

Manner And Customs of Bible Lands

by

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CHAPTER NINETEEN -

Growing and Harvesting Grain

THE NUMEROUS REFERENCES to the growth of grain, which are found in the law of Moses, indicate that it was expected that the Israelites would become an agricultural people after entering the land of Canaan, and that the cultivation of grain would become one of their chief industries. It is a remarkable fact that the methods used by them in growing and harvesting this crop are virtually the same as those that have been used by the Palestinian Arab peasants for centuries down to the present day.

PRELIMINARY PREPARATION FOR PLANTING THE GRAIN

Waiting for rain before beginning to plough. In Palestine, ploughing is done after the early rains have softened the earth (cf. Psalm 65:10). These rains usually come the latter part of October or the first part of November. If they do not come then, the farmer must wait for them before he can plough his ground. Job said, "**They waited for me as for the rain**" (Job 29:23). Jeremiah described lack of rain thus: "**There was no rain in the earth, the ploughmen were ashamed, they covered their heads**" (Jeremiah 14:4). Once the rain has come, the industrious farmer will start his ploughing. "**The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold**" (Proverbs 20:4). Such a man will retreat into his home and enjoy the warmth of his fire, but he will miss the harvest. Dr. Thomson tells of one year when the farmers waited until the month of February for sufficient rain to enable them to plough the ground for the grain crop. The harvest came late, but was abundant.¹

Getting ready for ploughing. The farmer gets ready for ploughing after the first rain starts falling, if he has not already done so before. He will spend the time making sure that his plough is in good repair and ready for action. He may need to cut and point a new goad to use in prodding his team of oxen. He must also see to it that his yoke is smooth and fits the necks of the animals. An ill-shaped or heavy yoke would gall them. The LORD JESUS spoke of "**the easy yoke**" promised to His obedient followers (Matthew 11:30). When the ground has been softened sufficiently by the rain, then the ploughing can begin.²

EQUIPMENT USED IN PLOUGHING

The Plough. One type of Syrian or Palestinian plough is made up of two wooden beams which are joined together, and at the front end it is hooked to a yoke, and at the rear end it is fastened to a crosspiece, the upper part of which serves as the handle, and the lower part holds the iron ploughshare or colter.³

Even today many may be seen in Bible lands plowing with what we might term a "forked stick." Bible writers often mention iron ploughshares (I Samuel 13:20, etc.). These ploughs could without much work be changed into swords for warfare. Thus the prophet Joel said: "**Beat your ploughshares into swords**" (Joel 3:10). Exactly the reverse of this prophecy was suggested by both the prophets Isaiah and Micah in predicting the Golden Age (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).

The yoke. The yoke is a rude stick that fits the necks of the cattle. Two straight sticks project down each side, and a cord at the end of these sticks and underneath the cattle's necks holds the yoke on the necks.⁴

These yokes of wood are often spoken of in the Scriptures (Jeremiah 28:13, etc.).

The goad. A goad is carried by the native ploughman today, and was also used in Bible times. It is a wooden rod varying in length from five to seven feet, with a sharp point at one end. With this the farmer can hurry up his slow-moving animals.⁵

It was such an ox-goad that was used by Shamgar in slaying six hundred Philistines (Judges 3:31). The conviction of sin that came to Saul of Tarsus and led to his conversion was compared to the pricks of an oxgoad: "**It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks** [goad]" (Acts 26:14).

ANIMALS USED IN PLOUGHING

Use of oxen. In Bible times oxen were used almost exclusively for ploughing. For this reason the expression "a yoke" was used by the Hebrews to mean the measure of land which a yoke of oxen could plough in a day (cf. I Samuel 14:14, and Isaiah 5:10). "Oxen" as the Hebrews used the term, meant both sexes of the animal, cows being used as well as bulls for purposes of draught, but the latter were castrated.⁶

This explains the reason for the law specifying concerning a heifer to be used for sacrificial purposes, that it be one "**upon which never came yoke**" (Numbers 19:2). The law of Moses forbade ploughing with an ox and an ass yoked together (Deuteronomy 22:10). The Apostle Paul spoke of "**the unequal yoke**" in connection with partnership between believers and unbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14).

Today, the Arabs usually make use of oxen in ploughing, but sometimes utilize camels, and occasionally yoke together an ox and a donkey, or a camel and a donkey.⁷

PREPARING THE SOIL FOR THE CROP

Ploughing. The ploughing of the ground in Oriental fashion is quite primitive. The plough, which at best is a slight implement, can be carried if necessary two miles to the farmer's place of work. Of course by comparison with modern ploughs, it could be said merely to scratch the surface of the soil. The ploughman holds the one handle of the plough with one of his hands, while he carries the goad in the other hand, with which to prod the animals. JESUS said, "**No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God**" (Luke 9:62). He described the operation accurately in saying *hand*, i.e. *one hand*, rather than *two*

hands, as is the case with a Western farmer. It would be fatal for the Palestinian farmer to look back, because his implement is so light that the worker often has to press down with all his weight upon it to keep it from leaving the furrow.⁸

The Eastern farmers will sometimes plough together, each man having his own plough and team of oxen, and one following close behind the preceding one. This sort of farmer's club is adopted as a protection from roving Bedouin robbers, and also because co-operation is desired when the wheat farms are large.⁹

Thus Elisha was found ploughing with eleven other ploughmen and a total of twenty-four oxen (I Kings 19:19).

Use of pickax or mattock. Where the ground is hard, or on the rocky hillside, it is not possible to use the plough. In such places, if the peasant farmer is industrious, he will prepare the soil by using the pickax or mattock. Isaiah speaks of "**hills that shall be digged with the mattock**" (Isaiah 7:25). By using such an implement, all the available ground is utilized for the crop.¹⁰

Fertilizer seldom used. The Eastern farmer seldom adds fertilizer to his soil in raising grain. Many a hillside used by the farmer for his crop has a quantity of small, soft lime-stones scattered over it. Part of the lime in the stones is dissolved with each rainstorm, and mixing with the soil, makes it better qualified for a good stand of grain. These stones take care of liming the soil.¹¹

Modern Jews, returning from the West to farm their land, are adding various chemicals from the Dead Sea as fertilizer for their soil. But there is no mention in the Bible of fertilizing the ground for a grain crop. JESUS did mention in one of his parables about the fertilizing of a fig tree (Luke 13:1-9).

SOWING THE SEED

Kinds of grain sown. There are various kinds of grain used in the Orient. The word "corn" as used in English translations of the Bible, is actually the family name for *cereal grains*, because the "maize" or "indian corn" of modern days was doubtless unknown to Bible writers. The two principal grains cultivated in ancient Palestine were wheat and barley. There is one mention in the Old Testament of the use of millet (Ezekiel 4:9). The Revisers in the American Revised Version have changed the word "rye" in Exodus 9:32 and Isaiah 28:25 to mean "spelt." In modern times, both, rice and maize or Indian corn are used in Palestine, although the former is largely imported.¹²

How and when the seed is sown. The farmer usually carries his seed to his field in a large sack on the back of his donkey, and then the leather bag which he carries under his arm is replenished with seed from the sack.¹³

As a rule, the seed is scattered broadcast on the ground, and then it is covered over by the ploughing. Often the sower walks along, scattering his seed, and then one of his family, or a servant if he has one, follows directly with the plough.¹⁴

The Biblical word "to sow" as used in the Pentateuch (Genesis 26:12; Leviticus 25:3, etc.),

means "to scatter seed."¹⁵

Sowing as illustrated by the parable of JESUS. The process of sowing, and what happens to the seed, is well illustrated by the Parable of the Sower. No better picture could be given of the Oriental process of sowing the grain than that given by JESUS in this parable (Matthew 13:3-8; Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8).

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up" (Matthew 13:3, 4).

Palestine had few roads in the modern sense of the word until the Romans built their roads, and these only connected the most important places. Because traveling was either on foot, or by means of donkeys, or camels, a simple footpath was usually all that was necessary. These paths were given over to public use by ancient custom. If a farmer had such a path running across his land, he would plough the earth to the edge of the narrow path, but would leave it for the use of travelers.¹⁶

The Synoptic Gospels tell of JESUS and His disciples traveling in this manner through a grainfield (Matthew 12:1; Mark 2:23; Luke 6:1). Hedges or fences were seldom erected along such a footpath. When the farmer scattered his seed, some was quite apt to fall on this "way," and not being covered by the plough soon enough, the birds would discover it and eat it.

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." (Matthew 13:5, 6).

The thought here is not of a soil that is mingled with stones, but rather a thin layer of mould covering a rock. Under such conditions, the grain would spring up quickly, but lacking depth of root, would be scorched by the sun, and fail to mature.¹⁷

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them."

In Palestine and Syria, there are many thornbushes present that are apt to grow adjoining the grainfields, and some of them will spring up in the midst of the grain. The native farmer uses these thornbushes in the summer for the outdoor fires for cooking the meals. Hence he is not so careful to get rid of them in the near vicinity, and so some of these will choke the wheat or barley shoots.¹⁸

"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold: some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."

The native farmers of Bible lands often have poor returns on the seed they sow, because their methods are primitive. But there are instances of good crops in modern times. George Mackie, who was a missionary to Syria, has said: "The soil is in many places exceedingly fertile, and the return corresponds to the standard cited in the parable."¹⁹

When Isaac farmed in the rich Negeb section of Southern Canaan, Scripture says:

"**Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold**" (Genesis 26:12).

ENEMIES OF THE GRAIN

Birds. The birds of the air are foes of the grain. In the East, large flocks of birds often follow the farmer as he sows his seed in order to snatch up, if they can, what he has scattered. Some of the grain is therefore lost before the plough can succeed in covering it up. That which chances to fall on the path would readily be devoured by them (Mark 4:4).²⁰

Tares. The tares are also enemies of the grain. In his Parable of the Tares, JESUS said: "**While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat**" (Matthew 13:25). In the Holy Land, tares are something called "wild wheat," because they resemble wheat, only the grains are black. Thomson has this to say about the tares:

"The Arabic name for tares is *zawan*, and they abound all over the East, and are a great nuisance to the farmer. The grain is small, and is arranged along the upper part of the stalk, which stands perfectly erect. Its taste is bitter, and when eaten separately, or when diffused in ordinary bread, it causes dizziness, and often acts as an emetic. In short, it is a strong soporific poison, and must be carefully winnowed, and picked out of the wheat, grain by grain, before grinding, or the flour is not healthy. Of course the farmers are very anxious to exterminate it, but that is nearly impossible."²¹

Fire. Fire is another enemy of the grain farmer. In Palestine, the Arabs let the wheat become dead ripe, and therefore as dry as tinder, before they cut it. Thorns usually grow all around the wheat fields and intermingle with the grain, and thus it would be easy for a fire starting with the thorns to spread to the wheat, and it would be difficult to keep a whole field from being burned.²²

The law of Moses had a wise regulation regarding fire in relation to the grain fields: "**If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution**" (Exodus 22:6).

Locusts. The locusts are a dreaded enemy of the grain farmer. Perhaps these creatures are the most hated of enemy of the Palestinian farmer. These locusts are very much like the large grasshopper with which the Westerner is acquainted. When they reach the proportion of a plague, they are indeed a vast multitude (cf. Judges 6:5; 7:12). They will occupy a space as large as ten or twelve miles long, and four or five miles wide. They are said to march like an army. The Book of Proverbs indicates this interesting fact about them: "Locusts have no king, but they march all in ranks [i.e., in orderly array]" (Proverbs 30:27, tr. of C. H. Toy).²³

When the weather is cold and the air is moist, or if they become wet with the dew, then they will stay where they are until the sun has warmed and dried them. The prophet Nahum describes them thus: "**Which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away**" (Nahum 3:17). The prophet Joel describes the judgment of the Day of the LORD in terms of an invasion of locusts. The plague of locusts shuts out the light of the sun because of their

great numbers (Joel 2:2). Before their coming, the land might be like the Garden of Eden, but after they leave, it has become a desolate wilderness (Joel 2:3). Their appearance is compared to horses because the form of their head resembles that of a horse (Joel 2:4). They make a loud noise when they are eating (Joel 2:5). The consternation which they cause to the people of the land may well be understood: **"Before their face the people shall be much pained"** (Joel 2:6). They are able to pass over walls, and to enter windows or doors of houses (Joel 2:9). The terrible fact is that sometimes one swarm of locusts after another may invade the same section of land.²⁴

Dr. Keil believes that this is what Joel 1:4 describes, rather than different stages in the development of the locust. He gives a literal translation of the verse thus: "The leavings of the gnawer the multiplier ate, and the leavings of the multiplier the licker ate, and the leavings of the licker, the devourer ate."²⁵

Thieves. Thieves are also great foes of the grain farmer. This has been especially true in modern times when the government has not been stable and efficient, as sometimes under the Turkish rule. Under those conditions, when the crop of grain has been planted a distance from the villages where the Fellahin farmers have lived, or if it was planted near to the territory of some of the wild tribes of Bedouin Arabs, there has been risk of losing the crop or at least a portion of it.²⁶

In Bible times, Israel many times lost grain to her enemies. This was especially true in the days of the Judges.

"And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east" (Judges 6:3).

With enemies nearby, crops may be lost to them, and even the seed is often taken. If therefore the peasant farmer is very poor, and his supply of seed to plant is not large, he would go forth to sow his seed with a certain amount of fear and trembling, wondering if he would get a harvest from his scattering, or if the enemy would take it from him. As the feelings of the Oriental are easily moved, one can imagine him going forth with tears to sow, and if a harvest was actually reaped, what great rejoicing would be his!²⁷

This is the picture the Psalmist had in mind when he wrote: **"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"** (Psalm 126:5, 6).

RAIN AND THE MATURING OF THE CROPS

The Palestine grainfields are largely dependent upon the rain that falls, for their fruitfulness. No rain falls in the land from May to September. The former rain, spoken of in scripture, falls in the latter part of October or the first part of November usually. It is this rain that is the signal for the farmer to begin his ploughing and plant his seed.

The Bible also speaks of the latter rain, which ordinarily falls in March and April, and it is this rain that is of so much value in maturing the barley and the wheat crops. The heavy winds come

the latter part of December and during January and February.

The prophecy of Joel mentions all three of these kinds of rain: "**And he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month**" (Joel 2:23). The word *rain* here means heavy, gushing rain that falls in winter months, and the rainy season starts with the former rain in the fall, and ends with the latter rain in the spring.²⁸

Barley harvest is usually in April and May, and wheat harvest in May and June. Thus we see that Jeremiah was quite correct in his order of seasons in relation to the harvest time, when he said: "**The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved**" (Jeremiah 8:20).

THE FARMER'S LAW OF HOSPITALITY

Eating grain in the field. When the grain in the wheatfield has passed the "milk-stage," and has begun to harden, it is then called "*fereek*" and is considered to be delicious to eat raw. Natives of the land will pluck the heads, and then rub them in their hand and eat them. For centuries the unwritten law of hospitality has been that wayfarers may eat of the wheat as they pass by or through a field, but they must not carry any away with them.²⁹

The law of GOD allowed this same privilege. "**When thou comest unto the standing corn (i.e. grain) of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn**" (Deuteronomy 23:25). When the Pharisees criticized the disciples, it was not for eating wheat as they passed through a wheat field, but rather for doing it on the sabbath day (Luke 6:1,2).

Grain left for the poor. The Mosaic Law also had a provision in it to help take care of the poor, in connection with the grain harvest. "**And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger**" (Leviticus 23:22).

Ruth the Moabitess made use of this provision as a stranger in the land, and so gleaned in the field of Boaz (Ruth, Chapter 2). The Arab farmers of today still carry out this ancient custom, although they may not be acquainted with the Biblical precept concerning it. They would not think of touching the corner of their field when harvesting. It is left for the poor and stranger. It may be collected later into a great heap, but it is then given to the poor, or used to maintain a guest chamber.³⁰

CUTTING AND TRANSPORTING THE RIPENED GRAIN

Cutting the ripened grain. The ripe grain is cut with a sickle. In early times sickles were made of flint, which material was abundant and therefore cheap. In later periods there were some made of bronze or of iron, but the former were more prevalent in all periods. The flint was at first set in the jaw-bone of an animal, or in a curved piece of wood.³¹

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of "**him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest**" (Jeremiah 50:16). And the prophet Joel commands: "**Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is**

ripe" (Joel 3:13).

Binding the grain into sheaves. The cut grain is gathered on the arms and bound into sheaves. The Psalmist makes a reference to the mower filling his hand, and the binder of sheaves filling his bosom (Psalm 129:7). And the Song of Solomon speaks of an heap of wheat (Song of Solomon 7:2), and Joseph in his dream saw "**binding sheaves in the field**" (Genesis 37:7). Thus the cut grain was gathered in the arms and bound into sheaves.

Transportation of grain to the threshing floor. The usual method of transporting the grain to the threshing floor is as follows: two large bundles of the grain are made secure by a network of rope and then placed a few feet apart. Then a camel is made to kneel in the space between them, and then the bundles are fastened to the animal's packsaddle. The driver gives his signal, and the camel rises and begins to march off to the threshing floor, which is usually located not far from the village. Here he kneels again and is relieved of his burden of grain, and goes back for another load.³²

When a camel was to be had, this was the method of transportation that was doubtless used in Bible times. Otherwise the much-used donkey was utilized for the purpose. When sheaves of grain are loaded on the donkey, a sort of cradle is suspended to the flat saddle, and the cut grain is thrown over this and tied by a rope.³³

The brothers of Joseph used asses to carry sacks of grain and also straw for them to eat (Genesis 42:26, 27).

THRESHING THE GRAIN

Threshing floor. A typical Oriental threshing floor has been described by Thomson thus:

"The construction of the floors is very simple. A circular space, from thirty to fifty feet in diameter, is made level, if not naturally so, and the ground is smoothed off and beaten solid, that the earth may not mingle with the grain in threshing. In time, the floors, especially on the mountains, are covered with a tough, hard sward, the prettiest, and often the only, green plots about the village, and there the traveller delights to pitch his tent. Daniel calls them summer threshing floors; and this is the most appropriate name for them, since they are only used in that season of the year."³⁴

Methods of threshing. Three methods of threshing were in use in ancient times, and in some places in the East today.

(1) A *flail* was used for threshing small quantities of grain. Ruth must have used such a wooden instrument. "**And beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley**" (Ruth 2:17). And without doubt Gideon was also using such an instrument when he was threshing a small amount of wheat secretly, for fear of the enemy. "**Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites**" (Judges 6:11).³⁵

(2) A *threshing instrument* was often used. One type that has been used in Bible lands in modern days, is composed of two wooden planks joined together, about three feet wide and six feet long,

and underneath has rows of cut square holes, and sharp stones or pieces of metal are driven into these. Isaiah well describes such a threshing instrument: "**Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth**" (Isaiah 41:15). This threshing board is pulled by the oxen over the grain, and the thresher sits or stands upon the instrument, with his goad in his hand to hurry up the animals.³⁶ Another type of threshing instrument takes the form of a small wagon with low cylindrical wheels that serve as saws.³⁷ The prophet must have been thinking of this sort of instrument when he mentioned "**the cart wheel**" in connection with the threshing activity of the farmer (Isaiah 28:27, 28).

(3) *The oxen alone were driven over the grain in order to thresh it.* This method was the most common method used by the Jews in Old Testament times. The animals were turned over the layer of grain as it lay upon the threshing floor, and their hoofs did the work of threshing. Many of the Fellahin today will say that this is the best way of threshing. "This must have been the same in Bible days, for the Hebrew verb "to thresh" is *doosh*, which has as its root-meaning 'to trample down', 'to tread under foot'"³⁸ (cf. Job 39:15; Daniel 7:23).

The oxen not muzzled while threshing. Even today the Arab peasant farmer does not muzzle his oxen while they are treading the grain on the threshing floor. He says it would be a great sin to do so.³⁹

This agrees with the teaching of the Mosaic Law. "**Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn** [grain]" (Deuteronomy 25:4). The Apostle Paul quotes this Scripture to enforce his argument that "**the laborer is worthy of his hire**" (I Corinthians 9:9; I Timothy 5:18).

What the threshing process accomplishes. What happens has been described as follows:

"As these heavy sledges are drawn over the layer of straw and ears, they rub out the grain. This by its form and weight, sinks immediately through the straw, and thus escapes being hurt. The straw, which by its lightness remains on the surface, is slowly broken and crushed into tiny pieces. Thus a double process goes on by means of this simple but effective treatment. Not only is the corn threshed out, but the straw is at the same time prepared for cattle and camel fodder. In this crushed state it is called "*teben*" and is used to mix with the barley with which all their animals are fed, just as we mix chopped hay with oats; but this crushing is far superior to our chopping as a means of preparing cattle food."⁴⁰

WINNOWERING THE GRAIN

Winnowing was accomplished by the use of either a broad shovel or of a wooden fork which had bent prongs. With this instrument, the mass of chaff, straw, and grain was thrown against the wind. Because there was generally a breeze blowing in the evening, this was the time when it was normally done.⁴¹

So Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz: "**Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor**" (Ruth 3:2).

When the Bible speaks of the farmer's fan, it does not mean that some instrument was used to

increase the wind. Rather, the fan was the shovel or wooden fork used when unseparated grain and straw was thrown against the wind.⁴²

The prophet Jeremiah tells of GOD using a fan to winnow His people Israel: "**And I will fan winnow them with a fan in the gates of the land**" (Jeremiah 15:7).

When the grain and straw, not as yet separated, are thrown into the air, the wind causes the mass of material to fall as follows: Since the grain is the heaviest, it naturally falls beneath the fan. The straw is blown to the side into a heap, and the lighter chaff and the dust are carried beyond into a flattened windrow.⁴³

This gave to the Psalmist his figure: "**The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away**" (Psalm 1:4). The chaff is burned as Scripture often indicates. "**And the flame consumeth the chaff**" (Isaiah 5:24). John the Baptist was familiar with the winnowing process and the burning of the chaff. He said: "**Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**" (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17).

Dr. Lambie reports seeing an additional process used by Bible land Arabs. After being thrown against the wind, the grain is placed on a rock and the farmer uses a mat about eighteen inches square with which to fan the grain, while a helper keeps turning it over, in order to get rid of any remaining chaff.^{43a}

There is no definite reference to such a practice in the Bible, but it is possible this method may have been used in olden times as an additional means of cleaning the grain, or perhaps it was employed when the winds were quiet.

SIFTING THE GRAIN

When the winnowing process is over, then comes the sifting of the grain. The wheat or barley will still be more or less mixed with certain amounts of chaff, little stones, and perhaps some tares. Sifting is therefore necessary before the grain can be ground into meal. This is the task of the women. The sifter seats herself on the floor, and shakes the sieve which contains the grain, until the chaff begins to appear on the top, and this is blown away by lung power. The stones are removed as are also the tares.⁴⁴

The LORD JESUS made reference to the "**sifting**" of Simon Peter. He said: "**Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren**" (Luke 22:31).

STORING THE GRAIN

Smaller quantities of grain are often stored away for future use by the family, in "barrels" made of a combination of clay and wickerwork. If there is a larger quantity of grain it is sometimes placed in a dry cistern under the ground, and the location of the place is kept a secret by covering over the opening.⁴⁵

Actually there were no flour barrels in the homes of Old Testament characters. The word "barrel" speaks of a "jar." Earthenware jars were used to store grain or flour (see I Kings 17:12, 14, 16; 18:33). Both underground storage places for grain and buildings above ground have been in use in modern times. In the Bible, three words are used for grain storage places: the storehouse, the garner, and the barn (Deuteronomy 28:8; Matthew 3:12; Proverbs 3:10). These places were often located below the surface of the ground, but were sometimes above ground. The barns of the rich fool CHRIST told about, must have been of the latter type, because he said: **"I will pull down my barns and build greater"** (Luke 12:18). When excavators uncovered the city of Gezer, they discovered that granaries had been important buildings in ancient times. Some of them were connected with private homes, while others were evidently public storehouses. Most of them were circular in shape, like some that have been in use on the maritime plain of Palestine in recent years. Their size varied greatly.⁴⁶

1. W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, Vol. II, p. 549.
2. A. C. Haddad, *Palestine Speaks*, pp. 18, 19.
3. Abraham Rihbany, *The Syrian CHRIST*, p. 287.
4. Edwin W. Rice, *Orientalisms in Bible Lands*, p. 135.
5. CE. E. P. Barrows, *Sacred Geography and Antiquities*, p. 342.
6. Loc. cit.
7. Samuel Schor, *Palestine and the Bible*, p. 8.
8. James Neil, *Pictured Palestine*, pp. 261, 262.
9. Schor, loco cit.
10. G. Robinson Lees, *Village Life in Palestine*, p. 141.
11. Schor, op. cit., p. 6.
12. Barrows, op. cit., pp. 342, 343.
13. Rice, op. cit., p. 135.
14. George M. Mackie, *Bible Manners and Customs*, p. 39.
15. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 281. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906.)
16. Cf. George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 132.
17. Richard C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, pp. 60, 61.
18. Rihbany, op. cit., pp. 289-290.
19. Mackie, op. cit., p. 40.
20. Trench, op. cit., p. 59.
21. Thomson, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 395, 396.
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