

EDUCATION AND EUGENICS AMONG JEWS

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A man should sell all he possesses in order to marry the daughter of a scholar, or marry his daughter to a scholar or other man of character, because he may then rest assured that his children will be scholars; but marriage to an ignoramus will result in ignorant children. (b. Pesachim, 49a)

For a learned man to marry the daughter of an ignoramus (*'am ha-ares*) is like planting a vine tree among thorns. (b. Pesachim, 49a)

If one sees that scholarship is dying out in his children, one should marry his son to the daughter of a learned man. (b. Pesachim, 49a,b)

An unlettered Israelite should not marry a woman of priestly descent, since this constitutes in a way a profanation of the seed of Aaron. Should he marry her nevertheless, the Sages have said that the marriage will not prove successful, and he will die childless, or else he or she will come to an early death, or there will be strife between them. On the other hand, it is laudable and praiseworthy for a scholar to marry a woman of priestly descent, since in this instance learning and priesthood are united.

A man should not marry the daughter of an unlettered person, for if he should die or be sent into exile, his children would grow up in ignorance, since their mother knows not the crown of the Torah. Nor should a man marry his daughter to an unlettered person, for one who gives his daughter in marriage to such a husband is as though he had bound her and placed her in front of a lion, seeing that the beast's habit is to smite his mate and have intercourse with her, since he has no shame. A man should go so far as to sell all his possessions in order to marry a scholar's daughter, for should he die or go into exile, his children would grow up to be scholars. Similarly, he should marry his daughter to a scholar, since there is no reprehensible thing or strife in the house of a scholar. (*The Code of Maimonides, Book 5: The Book of Holiness*, ch. XXI: 31-32, 140)

Eugenicists such as Hughes (1928) and Weyl (1963, 1989) have long emphasized Jewish eugenic practices as resulting in high levels of intelligence

among Jews. Although there are major differences between an evolutionary perspective and a eugenics perspective on Judaism,¹ the evolutionary perspective is highly compatible with the supposition that eugenic practices have been an important aspect of Judaism as an evolutionary strategy. From this perspective, not only did the Jewish canon perform an educational function, but also there is evidence that the Talmudic academy often functioned as an arena of natural selection for intelligence.

The first major eugenic effect occurred when the Babylonian exiles returned to Israel (now a part of the Persian Empire) in the fifth century B.C. The Babylonian exiles were disproportionately wealthy compared to the Israelites left behind, and in Chapter 3 data were presented indicating that these relatively wealthy and aristocratic exiles returning from Babylon refused to intermarry or associate with the "people of the land" (*'am ha-ares*)—both the Samaritan remnants of the northern kingdom and the former Israelites of the southern kingdom. The main reason given for this exclusion was that these groups had not preserved their ethnic purity, but Ezra's policy of removing all individuals of foreign taint from the Israelite community would also have had a eugenic effect.

Dating the origins of eugenics as a conscious policy among Jews is difficult. The evidence described in this chapter indicates that concern with education originated at least by the second century B.C., and there is evidence for social, economic, and genetic discrimination against the less educated classes at least from the period following the Second Commonwealth (70 A.D.). Moore (1927-30, II:157ff; see also Alon 1977; Safrai 1968) suggests that, following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the new class division was between an educated, religiously observant elite called "associates" (the *haberim*; sing. *haber*; i.e., members of the fellowship) and the *'am ha-ares*, who were either characterized by a withdrawal from Torah education and knowledge or suspected of being careless in the performance of the religious law. The appellation *'am ha-ares* itself is significant, since it is the term used for the racially mixed, religiously impure native population inveighed against by Ezra and Nehemiah during the Restoration in the fifth century B.C. It is thus a derogatory term, and the animosity between these groups was rather intense, especially during the second century A.D.²

Avi-Yonah (1984, 63f, 108f) notes that after the destruction of the Second Temple, the highly observant, exclusive *haberim* were the only group available to reconstitute a national authority, and they quickly assumed power as magistrates and used their authority to enforce rigorous observation of a very strict interpretation of the religious law, including the agricultural laws, which impacted so heavily on the *'am ha-ares*. (For example, during the economically difficult times of the third century, the *haberim* strongly opposed the relaxation of the sabbatical year law, in which fields were to remain fallow in the seventh year despite the hardship this caused to the *'am ha-ares*.) The rabbis had power in the towns, but they were freed from taxes while at the same time being dependent ultimately on the *'am ha-ares* for support. The freedom from taxation

was especially resented during economic crises, as during the third century. The result was the development of an elite class of scholarly rabbis whose status was based on intellectual ability and who were supported by a relatively illiterate and poor peasantry.

There were a variety of methods of social discrimination against the *'am ha-ares*. The *'am ha-ares* were ritually unclean, so that any contact with them was fraught with difficulty. For example, Mishnah Tractate Tohorot (7:1-9--8:1-5) goes into great detail on how *'am ha-ares* impart uncleanness to virtually everything they come in contact with, including the space surrounding them.³

Moore (1927-30 II:159) summarizes these prohibitions by noting that "the presumption of uncleanness was a serious bar to social intercourse, and indeed to friendly relations of any kind." Because of their ignorance of the law, the *'am ha-ares* may not have paid the requisite tithes on agricultural produce to the authorities, with the result that business relationships were also highly problematic. Moreover, the *'am ha-ares* were prevented from testifying in legal proceedings, could not be entrusted with a secret, and could not be appointed guardian of an orphan or be in charge of the poor rates. During the economic troubles of the third century, the Patriarch only reluctantly and belatedly opened his storehouses to the *'am ha-ares* after originally opening them to "students of the Bible, of the Mishnah, of the Gemara, of the Halakah and the Haggadah" (quoted in Avi-Yonah 1984, 110).

These comments indicate that the policies of the *haverim* would have had negative economic effects on the *'am ha-ares*, and the social discrimination might reasonably be supposed to result in defections of the *'am ha-ares* from Judaism. Of particular interest here is that "marriage between the two classes was condemned in terms of abhorrence" (Moore 1927-30, II:159-160). Thus, the Talmud states that

A Jew must not marry a daughter of an *'am ha-ares*, because they are unclean animals [*sheqes*] and their women forbidden reptiles [*sheres*] and with respect to their daughters the Scripture writes: "Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast [Deut. 27:21]! . . . Said R. Eleazar: one may butcher an *'am ha-ares* on a Day of Atonement that happens to fall on a Sabbath [when any kind of work constitutes a violation of a double prohibition]. His disciples said to him: Master, say "slaughter" [instead of the vile word, butcher]. But he replied "slaughtering requires a benediction, butchering does not require a benediction." (b. Pesachim 49b)

In the words of Hillel, "No ignorant man (*'am ha-ares*) is religious" (cited in Moore 1927-30, II:160). Being religious meant having knowledge of an enormously complicated code of laws, many of which "from our point of view seem of the smallest religious significance" (Moore 1927 II:160). Thus, a great

deal is made of the regulations on agricultural tithing to priests (perhaps because many of the *'am ha-ares* were peasants), even though the priests no longer had any religious function. There is an extraordinary interest in the Mishnah in the regulation and taxation of agriculture, resulting in thousands of regulations (Avi-Yonah 1984, 20) elaborated to a truly amazing level of complexity.

Regarding the general system of agricultural taxation, Moore comments that

the system, with its numerous and various payments in kind, was complicated, while the method of collection, so far as there was such a thing, had the semblance--and doubtless the substance--of extortion by the beneficiary.

It is small wonder that the peasant earned the reputation of being very "untrustworthy" in acquitting himself of his religious obligations in this sphere. Even the most scrupulous of the class doubtless followed in this as in other matters the prescriptive usage of their fathers, heedless of the stricter interpretation of these laws in the schools and of the refinements of the oral law. (Moore 1927-30, II:72).

The clear animosity between these groups, the emphasis on elaborate regulation of the economic behavior of the *'am ha-ares* by an intellectual, and non-agricultural elite, the elaborate set of rules regulating social contact between the groups based on the uncleanness of the *'am ha-ares*, and the extreme importance of not marrying into the family of an *'am ha-ares* are highly compatible with a eugenic interpretation in which community controls facilitating eugenic mating among the scholarly rabbinic class were highly salient to members of both groups. Moore indicates that the barriers between the *'am ha-ares* and the *haverim* were not absolute, since an individual could be admitted to the educated class if he accepted instruction during a probationary period. However, the response of many of the *'am ha-ares* was to flaunt their lack of knowledge and literacy and to thumb their noses at the *haverim*.

Nevertheless, Avi-Yonah (1984, 107, 110, 238) states that by the third century the rifts between these classes had receded and in the sixth century wealthy *'am ha-ares* could achieve positions of power and influence in the community. There is the clear suggestion, however, that assortative mating based on intelligence and active avoidance of intermarriage with the unlettered was characteristic of the scholarly class beginning at least during the first century. Minimally, there is the suggestion that marriage would only be within-group, and even after the disappearance of this class distinction, only wealthy, intelligent *'am ha-ares* would be able to have influence in the towns and *connubium* with the rabbinic class.

Moreover, it is apparent from this material that the *'am ha-ares* would have had maximum motivation to leave the group. It has been mentioned that the poor and obscure have always been the most likely to leave Judaism, and this must have been particularly so during this period. From an evolutionary perspective, the exclusionary behavior and economic disabilities imposed on the *'am ha-ares*

by the *haberim* are absolutely incompatible with supposing that both of these groups were at that time members of the same evolutionary strategy. Quite clearly there is the indication of maximal divergence of interest here, rather than the impression of a unified, corporate type of Judaism in which there were high levels of within-group altruism and the consequent strong group cohesion. The image presented by this ancient conflict is highly discordant with the image of Judaism apparent from the material discussed in Chapter 6.

Theory and Practice of Eugenics Among the Jews

The Talmuds show a strong concern with eugenics. Marriage with a scholar or his children is highly recommended: "For marriage, a scholar was regarded . . . as more eligible than the wealthy descendent of a noble family." The Tannaim did not tire of reiterating the advice that "under all circumstances should a man sell everything he possesses in order to marry the daughter of a scholar, as well as to give his daughter to a scholar in marriage. . . . Never should he marry the daughter of an illiterate man" (Baron 1952, II:235).

Feldman (1939) shows that the authors of the Talmud, like the other ancients, believed that heredity made an important contribution to individual differences in a wide variety of traits, including physical traits (e.g., height), personality (but not moral character), and, as indicated by the above quotations from the Talmud, scholarly ability. "Every care was taken to prevent the birth of undesirables by a process of selective mating" (p. 32). Individuals contemplating marriage are enjoined to attend to the family history of the future spouse: "A girl with a good pedigree, even if she be poor and an orphan, is worthy to become wife of a king" (Midrash Num. R.i, 5; quoted in Feldman 1939, 34). A prospective wife should be scrutinized for the presence in her family of diseases believed to be inherited (e.g., epilepsy), and also the character of her brothers should be examined, suggesting an awareness of the importance of sex-linked factors. Physical appearance was not to be a critical resource for a woman: "For 'false is grace and beauty is vain.' Pay regard to good breeding, for the object of marriage is to have children" (Taanith 26b and 31a; quoted in Feldman 1939, 35).

Feldman interprets the *k'tsitsah* (severance) ceremony, described in b. Kethuboth 28b, as intended to show the extreme care the rabbis took to ostracize anyone who had contracted a marriage not made according to eugenic principles.⁴ A barrel of fruit was broken in the market place in order to call attention to the event, and the following words spoken:

"Listen ye our brethren! A. B. married an unworthy wife, and we fear lest his offspring mingle with ours; take ye therefore an example for generations to come that his offspring may never mix with ours."

In his authoritative 12th-century compilation of Jewish law, Maimonides states that "A man should not marry a woman belonging to a family of lepers or epileptics, provided that there is a presumption based on three cases that the disease is hereditary with them" (*The Code of Maimonides, Book 5: The Book of Holiness*, ch. XXI:30, p. 140). The advice, therefore, in the Sephardic community was to carefully scrutinize the family of a prospective mate for heritable diseases, and there is an implicit theory that the more commonly the disease is found among family members the more likely it is to be heritable--advice that makes excellent sense from the standpoint of modern genetics.

These writings were not without practical effect. There is evidence that the practice of intermarriage between daughters of wealthy men and males with high ability in scholarship dates from the very origins of Judaism as a diaspora religion. Baron (1952b, 221) notes that in Talmudic times wealthy men selected promising scholars as sons-in-law and supported them in their years of study.

Interestingly, Johnson (1987, 183) notes that most Jews during medieval times could list at least seven generations of ancestors. The main purpose of the genealogy was to show that one had illustrious scholars in one's lineage, and the list usually began with a famous scholar. Maimonides himself listed four important scholar/judges as ancestors (Johnson 1987, 184). The implication is that having illustrious scholars in one's pedigree was an important resource in social interactions (including marriage) within the Jewish community.

These practices also occurred among the Ashkenazim from an early period. Grossman (1989) notes that in medieval Germany it was the custom among *yeshiva* heads (themselves members of distinguished families) to choose their best pupils as sons-in-law. The son-in-law would then succeed him in his leadership within the community. In the shtetl societies of Eastern Europe, the Talmudic commandment to attempt to marry a scholar was taken very seriously to the point that there was a very direct correlation between the amount of the dowry and the number of scholars in the family tree (Zborowski & Herzog 1952, 82).

Parents dream of marrying their daughter to a learned youth or their son to the daughter of a learned father. The matchmaker, who is a very important institution in the shtetl, has in his notebook a list of all the eligible boys and girls within range. Under each name is a detailed account of his *yikhus*, in which the most important item is the number of learned men in the family, past and present. The greater the background of learning, the better the match. (Zborowski & Herzog 1952, 82)

There was also a concern with mental disorders in the genealogy of prospective mates in traditional shtetl society and at least until very recently, among Hasidic Jews in contemporary New York (Mintz 1992, 216ff; see also Chapter 4). A person with a psychiatric disorder was a blot on the marriage

prospects of the entire family for generations, with the result that families made every effort to prevent psychiatric disorders from being known to the wider community.⁵

There is also very clear evidence for eugenic practices among the 19th-century Ashkenazim. Etkes (1989) finds that, although a variety of traits were important in the choice of sons-in-law, including appearance, health, and temperament, particular value was placed on the perceived potential for Torah study. In other words, marriage with the daughter of a wealthy man and consequent support of study during the years of adolescence (the *kest* period) were conditioned primarily on scholarly ability, and, indeed, the prospective father-in-law would give the future son-in-law an examination prior to agreeing to the marriage. The father-in-law would then support the couple for a specified period of years and provide a large dowry, which would secure the financial future of the couple.

Katz (1961a) shows that scholarly ability was the *summum bonum* within the Jewish community--the ultimate resource when contemplating marriage. Wealthy individuals who were not themselves scholars could obtain scholarship indirectly by providing large dowries so that their daughters could marry scholars: "If an unlettered person married into a family of scholars, he would bask in the reflection of their glory" (p. 206). Moreover, in some cases, scholars could become wealthy simply as a result of their incomes and the many gifts they received. Individuals, such as the Court Jews of the 17th and 18th centuries, provided gifts and support for scholars. They thereby developed "the reputation of 'cherishing the Torah,' and the merit so acquired was equivalent to that achieved by study itself" (p. 206).

Beginning in the ancient world, wealthy men would marry their daughters to promising scholars and support the couple until adulthood (Baron 1952b, 221). This practice became a religiously sanctioned policy and persisted among both the Ashkenazim (Katz 1961a) and the Sephardim (Neuman 1969).⁶ Katz (1961a) notes that this pattern of early marriage, and the associated period of prolonged dependency on adults (the *kest* period referred to above), was assured only to the wealthy: "Only members of the upper class who were outstanding Jewish radical organizations such as the Russian Bund essentially replicated traditional Jewish separatism in a secular, socialist milieu. Issues related to Jewish identity and radical intellectual/political movements are discussed extensively in *SAID* (ch. 6). in both wealth and learning could afford the luxury of an early match without lessening their prospects. They were assured of a 'good match' by their very position" (p. 142). The poor, even when allowed to marry, would be forced to marry later, and there was a group of both sexes that was forced to remain unmarried--a clear marker of sexual competition within the Jewish community. On the other hand, upwardly mobile individuals would often defer marriage until they had obtained status, whether in the business world or by developing a reputation as a scholar.

As noted in Chapter 6, the officials of the Jewish community acted to regulate the marriages of the lower classes (Katz 1961a; Weinryb 1972), and the

marriages of poor and indigent Jews came under special scrutiny by these officials (Hundert, 1986b). These regulations included minimum dowry payments, foregoing Jewish charity for a certain period, and numerical limits on the marriages of poor Jews.

The result of these practices was a large overlap among scholarship, control of economic resources, social status, and, ultimately, fertility. Hundert (1992) notes that rabbis were often wealthy, socially prominent merchants, manufacturers, or traders. Throughout most of the 18th century, there was a Jewish aristocracy in Poland-Lithuania consisting of a small number of prominent families who "held an astonishing number of rabbinical and communal offices" (p. 117).

As in all traditional European societies (see, e.g., Herlihy & Klapische-Zuber 1985), Hundert (1992) finds that there was a positive association between wealth and numbers of children in Jewish households in the 18th century, and Weinryb (1972) notes that there were marked differences in fertility among Jews, with successful business leaders, prominent rabbis, and community leaders having a large number of children reaching adulthood, while families of the poor were small. Vogel and Motulsky (1986, 609) note that in mid-18th-century Poland prominent Jews had 4-9 surviving children, while poorer Jewish families had 1.2-2.4 surviving children. As is typical in pre-industrial societies, wealthy families also benefited from having adequate food and were better able to avoid epidemics. Similarly, Goitein (1971, 140) notes that the families of wealthy Jews in the Medieval Islamic world were much larger than those of poor Jews.

Katz (1961a) notes that because the Ashkenazim were prevented from placing their resources in land and because their capital was always precarious, since it was liable to expropriation by the authorities, there was an unusual degree of fluidity in the society, in terms of both upward and downward mobility. In this type of society, scholarship was a better criterion of resource-obtaining potential even than present wealth, since it was independent of time and place, and obtaining a scholarly reputation was certainly not a matter of good fortune as wealth sometimes was. However, in some ways, scholarship and wealth were interchangeable, since property qualifications for voting were waived for scholars--another indication of the many benefits that scholarship conferred within the Jewish community.

As throughout Jewish history (Baron 1952b, 279), there was no hereditary elite of scholars. Scholars "were in a position to provide their sons with favorable facilities to continue their tradition by giving them an outstanding education and an atmosphere of learning. But they could not bequeath their learning nor block the rise of the sons of the uneducated" (Katz 1961a, 204). Nevertheless, there was a strong overlap among wealth, scholarship, family connections, and political power within the community to the point that at times scholarly position was virtually inherited. Kanarfogel (1992, 68) notes that virtually all of the prominent French Tosafists in the 12th and 13th centuries were in a direct line from Rashi or were sons-in-law in this direct line. The

presence of sons-in-law in this genealogy shows the possibility of upward mobility. It was a society with "tremendous distances between its peaks and valleys. . . . He who aimed to reach the peak had a long, steep road to climb, but if he had the strength, the ability, and the will, nothing would prevent him from achieving his desire" (Katz 1961a, 209).

Another aspect of some eugenic importance is that poor Jews were relatively likely to become apostates (see Chapter 2). Such defections would also contribute to the skewing of the Jewish gene pool toward high intelligence and resource acquisition ability. This phenomenon may quite possibly be related not only to the relatively degraded political and economic position of poor Jews in the Jewish community, but also to the extreme psychological emphasis on elitism within the Jewish community apparent in this material. One would expect that individuals who failed to live up to the cultural ideal of scholarly ability and wealth would develop a negative self-image and eventually be more prone to desert the group.

This elitism persists into contemporary times: Meyer (1988) notes that early in the 20th century many American Reform congregations still set minimum dues for members, which effectively excluded poor families, and the poor could not vote in synagogue elections. These practices continued for many years thereafter, and indeed, Meyer (1988, 289) notes that "to working people the established synagogue in the first decades of the century often looked more like a 'rich man's institution,' allied with oppressive capital, than one where they felt at home." Meyer, 306) describes membership in Reform congregations in the 1930s as a status symbol and as a marker of economic success.

Extreme concern with worldly success has also remained a characteristic of Judaism in the contemporary world. Herz and Rosen (1982, 368) note that "[s]uccess is so vitally important to the Jewish family ethos that we can hardly overemphasize it. . . . We cannot hope to understand the Jewish family without understanding the place that success for men (and recently women) plays in the system." Success is measured in terms of intellectual achievement, social status, and money, while failure, e.g., to graduate from college, is viewed as a problem requiring clinical counseling. Not surprisingly, a recent survey indicated that the group least likely to defect from Judaism was the highly educated (Ellman 1987).

NOTES

1. An evolutionary perspective differs from a eugenic perspective because there is no emphasis in the eugenic perspective on resource competition between segregated gene pools or on the importance of within-group altruism. Weyl (1969, 1989) notes correctly that eugenic practices also occurred in China, but in this case there was no large, unbridgeable genetic gulf between an ethnically separate scholarly class and the rest of the population, and, indeed, successful scholars undoubtedly had large numbers of concubines from the lower levels of Chinese society. As a result, while anti-Semitism has been an extremely robust tendency, scholars were revered throughout Chinese society. (However, as indicated in Chapter 5, anti-Chinese activity has been directed against

overseas Chinese when they lived as a segregated ethnic group viewed as being in competition with indigenous peoples.) In China, competition was not between a genetically isolated group of scholars and the rest of the population, but rather there was individual/family competition within the entire population, the basis of which was scholarly ability. Mainstream Judaism must be seen primarily not as an example of successful eugenic practices, but rather as a national/ethnic strategy that has a eugenic component: All the genes and gene frequencies typical of the Jewish ethnic group are involved (e.g., genes for fingerprint patterns), not simply genes for intelligence.

2. The question of whether the Pharisees (in addition to the *haberim*) discriminated against the *'am ha-ares* is controversial. (Schürer [1885] 1979, 399) states that the *haberim* are to be identified with the Pharisees.) Many scholars, including Betz (1968), Black (1962), Jeremias (1969, 246ff), Neusner (1971 III:286ff) and Schürer ([1885] 1979, 394ff), take the view that the Pharisees participated in closed communities separated from other Jews and from the *'am ha-ares* in particular. Sanders (1992, 442) describes this tradition as one in which the Pharisees are "the only true Israel, communal meals, meals eaten in purity, sacred food, closed societies, unwillingness to mingle with others because of fear of impurity, exclusion of everyone else from the realm of the sacred, hatred of other Jews, expulsion of people who transgress food and purity laws from the commonwealth of Israel." Even though Sanders disagrees with this view, he suggests that the Pharisees only viewed the other Jews as lower on a scale of purity than themselves, but did not view the common people as entirely removed from the sacred (Sanders 1992, 434). Such a designation of relative impurity is of course compatible with considerable social and genetic discrimination against such people. The point here is that there is indeed a mainstream scholarly tradition that holds that there was a conscious attempt by organized sections of the Jewish community to exclude the *'am ha-ares* from the community of Judaism.

Because of the many negative statements about the Pharisees in the New Testament, this issue has become an issue in Christian-Jewish scholarly polemics. (Jeremias [1969, 267] states that Jesus "openly and fearlessly called these men to repentance, and this act brought him to the cross.") However, the only important issue here is whether it is reasonable to suppose that the well-documented negative attitudes toward the relatively poor and illiterate *'am ha-ares* on the part of the Jewish political and intellectual leadership had a negative effect on their genetic representation in the Jewish gene pool.

3. In the following passage, the house where the wife of an *'am ha-ares* is grinding grain for a wife of a *haber* becomes especially unclean when the wife of the *'am ha-ares* stops working, and if there are two such women there, one must always assume the worst:

- A. The wife of a *haber* who left the wife of an *'am ha-ares* grinding [grain] in her house--
- B. [if the sound of] the millstones ceased
- C. the house is unclean.
- D. The millstones did not cease--
- E. unclean is only [the space] up to the place to which she can reach out her hand and touch.
- F. [If] they were two, one way or the other [whether or not the grinding ceased],
- G. "the house is unclean,"
- H. "for one grinds, and one snoops about," the words of R. Meir.
- I. And sages say, "Unclean is only [the space] up to the place to which they can reach out their hands and touch." (M. Toh. 7:4)

4. Epstein (1942, 311) emphasizes that this ceremony was intended to sever ties with anyone who had contracted a marriage of a woman of foreign blood. Clearly, both foreign blood and a marriage not made according to eugenic principles may well have both been viewed as unworthy marriages for the purposes of this ceremony.

5. Mintz (1992, 219) finds greater acceptance of professional treatment of mental

disorder among the Hasidim dating from 1982, although great pains are still taken to prevent public knowledge of psychiatric disorder in the family.

6. Since marriage occurred long before the possibility of having children in many cases, it is reasonable to suppose that the practice had some other function than simply high fertility. Since the boy would be under the scrutiny of another family, marrying in early adolescence and living with in-laws would presumably result in a great deal of pressure to succeed at scholarship and to avoid the impulsivity and immediate gratification typical of adolescents (see MacDonald 1988a). There also is some indication that Jews believed that such a practice would make adolescent sexual desire less of a disruptive force. However, there is also evidence that in some cases the children became permanently repelled by sexual relationships as a result of the practice.

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