

During the exile, however, the legal minds among the captives had been devoting much attention to framing laws for the organization of their religion when they should return to their own land; and shortly after their return, in the fifth century before Christ, there began the crystalizing of the law and the emphasis on ceremony which characterized the night of legalism. The strong arm of the Civil Law was invoked by Ezra and Nehemiah for enforcing the observance of religious ritual; and in this period, as in all periods of severe legislative enactments, the Sabbath took on a far less pleasing form. Its humanity was neglected and its literal observance was everything. Under this influence the violation of the Sabbath law was made a capital offence. The lighting of a fire on the Sabbath day was forbidden, and so strictly is this observed by the orthodox Jew to-day, that the curious case is now before the American Courts, in which the defendant is charged with slander, because he accused the plaintiff of smoking a cigarette on the Sabbath. A reflection of the severe legislation of this period may also be seen in the story of the man who was gathering sticks on the Sabbath day and was put to an inhuman death. It was in this dark period, too, that there grew up among the Rabbis the mass of petty regulations and puerile literalisms that made the originally humane institution a burden grievous to be borne—the bondage to ceremonial law against which Jesus uttered his indignant protest in his splendid words: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

This, then, is the history of the Sabbath among the Hebrew people: (1) Originally the Sabbath was a day of rest and worship. It blended in perfect harmony the two elements of humanity and ritual. (2) The Sabbath became a day of rest, but not for the common people a day of worship. Its humanity was preserved at the expense of its ritual. (3) The Sabbath became a day of worship—of purely ceremonial observance—but no longer a rest, rather a heavy burden. Its ritual was emphasized at the sacrifice of its humanity. (4) Then came the Lord of the Sabbath and by both precept