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Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation in the Light of  
History and Religious Practice

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1.

## Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation in the Light of History and Religious Practice

Before considering Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation as religious institutions we must have some insight into the problem of initiations, for Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation as now practiced must be regarded as religious initiatory institutions. In order the better to understand these Jewish initiations we must first consider the problem of general and semitic initiations.

We shall see that some initiation besides the mere fact of birth is indigenous to Judaism, but whether or not this is indispensable is a debatable problem. In the course of this thesis it will be seen how, among a people whose very existence was nurtured on religious instruction and practice, the problem of initiation into the group gradually crystallized into an institution with some fixed and some variant features dependent upon this religious instruction. Finally we shall consider the present value and place of such religious initiations in Judaism today.

### Chapter I.

#### Initiations

<sup>1</sup>  
D'Alviella points out that "initiation in its general sense is synonymous with 'beginning', 'training', 'instructing'. The word is usually applied in a restricted sense to signify admission to ceremonies or traditions of a religious or magical order." In Judaism, however, as we shall see, the initiation is not a definite admission set off at one period, since the Jewish child is very early inducted into the practices of Judaism, but this gradual induction is climaxed at a definite period.

Two exegetical schools are cited, "the one maintaining that the initiation furnished a philosophical explanation of vulgar beliefs and led to

a rational and moral interpretation of official cults, while the other tended rather to perpetuate under cover of secrecy, rites and myths of primitive barbarism, which their adepts were ashamed to lay bare to the open day." (Neither of these interpretations seem to apply to the "Initiation" into Judaism, since it was rather the culmination of a period of study and practice in the religion of the group than an act of taking the initiate aside and disclosing certain tenets to him.) "Neither of the two theories mentioned, though applicable in particular cases, can be accepted as a general view. Another theory is that every initiation is invariably an embodiment or dramatic representation of old legends or myths. In most cases it is not the myths that have given birth to the ceremonies of initiation, but rather, as has been superabundantly proved by Robertson Smith and Frazer, the ceremonies that have been explained by myths after their original meaning has been lost sight of."

"The ceremonies of initiation are divided into two categories. In the one the ceremony has as object the granting of a certain power to the neophyte who uses it exclusively in his own personal interest, or, in return for a remuneration for the benefit of others, as practiced by sorcerers. The second category includes initiation ceremonies forming an integral part of the social institutions of so-called primitive peoples; they are usually performed on behalf of the community by a natural or artificial group. The second category is by far the more important, not only because it forms a necessary part of the life of individuals and communities in primitive society, but also because its development is parallel with the modifications taking place in the structure of the social body."

Bar Mitzvah will be seen to fall more or less into this second category inasmuch as it is a ceremony designed to bring the individual into the group of observant adults, and at the same time the features of the initiation change with the educational changes inside the group. (This will be brought out more clearly later, but we may state here that, for example,

the derascha grew out of the educational program of the group, and its features changed with alterations in the religious instruction of youth. The seudah also reflects the cultural, social, and economic life of the group.)

D'Alviella says further that in all primitive societies individuals of the same sex and age, having the same interests, tastes, and occupations, have a tendency to group themselves into particular societies within the general society. Among initiations of this nature, one of the most important and most common is that which marks the attainment of puberty, or rather the ceremony which about that age officially breaks all ties binding the adolescent to children and women, and admits him into the society of men. This ceremony is found, either as an established institution or as a survival of an older ceremony among nearly all uncivilized peoples, not to speak of the traces of it still found among the civilized peoples of antiquity. Its function is to confer on the adolescent the rights and obligations of an active member of society, i.e., it enables him to take part in war, to lay the foundations of family life, and to observe the customs and rites necessary for the well-being of the tribe. Initiation, so understood, may be considered as the oldest form of public instruction.

This latter description would seem to fit the practice in Judaism, with the possible exception of the matter of participation in war, for we learn that the age for bearing arms was twenty rather than at puberty, though it will be seen when this matter is discussed later that some discrepancy is felt, and some sort of harmonization is attempted in this matter of responsibility at thirteen or at twenty.

It is interesting to note that in this article the author comments on the initiation of women, and points out that even in cases where this initiation is in imitation of the male rite it is less important because it confers fewer privileges. It will be seen that in Judaism there was no female counterpart to Bar Mitzvah until the advent of Reform. Reform has

attempted to be consistent in the conferring of equal rights to women, but where Orthodox and Conservative groups have introduced a feminine counterpart to Bar Mitzvah it would seem that d'Alviella's comment is pertinent, inasmuch as fewer privileges are conferred upon the Bath Mitzvah or girl confirmand.

<sup>4</sup>  
Hamilton-Grierson says of initiations and puberty that it is a familiar feature of uncivilized societies that those of their members who are of the same sex, age, or occupation, or who have been participants in the same rites at the same time, or who are affected by interests common to all of them, tend to form themselves into subordinate social groups, membership of which confers special rights, imposes special duties, secures special privileges, and exposes to special supernatural influences..... It is a common practice to give to the rights which mark separation from childhood and entrance upon manhood or womanhood the name of 'rites of puberty'. And yet it is only to certain of those ~~rites~~ that the name can accurately be applied; for admissibility to the ranks of mature persons is, in many instances, determined not by arrival at puberty, but by something having no necessary connection with it, such as attainment of a certain age.

In this connection we need but mention the Talmudic provision for proving the attainment of puberty by evidence of the two pubertal hairs, for this will be discussed in the "Bar Mitzvah" section of this thesis. As Löw<sup>5</sup> points out, the changing of the prerequisites for Bar Mitzvah from that time when the pubertal hairs appear to the arbitrary attainment of thirteen years of age is something in the nature of a radical departure. Löw seems to think that this change was anti-Talmudic.<sup>6</sup> But we have reason to believe that the actual examination of the boy for signs of puberty had given way to the arbitrary attainment of thirteen years even during Talmudic times. The Romans placed the age of responsibility at the pubertas.<sup>7</sup> Surely this influence was felt by the Rabbis of the Talmud, as

there are any number of references to this assumption of responsibility at thirteen or the approximate age of puberty, among boys in the East, and twelve years for girls. This will be investigated later.

Among the characteristic features of puberty rites in general Hamilton-Grierson's article includes mutilations, which find expression in circumcision, and the practice of feasting. In Judaism feasting is a definite characteristic of Bar Mitzvah, and this will be considered in the section dealing with seudah. And as for circumcision, in Judaism this rite takes place not at puberty, but when the male child is eight days old.

#### Initiations among Semites.

The characteristics of initiation in Judaism will naturally resemble Semitic practices. W. Robertson Smith <sup>8</sup> says that in early societies a man's religion is determined by his birth, for he is destined from his birth to become a member of a particular political and social circle, which is at the same time a distinct religious community. But in many cases, perhaps in most, this destination has to be confirmed by a formal act of admission to the community. The child or immature stripling is not yet a full member of his tribe or nation, he has not yet full civil privileges and responsibilities, and in general, on the principle that civil and religious status are inseparable, he has not a full part either in the rights or the duties of the communal religion. He is excluded from many religious ceremonies, and conversely he can do without offense things which on religious grounds are strictly forbidden to the full tribesman. /Among rude nations the transition from civil and religious immaturity to maturity is frequently preceded by certain probationary tests of courage and endurance; for the full tribesman must above all things be a warrior. In many cases the step from childhood to manhood is too important to take place without a formal ceremony, and public rites of initiation, importing the full and final incorporation of the neophyte into the civil and religious fellowship of his tribe and community. As manners become less fierce,

and society ceases to be organized mainly for war, the ferocity of primitive ritual is naturally softened, and the initiation ceremony gradually loses importance, and ultimately becomes a mere domestic celebration, which, in its social aspect, may be compared to the private festivities of a modern family when a son comes of age, and in its religious aspect to the first communion of a youthful Catholic. When the rite loses political significance and becomes purely religious it is not necessary that it should be deferred to the age of full manhood; indeed the natural tendency of pious parents will be to dedicate their child as early as possible to the god who is to be his protector through life. Thus circumcision, which was originally a preliminary to marriage, and so a ceremony of introduction to the full prerogatives of manhood, is now generally undergone by Mohammedan boys before they reach maturity, while among the Hebrews infants were circumcised on the eighth day from birth.

How closely this outline according to Smith is paralleled in Judaism will become increasingly apparent with the consideration of such features in Judaism as circumcision and the celebration of Bar Mitzvah with its domestic features as generally practiced. But the problem arises here that must be considered now, namely, does Judaism require an initiation besides birth, and is circumcision to be construed as such an initiation? Does circumcision alone serve the needs of Judaism for an initiatory rite?

In answer to the question, does Judaism require an initiation besides birth, it suffices here to say that Judaism has always made circumcision an unalterable requirement and an irreducible minimum. When the material has been presented an evaluation will be attempted, showing the inadequacy of circumcision as an initiation for Judaism. Here let us consider the rite of circumcision itself.

#### Circumcision.

9

Philipson has traced the problem of circumcision as it expressed itself during the early days of the Reform Movement. The evidence he pre-

gents from contemporary literature shows conclusively that circumcision was regarded as indispensable. However, he does make this statement, that <sup>10</sup> even so fundamental a ceremony as circumcision was intermitted because of unfavorable circumstances, citing as proof for this statement that male Jews were not circumcised during the desert wanderings prior to their entrance into Canaan. <sup>11</sup> One might likewise consider the statement of Jeremiah <sup>12</sup> as evidence of the fact that just as there might have been a movement against ceremonialism and ritualism in the plea for a purified spiritual religion, so was there a plea for a substitution of a spiritual circumcision for the physical rite. This seems too much to assume on this scant evidence.

The controversy that so stirred Jewry concerning circumcision began with a statement of the Frankfort Reform Society <sup>13</sup> which was revoked at a subsequent meeting. The Society formulated five principles, the third of which stated that they do not consider circumcision binding either as a religious act or a symbol.

<sup>14</sup> In Frankfort circumcision was placed under the supervision of the Sanitary Bureau; the third paragraph of this measure ordered that "Israel-  
itish citizens and inhabitants, in as far as they desire to have their children circumcised, (sofern sie ihre Kinder beschneiden lassen wollen), may employ only persons especially appointed to perform the rite of circumcision." Members of the Reform Society and others who sympathized with them interpreted these words to mean that the rite of circumcision was to be performed or omitted at the desire of the father. It was not long before the actual occurrence took place that made the matter a living issue, the question as to whether circumcision was a condition sine qua non of entrance into Judaism. At this time <sup>15</sup> an anonymous publication appeared entitled "Circumcision historically and dogmatically considered" by Ben Amithai. This publication was looked upon generally as a pronounce

ment of the Reform Society; the author put the question, "Is circumcision an absolute condition of Judaism, so that an uncircumcised child cannot be considered a Jew, or is it not?" He answered the question in the negative, and suggested another method of initiation into Judaism, viz., a solemn declaration by the father in an assembly of ten Israelites, that he desired to have the child received into the covenant made by God with Abraham and Moses.

The aged rabbi of Frankfort, Solomon Abraham Trier, believing that one of the very fundamentals of Judaism had been wantonly disregarded by the individuals who had neglected to have their children circumcised addressed the Senate on Feb. 26, 1843, calling the attention of the law-making body to the importance of circumcision from the religious standpoint, and pointing out the dangers that would threaten the integrity of the Jewish community were the performance or omission of this rite to be left to the caprice of the individual father. On August 4th Trier again appealed to the Senate, requesting that it declare that no child of Jewish parents could be received into the congregation as a coreligionist unless he had been circumcised. The Senate did not act.

In 1844 Trier addressed a communication to the rabbis of Europe asking their opinions upon the significance of circumcision. His communication appeared as the introduction to the volume, "Rabbinische Gutachten über die Beschneidung, gesammelt und herausgegeben von Solomon Abraham Trier", Frankfort-am-Main, 1844. Outstanding rabbis responded almost unanimously, (only Elias Grunebaum, of those who responded, disagreed), supporting circumcision, and denouncing those who would abolish the rite.

<sup>16</sup>  
Zunz took a positive stand against the abolition of the rite. He regarded the rite as the irreducible minimum, the sign of belonging to "die judische Kirche".<sup>17</sup> He points out that in any classification of the laws of Judaism, be it like that of Saadia, Maimonides, Albo, or any other

circumcision can under no circumstances be regarded as possible of non-fulfillment and yet remain a Jew, whether a good Jew or a sinful Jew.<sup>18</sup> He who negates this law is no Jew. Zunz further notes how closely circumcision is bound up with Judaism in that in times of persecution or attempt to wipe out Judaism circumcision is forbidden.<sup>19</sup> Circumcision is not a ceremony but an institution. Other acts take place frequently in life; if neglected they can be atoned for and performed. In this case, however, a single omission is decisive, and the son who has not been circumcised by his father because of principle will scarcely remain within Judaism for principle's sake.

<sup>20</sup> Holdheim issued a pamphlet entitled "Circumcision viewed Religiously and Dogmatically". He contended that circumcision was a sign and condition of the theocratic-national but not of the religio-universalistic covenant in Judaism. Not circumcision then makes the Jew, but birth; circumcision is not an essential requirement in Judaism, therefore both the father who neglected to circumcise his son and the son are to be considered as ~~not~~ being Jews.

The result of all this agitation was to leave the question as to the necessity of circumcision as a condition sine qua non of Judaism much the same as it had been before. With the fewest exceptions the authoritative voices had expressed themselves strongly in the affirmative. Holdheim and Hess stood alone among the theologians in their radical views on the subject; Geiger apparently agreed with them, but he did not give utterance<sup>21</sup> to his views otherwise than in private correspondence.

<sup>22</sup> In 1871 we find this stand of the Augsburg Synod : Although the synod premises without any reservation the supreme importance of circumcision in Judaism, it yet declares that a boy born of a Jewish mother who has not been circumcised, for whatever reason this may have been, must be considered a Jew, and be treated as such in all ritual matters, in accordance with the existing rules regarded binding for Israelites.

Here we see that the vast majority of the leaders in Jewry, even under the influence of modern Reform, hold circumcision to be a paramount institution in Judaism. Even those who would do away with it suggest an alternative, as we have seen in the case of Ben Amithai who suggested that a solemn declaration by the father in an assembly of ten Israelites that he desired to have the child received into the covenant made by God with Abraham and Moses should serve as an alternative; and Geiger suggested, in his letter to Wechsler, that some other rite whereby girls would be included as well as boys, even as in the case of Confirmation which took the place of the boys' ceremony of Bar Mitzvah, should be instituted.

If this is the stand of Reform it goes without saying that traditional Judaism holds circumcision as a *conditio sine qua non*.<sup>23</sup> Zunz, in discussing Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation prefaces his remarks with a statement of significance here. He says<sup>24</sup> that the admission of a child into the synagogue community, i.e., into the Jewish "church", needs no formality; it takes place through birth, and besides this, among boys, through circumcision. Herein seems to lie the solution of the problem. As Zunz points out the child is a Jew by birth, that is, he is a member of the "church", and whatever other ceremonies he goes through are not in the sense of granting him a right because of the initiation ceremony, but that the ceremony is a recognition or a public declaration of those rights which have been his since birth, only that he has later reached the age of religious responsibility and now makes acknowledgement of these responsibilities and his intention of assuming them. He takes on no new rights through the ceremony, but assumes responsibilities now towards his inherent rights as a Jew through birth.

But if a child is a Jew through birth why then is the male infant who dies before being circumcised to be circumcised before burial?<sup>25</sup> The female infant who dies is certainly buried as a Jew despite the fact that no parallel ceremony is known. Then the statement of Zunz is pertinent.

11.

The child is a Jew through birth, in the case of male through birth and circumcision.

Whatever may be said about this problem it is certain that the teachers and codifiers of Jewish law, as well as the people themselves as they expressed themselves through custom, were more interested in the individual's living a complete and adjusted life within the group than they were in debating the question of his membership. In order to bring the individual into the fullest measure of participation in the group life, and so to enjoy the privileges and share in the responsibilities of the group, they realized that not only must there be a definite period when the individual should share fully, but that there must be a logical period of training for the assumption of this responsibility. In all probability they did not reason it all out in this way, but the notion grew out of the very nature of the group life. The assumption of full rights was not to be some mystic or mysterious initiation, but rather the climax of a long period of training. This was bound up with the religious instruction of the individuals, the fact being held in mind that eventually the individual would be a full-fledged member of the group. When was ~~this~~ climax to be reached? What would be the nature of the ceremony? We have already seen how the Roman notion of pubertas influenced the Jewish law, and what role puberty held in earlier initiation rites both generally and among Semites. As for the nature of the ceremony, that would grow out of the group life and would depend largely on the nature of the religious instruction and the economic and social status of the group at any one time and in any given locality. These specific features will be discussed under Bar Mitzvah. Now let us consider the rabbinic notions centering around the age of thirteen, the general concept of responsibility and the age of responsibility, and the way in which Jewish life led gradually and logically up to this age.

Responsibility

One must remember that the transition from a concept of initiation to a concept of the attainment of age involves a very important factor. In initiation, such as circumcision, involves no responsibility whatsoever on the part of the individual circumcised. We have seen that in primitive society the prime motivation of such an initiation is to bring the individual out of taboo into normal, profane life, and to place him as quickly as possible under the aegis of the deity. In more cultivated society a later initiation serves to instruct the individual or to impress upon him his new status in the group when he assumes responsibilities and is definitely marked off from the period of childhood when he could violate certain group laws without punishment or the incurring of sin. A rite in this sense had perforce to take place when the individual was fully conscious of the import. Such a ceremony comes nearer to the true definition of an initiation, viz., 'training', 'instructing'.

We shall see that this period of childhood, when laws may be violated, finds a peculiar adjustment in Judaism. Perhaps the rigidity of ceremonial observance would not allow this luxury even in the case of children. Somehow it was felt that someone must be responsible for the sins of the minor, and since the child himself cannot be held responsible until he reaches a definite age, the father bears the sins. We shall discuss this at length under the section Baruch she'patarani.

Any notion of responsibility must grow out of the life of the group. A civilization whose criterion of manhood and responsibility depends upon physical prowess will, as was cited from Robertson Smith, demand certain probationary tests of courage and endurance. In such a civilization the individual will come of age later than in a gentler society. Where physical prowess or ability to share in warfare gives way to other criteria w

18.

should expect the new standard also to grow out of the life of the group. For example, if the learned and observant individual becomes the model, responsibility will commence when the individual is considered by the group to be far-enough advanced along the line of religious knowledge and capable of observing the group's religious law to be an intelligent and participating member of the group.

When, then, should we expect to find this age of responsibility established in Judaism? There are two phases in the answer to this question. In the early Biblical accounts there is no reference to the age of puberty or the arbitrary age of twelve for girls and thirteen for boys as we find later. In the matter of vows<sup>27</sup> the periods of life are divided from five until twenty and from twenty until sixty. Clearly here twenty is the age of maturity.

When God speaks to Moses and Aaron concerning the evils of the congregation He says:<sup>28</sup> "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, ye that have murmured against Me."

When Moses is commanded to take a census of the children of Israel we find the following:<sup>29</sup> "Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male, by their polls, from twenty years old and upwards, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel."

These examples show clearly that the age of twenty was the age of responsibility, and only later, due to certain influences, the age of puberty was taken as the time for the assumption of duties and responsibilities.

There were several of these later influences. First, the changed view and condition of life for the Jew, where he was no longer in a state of society whose men must be bearers of arms, but the group assumes a religious character in a theocratic state. Secondly, notions prevalent among early groups, perhaps latent among the Jews, centered around the age of

puberty, and when, subconsciously, an earlier date was sought, these ideas of puberty, together with the much more important factor of Roman influence through practice and its legal notion of pubertas, came to the fore. The age of puberty came to be the age of responsibility. Gradually, through a refinement of practice the arbitrary age of twelve for girls and thirteen for boys, when under normal conditions puberty was reached in the East, came to be the arbitrary time for the assumption of responsibility as an adult in the group life. This refinement was in the matter of the actual physical examination of the boy or girl for pubertal signs. But we see that as late as the time of Solomon Luria<sup>30</sup> objection is raised to the Bar Mitzvah of boys at thirteen, because it sometimes might happen that boys would reach the age of thirteen without having brought forth the two pubertal hairs. To him puberty and not the age of thirteen rendered the individual an adult.

The terms used to differentiate the minor from the adult all refer to a separation of the periods before and after puberty. Invariably the minor is referred to as the Katan, while the individual who has reached puberty is otherwise designated. Having reached the age of puberty the individual is regarded as capable of making a binding vow or of consecrating property to holy purposes.<sup>31</sup> The person is held accountable for his own misdoings and is called a Bar Onshin.<sup>32</sup> Rashi explains the term as applying to the boy who has reached thirteen or the girl at twelve. They are not to be considered as a Bar Onshin before the age even if they have brought forth pubertal hairs, and they are ~~not~~ to be considered Bar Onshin after the age even if they have not brought forth the pubertal hairs. The term Perek applies to sexually matured individuals regardless of the legal age.<sup>33</sup> These references lend strength to the contention that the attainment of a definite age rather than the indefinite age of maturity was not a radical departure of later times, and an anti-Talmudic reform, but was recognized as early as the time of these passages in the

Talmud, and their interpretations, since it is recognized that an individual could be "prematurely mature". It is perhaps nearest the truth to say that at this time an individual must have fulfilled both conditions of age and puberty, before he was regarded as fully responsible as an adult. Then the later reform consists of requiring but one of these conditions, namely, the attainment of the age of thirteen.

34 / Maimonides clearly states the position with regard to responsibility. The first condition to be fulfilled is the one of age, then the pubertal signs. This is also true of the statement in the Shulchan Arukh<sup>35</sup>. Here we find some <sup>ve</sup>cl<sup>ew</sup> as to the development. First there was the requirement of the attainment of puberty; then, when it was realized that a person might very early, in fact too early, bring forth the pubertal hairs, they added the age restriction. With the refinement in practice as to physical examination the age at which puberty most commonly occurred was set up as the time for the assumption of religious duties as an adult.

36 Mielziner states that the legal age for contracting a valid marriage is, according to Talmudic law, the age of puberty, which, in general is assumed to be completed<sup>the</sup> thirteenth year in males, and the completed twelfth year in females. He states that this law is no doubt borrowed from the Roman law (pubertas) which established the periods of twelve and fourteen as the competent age of consent to render the marriage contract binding.

Having come around to the adoption of the age of puberty and then the arbitrary age of twelve and thirteen the literature of the Jews in a quaint and characteristic manner harmonizes the two concepts, the earlier one where twenty was the age of responsibility, and the later concept where thirteen becomes the age of responsibility. The whole notion of responsibility at this age is in a way motivated by the statement in Aboth<sup>37</sup> that the thirteen year old boy is ready for the fulfillment of religious commandments. In a Baraitha<sup>38</sup> attached to this we find the statement of Sam-

uel ha'Katan who says that the boy is responsible at thirteen because at this time he reaches puberty and is called "ish". He tries to find Scriptural proof, also, and cites the passage<sup>39</sup> about Simeon and Levi in the slaughter at Shechem. According to calculations Levi was at this time only thirteen years of age, yet he was called "ish". He continues with the statement concerning the matter of the spies that heaven holds one responsible for his acts only when he has reached the age of twenty.

Again in the Midrash<sup>40</sup> we find the statement: "The Beth Din above punishes only from twenty years and upward, while the Beth Din on earth punishes from thirteen years!" Rashi<sup>41</sup> cites the identical idea when he says that the earthly courts hold a person liable for his own misdeeds as soon as he has brought forth two pubertal hairs, while the Beth Din above waits until the person is twenty years old. This certainly seems to be an attempt to harmonize the older with the newer age of responsibility.

Still other ideas attach to the age of thirteen as the time of coming of age. The rabbis<sup>42</sup> speak of the Yetzer Ra as being thirteen years older than the Yetzer Tov, that is, that the good inclination is only born when the individual reaches the age of thirteen. This is certainly a poetic figure expressing the notion that at thirteen the individual may be expected to do good, and to assume his rightful place as a full-fledged member of the group.

In the Sefer ha'Brith<sup>43</sup> the same idea is expressed. The writer says that when the boy becomes thirteen and fulfills the commandments and ceremonies, habits, and customs he elevates his own soul, and at the same time raises the standing of Israel so that it is an outstanding or distinguished group by virtue of the fulfillment of the commandments. In another place<sup>44</sup> the writer reiterates the old notion that when the individual is born he has only evil inclinations,<sup>45</sup> but at thirteen he takes on a second nature and strives to work for good. According to another<sup>45a</sup>

source Abraham rejected the idolatry of his father and became a worshiper of God when he was thirteen years old. Again this same idea is expressed in the Midrash<sup>46</sup> in commenting on the verse in Ecclesiastes: "Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king." The poor and wise child is the good inclination, while the old and foolish king is the older evil inclination, the Yetzer Tov being born thirteen years later than the Yetzer Ra.

In considering the concept of responsibility we must keep in mind the Biblical expressions. In both Decalogues<sup>47</sup> we find expressed the notion that the iniquity of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate the Lord, and mercy will be shown unto the thousandth generation of them that love the Lord and keep His commandments. Only with Ezekiel<sup>48</sup> does there come into Judaism a concept of individual or personal responsibility. He says: "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb in the land of Israel, saying, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?' As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul ~~of~~ the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth it shall die."<sup>49</sup>

Since the inclination to good does not appear in the individual until thirteen, how can he be held responsible for doing evil before that time? Consideration of this problem together with a natural feeling on the part of the rabbis to harmonize the two statements from Scripture probably accounts for certain attempted harmonizations of these conflicting notions. Accordingly, we find the notion prevalent that up until the time when the child reaches the age of responsibility the father bears that responsibility. Once this notion took root in the thinking of the people they remembered the fact that at thirteen the child assumes responsibility for himself, but instead of the father being at that time

freed from the obligations of the child, some thought that the child is thenceforth freed from the sins of the father which might be visited upon it. The Midrash Zutta<sup>50</sup> and the Yalkut<sup>51</sup> speak of the child up until thirteen as being liable for the sins of the father, and after thirteen each being responsible for himself, while the Tosefta<sup>52</sup> states that the father's merits convey benefits upon the son until he reaches his Perek, thenceforth each is responsible for himself. It is outside the limits of this thesis to consider which is correct<sup>53</sup>, but the significant factor here is that both concepts agree that at thirteen the child assumes responsibility for himself.

#### Preparation for Responsibility.

Before considering the history of the institution of Bar Mitzvah it is well to consider the traditional status of the child within Judaism before he is regarded as a fully-fledged and fully responsible member of the group.

<sup>54</sup>  
Schechter says that in olden times boys had most of the privileges accorded those who had reached their majority long before the day of his Bar Mitzvah. This statement, though absolutely borne out by a consideration of the facts, is misleading in that in olden times there was no institution of Bar Mitzvah, and it would be more nearly true to state that in olden times boys had most of the privileges accorded those who had reached their majority long before the time when he too was considered to have reached the age of responsibility. The issue here is clear: before the time when an institution called Bar Mitzvah crystallized in Jewish practice the concept held that the boy would become religiously responsible at thirteen, and once having attained that age he would be expected to take his place in the life of the group as an adult. The religious leaders were well aware of the fact that in order to be an intelligent participator in the group one must be prepared for such participation. Accordingly, the period of childhood was filled with prep-

aration for this later role. And when the institution of Bar Mitzvah took shape there was certain specific preparation for this ceremony, over and above the long period of training and gradual initiation into the group mores, that was needed. We shall see that though slowly integrated into the group the boy needed specific preparation for the ceremony of Bar Mitzvah. Only later, when Jewish religious instruction became ever more formal and divorced from the life of the child at home and in the community the preparation for the ceremony of Bar Mitzvah in a way took the place of the long, systematic period of integration. In other words the boy was no longer prepared for responsibility but was prepared for participation in a ceremony. Where the ceremony at first was a formalization and a dramatization of the concept of responsibility, it later came to be a hollow and an empty ceremony which was a poor substitute for the integrating process.

What was this process of integration?

Besides the circumcision and the redemption of the first-born about which the child knew nothing and could therefore derive no integrating values there was the general atmosphere of the Jewish home, where impressions were early made upon the mind of the child, conditioning him for the enjoyment of those things which were actually a part of his religious life, since there were no lines drawn between the "Jewish life" and the "whole life" of the child. Preparations for the Sabbath and Festivals, with their attendant special delicacies, the kindling of lights, the festive spirit of the home, the wine cup, affikoman, and "Four Questions" of the Passover Seder, the zemirot, Sabbath blessing, and countless other enjoyable experiences of childhood made their impressions on the youngster. Perhaps he envied his father and older brother who put on the tefillin each morning. Surely he prized the <sup>katan</sup> talith given him rather early in life. At four the child was taken to the Synagogue and to the school-house, when he began on an intensive

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program of study that always lasted until he was thirteen, and often  
55  
much longer.

In summary: Responsibility passed from the age of twenty to the time of puberty with the changed mode of life and the influence of Roman practice. Since pubertal signs showed themselves very early in some individuals and late in others, a second condition was imposed, namely, that the individual must have attained the age of twelve and one day among girls, and thirteen and one day among boys. Eventually, through a refinement in practice which did away with the physical examination of the individual for pubertal signs the ages of ~~twelve~~ and thirteen arbitrarily became the age for the assumption of responsibility in the religious sense. This assumption of responsibility took concrete forms in an institution called Bar Mitzvah. Where the whole life of the individual was actually a preparatory period leading up to the time when he would become an adult fully participating in the group life and was at first supplemented by specific training for the ceremony of Bar Mitzvah, in the course of time, as we shall see, the ceremony with its preparation came to be in a manner a substitute for the long period of integration of which the ceremony was but a climax.

### Chapter III

#### Bar Mitzvah

In the consideration of the concept of religious responsibility and the time when that is assumed, Bar Mitzvah was alluded to as the ceremonial institution which definitely marked the end of childhood with its integrating influences of school, home, and synagogue.

It is well to consider a survey of the institution as it exists today before tracing its history and analysing its component parts.

56  
Rosenau says: " The thirteenth birthday of the Jewish boy is one of the most important events of his life. He is then considered as

having attained his religious majority. The event is usually celebrated by him both in the synagogue and home. Before, however, this is done, he is obligated to make elaborate educational preparation. Long before the advent of the important day, he is sent by his father to a teacher who instructs him in the whole section or in one of the subsections of the weekly Pentateuchal portions read on the Sabbath following his thirteenth birthday, according to the Jewish calendar, in order to enable him to read the unpointed text of his section from the scrolls during the public service. In addition to the Pentateuchal section the boy is taught the accompanying prophetic portion. While in some communities the boys are permitted to read their parts of the Scripture without the traditional melody, in the great majority of communities the reading with the melody is not only expected, but actually demanded. During this period of instruction the boy is further taught how to lay the phylacteries which becomes a daily duty to be performed by him already three months before the thirteenth anniversary of his birth. When the day in question arrives he is regarded as Bar Mitzvah, a son of the commandment, by which is understood a Jew expected to perform the precepts of the religion and guilty of their violation. According to tradition, the father, who is in duty bound to provide for the proper training of his son, is responsible for the son's every failure to comply in childhood with the laws of God. When, therefore, the son becomes a Bar Mitzvah the father thanks God for having freed him from further responsibility for laws transgressed by his son. The father then recites the Benediction: "Praised be He who has freed me from being responsible for this young man's conduct."

When the boy comes to the synagogue on the Sabbath of his Bar Mitzvah he is called to the bema. There he sings the several subsections for ~~the~~ others, who recite the traditional benedictions, usually saying the benedictions himself over the last and eighth subsection, called Maftir,

the concluding portion. The Bar Mitzvah then follows with the prophetic portion. In some instances boys deliver addresses in the hearing of the assembled worshippers. In these are set forth the duties and benefits of the Jew. Upon returning from the public devotion the mid-day meal is made a family feast, and, during the course of the same, the Bar Mitzvah delivers a speech, accentuating the thanks he owes his parents and relatives for the love and care enjoyed at their hands. On this occasion the boy is the recipient of gifts from relatives and friends.

The Bar Mitzvah ceremony, in the elaborateness given to it in previous centuries, has fallen into disuse in many communities. With the ever-lessening attention paid by Jews to the study of Hebrew, a boy who becomes a Bar Mitzvah frequently does no more than recite the benedictions over the subsection of the law read to him by the precentor of the synagogue. In those communities where the Bar Mitzvah ceremony has either disappeared altogether or has been modified as stated, an institution known as Confirmation, to which boys and girls are admitted, takes the place of the Bar Mitzvah."

An examination of autobiographic literature will serve to give a picture of the actual celebration as recalled by the writers.

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Gordon says: "That winter I became thirteen and was Bar Mitzvah. On Saturday evening of Chanukah that year my parents made a party, a Bar Mitzvah seudah, and I gave the derascha which my rabbi taught me. And the method of my talk on Baba Metziah was question and answer on a book called "Shitah mekabatzes". The people who came to take part in the seudah were ....., and among them was a lumberman named Za'ave Rosenthal who lived in our neighborhood. He had one eye and one daughter, and he set his one eye on me to take me as his son-in-law for his one daughter, for I achieved a lot of fame at that time, but it was not told to me until much later. An old man named Isaac, the magid of Schwintzan, who used to sit in the small Beth Ha'midrash and would eat at our home

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on the Sabbath and festivals, also told this lumberman about me, and asked Aaron David Gordon to be the matchmaker. It seems to me that also Rab Lippe, my first teacher, who now taught Torah, also came to my Bar Mitzvah, as well as some others whose names I have forgotten. I remember when the time came for laying tefillin I decided to be very pious and a "kosher" Jew, and I became a penitent although I don't know what sin I committed before this. When I put on the tefillin for the first time I was praying with religious fervor and wept, while Michal, my brother-in-law, was standing like Mephistopheles and laughing at my naivete. While I was in the midst of my prayers I heard him say that a day will come when I would be lax with regard to prayer. At that time I was angry at him, but as it happened in a very short time his statement was fulfilled. I remembered this incident, for during the Bar Mitzvah festivities something happened which manifested my sinfulness. While I was delivering my derascha with a lot of enthusiasm and "making an elephant pass through the eye of a needle", and indulging in pilpulism, and while my father, mother, and childhood nurse listened to me with joy and pride, and while Za'av Wolf, who sat opposite me eating a goose wing, not understanding a word I said, though he enjoyed it, his one eye was set on me and was gleaming like the sun. Isaac of Schwintzan sat next to him and looked me over with his penetrating eyes showing the others how much he enjoyed my talk,---just at that moment a bone stuck in the throat of Eliezer Rendzunsky, and he choked. It is natural that the people forgot about my sermon and went to help Eliezer to save him. There was a lot of commotion, the women fighting and screaming. Then my mother came with a loaf of bread and hit Eliezer on the back, and he coughed up the bone. Then the people resumed their former places and again paid attention to me, but I never finished my sermon, because Aaron David Gordon said to me, "Let it be enough; better have a good time and eat, and enjoy yourself."

Shmarya Levin says of his Bar Mitzvah: "The preparation for the great event, when I would take upon myself the responsibility for my own life, began several months ahead. My rabbi began to teach me the Shulchan Arukh in order that I might be acquainted with all the details of our religion and its laws. He also spent much time in discussing earnestly with me the course of studies which I would follow after I had left him. My rabbi now believed that I ought to become a man of letters, and he advised me strongly to write not only Hebrew, but Yiddish too....

"The synagogue ceremonies of the Bar Mitzvah held no terrors for me. At the age of seven I had already been called up to the pulpit for the reading of the week's section of the prophets. And even then I was unafraid. From my earliest years I was wholly at my ease in the presence of a large audience. Fear, as an emotion, was on the whole alien to my nature, and least of all I feared people. For you can talk with people, and when it came to talking I was in my element.

"The banquet which my father prepared on that day was almost as sumptuous as a wedding feast. I think there was hardly a householder in Sivilowitz who was not invited, and all of them came, for my father's sake, and, I must add, for mine. At the age of thirteen I was the favorite of the town; and on more than one occasion, both in the street and in the synagogue, I would be asked by older Jews to settle a dispute. Such was their faith in my common sense and in my sense of justice.

"Four rabbis came to the ceremony; the rabbi of our town and three from neighboring townlets. I was seated at the head of the table, in the same place where I had sat nine years before, on the day when they smeared the pages of the prayerbook with honey for me, before they carried me off to my first rabbi, Mottye the bean. My father sat at my side, and my mother helped serve the guests. But when the moment came

for me to deliver my address, my mother took a seat at the side. My Bar Mitzvah address was a complicated and involved treatise on a Talmudic point. I went through it without an error. At the close of it the four rabbis questioned me closely on the subject-matter, and I answered them with unusual ease and skill. When the examination was over they congratulated my father and expressed the hope that I would grow up to be a great man in Israel.

"The banquet lasted until late in the afternoon. The importance of the occasion and the success of the ceremonies created a universal mood of happiness. Only one man sat quietly and thoughtful, my rabbi, Judah. When the guests had withdrawn and only he and the family remained, he asked me to go out for a walk with him. We went downhill out of the town to the colonnade of the state road. I felt that something was weighing heavily on my rabbi's mind, but I dared not ask him why he had called me out to walk with him. Without a word, each of us sunk in his own thoughts, walked under the shadows of the trees. When an hour had passed we turned back, still wordless, toward the town. And then my rabbi, like one who had something to say and had given up the idea of saying it, turned suddenly to me: 'Come my ex-pupil! We will go to Schul for Mincha!' "

I have been told by a scholar an account of his own Bar Mitzvah which differs greatly from the above accounts. I quote it because it sheds light upon a phase of Jewish life. He became thirteenth during the week, and his mother, fearing an "evil eye", desired to have the event traditionally observed, yet with as little show as possible. Accordingly, the boy's father went to the synagogue on Thursday morning and recited the Baruch She'patarani at the reading of the Torah. On the Sabbath that followed the boy went to the synagogue and was called up to chant the Maftir. This simple ceremony, together with the fact that the boy had previously begun to wear the tefillin during morning

prayers, constituted the attainment of the age of responsibility.

There was no seudah and no derascha.

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Zangwill describes "Sugarman's Bar Mitzvah Party". All the appurtenances were to be found at this Bar Mitzvah; the notion of responsibility is paramount, the receiving of gifts, the intoning of the portion of the Law, and the Bar Mitzvah seudah which took the form of a breakfast. There was the English sermon, or derascha, and a "speech", "both openly written by the Shalotten Shamos". "Mrs. Sugarman forgot all the trouble Ebenezer had given her in the face of his assurances of respect and affection, and she wept copiously."

62

There is a very fine description of a Bar Mitzvah celebration in Morocco which differs somewhat from the forms just described. As soon as the boy becomes twelve years old he starts preparation for his Bar Mitzvah. He learns one of the Talmudical treatises from one of the tractates, Chulin, Manachoth, or Ketuboth, together with as many commentaries as he is able to master. He rehearses his dissertation each night until he has committed it to memory. After he has passed an examination the rabbis and the parnassim of the congregation, together with his relatives and friends are invited to a dinner the Wednesday before the Sabbath on which he is to be called up to the Torah. The following morning, Thursday, at the service which takes place in the boy's house the chief rabbi puts the tefillin on his arm, and his father puts the tefillin on his head while the choir accompanies the initiation rite with a hymn. He is then called to the Torah, and before the close of the service a discourse partly in the vernacular, for the benefit of the women who are present, is delivered. The rabbis follow with a discussion and the Bar Mitzvah is then blessed aloud by the whole assembly, who say: Chazak u'varuch ti'hi'yeh yagdil Torah va'ya'adir. 63 After this he goes around with his tefillin bag, and first the men, then the women, and finally the parents throw silver coins in-

to the bag, which he then takes to his teacher. A breakfast follows in which all take part. On the next Sabbath the Bar Mitzvah reads the Maftir. When he is called to the Torah a piyyut is recited. This is a very beautiful piyyut in acrostic form with refrain.<sup>64</sup> The boy is exhorted to follow the commandments, to devote himself to the study of Torah, and to wear the tefillin. The priestly benediction is invoked without being recited over the Bar Mitzvah.

Now to consider how this institution came about.

<sup>65</sup> Schechter, <sup>66</sup> Rosenau, <sup>67</sup> Dembitz, <sup>68</sup> Kohler, <sup>69</sup> Abrahams, and others quote and agree with <sup>70</sup> Löw that the Bar Mitzvah ceremony cannot claim a very high antiquity. The institution as such dates from the 14th century, according to these writers. Kohler points out, however, that so sweeping a statement cannot be made, for surely the roots of the institution go back to very early times. Schechter says that the Talmud, the Gaonim, and even R. Isaac Alfasi and Miamonides knew neither the term Bar Mitzvah, in our sense of the word, nor any ceremony connected with it. "In many cases centuries elapse before an idea or a notion takes practical shape and is crystallised into a custom or usage, and still longer before this custom is fossilized into a law or fixed institution"<sup>71</sup>

The term Bar Mitzvah is first used in the Talmud, where it applies to every grown Israelite, and has nothing at all of the concept of a ceremony or an institution as we know it. But there are a few traces of what might be forerunners of such an institution long before the 14th century.

<sup>72</sup> The quotation from Aboth stating that at thirteen the boy is ready for the commandments, that is, the fulfillment of the commandments, is generally taken to refer to Bar Mitzvah, but we have already seen that this refers rather to the age of responsibility without any ceremonial institution in mind. <sup>73</sup> Gorfinkle, in commenting on this passage, states clearly that this is so, and again reiterates that the institution can-

not be clearly traced earlier than the fourteenth century.

74

In Tractate Soferim we find the following statement: "There was a good custom in Jerusalem to initiate the children into fasting the whole of the Day of Atonement at the beginning of the thirteenth year. During this year they took the boy to the priests and learned men that they might bless him and pray for him that God might think him worthy of a life devoted to the study of the Torah and pious works. And whoever knew of a worthier person than himself would go to that person because their lives were exemplary and their hearts were directed heavenward; and they didn't try to lead their children themselves, but took them to the synagogue in order to awaken their emulation in religious matters." Surely, here was no Bar Mitzvah, but there is a seed in the practice of training the children, preparing them for full participation in the group life, and the matter of having them blessed by the religious leaders of the community. It is interesting to note that this passage attracted the attention of and drew expressions from Schechter and Kohler as to the analogy of this to Bar Mitzvah.

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Another statement in the same vein suggests a germ of the Bar Mitzvah idea: "When the heathen begets a son he consecrates him to idolatrous practices. The Israelite has his son circumcised and the rite of redemption of the first-born performed, and as soon as he becomes of age he brings him into the synagogue and school in order that he may bless the name of God each day, and say the benediction over the Torah." Too much importance should ~~not~~ be laid upon these quotations, but they do serve to show that the idea of the boy eventually formally assuming his responsibility is found earlier than the 14th century.

77

The Midrash very definitely states that a man must concern himself with his son and care for him until he is thirteen years old,

from that time on he says, "Blessed be He Who has removed this responsibility from me." Löw insists that the Midrash in no manner intended to introduce a benediction, but that later misunderstanding gave rise to it with this as foundation. This will be discussed later.

<sup>78</sup>  
Löw gives the following account of the Bar Mitzvah institution:  
"The institution of Bar Mitzvah was created and developed between the early decades of the 14th century and the early decades of the 19th century. In its nature and practice it is an anti-Talmudic reform. It finds its origin in Germany. The expression Bar Mitzvah reveals an innovation which was not at all in practice before the 14th century. The older authorities of the middle ages called one who came of age Gadol or Bar Onshin, even until the time of Asher b. Jehiel <sup>79</sup> who still uses the older terms.

✓ "The expression Bar Mitzvah as we know it appears for the first time in Mordecai b. Hillel <sup>79a</sup>, cited by Jacob ha-Levi and Moses Isserles, Darke Mosche Or.Chayim 225,1. The first to speak of his own Bar Mitzvah is the pupil of Jacob ha-Levi, Salomon Steiward. <sup>80</sup> /

"It designates a boy who has passed his thirteenth year and is so considered as being of age even though he has not yet reached puberty. Undeniably it was a step forward that they completely did away with the practice of examining the katan for pubertal signs and made the ritual and rite attending the coming of age exclusively one dependent upon age. By the judgment of the Talmud <sup>81</sup> this progressive step could not have been justified, nor do the Orthodox fail to express their displeasure at this. Just as the institution itself, so the ceremonial apparatus with which it is surrounded stands in direct contradiction to the Talmud. This is true especially concerning phylacteries. In the 12th century a lone voice was raised which demanded that boys not be permitted to lay tefillin before the end of their thirteenth year. This demand, however, as anti-Talmudic, did not meet with approv-

al; in the 16th century it was universally recognized in Germany<sup>82</sup> and Poland.

"In the 15th century in Poland the Orthodox were inclined to shut out unmarried men and young married men from laying tefillin because<sup>83</sup> of their not altogether pure thoughts. In the 17th century it was already customary to permit the boy to begin the laying of tefillin two<sup>84</sup> or three months before his Bar Mitzvah.

"The festive announcement of the attainment of age takes place through the act of calling the Bar Mitzvah to the Torah. This act is a joyful occasion and a privilege which he has heretofore not enjoyed. This interpretation vindicates the act and unsuspectingly takes a stand in opposition to the Talmud, for by right, according to the Talmud<sup>85</sup> the minor may be called to the Torah, and in this respect no distinction exists between the Katan and the Gadol. Already in the 13th century among the German and French Jews the minor has forfeited this right. In France boys under thirteen were called to the Torah only on Simchas Torah.

"Among the Ashkenazim in the 16th century the calling up of the Bar Mitzvah to the Torah<sup>85a</sup> was obligatory<sup>86</sup> and in many communities he read the whole Scriptural portion. Among the Sephardim the practice continued of merely calling the minor to the Torah, according to Talmudic practice.

"In many communities it is at present customary for the Bar Mitzvah to read the Haftarah, and so in solemnity through this activity set aside for him he wins his place as one of age in the eyes of the laity. He who knows the sources recognizes that this innovation is also not in accord with the Halacha. For even there where the Katan after a period of time lost the privilege of appearing among the seven men before the Torah they did permit him to say the Haftarah. He was only excluded by certain casuists from reading designated Hafta-

roth. From the standpoint of the Halacha, however, the Haftarah is only the fit portion of the Bar Mitzvah as an adequate expression of his having attained his majority.

We may summarize the preceding comments of Löw with regard to the inception and early development of the institution by stating that as the institution crystallized some of the prerogatives which the boy in an earlier age enjoyed as a minor, as part of the program of integration, were deferred to the time of Bar Mitzvah and were given to him then for the first time. Chief among these prerogatives, as has been noted, were the wearing of tefillin and the right to be called to the Torah, especially for the Haftarah.

Further consideration of the history of Bar Mitzvah as an institution involves an analysis and a history of the component parts of the ceremony, what Löw called the "ceremonial apparatus", namely, the Baruch She'patarani, the Seudah, and the Derascha.

#### Baruch She'patarani

An integral part of the traditional Bar Mitzvah celebration is the father's benediction. When the son reaches the age of thirteen the father goes to the synagogue, is called to the Torah, and recites the following: "Blessed be He Who has freed me from being responsible for this young man's conduct."

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The source for this benediction is traced back to a responsum of Asher b. Jehiel who gives it the usual formula: Halacha la'Moshe mi' Sinai, that it is part of the oral tradition handed to Moses at Sinai and transmitted in accordance with the chain of tradition outlined in Aboth<sup>89</sup>. The phraseology for the benediction is derived from the statement in the Midrash<sup>90</sup>: "Rabbi Eliezer says, 'A man has to support and care for his son until he is thirteen years old, thenceforth he says Blessed be He Who has relieved me of this obligation'."

<sup>91</sup> Isserles states that the father of the Bar Mitzvah pronounces the

benediction, and he cites two opinions as to the form the benediction takes; in the one the benediction is in complete form, viz., Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who hast freed me, etc. He gives as his own opinion that the formula including the name of God, King of the Universe should be omitted.

92

In the 18th century the Beure Hagra insists that the full form of the benediction, including the Shem va'Malchuth, should be pronounced by the father.

It has already been seen in connection with the problem of responsibility that a certain amount of confusion existed with regard to the throwing off of responsibility: whether the child had heretofore been responsible for acts of the father and was so liable even to death for what the father might do, and was freed from this at thirteen, a notion probably based on the statement from the Decalogue, or the notion that the father bore the sins of the child until it was thirteen, a somewhat more lenient view, though not yet up to the spirit of Ezekiel with his notion of personal responsibility throughout.

Löw states that "at the basis of the whole benediction is a misunderstanding. Those words in the Torah which refer to Esau and Jacob, "The boys grew up", the Midrash comments on with the following simile: "A myrtle and a thornbush grew side by side. After they had blossomed the former made itself noticeable through its fragrance and the other through its thorns. So also Esau and Jacob. Up to their thirteenth year they both attended school. After thirteen Jacob turned to the school, Esau toward the temples of the idols." The fundamental background of this simile consists in this that the male youth at the time of this Midrash teacher were accustomed to attend the Bible school until the completion of their thirteenth year. Those who wished to devote themselves to the study of law went from the Bible school to the Talmud school. The Midrash in its way presumes to place those in-

cidents in the time of the Patriarchs. The mention of the age of thirteen leads the Midrash editor to interpolate the saying of Rabbi Eliezer that a man should busy himself with his son until his thirteenth year, that is, to give him instruction, and thenceforth to say, 'Blessed be He Who has freed me from the responsibility of this fellow.' These last words cannot be understood in their natural sense in any other way than as they occur in the text. The explanation of Mordecai Jaffa<sup>96</sup> that the father thanks God that the son may no longer be punished for the father's sins is inadmissible. But the theory itself is not altogether foreign to the Talmud. In some supernatural way some of the sins of the father bring about the death of the children: violation of vows<sup>97</sup>, neglecting to take part in caring for the needs at the death of worthy people<sup>98</sup>. The saying runs quite generally,<sup>99</sup> "Aboth masim ba'avon atzmum, u'vanim masim ba'avon abotham", which even Maimonides takes up in his code and tries to motivate....

"The Midrash does not think of a benediction, and indeed could not think of such a thing according to the ritual of the time. The misunderstanding can be attributed only to the degenerate state of Talmudic learning among German Jews in the 14th century. In the 16th century the benediction itself was dispensed with in accord with Talmudic legitimation, and its character as a benediction was stripped.<sup>100</sup> The Sephardim give no place to this benediction in their liturgy."

It is interesting to note that the interpretation given to this benediction became so much a part of the thinking of the Jew with regard to the thirteen year old boy that we find a society for the care of orphans<sup>101</sup> in Fuerth in 1763 stating that the society cares for the orphans until they are thirteen. It is as though the society then felt itself freed from any further responsibility.

Löw states that in many German and Polish communities the custom grew up to give presents to the Bar Mitzvah, and to have him blessed by the rabbi.

"The following circumstances helped not a little to make the Bar Mitzvah celebration popular. The classification of ages by Judah b. Tema was early made part of the Tractate Aboth, and became part of the liturgy, thus being known even to the unlearned who might otherwise never have seen this passage. This classification contains the sentence: "The thirteen year old boy is ready for the fulfillment of religious commandments". This sentence is considered foundation for the Bar Mitzvah celebration. But the author of this sentence knew nothing of the celebration. He merely wished to say that at the age of thirteen as a rule ritual maturity is coincident with this age and with the signs of puberty.

"After the synagogue Bar Mitzvah ceremony became well-liked it insinuated itself into the family circle. This happened first among  
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the German Jews. But the Bar Mitzvah ceremony was never as common as circumcision. Important facts in the Midrashim which date from the Talmudic period and stood the circumcision feast in good stead could naturally not be sought out in favor of the Bar Mitzvah feast. And the time was past when innovations could hope to find universal acceptance. The production of piyyutim had ceased. Bar Mitzvah therefore found no poetic cultivation. Only in Morocco was the Bar Mitzvah,  
103  
who was called to the Torah, greeted with a Hebrew poem."

In this way Löw accounts for the popularity of the ceremony on the one hand, and shows why it was not even more popular on the other. Certainly the seudah, or party, must have been one of the most attractive features of the celebration wherever it was held.

There is certainly no connection between the Bar Mitzvah seudah and the feasts that sometimes accompanied rites of puberty among primitive peoples.<sup>104</sup> The seudah is justified only on the grounds that it is of a religious nature. Inasmuch as it formed but the setting for the discourse or derascha, to be considered a little further on.

<sup>105</sup> Solomon Luria says: "Concerning the feast of Bar Mitzvah which the German Jews make there is no feast which is a greater mitzvah to make, because thereby one praises God and makes known that the boy has merited to become Bar Mitzvah; and the mitzvah of the parents is great because they have reared a son and brought him into the covenant of the Torah."

<sup>106</sup> Abrahams, in listing the "seudoth mitzvah" or commandment meals, says that from the fifteenth century large parties were held at the Bar Mitzvah. Though the Jewish authorities set their faces against all banquets except those of a semi-religious character<sup>107</sup> it early became necessary to curb the hospitable excesses which occurred on even the permitted occasions.

<sup>108</sup> Interestingly enough we find in Asaph an account of the communal regulations in Cracow in 1595 which place a tax on the Bar Mitzvah seudah: "And so, if he (the father) makes a seudah for the Bar Mitzvah of his son he shall also give a <sup>ft</sup>give of 'Chai', that is, eighteen parutos to the Hebrah." It is not unusual to find this apparently odd sum of eighteen coins stipulated as a gift, since the Hebrew equivalent of eighteen is 'ח , meaning life, and the giver has in mind the idea: "May it spell life!"<sup>109</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Ezekiel Landau (1720-1793) says that the Bar Mitzvah seudah is to be regarded in the same category as a siyyum and may be attended even by one during the twelve months of mourning if the Bar Mitzvah boy delivers a derascha, or if the seudah falls out on the actual day when the boy is Bar Mitzvah. This implies that when the seudah is deferred

to the following Sabbath when the boy goes to the synagogue and is called to the Torah, attendance is forbidden the mourner. The first restriction is of course significant here, in that the qualification of a proper seudah is that it be but the setting for the derascha, and so the seudah takes on a semi-religious character.

The ever-present desire to project new customs or new institutions back into an earlier period, such as we saw in the matter of Esau and Jacob attending the school until thirteen, probably accounts for the fact that some commentators<sup>111</sup> notice the double language in the verse: "And the child grew, and was weaned", (Genesis 21<sup>8</sup>), and they say it refers to the banquet given by Abraham on the day that Isaac was weaned<sup>112</sup> from the Yetzer Ra and became Bar Mitzvah.

In summary: The seudah, forming the setting for the derascha, had its origin in the 15th century among the German Jews, and was originally a semi-religious occasion. The pictures of actual celebrations such as those of Gordon, Levin, and others referred to above would lead one to believe that the seudah assumed a leading role in the celebration. Surely, today, where the Bar Mitzvah is celebrated the seudah is characteristically a part of the ceremonies. It was the derascha, for which the seudah was originally but the setting, that degenerated.

#### The Bar Mitzvah Derascha

<sup>113</sup>Abrahams says that "sermons in the home were a common feature of Jewish life. These sermons often took the form of learned discussions, and a distinguished guest repaid his host's hospitality by a chiddush, a novel thought on a religious topic or some ingenious explanation of a Biblical difficulty. Boys delivered orations at the table on their Bar Mitzvah, but the custom does not present itself earlier than the 16th century."

It seems that the earliest reference to the Bar Mitzvah delivering

a derascha is to be found in the aforementioned passage from Solomon  
<sup>114</sup>  
 Luria . Here the derascha is a dialectic discourse based on the interpretation of a Talmudic passage.

If it seems strange that a thirteen year old boy should deliver so learned a disquisition we need only consult a statement of Solomon  
<sup>115</sup>  
 Maimon concerning himself when he was but eleven years old: "I was to prepare myself for a disputation to be held on my marriage day, which would be in two month's time."

The derascha seems to have been a natural outgrowth of the practice of training boys rather early in life in the technique of the Talmud, and perhaps also the universal desire of parents to enjoy "nachas" in their children; and surely nothing could have been more gratifying to the parents than seeing and hearing their young son orate and argue Talmudically with the invited guests at the seudah.

Löw states that "the initiative in the matter of the derascha was taken by the Polish Jews where the most precocious Talmudists flourished in the 16th century. The derascha deals with a halachic theme, and was delivered before or during the seudah by the little hero of the festival. In certain exceptional cases the deraschan was also the author of his pilpulistic production. But even when this was the intellectual product of another he had to become thoroughly familiar with its contents for only thus could he succeed in parrying the pseudo-logic wherewith the mature Talmudists interrupted him, so that he might have the opportunity in the presence of his parents and relatives to show off his knowledge and quick-wittedness.

"It is self-evident that such examinations could be employed with only the most gifted children. Less gifted ones could hardly find the thread of their dissertation after an interruption. Boys not fitted for the study of the Talmud or having no inclination for it had to

remain quiet during the Bar Mitzvah meal. Their parents cast envious glances towards those whose sons on similar occasions already conducted themselves as promising Talmudists, or who were prepared to submit themselves to such an examination. It was because of this pilpulistic derascha that the seudah had religious significance. The guests were regaled with hagadic fare. The Hagadic lecture (in addition) was held by the rabbi, or where the rabbi seldom appeared at the domestic ceremony in larger cities they were held by other Talmudists. These concerned themselves partly with the Torah reading of the week or the Haftarah, but especially with the Bar Mitzvah ceremony itself. Seldom did he fail to mention that good impulses accompany the attaining of age, while evil inclinations are inextricably part of the Katan... Now he can point to the responsibility to which the Katan was not subjected.

"The Bar Mitzvah derascha, halachic or agadic, is similar, as we can readily expect, both in content and in form, in its direction and in its sphere, to the vulgar and degenerate derasch. As a classical example from the second half of the 16th century we mention the Bar Mitzvah derasch of Efraim Lentschütz, (d. 1619). The senseless play of pictures and words was not only produced by confused minds but also were generally marvelled at and praised. The most insipid allegory was considered the most scintillating style. Here we have the story of a war between the quadruple alliance and the pentapolitan in the thirteenth year, which belongs to the story of Abraham in Genesis 14<sup>4</sup>, dragged by Rabbi Efraim into the circle of Bar Mitzvah reflections. The war described points to the struggle which passion has with the soul. The four kings represent the four elements, also the world of sense; the fifth represents the soul which is similar to the divine essence in five parts, and therefore also has five names. He was not familiar with the decree of excommunication of Solomon b. Adret and

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his associates which hung over the heads of preachers in the Provence who interpreted the war in question allegorically.

"Most original is the allusion to marital opinions during the Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Rabbi Efraim says: When a man lives with his wife ten years in childless marriage he is not only justified but also duty-bound to dissolve the marriage by a divorce, and to take steps for a new marriage. Now the boy lives up to his tenth year in childless marriage, i.e. in a marriage with evil instincts unfruitful of good deeds. This he does not recognize until his tenth year when his eyes are opened by the study of Mishna, and he has to end the union with his unfruitful wife and marry the Torah. To this end he must allow three more years to pass in order to wait for the conception aptitude of his new helpmate.

"We might think that the nonsense of the old derasch would come to an end with this sort of reasoning. This however is not the case. Rabbi Efraim Lentschütz, its innovator, belonged to the solid darshan-im. As a famous preacher he was called to the Prague community from Poland. The ordinary darshanim on various occasions, as well as on the Bar Mitzvah festival, delivered themselves of far more quaint and unrhymed ideas without coming any closer to the tastes of their listeners or discouraging the applause of the crowd."

The derasch, having arisen out of the type of religious education received by the boy, continued to reflect the education he received. When the emphasis was laid upon Talmudic study the derasch was Talmudic, and when the advent of emancipation brought secular education it was only natural that it should reflect itself in the derasch. In those countries where emancipation was slow and the secularization of education was delayed the old type of derasch continued, but in a country like Germany the Bar Mitzvah came to be a sort of stock-taking or public examination of the boy's religious training. Zunz <sup>116</sup> says

that "since the introduction of religious instruction there has been bound up with this celebration an admonition on the part of the teacher, an examination of the most important studies, and sometimes also the confession of faith through an oath on the part of the boy." Here, of course, he is leading up to the change from Bar Mitzvah to Confirmation, but at present the significance lies in the fact that the Bar Mitzvah changed its character in proportion as the religious educational training of the boy has changed.

An examination of some of the German *deraschoth* of the 19th century shows us that the talmudic *derasch* has given way to a simplified *derascha* which is actually a sermonette, and is usually based on a Biblical verse, ~~other~~ <sup>117</sup> than a halachic or agadic dissertation in the talmudic style. Ehrentheil's <sup>117</sup> volume included quite a number of Bar Mitzvah *deraschoth* which follow a set pattern. There is the opening sentence which in one way or another expresses the idea that today the boy joins the ranks of the congregation of Israel and will henceforth share in its responsibilities and privileges. Then follows an exposition of some Biblical verse, taken from the section of the week, then a paragraph of thanks to his parents and teachers for all they have done for him, (as though they will not do more), and the conclusion in the form of a prayer that he may be a worthy son of Israel. Significantly enough the title of the volume would lead one to think of the Bar Mitzvah as fused with Confirmation: "Confirmations-Reden für den Barmizwa."

<sup>118</sup>  
We find a similar volume by Plessner. He speaks of the Bar Mitzvah as the first step towards independence, the assuming of religious responsibility, and the new way of life. "Der heutige Tag ist der erste deine Selbstständigkeit", says the Rabbi to the boy. "Heute sprach dein Vater das für dich nicht gleichgültige Wort aus:

...und ihr sollt hüten die Aufträge  
das Herrn; denn heute wirst du ja ein <sup>היום היום</sup> , das heist ein  
kind der Religion!"

119  
Wolff's volume includes addresses for the teacher to the Bar  
Mitzvah. These stress the idea that the boy is now joining the ranks  
of Israel, that he has now reached religious maturity. The chief mer-  
it of this section of the volume lies in the prayers for Bar Mitzvah.

120  
Katz has given us a volume which succeeds in its attempt to make  
the Bar Mitzvah, at least as far as the derascha is concerned, accept-  
able today. The volume is a collection of sermonettes written for the  
boy to deliver. At times the talks go beyond what might be expected  
of a boy thirteen years old to feel and express, but on the whole the  
volume is good. Some of the themes are: devotion to Jewish learning;  
unity of Israel; mission of Israel; Bar Mitzvah is the entrance into  
the fold of Israel; continued study after Bar Mitzvah; "this day marks  
my becoming a Jew and a man.."; spiritual Zion in exile; and others.  
They close with a word of thanks to the parents and a prayer. The ap-  
purtenances of Bar Mitzvah are utilized in good homilectic fashion:  
tefillin, tzizith, tallis, etc.

121  
A volume containing speeches in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English  
by numerous authors gives one a fair notion of the ideas most commonly  
expressed. These fall into sentimentalism in tribute to the pain, suf-  
fering, watchful nights, and care-laden days of parents; with such  
well-worn texts as "I am a Hebrew" and "I seek my brethren" the con-  
cept of the boy entering upon membership in the group is expounded;  
the boy again and again reminds himself, and his congregation, that  
he will not overlook his responsibilities and duties towards his re-  
ligion when he begins to share in the privileges and joys of the re-  
ligiously mature person.

So it becomes evident that the modern derascha eloquently proclaims

the status of religious instruction. No longer do we find the tal-mudic derascha composed by the boy, but the whole gamut has been run; today the speech is written for the boy, and is generally of a rather non-descript type, attempting to reveal none of the deficiencies in the boy's preparation. The situation today is well described in a source from the 17th century: <sup>122</sup> "Before the boy is to become Bar Mitzvah his father wants him to know the whole Torah "on one foot", a thing which is humanly impossible. The father doesn't want to spend money on the boy, especially to pay for having him taught, and the result of this is that when the teacher says to the father: "Your son is learning Gemara", he says to himself that the boy knows enough. This results in teaching which is the reverse of the normal. Before he can pray they teach him chumash; before he knows chumash they teach him a perek of Mishna, and then Gemara, which is the greatest wisdom, but the child's mind can't carry it all, and he doesn't even know his own affairs, and he chirps like a bird not knowing what he chirps...."

#### Preparation

But we must not think that there was no prescribed preparation for the Bar Mitzvah. We have already seen the preparation in Morocco. Even in the more degenerate communities boys were trained to the best ability of the community up until they were thirteen. We have seen that the boy was trained in the wearing of the tefillin just before Bar Mitzvah. Asaph <sup>123</sup> cites a communal regulation in Cracow (1595) that it is one of the duties of the rabbi to teach any boy approaching his thirteenth year in the Seder Mitzvoth Tefillin, the regulations for the wearing of tefillin. This is typical.

In another place Asaph <sup>124</sup> cites the rule of the Amsterdam Society for the Rearing of Orphans, (1738), that every orphan must study until he is Bar Mitzvah.

10.

In the matter of wearing tzizith the practice is for the Katan, even, to wear the talith katan, but a real talith is not even given to the boy at Bar Mitzvah, but is deferred until the young man<sup>125</sup> marries.

In earlier times when the training of the Jewish youth was most intensive there was no need for a protracted period of preparation for the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, but in later times, as today, the boy must be arduously drilled in the chanting of some little portion of the weekly Torah reading or the Haftarah. Thus, instead of the Bar Mitzvah being the climax of a long and systematic period of integration into the group it is a ceremony artificially given that appearance. This constitutes one of the chief objections to it, and in no small degree contributed to the rise of a substitute ceremony which we shall discuss presently.

#### The Orphan

There remains another point yet to be considered. How did it come about that orphans put on tefillin earlier than other boys? In the<sup>126</sup> Sefer Ta'ameh ha'Minhagim u'Makoreh ha'Dinim<sup>127</sup>, Abraham Isaac Sperling is quoted: "It is further written that there is a custom for orphans to lay tefillin earlier than the Bar Mitzvah, and this is the reason, that he may thereby add to the merit of the deceased parent." Inasmuch as the orphan may now also participate in other honors that would otherwise be denied him until after Bar Mitzvah, such as reading the service as the Shaliach Tzibur, he, in a manner, calls to the attention of the powers that rule the universe that so-and-so, the deceased parent, deserves special merit for having a son who is fulfilling the mitzvoth.

#### "The Wig"

One last consideration brings us to the matter of a curious pract-

ice referred to by Abrahams and Schechter, namely, that of cutting the Bar Mitzvah boy's hair, and the wearing of a wig. No other authorities even do so much as mention it, and were it not for the standing of these men as reliable sources of information it might be omitted.

Abrahams states: "A curious rite was connected with cutting the Bar Mitzvah boy's hair. Schudt tells us that the boy wore a wig on the occasion. The hair cutting on the thirteenth birthday in Tetuan is described in Benjamin II, p.33. In other parts of the East, in Arabia and Palestine, the first hair-cutting of the boy after the fourth birthday is celebrated with much formality, and all the guests participate in the honour of shearing off a few hairs."

Schechter says: "The Bar Mitzvah was signalized by various rites and ceremonies, and by the bestowing on him of beautiful presents. I miss only the wig which used to form the chief ornament of the boy on this happy day."

If this rite ever was a part of the celebration it certainly had no traditional foundation, and has passed completely out of the institution as it now exists. Abrahams attempt to connect the custom with the peculiar practice of shearing the hair and dedicating it seems most fanciful. In the case of Schechter we can understand it better when we realize that he lived in England. In those localities where the wig was an appurtenance of dignity, such as was worn by English magistrates, the practice probably enjoyed a brief vogue.

#### Chapter IV

#### Confirmation

130

Xunz tells us that "Confirmation is part of the change in the synagogue service, discarding of Yiddish-German, and a lessening of stress on German lectures in Kabbalistic books and the flavor of trivial deraschoth...Here there awoke in Israel the longing for a

divine service which possessed edification and instruction...Confirmation as part of the service supplied this longing."

We have already seen that Löw expressed somewhat the same discontent. Both of these men looked upon Bar Mitzvah as a form which had lost any genuine religious value it might have possessed, and they lamented especially the low state to which the derascha had fallen. But before Judaism could be expected to throw overboard an institution hallowed by even a few centuries more discontent than that felt by a few of the intelligent leaders for an older form would have to be evidenced; and more than that, some miracle must be wrought before that group, having once set aside such a form, would turn to a substitute which was based primarily upon a different outlook of Jewish life and practice and adopt a form similar to and directly named after a rite observed in the Christian Church.

Here follows a consideration of the deficiencies felt in the Bar Mitzvah; then Christian Confirmation; the early history of Jewish Confirmation; the opposition to it; Confirmation in Reform Prayer-books; preparation of Confirmands; the Confirmation service itself; its abuses; and finally, an evaluation of Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation and their significance today.

#### Opposition to Bar Mitzvah

<sup>131</sup>  
Philipson tells us, "Since the Bar Mitzvah is an antiquated, soulless ceremony with no meaning for us and our time, some public expression of belief is necessary".... "It is because of the soullessness, the meaninglessness and the dry formality of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony that the confirmation has been introduced."<sup>132</sup>

<sup>133</sup>  
Kohler refers to Bar Mitzvah as an anadronism. He says: Now I ask, is the calling up of the thirteen year old lad to become Bar Mitzvah by reading or listening to the reading of the Torah, which is still the practice in many Reform congregations, in harmony with

the whole of our Reform service? To be sure it was a grand and glorious privilege of each individual member of the congregation to be called up...to read aloud from the book of the law and thus be made a participant of the great spiritual heritage of the people of God... Since the calling up of members of the congregation to read from the Scroll of the Law has been abolished in the Reform synagogue, the whole Bar Mitzvah rite lost all meaning, and the calling up of the same is nothing less than a sham....But there is a greater principle involved. When Confirmation...was introduced into the modern synagogue. the early Reform leaders had chiefly one object in view, viz., to emancipate religion from the oriental view which regards religion in the main as the concern of man only, and not of woman, and therefore essentially and intently neglects the religious training of the girl. In clear and emphatic opposition to such Orientalism as still prevails ...the religious instruction was systematically extended so as to include the girls, and after the conclusion of the course of instruction, the young woman was solemnly initiated into the faith of the fathers at the age ~~age~~ of maturity just as was the young man...."

From a review of the facts it would seem that the contention against Bar Mitzvah that it discriminated against the girls is a mere rationalization, and after-thought in the defense of Confirmation when it in turn was attacked by those who still retained the Bar Mitzvah in preference to Confirmation. When we consider the history of Confirmation it will be seen that it varied but slightly from the traditional Bar Mitzvah, at first, and only gradually assumed those features which mark it off so definitely from the older rite.

#### Christian Rites

134  
Scannell refers to Confirmation as "a sacrament in which the Holy Ghost is given to those already baptised in order to make them strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ...In the

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early ages of the church, Confirmation was part of the rite of initiation, and consequently was administered immediately after baptism. There was no fixed age, but it was deferred until the attainment of reason, and the child to be confirmed had to be at least seven years old, though it might take place earlier in cases of extreme danger or fear of death. The act of Confirmation imparts an increase of sanctifying grace which makes the recipient a "perfect Christian".

"Melanchthon taught that Confirmation was a vain ceremony and was formerly nothing but a catechism in which those who were approaching adolescence gave account of their faith before the church. This attitude was condemned by the Council of Trent. The Catholic Church maintained that only the bishop could confirm, Melanchthon held that any priest whatsoever could be the minister.

Peculiarly enough the church states that regarding the obligation of receiving the sacrament it is admitted that Confirmation is not necessary as an indispensable means of salvation.

"The Lutheran Church retains some sort of Confirmation to the present day. It consists of the examination of the candidate in Christian doctrine by the pastors or members of the consistory, and the renewal by the candidate of the profession of faith made for him at the time of his baptism by his godparents.

"The Anglican Church holds that Confirmation is not to be counted for a sacrament of the Gospel...for it has not the like nature of sacraments. But like the Lutheran Churches it retains the confirmation of children by examining them of their knowledge in their articles of faith and joining thereto the prayers of the church for them."

135

It is interesting to note that "The Sacrament may be administered at any time, but preferably in Pentecost Week." There is of course no connection between this and the observance of Confirmation on

Shebuoth, but the coincidence is noteworthy.

One can readily see that the Jewish Confirmation presents striking similarities to the Protestant rites, but in no manner possesses the sacramental character of the Catholic Confirmation. There were attempts to make Confirmation in a manner compulsory<sup>136</sup>, as was done by the Danish government in an edict of March 14, 1814: The youth is to be taught and confirmed according to an authoritative religious book. They can be taught and confirmed only by authoritative persons. Unless a boy or girl can give proof of having been confirmed no civil status will be granted. The clergy, (supposedly Jewish), is to take care of these records."

It seems logical to assume that the Protestant Church was influenced by the desire to break away from the sacramental character of the Catholic Confirmation, and in this was aided by the educational technique of the period wherein catechisms were the handtool of dogmatic teaching. The Jewish school, no less, was influenced ~~was influenced~~ by the changed method of religious as well as general instruction.<sup>137</sup> Strassburger tells us that "whereas religious instruction formerly consisted merely of translating the Bible and Talmudic writings, there now appeared numerous religious books by Behr, Philippsohn, Herxheimer, and others. Many of these works contained only moral instruction, many imitations of Christian catechisms, many consisted entirely of specific Jewish religious material. Girls shared equally with boys in this kind of instruction. As a result of these religious instructions the so-called Confirmation ceremony was introduced into Judaism."

Perhaps here we have an answer to the question: How did it happen that the Jews turned to a Christian practice? The new spirit of the age made the old type of religious instruction impossible, and the new method which replaced the old naturally followed the pattern of current techniques, namely, the catechism. Catechisms by their very

nature are conducive of dogmatic teaching, since a question is asked, and a ready answer which must be memorized by the pupil using the catechism is supplied. What questions would naturally be asked? Questions of faith and creed and religious belief. Here then is the link between the Protestant technique of examining candidates for Confirmation and the newer Jewish form which set about to revise or replace the Bar Mitzvah, the product of an older and now impossible course of religious instruction in the Talmud, the basis for the derascha.

Löw traces this change and the Protestant Christian influence as follows: <sup>138</sup> "Not only the Jewish but also the Christian, especially the Protestant, sermon fell into the sadly wrong way. To refined tastes the doors of the churches were as inapproachable as those of the synagogue. But while at first with Spener there set in a turn for the better the insipid sermon persisted far into the time of Lessing and Mendelssohn.

"From the first the education of the young was influenced by the movement of the time. In an ever-widening circle the Talmud ceased to be the object of instruction for the youth. The sermon of the Bar Mitzvah boy consequently fell away of itself, (since the sermon was based on his knowledge of the Talmud), and in Germany, the only scene of this revolution, the Bar Mitzvah celebration gradually disappeared from the series of family celebrations or, where it was still retained, it was entirely robbed of its doctrinal character. It shared the fate of the much-diminished synagogue cult. Since, as a sermon, there was no other way out of it for the Reformers than to borrow song and choral from the cult of the Protestants, they straightway made the experiment of transplanting the Protestant Confirmation to Jewish soil, and through this to breathe a new spirit into the Bar Mitzvah celebration. With this act they inaugurated the next period in the

development of the Bar Mitzvah celebration.

"The Protestant Confirmation which was adopted by the Jewish Reformers is essentially different from its Catholic namesake. The Catholic Confirmation is considered a sacrament. Its consummation, the oldest and most important part of which, the laying on of hands and anointing, in and acknowledged measure were taken over from the Jewish rite, belongs to the privileges of the bishop. In the second century it was bound up with baptism; later it was separated from it and executed on seven year old children. Magic results were attributed to it.

"All this was cast aside by Protestant symbolism. The act of Confirmation which the Reformers recommended had throughout nothing magical and mystical; it is entirely moral-religious stimulation, which was anticipated because of the confession of faith and the solemn promise or vow of the creed on the part of the confirmands, and the invocation of God's blessing on the part of the confirming minister. Actually it was only the leavestaking of childhood and the assumption of membership in the community.

"Confirmation had its developmental phases among the Protestants. It was first introduced on the 17th century, and only gradually became effective. At first only individuals were confirmed, privately, then openly and in whole communities, whereby the conclusions of the churches of the land were made authoritative. In many parts of Germany universal introduction occurred only in the third decade of the 17th century. In the time before this the Protestants were far from considering Confirmation as an integral part of their religious rites.

"Consequently Confirmation is not an original Jewish adaptation, nor did its spokesmen claim for it the attribute of originality. It takes its place with other innovations of earlier centuries. As its

precedents we may mention as examples: Foreign names, (Latinizing, Anglocizing, etc.); god-father institution; parchment of Torah scrolls; rhymed piyyutin; the transfer of circumcision and weddings to the synagogue; uniting the nuptials with the consummation of the marriage; the Great Sabbath; window-paintings in synagogue; the use of eggs on Pessach night; the green adornments of the synagogue on the Feast of Weeks; the ordination of teachers; the collection-boxes and the foreign songs in all synagogues; and the instruments for greeting the Sabbath in many synagogues. In common with the institution of the god-father Confirmation has also a foreign name.

"On the other hand, however, there was no lack of historical ties. Religious declarations upon the attainment of age, as an institution, was already at home in the German synagogues for two centuries, as it found expression in the Protestant church through Confirmation. A greater or less amount of activity was assigned to the coming out of the Bar Mitzvah. Least of all was the blessing of the rabbi an unheard of innovation."

#### Early History of and the Struggle against Confirmation

We have seen that changed conditions made for discontent with Bar Mitzvah and for innovations, wherever they were to be copied. <sup>139</sup> Zunz tells us that "since the introduction of religious instruction there has been bound up with the Bar Mitzvah celebration an admonition on the part of the teacher, an examination in the most important studies, and sometimes also the confession of faith through an oath on the part of the boy; hence it derives its name Confirmation."

Surely the name was taken over from the Christian rite, and this statement of Zunz may evidence but a rationalization of the name when opposition to it was felt. There was sufficient foundation already in the older rite for much that characterized Confirmation, and there was undoubtedly room for improvement concerning Bar Mitzvah,

but for all intents and purposes Bar Mitzvah was thrown overboard, and the name of the Christian rite was assumed. This accounts for much of the opposition met by the introduction of Confirmation.

We may attribute this to Israel Jacobson. Graetz<sup>140</sup> says of him: "He also introduced new forms and methods borrowed from the Church, such as German alongside Hebrew prayers, insipid German songs by the side of the psalms pregnant with thought, and the ceremony of confessing the faith, (Confirmation), for half-grown boys and girls, an idea without meaning in Judaism." Again<sup>141</sup> he says: "The Hamburg reforms thus were adopted in some parts....at least the rite of confirmation, imitated from the Church, was introduced."

The first official recognition was extended to the ceremony by the Jewish Consistory of Cassel, March 15, 1809; it devoted two paragraphs to the duties of the rabbi, which read as follows: "The rabbi must supervise the schools and charitable institutions of the Jews so that the good intention of the state may be realized. He must prepare the young for confirmation and himself perform the act of confirming them."<sup>142</sup>

The mere fact that the consistory speaks of the Confirmation as one of the duties of the rabbi leads us logically to infer that such a ceremony had previously been performed, and, in fact, Zunz<sup>143</sup> mentions a confirmation as early as 1803 in Dessau.

Just as in the case of Bar Mitzvah we must not assume that at this early time the ceremony was the ceremony we know today.

Marcus<sup>144</sup> evaluates Jacobson and his work. He speaks of Confirmation as having been "introduced to help the children live according to the religious and moral law and loyally to conform to the statutes of the land. The ceremony was developed in Westphalia. Ehrenberg, however, had confirmed a boy as early as August, 1807". (Zunz, as cited

above, records an earlier Confirmation.) "In Dessau, Mendelssohn's old home, Confirmation for boys alone was permissible if the parents requested it, but by a decree of April 26, 1809, the ceremony was extended in Westphalia to include girls. The first public confirmation with choir and instrumental accompaniment was probably held in Cassel, 1810, on a Sabbath in the community synagogue. It was felt that the Bar Mitzvah ceremony taught nothing. Confirmation would help fight the inroads of religion; it would strengthen the love for the faith. It would help the children to know Judaism."

This seems a fairer criticism of Bar Mitzvah and a juster claim and justification for the rise of Confirmation. Couple with this the general spirit of the times, when, in seeking new forms hymns and chorals were borrowed from the church, and we are not surprised that in renovating the older rite of Bar Mitzvah they also turned to the Church for its rite of Confirmation.

It is well now to consider what ideas were attached to this new ceremony. The Bar Mitzvah was the celebration of the attainment of the age of religious responsibility. The Confirmation took on notions current at the time of its inception, namely, a "solemn graduation from the school of religious and ethical instruction intended to consecrate the young to their duties as Jews." <sup>145</sup> Whether or not Confirmation was an initiation seems never to have been clear. Even within this single article by Kohler and Landsberg we have a direct contradiction: "Confirmation is the solemn form of initiation of the Jewish youth into their ancestral faith".....yet later we find: "It does not mean initiation into the faith, or admission into the Jewish community, but is a declaration of the candidates, after having been sufficiently instructed in their duties as Jews, and being imbued with enthusiasm for their religion, to be resolved to live as Jews and

Jewesses."

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Philipson defines: "Confirmation would then mean for us that public impressive ceremonial whereby the confirmands shall declare their purpose to believe in and uphold the principles of Judaism, a responsible, self-actuated confession of their religious belief."

For the Reform Jew there had to be a redefinition of terms with regard to this ceremonial institution upon reaching the age of religious maturity. Whereas the Bar Mitzvah assumed responsibility and donned tefillin, was called to the Torah, counted in a minyan, etc., there were no tefillin, no calling to the Torah, no boy's prerogative with regard to minyan in Reform. Those responsibilities he was to assume no longer were responsibilities. The void thus created left nothing but an empty shell of a ceremony, in truth. But were the reformers within the spirit of Judaism when they set up a confession of faith or an examination of faith, or a declaration of faith, or the exaction of a vow? This will be discussed later.

Important dates in the development of Confirmation:

147

1803: Confirmation in Dessau.

148

1807: Confirmation in Seesen and Wolfenbüttel.

149

1809: First official recognition by Westphalia Consistory.

150

1810: One boy confirmed and blessed by rabbi in Cassel. Here the ceremony was conducted in the school by the teacher.

1815: On Shebuoth Jacobson held the first Reform service in Berlin.

It was a private home service for the confirmation of his son,

151

Naphthali.

152

1816: Confirmation in Copenhagen.

1817: Jacobson introduced Confirmation into the Jewish Free School

153

in Berlin. Girls confirmed for the first time, (in Berlin).

154

1818: Confirmation in Hamburg.

1822: First mixed class of boys and girls confirmed by Dr. Kley.

It was the first time anywhere that Confirmation had taken  
place in a house of worship.

156

1828: Girls confirmed in Frankfort.

157

1831: Girls confirmed in Munich.

158

Scholarly Orthodox Rabbi Solomon Eger held Confirmation in

Braunschweig; this was considered a great victory for Reform.

159

1835: Legal sanction for confirming girls in Hessen and Saxony.

160

1841: Confirmation introduced in France, (Bordeaux).

161

1842: Confirmation in England; two boys and two girls confirmed in

162

London.

1843: Confirmation of mixed group in Paris by Grand Rabbi Ullman.

163

1846: On Shebuoth, Lillienthal confirmed a mixed group at Anshe Chesed

164

Congregation in New York.

1847-8: Oct. 11, 1847 Temple Emanuel Congregation, New York, resolved

upon having confirmation of boys and girls. First Confirmation

165

held on Shebuoth, 1848, at that temple.

166

1847: Confirmation introduced into Hungary, at Lugos.

Following this the leaders of Reform in America introduced with  
the zeal of pioneers new religious reforms, among them the Confirm-  
ation. This was true of Isaac M. Wise and others.

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From the fact reviewed we can draw certain conclusions. Confirmation was at first only a graduation exercise from the religious school, and was conducted by the teacher in the school, and only boys were confirmed. Gradually girls were admitted to the rite, then boys and girls were confirmed together. The exercise was observed at no fixed time, but gradually came to be performed on Shebuoth. The rabbi assumed the leading role as the ceremony took on religious import.

300.

The institution spread from Westphalia to other parts of Germany, and was finally taken up in other countries, including France, England, Denmark, Hungary, and the United States.

Löw speaks of the Confirmation as having passed through the home, school, and synagogue phases. "At the home and school Confirmation the Katan was originally occupied alone; instead of the pilpulistic discourse they let the confirmands give a pleasant talk. German confirmation speeches as a rule contain a sort of confession of faith, and have a rhetorical swing, while the Italian pass silently over the confession, and bear a haggadic stamp. Later Confirmation in the school was also extended to girls, and was celebrated with great solemnity. In the place of the Confirmation speech the religious examination came in; added to it came the address or the sermon of the confirmer. It didn't take long before confirmation was transferred to the synagogue. Here was added the blessing of the rabbi or preacher. In many places the confirmed boys were called to the Torah. Zunz and Jost spoke of the spread of Confirmation as a delightful advance of culture and a purification of religion. Even many orthodox rabbis, as Löb Berlin in Cassel and Solomon Eger in Braunschweig yielded in this to outside pressure inasmuch as confirmation already had much tradition behind it in that it confirmed males at thirteen years of age.

"When confirmation was introduced into France it was called, very significantly, "initiation religieuse"."

It has already been intimated that the claim for confirmation that it gave girls equal status with boys was but a rationalization. This is clearly brought out when one considers that there were confirmations of boys as early as 1800, as all agree, and as early as 1803 according to Zunz, yet there was no confirmation of girls until 1817, and no mixed classes of boys and girls until 1822. But the real opposition to Confirmation consisted in such arguments as these:

"It was decried as a servile imitation of Christianity, and entirely foreign to the spirit of Judaism." Graetz made this charge, too, as we have seen. The champions of confirmation were charged with nourishing secret designs on the perpetuation of the Jewish faith and a desire to open to the young a doorway into Christianity.

Another potent argument, cited by Kohler and Landsberg, which was used against confirmation was that it contradicted the principle that the Israelite is pledged by the covenant of Sinai at his birth, inasmuch as the confirmand is asked to pledge himself to Judaism as though he would have no heritage in that covenant without this pledge.

Opposition to confirmation took concrete form in the government edicts against it instigated by the Orthodox.

It is undoubtedly true that a reform in the Bar Mitzvah ceremony was necessary, and within the bounds of tradition such changes could have been wrought. It was perhaps unfortunate that these changes were not accomplished without offending great masses of Jews for whom the name Bar Mitzvah was meaningful, and for whom the adoption of a Christian name was distasteful.

#### Features of the Confirmation Service

It was only gradually that the celebration of the confirmation took on fixed forms. Out of the very factors that gave it rise we expect such features as the examination, since it was at first but a graduation exercise from the religious school. When the performance of this ceremony was transferred to the house of worship one finds the organ, choir, and chorals, together with the hymns lately taken over by Reform, taking their places in the exercises.

<sup>172</sup>  
Zunz says: The order of the celebration is customarily as follows: (a) Song, (b) Prayer, (c) Talk by teacher, (d) Examination, (e) Admonition of boys by teacher, (f) Oath or confession of faith

and prayer by confirmands, (g) bestowing of blessings, (h) Prayer, (i) Closing song.

It was the decision of the liberal rabbis of Germany assembled in conference in 1899, in view of the meaninglessness of Bar Mitzvah, to introduce the custom in their congregations of making a short address to the boy on the meaning of Judaism and the duties of the Jew, and having the boy speak a confession of faith in German before the congregation. <sup>173</sup> But long before this time those not so concerned any more with Bar Mitzvah but highly concerned with Confirmation had made the adjustment, though with little modification over the outline furnished by Zunz.

Landsberg and Kohler have the following to say of the essential features of Confirmation: "With the freedom and self-government universally prevailing in Jewish congregations, it is natural that the confirmation services should differ according to the subjective views and to the tastes of the rabbis. Thus some introduce a formal confession of faith while others prefer a statement of principles. But the essential features are everywhere about the same: (The act is preceded by a public examination in the history, doctrines, and duties of the Jewish religion, held together with the celebration or on some day during the preceding week. The sermon preached at the exercises refers to the importance of the epoch which the young people have reached, and closes with an impressive address to them. Thereupon follows a prayer, either a profession of faith or a statement of principles by members of the class, and in conclusion is invoked the blessing of the candidates by the rabbi. The rite is accompanied by impressive music."

What was referred to above as the freedom and self-government universally prevailing in Jewish congregations making for differences was felt to be a weakness when carried too far, and the very first

time the Central Conference of American Rabbis met they, the rabbis, discussed a program for Confirmation. Philipson<sup>174</sup> states: "The exercises should consist of a few prayers, a declaration of faith, a short examination.....the recital of the Ten Commandments from the Torah in Hebrew as symbolical of the historical significance of the day, and the response in English, the blessing by the rabbi and parents, and beautiful and appropriate music...(1) Opening hymn by the class, (2) Opening Prayer, (3) Music by choir, (4) Floral prayer, (5) Recital of Ten Commandments from the Torah, with appropriate prayers before and after, (6) Music by choir, (7) A few words by one of the confirmands telling of the significance of the day, (8) Music, (9) Sermon by rabbi to congregation, to close with admonitory address to children, (10) Music, (11) Short examination, to conclude with declaration of faith, (12) Blessing of children by rabbi, (13) Closing hymn, sung by class, (14) Concluding Prayer, (15) Dismissal of children to parents, (16) Music."

This shows us the status of the Confirmation ceremony in America in 1890. An examination of Wolff's volume<sup>175</sup> shows us the status in Germany at about the same time, (1891). He furnishes the following Confirmation program: (1) Introduction---song, (2) Prayer of Rabbi, (3) Talk to confirmands, (4) Speeches by confirmands, examination, catechism, declaration of faith, Ten Commandments, Thirteen Articles of Faith, (5) Shema and Kadosh repeated by confirmands in chorus, (6) Closing words of rabbi, (7) Choral music, (8) Blessing of confirmands.

It is only natural that as Confirmation came more and more to be regarded as a religious institution which had found its way into the house of prayer that it should also find its way into the prayerbooks. By a consideration of these we shall gain a better view of the service.

## Confirmation in Prayerbooks

Löw mentions that in many new prayerbooks, as for example the one of the community of Frankfort-am-Main, a section is given up to Confirmation.

The prayerbook in use in the temple at Hamburg in 1819<sup>176</sup> has no mention of Confirmation, but this is not strange, since the first confirmation was held there only the year before, and in one year it had not gained sufficient popularity to merit its inclusion in the prayerbook. However, by 1845 we do find definite provision in the Hamburg Temple Prayerbook<sup>177</sup> for Confirmation. The order is:

Calling up of the confirmands by the minister, who says:

עלו בחורים נעימים (עלה בחור נעים) בתוך שמרי  
אמונים לקרא בספר תורת האלהים פקודי ה' שרים

The Confirmands then read from the Torah the section Deut. 10<sup>12-22</sup>, and the minister follows with the blessing:

המלאך הגואל אותי מכל רע יברך את הנערים ויקרא בהם  
שמי ושם אבותי אברהם ויצחק וישראל לקרב בקרב הארץ

This is certainly a long way from the confirmation we know, and could hardly be identified with the service as outlined by Philipson and Wolff. It still bears a striking resemblance to the old Bar Mitzvah, and one is led to think that the great daring in Reform was more the adoption of the name of the Christian rite than an imitation of its features, at first.

In the prayers of the Reformed Society of Israelites of Charleston, S.C., 1830<sup>178</sup> we find: Mode of Confirmation: Anyone born of Jewish parents, not under the age of thirteen and desirous of expressing his belief in the Jewish faith, may, on any Sabbath, make declaration of the same and be confirmed therein as follows. He advances to the minister's desk, and repeats the articles of faith of the Society.

In the Order of Prayer arranged by Rabbi Merzbacher of Temple Emanuel in 1855 there is no reference to Confirmation, although it had been sanctioned by the board of that temple in 1847 and confirmations had been held since Shebuoth, 1848.

The Einhorn prayerbook, Olath Tamid, 1858, provides for a service which is more characteristic. "Confirmands take seats on platform at beginning of the service; Benedictions before and after Torah reading by boys or girls; discourse on Confirmation; choral singing; few words by rabbi; examination, (catechism); ...creed rendered in questions by rabbi to which confirmands answer "Yes"; (this included such ideas as the Mission of Israel, etc.); Few words by rabbi; all repeat declaration of faith, (creed); while choir sings Rabbi places hands on heads of confirmands and pronounces priestly benediction; closing benediction."

When this prayerbook was translated into English in 1896 by Emil G. Hirsch the confirmation service was completely omitted. In this connection it is interesting to note that in 1909, when the Committee on Religious Schools of the Central Conference of American Rabbis was requested to have prepared and submitted to the next conference an Outline of Lessons for Confirmation Classes, it was Emil G. Hirsch who expressed the desire to teach his own method, materials, etc. Perhaps this objection to uniformity throws some light upon the omission of the service from the translation of Einhorn's prayerbook.

Isaac M. Wise, in his Minhag America sets aside a section for Confirmation: "The anniversary day of the revelation on Mt. Sinai is the most proper time for the solemn rite of confirmation...After Olenu and Kaddish the rite of confirmation closes the divine service. The two highest officers of the congregation retire to introduce the confirmands. During a hymn by the choir the confirmands headed by the

officers enter the sanctuary and proceed by the middle aisle to the tabernacle in the east while the girls go to the right, the boys to the left of the platform, which they surround in a semicircle facing the ark. (In the temple in Cincinnati the confirmands are required to dress alike, the females in white and the males in black; no jewelry of any kind is tolerated; each bears a bouquet.) Introductory hymn; Prayer by confirmand; confirmands deposit bouquets at steps leading to the ark; second prayer by a confirmand; address by rabbi;...at the close of the discourse he calls upon them to perform an act of divine worship in the congregation of Israel, in expression of their holy desire to be attached to the congregation; Examination; Confession; The preacher then tells the confirmands that as a token of their full consent to the confession just made each of them shall kiss the Scroll of the Law. While the organ plays a symphony the one who spoke the confession hands around the Scroll of the Law, each confirmand speaks an appropriate motto from Scripture and kisses the Scroll of the Law, until it is finally handed back to the preacher, who deposits it in the ark. The symphony closes, the preacher declares the confirmands initiated into the congregation of Israel, and gives them the priestly blessing; Prayer; Confirmands are admonished to return to their parents and receive their blessings."

One need go no further than this service to declare Wise a past-master at the handling of details. Probably more significant than anything else here is the fact that Wise considers this ritual an initiation.

A prayerbook of 1870, called the American-Jewish Ritual, <sup>183</sup> presents a curious mixture of confirmation material. In part it bears striking resemblance to the Bar Mitzvah ideology, while again it incorporates strikingly non-Jewish practices. "The request you make,

(to be confirmed), howsoever worthy it may be, will, if granted, impose upon you many weighty obligations; for, from this day henceforth you will become members of the congregation of Israel, participators in the messianic mission of your people....in fine, you will be wedded to your religion and in consequence of such union, will have duties to perform..." The confirmands kneel before the open ark(!) Examination; Recitation of Ten Commandments; Confession of Faith; obligation,(oath taken with hand raised)..."In the presence of Almighty God, the God of Israel, the God of the world, the only Creator and Savior of mankind; and in this assembly of my people, I do, of my own free will and accord, most solemnly and sincerely swear and vow to cherish and defend my holy religion to live in that religion, to die in that religion, and through that religion alone to seek eternal salvation (!!!)" The minister says: " I declare you duly confirmed...I hail you by the honored title of Israelites, I acknowledge you as members of our race, as coworkers with us in our heavenly mission of God-inspired humanity. I welcome you to our fold with joy and satisfaction." Here follows further kneeling by the confirmands; sermon by the rabbi; blessing and benediction.

The unJewish kneeling, ideas of salvation,etc. are striking. How Christian must have been the environment in which Lewin labored is all too apparent.

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Szold's "Abodath Israel" is a harmonization of Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation ideas. There is the prayer "For a Bar Mitzvah" at the reading of the Torah, followed by a confession of faith on the part of the initiate himself. The prayer for the Bar Mitzvah by the rabbi is as follows: O Lord and Father, we beseech thy blessing on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ who has this day pronounced the blessing of the Torah, by which he promises to devote himself to Thy service. Be Thou, O Lord,

with him. Strengthen his every pious resolve, and aid him in the hour of temptation, that he may remain faithful to the Religion of Israel, observe all its divine inculcations, and thus promote the happiness of his parents and friends, as well as his own salvation. Amen.....Advancing now from the period of childhood, we promise to obey Thee, O God, and keep thy commandments...Soon am I to enter into active life, where there are dangers and temptations constantly lurking. O Lord, aid me that I may tread firmly on the head of sin, ere he wound my foot and gain the mastery over me....; Confession of Faith."

185

The Union Prayerbook in the service for the morning of Shebuoth contains the following: "In the spirit of devotion we hold fast to Thy covenant, and we rejoice that, with youthful ardor, our children are renewing this day the vow of Horeb. Grant, O God, that this covenant be a covenant of life and peace forever sealed upon their hearts, and that Thy spirit, which was upon our fathers and Thy words which Thou didst put into their mouths may not depart from our children's children for ever...."

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In the Rabbi's Manual we find a confirmation service arranged. Here are included the most commonly accepted and most beautifully meaningful practices. The influence of early service arrangements, especially that of the Minhag America will be noted.

Confirmand enter the Temple preceded by two officers of the congregation. They march by the central aisle towards their positions on the platform; Choir; Prayer:...May this service of Confirmation strengthen us in th faith of Israel, and help us to be loyal to the faith of our fathers, to the cause of right and truth...."; Flower offering; Confirmation vow:"It charges us with the duties and responsibilities of full membership in the brotherhood of Israel. Henceforth it shall be our duty to keep and to cherish our priceless heritage of

truth, and to defend with all our hearts and with all our souls the name of Israel; Declaration: Mission, Torah, etc.; Brief addresses by confirmands; Sermon by rabbi; Presentation of certificates; Priestly benediction; Confirmands kiss Sefer Torah; The regular morning services are then concluded; Confirmands join parents for blessing."

Most significant here are two statements. "In order to permit our heritage to take deep root in our hearts we must try to hear and understand the commands of our religion, and learn to appreciate its beautiful teachings. We Must become Jews by choice as well as by birth...."<sup>187</sup> "We are aware that this occasion marks a turning point in our lives, our childhood is partly over. In this knowledge we are about to enter a new life of larger duties and responsibilities."<sup>188</sup>

These most cogent citations will be discussed in the evaluation later.

#### Instruction of Confirmands

We saw that the earliest Bar Mitzvah practices required no preparation as such, inasmuch as the ceremony grew out of the natural training which all boys received. The benediction, ability to read from the Torah, and, in a sense, even the derascha required no long period of preparation. But in time, with the falling away of the older, intensive religious educational program even the benedictions over the Torah, and the less bulky Bar Mitzvah address required much training. Now, when we consider Confirmation with its emphasis upon beliefs, creeds, articles of faith, and the like, and the pedagogic technique prevalent at the time of its inception, the catechism as a means of instructing the youth for confirmation becomes easily understandable.<sup>189</sup> Philipson said in 1890: "The system of catechistic teaching has been and still is in vogue. From the publication of Herz Homberg's "Ben Zion" in 1812 to the issue of the last catechism of some American pulpit occupant, the number of catechisms has been legion,

some like those of Herxheimer, Stein, Einhorn, Philipppson, Hirsch, and other being valuable contributions to religious literature; others not to be mentioned should never have been given to the world, but but a dry formulary of questions and answers.....A uniform catechism is well nigh an impossibility, in truth, is not to be desired."<sup>190</sup> This was in 1890. By 1909 the Central Conference of American Rabbis through its commission on religious schools, recommended that a committee be requested to prepare and submit an Outline of Lessons for Confirmation Classes. Throughout there has been a feeling that above all else Confirmation depends upon an appreciation and a transmission of the principles of Judaism. But what these principles were and in what manner they could be taught, has been the problem.

<sup>191</sup> By 1931 Reform takes stock of Confirmation, and is concerned with three phases: requirements for enrollment in the confirmation class, the preparation for confirmation, and the ceremony itself. Confirmation seems again to have taken on the characteristics of a graduation from a set religious school curriculum, though the ceremony itself has a religious nature much akin to the Christian notion of sacrament. From a study of practices summarized in the paper presented by Rabbi Egelson it would seem that the old catechism has given way to a well-rounded program of study, with the finest available educational techniques employed. These attempt to give the boy or girl an understanding and an appreciation of his religion.

#### Time of Celebration

<sup>192</sup> Krauskopf speaks of the first confirmation as having taken place "on Sabbath afternoons, where they were conducted by the teachers in the school houses. In time the ceremony took place in the synagogue in connection with one or the other of the regular Sabbath services, generally the one that best suited either the Rabbi or the class. In time sentiment favored a Confirmation Day that would be common to all.

The Sabbath of the Maccabean Festival week found many advocates. Others suggested Shebuoth as the more appropriate by reason of tradition claiming that that festival synchronizes with the time when the Sinai Law was given unto Israel, and when that people solemnly pledged to heed and do all that that Law commanded. In the end Shebuoth won the day...."

Landsberg and Kohler state that at first confirmation was held on the Sabbath of Chanukah or Passover, but later the example of Solomon Eger was followed. (We have noted Zunz's satisfaction at Eger's having confirmed a class on Shebuoth, 1831.) Shebuoth was considered peculiarly adopted for the rite since the Jews at Sinai of their own free will declared their intention to accept the obligation of God's Law, so those of every new generation should follow the ancient example and declare their willingness to be faithful to the religion of the fathers."

Eger was certainly not the first to confirm on Shebuoth, for we have seen that Jacobson confirmed his own son Naphthali on Shebuoth, 1815, in Berlin.<sup>193</sup> Perhaps it was Eger who suggested for the first time that the ceremony be held on Shebuoth for the reason given.

In the prayerbooks referred to above Confirmation is generally found in the Shebuoth sections.

In the study made by Egelson it was found that practically every congregation in America today confirms on Shebuoth, or on the Sabbath or Sunday nearest Shebuoth. Yet it was Krauskopf's recommendation in 1912 that the date be changed. He urged Simchath Torah as the time better suited to the celebration of confirmation. He regarded Shebuoth unsuited because of the time of the year when it occurs: excitement of school examinations and school closing; summer heat; no services during summer; Rabbi fatigued at Shebuoth time. To confirm in the fall would keep the children and avail the rabbi of all the psy-

chological advantages to hold interests when the synagogue is launching on its year's activities.

In 1914 the committee of the Conference which considered this problem voted against a change from Shebuoth. Kohler stated at that time: <sup>194</sup> "Originally confirmation was a matter of education in the religious school. It was introduced...to mark the conclusion of the course of religious education. Gradually, however, it was transferred to the Synagog, and had therefor to undergo a certain transformation. Finally it became a generally understood fact that confirmation implied not only the consecration of the young, but also the reconsecration of the entire congregation. <sup>195</sup> As such, and in connection with the anniversary of the traditional Mattan Torah, the giving of the Law, it retains its significance for us today....Furthermore, I believe that the words Na'aseh venishma', "we shall do and we shall hearken" should ever be repeated by the children, so that the confirmation maybe indeed a consecration service, the conclusion and consummation of the entire course of religious education....Simchath Torah could be revitalized...without confirmation Shebuoth must surely perish."

#### Age of Confirmands

As a carry-over from the Bar Mitzvah with its adherence to the age of thirteen, which we have seen at great length, Confirmation also was held at thirteen. If confirmation was a graduation from the religious school, then having attained the age of thirteen, without regard for what knowledge the child had acquired, worked against the very goal desired. Actually, early conditions in Confirmation demanded the memorization of creeds and articles of faith learned from catechisms, and this the child undertook sufficiently long before the Shebuoth nearest the thirteenth birthday to be able to stand in the examination which was conducted either a few days before the ceremony, or during

the ceremony itself. Another factor was the notion prevalent that the attainment of puberty was generally accompanied by emotional changes highly conducive of religious feeling. Hall's psychology of adolescence was largely responsible for the widespread acceptance of this hypothesis.

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In 1907, Rabbi Max Heller offered this argument that thirteen or fourteen was the best age of receptiveness. He also advocated the retention of this age rather than a postponement of confirmation on the grounds that there could never be a test of religious maturity. Further, children, rich and poor, would still be in school at this age, where they might withdraw before confirmation if it were deferred.

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In this connection M.N.A. Cohen points out the differences between Bar Mitzvah and confirmation on the one hand and Christian conversion with its attending circumstances of hysteria on the other, and he regarded sixteen to eighteen a better age for imparting religious ideas than the age of puberty.

Kohler and Landsberg speak of the lasting effect of the religious experience at Confirmation, and state that it is becoming customary on that account to delay the rite until the sixteenth or seventeenth year.

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Schulman advocates the earlier age, contending that Confirmation is a religious ceremony and not a graduation. He wishes to have the child confirmed "while his tendency to believe is yet unimpaired, without any undue scepticism developed."

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Egelson shows that in present practice two considerations as to the age for confirming are taken into account: a desire to set the ceremony at an age when the child will have the ability to understand some of the abstract teaching connected with Confirmation, and at the same time to have it when the individual can be influenced by the ceremony itself. In 106 cases studied, one school confirmed as early

as twelve, at times, while sixteen schools confirmed at thirteen, forty-five schools at fourteen, thirty-nine at fifteen, four at fifteen and a half, and one school confirmed at sixteen. Characteristic, then, of the times, Reform is placing reason as a primary consideration. Tradition, the centuries-old notion of responsibility coming with the age of thirteen, goes overboard with the continued postponement of the age of confirmation. In a way this is a healthy sign of the times, for with postponement comes lengthened and broadened curricula in religious schools, and confirmation is again tied up with the school.

### Miscellaneous

When Bar Mitzvah gave way to Confirmation some of the characteristics of the old form still remained in the new. The old derascha which had lost its Talmudic content lingered on as (speeches in confirmation. <sup>200</sup> Zunz tells us that "since 1810 many essays and papers as well as many confirmation talks have appeared in print by such people as the following: Büdinger, Alb.Cohn, Creizenach, Fränkel, Grünebaum, Herxheimer, Kley, Liepmannssohn, Plessner, Rehfuß, G. Salomon, S. Steinhard, H. Stern, and others." Many of these works reveal a hesitancy to cast aside the term Bar Mitzvah and adopt Confirmation. The two names occur side by side, especially where Conservative Rabbis have taken over the practice of confirming. <sup>201</sup>

In time these talks gave way to the examination and the very brief essays that we know today. But somewhere in between these two extremes we find such confirmation addresses as the one of Master Samuel Schwatz, <sup>202</sup> which is a lengthy allegorical interpretation of the story of Balaam's ass. This address differs but a little from the derascha of Lentschütz against which we found Löw so loud in his disapproval.

Of course there were abuses in Confirmation, but chief among these

were not the weaknesses of any specific practice, but the "pomp, show, display, and ostentation" which grew up around the service itself. The religious significance of Confirmation was lost in gift-giving, formal pageantry, display of fine clothing and jewelry, elaborate receptions, etc. Egelson<sup>203</sup> reports efforts towards eliminating some of these evils and abuses which appear on the surface. Perhaps a greater abuse than these, and one more hopeful of eradication, is the prevalent misconception that Confirmation is the signal for a moratorium on religious education, and for that matter, even of religious participation and religious interests.

## Chapter V.

### Evaluation

The facts, as we have seen them, show that whether an initiation is indispensable in Judaism or not, certain initiatory rites are to be found. Similar to other Semitic groups it possesses a formal function at which the individual is brought closer to the life of the particularistic group. In the 1840's the storm of protest which greeted the first feeble suggestions that circumcision be discarded stands as eloquent testimony to the place it holds in Judaism. Even those who wanted to discard circumcision offered an alternative initiation. The mere fact of birth seems not to have filled the requirements for membership in the group, at least for the males. When Zunz stated that Judaism required no further initiation besides birth, and birth plus circumcision for males, he struck the problem at its very heart. Whether Judaism requires an initiation or not it possesses one, and from the viewpoint of history it seems that this initiation will not be relinquished.

We saw that initiation in the sense of instructing came nearer the true meaning of the word. What of initiation in Judaism in this sense of the word? A group tied up with land, language, and other

manifestations of nationality need fear little that its young will not be naturally integrated and absorbed into the group life. But a group such as the Jewish group has been since the dispersion must vicariously integrate its young through systematic instruction. Thus, a concept of responsibility at a given age would set up a goal. Each individual must be prepared to assume his place in the adult group life with all its duties and privileges, and the process of integrating must be so planned that when the individual reaches that age he will be capable of assuming the new role.

We saw how the institution of Bar Mitzvah grew out of the life of the group, a sort of dramatization of the notion that the individual had finished his period of "instruction", and how in the course of time the instruction was weakened until it almost ceased to exist, and only the ceremonial, which was formerly but a climax to the integrating process, remained.

Under Christian influence, and again a product of the group life, an attempt was made to revitalize this hollow shell of a ceremony. Needing no salvation for the soul, and having no foundation for a notion of "grace", the sacramental character of the Catholic Confirmation was passed over in favor of the Protestant practice. Again the ceremony was tied up with the school, but the intensive educational program that gave rise to the talmudic derascha, was gone. Secular education relegated the religious training to a secondary position, and religious leaders turned to the catechisms of the period in an attempt to foist ready answers as to creed and doctrine upon the ill-prepared child.✓

Löw maintained that Confirmation was but another step in the history of Bar Mitzvah. This may have been so, but somehow the differences between Reform and traditional Judaism were so accentuated and exaggerated that in time Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation came to be regarded

as mutually exclusive. If some of the features of Bar Mitzvah had their origins in misunderstanding, as for example the Baruch she' patarani, then the same can be said of Confirmation, for only by a misunderstanding of Judaism can a test of faith or an oath and declaration of faith be made a requisite. If Bar Mitzvah could claim no great antiquity Confirmation could claim even less antiquity. But these are fallacious criteria of the worth of an institution.

Fortunately the introduction of Confirmation has not proven a wedge further dividing liberal from traditional Judaism, since in some form it has been taken over by Orthodox and Conservatives, but the manner in which Bar Mitzvah was attacked by the protagonists of Confirmation was unwise in principle. Both Confirmation and Bar Mitzvah are posited upon the notion of responsibility and both are more or less tied up with the religious education of the young. In the proportion as either becomes a hollow ceremony without the educational background they defeat their own purpose, in proportion as the religious education of the child is intensified the ceremony which climaxes that study is meaningful. Judaism needs no initiation in the sense of a mystic rite, but it certainly needs an initiation in the sense of instructing or training. Only by a rich period of religious training can Judaism possess true initiates.

But what about the ceremony which dramatizes the "graduation"? It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the value of ceremonies, but suffice it to say that rich, meaningful, ceremonies which have substance in their foundation are the concretizations of religion's highest truths.

One of the great tragedies in Judaism today is the fact that everyone is trying to see how little one need believe, how little one need participate in the group's religious life and still remain a Jew. Minimums may be desirable when physicians are trying to prolong the

moments of life in a dying body, but certainly this is no criterion of health. Judaism, in order to be vigorous, must have affirmation, and individuals shall be brought to these affirmations through being confirmed in their beliefs. "We must become Jews by choice as well as by birth..." Young Jews must be instructed, initiated into "a new life of larger duties and responsibilities". The problem is not to see how little we need believe and ~~do~~, but how meaningful Judaism can be. Surely, then, Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation can be utilized as one of the few occasions when individuals do still turn to organized religion. The value of the personal contact of the Rabbi with the impressionable individual cannot be overestimated. The advantages of an initiation in the sense of instruction can be utilized to the utmost; the abuses of a ceremonial, where the ceremonial remains while that for which it is but a symbol is lost altogether, can be rectified, and whether this practice ~~is~~ Judaism of instructing the young and celebrating the close of that period of instruction and preparation for full participation in the group's religious life is called Bar Mitzvah or Confirmation the same result can be attained.

Confirmation is more desirable if we truly make of it a religious experience which climaxes a sound program of religious instruction, especially since it takes cognizance of girls as well as boys, and attempts to make a beautifully spiritual experience of the ceremony.

Let us not accentuate too greatly the differences between Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation, for in many cases today the Bar Mitzvah is meaningful, and possesses the best qualities of Confirmation while it retains the older name, while Confirmation may be and often is as empty a ceremony as Bar Mitzvah ever was. The important thing is not to widen the growing chasm between liberal and traditional Judaism, <sup>t</sup>less we become sectarian, but to make of either ceremony a true initiation, which is instruction and training, so that it shall motivate the schooling and in climax be a meaningful religious experience.

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Notes

(For editions see Bibliog.)

1. Hastings, James, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. VII, p.314ff, Article "Initiation", by G.d'Alviella.
2. Numbers I : "From twenty years old and upward, all that are able<sup>3</sup> to go forth to war in Israel, ye shall number them by their hosts, even thou and Aaron."
3. Tanchuma, Korach 3.  
א"ר ברכ'יה כמה קשה המחלוקת שו"ת דין של מעלן  
אין קונסין אלא מובן עשרים שנה ומעלה וזו"ת דין של כמה מובן י"ג
4. Hastings, James, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. I, p.440ff, Article "Puberty", by P.J.Hamilton-Grierson.
5. Löw, Leopold, Die Lebensalter in der Jüdischen Literatur.
6. ibid., p.210.
7. Schechter, S., J.Q.R. Vol. II, p.20ff: "It was only in the times of the Rabbis, when Roman influence became prevalent in juristic matters at least, that the age of thirteen, or rather the pubertas, was fixed as giving the boy his majority."  
  
So also Mielziner, Moses, Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce, p.71, "The legal age for contracting a valid marriage is, according to the Talmudical law (Nidda 44; Main. Ishuth II, 1, 10) the age of puberty... This law was no doubt borrowed from the Roman law which established the periods of twelve and fourteen as the competent age of consent to render the marriage contract binding.
8. Smith, W. Robertson, The Religion of the Semites, p.309ff.
9. Philipson, D., The Reform Movement in Judaism, (1931)
10. ibid., p.4.
11. Joshua V<sub>2-3</sub>

12. Jeremiah IV ; Circumcision is also spoken of figuratively in  
<sup>4</sup>  
 Deut.X and Deut.XXX .  
<sup>16</sup> <sup>6</sup>
13. Philipson, p.118.
14. ibid.p.131.
15. ibid. p.454, note 71.
16. Zunz,L., Gutachten über die Beschneidung,1844. This was not  
 included in Trier's volume, but was separately printed in a  
 pamphlet of a few pages.
17. ibid.p.12.
18. ibid. p.9.
19. ibid. p.9.
20. Cited by Philipson, p.136.
21. ibid. p.456,note 98. (In a letter to Wechsler in 1849 Geiger  
 declares that some new form of initiation into Judaism must soon  
 be found which should take the place of circumcision; his words  
 are as follows: "Es muss nun bald eine Form gefanden werden,  
 welche diese alte ersetzt, die Aussegnung der Wöchnerin dürfte  
 nicht ganz genügen, die Anwesenheit des Kindes scheint gleich-  
 fall erforderlich, und der Anfang dazu könnte mit den Mädchen  
 gemacht werden; dann würde allmählich wie die Confirmation die  
 Bar-Mizwah-Allfanzerei. so auch die neue Form die Beschneidung  
 verdrängen". (Nachgelassene Schrift.V,p.202-3.)
22. ibid. p.320.
23. Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah,Hilchoth Milah, 260,1.
24. Zunz,L. Gesammelte Schriften, II, p.214.
25. Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah, Hilchoth Aveloth, 353,6.

פִּינוּק עֲמַת קוּדֵם אֲנִימוּל מוהֲלִין אוֹתוֹ עַל קִבְרוֹ בְּלֹא  
 בִּרְכָה וְקוּרְאִין לוֹ שֵׁם.....

26. There is an exception in the case of a father who has failed to have his son circumcised. The responsibility then falls upon the uncircumcised individual to have himself circumcised when he is able. Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah, Hilchoth Milah, 260, 1.

27. Lev. XXVII  
2ff.

28. Nu. XIV  
29.

29. Nu I  
2,3.

30. Luria, Solomon: Yam Shel Shelomo, Baba Kama VII, 37.

(16th century contemporary of Moses Isserles.)

אכן הבר מצוה גופא לא ישר בעיני שרובן אין להם ב  
שערות וא"כ איך יוצאו אחרים ידי חובתן בתפילה וברכת המזון

31. Mishna N'darim V, 6.

לאחר הזמן הזה אף על פי שאמרו אין אנו יודעין לשם  
מי נדרנו לשם מי הקדשנו נדרן נדר והקדשן הקדש.

32. Rashi, commenting on l'onshim, לעונשים, Nid.45b.

33. Pes.43a.

34. Mishna Torah, Hilchoth Ishuth, II.

(1) A girl up until twelve years, regardless of pubertal hairs, is a minor, and is called tinokes, תינוקת. After twelve years and one day, as soon as she has two pubertal hairs, she is called na'arah, נערה.

(10) A boy up until thirteen years, regardless of pubertal hairs, is a minor, and is called katan, קטן. After thirteen years and one day, as soon as he has two pubertal hairs he is called ish, איש.

(23) When a father declares that his son is thirteen years and one day or his daughter twelve years and one day they are capable of making vows.

35. Or. Ch. Hilchoth Berachoth, LV, 9.
36. Mielziner, Moses, Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce, p.71.
37. Pirke Aboth V, 24.
38. Quoted in Machzor Vitry to Aboth V, 24, p.549ff.
39. Gn XXXIV  
25.
40. Tanchuma, Korach 3.
41. Commentary to Nu XVI  
27.
42. Abot d'Rab Nathan, 16. (According to J.E.Vol.I, p.82: "Probably belong to the period of the Geonim between the 8th and 9th centuries.)
43. Sefer ha'Brith, Pt.II, section 1. p.235. (Written by Phinhas Eliyahu ben Mair of Wilna, about 1797-8.)
44. ibid. Pt. II, Sect.5, p.267.
45. This idea is generally based on the Scriptural phrase in Gn IV<sup>7</sup>  
לִפְתֹּחַ חַמַּת רֹבֹץ, "sin croucheth at the door" and Gn VIII<sup>21</sup>  
לִבְּהֶאֱדָם רָע מִנְעוּרָיו, "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."
- 45a. Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, XXVI. (According to J.E.Vol.X, p.58:  
"Composed in Italy shortly after 833.)
46. Koheleth Rabbah IV, 13.
47. Ex.XX and Dt.V. (Ex.XX<sup>5-6</sup> ; Dt. V<sup>9-10</sup>).
48. Ezek.XVIII.
49. ibid. verses 2-4.
50. Midrash Zutta, Ruth. ed.Buber, p.47.
51. Yalkut Ruth, 600.
52. Tosef.Eduy. I, 14.
53. The problem raised here, together with later misunderstandings that arose in connection with it, probably throws some light on the Baruch she'patarani to be discussed later.

54. Schechter, S. Studies in Judaism, p.312. (With note in J.Q.R. Vol. II, p.20ff.
55. ibid. Essay entitled, The Child in Jewish Literature, p.282ff.  
Löw, L., Lebensalter; For further examples of childhood prerogatives see Abrahams, Israel, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p.32ff.
56. Rosenau, William, Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs, (3rd ed., 1925), p.145ff.
57. Gordon, Judah L., Al Nahar K'Var, in the volume, Kitvay J.L. Gordon, (Tel-Aviv, 1928.) p.28ff.
58. 1844.
59. Here follows a list of the names of those whom Gordon could yet remember at the time he wrote his autobiography.
60. Levin, Shmarya, Childhood in Exile, English translation by M. Samuel, p.268ff.
61. Zangwill, Israel, Children of the Ghetto, Vol. I, Chap. 13, p.276ff.
62. Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums, 1839, p.278.
63. חזק וברוך תהיה יגדיל תורה ויאדיר
64. Text of Moroccan Piyyut:

אטיר היום שירה חדשה בשפה בנעימה קדושה לאל ברוך  
 אשר עשה את משה ואת אהרן :  
 נהלל אל עושה נפלאות הגיעני זמן זה לנאות, ברוך אל  
 כב המודאות 'אמרו נא בית אהרן :  
 כפי פרושות השמים, תהיה כעץ שתול על מים, ללמוד תורה  
 לשם שמים, מתלמידיו של אהרן :  
 יחיד נורא אליך אעתיך כאשר זכה להיות מפמ"ר זכה להיות  
 אוסר ומתיר ומשחת את אהרן :  
 דברי תורה מאד חביבים לך יהיו בני ערבים, תורה נביאים  
 וכתובים, והיו על לב אהרן :  
 ואל שדי ידריך אותך לעשות גדילים על כסותך ולקשור תפילין  
 על ירך והיה על ספח אהרן :  
 דעה תוסיף יפה אף נעים לשקוד ללמוד דת שעשועם, אשר  
 צוה אל תמים דיעים ביד משה ואהרן :

בן חסין במצות הבורא, תהיה וממנו תהיה, כל רואיך יאמרו אשרי,  
 הנה פרח מטה אהרן :  
 חפץ תהיה מאד וחרד, במצות מהם אל תפרד, כשמן הטוב שיוֹרד  
 על הזקן זקן אהרן :  
 זכות אבות שוכני מערה, תבוכך בברכה סדורה, המשולטת בתורה,  
 האמורה מפי אהרן :  
 קולי רצה חי עולמים לראות בבניין בית עולמים, שם יקריבו עולות  
 ושלמים, הכהנים בני אהרן, הכהנים בני אהרן :

65. Schechter, *supra*. Studies. (see note 54).

66. Rosenau, *Ceremonial*, p.148.

67. Dembitz, L., *Services in Synagogue and Home*, p.263.

68. Kohler, K., *Article, Bar Mitzvah*, in J.E. Vol. II, p.509ff.

69. Abrahams, *Middle Ages*, p.32.

70. Löw, *Lebensalter*, p.210.

71. Baba M. 96a.

ר' יוחנן אומר מצינו בכל מקום ששלוחו של אדם נמותו  
 .....הני מילי שליח דבר מצוה הוא אבל עבד דלאן בר מצוה לא...

72. Aboth V, 24. בן שלש עשרה למצוות.

73. Gorfinkle, Jos. I., *The Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, p.88.

74. Soferim XVIII, 5. (This talmudic treatise was finally redacted  
 about the middle of the 8th century, though its contents are  
 older. J.E. Vol. XI, p.426ff., *Article "Soferim"*.)

75. Schechter and Kohler, *Article, Confirmation*, J.E.

76. *Sefer ha'Liklutim*, Grünhut's ed. Part I, p.3, paragraph 6.

(This is assigned by Zunz to the 10th century. It is quoted as  
 early as the middle of the 11th century as a recognized authority,  
 J.E. Vol. VIII, p.563.)

77. Gn Rabbah, LXIII, 10.

78. Löw, *Lebensalter*, p.210ff. and notes.

79. *Responsa of Asher b. Jehiel*, 16, 1., (1250-1328).

וששאלת מאין לנו דבן י"ג שנה ויום אחד הוא בר

עונשין אבל פחות מכן לא דע כי הלכה למשה הוא

79a. German halakist of 13th century, died as a martyr at Nuremberg, 1298, pupil of Meir of Rothenburg. (J.E.Vol.IX, p.10.)

80. Löw gives as his source for this statement the phrase שניעטתי בר מצוה מיום, taken from the Sab.ed. of Minhagim, 83b, but admits that he could not find this in the Minhagim. (Nor could I.)

81. Luria, see note 30 above.

82. Shulchan Arukh, Or. Ch. XXXVII, 3.

Caro says: When a boy is old enough to know how to respect tefillin, not to sleep in them and not to pass wind or to go to the toilet while wearing them, his father must buy tefillin for him in order to initiate him into their use." To this Isserles comments, quoting the Ba'al ha'Ittur, that this applies only to thirteen year old boys. He adds that this is the custom and is not to be changed.

The Magen Abraham comments that tefillin may be worn by the boy two or three months before the Bar Mitzvah.

83. For this statement Löw quotes the Minhagim of Maharil, 106a.

אמרו סגל שהוקשה לו על הבחורים שאין עדיין לשנים שהם מניחים תפילין וגם הנשוי כבר העדיין כך בשנים לא נחה שיניחם מפני שצריך תפילה עליהן והתפילין צריכין גוף נקי ותמיהני מנין הורגל טמניחין לכוונותן

84. See end of note 82, Magen Abraham.

85. Meg. 23a.

85a. Kohler's theory as to the calling of the boy to the Torah is interesting. (CC. A R. Yearbook, Vol.XXIII, p.17).

First he links the seven men called to the Torah with the seven Tovay ha'ir...."as the study of the Law spread among the Jewish people and all the members of the congregation were able to read, the reading rotated and all were in turn called up to take the

82.

place of the seven to'vay ha'ir...Accordingly, it was the greatest privilege that could be bestowed upon the youth who had just attained, according to the juridical view of the time, the age of duty and responsibility, and the Bar Mitzvah, after having received his training in Scriptural reading."

86. Levush ha'Techeleth, 282, 3.
87. Shulchan Arukh, Or. Ch. 282,4, comment of Isserles.
88. Minhageh Beth Ja'akov, paragraph 30.
89. Aboth I,1.
90. Gn Rabbah, LXIII, 10.
91. Shulchan Arukh, Or. Ch. Hilchoth Berachoth 225,2.
92. In the Minhageh Beth Ja'akov, paragraph 31, authority for the omission of the formula וּמִלְכּוּת is cited from Lipmann Heller's comment on this passage in the Lechem Chamudoth. The reason there given is that there is no mention of this benediction in the Talmud.
93. Elijah of Vilna...comment on Or. Ch. 225,2.
94. Gn XXV  
27.
95. Gn Rabbah LXIII.
96. Levush ha'Techeleth, 225, 2.
97. Sab.32b.
98. Sab. 105b.
99. Sifre Deut.280. (Friedman ed. 124a).
100. See note 92.
101. Asaph's source book: שְׁמֵחָה אֶסֶף: מִקְרֹת לְאֻלְדוֹת הַתּוֹךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
p.189.
102. Same citation as note 30.....  
.....סְעוּדַת בֶּרַךְ מִצֻּה שְׁעוּשִׁין הָאֶשְׁכְּנָזִים
103. For the text of the piyyut se note 64.

104. See note 4 above. Hastings, Vol. XI, p. 441.

105. See note 102.

106. Abrahams, Middle Ages, p. 144.

107. Gädemann, Moritz, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Deutschland während des XIV and XV Jahrhunderts, p. 260.

108. See note 101 above, Asaph, p. 102.

109. For this and similar ideas see Sach, A.S., Worlds That Passed, p. 194.

110. Commentary *דגול מרבבה*, (Königsberg, 1859), to Yoreh Deah, 391, quotes Solomon Luria (see note 30) and adds:

והי"ן א"ם הנער דורש או שהוא ממש ביום שנעשה ב"מ

111. Quoted in J.E. Vol. II, p. 496. Article, Banquets.

112. See also *מתנות כהונה* and *פירוש מהר"ל* to the phrase  
*נגמל מיצר הרע*, Gn Rabbah LIII, 10.

113. Abrahams, Middle Ages, p. 132.

114. See notes 30 and 102.

115. Maimon, Solomon, Autobiography, Murray's English Translation, p. 63.

116. Zunz, Gesammelte Schriften, II, p. 214.

117. Ehrehtheil, A., Confirmations-Reden für den Barmizwa, nach allen Wochenabschnitten geordnet. (1896).

118. Plessner, Solomon, "Confirmationsreden für die Israelitische Jugend". — *yes?*

119. Wolff, L., Universal-Agenda für Kultursbeamte, p. 286ff; p. 489ff.

120. Katz, J., Attaining Jewish Manhood. — *yes?*

121. The Jewish-American Orator, (N.Y., 1907).

122. Asaph, Sources, Yakutheil Blitz, in the introduction to his translation of the Bible into Judeo-German (1678), written for Polish Jews newly come to Amsterdam, comments on the state of ignorance

of Jewish children. (See J.E.Vol.III,p.191 for identification of this translation.)

123. Asaph, Sources, p.101.

124. *ibid.* p.189.

125. Shulchan Arukh, Or. Ch. Hilchoth Tzizith, XVII, 3. Note especially the comment of Be'er Haitave.

126. Sefer Ta'ameh ha'Minhagim u'Makoreh ha'Dinim, by Abraham I. Sperling, (Lemberg, 1896)..... ענין 'תפילין

127. Sefer Hadrash Kodesh.

128. Abrahams, Middle Ages, p.144, note 2.

129. J.Q.R. Vol.II,(1890), p.16.

130. Zunz,L., Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden,(1892 ed.) p.472ff.

131. Philipson,D., in C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol.I, p.43ff. Confirmation in the Synagogue, p.47.

132. *ibid.* p.49.

✓ 133. Kohler,K. in C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol XXIII, p.170ff.

134. Scannell,T.B. Article,Confirmation, in Catholic Encyc.Vol.IV, p.215-22.

135. Supplement to Catholic Encyc., p.223.

136. Strassburger,B., Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts bei den Israeliten, (Stuttgart,1885). p.220.

137. *ibid.* p.232.

138. Löw, Lebensalter, p.218ff.

139. Zunz,L., Gesammelte Schriften, (Berlin,1875-6),II, p.214.

140. Graetz,H., History of the Jews, (English trans.)Vol.V, p.562.

141. *ibid.* p.572.

142. Cited by: Philipson,Conf.in Synagog, p.44.

Marcus,J."Israel Jacobson",in C.C.A.R.Yearbook

Vol.XXXVIII, p.437.

143. Zunz, Gesam.Schrift., II, p.214ff.
144. Marcus, Israel Jacobson, p.490, note 73.
145. Kohler,K. and Landsberg,Max, Article,Confirmation,in J.E.Vol.IV,  
p.219.
146. Conf. in Synagog., p.48.
147. Zunz,ibid.
148. ibid.
149. See note 142.
150. Philipson, ibid.
151. Marcus, ibid., p.467.
152. Zunz, ibid.
153. Marcus, ibid., p.475.
154. Kohler & Landsberg, ibid., p.219.
155. Zunz, ibid.
156. Philipson,ibid.  
Kohler and Landsberg, ibid.
157. Philipson, ibid.
158. ibid.
159. ibid. also  
Zunz, Gottesd.Vortr., p.472.
160. Philipson, ibid.
161. ibid. also  
L w, Lebensalter, p.218ff.
162. Philipson,D., Reform Movement, p.106.
163. Philipson, Conf. in Synagog., and L w, ibid.
164. ibid.
165. Landsberg and Kohler, ibid.
166. Philipson, Reform Mov.
167. ibid., p.335.

168. Löw, Lebensalter, p.218ff.
169. Philipson, Conf. in Synagog., p.43.
170. Krauskopf. Joseph, A Change of Confirmation Day, in C.C.A.R. Yearbook Vol.XXII, p.322ff.
171. Philipson. Reform Mov.. p.77.
172. Zunz. Gesamm.Schr., II, p.214.
173. Philipson, ibid. p.393-4.
174. Philipson, Conf. in Syn., p.55ff.
175. Wolff, (see note 119), p.497.
176. Ordnung der Andacht des Neuen-Tempel-Verein in Hamburg, (1819).
177. Gebetbuch des Neuen Temples in Hamburg, (1845), p.77.
178. Prayers of the Reformed Society of Israelites, Charleston, S.C., (N.Y., 1916), p.53.
179. Order of Prayer, by Merzbacher, L., Rabbi of Temple Emanuel, 1855.
180. Olath Tamid, by Einhorn, D., (1858) p.460.
181. C.C.A.R. Yearbook Vol. XIX, p.109-10.
182. Wise, Isaac M., Minhag America, (Cinti., 1868), p.196ff.
183. Lewin, Raphael D.C., American-Jewish Ritual, (1870), p.229ff.
184. Szold, B., Abodath Israel, translated from the German by M. Jastrow, (1885), 1st section, p.97; supplement, p.81-87; 102-104.
185. Union Prayerbook, (C.C.A.R.), Vol. I., p.230.
186. Rabbi's Manual, (C.C.A.R.) p.13ff.
187. ibid., p.22.
188. ibid. p.23.
189. Conf, in Synagog. (Philipson), p.52.
190. C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. XIX, p.109-110.
191. Egelson, Louis I., Confirmation Practices in the Jewish School, in C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. XLI, p.366ff.
192. Krauskopf, Change of Conf. Day, C.C.A.R. Yearbook Vol. XXII, p.322ff.
193. See note 151.

194. C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. XXIV, p. 75.
195. Compare this with the proposal of Rabbi Egelson, (ibid. p. 387) for a Rededication Service for confirmands of fifteen years previous. But more especially in this same connection see the suggestion of Rabbi Israel Goldstein, (Problems of the Jewish Ministry, N.Y. 1927.) to invite the Bar Mitzvah boy to return on the anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah to be called to the Torah. (Problems, p. 105ff.)
196. C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. XVII, p. 137.
197. ibid. p. 248.
198. ibid. p. 154.
199. Egelson, Practices, p. 371.
200. Zunz, Gesamm. Schrif., II, p. 215.
201. As examples: Levisseur, Elias M., Denkmal der Liebe und Weihe, in sieben Vorträgen für israelitische Jünglinge beim Eintritte in ihr vierzehntes Jahr., (Cassel, 1839).  
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202. Stone, Jacob L. Confirmation Address of Master Samuel Schwartz, (Chicago, 1881).
203. Egelson, Practices, p. 381ff.

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Meg. 23a.

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Sab.32b; 105b.

(Soferim XVIII, 5.)