

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

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EVERY important proceeding in connection with olives is mentioned in the Bible, and it appears strange that no mention is made of the oil-mill, when we know that the olive-tree is *the tree of Israel* par excellence, that oil was employed in the tabernacle and in the home at least as much as butter is with us, if not more so. The only notice mentioned in the *English version* is in Micah (vi, 15), "Thou shalt tread (or crush) the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil." If we consider the word *yishár*, which is translated "olives" or "oil," it may give us a clue to a series of reflections which would otherwise be incomprehensible. The root may be associated with *šár* "to press," or "to be in a strait." If so, *yishár* would mean "olive-juice," or "pressed-juice," like the Arabic *ʿašr*. In modern custom a portion of the first oil is always given to the patron-saint, and in Numbers xviii, 12, the priests are to receive "the best of the *yishár*."

In the blessing bestowed on the land, it is upon the prepared land: "He will also bless thy fruit of thy (arable) land, the corn (in general), the wine (or preserved products of the vine, *tírósh*), and thine oil (of the press, *yishár*)."

In the "Song" Moses specifies all the agricultural productions which the Israelites will enjoy, and mentions the increase of the field, the butter, the milk of sheep, and the *dibsh* (grape-juice) of the rock-press, and the oil out of the flint-stone press. He certainly meant the hard flinty stone with which the olives are crushed. This also gives a better interpretation to the passage in Job: "When I washed my steps with butter, and the oil-press (*šár*) poured me out rivers of oil" (Job xxix, 6). The men of the oil-mills still occasionally rub their legs with oil to strengthen themselves. Job in his days of wealth used the more costly production.

Among the inspectors, whom David appointed for every branch of agriculture and commerce, we find Baal-hanan the Gederite, inspector of the olive-trees, and Joash, inspector of the oil-cellars (1 Chron. xxvii, 28).

When the whole of the first pressing is over, and there are no more olives to be crushed, the refuse is gathered and moistened and put into the baskets for pressing the second quality of oil. The oil flows into a small pit below the press, whence it is emptied into big skins, and sold to the soap factories. The refuse (*jift*) is sold to the bakers for burning material; it heats the ovens very well, especially after the second or third time, when the principal heating with wood has begun the work.

The pomegranate (*rumân*) is also found to some extent everywhere throughout the land. As with the three aforementioned trees it is also multiplied by saplings, and not by seed. The real home of the pomegranate was Jaffa, but owing to the increasing trade in oranges it is quickly disappearing.

There are different kinds of pomegranates, sweet and sour. Some kinds are exceedingly beautiful, and have names as "Mule's head," or (on account of the red cheeks) "Daughter of the Governor." The fruit of some kinds is preserved for the winter, the hard skin forms a kind of wooden envelope, and the grains lose none of their savour or juice, if properly taken from the tree and put in a dry place. The peel is used for making ink.

The cactus (*saber*) is grown in the plains as hedges for the orchards and vegetable-gardens. The fruit is taken generally to Jerusalem and the villages of the mountains during the harvest, where it is sold or exchanged for wheat. The impenetrable hedges in Jaffa, Ramleh, and Lydda are the homes of jackals and all kinds of reptiles. The tiny thorns which grow on the fruit in small tufts are easily blown away when ripe, and are supposed to be the chief cause of the different eye diseases so frequent in Ramleh and Lydda. The fruit is gathered by means of a long stick, which has a long nail driven in at the end at right angles. It is called *tawâle(t)*. The nail is stuck into the fruit which is taken off with a twist, then rolled on the ground to loosen the thorns, before it is put into baskets for sale.

The cactus has been introduced into Palestine, but at what period or under what circumstances is not known. It is found in Africa from west to east, as though this were its home. As the cactus

grows very easily, either by leaves or by seeds, it may have been brought from America, even before its discovery by Columbus, through birds having eaten fruit in that country; a bird can certainly cross the Atlantic in a very short time. But as the cactus is now wide-spread, especially in the lowlands, nobody doubts but that it has always been in the country. This is not the only plant introduced into Palestine in the course of the centuries. Solomon brought nut and other trees. The balm-trees were introduced, but disappeared again. Herod certainly introduced trees, and though we do not know what the Crusaders brought, probably the orange-tree dates from their days.

We have thus seen the different industries and callings of the people; we will now follow them in their every-day life.

The morning is the most serious hour of the day: morning prayers are due from day-break to noon, and before prayers are said jokes are not acceptable; the most humorous and noisy holds back his jokes or imprecations for some later hour, when the sun has dissipated the holy feelings with which the Oriental seems impregnated in the morning. If any one should hazard an untimely word in the early hours, he is rebuked in a few short sentences, as: *Yâ fattâh*, "Oh! opener (of the day)"—being one of God's titles; or, with more severity: *Yâ fattâh, yâ 'alîm, yâ sabâh, yâ karîm, istafteh 'ulla-l-subbeh*, that is, "Oh! opener, oh! Omniscient, oh! owner of the morning, oh! noble. Bring praises (say the opening chapter of the Koran) this morning!" The Psalmist says: "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee" (Ps. v, 3, lix, 16, lxxxviii, 13). Orientals are all early risers, as it is the most pleasant hour of the day, and quietly they roam about the streets and salute each other very solemnly.

Greetings are innumerable, the flowery Oriental is disposed in the morning more than at other hours to present his compliments. The most current greeting is *Allah yezabhak bil-khêr*, and the answer is to change the words from "God give you a good (excellent) morning," to "God give you a successful morning"—*Allah yezabhak bil-hannâ*. When saluting each other, the right hand is put on the breast, between equals; superiors receive a slight, almost imperceptible, bow, and the right hand is either carried from the breast to the mouth and head or to the breast and head only, with the addition of "My Lord," *Yâ Sêdî*, to the above-mentioned greeting.

Business may require an abridged form of greeting, so a simple "Your good morning" is said and the same is returned. In daytime they say: *nehârak sa'id* "Happy day to you," and receive the answer: *nehârak mubâarak*, "Yours be blessed," or *nehârak as'ad*, "Yours be happier." As soon as the muezzin has called for mid-day prayers, evening begins, and the greetings are changed; *massâk bilkhêr* being altered for euphony into *massêk*, in the colloquial Arabic "Your excellent, or good evening," with the answer, *massâk birâda*, "Your evening with satisfaction," or also, *Allah yesêd massâk*, "God return your evening wish." Moslems salute each other with *salâm 'alake*, "Peace be on you," and answer, *wa'alake es-salâm*, "And on you be peace." This greeting is exclusively reserved to believers. Christians salute each other with: *Allah ma'ak*, "God be with you," and answer, *Allah yehfadak*, "God guard you."¹ A greeting common to all (though more appropriate to welcome a guest in the house) is passed in the streets, as: *marhaba* "Welcome," and the answer is, *ahla(n) wasahla(n)* "Be welcome. At your ease." To emphasize the welcome, the tonic accent is put on the second syllable of the word *ahlan*, and drawn out to some length, and *mât marhaba*, "hundred welcomes," are added.

Salutations are called *Salâm*, whether the word *Salâm* is used or not. *Sallem 'alley kither issalâm*, "Greet him with many greetings," and the answer is *Allah yesalmo*, "God greet him." The Hebrews used the same formulæ. Samuel, on sending away Saul, tells him: "They will greet you (with greetings)" (1 Sam. x, 4; *cp.* Judges xviii, 15, *et seq.*). Salutations and blessings may be combined, *'aleikum es-salâm wa-rahmet Allah wabarakâtahu*, "On you be peace and the mercy of God and his blessings;" these greetings are generally at the beginning of a long conversation. King Toi, of Hamath, sends his son to David after a victory to salute him and bless him (2 Sam. viii, 10). Elisha sends Gehazi to the deceased son of the Shunammite, and recommends him not to bless anybody in the way (2 Kings iv, 29), because the combined greetings with blessings involves sitting down and perhaps eating something, whereas Gehazi must hasten. After some absence, men give each other the right hand to salute, but without shaking it. More intimate and good friends put the left arm around the shoulders,

¹ And Boaz said to the reapers: "The Lord be with you," and they answered "The Lord bless thee." Ruth ii, 4.

and kiss each other on the shoulder first, then on the cheek; if the friendship is not so close, the kiss on the cheek is omitted. Laban ran to Jacob, and embraced him and kissed him (Gen. xxix, 13). Between indifferent friends, hands are given, and the turbans are slightly touched in placed of a kiss. The Hebrews only kissed each other when very familiar, *e.g.*, David and Jonathan, or parents, and so forth. Absalom, who kissed everyone coming in at the gate, instead of receiving the more solemn greeting of bowing, astonished everybody (2 Sam. xv, 6). A superior is saluted without giving the hand, but simply by touching the breast, mouth, and head; this kissing the mouth by the hand is mentioned by Job (xxx, 27). Holy persons, priests, dervishes, and the like, graciously stretch forth the hand for it to be kissed.

When taking leave, the one going asks permission to quit, *bilidhen* "permit," or *Dastûr*, and if he does not wish to keep him back, the host will say: "Your permission is with you," and then the person leaving says, *khatrak*, *i.e.*, "With your good will," and the answer will be, *Ma' selâme* "(Go) with peace." If the departure be for a journey, the answer is *Ma' selâme* and *fi jîret Allah* "In God's protection or neighbourhood." Both formulæ have been used by the Hebrews. Eli says to the departing Hannah "Go in peace" (1 Sam. i, 17). Jonathan also takes leave of David with the same salutation (1 Sam. xx, 42). For "Good night," the salutation is *leltak sa'idat*, and *leltak mubârat* "A happy night" and "A blessed night."

When all salutations are ended, each one begins to ask the other about his health, *kîf hâlak*, "How is yourself?" or *kîf kîfek*, "How is your enjoyment?" and the answer is *il-hamdû 'lillah*, "Praise be to God," or *bikhâr*, "It is all well." The question is sometimes repeated many times, always with the same answer, no matter what bad news may be lurking. If any bad news is to be communicated it is only done in the course of conversation, the questioner feigns astonishment (though he may have heard all about it), and asks "By God?" "Yes, by God—the fever took me yesterday," and so forth, or whatever the case may be. The transmission of the bad news of Absalom's death is done quite progressively. Ahimaz arrives first and says: "All is well (in peace)" (2 Sam. xviii, 28), and then stands aside till the news is gently broken to the king, who had to ask several times "if the young man Absalom is safe." The Shunammite going to Elisha for her dead child stoically

answers Gehazi, "It is well" (2 Kings iv, 26), and does not even answer Elisha, who guesses the bad news.

Cursing, as well as greeting, is extremely extravagant. As the Oriental is polite, so his violence is beyond measure, and like a volcano he gushes forth all the imprecations he may remember if his anger be roused, or his feelings moved—as Shimei of old (2 Sam. xvi, 7, 8). The proverb says: "If you feed, don't spare; and if you strike, give pain." This may in a sense be also taken of cursing; if you bless or curse, don't do things by halves! It is well to remark that *blessings* and *cursings* are often used in the same sense, and the word *da'wet* means both, being derived from the root "to call." To call a blessing or a curse is hardly distinguished, in fact, everything lies in the use of the prepositions "to" or "on." "I'll bless (*to*) you," *bad'i lak*, and "I'll curse (*on*) you," *bad'i 'alake*, only differ in the preposition. Used in the singular as a noun, a *da'wet* is a curse, put in the plural form, curses or blessings may be meant.

"Bless (or curse God) and die," said Job's wife (Job ii, 9). Though the Hebrew *b-r-k* is used, Job understands it for the more emphatic curse (Deut. xxviii, 16).¹ The word exclusively used for a curse is *lanat* or *harm*, this last is also used for excommunication—"Forbidden." *Mesabet* is also a curse, used in "He curses the religion," *besib id-din*.

¹ Jezebel called for sons of Belial, who should say that Naboth blessed (or cursed) God and the king (1 Kings xxi, 10).

(To be continued.)
