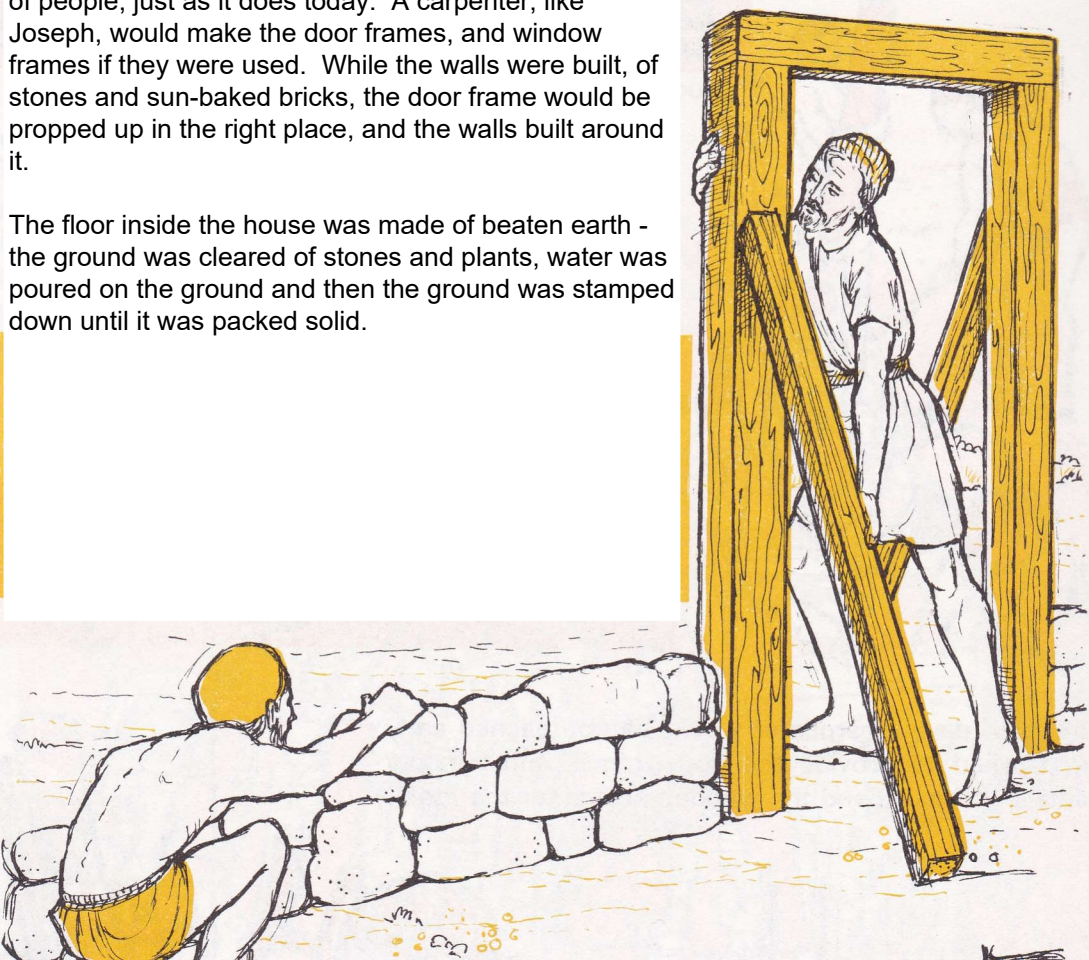


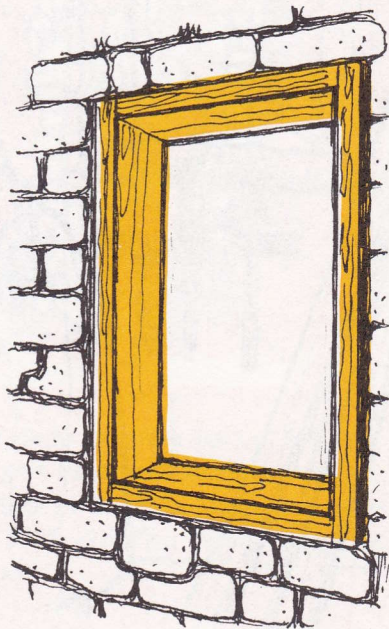
Building a house was an activity that involved a number of people, just as it does today. A carpenter, like Joseph, would make the door frames, and window frames if they were used. While the walls were built, of stones and sun-baked bricks, the door frame would be propped up in the right place, and the walls built around it.

The floor inside the house was made of beaten earth - the ground was cleared of stones and plants, water was poured on the ground and then the ground was stamped down until it was packed solid.



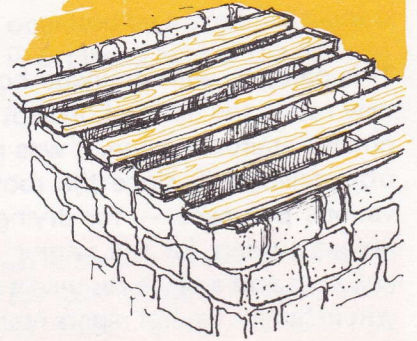
Window frames would be put into the walls as they got high enough, and then the wall finished around them. Where the house owner couldn't afford to have window frames, they would have a lintel - a long piece of stone or wood that would go right across the window opening and into the wall either side, to hold the weight of the wall above the gap.

The windows would not be very large - they would just be openings, with no glass in them. They were needed to let light into the house, but they could also let in the cold, and the wet.



At roof height came the most difficult operation. The roof was the most difficult, and the most complicated part. It started with wooden roof beams, which had to go the whole width of the roof, resting on the walls. Across the beams were put branches of trees and shrubs, and then a layer of straw, and then a layer of soil.

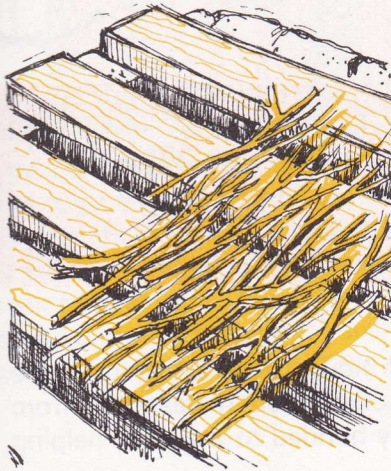
Then there would be another layer of straw, and then finally a layer of wet clay. This would be packed and rolled - see the picture at the bottom - until it was smooth.



At the same time as the roof was being laid, the walls were built up further, over the roof beams, to make a parapet. This was a legal requirement, because the roof of a house was part of the used space - and people would often be up there.

As the clay layer was spread, it would come close up to the walls, so that there would be no leaks in the house below.

The roof would need to be rolled after the rains, because the clay would get soft. We don't know whether a village shared a roller, or whether each house had one.



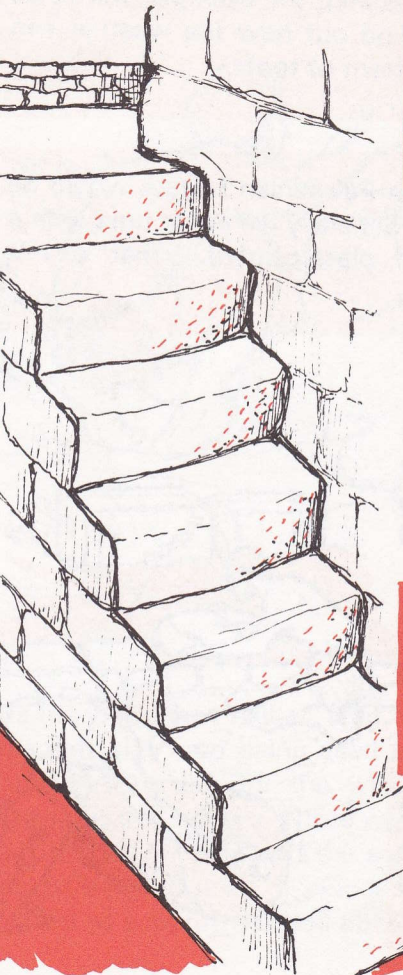
In the story of the paralysed man whose friends brought him to Jesus, the friends took him up the outside staircase, and pulled the roof covering apart to lower him inside (Luke, chapter 5, verses 17 - 26). Afterwards, the house owner would have had to repair his roof!

Perhaps the roof beams were further apart than in our picture, or the man's friends wouldn't have been able to get him past the beams.

From inside the house, you would have been able to see the wooden beams of the roof, and between the beams, the branches that were on top of them. It would have been bits of this that fell down into the house as the man was lowered down to Jesus.







Because the roof was so well used in Jewish houses, every house had a staircase to reach the roof.

The staircase was built at the same time as the house was built, so that it was part of the structure, not an added extra. The stones that made the staircase were built into the walls.

It must have been really useful to have the staircase when the builders were laying the roof - there was no such thing as scaffolding!

