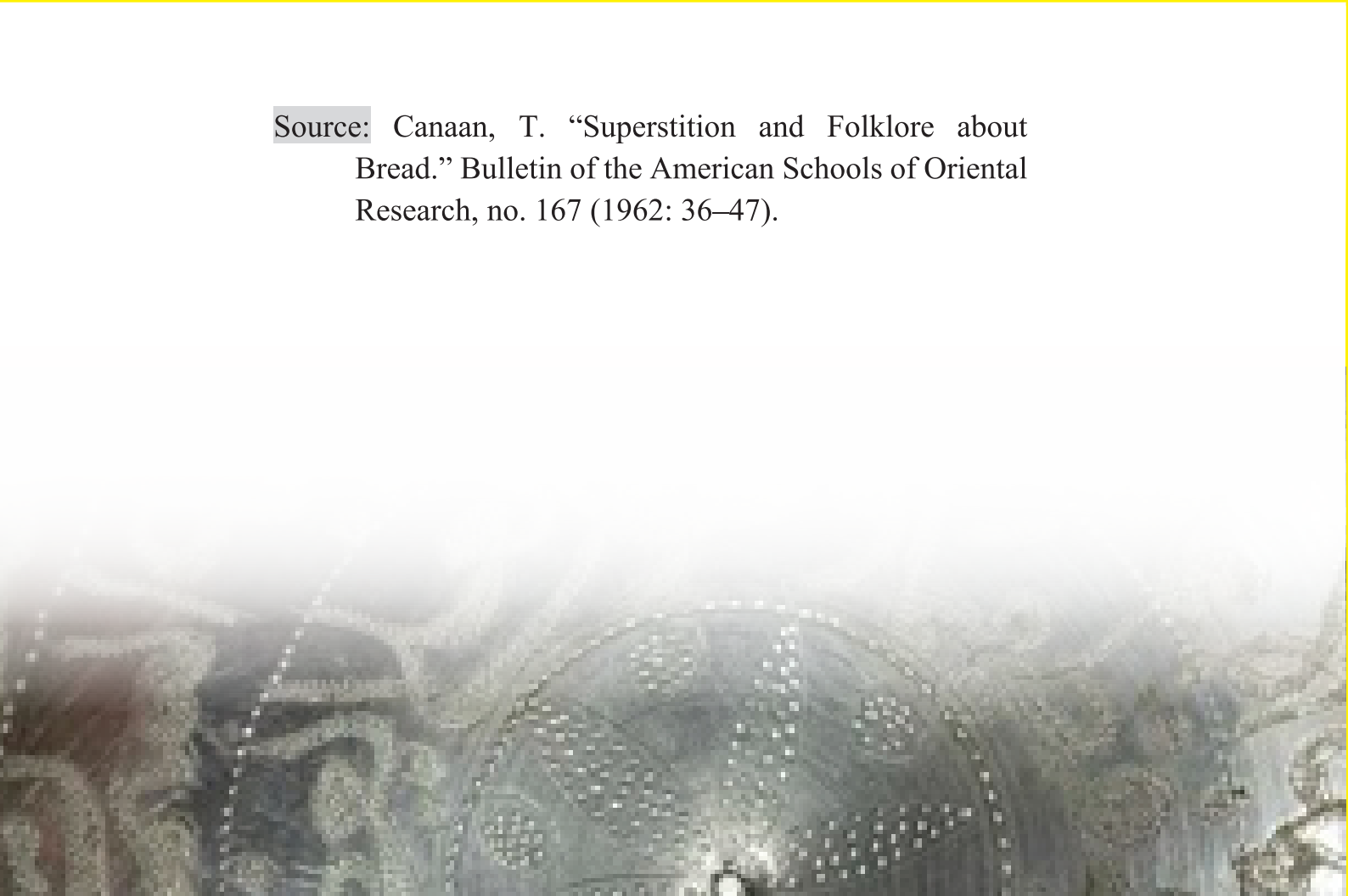


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SUPERSTITION AND FOLKLORE ABOUT BREAD *

T. CANAAN

It is scarcely necessary to mention that the old customs and superstitions of the Near East are fast disappearing. This is more true of Palestine than elsewhere. The influence of Jewish immigration, which flooded Palestine in the second quarter of this century has changed the former primitive conditions completely. In this paper only beliefs and practices known and practiced in the first forty years of this century will be described. Some of them preserve corresponding practices of the ancient Semites.

Bread constitutes the most important food of the peasants. In fact, there are many Bedouin and *fellāhīn* who are so poor that they live mostly on bread and water, with some herbs of the fields. Bread was also the most important food in Biblical times.

Bread is prepared in the Orient mostly from the flour of wheat, barley and emmer, that of wheat being the best and noblest. Some poor Bedouin in Transjordan use also *samah* grains to make bread, from a plant that grows abundantly in the desert east of Maʿān. The bread is black.¹ A proverb describing the superiority of wheat is "I am wheat (always) marching in advance. I am served to the guests without any other food."²

It was an old belief, known still to many Arabs of Palestine, that the tree of "knowledge of good and evil," which stood in the midst of the garden of Eden, was a wheat tree.³ It grew high and its fruits were as large as small cucumbers. When Eve, tempted by the serpent, which "was more subtle than any other creature," plucked one fruit a fluid exuded.⁴ Since that time Eve and all her daughters have monthly bleeding as a punishment. As blood is impure and makes the person and everything it touches impure, Eve could no longer remain in the Garden of Eden; God threw her and Adam out of Paradise. Since that time

* It is an unusual pleasure to include the article by Dr. T. Canaan in this number of the BULLETIN. Since 1920 Dr. Canaan has been a close friend of the School in Jerusalem, and the Editor is happy to have been able to assist him in publishing many of his articles in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, which Dr. Canaan was later to edit. His books and papers in German and English form the most valuable body of such material now in existence—a fact that is doubly important when one realizes how fast the old customs and beliefs are disappearing in Arab lands. We are enabled to include this article in the present number of the BULLETIN (which continues to overflow its budgetary limits) by the generosity of friends of Dr. Canaan. In editing the paper, the Editor has employed the Littmann system of transcribing vernacular Arabic, which he always employed in former years as far as possible.—W. F. A.

¹ A Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab*, 1908, p. 62.

² *'anā l-qamḥ bramah ramḥ batqaddam laq-déf balā ghmās*. *Ghmās* is any food into which bread is dipped (Canaan, *JPOS*, VIII, 159).

³ See also Mudjir ed-din, *Tārīḥ al-quds wal-ḥalīl*, p. 18; 'Omar Farīd al-Muftī, *Tārīḥ el-quds wal-islām*, p. 4.

⁴ Some say the serpent plucked the fruit and gave it to Eve.

the female sex is continually being reminded of the disaster their mother caused.⁵

Adam and Eve suffered greatly, for the ground was cursed. In toil they had to eat its produce all the days of their life. God said to Adam: "Thorns and thistles it shall bring. Ye shall eat of the plants of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you are taken. You are dust and to dust you shall return." Since that time agricultural work to raise wheat for bread has been hard and tiresome.

God pitied Adam and sent him by the archangel Gabriel, to alleviate his hardships, some wheat grains packed in silk handkerchiefs.⁶ Adam planted them but owing to the inferiority of the earth's soil and climate as compared with the Garden of Eden wheat grew only to its present size.⁷ From that time God has been and still is the giver of our greatest need, the bread. We therefore pray "give us this day our daily bread."⁸ Every grain exhibits the first Arabic letter of God's name; the *alif* is the groove which runs along the longitudinal side. All these beliefs make the Arab respect and honor wheat and everything made of it very highly, as we shall see later. Barley and *dhurah* (emmer), which often take the place of wheat in preparing bread are also respected, but not as highly as wheat.

The fields are ploughed as soon as the first rain comes, or just before it is expected. The peasant works almost in the same way and uses more or less the same tools as his ancestors thousands of years ago.⁹ I shall not describe the different processes connected with field work, for they have already been described very thoroughly by several authorities.

The Arabs never began any work, however small, without first imploring the Almighty for His blessing, protection and help. A beautiful saying used before sowing is "*yâ tâ'im ed-dûd fil-ḥadjar edj-djalmûd iṭ'amnâ wiṭ'am minnâ*," "O Thou who feedest the worm in the solid rock, give us to eat and others through us."¹⁰

When the winter crops grow weeds grow also between them (Math. 13: 26-28); they are generally pulled out by the *'aššâb* (also called *mu'aššib*), the weeder. Hence the proverb, *el-'aššâb ghalab el-karrâb*, "the weeder has done better work than (lit. overcome) the plougher." This custom existed at the time of our Lord.¹¹

God is also called upon for help and blessing before harvesting, thresh-

⁵ Canaan, "Plantlore in Palestinian Superstition" (JPOS, VIII, p. 154).

⁶ Some say God sent barley and other cereals with the wheat.

⁷ From the notes of my father about the customs of the inhabitants of Beit Djâlâ.

⁸ Math. 6: 11; Luke 11: 3.

⁹ Deut. 25: 4; Judg. 14: 13; I Kg. 19: 19; I Sam. 13: 20; Amos 6: 16; etc.

¹⁰ Another beautiful saying recorded by A. Jaussen (*Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab* p. 248) is "O Lord, give us our sustenance and through us to others; O Thou who givest the poor his maintenance as well as the mighty; O Thou who givest to the bird in the darkness of the night; O God, give us a good harvest as well as a quiet conscience; O Lord, on Thee depends the food of the herds and the existence of the family; O God, we have placed (all our needs) before Thine eyes and are depending on Thee, O God, give us good luck."

¹¹ Canaan, JPOS, VIII, p. 134; Canaan, "Die Wintersaat," ZDMG. vol. 70, p. 173; Sprenger, "Jesu Sâh- und Erntegleichnisse, PJB, IX, p. 89.

ing, winnowing and carrying home the produce of the fields. The *fellâh* spends most of the time in or near the threshing floor. When the owner of the field comes to inspect the harvesters he still salutes them with the same words that Boaz used, "the Lord be with you" (Ruth 2:4), *allâh ma'kum*. Another expression is *allâh ya'tikum el-'âfieh*, "May God give you health." When the workers have had their meal, the overseer asks *illi 'akaltû minnuh qûmû 'alêh*, "get up on that of which you have eaten (namely wheat)." What a reaper cuts in one movement is a *šmâl*. Several *šmâls* make a *ghumr* (omer), as already in the Bible (Mic. 4:12). After harvesting a field, widows, orphans and the poor are allowed to gather ears that had been forgotten or had fallen on the ground. It is believed that God's blessing will be withdrawn if the reapers should go back to gather forgotten ears, *el-barakeh bitrûh*. This was also a Biblical law (Lev. 23:22; Ruth 2; Deut. 24:21). Such gatherers are called *šaiyâfât*, *ba'ârât*, *laqqâtât*. These *šaiyâfât* glean a lot of ears, therefore the saying *mâ sâqtah illâ warâhâ lâqtah*, "no fallen ear but has a gatherer behind it"; *kull mâ tâtlat kull mâ lammat ghmûr*, "the longer she remains the more armfuls (of ears) she gathers." The expressions *šaiyâfât* and *laqqâtât* are more common than *ba'ârât*. Poor and widows are also allowed to gather olives and grapes dropped by the reapers.

The last of the field is not harvested, but left in some places for the poor. It is called *djôra'ah*. Some peasants roast the ears of the last sheaves and celebrate the end of the harvest by eating this so-called *qalîyeh*. There still exists in some places the old Semitic custom of burning the last sheaves in the place where they were reaped, while the Mohammedan creed is recited.¹² Others harvest the last corner of the field and bury the sheaves in their place. In this way the spirits are satisfied and will give a good harvest the next year.¹³

More often formerly than at present some landlords used to kill a sheep after the harvest is over. It was dedicated to Abraham, "the Friend of God." The Bedouin and the peasants thresh their grain more or less in the same primitive way as was customary in biblical times (Deut. 25:4; Lev. 26:5; Ruth 3). Often after winnowing and cleaning the grain some wheat was cooked as *smât*. This was also dedicated to Abraham. Some dedicated it to their most important *welî*. The *smât* was usually distributed among the poor.

Some weave wheat ears into a *mušt qamh*, also called *kaff qamh* and bring it as a sign of gratitude to a sanctuary. Often it hangs in their homes. A *kaff* (or *mušt*) *qamh* is woven in such a way that the ears of grain protrude on both sides as well as on the lower one.¹⁴

The harvest is a time of hard work. Nevertheless the peasants are

¹² G. Dalman, "Der palästinische Islam," PJB, XIII, p. 89.

¹³ This custom has more or less died out among the *fellâhîn*. In Transjordan the sheaves used to be buried. A head- and a footstone were placed at the two ends of the tomb. Those present say *mât el-ihtiyâr*, "the old man has died" or *dafannâ eš-šâib*, "we have buried the old man"; they pray, "O God, let the coming year find us in good health."

¹⁴ In the same way the first oil and the first grapes were brought by the Christians to the church, where they were blessed by the priest.

merry and spend a part of their time singing.¹⁵ It was formerly a widespread belief that no work on Monday would be successful, but may even be followed by some kind of misfortune. Therefore the proverb *kōl ḥubzak bid-dēn walā tištghil yōm il-itnēn*, "eat your bread in debt rather than work on Monday,"¹⁶ which was supposed to be unlucky. This rule is followed only by women.

In measuring grain the first *ṣā'* used to be consecrated to the patriarch Abraham and was called *ṣā' el-Ḥalīl*. It was given to the poor. Some Bedouin dedicate it to their local *welī*. Thus the 'Idwān tribe of Trans-jordan say *awwal ṣā' qta' lan-nabī šu'ēb*, "the first *ṣā'* is the fee due to the prophet Shu'aib"; it is given to the *qaiym* (keeper) of the sanctuary.

The heap of grain while still on the threshing floor is called "*ṣalībī*," because it is stamped with a wooden seal on its four sides as well as on top. On this seal the name of God is generally engraved. If such a seal is not obtainable the hand with the outstretched fingers of the owner will do. In this way the owner is able to check the following morning to see whether anything has been stolen. The word *ṣalībī* comes from *ṣalīb* (cross), for a cross is formed by the junction of the seals on opposite sides with that on the top.

Wheat and barley are usually stored by the Bedouin in *maṭāmīr* or *kúmar*. *maṭāmīr* (pl. of *maṭmūrah*) are pits dug in the fields and having the form of a bottle, i. e., the deeper one goes the broader it becomes. A *kamūr* (sing. of *kúmar*) is a square pit 1.50-3 m. deep. On one side it has stairs dug in the earth. This pit is covered with branches and earth.¹⁷

Wheat used to be brought to the villages mostly by the Bedouin. They settled down with their loaded camels in the *sāḥah*, a free place inside or on the periphery of the village. Every one needing wheat came and bought. In Lebanon¹⁸ and in some villages of Palestine a man of the village used to announce the arrival of wheat from the top of a house.

In measuring grain a man squats on a clean mat or on the cleansed floor with a *ṣā'* between his legs. He fills the *ṣā'* up, presses again and fills till it is actually running over. Then with one finger of the right hand he makes little cone-shaped depressions on the top of the pyramid of grain, which action causes the grain to shake together even more closely and then adds small quantities from the palm of the other hand, while the finger is slowly withdrawn. This is repeated until the measure can hold no more, when it is emptied¹⁹ into a sack or on a special mat lying beside him. This is done by a quick and steady movement. During this process he does not count the numbers of *ṣā'* he has measured in the usual way, but says *allāh wāḥid*, "God is one," for the first measure. He continues to repeat *allāh wāḥid* until the second *ṣā'* is ready to be emptied, when he says *māluḥ tānī*, "he has no second." The third is called *ṭalāteḥ* (three), the fourth *nirbaḥ min allāh*, "we gain from God."

¹⁵ Dalman has given in his *Palästinscher Diwan* (pp. 4-22 and 25-29) some such songs.

¹⁶ Another proverb is *lā tištghil yōm el-itnēn ulaw kân 'ēltak alfēn*, "Do not work on Monday even if your family is two thousand."

¹⁷ Na'ūm Ṣuqeir, *tārīḥ Sinā*.

¹⁸ A. M. Rihbany, *The Syrian Christ*, 1916, pp. 269 ff.

¹⁹ Goodrich-Freer, *Arabs in Tent and Town*, pp. 132 f.

For the fifth *ḥamseh* (five) is used. But instead of six he says *sitr allāh*, "God's protection," for seven *samḥah*, "God's gift," or *barakeh*, "blessing," for eight *rabb el-amāneh*, "the Lord of security," is used. Nine and ten are unchanged, but the eleventh *ṣā'* is for the prophet, *el-hādī lan-nabī*.²⁰ As the process of measuring is connected with a lot of dust a proverb advises *el-qamḥ illi mā hū ilak lā tiḥdar kēluh bitghabbir ḍaḡnak u btit'ab ibšēluh*, "do not attend the measuring of corn which is not yours, you will only be covered with dust (lit. your beard will be covered with dust) and you will get tired (in helping) to carry it." It means "keep your nose out of other people's business." While in the Nablus district a *ṣā'* weighs 5 ratls, in Jerusalem it weighs only 4¼ ratls. Two *ṣā'* make a *ṭabbeh*.

Wheat was ground, especially in villages and among the Bedouin nearly always in a handmill (*djarūseh*, *tāḥūneh*) which is probably the same as those used in the Bible (Deut. 24:1 ff.). Grinding was the duty of the housewife. Even today one occasionally sees a woman squatting on the ground with a handmill between her outstretched legs grinding wheat. Beneath the mill a clean cloth is spread, so that no flour falls on the floor. Grinding begins in the early morning hours. This process has been so often described that it needs no repetition. Grinding was regarded as low work indicating poverty. It was the work of servants. This is well described in the proverb: *lā ighurrak libs edj-djūh wil-firā wahl ed-dār btithan bilkirā*, "do not be misled by the cloth and silk (he may wear) while the (housewife) grinds (wheat) for wages (in order to pay for the luxuries)."

Beside the usual wheat and barley, the Arabs have *qamḥ nabawī* (prophet's wheat) and *š'ir nabawī* (Prophet's barley). These are sown, harvested, threshed and winnowed only by ceremonially clean men. No animals are used. No woman is allowed to approach or touch them. These precautions are taken to keep the produce ritually clean. Some even prescribe that the workers should fast and repeat the Mohammedan creed or some Qoranic verses while they work. These crops are threshed by beating the ears with sticks. Gideon used the same method (Judges 6:11). It is said that these cereals were the food of prophets. They were used widely in popular medicine among the Mohammedans.

Beside grinding grain into flour, a part is made into *burghul*. First the wheat is cleansed of all foreign substances by washing it in a big basin. The fine straw floats and is removed. Earth particles and dust dissolve. The stones fall to the bottom of the vessel. Slowly the water is decanted, and the grain is carefully taken out, so as not to disturb the stones at the bottom. All foreign matter is carefully picked out. The grain is spread in the sun to dry.²¹ Now it is ready for crushing. First the grain has to be moistened with cold water and then crushed into coarse particles. While it is being crushed it is at the same time hulled. The famous Oriental dish *kibbeh* is prepared from *burghul*. Probably Proverbs 27:22 describes the process of making *kibbeh*. The poorer class uses *burghul* in place of rice, which is much more expensive. This is

²⁰ JPOS, VIII, 155.

²¹ This process is called *tašwīl*; Rihbany, l. c. p. 402.

well expressed in the proverb *ruzz el-faqr burghul*, "the rice of the poor is crushed wheat."

Different kinds of wheat have different qualities. Of the best it is said '*irquh mnih*, meaning "it kneads well" and the dough is elastic. Most Bedouin and many *fellāhīn*, especially the poor class, do not clean the flour of all the bran (*nḥāleh*), but remove only the coarser constituents.

When Bedouin are on a journey or a *ghazū* (raid) and like to bake bread they take a few handfuls of flour (carried with them in a leather bag, *djrāb*), mix them with water and knead. Salt may be added but generally is not. When the dough is ready they bake the loaves on stones which have been thoroughly heated (Jer. 44:19). While the fire is being made the Bedouin never fail to get permission from the local *djinnī* by saying *bi idnak yā šāhib el-maḥall* "with your permission, O owner of the place." The Israelites while wandering through the desert most probably had only unleavened bread. While in Egypt they had leaven (Ex. 12:34).

Peasant women put a few handfuls of flour in the *bāṭiyeh*, *lakan* or *ma'djan*²² and knead it well with water, salt and leaven (*ḥamīreh*) until it is thoroughly mixed (Math. 13:33). A *bāṭiyeh* is a wooden vessel of middle size. Never does the *fellāhah* or the Bedouin woman forget to call upon God for his blessing by saying "*bism allāh*," "in the name of God," when they take flour from the sack, pour water, put in the leaven and begin to knead. Christian women make the sign of the cross on the dough and on the *bāṭiyeh*. They call upon God for help and sustenance, and never forget to cross themselves. If they should omit these precautions the blessing is gone. They believe that the *djinn* who are continually following the human race, take whatever they need from the flour. As soon as the *'adḡīneh* is well leavened a small quantity is taken and kept as leaven for the next baking. This *ḥamīreh* is kept well surrounded by zour in a *qub'ah*. The *qub'ah* is a small straw basket. The *bāṭiyeh* with the dough (*'adḡīn*) should be well covered with thick coverings during the cold months, for warmth hastens the process of rising.²³ A large baking is regarded as a special blessing, as it indicates either a large family and/or an abundance of earthly goods. A small one, on the other hand, indicates poverty and a small family (Lev. 26:26).

Bread used to be baked on a *šādḡ*, in a *ṭābūn*, *tannūr* and on hot stones. The latter method is followed, as was already mentioned, by the Bedouin when they are on a journey. Stones are heated with a strong fire; a loaf, which should not be too thick, is placed on the stones and after a while it is turned over. The procedure is repeated until the bread is well baked. A slightly different way is to heat small stones (called *radaf*) thoroughly. These are placed close to each other. When they are well

²² A *lakan* is a copper basin of various sizes. It has a diameter of ca. 80-1.30 m. and a depth of 20-30 cm. A *ma'djaneh* is an earthenware, middle-sized, deep basin. A *safḡiyeh* is a small *bāṭiyeh*. A *hnābeh* is still smaller. A *ma'djan* is a big, elongated wooden receptacle found in bakeries for the preparation of a large quantity of bread.

²³ Smaller bakings take place when the fruits have ripened, especially during the fig and grape season. This is well expressed by the advice *ṭili' el-'inab wit-tin baṭṭlā el-'adḡīn*, "Grapes and figs are ripe (lit. have come) cease kneading"; JPOS, 1928, p. 136.

heated their surface is cleansed and the ashes removed. The dough loaves are placed on the hot stones to bake. Such bread is called in some parts of the Near East *malleh*, but the Bedouin call it *qurs ħubz* (I Kg. 19:4 and 6).

A *šādĵ* is a thin plate of iron sheeting, ca. 40 cm. in diameter. One side is concave, the other is convex. The concave side comes over the fire. A piece of dough is stretched until it is pretty thin. This is done by gently throwing a piece of flattened dough from one hand to the other. When the *šādĵ* is hot the sheet of dough is placed on the upper (convex) side. *Šādĵ* bread is used by Bedouin and sometimes by peasants, especially when the latter are working in fields which lie far from their habitations.²⁴ The Bedouin of Transjordan call *šādĵ* bread baked on both sides *malleh*. When one side is baked the *šādĵ* is turned over so that the upper (convex) side comes directly over the fire. A proverb says about a person who has an indifferent attitude: “(you are) like *šādĵ* bread which has no face and no back” (*miṭl ħubz eš-šādĵ lā wiḍjeh walā qafā*). *Šādĵ* and *malleh* bread are practical, for they can be used as a spoon. When folded one can pick up other food with it. *Šādĵ* and *malleh* bread dry out quickly and crumble easily, especially in the hot summer months. This explains Joshua 9:12.

Ṭawābīn (pl. of *ṭābūn*) ovens are used especially in villages. The bread, *ħubz ṭābūn*, is very delicious. It does not need to be described. A *tannūr* is mostly used in the northern parts of Palestine and in Lebanon. The fuel of a *ṭābūn* consists generally of dried dung. That of a *tannūr* is made of brush and straw.²⁵ The firing of a *ṭābūn* is done on the outside of a clay oven. Formerly European ovens fed with wood and brush-wood were found mainly in the cities, and only a few villages had them. Those who used such ovens paid the baker either in bread or in dough. Formerly the bread baked in such ovens was of different kinds. The most important kinds were *kmādĵ*, *ṭulmīyeh* and *bētā*. *Bētā* bread is either elongated or round. The upper surface shows impressions made by the fingers. The periphery and the lower surface are not treated in this way. A proverb says “give your bread to the baker, even if he steals half of it.”²⁶ *Ṭalāmī* are still distributed by the Orthodox and Latin convents to the poor of their communities. Barley and *durah*²⁷ bread is used by the poor class. This is well illustrated by the proverb “*miṭl ħubz eš-šīr ma’kūl madmūm*,” “like barley bread it is eaten but always criticised”; “*mā šuṣṭ yōm la’ abkī ‘alā aiyāmuh illā ħubz eš-šīr u qillet adāmuh*,” “I have never seen a (good) day (during the time I lived with him) so that I should bemoan his days. I had only barley bread and scant subsistence”; *el-ism kbīr wil-jatt šīr*, “(although) his name sounds important the bread (used) is barley.”

It is said that the Prophet Mohammed in his ascetism ate only barley

²⁴ This takes place mostly during the harvest time.

²⁵ Malachi 4:1 refers probably to such an oven.

²⁶ *a’ṭī ħubzak la’-farrān ulaw saraq nuṣṣuh*. Another proverb is *illī bi’mal ħāluħ kmādĵeh biṭkammdĵeh en-nās*, “a person who makes himself a loaf will be kneaded and baked into a *kmādĵeh*.”

²⁷ Num. 5:15; Ruth 7:3; Judg. 7:13; II Kg. 11:42; Ez. 4:12.

bread. When he intended to give his daughter, Fâtmeḥ, in marriage to 'Alî, who was poor, she was not pleased, so he said *bâarak allâh fil-faqîr ibn el-faqîr bâarak allâh fil-qamḥ ḥalt eš-š'ir*, "may God be blessed in the poor, the son of the poor, as God may be blessed in wheat mixed with barley."

Bread is called 'eš, "life," since it constitutes the main food and is thus the best gift of the Almighty. This expression is well known over the Near East. The ordinary name of bread is *ḥubz*, from the verb *ḥabaza*, to bake. No unclean person, especially a female in her impure days, was formerly allowed to handle, measure or grind wheat or take and knead flour. She was allowed to touch only the bread she ate. The peasants used to say whenever they handled bread, *yâ barakeh* "O blessing," and when they finished their meal they exclaimed *Yâ rabbî tadîmhâ ni'meh*, "O my Lord, keep it a grace."

There are several proverbs describing a clever woman. As many such sayings are connected with wheat or bread, I shall mention a few: *illî taḥnat u dabbarat mâ djâ'at walâ 'iriat*, "the woman who grinds (her wheat) and arranges her (housework) will not starve, and will not go naked"; *in kân el-ḥubz fil-bêt zaqqaft ughannêt*, "if there is bread in the house, I shall clap (my hands) and sing"; *ḥubz u zêt 'mâret el-bêt*, "bread and oil make the house thrive."

Whenever a piece of bread fell or was found on the ground, the Arabs picked it up, kissed it and touched the forehead with it. Then they put it in a place where it would not be trodden upon. It is told that a negro once picked up a piece of bread which had fallen on the ground. He kissed and ate it. God blessed him and—behold—the cheek first touched by the bread turned white.²⁸ The following story is characteristic of the great punishment which may befall a person degrading this heavenly gift.²⁹ A peasant woman went to the *ṭabûn* to bake bread. She took her baby along with her. After baking a few loaves the baby's bowels moved. Having no rags whatsoever the mother cleansed him with a hot loaf of bread.³⁰ As a punishment for dishonoring this heavenly gift the child was turned into a monkey with its gluteal region red. Since that time all monkeys have this characteristic. The great honor paid to bread is also clearly shown by calling it "the holy book of God" *el-'eš maṣḥaf allâh*. It is farther said, "If God would take any food he would eat nothing but bread and grapes," *lôlâ allâh biyâkul la'akal ḥubz u 'inab*.

Wheat, barley and bread are also used as amulets protecting against the evil eye, the evil soul and the evil demons. The most malicious one of the latter is the *qarîneh* (also called *et-tâbi'ah*). Some Christian patients used to take holy bread (*quddâseh*) hoping to be rescued from her.

Some Christians of the Orthodox Church distribute, after a death in the family, a *ṣûniyeh* or a *widjeh*. They do this on one of the following

²⁸ This story is also told by Goodrich-Freer.

²⁹ Canaan, *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin*, 1914, p. 55.

³⁰ Some add: God sent the angel Gabriel with seven silken handkerchiefs, but preferring to keep this unexpected gain for herself, she wiped the child with a loaf of bread.

days: the 3d, the 7th, 40th day and six months after the death. This is done for the soul of their dead. A *šūniyeh* is a plate of boiled wheat decorated with almonds and candy. A *widjeh* is a big loaf of bread (40-50 cms. in diameter). The priest blesses both before they are distributed.³¹ Everyone who takes some will say *allāh yerhamuh*, "may God be gracious to him." The multitude of prayers will help the soul of the dead in the next life. If the dead person reached an advanced age mothers will thread wheat grains from the *šūniyeh* into chains which they put around the neck of their children, hoping they will also reach a high age.

Bread prepared in the Moghrabite *zāwieh* in Jerusalem during the month of Ramaḍān is often seen hanging in Mohammedan houses as a *barakeh* (blessing) and a protecting amulet.³² Often bread made in the shape of the hand with outstretched fingers is also hung in houses as a protective amulet. Here the hand as well as the bread protect. The Arabs formerly did not starch their clothes. This was done because starch originated from wheat. In wearing starched clothes this holy substance might be defiled with impurities.

When a peasant bride reached her bridegroom's house she stuck a piece of leaven (*hamîreh*) or dough (*adjîneh*) on the upper lintel of the entrance. This act was supposed to bring luck.

Another old custom more or less rigidly followed by Christian peasants, was never to cut bread with a knife, but to break it with the hands. Christian peasants said "Christ always broke, but never cut the bread with a knife" (Is. 58:7; Math. 14:19; 15:36; Mk. 6:41; 8:6; 19:20; 14:20; Luke 17:14; 24:30 & 35; Acts 2:46; 20:7 & 11; I Cor. 10:16). I still vividly remember the following incident from my childhood. While we were one day taking our breakfast a peasant from Beit Djâlâ came to see my father. Father invited him to breakfast and he stayed. While my father was cutting the bread with a knife, the peasant stood up, agitated and angry. He rebuked my father with the words "you are a *hūrî* (pastor) and you cut the bread with a knife! Are you better than our Lord Jesus who always broke bread with his hands?"

In the Ramaḍān feast (*el-îd eš-šghîr*, the little feast) many Mohammedans, both city dwellers and peasants, used to strew a handful of seven different kinds of cereals in front of the door of their houses. These were wheat, barley, emmer, *kersenneh* (vetch), millet, lentils and beans. They believed that the *djinn* who were banished from human habitation during the holy month will come back at its end. They will slip while walking over these seeds, fall and hurt themselves. At the same time it was believed that they would be punished by the Almighty for dishonoring his greatest gift (the wheat) by treading on it with their feet.

Sellers of bread or *ka'k ibsimsim* (round cakes with a circular form about 15-20 cms. in diameter covered with sesame seeds) are heard shouting in the early morning *yâ karîm*, *yâ ra'ûf*, "O Thou Generous, O Thou Compassionate!" These exclamations are never used in connection with any other article.

³¹ Canaan, "Palästinische Sitten und Gebräuche um den Tod," ZDPV, 75, p. 112.

³² Canaan, *Aberglaube*, etc. p. 87; Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries*, 1927, p. 114.

Every family formerly prepared its own bread. It was believed that bread sold in the market had lost its blessing because of the thousands of eyes which looked at it. Surely among the multitude of passers-by looking at the bread there are many with evil eyes. Besides there are many needy, hungry persons gazing at the bread enviously. To be obliged to buy bread was a heavenly punishment.

A neighbor who has to borrow bread for his family or for an unexpected guest, is never sent back with empty hands. Everyone is afraid of God's punishment. Even those who refuse to allow the use of their *tābūn* for a neighbor to bake his bread are heavily punished, if the oven is not being used at the moment. The following story illustrates this belief.³³ The peasants to the south of Bethlehem told me the following story. Fātmeh, the daughter of the Prophet, once begged her neighbor to allow her to bake her bread. The *tābūn* was hot and ready for use, and the neighbor did not need it at the moment. The neighbor answered "it is not heated and cannot be used." The Almighty punished the woman who told a lie to justify her refusal to help her neighbor prepare bread, the holiest gift of God. She was turned into a tortoise. As a continuous reminder of her grave transgression against the heavenly rule "never to withhold any thing which is needed for the preparation of 'ēš (bread = life) she wore the *tābūn* continually as a shell on her back. The square and round patches on her back represents the small stones (*radaf*) on which the loaves are spread.

The proverb *irghîf birghîf walā ibāt djâarak djō'ân*, says "give a loaf for a loaf and do not let your neighbor go to bed hungry." Another saying is "a loaf (given) by a weak (poor) person is better than the prayers of a year."³⁴ Hospitality is still carefully practiced by the Orientals, who regard it as a duty and not as a favor. Bread is always given even by the poorest. Partaking of food means making a covenant. The host as well as the guest may remind each other *bēnnā 'ēš u-milḥ*, "there is between us (the covenant) of salt and bread." To say of a person that he knows not the significance of the "bread and salt covenant" is to stigmatize him as a bad person. When a person visits another on a special mission he will not touch any food until he has defined the purpose of his visit. "The covenant of salt and bread" should not be entered into until the host has shown his inclination to accept the request or commission. An Arab rule commands *lā ta'ām illā bā'd el-kalām*, "there is no food except after talking (i. e. transacting business)." In Gen. 24: 33 we have the same idea: "I shall not eat until I have told my errand." Thus the expression "there is bread and salt between us," which has been used since biblical times, is equal to saying: "We are bound together by a formal covenant." It is interesting to note that the word *ḥubz* (the ordinary word for bread) is never used in this formula.

A proverb says "only a bastard will betray (the covenant of) bread and salt" (*mā biḥūn el-'ēš wil-milḥ illā ibn el-ḥarām*). Should a visitor partake of the food of a host he at once enters into the sacred covenant and can no longer take any measures against the host (cf. Ps. 41: 9; Obad. 4: 7; Job 13: 18).

³³ Canaan, *Aberglaube*, p. 55.

³⁴ *Rghîf min qalb d'if aḥsan min ṣalât seneh*.

While partaking of their food the members of a family formerly did not get up to welcome a coming guest. They remained seated and invited the newcomer to "honor" (*tšarrifnā*) them by partaking of bread with them. This was done out of respect and in honor of bread (*ħurmet el-‘êšš*).

When a beggar is given a piece of bread he is told by a pious giver "It is not I that has given you, God has given you" (*miš anā a‘tétak allāh a‘tāk*). The beggar knocking on the house door begs *ithannanū ‘alay ibluqmet ħubz*, "pity me with a morsel of bread"; *išfaqū ‘a-hal-faqīr*, "have pity on this poor man." The beggar never used to ask for anything but bread, the life sustainer.³⁵

Bread is so highly honored that it is used in oaths. Some examples are: *wihyāt hal-‘êšš*, "by the life of this bread"; *wihyāt hal-‘êšš illī hū mašħaf allāh*, "by the life of this bread which is God's holy book."

Even in curses grain and bread are at times mentioned: *in šā allāh el-fār ‘umruh mā biđūq ħubzak*, "may God decree that the mouse will never taste your bread," i. e., you will not possess any bread whatsoever; *in šā allāh bturkuđ warā er-rghīf wir-rghīf quddāmak byidhal umā btilhaquh*, "may God decree that you shall run behind the loaf of bread while the loaf runs before you and you can not reach it"; *yiq‘idak fil-qurneh uyħirmak el-ħubzeh*, "may God make you sit in the corner (owing to blindness or lameness) and deprive you of bread." These curses aim to deprive the cursed one of the basic necessity of life, namely, bread.

Orientalists formerly looked at bread as the most important part of the meal. The greatest sign of poverty was and still is complete lack of bread (Num. 21:5). In inviting a person to a meal one used formerly to say *itjadđal isnid qalbak ibšaqtet ħubz*, or *djābirnā ibluqmet ħubz*. All other food is counted accessory.

Among the offerings made to the souls of the dead *ghurbnīyeh* bread is the highest. Generally five loaves are made. Only pure, well-sifted white flour is used. The number five is in remembrance of the five loaves which were blessed by Christ and distributed among the 5000 (Math. 14:17; Mk. 6:38; Luk. 9:13; John 6:9 & 19). They are stamped on both sides with a holy seal and are carried to the church to be blessed by the priest. He usually receives one, and the others are distributed among relatives and friends. This holy bread is made on the birthday of a person, on the feast of a saint or in remembrance of a beloved dead member of the family. In the last case every one who takes a piece says *allāh yirħamuh*, "may God be gracious to him." In this way bread gives rise to a great many prayers ascending to the Heavenly Father in favor of the dead. Everyone who partakes of this bread must be ritually clean. Beside the *ghurbnīyeh* there is also the *quddāseh*, which is used primarily in the Holy Communion. It is blessed for the person for whom it is made. The person who eats of the *quddāseh* must be ritually clean and have fasted from the foregoing midnight. A *quddāseh*, which is regarded as the holiest bread, is sometimes used as an amulet in children's diseases.

³⁵ If he should ask for anything beside bread people would apply to him the proverb *saħħād ubidduh arba' rughfān kbār*, "a beggar, and he wants four big loaves."

The mystical significance of bread in the daily life of the Arabs of Palestine is rapidly disappearing. The Arab's attitude was formerly one of gratitude for God's blessings. From the moment he began to plough the field until the bread was placed on the table his attitude was continuously religious. Bread was so highly honored that it was believed that even God would have partaken of it if he ever took any food. This makes wheat the preferred cereal for offering to God.

SOME BOOKS ON THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

The following collection of books to be noticed is devoted to basic categories, such as dictionaries, general introductions, histories, commentaries and a few special monographs and collections of essays, each of which will be appraised for its contribution to our title. As the Editor has repeatedly stressed, there is a very great lag in biblical studies, which have scarcely begun to catch up with the wealth of new material about the world in which the Bible came into being. The following series is chiefly devoted to the Old Testament; the contributions of archaeology and epigraphy to the study of the New Testament were unimportant until the early twentieth century and did not begin to dominate the scholarly picture until well after the middle of our century.

A revised and enlarged translation of the **Robert-Tricot** *Initiation biblique* (third revised edition of 1954) has now appeared in a second English edition, also revised and enlarged by the editors, Professors **Edward P. Arbez** and **Martin R. P. McGuire** (*Guide to the Bible: an Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture*, Desclée Company, 1960, Vol. I: xxvi + 812 pp., \$8.00). This massive volume can be highly recommended as collateral reading for students of any faith; it is judicious, up to date (especially on the Dead Sea Scrolls and in its bibliography), and liberal without being in any sense obscurantist. It is not the same—except in part of its plan and in a number of individual contributions by the same authors—as the equally massive *Introduction à la Bible*, Vol. I (1957), on which cf. the reviewer, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, XVII (1960), pp. 241 f.

To **Frederick W. Danker** we are indebted for his excellent *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1960, xviii + 289 pp., \$3.75). The book is mostly devoted to introducing students and interested amateurs to the Hebrew and Greek texts and to standard sources of information, not forgetting the Dead Sea Scrolls. The bibliography is excellent, and textual illustrations are well selected; archaeology and epigraphy are presented with appropriate caution. Very little is omitted, and the Septuagint, the Semitic languages, Bible dictionaries are all discussed intelligently.

Since **Ernst Würthwein's** useful book, *Der Text des Alten Testaments* appeared in 1952, it has been recognized as a very good introduction to the subject, with a unique collection of 42 illustrative plates, each accompanied by a page of description. **Peter R. Ackroyd** has translated a 1955 revision by the author under the title, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to Kittel-Kahle's Biblia Hebraica* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1957, xi + 173 pp., 17s. 6d.). Unfortunately the author and translator were not yet able to utilize the new material from Qumran (since 1955), or the new light on the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Ben Asher Codex. As a result the picture is already quite antiquated.

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(to be continued)
