

JEWISH FUNERALS.

Curious Customs That Are the Same Now as in the Days of Moses.

In their funeral rites and observances the Jews have preserved many of the most ancient customs of their race, says the St. James' Gazette. They still read the upper garments in token of bereavement, as Jacob did when informed of the death of his favorite son; they still seal themselves for seven days on the ground in sign of mourning as Job and his friends are represented in the Scriptures to have done. They still eat the mourners' meal, as their ancestors did in Palestine; they kindle the memorial light to comfort the departed soul, as they did, in all likelihood, ages before Judaism was known; and they still replete in public the mourners' prayer, every repetition of which—according to rabbinical notions—helps the deceased a step further out of purgatory.

The Jews rigidly exclude all relatives from the chamber of a dying co-religionist. Only strangers should be present when the soul leaves the body. As soon as death occurs all the vessels in the house containing water are emptied. On the continent, in places where Jews reside, the emptying of the water vessels in the public roadway is the usual mode of notifying that a death has occurred. The practice had its origin, we gather from the rabbinical books, in an Old World superstition that standing water in such circumstances became the abiding place of certain evil spirits whose presence in the house was prejudicial both to the dead and to the living. In the interval between death and interment the Jews lay the corpse upon the bare ground with the feet toward the door. The body is covered, but nothing—save occasionally a little straw—may be placed under it. Then the two big toes are tied together. On Sabbath it is not, however, permitted to remove a body on to the floor; it would be work. But as it is sometimes necessary that this should nevertheless be done, rabbinical ingenuity has contrived a means of accomplishing it without violating the sanctity of the day. A loaf of bread is placed upon the corpse, and the two together are lifted to the ground. It is held that only the bread has been moved, and this is permitted on the Sabbath.

Two or three hours before the interment takes place, the ceremonial purification of the body known as the *ahara* takes place. It consists merely in pouring seven definite measures of warm water over the body, while repeating the words: "I will pour upon you cleansing waters, and ye shall be cleansed of your uncleanness; for of all your iniquities I will purify you." The body is then placed in the coffin, attired in a white cotton gown known as a *kittel*. The *kittel* is, in Northern Europe, presented to a bridegroom by his bride on the day of their wedding, and is worn by him on certain occasions, such as the Day of Atonement and the Passover Eve celebration. It is made by the female relatives of the bride, but she herself must not take part in the sewing of it. In Poland, Galicia, and in Russia the bridegroom always wears the death garment under the wedding canopy during the performance of the marriage ceremony. Besides the *kittel*, the body is enveloped in the praying scarf or *talith* used by the deceased during life. When this is done the relatives are summoned. One by one they draw near and bend over the coffin; a friend takes a shawl knife and makes a slit in one of the outer garments of the mourner—on the right side if the deceased be a parent, on the left if a child. The mourner himself then rends the garment according to the custom of the country. In the East the Jews tear the vestments clean across; in England it is only torn a couple of fingers' breadth. The rent must not be sewn up for a month, and the mourning garment must be worn, for a parent, fully eleven months. The Spanish and Portuguese Jews rend their undergarments as well. Except among the German Jews—as they are called—in this country, the last offices of the dead are performed by the members of what are termed "Chevrah Kadishah," or "Holy Brotherhood," an organization formed in every orthodox congregation only for this purpose.

Just as near relatives are excluded from the death chamber, so are females prohibited from attending a funeral or interment. Why this should be so it is difficult to say. The custom of excluding women on such occasions is certainly not an ancient one, since we know from the Talmud and later rabbinical books that, of old, women joined in the funeral processions of their people chanting dirges appropriate to the ceremony. However, nowadays they are not permitted to join, and the observance is attended by males only. In Northern Europe and in parts of Russia, a father is not allowed to be present at the interment of the first child he is unfortunate enough to lose. It is believed he will lose a second if he does; though this will not in itself suffice to explain the existence of so strange a custom. The Polish Jews are, however, peculiar in more than this. It is the universal belief of orthodox Hebrews that the resurrection of the dead will take place in the Holy Land, and therefore all bodies will have to make their way underground to Palestine before the Day of Judgment. So, to facilitate this task, the "Chassidim," or ultra pious of Russia and Poland, put a fork in the hands of the deceased when he is placed in the ground—for coffins are only used in the case of a *brith* (first born), or a *kohen* (one of priestly family)—in order that he may dig his way through the ground with and thus reach the Holy Land, where the resurrection takes place.

On leaving a cemetery—which is known as the *bet ha'em*, "house of eternity," or *bet ha-haim*, "house of life"—it is customary to pluck some of the grass growing there and throw it over the shoulder without looking back, repeating the words: "Like me, I will not be plucked." (He will destroy death forever). Primarily the plucking of the grass had no connection with the formula that nowadays accompanies it; but the original symbolism of the act is forgotten, like so many of the practices still extant in Jewry. On returning from a funeral the mourners take their seats on the floor, or on low hassocks placed upon the floor, and partake of the "mourners' meal." This consists of hard-boiled eggs and dry bread and salt, which is always prepared by neighbors and is arranged in readiness for the party upon a low stool. It must be eaten seated upon the floor, as indeed must all meals during the whole seven days of mourning.

Infantry and Artillery.
John Austin Stevens, who met General Sheridan when he was in Europe during the Franco-German war, said: "I met General Sheridan at a breakfast given by Dr. Belard, and asked him why he was on the Prussian side of the war. He replied: 'Mr. Stevens, I came abroad for one purpose—to ascertain the value of artillery as against trained infantry. I went over the battlefields where the dead were hastily buried and turned over their bodies to discover the nature of their wounds, and the experience confirmed my judgment that artillery was useless. I do not believe in artillery as an auxiliary of war.' General Gibbs, who was with General Sheridan in the Shenandoah valley in his advance against Early, once said to me: 'No cannon was ever fired at General Sheridan that he did not capture.'"

MAIL LETTINGS.
NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS.
POSTOFFICE DEPARTMENT.

Washington, D. C. Feb. 1, 1889.
Proposals will be received at the contract office of this department until 4 p. m. of April 10, 1889, for carrying the mail of the United States upon the routes, and according to the schedule of arrival and departure specified by the department, in the State of Oregon, from July 1, 1889, to June 30, 1890. Lists of routes, with schedules of arrivals and departures, instructions to bidders with forms for contracts and bonds, and all other necessary information will be furnished on application to the Second Assistant Postmaster General DON J. DICKINSON.

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On and after Feb. 18, 1889, and until further notice trains will run daily (except Sunday) as follows:

EAST SIDE.

Colburg Mail	From Portland	STATIONS.	Toward Portland
Lv. 11:30 a.m.	Ar. 10:30 a.m.	PORTLAND LEAVING AT 4:40 p.m.	Ar. 1:30 p.m.
Ar. 2:15 p.m.	Ar. 2:15 p.m.	Foot of Jefferson St.	Ar. 2:15 p.m.
Ar. 2:20	Ar. 2:20	Roy's Landing, Ar.	Ar. 2:20
Ar. 2:25	Ar. 2:25	St. Paul's.	Ar. 2:25
Ar. 3:10	Ar. 3:10	Woodburn.	Ar. 3:10
Ar. 3:30	Ar. 3:30	Townsend.	Ar. 3:30
Ar. 3:40	Ar. 3:40	McKee.	Ar. 3:40
Ar. 3:50	Ar. 3:50	Mr. Angel.	Ar. 3:50
Ar. 4:00	Ar. 4:00	Dewey's.	Ar. 4:00
Ar. 4:10	Ar. 4:10	Silverton.	Ar. 4:10
Ar. 4:20	Ar. 4:20	Johnson's Mill.	Ar. 4:20
Ar. 4:30	Ar. 4:30	Switzerland.	Ar. 4:30
Ar. 4:40	Ar. 4:40	East side Junction.	Ar. 4:40
Ar. 4:50	Ar. 4:50	Maclean.	Ar. 4:50
Ar. 5:10	Ar. 5:10	Annville.	Ar. 5:10
Ar. 5:20	Ar. 5:20	West Saylor.	Ar. 5:20
Ar. 6:10	Ar. 6:10	O'P Crossing.	Ar. 6:10
Ar. 6:20	Ar. 6:20	West Selo.	Ar. 6:20
Ar. 6:30	Ar. 6:30	Centerville.	Ar. 6:30
Ar. 6:40	Ar. 6:40	Salmon.	Ar. 6:40
Ar. 6:50	Ar. 6:50	Tillamook.	Ar. 6:50
Ar. 7:00	Ar. 7:00	Platypus.	Ar. 7:00
Ar. 7:10	Ar. 7:10	Brownsville.	Ar. 7:10
Ar. 7:20	Ar. 7:20	Howland.	Ar. 7:20
Ar. 7:30	Ar. 7:30	Colburg.	Ar. 7:30
Ar. 7:40	Ar. 7:40	Ar.	Ar. 7:40

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