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THE TENSION BETWEEN KING AND PEOPLE  
IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

Thesis presented for the  
degree of Master of Theology.

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1966.

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1.

It can be truly said that Israel came into being by a process that was exceedingly complex. As a people, Israel had neither a unilineal development nor did her way of life follow an unchanging pattern. By her geographical position, she was brought into contact with many streams of traditions that influenced her culture. The process of understanding the history of a people is difficult even when historical documents are abundant. But in studying ancient Israel, we are confronted with traditions that are fragmentary, thoughtforms that are strange to us and cultic practices that are out-moded. It is against this background that we attempt to trace the tension between the people and the kings of Israel.

A. The Development of the People of Israel:1. Origins.

In attempting to define the 'people', where do we begin? When did Israel become a covenant people? What significant event or events occurred to bring about this unique people? There is, in the Old Testament, evidence that certain events made a lasting impression upon a group of people. It could be said that Abraham, having received the call and the promise to be the father of a great nation, was the beginning of a 'people'. It is undoubtedly true that the history of the Patriarchs, beginning with Abraham, is firmly grounded in historical fact. Scholars are agreed that Abraham may well have been part of the migrations of people along the Fertile Crescent. It is also quite conceivable that, from early times, he was seen as a man of faith, one who would be the founder of a great people. But this belief only assumed its full proportions much later in the light of spectacular events. It was the concern of the biblical writer to trace Israel's beginnings back to its creation, its early covenant-making and its migration to the Promised Land. The focus of history settled on Abraham as an exemplar of Israel's faith and as the father of the race. For the factors that coloured the Abrahamic promise, we must look to other events.

What proved to be the normative experience in the life and faith of the Israelites was a miraculous deliverance from the Egyptian 'house of bondage'. It was this occurrence that "Israel remembered... for all time to come as the constitutive event that had called her into being as a people. It stood at the centre of her confession of faith from the beginning, as is witnessed by certain ancient poems and creeds that go back to the earliest period of her history

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1. Bright, A History of Israel, p. 111

What happened at the deliverance from the Egyptians was remembered and treasured in much the same way as the Cross holds central place in the faith of the Christian. <sup>1.</sup>

The Exodus became the focal point of Israel's faith, extending both into the future and backward into the past. It gave rise to the question, 'If Israel was delivered from Egypt, how did she come to be in Egypt?' It was in the light of this deliverance that the people became concerned to show God's hand in history and to say that His interest did not begin with the Exodus. <sup>2.</sup> It was in this crucial historical experience that Israel became a self-conscious historical community. Those who had been delivered were conscious that they themselves had had nothing to do in the occurrence of the decisive event, but rather that it was God's action of undeserved grace and favour. So profound and normative was this experience that the reality of it was still alive for the prophets. <sup>3.</sup> The Exodus therefore, "is the central moment in Israel's history. Here was her true beginning, the time of her creation as a people." <sup>4.</sup> It was the call, the summons, the motivating and inspiring event in Israel's past and the inspiration of Israel's response. <sup>5.</sup>

Alongside of this experience lay another event which also was determinative in the growth of a people, namely the covenant relationship with Yahweh at Sinai. The relationship between this event and the deliverance from Egypt has been widely discussed. While it may well have been the logical and psychological outgrowth of the Exodus, it is impossible to know whether these two events belong together historically.

1. See Josiah 2:10; 4:23; 5:4-7; 9:9 24:4-7,14,17  
Judges 2:1,12; 6:8,13; 11:13,16; 19:30; 1 Samuel 2:27;  
8:8; 10:18; 12:6,8; 15:2,6.
2. H.H. Rowley, Growth of the Old Testament, p. 49
3. See Amos 3:1-2; 9:7; Hosea 2:14-15; 11:1; 13:4; Ezekiel  
20: 5-6; Micah 6:4; Jeremiah 2:2-7
4. B.W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, p.9
5. J. Millenbunrg, The Way of Israel, p. 51

Most scholars are agreed that the Sinai tradition does stem from an actual event even though it is disputed whether it had any historical connection with the Exodus.<sup>1</sup> It may be, as Noth argues, that these events, happening to different clans, were much later brought together with the belief that the God who delivered at the sea and He who made a covenant at Sinai was one and the same God called Yahweh. The process by which this tradition developed is beyond the scope of this work, but it may be asserted that "what they experienced affected the whole of the later tribes of Israel so powerfully that what took place on Sinai became a substantial and fundamental element in that common Israelite tradition which henceforth inspired Israel as a corporate unit."<sup>2</sup> Bright echoes this belief too that "it was during this period that Israel received her distinctive faith and became a people."<sup>3</sup>

There is no unanimity among scholars on this point. We take the position that the Exodus, the guidance in the wilderness and the covenant at Sinai were all inseparably bound together. The Exodus experience was the outpouring of Yahweh's initiative in choosing his people, or 'his whole family' as Amos later called them. This divine guidance continued as the people were moulded and tested by hazards and hardships which became the preparation for the covenant when they were summoned to obey and uphold their end of the relationship. This covenant was based theologically on the initial Exodus event.<sup>4</sup> On this basis, a heterogeneous people became a community bound to Yahweh and to one another by a covenant bond. As Yahweh had chosen his people in Egypt, so now his chosen people gave response to that free grace. At Sinai, they were called to choose or reject Yahweh, to choose between One God and many gods.

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1. M. Noth, The History of Israel, p. 133

2. Ibid. p. 133

3. Bright, A History of Israel, p. 113

4. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, p. 53

A question that needs to be asked at this point is: To what extent did these events weld those who shared them into a people? It needs to be pointed out that as semi-nomads, these people had a passion for freedom, a love of independence and an impatience of external control. Among the semi-nomads, the respect for personality and belief in individual rights were very strong.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to believe that a covenant brought much political unity among the clans. The fact that we find the tribes in Palestine with a great deal of self-determining power and freedom bears this out. In what way, then, were the people unified? While we may say that the tribal members were probably of a common descent, there is also the indication that they were a mixed 'rabble'. Blood relationship was not, then, the primary unifying force. The unity rested more powerfully on a common worship. All recognised Yahweh as their tribal deity and realised that they must obey him. Whatever Moses "had done or had not done at Sinai, he had given to all the tribes a common God, valid for themselves and for all who should unite with them in after days, and it was this devotion to a single deity, which, above all else, made Israel a nation."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the welding together of a small nucleus of people under covenant to Yahweh was, in itself, enough to explain the fervour and determination which accompanied them into Canaan. It may also be that other factors contributed to the forceful drive which we witness in Joshua and Judges.

Although many references to promise of land appear in biblical books that are of a late writing or have been redacted by the Deuteronomic editors, undoubtedly the promise made to Abraham represents an early tradition which, being kept alive orally from generation to generation, became meaningful in the light/

1. Oesterley and Robinson, A History of Israel, vol. 1, p. 105.
2. Ibid. p. 132.

of the Exodus event. If this belief was re-enforced during the covenant-making at Sinai alongside of the belief in election, then we can understand the reason for motivation among the people. When such passages as those found in Numbers 33:50-56 and Deuteronomy 7:6f are read together, that is the idea of dispossessing Canaan from the native inhabitants because Israel was the true inheritor, along with the concept of a people who are chosen, then we can expect to hear a battle cry. This reaction appears to have, in fact, resulted in the concept of holy warfare. Although it is impossible to know how great this motivation of holy warfare really was among the clans entering Canaan, we may make a conjecture that it was a very strong force.

We find another angle of approaching the search for motivation in Joshua 2:9-11 and 9:9:10. The inhabitants of Jericho and those of the central hill country heard great and dreadful accounts of this people, Israel, who were led by Yahweh. It is worth pondering the question that if this was the image of Israel which existed in the minds of other nations and people, how did Israel view herself? A strong case could be made for the view that Israel's conception of her own life and destiny would have been greater than that held of her by her neighbours. After all it was Israel who had experienced Yahweh's saving power. It is only logical that the feeling of being 'Yahweh's possession' was deeply ingrained in their lives.

The attempt has been made here to show that Israel had its birth in historical events, events in which Yahweh's hand was seen to be a guiding force. So, primarily in the Exodus and Sinai experiences, but also in the promise to Abraham, the wilderness wandering and in the conquest, the people of bondage felt that they were called to a destiny and the consciousness of this call issued in a sense of mission

2. The Unification of the People of Israel.

Although there was little cohesion among the clans when they entered Canaan, except on a religious basis, there was a gradual growth at work which blossomed finally into a political and geographical unit. The steps to this end were numerous and varied.

In the early days of Israel's life in the Promised Land, there is evidence that the people were united in some kind of loosely-knit tribal confederacy, an amphictyony, consisting of tribes (ideally twelve but effectively less at that time), all purported to be descendants of Jacob's sons. It has been widely discussed by scholars, such as Noth and Bright, as to the place and the time that this tribal union took place. Noth argues that the tribes only became fully united at the occupation of Palestine and that before that occupation they lived as separate clans.<sup>1.</sup> On the other hand, Bright feels that it would be wrong to suppose that the covenant league itself originated only at the time of the land occupation. He believes that a league of clans must be presupposed to have antedated the conquest and sees this league as the powerful motivation which led to the destruction in Palestine under holy warfare. Although this was not normative amphictyony, it was, he argues, a confederation of smaller family units. Normative amphictyony came only after the conquest.<sup>2.</sup> Perhaps these two scholars do not represent views that are too divergent. Biblical evidence points to a tribal confederacy that was in existence shortly after the conquest as can be seen from the early poetry of Deborah's Song.<sup>3.</sup>

Part of the growth of the people can be seen in the extension of the covenantal relationship to embrace other people who had not experienced Yahweh's hand of deliverance nor the covenant at Sinai. Joshua 24 portrays one such extension. It may be a record of the institution of the

1. Noth, The History of Israel, pp.5-6

2. Bright, A History of Israel, pp 145-6

3. Judges 5:15-18

of the amphictyony as well. It shows that some of the original inhabitants of the central hill country, Israel's common ancestors and their allies, became absorbed into a tribal grouping and into the covenant relationship. A briefer covenant also took place with the cities of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim.<sup>1</sup> Although it is said that they became "hewers of wood and drawers of water" they undoubtedly were completely absorbed into the 'am Israel in time. After the initial onslaught on Canaan this process of extension and assimilation must have occurred many times so that Sinai and Exodus became a common tradition.

The Shechem Assembly has been viewed by some scholars as the real account of the birth of a people rather than the Exodus and Sinaitic covenant. This is the view of T.J. Meek who speculates that Shechem, a city with very old traditions of covenant-making, was the original home of the Hebrew Torah as against Sinai/Horeb.<sup>2</sup> His argument rests on the belief that the Old Testament narratives, being largely pro-Judean, subordinated the Shechem tradition and that the invasion of the Israelites under Joshua preceded Moses by two hundred years. This argument is not acceptable to Buber. He asks "Are we to gather here that this was the historic hour at which, in one event, the tribes were linked to become Israel, and Israel linked with YHWH? Was it only here that the relationship of faith between God and people began? There is, however, no basis for this view. There is nothing here of any sacramental covenant between God and people, after the manner of the story of the blood covenant at Sinai.<sup>3</sup> Buber concludes that the Shechemite convocation was a covenantal renewal, a self-binding of people toward God. Covenant extensions and covenant renewals were important in a land where the

1. Joshua. 9

2. T.J. Meek, Hebrew Origins, p. 27

3. M. Buber, The Prophetic Faith, p. 15

transition from semi-nomadic existence to agrarian living was a necessity. The temptations of becoming completely absorbed into the native population, with all its accompanying ways, was a real challenge to Israel. At Shechem, the tribes repledged themselves to Yahweh and extended the covenant to include people already living in the central hill country.

In order to secure their position in the land, battles had to be fought against other nations that looked with longing eyes at the same highly-prized land or against the people who had settled prior to Israel's invasion. It was in such times of national crisis that we occasionally see the tribes coming together with united effort. In most cases however, these crisis affected only one or two tribes where the pressure of invasion was most deeply felt. In each crisis "the Lord raised up for them" a deliverer or judge who through his personal qualities commanded authority and respect and thus led the tribe or tribes to victory.

In the victory stories about Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Jephthah, it appears that only single tribes were involved. But we notice concerted efforts in Judges 4+5 regarding Deborah and Barak's victory over Jabin, King of Canaan. Here the call to arms went to all the tribes, with the exception of the tribe of Judah which was never an active participant until David's reign. In Deborah's Song, there is praise or blame given to the tribes depending on whether they responded with their levies or not. Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir (or Manasseh), Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali rallied to fight while "among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart"; Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan: "Dan, why did he abide with the ships?" and "Asher sat still at the coast of the sea." In this time of consolidation and expansion the position of/

the tribes was precarious until they had defeated Canaanite forces and thus were allowed freedom of travel among all the tribes. Deborah's Song shows that the tribes did not form an organised unity. At this time "the Israelites could only be induced to concerted action by their feeling of fellow-ship."<sup>1</sup> Since no external organization kept the tribes together, this unity of fellowship, grounded in their belief in Yahweh, was a unity of spirit.

Another example of concerted effort in time of war is found in Judges 6-8, Gideon, raised by Yahweh as a judge "to deliver Israel from the hand of Midian", sounded the trumpet and sent messengers to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. The tribe of Ephraim gave its support at the end of the battle. In both the above instances, the leaders reawakened in the geographically separated tribes, the sense of association and common loyalty under the banner of Yahweh.

But the tribal unity, which rose to the forefront during national crisis, tended to fade away after the danger passed. It is unfortunate that the traditions we have dealt only with the times of crisis and not with the intervening years of peace. We are left with the conjecture that each tribe was engaged in its own affairs. When peace time was enjoyed, then the tribal members became associated with the native population through inter-marriage and by the interplay of cultural influences.<sup>2</sup>

There are other hints of a growing sense of unity between the tribes in the years of settlement and consolidation. The narrative in Joshua 22 illustrates the unity that was felt among the people. Land had been promised to the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh on the east side of Jordan only if they promised to fight with the remaining tribes in order to secure their positions on the west side.<sup>3</sup>

1. J. Pedersen, Israel 111-1V, p. 7

2. Judges 3:5-6

3. Joshua 1:12-18.

Joshua 22 is the account of these tribes returning to their possession east of the river. Before recrossing the Jordan, they erected an altar of great size, "a copy of the altar of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> In the eyes of the rest of the people of Israel, the construction of this altar was seen as the most heinous crime of all, apostasy, punishable by war and/or death. It is strange that building an altar would be seen as rebellion against the Lord since most towns of any importance had an altar. It rather seems to be looked upon as a recurrence of the sin at Peor, reminiscent of the people's sojourn in Moab when they had yoked themselves to Baal Peor.<sup>2</sup> The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh explained their action, not as a breaking of covenant, but as a symbol and a reminder to future generations of their faithfulness, and their common heritage and tradition with the tribes on the west of the Jordan. Here, then, is a concern of the tribes to keep their worship and covenant without blemish. So, although no political unity was felt, there was a keep religious unity.

Again in Judges 19-21 it is recorded how "all the people of Israel came out from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead" to fight the tribe of Benjamin for the crime committed against the Levite's concubine. There are many details which make it very difficult to reconstruct what really happened. That 'all Israel assembled' together is a gross exaggeration since the physical dimensions that are given reflect the later kingdom under David. In Judges 20:1 it is said that Gilead also rallied to Mizpah but in 21:5, 8-12 the tribe was not only rebuked by words but war was made upon it for not participating. The numbers of those who rallied against Benjamin and Benjamin's fighting men are out of all proportion. It is possible that certain details reflect a later redaction after the unfortunate reign of Saul, in an attempt to discredit his supporters, but for

1. Joshua 22:10,28

2. Numbers 25

the purpose of this thesis, the narrative does indicate profound concern on the part of the tribes for the future welfare of Benjamin. After the smoke of battle had cleared, remorse for their actions filled the hearts of the Israelites "O Lord, the God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?"<sup>1</sup> Then the people made plans to restore the decimated tribe by providing wives who would give inheritors to Benjamin's portion of land. The idea seems to have been that the tribal system was sacrosanct and therefore, not to be altered by any human means. This meant, probably, a fear of reprisal from Yahweh for tampering with something that lay within his sphere; therefore they had to make amends and provide for the restoration of one of His tribes. Again we see a covenantal concern among the tribes.

Although the amphictyony did not bring political or geographical unity, the institutions connected with it undoubtedly provided some sense of consolidation. We see evidence in Joshua, Judges and 1 Samuel of important centres where the people gathered at certain appointed times of the year. These pilgrimages must have been designed to keep alive the Exodus and Sinai traditions and were, therefore, renewals of the covenantal relationship. Joshua 24 tells of the people gathering at Shechem which appears as one of the early centres. There was a reiteration of Yahweh's acts and a covenant renewal with people who were earlier settlers in the land. Although it is impossible to be certain, it is likely that the Ark of the Covenant, which was prominent during the entry into Canaan, rested at Shechem at that time. For some unknown reason, the religious centre and the ark were later moved to Bethel and then to Shiloh. Judges 21:19 mentions a "yearly feast of the Lord at Shiloh" during the grape harvest. It may be the same festival to which Elkanah and his

1. Judges 21:3

13.

two wives, Peninnah and Hannah, went year by year to sacrifice to Yahweh. <sup>1</sup> Samuel's early life certainly was strongly grounded in this amphictyonic tradition. To men like Samuel and Eli, the central amphictyonic shrine must have been regarded as one of the most effective ways to keep the historical and religious traditions alive in the life of the people. In Judges 2:10 the remark is passed that "there arose another generation after them (Joshua and his elders) who did not know the Lord or the work he had done for Israel." The religious enthusiasm of the conquest period tended to become weaker as the tribes intermingled with the native population. In this situation the religious centre of Shiloh ( and other important sanctuaries), supported by a priesthood and festivals, provided the means whereby the covenant could be renewed and Israel's faith proclaimed. There is evidence that as long as the central amphictyonic shrine existed, there was a sense of unity among the people. But after Shiloh fell and the ark was captured by the Philistines, we can detect a disuniting effect upon the population. <sup>2</sup> A rejuvenation of this unity came in David's reign when the ark was reintroduced, this time at the new religious and political centre of Jerusalem, which had a priesthood, festivals and ritual. Like Shiloh, Jerusalem became the focal point of the United Kingdom and a means of maintaining the unity of the tribes.

In the narratives of the consolidation period, there are elements of both tribal unity and conflicts. We see built-in forces that kept the tribes apart and prevented a close association. Geographically, the tribes were spread over a large area and were, at times, separated by non-Israelite territories.

Being a fervent Yahwist, the Deuteronomic historian attributed disunity to the serving of the Baals in his characteristic phrase " and the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, " and "the Lord gave them/

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1. 1 Samuel 1-2

2. 1 Samuel 7:5-8:3

-4-

into the hand of foreigners." <sup>1</sup> It is understandable that he would regard the foreign invasions as a punishment for serving other gods. His theology was that the serving of the Baals tended to dull the people's consciousness of being called by Yahweh, and therefore, obscured the covenant which bound one with another.

Such an over-simplified theological pattern may not be in accord with our modern thinking, but it may be that the worship of Canaanite deities did have a disuniting effect upon the people. After they had entered Canaan under Yahweh's banner, the religious zeal waned as they began to settle among the original inhabitants. It is difficult for us to unravel this period in Israel's history because of fragmentary evidence, but it would seem that the semi-nomadic Israelites identified themselves, at an early date, with the Canaanites, to the extent that they shared each other's agricultural methods, law forms <sup>2</sup> and cultural traditions. <sup>3</sup> This involved the acceptance, on the part of the Israelites, of established and known agricultural gods. They did not forsake Yahweh, but continued to worship Him as the God of their fathers. At that time, it is doubtful if the people recognised any difficulty in worshipping Yahweh and the local Baals. When the clash did come, in Elijah's day, it was a conflict, not between the national God, Yahweh, and the fertility deities, but rather between two different cultures. To what extent the local fertility cults influenced the Israelites is not known. Undoubtedly, there were some who forsook Yahweh, while others confused Yahweh with the Baals. Faith in the national God was probably strongest during the times of crises. At such times, the deliverer-judges rallied the people to holy war, thus making Yah<sup>w</sup>ism more militant and the people more faithful.

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1. Judges 2:11-14,17,19; 3:6,7,12; 4:1 6:1 8:33; 10:6,13,14,16; 13:1.

2. Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, p.95.

3. Judges 3:5-6.

17.

These periodic revivals seem to have been short-lived, because in peace the intermingling of cultures continued. To some extent, this may have weakened religious unity.

Political disunity was caused by tribal rivalries. Perhaps this was an outgrowth of the loosely-knit amphictyony in which the tribes were almost totally independent of one another. Gideon faced a jealous attitude on the part of the Ephraimites who were called to share the last moments of the victory against the Midianites. They upbraided Gideon with the words, "What is this that you have done to us, not to call us when you went to fight with Midian?"<sup>1</sup>. We also see towns like Succoth and Penuel, refusing to aid Gideon in his conquest against the Midianites.<sup>2</sup>

Conflicts with the tribe of Ephraim again occurred when the Ammonite invasion was stopped by Jephthah. There is an indication that a call for the levies had been issued to Ephraim without any response, so it seems to have been a Gileadite war and victory. Then the men of Ephraim called themselves to arms and accused Jephthah with the words, "Why did you cross over to fight against the Ammonites, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house over you with fire."<sup>3</sup>. War followed between Gilead and Ephraim.

Tribal rivalries seem to have been prevalent among the Joseph tribes which had entered Canaan under Joshua. Perhaps because they still bore the marks of enthusiasm from the wilderness period and because they saw the conquest and settlement as the fulfilment of Yahweh's promise, the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh felt superior to the other tribes. Ephraim and Manasseh were strong tribes which possessed much of central Palestine and acquired more land in the area of Transjordan. There is also the added consideration that these two tribes were strategically situated near the east-west road of the Fertile Crescent where many tribal migrations and political changes occurred.

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1. Judges 8:1

2. Judges 8:4-17

3. Judges 12:1.

For a variety of reasons, the central tribes seem to have assumed a superior position.

The unity that was achieved within the amphictyony prior to David's reign seems to have been two-fold. In the first place, there was provision made for the protection of the newly won homeland. Although there was no compulsion to send troops from each tribe, in times of danger the tribal levies did rally to the defence of the area. Undoubtedly this military aspect was to many Israelites, the most important function of the confederacy. At least we see that it was the military crises that brought the tribes together even in Saul and David's reigns. To some extent, a political unity was achieved under the banner of Yahweh. Secondly, the amphictyony seems to have been the means of preserving the faith, as we have seen in the narratives of the altar built by the tribes in the Transjordan area and the Gibeah affair. Within the amphictyony, the tribes acknowledged one and the same God, Yahweh, and celebrated His feasts at the same sanctuary around the ark. They shared a common statute and a common law. It was this common worship which was the unifying factor among the tribes.

B. The Development of Leadership.

Running parallel with the foregoing account of the growth of a people is the development of leadership. Because the social structure was not of basic interest to the biblical writer, we are greatly hindered in this part of the study by fragmentary evidence. At times we are given only brief hints of the type of leadership that existed prior to the monarchy. These references and the scholarly works of Pedersen and de Vaux, who have drawn useful parallels between nomadic Arabia and ancient Israel, help us to see the growth of leadership.

When we look at the theme of leadership prior to settlement, it must be noticed that there was complete equality within the clans and between the clans. On the basis of the covenant relationship each person was a brother to every other tribal member. There were a few social positions but any distinction that existed between those who held a position and the common people, was a distinction, not of status, but of kind. Leaders like Moses and Joshua rose to the forefront, but we are never given any hint that they used their position to subject others as the typical Oriental ruler was accustomed to do. As primus inter pares, such a man as Moses felt called and commissioned by Yahweh and it was the manifestation of His spirit in their lives that commanded respect and obedience.

In our examination of the structure of society, we see that the basic unit was the family (בֵּית אָב), a father's house, composed of the father, his wife, his children, married and unmarried and the next generation as well. Several families which inhabited the same general area and met for religious feasts and sacrificial meals formed a clan (בְּנֵי מִשְׁפָּחָה).<sup>1</sup> In turn, several mishpahoth made a tribe (שֵׁבֶט). Binding them together was a claim to blood relationship, having

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1. Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, pp 7-8

descended from a common ancestor called 'Israel'. But as has been pointed out before, they were more strongly bound together by a common allegiance to Yahweh which permitted the assimilation of peoples who were not kinsmen. Just when this three-fold social structure evolved, it is impossible to say with any certainty. In Joshua 7:14-18 and 1 Samuel 10:20-21 reference is made to calling the people together by tribe, clan and family. Even after the pattern of king and constituted state were imposed, the old social structure was not forgotten but continued to influence the thought and action of the people.

Within this tribal organisation, it is the 'heads of families' that play a determining role. These men, also called elders (עֲלֵזָבִים) must have antedated the period of conquest and settlement, for their position is taken for granted in the book of Judges. It is this group of men sitting 'at the gate' which bore the burdens of the community,<sup>1</sup> who witnessed transactions of buying and selling,<sup>2</sup> and gave judgment in administration matters.<sup>3</sup> It is this group, also, which possessed the authority to appoint a leader for the people as in the case of Jephthah,<sup>4</sup> and to make the demand for a king.<sup>5</sup>

Head (אֲזָרָה), Judge (שֹׁפֵט) and officer (רִבֵּי) are other designations used in the same period to denote men who were governing and responsible people of the community. In Judges 8:14 the elders and officers of Succoth are used alternatively without any distinction between them and the same is true in Joshua 23:2 and 24:1. From among these minor officials, it was the group known as the officers who later emerged as the military arm of the king and formed an elite as opposed to the general populace. But in the days of the amphictyony, when clan and tribal loyalties were strongest, the officials mentioned above were the people's mouth-pieces. They were 'of the people' and 'for the people'.

1. See Judges 21:16 and 1 Samuel 16:4

2. Ruth 4:4, 11

3. Joshua 20:4

4. Judges 11:4, 10-11

5. 1 Samuel 8:4-6.

In the settlement period related in Judges we are made aware of the importance of the judge (שֹׁפֵט). Here we must make a distinction between the minor judges and the major ones. The presence of the minor judge is mentioned in Joshua but what his duties were is not known. All of the minor judges seemed to have been limited to their own tribe. No mention is made of their participation in war, with the exception of Shamgar who is said to have "delivered Israel", a phrase attributed to the major judges. With the exceptions of Iola, Ehud and Shamgar, these minor judges appear to be more like oriental sheiks with large families and great wealth. Perhaps their position in society overlapped with the role of the elder in giving judgment at the gate.

The figure of the major judge or more properly, deliverer, is much more clearly drawn but much harder to classify. However a pattern does emerge. All of them are depicted as part of the resistance movement against foreign invasion. In most of the narratives we find the same phrase - "the Lord raised up a deliverer" (וַיִּשְׁעַתְּ יְהוָה) and the same concluding formula that "he judged Israel," "the nation was subdued" and "the land had rest." Far from being petty leaders, these judges or deliverers, were raised by Yahweh, first of all, to deliver the people from the hand of foreign invaders, and secondly, to inspire the people to return to a faithful covenant relationship. At least, this is the interpretation of the Deuteronomic theologian who was invasion as a punishment for the people's apostasy.<sup>1</sup> Although the nomadic personality was adverse to being ruled, these military chieftains would command the allegiance of their own tribe and, at times, of other tribes, on the basis of their possession of the charismatic gifts. In each case, with the exception of Ehud, 'the Spirit of the Lord' came upon them,<sup>2</sup>

1. H.H. Rowley, Growth of the Old Testament, p. 58  
 2. Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:19; 15:14.

and manifested itself in some great military victory. There is no explicit mention of it, but it is generally assumed that these colourful heroes rose to the foreground of Israel's life only to fade out after the victory had been won in Yahweh's name. In practically every case we are told about the conflict, the successful outcome and the fact that peace ruled over the land. It is unlikely that the leader in war, at the end of a successful campaign, retained much, if any, military authority over the tribes who had taken part. But, having demonstrated his possession by the ruah, he would have enjoyed prestige to the end of his days and would have been a respected judge. He may have taken a place among the elders of the gate to give judgment. Deborah is said to have sat under the palm, and people of Israel came up to her for judgment.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to believe that she discontinued to do so after the crisis against Sisera passed. It may be this capacity of judgment that made the writer ascribe forty years of peace after most of the judges. Judges, being an anthology of war stories, simply does not include enough details of the peace years to formulate a complete picture of what happened.

These chieftains never made any attempt to set up a hereditary office or to surround themselves with an entourage, but rather depended upon the tribal levies to give them support. In a very real sense, the chieftains were fighting Yahweh's wars. There was complete confidence that Yahweh would prevail over his enemies. Each hero trusted in him and did not rely upon force of arms alone. Deborah called Barak with the words, "Does not the Lord, the God of Israel, command you, 'Go...'"<sup>2</sup> and "Up! .. Does not the Lord go out before you?"<sup>3</sup> Gideon, having purified his house of foreign deities, marched against the forces of Midian. But at the voice of Yahweh, he trimmed his force of thirty-two thousand fighting men to a mere handful of three hundred.

1. Judges 4:5.

2. Judges 4:6.

3. Judges 4:14.

With a shout "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon" the battle began and was won. Yahweh's continued support was shown in this type of charismatic leadership in war.

What begins to emerge under the charismatic heroes is a type of unified rule concentrated in one person. In the person of Deborah, we see not only a judge but also a prophetess and one who inspires leadership in war. In Gideon, we see one who offers sacrifice as a priest, one who judges and who acts as a mighty warrior. The full-blown picture of a leader who exemplifies this unified rule is Samuel whom we shall examine later. The judgeship could mean the rule of one man over several tribes, but "his rule was fairly localized, involving no general governmental organization or political differentiation, and it did not affect deeply the economic or social life of the people. In this respect it was quite different from the kingship. Allegiance to the judge was a voluntary affair, and the person rather than the office bore the authority".<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this period of loose-knit amphictyony, the tribes were satisfied with this sporadic leadership provided by the charismatic judges. It met each crisis successfully and showed them that Yahweh was with them. They could ask for nothing more. There was, then, at that time, no officially organized political head or political cohesion. The only recognized authority in Israel was charismatic.

Within this pattern of community life there can be seen a foreshadowing of what was to come. Gideon had achieved a great victory over the Midianites who had presented a grave threat to those tribes in the north and east - Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. Perhaps as a token of appreciation to Gideon or, more likely, desiring to have a full-time hero "to rule over us", the men of Israel came to Gideon asking him to be king over them.

<sup>1</sup> H. G. May, art. History of Israel, Peake's Commentary, p. 117.

Gideon refused emphatically on theological grounds. "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you." <sup>1</sup>. An hereditary leadership was unthinkable since to have it would have meant a denial of Yahweh's choice of leader and also a reliance on the military acumen of one man and his army rather than upon Yahweh. In the amphictyony "God was conceived as the direct and actual ruler of the nation... Yahweh was thus the Lord, the King, the Judge and the Law-giver of his people, who were his subjects or servants." <sup>2</sup>.

Although the biblical evidence is that Gideon refused, not all scholars are convinced. Some see the significance of Gideon as lying chiefly in the fact that he initiated the first tentative movement towards a hereditary leadership. <sup>3</sup>. They say that although Gideon refused kingship, Judges 9:2 seems to indicate some kind of sovereignty. Gideon's sons do seem to have assumed a prestige position at Ophrah and one of them, Abimelech, showing his true colours by being a shrewd political opportunist, tried to cash in on his father's popularity. It is certain that Gideon's authority surpassed that of the other judges. The evidence seen in the fact that he took a harem, had seventy sons, established a religious centre, made a cult object and named a son Abimelech (father, king) may be a strong reason for believing that he did accept some kind of sovereignty. In that case we would have to deny the historicity of Gideon's absolute refusal. It may also be argued that Gideon showed shrewd diplomatic rejection of kingship, while at the same time, he silently accepted some kind of rulership. Or we may interpret the story as Gideon's oath pledging to preserve, undisturbed, the continuity of theocracy during his rule. <sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, the facts supporting some sort of royal power may only give a hint that there was a growing royal ideology. <sup>5</sup>.

1. Judges 8:23.  
 2. G.E. Wright, God Who Acts, p. 52  
 3. Oesterley and Robinson, A History of Israel, vol.1,p.134f.  
 Cf. Pedersen, Israel III-IV, p.39.  
 4. Interpreter's Dictionary, art. King, Kingship.  
 5. H.G. May, art, History of Israel Peake's Commentary p. 117

It is really with Abimelech that we see the first attempt to establish a monarchy on Israelite soil. It is true that Jephthah had struck a clever bargain with the Gileadites to become their leader and their head<sup>1</sup>. but there is no evidence of a successor or monarchical power.

Two thoughts require emphasis at this point. The first is the growth of a royal concept. We see it here quite openly in Gideon and in Abimelech. But a further extension of this is, secondly, that the people were prepared to change the basis of the chieftain's authority from that of non-hereditary, charismatic judgeship to that of a hereditary monarch modelled after the other nations.

Abimelech's power as king over a number of towns rested entirely on force of arms rather than upon a charismatic experience, as with other heroes in the past. Up to this time, a military hero could demand allegiance and support of the tribal levies on the basis of Yahweh's spirit being with him when war threatened. But when the enemy was routed and the danger was past, then his power tended to subside. In times of peace the independence of the tribes rose to the foreground. Abimelech lacked popular support because of his Canaanite background<sup>2</sup>. and because he seized power in time of peace, an action completely foreign to traditional Yahwism. It may be that Abimelech was able to assert himself among his Shechem kinsmen and become king because the centre had originally been Canaanitic. Being accustomed to this pattern of old city-states, the idea of monarchy would be fairly strong among the inhabitants. The writer has also made it clear that Abimelech's kingship was doomed from the very beginning since the lack of an anointing meant a corresponding absence of Yahweh's approval. In this narrative, we get a glimpse of what the people were capable of doing when they were so determined, even to the making of their king. The Deuteronomic writer has added his characteristic remark on this abortive monarchy

1. Judges 11:4-11  
2. Judges 8:31; 9:1.

by including Jotham's fable, a stinging condemnation of kingship. Although we may regard this as being unhistorical, it surely represents a viewpoint which later appeared in opposition to Saul.

The reliance upon spirit-endowed heroes might have continued had it not been that Israel found herself set against a much more formidable enemy in the Philistines. Here was a nation that presented a real and grave challenge, because it was not satisfied with occasional raids into Israelite territory but aimed at complete occupation and domination. We are made aware of those people in the days of Shamgar, but the pressure became stronger in Samson's time until the tribe of Dan had to evacuate and find a new home in the north. If one doubts the extent to which the Philistines had infiltrated, one has only to read the beginning of 1 Samuel, an account of the gradual takeover climaxed in the seizure of the Ark at the Battle of Ebenezer. It is not difficult to imagine the psychological consequences that followed the seizure of the Ark. In times past, as a symbol of Yahweh's presence, power and support, the ark had preceded the men of Israel into the promised land and into battles.<sup>1</sup> The confidence that was placed in the ark can be seen from 1 Samuel 4:3-9. The belief that it would save them from the power of the enemies was very strong. When the ark was brought into the camp, a shout arose because success was sure. The faith that was engendered by this cultic object can also be seen in the reaction of the Philistines. They, too, were confident that "the gods who smote the Egyptians" would also destroy them. When the Philistines captured the ark, it undoubtedly called into question the whole theology of the ark and faith in Yahweh's power to give deliverance. The subsequent demand for a king was an expression of a lack of confidence in the Lord and his capacity always to send the right man at the right time.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Joshua 6:7

2. H. H. Hertzberg, 1 and 11 Samuel, p. 89

Here is the first reason why a change of political administration was needed. Practically speaking, the old order did not offer enough security.

There were other reasons why a monarchy was inevitable. The people generally, were dissatisfied with the old order. In 1 Samuel we are told of the abuses of the priestly sons of Eli.<sup>1</sup> Corruption and greed were rampant even in the amphyctonic shrine at Shiloh. Although we are dealing here with retrospective history, it is the belief of the writer that the fall and the curse of the priestly house of Eli resulted because of the cultic abuses. Eli's house had been chosen in the days of Egyptian bondage to "go in and out before me for ever."<sup>2</sup> Because of its unfaithfulness, the house would be greatly restricted and be replaced by a "faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever."<sup>3</sup> This statement implies that the House of Eli lost its status and privilege.

An almost identical condemnation is made of Samuel's sons. As judges they "turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice."<sup>4</sup> We see that Yahwism was at its lowest ebb when those institutions of judge and priest, chosen by Yahweh and designed to protect the covenant relationship, came into dishonour. With both Eli and Samuel, as with Gideon, who were personages conforming to the role of the charismatic heroes, we see attempts to replace the charismatic call to office by a more sure hereditary succession. Eli's case is somewhat different since the priestly house always followed the hereditary principle. As in Abimelech's kingship, the attempt to change the leadership to a more stable form is seen to be a failure, being wrecked by the attitude of the persons involved. The sons, the younger generation, were further removed from the

1. 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25.

2. 1 Samuel 2:27-30

3. 1 Samuel 2:35

4. 1 Samuel 8:1-3

Exodus and Sinai experiences and were not tied to the traditional ways. Each one, in his particular position, tried to assert his own personality. The biblical writer, emphasising the spiritual poverty of the times, adds this subtle comment, "And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision."<sup>1</sup>

It was for these reasons that "all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah" to ask for a king "to govern us like all the nations."<sup>2</sup> We are met with a problem here, namely the origin of the monarchy. Certain passages show a favourable attitude to the monarchy because the majority of people saw it as the only way to save Israel from the Philistines.<sup>3</sup> Other references deal with the monarchy as an explicit rejection of Yahweh.<sup>4</sup> Yet another narrative deals with Saul as a successor to the former heroes.<sup>5</sup>

In the source that is favourable to the monarchy we find the story of the lost asses which brings Saul into Samuel's presence and friendship. In 1 Samuel 9:15, 17,20 it is clearly shown that the monarchy is a gift of Yahweh. Samuel, as Yahweh's instrument, is to "anoint him (Saul) to be prince (nagid) over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines." When Saul comes to Samuel, Yahweh confirms his choice a second time that "he it is who shall rule over my people." This is accompanied in verse 20 by a promise of grandeur to Saul clearly indicating that what is happening is ordained of God. The following day Samuel anoints Saul as prince (nagid) over Yahweh's people and gives him signs by which he shall recognise his sacred calling. All is fulfilled and the spirit of Yahweh comes upon Saul, making it clear that he is an instrument of God, open at any time to the onset of his power. This pro-monarchical account is reputed to be the older of the traditions and must have represented the majority of the population.

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1. 1 Samuel 3:1  
2. 1 Samuel 7:4-5  
3. 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16  
4. 1 Samuel 8:4-22; 10:17-27; 12:12-25.  
5. 1 Samuel 11:1-15.

The anti-monarchical view, which is a later interpretation by a Deuteronomic editor, was represented chiefly by Samuel. It is hard to reconcile the two views, especially since Samuel played such a large part in both. In the passages dealing with Samuel's horror of monarchy, he appears to have taken an instant stand against the demand of the people. First of all, he presented the theological objections that choosing a king meant a rejection of Yahweh as king, a rejection of one who had always raised his own leaders to fight his wars. Secondly, he pointed out the practical objections. There has been the suggestion that these ways of the king is an assessment of the monarchy in retrospect, written after the collapse of the nation. There is no reason, however, to take such a view, especially since Israel was surrounded by small kingdoms like Moab and Ammon and the kings of the Philistine city-states. The description of the 'ways of the king' is of interest because what Samuel described was a new type of person, hitherto unknown in Israel. Not only would a king be head and shoulders in authority above everyone else but he could use his kingship to demand whatever he liked, be it a standing army, ancestral property or the reduction of his subjects to slavery. He would <sup>not</sup> necessarily be tied to the covenant relationship. True, he would be Yahweh's son by adoption and would be an expression of his will, but the king, as a man could fall from this ideal and behave otherwise because of his elevation to the throne. The description of a king is of one who would no longer be 'of the people' to protect the people, but one who could exploit his subjects for his own purposes. What Samuel contrasts is, on the one hand, Yahweh, the real king, protecting his people by raising charismatic leaders; and on the other hand, a people's king who may not seek his guidance from Yahweh but will take everything into his own hands. The people are being told that in choosing a king a new way to apostasy has been opened to them.

But the picture which Samuel painted did not deter the people from making their choice in favour of a king. In a king they visualized regulated government, leadership in war by a trained soldier instead of a charismatic leader, and also responsibility for "our battles." Still determined to have a king, the people were presented to Samuel by tribes, clans and families until Saul was singled out by lot. When Saul was presented to the people, he was acclaimed as king (melek), he "whom the Lord has chosen." The anti-monarchical view is continued in 1 Samuel 12 in typical Deuteronomic phrases, ending with the account of a rain and thunderstorm interpreted as a sign that Yahweh and Samuel were unanimous in their condemnation of monarchy.

Here we see an example of the voice of the people being heard. They were especially aware of the Philistine menace in their midst. In the past they had trusted Yahweh to deliver them. But now the people make their demand in the face of the catastrophe of the ark by which the Israelite army had been led in the past. Because of this disappointment in the power of the ark and in the ruan, the people called for a commander, one endowed with permanent heavenly favour. He was not to be temporary like the judges. Rather the people wanted security against death and interregnum, and a succession which would not suffer interruption with its consequent dangers. This demand is carried out by a covenant in which the king becomes responsible to Yahweh — just as the people had earlier covenanted with Yahweh to be a faithful 'am.

It is important to realise that this view represented by Samuel must have been felt most strongly by those who maintained a mosaic Yahwism. It is rather difficult to speculate about the exponents of this view since it has already been mentioned that those among whom one might have expected to find faithfulness to Yahweh, namely the priests and the judges, seemed to have been riddled by corruption. Clearly the old amphictyony had broken down, and gone was Israel's focal point at Shiloh. Samuel himself is portrayed

as a faithful remnant. Having grown up as a protégé of Eli in the central shrine, Samuel would necessarily have emulated the amphictyonic ideal and despaired of any institution that threatened that ideal. Furthermore, if we look at Samuel in the light of the charismatic leaders, we see in him the embodiment of unified rule. He was born a Nazarite; he administered before the Lord wearing the ephod, marking him as a priest; he was a prophet of the Lord; he was a judge who has a yearly circuit to the centres of Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpath; and he was a leader in war against the Philistines. If Yahweh could provide such unified leadership in one man, what position could a king possibly have? When we take this into consideration we can understand why Samuel felt that the demand of the people was a rejection, not only of himself, but of Yanwen's power to bring deliverance. We can also understand why Samuel tried to hold off the advent of a king.

The third narrative about Saul's installation as king appears in 1 Samuel 11, a chapter that makes Saul appear like just another judge. The conditions were there as they were for Gideon. Jabesh-gilead was hard-pressed by the Ammonites. Messengers were sent to the tribes to rally the tribal levies. When Saul heard of it the Spirit of Yanweh came mightily upon him, and after dramatically chopping up his oxen and sending the parts to the tribes, he ordered the people to muster their troops. The people saw in Saul's actions the mark of the God-given charisma and so they lent their support to achieve victory over the Ammonites.

Following the victory, the people offered to Saul what had once been offered to Gideon — the kingship. This time it was accepted. What makes the story difficult to interpret is that again we find Samuel at Gilgal taking part in the crowning ceremonies and acclamation.

It is a somewhat despairing task to fit these three accounts

of the origin of the monarchy into an understandable pattern. They are conflicting accounts in many regards. But it must be admitted that the editor has displayed considerable skill by showing the psychological progression of events. The demand of the people comes first of all, which is seen by Samuel in all its apostate colours. Only after Samuel points out the implications of the request and after the people remain adamant in their demand, are plans laid down for a king. Saul enters the picture in search of the lost asses and encounters Samuel who, at Yanweh's command, anoints Saul secretly. Saul himself is given the signs to reassure him of his divine commission. After the people are called together, Saul is publicly chosen by lot and acclaimed as king. But it is only after Saul's dramatic victory over the Ammonites that he is accepted wholeheartedly. The finishing touches are provided by Samuel in his warnings that faithfulness to Yanweh is required.

It is evident that, even though the people have demonstrated their lack of confidence in Yanweh and their tendency to be unfaithful, Yanweh was there in control of the situation. Monarchy, in itself was not without the guidance of Yanweh even though it began as a demand of a rebellious people. Yanweh would work through it as he did the charismatic leaders to achieve his plan of salvation.

Until the time of the monarchy, Israel's leadership was charismatic in character. Although the kingship of Saul was begun with the same endowment of the spirit, it became progressively clear that within monarchy lay the seeds of tension and conflict. The judges of the past had each been called upon to act once in a moment of crisis and therefore there was no pressure upon the people to accept that leadership after the danger passed. But in Saul's case, the charisma was expected to show itself continually in order to have the support of the people. Precisely because

the Philistine aggressor could not be defeated, Saul's reign and, indeed, the monarchy were brought into question. Saul faced the problems of a sustained leadership without any precedents to guide him.

Throughout Saul's reign, some of the tensions boiled into actual conflict. We have seen that although Samuel's personal feelings regarding the monarchy were ambiguous, he nevertheless supported the principle, willingly or unwillingly, in the face of popular demand by the tribal leaders. From the very beginning the differences "were already implicit in the contradiction between genuine Mosaic Yahweh religion and any leadership which was not charismatic."<sup>1</sup> It would seem that in the mind of most Israelites the pressure from the Philistines was the important issue, and so the monarchy was launched for defensive purposes. The consequences of monarchical rule were not immediately felt by the Yahwists.<sup>2</sup> Whatever Samuel's initial feelings were, it is evident that he soon broke with Saul, and quite likely his response was representative of circles of charismatics.

Saul's first conflict recorded in 1 Samuel 13:8-15 arose as he and his army prepared for battle against the Philistines. A week earlier Samuel had told him to go to Gilgal - "behold, I am coming to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do." Saul gathered his troops and waited the appointed number of days for Samuel. But when Samuel failed to appear, Saul performed the ritual of making the offering himself. Samuel's reaction is beyond understanding. Had he not broken his end of the agreement? Was it not appropriate for Saul to make a burnt offering? Was this action a priestly prerogative? In the majority of passages from Joshua to 1 Samuel, the offering of burnt and peace offerings

1. Walter Eickrodt, Theology of the Old Testament vol 1. p.441

2. Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, p. 37.

does seem to have been an act proper only for the priestly class. But while this is true, there are also passages where no priest is mentioned and where his presence would be unexpected. In Judges 6:25, 26, 27 Gideon is commanded by the Lord to "pull down the altar of the Ba'al which your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down." So Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord told him."

Here is an example of a charismatic figure, who is not of the priestly class, making sacrifice. Judges 13:16,19,23 carries another example. Manoah and his wife are told by an angel of the Lord "if you make ready a burnt offering, then offer it to the Lord..." "So Manoah took the kid with the cereal offering and offered it upon the rock to the Lord." Later they reflect on their action in these words; "If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a cereal offering at our hands." It may be argued that in both the cases of Gideon and of Manoah they had the express command or invitation to sacrifice but in the case of Saul, no such indication is given. Here can be little doubt that the people consulted the priests about the proper offering of sacrifices but "the evidence from the time of the Judges and the monarchy suggests that the right of the paterfamilias to exercise the priestly function of offering sacrifice was uncontested for a considerable period and that there was, therefore, no need to call in the assistance of a special cultic official."<sup>1</sup>

Although we may be inclined to view this incident as an example of Samuel's eccentricity or his jealousy, it may, on the other hand, represent a fear felt by those in the priestly and prophetic circles, that Saul was grasping at religious as well as political authority. Behind Samuel's reaction may have lay the thought, also, that the monarchy,

<sup>1</sup> L. W. Michrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, pp 396-7

being not only a political but primarily a religious institution, could set itself up as the infallible expositor of divine will in opposition to those who had been the agents of the spirit in the past.

The second clash between Samuel and Saul came as the result of Saul's violation of the ban, the herem, recorded in 1 Samuel 15; 10-35. At the command of Yahweh, Samuel gives Saul instructions to war against Amalek and to spare nothing — a total destruction of man, and animals. The venture is successful but contrary to the command. King Agag is spared and the best of the stock are brought to the camp "to sacrifice to the Lord." This explanation does not satisfy the angered Samuel who views Saul as a disobedient servant of Yahweh and pronounces the termination of Saul's kingship. Saul is here portrayed in the worst possible light as one who "set up a monument for himself", one who "has turned back from following" Yahweh and one who lays the blame on the people for bringing the spoil back from the camp. The conditions of the ban varied from case to case. Sometimes a total destruction was commanded while at other times the cattle could be spared and shared among the clans. Saul was pronounced guilty for having crossed a very shadowy line of distinction between total ban and what he, in fact, did. The Yahwists, however, interpreted Saul's action as a violation of the trust in Yahweh.

Both accounts of Saul's fall from prophetic favour may stem from the same incident centred at Gilgal. What interests us here is the conflict between the two men. Samuel seems to have been bent on making the king subservient to himself. The conflict is partly understandable on the grounds that Samuel as a prophet was exercising his right to make the king conform to covenant requirements. But we cannot rule out the possibility of jealousy on Samuel's part, for after all, Samuel had been key man in Israel prior to the establishment of the monarchy. It may

also be said that the <sup>34</sup>man chosen by Yahweh as prince, and Samuel the man of God, had differences stemming from the fact "that the relationship between the king's sacred and secular functions was ill-defined, and the secular requirements of the monarchy conflicted with the ancient traditions."<sup>1</sup>

Saul not only broke with the prophet-priest Samuel, but also with the established priesthood. Initially the priests had supported Saul. Like Samuel, they probably saw in the monarchy the hope of a nation to maintain its inheritance. In 1 Samuel we see Saul, an enthusiastic and superstitious Yahwist, surrounded by the army and by at least one representative of the priesthood.<sup>2</sup> When Jonathan struck a winning blow at the Philistine garrison at Micmash he hastily consulted the priest who attended the ark.<sup>3</sup> The narrator shows most clearly that Saul was a man who stood in fear of Yahweh and was concerned to do his will. It was only after his recurring bouts of melancholia that he lost the priestly support to his opponent, David. These fits of melancholia caused Saul to suspect everyone of coveting his position, most of all David. In 1 Samuel 22:11-23 the story is told of how Saul took vengeance against the priests of Nob, after they had given help to David, and had the whole priestly family murdered, except Abiathar who escaped in David's camp. After this incident no mention is made of a priest among Saul's followers. It is said "when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it is here that we should note the root of the problem. On the one hand the God, Yahweh, who moves in history, intervenes as a helper in time of need, calls judges to be instruments and accords them protection and blessing. The many references to Yahweh's past deeds are intended to show us this continual guidance. Samuel

1. Note, The History of Israel, pp 175-6.

2. 1 Samuel 14:3

3. 1 Samuel 14:18

4. 1 Samuel 28:6

bases his farewell sermon<sup>1</sup> on this very point. Yahweh's hand of guidance was with Moses, Aaron and the judges. Throughout this passage, God's faithfulness is emphasized. Into this pattern Samuel places himself, or rather, the writer places him. It shows his incorruptibility and that everything about him has been done in order. But on the other hand, we see people who willingly forsake Yahweh. This pattern is vividly reiterated time after time in Judges. We see it in men like Abimelech, Eli's sons and Samuel's sons.

Now that monarchy has been demanded by the people, it is seen as another sign of rebellion and of constantly renewed apostasy. It reveals in itself an act of unfaithfulness and a lack of trust in Yahweh. "The new sin exceeds all previous sins in so far as the aspiration for a king puts in question the desire and capability of the Lord to bring about deliverance."<sup>2</sup> But bad as the desire of a king may be, the possibility of deliverance is still present in it. Yahweh is behind it. Samuel will counsel the people in the path they are to follow.<sup>3</sup> The Lord has made provision for it. It is now up to the people and the king whether they keep to it.

This is the underlying theme of the whole heilsgeschichte and is the backdrop for the ensuing conflict

between the king and people. As we have seen, the people are a chosen people. Eli's house is a chosen house, Saul is chosen and anointed of the Lord as are the succeeding kings. But although they are chosen, they, and we, are also men, living, not in a spiritual vacuum, but in the midst of the world with all its many temptations. There is the possibility of failure to keep covenant with Yahweh, and therefore, failure to keep covenant with men. It is the interplay between these two aspects that causes friction.

What, then, can be said about the Israelite monarchy as it is seen against the background of her/Yahwistic faith?

1. 1. Samuel 12.

2. H. Hertzberg, 1 and 11 Samuel, p. 99

3. 1 Samuel 12:23

Basically monarchy was a contradiction of pure Yahwism. But that it was incorporated into the constitution of the people of God is evident. It was accomplished by entrusting the king, as servant of the covenant God, with the upholding of the divine decrees. Here was the seed of friction, for it allowed for the possibility of a clash between policies of practical politics and divine decrees; the clash between Yahweh's will and human will. We see it in Saul's reign in the conflict between himself and Samuel, representatives of the two opposing view points, each laying claim to the charisma. It developed into a clash between the static and the dynamic understandings of the faith. Saul tragically portrayed the inability to reconcile the two offices into a working union. At the beginning of his reign, Saul's charismatic gift showed in his actions and stirred all Israel. But it was in Saul that we see the transition from charismatic leader to official functionary. Though he had the support of the prophet, priests and the people, he "substituted sacramental consecration for personal deeds of power as the basis of his office. Next, he sacrificed respect for the ancient law of Yahweh to his own authority in the matter of the ban in the Amalekite war, and thus gave preference to his newly won political power over the religious rule of service required from the man endued with the spirit. Here human greatness has set itself up against God, and is no longer prepared to spend itself in obedient service".<sup>1</sup> It is little wonder that those who had shown grave misgivings about this new institution suddenly withdrew their blessing, not so much from the institution itself but from the man who was Israel's first king.

1. W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 1, p. 445.

C. King and People in the United Kingdom.1. David.

David's character is a very curious mixture. On the one hand, he is ruled by the divine charisma and therefore, shows himself to be a faithful instrument of Yahweh. But on the other hand, we see glimpses of a shrewd man who operates with cold practical policies. Here again we see the main theme: Yahweh who leads by choosing a king and a king who is a man susceptible to flaws of character.

The writer of Samuel, conditioned by a southern point of view and Jerusalem theology, is careful to describe David in the best possible light. In his rise to power, he is continually contrasted with Saul who failed to live up to his calling. David's early life is told in such a way to show that, without a doubt, he was Yahweh's chosen man.

If we could sweep away the Deuteronomic editing, David's rise might have occurred this way: A handsome shepherd boy finds his way into the royal court of Saul to play his lyre for the king; he demonstrates his prowess in killing Goliath; he is successful at war against the Philistines, has the friendship of the royal family, and marries the princess. With the death of King Saul, he is anointed king at Hebron by the Judeans. After several years, the elders of Israel ask him to be their king too. In the light of all these elements and the fact that Israel had become a united country, it is easy to see why the writer and the common people believed that David was the fulfilment of their dreams. Surely the Lord is with him, they would say. No man can do what he has done unless God is with him. It seemed appropriate to the writer to show not only that David was the pre-ordained king; by an early anointing but also that the last great judge, Samuel, was the one to anoint him. As we saw, Abimelech's abortive monarchy was doomed from the start because it lacked any divine sanction. Thus, it was necessary to give David the proper beginning with the endowment of Yahweh's spirit.

David's spectacular rise does have parallels with the old tribal heroes and undoubtedly the common people recognised this quality of leadership and individual call of Yahweh.

The rise of David can be seen in another perspective. The promise that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation had not yet been fulfilled. It is true that in Joshua we are given the impression that the conquests in central, southern and northern Palestine were a complete success; that the peoples were subdued and that the land was completely Israel's possession. But this account is idealized. It was far from a complete success although certainly a partial fulfilment. Judges gives many references that the tribes did not drive out the former inhabitants but rather had to live in their midst. The judges had been successful in holding back invaders but no mention is made of gaining ground, with the possible exception of Deborah and Barak's victory against Sisera. Saul had maintained a unity between the tribes and although he had success against the Ammonites, the Philistines could not be dealt the deathblow. It was not until David's reign that we see a complete fulfilment of the old promise. Jerusalem and other city-states were conquered. Moab, Ammon, Edom, Amalekites and Syria were annexed to Israel and a trade alliance made with Phoenicia. Even the Philistines had been pushed back to the edge of the sea. Two interpretations could be made of these facts. One, is that David, as Yahweh's instrument, had brought about Israel's fulfilment. Certainly the Lord was with him. This seems to have been the majority opinion of his own day. The other interpretation is a much less attractive picture but one that shows David as a very clever and shrewd politician and statesman who knew what strings to pull and when to pull them. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. It is the basic theme showing itself again.

David's rise can also be viewed another way. There had been a growth in the idea that Yahweh would establish his rule in persons. He was with Moses, Aaron, Joshua and the judges. In each crisis a leader was raised. The idea that the charisma could be passed down from father to son was evidenced in the appeal made to Gideon. In the troubled period prior to Saul's reign, it was hoped that the tribes would be united around the priestly rule of Eli and his sons, who were custodians of the Ark and the sacred oracle. Eli's house, however, came under judgment and hope dwindled. Samuel tried to adapt the judgeship to the political situation by appointing his own sons as judges. This proved unsatisfactory. Saul's monarchy may have begun with the hope that Israel's heritage would be fulfilled but Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you; for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue," <sup>1</sup> and "the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day." <sup>2</sup> Saul's house, too, fell under judgment. On the basis of David's spectacular reign, his success in bringing the tribes together and his success against the enemy nations, it is understandable why the tradition emerged that Yahweh had chosen, not only David, but also, the dynasty of David. Hence, we see a covenant made with David -- "the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled... I will raise up your son after you, who shall build a house for my name, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.... Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before him; your throne shall be established for ever." <sup>3</sup>

We see here a shift in emphasis in respect to the role and

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1. 1 Samuel 13:13-14

2. 1 Samuel 15:28.

3. 2 Samuel 7:11-16

the position of the king. Not only had Yahweh chosen a king and endowed him with the charisma but he had chosen a whole dynasty. No longer would a king be chosen for his charismatic qualities but rather on the basis of his blood relationship to David. This Davidic theology stemmed from the southern kingdom which was David's home territory. There is little doubt that the north too was influenced by views of hereditary leadership, but the traditions of the tribal confederacy were much stronger there. There always existed a tension between north and south. Possibly it was because the south had never been a part of the larger confederacy until David's time. After the disruption of the monarchy, the north attempted to return to the old traditions of the Mosaic covenant and charismatic leadership.

The Davidic covenant, to a large extent, eclipsed the Mosaic covenant that originated in the wilderness period based on obedience to Yahweh's commandments. A king under the Davidic covenant was Yahweh's son. It became a popular belief that as long as a Davidic king sat on the Jerusalem throne, Yahweh was sure to preserve the state "for the sake of David," - I will not take my steadfast love from him as I took it from Saul." <sup>1</sup> This placed the king on a very high and unlimited plane. No longer were the people of Israel bound together on the basis of covenant allegiance and obedience to Yahweh at the central sanctuary as they had in the amphictyony; they were now bound together politically as citizens of the state. Allegiance to the covenant God had been replaced by allegiance to Yahweh's son who was a flesh and blood, sinful man. That is, the people were bound to a person who could take a census, exact forced labour and order his life by practical politics like the other nations. <sup>2</sup>

We have noted this tremendous growth of leadership in Israel from dependence on Yahweh to raise men in crisis, to a full-fledged monarch who was Yahweh's anointed son and yet

1. 2 Samuel 7:15.

2. E. J. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, p.143

could be motivated solely by practical politics. We see glimpses of the 'practical' David even prior to his reign. For more than a year while David and his men lived among the Philistines, he became the bodyguard of Achish, king of Gath.<sup>1</sup> The Philistine city of Ziklag was given to David to live in.<sup>2</sup> During that time, David carried out raids against the Geshurites, the Gittites, and the Amalekites but he convinced Achish that the raids were against the Israelites. The spoils gained from some of these raids were then sent to David's friends, the elders of Judah.<sup>3</sup> In this way, David ingratiated himself with both Achish and the southern tribes. When a successor to Saul was sought, David was the obvious choice of the men of Judah.<sup>4</sup> Seven years later David became king over the confederacy of the north as well. Although it was the elders of Judah who approached him, David seems to have gained the throne over the whole area by a strange mixture of coincidence and practical manoeuvring. When we consider David's contact with the Philistines, we must not underestimate the extent of that particular influence. Although it was David who finally defeated the Philistines, it is quite possible that he became king in Judah under the sponsorship of the Philistines. Later in David's reign, he surrounded himself with mercenaries and other Gittites from the Philistines.<sup>5</sup>

From the time David became king of Judah and Israel, he proceeded on a programme to centralize. Militarily, David and his army broke the power of the Philistines, conquered the old city-state of Jerusalem and subdued Moab, Damascus, Edom and Ammon. It is very likely that the subdued nations were accepted into Israel's covenant tradition, but in return, Israel had opened herself to traditions and religious practices quite unlike her own.

Internally, a new type of monarchy emerged. It is said that

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1. 1 Samuel 28:2
  2. 1 Samuel 27:6
  3. 1 Samuel 30:26-31
  4. 2 Samuel 2:4
  5. 2 Samuel 15:18

David made a covenant with the elders of Israel at Hebron.<sup>1</sup> This seems to be, not a renewal of the Sinaitic covenant, but rather, an arrangement by which the people accepted David on certain terms, now unknown to us. That such limitations were made, seems to be inferred later in Adonijah's reign when the elders of the northern tribes demanded that certain concessions be made to them. Although the north and south were brought together into a political unity, the position of the king was enhanced so that he himself became the focal point of the nation.

Unlike Saul who had not grounded his kingship with a sound religious foundation, David was able to make such a basis for his reign. He displayed a deep consciousness that he was dealing with two conflicting aspects; one characterized by charismatic traditions, and the other, the more modern institutional concept. David was able to unite "the very diverse religious forces to be found in Israel under the leadership of the monarchy and at the same time to secure the indispensable constitutional basis which would ensure the effectiveness of the kingly office."<sup>2</sup> This stroke of genius was demonstrated by bringing the ark the symbol of the amphictyonic tradition to the new capital of Jerusalem. This was the link which gave his kingship divine legitimation and which provided a new focal point for the nation. Since the fall of Shiloh, the Ark seems to have been pushed aside and ignored. But David saw it as the means to draw the tribes together at a new centre and make it appear that monarchy was the patron and protector of the sacral traditions of the past. The priests who served in the new sanctuary also provided a link with the old. Abiathar, who had escaped Saul's purge of the priests of Nob, was of Eli's house and therefore of Aaronic descent. The other attending priest was Zadok who had received the promise of a sure house in place of Eli's line.<sup>3</sup> It is uncertain where the Zadokite family originated.

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1. 2 Samuel 5:3

2. E. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 447.

3. 1 Samuel 2:35

The Caronicler traced Zadok's lineage to Aaron but it seems likely that this was an attempt to give Zadok a legitimate priestly heritage.<sup>1</sup> It may be that Zadok belonged to the pre-monarchical Jebusite cult of Jerusalem. Although we do not know at what time Zadok became a priest in Jerusalem, his presence is twice mentioned in the lists of David's officials,<sup>2</sup> holding a priestly position beside Abiathar, David's sons and Ira the Jairite. When David had to flee from Jerusalem in the face of Absalom's revolt, Abiathar and Zadok were equal custodians of the Ark. This equality ceased during Solomon's accession to the throne. Zadok, as a loyal supporter of David's chosen son, Solomon, became the head priest, while Abiathar's support of Adonijah, marked him for exile. Thus Zadok rose to the forefront "at the very time when the new royal temple was built and the cultus assumed forms requiring a priest-hood quite different from the former."<sup>3</sup>

Although David's reign demonstrated the possibility of the office of king within the framework of Yahweh religion, it did not prevent conflicts with prophets and people. We see it in the Bethsabee affair where David, like kings of other nations, committed adultery and then contrived to cover up his guilt by implicating the innocent husband and finally to having him murdered. This brought prophetic chastisement upon David by Nathan the prophet. What might have been overlooked in another country, was seen in Israel as a breaking of the covenantal relationship. Nathan's opposition to the building of the Temple also demonstrated the prophetic role in checking the actions and the power of the king.

The voice of the people can be seen through Absalom. There was evidently some cause for grievance over the administration of justice. Whether this, in fact, was true or whether Absalom built up an imaginary case to incite the people to rebellion cannot be known. Since he had a following, this

1. 1. Chronicles 6:1-15

2. 2 Samuel 8:17 20:25

3. J. Pedersen, Israel 111-1V, p. 155

may indicate that there was popular discontent against David. At least the people were willing to change loyalties from father to son and likely there was some reason for it. In some way David had made himself unpopular with some of the people and they were prepared to transfer their allegiance.

The Sheba Revolt represented not only the weak link that existed between Israel and Judah but also a dissatisfaction among the people towards the ruling house. It may have been due to tribal rivalries emerging since it was a man of Benjamin who led the revolting party. It may be that as a Benjaminite, Sheba was a supporter of the Sauline claims. There seems to have been a readiness especially by the northern tribes, to abandon the Davidic kingship.

David incurred disfavour also because of the census that was conducted from "Dan to Beersheba." <sup>1</sup>. We are not told why the numbering was conceived to be such a terrible thing. It may be speculated that the census was the groundwork for imposing a system of taxation. Perhaps it was seen as a disbanding of the tribal levies which meant a direct inroad into the sacral sphere, the replacement of a charismatic institution by the measures of human organization. It is a challenge to God himself." <sup>2</sup>. Again it was a prophet who drew attention to the king's evil ways and foretold of a disaster to come that would demonstrate the anger of Yahweh. The effect that David's census had upon the people is not mentioned in the narrative but it prepared the ground for some of the worst practices and burdens that the people were subjected to in later reigns.

In David's reign, we see the fulfilment of the patriarchal promise. Israel had become a people; indeed she had become a nation of great size by ancient standards. It is no wonder that David became the ideal figure. But by becoming a nation with a constituted monarch, the charismatic leadership was replaced by the more secure and practical institutional concept. <sup>Although</sup> there was a 'house' chosen by Yahweh,

1. 2 Samuel 24:1-9 and 1 Chronicles 21:1-6

2. H. S. Hertzberg, 1 and 11 Samuel, p. 412

it was placed in a frame of reference in which the king was a hereditary monarch selected on the basis of his blood kinship to David. It is not surprising that the relationship of the institution of the monarchy with the central traditions of the faith "was strained from the outset and, right down to its end, the monarchy never succeeded in extricating itself from this strain."<sup>1</sup>.

David was also responsible for opening Israel's doors leading to detrimental cultural, religious and political influences. Here was the paving of the way to the problem that became so much clearer in Solomon's reign. It raised the question of whether Israel could ever be a people living an isolated existence in Palestine with a minimum of outside contacts, or whether, as a people under Yaweh and part of a large state, she was thereby committed to rub shoulders with other nations and different cultures. In other words, she had either to isolate herself in Palestine, and therefore, deny her God-given destiny, or to go forth, in which case she might well be overcome by the ways of the world. David's reign set the stage. It is a matter of interest and importance to see how future kings tried to solve this problem.

Before we examine Solomon's reign for evidence of the tension between the king and the people, it may be well to consider the position of the Davidic king within the religious cult of Jerusalem. On the basis of his position, we can appreciate the status and authority that the king possessed in the life of his subjects and of the nation.

Although the people asked for a leader of war, and for one who would administer justice<sup>2</sup>, the kind of king who emerged in David and his successors was of a much larger stature. He was not merely Yaweh's anointed, but he was seen as the people's source of strength, their 'breath of life'<sup>3</sup> 'equal to ten thousand of us'<sup>4</sup>

1. Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, p.40

2. 1 Samuel 8:4,20

3. Lamentations 4:20

4. 2 Samuel 18:3

40.

and the light or 'lamp of Israel'.<sup>1</sup> This idea must be seen in the light of the concept of corporate personality. Just as the father was the focal point of the household, the king was seen as the focal point of the nation. If the king protected the covenant relationship, the people prospered, but if he neglected his duties, then the people suffered.

This focusing of attention and importance on the king in Israel is now believed to be the result of Israel's contact with the Canaanites, who, in turn, had been influenced by a general pattern of ideas common to the cultures of the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile regions. In the first instance, "the Hebrews, settling in Canaan adopted the festival and ideology of the myth, and adapted it eventually to their ancestral faith under the influence of their priests and prophets."<sup>2</sup> This Canaanite influence was undoubtedly aided by the Israelite conquest of the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. There is reason to believe that David found in Jerusalem, in its cultus, "with its worship of 'Most High' and its royal-priestly order of Melchizedek, a ritual and mythology which might prove to be the means of carrying out Yahweh's purposes for Israel, and fusing the chosen people into a model of national righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

Mowinckel points out that "the god-king festival of the Canaanites was, in fact, only a particular version of a general cultic pattern obtaining throughout ancient oriental civilization its fundamental features being traceable in most of the religious and cultic systems, although naturally stamped by different national and religious characteristics."<sup>4</sup> Although there was no homogeneous pattern to which all details conformed, there was the belief that the king was more or less

1. 2 Samuel 21:17

2. John Gray, The Canaanites, p. 137.

3. A.R. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, p.46. Cf. H.J. Kraus, Worship in Israel, pp 201-8

4. S. Mowinckel, Psalms in Israel's Worship, p. 134; cf. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, pp 40-1.

47.

looked upon as 'divine'<sup>1</sup> and that he was both the representative of the gods on earth and of men before the gods.<sup>2</sup> It is this general Eastern King-ideology that throws light on and explains many single features of the Israelite king idea. But it must be admitted that "the basic conceptions have been fundamentally altered under the influence of the Yahweh religion."<sup>3</sup> Israel took the cultic pattern, remoulded it and infused it with the historical 'facts of salvation'.

It is in the light of this pattern that we see the position and the importance of the Davidic king, both in the life of his people and in the religious festivals. The theory that we are to assume the use of enthronement ritual at the annual New Year's Festival does not really concern us. It is generally agreed that a ritual was performed in which Yahweh triumphed over the forces of darkness, represented by the chaos of waters and that he was enthroned in the heavenly council and demonstrated. His might and power in the creative of the world.<sup>4</sup> What is of greater interest to us is that the king as Yahweh's adopted son, played the leading role in the mime. As Yahweh showed his devotion and righteousness to the people by overcoming chaos or the obstacles in the way of the nation's well-being, so the king was seen as the guarantor of his people's devotion and righteousness. As Yahweh's son and the people's king, the Davidic king became the mediator between Yahweh and the people.

In other words, the king was the trustee of Yahweh's chosen people. It was his responsibility to defend the nation from internal and external attack by ensuring righteousness and well-being. There could be no prosperity or assurance of continuity without this. But there could be no righteousness without Yahweh, nor without fidelity and obedience to Yahweh and His laws, grounded in the Sinaitic covenant. The king, as the nation's focal point was responsible for the righteousness of the nation. It was his devotion

1. S. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, p. 51.

2. Ibid. p. 51.

3. Ibid. p. 52.

4. Psalm 18, 46; see Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel p. 124ff

to Yahweh under the terms of the Davidic covenant which became the basis of the nation's faithfulness. Hence it can be truly said that the reigning Davidic king was a "shield" of the people. Upon him rested potential prosperity and survival.<sup>1</sup>

In an ideal way, the king was not free to follow his own way, but rather he was to live in accordance with Yahweh's will. To demonstrate this submission, part of the ritual involved a deep humiliation on the part of the king.<sup>2</sup> He became a suffering servant who, in pleading his own devotion and that of his people, showed a complete dependence upon Yahweh. Yet there was another side to the coin. Although the king was ideally Yahweh's adopted son who ensured righteousness, he was still a man by nature. However, the king was not faced with a complete antinomy in choosing between dependence upon Yahweh and reliance upon his own power. At the risk of over-simplifying the dilemma, it may be said that, on the one hand, Yahweh was working out His plan of salvation for righteousness and peace for all nations. To this end, the House of David had been entrusted with the successful direction of the operation. The king could fulfil this role, remaining perfectly obedient in his task. But the other possibility was that he could renege on his responsibilities, fail to keep the covenant, and therefore, bring the people to destruction too.

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1. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, p. 124ff

2. See Psalms 89, 101

2. Solomon.

The transfer of power from David to Solomon was, by no means, without intrigue. Since there was no established precedent for succession rights, the court, the priests, the army and probably the general populace, were divided over the issue. David's oldest surviving son appears to have been Adonijah. He seems to have assumed that the throne was his by right of primogeniture, although there was no provision made for it. Yauwea's promise to the Davidic house was that David's son would succeed to the throne, but there was no indication about which son. In hopes of ascending the throne, Adonijah gained the support of important personages in David's entourage. To his inaugural dinner came the royal princes, all the royal officials of Judah, Joab, and Abiathar. Both Joab as commander of the tribal levies, and Abiathar, a priest of the Aaronic line from the house of Eli, were representatives of traditions that had roots in Israel's early history. To this extent, it may be true that Adonijah had the support of the older and more religiously conservative elements in Israel. The 'royal officials of Judah' (literally, 'the men of Judah, the king's servants') would have undoubtedly included the responsible men of Judah, as well as some non-Israelites who had surrounded David during his reign. With the support of this formidable party, Adonijah's position appeared to be secure.

In the opposition party, there was Nathan the prophet, the king's seer, who had delivered a sharp rebuke to David over the Bathsheba Affair. It is hard to believe that Nathan could have been 'used' by a pro-Solomon party to give it legitimation. Nathan appears to have been convinced that Solomon was the Lord's choice. There is, however, no explicit mention that Solomon had received prophetic designation as in the case of David. 2 Samuel 12:24-25 records that "the Lord loved him, and sent a message by Nathan the Prophet." Although this may seem to favour Solomon as a successor, it certainly was not clearly spelled out. Whether Nathan based his action on an

actual promise to Bathsheba: "Solomon, your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne,"<sup>1</sup> or not, cannot be known. Such a promise was unknown to the other persons involved. If the promise was made, then we have here a departure from the old tradition. In this instance, the new king came to the throne on the basis of a father's promise which may, or may not, have been according to divine will.

Nathan stands in sharp contrast to Solomon's other supporters. As a prophet, Nathan's role as the king's advisor (much the same as Samuel's relationship to Saul) was strongly grounded in Yahwism. But the other supporters represented comparatively new elements in Israel. Although Zadok had emerged as a priest in David's reign, there is no mention of him prior to David's occupation of Jerusalem. This may mean that he belonged to the local pre-Israelite cult of Jerusalem. There is, therefore, a strong possibility that Zadok originally had little contact with Israel's religious traditions.

Benaiah's position as the commander of the Cherethites and the Pelethites, that is, the professional army, was also a departure from Israel's traditions. This reliance on foreign mercenaries, who were Philistines in origin, showed that there was a swing away from dependence upon the tribal levies. We must recall that David's stay in Gath had brought him into contact with military techniques that were not native to the Israelites. When Benaiah supported Solomon, it was this new influence which came into action.

The outcome of this political intrigue determined, to some extent, the direction of the monarchy. As we have noticed the conservative elements, which supported Adonijah's succession to the throne, failed to win. Solomon ascended the throne surrounded by David's mighty men, the professional army, and the new priestly house of Zadok, all of whom were

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1. 1 Kings 1:13

representatives of a new kind of political machine. After the anointing by Zadok and the acclamation by the people, Solomon ascended the throne as David's chosen successor. We are not told that there was a covenant made with either Judah or the northern tribes, and this may indicate that under Solomon, the monarchy was free from restraints and limitations.

The policies, the development of the royal court, and the aggrandisement of the national state, which were begun under David, were continued and developed under his succeeding son, Solomon. While it is true to say that Solomon brought Israel to its most illustrious position and splendour, he was also the one responsible for the gross abuses and heavy burdens which were imposed upon the people. Although he had been granted the gift of wisdom shortly after his accession to the throne,<sup>1</sup> Solomon did not demonstrate his father's keen sensitivity to the needs and traditions of the common person. While both Saul and David had grown up among the people, and were, therefore, acquainted with the common man, Solomon was born 'in the purple' and thus lacked the needed identification with his subjects.

As we have seen in David's rule, Israel's splendour had grown greatly since Saul's rustic court. Under Solomon, the city of Jerusalem launched into a twenty-year building programme. For this project much labour, money, and natural resources were needed. To fill his need for timber, Solomon made an agreement with Hiram of Tyre, in exchange for a regular supply of wheat and olive oil. This made it imperative for Solomon to commandeer the produce of agricultural Israel, at the farmers' expense. The people also had to bear the burdens of supplying food for the king's increasing court. For this task, Israel was divided into twelve areas under the supervision of an "overseer." This represented not only a heavy financial burden on the people, but it was a far cry from the days of the amphictyony when a person's

1. 1 Kings 3:3-14

allegiance to the chief was on a voluntary basis.

Solomon's building schemes also pre-supposed a large availability of labourers. We know that slavery existed in both David and Solomon's reigns. But the biblical record is contradictory in this matter. In 2 Samuel 20:23 Adoram is said to have been in charge of forced labour. 1 Kings 5:11 records that "King Solomon raised a levy of forced labour out of all Israel," which states that Israelites were included among those who were forced to work for the king.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the narrator writes that "of the people of Israel, Solomon made no slaves" and this is echoed by the Chronicler.<sup>2</sup> It may have been that the free men of Israel were liable for military call-up, but were not required to give service to the king's working force. The narrator explains in 1 Kings 9:20 that those who became slaves were the remnants of "the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel". This evidence corresponds to what the writer of Judges said about some of the Canaanites who continued to live among the Israelites after the conquest period. The remark is made that "when Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, but did not utterly drive them out."<sup>3</sup> It must be remembered that by Solomon's time there would have been very little to distinguish an Israelite from a Canaanite after years of intermarriage. The denial that slavery existed among the Israelites seems to be an outright falsification of the facts and an idealization of Solomon by the Deuteronomic writer. That the Israelites did become slaves seems to be borne out in 1 Kings 12 when the men of Israel came before Rehoboam to ask for a lightening of "the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke upon us". Both taxation and forced labour would be implied in this request.

1. See 2 Kings 11:28

2. 1 Kings 9:24; 2 Chronicles 8:9

3. Judges 1:28, 3, 33

both of these actions, undertaken by Solomon to maintain his high court standard, added fuel to the kindling fires of discontent. The people, Canaanite or Israelite, for the distinction was fading, became little more than machines to be exploited. Another of Solomon's measures to balance his national budget was to give to Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty cities in the land of Galilee, in exchange for one hundred and twenty talents of gold.<sup>1</sup> We are not told who the inhabitants were, but it would seem that they were Israelites, and that they were being sold into foreign hands, by the policies of Israel's despot. T.H. Robinson points out another reference which may also indicate the unjust rule: Deut. 17:16 refers to the prohibition "he must not multiply horses for himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses." The exportable commodities in Palestine were few. Therefore, Solomon turned to a lucrative trade in horses and chariots. Robinson points out that "the kings of Judah and Israel had been in the habit of paying in men for the horses and chariots which they got from Egypt. The direct evidence that we have of this practice comes from much later times, but there is reason to believe that Israelite mercenaries were sent to Egypt under the monarchy, and that Solomon may have been the originator of the practice."<sup>2</sup> This certainly is in keeping with his character and behaviour.

In yet another aspect, Solomon aroused some criticism. This comes from the pen of the Deuteronomic writer who saw apostasy in the fact that Solomon had many wives, and that they had their own non-Israelite centres of worship. This apparent failing of Solomon seemed more important to the narrator than his other injustices. Undoubtedly there was a small group who criticised this innovation, but they were powerless to do anything about it. Solomon held absolute power. It is not without coincidence that no prophetic voice was heard during this particular reign, as there had been

1. 1 Kings 9:10-14

2. Oesterley and Robinson, A History of Israel, vol. 1, p. 257

throughout David's kingship. Although the palace intrigue, which had placed Solomon on the throne, was supported by the prophet Nathan, nothing more is heard about him. Solomon seems to have either suppressed or reduced the prophetic role of Yahwism to an ineffective court position. Even Abiathar, the Aaronic priest, suffered an exile because of his involvement in Adonijah's claims.

It is somewhat surprising, that the vox populi appears to have been silenced although there was adequate ground for protest and rebellion. One event at this time gives us a glimpse of the discontent. A prophet, Anijah, the Shilonite, taking his stand among the resistance, prophesied to Jeroboam by means of an enacted parable, that the Davidic House would be reduced to a single tribe, and that this would occur in the reign of Solomon's son "for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes." <sup>1</sup>.

In two reigns, Israel had blossomed from a simple, rustic amphictyony, based on a religious covenant, to a full-fledged political state. But in the achievement of this state, Israel had had to forego much that was dear to the common person. In the new state, isolation was gone. It was no longer possible to be free from involvement in the affairs of the nations. Begun by David, and perpetuated by Solomon, Israel subjected and incorporated the surrounding nations, reducing them to vassal states. Friendly alliances with Egypt and Phoenicia put her in contact with peoples on a much larger scale. The simple life of the semi-nomads was gone forever. Trade pacts, commercial markets, building programmes and administrative policies meant a drastic change in social stratification, the results of which were far-reaching on the common person. The new prosperity gave rise to a wider chasm between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. As cities became more commercial, a population shift took place from rural areas to urban settlements. Life, which had previously been ordered on a right relationship between men,

on the basis of the covenant became motivated by other incentives. Although the population still adhered to Yahweh as the national God, the devotion once given to Him alone had to be shared with Ashtoreth of the Sidonians, Milcom of the Ammonites and Chemosh of the Moabites.<sup>1</sup> It may be that by building temples to other gods, Solomon was merely performing the honoured custom of the nations. It was the respectable thing to do as a token of friendly relations with other people. As a consequence, Yahwism no longer was the sole norm for one's action. Personal profit, political expediency, and national splendour tended to become the motives.

Samuel's warnings to the people who came to him at Ramah seems to have come to fruition. The monarchy, as it appeared under Solomon, was a monstrous and devouring thing, for it eclipsed the basic nature of Yahwism.

Solomon's reign ended, as might be expected, with much dissatisfaction. Those who had been silenced or forced underground gave vocal expression to their discontent when Rehoboam ascended the throne. There is the indication that the division could have been prevented if Rehoboam had listened to the voices of his older and more experienced counselors. The people of Israel did not demand a complete change of policy, but instead they said, "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now, therefore, lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke upon us, and we will serve you."<sup>2</sup> The Israelites, that is, the northern tribes, met together at Shechem, perhaps for a yearly festival which may have involved a covenant renewal with Yahweh and/or a renewal of the covenant with the Davidic House. There is no mention of such an occurrence at Solomon's accession, which may indicate that no ceremony took place at all. But after such a hard and burdensome reign, the North was anxious to place some limitations upon the king. As it has been

1. 1 Kin\_g 11:5-8

2. 1 Kin\_g 12:4

pointed out, the north held tenaciously to the amphictyonic ideal, so that the Davidic covenant was regarded as an undesirable innovation.

As at Solomon's accession, the beginning of Rehoboam's kingship was marked by contending parties. Judah seems to have been completely favourable to Rehoboam because he was the legitimate Davidic heir. There is also the possibility that the South had escaped the worst of Solomon's abuses. The opposition to Rehoboam came primarily from the north, and was again represented by the more conservative elements. In the Masoretic Text, it is recorded that during Solomon's reign, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat was called by Ahijah the Shilonite to be king over ten tribes.<sup>1</sup> Although the Septuagint records this same incident of Jeroboam's call to kingship,<sup>2</sup> it includes a second account with much different details. In this latter account we are told that Jeroboam aspired to the throne before he received any prophetic designation. It was only after the tribes met at Shechem to negotiate with Rehoboam, that a prophet, this time 'Amasia the Enlathite' (Enemaian), commissioned Jeroboam to be king over the ten tribes, by performing the enacted parable of the rent mantle. The fact that this second account was included in the Septuagint may indicate that there was some question about Jeroboam's prophetic designation. On the other hand, the account may have been added to discredit Jeroboam's claim to the Shilimite throne. It would seem better to accept the account as it is recorded in the Masoretic Text and therefore regard Jeroboam as a chosen man by Ahijah.

As his name suggests, Ahijah the Shilonite came from the amphictyonic centre of Shilo. This fact leads us to believe that Ahijah was a reactionary who wished to turn back the hands of time to a less complicated, semi-nomadic life. The introduction of foreign gods seems to have been Ahijah's reason for inciting the rebellion. It was perhaps

1. 1 Kings 11:29-39

2. LXX 1 Kings 11:29-39

his intention to lead the northern tribes back to pre-monarchical days, although such a return to the past was impossible.

Since the prophets were often spokesmen for the underlying popular feeling, we are led to believe that most of Israel was behind the revolt. While Ahijah rebelled against the House of David on religious grounds, national demand seems to have been the main issue with the majority of the people. The indications that most of the northern people were behind the revolt are that "Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel" <sup>1</sup> came to Shechem; that it was "all the people" who came back to Rehoboam on the third day: <sup>2</sup> that "the people answered the king. (What portion have we in David?...)" <sup>3</sup> and that "all Israel stoned him (Adoram) to death" when he tried to coerce Israel. <sup>4</sup> The revolt certainly had popular support.

There appears to have been two sides to the rebellion. First of all, it had a religious aspect. Solomon had built a temple in Jerusalem in which the ark rested. In doing so, he was furthering the trend set by David. The Davidic covenant that was upheld by Judah tended to obscure the demands of the older Sinaitic covenant. A more serious consideration was that Solomon had followed a policy of religious toleration and syncretism. It was against this aspect that Ahijah rebelled and on that basis he wished to see a return to a purer form of worship.

The revolt was also political in nature. Hereditary monarchy had not been accepted as an established principle in the North. The consideration undoubtedly came into play after Solomon's death. But it was the heavy taxation and the burden of the labour service which were key factors in the uprising. These two aspects are like two sides of the same coin; they cannot be completely separated as two distinct feelings, but were part and parcel of the same longings.

1.1 Kings 12:3

2.1 Kings 12:2

3.1 Kings 12:16

4.1 Kings 12:18

D. King and People in the Divided Kingdom.1. The underlying Factors.

The rebellion brought an end to the unified kingdom.

There were later kings who encouraged peaceful co-existence, but the empire, secure under one head was gone forever. To some extent, the two kingdoms, Judah and Ephraim, proceeded along different courses. Although the pro-Judean editor would have us believe that only Judah remained faithful to Yahweh, and therefore outlasted Ephraim, we know that he overlooked many external factors as well as internal ones that had much bearing upon the destiny of these two kingdoms.

First of all, the people of Israel were far removed from the semi-nomadic life. The simple life had become overlaid with complications and complexities. In the first instance, agricultural living meant a new life, one that was dependent upon the fertility of the land and the cycles of nature. Understandably, the nature deities received an influx of adherents from the Israelites who made no distinction between Yahweh and the local Baals. This religious influence was accompanied by exchange in culture and in law to cover the new agrarian situation. Therefore the influences upon Israelite life were many and varied.

This intermingling was conditioned by the proximity of the kingdoms to other nations. In this respect, Judah and Ephraim had a development which differed at least in degree. It was well nigh impossible for either kingdom to isolate itself as prophets, like Amos the Shilonite, envisaged. The nature of Israel's faith and the political situation made that impossible. In Ephraim, the people found themselves in the larger, wealthier part of the divided kingdom. Although they had the ancient tribal centres in their midst which might have induced the preservation of the old traditions, they also had a large Canaanite population. This originally foreign element was no longer outwardly visible, but it did mean that Israelite ways had become strongly flavoured by Non-Israelite elements. Ephraim was

also situated on the crossroads of the busy trade routes along the Fertile Crescent, and, therefore, was more exposed to outside influences from Phoenicia, Syria, Assyria and Babylon. Ephraim, then found herself placed among the nations. None of this came to pass without surrendering some of her distinctiveness.

The southern kingdom of Judah was in a different position. In contrast to Ephraim, she was a back-water state. Smaller, much poorer, and not as far removed from the semi-nomadic life, Judah was able to retain more of the old ways. Although she had her share of non-Israelite elements, such as the Jebusites and the Philistines, her population was much more homogeneous because of her position in the hills and wilderness away from the major trade routes. Religious syncretism which ran rampant in the north never swept through Judah to the same extent.

The direction which each kingdom followed was determined to some extent by its royal ideology. We have seen that in the south an hereditary monarchy was soundly established by the covenant with the Davidic House. Only once, when Athaliah usurped the throne, did the Judean people have a non-Davidide over them. We have also seen that the royal cult and festivals which may have been adapted for Yahweh worship from non-Israelite sources, were established in the Jerusalem capital. All this meant that Judah achieved a very stable form of government. It was not altogether free from palace intrigue, assassinations, apostasy and hardships, but there was political stability based, however falsely, upon the never-failing Davidide and the immutable city of Jerusalem.

It is one of the queer twists of history that in Ephraim the attempt was made under Jeroboam to return to the old pattern of living, to pure Yahwism, but in so doing, it brought instability to the kingdom. After two generations of kingship, Ephraim could not return to the old, simple policy.

Rather, she too had to become a kingdom. Jeroboam was faced with a contradiction over this very point. On the one hand his supporters, like Ahijah of Shiloh, were enthusiastic for a return to the old reliance upon spirit-endowed, prophetically designated leaders who would be like the heroes of old. On the other hand, the same supporters were opposed to absolutist monarchy. Thus any attempt to strengthen the king's position was blocked by the very elements which supported him. As Guthrie writes, "the raison d'etre of the northern Kingdom was the covenant loyalty to Yahweh, a loyalty that precluded the kind of enthusiasm for the kingdom that alone could make it strong. This is why... its first forty-six years of existence saw three dynasties rise and fall, and three of the five kings meet violent deaths." <sup>1</sup>. This royal ideology resulted in military coups d'etat because the commanders found ready support among the army which wielded great might. The precedent for this can be seen with men like Saul's Abner and David's Joab. The charismatic principle, though accepted in principle, was seldom the motivation for making a new king. This being the case, Ephraim was subject to the shifting winds of change. It was possible to be ruled by one like Ahab who had little understanding or concern for the covenant. So although Ephraim began on the basis of the amphictyonic tradition, she was quickly transformed and influenced by Phoenician concepts of absolute despotism in which the ruler had unlimited privilege.

Another pressure that shaped the destiny of the two kingdoms was the alternating rise and fall, strength and weakness, of the surrounding nations. The empire built by David and Solomon was possible only because of Egyptian and Mesopotamian impotence. When these sleeping giants rose up and began flexing their muscles, Ephraim and Judah became pawns to be played and manipulated. There is no doubt that both

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1. H.H. Guthrie, God and History in the Old Testament, p. 51

Judah and Ephraim made dangerous and unnecessary foreign treaties because of near-sighted policies, but it was virtually impossible for either of them to remain aloof. They could not help but be involved.

All the above factors came into operation in the period of the divided kingdom. This helps us to see how selective the biblical editor has been to use materials, and to make judgments in the light of one legitimate sanctuary and one legitimate royal house. In discarding this over-simplified interpretation we must remember that Israel's history is a religious story, a story of faith, the heilsgeschichte. The people of Israel and their faith were being tried in the crucible of human life and experience. They could not sustain a faith in a vacuum; it had to be lived out in the midst of the domestic and world situations in which they found themselves. Thus we turn to examples where the people outwardly challenged the authority of the king. At times we see only hints of the tension that existed because the details of the incidents in which people were active, have been lost to us. There are also accounts in which some kings were faced with the difficult tension between choosing the path of faith and the reliance on practical politics. Likewise, the people were subject to the same temptations to disregard the covenantal relationships. We turn then to an examination of the tension between king and people from the divided monarchy to the disruption.

2. Ephraima. Tension during Royal Successions.

We shall look at the evidence of this tension as it appears at the succession of the kings to the throne, because at such times, we see clashes between the kings and different elements in the population.

We have noted the Jeroboam's succession was supported by both prophets and people. Within a short time, however, Jeroboam fell out of favour with Ahijah. The biblical editor believed that his religious policy, which involved golden calf images at Bethel and Dan, centres which had ancient cultic associations, was idolatrous. Recent studies on the subject of cultic objects "tend to see in the calf images a base resembling a throne, a pedestal for the deity who is present but unseen."<sup>1</sup> As Kraus points out, the distinction between the pedestal and the invisible God was probably not made by the common person, so that what Jeroboam intended as a parallel to the ark, became linked with Canaanite conceptions of fertility religion.<sup>2</sup> When this distinction was not made, Jeroboam was blamed for making Israel sin. We have the accounts of how a man of God<sup>3</sup> and Ahijah the Shilonite<sup>4</sup> condemned Jeroboam for this religious policy. Other than this we are given no evidence that Jeroboam lacked popular support.

What we do witness in Jeroboam's reign is the tendency to separate religion and politics. In Judah, the political and the religious centre coincided in Jerusalem, making a very strong core. But in Ephraim, no comparable centre emerged. If Shechem had become the capital city, it might have been possible for Ephraim to have had a continuity with

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1. H.J. Kraus, Worship in Israel. p. 147

2. Ibid. p. 150; cf. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, p. 58

3. 1 Kings 13:1-10

4. 1 Kings 14: 1-16

the amphioxonic traditions of the past. Although the royal city was first established at Shechem,<sup>1</sup> it was later moved to Penuel,<sup>2</sup> Tirzah<sup>3</sup> and finally to Samaria<sup>4</sup> which was the property of the Omride family. As far as we know, Samaria never became a Yahwistic centre comparable to Bethel or Dan, although Hosea's reference to the 'calf of Samaria'<sup>5</sup> may indicate some cultic centre. When Jeroboam made Bethel and Dan the chief religious centres he "appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites,"<sup>6</sup>. This represents another break from tradition. If the priesthood had been of the Levitical line, it might have exercised some restraint on the king. These breaks from the ancient Israelite traditions greatly influenced Ephraim's future direction.

The problem of succession was again raised at Jeroboam's death. His son, Nadab, became king, indicating a desire for dynastic stability, at least on the part of the court officials. But there was an uprising on the part of the army in which Baasha from Issachar, an army commander, gained support. Like Jeroboam before him, Baasha seems to have had prophetic designation. We are not given the details of it, except in retrospect by the words of Jehu, the son of Hanani, "... I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel..."<sup>7</sup>. His purge of Jeroboam's house is also seen as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Ahijah --" And as soon as he was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam; he left to the house of Jeroboam not one that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by his servant Anijah the shilonite."<sup>8</sup> Without giving any reason, the account goes on to show that Baasha fell out of favour with the prophetic party, especially Jehu the son of Hanani.<sup>9</sup> The words of the condemnation are almost identical with that against Jeroboam; the leader over Yahweh's people has led them astray; therefore his house would be completely swept away.<sup>10</sup>

1. 1 Kings 12:25

2. 1 Kings 12:25

3. 1 Kings 15:33

4. 1 Kings 16:24

5. Hosea 8:6

6. 1 Kings 12:31; contrast Judges 17-18

7. 1 Kings 16:1-2

8. 1 Kings 15:29

9. 1 Kings 16:1-4

10. 1 Kings 14:7-11 and 1 Kings 16:1-4

Baasha's son, Elah, came to the throne, only to meet the same fate as Nadab. The assassin was Zimri, a commander who proceeded to sweep away the house of Baasha, "according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet." <sup>1</sup> Zimri seems to have lacked popular support for when the news reached the troops at the army camp in Philistia, they, "all Israel" <sup>2</sup> made Omri, "king over Israel" Zimri was soon disposed of in a siege against the capital of Tirzah. The Omri claim was not immediately recognized by all the people. The biblical record states that "half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri. But the people who followed Omri overcame the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath; so Tibni died and Omri became King." <sup>3</sup> It seems quite clear that Omri's claim to the throne was only won by the superior strength of the army. In 1 Kings 16:16,17 both references to 'all Israel' making Omri king and going with him to Tirzah, imply the army, since the troops were stationed at Gibbethon in Philistia and it was there that Omri was made king. Although Omri received a very brief and scanting press report he was a king strong enough to bring stability to Ephraim, and in doing so, to secure the throne in the Omride family until the fourth generation.

The Omride dynasty ended in what can only be described as a bloodbath. As in the past, the man who led the revolt was an army commander. But his supporters were found in many different areas of Ephraim's life. First of all, the prophetic movement stood wholeheartedly behind the rebellion for reasons which we shall examine later. It was Elisha the prophet who sparked the revolt like Ahijah of Shilo years before. He ordered one of his associates from the prophetic guild to go to Jehu at the army camp in Ramoth-gilead, take him aside from his fellows and pronounce over him. "Thus

1. 1 Kings 16:22; see also 1 Kings 16:2-4

2. 1 Kings 16:16

3. 1 Kings 16:21-22

57.

says the Lord, I anoint you king over Israel." 1. Elisha's authority for Jehu's anointing had been prepared by Elijah, his predecessor. While in the wilderness Elijah was commanded to "anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place."<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the choice of Jehu was a Yahweh-directed plan started years before the actual rebellion.

When the prophetic designation was made known to the army commanders, the immediate acclamation of Jehu as king by them leads us to believe that there was a dissatisfaction against the Omride dynasty. The army, composed of the free men liable for military duty, would have reflected popular attitudes. "Though we hear of no popular uprising, Jehu and his soldiers almost certainly acted in line with what they knew to be popular sentiment."<sup>3</sup> There is also the strong possibility that King Joram's injury in the battle against Hazael, the king of Syria, might have given rise to the belief that the blessing of God had passed from the king to his commander.

Another element which played a part in this revolt was the very conservative group known as the Rechabites. During Jehu's purge of the Omride house, he met Jehonadab, the son of Rechab. After pledging each other to the same goal, the two rode together in their 'zeal for the Lord.'<sup>4</sup> The Rechabites were undoubtedly the most conservative of any group in Israel, holding tenaciously to the wilderness ideal and refusing to make the transition from semi-nomadic to agrarian life.<sup>5</sup> They literally lived in the past. For them, as for the prophets, the wilderness tradition was normative. Jehu gained their support because they saw in him the hope of returning to a purer form of Yahwism and to

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1. 2 Kings 9:3

2. 1 Kings 19:15-16

3. Wright, A History of Israel, p. 321

4. 2 Kings 10:15-24

5. Jeremiah 35:6-10

a simple way of life, untainted by the world.

The royal court in Samaria had still to be won to Jehu's side. That there were loyal supporters of the king can be seen in the necessity of challenging the commanders of the city, the elders and the guardians of Ahab's family to contest Jehu's authority. When his plan was carried out and Ahab's family massacred, Jehu spoke to the people admitting his implication in the political coup but justifying it by the prophetic word that "the Lord has done what he said by his servant Elijah".<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that this action on Jehu's part was his direct appeal to the people to support the return to the amphictyonic tradition, an approach they might well have applauded. Those who were not won by his passionate appeal to the past, would certainly have been deterred from challenging his superior strength. Any suspicions that Jehu was motivated by personal ambition was ruled out by this appeal. In addition to this, the Rechabite support in religious reformation would have been interpreted as a Yahweh-directed coup d'etat.<sup>2</sup>

The support given to Jehu was strong enough to establish the dynasty until the fourth generation. The Deuteronomic writer evidently construed this as a sign of Yahweh's favour to Jehu in spite of the fact that the dynasty continued to perpetuate the sin of Jeroboam. Jehu's purge of Ormi's house meant not only a repudiation of all Phoenician influences but the loss of Judah's support as well. Gone also was the cream of Israel's leaders in the senseless purge so that Ephraim was reduced to a weak and ineffective kingdom.

With the end of Jehu's dynasty, came the end also of stability. Six kings, of whom five seized the throne by murder and violence, rose and fell with neither prophetic designation nor popular support. Part of this may be

1. 2 Kings 10:10

2. 2 Kings 10:15-27

attributed to a revival of inter-tribal rivalry. Shallum is named as 'son of Jabesh' <sup>1.</sup> and this might refer to the Transjordan area; Menahem is the 'son of Gadi' <sup>2.</sup> and this might refer to the tribe of Gad; Pekah is supported in his conspiracy by fifty men of the Gileadites." <sup>3</sup>

Political opportunism and personal ambitions were the motivations in making kings. There is no evidence that the people took an influential part in these latter succession intrigues.

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1. 2 Kings 15:10
  2. 2 Kings 15:17
  3. 2 Kings 15:25

Ephraim.b. Tension through Foreign Involvement.

Foreign involvement, with its accompanying implications, was not a new thing in the divided kingdom. The groundwork for this problem had been laid much earlier in the days of the United Kingdom by both David and Solomon. It has already been mentioned that David reduced the surrounding nations to vassal states and had made a friendly alliance with Hiram of Tyre. This policy opened the doors to an intermingling of ideas, religious, social and political. Solomon's policy followed the same course to an even greater extent. The marriage alliances with an Egyptian princess and with Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women were not undertaken without changing the character of the covenant people. Even before his death, Solomon witnessed the beginning of the decay within the empire. The suppression that had been exercised upon Edom, Syria, and Moab was never forgotten, and when the time for freedom came to these states, the relations between Israel and her satellites was anything but amicable. With the exception of times when Ephraim and Syria were faced with a common enemy there was continual warfare between them. On the other hand, the peaceful relations with Phoenicia begun under David continued until the fall of the Omride dynasty.

The implications of becoming one people in the promised land under David and Solomon were not immediately seen. After all, the kingdom must have been viewed as the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise. Therefore, any conflict or unrest would have been quelled by those who viewed Israel's growth and development as divine blessing. We have already examined the conflict which arose following Solomon's death, for by that time the consequences of welding together the north and south tribes, of unifying the subject people in the Empire and of having friendly relations with Egypt and Phoenicia were beginning to be recognised.

We turn, then, to examine the tension which the kings faced in trying to uphold the demands of the covenant in times when it was impossible for a nation to live in complete isolation.

Although we have a record of Jeroboam's internal administration there is little evidence of his foreign policy. We do know that Jeroboam had received political refuge in Egypt under Pharaoh Shishak ( Sheshonk).<sup>1</sup> The Septuagint includes an additional account of Jeroboam's marriage to Shishak's sister-in-law, Anu.<sup>2</sup> If this is reliable, it would mean that Jeroboam was highly regarded in the Egyptian court and would have undoubtedly been influenced by that culture. However, we feel that the record of the marriage may be a confusion with the marriage of Hadad the Edomite.<sup>3</sup> The accounts are so similar as to cause a doubt upon the authenticity of Jeroboam's marriage. There can be little doubt, however, that Shishak welcomed refugees like Hadad and Jeroboam since it was to his interest to see Palestine become fragmented under different men. To this end, Shishak might well have encouraged rebellion.

The question needs to be raised whether Jeroboam was aided by Egypt in his bid for leadership in Ephraim. The biblical record is not clear at this point. 1 Kings mentions that Shishak "came up against Jerusalem; he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything." <sup>4</sup> The Chronicler makes the additional note that Shishak "took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem." <sup>5</sup> On Biblical evidence along this may indicate that Ephraim was given political immunity, or that Egypt aided Jeroboam in his possession of power. However, extra-biblical evidence found in the Karnak inscription shows that cities in Ephraim also were overrun. The interpretation of this evidence is

1. 1 Kings 11:40

2. LXX 1 Kings 12:24

3. LXX 1 Kings 11:18-22 and N.T. 1 Kings 11:14-22

4. 1 Kings 14:25-26

5. 2 Chronicles 12:4

difficult since it may only indicate that Jeroboam had seized some northern territory which Saishak, then, conquered and returned to Ephraim. We think that it is very difficult to prove that Jeroboam had support from Egypt. The reference to the capital being at Penuel,<sup>1</sup> even for a short time, might show that Egyptian advances against Ephraim made it necessary to move the royal court to the Transjordan area.

Every indication points to Ephraim as a weak state. The Chronicler includes the defeat of Jeroboam's forces by Abijah of Judah. It seems very likely that Abijah had some alliance with Damascus<sup>2</sup> and that this helped to turn the battle to his favour. If this record is reliable, then Jeroboam's power was greatly limited by having to face Syrian aggression.

When Baasha ascended the Ephraimite throne the policy towards Damascus changed. Perhaps he needed more military backing for his usurpation of power and to this end an alliance was made with the king of Syria.<sup>3</sup> This league was short-lived since Asa of Judah paid Syria to break the alliance and become political allies with Judah.

Under Omri and his dynasty, Ephraim moved into a new age. Although there is almost complete silence about his reign, Omri must have been a king of considerable importance to have consolidated power and brought stability to the kingdom. About Ahab's reign we have much more evidence. In the Omride dynasty the greatest influence came from Phoenicia. Omri, like David and Solomon, had a peaceful alliance with Tyre and this relationship was sealed with a marriage between Ahab and Jezebel, the daughter of the Sidonian king, Ethbaal.<sup>4</sup>

Israel had been tempted by Baal worship from the time of her sojourn in Moab, but she had never before encountered such an enthusiastic, determined, and ruthless missionary as Jezebel for her national god. It was customary to allow

1. 1 Kings 12:25

2. 1 Kings 15:19

3. 1 Kings 15:19

4. 1 Kings 16:31

freedom of religion to outsiders as a courtesy to peaceful alliances. So with well-founded precedents, Ahab built a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria for his wife's worship. In addition, Ahab made an Asherah <sup>1</sup>. But Jezebel's enthusiasm for Baal extended to the extermination of Yahwism in favour of Melkart which she undoubtedly considered superior in every way. To this end, she had managed to decimate the prophets of Yahweh, thus driving the few survivors to form pockets of prophetic resistance. <sup>2</sup>. The extent of Jezebel's policy is summed up by Elijah - "the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." <sup>3</sup>. To this Yahweh replies, " I will leave seven thousand in Israel all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." It is evident from this account that the Omride policy of religious syncretism was most acceptable to the majority of people. The commercial class of people would have been indiscriminating in the religious practices out of sheer expediency and the farming class had always paid respect to the fertility deities along side of Yahweh.

The reaction to this syncretism can be seen in the prophet Elijah and his associates. It is interesting to note that his home was Gilead which was still largely a semi-nomadic country. The shepherding life had been far less influenced than the agricultural lands on the west of the Jordan and, therefore, had preserved the old wilderness traditions. The concepts of holy warfare and nationalism were strongest among these people. Elijah represented pure Mosiac Yahwism. Thus we can appreciate the head-on collision between the wilderness-oriented prophets and the Phoenician-oriented people and court in Ephraim, especially in Samaria. Elijah clearly laid the blame for Israel's troubles upon Ahab as he said, "I ( Elijah ) have not troubled

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1. 1 Kings 16:32-33

2. 1 Kings 18:13

3. 1 Kings 19:10,14

Israel: but you (Ahab) have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals." <sup>1</sup>

In the first explicit conflict on the religious level, Elijah challenged the priests of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. All the people gathered to witness the duel. We are given the impression the Elijah was almost alone on the side of Yahwism. When he spoke to "all the people" he accused them of hopping between Baalism and Yahwism with total loyalty to neither.<sup>2</sup> When the contest came to the dramatic and indisputable victory for Yahwism, all the people were overcome with awe and shouted, "Yahweh, he is God; Yahweh, he is God."<sup>3</sup> We are not told of the effect of the contest upon the people other than their praise to Yahweh and that they participated in the massacre of the prophets of Baal.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly Elijan had stemmed the tide of wholesale syncretism for the time being, but it is all too evident that Jezebel, the chief trouble-maker, was not impressed or convinced. Certainly those who depended upon Phoenician trade for their livelihood would not have looked with favour on what was an explicit bid for independence from that country. Neither was Ahab visibly moved although some of his court, like Obadiah who was over the household, were Yahweh worshippers.<sup>5</sup>

The Phoenician influence made itself felt on a social level. The incident involving Naboth's vineyard indicates this very clearly. In the eyes of an Israelite, land had been granted to him and to his clan by Yahweh. Therefore it was not his possession either to buy or to sell. In certain crises, such as famine, when it was necessary to sell one's property, legal provision was made for its recovery to the family at the earliest possible opportunity.<sup>6</sup> In Naboth's refusal to part with his ancestral land we see the tenacity of the amphictyonic ideal.

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1. 1 Kings 18:18

2. 1 Kings 18:21

3. 1 Kings 18:39

4. 1 Kings 18:40

5. 1 Kings 18:3

6. Ruth 4

Ahaz understood this right even though he found it difficult to accept it. He perhaps thought that by offering to buy the land at a good price or by providing a better vineyard, the ancient right could be circumnavigated. Naboth adhered to what was his right, knowing full well that to sell would affect his status as a freeman. To have accepted the offer, as fair as it sounded, would have involved forfeiting the status of himself and his family and becoming a royal dependent.<sup>1</sup>

This ancient tradition, indeed law, was not at all comprehensible to Jezebel who was not only a strong-willed woman but a foreigner from a culture where the image of kingship was vastly different. Phoenician kings knew nothing of a covenant whereby the king was subject to the same obligations as his people. They know nothing about his being a protector of the covenant law. As kings they were absolute rulers without limitation. This was Jezebel's background. So when she found out why Ahab was sulking upon his couch, she asked, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."<sup>2</sup> Jezebel interpreted Israel's kingship in the light of her background. If Ahab wanted that vineyard, she could see no reason why it was not his right to take it without paying for it or providing another vineyard.

Although we may argue for Jezebel's ignorance of covenant law, she certainly understood that her treachery would have to be given the veneer of justice. This she managed by manipulating the law to her own purposes. Writing the letters in Ahab's hand, Jezebel probably allayed any suspicions the elders and free men (horim carries the meaning of freemen with high standing) might have had about the authenticity of the charge against Naboth, but it seems

1. John Gray, 1 and 11 Kings, p. 389

2. 1 Kings 21:7

necessary to believe that some of those who were involved did not carry out this 'justice' in pure innocence. After all, Naboth was a free man and so he would have occupied a place of respect in the community. Gray's view is that "Jezebel's reliance on the local elders and freeborn men of Jezreel suggests that Ahab was personally influential. This indicates perhaps that the persons in question had been long accustomed to follow the lead of the family of Ahab. This situation is readily intelligible if Ahab's family was from Jezreel."<sup>1</sup> But even if the elders and free men were opposed to these high-handed methods, there would have been a reluctance to disobey the king out of sheer fear of Jezebel's unscrupulous ways. Thus everything was given a semblance of justice and Ahab received his coveted vineyard since the property of rebels reverted to the crown. The entire incident seems to have passed without inciting opposition except the intervention by the prophet Elijah who forewarned of Ahab's own death. We cannot believe that the free men or elders were willing cohorts to Jezebel's whims. It is more likely that we have an expression of true popular reaction in the words of Elijah.

The reliance of the Omride kings upon military strength and practical politics was another source of tension. The prophetic-movement, spearheaded by Elijah and Elisha, had effected, to some extent, an appreciation for the amphictyonic ideals. This showed itself in a re-emergence of a fierce nationalism, accompanied by a revival in the concept of holy warfare much as it had been in the days of the tribal chieftains. During Ahab's reign, Samaria was being hard-pressed by Ben-hadad of Syria. Although the situation looked bleak for Ephraim, an unnamed prophet came to Ahab and told him that Yahweh would bring the victory. After "all the people of Israel" were mustered together, the battle was fought and won by Ephraim, clearly a victory not of their

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1. John Gray, 1 and 11 Kings, pp 390-1

own making.<sup>1</sup> When a second battle occurred some time later, a man of God came forward to announce that Yahweh would "give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord."<sup>2</sup> It is pointed out that Ephraim encamped before them (Syrians) like two little flocks of goats but the Syrians filled the country."<sup>3</sup> In the eyes of the prophets and the representatives of the older stream of tradition, this was undoubtedly seen as holy warfare. Like the wars of the old days, the conditions of the herem were in force. Everything was devoted to destruction. However when Benhadad surrendered himself, Ahab made a covenant with him and let him go. This incident is reminiscent of the conflict between King Saul and Amnuel over the sparing of King Agag. In both cases the prophetic voice made itself heard in protest. In an act of prophetic symbolism, one of the 'sons of the prophets' confronted Ahab with the words, "Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people."<sup>4</sup> What is being condemned here is Ahab's reliance on political expediency. Evidently Omri had lost several cities to Syria and as a token of his inferior position he had to provide bazaars for Syrian merchants in Samaria.<sup>5</sup> This would have involved a token worship of Syrian deities as well, although no mention is made of this aspect. Ahab thought it was more expedient to allow Benhadad freedom and by making a covenant with him, repossess the lost cities and enjoy certain mercantile concessions in Damascus. Such action went against the grain of the prophets and the pure Yahwists, although the commercial elements of the population would certainly have favoured Ahab's decision.

Ahab's reliance upon the chances of war and the strength o

1. 1 Kings 20:1-21

2. 1 Kings 20:28

3. 1 Kings 20:27

4. 1 Kings 20:42

5. 1 Kings 20:34

his forces is contrasted by the ideal of holy warfare as seen by the prophets. The prophets trusted upon Yahweh to bring the victory. We have several examples in addition to the one mentioned above. Elisha is said to have intercepted all the plans of the Syrian aggressors so that he was able to warn the Ephraimite king.<sup>1</sup> Another prophet called down blindness upon the Syrians so that they could be led to Samaria.<sup>2</sup> When a severe famine occurred in Samaria because of a siege by the Syrians, the king became impatient with waiting for Yahweh to bring deliverance - "This trouble is from the Lord! why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"<sup>3</sup> Elisha's answer was to wait and trust because Yahweh would deliver the following day. Elisha had evidently persuaded the king to hold out, on the expectation of some divine intervention which would remove the Syrian menace. Deliverance did come, not by the power of arms but by some miraculous occurrence which caused the Syrians to abandon the siege. We see in such incidents the tension which the king felt, the tension between reliance on faith and upon practical politics.

The revolt led by Jehu against the Omride dynasty was the outcome of a build-up of hostilities at all levels of life. The prophets, the Rechabites, the army and the people rallied together against the Phoenician influences or as Jehu said, "the harlotries and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel." The reasons for the revolt were many-sided but as they have already been discussed it is enough to say that it was the conservative religious elements that engineered the coup d'etat in hopes of returning to a simpler life, overlaid with fewer foreign innovations.

The more offensive features of the Phoenician influence were swept away under Jehu. With great cunning he purged Ephraim of her Baal worshippers and destroyed the house of Baal. But since he continued the division of Ephraim from

1. 2 Kings 6:11-14

2. 2 Kings 6:15-23

3. 2 Kings 6:33

Judah and retained the golden calves built by Jeroboam, Jehu came under the invective pen of the Deuteronomic writer.

It was not until the reign of Jeroboam II that Ephraim was again in a position to regain her former prosperity. Syria was in a period of great strength under Hazael and Benhadad both of whom reduced Ephraim's fighting force to a mere handful.<sup>1</sup> But under Jeroboam II the Syrian forces were weak enough to allow a resurgence of Ephraim.

There seems to be a direct correlation between material prosperity and the temptation to break the covenant law. Under Jeroboam II, the northern frontier, which had been held during Solomon's kingship, was regained. Syria's power was almost eclipsed. Moab and Ammon were held in check. Judging by the measuring stick of the Deuteronomic writer it could be said that Jeroboam was fulfilling the old promise. But the real picture can be reconstructed from Amos and Hosea. Although politically strong, Ephraim was really in a state of decay - socially, morally and religiously. The condition of the humble citizens had deteriorated greatly. The gulf between the rich and the poor had widened. The poor person was at the mercy of the money lender and bribed judges. Amos records that "They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes."<sup>2</sup> and "great are your sins - you who affect the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate. Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time,"<sup>3</sup>. This is echoed by Hosea, "there is no faithfulness or kindness and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing murder; they break all bounds and murder follows murder."<sup>4</sup>.

At one time Israel's "social structure had been a unified one without class distinction, in which the basis of all

1. 2 Kings 10:32,33 and 2 Kings 13:7,22

2. Amos 2:7

3. Amos 12-13

4. Hosea 4:1-2

in which the basis of all social obligation was Yahweh's covenant and in which all controversies were adjudicated by covenant law".<sup>1</sup> Under the monarchy the range of social obligation had been extended to include the national demand as distinct from the purely local obligations. This tended to weaken tribal ties and undermine the solidarity characteristic of tribal society. Commercial activity which accompanied this wider range of obligation resulted in the emergence of a wealthy and privileged class. In Amos and Hosea's time, these trends, started by David, and further developed under Solomon, tended to dull the people's feeling for and comprehension of the covenant relationship.

With the death of Jeroboam II, Ephraim declined rapidly. Weakened internally by palace murders involving partisan groups of perhaps inter-tribal jealousy between Ephraim and Manasseh, and stunted externally by the emergence of Assyria, Ephraim became pawn in the affairs of the nations. Menahem came to power and promptly paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III by exacting money "from Israel, that is, from the wealthy men, fifty shekels of silver from every man."<sup>2</sup> The terms Gibbore hahayil might be translated simply 'valiant men' or 'men of standing' but it also carries the meaning of wealth both in material and in character. This levy must have been exacted from a large proportion of the population, because it was "from every man" of the free men of high standing. Based on the calculation that three thousand shekels equalled a talent, it took sixty thousand men to raise the tribute of one thousand shekels levied by Menahem. This indicates how broad the term gibbore hahayil really was. It is uncertain if Menahem enlisted Tiglath-pileser's support in winning the crown. This is stated in the phrase that <sup>he</sup> (Tiglath-pileser) might help him (Menahem) to confirm his hold of the royal power"<sup>3</sup>. But it may be that he gave the tribute after Tiglath-pileser's invasion as a token of his readiness to accord with Assyrian policy.<sup>4</sup>

1. Bright, A History of Israel, p. 242

2. 2 Kings 15:20

3. 2 Kings 15:19

4. John Gray, 1 and 11 Kings, p. 565

The heavy burden which rested on the shoulders of the men of standing, presumably free men who would correspond to the 'am haaretz in Judah, must have caused opposition and dissatisfaction to Menahem's policy of willing vassalage to Assyria. Although we read of no popular unrest, it is perhaps not coincidental that Menahem's son, Pekahiah, was murdered by his captain, Pekah.

This was a bid for independence from Assyria supported by some Gileadites and might well have received support from the men of standing. Pekah's policy was one of coalition with Resin of Damascus against Assyria. This coalition might have worked had it not been that Judah could not be persuaded, even forcibly, to join the league. Instead, she appealed to Tiglath-pileser to intervene for her against the coalition. For the Syrian people and the king, this was the end. In Ephraim, another palace intrigue brought Hosea to power. Hosea's court seems to have been split in the matter of foreign policy. With Syria out of the way, Ephraim, became a vassal of Assyria for a short time and thus she gained a few years respite. But in Samaria there was a pro-Egyptian party who wished to make an agreement with the king of Egypt against Assyria. It was detection of this rebellion which induced Shalmaneser to invade and capture Ephraim, deporting the inhabitants to Assyria.

3, Judaha. Tension during Royal Succession.

While the monarchical pattern in Ephraim lacked the stability of a continuous dynastic house, Judah held fast to the house of David. This meant that Judah had a much more stable form of government and was free of much of the conspiracy and intrigue which was characteristic in the north. There were assassinations but the legitimacy of the Davidic house was never questioned. For this reason we have much less evidence of tension between king and people surrounding the succession stories.

The one break in the Davidic line came as a result of Jehu's purge on the Omride house of which Judah's Ahaziah was a member. Ahaziath's mother, Athaliah, a daughter of Ahab, took the opportunity of his death to seize the Judean throne. By murdering the royal family, with the exception of Joash who was concealed, she made her position secure for six years. Like Jezebel, Athaliah was responsible for encouraging Phoenician influences in Jerusalem. Previous to her usurpation, the paganizing tendencies had penetrated less deeply than in Ephraim due in large measure to enthusiastic Yahwists like Asa and Jehoshaphat. The Baal worship, which gained royal assent, was perhaps acceptable to some in the court circles, but we have no indication that Athaliah had any great following. Not being a native Israelite nor a legitimate Davidide sealed her doom.

In the northern kingdom, it was the army who led the revolt against the Phoenician element. But in Judah it was the Jerusalem priesthood under Jehoiada, the chief priest, who organized the rebellion. The priests were representatives of the conservative religious tendencies within Judah. Jehoiada was of the Zadokite priestly family, who appeared during David's reign, so it is understandable that Jehoiada would be greatly offended by a usurper on the throne of David. As chief priest, the

introduction of the Phoenician Baal Melkart would be seen by him as an abomination to Yahweh.

For six years, Joash was hidden by Jehosheba, the wife of Jehoiada, in the Temple. The fact that one son survived Athaliah's massacre was kept a secret from everyone, including Athaliah and the people. When the time came to rebel against the usurper, Jehoiada entered into a covenant with the captains of the Carites and the guard<sup>1</sup> and showed them the king's son, thus revealing the carefully hidden secret. The Chronicler relates a slightly different account, in which Jehoiada made a covenant with the commanders who "went about Judah and gathered the Levites from all the cities of Judah, and the heads of the father's houses of Israel and they came to Jerusalem. And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God."<sup>2</sup> It was the Levites who then carried out Jehoiada's scheme. But the editor of 2 Kings would seem to have preserved the more realistic event in which only a few chosen captains were aware of the plot until the actual rebellion began.

In this survey of royal succession, we must examine the role played by 'the people of the land', not only in this rebellion against Athaliah but in other instances. In Ephraim there were prophets to champion the covenant law, but in Judah 'the people of the land' exerted a strong influence even to the point of being the actual king-makers.

Although Joash's accession was engineered mainly by the priests and the guards, 'the people of the land' had a large part also. In this narrative we may have the survival of two traditions: one, a priestly source which placed the initiative on the priests of the Temple supported by the guards;<sup>3</sup> the second, a popular source where the people played a leading role<sup>4</sup>. While there is strong evidence for the existence of two traditions, it is difficult to separate them in such precise ter

1. 2 Kings 11:4

2. 2 Chronicles 23: 2-3

3. 2 Kings 11:4-12, 18b-20

4. 2 Kings 11:13-18a

First of all, the priests and the guards would have known of the sympathetic feelings among the people and acted because they knew there was popular support for a rebellion. Secondly, the presence of the people in the Temple must be assumed unless the phrase, the guards " shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever approaches the ranks is to be slain,"<sup>1</sup> is meant to indicate that the people were prohibited in the Temple during the accession of the king. But it seems more likely that this prohibition refers to Athaliah and her palace guard. Thirdly if the scheme had been a carefully guarded secret until the actual moment, there could have been little participation by the people. But the fact that the rebellion occurred on a sabbath ( and perhaps a special feast day), when the priests were sure of a large number of country people in attendance, must have meant that the people had a part in the uprising. It is only when they saw the king's son, Joash, and witnessed the crowning and the giving of the testimony that the people made any response. We think that the presence of the people is to be assumed in 2 Kings 11:12 where it is said "they proclaimed him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands and said, 'Long live the king!' " The subject 'they' is undoubtedly a reference to all who were present - guards, priests, and people. The subject of the phrase "anointed him" most likely refers to Jehoiada whose priestly role would have given him the right to perform the anointing and not the people.

After the initial acclamation ceremonies were over and Athaliah had been killed, "Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and people, that they should be the Lord's people; and also between the king and the people."<sup>2</sup> It is not clear whether the reference is to a three-fold covenant or not. Gray argues for a three-fold covenant: one between Yahweh and the king which signified

1. 2 Kings 11:8

2. 2 Kings 11:17

the renewal of the Davidic covenant and royal obligations, another between Yahweh and the people which was reminiscent of the Sinai covenant renewal at Shechem, where responsibility was laid upon the people to put away foreign gods, and a third between king and people which placed constitutional and political limitations upon the monarch.<sup>1</sup> We think that the passage refers to a two-fold covenant. First a covenant between Yahweh and the people, including the king as an equal, and that this was a renewal of the Sinaitic covenant placing obligations upon the people. The second covenant was made between the king and people which placed the king under obligation to preserve the people's rights. The corresponding passage in Chronicles is not as detailed as that from Kings but "a covenant between himself (Jehoiada) and all the people and the king that they should be the Lord's people,"<sup>2</sup> certainly indicates that the king was being limited in his power. The important point is that the people had the power to check the trend set by Athaliah and to enforce some kind of constitutional monarchy.

There is no specific reason why both Joash and his son Amaziah were assassinated. It may be that Joash had become more tolerant to alien ideas<sup>3</sup> and thus fell out of favour with the priests and 'the people of the land'. It seems more likely that Joash was the victim of a court intrigue which had no public support.<sup>4</sup> Amaziah was met with opposition at his accession and found it necessary to extinguish his father's murderers. A conspiracy against him ended in his death but again it is impossible to know who was responsible. At this point "all the people of Judah took Azariah.... and made him king instead of his father Amziah."<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to interpret this phrase "all the people of Judah" for while it may mean that Azariah had the support of the total population, it is

1. John Gray, 1 and 11 Kings, pp 523-4

2. 2 Chronicles 23:16

3. 2 Chronicles 24:17-22

4. 2 Kings 12:20-21

5. 2 Kin s 14:21

possible on the basis of a passage such as 2 Kings 23:2, that he was the choice of the country people as distinct from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The idea that there was a tension between the city people and the country will be discussed later.

The succession activities continued without intervention until King Amon's reign at which time the political policy was one of complete submission to Assyria. This foreign policy may have angered a group in the court, Amon's servants, and as a result the king was murdered. 'The people of the land' stepped into the scheme, killed Amon's murderers and raised Josiah to the throne. There is no reason given for these murders. Possibly the conspirators were Egyptian sympathizers and favoured an alliance with that nation, as Gray suggests. There is, however, no evidence that Egypt was in a position to give any aid at this time. 'The people of the land' were champions of national independence and therefore wished to be free of both Assyria and Egypt. In choosing Josiah, the people probably intended to tutor him or mould him to carry out their desires. Many years after Josiah's accession to the throne and during the purification of the Temple, a scroll was found which Josiah and "all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem" and "all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great" heard read. On the basis of this, Josiah made a covenant before Yahweh in which all the people joined.<sup>1</sup> This appears to have been a renewal ceremony of the kind held at Shechem and at the accession of Joash.

At Josiah's premature death, " 'the people of the land' took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead."<sup>2</sup> We are in the dark as to the motive in choosing Jehoahaz over Eliakim or Zedekiah. It may be that Jehoahaz was a man of stronger character and sympathised with the nationalistic longings of the people.

1. 2 Kings 23:3  
2. 2 Kings 23:30

1. 2 Kings 23:3  
2. 2 Kings 23:30

We know that he was not an Egyptian supporter because Pharaoh Necho soon removed him from the Judean throne and replaced him by Eliakim ( Jehoiakim) who was a political opportunist. Necho's scheme seems to have been to create a buffer state between Egypt and Babylon. Jehoahaz and 'the people of the land' must have displayed antagonism to this scheme. As a consequence, the tribute imposed upon Judah was levied upon "the people of the land" <sup>1</sup>. It is an open question whether the assessment was exacted only from the property-owning class, and not the total population. Such a discriminative policy would not only have been difficult to impose but would also have risked an open rebellion.

From the little evidence that we have, we know that 'the people of the land' wielded considerable political influence but unfortunately the motives for this intervention are now lost to us. There have been attempts made to reconstruct the part played by these people. Sulzberger puts forth the theory that there was " a great directive, if not, controlling influence in the state, closely analogous to what we call Parliament", <sup>2</sup> exercised by the 'am ha'aretz'. Although this theory might help us to interpret certain passages, it raises more questions than it answers. The existence of a Parliament, or even a political party, as Sulzberger sees it, is a most difficult thesis to prove.

A different approach is presented by Gordis. <sup>3</sup> He maintains that there was a growing rivalry between the city and the country inhabitants caused by the wish of the city party, composed of priests, merchants and some prophets, to exterminate the 'high places' held dear by the country folk. As evidence for this tension, Gordis points out the references to 'the people of the land', the country dwellers as distinct from the nobility, the government officials, merchants, and wealthy landowners of Jerusalem. This antagonism was buried temporarily during Athaliah's reign because both groups wished her downfall. But "the accession of Joash marks the

1. 2 Kings 23:35

2. Mayer Sulzberger, The Am Ha'aretz - The ancient Hebrew Parliament, p. 17.

3. R. Gordis. Sectional Rivalry in the Kingdom of Judah, JQR 25,

clear emergence of these two alignments in the land." <sup>1</sup> which are not to be understood as other than group tendencies or interests. Gordis contends that in the reigns of Joash and Amaziah the country interests were being served but the city group, wishing to gain control, engineered the assassinations of both kings.

Gordis goes on to say that in Hezekiah's reign, the position of the country dwellers was being threatened by centralization of religion whereby the 'high places' would be abolished. This might well have caused a revolution and perhaps it was on the basis of this unrest that the Assyrian Rabshakeh wished to subvert the country people in Jerusalem during the siege. <sup>2</sup> When Manasseh and Amon reversed the religious policy, there was no attempt by the country people to rebel against it. In fact, the policy was aiding their anti-centralization longings. At Amon's death, the country people supported Josiah in hope that he would follow his father's policies.

Gordis points out that the country people greeted Josiah's reform in silence. Only the "inhabitants of Jerusalem" <sup>3</sup> showed any interest. When Pharaoh Necho advanced against Assyria, Gordis believes that he was encouraged by the country dwellers to fight against Josiah. Therefore, Josiah's hand was forced in an attempt to reunite the people. The country interests won the day and while the king's servants buried Josiah in Jerusalem, 'the people of the land' raised Jehoahaz to the throne. After he was deposed by Necho, the sectional rivalry within the country sank to insignificant proportions.

This theory is a most attractive one. To define 'the people of the land' as the country dwellers as distinct from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were the king's advisors and dependents, is true to the evidence in 2 Kings 23:2 <sup>4</sup> That there was a rivalry between the city and country

1. R. Gordis, 'Sectional Rivalry in the Kingdom of Judah, p 245

2. Ibid pp 248-9

3. 2 Chronicles 34:32

4. Von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, p. 65

can hardly be disputed. But Gordis seems to have compiled the evidence in neat black and white categories. It is very doubtful if all 'the people of the land' worshipped at the 'high places'. Those in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem would very likely have been influenced by the Jerusalem theology and centralization. There would have been those who perhaps kept covenant with Yahweh in their own homes, going to a well-known sanctuary such as Bethel or Beersheba, for the festivals. The majority of country people would have been influenced by the Canaanitic nature deities although they still recognized Yahweh as the national God. There is no doubt that the alternating policy of the kings would have affected these groups of people in different ways. Under Hezekiah and Josiah some would have approved of centralized worship as a means of purifying and strengthening Yahwism. Others would have been rebellious against the city, as Gordis suggests. During the reigns of syncretistic kings like Manasseh and Amon, the country inhabitants would have been little affected, if at all, by the changes in policy.

In Jerusalem itself, we cannot assume that everyone was a royal supporter in spite of the king's policy. There were the priests, supported by some of the prophets, who saw Jerusalem as the city of God. Thus any king who favoured centralization and religious reform would have had the support of this group. But any king, such as Ahaz or Manasseh, who favoured religious syncretism could expect to meet opposition. We must assume that foreign cults had a greater effect upon the city dwellers, not the country people. We are not told what requirements were made in respect to worshipping the foreign cult objects, but the periodic reformations indicate that the Temple became the depository for all kinds of objects.<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that the religious policy which allowed such toleration was criticised.

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1. See 2 Chronicles 29: 5,16; 2 Kings 23: 5-14

The religious views of the people were also conditioned to some extent, by historical events. The fact that Jerusalem was saved during Hezekiah's reign, might have been seen as a sign that Yahweh was pleased that the 'high places' had been abolished, and, as a result, many became fervent Yahwists. But when Hezekiah's reform became eclipsed by Manasseh's reign of submission to Assyria, this was probably seen by some to be a contradiction of Yahweh's power to save. Therefore, many would have supported Manasseh's political policy and religious syncretism. A similar reaction might well have followed Josiah's death. National disasters were invariably bound up with matters of faith.

There is no simple interpretation of the biblical evidence. No single factor determined Judah's direction, but rather many and varied pressures account for the total picture.

What we can say about 'the people of the land' is that they were a southern phenomenon, although there may have been a corresponding group in the north called the gibbore hahayil, the men of standing.<sup>1</sup> From the evidence that we have, they sprang to action in times of national crises as for example, when a king had been murdered or killed in battle. Although not a political party in the modern sense, 'the people of the land', the free property-owning citizens, wielded a political influence and acted as a check on the prerogative of the king.

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1. 2 Kings 15:20

Judah.b. Tension Through Foreign Involvement.

The problem of foreign involvement existed in Judah, as well as in Ephraim, even though she was geographically isolated. There were times when the king, as Yahweh's vicegerent, had great difficulty in exercising his faith in the practical situations of life. On the one hand, there was the prophetic advice to trust completely in Yahweh. Sometimes that meant a policy of simply waiting for Yahweh to deliver, while at other times, it meant that the king must wage holy war. The king did not necessarily have to be inactive in his trust in Yahweh but rather the outcome was left entirely to Yahweh. But such reliance upon Yahweh could have adverse repercussions among the king's counsellors and the rest of the court. On the other hand, the king could follow a course of action which placed reliance upon force of arms and practical alliances. In any crisis, then, the king was faced with these two main considerations. We must not think that the choice between trust in Yahweh and practical politics was ever clear-cut or simple.

The tension can be seen in Asa's reign. After the separation of the north and south, border squirmishes had taken place which weakened both countries. Into this political picture, the kingdom of Syria often entered at the invitation of either the king of Judah or of Ephraim. There is evidence, for instance, that Abijah of Judah had an alliance with Syria<sup>1</sup> and it may have been this alliance which enabled Abijah to win a border battle against Jeroboam.<sup>2</sup> There is no specific mention of it but this alliance would likely have involved some religious implications. That Asa carried on a programme of religious reform could mean that the league with Syria was terminated after Abijah's death, for we are told that Asa "put away the male cult prostitutes out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. He also removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother because she had an abominable image made for Asherah;

1. 1 Kings 15:19

2. 2 Chronicles 13:3-20

and Asa cut down her image and burned it at the brook Kidron"<sup>1</sup>  
 It must not be assumed that these cultic abuses were the  
 result of the Syrian alliance alone. It may well be that  
 Asa was cleaning up the worst of the religious practices  
 that existed under Solomon and Rehoboam.<sup>2</sup>

The military pressure from Ephraim in Asa's reign forced  
 his hand to renew the league between Judah and Syria. In  
 this action, Asa was relying upon practical politics in  
 order to rescue his country from a most difficult and awkward  
 predicament. In doing so, Judah was reduced to vassal status.  
 Undoubtedly this had implications upon religious observances  
 in the Temple which the biblical writer has neglected to  
 tell us. Asa's foolish reliance on Syria for deliverance  
 brought a sound rebuke from Hanani the seer.<sup>3</sup> The Chronicler  
 also records that Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the  
 people at this time, as well as putting the seer in prison.  
 We do not know to what extent Asa's alliance affected the  
 people. It is doubtful if the religious implications of  
 the alliance had much effect upon the common person outside  
 the city of Jerusalem. Perhaps the court itself followed a  
 pro-Syrian policy which would explain Asa's persecution of  
 some of the people who presumably desired national independ-  
 ence.<sup>4</sup> The alliance with Syria does point out the tension  
 that the king faced in times of political stress and the  
 temptation to disregard religious considerations for purely  
 secular reasons.

In Jehosphaphat's reign, peace was made between Judah  
 and Ephraim. Although this was a much desirable friendship,  
 the close association meant that Judah was intro uced to  
 greater outside contact with the nations, particularly  
 with Phoenicia. In this alliance with Ephraim, Judah was  
 the poor cousin and, although no mention is made of paying  
 tribute, it is evident that she held an inferior status to  
 the wealthier Ephraim.<sup>5</sup> Opposition to the close association  
 1. 1 Kings 15:12-13 and the extended account in 2 Chronicles  
 15:8-18.  
 2. 1 Kings 14:22-24  
 3. 2 Chronicles 16:7-10  
 4. 2 Chronicles 16:10  
 5. 1 Kings 22:4,30 and 2 Kings 3:7

can be seen in the attitude of the prophet, Jehu the son of Hanani.<sup>1</sup> This view may have been prevalent among the more conservative religious groups who regarded Ephraim as an apostate kingdom. The loose relationship with the North was strengthened by a marriage between the house of Omri and the Davidic house. The resultant judgment passed on Jehoram of Judah, son-in-law of Ahab of Ephraim, was that "he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife."<sup>2</sup> The account of Phoenician encroachments into Judah is not detailed to the same extent as it is about Ephraim. We know of none of the social or judicial abuses, if there were any. About religious abuses, the Chronicler records that "he made high places in the hill country of Judah, and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, and made Judah go astray,"<sup>3</sup> but this statement is unreliable since high places were present in Judah for a long time before Jehoram's reign. The Chronicler also records that Ahaziah, Jehoram's son, "walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counsellor in doing wickedly; .. they ( the house of Ahab) were his counsellors."<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the Jerusalem court, it is doubtful if the life of the average Judean person was greatly affected by the house of Omri. Perhaps the livelihood of the merchant class was improved because trade routes were opened to them through Ephraim. This might have had the result of widening the gap between the poorer peasants and the city dwellers but we have no evidence of this for another century. The popular uprising against Athaliah can probably be attributed to the desire to restore to the throne a legitimate Davidide more than because of excessive abuses.

Judah remained relatively free from foreign involvement until the reign of Ahaz. Joash had had to face Syrian aggression, but he seems to have been able to buy his freedom by offering tribute. There is no indication that tribute had

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1. 2 Chronicles 19: 1-3

2. 2 Kings 8:18

3. 2 Kings 21:11

4. 2 Chronicles 22:3

to be paid regularly. The Syrian and Assyrian menace subsided during the reigns of Amaziah and Azariah so that, at that time, Judah experienced a revival and growth of the national state, just as Ephraim did under Jeroboam II. However, the world situation was changing when Ahaz came to power. Assyria, who had previously shown her power in Ephraim under Tiglath-pileser, was gaining in strength. Ephraim and Syria were aware of the necessity to form an alliance to block Assyrian advances in Syria-Palestine. Ahaz began to feel the pressure to join the coalition in order to remain on the throne, for there were rumours that he would be replaced by a puppet king who would bring Judah to heel. The real drama that took place can be seen in Isaiah 7. Judah was caught between a policy of alliance with Assyria whereby her national security could be saved at a price, or a policy of joining the coalition, whereby she could become involved in national and political disaster. Isaiah, a court counsellor, advised Ahaz to remain calm because the coalition would pass away and he gave a sign that "a young woman shall conceive and bear a son... for before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted." <sup>1</sup> Ahaz was faced with a decision to trust Yahweh as Isaiah advised or to rely solely on political statesmanship. He might have argued that a king simply does not sit back and wait; that he must be active in that situation. Instead of following Isaiah's advice, or joining the coalition, Ahaz adopted the far more dangerous alternative - that of paying Tiglath-pileser to rescue Judah from the power of Ephraim and Syria.<sup>2</sup> If Ahaz had followed Isaiah's counsel and trusted, Judah's chances of escape would have been very great. But in taking the step which he did, Ahaz reduced Judah to a tribute-paying vassal. As a token of this status, it is likely that Ahaz was required to place an Assyrian altar in the Jerusalem Temple. This seems to have been the implication

1. Isaiah 7:14-16

2. 2 Kings 16:7

of his visit to Damascus where he saw an altar, the copy of which was placed in the Temple <sup>1</sup>. Political subservience was often symbolized by placing an altar to the god of the conqueror in the existing temple. It may be that Ahaz had a syncretistic nature anyway, but it is quite possible that different temple innovations were carried out to please the Assyrian overlord. Like Asa, Ahaz was faced with the tension of compromising his faith in a time of political uncertainty.

Under Hezekiah, the political situation again turned to Judah's favour. Sargon, the Assyrian king, was preoccupied with other sections of his vast empire. In Judah there was a growing restlessness for national independence because Ahaz's policies were unpopular with those who had to bear the heavy tribute. It was these two factors which encouraged Hezekiah to perform a religious reformation, in the course of which the Assyrian cult objects were removed from the Temple. <sup>2</sup> This was an obvious bid for independence.

There is a possibility that Hezekiah was tempted to join an open rebellion at the instigation of Egypt in the early part of his reign. Isaiah records that Sargon's army invaded the Philistine city of Ashdod. <sup>3</sup> But later when Sargon died, his whole empire was in rebellion. This time Hezekiah became an agitator in the general revolt, even forcing the Philistines, who evidently wanted nothing to do with conspiracy against Assyria, to join in. <sup>4</sup> Isaiah's advice was the same as it had been for Ahaz; to stay out of the rebellion. He tried to point out the futility of trusting in Egypt and in the strength of horses and men <sup>5</sup>. He counselled against all practical politics and human alliances, stressing reliance on Yahweh who controlled the events of history. Emphasising that Judah must not be like the other nations, Isaiah encouraged the nation to rest and wait, trusting that deliverance would come. This was the dilemma that Hezekian faced

1. 2 Kings 16:10

2. 2 Chronicles 29:3-21

3. Isaiah 14:28-32

4. 2 Kings 18:8

5. Isaiah 28-33

But like Ahaz, Hezekiah gave his support to the rebellion for he believed that it was the practical way to freedom. The eventual outcome was that Hezekiah was subdued, a heavy tribute imposed and the political state very much reduced.

The latter years of Hezekiah's reign were spent in loyalty to Assyria and this policy was continued under Manasseh and his son, Amon. Although Isaiah's advice to submit to Assyria was carried out in part, the Manasseh years marked one of the worst periods of syncretism. If Ahaz had shown a disregard for religious considerations, Manasseh attempted to eclipse Yahwism by over-laying it with foreign innovations. The monarchy became absolutist in policy as it had been in Solomon's day. It is not difficult to imagine that Manasseh's complete submission to Assyria was viewed with great distaste by the nationalists. The foreign objects of worship were abominations in the eyes of the Yahwists. What must have hurt even more was Manasseh's complete disregard for the covenant relationship. The protests were made can be seen from the comment that "Manasseh shed very much innocent blood,"<sup>1</sup>. Although we are not given any clues as to the identity of these innocent people it would seem to indicate that the prophetic class were involved, as well as the priests and possibly some of the people. The reason for protest can be attributed to Manasseh's political and religious policies.

With Josiah, the nationalists again championed the cause of independence. This policy caused a corresponding pendulum swing to religious reformation. These two movements were inseparable because the purification of the cult was an explicit plea for independence. This could only be undertaken because there was a period of calm between the downfall of Assyria and the emergence of Babylon.

It seems likely that Josiah's religious reformation was begun before the discovery of a scroll, since it came to light during the Temple repairs. On the basis of this scroll, there was a return to Yahwism accompanied by the renewal of

1. 2 Kings 21:16

the covenant.<sup>1</sup> This type of covenant reminds us of the Shechemite covenant in Joshua 24, rather than the ceremonies connected to the Davidic House. No mention is made of the covenant made with David at all. But like the Shechemite covenant which involved the putting away of the "gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt"<sup>2</sup> the covenant under Josiah also issued in the cleansing of the Temple and destroying foreign objects of worship.<sup>3</sup> This indicates a renewal of the amphictyonic tradition, familiar in Ephraim, but long since forgotten in Judah. Therefore, the covenant made in Jerusalem was one which placed limitations on the king, indeed made him only as prinus inter pares under Yahweh. It is very likely that Josiah's policy gained him the support of the majority of the people. There may have been some, as Gordis suggests, who disliked the centralization of religion but the reform must have resulted in an upsurge of Yahwism.

Following Josiah's premature death, the factors affecting Judah became very complicated. The nationalists still championed the cause of independence by supporting Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, but he was quickly unseated by Neco and replaced by Jehoiakim. Although a Davidide, Jehoiakim was subject to his Egyptian over-lord rather than to a covenant with the people or with Yahweh. He was left free to play the tyrant, an indication that "the constitutional monarchy so dear to the Israelite heart, had broken down, and in Jehoiakim, Judah had a king who was prepared to take full advantage of his position"<sup>4</sup>. His apparently unrestrained reign may have been due partly to the idea of Egyptian kingship in which the king was divine and therefore a law unto himself. Protests against his policies can be seen from the reference that "he exacted the silver and the gold of the

1. 2 Kings 23:1-2

2. Josiah 24:14

3. 2 Kings 23:4f

4. Oesterley and Robinson, A History of Israel, vol. 1, p. 431

people of the land', from every one according to his assessment."<sup>1</sup> This might be an indication that 'the people of the land' had been singled out for this levy as a penalty for opposing the official policy, if we make a distinction between these people and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. On the other hand, this distinction may not have been intended to all.

Jehoiakim was no statesman like his father, Josiah. He remained an Egyptian vassal until Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Egypt in 605 and then he transferred his loyalty to Babylon. We must appreciate the pressure that was exerted on the king. In the Jerusalem court, there were those who advocated a pro-Egyptian policy; there were others, like Jeremiah and some members of the court, who saw Babylon as Yahweh's instrument, and therefore, to rebel against Babylon was to rebel against Yahweh. There were nationalists whose hope was for independence from both Egypt and Babylon. Jehoiakim was evidently swayed toward adopting a pro-Egyptian policy. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem and deported "all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained except the poorest people of the land"<sup>2</sup>

Zedekiah, the king after the first deportation, was placed on the throne by the Babylonians. Besides being a weak ruler, Zedekiah lacked responsible leaders and statesmen to guide Judah into a stable position. The different parties that existed in Jerusalem brought pressure to bear upon the king. Had Zedekiah listened to Jeremiah's advice to remain dependent on Babylon, all might have been well, but the court was strongly pro-Egyptian and this party won the support of Zedekiah.

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1. 2 Kings 23:35  
2. 2 Kings 24:14; also 25:12

Conclusion

The tension which we have attempted to trace arose because there were people set apart through a series of unique events to be Yahweh's 'holy people.' They were under a covenant obligation both to Yahweh and to one another. Therefore, the rights and privileges of each person were protected. As long as Israel's leadership requirements were met by a spirit-endowed chieftain who arose from the midst of the people, and was likewise under the covenant, there was very little evidence of tension between the leader and the people.

But when the everyday concerns of life became more complex and the charismatic leadership no longer offered enough security, Israel made a demand for a monarchy. Then there emerged a king who, although ideally in the same covenant relationship with Yahweh as the former leaders, could fail to protect the interests of his subjects.

This basic tension was expressed in different ways and was influenced by varying factors. Sometimes it was the prophets who took the king to task for their disregard of Israel's past traditions. In at least one case, the chief priest pursued a line of action which determined royal policy. There are many other accounts in which the people themselves gave vocal expression and overt action to their dislike of the king's demands. Such protests were made on the basis of the fact that the king, who was subject to a covenant that protected individual rights, tended to neglect Israel's heritage.

The king, in his position as the guarantor of a correct covenant relationship, was confronted with the dilemma of working out the demands of the covenant in the actual situations of life. There was no easy solution for the king to follow. If he was passive in his trust in Yahweh, his counsellors could have called him 'impractical'. If he relied on his counsellor's advice to follow a practical course of action, the prophets were ready to rebuke him.

To choose the middle road of compromise was no less difficult. This problem was just as real for the people because there were circumstances in which they were tempted to put their own selfish, commercial interests ahead of the need to protect the rights of the widow and the fatherless.

The tensions, which we witness in the narratives, resulted from the attempt to apply Israel's faith in the daily situations of life.

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## THE TENSION BETWEEN KING AND PEOPLE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

The thesis attempts to trace the tension that existed between the kings and the people in ancient Israel. In the first section there is a survey of the normative event which moulded the people into a religious community and the factors that strengthened this unity so that the people were conscious of their covenant relationship to Yahweh.

The development of leadership is discussed in the second section, touching briefly upon the social structure of society prior to settlement in Canaan, the charismatic role of the judges and the transfer from reliance upon these judges to the demand for a monarchy. The causes for the tension between constituted monarchy and the covenanted people, the clash between charismatic and non-charismatic leadership, and the clash between dynamic Yahwism and static institutionalism are developed in this section.

In a third section, entitled the United Kingdom, an examination is made of the implications of becoming a nation and the effect of establishing the monarchy in the daily lives of the people during the reigns of David and Solomon. David illustrates the possibility of incorporating the monarchy into mosaic Yahwism even though there are examples of the underlying tension. Solomon's reign, however, demonstrates that even though a king is ideally under covenant to Yahweh, he is also liable

to disregard his responsibilities to protect the rights of the people and become a despot, not unlike the kings of other nations.

The final section is concerned with the tension between the king and the people from the division of the nation until its fall. After briefly noting some of the internal and external factors which impinge upon the clash, the tension is arranged under two main headings, royal successions and foreign involvement in both Judah and Ephraim. It is in these two areas that the open conflict between king and people can be traced.