

**SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY ISRAELITE MONARCHY**

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## PREFACE

The subject of kingship in the Bible has necessarily received treatment in the standard Biblical encyclopedias and histories of Israel. By their very nature, these treatments are surveys which are limited in either comprehensiveness, or in intensiveness, or in both. The literature in the journals on specific aspects and details of kingship is considerable,<sup>1</sup> and the debt of surveys to this corpus of scholarship is more often implicit than explicit.

The approach of the writer has been first to undertake an intensive review of the Biblical material, with minimal recourse to commentaries, with the aim of developing certain impressions as to the nature of kingship in Israel. These first impressions have then been tested in the light of the scholarship on the subject. Thus, the thesis aims to present a study of the relevant Biblical passages in a logical structure, and to offer the writer's evaluation of varying conclusions of scholars in areas where research has not yielded unanimity to date.

## CHAPTER I

## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

A. A Survey of the Hebrew Nominal Terms for Sovereignty.

The terms most frequently used to refer to the king are: *šc/n*, *klc*, *šalc*, *h'cn*, *z'd* and *škn*.

The term *šc/n* reflects its derivation from the verb *šcn*, which B.D.B. renders: "rule, have dominion, reign." Its verbal usage, as e.g. *lā šcnp dphl* (Gen. 4:7), indicates that the basic force is far more general and implies, rather, the possession and exercise of authority, power, control. The active participle *šc/n*, in the sense of "ruler", would not necessarily indicate or imply monarchy. Thus, *šc/n* is employed to refer to Joseph (Gen. 45:8 and 26), to Abraham's servant and head of the household (Gen. 24:2), and to the Philistines in general (Jud. 14:4 and 15:11).

*klc*, as applied to the king, appears rarely: once in the Book of Kings (1 Kings 11:34) and twice in the Book of Ezekiel (Ez. 34:24 and 37:25), where it clearly refers to a king, Solomon or David. For the most part, however, it appears to be a term of office antedating monarchy. Thus, most of its appearances occur in the Pentateuch, chiefly in the Book of Numbers. Where it occurs in Ezekiel, its denotation in the majority of cases is vague or uncertain. Thus, *klc* may refer to a Temple official (Ez. 45:17 et passim), to an unspecified person of prominence (Num. 7:11, 24,

30, etc.), or to a tribal chief (Num. 3:24). In Gen. 23:6, the children of Heth call Abraham *אֱלֹהֵי הָעֵלְיָהוּ*, which may mean "elect of God."

The noun *בַּיָּד* derives its force from the verb *בָּרַךְ*, which B.D.B. renders: "judge, govern." That *בַּיָּד* means "judge" is clear from the many verses in the Pentateuch where judges or magistrates are clearly intended (as e.g. Deut. 17:9, 12 et passim). However, it is also clear that the term *בַּיָּד* is not limited to matters of adjudication. There is nothing to indicate that the *בַּיָּדִים*, Othniel, Tola, Jair, Jephtah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon or Samson, ever served as magistrates or dealt with matters of adjudication (cf. Jud. 3:10; 10:2,3; 12:7,8,11,13; and 16:31). Furthermore, Jud. 4:4, which speaks of Deborah "judging" Israel, indicates that one may serve as *בַּיָּד* in peace-time as well as war-time. No doubt, adjudication constituted one of the functions of the king (2 Sam. 15:4; 1 K. 3:16ff, 28). However, when *בַּיָּד* is applied to the king, it should be understood as a functional term, rather than as a synonym for monarch.

Although the term *הַמֶּלֶךְ* (and particularly *הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל*), in the overwhelming majority of cases, refers to the king, it is also applied to the priest (Lev. 4:3,5,16 and 6:15) and to the Patriarchs (Ps. 105:15 and 1 Ch. 16:22). Unlike the term *בַּיָּד*, *הַמֶּלֶךְ* does not signify a function; rather, it is a reference to the form of the ceremony by which a person is vested with authority. Thus, it is used in regard to the priest (the *הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל* referred to above in the Book of Leviticus). The king, as the *הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל*

is the legal claimant to the throne by virtue of the fact that his authority and selection are derived from God.

The term נָשִׂיב, although used as a title of leadership, does not necessarily imply monarchy. While one finds נָשִׂיב employed to refer to the king, the majority of its appearances in the Bible indicate that it is used to refer to other officials as well. Thus, it appears as a reference to the "ruler" of the House of God (1 Ch. 9:11), to one of the priests or possibly the High Priest (1 Ch. 9:20; Jer. 20:1), to the "ruler" of the royal House (2 Ch. 28:7), and to the person in charge of the treasuries (1 Ch. 26:24). In most instances, the precise meaning of נָשִׂיב is obscure.

B.D.B. defines נָשִׂיב as: "Leader (lit. prb. one in front), ruler, prince" and notes that it is applied to officials other than the king. W.F. Albright has defined נָשִׂיב as a military commander, citing the Aramaic root ngd which is found in the Sefirah treaties of the mid-eighth century B.C.E. "The word negidah, negudah occurs in the plural between words for royal princes and officials; the only possible translation is military commanders," writes Albright.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he differentiates between נָשִׂיב and נָשִׂיב as follows: "In view of the great significance attached to titularies in the ancient East, we may be quite certain that the appearance of nāgîd instead of melekh in the formula of installation was intentional. In other words, Saul and David were not intended by Samuel or the tribal heads of Israel to be enthroned as kings, but only to be anointed as military leaders of the tribal

confederation."<sup>3</sup>

John Bright also distinguishes between  $\text{רֹאשׁ}$  and  $\text{נָגִיד}$  and states that Saul's charismatic qualities marked him "as Yahweh's warrior-leader, his 'designated' (nagid) --and so the older source (1 Sam. 9:1 to 10:16; 13:4b - 15) consistently refers to him."<sup>4</sup> As regards both Albright's and Bright's respective views and renderings of  $\text{נָגִיד}$ , it should be noted that this term is used as a general designation of leadership: military, royal and priestly (as noted above). Thus, the Bible does not reserve the term  $\text{נָגִיד}$  for military leadership alone, even as it does not limit its employment to a monarch. Against Albright's point that  $\text{נָגִיד}$ , rather than  $\text{רֹאשׁ}$ , is used in the "formula of installation," indicating that Saul and David were anointed as "military leaders of the tribal confederation," rather than as kings, is the witness of 1 Sam. 11:15, 13:13 and 14 (both of which belong to the "older source") and 1 Sam. 16:1 and 2 Sam. 5:3, where Saul and David, respectively, are referred to as  $\text{רֹאשׁ}$  and Saul's rule is designated as  $\text{מַלְכוּת}$ . It would appear then that these attempts at definition and distinction find no support in the Biblical text and sources.

The remaining term  $\text{רֹאשׁ}$ , applied to Judean, Israelite as well as foreign kings, always implies: 1) pre-eminence, 2) life tenure and 3) hereditary succession, constituting together the features of monarchy. B.D.B. suggests that the meaning of the term was "originally counsellor, i.e. he whose opinion is decisive," and cites the Akkadian malaku ("to counsel, advise"), Arabic mlk



("to possess, own exclusively"), and Aramaic mlk. J. Hastings suggests: "he whose counsel was found best eventually became king," and he offers the same etymology as does B.D.B.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, T.S. Cheyne and J.S. Black speculate: "The king was the most gifted and powerful member of a council of chiefs and elders," and they cite Mic. 4:9 as support.<sup>6</sup> Whether the etymology given is correct or not, the use of רֶשֶׁת in the Bible, in every appearance, signifies a monarch whose reign is not intrinsically dependent upon any council of chiefs or elders. Nowhere in the Bible does רֶשֶׁת mean or imply an advisor or counsellor, for which the term is usually סֹפֵר. Thus, the attempts to define רֶשֶׁת on the basis of the Akkadian cognate malaku are essentially speculative and find no support in the Bible.

#### B. Kingship in Israel Before the Time of Saul.

The account of kingship in Israel, prior to the establishment of Saul's reign, is confined to Jud. 8:22 to 10:1. Until the time of Gideon, no Israelite leader was offered the crown and the question of instituting a monarchy seems never to have arisen.

Although the term רֶשֶׁת, in either its nominal or verbal form, is not used, the offer of the "men of Israel" to Gideon is made clearly with hereditary succession in mind (Jud. 8:22). Gideon's refusal of their offer is couched in language which, although avoiding the term רֶשֶׁת (רֶשֶׁת is used), implies an essentially religious objection to monarchy: "...I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; YHWH shall rule over you"

(Jud. 8:23).

Gideon's son Abimelech, on the other hand, actively sought kingship to the point of attempting to extirpate all the other sons of his father (Jud. 9:5). What is noteworthy about the account is that the kingship involved is not over Israel as a whole, or even over a significant section of one Israelite tribe. Indeed, Jud. 8:34f tells us explicitly that the Israelites

( *יְהוּדָה* ) did not deal loyally with the "house of Jerubbaal", i.e. with Abimelech ( ... *בְּיָמָיו* ).

The succeeding account in Chapter 9 makes it equally clear that the territory over which Abimelech ruled was limited to Shechem and its environs, the population of which was largely non-Israelite (Jud. 9:3 and 28). While it is true that Jud. 9:22 ( *וְעַל כֵּן* ) might indicate evidence to the contrary, the context of the entire narrative leads us to suppose that Israel here refers only to the Israelites living in the vicinity of Shechem.<sup>7</sup> It is further significant that Jud. 9:22 employs *וְעַל כֵּן*, almost as if to exclude the use of *וְעַל כֵּן*.

Thus, Jud. 9:1 - 3 reveals that Abimelech's rise to the throne was made possible by his appeal to the men of Shechem, to whom he was related through his non-Israelite mother (Jud. 9:2f).<sup>8</sup> That Abimelech's short reign was exercised primarily over non-Israelites is confirmed by the conspiracy against him (Jud. 9:26ff). Gaal ben Ebed incited the men of Shechem by appealing to them to oust a person who is essentially an outsider. Noteworthy is the contrast in Jud. 9:28 between " *וְעַל כֵּן* " and " *וְעַל כֵּן* ".

" *כְּנִיזְכֵּי חָמֹר* , i.e. the dignitaries of Hamor, the ancestral (therefore legitimate) lord of Shechem. The verse indicates clearly that Gaal ben Ebed's appeal to the Shechemites to overthrow Abimelech is based on the claim that Abimelech, as " *יִשְׂרָאֵלִי* " (i.e. an Israelite) had no right to rule over the city of Shechem (despite his non-Israelite mother), and that only a full-blooded descendant of Hamor, the ancestral lord of Shechem, would be a legitimate ruler. Further indication of the narrowness of Abimelech's domain is his unsuccessful attempt to extend his rule over the city of Thebez (Jud. 9:53ff).

In the light of the foregoing analysis of Jud. 8:22 to 10:1, there can be no question but that Abimelech never ruled over the whole of Israel, or even over a significant tribal division, and that the first king over Israel was Saul. It may be helpful, however, to review the sentiments toward monarchy in the Bible, before going-on to a consideration of Saul's ascendance to the throne.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNING OF KINGSHIP IN ISRAEL

#### A. Attitudes Toward Monarchy.

Positive attitudes toward the establishment of monarchy in ancient Israel are found in a number of passages. Thus, Gen. 17:6, "...and kings shall come out of thee." This promise, stated as it is, together with predictions of the future greatness of Abraham's progeny, with the promise of a covenant with YHWH and a land in which to dwell, clearly indicates a positive disposition toward the establishment of monarchy in Israel.

In like manner, the recurring statement in the Book of Judges: "In those days, there was no king in Israel; every man did that which is right in his own eyes" (Jud. 18:1; 19:1; 21:25 etc.), implies that the editor or narrator responsible for this comment regards the lack of a king as lamentable. The statement attributes the then prevailing moral laxity in Israel to the absence of that central political authority which is necessary for an orderly society, which a king would provide. It should be noted that this statement derives from a time when a king did rule over Israel and that the author is indicating his approval of the king's constructively disciplinary role.

Deut. 17:14ff speaks of the time when the people, having taken possession of the land, will enthrone a king. While the people are cautioned to appoint only him whom YHWH has chosen,

"one from among thy brethren" (thereby excluding all foreigners), who will not add excessively to his horses, wives, silver or gold, who will not lead the people back to Egypt but will "keep all the words of this Instruction and these statutes...", nothing in the passage indicates a negative disposition toward the establishment of monarchy. On the contrary, although it warns the people against royal excesses and abuses of power, it offers no hint of opposition to the notion of a human monarch reigning in Israel.<sup>9</sup>

In general, it would seem that the view which came to prevail in Israel was favorable to monarchy or, at the least, assumed monarchy as an accepted political reality. Thus, such references to kingship and its appurtenances as Gen. 49:10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet...;" 1 Sam. 2:35, "...and he [the faithful priest] shall walk before Mine anointed forever;" and 1 Sam. 2:10b, "...and He will give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn (i.e. the power) of His anointed;" as well as the numerous occurrences in the Prophetic books and in the Book of Psalms.

The existence of two separate and differing accounts of Saul's ascendance to the throne is a staple of critical Biblical scholarship. Of the two, the older account (consisting of 1 Sam. 9:1 - 10:16; 11:1 - 11; 15:1ff; 16:1ff, etc.), as has been recognized by scholars, betrays no opposition to monarchy.<sup>9a</sup>

1 Sam. 9:1ff tells of Saul, member of a family of the tribe of Benjamin,<sup>10</sup> and his servant searching the country-side for the asses of Kish, Saul's father. They enter the city to seek out

the prophet Samuel (apparently known then by the titles "man of God," "seer;" cf. 1 Sam. 9:9) for help in their search. Samuel greets them with the news that the asses have been found. He has, however, more important business with Saul. The day before, YHWH revealed to Samuel that He has chosen a man from the land of Benjamin to be anointed <sup>נִדָּב</sup> over Israel. As Samuel is talking to Saul, YHWH reveals: "Behold, this is the man of whom I said unto thee, 'this one shall have authority over My people.'" Saul and his servant are then given the seats of honor at a sacrificial meal. The next morning, Samuel anoints Saul in private as <sup>נִדָּב</sup> over YHWH's possession (i.e. the land and people of Israel) and cautions Saul to keep this matter secret until the time for disclosure is ripe. The occasion for this disclosure is Saul's rallying of the tribes to come to the rescue of Jabesh-Gilead, which is besieged by the Ammonites. The victory is followed by Saul's acclamation as king (1 Sam. 11:1-15).

Further indication of this account's positive attitude toward monarchy is found in 1 Sam. 10:27 and 11:12. In the former verse, the opponents of Saul's enthronement are viewed as "רֵשָׁעִים," i.e. "worthless man" or "riff-raff." In the latter citation, the populace is portrayed as being so incensed against these dissidents as to propose that they be put to death.<sup>11</sup>

Opposition to monarchy in ancient Israel is voiced by Gideon, Jotham (Gideon's youngest son) and Samuel (according to the later account). Gideon's objection, as has been indicated above, is

essentially a religious one, i.e. YHWH alone is king and no mortal has the right to rule over Israel in YHWH's stead (Jud. 8:23).

Jotham's objection is expressed in the form of a parable: "The trees went forth...to anoint a king over them..." (Jud. 9:8ff). His words betray a basic hostility to the very concept of monarchy. That hostility is expressed in a three-fold proposition: anyone worthy of being king would certainly refuse the offer; the one who finally agrees to rule is the least fit; and to serve such a person is as implausible as to take shelter under a thorn bush. Thus, Jotham's parable is more than an attack on his brother Abimelech; it is an anti-monarchical pronouncement.

The third and most detailed account of opposition to monarchy consists of 1 Sam. 8:1 - 22; 10:17 - 27a; 12:1 - 20; 13:1 - 14:46. Samuel's hostility toward monarchy is unqualified. He is angered by the people's request for a king and he presents the institution of monarchy in a totally negative light. The "manner of the king" (1 Sam. 8:11ff) which he details is that of a tyrant who will eventually indulge in excesses and abuses of power. In his admonition, Samuel warns that (a) the king will conscript the male population in order to staff the chariotry, infantry and corvée and will draw upon the female population for the domestic corps of the palace (1 Sam. 8:11 - 13, 16); (b) he will confiscate the best of the agricultural lands and parcel them out to his servants and favorites (1 Sam. 8:14); and (c) he will require a tithe of all the produce of the land as well as the cattle in order to support the kingdom (1 Sam. 8:15, 17). The inevitable result

Will be that the people will cry out in protest against the burden which monarchy imposes, but YHWH (who has been rejected) will not answer (1 Sam. 8:18). In addition to the above objections to monarchy, it must be stressed that a personal reason is given in regard to Samuel who feels himself and his sons rejected. The answer to Samuel's personal pique is that a greater affront has been offered to YHWH: "...for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them" (1 Sam. 8:7).

Samuel's objection to monarchy on the ground that the king will ultimately abuse the royal authority and become oppressive and tyrannical might well have been based on his acquaintance with Egyptian and Canaanite kingship. Opposition to Saul on the part of the Israelites themselves, as expressed for example by the "worthless men" (1 Sam. 10:27 and 11:12) is not difficult to understand. The Israelite tribes cherished their individual, political rights and privileges as assured by the autonomous tribal rule. The dissidents who refused to bring "tribute" ( *נָתַן* ) to Saul were expressing, in all likelihood, more than parsimony. The king's threat to tribal autonomy would also be a threat to those who exercise authority under the tribal scheme of organization.

In the face of these objections, the rise of monarchy in Israel has been accounted for in social, political or economic terms, or in a combination of these. Whatever the weight of social and economic factors, the most likely explanation lies in



the inadequate defense which loosely tied tribes could offer to the assaults levelled by Israel's neighbors. In addition to the explicit account of the Ammonite threat to Jabesh-Gilead and of the threats by other nations (as detailed in the Book of Judges), scholars have generally regarded the rise of the power of the Philistines, in Saul's time, as the crucial impetus which led the Israelites to abandon their tribal autonomy in favor of monarchy.<sup>12</sup> Realizing that their vulnerability rendered them easy spoil to whatever army marched through the land, the relatively disorganized and disunited tribes demanded a stronger, more defensible political organization, headed (as were other polities) by a king (cf. 1 Sam. 8:19ff; 9:16 and 12:12).

With the defeat of the anti-monarchical party (or parties), and with the establishment of Saul's reign, kingship became an accepted fact and, as an institution, was apparently never again questioned or opposed in Biblical times. It remained the form of government in the northern kingdom down to its fall and in Judah remained a dream even after its royal dynasty was ended by foreign conquerors. From 1 Sam. 16 onward, the institution of monarchy, if not every individual king, has the blessing of the people, prophet and Deity.

#### B. Features of Saul's Reign.


The composite narrative of the Book of Samuel rules-out any consistent account of Saul's rise to the throne and subsequent reign. Nevertheless, the latter account, as has been seen, provides

ample evidence of opposition to the institution of monarchy as well as to Saul himself. In the face of this considerable opposition, Saul's first major task is to prove his worth and justify his election as king and "head of the tribes of Israel" (1 Sam. 15:17).

The previously made observation (cf. above p. 13) that Saul's appointment as king over Israel is dictated primarily by the need for unity among the Israelite tribes, a unity necessitated in turn, by the need for organized, co-ordinated resistance against the military assaults of Israel's neighbors, is explicit.<sup>13</sup> In 1 Sam. 8:19ff, the people insist that they have a king "that we may also be like all the nations, so that our king may 'judge' us and go-out before us and fight our wars." In 1 Sam. 9:16, God tells Samuel: "...you shall anoint him to be <sup>3, d</sup> over My people Israel, and he shall save My people out of the hands of the Philistines." And in 1 Sam. 12:12, Samuel reminds the people: "And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'Nay, but a king shall reign over us...'"

Saul's opportunity to demonstrate his worth comes, in the older account, when Nahash and his Ammonite troops besiege the town of Jabesh-Gilead. Upon receiving the news, Saul rallies the tribes and routs the forces of Nahash.<sup>14</sup> The victory is the signal for Saul's acclamation as king. In the other account, Saul's encounter with the Philistines (ch. 13), though coming after his anointment, is similarly successful. Here again it

is stressed that the tribes are united behind Saul in the offensive against the Philistines ("...and the people were gathered together behind Saul in Gilgal"). Despite being outnumbered and despite the shortage of weapons, the united Israelites wage a successful offensive against the Philistines in Michmas (1 Sam. 14:31). The victory is due, at least in part, to the success of Jonathan's ambitious foray upon the Philistine garrison.

Having surmounted the opposition to his ascendance to the throne and having proved his worth against the Ammonites and against the Philistines, Saul finally succeeds in "taking" or consolidating his hold on the kingship over Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 14:47 where the verb  implies a struggle). Further stress on Saul's valor and impressive victories is found in 1 Sam. 14:47f which mentions his success against Israel's enemies: Moab, Edom, Ammon, the kings of Zobah, the Philistines and the Amalekites.

Despite this last cited passage, however, it appears that the Israelite tribes were never free of foreign military threats during Saul's reign. Although the Ammonites were repulsed and the Amalekites badly mauled, there can be no doubt that the Philistines constituted a threat to Israel throughout Saul's reign (1 Sam. 14:52; 17:1ff; 19:8ff; 23:27f, etc.); indeed, Saul's last battle is an engagement with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, in which he and his sons (with the exception of Ish-baal/Ish-bosheth) are killed. The Philistines continue to be a threat well into David's reign.

It must be clear that Saul's task in unifying the tribes

could not have been an easy one. While it is true that he apparently succeeded in organizing and uniting the tribes, enabling them to act effectively in military ventures, the system of tribal organization and autonomy appears to have remained essentially unchanged.<sup>15</sup> As will be seen later, Saul's and David's reigns differ considerably in this respect.

The details of Saul's activity as king and "head of the tribes of Israel" (1 Sam. 15:17) are limited almost entirely to his military functions. Political unification apparently lagged far behind. Following his anointing, Saul returns to his own home in Gibeah with a small standing army consisting of recruits. There is no capital and no place. Even following his defeat of the Ammonites and his subsequent recognition and election, Saul fails to establish a capital, a political center for the kingdom.

Despite the conflicts between the accounts concerning the reason for Saul's rejection by YHWH, both accounts are in agreement that Saul was rejected (1 Sam. 13:13; 15:23, 28f) and, it would appear, quite early in his reign. Nevertheless, it seems that Saul's standing army, probably recruited in large part from the tribe of Benjamin, remained loyal to him. Although he accuses his Benjaminite favorites of disloyalty in not reporting Jonathan's pact with David (1 Sam. 22:7 and cf. 18:3 and 20:13 to 17), there is no indication in the narrative that the Benjaminites ever betray him. On the contrary, they remain loyal to Saul and to his house to the last and support Ish-baal/Ish-bosheth in his claim to the throne.

A clue to the reason for this loyalty is offered by 1 Sam. 22:7, where Saul addresses the men who comprise his court: "Hear now, you Benjaminites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards...?" We cannot know whether these fields and vineyards came into Saul's possession through a system of taxation or whether they represent territory gained by conquest and parceled out to his retainers in return for their service.<sup>16</sup> Outside of this core of loyal Benjaminites, however, Saul's advisors and supporters seem to be exceedingly few, if one may judge from the accounts that deal with David's flight from Saul. David, on the contrary, is reported to have gained the assistance of Jonathan and Michal, Ahimelech and the priests of Nob, and the prophets Samuel and Gad (1 Sam. 19:1ff, 9ff; 20:1, 14ff, 35; and 22:5).

Pretending that he has been sent on a secret mission, David secures provisions from Ahimelech, one of the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 21:2ff). When Saul learns of this, he summons Ahimelech "and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob" and accuses them of having aided David in his conspiracy. Ahimelech denies the charge and admits to no knowledge of a conspiracy; he refers to David as the most trustworthy of Saul's servants, "the king's son-in-law." Saul then orders his Israelite guard to slay the priests of Nob, but his guard refuses to "put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of YHWH;" Doeg the Edomite performs the execution (1 Sam. 22:11ff).

The one survivor of the slaughter, Abiathar ben Ahimelech,

flees to David for refuge and protection. Can there be any doubt that Saul's slaying of the priests of Nob alienated any priestly support that he may have had? And does not the refusal of his Israelite guard to participate in the slaughter indicate the kind of disaffection which impelled other dissidents to join David (cf. 1 Sam. 22:1f)?<sup>17</sup>

We cannot know the extent of territory over which Saul exercised effective rule, nor indeed, the extent to which the tribes, including Judah, maintained their allegiance to Israel's first monarch. We know very little about the relationship, if any, between Saul and the cult, we know only that Samuel resided in Ramah as the "seer"/"prophet" of that town and that Nob seems to have been a priestly center. Although 1 Sam. 13:9 tells of Saul sacrificing a burnt-offering, while waiting for Samuel in Gilgal, Scripture gives no single example of Saul acting as arbiter in social or political disputes. We may only presume from Samuel's "farewell address" in Chapter 12 that he relinquished his role as "judge" to the newly-crowned king.

### C. The Decline of Saul and the Rise of David.

Within a few years of his election as Israel's first king, Saul suffers from frequent psychic aberrations. Whether these are of a melancholic, or manic depressive or schizophrenic nature is beyond our ability to say. The Biblical idiom expresses it as follows: "Now the spirit of YHWH had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from YHWH terrified him" (1 Sam. 16:14);

"And when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the harp and played...; so Saul found relief...and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam. 16:23); and "...an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul and he raved (הִשְׁפִּיץ) within the house..." (1 Sam. 18:10).

With regard to Saul's prophesying/raving, there are two traditions. One account traces Saul's prophetic capacity to his pre-coronation adventure with Samuel. According to this account, Saul's prophesying is an indication that the spirit of YHWH is with him and that "God gave him another heart" (1 Sam. 10:9), qualifying him to reign as king. Thus in 1 Sam. 10:11f, the proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?", betrays an admiring attitude toward Saul's prophetic ability. This is clear from the response to the expostulation which became proverbial. "And who is their father?" (מִי הֵם אֲבֹתָם; cf. 1 Sam. 10:12) may be understood to mean, "Do these other prophets, by virtue of some special pedigree, have any greater right to prophesy?" In another account, the same parable is stated with disdain and reproach, as if Saul's "prophesying" is an activity demeaning to a king: "And he Saul too stripped-off his clothes and also prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Hence the saying, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'" (1 Sam. 19:24).

The matter of succession became, apparently, one of Saul's chief concerns. The friendship between Jonathan and David is well attested to throughout 1 Samuel. There are several covenants

between them (1 Sam. 18:3; 20:13 - 17; 23:17f), two of which assume David's succession to the throne. Jonathan has David swear an oath that when David's enemies have been destroyed (and, presumably, David has succeeded to the throne), he will not act unfaithfully to the house of Jonathan. In 1 Sam. 23:17f, Jonathan acknowledges: "...thou shalt be king over Israel and I shall be your *דָּיָוָד*, and my father Saul knows this also."

It is possible that 1 Sam. 23:17f as well as 24:21 (where Saul admits that David is to be the next king of Israel) belong to an account prejudiced in favor of the house of David. It should be clear at all events from 1 Sam. 20:31 ("For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, you Jonathan shall not be established, nor your kingdom ") that Saul expected his son to succeed him as king. That Ish-baal/Ish-bosheth succeeds to the throne of the northern tribes following Saul's death supports this expectation.

After several attempts have been made on his life by Saul, David flees the king's court. Saul appears to have spent the better part of the latter years of his reign in pursuit of David and his followers. Finally, David flees the land rather than risk being "swept-away one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. 27:1) and he becomes a vassal of Achish, king of Gath.

The accounts of David's career and ascendance to the throne contain several attitudes toward David and his bid for kingship. 1 Sam. 16:1ff preserves the tradition that David was the choice of YHWH and Samuel while Saul yet reigned. According to this account, Samuel journeys to Bethlehem, selects David from among Jesse's sons



and anoints him; "and the spirit of YHWH came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:13b). We cannot overlook the possibility, however, that this may be the account of a narrator prejudiced in favor of the house of David.

According to one account (1 Sam. 17:1 - 18:5), David a beardless youth, first attracts Saul's attention by the extraordinary act of heroism against Goliath (a tradition upon which doubt is cast by the notice of 2 Sam. 21:19, where Goliath is said to have been killed by Elhanan of Bethlehem).<sup>18</sup> According to another account (1 Sam. 16:14 - 23; 18:6 - 30), David is brought into Saul's service as a skilled harpist, already "a mighty man of valor, a man of war and prudent in affairs..." (1 Sam. 16:18).

It is impossible to reconcile the accounts and resolve the striking contradiction between the image of David as the inexperienced shepherd lad, on the one hand, and as the experienced man of war, on the other. Both accounts are in agreement, however, as to David's early fame and success. Soon after he is admitted into Saul's court, he is appointed to a high military command by Saul and is invited to marry into the royal family. This marriage could not but be a significant upward step in David's career, and it is noteworthy that when David finally comes to power, one of the conditions that he includes in his pact with Abner is that Michal, Saul's daughter (whom Saul had taken-away and had given to Palti ben Laish), be restored to him (2 Sam. 3:13f). Attempting to ascertain David's motive, we may ask whether he demanded Michal's restoration in order to support the legitimacy of his claim to

Saul's throne and thus to the support of all Israel.<sup>19</sup>

David's reputation as a skillful and successful soldier is well attested to in both accounts (1 Sam. 17:36ff and 18:7f). Moreover, the parable of the women ("Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten-thousands;" cf. 1 Sam. 18:7) is later repeated by Achish, king of Gath, who refers to David, strangely enough, as "king of the land" (1 Sam. 21:12). Here again, we may question the significance and historicity of these accounts. Was David generally recognized as the king-designate, Saul's successor, by the royal houses of Gath (1 Sam. 21:12) and Israel (1 Sam. 24:21), or are these the ex post facto accounts of a narrator who is biased in favor of the Davidic dynasty?

Indeed the basic question is whether David made an active bid for the throne. The testimony of 1 Sam. 16:1ff; 20:13 - 17; 21:12; 23:17f and 24:21 express the view that David was the choice of YHWH, His anointed, and already recognized as such while Saul yet reigned as king. Evidence is ample, however, that David's rise to power was not accomplished against his own will.

1 Sam. 22:1ff portrays David as the leader of a band of malcontents and guerilla-fighters: "And everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him [David] and he became captain over them..." Moreover, Nabal's estimate of David would confirm the view that David was the rebel leader of a band of dissidents. Thus, when David's men come to Nabal to solicit his help and secure provisions, he replies: "...Who is David, and who is the son

of Jesse? Many are the servants today who break-away each from his master..." (1 Sam. 25:10). It appears that Nabal recognizes David merely as a formerly loyal subject of the king now turned rebel. Abigail, Nabal's wife, on the other hand, speaks as though David's rise to the throne is a foregone conclusion since he is YHWH's choice (1 Sam. 25:28, 30 and 31); she acknowledges that YHWH has "appointed thee <sup>3</sup>ד' over Israel" and asks that David remember her after he has claimed the throne.

1 Sam. 24:1ff and 26:1ff provide us with variant accounts of an encounter and reconciliation between Saul and David. It is noteworthy that in both accounts David refuses to wage a counter-offensive against Saul or to have him killed (1 Sam. 24:6f and 26:9), and he must even restrain his men from slaying Saul: "So David checked his men...and did not let them rise against Saul" (1 Sam. 24:8). Does this support the view that David did not pursue an active role in his ascendance to the throne or was it David's feeling that history would take its course and that his most advantageous procedure would be to gain support and recognition as Saul's legitimate successor without lifting his hand against the latter?

We are told in 1 Sam. 30:26 that David sent part of his spoil to the elders of Judah, "even to his friends."<sup>20</sup> If it were David's plan to gain the support of the house of Judah through such gifts, subsequent history appears to have made the plan a success: following the death of Saul, the men of Judah come to Hebron and there anoint David king over the house of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4).

The men of Israel, however, remain loyal to the house of Saul and, with Abner's support, anoint Ish-baal/Ish-bosheth king over Israel. Although Ish-bosheth's reign is cut-short at two years by his assassination, it is significant that the men of Israel do not recognize David as their king for another five and a half years (2 Sam. 2:10f), this despite Abner's attempt to win-over the house of Israel for David during Ish-bosheth's lifetime.

As noted above, part of David's pact with Abner concerned the restoration of Michal to David (2 Sam. 3:13f and cf. 1 Sam. 25:44). We have considered whether this was an attempt on the part of David to legitimize his claim as Saul's successor, on the basis of his marriage into the royal family, and to secure the support of the house of Israel. In any case, David finally wins the support of the elders of Israel and ascends the throne of a united kingdom seven years and six months after his enthronement as king over the house of Judah.

David attempts to heal the wounds between his house and the house of Saul by bringing Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, to Jerusalem to eat "at the king's table as one of the king's sons" (2 Sam. 9:1ff, 11).<sup>21</sup> However, the breach between the house of Saul and David is not so readily mended. Absalom's conspiracy against his father gains considerable support not only in Judah but also among the men of Israel (2 Sam. 15:6, 13; 16:15; 19:10f). Judging from 2 Sam. 19:11, the men of Israel anoint Absalom as their king, while most of David's retainers, including the court priests and his personal body-guard, remain loyal and choose to

flee Jerusalem with David in the face of Absalom's triumphant march against the city.

As to the role of the house of Saul itself, there is some question. According to 2 Sam. 16:1ff, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, reports that his master has remained in Jerusalem hoping that the house of Israel would restore to him his father's kingdom. According to 2 Sam. 19:27f, however, Mephibosheth denies this charge and claims that his servant had deceived him and that the charge is a slander. Mephibosheth claims that his loyalty to the king has remained unchanged. He acknowledges that David, upon his ascendance to the throne, would have been within his rights had he wiped-out the entire house of Saul: "For all my father's house were deserving of death at the hand of my lord, the king; yet, you set your servant among those who eat at your own table..." (2 Sam. 19:29).

Upon his retreat from Jerusalem, David is met by Shimei ben Gera, "of the family of the house of Saul" (2 Sam. 16:5), who accuses David of having dealt treacherously with Saul's descendants and of having usurped Saul's throne: "...YHWH has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned..." (2 Sam. 16:8).

Absalom's death of itself does not end the insurrection, Zadok and Abiathar, the court priests, are dispatched by David to promote the sentiment in Judah to restore the king to his throne. David is compelled to make a concession to the party that supported Absalom. Only so can we understand his appointment of Amasa ben Ithra (who

had commanded Absalom's army) to the position formerly held by his loyal retainer, Joab. However, a rift which develops between Israel and Judah results in a failure to regain the loyalty and support of the northern tribes for the house of David. The revolt is ended only when Sheba ben Bichri, who succeeds Absalom as rebel leader of the house of Israel, has been killed and Joab has restored himself as general of David's troops (2 Sam. 20:1ff).

These events reveal that the union of the tribes under David's kingship was far from stable. For five years, the northern tribes fail to recognize David as their king, even after Ish-bosheth's death leaves them without a monarch. Signs of continual disaffection in the house of Israel are expressed by revolutions against the Davidic dynasty, first with Absalom as rebel leader and then under Sheba ben Bichri, a Benjaminite. It appears, therefore, that despite David's military triumphs against Israel's enemies, composition of the tribal quarrels between the house of Saul and the house of David was not achieved.

That disunity remained and continued to divide Judah and Israel, keeping them separate and independent polities, is generally recognized. Roland de Vaux writes: "Israel and Judah are sometimes allies, sometimes enemies, but they are always independent of each other, and other nations treat them as distinct entities."<sup>22</sup> From the beginning of David's kingship, the emergence of Judah as a separate and exclusive polity is clearly visible. In this regard, John Bright observes: "A state of Judah emerged as a separate entity within the Israel to which Eshbaal laid claim. Both

'Israel' and 'Judah' began thereby to assume new connotations."<sup>23</sup>

Thus it is that Judah is first to recognize David as king without considering the fate of the northern tribes (2 Sam. 2:4). In 2 Sam. 19:44ff, after Absalom's defeat, we are told how the men of Israel and of Judah contend as to who should take precedence in restoring the king to his throne; in this passage, the distinction between the "men of Israel" and the "men of Judah" makes explicit the essential separateness of these two political entities.

Although the uprising of Absalom gains support in Judah, as well as in Israel, the continuation of the revolt under the leadership of Sheba ben Bichri is confined to Israel alone. Judah remains loyal to the Davidic house (2 Sam. 20:2) and this loyalty to the Davidic dynasty remains a feature of the Judean political scene down to its fall in 586 B.C.E.

The shifting of his headquarters from Hebron in Judah to Jerusalem seems to have been one of the first of David's major accomplishments. The text (2 Sam. 5:6ff) leaves considerable doubt as to two questions: whether David actually conquered all of Jerusalem or whether, after the stronghold was taken, the Jebusites did not come to some kind of understanding in which David was acknowledged as master while the Jebusites continued in possession of such rights to property as is revealed by 2 Sam. 24:24. In this passage, David purchases the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite and builds there an altar dedicated to YHWH. It would seem that while David succeeds in capturing and holding the strong-

hold of Zion ("the same is the city of David;" cf. 2 Sam. 5:7), the presence of a Jebusite in so prominent a place in Jerusalem indicates that David never made all of Jerusalem into a private royal preserve. I.C.C. and S.R. Driver agree that the stronghold of Zion is not to be equated with the whole of Jerusalem. Driver writes: "...based on the usage of the Old Testament itself...the 'Zion' of ancient times was the South-Eastern Hill of Jerusalem..."<sup>24</sup> So too, I.C.C. maintains that "Zion" constituted only a part of the city, "undoubtedly the eastern ridge."<sup>25</sup>

David's choice of Jerusalem as the domain of his royal court and center of the kingdom must be understood against the background of tribal rivalries. Since the city had never been a part of either Judah or Israel, David's choice of Jerusalem may have been motivated by the desire to remove the government from inter-tribal politics, much the same as Washington, D.C., is a separate entity and not considered one of the states.

The concentration of political authority in David's hands is further manifested in the construction of a palace for the king, with the assistance of Hiram of Tyre who provided the materials and the laborers (2 Sam. 5:11f). David's own wealth and prestige are reflected in his harem of wives and concubines (2 Sam. 5:13) - a practice, to the best of our knowledge, unknown to Saul.

The organization of a royal court and the proliferation of officials provides the throne and the kingdom with an effective centralized administration. Some of the tasks falling for the



first time to such a bureaucracy in Israel were the ambitious building program; the administration of the booty and tribute taken from subjugated peoples (2 Sam. 8:1ff) and the taxation at home which undoubtedly supported the building program; the direction of the military; and the cult.

Some functionaries of the royal court specifically mentioned are Joab, general of the army; Jehosafat, the "recorder;" Zadok and Ahimelech, the royal priests; Seraiah, the "scribe;" and Benaiah, head of the mercenary bodyguard, the Cherethites and Pelethites (2 Sam. 8:16ff).<sup>26</sup>

There is no indication that David's appointment of royal priests constituted an attempt to centralize the cult along the lines carried out later by Josiah in keeping with the Deuteronomic program. It is likely that David intended to lend further prestige to the capital by the erection of a royal Temple and through the appointment of royal priests. Thus, the centralization of authority in the hands of the king brought with it not only political but also a measure of cultic consolidation. In addition to being a political center, the City of David also became a cultic center.

David's appointment of his sons as "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18) constitutes a problem which we cannot resolve. On the one hand, the priestly tradition would have it that only descendants of Aaron could serve as priestly functionaries; on the other hand, David's appointment of his sons as "priests" is not challenged nor does Scripture preserve a criticism of this action. Moreover,

the variation preserved in 1 Ch. 18:17 indicates the Chronicler's inability to understand how David could make an appointment which would supersede Aaronic tradition; the text substitutes *פִּיכָרָה* *פִּיכָרָה* *פִּיכָרָה* for the *פִּיכָרָה* of 2 Sam. 8:18.

Driver writes: "From 2 Sam. 20:26...it may be inferred that they [David's sons] stood in some special relation to the king. It seems not improbable that they were 'domestic priests'... appointed specially to perform religious offices for the king."<sup>27</sup> Driver further notes that in Egypt "the king's responsible advisers were chosen from among the priests...It has also been supposed that the title was adopted in imitation of the Phoenicians, among whom members of the royal family often filled priestly offices... Neither the Egyptian nor the Phoenician parallel thus makes it probable that the Hebrew kohen should have been used to denote persons who were not really 'priests.'"<sup>28</sup> So too, I.C.C. comments: "...there is no reason for departing from the plain meaning of our text."<sup>29</sup> Thus, both S.R. Driver and I.C.C. accept the "plain meaning" of the text and maintain that David did in fact appoint his sons as priests; Driver offers only conjectures as possible explanations.

David himself seems to have acted as priest, Saul, it will be recalled, offers sacrifices in Gilgal without waiting for Samuel to arrive and is not only criticised but, according to the later (negative) account, is rejected by YHWH for this act (1 Sam. 13:9 - 15). Scripture preserves no such criticism of David: he wears an ephod (2 Sam. 6:14b), part of the customary priestly garb, offers-

up "burnt-offerings" and "peace-offerings" (vs. 17) and blesses the people by the name YHWH (vs. 18). Moreover, the tradition preserved in 2 Ch. 29:25f, 30 and 35:15 ascribes to David the composition of parts of the Temple liturgy as well as the establishment of a musical guild. It appears, therefore, that David himself was largely responsible for the organization of the cult in Jerusalem, with priests constituting a part of the royal court, and boasting probably a musical guild.

Upon David's instructions, the Ark is brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1ff) with the intention of building a permanent Sanctuary to YHWH, in which the Ark would be housed (2 Sam. 7:1ff). Nathan's oracle concerning the building of a permanent Sanctuary during David's reign is negative, stating that the Temple is to be built by David's son. The plan is abandoned. It is possible that Nathan's dream-oracle is the work of a narrator who is explaining the postponement of the building of the Temple until Solomon's reign.

David's close relationship with the cult is underscored by the fact that when David and his loyal retainers are fleeing Jerusalem prior to Absalom's triumphant entrance, Zadok and the Levites carry the Ark out of the city (2 Sam. 15:24).

David's building program seems to have been limited to the construction of the royal palace. There are two references which may point to the institution of a corvee. In 2 Sam. 12:31, we are told that the captives whom David took from Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, and from all the Ammonite cities were forced

to perform various kinds of labor. In 2 Sam. 20:24, we learn that "Adoram was over the *ON*" i.e. the corvee. Except for these citations, there is no indication that David instituted a corvee composed of Israelites, as was the case during Solomon's reign. Similarly, there is no indication that the imperial consolidation which David initiated brought with it elaborate building plans such as were later undertaken by Solomon.

The census which David causes to be taken ("...Go, number Israel and Judah;" cf. 2 Sam. 24:1ff) was probably motivated by the desire to ascertain the number of men of military age. Under David's leadership, the army had been transformed from a small corps of volunteers, which it had been under Saul, into a permanent, professional body. Saul's standing army was effective only in securing Israel's borders and in driving-back foreign military assaults. David's army, on the other hand, is reorganized and brought directly under the king's command. Moreover, David's army successfully wages offensive campaigns, on foreign soil, and gains for Israel the new status of an empire-kingdom.<sup>30</sup>

On several occasions, David either leads the army personally (2 Sam. 5:6 and 21:15) or plays a major role in the decisive campaign (2 Sam. 12:29). It would appear that there is a distinction between the national military force, recruited for a specific time, and the standing army which David himself led. In the assault against the city of Jerusalem, David leads his men ( *PSN* ) against the Jebusites, the "inhabitants of the land" (2 Sam. 5:6). Noteworthy is the contrast between "David and all

the people who were with him" ( *לִּפְנֵי יְהוָה* ; cf. 2 Sam. 6:2) and "the king and his men" ( *יְהוָה וְעַמּוּ* ; cf. 2 Sam. 5:6).

David's successful attempt to transform the nation-kingdom into an empire-kingdom is due not only to the effectiveness of the army which David organized and led. The international political situation which obtained at the turn of the second millenium was highly favorable to Israel's unprecedented ascendance. Roland de Vaux writes: "The notion of a national state gave way to that of an empire, which aspired to fill the place left vacant by the decline of Egyptian power."<sup>31</sup> John Bright too notes the decline of Egyptian power by the end of the second millenium and writes: "No rival power existed to inherit the debris of Egypt's Asiatic holdings. The Hittite Empire had vanished. Assyria... entered a century of weakness...Canaan, meanwhile, no longer defended by imperial power, had been dealt a fearful blow by the invasion and infiltration of new peoples."<sup>32</sup>

Thus, it appears that at the time that David comes to power, not a single state in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria or Egypt was powerful enough to interfere with Israel's plans for expansion. Within the context of this political void in the ancient Middle East, David was able not only to secure Israel's borders but expand them as well. On more than one occasion, David engages the Philistines in battle and defeats them so decisively that they never again recover their power to threaten Israel (2 Sam. 5:17ff, 22ff; 8:1; 21:15 to 22).

Having secured his southern and western flanks, with the

capital apparently secure in the city of David, the king's forces are deployed eastward across the Jordan as far as Damascus and Zobah. In a series of battles, David subdues the Moabites (2 Sam. 8:2), Hadadezer king of Zobah (vs. 3), the Arameans of Damascus who had attempted to aid Hadadezer (vs. 5), in addition to Ammon, Amalek and Edom (2 Sam. 8:12ff). With the Amalekites subdued and with garrisons stationed in Edom, the eastern and south-eastern borders are secured.

Only against Phoenicia does David not go to battle, either because it is not possible, necessary or desireable. Under Hiram I,

Phoenicia enters into a political and economic pact with Israel which must have been mutually beneficial.

By the time David's forces have accomplished his expansionist goals, the Israelites are in control of territories from Kadesh on the Orontes River in Syria to Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqabah. Philistia and the peoples of Transjordan either are made tributaries, or acknowledge David as king, or both. Thus, with the partial or total defeat of the Philistines, Ammonites, Amalekites, Moabites, Arameans, and Edomites, with the tribute flowing into the city of David from these subjugated territories, and with Phoenicia's assistance in the building program, Israel became economically as well as militarily secure.

Toward the end of his reign, David fails to provide firm leadership. In the absence of any designated successor to David's throne, a struggle ensues between Adonijah and his followers and the supporters of Solomon. There is a question as to whether

primogeniture constituted an accepted principle of succession to the throne. As has already been stated above (p. 20), the dynastic principle of hereditary succession was assumed in Israel in both the pre-monarchical and the monarchical period. This is clear from the request of the men of Israel that Gideon rule over them ("Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son and thy son's son also...;" cf. Jud. 8:22); from Saul's expectation that his son Jonathan would succeed him (1 Sam. 20:31); and from Nathan's dream-oracle ("When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set-up thy seed after thee...and I will establish his kingdom;" cf. 2 Sam. 7:12).

An attempt to establish the principle of primogeniture in regard to succession is revealed in Joab's effort to persuade David to restore Absalom from banishment. When, in 2 Sam. 14:13f, the woman of Tekoa uses the words: "Why then hast thou devised such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished one. For we will certainly die and be like water spilt upon the ground which cannot be reassembled....," she is indicating that the banishment of Absalom constitutes a danger to the nation. To what danger can she have reference? It seems likely that she is looking forward to the possibility that upon the king's death, there would be a son in good standing making a claim to ascend the throne, while an elder son who has been in banishment might return to contest that claim.

As David's death becomes imminent, the matter of succession

becomes a crucial issue. Adonijah, the eldest son, makes a bid for the throne. His claim must certainly have been based upon the principle of primogeniture. He gains the support of Joab and Abiathar, the priest; the rest of David's court, including the "mighty men," remain aloof and unallied.

The prophet Nathan and Bath Sheba secure David's indorsement of Solomon as successor to the throne (1 Kings 1:10ff). Zadok, Benaiah and Nathan are summoned by David and instructed to bring Solomon to Gihon and anoint him there as king. The fact that Solomon is to be anointed during David's lifetime, rather than after the monarch's death, indicates that David wanted to be sure that Solomon would indeed succeed him to the throne. With Solomon's enthronement accomplished, and with his kingship supported by most of the royal court, including the Cherethites and Pelethites (who had accompanied Solomon and the coronation party to Gihon), Adonijah's bid for the throne collapses; his followers scatter and it is not long after David's death that Solomon has Adonijah killed. Thus it is that Solomon ascends the throne and, with no rival to challenge his claim to succeed David, the kingdom is established in Solomon's hands (cf. 1 Kings 2:46).

The differences between the reigns of Saul and David are many and significant. Under David's rule, the government of the kingdom is centralized, a capital established and a palace built. Although a permanent Sanctuary is not constructed to house the Ark, the Ark is kept in Jerusalem, close to the throne and attended by royal



priests. A royal court is developed which includes the various governmental heads: priests, general of the army, "scribe," head of the Cherethites and Pelethites, "recorder," and the court prophets. The army becomes a highly effective force. The Philistines are defeated decisively; the borders are secured and Israel's neighbors conquered and forced to pay tribute. Israel is thus transformed from a kingdom to an empire.

The military and economic successes are not enough, however, to prevent the revolt of Absalom and the continuation of that rebellion on the part of the northern tribes under Sheba ben Bichri. Nevertheless, the insurrections are quelled and the king is restored to his throne. Before his death, David designates Solomon as his successor and sees to it that he is anointed king.

David, for all his difficulties and defects, served the later prophets as the prototype of the future ideal monarch who, reigning in justice, would reunite the divided kingdom.

#### D. The Reign of Solomon.

Upon ascending the throne, Solomon undertakes first to set the royal house in order and then to reorganize the court. Adonijah, who had challenged Solomon's claim to the throne, is put to death by Benaiah upon orders from the king (1 Kings 2:25). When Joab learns of Adonijah's death, he flees to the "Tent of YHWH" and seeks refuge behind the altar, hoping that the Sanctuary would provide protection against Solomon's plan to eliminate all rival claimants to the throne together with their followings.

The Sanctuary offers Joab no such protection and he is killed; Benaiah is then appointed general of the army in Joab's stead (1 Kings 2:34f). Shimei ben Gera is placed under house-arrest and within three years he too is killed. With his death, the plan attributed to David to establish the kingdom firmly in Solomon's hands (1 Kings 2:1ff) is completed.

The royal court is reorganized and expanded so as to include twelve  $\text{P}^{\prime}\text{a}3\text{J}$ , the head of the  $\text{P}^{\prime}\text{a}3\text{J}$ , the head of the royal household, and the king's  $\text{נָסִיחַ} \text{ / } \text{נָסִיחַ}$  ("chief minister and the king's friend"). In addition to these offices which Solomon created, there were the priests, "scribes," "recorder," and the head of the  $\text{ON}$  (sorvee). According to the list of court officials in 1 Kings 4:1ff, Zadok and Abiathar were the royal priests, together with Azariah ben Zadok; according to 1 Kings 2:26f and 35b, however, Abiathar is replaced by Zadok.

The  $\text{P}^{\prime}\text{a}3\text{J}$  whom Solomon appointed are assigned to twelve administrative districts with the responsibility to provide for the needs of the king and the royal household; each  $\text{a}3\text{J}$  and his district is to supply the palace with provisions for one month in the year. J. A. Montgomery notes that "there is no allignment with the Twelve Tribes."<sup>33</sup> John Bright explains that by this system of districting, Solomon virtually abolished "the old amphictyonic order" and "in place of twelve tribes caring...for the amphictyonic shrine were twelve districts taxed for the support of Solomon's court."<sup>34</sup> The issue of amphictyony apart, it would appear that Solomon wished to weaken the old tribal loyalties and to strengthen

the throne by establishing a system of twelve districts which would cut-across the geographical boundaries of the tribes (1 Kings 4:7ff). The text is not clear as to whether there was a <sup>23</sup> over Judah or whether Judah was even included among the other districts.

Solomon's domestic policy includes an ambitious building program in Jerusalem as well as throughout Israel. Solomon seems to have added to the palace which David had had built; according to 1 Kings 7:1, the additional structure required thirteen years for its completion. With the assistance of Hiram, king of Tyre, the Temple is built to house the Ark and to provide the kingdom with a royal chapel and, at the same time, a national shrine as well. Scripture details the lavish and ornate design of the palace, Sanctuary, the many vessels necessary for the conduct of the cult, and all the interior appurtenances (1 Kings 7:13 to 40).

In addition to the living quarters of the palace, there was the throne room where Solomon presided as magistrate (1 Kings 7:8f) and the "building of Lebanon wood" which seems to have been used as an armory-treasury (1 Kings 10:16f).

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon seems to take precedence over the priests and Levites in the ceremonies. It is Solomon himself who delivers the invocation and who is credited with offering-up the "peace-offerings," "burnt-offerings," and "meal-offerings," and who blesses the people (1 Kings 8:5, 12ff, 54ff, and 63ff).

Solomon sacrifices at other shrines *והיה*; cf. 1 Kings 3:3)

and it is at one of these shrines that he has an incubation dream. YHWH's oracle promised Solomon the gift of wisdom and understanding in addition to riches and honor (1 Kings 3:12f).

In addition to the complex of palace buildings and the Temple in Jerusalem, Solomon is also responsible for the construction of fortifications within and without the royal city. He fortifies Millo, Hazor, Megiddo, Beth-horon, Baalath and Tadmor;<sup>35</sup> builds or rebuilds the wall of Jerusalem; constructs "store-cities" and stations garrisons throughout the kingdom (1 Kings 9:15ff). With the fortification of Jerusalem and other strategic cites, Solomon seems to have maintained effectively the national security by guarding the borders and at the same time by keeping a watchful eye on Israel's neighbors.

Solomon resorts to the corvee in order to provide the necessary labor force for his vast building projects. As far as we know, this practice was unknown to Saul and David appears to have subjected only his Ammonite captives to forced labor (2 Sam. 12:31).<sup>36</sup> Solomon extended the corvee to include captive Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (1 Kings 9:20). However, the corvee was composed not only of the Canaanites "whom the children of Israel were not able utterly to destroy," as 1 Kings 9:21 states. Despite the witness of 1 Kings 9:22 ("But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondservants..."), Scripture testifies to Solomon's conscription of 30,000 Israelites who were sent to Lebanon to hew lumber and to quarry stone for the foundation of the Temple (1 Kings 5:27ff). Beside the labor

force, Solomon had 3,300 overseers supervise the corvee (1 Kings 5:30; according to 9:23, however, Solomon's overseers numbered 550). There can be little doubt concerning the authenticity of these notices in regard to the corvee. The construction of the palace, adjacent buildings, Temple, and city walls in Jerusalem and the fortifications throughout the land must have required a labor force of thousands of non-Israelites and Israelites. It is noteworthy that it is the popular resentment against the corvee, as revealed in the killing of Adoniram who was "over the *ON*" (1 Kings 4:6 and 5:28), which initiates the secession of the northern tribes.

Revenue to support the vast and ambitious building program is derived from the taxes provided by the twelve districts and from the tribute supplied by the empire. While there is no indication that Solomon expanded the empire beyond those lines inherited from David's reign, Solomon's attempt to maintain Israel's hold on the imperial territories may be seen in 1 Kings 3:1 and 11:1ff. His marriages to foreign women seem to have been part of his effort to maintain amicable relationships as well as political alliances with Israel's vassal states. The crown prince himself, Rehoboam, is the offspring of such a union between Solomon and an Ammonitess. The political sagacity of these marriages aside, the narrator in 1 Kings 11:1ff criticizes Solomon for his attachments to these foreign noblewomen and he claims that they have "turned-away his Solomon's heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:4, 8f), for which YHWH would rend the kingdom from

Solomon and give it to the monarch's servant (1 Kings 11:11).

Under Solomon, the empire prospers and trade is carried-on via the Red Sea by the merchant fleet which was constructed with the assistance of Phoenician shipbuilders (1 Kings 9:26f; 10:11 and 22). The port at Ezion-Geber carries-on lucrative trade with the lands to the south. According to John Bright: "At Ezion-Geber the largest refinery so far known in the ancient orient was erected, where the ore was further refined and worked into ingots for shipment...This industry provided Solomon with an ample supply of copper for domestic use, as well as a surplus to export in exchange for foreign products."<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the exporting of copper from Ezion-Geber, in return for which gold, silver, rare woods, jewels, ivory, apes and peacocks are brought back from the south (1 Kings 10:22), Solomon also imports horses and chariots from Egypt and Keveh (1 Kings 10:28f).

Nelson Glueck suggests a possible explanation for the state visit of the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1): "Solomon's shipping line evidently made such inroads in the lucrative caravan trade controlled by the Queen of Sheba, that she hastened to Jerusalem with all manner of presents in order to conclude an amicable trade agreement with him [Solomon]...A satisfactory commercial treaty was evidently negotiated between the two sovereigns... (1 Kings 10:13)."<sup>38</sup>

Together with Israel's prosperous economy there seems to have been considerable literary activity during Solomon's reign.

According to John Bright, Israel began to produce "a literature historical in character, unsurpassed in the ancient world. Outstanding in this class is the matchless court history of David (2 Sam. chs. 9 to 20; 1 Kings chs. 1 and 2)...The heroic tales of David, Saul and Samuel were likewise collected and given literary form."<sup>39</sup> Bright's statement is based probably on the notice of 1 Kings 11:41 ("Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon?").

Despite the general prosperity of the new empire, Solomon is plagued by imperial troubles. The Edomite prince, Hadad, had managed to survive Joab's massacre, flee Edom and find asylum in Egypt. Although the text is incomplete and ends abruptly, it is a possibility that Hadad returned to Edom and became a source of harassment for Solomon. How else shall we understand 1 Kings 11:14 ("And YHWH raised up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite...")? It appears that Solomon never loses his grip on Edom despite whatever harassment Hadad causes. Troubles in Syria, however, are more serious. We learn in 1 Kings 11:23ff that Rezon flees from the king of Zobah, gathers a following and becomes general over an army. Rezon and his troop seem to have controlled Damascus where they continued to trouble Israel "all the days of Solomon."

Solomon also encounters trouble at home. Jeroboam, one of Solomon's servants, is encouraged by Ahijah the prophet to believe that it is the will of God that the kingdom be divided, with Solomon retaining only the tribe of Judah. Scripture does not give the

exact nature of Jeroboam's activities against Solomon. They are, however, serious enough for Solomon to attempt to execute Jeroboam. The latter flees the land and finds asylum in Egypt, as had Hadad.

The Cabul transaction, related in 1 Kings 9:10ff, is an indication that Solomon's building program probably far exceeded the ability of the royal treasury to support such ambitious projects. According to J. A. Montgomery, the transaction reveals that a bargain was struck between Solomon and Hiram of Tyre "for a loan to replenish Solomon's empty treasury, for which the latter pawned twenty cantons in Galilee."<sup>40</sup> According to John Bright, the towns that Solomon handed-over to Hiram in exchange for the building materials supplied him "were either sold outright or advanced as collateral against a cash loan and never redeemed. One wonders if this could have been a popular transaction in Israel?"<sup>41</sup>

Scripture gives no indication of a rival to challenge Rehoboam's claim to the throne (1 Kings 11:43). However, trouble comes to the successor from another source. After Solomon's death, a delegation of Israelites comes to Shechem to enthrone Rehoboam and to request that he lighten the heavy yoke of taxes and corvee which Solomon had imposed (1 Kings 12:1ff). It is not clear, however, whether Jeroboam headed the delegation of Israelites at Shechem (1 Kings 12:2 and 12) or whether Jeroboam returned from Egypt after the incident at Shechem and the secession of the northern tribes (1 Kings 12:20).

Rehoboam takes counsel with the elders but rejects their advice to be temperate in favor of the rash counsel offered by the



courtiers who grew-up with him. His answer to the Israelites is a threat to increase their burdens (1 Kings 12:12). Thereupon, Jeroboam and the men of Israel announce their secession from Judah's kingdom. When Rehoboam dispatches Adoram on corvee business, the latter is killed by "all Israel" (1 Kings 12:18). Rehoboam flees to Jerusalem to mobilize the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin in an effort to restore his hold on the north. This enterprise is aborted by Shemaiah, a "man of God," who tells Rehoboam that the secession is the work of YHWH and the rebellion of Israel goes unchallenged.

Despite the opulence and power of Solomon's kingdom, serious problems seem to have set-in toward the end of Solomon's reign. In 1 Kings 11:1ff, we learn of Solomon's numerous foreign wives and of his tolerance of their native deities, which the narrator views as apostasy and as the cause of the division of the kingdom after his death. Solomon's difficulties in maintaining the boundaries inherited from his father are clear in 1 Kings 11:14ff and 23ff (the harassment of Hadad the Edomite and Rezon of Aram). Moreover, Hadad and Jeroboam find refuge with Shishak I, who had begun to restore to Egypt some of its former pre-eminence. With Shishak offering political asylum to rebels who have quarrelled with the royal house of Israel and with Rezon of Aram "an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon," Solomon's task was not an easy one.

While there can be no question that Solomon's rule brought

great prosperity to Israel, there is question as to the extent to which the common people shared in this new wealth. The high taxes and the corvee undoubtedly contributed to the division of the kingdom. Had Rehoboam come to terms with the men of Israel, it is quite likely that the northern tribes might not have seceded. History, however, knows no "if's."

With the enthronement of Jeroboam as king over the northern tribes, the division of Israel into two kingdoms commences; the breach between Israel and Judah is never healed.

## THE TREATMENT OF KINGSHIP IN THE SECONDARY SOURCES

### A. The Rise of Monarchy.

Roland de Vaux' position on the rise of monarch in Israel is difficult to follow. On the one hand he writes: "This [monarchy] is something quite new. The Israelite federation became a national state, and in the end took its pattern from the related kingdoms beyond the Jordan."<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, he maintains that "the institution of the monarchy had sprung from the tribal federation..."<sup>43</sup> In Still another passage, de Vaux writes: "...we cannot speak of one Israelite idea of the State. The federation of the Twelve Tribes, the kingship of Saul, that of David and Solomon, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah...all these are so many different regimes. We may even go further and say that there never was any Israelite idea of the State."<sup>44</sup>

What does de Vaux intend? Does he believe that monarchy was a natural development from the federation of the tribes or that it was an innovation unrelated to the previous form of political organization in Israel?

Similarly, John Bright writes that monarchy was established "almost tentatively and, on the part of some, with great reluctance... for monarchy was an institution totally foreign to Israel's tradition."<sup>45</sup> He maintains that "a step as drastic as this, and involving such a break with tradition, evoked opposition from the beginning."<sup>46</sup> On the other, he writes: "But while this [monarchy] was certainly an innovation, it represented no sharp break with

the old amphictyonic tradition" since, Bright explains, "the fierce independence of the tribes...prevented the exercise of any real authority."<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the intent of these seemingly contradictory statements by de Vaux and Bright is that the rise of monarchy both stemmed from the confederation and at the same time represented a dramatic innovation.

In the face of tribal disunity, the "judge" served to rally the tribes and unite them against the military assaults of Israel's neighbors. Under the rule of the "judges," the tribes were enabled to defend themselves and withstand times of national crisis. While some of the "judges" played an intra-tribal role (as, for example, Samson and Gideon) and were limited, therefore, in their influence to one tribe, others acted in intertribal affairs, in both peace and war time, and were national figures (as for example, Deborah). Nevertheless, the system of leadership by "judges" whom YHWH would designate and raise-up in time of national crisis was inadequate and did not suffice. It is the recognition of this inadequacy which underlies the demand of the men of Israel for a king.

The system of rule by YHWH-appointed "judges" was inadequate because the *picale*, sent by YHWH in times of peril, ruled by force of personal prestige and magnetism, usually referred to as "charisma." The people would have to wait for a "judge" to be produced, or for YHWH to designate a deliverer, or for one to rise to the occasion of national emergency. Obviously, an attack could come before the response, or there might be no "judge" to respond, or the "judge"

might die or be killed without transferring his authority to his heirs. Furthermore, even when a "judge-deliverer" arose, the extent of his prestige and influence were often limited. Even Deborah, who was a national figure, could not rally all the tribes against Sisera.

The demand for a king among the tribes is dictated by the need for political and military unity. Under the confederation, the tribes recognize the requirement and the necessity for each tribe to come to each other's assistance. Under the federation, however, with rule provided by a "judge-deliverer," this requirement and inter-tribal commitment might remain theoretical. Under a monarchy, it would become a political fact. In demanding a king, the people were demanding a solution to their problems; what they got was a new form of political organization headed by a stable, permanent king whose authority would pass to his legitimate heir and successor.

Kingship, then, derived from the fact of the federation and its need for more effective political and military organization. Monarchy, it was hoped, would satisfy this need by providing the federation of tribes with a figure who could be counted upon at all times, not just in times of national peril, whose permanence of role would be determined by hereditary succession.

As has been suggested earlier, such a move would find support as well as opposition. Monarchy had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the king would maintain firm control and rule over the tribes. YHWH designates Saul as His choice and

declares: " *וְיָאֵלֶּכֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ* " (1 Sam. 9:17). The king would hold the reins of the kingdom firmly and restrain the tribes from lapsing into their former state of relative disorganization. On the other hand, the tribes recognized that a large measure of their former independence and autonomy would be alienated. In this light, one can understand the periodic insurrections by the northern tribes against the Davidic house during David's reign and their secession from Judah upon Rehoboam's ascendance to the throne.

Once kingship has been established in Israel, it conformed to its own nature and logic. With the institution of monarchy, consolidation of political power in the hands of the monarch gradually became evident. A royal court, standing army, system of taxation, corvee, and centralization of the cult were initiated. A vast building program was undertaken in Jerusalem as well as throughout the empire: royal buildings, Temple and fortifications were constructed. The empire yielded considerable revenue but also brought with it the problem of foreign harassment. The taxation and corvee also brought discontent at home. There was also the problem of succession to the throne.

The monarchical form of political organization did not spring-up overnight. Under Saul, the tribes within the federation seem to have maintained a good part of their autonomy. No palace is built, no standing army is instituted and no consolidation of political power in Saul's hands takes place. In David's reign, consolidation and centralization are evident; the security of the

borders are maintained and the national boundaries expanded to the proportions of an empire. Nevertheless, David still did not secure the support and loyalty of the northern tribes. Under Solomon, further centralization and consolidation is accomplished and tribal quarrels seem to have been contained, at least momentarily. Upon Solomon's death, Rehoboam succeeds his father to the throne without incident or opposition from a rival.

#### B. The Spiritual Element in Kingship.

Yehezkel Kaufman maintains that "the early Israelite theocracy did not on principle repudiate kingship in favor of the rights of the people, God, priest or prophet. It [monarchy] was the natural effect of the idea of apostolic prophecy (של הנביאים האלוהיים) on ancient Hebrew society, whose government...left room for the leadership of the men of God."<sup>48</sup> The fact is, however, that early Israelite theocracy did repudiate kingship, claiming that the institution of kingship implied a rejection of God's rulership. The latter (negative) account, as has already been stated, expresses opposition to monarchy on the grounds that YHWH is Israel's King and that under an earthly king the people would suffer from abuses of power and royal excesses.

If apostolic prophecy had any political effect on ancient Hebrew society it manifested itself in the form of "judges-saviors" who came to power in time of national peril. It was precisely this institution of "judges-saviors" that the people rejected in demanding a king "like all the nations." The people complain

that Samuel is old and that his sons are corrupt; but the people do not wish to see Samuel and his sons replaced by another "judge." The people reject this "leadership by men of God" in favor of monarchy with the hope that the king would provide the federation with stronger, central, authoritative leadership.

Thus, Israelite "theocracy" did, in fact, oppose and repudiate kingship, at least according to one tradition. Moreover, monarchy followed as a political necessity demanded by the military vulnerability of the tribes, and not as the natural effect of apostolic prophecy on ancient Hebrew society.

It seems strange, therefore, that Kaufman should state further that "the negative assessment of the monarchy is based not on priestly, but prophetic claims...At stake is not priestly rule, but the kingdom of the apostolic prophet-Judges (מְשִׁיכֵי הַדָּוִד) *mešīkēi ha-dāvid* *P'Golei* )..."<sup>49</sup> If Kaufmann's former statement is correct, namely that monarchy is the "natural effect of apostolic prophecy," how then can the latter statement also be correct, namely that monarchy was opposed by the "kingdom of the apostolic prophet-judges"?

Kaufmann further states: "The monarchy is the direct successor to the apostolic kingdom of God...Saul is the last judge for he is the first king."<sup>50</sup> Again we ask, if Israelite monarchy was the direct successor of the apostolic-prophetic form of government, headed by the prophet-judge, why then did Samuel oppose the institution of monarchy and why was his opposition based, as Kaufmann claims, not on priestly but on prophetic grounds? It



seems clear from Samuel's objection, in the latter account, that to him monarchy represents a radical innovation signifying an overthrow of the previous political organization. Thus, monarchy can hardly be considered a radical innovation and at the same time "the direct successor to the apostolic kingdom of God." Furthermore, Saul is nowhere cited or acknowledged as "judge." He bears the titles *melekh* and *nagid*, but never *shofet*. As Israel's first king, Saul assumes the functions represented by the verb *šafat* but he is certainly not the "last of the judges;" he represents a sharp break with the "judges-saviors" and the Israelites' demand for a king indicates that such a break was desired. Far from being the last "judge," Saul represents Israel's first attempt to establish permanent, hereditary rule in place of the sporadic rule of the "judges."

Kaufmann maintains that "the 'spiritual' element in Saul is still very marked. Not only is his rise to kingship due to a prophet, but he himself is an ecstatic (1 Sam. 10:5ff; 19:23f; cf. 16:14ff and 18:10). In 1 Sam. 10:9, Saul's inspiration is conceived of as an effluence from Samuel. The oracle that Samuel communicated to him gave Saul 'another heart' and qualified him for prophesying;" and this "touch of prophecy prepared him for kingship."<sup>51</sup>

Evidently, Kaufmann overlooks the negative account of Saul's prophesying which considers Saul's actions demeaning to a king (1 Sam. 19:23f). Only in the positive account (1 Sam. 10:5ff) is Saul's prophetic ability considered a sign of his fitness to

occupy the throne; in the negative account, this prophetic ability is viewed with scorn (cf. above, p. 19). Furthermore, 1 Sam. 16:14ff and 18:10 speak of Saul raving ( *הִשְׁפִּיז* ), in connection with the evil spirit from YHWH. These verses can hardly provide support for the claim that Saul's prophetic ability and actions as an ecstatic qualified him for kingship.

Had Saul been given the gift of prophecy as "an effluence from Samuel," and if he were a "fit successor to the authority of the prophets,"<sup>52</sup> why then did Saul have to rely upon the witch of En-dor for an oracle? The account in 1 Sam. 28:6ff makes it clear that Saul had exhausted the normative means of obtaining an oracle from YHWH: "And when Saul inquired of YHWH, YHWH answered him not, neither by dreams, nor Urim [and Thumim], nor by prophets." That Saul had recourse to prophets, as well as to dreams and Urim, indicates that his own ability to prophesy is questionable or, at least, was unreliable. In seeking an oracle from YHWH through the outlawed means of a "woman who divines by ghost," Saul seems hardly a "fit successor to the authority of the prophets."

Kaufmann further maintains that "each of the first three kings is a man of the spirit. Saul is an ecstatic; David is a poet in whom 'the spirit of YHWH' speaks (2 Sam. 23:2); Solomon is a sage in whom there is 'the wisdom of God' (1 Kings 3:28). We do not find this quality in any of the later kings."<sup>53</sup>

Although 1 Sam. 16:13 testifies that "the spirit of YHWH came mightily upon David from that day forward," following his anointing by Samuel, and despite the reference in 2 Sam. 23:2 ("The spirit

of YHWH spoke by me..."). David's conduct is frequently not that of a "man of the spirit." To be sure, tradition ascribes to David the composition of most of the Psalter; nevertheless, there are also the traditions of David's role in the death of Uriah, his adultery with Bath Sheba, and his ruthless, if politic, advice to Solomon that Joab and Shimei ben Gera eventually be liquidated. These traditions hardly depict a "man of the spirit;" David's spiritual qualities may well have been limited to his skillful playing of the harp and to his composition of liturgical pieces for the Temple, many of which are, according to tradition to be found in the Psalter.

Solomon too can hardly be considered a "man of the spirit" solely on the basis of 1 Kings 3:28 ("And all Israel heard of the judgement which the king had rendered; and they revered the king for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him..."), 1 Kings 5:9 ("And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding..."), 1 Kings 8:12ff (Solomon's invocation at the dedication of the Temple), and 1 Kings 3:4ff (Solomon's incubation dream at Gibeon. Together with the traditions which claim that Solomon possessed great wisdom, one must also consider the tradition that Solomon erred in taking "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines" who "turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Kings 11:3ff), as a consequence of which YHWH raised up Hadad the Edomite and Rezon of Zobah as adversaries to Solomon (1 Kings 11:14 and 23). Jeroboam is also viewed by Ahijah the prophet as an agent of YHWH, sent to wrest the northern tribes from Solomon's control

(1 Kings 11:30). These latter traditions do not attest to Solomon's spiritual qualities. Moreover, Josiah must certainly be considered among those possessed of marked spiritual qualities on the basis of the religious reforms which he instituted (2 Kings 23:4ff). It should also be recalled that Hezekiah, like David and Solomon, is credited with having composed a psalm ( *אֲדָוָה*; cf. Is. 38:9ff). Thus, Kaufmann's claim that the latter kings are lacking in spiritual qualities is not supported by Scripture.

In a tradition which holds that God is chiefly concerned with His people, constantly revealing His will to them, it should be understood that any king who is successful and who is viewed with favor by the tradition is considered to be graced with the spirit of God (1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Kings 3:28; 5:9; 2 Kings 18:3, 5f; 23:25). Only in the case of Saul who has ecstatic, psychic aberrations, do we find an Israelite monarch who "prophesies." This pattern is not repeated by any other king. Furthermore, Saul's prophesying/raving should not, as argued above, be considered spirituality in the sense that Kaufmann intends.

### C. Succession to the Throne.

As has been indicated earlier, hereditary succession is one of the essential ingredients of monarchy to which the tribes looked for a solution to their political problems. Unlike the "judge," the king's authority would pass to his legitimate heir and successor. It is, therefore, difficult to accept de Vaux' statement that "the dynastic principle was no more accepted in Israel than in

Edom (Gen. 36:31 - 39): no provision was made for the succession to Saul, and only Abner's personal authority made Eshbaal a puppet king (2 Sam. 2:8f)..."<sup>54</sup> John Bright also asserts that the "principle of heredity was not recognized. Though many Israelites may have tacitly accepted Eshbaal, the fact that he was Saul's son did not mean that he commanded their loyalty. His claims, without any real basis in the will of the clans, were supported solely by Abner and others loyal to the house of Saul for personal reasons."<sup>55</sup>

Notwithstanding Jonathan's recognition of David as Saul's successor (1 Sam. 23:17), Saul certainly expected Jonathan to succeed him as king (1 Sam. 20:30f), as has already been mentioned above (p. 35). The men of Israel anointed Ish-baal because he was Saul's sole legitimate heir to the throne. Had Abner possessed such prestige and personal authority enabling him to designate Saul's successor and had hereditary succession not been accepted in principle, would it not be reasonable to assume that Abner would have declared himself, rather than Ish-baal, as Israel's king? Furthermore, that Israel expected Saul to be succeeded by a member of the house of Saul is clearly reflected in the accusation of Shimei ben Gera (2 Sam. 16:5ff).

In the case of David's sons, there is no question but that one of them will succeed David to the throne. The only question is, which son? It is Solomon who is ultimately designated by David as his legitimate successor. In the case of Rehoboam, it appears that the dynastic problem is finally settled. Rehoboam ascends

the throne, after Solomon's death, with no opposition. It seems likely, therefore, that hereditary succession was an accepted principle in Israel.

#### D. David's Vassalage to Philistia.

De Vaux asserts that "David continued to be the vassal of the Philistines at the beginning of his reign in Hebron."<sup>56</sup> Bright too maintains that David became king over Judah in Hebron "with the Philistines' consent...for he was their vassal and could hardly have taken such a step without their approval."<sup>57</sup> While it is clear that David had indeed been a vassal of Philistia and had been rewarded for his services by Achish, king of Gath (1 Sam. 27:5f), there is no indication that David ascended the throne of Judah as Philistia's vassal. Scripture does not testify to David's either seeking or receiving Philistia's approval, upon his enthronement as king. De Vaux' and Bright's assertion is speculation.

As soon as the inter-dynastic rivalry between the houses of Saul and David is settled and David is declared king over both Israel and Judah, war commences between David and the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17ff). It is possible that the Philistines did not feel threatened when David ascended the throne and ruled from Hebron. Since Hebron is relatively close to Philistia, the Philistines may have felt that their dominance in the area was not in real jeopardy. Israel, however, is not Philistine territory. It is conceivable that when the northern tribes join Judah and recognize

David as head of the kingdom, now united, the Philistines decide that it is time to challenge David's rule of a united and dangerous kingdom.

#### E. The "Adoption" Formula.

De Vaux maintains that "the word of Yahweh in Ps. 2:7, 'Thou art My son; today I have begotten thee,' is best understood as a formula of adoption. According to the Code of Hammurabi, when someone adopted a person, he said to him, 'You are my son...'" Thus, YHWH declares that "He acknowledges the king as His son; He adopts him."<sup>58</sup> De Vaux also cites Nathan's prophecy (2 Sam. 7:14) and further maintains that YHWH's adoption had to be made effective for each sovereign in the Davidic dynasty and "thus the text is applied to Solomon by 1 Ch. 22:10 and 28:6."<sup>59</sup> John Bright claims that the king, through his adoption by the Deity, became "Yahweh's vice-regent, ruling by divine election and under divine sufferance..."<sup>60</sup>

It should be noted, however, that in 2 Sam. 7:14, the father-son relationship is tantamount to a lord-vassal relationship; the "son" is expected to fulfill certain obligations and is responsible for his conduct to YHWH. Crucial here is the fact that YHWH requires obedience from his "son" and thus 2 Sam. 7:14b states: "if he [the king] commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the children of men." As YHWH's "son," the king may expect punishment, rather than preferential treatment, if he should disobey YHWH's commands.

Adoption, as attested to by hundreds of cuneiform tablets, is commonplace in Mesopotamia but practically unknown in Israel where the next of kin was heir. The one case of adoption to which Scripture bears witness, namely Jacob's adoption of Ephraim and Menasseh (Gen. 48:5), deals with the inheritance of property. In claiming the Ps. 2:7 contains an adoption formula similar to that found in the Code of Hammurabi, De Vaux is importing cultural patterns from Mesopotamia without adequate evidence of their existence in or relevance to ancient Israelite society.

#### F. The Relation of the King of God and the Cosmos.

Henri Frankfort's analysis of Israelite monarchy is confined to the few pages of his Epilogue. His conclusion is profoundly true: "The transcendentalism of Hebrew religion prevented kingship from assuming the profound significance which it possessed in Egypt and Mesopotamia. It excluded, in particular, the king's being instrumental in the integration of society and nature."<sup>61</sup> He further states that, except by way of contrast, Israelite kingship "has no place in a 'study of ancient Near Eastern religion as an integration of society and nature.'"<sup>62</sup>

However, others of Frankfort's statements are generalizations which find little support in the Biblical narrative. Thus, Frankfort maintains: "If kingship counted in Egypt as a function of the gods, and in Mesopotamia as a divinely ordained political order, the Hebrews know that they had introduced it on their own initiative, in imitation of others and under the strain of an



emergency."<sup>63</sup> Frankfort evidently takes the later (negative) account of the rise of monarchy, which has the people coming to Samuel and requesting a king, as the historically valid account, to the exclusion of the older narrative which has God, not the people, initiating monarchy. Thus, one cannot say that the Hebrews knew that they had introduced monarchy on their own initiative, when the Bible preserves a version of the rise of monarchy at YHWH's insistence. The older account claims that monarchy is precisely "a divinely ordained political order."

Frankfort further states: "If the Hebrews, like the Mesopotamians, remembered a kingless period, they never thought that kingship descended from heaven! Hence, the Hebrew king did not become a necessary bond between the people and the divine powers."<sup>64</sup> Again, the older (positive) account maintains that kingship was instituted by YHWH or, to use Frankfort's words, that it had "descended from heaven." Nevertheless, he is correct in his belief that the Hebrew monarch never became a god-king, such as Pharaoh, or a necessary bond between the people and the cosmos, although the reason for this does not lie in the fact that the Hebrews believed that they, rather than YHWH, had initiated kingship. Rather, the nature of Israelite religion did not allow anyone to share in YHWH's divinity, sanctity or rulership. Neither the king, nor the prophet, nor the priests who ministered at the sacred alters are regarded as divine personages. YHWH's divinity and indivisibility are kept intact and the most that Israel's kings may claim is that they rule with YHWH's approval.

Contrasting Israelite kingship with that of Egypt and Mesopotamia, Frankfort writes: "In addition to the god incarnate who was Pharaoh and the chosen servant of the gods who ruled Mesopotamia, we find [in Israel] a hereditary leader whose authority derived from descent and was originally co-extensive with kinship. This is a more primitive kind of monarchy...based on the facts of consanguinity, not on any conception of man's place in the universe..."<sup>65</sup>

This contrast is a generalization vulnerable to attack. The authority of the Israelite king derives from YHWH, not from descent, as Frankfort maintains. That this is so is clear from the fact that Saul rules by virtue of YHWH's appointment and designation of him as king, rather than by virtue of descent. Being Israel's first monarch, Saul's authority could hardly have derived from some predecessor. Moreover, Saul acknowledges that he is from the smallest, most insignificant of Israel's tribes; thus, his authority can hardly be said to be based on prominent lineage. Furthermore, from whom does David's authority derive? Certainly David's rule does not derive from Saul; rather, it is YHWH, according to the Bible, who invests the king with authority. Among the northern tribes, after the division of the kingdom, Jeroboam is declared king by the men of Israel with no thought or claim of descent. Moreover, Ahijah the prophet informs Jeroboam that he has been chosen by YHWH to be king over Israel. In general, dynasties do not long endure in the northern kingdom; thus, it appears that descent does not play a significant part in the succession to the throne of Israel. There seems to be little

support for the claim that the Israelite kings' authority "derived from descent and was originally co-extensive with kinship."

Concerning the hypothesis that Israelite monarchy is "based on the facts of consanguinity," Frankfort states that the Israelites "acknowledged kinship above every other bond of loyalty... The tribesmen recognized the bond of blood alone and it was exceedingly difficult to envisage a loyalty surpassing the scope of kinship...In fact, once kingship had been established, it conformed to the tribal laws which treat relatives as one...Saul's 'house' was exterminated by David...David's house was promised lasting dominion by Yāhweh..."<sup>66</sup> Frankfort maintains that it is significant that the Davidic dynasty was never dethroned in Judah probably "because David belonged to Judah."<sup>67</sup>

It should be noted that no king, except Saul, claims to "belong" to a particular tribe. Certainly the northern kings "belong" to the northern tribes but this does not prevent the dethronement of Israel's several dynasties. It goes without saying that intra-tribal kinship serves as the basis of loyalty and that the tribesmen recognize as important the facts of consanguinity that bind them together. But there is inter-tribal loyalty, as evidenced in the Song of Deborah. The tribes are aware of common traditions, common historical experiences and current dangers affecting them all. These dangers, primarily in the form of the military assaults by Israel's neighbors, bring the tribes closer together and make them realize that a stronger political organization is desirable and necessary. Frankfort himself admits that

when "the separate tribes were threatened with extinction or enslavement, Saul was made king over all." Thus, while the tribesmen recognize the "bond of blood," they are also aware of inter-tribal unity and the need for stronger central authority vested in a king. Furthermore, although Saul is a Benjaminite, "the smallest of the tribes," the non-Benjaminite tribesmen appear to voice no opposition to Saul's election. Outside of the *Shema ya*, all appear to accept Saul as king. Thus, the tribesmen recognize a stronger bond of loyalty than that of intra-tribal consanguinity.

Frankfort claims that "kingship never achieved a standing equal to that of institutions which were claimed...to have originated during the Exodus and the desert wandering."<sup>68</sup> The fact is that kingship, once established in Israel, is never again challenged or opposed by either prophet, priest or Deity. It becomes an accepted political reality, equal in status to any Israelite institution. Moreover, while the prophets frequently attack the priesthood, an institution which was certainly claimed to have originated "during the Exodus and desert wandering," and while they often come in open conflict with the king, they never challenge kingship as an institution, either in the north or south. The prophets accept monarchy as the political form sanctioned and approved by YHWH. In fact, they envision the effature, ideal ruler of Israel neither as a priest nor a prophet, but as a king belonging to the Davidic dynasty. It would appear, therefore, that kingship not only achieves a standing equal to that of other

corruption in adjunct and subordinate positions. Thus, the king is expected to uphold his commitment to the covenant of YHWH in order that the people maintain their part of the covenant with the Deity. The king's failure to do this would inevitably portend national catastrophe.

The nature of Israelite religion accounts for the connection between the king's fate and the national destiny, rather than the "religious orientation of Hebrew society." There is every indication that Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies were as religiously oriented as was Israel; the nature of their respective religions, rather than the fact of their religious orientation, accounts for the fact that the king in Egypt and in Mesopotamia plays a more significant role in the integration of society and the cosmos than does the monarch in Israel. Although this may be what Frankfort intends, it is important that this be clearly stated.

Finally, Frankfort states: "The Hebrew king, as every other Hebrew, stood under the judgement of God in an alien world, which...seems friendly only on those rare occasions when man proves not inadequate..."<sup>71</sup> Frankfort cites 2 Sam. 23:3f as support: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass, springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."<sup>72</sup> I am unable to make any connection between Frankfort's observation and the verses which he cites. The view that the king is as

responsible as any other Israelite to the covenant of YHWH is indeed supported by Scripture. But the notion that man lives in a world which is alien or "friendly only on those rare occasions when man proves not inadequate" is a philosophical or philological problem which, though beyond the scope of this discussion, is certainly open to question.

## FOOTNOTES

1. For an up-to-date bibliography, see Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel Its Life and Institutions (London: McGraw-Hill, 1961), pp's 525 - 529.
2. W.F. Albright, Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement (Cincinnati: H.U.C. Press, 1961), p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 15.
4. John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), p. 169.
5. J. Hastings (ed.), "Kingship," Dictionary of the Bible (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1909), p. 518.
6. T.S. Chayns and J.S. Black (editors), "Kingship," Encyclopaedia Biblica (New York: Macmillan Co., 1914), p. 2663.
7. Analogously, the local hero Samson, of the tribe of Dan, is said to have "judged" Israel (Jud. 15:20).
8. The factor of Abimelech's non-Israelite blood, in his selection by the Shechemites, is stressed by Jotham in Jud. 9:18.
9. S.R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 86; "...the composition of Deuteronomy [belongs] to a period considerably later than the Mosaic age...The terminus ad quem is not difficult to fix; it must have been written prior to the eighteenth year of king Josiah (B.C. 621), the year in which Hilkiah made his memorable discovery of the 'book of the law' in the Temple (2 Kings 22:8ff)...The argument does not deny that Moses may have made provision for the establishment of a monarchy in Israel, but affirms that the form in which the provision is here cast bears traces of a later age." Thus, Deut. 17:18f is said to be a "reminiscence" of the Solomonic period (cf. 1 Kings 10:25 - 28; 11:2 - 4). According to Driver, the phrase "nor cause the people to return to Egypt" may reflect the influence of those royal advisors who wished to enter into a military pact with Egypt, during the ministries of Isaiah and Jeremiah (cf. Is. 31:1 - 3; Jer. 2:18, 36). In a footnote, p. 93, Driver adds: "That the legislation of Deuteronomy is based generally upon pre-existing sources is fully recognized by critics..."
- 9a. Ibid., p. 175.
10. In the light of 1 Sam. 9:1f, it may be that Saul is being excessively modest when he describes his family as "the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin" (1 Sam. 9:21). We may only conclude that the social, economic and political status of Saul's family within the tribe of Benjamin is problematic.

11. For an explanation of the term סֹפֵר [ sofer ], see J.A. Montgomery (ed.), A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1951), p. 334.
12. Roland de Vaux, p. 94; John Bright, p. 164f; Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 340; Yehzekel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 262.
13. It is noteworthy that in all the Biblical passages which state or reflect the people's demand for a king (1 Sam. 8:19ff; 9:18 and 12:12), the reason given for the demand is the threat of a military assault by Israel's neighbors.
14. John Bright, p. 167.
15. Roland de Vaux, p. 95; John Bright, p. 169.
16. Cf. 1 Sam. 17:25 and John Bright, p. 172.
17. Idem.
18. Cf. 1 Chron. 20:5 which appears to be a harmonization of 1 Sam. 17:1 - 18:5 and 2 Sam. 21:19.
19. John Bright, p. 177.
20. Roland de Vaux, p. 138; John Bright, p. 173.
21. It is also possible that Mephibosheth was kept not as a retainer, but as a hostage.
22. Roland de Vaux, p. 97.
23. John Bright, p. 175f.
24. S.R. Driver, Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2nd ed., p. 258.
25. H.P. Smith, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribners, 1899), p. 287.
26. The precise functions of the "scribe" and the "recorder" are unknown. See John Bright, p. 184, for his speculations.
27. S.R. Driver, p. 285.
28. Ibid., p. 286.
29. H.P. Smith, p. 310.
30. John Bright, p. 180f.



31. Roland de Vaux, p. 96f.
32. John Bright, p. 153.
33. J.A. Montgomery, p. 120.
34. John Bright, p. 200; Roland de Vaux, p. 133f.
35. John Bright, p. 192.
36. It may be that 1 Sam. 17:25 ("...the king will enrich him [who kills Goliath] with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house in Israel") indicates freedom from obligations to the throne in terms of taxes and/or labor. However, since the account of David's victory over Goliath may be legendary, this could be an anachronism.
37. John Bright, p. 195.
38. Nelson Glueck, The Other Side of the Jordan (New Haven: The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1940), pp's 50 - 113.
39. John Bright, p. 198.
40. J.A. Montgomery, p. 204.
41. John Bright, p. 201.
42. Roland de Vaux, p. 204.
43. Ibid., p. 95.
44. Ibid., p. 98.
45. John Bright, p. 166.
46. Ibid., p. 167.
47. Ibid., p. 169 - 171.
48. Yehezkel Kaufmann, p. 262.
49. Ibid., p. 263f.
50. Ibid., p. 264f.
51. Ibid., p. 265.
52. Idem; John Bright, p. 166 and p. 171.
53. Idem; John Bright, p. 169 and p. 280.
54. Roland de Vaux, p. 94 and p. 97.

55. John Bright, p. 176.
56. Roland de Vaux, p. 95.
57. John Bright, p. 176.
58. Roland de Vaux, p. 112.
59. Ibid., p. 113.
60. John Bright, p. 205.
61. Henri Frankfort, p. 343.
62. Ibid., p. 344.
63. Ibid., p. 339.
64. Idem; Roland de Vaux, p. 94; John Bright, p. 166f.
65. Henri Frankfort, p. 337.
66. Ibid., p. 340.
67. Idem.
68. Idem.
69. Ibid., p. 342.
70. Idem.
71. Ibid., p. 344.
72. Idem, Frankfort's translation.

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