threatens the Heavens by refusing to move till his demand was answered.

(1) Scheftelowitz Altpersische u.z.w. p73-76
(2) G.B. i,225 cited from G.Maspero Histoire Ancienne des peuple de l'orient classique p.12
Augustine De civitate Dei x,11

R. Hanina stamps himself as a magician when he orders the sky to cover itself with clouds. When he reproaches the sky for impudence for failing to grow cloudy, the firmament, properly abashed, sends rain. The motive of compulsion is clearly present in these practices. Yet Honi was not an out-and-out magician since his request is in the form of a prayer and he addressed his God with a prayer for mercy. He was a mixture of religionist and magician, but with pronounced leanings toward the latter. (1)

Like other magical workers, his knowledge or his unique power passed into his family. Two grandsons, one the son of Honi's son and the other, a son of his daughter, shared this control over the rain. Abba Hilkiah, the grandson through the son, possessed such powers over rainfall that his wife acquired something of this control, and when they both prayed for rain (Taan.23b) it was her prayer that was answered-- because she did works of charity, her husband explained. The idea that the power over the rain can be transmitted through entire families, occurs among many scattered peoples (2

R. Judah found that removing his shoes had a violent effect on the weather; heavy rains ensued. The rabbis complain that their learning is greater than his and their prayers for rain ought therefore be answered. But the mere act of removing his shoes was a strong enough rain charm for Judah, one that did not fail to bring rain. In fact, so potent was this charm that Elijah had to materialize and then prevail upon him not to take off both his shoes "lest the world be destroyed". (Taan.24b) The removal of one shoe was enough to cure the drought. The removal of shoes can not be explained on the basis that this was the proper procedure for the special fast-days (M.Taan.i,6) since not every one could bring rain by taking off his shoes. Judah alone had that power. What forces worked through him can be seen from the fact that he produced a famine by a mere glance. The removal of shoes must have been a rain charm, designed perhaps to symbolize a change of weather by changing apparel. Such ceremonies still exist in Palestine, where the peasants assume that by turning their clothes inside out, they work charms that change the weather, that release the rain clouds.(3

(1) Not every man could act impudently with natural forces. R. Levi, when asking for rain reproached God as inconsiderate and was struck lame for his impertinence. However, rain did fall. No ill effects are reported regarding the other wizards.

(2) G.B. i,224ff (3) Kahle P.J.B.(1912) p.152

The most common way of producing rain in this later period was through prayer and self-affliction, methods calculated to move the Deity to pity. The fast days designed to bring rain during a drought, the special prayers that were uttered, are religious rites, purged for the most part from any magical implications. As such they need not be treated here. Certain prayers, such as the mentioning of dead heroes who distinguished themselves in rain making(Mish. Taan. ii,4) might have some magical notions associated with them, but that can not be determined. They are to be regarded as beyond the realm of magic, simply as expressions of distress in troubled times, free from any trace of incantations or spell. It might be possible that the mentioning of these dead heroes' names is related to the belief that there was a magical power in the dead that helped rain-fall; invoking their names might be an attenuation of the older practice of employing their bones, such as we had in the case of David. A host of superstitions were based on the relation of the dead and rain. However, in this particular instance, one could hardly prove that the mentioning of Samuel, Elijah, and David is a magical device.

The RAIN CEREMONIES at the TEMPLE

Misnnah Succah describes a peculiar ceremony, held under conditions altogether different than any other in the religious calender. This ceremony which took place during the Feast of Tabernacles bears the name of שמחת בית השואבה, but there seems to have been some doubt in the minds of the rabbis as to the actual reading of the word. It is suggested (b.Suc 50b) that the name may be חשובה. The name שואבה indicated that it has to do with water drawing. Hochman cites an attempted derivation that would connect שאב with "torch", but this etymology is rejected.(1) The variant חשובה is explained in the Talmud by the statement that the performance of these peculiar rites was a מצוה חשובה, and it may be that this other reading was only a play on words. The reading, שואבה, may be accepted as the correct one, and the holiday that went by the name שמחת בית השואבה had to do with the festivities connected with the drawing of water.

It is peculiar in that it was the only holiday celebrated at the Temple at night. It lasted from the time of the Minhah offering until the morning.(b.Suc.53) The Passover resembles it to a degree in that the Pesah was consumed at night, but this was a home celebration, while the שמחת בית השואבה was purely a Temple rite.

The Celebration

During the ceremony, the Women's Court was illuminated by golden lamps that topped golden candelebra. Each lamp was served by a boy of the rising generation of the priesthood, who replenished the lamps with oil. The wicks of the lamps were made of the worn-out girdles and breeches of the priests, the garments being torn into strips and then plaited into wicks for the many lamps in the Court. The light was so brilliant as to illumine the entire city of Jerusalom. (M.Suc.v)

Then night fell, the people gathered in this court, the women going to the balconies about it, the men gathering in the court below.(2)

(1) J.Hochman: Jerus. Temple Festivities p54; Feuchtwang: Das Wasseropfer p41
(2) At one time there were no balconies, the women sat in the inner chamber, the men in the outer. There was a degree of levity and to remedy it, their stations were reversed. But levity persisted, so the balconies were built.

A procession was formed in which the men of piety and position, carrying lighted torches, danced before the people, the Levites furnishing music for this occasion. The instrument used was the flute. (M.Suc.v) The torches evidently were tossed about since it is related that Simeon b.Gamaliel was quite a juggler, being able to throw eight of them in the air and catch them, without any touching each other or falling to the ground(1).

The men that took part in the ceremony sang in unison, "Happy is he who has not sinned, and may the sinner be forgiven." They who danced in the procession, who were known as pious, sang,"Happy our youth that does not shame our manhood." They who looked on sang,"Happy our manhood that atones for our youthful sins." This antiphonal response was made between the אנשי מעשה and the בעלי תשובה (2) Hillel is reported on this ocassion to have said,"If I am here, all is here; and if I am not here, who is here!", which Rashi explains as being said in the name of the Shechina.(3

The nature of the celebration changed toward the morning. Instead of simple merry-making, the Levites began the chanting of the Songs of Degrees, accompanied by their large orchestra. They stationed themselves on the fifteen steps that led from the Court of Laymen to the Women's Court.(M.Suc.v,4). "The Levites sang Ps.134, the last of the fifteen Songs of Degrees...This psalm contains the call of the Levitesbn those assembled for the festivities to take up the song of praise. Then repeating Ps.128:5-6, the Levites withdrew."(4)

Two priests mounted the steps and awaited the coming of dawn. At a signal from the הקרא גבר, they sounded תקעו והריעו ותקעו on the trumpets that they carried. The phrase above is customarily translated as the "cock", but Hochman maintains that it refers to an official of the Temple, some under-officer who announced the coming

(1)b.Suc.53a. He also performed the קידה, which consisted in standing on tip-toe and then bending until he could touch the ground with his lips. The hands were not used in this performance. It was done as a part of the celebration. R.Levi, who tried to imitate him, became lame on one leg from the exertion.

(2)b.Suc. 53a; Tos.Suc.iv,2.

(3)The further statement,"If you will visit my house, I shall visit thine..", might corroborate Rashi's explanation. These statements may refer to the struggle between the Pharisees and Sadducees to give this holiday its proper attention.

(4)Hochman p78

of dawn. It may be that it actually was another official who gave the signal, instead of chanticleer, but the point is not clear.(1) The priests then descended to the tenth step and blew their trumpets again. Then they stepped down into the Women's Court and repeated the trumpet blasts, and they continued sounding the trumpets as they crossed the Hall until they came to the Eastern Gate. The priests then turned about so as to face westward, toward the Sanctuary, (2) and said,"Our fathers who were in this place, turned their backs to the Sanctuary and faced East, for they worshipped the sun rising in the east.But we are God's and we raise our eyes to God." R.Jehudah said, they repeated over and over again the phrase,"We are God's we lift our eyes to God." (M.Suc.v)

Certain people went to Mosa to gather branches of willow,(3) which were brought to the Temple. Here the priests set them around the altar so that the tips overhung it. The willows that surrounded the altar were used six days, but in case the festival began on the Sabbath,seven days.(M.Suc iv 5) (4) While these were being arranged, others accompanied the priest who went to Siloa to draw the water for the libation. When they returned, the trumpets were sounded as they reached the Water Gate(5). The priest was provided with a golden vessel that held three lugs of water, which he used to draw the water from Siloa. (M.Suc iv 9)

Then the priest ascended the altar from the south, turned to the left so as to reach the south-east corner(b.Suc 48b) where there stood two silver bowls, one for water and the other for wine. (M.Suc iv 9) R. Jehuda claimed that the bowls were gypsum but had become dark from the wine. Each bowl had a spout or opening, the wine bowl having the larger, so that when emptied the two would drain simultaneously, the libation being a double one, of wine and water. (Taan. 2a) The procession from Siloa arrived when the willow branches were set up and the morning sacrifice was ready to be offered. According to b.Suc.54a, the libation might be made before the sacrifices as seems to have been the case in the incident of Alexander Jannai.

(1) Hochman:note 86 p108
(2) This custom must have had its sanction in Ezek. viii 16 where the older rite is condemned.
(3) There is no way of determining who the people were that made these processions. They may have been deputies of the Pharisaic teachers.
(4) The fact that the willows were used on Sabbath would indicate that the encircling of the altar was a late institution. The Pharisees used this procedure when they overcame Sadducean opposition.
(5) It took its name: שבו מכניסין צלוחית של מים של ניסוך בחג

When the water and the wine were put into their respective bowls, he who was to make the libation was told,"Raise you/ hand high, for once some one poured the libation over his feet and the people pelted him with ethrogs." The water that was poured flowed way through two canals (שיתין) or pits. After the libation, the trumpet were sounded again.

Then followed the procession about the altar. The people carried palm branches in their right hand, ethrogs in their left. Each day of the festival they circled the altar once; on the seventh day they went around seven times. They recited the Ps.118:25, אנא ה' הושיעה נא. When the ceremony drew to a close, they cried " יופה לך מזבח, Beauty is thine, O Altar." R. Elazar adds, they used to say, לי ולך מזבח; לי ולך מזבח. A curious custom was followed on the seventh day. (M.Suc iv 6) R. Jonathan reports that the people took the palm branches and threshed them against the side of the altar.

This is a summary of the important rites that made up the celebration of the Succoth [toward the Succoth] toward the close of the Second Temple period. And before these ceremonies are analyzed, something ought to be said as to the importance of the festival in the religious calendar of old Israel.

In most religions, some particular day of the year is dedicated to the deity. Among the early Israelites, there was a festival especially sacred to Yahweh. It was the old Succoth-New Year period that came at the end of the harvests. This was His festival, His "hag". This particular period was long known by the simple title of Hag. That such a festival took place at Shilo every year in the fall, is indicated in I Sam.i, and Jud.xxi:19ff. At this time, every Israelite repaired to the sanctuary of Yahweh and made his offerings, brought the tithes and spent the period near the shrine.(I Sam.i:21, Deut xiv:21, xxvi:1) Because of the great importance of this festival, the Temple of Solomon was dedicated then(I Kgs.viii) Jeroboam dedicated his temple apparently at the same time, at the Hag. It had not lost its character as the Yahweh-festival at the close of the exilic period since Lev.xxiii:39 still refers to it as the "hag Yahweh".

Volz argues that the Succoth festival was the unique and original Yahweh day on the basis of a comparison of this festival with the other pilgrim holidays of the year. Though the people were obliged to come to the sanctuary three times in the year, we hear most of the festival in the fall. "It is possible that from quite early times, the spring pilgrimage was instituted to correspond with that at the end of the harvest season, exactly a half year earlier at the beginning of the time of sowing." (1) The Massot Hag was introduced later into the cultus, while the Pesah came not from the original Yahweh cult but was a propitiation of demons that were warded away or appeased by the blood magic. Moreover, it was observed at home, and was brought up to the Temple at the time of Josiah.(II Kgs xxiii:21)

These arguments are rather curious since both the Hag ha Massot and the Hag na-Succoth represent the same stage culturally;and as to origins, both are seemingly Canaanitish. Volz would regard the Hag Yahweh as an inherent part of the original Yahweh cult, and not borrowed from the Canaanites. He would make of the harvest festival of Baal Berith at Shechem a Yahweh celebration, since He was called Baal too in early times. Of the three festivals, the Pesah, from its nature conforms more nearly to what one would expect of a desert religious practice than the Hag of the fall. This latter was more probable assigned to Yahweh because He took on the characteristic of a Baal, after the people settled on the land. That it rose in importance, to very great importance, can be seen when the nature of the holiday is considered. On this festival Yahweh promised the tillers of a semi-arid country what they needed most for their crops-- a plentiful rain supply. "On Succoth, God judges the waters." (R.H.16a)

Significance of the Rites

The ceremonies that make up the celebration of the festival are described with a fair degree of fullness in the Rabbinic writings and the character of the Succoth [of the Succoth] can be determined, at least as it was practiced at the close of the second Temple. We willtry to discover what were the essentials in its ritual in early times, though the descriptions in Biblical writings are very scanty. The ritual too, must have undergone an evolution and an elaboration. It may have been

(1) Volz Neujahrsfest J. p;7ff

only an expansion of the basic ritual; it may to have borrowed considerably from non-Palestinian sources. The particulars in this matter can not be determined with much accuracy. The relationships that are pointed out may as likely as not, in several instances anyhow, be a matter of coincidence. It is difficult to sketch with any degree of assuredness, the progression of the celeoration from its earliest forms to the stage in which we find it when its observation is reported in Rabbinic writings.

The most primitive ceremonies, non-religious for the most part, must have begun to lose their magical meanings , in the eyes of the bulk of the people, at an early time. And the religious leaders probably modified the celebration as much as they could, since the magical elements were not obscured to them. New interpretations were read into the festival, the character of the ritual objects were modified, and a different conception of the holiday was worked out. The name itself went through a development. While its first name was merely חג, as the earlier writings know it, in its specific character of harvest festival it was known as חג האסיף. The name, סכות proves to be the most common.

It was in this aspect that the holiday enjoyed its greatest favor. The laws emphasize this character, the festival of the Booths , that is, of the harvest. And this may be an effort to change its primary meaning from a time in which the rain for the coming year is sought/ to a simple festival of thanksgiving. The name, Hag haSuccoth, is late. It occurs for the first time in Deut xvi:13. In the Holiness code, the use of the Booth is stressed , this element is made the most important ritual part of the festival. Thus we can infer, that in early times, the Succah if it existed at all, was only a minor item in the observance of the feast, without either religious or magical meaning. The Booths, which were modelled after the temporary dwellings of the (soldiers in the field and of the) peasants at the time of the vintage, had some place in the celeoration of Hag before the exile.(Hos.xii:10). They come into far greater prominence in post-exilic Judah since the Priestly writer makes much over them,(Lev xxiii-4 and the celebration of Succoth as we have it in Nehemiah viii, which is based on Leviticus, brings them more and more into prominence.

The Booth was not a distinctive institution in Israel since it had a place in other harvest festivals, those at Cos and Sparta and other parts of the Greek world as well as in Asia Minor.(1) But the booth does not seem to have a primary part in the celebration according to its basic meaning. The passage in Zech.xiv:16, a post-exilic writing in all likelihood, still remembers what the Hag is to do; it is to secure an abundant rain-fall, and the nations that failed to come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Hag there, would have no rain. The connection between the booths and the securing of rain seems remote; what magical idea lies behind the construction of the Booth that would make it a rain charm is difficult to understand. In all likelihood it has no connection whatever with this aspect of the festival, and for that very reason it was brought forward. When Ezra reads the law commanding the erection of Booths (Neh.viii:14) as it occurs in the Holiness code the people hasten to gather the olive, myrtle, and palm branches and they erect booths. They are represented as building a host of them, on the roof-tops, the gate-ways, and the court-yards of the Temple. This exuberance of Booth-building is characterized by the significant statement that "since the days of Joshua b. Nun until that day had not the Israelites done so." Clearly, booth-making as a part of the festival ritual was an innovation.(2) Since the festival in its basic character was intended to secure rainfall and fertility, the Booth as a ritual object must be late.

There is a way of accounting for the association of Booths with the Hag. Since it was a pilgrim festival from early times(I Sam.i), shelters of some sort had to be provided for the visitors to the high-places. Rude huts were probably built as temporary dwellings that had no place whatever in the active celebration of the festival, but came to be associated with the Hag because visitors to the shrines used such huts for the duration of the festivities. When the Booths were included in the ceremonial objects, people must have reached a stage in their development where they were no longer necessary for the comfort of the visitors to the shrines. The booths represent a deliberate attempt to maintain an old manner of life that

(1) Volz: Neujahrsfest Jahwehs p.53 note 40
(2) The use of the myrtle and palm may also be post-exilic since the two plants are sacred to Astarte --Hochman p 83

had passed away. Theyhad no place in the cult but their significance was forgotten. It was remembered that the Booths had some connection with the Hag, therefore the dwelling in booths was enjoined by law.

The belief that Yahweh made Himself visible before the חג was we find in Ex xxxiii:7 lent prestige to the idea that there was some sacredness connected with these booths. The belief that He appeared in the Temple where the Tent was kept, on the concluding day of the Succoth-New Year's festival gave the custom of dwelling in booths a theological basis.

The most cogent reason for emphasis placed on the Booths is this. There was a consistent effort made to minimize the rain charms that were practiced at the fall equinox. The ceremonies were magical and had no place in the more advanced religion. The legal codes ignore the rites completely, the priests would have liked to suppress them if they could, as they tried to do with other folk-practices of a primitive nature. The hope was to bring the Booth into greater prominence and thereby remove the rain charms from the people's memory. But the rain charms were practiced still, and it probably was necessary to bring them up to the Temple and include them in the Temple cult, as they had to do with a number of other heathen customs. They were probably brought up at the time of Josiah, under protest, as the reformers could not break the hold that these rites had upon the people. But the official adoption must have been half-hearted for we find the priestly party still opposed to them at the time of Alexander Yannai. The incident in which he pours the water on his feet has been interpreted to mean that he tried to discredit the ניסוך המים and the people expressed their indignation at the slight offered this important rite by pelting him with ethrogs. The statement of Hillel, "If I am not here who is here?", instead of being a homily as the commentator regards it, is more likely his defense of the popular libation ceremonies that the Sadducees tried to discourage. The occasion that brought forth this remark must have been one at which the Sadducees attempted to mismanage the affair and he, as a representative of the people, protected the ancient and highly esteemed rites from being carried out improperly.

The various rites that formed parts of the celebration of the שמחת בית השואבה have a definite purpose. The ceremonies were intended to bring rain; they are to a large degree, applications of the laws of homeopathic magic. The libation of water, the sounding of the trumpets, the torches, have been judged as manifestations of these laws. And the rest of the symbolism, the processions, the sacred rock with its channels, have many parallels in the common practice of the Semites to indicate that they too are a part of the instruments that insure a proper rain-fall.

The אבן שתיה and the Channels

There is an elaborate mythology connected with the sacred rock and the adjacent channels, and to understand their actual role in the ceremonies, it is necessary to see them in the "cosmic" significance. There are two groups of legends attached to them, one of which relates them to the תהומות, the other touching upon the notion of the marriage of Heaven and Earth.

The channels that carried off the water of the libation were not artificial, they were natural clefts in the rock, and the sacredness of the place may have been determined from this phenomenon. The pierced rock at Hierapolis became a center for worship on this basis. The water that flowed through these channels were a link between the תהומות, the libation water connected the upper and the lower תהום (1) since the channel was supposed to have been bored down to the lower Tehom(j.Suc v) Legend had it that this connection was made in remotest times, in the six days of Creation. The emphasis on the belief that these channels reached down into the foundation of the earth meant only one thing to heathen antiquity--that they summoned the spirits of fruitfulness by pouring the waters through the channel.(2) The waters that flowed through the channels and joined the תהומות had this purpose, they made the powers that governed the waters favorably disposed and thus entreated the blessing of heaven that was to come in the form of rain.

The relation of the תהומות is brought out by the statement of R.Eliezer. "When the libation is poured during the nag, one Deep says to the other, 'Let thy waters spring forth, Ihear the voice of the two comrades'.(3)

(1) Feuchtwang: Das Wasseropfer p.12 (2) ibid. p16
(3) The comrades were the two vessels from which the libations were made b.Taan 25b Walter: Taan p.194 note 364

There is the Beraitha that brings out this relation: Not a hand-breadth of rain comes from above, but that the Deep from below comes up to meet it with two hand-breadths. (b.Taan 25b) Rabbah bar Bar Hanah tells that he saw the Persian angel of rain, Redyah, who resembles a three year old heifer according to this teacher, standing between the upper and the lower Tehom, urging the upper to send down rain, the lower to let its waters spring up.(1)

Connected with this libation offering, the pouring of liquids into a channel, there is a stone pierced by a hole, through which the offering flows. This perhaps relates to earth demons that dwell in this cavity, to whom this offering is made. There seems to have been such an idea current among the oldest inhabitants of Palestine as is attested by the many sacred cavities that were regarded as the homes of such spirits.(2)

The Semitic practice had something similar. Sometimes one finds, either under or next to the God-stone, a hole called Ghabghab or ʿAbʿab. Such arrangements were found among the Arabs. At the temple at Hierapolis there was such a cavity with a small opening, and at Sisythos, there was erected an altar since the waters of the "Sündflut" disappeared there; and as a remembrance, in later times, water was brought twice a year. All Arabia and Syria took part in these rites of bringing the water from the "Sea" and pouring it into the opening. (Dea Syria 13) In Jerusalem, the blood-offering flowed into a hole under the burnt-offering altar; the water of the Flood did not pass through this "spring of the great Deep" but through an opening in the inner Temple, which was connected with the Even Sethia. (3)

The oldest reference we have in the Jewish literature to this אבן שתיה is found in the comment of Targ. Jonathan to Ex.xxviii:28 and Koh.iii:11. In translating חושנא דמשפט, the Targum states that the Tetragramaton was engraved on it and it was used to seal up the waters of the flood. The other passage tells too that the name, יהוה, was engraved on it. (Feucht. p.27)

(1) The name in later Jewish folk-lore for Tehom was "Oqinus", "der als ein belebtes, engelhaftes Wesen geschildert wird". The Babylonian Rabbis used the Persian equivalent for this name, Redyah, who was an angel that watched over the Tehom and released the rains. Scheftelowitz, Altpersische Rel. p.108

(2) Curtiss: Ursemitische Religion p.257

(3) Wellhausen: Reste Arabischen Heidentums 103

This stone in its ritual use, was employed as the incense and "Schlachtopfer" altar, but its significance was much wider than this. Its name is explained to mean,"the foundation stone of the world". Its most important role was in the rain ceremonies, which sought to obtain not only rain, but the related values, fertility of the earth and prosperity, תהום and שתיה being the same thing. As this stone sealed up the waters of the flood, or the lower Tehom, it was likewise responsible for the waters that come from above. It was supposed that it was set in place at the time of the flood, the only solid thing, firmly grounded, in a universal Chaos,and the world was established about it. As it sealed up the waters that were drawn back into Tehom, only one opening was left, the "Nabelpunkt" which this "Nabelstein" covered. The mythology connected with the stone tells that God threw a stone into the sea and about this, the world was formed. It was sunk into the depths of Tehom to be the foundation stone.(1)

The cosmic role of the stone in its relation to the תהום into which the channels lead, is paralleled among other people as is indicated by the quotation from Wellhausen. The Ka'aba was also a"Nabelstein". "The Arabs think that there is also a heavenly Ka'aba above the earthly stone and that the latter is a copy of it. The theology of Islam teaches that the pattern of the Ka'aba was created in heaven before the creation of the world," notions that are very much like the Haggadic ideas regarding the [illegible].

We hear that in Armenia there are stones that have attached to them the same mythical notions, and are used in libations for rain also. In Gau of Varanda, there is to be found a sacred place, a stone in which there is a hole. This place most probably was an altar at one time and now, when there is a drought, women come and pour water into it. Rain follows.(2) Another stone in the same district is employed in a similar manner. When rain is needed, water is poured into it and a "Milchspeise" is cooked as an offering. Manat, a large stone in Qudaid according to Ibn al Kalbi, was sought out in case of grave sickness. When the people of the district were asked as to its function, they replied that they received from it protection against demons and help in case of drought. (Wellhausen: Rest Arab. p.25)

(1) Feuchtwang, p32 (2) Schertelowitz: Altpal.Bauernglaube, p.94

The function of stones as rain charms is illustrated in another way. The Arabs possess certain rain stones on which is engraved the name of the Deity. When the stone is dipped in water, rain follows. A similar charm was used among the Greeks, who obtained rain by pouring water into a crack in the earth, or by sprinkling a sacred stone with water.(1)

There may be , in the elaborate mythologic notions that surround the stone at Jerusalem, some elements of homeopathic magic in the very lay-out of the channels. These channels, Lagrange points out, faced westward, which is the direction from which rain came to the city.

The Willows

The use of willows depended on their magical powers. As used in the Temple to encircle the altar, they were a rain charm. In Babylon, under similar circumstances, an altar was surrounded by branches of myrtle. The lulab, which was made of these two plants bound together with palm, was supposed to possess certain magic qualities as well. In Palestine there was a belief that shaking it sidewise prevented bad winds, shaking it up and down warded off bad dews. The myrtle had a reputation for magical qualities among the Jews too; it was supposed be possessed of some quality that assured Resurrection. This idea may be due to the fact that it leaves do not wither. (2)

The commandment to use them is found in Lev.xxiii and in the celebration of Nehemiah, they apparently were used. The description of a Succoth celebration in IIMacc.x:6 tells that they were used on this occasion. According to the description of the celebration at the Temple, given in Mishnah Succah, the willow was threshed against the altar on the last day. The Boethsians looked down on this custom as a mere folk-practice, yet it was continued in the synagogue during Talmudic time. It was thought, according to R.Jonathan that this ceremony was brought in from Babylon, (B.Suc.43b) a tradition which may be true.

The use of thes plants might, at first glance, appear to be merely a harvest decoration for the Temple, but there was more likely a "practical" reason for their

(1) Volz:Neujahrsfest p.58 note 62
(2) Scheftelowitz: Altpal. Bauerngl. p.82

inclusion. They probably were used to promote the coming rains and insure the fertility of the soil. The Lulab had some connection with rain since the Rabbis said,"Just as it can not live without water, so the earth too can not live without water." The fact that the last ceremony of the [illegible] was the beating of the altar points to the conclusion that they were trying to stimulate it and thus increase fertility. The beating of the altar,on the festival when God judged the waters (R.H.16a),with plants that had some affinity for water,"weil sie am wasser gross wird,(1)" bears out this conclusion.

The earth was regarded in the polytheistic beliefs as a pregnant mother whose fruitfulness had to be stimulated through magical rites. The ancient custom of beating the earth with "lebensrute" still exists in the peasant practices of Austria, Germany and Poland. This custom of flaying willow branches on the earth was to make the earth fertile and to bring down rain. The fact that willows grow near streams of water must have been an argument in favor of its employment. The fact that it is a very hardy plant may have also suggested its use. Its vigor and the presence near water make plausible explanations for its use, since other rain charms have been selected for these reasons. Among other people, notably in India, frogs and snakes have been used as rain charms, seemingly for the same reasons.(2) When the willow and the other plants, listed in Lev.xxiii, were adopted into the official cultus, the ancient folk belief that they promoted rain fall must have been forgotten, or the connection was no longer clear. If it had been, they would have been ignored as was the libation. When the willow was placed in contact with the altar, it was not because they saw in this plant a rain-compelling charm that made for fertility, but only to enhance the great power of the altar.

The ethrog too was probably a symbol of the same sort, as it is a fruit that needs much water, "that grows beside every stream" (bSuc.35a) It too may have been a charm for vitality and fertility. Volz sees in this carrying of the fruit an analogy to an Assyrio-babylonian picture of a Genius that holds a fruit in one hand, in the other something resembling a water-jug.

(1) Scheftelowitz: Altpal. Bauerngl. p.91 (2) Altpersische Rel. p.85 note 8

The Sacrifice

The celebration of the Succoth, as we have it in the official cult, always involved a sacrifice. Great numbers of animals were offered up each day during the course of the celebration, 7o bullocks, 98 firstling male lambs, and 14 rams together with a daily sin-offering of a goat and meal and drink offerings. (Num29:12-35) The eighth day had special sacrifices in a different proportion numerically. The 70 bullocks are explained to correspond with the seventy nations (b.Suc.55b) This element in the ritual is the harvest celebration, the other motive in the Succoth. It might be argued that this element is the more important in the festival-- that it was primarily a thanksgiving for favors received from Yahweh. It would be more reasonable to see them as propitiatory offerings, intended to secure His good-will for the coming year. The old peasants had more immediate needs; they had to be assured that the Baal of the land would extend His help for the coming year. One questions whether lofty religious ideas, such as thankfulness for the prosperity of the past, would have made much impression on them. The offerings, if they were of the nature of thanksgiving, were only preludes to the real purpose of the ceremonies, the insuring of a proper rain supply for the coming year. If the sacrifices were intended as thanks-offerings, they served to discharge obligations incurred during the past year. The rites that came to their climax on the seventh day, with the expanded ritual of the libation, were primarily devises to insure prosperity for the year ahead.

There are examples of sacrifices that fall under the head of homeopathic magic. Those intended to bring rain may be of this character."Pour une demande de pluie la victimesacrificée sera de preferance noire parce que c'est la couleur des nuages qui apportent la pluie."(1) One of the Arabic rain charms makes use of such a homeopathic sacrifice. A black hen is killed during the rites. The idea that the dark-colored animal represents rain clouds is strengthened because of the accompanying ceremonies. When the sacrifice is made, a woman brings a stone mill and grinds it-- simulating thunder that should attend the coming of the dark rain clouds. (2) Whether the sacrifices at the Simhat Bet haSoevah were of this type can not be stated

(1) Doutte:Religion et Magie p.477
(2) Kahle P.J.B. (1912) p.162

definitely since we hear nothing about the color of the animals used . Doutte raises the question as to the animal used being an ancient totem. (p573) While he passes no judgment on this idea, he seems to find it reasonable, thinks that it resembles the eating of the new grain at a common banquet which might also be a survival of a totemic feast. This idea is untenable since there is not sufficient evidence to prove that there was totemism in ancient Israel. But there is a possibility that the bullocks, which seem to be the most important sacrifice, since they were used in the Elijah incident too, mightbecause of their dark color be imitations of rain clouds.

Whether there were homeopathic reasons for including the sacrifice, or not, the fact remains that there are sacrifices made as rain charms. The Fedou' which is used to avert various diseases, cholera and the like, is sometimes employed to overcome drought too. It happens occasionally that when the cattle are perishing for want of rain, an Arab sheikh will stand in the midst of the village and cry, "Redeem yourselves, redeem yourselves." At these words each family sacrifices a sheep, divides it in half,hangs the pieces upon poles and each member of the family walks between them(1)

The Torches

Besides the libation at the sacred stone that figured so prominently in the rain ceremonies, there are several other elements that have been regarded as imitative. The offering that was poured into a hole in the rock might have had for its purpose the propitiation of earth demons, it may be more than homeopathic magic. But the use of the torch and the trumpet can not be explained on that ground. The torch, as a rain charm, probably to symbolize the coming of lightning that attends the rain clouds, is fairly common. The procession at Eleusis cared torches as did the אנשי משמר at the Temple ceremony. And since the rites at Eleusis came at about the same time in the year, the beginning of fall when the rain is wanted for the next year's sowing, the torch probaly served the same function. R.Smith cites a curious custom in rain making. At the time when rain is needed, lighted torches are fastened

(1)G.B. Vol.i,p289; Jaussen:Coutumes des Arabes, p.362

to the tails of cattle, which are then set free and driven into the mountains. Wellhausen sees in this an imitation of lightning on the horizon, but it may also be, as Frazer suggests, a way of threatening the heavens. Certain S.African rain-makers threaten to set fire to the heavens if rain is not sent. (1) R.Smith accepts Wellhausen's explanation, that we have to do here with a rain charm that is imitative. A celebration involving torches, somewhat like the Temple ceremony was held in Damascus. During the festival of spring, boys ran through the streets, carrying torches dipped in oil which they pulled from eachother's hands. This festival which was something of a carnival was marked with water libations and rain ceremonies, at the beginning of the new year.

The use of lights at the New Year is a fairly common rite. In Egypt, the kindling of lamps was a ceremony for the New Year. The Chinese, on the fifteenth day of their eighth month hold a harvest feast and lighted balloons are released. In the religion of light that the Persians followed, fire and lights were used widely. Volz suggests that this may have influenced the Jewish practice since the Persian religious practices did affect those of the Jews. "In Christian times, the light festival was associated with the NewYear of the spring, and present day Jerusalem has no more important festival than that of the Holy Fire at Easter;(2) and he holds that the employment of light had no place in the cult of Yahweh but had been adopted into the religious practice because the people had accepted this rite. It is entirely probable that the kindling of lights in the fall is a parallel to the light ceremonies of the spring. But the kindling of the lights at the Temple during the fall was not for the same purpose that the usual spring or summer light celebrations are held. At the time of the spring equinox, from the stand-point of imitative magic, one would assume that the kindling of lights was intended to strengthen the sun. The sun's rays at this time are growing more powerful; the light ceremonies would hasten or insure the increase of the sun's strength. Such an explanation could not hold true for the lights of the autumnal equinox. Observation would show that the sun's power was on the wane and that the kindling of the lights could not arrest its loss

(1) R.Smith:Religion of the Semites p.231 (2) volz: p.29
Wellhausen: Reste Arab p.157
G.B. vol.i p203

of power. If it was ever done for this purpose, the futility of the proceedure would have been clear to the most primitive observer. One feels that the explanation for this kindling of torches is not to be sought in Persian influence, nor was it a homeopathic charm paralelling the common solar charm of spring that aimed at strengthening the sun. If it is a direct rain charm, which is one of the possibilities, then it was the magician's attempt to attract lightning or imitate its coming. One need not regard this part of the ceremonies as dating from the time of the Persian ascendancy. The description of a similar ceremony in Is.xxx:29 indicates that the torch-light procession was more ancient.

It has been suggested that the trumpet too is a bit of imitative magic. "Water that is poured on the ground is identical with rain; when one pours it out rain is produced. Blowing and flute-playing are wind; they produce wind thereby drawing near the storm."(1) The use of the trumpet probably can be explained in this way. That this is the reason for its employment by the Israelites, is suggested by one of the customs in case of excessive rain. In case of any public calamity, visitations of wild beasts, plagues of locusts, mildew , and the like, the trumpet is sounded. But not in case of excessive rain! In this instance,it seems to be a specific that would only aggravate conditions. (M.Ta'an.iii:8) But on those ocassions when fasts were declared so that the people could supplicate the heavens for rain, the blowing of the trumpet occupied a conspicuous place in the ritual. In case enough rain fell for the trees and not the plants, or vice versa, or if enough fell to revive them but not to fill the cisterns, the trumpets were still blown. In view of this, since it was customary to blow them in case of any public calamity except excessive rain, (2) it would indicate that that thepeople saw a direct connection between the rain fall of the blowing of the trumpet, that the trumpet could increase the rain fall.

The flute, which was also used in the cermonies, may have been intende to mow Yahweh to compassion. Its characteristic wailing sound, which gives the instrument its name, might explain its inclusion in the ritual. If there is an explanation for its role, beside that of simulating the wind, it probably would be the mournful

(1) Dieterich:Mutter Erde p.99

(2) The talmudic comment on this passages hows that the meaning of the trumpet playing was forgotten.

quality in its tone. In some of the Rain Mother ceremonies, attempts are made to move Allah to compassion by torturing fowls, which when they shriek, are supposed to be able to get the attention of this Deity. This may be the purpose of the flute too. It was a most early part of the rain processions since the passage in Isaiah mentions it.

The Procession

The procession about the altar, which forms the concluding ceremony in the celebration is that part of the ritual dedicated to Yahweh. It was the homage paid to the King, Whose might was praised. From earliest times, the worshippers danced in circular formations before their particular Deity and this particular dancing was known as the Hag among the Arabs and the Israelites.(1) This particular ceremony outlasted the Temple and was continued in the celebration of the seventh day in the synagogue. The procession of pilgrims that went seven times around the Bemah--which corresponds to the ערבה חג -- carrying palm leaves, had the same purpose. It was a continuation of the rain charms. Feuchtwang gives a mythological interpretation to the procession. He states that " the seven-fold circling of the pilgrims about the earthly Ka'aba is like the circling of the angels, that is, the heathen planet gods about the mysterious stone that is the foundation stone of the universe...The same explanation fits the model of the Ka'aba as it existed in Asia Minor, the Kybele being the Deity of the sacred mountain that was also a mysterious "Nabelstein" or foundation stone." This picture does not seem necessary as the basic explanation for the rite. The circle that travelled once on each of the festival days and seven times on the last day, instead of mimicking the circling of the stars and planets around the earth, was a more simple charm. It had some magic potency; perhaps it warded off demons as did the circle of Honi. But its intimate connection with rain magic is unescapable.

In the oldest meaning of the word, Hag implies a circling about a sacred object. In the broader meaning of the term, it includes processions and pilgrimages to the Holy places. "The term passed through the same metamorphosis among the Arabs and the Hebrews, so that it came to mean a festival"(2) Ultimately it meant any festival

(1) Volz: p.33 (2) Wellhausen: Reste Arab. p.141

in general. The Arabs had two such festivals in the year, one in the spring and the other in the fall, a circling about a sacred stone for the sake of obtaining rain.(1) "Israel too had two such festival times, one at the beginning of the year in the fall, the other in the spring at the beginning of the second semester; the fall festival carried the name Hag among the Hebrews and Arabs alike."(2) "The hag of the month Tishri corresponds to that of Muharram, known also as a Hag... The Safar-Muharram begins the year and thus occurs in the fall, since the year begins for the Arabs, as well as old Israel and Aram, in the Fall."(3)

There are patterns in Biblical literature for this procession in rain making. The dances of the maidens at Shilo, as it is reported in Jud.xix:19-23 is considered a rain dance held yearly at the time of the harvest.These processions were of the the same sort as were held in the Temple; the Temple procession about the altar in all probability was a descendant of such dances as were held at Shilo. The dances of the girls continued late in the folk history. The Mishnah records such dances, held at Jerusalem twice a year. "In later times, under the influence of an exhalted religion, this custom took on a deeply religious character"(4) But they were still rain dances. "The fact that everyone at these celebrations wore the same sort of garment (which they borrowed) strengthens the conviction that these later dances were continuations of the old rain-dances." There are other instances in which changing of garments is supposed to be a rain charm. In North Africa, men put on women's clothes to effect a change in weather(5). And what furthers the conviction that the dances at Shilo were rain charms is the fact that each garment had to be dipped in water before it was donned. This טבילה, dipping in water,(Taan 31a) was not for hygienic reasons. Even if the garments had been laid away, the ritual טבילה was gone through anyway. The dipping in water was a rain charm; it is a most common way for procuring rain.(6)

(1) Feuchtwang, p.50
(2) Wellhausen:Reste Arab. p141
(3) Wellhausen,ibid: p.99
(4) Scheftelowitz: Altpal.Bauern. p151
(5) Goldziher A.R.W. vol.xiii p34 note 1
(6) G.B. vol.i, p.277ff

Note: Dipping as a rain charm is practiced in a variety of ways; images, stones priests, travellers are thrown into water as a means of bringing rain. The various bathing rites, like those of St. John s day are charms of this order.

Another explanation suggests itself regarding the use of lights and processions about the altar. They may have been a form of solar magic, but not for the immediate purpose of strengthening the sun, as the more primitive solar magic attempts to do.(1) The circular dances and the fire rites lend themselves to a solar interpretation along with their use as rain charms. Although this type of magic, solar charms, is most common to the solstices and the festivals when the sun's heat is increasing, instances of which Frazer supplies in prodigious numbers, they are possible at any of the periods of transition,(2) throughout the solar year. (3)

The circle, in primitive times, is the symbol of the sun, and the going about in a circle, an imitation of the revolution of the sun about the earth.(4) In this case, it was not to strengthen the sun, but to create a different effect. The Temple of Solomon, built on a Phoenician pattern, was so built as to admit the rays of the sun, directly onto the altar, on the days of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. In this illumination of the interior of the Temple at sun-rise, the ancient Israelite saw the coming of the Kabod Yahweh. The Mishnah Succah recalls that in old times, the worshippers at the Temple prostrated themselves before the rising-sun on the morning of the Hag, presumably because the Kabod Yahweh was supposed to enter the Temple. We have a number of passages in the Bible to show that this coming of the immanent manifestation of Yahweh did take place on the equinoxes. If the circling of the pilgrims, or, as it was in later times, the priests has a solar basis, it might be sought here. Instead of trying to strengthen the sun's powers, which could explain the wide-spread custom of circle dances and fires in other lands during the winter and spring, these rites at the Temple may have aimed at insuring the descent of the Kabod Yahweh, and its entry into the Temple.

In its earlier form, the Kabod Yahweh was the sacred fire that was to descend upon the altar.(5) This heavenly fire that later developed into the idea of the Kabod and seems to be related to the sun's rays, was supposed to be the visible manifestation of Yahweh's presence in the midst of the sanctuary.(I Kgs.viii:11 II Chr.v:14; Is.vi:iii etc.) It was a most important feature of the New Year-Succoth

(1) G.B, vol.i,311ff (2) Doutte: Rel.et Mag. p.570
(3) On the basis that light produces light, we find that the new Moon celebration was marked by the kindling of lights too.
(4) Doutte, p.576 (5) Morgenstern:Three Calenders,HUC Annual,vol.i p37

festival that this fire should come down upon the altar, since by its appearance, the worshipper knew that the offerings had been accepted. It was a seal of approval on the ritual that had been carried out, and by its coming, the worshippers felt that the desired results, the fertility of the soil, had been secured for the next year.

Thus the lights which featured the service at night, and the circling about the altar might have been magical means for bringing down this fire from heaven. In the Elijah story the priests of Baal try to bring down this fire by dancing and leaping about the altar. The bringing down of the fire is the immediate purpose of their dancing. Even as they had intended to produce the rainfall that would end the drought or the dry season, to show that it was Baal who rules the land, they had first of all to bring down the fire from him, Thus they would show that it was he who provided the land with rain. If he was potent, was to be relied on to give rain during the subsequent year, he had to prove his might by sending down the fire from heaven. And the priests may have tried to help him by going through their dances. Cf. also the circling in the Church of the Sepulchre at Easter

The importance of this descent of fire can hardly be over-emphasized. The immediate success of the rite is evidenced by its coming. Its appearance was the Deity's promise to protect the new sowing of the coming year by sending a sufficient supply of rain. And when it came, the people were assured that their Deity was able to give them rain. Thus it may be that while the ceremonies aimed ultimately at securing a proper rain-fall, this portion of the ritual was designed to bring down the heavenly fire as a guarantee that the rest of the magical rites were to be effective, and its character as a rain charm is only secondary.

The Libation

The purpose of the libation is to procure rain,; this is a climactic point in the ritual, if not the most important. Yet we are in some doubt about certain features of it. One of the first difficulties about this ceremony is the question as to the number of days on which the libation was offered. According to the Mishnah, it

was offered daily. But according to John vii:37, it would seem that it was only on the seventh day that the libation was offered. And the Talmudic tradition is completely at a loss as to the number of days during which it was offered. It is variously suggested that/was made on one day, two, six, seven or even eight days. They accept the number as seven days because they had no other proof outside the statement given in the Mishnah. This tradition, though, is probably correct. There is a large discussion recorded in the Mishnah Succah as to the number of days the flute (חליל) might be used, whether it could be played on the Sabbath as well as the other days. Since flute-playing was a part of the rites of Simhat Bet ha Soveah, it follows that the libation was poured throughout the festival also. (bSuc51a) Despite the different traditions that the Rabbis remembered about the number of days for the libation, it is probable that the procession to Siloa was repeated seven times during the festival (1). This belief is based on the fact that provision was made for the libation of the Sabbath as well as the other days.

The employment of the water libation as a part of the Succoth ceremonies has no direct proof from the descriptions of the celebrations in the Bible. No one of the fall festivals that are described as a Succoth celebration refers to a water offering. There was a vague opinion about the antiquity of this rite, it was traced either to Prophetic or to Mosaic origins.(2) The teachers, to make these customs seem as old as they should be if they were to have a place in the people's regard as was wanted for them, solve the problem by stating that the laws concerning the ten plants, the willow branch, and the libation are halakot given to Moses at Sinai. Feuchtwang cites the comment of the Tosefists on the passage in Taanith, where the Rabbis deduce the authority behind the ניסוך מים, as a proof that there existed at all times a degree of uncertainty about the origins of this rite. The doubts themselves prove that the beginnings were unknown, or that it was deemed best not to inquire too much about them.

(1)Hochman: Jerus. Temple Festivities p.61
(2)Mish.Suc. iv:5-6; bTaan. 2b-3a

These ceremonies that took place at the Temple were old folk-practices and the rabbis were casting about, trying to find sanction for them. Maimonides, in his comment on Suc48, says"there are certain veiled hints in the Torah regarding the libation, but the people that do not accept the Oral Law do not believe in the validity of this libation." (1) The nature of these hints,though, if they were the only evidence extant, would prove very little, since they are of the order of playing on words and the like. Actual proof was wanting; the best that could be offered was an אסמכתא, a hint.

Thus we can understand the differences that the Sadducees and Pharisees exhibit regarding the ancient but unsanctioned water offering., as it is reported in bSuc 48b. The officiating priest, incidently not the high priest who seems to have been deprived of the right to conduct this service, (2) was ordered to lift his hand high when he made the offering, since the libation had once been poured on the priest's feet instead of the altar. This priest who defiled the offering has been identified, both by Gräatz and Büchler, as Alexander Jannai. And the incident means that the Sadducees intended to show the people that the libation was non-Yahwistic in origin. They wanted to discredit it. "But the Pharisees had the greatest power in the ordering of the-Emple cult, and everything that the Sadducees attempted to forbid, was celebrated with greater pomp."

The conflict in Temple proceedure certainly included this matter of the libation. From the frequent questions raised about its origins -- which indicate that its validity was shrouded in doubt even in the minds of those that defended it-- from the unsatisfactory way in which its beginnings were explained, it is obvious what a source of difficulty this rite was for the Pharisaic interpreters. And the tendency was to force its origins back as far as was possible, back into patriarchal times. The author of Targ. Jonathan, in translating Gen.xxxv:14, expands the original text ויסך עליה נסך to read ונסך עליה נסוך חמר נסוך מוי ארום כדין עתידין למעבד בחגא דמטליא "He made a double offering of wine and water, as would be done in the

(1) Feuchtwang: p.4
(2) Graetz: vol iii,p.112 ; Hochman p.113 note 99.

in the future at the Hag", which is what R.Nathan said was the libation of the Temple (b'aan 2b)

However late one would set the elaborate rites of the שמחת בית השואבה there is nonetheless quite a bit of evidence to show that the water libation itself had been employed from remote times in Israel. The instance in Samuel I,vii:6 tells of a libation at Mizpah, which is described as וישאבו מים וישפכו לפני ה'. This appears to have t e seed of the later Temple ceremony in it, since the people make a confession of sin and they are judged. This idea of the purification of the people, combined with a libation offering, [and the return of the Ark of Yahweh] makes this passage resemble the dedication of the Temple of Solomon. Even though the account in Samuel occurs in a later stratum of the book, it probably has some historicity; it must be the reworking of a tradition about the celebration of a festival that bears striking resemblance to the old Succoth-New Year's feast. It must be the account of a Succoth celebration as it was held at the old high place of Mizpah. The pilgrims that were put to death there at the beginning of the seventh month (Jer.xli:4) came to observe the Succoth at this shrine, or were using it as a stopping point on their way to Jerusalem. The libation that Samuel made is in all likelihood, the customary offering for the Succoth; the setting of the narrative suggests this as the most logical explanation for what transpired. (1)

The verse in Isaiah (Is xii:13) is no mere poetic image; ושאבתם מים בששון מעיני הישועה is intelligible only if it refers to such rites as were held in the Second Temple. The other passage, Is.xxx:29-30, is based on the same celebration and completes the picture of this ancient ceremony as it was observed in the closing period of the monarchy. The appeal to the well, as we have it in Num.xxi:16-17, that it should "spring up" must refer to the same sort of ceremonies.(2)

As to the use of the libation in the official cult of the Temple, we have no direct statements that would fix the date of its inclusion. In John,vii-viii, there is reference made to these ceremonies and the passage relating to Hillel suggests

(1) There is an account of a libation made by David (II Sam xxiii:16) which was interpreted to mean that the day on which it was offered was the time for the Succoth libation. (Sanh 20a) This may be part of the Pharisaic efforts to impute antiquity to the libation.

(2) R.Smith:Religion of the Sem. p183

shows that this elaborate rite existed in his day. Indirectly, the age can be established as at least as early as Alexander Jannai, in that a tradition links his name with the performance of these rites.

The antiquity of the water ceremony, calculated to bring certain specific results, can be better determined by examining their purpose. The reason for holding these ceremonies, the Talmud itself supplies. In Rosh haShannah 16a, where the discussion of מה אמרה התורה נסכו לפני מזבח is reported, the answer is given אמר הקב"ה נסכו לפני בזבח כדי שיתברכו לכם גשמי השנה. In a matter so important as the proper supply of rain one had to have guarantees as to its coming. The purpose of these ceremonies was to obtain the rain which Israel hoped would fall. Rites of this type are most common among the Semites, as they were among other primitive folk. And in spite of the pains to which the rabbis go, in ascribing the libation to Prophetic or Mosaic origins, thereby leaving the impression that it is anything but ancient in Israel, the libation that was intended to bring rain must have been adopted very early into the folk practices of Israel. One of the basic needs of an agricultural community is this need of rain-fall, and methods of this sort would be resorted to, in order to facilitate its coming. Although it is true that we can not determine directly the time when this water-offering was included in the official cultus as we have no reference prior to the reconstructed incident about Alexander Jannai, it still is obvious that so important a ritual was not invented or borrowed completely in the Hellenistic period. Likewise, it could not have been brought back from Babylon, though certain lesser symbols may have been. "It is not likely that so important a feature would have been grafted on the altar ritual after the re-organization of the community by Ezra and Nehemia"(1) The story of Elijah would show that the libation formed a part of the pre-exilic ritual even before the Temple eclipsed in importance all the other shrines. The time of the day when Elijah's ceremonies began, בעלות המנחה,

(1) Hochman: p.87

(2) The two phrases ועד לעלות המנחה I Kgs.xviii:29a and בעלות המנחה v.36a, since they refer to the evening (and not to the morning as in II Kgs.iii 20), refer to nothing except the evening sacrifices of the Temple at Jerusalem. This passage is unmistakably the work of Deut. (Burney: Book of Kings p227)

which is the time that the Simhat Bet haSoevah commenced,(bSucc.53b)suggests that the latter follows the earlier method. Regardless whether the verses in Elijah (Kings) are insertions or not, we have some indication there that the water-drawing ceremonies took place at the same time of the day, during the period of the monarchy as during the second Temple. Elijah's ceremonies consisted of a sacrifice and a libation, which is the essence of the rites as described by the Mishnah. He dug a trench to lead off the waters, which seems to parallel the יסוד of the Temple cult. The festival at which he appeared is clearly a Succoth celebration. The rites he performed were evidently of the sort that were acceptable to the Baal of the land; since they were efficacious-- they brought on the rain. Moreover the rites are most similar to those of the Second Temple, at the time of the Hag. We conclude from this that the basic rite, the water-offering was a regular part of the Succoth celebration as it was observed in old Israel. The two celebrations, that of Elijah and that of the Second Temple, resemble each other at too many points to permit any other conclusion; they must have been connected historically. The Temple ritual must be an out-growth of just such ceremonies that once flourished at the old Bamot. It is entirely possible that these rain ceremonies, so important in the people's life, were brought up to Jerusalem during Josiah's reformation, when the old high-places were destroyed, and were continued as long as there was a Temple.

Similar Ceremonies in the Ancient World

The rites at the Temple were much misunderstood. The Greeks who heard of them supposed that this festival was in honor of Dionysus. Büchler(1) cites a passage from Plutarch who seems to have witnessed the rites at the Temple of Jerusalem. His description parallels the Talmudic account of the festival."..After several days, they celebrate another feast where they invoke Bacchus, not by enigmatic symbols, but openly. They have a festival where they carry branches of fig and thyrsus and the bearers of these branches go into the Temple. We do not know what they do there but they probably hold a bacchanale, for they invoke their God with trumpets like those the Argiens use in the festival of Bacchus." He was further convinced that

(1) Buchler: R.E.J. vol.xxxvii,p181.

this was a celebration in honor of Bacchus because he saw fruit exposed on the tables. Because this celebration resembles to some extent the mysteries at Eleusis, some connection has been posited. The rites at Eleusis occur about the same time in the year because the seasons there are somewhat like those in Palestine. They too have a practically rainless summer, the first rains of the fall coming about the middle of October; then they begin their plowing. The feast of the harvest was delayed until this time.(1)

The last day of the Dionysian rites was dedicated to the Chthonic gods, and the water libation thatwas poured was probably in honor of those that had perished in the flood. This libation concluded this celebration, as it did the Eleusinian Mysteries and certain investigators, Herzfeld and Venetianer, have suggested that the Temple rites are to be traced to the celebration at Eleusis. Venetianer especially went to great lengths to force a relation between the two. The double libation, the one to the east and the other to the west, the same sort of songs, the lights, the mystic joy, are the basis for the identification of the Temple rites with those at Eleusis. While Graetz puts the origins of the Simhat Bet haSoevah as a part of the Temple cultus in the reign of Salome Alexander (78-69) Venetianer makes the inclusion a little earlier than that. But the Temple owed its ceremony to Eleusis; the fact that they fell at almost the same date in the year is added proof. The resemblances are accidental, some of them are inconclusive as he himself admitted. Hochman rejects the specious analogies by which Venetianer proves the origin of the Temple rites in the Eleusinian Mysteries, regards the libation as established before the time of the Greek influence, yet he states "That the addition of this water libation will, however, have added another to the already existing foreign associations which the ceremonial of the Feast of Tabernacles presented. When Alexander Jannai poured the libation to his feet, he will have been understood thereby to declare it an offering to the Chthonic gods,and also to proclaim to the mal-practices of the Hellenic priests of the pre-Maccabean period." (2)

(1)G.B. vol.v p.49
(2) Hubert: Review of Venetianer's Die Eleusinische Mysterien im Tempel zu Jeru R.E.J. vol.xxxvi (1898) p.318
Hochman: p83-88

The most serious argument against the this relationship between Eleusis and Jerusalem is the late date at which the Temple rites would have begun. The insistence that the libation be poured over the hearth of the altar, and not at its base, does not mean that the Pharisees were trying to get away from an original Greek form. The pouring of a libation at the base of the altar is North Semitic.(1) The origins of the rite are to be sought in Semitic practice, and though the evidence of the libation as a Succoth custom in pre-exilic times is fragmentary, the evidence is there. And such evidence is more conclusive than analogies from the non-Semitic life with which Israel's contacts were most remote until the time of Alexander. It is not necessary to trace any relationship between the two cults. Whatever similar practices they did have does not involve any dependence of one on the other, since it can be shown that the water libation, as a rain charm, had a respectable antiquity of its own before Jerusalem was engulfed in Hellenism. Both systems of fall festivals grew up out of the same necessity-- rain for the coming year-- many agricultural people employ similar rites. To pretend that a common ritual is the explanation for the similarities is claiming too much for any one people's influence. When people are on comparable levels culturally, the same needs will create pretty much the same solutions. The drama of the coming rain-fall will contain the same elements, the imitation of the lightning and thunder, the blowing of the wind, the falling of the rain.

Parallels from the Semitic life are more to the point because influence from remote time is more plausible. The closest approach to the libation of the Temple is the one that Lucian describes as having taken place at the temple of Dea Syria Atargatis. Twice a year, in the spring and the fall, water was brought from the Sea (the Euphrates) to the Temple of Hierapolis and poured into a cleft in the rock there, which was supposed to have absorbed the waters of the flood. The probability is that the water-drawing is related to the שאיבה, which seems to have been quite common in Talmudic times. This word which has customarily been translated as "market" (as does Wellhausen: Reste p.99) has been recognized to refer to the idea of a "descent of water".(2) I.Levy points out that the root of the word carries

(1) R.Smith Rel.Sem. p.213 (2) I.Levy R.E.J. vol.xliii (1901) p192ff

of a "descent of water."(1) The ceremonies of the Yerid consist in a procession that directed itself to a pool of water. This is a basic rite in the ceremonies at Jerusalem and Hieropolis alikeand it is characteristic of the Yerid in general as it was practiced in the Palestinian folk life. The same rite was observed at Baalbek as well, which would indicate that such ceremonies were familiar to the Semitic world.

The Yerid at Botua, a place near Hebron, was held in the fall. The scene of the celebration was a sacred pool, near the terebinth of Abraham. Lights were kindled, sacrifices offered, and a libation of wine was poured. This resembles to some extent the celebration at Jerusalem, where torch-light processions were held in the Women's Court, followed later by the drawing of the water from the pool of Siloa and the libation in the Temple. The date of the ceremonies at Botua can not be fixed since it was interdicted by Constantine and the references to it are scanty. But it occured either in Tammuz or Tishri, the time for the "fete de la puisance de l'eau".

The most striking proof that these are folk-practices indigenous to Palestine is to be found in the Yerid at Tyre. In the early part of October, when the waters turn dark, a procession moves down to the sea and draws several jars of water. These are poured into the stream to bring back its clear color, that is, to bring down a supply of fresh water to wash away the turgid residue of brackish water. The rites here were conducted with utmost solemnity; the members of the procession joined in dances and after the rites were over, they returned to the village with "l'allegresse qu'inspire un triomphe". Marti, who describes these rites, points out that this "allegresse" which the Syrians displayed suggests the Simhat Bet haSoevah. What makes the resemblance more striking is the fact that these ceremonies occupied eight days as was probably the case with the original Succoth-New Year's festival.

(1) Levy makes the derivation of the word Yerid akin to "yarda" which means a basin or pool of water, in Aramaic.

The elements out of which these rites developed seem to be in the petitions for fruitful seasons that were held at sacred springs.(1) Thus Kazwini(2) reports that at the well of Ilabistan, when the waters failed, a feast was held that included music and dancing. This was to induce it to flow again. Volz suggests that from the name, שמחת בית השואבה, we might infer that in early times a festive ceremony was held at the pool of Siloa and that a sacred building was erected there, as in later times a Christian church and then a Mohammedan mosque were built there.(3) Regardless whether there was a building of some sort there, it seems that there were sacred springs near the site of the future Temple.(4) Several references from the time of the early monarchy would indicate this. As the festival is referred to in M.Suc.iv,1; v,1 as החליל and since the Targ.J.to Deut.xvi:14 has the phrase ויתיחדון בחגא בשאובתא ומחליל, Hochman concludes that the celebration in its earliest form consisted of a procession to and from Siloa, led by a flute. (5) It is in such simple rites as this that we are to find the basic material out of which the later Temple ritual developed.

A somewhat similar type of rain charm, still common to the Near East, preserves the essentials of this magical method for bringing rain. It is the procession of the "Umm elGhet," withits attendant ceremonies. This particular charm is to be found scattered throughout the Near East, wherever the lands are under Semitic influence, among Christian peasants and Mohammedan alike. The fact that the ceremonies are wide-spread points to a dim antiquity as the beginnings of the rites. Their character too, highly magical with only a thin over-lay of religion, confirms that conclusion.

The various customs associated with the Rain Mother processions are fairly constant. In Armenia, children dress up a broom-stick as a girl and carry it from house to house. At every household it is drenched with water. Finally it is cast into the river. Elsewhere in Armenia, boys carry a similar doll that is supposed to procure wheat and grain, that "asks for rain from God." People pour water on it

(1) R.Smith:Sem. p.183
(2) Hochman: Jeru.Temple Fest. p.82
(3)Volz: Neujahrsfest p.56 note 57
(4)R.Smith:Sem.
(5) Hochman: p.63

from the roof-tops. In some parts of Armenia, the Rain Mother is supposed to demand offerings of lambs, The ceremonies are invariably concluded by throwing the image into water.(1)

The same type of Rain doll is most common among the Arabs of Palestine. When the rains of the winter have been delayed as late as the middle of December, girls make a doll of crossed sticks over which are draped women's clothing. This they carry through the villages. They sing various rain songs that are addressed to Allah, but it is the Rain Mother that is usually spoken of as the one that actually brings the rain. In these processions, a girl often carries a jar which she asks the Rain Mother to fill. (2) A variation of this same rite is found in Northern Palestine. Children make a procession through the streets, each carrying a stick on which is bound a rag. This image is plunged into water. The people that they pass sprinkle the boys with water. They sing rain songs of the same sort as characterize all these rites, but in their chant there occurs an interesting phrase: "O our Lord, let rain fall upon our town. They are guilty, they that are grown up; But we are small, what is our guilt?" The notion that drought is a punishment for sinfulness, which is found in the Biblical writings, appears here. The idea that the Deity could be moved to compassion by the cry of the innocents has other parallels(3 Women also make these Umm el Ghet dolls out of crossed sticks over which they suspend bits of clothing. These images they carry in processions. Sometimes the processions end at the home of the head-man of the village who furnishes them with a meager meal.(4)

At Kerek in Palestine, the Christian women dress up a winnowing fork in women's clothes. This "bride" is carried about in procession and the women sing the customary rain songs. "We are not told whether this bride is drenched with water or cast into a stream but the charm would hardly be complete without it."(1) Curtiss suggests

(1) G.B. vol.i, p.276
(2)G.H.Dalman: Palest. Diwan, p56-58
(3)Kahle P.J.B. (1912) p.164
(4) Musil: Arabia Petraea vol.iii, p.8 In one of the songs reported there occurs the verse,"O Elijah, we come to you. The fall of rain depends on you. The Key of Heaven is in your hand and to-day we are your servant."

that the image was called the "Bride of Allah" but Jaussen, who made a careful inquiry find that this can not be substantiated. At Negeb, where the Rain Mother is ornamented with a white veil, it is also called a bride but never the "Bride of Allah". Its name comes from the clothes it wears; it has no other explanation. As a concluding ceremony, the men make sacrifices of animals,"immolées a la face d'Allah." The blood that is poured may be imitative magic.(1)

The same rain charms are used in North Africa. During periods of drought, Rain Mother dolls are carried in procession to the graves of Holy men and are there sprinkled with water.(2) There is a similar ceremony in Maghrib known as the "Ghondja". According to Doutte, the word means a large spoon, one that is used to ladle up water. In times of drought, women dress this spoon like a doll and carry it through the streets, singing rain songs. Here the songs are addressed to the Ghondja, as the Palestinian songs were addressed to the Umm el Ghet. This same ceremony in which the spoon is dressed as a Rain Mother is practiced in Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis. In each case ,the procession is sprinkled with water. (3)

These rites are somewhat like those of the Yerid. They are of a simpler nature in that there seems to be no sacred stone involved in the ceremonies. The image is cast into water instead of a libation being poured on the stone. Again, there is no fixed time for the Rain Mother ceremonies. Special needs, prolonged and excessive droughts, dictate the time for holding the processions. The celebrations at Jerusalem, Tyre, and Hierapolis were held at the beginning of the rainy season. But there are resemblances between the two types of rain charms that suggest some kinship. Both employed processions, they sang songs that had power to control the water supply,(4) they ended at streams of water, and in the course of the rites water was either sprinkled or poured out as a dramatization of rain-fall and a charm to insure its coming. It is not impossible that the rain ceremonies that were held at the various shrines in the Semitic world owe their origins to simple folk practices like the Rain Mother rites. Both may be variations of one original pattern.

(1) Jaussen: Coutumes des Arabes, p.326-328 (2) Goldziher:A.R.W. vol.13,p.34
(3) Doutte: p.584
(4) The songs of Degrees were supposed to have magical power. David is reputed to have composed them while digging under the altar, in order to check the flow of water. (bSuc.53a)

The Succoth-New Year Festival

The statement that the libation was made on the Succoth so that the rains for the coming year might be blessed raises the question why this ceremony should have been deferred until after the year had begun. Its proper place would be at the very beginning of the New Year, not after it was several weeks old. The answer is furnished in the fact that the revision of the calender shifted the Succoth from its original place, immediately before the New Year, to several weeks later. At one time, the Succoth preceded the New Year, both holidays making a continuous celebration, practically.

In the time directly before the exile, the Succoth was celebrated from the third to the ninth of the seventh month. The New Year followed immediately after, its ceremonies merging into those of the Succoth and forming a part of them. The fact that the Succoth began on the third is indicated by the story of the murder of Gedaliah (Jer.xli) (1). The so-called fast of Gedaliah is really the beginning of the old Canaanite celebration of the Succoth since his death was unimportant historically and the fast was associated with his name because the true reason was forgotten. The agricultural festivals of seven days began with a fast and ended with merry-making. (Taan.iv:8, Jud.xxi:19)

The legislation of Ex.xxiii:16 and xxxiv:22 provides that the Succoth be celebrated at the "turning of the year" or at the going out of the year. It marked the close of the year and preceded immediately the New Year. "In itself, it was hardly the New Year festival. Rather the language seems to imply that its celebration marked the close of the old year and that the beginning ofthe New Year came immediately after."(2) Neither mentions the actual length of the festival but according to pre-exilic writings, its duration was seven days.(Lev.xxiii:19, Deut.xvi:13, I Kgs.vi Ezek.xlv:25) The Succoth was celebrated then on the third to the ninth, the New Year on the tenth.

The Succoth as it is described in Nehemiah points to the conclusion that the two holidays, separated in later days, were to all intents and purposes one celebration in his day. When the seventh month drew near, the people began assembling in

(1) Morgenstern: Three Calendars p.23 (2) Morgenstern: Two Ancient Is.Agri. Festivals,

Jerusalem(vii,73) and the Law was read to them. The people are reported to have gathered at the broad place before the Water gate. The account in Esdras v:47, which parallels a Succoth celebration in Ezra iii:1-7, has the people assembling in a court at the site of the Eastern gate. The people in each instance must have been gathering in the same place for their celebration, so it is probable that the court of the Eastern gate and that of the Water gate were the same. We must see in these three accounts of a celebration at the beginning of the seventh month a Succoth festival that had at least the same local as did the rites of the second Temple. The ceremonies of the Water-drawing included a procession of the priests to the Eastern gate, where in former times they prostrated themselves to the rising sun. This is an old rite, dating back to the Canaanite origins of the cult. And since it is associated with this court, it means that the celebration there was early, dating surely from the time of the kingdom. The account in Esdras substantiates the evidence of the Mishnah that the Eastern gate played an important part in the Succoth festivals and its place as the scene of the ritual is extremely early. The festival to which the people had assembled at the beginning of the seventh month was a Succoth celebration. The period from which these accounts come is one in which the New Year still followed immediately after the Succoth.

The celebration described in Nehemiah was carried out differently than was the custom. A clue to the manner of the difference is given by the fact that the people are ordered not to weep. This mourning was characteristic of the beginning of the Canaanite agricultural festivals. Since this element was being forcibly eradicated, it is entirely probable that the water-drawing, which was also a part of the pagan celebration, was suppressed on this occasion too. The scene of the celebration is at the place where a part of the water-drawing rites were enacted. As the festival is described with a fair degree of detail in all other respects and yet is completely silent regarding the libation, it seems that the libation must have been deliberately omitted. By the emphasis here and in Leviticus on the ritual employment of the Booths, it may mean that there was attempted on this occasion, a radical reform in the observance of the Hag. The priests were trying to change the old

pagan celebration when the community was reorganized and the new temple dedicated. If the tradition that the rain charms of the water-drawing had been forgotten and later reinstituted has any historic basis, it may be related to this action on the part of the Priestly writer and Nehemiah. The priests wanted to force it out of the cult. At this occasion they may have been successful. But their success was most short lived. Once the people settled back to their old life in the land, they revived these ceremonies and by the time of the Mishnah, they had evolved a most elaborate celebration for this popular folk festival.

This festival period of the fall was regarded as appropriate for dedications of temples. Solomon's Temple was dedicated at this time, the period of the Hag. Several reasons make it the most fitting time to initiate the new Temple. The people came up to the city as it was a shrine at which the Hag was celebrated, and at this festival the greatest number of worshippers would attend the rites. But there is a stronger reason for holding the dedication during the Succoth-New Year festival. The rites of the holiday were to secure Yahweh's favor for the coming year. During this period, the people could ascertain whether or not they were to enjoy it. The proof was the coming of the Kabod on the day of the equinox. What day would be more fitting to celebrate the dedication then the one on which Yahweh's immanence entered the Temple? The New Year and Succoth rites that culminated in the descent of fire took place on this occasion. While the account in I Kgs viii does not make the statement that this took place, the elaboration in II Chronicles says explicitely that fire descended on the altar to consume the sacrifice after Solomon made his prayer. And the account in Kings has been evidently altered, since the appearance of the Kabod is inserted before Solomon's prayer instead of after it, the logical place for this manifestation.

The Temple vessels included a □', described briefly in I Kgs.vii:44 but at length by the Chronicler (II Chron.iv:2-5), and from the description here, it would seem to be a representation of Tehom. This article of Temple furniture could hardly refer to anything else. It must have been a representation of a Deep, which figures in the mythologies about the coming of rain. Solomon asks for rain in his prayer,

makes a most direct appeal for this benefit, and his words reflect the common belief that rain is given or withheld according to the people's faithfulness to Yahweh. This is the sin that is punished by drought, both accounts repeat it. The cure for the drought is to acknowledge Yahweh הודו את שמך. This recalls the Elijah incident where the prophet compells the people to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignity in the land by obtaining rain from Him. Solomon's prayer was as successful as Elijah's libation since it was answered by the descent of fire, the visible proof that the land would be blessed with rain during the coming year. The most appropriate time for asking for rain, or performing rain ceremonies, is at the time when it is due. This is the New Year-Succoth festival. And at this festival the old Canaanite year began.(1) Thus it is most appropriate that the Temple of Jerusalem should be dedicated during this period when the fertility of the land was renewed. The temple that Jeroboam built was dedicated at thesame time. In all probability the ceremonies over the return of the Ark, which Samuel performed, took place during this same holiday, as it was a dedication of sorts too.

While the ceremonies of Samuel and Elijah include libations, in neither the Succoth festival of Solomon or of Nehemiah do we hear anything about the water-drawing. This does not mean that the water-drawing was not a regular institution of the Succoth-New Year celebration. The explanation for the omission must be sought in the fact that it was a folk-practice, never recognized by the Deuteronomic or Priestly legislation and suppressed wherever it appeared in this festival ritual. But the practice persisted in the lives of the people nonetheless. The dances of the maidens gets only incidental mention likewise, yet the fact that they are attendant rites of the Hag is unmistakable. From the several descriptions of a Succoth festival in the Bible, we can reconstruct the ceremonies as they flourished in pre-exilic Israel, at least far enough to see that the water ceremonies must have been a regular part of the ritual, and that they were held at the Temple too. The Eastern Gate, the scene of the later processions, played a role in the ritual of the day. The water Gate that is mentioned in Nehemiah also had some special significance for the old celebration; it could hardly have been a new architectural feature of the Second

(1) Morgenstern: Three Calendars p.70

Temple. It also must have been the place were certain ceremonies took place, even though, in that instance, they had been suppressed. Since Elijah secured rain at Mt Carmel by pouring water during a Hag, and the same rite appears again during the Second Temple Festivities at the time of the Succoth, it would seem likely that it was practiced from early times onward among the Israelites. The fact that the general Semitic life around them, even up into modern times, has used very similar rites to secure a rainfall, argues that the Hebrew peasant knew such ceremonies and had recourse to them. Traditions that the water-drawing was at one time forgotten seems far-fetched. Such ceremonies must have been practiced at the First Temple along with other magical rites, despite priestly opposition, because they were integral parts of folk-life and they could not be eradicated.

Summary

Old Israel believed that certain men were able to control rainfall. This primitive belief they shared with many other agricultural societies. The public magician figured in folk life throughout their residence in Palestine; from the time of Samuel to that of Honi, we have occasional references to the arts by which he brought rain to the land. As a rule, the Biblical characters to whom are ascribed powers over nature were men distinguished as leaders in the religious or political life. They were not mere magicians as was Honi.

The methods used for producing rain varied but the most common charm involved a libation of water. This rite, as far as our evidence goes, does not seem to have been used at any time of drought but only at the beginning of the rainy season. In this respect it differs from the familiar Rain Mother charms of the Near East. Apparently, it was resorted to only during the Hag, a festival that was associated with the New Year in early times.

The various rites which make up the complex water-drawing ceremonies lend themselves readily to an explanation on the basis of homeopathic magic. The ceremonies seem to imitate the coming rain with its attendant thunder and lightning.

There is also the possibility that certain parts of the ritual were intended as solar magic and had to do with the Kabod Yahweh, in which case they would be of a secondary character, either to supplment or to strengthen the rain-compelling magic of the libation.

Attempts have been made to associate the water-drawing ceremonies with non-Semitic magical rites of a similar nature, notably with the processions at Eleusis. It is quite improbable that the festival at the Second Temple was related in any way with the Mysteries. There is a fair amount of evidence to show that the basic rites were practiced in Israel during the early period of the Monarchy and it is more likely an ancient Canaanite rain charm that was adopted by Israel when they settled in the land. Rain ceremonies, very much like the Simhat Bet haSoevah, were known to other parts of the Semitic world. They involved similar mythological notions, they used similar apparatus, they fell at about the same time in the year. It is with these festivals that relationships with the water-drawing are to be sought.

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