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Report on the thesis of Daniel M. Lowy, " Israel's Attitude
Toward War in the Biblical Period"

Mr. Lowy himself suggested the topic of this dissertation. He had read two early discussions in English which dealt specifically with the subject of war in the Bible. It was his opinion that there were various aspects of this problem which had not been treated adequately, and in some cases, not at all, in the earlier discussions.

He undertook to analyze the entire biblical material with the view to determining the attitudes toward war of the Israels, their Judges, Priests, kings, elders, and prophets.

He attempted to explain these attitudes in the light of the economic, political, cultural, and religious conditions of the times. He included in his study a brief analysis of Israel's attitude toward pacificism in the biblical period.

The candidate devoted himself completely and sincerely to his task and probably got as much out of the biblical material, and in some cases out of the extra-biblical material made available by archeology, as was possible. The study is not a particularly penetrating one, and the analysis of the biblical material is pedestrian. Nevertheless, I think that the dissertation comes up to our standards, and I recommend its acceptance towards the requirements for the M.H.L. degree and ordination.

Dr. Harry M. Orlinsky
Referee

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Israel's Attitude Toward War
in the Biblical Period

By

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Foreword

It has been wondered why the Bible, which is the fountainhead of the Jewish faith and the sourcebook of Jewish ethics, is saturated with the gory details of war and ruthless bloodshed, and why the God of Israel was pictured as a God of war and vengeance. The answers to these questions must be sought by studying the attitudes of the people of Israel who lived during this period as well as the sentiments of their leaders. It will be the aim of the author of this dissertation to describe Israel's attitude toward war and to determine whether that attitude was consistent or not throughout the Biblical period. Sp.

To my knowledge, two works have been written in English dealing specifically with the subject of war in the Bible. In 1905, a thesis was prepared by Sidney E. Goldstein for the Hebrew Union College entitled, "The Conception of War and Peace in the Bible." The author discussed the relationship of the wars of the Biblical period to the geographical conditions in Palestine, the military strategies of Israel's leaders, showing how they improved steadily until the monarchy was established, the laws regarding the conquest of land, and the

treatment of captives and spoils, the rituals which were practiced before a battle, blowing the shofar, sacrifices, the consecration of warriors, etc., the concept of the sanctity of war, the attitude of the prophets toward war, and the God of Israel as a God of war. All in all, the thesis presents to the reader a bird's eye view of the concept of war in the Bible. This work does not infringe upon my dissertation except in one respect, namely the description of the attitude of the prophets toward war. However, since 1905, many new studies have been made by scholars which enable me to go more deeply into the problem than was previously possible.

The second work is a thesis which was written by Mitchell S. Fisher in 1927 for the Jewish Institute of Religion, and entitled, "The Wars of Yahweh." The author's aim was to describe the God of Israel as the God of war. Part one deals with God's leadership in the wars of Israel, the manner which God participated in these wars, and the manifestations of the Divine presence on such occasions, i. e. the Ark. Part two discusses the war ceremonies, sacrifices, kinds of weapons used, taboos, priests of war, the sanctification of war, and kindred subjects. The author concludes the work by saying that he has reserved for another work, the relation of the prophets to the phenomenon of war, and

the question of ethics in relation to ancient Hebrew warfare. Obviously, this thesis deals with an aspect of war in the Bible which is totally different from that which I will study.

In the English Language there is a singular lack of analysis on the problem of Biblical Israel's attitude toward war. Therefore, in my dissertation, I hope to describe the attitudes of the people, the judges, army commanders, priests, kings, elders, and prophets toward war from what they have said and done as recorded in the Bible, as well as from what may be deduced from the archaeological material that has been made available up to the present time. Furthermore, I will try to explain the attitudes in terms of the economic, political, cultural, and religious conditions of the times as revealed in the Bible and in modern scholarly studies of this period. Although I have decided advantage over my predecessors with regard to source material due to many recent archaeological discoveries, I am denied the use of certain German works from which I might have been able to derive great benefit, because of a language barrier.

I want to thank Dr. Harry M. Orlinsky for his untiring efforts in my behalf, and for the advice which he

has given me in the preparation of this thesis. His guidance has been most valuable.

I also want to express my gratitude to the library staff of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and particularly to Mrs. Suzan Tabor who has inconvenienced herself to be of help to me.

Chapter I-Early Israel's Concept of War

A. The Patriarchal Period

To understand properly Israel's attitude toward war in the Biblical period, it is necessary to attempt to trace the origin of the Israelites and the society from which they emerged. For this purpose, there are two sources, The Bible and recent archaeological discoveries, and I shall begin by dealing with the latter one.

Early in the second millenium B.C.E., the Hurrians left the Caucasian highlands to invade Northern Mesopotamia, and by 1800 B.C.E. they had infiltrated into Southern Mesopotamia and were beginning to move westward. These Hurrians did not set up an empire of their own. Instead, they were content to live among other ethnic groups. Many of them were known to have inhabited the cities of Nuzu and Arrapkha. On the heels of the Hurrians, came the Hyksos peoples at about 1720 B.C.E. However, they did not represent a single ethnic group, for their personal names indicate different national stocks, Semitic, Hittite, Luvian, Indo-Iranian, and Hurrian. It is generally believed that out of this coxmingling of diverse nationalities, some of the Hebrew people emerged.

In Babylonia, the Habiru often served as mercenaries, although among peaceful Hurrians at Nuzu and Arrapkha, they had to sell themselves into a form of slavery for a limited time in order to earn a living. In Palestine, under the Canaanite vassals of Pharaoh, the Habiru served as mercenaries in conflicts between local rulers.¹ The fourteenth century Tell el-Amara tablets mention them as marauding raiders. When the Habiru wandered along with these heterogeneous hordes, into Palestine and Egypt, they were not conquerers, but immigrants to a new land. They weren't ^{not} numerous enough or nationally minded enough to hew out a homeland of their own. They lived on friendly terms with the natives of these lands in a way similar to that of the early patriarchs and their families. As a result of the many parallels which were discovered between the Habiru and Hebrew societies, it is generally believed that some of the Hebrews were part of the Habiru and Hyksos groups.²

1. George Ernest Wright-Floyd Vivian Filson
The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible (Philadelphia 1946), pp. 34-35

2. See W. F. Albright, "The Smaller Beth-Shan Stele of Sethos I (1309-1290 B.C.E.)". Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 125 (1952) 1 p. 31

In the Bible, the patriarchal period is pictured as a peaceful one. Foreigners were treated kindly for the most part, and except for one or two situations, war seems to have been avoided. Thoughts of nationalism were far from the minds of these semi-nomadic clans of wandering shepherds and smiths. They did not know what it meant to possess lands of their own. They were only interested in the security of members of their families and their movable property. This is evident in Abraham's participation in the war of the four kings against the five kings (Genesis 14:14-16),

וַיִּשְׁמָע אַבְרָם כִּי נִשְׁבָּה אַחִיו וִירָקָה אֶת חַיֵּיכֹ' /
 וַיִּצְדָּק בְּיָדוֹ עֶשְׂרֵי מֵאוֹת וַיִּרְדֵּם וַיִּשְׁבֶּם /
 וַיִּחְלֶק עֲלֵיהֶם אֵילָה הָוָא וְעֶבְרִי וַיִּרְדֵּם עֶשְׂרֵי /
 מֵאוֹת אֶת אֶלֶן עֶבְרִי וַיִּשְׁבֶּם. וַיִּשְׁבֶּם אֶת כָּל הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת /
 אֶת אֶלֶן אַחִיו וְכָל הַיָּבֵשׁ וְאֶת הַיָּבֵשׁ וְאֶת הַיָּבֵשׁ.

Abraham, or Abram as he is called in the early sections of the Book of Genesis, had a nephew Lot, who lived with his family in Sodom. When he was captured along with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah by Chedorlaomer and three other kings, Abraham lead his trained men against these kings and their warriors only in order to recover his brother Lot and his family and property, but he also recovered many captives and much spoil. However he refuses to accept the offer by the king of Sodom to take the spoils as reward (Genesis 14:21-23),

וַיֹּאמֶר מַלְכֵּךְ סִדְקַם אֵלֶּה אֲבִירֵי הָאָרֶץ וְהָרֶכֶשׁ קָח
 אֵת. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִירֵי אֵלֶּה מַלְכֵּךְ סִדְקַם הִרְמֵהוּ יָדִי אֵלֶּה
 יְהוּדָה אֵלֶּה עֲלִיוֹן קִנְיָה שֵׁמִיר וְאַרְלָא. אֵלֶּה מַחֲוֹשׁ וְעֶדְדֵי שִׁרְיָן
 נֶעֱדָה וְאֵלֶּה אֲקִיחָה מִכָּל אִשְׁרֵי אֵלֶּה וְלֹא אֶלֶּה אֲמַר אֲנִי
 הַלְעִסְתִּי אֶת אֲבִירֵי אֲבִירֵי.

In the same way, when Jacob's two sons, Simeon and Levi slew all the males among the Hivites along with Hamor and his son Schechem, they did not do it because of any nationalistic considerations. They retaliated because of the moral dishonor which Schechem inflicted upon Dinah, their sister,

(Genesis 34:25-27),

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּהִיוֹתָם כְּאֲבִירֵי וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי בְנֵי יַעֲקֹב
 שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֶת דִּינָה אִשׁ חָרָב וַיָּבִיאוּ אֹתָהּ הָעִיר בְּטַח
 וַיְהִי כֹל זֶכֶךְ. וְאֵלֶּה מַחֲוֹשׁ וְאֵלֶּה שִׁבְכָה בְנֵי הָרֶכֶשׁ
 אֵלֶּה חָרָב וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת דִּינָה אִשׁ חָרָב וַיָּבִיאוּ אֹתָהּ. בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב
 אֵלֶּה הַחֲלָלִים וַיָּבִיאוּ הָעִיר אֶת אֲבִירֵי אֲבִירֵי.

Despite the peaceful atmosphere of the patriarchal period, the seeds were already being sown for the concept of war which was to persist throughout the Biblical period. For one thing, when Malchi-zedek, king of Salem, met Abraham upon his return from the war, he praised Abraham's God as a God of war who delivered the enemies into Abraham's hand (Genesis 14:18-20),

ומלכי-צדק מלך שלם הוציא לחם ויין והוא כהן
 לאל עליון. ויהרבהו ויאמר ברוך אברהם אל עליון
 קנה שמים וארץ. וברוך אל עליון אשר ממן זר'ק
 ב'קק ויגן לו מעשר מכל.

Then too, after the war, Abraham³ had a vision
 of God as his shield to protect him from possible
 reprisals by the successors of the slain kings
 (Genesis 15:1),

אחר הקדרי'ק האלה היה דבר יהוה אל אברהם
 במחלה שאמר אל ג'רא אברהם אנכי ממן לך
 שברך הרבה מאד.

In later periods, this concept of the God of
 War came to be used with increasing intensity by the
 religious and political leaders as a means of inspiring
 these nomadic and nationally indifferent people to
 fight for the possession of their own land. Already
 in this period, the land of Canaan is promised as the
 future inheritance of the Hebrews (Genesis 12:1-2),

ויאמר יהוה אל אברהם לך לך מארץ ומחולצתך
 ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך. ואעשך לעם גדול
 ואברכך ואדקדקך שם והיה ברכה.

3. I am using the name Abraham at all times, though it
 is actually Abram in the earlier narratives.

The sign of this covenant with God is to be the circumcision of all males (Genesis 17:8-10),

ונתתי לך ולזרעך אחריק את ארץ מצרים את
כל ארץ כנען לאחזת עולם והייתי לך לאלהים.
ויאמר אלהים אל אברהם ואמר את בריתי גמר
אמר ולזרעך אחריק לדורם. לא בריתי אשר גמרנו
בי וביניכם ובין זרעך אחריק החולף לכם כל זכר.

This promise is again repeated in Jacob's dream. Jacob first sees the ladder with angels ascending and descending upon it. Then, God, standing beside him, promises Canaan to His people (Genesis 28:12-13),

ויחלם והנה סולם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע
השמימה והנה מלאכי אלהים עולים וירדים בו.
והנה יהוה נצב עליו ויאמר אני יהוה אלהי
אברהם אביך ואלהי יצחק והארץ אשר אגה
עבד עמיה לך אוננה ולזרעך.

B. The Mosaic Period

Thus far, we have dealt with a simple nomadic people who had no national inclinations, or concept of what it meant to possess a land of their own. However, now they began to be transformed into a national force under the leadership of Moses.

The Habiru came to Egypt as part of the Hyksos avalanche that overran Egypt while she was internally weak (about 1720 B.C.E.). The conquering horde which invaded Egypt was not composed of pure strains from some original home beyond the Caucasus. This southward movement from Asia Minor picked up many restless or displaced elements and by the time that the Hyksos entered Egypt, they must have included few of the original newcomers, but many Hurrians, Semites, and other displaced persons from Syria and Palestine. The result is that their culture, and those Hyksos names known to us show a considerable mixture of various ethnic elements.⁴

4. John A. Wilson, The Burden of Egypt (Chicago, 1951) p.161

The invaders, whom the Egyptians so despised and hated, built a powerful empire which included Palestine and Syria. Their source of strength for this conquest was to be found in a new weapon of war, the horse and chariot, enclosures for which were to be found in the Egyptian delta and in Palestine and Syria. With the establishment of the Hyksos regime, it is easy to understand how a "foreigner" like Joseph could attain the high position mentioned in the early Biblical narratives. However, by 1600 B.C.E., the Egyptians managed to muster enough strength to begin their war for liberation, having learned to use the horse and chariot and by 1550 B.C.E., they⁵ drove the Hyksos hordes back into Palestine and Syria. Some of the Habiru or Hebrews were driven out with the Hyksos, while others remained in Egypt. Some never came to Egypt. They settled in Palestine. It was natural for those who remained, though, to be persecuted, for they were considered part of the Hyksos peoples, and the Egyptian leaders feared lest they multiply too rapidly and again try to seize the control of the government. The government used whatever methods it had at its disposal to reduce the "Hyksos" population in his land, killing off their first born males, hard labor under severe taskmaster, lack of proper food and sleep, etc.

5. George Ernest Wright- Floyd Vivian Filson
The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible
 (Philadelphia, 1946) pp. 28-29

Amidst this persecution and enslavement of the Hebrews, arose a religious leader by the name of Moses, who used his people's suffering as the means to whip them into a unified group, and who gave them a common cause, freedom and finally a homeland of their own. At the vision of the burning bush, the promise of the land of Canaan for this people's inheritance as again repeated (Exodus 3:7-8),

וְאַתָּה יְהוָה רָאֵה רָאֵה אֵל עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרָיִם
וְאֵל צָדִיק וְעֹשֶׂה מִצְוֹת נֶגֶן כִּי יִצְעָק אֶל
מִכָּאֲבִיו. וְאֵרָא עֲהֵצִילוּ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וְלֹאֲהַעֲלֵנוּ מִן הָאָרֶץ
הַזֹּאת אֲלֵךְ אֶרֶץ עֹבֵד וְרֹחֵב אֵל אֶרֶץ זָבָה חֶלֶב
וְדָבָשׁ אֲלֵךְ מִקֹּדֶם הַכְּנָעִי וְהַחִיטִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַכְּנִזִּי וְהַחִיטִי
וְהַיְבוֹסִי.

At the Red Sea, Moses sang his song, calling the Lord a man of war dashing in pieces the Egyptian enemy (Exodus 15:3-6),

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי מִלְחָמָה יְהוָה עָמוּ. מִרְכָּבָה פָּרָצָה וְחֵילוֹ
יְרֵה בַיָּם וּמַגְחָר עֲלֵיו שָׂבָעוּ בַיָּם סוּף. גִּהְעָמָה יִכְסִּימוּ
יָרֵדוּ בַחֲצוֹף אֶל כַּחַם אֲבָן. יִמְנָן יְהוָה נִאֲדָרִי בַכַּחַם
יִמְנָן יְהוָה תִּרְעַץ אוֹיְבִי.

The horses and chariots mentioned here seemed to have had special significance with regard to Israel's attitude toward war throughout the Biblical period. In the days of the divided kingdom, the prophets regarded them as symbols of the material might of surrounding pagan nations whom Israel imitated,

instead of trusting in God as their leader in war, and they condemned the Kings of Israel and Judah for depending upon these horses and chariots for success in battle. Moses, Israel's first prophet, closes his song by rejoicing over the failure of Egyptian horses and chariots against Israel's mighty God of war

(Exodus 15:19),

כי בא סוס פרעה ברכבו ובפרשיו בים ויטה
יהוה עלהם אר מ' הים ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה
בגוק הים.

Miriam immediately repeats this thought in a concluding refrain to the song of Moses (Exodus 15:21),

וגען אלהם מרים שירו איהוה כי גאה גאה סוס
ורכבו רמה בים.

After a month and a half in the wilderness, with all provisions spent, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron, for giving them starvation and death together with freedom (Exodus 16:2-3),

וישנו כל עדת בני ישראל על משה ועל אהרן
במדבר. ויאמרו אלהם בני ישראל מ' יגן מותנו ביד
יהוה בארץ מצרים בשבטנו על סיר ההשך באכילנו
לחם אשכנח כי הוצאנו ארנו אל המדבר הזה
לדמות אר מ' כל הקהל הזה ברעה.

This can easily be understood in view of what we know of Habiru servitude. The habiru were used to being slaves in Babylonia and Palestine, and therefore they could not be expected to be willing to pay the price for their freedom. They were only interested in their

security, the kind which they had while serving private masters, or those of the state, and now that security was lost. When they reached Rephidim, and there was no water to drink, they were almost angry enough to stone Moses to death (Exodus 17:3-4),

ו'צמא עפ העפ פאמ'ס וילן העפ ע' משה ו'אמר
משה זה העל'תנו מחצרים פהמ'ג או' ואג בני ואג
מקנ' הצמא. ו'צעק משה אכ ידוה פאמר מה אעשה
עעפ הזה עוה מע' וסקל'.

Israel's first enemy in the wilderness was the nomadic Amalekite group that inhabited Southern Palestine along with the Canaanites.⁶ They were a predatory tribe, quite capable of raids at a considerable distance from their home. They were related to the Edomites and consequently also to the Hebrews. The Bible mentions that Amalek was a son of Esau's firstborn son, Eliphaz, and of the concubine Timna, the daughter of Seir, the Horite.⁷

The Amalekites are remembered most vividly among Israel's enemies probably because they were the first to war against the Hebrews, and because of the severity of their attack. They continued to have battles with Israel until David exterminated them as a power.

6. Numbers 13:29, 14:25

7. Genesis 36:12

8. See J. D. Davis and H. S. Gehman, Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, (Philadelphia, 1944) p. 23

In this war, the rod of God served as a symbol of victory to the Israelite warriors (Exodus 17:8-11),

וַיָּבֹא עֲמֹלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרֹדְפֵי קָדֶשׁ. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל יְהוָה בְּחַר עֲמֹלֵק וְאֶת אֲנָשֵׁי וְצִבָּא הַלָּחֶם בְּעֲמֹלֵק מֵאַחַר אֲנֹכִי נִצֵּב עַל רֹאשׁ הַגִּבְעָה וּמִטָּה הַאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדִי. וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר עַל מֹשֶׁה עֲמֹלֵק בְּעֲמֹלֵק וּמִטָּה אֶהְיֶה וְהָיָה עַל רֹאשׁ הַגִּבְעָה. וְהָיָה כְּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים יָדוֹ וְזָהַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וּכְאֲשֶׁר יִנָּח יָדוֹ וְזָהַר עֲמֹלֵק.

War in this case was one of defense against a nation which interfered with God's will, and hindered His people from reaching the promised land. Hebrew leaders commanded that the Amalekites were to be utterly destroyed in retaliation for their vicious attack on the Hebrew people (Exodus 17:13-16),

וַיִּחָלֶשׁ יְהוָה אֶת אֶתְּמֹלֵק וְאֶת עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָרָה. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה כִּגֵּב זֶה זָכָרוֹן בְּסֵפֶר וַיִּסַּח בְּאָזְנוֹ יְהוָה כִּי מִחֲמַת אֲמֹלֵק אֶת זָכָר עֲמֹלֵק מִגִּדְּיוֹ הַשְׂמִים. וַיִּבֶן מֹשֶׁה מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יְהוָה נֹס. וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי יָד עַל כֹּס יְהוָה מִלְּחֵמָה עֲלֵיהֶם בְּעֲמֹלֵק מִדֶּרֶךְ.

This charge was repeated in Deuteronomy 25:17-19, and in I Samuel 15:2-3 when Samuel summoned Saul to gather an army to fight and to destroy the Amalekites. When the Israelites lost the battle against the Amalekites at Hormah, the leaders blamed the people because they believed in those who were sent to spy out the land, and wanted to return to Egypt and give up their faith in the God of war.

In the course of setting down laws and ordinances before the Hebrews while they sojourned in the wilderness, Moses repeated the promise of a homeland flowing with milk and honey, but with certain conditions and warnings this time (Exodus 23:22-24),

כי אם שמוע תשמע בקולי וצוית את כל אשר אצוּר ואֵיבֶה
אֶת אֵיבֶיךָ וְצֹרֶתְךָ אֶת צֹרֶרֶיךָ. כִּי יֵלֶךְ מִלְּפָנַי עֲבָדִים
וְהִבֵּיאוּ אֵלַי הַבָּאִרִּי וְהַחֲמִי וְהַכֶּנֶזִּי וְהַיָּגוֹסִי
וְהַכַּחֲדָרִי. עַל אֲשֶׁר חֹמֶה לֹא־תִפְּחֶנּוּ וְעַל אֲשֶׁר תִּצְטָר וְעַל אֲשֶׁר
תִּחַצֵּיפֶנּוּ. כִּי הִנֵּה אֲפָרֹס וְעַתָּה אֲבָר אֶתְּכֶם מִצִּיֹּן פָּ.

Moses used the concept of religious purity as a means of intensifying national feeling among the Hebrews, and the concept that the God of Israel was a God of war, to inspire them to continue their struggle for a national homeland. The Hebrews had to rid the land of all idolatrous peoples and the images which they worshipped in order to prevent pagan practices from seeping into Israel's religion (Exodus 23:31-33),

וְשֵׁר אֶת אֶתְּכֶם מִכָּל עַמֵּי הָאֶרֶץ וְעַד יֵם פֶּלֶשֶׁתִּים וְחִמְדָּר עַד
לִנְהַר כִּי אֲנִי בִידְכֶם אֶת יְשֵׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ וְלִנְהַר מִכָּל
עַם הָאֶרֶץ עֲבָדִים וְעַל־אֲשֶׁר תִּפְּחֶנּוּ. עַל יְשֵׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ בֵּן
יִחְסִיאוּ אִתְּכֶם כִּי תִצְטָר אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יִפְּחֶנּוּ כִּי יִפְּחֶנּוּ עֲבָדֶיכֶם.

The Mosaic Law demanded that they annihilate utterly [?] the minds of the people for a later command to all idol-worshipping people that inhabited the promised land as well as their objects of worship (Leviticus 20:2-3),

ואל בני ישראל תאמר איש איש מבני ישראל ומן הגר
הגר בישראל אשר יתן מזרעו למלך מלך יחור עץ הארץ
ירמחו באבן. ואני אגן את בני באיש ההוא והכרת אתו
מקרב עמו כי מזרעו נתן למלך למען שמא אג מקרב
ולחם את עץ קרב.

This statute is mentioned again in the book of
Deuteronomy¹⁰, giving the impression that idolatry is
a kind of plague which can only be treated by outright
extermination. This can be seen even more clearly
in the ruling concerning a whole Israelite city that
has become idolatrous. Not only must the inhabitants
be killed "at the edge of the sword" but all their
cattle as well. The spoils must be placed in the
center of the city, and the entire city is to be
burned with fire, and to remain desolate forever
(Deuteronomy 13:13-18),

כי נשמע באחת עירך אשר יהיה אלהיה נגד אלה
על האמר. יצאו אנשי בני בלעם מקרבך וידיחו את ישי
עירם לאמר נלכה ונעבדה אלהים אשר לא יבצר
ברשע וחקרה וסאלת היטה והנה אמת נכון הדבר נעשה
המועצה הזאת בקרבך. הכה רכה את ישי העיר ההוא
לפי חרב החורף אותה ואג כל אשר בה ואג בהמה
לפי חרב. ואג כל שכלה וקרב אל גוך רחבה ושרפה

באש את העיר ואח כח שלמה כליהם כי הורה אליהם ותיגד
גם עולם לא גמנה עוד. ולא ידבק בידם מאומה מן
החרב אמן יסוד יהודה מחרון אפו ונגן לך רחמים
ורחמך ופרגך כאשר נסבה באהרן.

Moses warned the people in Leviticus 26, that, if they would obey these statutes, and remain separate, and strongly unified, they would continue to be successful in warring against their enemies, but if they did not obey them, and chose instead the path of least resistance, namely, assimilation with the idolatrous nations, they would be powerless against those who would seek to destroy them. In this case, the concept of the God of Israel as a God of war used in reverse in order to threaten the Israelites with extinction. God will fight on the other side along with the enemy helping to defeat Israel. The prophets who lived in the days of Divided Kingdom constantly reminded both Israel and Judah of this warning for their kingdoms were tottering because of the inroads which idolatry had made since Solomon's reign.

It is interesting to note that the Mosaic Law had a statute concerning conscription. Military service was limited to the male population and to those who were at least twenty years of age. There were special exemptions for any one who was faint-hearted, for one who had planted a vineyard and had

not used the fruit thereof, for one who had built a house and had not dedicated it, and for one who was betrothed, but who had not consummated the marriage. It was felt that these men would be more of a hindrance¹¹ than a help on the battlefield.

Before entering the new homeland Moses sent spies to determine the conditions that prevailed. When the people heard from the spies that the land, which they were to conquer, was filled with strongly fortified cities and "giants," they wanted to stone¹² Moses and Aaron, choose a new leader, and return to Egypt (Numbers 14:2-4),

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת מִסֵּד וְעַם אֱהֲרֹן כֹּס בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֵיהֶם
כֹּס הַעֲצָה עַל מִלְחָמָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אוֹ בַּחֲדָר הַיָּד עַל מִלְחָמָה.
וְלֹא מִדֵּי יִהְיוּ מִלִּי אֲנִי אֵל הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת עֲנֹכָה בַּחֲדָר נִשְׁמַע
וְעַתָּה יִהְיוּ עֲבָדֵי הָעָם הַזֶּה עֲבָדֵינוּ אוֹ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֵם
אֵל אַחֲרָיו נִגְנָה הָאֵם עֲנֹכָה מִצְרַיִם.

Though Moses and Aaron wanted to lead Israel into an offensive war, the people rebelled against them, fearing that they would all be killed by these strong enemies. They preferred to return to slavery in Egypt. They did not care about freedom and a homeland. To them it was not worth fighting for. They were interested only in security for them-

11. Numbers 1:2-3 Deuteronomy 20:5-8

12. Numbers 14:10

selves and their families. Throughout their lives, they had been oriented toward living in a slave society. Moses, seeing that it would be impossible to carry on the conquest of land with such people, caused them to dwell for forty years in the wilderness, giving time for the older generation to die off naturally, and for the younger generation, which was never conditioned to slavery, to reach maturity (Numbers 14:29-33),

במדבר ה'לה יפלו פלג'יכם וכל פקד'יכם לכל מספרכם
חבן עשרים שנה ומעלה אשר הע'נתם עלי. אמר אהרן
למאן אלה'י אלה'י אשר נשאתי את יד'י עשן אהרן בה כי
אם כלב בן יפנה ויפושע בן נון. וספרכם אשר אמרתי
עלי יהיה והביאתי אתם וידעו את האלה'י אשר מאמין
בא. ופלג'יכם אתם יפלו במדבר הזה. והניכם יהיו רעים
במדבר ארבעים שנה ונשא את לנול'יכם עד דם
פלג'יכם במדבר.

In the course of their sojourn in the wilderness, the Israelites arrived at Edom. They requested straight passage through the land on the king's highway, not turning right or left, and paying for any food and water that they might need. However, the Edomites refused to grant permission and came out to their gates with full armed force in case the Hebrews decided to attack the land (Numbers 20:19-21),

ו'אמרו אליו בני ישראל במסעה נעלה ונא'יך נשאר
אני וחקני ונא'י מכרם רק אין דבר הנג'י אצלך.

וַיֵּאמֶר עַל גַּעֲרָה וַיֵּצֵא אֶדְוִם עִקְרָאמוּ בַעַר כַּבֵּד וּבִיָּד חִזְקָה.
וַיֵּאמֶן אֶדְוִם נֶגֶן אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָרָה בְּגִבְלוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִעֲלֵיו

Only in the case of Edom and Moab, did the Israelites turn away from the enemy in the course of conquest. The Bible explains the situation by pointing out, that Edom was given to Esau's descendants for a possession, and that Moab was given to the children of Lot for a possession, and therefore, the Israelites could not even pass through these lands on foot without permission (Deuteronomy 2:4-5,9),

וְאֵל הַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָרָה אֶדְוִם בְּגִבְלוֹ אֲחִיכֶם בְּנֵי
עֵשָׂו הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעֵצִיר וַיֵּרָאוּ מִכֶּן וַיִּסְמְרוּהֶם מֵאֵד.
וַיֵּצֵאוּהֶם בָּרֶם כִּי עַל אֹתָן עָכָּם מֵאֶרֶץ עַד מִדְבָּר כֹּף רֹאשׁ
כִּי יִרְשֶׁה עַדְוִם נֶגֶן אֵל הַר עֵצִיר.
וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אִשְׂרָאֵל גַּעֲרָה אֵל מוֹאָב וְאֵל גַּעֲרָה בָרֶם
מִלְחָמָה כִּי עַל אֹתָן עָכָּם מֵאֶרֶץ יִרְשֶׁה כִּי עַלְנֵי עוֹלָם נֶגֶן
אֵל עַד יִרְשֶׁה.

"However, an archaeological survey of Edom provided other reasons why it was, that without permission of the inhabitants, a foreign group might not enter the territory. Strong fortresses barred the way on all the frontiers of Edom and of Moab, north of it. The high comparatively fertile and well watered Edomite plateau ends suddenly in the south with precipitous walls and slopes marking the abrupt fall to the desert of the Wadi Hismeh, which stretches to the Red Sea and Arabia. Edomite of the

armed guards probably escorted caravans which traveled through the Wadi Hismeh and the Wadi Yitm to the Wadi Arabah and to Ezion-geber: Elath on the north shore of the eastern arm of the Red Sea. The main line of defense, and for all practical purposes the southern border of the Iron Age kingdom of Edom, was marked by a line of fortresses along the southern edge of the plateau, dominating the Jebel Shera Neqb Shtar, which mark its limits.

The eastern boarder of the Edomite kingdom was even more strongly protected, than the southern, its defenses being marked by a long line of fortresses situated on the highest hills in the arid, uncultivated region between the Desert and the Sown. From one end of the country to the other it would have been possible to transmit fire or smoke signals in a very short time. This line of fortresses continued northward and marked also the eastern boundary of Moab.¹³

Israel could not possibly recruit the forces necessary to attack a thriving, prosperous, civilized kingdom such as Edom. If she would have been able to do it, the long continuous record of enmity and warfare would probably have begun at this time.

13. Nelson Glueck-"The Civilization of the Edomites"
Rabbinical Institute-H.U.C.-J.I.R.
 (New York 1948) p.2

Edom had control of the strategically important trade route down the Wadi Arabah, and the possession of the rich copper and iron mines which abounded in it. Moses made a remark about the children of Israel by-passing Edom which seemed to indicate his knowledge of Edom's source of wealth (Deuteronomy 2:8),

וַיִּסְמְנוּ אֶת־הַדֶּשֶׁת הַזֹּאת לְדֶרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּפְּסְדוּ אֶת־הַדֶּשֶׁת הַזֹּאת לְדֶרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 relationship to Jacob's brother, Esau.

In fact, Moses' marriage to Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the Kenite, may have had deeper significance for Israel than was previously known. Long before the advent of the Israelites, the presence of the mineral deposits in the Wadi Aragah was known, and the mines were ex;loited by Kenites and the Edomites to whom¹⁴ they were related through the Kenizzites. It was the Kenites, who were native to the country and whose very name indicates that they were smiths, who probably first imparted to the Israelites and Edomites information concerning the ore deposits in the Wadi Arabah, and who introduced the Israelites and the¹⁵ Edomites to the arts of mining and metallurgy.

Now Moses took his wife from the Kenites, and it appears that the Israelites ever afterward maintained close relations with them. Saul, being mindful of this

14. Genesis 15:19, Genesis 36:10, 11, 42

15. Nelson Glueck The Other Side of the Jordan (New Haven 1940), p. 83

close relationship, spared the Kenites in his battle¹⁶ with the Amalekites. Therefore, though we don't have any proof, it is possible for us to infer that Moses may have been well informed as to the great natural resources in the land of Edom, but lacking the military force to conquer it, he explained his course of action to the people in simple terms, namely, Edom's relationship to Jacob's brother, Esau.

After the Israelites by-passed Edom, they came by way of Atharim. Here they were attacked by the king of Arad. Israel won the battle and the people carried out the command to destroy utterly these Canaanites and their cities (Numbers 21:1-3),

וַיִּשְׁמַע הַכְּנַעֲנִי מִלֶּקַח עַרְבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנָּחָה כִּי גָא יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּרָךְ
הָאֱמֹרִיִּם וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשֶׁבֶת אֹמְנָן עָמִי. וַיִּדָּר יִשְׂרָאֵל נָדָר
עֲלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר אִם נָתַן גִּבּוֹן אֶל הָעָם הַזֶּה בְּיָדִי וְהִחַרְמֹתִי
אֹת עָרֵיהֶם. וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּגֶן אֶת הַכְּנַעֲנִי וַיִּחַרֵּם
אֹתָם וְאֵת עָרֵיהֶם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם חֶרְמָה.

Then they approached the land of the Amorites which was to be included in Israel's new territory. Moses, however, did not intend to conquer this area just yet, merely asked for permission for the Israelites to pass through the land in a way similar to that requested of the Edomites. Sihon, the king, not only refused permission but even came out with an

army, and attacked Israel. Under these conditions Moses had no choice but to order the conquest of the Amorite territory immediately. The Israelites destroyed the Amorite group and took over their land for possession by the tribes of Reuben and Gad (Numbers 21:21-24),

וישלח ישראל מלמאכית אל סיחן מלך האמרי לאמר.
אעברה בארצך לא נסה בשדה ובכרך לא נסגרתי
באר בקרך המלך נלך עד אשר נעבר גבלך. ולא נתן
סיחן את ישראל עבר בגבלו ויאסף סיחן את כל עמו
ויצא להקראת ישראל המעברה ויבא יהודה וימחם בישראל.
ויכפו ישראל לפי חרה וירס את ארצו מארנן עד יבק
עד בני עמון כי עד גבול בני עמון.

Next, they came to the land of Bashan, and Og, the king of Bashan came out with his army to meet them in battle. Once again, the Hebrews utterly destroyed the inhabitants and took the land. In this encounter, Moses once again inspired his people with the idea that the God of Israel is a God of war, encouraged them further in their path of conquest.

(Numbers 21:33-35),

ויבנו ויעלו דרך הבשן ויצא עוג מלך הבשן לקראתם
הוא וכל עמו אמלחמה אדרעי. ויאמר יהוה אל משה אל
תירא אגו כי בידך נתתי אגו ואך כל עמו ואך ארצו
ועשיר לו כאשר עשית עמון מלך האמרי אשר יוסף
בחשבון. ויכו אגו ואך בניו ואך כל עמו עד בלתי השאיר
לו שריד וירשו אך ארצו.

Finally they passed through the plains of Moab and settled at Shittim across the Jordan from Jericho. It was here that Moses inflicted severe punishment upon the people for attempting to assimilate into an idolatrous society. Twenty four thousand Israelites are said to have been put to the sword for turning away from the God of Israel, toward Baal of Peor (Numbers 25:1-5).

ו'ישראל בשמים ויחל העץ לזנוח את בנוח מואב.
והקראן עץ עזחוי אלמ'ה'יך ו'אכל העץ וישתחוו אלמ'ה'יך.
ו'יזנח ישראל עמלם בעור ו'חר אלף יהוה בישראל. ו'אמר
יהוה אל משה קח את כח ראש' העץ והוהע אורג ליהוה
נגד השמש ו'יטה חרון אלף יהוה מ'ישראל. ו'אמר משה אל
שכני ישראל הרגו איש אנשו הנזמדים עמלם בעור.

Furthermore, Moses ordered the annihilation of the Midianites because they had sent their women into the Israelite camp to lead them into practice of harlotry and worship of the idol, Baal of Peor (Numbers 25:16-18).

וידבר יהוה אל משה עמאר. צרור את המדינים והכנים
אורח. כי צררין הם עמכם הנכבדים אשר נבאו עמכם
דבר פסוק ועל דבר כזה בת נשיא מדין אחרי המכה
ביום המלכה על דבר פסוק.

This war against the Midianites was Israel's first religious war, and for the first time, Moses sent the priest, Phinehas into battle with the holy vessels. Later when the spoils of this war were

divided, the priestly class received a share of the booty. However, the presence of the priest Phinehas and the holy vessels on the battlefield may have been intended as a symbol of God's presence during the battle in order to boost the morale of the soldiers. Before this encounter, the word of God was sufficient encouragement. Also, this was the first time that Moses called for a numerical draft of manpower. These two facts might have indicated that the morale among the people was quite low (Numbers 31:3-7).

וְרָגוּ מִן הָאֵלֹהִים הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמָעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל

Further possible evidence of low morale can be found in the manner of expression used in the above passage. In verse 4, the words "one thousand men of each tribe" are mentioned twice by Moses, implying that it was necessary to emphasize them in order to have his bidding carried out by the tribes. In verse 5, the word for deliver was used in the passive form¹⁷ implying that the troops were delivered forcibly.

17. See Rashi (E. Solomon Ben Isaac) Commentary on the Hebrew Bible,
 and Rashbam (R. Solomon Ben Maimon) Commentary on the Hebrew Bible
 (Numbers 31:5)

In all these battles, which were fought prior to crossing the Jordan, the Israelites followed a set course of action as laid down by Moses. If the land was not to be inherited by Israel, the Israelites were to offer peace terms in which the other nation was to become tributary. If the other nation refused the peace offer, and went out to do battle, the Israelites were to conquer them, kill off all the males with the sword, and take the women and children captive, and their cattle and spoils for a prey.¹⁸ However, if the land was part of Israel's future inheritance, the inhabitants, their cattle, possession, and all their devoted objects were to be destroyed completely lest they might lead Israel to idol worship and the abominable practices associated with it.¹⁹ This warning, not to take captives, cattle or spoil, is mentioned²⁰ several other times.

With the close of the Mosaic period, Israel was still a weak federation of tribes. However, her concept of war was now established. The conquest of the land of Canaan was a divine mission. The God of Israel was a God of war, leading them into the promised

18. Deuteronomy 20:10-15

19. Deuteronomy 20:16-18

20. Deuteronomy 7:1-2,16, 24-26, Numbers 33:52-55

land, fighting with them and helping them to overcome all obstacles. The war camp became a holy place and the soldiers were like holy vessels which were not to be defiled.²¹ In the war against Midian, even the ark was brought into the camp by the priest Phinehas.

The leaders who succeeded Moses did their best to further nationalize the Israelites, and strengthen their confidence in the God of Israel as a God of war. However, there were many odds which they had to overcome due to external influences, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

21. Deuteronomy 23:10-15

with only bows, slings, stones, slaves, and only a few swords and spears, they could not compete against the formidable horses and chariots of the Canaanites. Thus we are told that Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron. Furthermore, the Israelites had great difficulty in capturing fortified Canaanite cities because of their primitive weapons and lack of experience in military science. Therefore, by the time that Joshua died, Israel was not in possession of the entire country but only the central ridge. The

1. J. K. Wright and E. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 34
2. Joshua 1:12

Chapter II - Growth and Transformation

A. The Conquest of Canaan

When the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, their newly appointed leader Joshua, was confronted with several new problems. For one thing, the Israelite tribes could not hope to conquer all the land immediately, because most of the Canaanite cities were situated in the lowlands and not in the hill country. Though the Israelites were capable of winning in the hills by guerilla warfare, they were unable to drive the Canaanites out of the lowlands, because, fighting on foot with only bows, slings, stones, staves, and only a few swords and spears,¹ they could not compete against the formidable horses and chariots of the Canaanites. Thus we are told that Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron.² Furthermore, the Israelites had great difficulty in capturing fortified Canaanite cities because of their primitive weapons and lack of experience in "military science." Therefore, by the time that Joshua died, Israel was not in possession of the entire country but only the central ridge. The

1. G. E. Wright and F. V. Filson, op. cit, p.34

2. Judges 1:19

3. Judges 8:11-13

Canaanites continued to live around them in the valleys and plains until the kings of Israel completed the conquest. Naturally, the inability to conquer all the land and to reduce all the inhabitants caused the people to lose faith in the promises which God made while they dwelt in the wilderness. Furthermore, as a result of having to live amidst the Canaanites, some of the Israelites were attracted to the Canaanite nature cult.³ This, in turn, weakened Israel's national unity considerably, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of the period of the Judges. However, first, I will deal with the conquest of the land under Joshua.

Immediately after the death of Moses, when Joshua became the leader of the Israelites, God's promise of the land of Canaan for inheritance by the Israelites was reaffirmed, and God's active participation in the future battles for conquest was reassured (Joshua 1:2-3, 5-6),

משה עבד'י מן ועתה קום עבר את הירדן הזה אתה וכך
העם הזה את הארץ אשר אנכי נאן להם עבד'י ישראל. כע
מקום אשר תדרכו כל רגלכם בו עבד'י נאמן כאשר דברתי
אל משה.

לא יגיב אים לפניך כע ימי חייך כאשר הייתי ע
משה אהיה עמך לא ארפק ולא אעזבך. ואמרת'י אלה
תנח'ם העם הזה את הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאבותי עבד'י.

Joshua was warned to practice and study the commandments day and night, and not to turn aside from them, in order that he may be successful in battle (Joshua 1:7-8),

רק חזק ואמץ מאד למען עשו ככל הורו אלהים
 ביום הזה עמדו אל גסור נחל נ'ן ושמאלו למען ושמאלו
 בכל אשר יאמר. לא ימוס ספר הורו הנה מפיך והנה
 בו יומן ואלה למען ושמאלו ככל הכתוב בו כי
 לא יצליח אר דרכך ואז יאמר ושמאלו.

It has been explained in chapter II that the purpose of these ordinances, which Moses had set down for the people during their sojourn in the wilderness, was to unify and nationalize the Israelites, and to separate them from the ways of the pagan nations, in order that no outside cultural or religious influence might weaken the strength of the tribes, and prevent them from conquering Canaan. In this case, the leader was told to practice all the statutes of the Mosaic Law, the reasoning being that if Joshua was meticulous in his practice of these statutes, the people would model their observance after their leader.

The entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan was marked by important symbolic acts which were probably carried out in order to boost the morale of these nomadic tribes who were completely disinterested in the new homeland, and who wanted only the security which they had already known in Egypt .

When the Israelites were about to cross the Jordan, Joshua ordered the priests to carry the ark at the head of the procession as if to convey to the people that God was leading the people in a war for conquest. They had been trained by Moses and Aaron in the wilderness to fear God, and this fear helped to carry them forward despite their inertia. Upon reaching the other side of the Jordan, Joshua circumcised all the male children of those Israelites who died in the wilderness, in order that they would bear the sign of the covenant of God with Abraham, by which he had promised a land flowing with milk and honey for inheritance by Abraham's seed.⁴

The conquest of Jericho was pictured in the Bible as a miraculous one in order to emphasize to Israel at the beginning, that not their own strength, but by the Lord's strength did they capture the city of Jericho.⁵ For the second time, the ark of God was carried into battle (Joshua 6:3-6),

וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֶת הַיְּרֵדָה כִּי אֵלֶּיךָ הָיָה הַיְּרֵדָה
וְהָיָה אֵלֶּיךָ הַיְּרֵדָה וְהָיָה אֵלֶּיךָ הַיְּרֵדָה
וְהָיָה אֵלֶּיךָ הַיְּרֵדָה וְהָיָה אֵלֶּיךָ הַיְּרֵדָה
וְהָיָה אֵלֶּיךָ הַיְּרֵדָה וְהָיָה אֵלֶּיךָ הַיְּרֵדָה

4. Genesis 17:7-10

5. The ark of God was first used in war in the battle of Midian (Numbers 31:6). According to Rashi, the holy vessels mentioned in this verse are the ark and the golden plate.

הציר שבזע פצח'ן ופכח'ן יקצו גספדות. ופ'ה גמסן
 בקרן היוה'ל גסמזכ'ן א' קול' הפופר יר'עו כל' הע'פ
 גרוע' ג'ול'ה ונפ'ל'ה חומ' הע'ר גח'ת'ה וצ'לו הע'פ א'ס
 ג'דו. ויקרא י'פוע' גן מן א'ל' הככ'ן וי'אמר א'ל'ה'פ ש'או
 א'ת הפ'רון הפ'ר'י' ופ'ל'ה ככ'ן י'ס'או ש'ל'ה' שופ'רו
 י'ג'ל'ם ל'פ'ני א'רון י'פ'וה.

However, as might be expected of a city lying in the deepest rift valley in the world, archaeological excavations at Jericho disclosed repeated evidence of the action of earthquakes.⁶ In all probability, the collapse of the walls of this city was due to one of these earthquakes, but nevertheless explained to the Israelites as a miraculous phenomenon which God alone was capable of.

According to the Biblical description of the battle of Jericho, the military strategy was carried out in a period of seven consecutive days. It is obvious that one of those days must have been the Sabbath, which should have been a day of rest. However, since there is no indication that the Israelites rested on the Sabbath day, there is no condemnation by God for disobeying His law, it seems evident that war superceded the Sabbath, or the Sabbath as an in-

6. Chester C. McCown, The Ladder of Progress in Palestine (New York, 1943), p. 82

stitution had not yet acquired the status which it later developed. In the well known passages in the Books of Maccabees no Biblical statement is cited as reason for their refusal to fight on the Sabbath.⁷ This is especially interesting in view of the fact that this was not a defensive battle in which the people had to fight for their lives, but an offensive one (Joshua 6:14-15),

וַיִּסְּאוּ אֶת הָעִיר בִּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בַּעַר אֶחָד וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּשְׁמַר כִּי
 עַל יְמֵי יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת. וַיְהִי בִּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּשְׁמַר
 וַיִּסְּאוּ אֶת הָעִיר בִּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בַּעַר אֶחָד וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּשְׁמַר
 וַיִּסְּאוּ אֶת הָעִיר בִּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת בַּעַר אֶחָד וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּשְׁמַר.

According to the Bible, this was the first battle in which an entire city was devoted to destruction. All the people, their cattle, and their property were utterly destroyed, and Jericho itself was consumed by fire. However, because of a promise made by the spies who were harbored in the house of the harlot, Rahab, while they were surveying the city, Rahab and her family and their possessions were spared from annihilation (Joshua 6:21-24),

וַיִּחַרְטוּ אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּעִיר מֵאִישׁ וְעַד אִשָּׁה מִנֶּעֱרָה וְעַד
 יָקִין וְעַד שׂוֹר וְעַד וְשֶׁה וְחֹמֶר לְכָל חֵרֶב. וְלִשְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים
 הַמְּרִגְלִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ אַחֵר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בָּאוּ בִּיג הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּנוֹת
 וְהַזָּנוֹת מִן אֶת הָאִשָּׁה וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבְּרָה

7. I Maccabees 2:40-41

א.ב. ויגלו הנערים המרדלים ויצאו אר רחב ואר אביה
 ואר אחיה ואר אחיה ואר כס אשר עה ואר כס
 מסחוריה הוציאו ויניחון מחור למחנה ישראל. והעיר
 ערבו באש וכס אשר בה רק הכסף והזהב וכס הנחש
 יה ברזל נגנז אוצר בית יהוה.

There is a parallel to this practice of utterly
 destroying a conquered city in the customs of the
 Moabites, which has been mentioned in this connection
 by Fleming James.⁸ In the famous Moabite stone, Mesha
 of Moab speaks of killing the inhabitants of a cap-
 tured town as a sight pleasing to the Moabite deity,
 Chemosh. James took the view, that Joshua was actua-
 ted by a similar idea, namely, that by killing all
 the people, the Israelites satisfied God's loathing
 of the Canaanites, and by destroying all the spoils
 which they might otherwise take for themselves, they
 were doing something which pleased God, and for which
 they would be favored by Him in the future. However,
 such destruction had much greater significance than
 that portrayed by these religious interpretations.
 For one thing, this practice prevented the influx
 of idolatry which could be very destructive parasite
 to the Israel's national unity which was still ex-
 tremely weak. Furthermore, taking captives for use as

8. Fleming James, Personalities of the Old Testa-
 ment (New York, 1947), p.51

slaves was not worthwhile for a people who were still not established in their promised homeland. Later on, though, when the monarchy came into existence, this practice fell into disuse, because slaves played a very important part in the economy of the empire.

Although Jericho is mentioned in the Bible as the first city conquered by the Israelites upon their entrance into the land of Canaan, it was probably not the first city to have been conquered by the Hebrew people as a whole. For one thing, not a word is said in the Bible about a conquest of central Palestine or its capital Shechem. However according to the book of Joshua chapter 24, Shechem was the scene of the gathering of all the tribes for the renewal of the covenant. Most scholars believe that friends or relatives of Israel were already in control of this region, so that all Joshua had to do was to make a treaty or covenant with them. In control of Shechem, it is thought, were Hebrews who had never been in Egypt, or more probably had come out of Egypt at an earlier time, perhaps at the expulsion of the Hyksos peoples. The Tell El Amarna letters of the Canaanite kings to the Egyptians court in the early fourteenth century indicate that Shechem and the region around it to the north and south were at that time in control of a rebel who showed by his actions, little respect

for the Egyptian Pharaoh.

After the conquest of Jericho, the Israelites turned toward another fortified city, which was called Ai in the Bible, but was shown by archaeological excavations¹⁰ to be really Bethel. The men that were sent to spy out the land, returned with reports that the Israelites would be able to capture the city with ease and suggested that only two or three thousand men be sent into the battle. However, a rather small force from Ai defeated the Israelites (Joshua 7:3-5),

ה'יבן אל יחזק ויאמרו אל'ו אל יעל כל העם כאמרי
איש או כסלם אמרי איש יעל ויכו את העם ג' ג' ג'
מה את כל העם כי מעט המה. ויעלו מן העם מה כסלם
אמרי איש וינסו לפני אנשי העם. ויכו מה אנשי העם
כסלם ומה איש וירדבוק לפני העם עד שהרי
ויכו המה וינסו אל העם ויהי למי.

9. See G. E. Wright - F. V. Filson, op. Cit. p.39

10. The excavation of Ai in 1933-1934 by Mme. Krause-Marquet furnishes an interesting problem. The name of the site in Hebrew means "The Ruin;" its conquest is described in the book of Joshua, chapter 7 and 8. The excavator found that it was one of the great cities of Palestine during the third millenium B.C.E., and never again occupied except for a small Israelite settlement dating after the twelfth century. An excavation by W. F. Albright in 1934 at Bethel, one and one-half miles away showed that it was established to take the place of Ai. The ruins of Bethel bore vivid marks of violent destruction during the course of the thirteenth century. The simplest explanation of the situation is that the story of the capture of Bethel was transferred to Ai in the "Book of Joshua."

G. E. Wright - F. V. Filson, op. Cit. p.105

Immediately upon the defeat of the Israelites, Joshua rent his clothes, and covered his head with ashes according to the mourning customs, and cried out to God in a manner that was typical of the people when they murmured against Moses in the wilderness, and which probably indicated the low morale of the Israelites, their reluctance to fight for the promised land, and their desire only for a place to dwell in peace and security (Joshua 7:7-8,

וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻעַ אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי יְהוֹה כֹּמֶה הֶעֱבֵרָה הָעַבְרָה אֵלַי
הַעֲרָה הַזֶּה אֵלַי הַיֵּרֶדָן לִפְנֵי הָאֹיֵב הַזֶּה הַבֹּאֵה אֵלַי
וְאֵל הַבֹּאֵה אֵלַי וְנִשְׁבָּה בְּעֵד הַיֵּרֶדָן. הִי אֲדֹנָי מִה אֵלֶּיךָ אֲחֵרִי
אִשֶׁר הִפֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֹץ לִפְנֵי אֹיֵבִי.

The overwhelming defeat of Israel by the inhabitants of Ai was due to the fact that the spies underrated the strength of the enemy and advised an attack with inadequate forces. Also they lacked trained soldiers and up-to-date implements of war necessary to conquer a fortified city. However, it was explained in the Bible as a punishment for a religious transgression by one of the tribesmen (Joshua 7:11-12),

חֲטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגַם עָבְרוּ אֶל בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֲבוֹתָם וְגַם
עָקְחוּ מִן הַחֶרֶק וְגַם גָּבְּוּ וְגַם כִּחְשׁוּ וְגַם בִּכְלִיָּהֶם.
וְלֹא יָכְלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִקְוֹץ לִפְנֵי אֹיֵבֵיהֶם עֲרֹץ לִפְנֵי
אֹיֵבֵיהֶם כִּי הָיוּ לַחֶרֶק לֹא אוֹסִיף עֲהִיּוּ עֲחָכִים אֲךָ לֹא
תִשְׁמְדוּ הַחֶרֶק מִקִּרְבָּם.

When the Israelites attacked the city a second time, Joshua employed thirty thousand men in battle.

Achan, of the tribe of Judah, was found guilty of taking articles devoted to idolatry from the spoil of Jericho and hiding them amidst his own possessions.

When he was brought before Joshua, he confessed his

sin (Joshua 7:20-21),

ו'ען עכן את יהושע ו'אמר אנכי חטאתי ע'הוה
אלהי ישראל וכזאת וכזאת עשיתי. ואראה בשלל אצור
שנער אחת עולה ומאגיד עקבים כסף ולשון זהב אחד
חמשים עקבים נקלו ואחמדי ואקחם והנני מניח בארץ
הבוק האלהי והכסף וחגייה.

Joshua ordered Achan and his family and their cattle to be stoned to death, and their possessions to be burned with fire because he disobeyed Joshua's instructions to the Israelites to keep far from things

devoted to idolatry (Joshua 6:18-19),

ורק אגף שחרו מן החרב בן תחריתו ולקחם מן
החרב ושמם אג אחיה ישראל לחרב ועכרם אגו.
וכס כסף וזהב וכס נחש והרזם קדש הוא ע'הוה
אוצר יהוה יבוא.

Without doubt, making an example of this law-breaker served as the means of impressing the people all the more with the seriousness of the offense of harboring any objects devoted to idolatry. As it is, they were already conditioned to the idea that success in war depended upon complete loyalty to God, their leader in battle.

When the Israelites attacked the city a second time, Joshua employed thirty thousand men in battle

instead of the original three thousand, and devised a strategy whereby the inhabitants of Ai would be squeezed between forces in front and behind them.

Once again the God of Israel was pictured as a God of war, giving the city into their hand. However, in this encounter, unlike the battle of Jericho, they were instructed to keep the spoils and the cattle as a prey for themselves (Joshua 8:1-2).

ו'אמר יהוה אל יהושע אל תירא ואל תחג קח צמק או
כל עם המלחמה וקום על העי ראיה נוג' ה'דק או
מלך העי ואג עמו ואג עירו ואג ארצו. וצ'יג עי
ועמלכה כאשר צ'יג עיריחו ועמלכה רק שלמה ובהמה
וגדו עכס סין לך ארז עיר מאחריי.

The Biblical commentators offer no reason for the change in attitude toward the spoils and cattle. Yet it seems obvious that their destruction was a tremendous waste, especially the booty which had no relation to idolatry. It is possible that Joshua revised this law in order to increase the sustenance of the Israelites, as well as to provide greater incentive to continue the conquest. Nevertheless, even though this law was relaxed, they were still commanded to destroy all the inhabitants of Ai including the king, and to set the city on fire.

After conquering Ai, Joshua built an altar to

11. Joshua 8:25-29

God at Mount Ebal according to the Law of Moses, and made a copy of the Law on stone to be read to all the people (Joshua 8:30-32),

אז יבנה יהושע מזבח אלהים בהר עיבל.
כאשר צוה משה עבד יהוה את בני ישראל ככרות
בספר תורה משה מזבח אבנים שמואל אשר לא הניח
עליו ברזל ויעלו עמו אלהים אלהים ויזבח שמואל.
ויכתב שם על האבנים את משנת תורה משה אשר כתב
לפני בני ישראל.

It has been suggested that this prohibition against the use of iron tools in building this altar, also mentioned in Deuteronomy 27:4-5, was instituted by Moses, because iron was a symbol of war, and iron implements which were used to shorten man's days should not be used to fashion an altar to God, which was meant to lengthen man's days. Iron was used in making axes and hatchets (Deuteronomy 19:5, II Kings 6:5), sickles, knives, swords, spears (I Samuel 17:7), bolts, chains, fetters (Psalms 105:18, 107:10, Isaiah 45:2), carts and chariots (I Samuel 13:20, II Samuel 12:31), all of them implements of war. This prohibition was further extended to the building of the Temple during the reign of Solomon (I Kings 6:7),

והבית בהבנתו אבן שמה נסח נבנה ומקבוצ והערן
כל כלי ברזל לא נסח בבית בהבנתו.

However, this explanation seems to contradict the concept established by Israel's leaders, Moses,

his peaceful reign.

escape their doom (Joshua 9:3-6),

The installation of which was the will of God. There-

The Gibeonite leaders hoped to persuade Israel to give them a treaty with better than slave status. They knew that they would not succeed if the Israelites were aware of the fact that they occupied part of the promised land. Therefore, they pretended to be living in a far off country. They thought that once the treaty was made, it wouldn't make a difference if their trickery was exposed, because of the emphasis which the Israelites placed on vows and oaths. Joshua made the treaty with them after almost no investigation, and the princes ratified it by swearing to the Gibeonites by the God of Israel, that their lives would be protected. However, three days later, their real location was discovered (Joshua 9: 16-18),

וַיְהִי מִקְצֵה שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר כָּרְתוּ אֵת הַבְּרִית
וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי קִרְבִּים הֵם עִלְיוֹ וּבְקִרְבָּו הֵם יֹשְׁבֵי. וַיִּסְּאוּ
בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְאוּ אֶל עֲרִיהֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַעֲרִיהֶם
לֹא יָדְעוּ וְהַכְפִּירָה וּבִאֲרוֹת וּקְרִיֹת יַעֲרִיֹם. וְלֹא הָיוּ
בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי נִשְׁמְעוּ אֵת נְשֵׂאֵי הָעֵדָה בִּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא כֹל הָעֵדָה עִם הַנְּשִׂאִים.

The people were extremely angry with the princes of Israel, because they took an oath in God's name to protect the Gibeonites. They had been conditioned to believe that the annihilation of all the inhabitants of Canaan was the will of God. Therefore, they probably saw in this oath disobedience,

which might provoke God to drive them out of the land. However, once a promise was made, it had to be kept. Nevertheless, in order to appease the wrath of the people, the princes gave the Gibeonites servile occupations such as hewing wood and drawing water (Joshua 9:19-21),

ו'אמרו כל הנשיאים אל כל העדה אנונו נשבענו לך
 ביהוה אלהי ישראע ועתה לא נוכח אנגע בך. ולא
 נעשה לך ער והחיינו אותך ואלה יהיה עמנו קצץ עץ
 השבועה אשר נשבענו לך. ו'אמרו אלהיך הנשיאים
 יחיו ויהיו חתבי עצים וסאבי מים כל העדה כאשר
 צונו לך הנשיאים.

Vows and oaths were strictly adhered to in the Biblical period because failure to carry them out was considered the equivalent of profaning God's name. This is evident in the third commandment (Deuteronomy 5:11),

לא יבא אדם על שם יהוה אלהיו לריק כי לא יקח
 יהוה אדם אשר יבא אדם לריק.

Furthermore, they felt that if they didn't carry out a vow a curse would come upon them. Thus, a vow or an oath was even more binding upon the people, than the law of Moses, and the Gibeonites, knowing this to be the case, resorted to deceitful means to escape the doom which was to fall upon the other peoples of Canaan.

Though Gibeon made peace with Israel, the other peoples of the land were not prepared to do likewise.

Adoni-zedek, the king of Jerusalem, gathered the Amorite kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon with their armies, and made war upon Gibeon because of her secession from these peoples, and her treaty of peace with the Israelites. Immediately, the Gibeonite leaders called on Joshua and the people of Israel to carry out their oath, and protect them. Israel had no choice but to come and redeem them from the hands of their attackers. However, this was the incident which inspired the conquest of southern Canaan. Once again, God was pictured as a leader in battle, delivering the Amorites into Israel's hand (Joshua 10: 8-10),

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֲלֵךְ הִירָא מִהֶם כִּי בִיזִיק נִמְגִּיף
 לֹא יֵצֵא אִישׁ מֵהֶם בַּפֶּיךָ. וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כָּגֹאֵן
 כֹּס הַקֵּי־לֵב עָלֶיהָ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, וַיַּהֲרֹג יְהוָה לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וַיַּכּוּ מִכָּה גְדוֹלָה בְּגִבְעוֹן וַיִּרְדָּפוּ דֶּרֶךְ מִצְרָה בִּיָּם
 חֲרוֹן וַיַּכּוּ עַד עֲזִיקָה וְעַד מִקְדָּה.

The defeat of the Amorites was attributed to an extraordinarily extended day, which was declared in the Bible to be a miracle, and an indication of the way in which the Lord fought for His people (Joshua 10: 13-14),

וַיִּדָּן הַיָּמָם וַיִּרָח עֲמָד עַד יִקַּח אֱלֹהֵי אִי־הוֹ הַלֵּא הָיָא
 כַּגִּוִּיָּה עַל סֶפֶר הַיָּם וַיֵּצֵא הַיָּמָם בַּחֲצִי הַיָּמִים וְלֹא
 אֵל עֲבֹא כִּיּוֹן גַּמִּים. וְלֹא הָיָה כִּיּוֹן הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי
 וְאַחֲרָיו עֲמָד יְהוָה הַקּוֹל אִישׁ כִּי יְהוָה נִלְחַם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

The Amorite kings fled to a cave at Makkedah, in order to escape their doom, but they were discovered and killed along with the rest of the Amorites in the field. Those who remained alive sought protection in fortified cities, but to no avail. Joshua and the Israelites attacked the cities of Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir, destroying all their inhabitants and their kings. However, Israel's victory over the Amorites was attributed to the leadership of Israel's God of war (Joshua 10:42),

ואי כח המלכים האלה ואי ארצם כי ייחזק
אמר כי יהוה אלהי ישראל נאמן עשה זאת.

When the king of Hazor heard about the Israelite annihilation of the peoples and kings of southern Canaan, he alerted the other northern kings, and their armies, and they went out together with the aid of their horses and chariots to the waters of Merom to fight with Israel. Again, the Lord was declared superior to the strength of horses and chariots (Joshua 11:6),

ו'אמר יהוה אל יחזק אל מלך ארץ חבניק כי חזק כח
הוא אנכי נא את כל חלמ'ם עמי ישראל אל חסידה
תעקר ואי מרכבתיהם תשרף באש.

These northern armies were delivered into the hands of the Israelites who smote them, houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire. Then Joshua led the people to Hazor, where they destroyed

all the inhabitants and their king, and set the city on fire. The cities of the other kings were also taken, and the inhabitants and the kings were utterly annihilated, but none of the cities were set on fire, except Hazor, whose king instigated the battle (Joshua 11:13-14),

רק כל הערים והעממין עם תלם לא שרפו ישראל
 ולא או חזור לבדה שרץ יהושע. וכל עם הערים
 האלה וההמה בללו להם בני ישראל רק או כל
 האדם הכו לפי חרב עם השמד אורם לא השאירו
 כל נשמה.

Once again, the laws of war were modified in accordance with the needs of the times. Joshua probably realized how impractical it would be to rebuild each fortified city from the foundations for settlement by the Israelites.

According to this account, the conquest of the land was now complete and the Canaanites had been utterly wiped out except for a small remnant of "anakim" which took up residence in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Joshua 11:22-23),

לא נותר ענקים בארץ בני ישראל רק בעזה בנת
 ובאשדוד ובארן. ויקח יהושע את כל הארץ ככל אשר
 דבר יהוה אל משה ויגנה יהושע אנטה לישראל
 כמחלקתם אשדוד והארץ שקדה ממלחה.

"However, there appears to be two versions in the Bible of the conquest of Canaan. The writers of

chapters 10 and 11 of the Book of Joshua would have it that Joshua defeated all the land, the hill country, and the South, and the Lowland, and the slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining; but he utterly¹³ destroyed all that breathed. Chapters 15-19 of Joshua, and Judges I though, have it that the conquest was a very slow piecemeal affair accomplished largely after Joshua and his generation were gone, and by individual¹⁴ tribes and clans acting only infrequently in unison. The latter view is deemed by scholars to be more correct.¹⁵ The remarks of the people after Joshua's death provide further evidence to support this conclusion (Judges 1:1),

וְהָיָה אַחֲרָיו מִן הַיּוֹסֵעַ וַיִּשְׁאַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּיהוָה לֵאמֹר
 מִי יִצְלֶה עִמָּנוּ אִם הֵכֵנָנוּ בְּתַחֲלָה לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא .

"Archaeologically, this conclusion is demonstrated by the destruction and occupation, or reoccupation, sometimes several times during the thirteenth, twelfth, and eleventh centuries of such places as Lachish, Debir, Hebron, Eglon, Beth-shemesh, Gibeah, Bethel, Shilch, Megiddo, and Beth-shan; or the failure to occupy certain places such as Jericho, Ai, Gezer, and¹⁶ Jerusalem."

13. Joshua 10:40, 11:16

14. This version is also found in Joshua 13:1-2, 14:12-13

15. From H. M. Orlinsky's Unpublished Manuscript on Ancient Israel (1953)

16. H. M. Orlinsky, op. Cit.

After the conquest, Joshua apportioned parcels of land to each of the tribes. When he sent the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh back to the land which they were to occupy, he gave them a portion on the western side of the Jordan in addition to Bashan which was already promised to them by Moses before the Israelites entered Canaan. As soon as they returned to their new home, they built a large altar to God. The Israelites, upon hearing of this, immediately took up arms, and prepared to go to war against these tribes. They had already set up the Tabernacle at Shiloh, and therefore considered the duplication of the altar an act of rebellion against the other tribes. The people sent Phineas the priest and the princes to the two and one-half tribes to question the meaning of their act (Joshua 22:16),

כה אמרו כל עדת יהודה מה המצא הזה אשר
 מצאנו בארצי ישראל לשום היום מאחרי יהודה בקדושתכם
 אכן מזהח למדקדק היום ביהודה.

The children of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh explained that the altar was not built to be used, but merely as a symbol for future generations, so that they will continue to remember that they are part of the people of Israel, even though they live across the Jordan. Thus, civil

war was averted (Joshua 22:28-29),

ונאמר והיה כי יאמרו אלנו ואם דרתינו מחר ואמרנו
 כאן את גבול מלחמה יהיה אשר עשה אבותינו לא
 עצוריה ולא מלחמה כי עש הוא בינינו וביניכם. חלילה
 לנו מננו למלחמה ביהודה ולשום היוק מאחרי יהודה לבנו
 מלחמה עצמה למלחמה ולמלחמה מלחמה יהיה אלהינו
 אשר לפני משכנו.

Joshua's death is preceded by a farewell message to the people and their leaders, of which there are two versions in the book of Joshua. In chapter 23, when Joshua spoke to the Israelites and their princes and elders, he assumed that they were well acquainted with the Law of Moses and their history since the Exodus from Egypt, and merely reminded them of what God did for them as their leader in war, and warned them not to be influenced by the remnant of the

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surrounding idolatrous nations, but to remain separate, lest God withdraw his support causing them to perish off the land instead of conquering it (Joshua 23:12-13),
 כי אם שוב תשובו ודבקתם ביהוה האל
 האלה הנסארים האלה אתכם והתחלתם בהם ובאגם
 בהם והם בכם. ידוע גדעו כי לא יוסיף יהוה אלהיכם
 לעורר את האל האלה מלפניהם והיו לכם לפח ולמוקש
 ולשטן בצריכם ולצננים בעיניכם עק אבדכם מעל הארצה
 הטובה הזאת אשר נתן לכם יהוה אלהיכם.

17. This statement provides more evidence that the conquest of the land was not complete, to support the view that the second version of the conquest was the correct one.

In chapter 24, Joshua spoke to a gathering of the people and their leaders at Shechem. It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, that many of the Hebrews had never been in Egypt, and that perhaps some left Egypt in an earlier exodus at about 1450 B.C.E. These people conquered and settled the land around Shechem. Though they were descendants of Abraham, they did not experience the crossing of the Red Sea, nor the sojourn in the wilderness, nor had they been practicing the Law of Moses. Joshua's farewell message of chapter 24 seems to indicate, that it was meant especially for these people. Joshua reviewed the history of the Israelites up to that time for them, and then told them that it was to be their choice whether they would serve the God of Abraham, or the idols of the Amorites among whom they dwelt (Joshua 24:15),

ואין רע בעיניכם לעבד את יהוה בחירו לכם ה' או את
 ה' תעבדון אם את אלהיכם אשר אבדו אבותיכם אשר
 בעבר הנפדו ואין את אלהי האמורי אשר ארץ ישראל
 בארצם ואנכי ובימי נעבד את יהוה.

The people promised their allegiance to the God of Israel. However, Joshua warned them that the Lord was a jealous God, who would consume them if they turned back to idolatry (Joshua 24:19-20),

ו'אמר יהושע אם העם לא תוכלו לעבד את יהוה כי
 אלהי קדש הוא אף קנוא הוא לא יסא לעבדכם

וְכַחֲאוֹתֵיכֶם. כִּי גַעֲזְרוּ אֶל יְהוָה וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהֵי נֹכַח
 עַל וְהָרַצְתֶּם עִמָּךְ וְכַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהֵי אֲחֵרִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁתָּבֵחַ עִמָּךְ.

Nevertheless, these people again promised to serve the Lord, and Joshua made a new covenant with them at Shechem and set up huge stone there as a witness against these people, should they deny their God.¹⁸

These two accounts seem to indicate the merger of two groups of peoples into one. However, the newly enlarged group did not have the national solidarity that prevailed under the leadership of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, because they lacked a common history and culture, and common interests.

B. The Period of the Judges

The conditions which prevailed in the land of Canaan for about two centuries after the death of Joshua were certainly detrimental to the growth and development of Israel as a united nation under one government and one God. Many forces, both within and without, helped to destroy the unifying bonds which Moses established and Joshua tried to maintain.

Of the external forces, the most important were the Canaanites who had not been driven out of the land because the Israelites could not compete with
 18. Joshua 24:25-27

their fortifications and weapons. Also they were greatly outnumbered. The period of the Judges marked the beginning of the Iron Age, and at this time, iron appears to have been a magic product in Western Asia valued no less than silver and gold. This was not so much because of the scarcity of the ore, as because the secrets of the rather complicated smelting process seem to have been jealously guarded by the Canaanites. As a result, the Israelites could not make the iron weapons nor the iron chariots which were necessary for the conquest of the lowlands where the enemy dwelt. Therefore, the tribes of Israel had to be content to live among their idolatrous neighbors.

Secondly, shortly after 1200 B.C.E., there appeared in the northern coastal plain a people called the Philistines. They were one group among a large number of sea peoples from the Greek Islands, and particularly from Crete.¹⁹ While attempting to invade Egypt, the sea peoples suffered a severe defeat at the hands of Pharaoh Rameses III (1195-1164 B.C.E.). This particular group fell back on the coast of Palestine.²⁰ Incidentally, the reason that the Israelites and the Philistines were able to gain a

19. Amos 9:7 (Caphtor was the name for Crete) and the Aegean Mainland

20. See G. E. Wright-F. V. Filson, op. cit., p. 44-45

foothold in the land, was that Egypt lost all control over Canaan at this time.

The Philistines were far the most important of the sea peoples in Palestine. Their residence centered about five cities, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. Each was controlled by a "tyrant," who though independent, cooperated with others in important matters. Thus, in political military affairs, the people were able to act as a united group. In addition, they too knew the secret of smelting iron, and had military superiority over the Israelites with their iron weapons and chariots.²⁰

Not only did the Israelites have to protect themselves from those who settled the land around them, but also from the bedouins of the desert, the Midianites, who were able to make long distance raids by making use of domesticated camels on a large scale. Every year, just before the harvest, they would leave the desert, probably because of a lack of water in the heat of the summer months, and travel westward across the Jordan and into Canaan. There they would overrun pastures and farmlands while riding on their camels, and seize the crops. As it was, the Israelites of this period were quite poor when compared to their neighbors,

20. See p. 25

Introduction to Old Testament
Times (1955) p. 25
"The Biblical Period," in
Jews, ed. L. Finkelstein
(New York 1947) Vol. 8, p. 21

the Canaanites and Philistines. These annual incursions made it even more difficult for them to provide sustenance for themselves and their families. Usually they would try to conceal their produce in caves or in hidden storechambers within their houses and then run for the hills, for the Midianites killed²¹ anyone they found in their path.

These were the external forces which harassed Israel. Of the internal forces, the first and foremost was the lack of a central government. While the Canaanites and the Philistines displayed strong city-state political organizations, each state having its own ruler with cooperation at least in time of emergency, Israel consisted only of a loose federation of tribes held together after a fashion by a religious covenant. The visible symbol of this bond was the "Ark of the Covenant" which rested in the central sanctuary erected at Shiloh. However, there was no central political figure to succeed Joshua as a leader of the people.²⁰ Furthermore, the liberty-loving Israelites were not ready to accept the authority of a king as yet. They were content with the old tribal organization. The monarchical idea went against their grain. They only wanted to settle down on the

21. See C. H. Gordon, Introduction to Old Testament Times (Ventnor 1953) p.139
 W. F. Albright "The Biblical Period," in The Jews, ed. L. Finkelstein (New York 1949), Vol. 5, p.21

land in hopes of living a peaceful patriarchal society again. The Canaanites, Philistines, and Midianites, asserted themselves, and managed to subdue different tribes for long periods of time.

Secondly, the people of Israel were not united as far as religion was concerned. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter, that the Hebrews who joined the Israelites, and pledged their allegiance to God of Israel at Shechem had been accustomed to worshipping the idols of their Canaanite neighbors. Without proper leadership, they reverted back to this seductive Canaanite worship with its degrading practices of child sacrifice, sacred prostitution, and snake worship.²² Furthermore, among the Israelites, the older generation died, and a new generation arose that did not remember the Exodus, of the years spent in the Wilderness (Judges 2:10),

וְכָל הַדּוֹר הַדּוֹר יִהְיוּ אֵלֶּיךָ אֲבֹתָיִם וְאִמֹּתָיִם
אֲחֵרִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ אֶת יְהוָה וְאֶת
הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

Since they were not able to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, they had to live among them. Gradually they married into their families, and were lured into worshipping their idols. In fact, contrary to the command of Joshua, many altars were built to be used in addition to the one at Shiloh. Of course, the

more they turned to idolatry, the weaker the covenant between them became and the more each tribe tended to live by and for itself, isolated from the other tribes. This disunity made oppression and subjugation by outsiders relatively easy.

Yet, complete assimilation was averted by the spontaneous rise of leaders from various tribes as the occasion demanded. They were called "Judges," but they were chiefly military leaders who led the oppressed tribes in their fight for freedom. Never did any of these Judges have the full support of the Israelites against the enemy. At most, only six tribes participated in battle, as in the days of Deborah's encounter with the Canaanites of Hazor. After the oppressors were defeated, the Judge would exercise temporary sway over those whom he had redeemed. The following pages will deal with the careers of the most important Judges and their role in the wars of Israel.

23

Jabin, the king of Hazor, appears in the Book of Judges to be at the head of a coalition of Canaanite states which gathered their forces to strike at Israel in the hopes of evicting the invaders from the land. At this time, since there

23. This is not the Jabin who was reported killed earlier by Joshua.

See Radak Hebrew Commentary on the Bible. at Judges 4:2

was no man of tried courage, a women named Deborah, from the hills of Ephraim, undertook the leadership of her people against the Canaanites! She appointed Barak the son of Abinoam as commander of the army, and then recruited forty thousand men, using the war cry that the God of Israel was a leader in battle in order to arouse and inspire them to go forth to meet the enemy. (Judges 4:6-7)

וּמִלְחָמָהּ וּמִקָּרָא כְּבָרֵךְ בֶּן אֲבִינוֹם מְהֵרָה נִפְגַּעִי וְאֶמְצֵא
אֶתִּיּוֹ הַלֵּא זֹה יִבְרַח אֵלָי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל וְחֶסֶת בְּהַר גִּבּוֹר
וְעִקְחָהּ צֶמֶח עֲשֶׂה אֲכָבִים אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי נִפְגַּעִי וּמִבְּנֵי זִבְלוּן.
וְחֶסֶת אֵלֶיךָ אֵם נַחֵם קִישׁוֹן אֵת סִיסְרָא שֶׁר צָמָא יִבֵּן
יֵאֵר רֶכְבּוֹ וְאֵם הַחַיִּים וְנִגְלִיָּהּ בִּידֶךָ.

However, only the men of six tribes gave their support, Zebulun, Naphtali, Isaachar, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. In her Ode of Triumph, Deborah chided Reuben for discussing and meditating on the war instead of offering manpower, the Gileadites for merely sitting peacefully among their sheepfolds on the other side of the Jordan, and Dan and Asher for being too occupied with shipping

(Judges 5:15-17),

וְעַד בִּישְׁכָר עַל דְּבָרָה וְיִשְׁשָׁכָר בֶּן בָּרֵךְ מֵעֵלֶיךָ שָׁמָּה
בְּרָגְלֵיךְ גִּלְעָדִים דְּאוֹרֵן גִּלְעָדִים חֲקִי לָבֶ. שָׁמָּה יִשְׁכָּן
בֶּן הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים שָׁמָּה שִׁקְוָה עֲדָרִים לִשְׁמֹרֶת רֶמֶשׁ
גִּלְעָדִים חֲקִי לָבֶ. שָׁמָּה חֲסִידֵיךְ שֶׁנִּי וְנִי שָׁמָּה
יֵשֶׁב אֶמְצֵא שָׁמָּה יִחַי וְנִי חֲסִידֵיךְ יִשְׁכָּן.

Success in this battle appears to have been a miracle upon first hand examination, in view of the fact that Sisera, Jabin's captain, was reported to have used nine hundred chariots of iron in the encounter, and Israel was unable to cope with iron chariots. Furthermore, Barak's forces were armed only with the home made weapons of farmers. None had swords or spears.²⁴ However, it was mentioned in Deborah's Ode, that a heavy thunderstorm occurred at the time of battle and Sisera's chariots were bogged down in mud (Judges 5:4),

וְהַיְיָ יִשְׁרָאֵל הִשְׁמָדָה אֶת־
 הָאֲרָמִים בְּיַד־יָהּ וְהָאֲרָמִים
 בְּיַד־יָהּ וְהָאֲרָמִים בְּיַד־יָהּ

Barak's army of forty thousand men immediately attacked and destroyed the Canaanites, and Sisera who tried to escape fell into the hands of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, who killed him.

Though the Canaanites were subdued, and no longer strove with the children of Israel, a new terror arose and plagued them. The Midianites from the east were making long-distance raids on the land of Canaan by means of large-scale use of the domesticated camel. The Israelite farmers, unable to offer any resistance, would flee to the

hills, while their crops and cattle were seized by these bedouins (Judges 6:2-5),
 וגעז יד מדין על ישראל מפת מדין צאו להם בני ישראל
 את מנהריו אשר בהרים ואת המצודות ואת המצודות. והיה
 אפ לרע ישראל ועל מדין וצמק ובני קדם וצלו עליו.
 ויחנו עליהם וישחיתו את יבול הארץ עד בואק עזה ולא
 ישאירו מחיה בישראל ובה וסור וחחור. כי הם ומקניהם
 יצלו ואליהם יבאו כדי ארבה ערב ולבם ולמלחמה
 אין מספר ויבאו בארץ עשמה.

At this time, arose a judge from the tribe of Manasseh by the name of Gideon. The Bible pictures him as having been inspired by a messenger of the Lord to carry on the war against the Midianites. It is also possible that he was moved by a desire for the revenge of the blood of his brothers who were killed by the Midianites at Tabor. The first thing which Gideon did was to tear down the altar dedicated to Baal and the adjacent Asherah in his own community, and erect an altar for sacrifices to the God of Israel, in order to redicate himself and his people to the religion of their fathers. Then he gathered an army of thirty-two thousand men from four tribes, Manasseh, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher, from which he selected three hundred men to drive away the great multitude of Midianites and their camels. Gideon, like the Judges who preceded him,

was inspired with the traditional idea that his God was a God of war, and a leader in battle, who would deliver the enemy into their hand even at overwhelming odds such as these (Judges 7:7),

וְאַחַר יְבוּהוּ אֵל גִּדְעוֹן בַּשָּׁמַיִם מֵאוֹיֵב הָאֵלִים הַמַּלְקִיִּים
אֲוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְנִתְּנָה אֵת מִדְּיָן בְּיָדְךָ וְכָל בָּעָם יִלְכּוּ
אִתְּךָ עַמְּהֶנּוּ.

The miraculous nature of this victory probably also served to convince those who did not pass through the Wilderness under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, that the God of Israel was a God of war. Gideon used a simple but effective strategy, namely to arouse the enemy at midnight and spread consternation in their camp (Joshua 7:19-21),

וַיָּקָם גִּדְעוֹן וַחֲמֵהוּ אִישׁ אֶתֶר אֶתוֹ בִּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַזֶּה
הַאֲשֶׁמֶר הַגִּיבִינָה אֶת הַקֶּסֶף הַקִּיּוֹם אֶת הַשְּׂמֶרֶת וַיִּקְצוּ
בַּשּׁוּכֹת וַיִּנְכָּזוּ הַכִּבְדִּים אֶתֶר בְּיָדָם. וַיִּקְצוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה
רִאשִׁיִּים בַּשּׁוּכֹת וַיִּשְׁכְּרוּ הַכִּבְדִּים וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ בִיד יְמִינָם
הַשּׁוּכֹת עֲגִקוּצָה וַיִּקְרְאוּ חֲרָה עֲלֵיהֶם אֲלֻדָּעוֹן. וַיַּעֲמֵד
אִישׁ מֵחֵיָו סָבִיב לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְעַל כָּל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְצוּ וַיָּנוּסוּ.

Wakened out of a deep sleep by the crash of pitchers, the blowing of trumpets, the shouting, and the flashing of torches and swords all around their camp, the Midianite horde plunged into panic and fled to the Jordan valley. While the small force pursued them, Gideon sent messengers to the

men of Ephraim living in the hill country overlooking the Jordan, and they attacked the bedouins upon their arrival, killing their two princes, Oreb and Zeeb. The powerful Ephraimites were angry because they were not consulted before the battle, but Gideon appeased them with flattery (Judges 8:1-3),

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אֵיךְ אִפְרַיִם מָחָה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּנוּ
 אֲבִיגַי הַכַּאוֹר עָמָּנוּ כִּי הִכַּכְתָּ אֶדְכָּחֵם בַּמִּדְיָן וַיִּרְיֵבוּ
 אִתּוֹ בַּחֲזָקָה. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיוּהֵם מַה עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּנוּ כִּכְּ הִכָּא
 טוֹב עָלֵינוּ אִפְרַיִם מִבְּצִיר אֲבִיעָזָר. בִּידְכַכְּ נָתַן אֹתָהּ
 אֵל שְׂרֵי מִדְיָן אֵל עָרָה וְאֵל זֶאֶב וְאֵל יִנְעָמִי עָשׂוֹר כִּכְּ
 אֵל דָּבָרָה רוֹחֵץ מֵעַלְיוֹ הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה.

25

It has been suggested that what was considered previously a single pursuit continuing across the Jordan, may really have been two separate ones resulting from two different Midianite attacks. In the first pursuit it appears that the princes Oreb and Zeeb were leading the Midianites. In the second, Zebah and Zalmunna were at the helm. In addition, there is a distinct interruption in the Biblical narrative between the pursuit before crossing the Jordan, and the one on the other side of the river.

While Gideon and his men were chasing the

25. See Fleming James, op. cit., p.70-71

Midianites under Zebah and Zalmunna, they passed through the Israelite cities of the half tribe of Manasseh, Succoth, and Penuel. Gideon made a request for bread for his weary and hungry men, but the elders of both cities refused him. Later when the bedouin kings were captured, the elders of those cities were put to death by barbarous torture. The Midianite kings, upon being overtaken by Gideon finally confessed that they slew his brothers at Tabor. Impelled by the obligation of blood revenge, he took the lives of the two rulers (Judges 8:18-19),

ו'אמר אל זבח ואל זלמנא א'בה האנשים אשר הרגו
בגבור ו'אמרו כחוק כחוקה אחד כגאר בני המלך.
ו'אמר אחי בני אחי הם ח' יהוה לו החי'ג אורג
לא הרגתי אהבם.

After Gideon returned victorious in battle, the people wanted to make him king over them, but he refused to accept this kind of leadership (Judges 8:22-23),

ו'אמרו איש ישראל אל גדעון מלך בנו אלך אלך אלך
אל בן הנק כי הושיענו מיד מדין. ו'אמר אל'הם גדעון
לא אמלך אתי בכך ולא ימלך בני בכך יהוה ימלך בכך.

He probably served as a sort of magistrate for his people for the rest of his days. However, it should be noted that this was the first time that any of the tribes of Israel expressed desire to subject

themselves to the authority of a ruler.

Though the Judges are always pictured as leaders who brought about the return of the people from idolatry to the religion of their fathers, they too were influenced by the pagan practices of their neighbors. Gideon for example, requested all the gold earrings from the spoils which his men gathered from the Midianites in order to make an Ephod which was a concession to Baal-worship, and a step in the Canaanization of Israel's religion. The term Ephod was used to designate different objects during the Biblical period. In the priestly code it was described as an outer garment worn by the high priest to which the breastplate containing the Urim and Tummim was attached. In the book of Samuel, it was a garment of the simplest and most primitive type, a small piece of cloth apparently girded about the waist, worn by priests or persons functioning as priests. The Ephod which Gideon made appears to have been an object of worship made out of precious metals. Like the Ark, it was a cult object of intertribal character, and a symbol of his high authority over his own tribe and over tribes federated with or dependent upon him.

26. See Julian Morgenstern, The Ark, the Ephod, and the Tent of Meeting, (Cincinnati, 1945), pp.115-131

After the death of Gideon, some of the tribes had their first experience with a monarch. One of Gideon's sons by a concubine, Abimelech by name, had all his other sons killed, and himself proclaimed king. The results were disastrous and this movement toward hereditary authority was short lived in Hebrew society.

After the fall of Abimelech, one of the sons of Manasseh, Jair, led his own clan northward and conquered the thirty cities and called them "the villages of Jair." It is possible that the northward advance of this clan may have weakened the remaining clans of the tribes of Manasseh in Gilead, thus enabling Ammon to attack the land. The absence of this important clan may also account for the Gileadites turning to the outlaw, Jephthah, for assistance, after having rejected him for being an illegitimate son. Jephthah accepted the leadership of his tribe against the Ammonites on condition that the elders not only recognize him as one of them again, but also accept him as their leader. The elders had little choice but to accept.

The first thing that Jephthah did, was to send messengers to the Ammonite king in hope of averting this encounter. However, the king was resolved to fight because he felt that the land was his, and that the Israelites deprived him and his people of

the land. The messengers responded under instructions from their leader that the God of Israel has given this land to His people for a possession (Judges 11:23-24),

וַעֲמַד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹרִים אֶת הָאֲחֵרֵי מַנַּשֶּׁה
עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֹהֶב גִּירָשָׁנוּ. הִנֵּה אֵל אֶשֶׁר יוֹרִישׁ
כַּחַשׁ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתֵּנוּ גִירָה וְאֵל כֹּחַ אֶשֶׁר הוֹרִים יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מַנַּשֶּׁה אֶתֵּנוּ גִירָה.

When the messengers returned with the news, Jephthah, rallied men from Gilead and Manasseh to his cause and went out to battle.

After the defeat of the Ammonites, the people of Ephraim were very indignant because Jephthah did not consult them and obtained victories without their aid. However, Jephthah did not appease them as Gideon, and the result was a civil war in which thousands of Ephraimites were slain at the fords of the Jordan. This intertribal war was one of the manifestations of disunity that weakened Israel in the period of the Judges.

From what can be deduced from these incidents concerning the people and Judges of Manasseh, the tribe must have been one of the most warlike in Israel. Later, during the period of the United Monarchy, the Manassites probably contributed many men to the professional army of David out of a lust

for conquest.²⁷ That the Manassite coans were eager for war is further demonstrated in an account of the war with the Hagrenes in the days of Saul.²⁸

While the Ammonites were attacking Israel from the East, the Philistines attacked from the West. The Danites, being their immediate neighbors along the coast, were their first victims. At this time, a Nazirite by the name of Samson arose from the tribe of Dan to protect his people. However, lacking the support of his own harrassed tribe as well as neighboring tribes, he tried to fight the Philistines single-handed, and resorted to mischievous strategies and unexpected onslaughts. One of his pranks was to set their fields on fire by torches placed in knots which he made by tying foxes tails together. After this outrage, the Philistines came up to Judah to capture him. The men of Judah, instead of hiding Samson, immediately bound him in ropes and handed him over to his enemies (Judges 15:11-13),

וַיָּבֹאוּ עֲשָׂרִים אֶלְפֵי אִישׁ מִפִּלִּשְׁתִּים אֵלֶיךָ אִתְּךָ אֵלֶיךָ סָבִיב עֲשֵׂה
וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ כִּי מֵעַתָּה כִּי מֵעַתָּה בְּפִשְׁתֵּינוּ וְנִחַ
לָנוּ עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ כִּי עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ כִּי עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ כִּי עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ

27. A. Bergman, "The Israelite Tribe of Half Manasseh," Journal of the Palestinian Oriental Society, (1936)

28. I Chronicles 5:18-22

העם הנאמר לא רצה להילחם
 נגד הפלשתים ורצה להישאר
 תחת יוקם הפלשתים. וכן
 נאמר כי לא רצה העם
 להילחם נגד הפלשתים.

The people of the tribe of Judah preferred to live under the yoke of the Philistines rather than fight for independence, and they were not prepared to have anyone disrupt the peace which they enjoyed. Therefore, they immediately surrendered him.

Samson's attacks on the Philistines did little to improve the state of affairs, for long after his death, they continued to hold the upper hand over the tribes of Dan, Benjamin, Judah, and Ephraim.

In the book of Judges, the attitude of the people toward war is more clearly expressed than anywhere in the Bible. For the most part, they wanted to return to a peaceful patriarchal society. Without a strong leader and internal unity, the war for conquest was interrupted, and they merely settled down to farm the land which was already in their possession. Naturally, the Israelites sought to live peacefully with their neighbors, and they probably thought it desirable to marry into their families. As a result of intermarriage and also because of common interests, many of them were lured into practicing Canaanite idolatry. Nothing, including religion, was as important to them as leading a secure and peaceful existence. They were reluctant to go to war. The only

things which incited them to action were the attacks of their idolatrous neighbors who made several unsuccessful attempts to evict them from the land.

Though the Judges tried to revive the idea that the God of Israel was a God of war as a means of rallying the tribes, none of them had the ability to mobilize all of Israel at any one time into a strong unified people, and as a result, disorganized tribalism prevailed (Judges 21:25),

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד כָּל אֶחָד מֵאֲדָמִי וּבְיַד כָּל אֶחָד מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ וּבְיַד כָּל אֶחָד מֵאֲדָמִי וּבְיַד כָּל אֶחָד מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ וּבְיַד כָּל אֶחָד מֵאֲדָמִי וּבְיַד כָּל אֶחָד מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ

C. Samuel

Although the people of Israel were able to subdue the Canaanites and the Midianites under the leadership of the Judges, they could not cope with the formidable might of the Philistines. In fact, four of the tribes were enslaved by them, Judah, Dan, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The philistine yoke was exceedingly heavy upon the tribes. They had their garrisons stationed in important places in order to prevent any uprising or rebellion. Furthermore, they took strong measures to disarm the population, confiscating all swords and spears, and deporting all smiths to Philistine territory. As a result, the Israelites had to bring even farm implements to their land and

pay an exorbitant price to have them sharpened (Samuel 13:19-21),

וחרש לא ימצא בכם ארץ ישראל כי אחר פלשתיים כן
יצאו הערבים חרב או חנית. וירדו כל ישראל הפלשתיים
לעזוב איש את מחרשתו ואג אתו ואת קרדמו ואג
מחרשתו. והיה הפזירה בין אמחרשו ואותיו ולעזב
קלסון ולקלדמית ולחציב הדרגן.

The oppression by the Philistines had a very depressing effect upon Israel's spirit, for their intentions were to engulf the promised land. Naturally, in times of trouble, the people were inspired to put away their idolatry and return to the Lord, in the hope that He would deliver their enemies into their hand. The sanctuary at Shiloh was visited in ever increasing numbers by despondent worshippers seeking comfort in their distress. Eli, the priest, and the elders undertook the leadership of some Israelite tribes at this time, but they lacked manpower and weapons to cope with the Philistines who continued their offensive both northward and eastward. An important encounter of this period was the pitched battle in the plain between Eben-ezer and Aphek in which the Israelites suffered heavy losses (Samuel 4:1-2),

ויפי דבר שמואל לכם ישראל ויצא ישראל לקראת פלשתיים
למלחמה ויחנו על האגן העזר ופלשתיים חנו באפק. ויצרכו
פלשתיים לקראת ישראל ותש המלחמה וינאל ישראל לפני
פלשתיים ויכו במצרכה בשדה כארבעה אלפים איש.

The Israelites were almost helpless against the iron chariots of the Philistines, and about four thousand men were killed. The elders, as a last resort, decided to fight another battle against them, but this time with the "Ark of the covenant" in their midst. They had been conditioned to the idea that the God of Israel was a God of war, and they believed that by bringing the Ark to the battlefield, God would become their leader in battle and deliver the enemy into their hand (I Samuel 4:3-5),

וַיָּבֹא הָעָם אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לִקְנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמֹה נִגְבֹּנוּ
יְהוָה הִיּוֹק עִמָּנוּ כַּלְשָׁנִים נִקְחָה אֵלֵינוּ מִסָּפָה אֶת אֲרוֹן
בְּרִית יְהוָה וַיָּבֹא בִקְרִבָּנוּ וַיִּסְעֲנוּ מִכָּל אִיבֵינוּ. וְשָׁמָּה
הָעָם עָלָה וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִפֶּן אֶת אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה זָבָאוּג יִשָּׁב
הַכִּרְבָּיִם וְשָׁם שָׁנִי בְנֵי עֲלִי עָם אֲרוֹן בְּרִית הַאֱלֹהִים חֲפְנֵי
וּפִנְחָס. וַיְהִי כִּבּוּא אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְעוּ
כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל גְּרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וְהָפָךְ הָאָרֶץ.

The Ark was indeed a great morale booster for the fighting forces as indicated by the shouting of the men as it was brought into the camp. Yet, they were still no match against the Philistines, and they suffered far heavier losses in the second battle since no natural force came to the rescue as in other encounters of this period (I Samuel 4:10-11),

וַיִּלָּחֲמוּ כַּלְשָׁנִים וַיִּגְבֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּנוּסוּ אִישׁ לְאֹהֲלָיו וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה
גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד וַיָּכַף מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלִשִּׁים אֶלֶף רָעִי. וְאֲרוֹן אֱלֹהִים
נִלְקָח וְשָׁנִי בְנֵי עֲלִי מָתוּ חֲפְנֵי וּפִנְחָס.

Though this defeat was due to the military inferiority of the Israelites, it was attributed in the Bible to corruption within the priestly ranks. Eli failed to punish his two sons, Hopni and Phinehas, for defiling the sanctuary with lewdness, and for tampering with the procedure of offering sacrifices (I Samuel 2:29-31,34),

למה גבעון הגבתי ובמחתי אשר צויתי מצון וכבד און
 בנין מנני להגבריאכא מראסית כל מחת ישראל לעצמי. עכנ
 נאס יהודה אלהי ישראל אחור אחתי ביק וביג אביק
 ויתהלכו לפני עד עולם וצתה נאס יהודה חלילה ע' כי מחבדי
 אכבד וביג יקלו. הנה ימיך באים ודעתי את ירצק ואג
 זנצ ביג אביק מהיוג יקן בקיג.
 ויה עק האוה אשר יבא אע שני בניק אע חפני וכינחס
 ביוס אחד ימיג שניהם.

The capture of the Ark by the Philistines symbolized to the author, who was violently pro-Samuel, God's anger because of the abominations of these priests, and the withdrawel of His support in the battle.

This encounter, as well as those that followed, was the result of an expansionist movement of these Philistines, the ultimate aim of which was probably to establish the nation in Canaan. The hillcountry of Ephraim was not a rich prize, but it was one of the obstacles which had to be overcome in order for them to reach the

plain of Esdraelon with its fertile soil and caravan routes.²⁹

In the wake of these misfortunes, arose another great Judge by the name of Samuel. Until this time, he had been serving as a priest under Eli. However, now that the Ark was in enemy hands and Shiloh was destroyed, he took upon himself the responsibility of organizing the people in preparation for throwing off the yoke of the Philistines.

When the Philistines saw that Samuel gathered the people of Israel together at Mizpah, they attacked them in order to crush what they thought was threatened revolt.

The Israelites, inspired by Samuel's religious leadership, went out to do battle despite their fears of the military superiority of the enemy, and defeated them with the aid of a force of nature which was described as a great thunder (I Samuel

7:8-10),

וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל אֵל תַּחֲרֹם מִמֶּנּוּ וְעַתָּה אֵל
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַיַּעֲזֵנוּ מִיַּד פִּלִּשְׁתִּים. וַיִּקַּח שְׁמוּאֵל דָּבָר הַזֶּה
אֶחָד וַיַּעֲלֶה עֹלָה כְּלִים עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּזְעַק שְׁמוּאֵל אֵל יְהוָה קָדֹךָ
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲנֶהוּ יְהוָה. וַיְהִי שְׁמוּאֵל מַעֲלֶה הָעֹלָה וּפִלִּשְׁתִּים
נִגְזְרוּ מֵעַמָּהּ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּרְעַץ יְהוָה קָדוֹם גָּדוֹל בְּיוֹם הַהוּא
עַם פִּלִּשְׁתִּים וַיִּהְיֶה וַיִּהְיֶה עָלֵיהֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל.

29. See Dr. S. Goldman, Soncino Commentary on Samuel 4:1, p.21

Samuel interpreted this thunder, which probably³⁰ threw the Philistines into a state of confusion, as an act of the God of Israel who in answer to Samuel's prayer and sacrifice, was delivering the Philistines into Israel's hands. (I Samuel 7:12),

וַיְהִי עַמּוּאֵל אֲבִן אֶחָא וַיֵּסֶף בֵּין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֵין הָעַן וַיִּקְרָא
אֶל עַמּוּהָ אֲבִן הָעֶזְרָא וְאֶחָא עָרְנָן יְהוָה.

As Samuel became older, he had hoped to keep the leadership of the tribes within his own family, and therefore, he appointed his two sons, Joel and Abijah, to succeed him. However, the elders refused to submit to their incompetent and dishonest judges, accepting bribes and perverting justice. Secondly, all the surrounding nations were ruled by monarchs. The elders realized that a sovereign ruler over Israel was an absolute necessity if the tribes were to survive against the forces without, and therefore, they demanded that Samuel appoint a king over them (I Samuel 8:4-5),

וַיִּגְדְּלוּ כָּל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל עַמּוּאֵל הַרְחֹמֶה. וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אֵלָיו, הִנֵּה אֲנִי זִקְנָה וְנִיךְ לֹא הָיָה בְּעֵרְכִי עֹלֶה שִׁמְהָ
לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְפָנֵינוּ כֹּכָה הָאֵל.

30. See Radak Hebrew Commentary on the Bible
I Samuel 7:10

Samuel, being displeased at this request of the elders, turned to the people and warned them that a monarch would demand from them military service and forced labor, and would burden them with heavy taxation, and would confiscate their property and servants in accordance with his needs or desires. The people refused to listen to his arguments. Their desire for security had always been greater than their longing for freedom, and only a king could help them to acquire that security in years to come (I Samuel 8:19-20),

וַיִּמְאֲנוּ הָעָם לְשָׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹל שְׁמוּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִּי אִם מֶלֶךְ
 יִהְיֶה עִמָּנוּ. וְהָיָה אֵל אֲנָחְנוּ כֹכָה הַגּוֹיִם וְשִׁבְעָנוּ מִכָּל
 אֲדָמָה לְפָנָיו וְנִשְׁלָטָנוּ אֵל מִלְחָמָתָנוּ.

Samuel had no choice, but to accede to their demands and he annointed Saul the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, as their king. However, he tried to exert control over the monarch so that he would obey the word of God as spoken by His priest and prophet, Samuel.

Chapter III - Israel's Rise to the Height of Power

A. Saul

It has been already mentioned that during the period of the Judges the Israelites suffered from two basic internal weaknesses, the lack of religious unity, and a central shrine , and the poor political organization which made it almost impossible for the people to act as unified military force against their enemies. Samuel partly succeeded in reviving their loyalty to the God of Israel because of the people's fear of the Philistines who had initiated an offensive which threatened to engulf the land of Canaan and subject them to vassalage. However, neither he nor his sons were able to recruit the military might necessary to repel the Philistines. Therefore, the elders and the people had no choice but to demand a king, especially now that such a formidable enemy demonstrated its imperialistic designs.

The establishment of the monarchy in Israel brought about many economic political, social, and cultural changes some which were already visible in the days of Saul, while others were not manifest until the days of David and Solomon. For ~~one~~ thing, under the Saul the loose federation of tribes was now to be

transformed into a nation and forced to act as a unit against its enemies. The Ammonites who had previously been defeated by Jephthah, were the first to attack Israel after Saul was anointed king. They saw in the weakening of Israel by Philistine oppression and opportune moment to regain the territory which they lost, and encamped against Jabeshgilead. The men of Jabesh would have been willing to serve them, had not the Ammonite king Nahash demanded, as the major condition of surrender, that all their right eyes shall be put out as a reproach to Israel. The elders, upon hearing this, sent messengers to Saul at Gibeah in the hope that he would be able to deliver them from their enemies. The new king recognized the fact that he did not have the support of the entire nation, for even when he was anointed at Gibeah there were some groups who refused to give him their allegiance (I Samuel 10:27),

וְגִבְיֵי בִלְעִיָּם אָמְרוּ מַה יֵּשְׁעֵנוּ לָהּ וַיִּבְרָחוּ וְלֹא הִבִּיאוּ לָהּ
מִנְחָה וְיָהּ כִּמְחִירִים.

Saul, however, unlike the Judges, did not resign himself to the opposition nor did he exploit the recruiting cry that the God of Israel was a leader in battle who would deliver the enemy into their hand. Instead, he threatened to kill the oxen of those men who refused to support their brethren in Jabesh-gilead against the Ammonites (I Samuel 11:6-8),

וּבָזָלַח רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים עַל עַמָּה כַּמָּה וְאַחַד בָּשָׂר אֶל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּחַר

אָבן מֵאָד. וְיָקָח פָּחַד בֶּהֱרֹא וַיִּנְגַּחְהוּ וַיִּשְׁלַח בָּכָל גְּבוּל
 יִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּיץ מַלְאכִים לְאַחֵר אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנו יָדָא אַחֲרֵי שְׂאֵל
 וְאַחֲרֵי שְׂמוּאֵל כִּי יָצֵה עֲבָדָיו וַיִּבְקְרוּ וַיִּפֹּס פָּחַד יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עַל הָעָם
 וַיִּצְאוּ כָּלֵי אֶחָד. וַיִּפְקְדוּ בְּגִידָם וַיְהִיו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֹׁשֶׁ
 מֵאֹיֹת וְאִישׁ יְהוֹדָה שְׁשִׁים אֲלֶפֶת.

There was an immediate and overwhelming response to the call for troops and after the battle, Saul was unanimously proclaimed king over Israel.

Saul's primary duty was to mobilize a strong army to repel the inland offensive of the Philistines. Of the thousands of men who came to the aid of the people of Jabesh-gilead, he selected three thousand warriors to serve as the core of Israel's military might. Two thousand men were stationed with Saul at Michmas, and one thousand with Jonathan at Gibeah. Jonathan opened the revolt by killing the garrison of Philistine officers in Geba. Immediately, the Philistines assembled a huge army at Michmas with thousands of chariots and prepared to make a three pronged attack on Israel. Saul naturally had to withdraw to Gilgal and there he blew the trumpet to mobilize his troops. However, the Israelites, fearing the Philistines, immediately hid themselves in caves, thickets, and pits or fled across the Jordan to Gad and Gilead. Only the people who were with Saul at Gilgal followed him, probably because they feared him more than they did the Philistines (I Samuel 13:6-7),

וא"ם ישראל ראו כי צר להם כי נגש העם ויגחבאו העם באחריו
 ובחוחים ובסלעים ובזרחים ובגרוג. וצביון צבאו או
 ה'רדן ארץ ג' וג'ע' וסא' צידו' בג'ג' וכל העם
 חרדו / אחריו .

Having made the customary burnt-offering before entering battle, Saul went up from Gilgal with the six hundred men that remained with him, and joined his son Jonathan at Gibeah. Except for the king and his son, none of the men had swords or spears because of the Philistines had previously deported all the Kenite smiths from their land in order to prevent them from making these weapons for the Israelites. Therefore, it appeared almost certain that the Philistines would be the victors. According to the Bible, Saul called for the Ark to be brought forth, but he probably sought to consult the oracle through the ephod of the Priest (see below). However too many things happened at one time. Jonathan and his armor bearer left Saul without his knowledge, and attacked and annihilated a front line garrison at Geba. At the same time an earthquake occurred which caused widespread panic in the enemy camp. Saul did not even wait to hear the oracle from the priest but immediately advanced toward Michmas. In addition, many of the people who had been enslaved by the Philistines took advantage of the situation to break loose from their masters, and put them to the sword. The remainder of

their troops were pursued by Saul's army, the liberated Israelites, and even by those who hid in caves and pits, as far as Beth-aven (I Samuel 14:20-21),
 וַיִּצְקוּ שְׂאוֹל וְכָל הָעָם אֲחֵר אַחֲרָיו וַיִּבְּאוּ עָד הַמַּחֲמֶה וַיִּהְיוּ
 מִיָּתֶד חֶרֶב אִישׁ בְּרַעְיוֹ מִהוֹמָה לְדוֹלֶה מֵאָדָּם. וּבְצִבְרִין
 הָיוּ עֹפְשֵׁי יָד כְּאֹהֲלֵי עֵשׂוֹן אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמָּם בַּמַּחֲמֶה
 סָבִיב וְאֵם הַמָּה עֲפִיּוֹן עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר אֵם שְׂאוֹל וַיּוֹנֶה.

After this unexpected success against overwhelming odds, Saul imposed upon himself and his people an oath, that no one was to eat any food until evening (I Samuel 14:24),

וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָשָׂא בְיוֹם הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוֹל אִם הָעָם כָּאֲמֹר
 אֲכֹל הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל עִמָּם עַד הָעֶרֶב וְנִקְמָתִי מֵאִיבִי
 וְעַד עַתָּה כֹּל הָעָם בָּלֶחֶם.

Probably, he thought that if the Israelites were to stop for food, they might relinquish their pursuit of the Philistines, knowing of the inertia⁴ which they had displayed until this time.

The routing of the Philistines was much more than just another military victory for Saul. In all probability the secret of iron-smelting, which they had been jealously guarding, was wrested from them at this time. That meant that in the near future, Israel could undergo an industrial revolution which lead to economic prosperity and political expansion. The manufacture of

4. See Radak, Commentary on the Hebrew Bible
 At I Samuel 14:24

iron weapons would make it possible for the succeeding kings to build up large standing armies. Also great advances were to be made in agriculture because the Israelites would now be able to make and use iron tools. The earliest iron plowshare found in Palestine was discovered in Saul's fortress at Bibeah. Other large plowshares were found at Beth-shemesh of approximately the same period. Thus in various ways, the introduction of iron in Israel paved the way for the establishment of the empire.⁵

After Saul discontinued his pursuit of the Philistines, he was instructed by Samuel to take revenge on the Amalekites and destroy every human being, men, women, and children, as well as all their cattle (Samuel 15:1-3),

וְאַחַר כִּנְוָאֵל אֵל שָׂאֵל אֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִנְחָק עֲמָזַק עַל
 עֲמָו עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה שְׂמַע לְקוֹל דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה. כִּי אִנִּי יְהוָה
 דְּבָאֵל פִּקְדָנִי אֵל אֶסֶר עֲשֵׂה עֲמָזַק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶסֶר סָקֵל בְּדֶרֶךְ
 גְּעֻלָּתוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם. עַתָּה לֵךְ וְהִקִּינֵה אֵל עֲמָזַק וְהַחֲרֵמְהֶם
 אֵל יֵם אֶסֶר לוֹ וְלֹא תִחַם עֲלֵיו וְהַחֲרֵה מֵאִיף עַד אִשֶּׁה
 מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד יוֹנֵק מִסּוּר וְעַד שֶׁה מֵאֵל וְעַד חִמּוּר.

Probably the Amalekites, who had been a hereditary enemy of the Israelites since their days in the

5. W. F. Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine, (London, 1949) p.110

wilderness, were again raiding the southern tribes under their king, Agag. Saul recruited a huge army and attacked them, killing those Amalekites who fell into his hand. However, according to the Biblical account, they were not completely annihilated, because they continued their intermittent warfare against the Israelites until they were finally subdued by David.⁶ When Saul returned, Samuel was extremely disturbed because the king had disobeyed him. He brought back king Agag alive in chains, and he permitted the people to bring back the best sheep and oxen. In view of this disrespect of the priest, the spokesman of God, Samuel informed Saul that the Lord had rejected him from being king (Samuel 15:26-28),

וְאַחַר שְׁמוּאֵל אָמַר שְׂאֵם עַל אֲגַג עֶמֶק כִּי מָאִסְתָּהּ אֵל דָּגֵר
 יְהוָה וַיִּמְאֹסָק יְהוָה מִדָּוִד מֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וַיֹּאמֶר
 שְׁמוּאֵל עֲלֶיכָה וַיִּחַדֵּק בְּכֶנֶף מַצִּיעֵל וַיִּקְרַע. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵי
 שְׁמוּאֵל קִרַּע יְהוָה אֶת מִמְלַכְיֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַתָּה הַיּוֹם
 וְנִתְּנָה לְרֹעֵק הַשּׂוֹב מִנֶּחֱק.

Samuel vigorously refused at first to return with saul to Gilgal to worship, but after Saul's second plea that the people notiving Samuel's absence would cease to respect their king, he finally consented to come. Immediately after Saul worshipped the Lord, Samuel demanded that Agag be brought before him and

6. I Samuel 27:8, 30:1, II Samuel 8:12

he executed Agag before the Lord in Gilgal (I Samuel 15: 33),

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל כִּי־אֵתֶּךָ עָשִׂיתָ נְאֻם ה' בְּכֹן וְגַם־כֶּסֶף מִנְשִׁים
לֹא־חָזַק וַיִּסְּסֵם שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת־אֲדָם עַד־כִּי־יָהוּדָה בְּגִלְגָל.

This entire episode in the relationship between Saul and Samuel demonstrates very clearly that Samuel had been the real sovereign until this time, while Saul was but little more than the commander of an army. However, after this incident, Saul was left upon his own resources, for Samuel went up to his residence in Ramah never to see him again. Samuel then sought another man to be king, and selected David, the son, of Jesse, and annointed him without Saul's knowledge (I Samuel 16:13),

וַיִּקַּח שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת־קֶרֶן הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּמָּח אֶת־קֶרֶב אֹהֶי' וַתִּצָּלַח רוּחַ יְהוָה אֶל־דָּוִד מִבְּנוֹת דָּוִד וַיִּקַּח שְׁמוּאֵל
וַיֵּסֶם בְּרֹחַ ה'.

In Samuel's action can be seen the roots of an undeclared civil war between the house of Saul and the house of David which lasted for seven years after Saul's death.

David was first introduced to Saul as a musician who would be able to sooth his nerves, for he often suffered from fits of depression after having been told by Samuel that the kingdom would be wrested from

his hands. Then in a war with the Philistines at
 Seok, he demonstrated his ability as a warrior. The
 Philistine man of war, Goliath, suggested that in-
 stead of an all out battle between their armies, the
 Israelites should pick a man to fight with him, and
 the winner would achieve victory for his people (I
 Samuel 17:8-9),

וַיִּצְמַח וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִצִּיכָה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לָבֹק עָמָה וַיִּצְא
 לַעֲרֹק מִלְחָמָה הַלּוֹא אֲנִכִּי הַפֹּעֵשֶׁתִּי וְאִתְּךָ עֲבָדִים לְשָׂאוֹל
 בָּרוּ עִמָּךְ אִישׁ וִירֵד אֵלַי . אִם יוֹכֵל לְחַלֵּץ אֶתְּךָ וְהַכִּי
 וַתִּיָּנוּ לָכֶם עֲבָדֶיךָ וְאִם אֵין אֹכֵל עָלֶיךָ וְהַכִּיתִּי וְהִיָּתָךְ
 עָלֶיךָ עֲבָדֶיךָ וְעֲבָדְךָ אֶתְּךָ .

Despite the offers which Saul made, his men were
 not prepared to risk their lives, for they knew that
 to enter into a contest with the giant would mean their
 death. However, David answered the challenge and went
 forth to meet Goliath with a sling and a bag of stones,
 and the fiery faith that the God of Israel was all pow-
 erful, and would deliver the enemy into his hand (I
 Samuel 17:45-47),

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד קִדֹּם אֵל הַפֹּעֵשֶׁתִּי אֵתָּה בָּא אֵלַי בַּחֶרֶב וּבַחֲנִיף
 וּבַכִּיָּדִין וְאֲנִי בָּא אֵלֶיךָ בְּשֵׁן יְהוָה צִבְאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרָיִם
 יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר חָרַבְתָּ . הִיוּ הָיָה יִסְעָרְךָ יְהוָה בִּידִי וְהַכִּיתִּי
 וְהִסְרֵתִי אֶתְּךָ מֵעַלֶיךָ וְנָתַתִּי בְּשֵׁר מִלְחָמָה בְּשֵׁמֶיךָ הִיוּ
 הָיָה לְעוֹלָם הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלָחִיָּה הָאָרֶץ וַיִּצֹּן כֹּל הָאָרֶץ כִּי יֵשׁ
 אֱלֹהִים עִשְׂרָאֵל . וַיִּצֹּן כֹּל הַקֹּהֵל הָיָה כִּי לֹא בַחֶרֶב וּבַחֲנִיף
 יְהוֹשֵׁעַ יְהוָה כִּי שִׁיבוֹתָ הַמִּלְחָמָה וְנָתַן אֶתְּךָ בִּידֵינוּ .

Although David attributed his victory over the Philistine to God, it was really due to his excellent marksmanship with the sling.⁸

Saul, recognizing David's ability as a warrior, appointed him commander of his army. However, it was not long before Saul became jealous of David's popularity and instigated a civil war. David had no choice but to become an outlaw, and he was constantly pursued by Saul and his army throughout the country. Saul was so ruthless in his pursuit that when he discovered that David was harbored at Nob, he ordered his men to annihilate the entire village of priests. However they refused to comply with the demands because of their respect for the priesthood, and Saul had to depend upon Doeg, the Edomite, to fall upon them.

7. Individual combat was a common middle eastern custom. This phenomenon was found on Mesopotamian seal cylinders; "and these were mobilized from all girding a belt and above." Putting on a belt for wrestling is clearly stated in Homer's Iliad 23:710. Also in the Gilgamesh epic, the hero's belt is singled out as the most precious keepsake a man could give to a woman. See C. H. Gordon, "Belt Wrestling in the Bible World," The Hebrew Union College Annual 28(1951), pp. 133
8. Many of the Israelites had developed wonderful accuracy in the use of this formidable weapon, and we are told of the Benjaminites that seven hundred of them could sling stones at a hairbreadth and not miss (Judges 20:16).

See M.S. Miller and J.L. Miller, Encyclopedia of Bible Life (New York, 1944) p.125

In the course of the pursuit, many men came to David's aid so that by the time that he went up against the Philistines at Keilah, he had recruited six hundred men. However, the continuous chase was very exhausting, and with no let-up in sight, David and his men crossed the battle-line and sought refuge with the Philistines. Achish, the Philistine king, welcomed their betrayal, for he knew that it would reduce Saul's army and facilities the conquest of the land held by the people of Israel, and gave them the city of Ziklag to dwell in. In time, Achish sought to have David and his men fight against their own brethren to demonstrate their loyalty to the Philistines, but fortunately they were saved by the Philistine princes who would not permit them to take part in the battle for fear that they might become turncoats. The inactivity of this force may well have contributed to Saul's defeat at Gilboa. The Chronicler describes David's men not as inexperienced troops, but as selected well trained warriors from various tribes, including Saul's own tribe of Benjamin (I Chronicles 12:1-2),

ואלה הבראיה אל דוד עזר עזר נפני עזר בן
קיס והמה הבראיה עזר והמחנה. נסר קסר מ'מ'ן
וממ'מ'ן פ'מ'מ'ן ובראיה נפני עזר מ'מ'ן.

The Philistines were now advancing through the plain of Jezreel, their objective being the spot where

the trade routes to Damascus joined. They had reached Shunem, penetrating into the heart of northern Israel, when Saul finally decided to take a stand against them at Mount Gilboa.

Israel suffered an overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Philistines at Gilboa, and many warriors lost their lives, including three of Saul's sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchi-shua. Saul, fearing that a Philistine would overtake him in the pursuit and inflict a shameful death upon him, finally committed suicide. As a result of this battle, Israel was reduced to a state of vassalage for seven years. However, although Saul left the country in this deplorable condition, he did succeed in wresting the secret of iron smelting from the Philistines and thereby made it possible for David to subdue them as well as to overwhelm other surrounding nations during his reign and to establish the Israelite empire.

B. David.

After the death of Saul, the nation was split into two parts. Abner, the captain of Saul's army, tried to establish one of Saul's sons, Ish-bosheth as king over all Israel, but among other things David was using the

rich spoil which he and his men acquired in his encounters with the enemies of Israel while behind the Philistine lines; to bribe the elders and thus gain control over Judah in the south. Flattered by David's gifts, the notables of the land gathered at Hebron, and after some negotiations they proclaimed him king over Judah. According to the Biblical account, the Philistine overlords were absolutely silent in this period. They probably regarded David as their vassal, and they were glad that he was keeping the house of Saul and all Israel weak through civil war.

The Scriptures state that there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, but only the battle of Gibeon is described in detail. This battle was not, as scholars usually assume, a sport contest in which only individuals were involved, but a genuine encounter as demonstrated by Yigal Yadin.¹⁰

(II Samuel 2:12-14),

וַיָּצֵא אֲבִנֵּר בֶּן נֹר וְעֶגְדִּי אִישׁ בֶּשֶׁר בֶּן עַלְמָנָן
 לְגִזְוֹנָה. וַיֹּאקֶה בֶּן גִּזְוֹה וְעֶגְדִּי דָוִד יָצְאוּ וַיַּבְלִסּוּ עַל
 בִּרְכַת גִּזְוֹן יַחְדָּו וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אִלֵּיהֶם עַל הַבִּרְכָּה מִזֶּה וְאֵלֶּה
 עַל הַבִּרְכָּה מִזֶּה. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִנֵּר אֵל וַיֹּאקֶה יְקֹוֹמָן נָא הַנְּעָרִים
 וַיַּחֲקֹוּ לַכַּנִּיָּן וַיֹּאמֶר וַיֹּאקֶה יְקֹוֹמָן.

10. See Yigal Yadin, "Let the young men I pray thee

arise and pray before us.",

Journal of the Palestinian Oriental Society, 21 (1948)
 110-116

To begin with, this apparent "sport" turned out to be a life and death struggle (II Samuel 2:15-16),

וַיִּקְרָא וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ בַּחֲסִפֵּי עֵינַי עַד אֲבִימָן וְלֵאמֹר בֶּהָר
אֵלֶּה וְעֵינַי עַד מַעֲבְדֵי דָוִד. וַיַּחֲלִקוּ אֵלֶּי בָרָאשׁ רַעֲוֹ
וַחֲרָב בָּצָר רַעֲוֹ וַיִּכּוּ מִדָּו וַיִּקְרָא לַמַּחֲקֹם הַהוּא חֶלְקָה
הַגִּבֹּרִים אֵלֶּי בַּזְּעֻל.

Secondly, Yadin shows through a certain relief found by Max Von Oppenheim in Tell Halaf (Gozan), that this method of fighting was not due to the peculiar circumstances of the event but was rather a common kind of life and death struggle in the Ancient Near East. The relief shows that one of the common ways of fighting was to get hold of the opponent's head, deprive him of freedom movement, and since the fighters clung to each other, to stab the exposed side of the opponent. This relief is dated between the eleventh and ninth centuries B. C. E., the same period as the battle of Gibeon.

In addition, he points to two articles by W. F. Albright which show that the word נִגְרִיף, used here with regard to the contestants, actually means "picked warriors" in the military sense.

Furthermore, according to Yadin, the word נִגְרִיף is actually a term for fighting which outwardly resembles a sport in which only a few men are involved, and the rest are spectators. Finally when the individual combats proved indecisive, the battle had to be fought on a full scale (II Samuel 2:17),

וְגַם הַמִּלְחָמָה קָרָה עָלָיו הָיָה אֶלֶף
וְאִנְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל עָבְדוּ עִיבָהּ.

In the course of the pursuit against the defeated men of Israel, Joab's brother, Asahel, sought to overtake Abner in the hope of depriving him of his ^{מִלְחָמָה} (wrestling belt) which was the most prized of heroic trophies. Israel and Judah lived in a world where belt-wrestling had long enjoyed international popularity. It is therefore only natural that it is reflected in the Scriptures. The aim of the sport was to strip off the opponent's belt. So characteristic of the fighting men was the wrestling belt, that soldiers equipped for war came to be called ^{מִלְחָמָה} (Joshua 4:13) or ^{מִלְחָמָה} 11 (Numbers 32:30)

Abner tried to persuade Asahel to seek a lesser trophy, but to no avail. Therefore, Abner turned upon him, smote him in the groin with his spear and killed him. The death of Asahel spurred his brother Joab to blood revenge, and some time later, when Abner surrendered Israel to David at Hebron, Joab killed him.

11. Cyrus H. Gordon "Belt Wrestling in the Bible World," The Hebrew Union College Annual 28 (1951) pp.131-136

There are no other comments regarding this war except to say that David's house was gradually becoming stronger while Saul's house was becoming weaker. ¹²

After many years of fighting, Abner, moved by many considerations, came to David in Hebron and offered him all Israel, and the divided kingdom was reunited.

David's first move as the new king of the entire nation was to seize the fortress of the Jebusites, Jerusalem, and to establish the capital of the nation there. This was very clever strategy on his part for three reasons. First, the city was midway between the northern and southern groups giving the elders of each the impression that one would not be favored above the other despite the fact that the king came from Judah. Secondly, it was militarily speaking, almost impregnable. Lastly, it was the perfect center for trade and commerce.

As soon as the Philistines learned that David was anointed king over the entire nation, they initiated a campaign to destroy him. As a rival to Ish-bosheth, David had been tolerated and perhaps even encouraged by the Philistines, but as sole ruler, he became a menace to their hegemony. They immediately encamped in the valley of Rephaim and prepared to attack him and his army.

David was victorious in his first encounter with the Philistines, and according to the account in the Book of Samuel, he and his men carried off the images which the Philistines had brought onto the battlefield to insure victory. This suggests that they might have been considered trophies in war (II Samuel 5:21),

.1'cjk1 717 pke'1 p7e'778 1k pe 1248'1

However the Chronicler added that they were burned with fire, probably in order to make David's action comply with the command in Deuteronomy 7:5,25 (I Chronicles 14:12),

.ek2 122e'1 7'17 77k'1 p7e'778 1k pe 1248'1

This was the first of many successful campaigns against the Philistines and the Canaanite peoples, the final result being the conquest of almost the whole of Canaan and the subjection of all the people to tribute and slavery. The Biblical account tells us that in the course of his successful encounters against the Philistines, David removed the Ark from Kiriath-Jearim and brought it to Jerusalem. During the lifetime of Samuel and the reign of Saul, the Ark apparently remained at Kiriath-jearim, and so far as our sources would indicate, played no part in the religious ritual or military strategy of the Israelites. There is no mention made of the Ark in the Biblical books of this period, with the apparent exception of but one reference in I Samuel 14:18,

and facilitated the centralization of the government.

After he subdued the Philistines, subjected them to tribute and confined them to a small coastal area, David conquered the Moabites, Arameans, Ammonites, Amalekites and Edomites. Some of these nations submitted willingly to his rule when they learned of Israel's great military strength.

"With Phoenicia alone, David did not go to battle. It was neither necessary nor desirable. The once great Canaanite empire which embraced so much of southern Syria and the territory on both sides of the Jordan, had dwindled and now only the narrow coastal strip running from near modern Haifa to beyond Byblos remained. The Israelites under David, and the Phoenicians under Hiram I, entered into a mutually beneficial military and political understanding. The Phoenicians agreed to provide Israel with skilled engineers and craftsmen, with cedar and cypress timber from Lebanon, and build a palace for David in Jerusalem (II Samuel 5:11). Phoenicia was militarily and economically at the mercy of David, and later of Solomon too. She could only hope to retain her independence, and increase her wealth only as long as her people were useful to these Israelite rulers."¹⁴

With the establishment of the monarchy, the

14. H. M. Orlinsky, op. cit., Chapter 4.

people no longer murmured against their leaders for involving them in war. Two factors were responsible for this change of heart.

For one thing, Israel's kings ceased to depend upon the scattered and intermittent support of the tribes. Instead they sought to establish permanent standing armies. The Biblical account relates how Saul gathered every "man of valor" for his army (I Samuel 14:52),

וַיִּבְרָא הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁאֵל כָּל־אִישׁ אֲזִיזֵי־כֹחַ וַיִּבְרָא
יֵשׁוּעַ בֶּן־נֹחַמַן וְיִשְׁבָּתָאֵל בֶּן־נִינְוֵה וְיִשְׁבָּתָאֵל בֶּן־נִינְוֵה

David, starting with a body-guard of six hundred men, during the days when he was an outlaw, had an army of thirty thousand men by the time he was king over the entire nation. David's army consisted not only of trained Israelites but also foreign mercenaries from the surrounding nations which he had subdued (II Samuel 8:18; 15:18). The establishment of a large standing army with many foreigners provided the security which the Israelites had been seeking ever since they left Egypt. They were no longer bothered by war, because now they had others to do the fighting for them.

Secondly, the completion of the conquest of Canaan brought with it a great economic revolution. The Israelites acquired the best land route between Egypt and the north as well as the city of Gaza, a

natural western terminus for trade from the eastern desert. Furthermore, the secrets of iron-smelting were wrested from the Philistines and made public property. In addition, David's capture of Edom provided Israel with the great natural resources upon which the empire was to be established, the copper and iron mines in the Wadi Arabah, and the port of Ezion-geber, the gateway to trade with the East. Naturally with the economic prosperity and security which they now enjoyed, they had no reason to complain about the exploits of their king.

In the course of his conquests, David did not follow the Mosaic law with regard to captives and booty; there is no mention of his destroying his enemies, their spoils and cities, except for the unclear description of his treatment of the Ammonites (II Samuel 12: 29-31),

וַיִּאָסֶף דָּוִד אֶת כָּל הָעָם וַיִּלָּק רֶגֶלָה וַיִּלְחֹם בָּהּ וַיִּכְבְּדָהּ.
וַיִּקַּח אֶת עֶשְׂרֵת מֵלֶכֶת מֵעַם רָאשֵׁי וַיִּמְשְׁקֶנָה כְּכֹר זָהָב וְאֶבֶן
וְקֶרֶת וְנֶחֱסִי עַל רֹאשׁ דָּוִד וְעַל הָעִיר הַיּוֹצֵא הַרְבֵּה
מֵאֵד. וְאֵת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ יוֹצֵאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר וּבַחֲרָצִי
הַבְּרָזִל וּבַמִּדְבָּר הַבְּרָזִל וְהַעֲבִיר אֹוֶגֶץ בְּמִלְכָן וְכֵן
יָעַשׂה עִם כָּל עַרְי בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וַיִּשֶׁה דָּוִד וְכָל הָעָם יְרוּשָׁלַם.

Though it is possible that David might have had them tortured to death by these instruments in retaliation for their callous treatment of his well intentioned delegation it is not likely, because in this period

it was more profitable for him to keep his captives alive, and to use them as state slaves to work the recently captured mines and smelters in the Wadi Arabah. Utter annihilation would have meant a tremendous waste of manpower. It is more probable that he set the Ammonites to hard labor with these implements.

In David's latter days, his house was filled with internal strife which grew to the proportions of a civil war. However, despite this disorder, David left the kingdom in good condition. Great as their jealousy was of each other, Israel and Judah had been held together with a firm hand. Through his roundabout conquests, David had acquired important natural resources, and established an era of economic prosperity. Though his reign was filled with blood, it did make way for the peaceful reign of his son, Solomon.

C. Solomon

Now that the conquest of Canaan was completed, it was Solomon's task to maintain the status quo and this he sought to do by peaceful means. He realized that the only way to prevent external attacks and internal disruption of the empire was to consolidate and expand his military, political and economic power. Therefore he began to develop these three assets.

He enlarged David's army and acquired thousands of horses and chariots in order to maintain military superiority over the neighboring peoples. The extent of Solomon's provision for his chariots and horses has recently been shown by excavations of the stables at Megiddo, Gezer, Hazor, Tell el Hesi,¹⁵ and other places ranging from Dan to Beersheba.

Secondly, Solomon undertook a huge building program with the aid of Hiram and the artisans of Tyre, which included the magnificent Temple, palaces for himself and the wives whom he took from the royal families of the surrounding peoples, and many store cities. These elaborate buildings at Jerusalem were of great psychological importance, for their grandeur commanded the respect of other nations for Solomon's empire.

The subservient relationship of Hiram to David was maintained during Solomon's rule. When part of the building enterprise had been carried out, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in Galilee as payment for the materials and the labor of the Phoenician artisans. Hiram was not satisfied with this exchange but he could do no more than to express his dissatisfaction (I Kings 9:10-13),

15. Chester C. McCown, op. cit., pp. 179-181

by Hiram's skilled navigators (I Kings 9:26-28),
 ואני עשה כחשק שלמה בציון לבד אשר את אדום על שם
 ים סוף בארץ אדום. וישלח חירם באני את עבדיו אנשי
 אדום יבשתי הים עם עבדיו שלמה. ויבאו אוכזרה ויקחו
 פז זהב ארבע מאות ועשרים ככר ויבאו אל כחשק שלמה.

Most probably the refined copper and iron mined in the Wadi Arabah near the port was the commodity used in trade. The Biblical account, however, only mentions that the ships brought back gold, sandalwood, and precious stones without any indication as to what was given in exchange. Thus Solomon became a great merchant king. His commercial enterprises, handled by "the king's merchants," extended in all directions.

With these means, Solomon was building the wealthiest kingdom in the Near East. However, at the same time he was planting the seeds for the division and the downfall of the empire. For one thing, he tried to make Jerusalem a cosmopolitan city, permitting the erection of pagan altars and the introduction of heathern rituals to accommodate his non-Israelite wives. It was only natural for some of the Israelites to grow familiar with idol-worship, and later to adopt these rituals.

Secondly, although Solomon exploited all the industry and commerce of the nation, the income was

not sufficient to finance his magnificent court with all its luxurious surroundings, costly buildings, and hundreds of wives and servants. Therefore, he divided the country into twelve administrative districts for purposes of taxation. As the years went by, the burden became heavier. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer, and there was much dissatisfaction in the land. Solomon even included his own people in the forced labor battalions. However, his sovereignty was too strong to invite a wide-spread revolution and the empire remained unified until his death.

Although Solomon's reign was described as a peaceful one, he was not without enemies. Rezon of Aram and Hadad of Edom made constant raids on Israel's borders. Furthermore, Jeroboam, the Ephraimite, who was placed in charge of the compulsory labor of the house of Joseph, availed himself of the deep-rooted antipathy of the north for the south, which was even more severe now because of the burdensome taxes and forced labor, and conspired against the king. He was abetted by the prophet Ahijah, who had previously condemned Solomon for allowing heathern practices in Jerusalem. Although the revolt was unsuccessful and Jeroboam was forced to flee to Egypt, the way was being paved for a permanent breach between the northern and southern groups.

Chapter 4 - The Decline and Fall of the Israelite Empire

Upon Solomon's death, the days of the united monarchy came to a close. His son, Rehoboam, was recognized as sovereign in the south, but not in the north. Jeroboam, who had taken refuge from Solomon in Egypt, was now recalled by the northern tribes to lead their revolt against the house of David. When Rehoboam announced that he would be even more oppressive than his father, they rebelled and proclaimed Jeroboam king over the northern kingdom of Israel. Thus Ahijah's words of warning to Solomon, namely, that all the tribes except one would be taken away from his son as punishment for the altars and idols which he permitted to be erected in Jerusalem, became a reality. Now that it had come to pass, Shemaiah, who was also a member of the prophetic class, restrained Rehoboam from going up to do battle with the northern tribes, telling him that the division of the kingdom was God's will.

A. Israel

As soon as Jeroboam ascended the throne of Israel, he sought to widen the breach between Israel and Judah. For one thing, he created a religious

barrier between the two peoples. He established sanctuaries in Dan and Bethel in which he placed golden calves which served as the pedestals for the invisible God of Israel. (I Kings 12:28-30),

ויוצא מלך ויצא שני עגלי זהב ויאמר אלהים רב
 עבד מצלם ירושלים הנה אלהים ישראל אשר העלוך
 מורש מצרים. ויש אור האחד בבית אל ואור האחר
 נגן קדן. ויהי הדבר הזה אחר שאר וילכו לפני
 האחד עד דן.

Furthermore, Jeroboam expelled the Levites from the north, and appointed his own priests to conduct the ritual at the newly established shrines (II Chronicles 11:13-15),

ופכבנים והלויים אשר בכי ישראל התיצבו עליהם
 מכל גבולם. כי צדו אהר הכהן אהר מלכיהם
 ואחיהם וילכו ליהודה ולירושלם כי הלויים
 ירבעם ובניו מכהן ליהודה. ויצאם לו כהנים אחרים
 ולעצירות אלה אלה.

"The nature of the alleged innovations of Jeroboam has long been recognized by historians as a reaction against the growing dominance of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, which was the religious expression of his autocratic claims. There is nothing to show that Solomon repressed the local cults, but his ambition to make Jerusalem supreme in double aspect of a political and religious capital, tended inevitably to the depreciation of the provincial holy places, to the political irritation of the local

cults, but his ambition to make Jerusalem supreme in the double aspect of a political and religious capital, tended inevitably to the depreciation of the provincial holy places, to the political irritation of the local communities and tribes at large, and to the relative depression of the country priests who doubtless came to play the role of agitators against the family of Zadok. It was to these elements of opposition that Jeroboam as a clever politician made his appeal. Jeroboam's enterprise was purely political, and cleverly founded on the opposition to Solomon's autocracy and centralization of religion. But he had no religious interest beyond the restoration of local cults, and this policy in contrast to the history of Judah, worked ill for the unity of the north.¹"

In addition to building the religious barrier, Jeroboam fortified the cities of Schechem and Penuel in order to protect Israel from an attack by Judah. Although the battles are not described, the Biblical account states that there was war between Jeroboam and Rehoboam continually. The intermittent warfare continued under Jeroboam's son, Nadab, and also under Baasha his successor. Baasha sought to

1. See J. A. Montgomery, International Critical Commentary on the Book of Kings (Edinburgh, 1951), ed. H. S. Gehrman at I Kings 12:28-31

fortify Ramah as a military threat to Judah. However, he was soon forced to abandon these operations due to an attack by the Arameans under Ben-hadad. The Arameans had been bribed by Asa, the king of Judah, to divert the attention of Baasha and his men from this building program. Finally, during the reigns of Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah the intermittent civil war came to a close.

During the reign of Ahab, Samaria was besieged by an army of Arameans under Ben-hadad (845 B.C.E.). Ahab would have surrendered except for the unreasonable demands of the Aramean monarch. After consultation with the elders and the people, and after receiving encouragement from a prophet, he decided to do battle with his enemy to the north. While they were in the midst of a drinking bout, Ahab and his army surprised Ben-hadad and his vassals, and routed the Arameans. A year later, Ben-hadad brought his forces to Aphek to do battle with Israel in the plain, for some of his men had suggested that the God of Israel was only a God of the hills, and

could not fight for them in the plain (I Kings 20:23),

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶלְכִּישְׁתִּי הַחֵיטִי אֶת־דִּבְרֵי הָאֲרָמִי וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־בֶּן־חָדָד מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם
 בְּכֹחַ חֵיטִי וְאֶת־כָּל־עָמָלָיו וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּחֵץ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־בֶּן־חָדָד
 וְאֶת־כָּל־עָמָלָיו וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־הַמָּחֵץ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־בֶּן־חָדָד וְאֶת־כָּל־עָמָלָיו

Israel was again victorious and Ben-hadad was taken captive. The Galilean cities previously wrested from Israel were recovered. However, Ahab foolishly

permitted the king of Aram his freedom. One of the prophets condemned him for it, and warned him that his life and the lives of his people would be taken in retaliation (I Kings 20:42).

In the ninth century B. C.E., the Assyrians under Shalmaneser III counteracted the expansion program of the Arameans with one of their own. Israel and Aram composed their differences long enough to do battle with this new enemy to the north. In his attack upon Syria, Shalmaneser met with a great coalition headed by Ben-hadad of Damascus. While the war is not mentioned in the Biblical account, the emperor tells us that next to Damascus, the strongest contingents were those of Hamath and of Ahab in Israel, the latter furnishing two thousand chariots and ten thousand infantry. The Assyrian monarch claimed victory, but nevertheless was unable to follow up such advantage as he may have gained, due to internal difficulties.²

After three years of peace between Aram and Israel, Ahab conspired with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to take Ramoth-gilead away from the Arameans. However, Ahab was killed on the battlefield. During the reign of his grandson, Jehoram, the Moabites sought to release themselves from the yoke of

Israel. Judah and Edom came to Israel's aid and they were encouraged by the prophet Elisha. Nevertheless, Moab won its independence.

The Arameans continued to make raids upon Israel's border inflicting heavy military losses upon her during the reign of Jehoahaz (II Kings 13:7). His son, Jehoash, on the other hand, having been inspired by the prophet Elisha, fought the Arameans again and recovered the cities which his father had lost to the Aramean monarch, Hazael. Jehoash's son, Jeroboam II was able to conquer the kingdom of Damascus and subject the land to tribute. The northern borders were approximately restored to what they had been in Solomon's day. Furthermore, Jeroboam fortified the walls of Samaria so strongly that it took three years for the Assyrians to conquer it in the last days of the northern kingdom.

Amos

The new conquests brought much wealth into Israel in the form of spoils, tribute and through a renewed impetus to trade. There was prosperity in the land, but an uneven prosperity. Merchants would use false weights and measures, and practice usuary to further enhance their coffers. Further-

more, the idolatrous worship of Baal and Astarte had been reintroduced and the moral fiber of the nation was deteriorating. In the midst of these conditions, a Judean shepherd appeared in the land, Amos of Tekoa, with a message of warning to the people of Israel of an impending catastrophe. He began by condemning the northern kingdom for social injustice, corruption and submission to idolatrous cults (Amos 2:6-8),

Amos believed that military preparedness would be of no avail against the evil which was coming. He poured his contempt upon the army through which Israel exulted, because they trusted in material assistance instead of God's help (Amos 2: 13-16),

והפס הקשת לא יצא	הנה אנכי מציק מחגיכם
וקל ברעליו לא ימלא	כאשר געיק העצלה
ורכב הסוס לא ימלא נפשו.	המלאה זה עמי.
ואמיל לבן בבוריו	ואבד מלחם מקל
ערק ינוס ביום ההוא	ותהק לא יאחד כחו
לא ירוה.	ועבור לא ימלא נפשו.

Amos and the prophets who succeeded him did not perpetuate the notion that the God of Israel was a leader in battle going out at the head of Israel's host to thrust down her enemies. On the contrary, he saw God using the invading forces of Assyria to punish Israel for the corruption which prevailed the land (Amos 3:10-12),

כה אחר יהודה
כאשר יציל הרעה מפי הארץ
שמי כרעים או בדל און
כן ינצלו בני ישראל
הישיבים בשמרון
בפאג מסה ובדמשק ערש.

ולא ידעו עשור נכחה
נאם יהודה
האזרים חסם וסף בארמנויהם.
עכן כה אחר אדני יהודה
צר וסביב הארץ
והורג ממך עזק
ונגלו ארמנויהם.

The prophet looked upon war as God's instrument for chastizing his people for the idolatry and social injustice which they practiced during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. The sword was in God's hand to punish, and any military effort was considered resistance to the divine will of doom.

The oracle concluded with a prophecy of captivity in which most of the people would be put to the sword, but a chosen remnant would be spared to return and rebuild the promised land (Amos 9:8-10,14),

הנה ציני אדני יהודה
המחלכה החטאה
ופשעתי אלה מצל בני האדמה
אפס כי השמיד אשחך
את ביה יעקב
נאם יהודה.
כי הנה אנכי מצוה והנעוה
בכל העוים את ביה ישראל
כאשר ינוע בכברה
ולא יבול צרור ארץ.

בחרה יחזיו כל חטאי עמי
האחרים לא גמיע וקדיש
קצתנו הרעה.
ושבתי אג שבות עמי ישראל
ובנו ערוק נסחור וישבו
ונטעו כרמים ושתו אג יין
ועשו גנות ואכלו אג פריהם.

As a result of these prophecies against Israel, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, denounced Amos to king Jeroboam and had him banished from the northern kingdom.

Hosea

A younger prophet by the name of Hosea arose to carry on the work of Amos. Like Amos, he began by condemning the people for idolatry and immorality (Hosea 2:10-12, 4:1-3). He saw with aversion the feverish seeking after foreign alliances, a phenomenon apparently new since Amos' day, and the assimilation that was taking place between the Israelites and their heathen neighbors. Israel was condemned for trusting in Assyria and Egypt (Hosea 7:11-13),

וַיְהִי אֶפְרַיִם כִּי־וַיֵּה פִּגְמוֹתָיִם אֵל אֱלֹהֵי כִּי־נִדְּרָהּ
מִזְרֵיָם קִרְאוּ אֶחָד הֶעָלוּ. עַד אֶהְיֶה כִּי־פָסַעִי הִ'
כֹּאֶסֶר יֵלֶכְוּ אֲבֵרֹשׁ עֲלֵיהֶם רֶשֶׁת אֲנֹכִי אֶבְרָם
כִּצְלוֹן הַנְּחִים אֲזַרְיָה וְהִנֵּה דָמָרוּ עָלַי כִּנְדִּיף.
אִיסִּירָם כְּנֶעֶץ אֶעֱצֹמָם.

Hosea, like Amos, conceived of war as God's instrument for chastizing those who turned to idolatry. Assyria, the nation from whom Israel sought help, was to be her conqueror (Hosea 11:5-6),

לא ישוב אל ארץ מצרים וחלה חרה בער'ו
 ואשר הוא מלכו וכמה גדיו ואכלה
 כי מאני לשוק. ממעצוריהם.

During the last years of Israel's existence the rulers swayed in their loyalty between Assyria to the north and Egypt in the south. While Menahem was on the throne, the internal difficulties in Assyria were cleared up, and Tiglath pileser the Assyrian king, prepared to attack Israel. Menahem immediately offered tribute to appease the Assyrian monarch, to restrain him from overrunning the land (II Kings 15:19-20),

בא כול מלך אשר על הארץ ויגן מנחם לבוא אלם
 ככר כסף להיוג ידיו אלו להחריק הממלכה בידו.
 ויצא מנחם אל הכסף על ישראל על כל גבולי החיים למג
 למלך אשר חמשי סקלים כסף לאיל אחד וישה מלך
 אשר ולא צמד ער בארץ.

On the other hand, when Pekah seized the throne after killing Menahem's son Pekahiah, he joined an anti-Assyrian coalition. The coalition was defeated and Israel was made a vassal state of Assyria. After Pekah was slain by conspirator, Hoshea, the son of Elah, ascended the throne and ruled Israel during the last nine years of her existence as a nation. During the earlier part of his reign, he gave tribute annually to Shalmaneser, Tiglath-pileser's successor to the Assyrian throne. Later,

though, he withheld the yearly sum and sought to make an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. The prophet Hosea condemned this move of Hosea, and predicted the end of the northern kingdom, because of the idolatry which pervaded the land, and because the king sought help through foreign alliances, instead of through the Lord in time of distress (Hosea 10:13-15),

חֲרָשָׁם רֵעַ עֲזָרָה קִצְרָם אֶכְלָם כִּי בָחַן
בְּדֶרֶךְ בָּרָה עֲזָרִיק. וְקָאֵם שָׁאוֹן בְּעֶמְקִים וּבְכָל מִדְבָּרִים
יוֹשֵׁב בְּעֵד שְׂמֹן בֵּית אֲרֻלָּה בְּיוֹם מִלְחָמָה אֵם עַל
בְּנֵי רֹעֶה. כִּכָּה עֲשֵׂה עֲכָם בֵּית אֵל מִכְנֵי רֹעַ
רִעֵיכֶם בַּסֵּחַ נִדְמָה מֵעַן יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Shalmaneser, upon learning of Hoshea's action, arrested him, imprisoned him, and set about to besiege Samaria. Though their king was in the hands of the Assyrians, the inhabitants of the capital city of Israel had no intention of capitulating. The people were able to hold out against the enemy for three years due to the strength of fortifications which Jeroboam II had constructed during his reign. Shalmaneser died during this time and was succeeded by Sargon who finally took Samaria, and carried the people into captivity according to the Assyrian custom.

The history of the northern kingdom indicates that there were many changes in the attitude of

Israel toward war in the days of the divided monarchy. The monarchs did not depend upon the people to fight but rather large standing armies of trained warriors many of whom were from foreign nations. Wars were no longer fought to conquer the promised land and eliminate idolatrous cults, but rather for economic reasons. Often religion served merely as a tool for economic and political maneuvers by Israel's rulers.

The people's attitude appears not to have changed much from what it was in the days of the united monarchy. Despite all the wars which were fought during this period, there is no mention in the Biblical account of any complaints against kings, for constantly involving the nation in these wars or reluctance to engage in warfare. As I have mentioned earlier, the people were interested only in their own security. Thus, as long as they didn't have to do the fighting or jeopardize their lives, they were not against war.

The greatest change manifested itself among the prophets of the God of Israel. Whereas formerly the God of Israel was regarded as a God of war, delivering the enemy into Israel's hands, now they warned that the God of Israel would use the military might of foreign nations to punish the kingdom

and destroy it because of idolatry and religious transgression. These changes were also evident in Judah as will be demonstrated in the second half of this chapter.

B. Judah

With the secession of the northern tribes under Jeroboam's leadership, Solomon's son Rehoboam only retained sovereignty over Judah, Benjamin, and the vassal state of Edom. If Rehoboam had been able to strike at once against the still unorganized north Israelites, he might have won control over the whole country. That the attack was not launched, must be credited in a large part to a warning from Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt who was doubtless already plotting¹³ to disrupt the Solomonic empire. At all events, Rehoboam was sufficiently alarmed by the threat of an Egyptian invasion to abandon any projected punitive expedition and to fortify a large number of strategically located points commanding roads and valleys leading into Judah from the south and west (II Chronicles 11:5-12). Fifteen of these fortified towns are listed by the Chronicler. They were admirably selected to create the strongest practicable defense line against attack by an Egyptian army.

13. From the Karnak inscription, Shishak does not appear as an ally of Jeroboam, as the partial Judean records suggested to past scholars, but rather as the enemy who took advantage of the now divided and weakened Hebrew state to raid and despoil it, but with no permanent results. See J. A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman, International Critical Commentary on the Book of Kings (Edinburgh, 1951), I Kings 14:25-28.

When the invasion finally came in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, it broke with full force over the southern kingdom, and it was attributed by Shemaiah, who was true to the prophetic tradition, to the fact that Rehoboam and the princes of Judah had forsaken the Lord and turned to idolatry (II Chronicles 12:5),
 וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ הַכּוּשִׁים עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁנָה חֲמִישִׁית לְמַלְכוּת רְחֹבָאָם
 כִּי יָבֹאוּ הַכּוּשִׁים עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁנָה חֲמִישִׁית לְמַלְכוּת רְחֹבָאָם
 כִּי יָבֹאוּ הַכּוּשִׁים עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁנָה חֲמִישִׁית לְמַלְכוּת רְחֹבָאָם

In the great Karnak list, Shishak listed over one-hundred-and-fifty places which he claimed to have taken; the presence of many Edomite names in this list has only been recently recognized. Once in Asia, Shishak proceeded to lay Israel as well as Judah to waste. The correctness of the inclusion of north Israelite towns in the list has been demonstrated by the discovery of a fragment of a large triumphal stele of Shishak at Megiddo, one of the towns listed at Karnak as conquered. Thus, despite the fact that the Egyptian monarch had protected Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon, he now unleashed the same terror upon the northern kingdom as the southern kingdom.

In the years which followed, the strength of the two kingdoms was weakened as a result of the intermittent warfare which they were carrying on between each other. This intermittent civil war was carried on during the reign of Rehoboam as well as under his

successors. His son Abijah, as was mentioned earlier, is credited with having won an important victory over Jeroboam, while his grandson, Asa contended with both the Ethiopians and the northern tribes of Israel with the aid of a large standing army.¹⁴ Asa had to repel an invasion from the direction of Egypt carried out by an Ethiopian garrison commander from the Egyptian frontier fortress of Gerar. Whether Zerah, the Ethiopian, was acting on orders from Shishak's successor, Osorkon¹⁵ I, we are not told, but it seems likely enough. The Chronicler states that Asa's army pursued the Ethiopians to Gerar, and smote them, spoiling all their cities round about the fortress (II Chronicles 14:12-14).

In the latter part of Asa's reign, Baasha, the king of Israel began to fortify Ramah, a border town between Israel and Judah. When Asa learned about this move, he turned to Ben-hadad, the king of Aram for aid, and bribed him with silver and gold treasures that were left in the temple and the King's palace after Shishak's raid,⁶ in order that Ben-hadad might attack Israel from the north and divert Baasha from his hostile activity (I Kings 15:17-19).

4. II Chronicles 14:7-8

5. See W. F. Albright, "The Biblical Period" in The Jews ed. L. Finkelstein (Philadelphia 1949) Vol. 1 pp. 29-32

6. II Chronicles 12:9

While Baasha abandoned Ramah to defend Israel against the Arameans, Asa and the people of Judah carried off all the building materials from the fortress to build two fortified cities of his own, Geba and Mizpah. The Judean king was severely criticized by Hanani, the prophet, for depending upon an alliance with Aram instead of the help of God to defeat his enemies. Had he relied upon God alone, he might have been able to defeat both Aram and Israel. However, now that he made the mistake, Hanani prophesied that he would have¹⁷ wars continually.

After a long and successful reign, Asa was succeeded by his son, Jehoshaphat. The new king raised a large standing army, and set garrisons of these trained warriors in all the fortified cities of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa, his father, had¹⁸ taken from Baasha. The result of these tactics was that not only were the surrounding nations afraid to go to war with Judah, but some of them even brought tribute to the Judean monarch. Thus he acquired much wealth and power (II Chronicles 17:10-13),

וַיְהִי כִּשְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר מֵאָלֶף הָאֲרָבִיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב
 יְהוּדָה וְלֹא נִלְחְמוּ עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְהָיוּ כָּל הַמְּלָכִים
 מִן הָעַרְבִיּוֹת וְעַד הָעַרְבִיּוֹת לְבָנֵי אֲשָׁא

17. II Chronicles 16:7-9

18. II Chronicles 17:2

ואלכס'ן וסבא מאור. ויהי יהושפט המלך ודדא עד למעלה ויבן
ביתיהודה בירניו וצרי מסכנו. ומלאכה רבה היה לו
בצרי יהודה ואנשי מלחמה לבורי חיל בירושלם.

Jehoshaphat finally made peace with Israel, and the intermittent civil war was terminated. The agreement was sealed by the marriage of his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. At about this time, the Assyrians, against whom Israel and Aram had made common cause, were forced to withdraw from battle due to internal difficulties, and the old conflict between Israel and Aram was renewed after a three year truce. Ahab, seeing the opportunity to take Ramoth-gilead away from the Arameans, requested and was granted assistance by Jehoshaphat and his army (I Kings 22: 3-4),

ויאמר מלך ישראל אם צדדיו הידעגפ כי ענו כחג דעצד
ואנחנו מחסינ מקח. אלה מ'ד מלך ארם. ויאמר אם
יהושפט הוסיף את' עמלמחה כחג דעצד ויאמר יהושפט
אם מלך ישראל כחונ' כחוק כצמי כצמק כסוס' כסוס'ק.

Jehoshaphat, being true to the God of Israel and against all forms of idolatry, requested that Ahab seek the word of the Lord before they enter battle. Ahab immediately turned to the four hundred prophets of his court and asked them whether he should fight the Arameans or forbear. They told him to fight, promising that the Lord would deliver Ramoth-gilead into his hand. However, Jehoshaphat refused to accept

their prophecy, probably because they were prophets of Baal, and asked Ahab to consult a prophet of the Lord. The king of Israel reluctantly sent for Micaiah knowing in advance that Micaiah would prophesy against him. The prophet warned Ahab not to do battle lest he be killed and his army scattered, but to no avail. The defiant king ordered that he be imprisoned and then left with Jehoshaphat for Ramoth-gilead. Though Ahab went into battle in a common soldier's dress while Jehoshaphat wore his royal robes, the former was killed and the life of the latter was spared.

After a rather successful reign of twenty-one years, Jehoshaphat was succeeded by his son Jehoram. It was during his reign that the Edomites carried out a successful revolt against Judah, winning their independence as well as control over the copper mines. They were able to maintain their gains for about a century. In addition, the southern kingdom suffered from raids by those who had earlier paid tribute to Jehoshaphat (II Chronicles 21:16-17),

וַיָּעַר יְהוֹרָם אֶת יְהוֹרָם אֶת רוּחַ הַכַּסְאִי וְהַעֲרִיף אֶת
 אֶת יְדֵי כוֹסֵי. וַיֵּצֵאוּ בִּיהוּדָה וַיִּקְעוּהָ וַיַּעֲבֹד אֱלֹהֵי כָנָן
 הַר כּוֹס הַנְּחֹמָא אֲבִי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלֹא נִשְׁאָר
 לֹא בֶן כִּי אֵין ~~וְיָדוּ אֶת הַקֶּסֶל~~ בְּנֵי.

During the reign of Joash, the Chronicler tells of an attack on Jerusalem and Judah by the Arameans

in which the princes were destroyed and the spoils were sent to the king of Damascus. The Chronicler, like the prophets, attributed this incursion to the fact that they had forsaken the Lord and turned back to idol-worship (II Chronicles 24:23-24),

וַיְהִי לְמִקְוַבַּת הַשָּׁנָה יָצְבָה עָלָיו חֵיל אָרָם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלָּה יְהוֹדָד וִירוֹשָׁלַם וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ אֶת כָּל שְׂרֵי הָעָם מֵעַם וְכָל שְׂלֵשֶׁת שָׁלֹחַ לְמֶלֶךְ דְּרַמָּשֶׁק. כִּי בַמִּצָּר אֲנִשִּׁים בָּאוּ חֵיל אָרָם וַיְהִי וְגַן בִּידָם חֵיל עָרֵב מֵאֵד כִּי עָזְרוּ אֶת יְהוֹדָד אֲלֵהֶם אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם וְאֵת יוֹאָשׁ עַבְדֵּיהֶם.

The Armean army was an instrument in God's hand to bring judgement upon the Judean princes and upon Joash. The king having been sorely wounded in battle was helpless against his conspiring servants. They slew him on his bed to avenge the murder of Jehoiada's son, Zechariah. Amaziah, his son and successor, upon taking over the reins of the kingdom, immediately had his father's conspirators put to death in retaliation, but spared their families from the same fate. During his reign, Amaziah waged a successful campaign against Edom regaining part of the territory lost by Jehoram, including Sela, whose name was then changed to Joktheel.¹⁹ Filled with confidence after this victory, the southern monarch then challenged Israel's king, Joash, to a battle, probably with the thought

19. II Kings 14:7

that he was now strong enough to control both Israel and Judah. However, Amaziah and his army were defeated, and Jerusalem was plundered by the northern forces. All the treasures of the Temple and the king's palace were confiscated, and many hostages were taken back to Samaria. In time, a conspiracy developed against Amaziah possibly as a result of what happened in Jerusalem. He managed to escape to Lachish, but he was finally slain there.

Upon his death, the people of Judah chose his sixteen year old son, Azariah, better known as Uzzuah, to succeed him. The new king completed the conquest of Edom, begun by his father, and restored Elath, formerly known as Ezion-geber, to Judah. Thus he acquired once again access to the trade of the Red Sea and Arabia, using probably as an article of exchange the copper he obtained from the mines in the Wadi Arabah. The marked upswing in the fortunes of Judah during his long reign may be attributed in large part to the wealth obtained from the possession of the Wadi Arabah.²⁰

According to the Chronicler, Uzziah developed a strong military machine consisting of a large standing army of trained warriors and some newly devised

20. See Nelson Glueck, The Other Side of the Jordan, (New Haven, 1940), pp. 86-87

weapons (II Chronicles 26:11-15),
 ויהי לעזר'הו חיל עשר מלחמה יוצא' צבא לעדוד המספר
 פקדון ביד יצואל הסופר ומעשהו השופר על יד חנניהו
 מסרי המלך. כל מספר ראשי האבוא עבדורי חיל אלפים וסע
 מאת. ועל יד חיל צבא שש מאות אלף וסבג אלפים וחמס
 מאות עוסה מלחמה בכח חיל עזר למלך על האויג. וכן עפס
 עזיהו לכל הצבא מלני ורמחין וכובעים ושריטות, וקסגות
 ולבגני הלצים. ויעש בירושלם חשבנות מחשבג חוסה להיוג
 על המלכים ועל הפנוג לירוא בחצית וקאבניג לגדול
 ויצא שמוע למרחוק כי הפליא להעזר עק כי חזק.

With the aid of these military forces, he conquered
 many neighboring lands, almost restoring the south-
 ern and western boundaries to what they had been in
 the days of Solomon (II Chronicles 26:6-8),

ויצא וילחם בפלשתיים ויברז את חומת דג ואג חומת
 אשדוד ויבנה ערים באשדוד ובפלשתיים. ויעזרהו האלפים
 על פלשתיים ועל הערביים היושבים בארבעה והמחנות.
 ויגנו העמון מלחה לעזיהו ויען שמו עק לבוא מצרים
 כי החזיק עק למעלה.

"Uzziah appears to have conquered the northern and
 eastern part of the Philistine plain, thus control-
 ling the important caravan routes in the coastal
 plain. The Chronicler lays great stress on his mili-
 tary activities in Arabia, which were evidently de-
 signed to consolidate his position on the caravan
 routes from Arabia."²¹

11. W. F. Albright, "The Biblical Period," in The Jews ed. L. Finkelstein (Philadelphia 1949)
 Vol. 1 pp. 40

In his latter days, Uzziah was stricken with leprosy, and his son Jotham took his place as regent. During his reign, Jotham further strengthened Judah with city and forest fortifications, and prevailed in a war against the Ammonites, subjecting them to tribute after his victory (II Chronicles 27:4-5),

וערין הנה הבר יהודה והחרשין הנה בירניו וחדלם.
 והוא נלחם עם חלק בני עמון ויחזק עליהם ויגנו לו בני
 עמון בשנה ההיא מאד כבר כסף וצמר אפס כרין
 חסין ועזורין עשר אלפים זאג השיבו לו בני עמון
 ובשנה השנייה והשלישית.

After ruling for sixteen years, Jotham was succeeded by his son Ahaz. Finding himself at once the target of an attack by Pekah, king of Israel, and his ally, Rezin, king of Aram, Ahaz appealed to Assyria for help, offering to become a vassal and sending silver and gold treasures from the Temple and the king's palace to the Assyrian monarch, Tiglath-pileser III (II Kings 16:7-8)

וישלח אחז מלכין אלם ושלח פסטר חלק אסור לאמר עבדן
 ובניך אני עבד ודועני מכל חלק ארץ ומכל חלק ישראל
 הקומים עלי. ויקח אחז את הכסף ואג העזה הנמצא ביה
 יפיה ובאצרוך ביה החלק וישלח לאמר אסור שחר.

Assyrian aid was promptly forthcoming. Damascus was stormed by the Assyrians after a bloody war, and Aram was converted into four Assyrian provinces. Even

before the fall of Damascus, the Assyrian armies swept over Israel, devastating Galilee, and annexing all of Israel except Ephraim and western Manasseh.

Ahaz went to Damascus to pay homage to the victorious Assyrian monarch. During his stay there, he saw an altar that appealed to him. He had the specifications of the altar recorded and sent to Jerusalem, where the priest Uriah executed the specifications to duplicate the pagan altar for the Temple. This was not unusual for Ahaz, who was already inclined toward idolatrous worship, but most probably it was a political move to win the good will of the Assyrian monarch.

Although Ahaz subjected Judah to vassalage with heavy tribute, he did save the country from devastation. Moreover, archaeological indications point to increasing prosperity toward the end of the eighth century B. C. E.

Upon his death, Ahaz was succeeded by his son Hezekiah, and there was a rapid change in both religious and political policy. For one thing, the people were confronted by the increasing power of the Assyrians. Secondly, new prosperity and new economic opportunities made men increasingly restive under the grinding taxation necessary to meet Assyrian demands

for tribute. Evidence of a plan for future revolt first manifested itself in Hezekiah's vigorous program of religious reform (II Kings 18:4-5),

הָיָה הַסֵּר אֶת הַבַּחֲוֹי וְסָר אֶת הַמִּצֵּבֹת וְכָרָא אֶת הָאֲסֵרֹת
וְכָרָא נֶחֱשׁ הַנְּחֹשׁ אֶת עֵשֶׂה מִשֶּׁה כִּי עַד הַיָּמִין הָיְתָה
הֵיוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִקְדָּרִים עָלָיו וְיִקְרָא עָלָיו נֶחֱשׁ. בִּיהוּה אֱלֹהֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּטַח וְאַחֲרָיו עָלָה הָיָה כְּמֹהֶן בְּכָל מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה
אֶת הֵיוּ אֲבָנָיו.

The Chronicler gives a much more elaborate descrip-
23
tion of this program, and informs us that not only did Hezekiah and his supporters seek to eradicate idolatry from Judah; they also began active propaganda in northern Israel which was now in Assyrian hands. Though it met with some success in Galilee, it was unfavorably received in Ephraim (II Chronicles 30:10-11),

וַיְהִיו הַרְצִיק עֲבָרִים מִצִּיר גָּלִיל בְּאֶרֶץ אֲפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה
וְעַד זַבְדִּי וַיְהִיו מִשְׁחִיקִים עֲלֵיהֶם וּמַעֲצִים בָּם. אֲךָ אֲנָשִׁים
מֵאֵשֶׁר וּמִמְנַשֶּׁה וּמִזַּבְדִּין נִכְנְעוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ עִירוֹשֶׁלַם.

While Sargon II of Assyria was still alive, Hezekiah did not try to incite an open rebellion. However, when Sargon was replaced by his son Sennacherib, the Judean king, following the pattern of the Chaldean and Egyptian monarchs, tried to free himself from the Assyrian yoke (II Kings 18:7-8),

וַיִּפֹּשׂ יְהוֹהָנָן בֶּכַל אֶת יָדָא יִשְׂכִּיל וַיִּמְרָד בְּחֹמֶק אֲשֶׁר

וְלֹא עָבְדָּו. הָיָא דְכַח אִי פִלְסְטִינִי עָד עֵינֵי וְאִי דְבִלְסִיָּה
מִמֶּנֶּדֶף נִזְכָּרִים עָד עֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם.

Probably the purpose of his attack on the Philistines was to force them into the anti-Assyrian camp. It was during this period that Hezekiah ordered the construction of the Siloam tunnel in Jerusalem to insure the capital's water supply in case of siege. The Assyrian army soon invaded Judah, crushed the revolt and destroyed forty-six fortified cities according to Assyrian records.²⁴ Jerusalem was saved by the payment of heavy tribute (II Kings 18:13-14),

וּבְאַרְבַּע עָשָׂר שָׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ עָלָה סִנְחֶרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ
אֲשׁוּר עָלָה כָּל עָרֵי יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת וַיִּגְכָּס. וַיֵּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ
מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה אֶל מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר לְכִיּוֹשֶׁה לְאַחַר חֲטָאֵי שׁוֹמֵר מַעַל
אֲשֶׁר גָּמַל עָלָיו אֲשֶׁר וַיִּגְכָּס מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר עָלֵי חִזְקִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ
יְהוּדָה שֶׁלֹּא מֵאוּר כְּכָר כֹּסֶף וְשֵׁלֶםִים כְּכָר זָהָב.

Although Assyrian records do not mention it, there are three Biblical accounts of a further siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians, in II Kings 19, II Chronicles 32, and in Isaiah 37. The king and the inhabitants of the city were saved by a pestilence which smote the enemy troops encamped outside the walls.

As can be seen by Hezekiah's rule, the religious reformation which he brought about not only served to rid the land of idolatry, but was also a

13. Cyrus H. Gordon, Introduction to Old Testament Times, (Ventnor, N. J., 1953) p.228

preparatory move toward the revolt against Assyrian domination. Thus religion only played a secondary role in the rebellion and was merely a convenient tool of the king to condition the people's minds for what was to follow.

Hezekiah's brave struggle for independence resulted in great losses of land, people, and livestock. It is only natural then that there should have been a political and religious reaction to his rule during the reign of his son and successor, Manasseh. I will discuss this matter immediately after dealing with the prophets of this period.

Isaiah

The conditions which prevailed in Judah in the eighth century B.C.E. were similar to what they were in Israel toward the end of the reign of Jeroboam II. There was great prosperity in the land. Luxuries from abroad were plentiful. However, there had grown up a young man during these times by the name of Isaiah, who regarded the splendor about him with aversion. The rich men of the southern kingdom enhanced their fortunes at the expense of the poor. Wealth went hand in hand with oppression. The property of the peasants was seized by large landholders by uncanny methods for their own use and

pleasure. Justice was constantly being perverted and the land was filled with violence (Isaiah 1:21-23). In addition to his attack on social injustice, Isaiah criticized the religious duplicity which pervaded the land. Although the official religion of the nation continued to flourish on the surface, and people came to the Temple and offered sacrifices and prayers, they practiced a ritual which was without significance. Along with this meaningless service went the actual worship of other gods, and the land was full of idols before which the rich and poor alike bowed down. Soothsayers and diviners acquired many clients (Isaiah 2:5-8).

Furthermore, Isaiah condemned foreign alliances as the means for defeating aggressive neighbors. When Rezin and Pekah attacked Judah, Isaiah came with his son to king Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool and tried to persuade him to trust in the power of the Lord to deliver him from his enemies (Isaiah 7:4-9),

ואמר אליו הנמר והסקט אף תירא ועבבק אל ירך משני	מלך בגובה אף בן עבא.
לנגור האודים העשנים האלה בחרי אצל ירצין וארם ובן	כה אמר אבני יהודה
רמסיהו. יען כי יעל עמיק ארם רצת אפרים ובן רמסיהו	אף תקום ולא תהיה.
עמר. נעלה בידודה ונקיצנה ונקיצנה אלנו ונחמיק	כי ראש ארם עמשק
וגור עמיק וחמם שנה	וראש עמשק לרצין
יחג אפרים מעק.	
וראש אפרים שרון	
וראש שרון בן רמסיהו	
אף עא תאמנו כי עא תאמנו.	

When the panic-stricken king refused to listen, and turned rather to the Assyrian monarch for aid, Isaiah insisted that he would still get relief from his northern enemies, but at the cost of impoverishment and permanent vassalage (Isaiah 8:5-8),

וְיִסַּף יְבוֹזֶה דָּבָר אֵלַי צוֹד לְאִמֶּרֶךְ,	וְעַל־פִּי כֹל אֲבִיקָיו
יֵצֵן כִּי מֵאֵם הָעַץ הָיָה	וְהֵלֵךְ עַל כֹּל גִּדּוּלָיו.
אִם מִי הַבְּסֵלֶחַ הַהֶלְכִים עָלָיו	וְחִסֵּץ בִּיהוּדָה
וְחִסֵּץ אִם רָצִין וְכֵן רָחֵמֵיהֶו.	שֶׁלֶף וְעֶבֶר
וְעַכְשָׁן הִנֵּה אֲדֹנִי מַעֲלֶה עֲלֵיהֶם	עַד צִוְּאֵר יִגִּיעַ
אִם מִי הַנִּהְדָּר הַצְּבֹאִים וְהַרְגִים	וְהִיָּה מִלֹּאֵל כְּנָפִי
אִם מִלֶּק אִשּׁוּר וְאִם כֹּל כְּבוֹדִי	מֵעַל רֶחֶב אֶרֶץ עַמּוּנוֹ אֵלֶּה.

Isaiah looked upon war as the means whereby God punished His people for their moral and religious backsliding. The Assyrian military machine was the weapon being used for the execution of the Divine judgment. However, because the Assyrian showed excessive brutality, arrogance and lust for power, he prophesied that in time they too would be punished (Isaiah 10: 5-7,12),

וְלִגְבוֹלָא כֵן יִחַשֵׁב	הָיָה אִשּׁוּר שֶׁבֶט אָבִיו
כִּי עֲהֵשְׂמִיד בְּלִגְבוֹ	וְחִמָּה הָיָה בִּידָם וְעָמִי.
וְעֲהֵכְרִיג גִּוִּים עַל מַעֲט.	בְּגִי חֲנֻף אֶשְׁחַנֵּן
וְהִיָּה כִּי יִהְיֶה אֲדֹנִי אֵל כֹּל	וְעַל עַץ עֲבָרָתִי אֲצֹנֵן
מִצִּהֶו בְּהַר צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם	עֲשֶׂה שֶׁלֶף וְעֶבֶר בִּי
אֶפְקֶד עַל כְּרִי גִדָּם לִבֵּי מֶלֶךְ אִשּׁוּר	וְלִשְׁמִתוֹ מִרְחֹם כַּחַת חוֹצוֹת.
וְעַל תְּבִאֶרֶת רוּם צִיּוֹן.	וְהָיָה עַל כֵּן יִדְמָה

Isaiah prophesied not only against Judah. He delivered oracles against Israel as well, condemning the northern kingdom in its last days for seeking a foreign alliance with Egypt against the more powerful Assyrian forces (Isaiah 31:1-3),

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	כִּי יִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם

Like many of his contemporaries, Isaiah alluded to horses and chariots as the symbol of Israel's dependence upon material aid and foreign alliances instead of God's help. He could only visualize captivity for the northern kingdom and extermination of its idol-worshipping inhabitants. However, a righteous remnant would be saved and would return to their land (Isaiah 10:20-23),

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם
וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם	וְיִשְׁעוּ אֶת יָדָם לְעִזְיוֹת מִצְרָיִם

Although Isaiah witnessed the Assyrian army overrunning Israel and Judah, he could not conceive of the destruction of Jerusalem. It was God's own

dwelling place and therefore it was inviolable. If nothing else, God would certainly protect His own sanctuary on earth (Isaiah 31:4-5),

כי כה אמר יהוה אלהי	כן ירד יהוה צבאות
כאשר יהיה הארץ והכר	אצבא עם הר ציון ועל גבעה.
על שרבו	בצפריים עפוח
אשר יקראו עמיו מלא רעיו	כן יזן יהוה צבאות על ירושלים
מקום לא יחג	גנון והציל
ומהמונים לא יענה	כסוח והמליץ.

Isaiah prophesied universal peace "in the end of days" stating that it would come only when all the nations are willing to recognize the God of Israel as the supreme ruler of the world, and Jerusalem as the center of religious instruction and the home of the supreme court of justice (Isaiah 2:2-4),

והיה באחרית הימים	ונלכה בארמון
נכון יהיה הר בית יהוה	כי מציון תצא גורל
בראש ההרים	ודבר יהוה מירושלים.
ונשא מלגיו	שפץ בין הגוים
ונהרו אליו כל הגוים.	והוכיח לעמם רבים
והלכו עמם רבים ואמרו	וכגלו חרבונם לארץ
עבו ונעלה אל הר יהוה	וחנינו יהיו למצור
אל בית אלהי יעקב	לא ישא גוי אלא גוי חרב
וירנו מדרכיו	ולא יעמדו עוד מלחמה.

There is no valid historical record of when and how Isaiah died, but it is possible that he may have been put to death by Hezekiah's idol-worshipping son, Manasseh.

Micah

At the same time that Isaiah was delivering his oracles against the kingdom of Israel and Judah, a younger contemporary by the name of Micah appeared on the scene with similar words of warning. His earliest prophecy was directed against the northern kingdom. Samaria was to be destroyed on account of her religious apostasy (Micah 1:6-7),

וְכַל אֲגַנְיָה יִסְרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ	וְאֶת שֶׁמֶרֶן עָצִי הִסְדֵּב
וְכַל עֲצָרְיָה אִשִּׁיפּ מִנֶּחֱ	לְחֻשְׁעֵי כָרֶם
כִּי מֵאֲגַנְן לִוְנָה קִבְצָה	וְהִגְדִּי עָלֵי אֲבָנִים
וְעַד אֲגַנְן לִוְנָה יִסְרְפוּ	וְיִסְדִּי אֶלֶּהָ
	וְכַל כְּסִילֶיהָ יִכְרֹו

However, the destruction would not stop with Samaria. Micah pictured the invaders overrunning small villages in Israel and Judah, including his own birthplace, and even went so far as to prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem after condemning the Judeans for social injustice and for depending upon material security instead of God (Micah 3:9-12),

שֶׁמֶרֶן נָא לֹא רֹאשִׁי הִיא יַעֲקֹב	וְנִבְיֵיהָ בְּכֶסֶל יִקְסֹוּ
וְקִצְרֵי הִיא יִסְרָאֵל	וְעַל יְהוּדָה יִסְעֲנוּ לְאַחֵר
הַמִּגְדָּבִים מִשְׁבֵּט	הֲלֹא יְהוּדָה בְּקִרְבָּנוּ
וְאֵל כֹּל הַיִּשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲקֹב	לֹא תִהְיֶה עֲלֵינוּ רָצָה
בְּנֵה צִיּוֹן בְּדָמִים	עֲבֹד בְּזֵלְזָכֶם צִיּוֹן שְׂדֵה גִחְרֹשׁ
וְיִרְוֹשֶׁם בְּצוֹלָה	וְיִרְוֹשֶׁם עֵיץ תְּהִיָּה
לְאִשִּׁיָּה בְּשֹׁמֵר יִשְׁבֹּא	וְהִירָה הִגִּיף לְבָחֹמֶיךָ יִצְרָה
וְכִהְיֶינָם בְּאַחִיר יוֹרוּ	

In this respect, Micah differed with his contemporary, Isaiah, who could not visualize the destruction of the Judean capital. Micah was the first to make this prophecy and he was quoted later by the elders who defended Jeremiah's right to prophesy in a similar manner.²⁵

Micah's prophecies of destruction and captivity were followed by an oracle on the restoration. He said that God will strengthen His people Israel in order that they might gain revenge on those nations that mocked them. The spoil which they take in this war of vengeance shall be devoted to the Lord (Micah 4:11-13),

וְצִוְתָה נְאֻמָּה עַל־יָם לְיוֹם רָבִים	כִּי קִרְנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּרָגָה
וְהָאֲמָרִים תַּחֲנֹף וְתִחַז בְּצִוּן עִינֵינוּ.	וּבְרִסְתֵּיךְ אֲשֶׁר נִחוּשָׁה
וְהָמָה עַל יָדָם מִחֲבוּל יְהוָה	וְיִדְבְּקוּ עֲמִים רַבִּים
וְעַל בְּבִינָה עֲצָה	וְהִחֲרַמְתָּ עִירָהּ בְּצָרָה
כִּי קִבְצָה כְּעֹמֶר לְרִגְהָ.	וְחִילָהּ עֲאֻדָּה כֹּה הָאֵלֶּה.
קוֹמִי וְדוּשִׁי בְּגִזְיוֹן	

Thus Micah shared the general prophetic attitude in the days of the divided kingdom that war is God's

instrument for chastizing his people for their iniquity. In the days of the restoration it was to serve as the means of humiliating those nations that taunted Israel and lured her toward idolatry.

For the better part of the seventh century, Judah continued to be a vassal of Assyria, paying regular tribute. Hezekiah's brave struggle for independence had resulted in loss of land, people, and livestock. The Judeans suffered materially in consequence of the government's policies. It is only natural then that there should have been a reaction to his rule during the reign of his son Manasseh and his grandson, Amon. Upon Manasseh's succession to the throne, the pro-Assyrian party gained control over the government, and as a by-product of this political change, idolatry was restored in all its glory. Even when Amon was assassinated by conspirators, the people, being in favor of the status quo, slew the king's murderers and placed Amon's son Josiah on the throne (II Kings 21:23-24),

וַיָּקֶשְׁרוּ עֲבָדֵי אֱמֹנִי וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּקִיּוֹ. וְיָקָם
 עַם הָאָרֶץ אֶת כָּל הַקְּשָׁרִים אֲשֶׁר הִמְלִיךְ אֱמֹנִי וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ
 הָאֵלֶּל אֶת יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ בֶן אֱמֹנִי.

Zephaniah

During the early part of Josiah's reign, before he reached his majority and instituted a religious reformation, there appeared in Judah a prophet, Zephaniah, who vigorously warned the Judeans of the approaching doom of their state because of the idolatry which pervaded the land (Zephaniah 1:4-6),

<p>כָּצָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵל הַמַּשְׁמָחוֹת הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים אֵי הוּהוּ הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בְּמַלְכָּם. וְאֵל הַנְּסוּלִים מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה וְאֵשׁ לֹא בָקָשׁ אֵל יְהוָה לֹא דָרְשׁוּ.</p>	<p>וְנִשְׁתִּי יְדִי עַל יְהוָה עַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהִכְרַגְתִּי מִן הַמִּקּוּץ הַזֶּה אֶת שָׂרֵי הַבָּצָל אֶת שְׂרֵי הַכַּחֲמִים עַד הִכְהִיָּם. וְאֵל הַמַּשְׁמָחוֹת עַל הַגִּלּוּל לֹא דָרְשׁוּ.</p>
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Like the other prophets, Zephaniah believed that war was God's instrument for chastizing His people, but He would also use it as the means for punishing those nations which displayed excess cruelty toward Israel, and mocked and taunted her while in captivity (Zephaniah 2:8-9),

<p>כִּי כִסֵּדָם גְּהִיָּה וְהָיָה עָמּוֹן כַּעֲמָרִים מִמִּין חֲרוֹל וּמִכְרָה מִלֶּק וּמִמְחָה עַד עוֹלָם שָׂאֲרִיג עַמִּי יִקְלָו וְיָגֵר גּוֹי יִנְחָלָם.</p>	<p>שְׂמַרְתִּי חֲרָפָה מוֹאָב וְגָדִי בְּעֵי עָמּוֹן אֶשׁ חֲרָפוֹ אֶת עַמִּי וְיִגְדִּילוּ עַל גְּבוּלָם. כֵּן חִי אֲנִי נֹא יְהוָה הַצֹּבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל</p>
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Zephaniah prophesied that the Ethiopians would be slain and the Assyrians would be destroyed for their attacks on Judah (Zephaniah 2:12-13),

וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּנוּ	וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּנוּ
וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּנוּ	וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּנוּ
וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּנוּ	וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּנוּ

The forceful prophecy of Zephaniah may have helped influence the young king to bring about a religious reformation upon reaching his eighteenth birthday.

During Josiah's reign, the Assyrian overlords were completely absorbed in defensive warfare against southern, eastern, and northern powers. The golden age of the empire was coming to a close. On the death of Assurbanapal, Assyria rapidly declined. For centuries, the Chaldeans had been slowly moving into Babylonia. As soon as they gained control of that country, they began to conquer Assyria with the aid of the Medes who had already captured Asshur. After forming an alliance, they joined to attack and capture Ninevah. The Assyrian army, having suffered a severe defeat, fell back on Haran. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho decided to march northward through Palestine to give military aid to the Assyrians. King Josiah, desiring Judah's independence, attempted to halt him at Megiddo, but he was

killed in the attempt (609 B.C.E.).⁴ When the Assyrians were defeated in Haran, Necho took over their territory in Syria-Palestine. However, the new Egyptian empire in Asia was short lived for soon Nebuchadnezzar arrived in Syria with a Babylonian army administering a crushing defeat to the Egyptians at Carchemish and took over the whole of the west to the border of Egypt. The new hope which the fall of Assyria had raised among subject peoples were dashed. Babylon was substituted for Nineveh.⁵

Nahum

In the latter days of Josiah's reign (620 B.C.E.), Nahum made his prophecies concerning the destruction of Nineveh and the fate of Assyria. Though he believed that the Assyrian army was God's instrument for chastizing Israel, he also believed that God would send still another force to swallow up the Assyrian empire because of her cruelty toward Israel (Nahum 3: 1-5),

15. II Chronicles 35:20-24

16. See G. E. Wright and F. V. Filson, op. cit. p.50

יבסלו גזיתים .	היו ציר דמים
חרב זנוני זונה	כזה כחם פרק מלאה
עובד חן בעצמ כספים	לא ימים ערף .
המרכב לויס הזנוני	הוא שוט וקול רעש אופן
ומשפחות גכספיה .	וסוס דהר ומרכבה מרהדה .
הנני אעיק נאם יהיה צבאות	פרס מעלה
ולאיתי שועיק על פניך	ולמה חרב וברק חניג
והראיתי לויס מערק	ורב חלא וכבד בגר
וממלכות קלונק	ואין קצה עויה .

Like many other prophets of this period, he used horses and chariots as a symbol of material aid in order to compare the strength of nations who depend upon them with the power of God.

Habakkuk

In a manner similar to that of Nahum, Habakkuk prophesied in the time of Jehoiakim (C. 600 B.C.E.) that though the people of Israel were destined to suffer defeat and captivity at the hands of the Chaldeans, as a result of their religious backsliding, God would use war as the means for punishing the Chaldeans for their cruelty toward Israel (Habakkuk 2:8, 16-17),

כי אתה שמוך לויך רבים	גסוך עמך כוס ימין יהוה
יטוף כח יגר עמך	וקיטוף עש כבודך.
מחמי אדך ומחם ארץ	כי מחם טגנון יכסך
קריה וכח יטבי בה.	ושך בהמוך יחייגן
שבגך קטוף מכבודך	מחמי אדך ומחם ארץ
שגה לך אגף והערש	קריה וכח יטבי בה.

Jeremiah

Judah declined rapidly after Josiah's death (608 B.C.E.). Finally the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar overran the southern kingdom and carried off the Judeans into captivity. It was during these days before the exile that the prophet Jeremiah warned the people of Judah that God would use the Babylonian army to destroy their land, particularly the city of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 4:5-7),

הגידו ביהודה	העילו אש גזמך
וקירושם השמים	כי רעה אנכי
ואמרו וקצו שפר בארץ	מביא מזבון וסגר גזר.
קראו מלאו ואמרו	עשה ארזה מסבך
האספו ונבואה	ומסית לויך
אש ערי המגזר.	נסע יצא ממקומו
שאו נס ציונה	לשופ ארץ שמה
	עריך גזינה מאין ישה.

The prophet condemned his people and their rulers for having forsaken the Lord's help and depending upon foreign alliances with Assyria and Egypt for protection against their enemies (Jeremiah

2:17-19),

מיסרן רעגן
 ומסבוגין גויכחך
 וגע' וראי כי רע ומר
 עזבק אה יהוה אלע'יך
 ולא פחדתי אלע'יך
 נאם אה' יהוה צבאו.

הלא זאג געשע' עק
 עזבק אה יהוה אלע'יך
 געג מולעכך בדרך.
 וצאה מה עק עדרך מצריים
 עסגוג מ' שחור
 ומה עק עדרך אסור
 עסגוג מ' נהר.

Furthermore, Jeremiah criticized the corruption and social injustice which pervaded every class including the prophets and priests. Like his predecessors, he considered the approaching doom as God's judgment upon the Judeans for moral backsliding (Jeremiah 6: 13-15),

ואין עשום .
 הוה' יסו כי גועגה עסו
 עס בוש עס יבוש
 עס הכעיס עס ידע
 עסן יכעו גנפ'עיס
 געג בקדג'יס יכעו
 אמר יהוה .

כי מקטנן ועד גדולם
 כעו בוצע געג
 ומנה'א ועד כהן
 כעו עשה עקר .
 ירפאו
 אה עהר עמי עס נקע'ה
 עסמור עסום עסום

Jeremiah not only warned the Judeans of the disaster which confronted them but also sought to convince them that they had better lay down their arms and submit to the Chaldeans lest they all be destroyed (Jeremiah 21:8-10),

ואם העם הזה גאמר כה אמר יהוה הנני נתן
 לפניכם את דרך החיים ואג דרך המוות. הישג בעיר
 הזאת ימוג בחרב וברעב ובדבר והיוצא ונכס
 עם הכסדים הנצרים עליכם יחיה והיה לו נכסו
 לשלם. כי שמוני בני בעיר הזאת ערערה ולא עשויה
 לאם יהוה ביד מלך בגל גמול וסרפה באש.

The ruling class felt that by these constant
 vigorous oracles of doom, the prophet was destroying
 the people's morale, and they branded him a traitor
 and imprisoned him during the siege of Jerusalem.
 They tried to counteract his words with the oracles
 of other prophets who delivered oracles of victory,
 peace and security. However, Jeremiah's attitude
 was misunderstood. His real purpose in preaching
 submission was to keep alive a remnant who would
 be able to return and rebuild the land in the future
 (Jeremiah 23:3-4).

Jeremiah, like the other prophets, believed that
 the days of the restoration, God would use war as His
 instrument for punishing all the nations that display-
 ed extreme cruelty toward His people Israel. The
 following prophecy is directed against the Chaldeans
 (Jeremiah 25:12-14),

והיה כחמאות שבאים שנה אפקד עם מלך בבל ועל העם
 יהוא נאם יהוה אלהינו ואל ארץ כסדים ושמי אגו
 למחור עולם והבאות עם הארץ והיה לא את כל דברי אשר
 דברתי עלי אג כל הכבוד בספר הזה אשר נבא ידמיהו

על כל המלחמה. כי צדקו קדש המלחמה למלך וכללם
לדורם וכללם לך ככדור וכחשך ידך.

The attitude of the Judeans toward war was the same as that of the people of Israel. Their chief concern was their security, and as long as that was not disturbed, they made no comment either in favor of or against war. The kings of Judah used their standing armies to fight wars for economic and political ends. The land of Edom, which was a source of great natural wealth due to the copper mines and the port of Elath on the Red Sea, changed hands a few times during the days of the divided monarchy. The prophets of Judah saw war as God's instrument for chastizing His people for corruption and social injustice, and later for punishing those nations that displayed extreme cruelty toward them in the course of their chastizement.

Chapter 5 - Israel's Attitude Toward War During the Exile and Restoration

During the period which followed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, we only have scattered references regarding Israel's attitude toward war. These references cannot be dated with certainty in many cases, but I will try to give as complete a picture as possible under the circumstances.

Ezekiel

In his earlier prophecies, Ezekiel warned the Judeans of approaching doom and condemned them for practicing idolatry and permitting social injustice. Like his predecessors, however, he prophesied that a remnant would be saved (Ezekiel 6:4-8),

ונשמו מזהחוי'כם ונשברו חמני'כם והפעל' חלל'כם
עבני גלול'כם. ונגל' אג פגזי בני ישראל עבני גלול'יהם
זרית' אג עצחוי'כם סביביו מזהחוי'כם. בכל מושבוי'כם
הצרי'ק גחרגנה וההחוי' גישמנה כחצן יחרבו ונאשמו
מזהחוי'כם חלל' בגוככם וידעגם כי אני יהוה. והוגרתי
בהיו' עכם פליצי חרה גלוי' בהדרותיכם בארצותי.

Like the other prophets, Ezekiel believed that war was God's tool for punishing His delinquent people (Ezekiel 11:8-9),

חרג יראתם וחרב אביא עליכם נאם אלהי יהוה.
והוצאתי אתכם מגולה ונגדתי אתכם ביד זרים וצאתי
בכם שפלים.

Ezekiel's love for the nation was so great that he had hoped that it would be possible to retain the kingdom even as a vassal state. Therefore he condemned Zedekiah's revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, and his faith in a foreign alliance with Egypt (Ezekiel 17:12-16),

אמר נא עבדך הנרי העל אדניך אתה אלהי אלהי הנה
בא מלך בקל ירושלם ויקח את מלכה ואג שריה ויהא
אורח ארץו בבבל. ויקח מורש המלוכה ויכרה אורו בריח
ויבא אורו באלה ואג איני האלף ליקח. אלהינו ממלכה
שכלה עבדתי הגנא לשאר אג בריגו לעמדה. ויחרב בו
עשמו מלאכיו מצרים אגג לו סוסים ועץ רב היצא
היחלף העשה אלה והפר בריג ונחלש. ח אני נאם אדני
יהוה אם לא במקום המלך הממלך אור אשר בלה אור
אלה ואשר הפר אג בריגו אורו בקוק בקל יחור.

Once the destruction and captivity had taken place, the prophet began to renew the people's hope of returning once again to their native land, and he delivered oracles against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Tyre, warning them that God would use war as an instrument to destroy them because they rejoiced over Judah's fall and over the destruction of the Temple (Ezekiel 28:25-26),

כה אמר אדני יהוה בקרצ' אג' ב'ג' ישראל מן העמים
אשר נבצו הם ונקדשתי במ' עמיני גויים וישבו עם אדמג' אש
נגמי עמגדו ע'עקב. וישבו ע'ע'יה ע'בטח ובנו בג'ס' ונטעו
כרמים וישבו ע'בטח בעמ'ט' שפטי' בכ' השאט' אג'ס'
מס' ב'ק'וג' ו'דעו כי אני יהוה אלהיכם.

Second Isaiah

Another prophet of the Captivity was the one who wrote the latter half of the book of Isaiah (Chapters 40-66), and who is today called Second Isaiah. His message is similar to that of Ezekiel in the days of the Exile. The prophet believed that God created the war, and strengthened the enemy forces in order to punish His own people (Isaiah 42:24-25),

וְאֵל שָׂמוּ בְּיָדָם	אִי נָתַן עֲמָסוֹת וְעָקַב
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים
וְעָזְרוּ מִלְחָמָה	וְעָזְרוּ מִלְחָמָה
וְגִלְעָדָהּ מִסְבִּיג וְאֵל יָדָע	וְגִלְעָדָהּ מִסְבִּיג וְאֵל יָדָע
וְגִבְעָר בּוֹ וְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָה	וְגִבְעָר בּוֹ וְאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל עָלָה

Nevertheless, the Second Isaiah prophesied that God's care would extend over the remnant, and that they would return to the promised land and their enemies would in time be destroyed (Isaiah 41:10-11),

אֵל גִּירָא כִּי עֲמָק אֲנִי	אֵל גִּירָא כִּי עֲמָק אֲנִי
אֵל גִּבְעָר כִּי אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ	אֵל גִּבְעָר כִּי אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ
אֲחַזְרִיק אִתְּךָ עֲלֵי גִבְעָר	אֲחַזְרִיק אִתְּךָ עֲלֵי גִבְעָר
אֵל גִּבְעָר כִּי אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ	אֵל גִּבְעָר כִּי אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ

Cyrus, the king of Persia, was to be the Lord's shepherd permitting the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, and subduing those nations that taunted Israel and brought her into captivity (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1),

עבֹרֵם אֲשֶׁר הִחֲלִיקְתָּ בִּימֵינוּ	הָאֵמֶר לְכוּרֵם רָצִי
עָרָה לְפָנֵינוּ גֹּיִם	וְכֹל חֲפְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּמִגְדֵּי מַעֲכִיבִים אֶפְתָּח	וְשֹׁמְרֵי עִירוֹשְׁתִּי תִבְחֶנּוּ
עֲפָתִי עֲפָנוּ דְּעִגְיִים	וְהִיכָה תִּסְוֶה.
וְשֹׁמְרֵי עִירוֹשְׁתִּי	כִּי אֵמֶר יְהוָה לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְחוּ

Like many other prophets of the exilic period, the second Isaiah gives vent to his feelings toward Edom. The Edomites not only taunted the people of Judah upon the nation's downfall, but also took advantage of her weakness to occupy the former Jewish territory to the south of Jerusalem. The literature of these days was filled with maledictions against this hereditary enemy (Isaiah 63:1-4),

כִּי יִהְיֶה דִּרְכֵּי עֲבָדֶיךָ	מִי יֵדָע בָּא מִקְדֻשֶׁךָ
וּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֵין אִישׁ אֶתְּ	חֲמוּץ בְּדִקְיֹת מַחֲצֵרֶךָ
וְאֶדְרֵכֶם בְּאֶפְסֵי	לֵךְ הַדֹּר בְּעִבְרוֹ
וְאֶתְּחַסֵּם בְּחֻמֵּי	צָרָה בְּרַב כְּחוֹ
וְיִלְכְּדוּךָ עַל גִּבְעֵי	אֵת מִקְדָּרְךָ בְּצִדְקָה
וְכֹל מַלְבוּשֵׁי אֲבִירֶיךָ.	יָרֵב לְתוֹשִׁיעֶיךָ
כִּי יוֹם נִקַּם בְּלִבִּי	מִקְדֻשֶׁךָ אֶתְּ מִקְדֻשֶׁךָ
יִשְׁמַח גִּבְעֵי בְּאֶפְסֵי.	וּבְדִקְיֹת כְּדִרְךָ בְּגֵלְךָ.

The so-called "Minor Prophets" of The Exilic
and Post-Exilic Periods

Quite a few of the minor prophets who lived in the days of the Exile and Restoration prophesied that God would take vengeance upon Edom for the way in which she treated Israel. Malachi warned that whatever the Edomites tried to build on their newly occupied land would soon be destroyed by the hand of God because of their wickedness (Malachi 1:4),

כי אמר אדום רשעו	החיה יבנו ואני אהרסו
ונשבו ונגבה חרבו	ולקראו שם גבוה רשעה
כה אמר יהוה צבאות	והצק אשר יצא יהוה ער עולם

Obadiah likewise delivered an oracle against Edom, giving the Lord's sanction for battle against this cunning nation (Obadiah 1:1-2),

חזון עבדי	קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה
כה אמר אדני יהוה אדום	הנה קטל נגיק בלוי
שועה שמענו מאג יהוה	גלוי אלה מאד
וציר בלוי עמ	

Edom was to be cut off for violence and extreme cruelty toward Israel during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. The Edomites not only refused to help Israel but also spoiled the Holy

City when it was captured, and they cut off the paths of escape (Obadiah 1:10-14),

ואל גזל פ'ק	מחמס אחיק יעקב
ביום צרה.	גכסך בוסה
אל גבול בער עמו	ונכר עולם.
ביום איק	ביום עמדק מנה
אל גבול גמ אנה ברעו	ביום שבו לריק חילו
ביום אידו	ונכריק באו שער
ואל גסלחנה בחילו	ועל ירושלא ידו גורל
ביום אידו.	גמ אנה כאחך מהק.
ואל געמדק על הפרק	ואל גבול ביום אחיק
עככריו אג פליטיו	ביום נכרו
ואל גסלר שרידיו ביום צרה.	ואל גסלח עבד יפודה
	ביום אקדק

Obadiah velieved that God not only sought vengeance upon Edom but upon all the nations that sacked Israel and rejoiced over her downfall (Obadiah 15),

כאשר עשיר יעשה לק	כי קרוה יום יהוה
גמלק ישוב גמלק.	על כל הארץ

Joel was another prophet who looked for God's vengeance upon Edom. Egypt was also to become a desolation for her treatment of Israel (Joel 4:19),

מגריק גמלקה גמלקה	מחמס בני יפודה
ואדוק גמלקה גמלקה גמלקה	אשר עבדו דף נקיו גמלקה.

Joel pictures a judgment day to be the time for a

war of retribution against the nations that attacked and destroyed Israel (Joel 4:9-12),

וקראו לאה גלוי'ם	עוֹשֵׁן וְזָאוּ כֵּל הַגּוֹיִם
קדשו מלחמה	מִסִּבֵּי וְנִקְבְּצוּ
העירו העגורים	סוּחַ הַנֶּחֱמָה יְהוָה גְּבוּרִים.
יָגֵשׁ יֵעָלֶה	יִצְרָאוּ וִיעָלֶה הַגּוֹיִם
כֵּן אֲנִי הַמִּלְחָמָה.	אֵל עֶמֶק יְהוֹשֻׁבֵּי
כִּי אֶחָד אֶחָד	כִּי עַם אֶחָד
וּמִחֲרָגֶיכֶם עֲרֻחִים	עֲשֵׂבֶיךָ אֶחָד כֵּן הַגּוֹיִם מִסִּבֵּי.
הַחֵלֶשׁ וְאֶחָד גְּבוּר אֲנִי.	

Zechariah, a prophet of the post exilic period, in the course of encouraging the captives to return, delivered oracles promising God's retaliation against those nations that spoiled Israel (Zechariah 2:12-13),

כִּי כֹה אֶחָד יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת אֶחָד כְּבוֹד עֲלֵה אֵל הַגּוֹיִם
הַשְׂעָרִים אֶחָד כִּי הִנֵּה בָכֶם נִגַּע גְּבוּרָה עִלּוֹ. כִּי הִנֵּה
מִנִּיךְ אֶחָד עֲלֵה וְהָיוּ עֲלֵיךְ עֲבָדֶיךָ וִידְעוּךָ כִּי
יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת עֲלֵה.

In Zechariah's prophecies, the Lord was once again Israel's leader in battle, fighting with His people against their enemies (Zechariah 10:3-5),

עַל הַרְעִים חֵרֶה אֶפִּי	מִמֶּנּוּ קֶסֶף מִלְחָמָה
וְעַל הַעֲגוּרִים אֶפְקֹד	מִמֶּנּוּ יֵצֵא כֵּן נֹשֵׂא יִחָדוּ.
כִּי פִקֵּד יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת אֶחָד עֲדָרוּ	וְהָיוּ כְּגִבּוֹרִים בּוֹסִים
אֶחָד הָיָה יְהוָה	בְּטִיט חוֹצוֹת מִלְחָמָה
וְעַל אוֹתָם כִּסּוֹס הוֹדוּ מִלְחָמָה.	וְנִלְחֲמוּ כִי יְהוָה עִמָּם
מִמֶּנּוּ כֹהֵל	וְהִי'שׁוּ רֶכֶבִי סוֹסִים.
מִמֶּנּוּ יִתָּד	

During the days of the Restoration, while the Jews were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, they suffered attacks from the Samaritans because they refused to accept their aid in the building program. Nehemiah, the governor, gave his people weapons to protect themselves, and impressed upon them that their God was a leader in battle who would fight for the people of Israel (Nehemiah 4:11-14),

ואע"פ' מלחמה עמקו מאחרי חומה בצח"ק ואע"פ
 אה העם למשפחות חרבניהם רחמיהם וקסגיהם. וארא
 ואקום ואמר אלה החרים ואל הסגנים ואל יתר העם אלה
 תיראו מפניהם את אדני הדדו והנורא זכרו והלחמו
 על אחיכם בניכם וקסגיהם נשיכם וקסגיהם.
 בבוני חומה והנשיים בסגל צח"ק באח ידו
 צפה במלכה ואח מחנה השלח. והבוני איס חרב
 אסורים על חמנו ובוני והקועה בשופר אצל. ויאר אלה
 החרים ואל הסגנים ואל יתר העם במלכה הרבה ורחבה
 ואנחנו נסדרים על החומה רחוקים איס מאחין. במקום אשר
 גמנו את קול השופר שנה בקצו אצלנו אפ"קו יחזק פנו.

Thus in the exilic and post-exilic periods, the prophets believed that God would bring the remnant back to their own land, and wreak vengeance upon those nations that taunted Israel. War was God's instrument for punishing these wicked nations. The God of Israel was once again leading His people in battle against the enemy. The prophets appear to have transferred the concept of Lex Talionis the individual to the national level, in promising retaliation to these nations.

Chapter 6 - Israel's Attitude Toward Pacifism in the Biblical Period

In the past few decades, Many Americans refused to serve their country, and registered as conscientious objectors. As one of their arguments, they claimed that the Bible was against war, and they cited various passages from the Scriptures in order to prove their point. However, very often, they have isolated these passages from the context which shows that the Israelites were definitely not pacifists. I will now cite some¹ of these passages, and refute them in accord with what I have learned about war in the Biblical period in the course of writing this thesis.

To begin with, the Patriarchs are mentioned as lovers of peace. The pacifists cite Isaac's non-resistance to Philistine vandalism (Genesis 26:18-22),
 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ יִצְחָק וְיִחְזָק ■ אֵל אֱלֹהֵי הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר חָרְפוּ בְּיָמָיו
 אֶבְרָהָם אֲבִיו וְיִסְמָחוּן בְּשָׂמָיִם אַחֲרָיו מִלִּפְנֵי אֶבְרָהָם
 וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שְׁמוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶת אֲשֶׁר קָרָא לָהֶן אֲבִיו. וַיַּחְפְּרוּ
 עֲבָדֵי יִצְחָק בְּהֶחֱץ וַיִּמְצְאוּ עַם בָּאֵר חַיִּים. וַיְרִיבוּ
 רָעִי לָרֶר עַם רָעִי יִצְחָק לְאַחֵר לָנוּ הַחַיִּים וַיִּקְרָא עַם
 הַבָּאֵר עַם כִּי הִגְדָּעְקוּ עָמוֹ. וַיַּחְפְּרוּ בָאֵר אַחֲרָיו וַיְרִיבוּ

1. Abraham Cronbach, "Pacifism", Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 8 (New York, 1946)
- Norman Angell, "Pacifism", Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 6 (New York, 1933) pp. 527-528
- Adolf Guttmacher, "Peace", Jewish Encyclopedia, 9 (New York, 1905) pp. 565-566

לפ' ע'כ"ה ויקרא שמה שטנה. ויעגל מן ויחפר גאר
אחרת ולא רבו ע'כ"ה ויקרא שמה רחבון ויאמר כי
עגה הרחיק יהוה לנו ופרינו בארץ.

Also they mention that Simeon and Levi receive their
dying father's rebuke for their attack upon the Sche-
chemites (Genesis 34:30),

ויאמר יעקב אל שמעון ואל לוי עברתם אתי עהבא' - שט
היטה הארץ בכנעני ובפדני ואני מנח מספר ונאספו ע'כ"
והכונ' ונשמדתי אתי וביג'.

However, it is also mentioned in this passage that
Jacob condemned his sons, not out of love of peace, but
rather as a result of his fear of the strength of the
Canaanites.

Abraham could hardly be called a pacifist when
we consider his participation in the wars of the four
kings against the five kings (Genesis 14:14-16),
וישמע אברם כי נסבה אחיו וירק את חניכיו יע'די גיגו
שמונה עשר ואשם מאור וירדף עד דן. ויחזק ע'כ"כ
ע'כ"ה הוא וצדקיו ויכח וירדפם עד חובה אשר משמאל
צדמסק. ויטה את כל הכס למ אלוט אחיה ורכשו השיג
ולא את הנסיון ואר העפ.

Furthermore, as I have pointed out in chapter one,
the patriarchs were not pacifists. They were pro-
bably associated with a group known as the Habiru
who often served as mercenaries in order to earn a
living. Their peaceful or warlike gestures were
motivated by a desire for security for themselves

and for members of their families. As demonstrated by Levi and Simeon, and by Abraham, they were willing to fight when it was necessary in order to maintain that security.

Another point made by the pacifists was that the Bible condemns civil war and they cited among other things the following passage as proof (I Kings 12:22-24)

וַיְהִי דְבַר הַאֱלֹהִים אֶל שְׁמַעְיָה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בִּים אֵלֹהִים לֵאמֹר.
אֵל רְחֹמִים בֶּן שִׁלְמִי מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וְאֵל כָּל הָיָה יְהוּדָה
וּבְנֵימִין וְיֶגְדֵּי הָעָם לֵאמֹר. כִּי אֵלֶּיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְלֹא
אֶלמֶלֶךְ עַם אֲחֵינוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוּבוּ אֵלֵינוּ כִּי מֵאֵל
נִפְיָה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְיִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל דְּבַר יְהוָה וְיָשׁוּבוּ אֵלֵינוּ
כְּדָבָר יְהוָה.

Once again the passage was taken out of context to satisfy the needs of the time. Actually the situation was quite the contrary. Shemaiah told Rehoboam not to fight against the division of Israel into two kingdoms because it was God's will that the country be divided as punishment for the religious backsliding of His people. Another prophet by the name of Ahijah was instrumental in bringing about the split in the kingdom by plotting with Jeroboam, in the name of God, a revolt by the northern tribes.

Among the prophets, The pacifists cite Isaiah, among the prophets, as the most outstanding protagonist of peace (Isaiah 7:7-9),

כִּי אַחֲרֵי אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה יִחַד אֶפְרַיִם מִצָּר
 עַל גִּקּוֹן וְעַל תְּהוֹמָה וְהָיָה אֶפְרַיִם מִחְרוֹן
 כִּי הָיָה אֶרֶץ דָּמָק וְהָיָה מִחְרוֹן בֶּן רַמְלֵהוּ
 וְהָיָה דָּמָק לְצִיִּן אֵין עַל גִּמְחֵינִי כִּי עַל גִּמְחֵינִי.
 וְגִזְרֵי שִׁפְיָהּ וְחֵשֶׁן שֶׁנֶּה

They say that even in the face of invasion, Isaiah counselled non-resistance and reliance upon God.

However, Isaiah like the other prophets is not against war. He is merely against Ahaz for depending upon the material support of foreign nations to deliver Judah, instead of depending upon God as leader in battle.

Later Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will take vengeance upon Assyria for her cruelty and arrogance (Isaiah 10:12-13),

וְהָיָה כִּי יִגְזַע אֲדֹנִי אֵת כָּל מַעֲשֵׂהוּ בְּהָר צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם
 אֶפְקֵד עַל עַמִּי לְדָם עֲבָרָה מִלֶּקֶת אִשּׁוּר וְעַל גִּבְעָתוֹ רוּחַ צִיּוֹן.
 כִּי אֵין וְאִסִּיר לְבָבוֹ עֲמִי
 בְּחַי יְדֵי עֲמִי וְעֲגִידָהּ שִׁמְרִי
 וְהִכְחֵמְתִּי כִּי נִכְחַתִּי וְאִוְרֵד בְּאֵיִר יוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם.

Isaiah's oracle on peace in the end of days (Isaiah 2:2-4), is at most an aspiration toward an un-armed and friendly world. The prophet says though that it can only come about when all nations recognize the God of Israel as their God and the city of Jerusalem as the source of law and justice.

According to the Biblical material, the Israel-

ites were not pacifists. They did go to war when it was necessary either to defend themselves from their enemies, or for the purpose of acquiring the land promised to them by God. Their reluctance to fight did not stem from an opposition to war in principle, but rather from a fear of the strength of the inhabitants of Canaan and a desire for security. Once standing armies were organized and they themselves did not have to go out to do the fighting, they were neither opposed to or in favor of war. While the prophets looked for the day when Israel would be left alone by her neighbors, they viewed war in their time to be God's instrument to chastize His people for their religious backsliding and later to chastize those nations which dealt cruelly with Israel or taunted her.

Chapter 7 - Conclusions

1. During the period of the Wilderness Wandering, the conquest of Canaan, and the era of the Judges, the Hebrews were reluctant to enter the promised land and attack the people living in it because they had learned through spies that the Canaanites were a powerful people and that they had weapons which the Hebrews could not cope with. Their opposition was not an opposition to war in general, but to these specific encounters in which they felt that the odds were against them.

The Judges and early kings believed that war was justified as the means of acquiring the land of Canaan which had been promised to the Hebrews for an inheritance since the time of Abraham. In I Chronicles 16:17-18,¹ David is said to have repeated this promise by God to His people Israel.

2. Until the establishment of the United Monarchy, the people of Israel were reluctant to go to war because they themselves had to go out and do the fighting and forfeit their security. When the monarchy was established, the kings ceased to depend upon the sporadic support of the Israelite population at large, and acquired more dependable standing armies, which consisted of trained soldiers, many of whom

לאחר שקראו את כל בני
המלך ויחזקוהו.

ו. ויחזקוהו עזקוהו
עזקוהו עזקוהו.

were foreign mercenaries. So long as they themselves were not directly involved on the battlefield, the Israelites took no action in favor of or in opposition to wars.

3. The priests themselves appear neither to have condemned or supported war in the Biblical period. However, they did bring the Ark into the field of battle indicating God's presence and encouragement.

4. The prophets saw war as the means whereby God would punish the people of Israel for their backsliding. Foreign armies would be instruments in God's hands with which He would punish the northern and southern kingdoms. Foreign alliances were opposed or favored in the name of God, depending upon specific political conditions.

The exilic and post exilic prophets saw war as the means whereby God would wreak vengeance upon those nations that taunted His people or that displayed extreme cruelty toward them.

5. In the days of the Divided Monarchy, the kings employed their own standing armies to fight their battles. War was fought for the sake of economic and political gains. Religion was no longer their chief concern except as a means for these kings to attain their own ends.

6. Israel's attitude toward captives and spoils of war went through two main phases. The Mosaic law

prescribes that people outside the promised land may be taken captive, but that all those living in the land were to be utterly destroyed. When Joshua began to conquer the land, this prescription was carried out fully upon the captured cities of Jericho, Ai, Hazor, etc., probably because captives were more of a liability than an asset to these as yet unsettled people. However, once they settled and began to consolidate their occupation of the land, they disregarded this order to utterly destroy all captives, because they could now be used for slave labor. The spoils likewise were completely destroyed at the beginning of the conquest of Canaan, but later, then the Israelites were more settled and established, they kept the spoils as well as tribute for their own use. Booty constituted a significant part of the national income.

7. According to the Biblical material, the Israelites were not pacifists. The pacifists of today, in using quotations from the Bible in their arguments against war, have taken these statements out of context and used their literal meaning to prove their point. The Israelites did go to war when it was necessary. At times when they appeared to be opposed to war, they were really only afraid of their inability to cope with the military strength of a particular enemy.

The prophets viewed war as God's instrument for punishing the people of Israel for their religious backsliding and later for punishing those nations that humbled her. They did not prophesy peace for the times in which they lived, but for the Messianic Era in the distant future.

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