

## The Paradigm of the Old Testament

### Stewardship & Allegiance

The Exodus and Covenant of Divine Protection. Few in our day would consider the Old Testament to be a guide for modern ethics governing warfare. The Israelite mode of warfare is too primitive to have direct relevance to a discussion of nuclear technology. While Israel's most sensitive prophets manifested an astute sense of social justice and moral responsibility, there were undoubted atrocities committed in the Conquest of the Promised Land that are too inhumane, too caught up in nationalistic pride, to represent a paradigm of God's universal love for all nations. The Old Testament is, after all, an incomplete record from the viewpoint of a single people who possessed a singular sense of identity through history and divine election as a nation. Nevertheless, it is precisely this sense of divine purpose manifest in the history of Israel that remains valuable for us today. Israel was to become a holy community, a nation of priests, God's own people (Exo. 19:6). Israel's polity would be established by Yahweh himself and the league of tribes would form a covenanted people who looked to Yahweh for their protection in warfare. Yahweh's mighty acts of deliverance were manifest in the history of the covenanted people - in the covenant to preserve the posterity of Abraham, in the covenant given at Sinai to provide a promised land, and the

covenant with the monarchy that promised to preserve a divinely ordained polity. A breach of the covenant would place in peril the order of society and community. It would destroy the land as a mother of life. It would endanger the hope of future generations. It is not difficult to understand that the covenant embodied what was of ultimate concern to the ancient Hebrews, nor is impossible to see that we too are in jeopardy of losing all that matters most if we continue to place faith in idols of war.

The study of Israelite attitudes toward war requires consideration of the political and historical context in which the ideology of war arose. Our approach to Israelite ideology of war is paradigmatic, for the Old Testament sense of history is purposely paradigmatic. It is our purpose, therefore, not to concentrate on the historicity of the accounts found in the Old Testament, but to understand the moral purpose embodied in them as presented by their authors and redactors. The historicity of a particular account may have bearing on understanding the integrity of the text and its message, but the sheer factuality of the events recounted is secondary to the moral dimension of the presentation. The Hebrew "history" is not merely a chronology of events with sterile scholarly assessment here and there; it is, rather, the story of a people's relationship with God. Its "history" is expressed in moral categories, in terms of fulfilling or failing to realize Yahweh's purposes in their experience. Yahweh's purpose is expressed in the covenant:

[Y]ou should enter into the covenant of  
Yahweh your God, and into His oath, which

Yahweh your God is making with you today; so that He may establish you today for a people to Himself, and He Himself be your God, as He has spoken to you, and He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. (Deut. 29:12-13)

The thematic approach to Old Testament history does not, however, overlook the varieties of opinions expressed in the Biblical text. The Bible was written by different people, at different places, in different times, facing different problems and often expressing differing opinions. Changing circumstances gave rise to correspondingly different views of war. To speak of "Biblical views of war" will appear to many to connote an established theological position on war in the Old Testament, or "the Biblical view of war." A careful reference to the biblical text reveals that there is no such theological dogma of war, no synthetic or analytic treatment of the problem of violence. The Hebrews did not employ discursive methods of categorizing concepts and theological doctrine. Warfare was not a theological problem for them, as it is for us today. War was, rather, an issue only insofar as related to Yahweh's claim to Israel's undivided loyalty, or "faith" in Him, as a result of the covenant. The ideology of war was thus an expression of the covenant and Yahweh's promise to deliver Israel if Israel would remain faithful to the covenant and yield loyalty to the heavenly king.

The concept of Yahweh as a warrior has caused embarrassment and consternation among Christians who have attempted to reconcile that vision of God with that of Jesus of Nazareth who revealed a God of love. Judging Yahweh from such a perspective

overlooks the significant social and spiritual revolution that accompanied the idea of Yahweh as warrior.<sup>1</sup> The idea of Yahweh as warrior was but one aspect of the expression of Yahweh as Israel's God and king. The Near Eastern king was responsible for the administration of law, the waging of war and the economic well-being of the population. In Israel, these functions were the direct responsibility of Yahweh. The question of the legitimate use of coercive force is one which every nation, modern and ancient, has had to answer. The concept of Yahweh as warrior was Israel's ethic of war, her answer to when force and war were legitimate instruments of the state. A state of war could legitimately originate only with Yahweh, though mediated through a prophet, or prophetess in the case of Deborah. The question of legitimate war was but one expression of the Sinai covenant, just as the operation of law and ordering of the society were a function of Yahweh's Torah, and Israel's economic well-being a function of her ethical conduct and attendant blessings and cursings of the covenant.

Yahweh provided Israel with his paradigm of history and polity -- the Exodus. The exodus was a model of divine liberation, continuing divine sustenance of life and divinely ordered community established and protected through covenant. Israel remembered the exodus for all time as the decisive historical event that constituted her as a covenant people, an occurrence that could be understood only in terms of divine intervention and election. Though there is no extra-biblical evidence of the exodus, judging from the antiquity of the poems

that served as confession-like statements of the Hebrew faith, the story of the exodus is so ancient and so entrenched in the Hebrew identity that there is no explanation save that a large group of slaves escaped from Egypt through attendant events so spectacular that they could never be forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

the exodus was also the paradigm of Israel's allegiance to Yahweh in times of war. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was accomplished without superior armaments, armies or even warfare. Yahweh had convinced Pharaoh to liberate his captive slaves through mighty deeds. Yahweh defeated Pharaoh's army, the largest and best prepared on the face of the earth at the time, through miracles alone. Israel's deliverance through the Sea of Reeds and Pharaoh's army of chariots swallowed up in the depths of the Sea proved that Yahweh was mighty to deliver, the invincible ally. (Exo. 55:5-16) At the very moment when the tribes that would constitute Israel were trapped against the Sea of Reeds, when they had lost the ability to extricate themselves from sure destruction, Moses mediated the decisive miracle that would silence Yahweh's critics in Israel from that time forth: "And Moses said to the people, Do not be afraid; take your stand and see the salvation of Yahweh, which He will prepare for you today; for as you see the Egyptians today, you shall not continue to see them again forever. Yahweh will fight for you, and you shall be silent." (Exo. 14:13-14)

In one of the most ancient texts in the Old Testament, we find a remnant of Yahweh's decisive victory preserved in a beautiful poem known as "The Song of the Sea," expressing the

message of faith in and salvation through Yahweh. (Ex. 15) "I will sing to Yahweh," begins the poem, "for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he through into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation...." (v. 2) Yahweh is a mighty warrior (v. 3) who has crushed Pharaoh's chariots (v. 4-6) and opened up a way for Israel's deliverance (v. 8). Yahweh's victory established his kingship (v. 18) and as a consequence of this demonstration of power and deliverance "the people put their faith in Yahweh and in Moses his servant." (v. 31) This ancient victory poem depicted the Hebrews as the redeemed of Yahweh (v. 13) who had manifest his hesed or divine covenant-love upon them, overthrowing all that blocked Israel's path in the exodus to the Promised Land. In return for his unmerited protection, Yahweh expected Israel to honor only him and to give allegiance to his purposes embodied in the Law given at Sinai - a Law ideally calculated to transform Israel into a people that mirrored Yahweh's holiness and benevolence through individual acceptance of the covenant and compliance with the Torah.<sup>3</sup>

The exodus thus culminated in a covenant rite at Sinai that acknowledged Yahweh as king.<sup>4</sup> We have no record of a time when the people of Israel did not consider themselves to be the beneficiaries of divine election, the objects of special favor.<sup>5</sup> The promise of posterity and Promised Land to Abraham was fulfilled in the exodus and conquest. Israel responded to Yahweh's unmerited grace and favor by entering into a covenant with him to be his people and to live in accordance with his

commandments. The express purpose of the Law accepted by covenant was to create a people that is holy like Yahweh is holy. (Lev. 11:44) As Moshe Greenberg has suggested, the Torah was designed to mold a national character, to forge a holy people conceived as a priestly order. The success of Yahweh's venture depended on each Israelite knowing the rules of conduct and willingly obeying them without legal coercion or force of war.<sup>6</sup> Since all power rightly belonged solely to Yahweh, its exercise in the human arena was limited by the demands of the Torah. In Yahweh's divinely ordered polity, power was dispersed among the members of society and many devices prevented its accumulation and concentration, both in terms of economic wealth and political position.<sup>7</sup> Yahweh's exercise of power was aimed chiefly at creating and sustaining the world and maintaining the moral order. While man is given dominion over the earth and all living creatures, the moral order is left solely to Yahweh. Placing too much power in the hands of mortals threatened both Yahweh's creation and the moral order, especially where force and war were involved. The conduct of war was thus limited to Yahweh's approval; war involved Israel was Yahweh's prerogative alone under the covenant. The Torah did not embody a society organized for the purpose of victory in war, national defense and material gain; rather, these were merely a divine reward promised to Israel if it remained faithful to the goal of becoming a holy nation. (Exo. 23:26-33; Lev. 26:3-13; Dt. 28: 1-14)

The covenant entered between Yahweh and Israel was a solemn pact or contract having the form of a treaty between a suzerain

and his vassal. We are fortunate to have treaties dating from the time that Moses is generally accepted to have lived which stipulated that the consequence of the great King's patronage and protection was given in return for the vassal's exclusive loyalty.<sup>8</sup> Like the treaties in question, Yahweh began the covenant ceremony by enumerating his gracious acts, telling his people that it was he who brought them out of Egypt (20:2), and that they were therefore forever obligated in perpetual gratitude to obey Yahweh's Law. Next followed the stipulations and obligations imposed upon Israel (the vassal) in the Torah. The vassal was required to respond to the suzerain's call to arms "with all your heart" or the treaty was considered breached. As the vassal was to refrain from enmity with other vassals and submit all disputes to the suzerain, so the Decalogue forbade any action that would encroach on fellow Israelites and destroy the well-being of the community. Israel was placed under covenant to recognize Yahweh alone as God, just as the vassal granted loyalty solely to his suzerain. A copy of the treaty was to be placed in the vassal's shrine, in the ark of the tabernacle in Israel's case, and the obligation read publicly at regular intervals.

An understanding of the nature of the covenant is necessary to see that it was essentially a treaty of alliance between Yahweh, the only God and King of Israel, and his servants and vassals, Israel. The Sinaitic covenant was an agreement to look to Yahweh alone for defense of the nation and well-being of the community - in essence to have Yahweh alone as God. Reliance



upon the "arm of flesh" in any way represented, for ancient Israel, primal violation of the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exo. 20:3). Reliance on other nations, human armies or armaments was therefore a breach of the covenant and idolatry. These conditions explain the later prophetic attack on Israel's alliances with Assyria and Egypt which could only be considered idolatrous in terms of Yahweh's covenant with Israel. Israel was thus a covenant society premised on religious obligations in return for Yahweh's unmerited favor and protection against all enemies. The covenant was a means of maintaining social order through voluntary acceptance of its obligations. The covenant stipulations forbade any act that would jeopardize the community's well-being.

The covenant was a religious vision that recognized conscience before God, and not the political power structure, as the ultimate source to look for the legitimate use of force, execution of the law and just ordering of social relationships. The primary role of religion in the Late Bronze Age, in contrast, was to lend political legitimacy to the existing state government with its guarantee of the cosmic order, economic prosperity, and material well being. Religion's purpose was to lend its power over the soul to the state's monopoly on the use of force employed through war and execution of its coercive legal sanctions and economic controls. The existing nation states defied this political power in the person of the king, for the state controlled virtually every aspect of life that had any

human meaning.<sup>9</sup> The nation state was omnipotent because all who fell under its jurisdiction were dependent on it for protection of life. The obligations imposed upon the individual by the state in return for protection against attack, assurance of even-handed commercial dealings and so forth, ended, however, at the established political borders. The obligations imposed by Yahweh were radically different.

Yahweh's ethical imperatives were valid, once accepted, in all places and at all times, independent of the existence of any particular political order. The obligations were valid not only within a given jurisdiction, but anywhere one of his people might happen to go. The obligations were not imposed through war and force, but through free acceptance of Yahweh's covenant stipulations. Well being, spiritual, social and political, was conditional, a consequence of obedience to the stipulations and not a "right" without responsibilities. George Mendenhall suggests that the Sinai covenant was a religious and social revolution, a rejection of the existing political ethic. It was an "alternative to the deification of the state as the infallible cause of human well-being and security, and the final arbiter of human obligation."<sup>10</sup> The obligations imposed by the state were subservient to the role of conscience and ethical demands embodied in Yahweh's Law and covenant. Thus, ultimate appeal of the use of war and political coercion was referred to conscience, to Yahweh, not to the state that protected self-interests and appeased conflicting political demands as a means of perpetuating itself.

The Conquest and Sacral Warfare. During the years of wandering from Sinai toward the Promised Land, Israel grew in numbers and in strength. After several years of sojourn, the Israelites approached the kingdom of Heshbon and requested King Sihon to allow Israel to pass through peacefully. Sihon refused and came against Israel in battle according to the Biblical account. (Num. 21:21-24) We know only that Sihon was killed in the battle that followed and that Israel prevailed and became established in the surrounding cities. The Conquest of the Promised Land had begun, necessitated by a defensive battle. Deuteronomy records that Yahweh instructed Israel through Moses:

[I]f you will carefully keep this commandment which I am commanding you, to do it, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him, then Yahweh shall disposses all these nations from before you, and you shall possess nations greater and mightier than you. (Dt. 11: 22-23).

Israel's ideology of sacral warfare developed around the belief that Yahweh alone could deliver Israel from her enemies and provide her with the Promised Land. The sanctity of the conquest was preserved through prophetic petition of Yahweh and ritual purification of Israel's soldiers. Gerhard v. Rad wrote the classical statement of the "holy war" tradition in his 1953 study, Studies in Deuteronomy.<sup>11</sup> Holy ware consisted, according to von Rad, of the following characteristics: (1) God first had to be consulted as to whether he would grant Israel victory (1 Sam. 28:6; 30:7ff; 2 Sam. 5:19, 23); (2) assuming an affirmative answer, a trumpet was blown announcing YHWH has delivered the enemy into our hands" (Ju. 3:27; 4:14; 7:14; 1 Sam.

13:3); (3) the soldiers of Israel were placed under strict standards of ritual purity and consecrated or set apart to Yahweh as holy warriors (1 Sam. 21:5; 2 Sam. 11:11; Is. 13:3; Dt. 23:10-15); (4) the spoils of the victory belonged solely to Yahweh, and were therefore consecrated to him (Num. 31; ( Sam. 15:7). Though von Rad thought holy war, considered as Yahweh's decisive victory through miracle, to have developed only in the time of Solomon, the antiquity of the sacral war paradigm cannot be doubted since A. Glock demonstrated that these same features characterized warfare in the ancient empire of Mari and Manfred Weippert in the ancient Near East in general.<sup>12</sup> The ideology underlying the sacral war conquest was clear: the land and all things in it belonged to Yahweh and he had chosen to give it to his chosen people on conditions of faithfulness to the covenant.

The primary concern expressed when Israel was finally poised to cross the Jordan river in typeological reenactment of the miracle at the Sea of Reeds was that she might become tainted by intermarrriage with the pagan population that inhabited the Promised Land. (Josh. 23:11-12) Only reliance on Yahweh and a commitment to become his holy people untainted by idolatry and pagan worship would allow them to prevail. "The Lord has driven out from before you nations greater and stronger" Joshua tells the assembled tribes, "for it is the Lord your God that fights for you as he has covenanted with you. Be careful therefore and watch yourselves, make sure that you love the Lord your God. For it you return to your former ways and become like the remnant of these pagan nations that remain among you, and intermarry with

them ... Yahweh your God will not drive out any of these nations from before you." (Josh. 23:9-11)

The purpose of the Conquest accounts, including the sacral war tradition, was primarily to prove that Yahweh is faithful to his covenant and an invincible ally, and rejection of the covenant lead inevitably to defeat and destruction. That the editors of the accounts would be given to hyperbole should not, therefore, be surprising. Whether all of the events presented in the Conquest accounts actually happened may be doubted, but for our purposes it is enough to acknowledge that very early traditions underlie the accounts available to us.<sup>13</sup> Israel was consistently portrayed as inferior in military strength to the enemies she handily defeated through stratagem rather than military might. (see, Josh. 10:10; Ju. 7:2ff; 14:6, 17ff; 4:15; I Sam. 5:11; 7:10) The city of Jericho was taken through miraculous stratagem without armed violence. The decisive victory was Yahweh's alone. Even the successful resistance of the city of Ai against Israel's conquest demonstrated Yahweh's supernatural help. Ai was able to repulse Israel only because Yahweh was not with Israel because "they have violated the covenant I ordained unto them ... [therefore] they have come under the ban (herem) themselves." (7:4-12, cf. 6:18) The sacral war paradigm established Yahweh as undisputed King on whom alone Israel could depend for military defense and deliverance.

The "ban" or herem laid on Jericho involved complete annihilation of the city. The rationale was entirely religious. God had claimed the city for his own; everything in

it was therefore to be turned over to him. Herem was therefore a religious act of obedience to the covenant rather than a political or military expediency. The most decisive proof of this thesis is that when Israel breached the herem in the case of Ai, it too became an object of herem and Yahweh acted against Israel. Israel had infringed upon the right of the suzerain to his share of the spoils of victory, and as a result, became collectively liable. Indeed, the purpose of the herem was to remove all aspects of the pagan Canaanite religion and culture so that Yahwism would not be corrupted.<sup>14</sup> Yahweh could produce a people holy like himself only if they were untainted by the then prevailing culture. When Israel turned from the covenant to practices associated with the pagan religion, Yahweh threatened to destroy her and to raise up a righteous nation through the seed of Moses alone. (Ex. 32: 11-14; Dt. 9: 7-8) Israel was spared only through Moses's mighty prophetic intervention on her behalf. The herem was thus a commitment to the covenant and Yahweh's goal to raise up a holy nation untainted by idolatry. The significant aspect of herem was that it too stressed Yahweh's kingship and acknowledged him solely as the victor. The concept of sacral war is inconceivable without that belief.

The practice of herem must be judged in light of prevailing practices of war during the late bronze age when the concept arose. The prevalent practice of war in the ancient Near East was "blood feud," private war carried out between tribal units and families without any guidelines of justice whatsoever. The Hebrew record presents the Conquest of Canaan as a bloody and

brutal military campaign, and there is no reason to believe that it was otherwise. The Promised Land would be granted through Yahweh's sacral war of herem.<sup>15</sup> The Biblical record presents Yahweh as having commanded Israel to massacre all living things in their military campaign of blitzkrieg (Dt. 2:34, 35; Josh. 6:17ff; 8:2, 18ff; 10: 28-41; 11:10ff.). Yet such force was used only when the Canaanite cities resisted.<sup>16</sup> Mass conversation to Yahwism was the likely result of Israel's military campaign rather than mass annihilation. Nonresistance entailed, in all likelihood, conversion to Yahwism, and thus to abandonment of idolatry and acceptance of Yahweh's program to raise up a righteous nation among the nations.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, force could be used only under Yahweh's command. Victory was assured not through force of arms or military supremacy, but through faith in Yahweh.

Prophetic teachings after Moses and Joshua as related in the Book of Judges concerning War and use of force continued to follow the paradigm of the exodus. The Song of Deborah in Judges 5, an early twelfth century victory hymn celebrating Yahweh's decisive defeat of the Canaanites in the valley of Jezreel,<sup>18</sup> informs us of Israel's continued dependence on Yahweh for military victory even after the tribal league had been formed. There has been a good deal of scholarly debate whether Joshua and Judges 1 describe two different traditions of the Conquest or just one description of different events. Some scholars view the book of Joshua as relating the initial Blitzkrieg that established military control of the Promised Land

and Judges 1 relating merely "mop-up" accounts.<sup>19</sup> Others see Judges 1 as describing a protracted settlement of the land and the book of Joshua representing an idealized account heavily redacted by later generations.<sup>20</sup> Though this issue cannot be solved here with any satisfaction, it is sufficient to indicate that a sacral war tradition that say Yahweh as the God who had delivered Israel from Egypt through miracles was formed by the time the Song of Deborah was written sometime in the twelfth century.<sup>21</sup> The view that the exodus and sacral war traditions were late developments, posited by von Rad and others, is therefore untenable.

Through the prophetess Deborah, Yahweh called upon Barak and promised him that Yahweh would deliver Canaan's host of chariots "into thine hands," reiterating the oft spoke formula that demonstrated throughout the ancient world that God was the ultimate source of victory.<sup>22</sup> Sisera's 900 chariots constituted no small challenge to Israel who, still a bronze age culture, lacked chariots. It is understandable, therefore, that Barak was unwilling to confront Sisera without prophetic direction from Deborah. It is significant that Deborah possessed sufficient social status as a prophetess to lay demands upon Israel's military leaders, for it was she who sent for Barak, the military general, and not vice-versa. When Deborah delivered the message to Barak that Yahweh required him to engage Sisera, a Canaanite general with a large army at his disposal, in battle and offered Yahweh's promise of victory, Barak responded: "If you [Deborah] go with me, then I will go; and if you will not



go with me, I will not go." (Judges 4:8) Israel depended as a tribal federation on prophetic direction just as it had done under Moses: prophetic leadership was crucial to its survival.

The Song of Deborah, like the Song of the Sea sung by Moses and Miriam (Cf. Exo. 15) was sung by Deborah and Barak following the victory of Israel over Sisera: "Listen, O kings; give ear, O princess; for I, (even) I will sing praises to Yahweh the God of Israel." (Judges 5:3) The poem related how, through miracles, Yahweh had overcome Sisera's seemingly insurmountable advantage in military technology and armies. Yahweh had neutralized the 900 iron chariots by causing rain and flooding, thus miring the chariots in the resulting mud: "the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yea, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before Yahweh's face, that Sinai, from before Yahweh, the God of Israel." (Judges 5:4-5) Deborah, "a mother in Israel" praised Yahweh who made "the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away ... and the horses' hooves were broken by their own pransings." (vv. 21-22) Though Israel clearly had a part in the victory over Sisera, the decisive act was again Yahweh's. Israel was no match for Sisera's host of chariots which would have easily massacred Israel's army on the open plain where foot-soldiers were an easy target for charging chariots. Israel prevailed by faith in Yahweh.

Similarly, Gideon, another judge and deliverer of Israel, was directed by Yahweh to reduce the number of fighting men from 32,000 to 300 to demonstrate that victory came not through

military strength, but from faith in Yahweh alone. The Israelites had been forced to find refuge in the nearby mountain caves because the hostile Midianites had gained control of their territory. The author of Judges attributed Israel's dire circumstances to her breach of the covenant. Judges relates how when the children of Israel cried to Yahweh because of the Midianite scourge, Yahweh sent a prophet to explain why his chosen people were caused to suffer. (6: 7-8) The prophet exclaimed:

Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel;  
I have brought you up out of Egypt  
and I have brought you out of a hours of  
slavery;  
And I have delivered you out of the hand of  
the Egyptians,  
and out of the hand of all your oppressors,  
and I have cast them out before you,  
and I have given you their land;  
And I said to you, I (am) Yahweh your God;  
you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites,  
in whose land you (are) dwelling;  
but you have not listened to my voice.  
(Jud. 6: 8-10)

It is clear from this poem that the exodus tradition was the basis for asserting faith in Yahweh and his continuing willingness to deliver Israel from her enemies. The continued reference to the escape from Egypt and reliance solely on Yahweh for further deliverance was a means of reconstituting the faith and identity of Israel in face of new challenges. An unnamed prophet was sent to declare that Yahweh was still with Israel, and he would fight Israel's battles. The prophet was Yahweh's answer to Israel's petition.

In further answer to Israel's petition, Yahweh sent an angel to a young lad, Gideon, to promise deliverance from the

Midianites. Characteristic of the prophet's intercession on behalf of his people Israel, Gideon did not passively accept the angel's command, but questioned the heavenly messenger: "If Yahweh is really with us, then why have all of these things happened to us? And where are all of his mighty miracles now that our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not Yahweh deliver us from Egypt?' But now Yahweh has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." (v. 13) Gideon was then called to deliver Israel from the Midianites: "Go in your strength and save Israel from the hand of the Midianites." (v. 14) Following the form (Gattung) of prophetic call given to Moses,<sup>23</sup> Gideon expressed inability to carry out his heavy assignment: "Oh my Lord, how can I save Israel? I come from a poor family in Manasseh, and I am the least in the entire family." (v. 15) Yahweh then assured Gideon, "I will surely be with you." (v. 16) The point was unmistakable, Yahweh would confront the Midianites through his prophet just as he had done with Moses, for the prophet was endowed with Yahweh's own strength. Nevertheless, Gideon needed a sign to assure him of Yahweh's deliverance that he had heard so much about from his fathers. (vv. 17-18) Gideon was a prophet like Moses, sent to deliver Israel from oppression under the Midianites through mighty miracles.

Gideon gathered a small band of men and went immediately to fulfill Yahweh's call. Gideon and his small band went first to a Midianite cult center dedicated to Ba'al and overthrew the alter, cut down the nearby sacred forest and established in its

place an altar to Yahweh. (6: 25-27) Such a daring move undoubtedly endangered Gideon. (vv. 28-30) Gideon possessed, however, those charismatic qualities that distinguished Israel's prophets and established their authority among the people: "the Spirit of Yahweh rested on Gideon, and he blew his trumpet." (v. 34) The people flocked to Gideon in great numbers to support his cause to overthrow the Midianites through numbers and military might. Yahweh had another plan: "There are too many people who follow you [Gideon] for me to deliver the Midianites into their hands -- otherwise Israel would just boast among themselves and against me, saying, 'I saved myself by my own hand.'" (7:2) Yahweh thus commanded Gideon to tell all who were afraid to return to their homes, and 22,000 left. Still 10,000 remained. (v. 3) Yahweh then commanded Gideon to take all his would-be soldiers to the river for a drink, and only those who lapped water like a dog should remain. (v. 6) This time only 300 remained.

Yahweh told Gideon, "by these 300 men ... I will have you, and they will deliver the Midianites into your hands." (7:7) Gideon divided his army into three groups of 100 men each. For weapons, he gave his men water pitchers, horns and torches. They retreated to the mountains and surrounded the camp of the Midianite army in the valley below them. Gideon's small army then began to create what must have been a rather unsettling noise by breaking the water pitchers and blowing the horns while simultaneously waiving their torches. The armies of the Midianites were thrown into confusion by the sudden racket and

began to retreat, disorganized, in every direction. By stratagem rather than superior armaments, Gideon prevailed. The Midianites were tricked into fighting among themselves and completed their own destruction. (Judges 7: 13-22)

Having finally found one who could protect them from foreign overlords, the people of Israel requested Gideon to become their king. What Yahweh had feared came about even though Gideon had pulled off the victory with only 300 men, for the people clearly attributed the victory to Gideon's cunning rather than to Yahweh. The lesson was not lost on Gideon however, who could only refuse the kingship: "I will not rule over you, neither will my sons rule over you; It is Yahweh who shall rule over you." (8:23) Gideon made his point emphatically by recognizing Yahweh as king - Yahweh, not any man or political system, was the protector of polity and peace that the people sought. Nevertheless, it appears that Gideon later did accept something comparable to royal stature and that authority remained in his family after his death. (vv. 8:27; 9:1) The redactor of Judges appears to have been disgusted by the duplicity in Gideon's actions and equated Israel's involvement in Ba'alism to Gideon's immoral usurpation of political authority that rightly belonged to Yahweh. (Compare 8:27 where Israel is said to "go awhoring" after Gideon's royal regalia and 8:34 where Israel "goes awhoring" after the Ba'alim).

The nature of the Ba'al religion deplored by Israel's prophets is difficult to understand in our own day because it has been obscured by centuries of change in political institutions

and religion.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it is essential to understand the nature of Ba'alism to appreciate why Israel's prophets found it to be a deductive threat to Yahwism. The gods of the ancient Near East were the mythical embodiment of the existing political order. Indeed, the political order was thought to depend upon divine status of the king and the gods who protected his dominion.<sup>25</sup> These gods (Ba'alim) were thus the mythological projection of the existing political order, a mode of legitimizing and consolidating the authority of the rulers of the existing nation state.<sup>26</sup> Yahweh could overcome these rival gods only by destroying them in battle, which entailed basically a destruction of the political orders that gave life to them. Israel did not espouse a metaphysical monotheism, for the point is not that the other gods did not exist; rather, the essential belief was the Yahweh alone could create a holy nation out of Israel.<sup>27</sup> Israel espoused an ethical monotheism, for only Yahweh was holy and worthy of worship because he had created Israel to be his own people: "Is not he your Father, your creator? He made you and established you." (Dt. 32:6) The Sinai Covenant was not an attempt to consolidate the authority of an existing nation state; its purpose was rather to create a new covenant society dedicated to each Israelite freely accepting and living its stipulations. Yahweh could demand the entire heart and soul, and would accept nothing less, because his moral order was not a political compromise of self-interests maintained through legal coercion and force - for that was Ba'al. Yahwism was thus an utter rejection of the existing political order and

culture of Ba'al - the nationalism, racism, militarism and imperialism of the existing nation state.

Yahwism was as much a social revolution as it was a new religion. Yahwism could not, therefore, merely exist as another cult practiced along side other religious cults in the contemporaneous culture. Its goal was to eradicate that culture and replace it with one dedicated to the goal of producing a holy people through acceptance of Yahweh's Law! Yahwism was not, therefore, so much a political party or particular government as it was a new value system that was mirrored in Israel's social structure and polity. Though very few Israelite practices were novel (most all were in fact shared by their Near Eastern neighbors), what was new was the peculiar identity of a people over generations of time, the commitment to preserve the culture and community for future generations through maintaining ethical and moral standards. Ba'alism was seductively similar to Israel in its practices, ranging from the conduct of war to identifying its own political legitimacy with the gods. The significant distinction is simply that Ba'alism was committed to the status quo to promote power for its own sake and the resulting personal gain; Israel was committed to maintaining the community and national identity as a gift to future generations - a gift created and given by Yahweh. Those of us who live in a generation threatened by nuclear destruction of not only ourselves and our society, but of all future generations, would do well to understand this distinction. We must have Israel's sense of how the sins of the fathers will be answered on the

heads of their children, even to the third and fourth generation, if we engage in a military build-up at their expense, or the unthinkable, leave them a world whose conditions are incompatible with life itself. We must not abandon Yahweh by blindly believing that security rests in the ba'alim.

The Rise of the Monarchy. The Israelite confederacy fell to Philistine conquest after some 200 years of existence. The author(s) of I Samuel attributed the Israelite defeat at the hands of the Philistines to Israel's faithlessness and corrupt priesthood leaders. (I Sam 4) The Philistines were a military dynasty with whom Israel's loose defensive network simply could not cope. The Philistine monopoly on iron provided them with clearly superior weapons and their long military history of conquest posed a threat to Israel's very existence as a people. To counter the threat, the Israelites had the ark brought from Shiloh in the hope that Yahweh's presence on the battlefield would insure victory. (v. 3) Instead, the Philistines achieved a decisive military victory and captured the ark. The Philistine military dominance set the stage for a sweeping transformation of Israel from a loosely organized tribal confederation to a major military power.

The protagonist of Israel's response to the Philistine military threat was Samuel, a Nazarite who had been set apart from birth to service in the temple (I Sam. 1:11) and early recognized as a prophet among his people (3:19) The first order of business Samuel attempted to accomplish was a national repentance: "Samuel spoke to the house of Israel, saying, If you



will return to Yahweh with all your hearts, then put aside the gods of the strangers and Ashtaroth, and prepare your hearts to Yahweh and serve him alone, and he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." (7:3) When the Philistines heard that Israel had gathered with Samuel at Mizpah to fast, they prepared to slaughter them. (v. 7) The children of Israel were terrified and begged Samuel to pray to Yahweh to deliver them. (v. 8) As Samuel offered a burnt offering to Yahweh a tremendous lightening storm arose that dispersed and confused the approaching Philistines. (v. 10) The people looked upon Samuel as one who had come in Yahweh's name to deliver Israel once again from oppression. The expectation of the exodus remained alive.

Though Yahweh protected Israel throughout Samuel's lifetime, (7:13) the Israelites insisted on having a king who they thought would achieve military strength like her neighbors. Like most important political decisions, there was considerable disagreement over the propriety of establishing a monarchy in Israel. The account of Israel's desire to have Saul for her earthly king is presented in two parallel narratives, one which acquiesces in the monarchy and one vehemently opposed to its establishment.<sup>28</sup> The pro-monarchy account ( Sam. 9:1 to 10:16, 13:3b, 4b-15) discusses Saul's private anointing by Samuel. In this account, Yahweh himself chose Saul to be the king of Israel. (9:16-17) Nevertheless, this favorable assessment of the monarchy may have required some accommodation of the nature of Kingship envisioned by the tribal leaders, for Saul is not referred to as a king (melek), but only as a leader

or commander (nagid).<sup>29</sup> Perhaps a full-fledged king in the Near Eastern sense was not intended by the tribal leaders who sought Saul's election, but only a military leader of sorts. It is certain that the people soon began to think of Saul as a king, however, and he exercised authority as such. (I Sam. 11:14ff)

The hostile account (I Sam. 9; 10:17-27; 12) interprets Saul's election to the monarchy as a political capitulation to the demands of an unrighteous populous and rejection of Yahweh's rule:

And all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him ... appoint a king who can be a judge for us like all the other nations. But this desire for a king was evil in Samuel's eyes, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. So Samuel prayed to Yahweh. And Yahweh said to Samuel, listen to the voice of the people, to everything they ask of you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me as a ruler over them. According to all the works that they have done from the day I brought them out of Egypt, even to this very day, when they forsook me and served other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now listen to them, but you will surely protest to them and tell them the manner in which the king will reign over them. (8:4-8)

Samuel therefore proceeded to inform Israel that a king would take their sons and appoint them to run chariots and be the king's horsemen; he would militarize Israel by appointing captains by the thousands and making instruments of war; he would take their daughters of cooks and seamstresses and take the best fields and give them to his servants; he would tax them and enslave them. (9:11-17) Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to Samuel and cried "No, we will have a king over us."

(8:19) This latter account reflects in all likelihood the tension inherent in such a momentous decision, especially one that potentially challenged Yahweh's exclusive claim to Israel's loyalty. The practice of monarchy thus presented an uneasy tension with the earlier covenant ideology.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, while this anti-monarchical view represented one party's views, and one that turned out to be quite accurate, it cannot be maintained that the prophetic heritage, taken as a whole, was essentially anti-monarchical. Indeed, the very conflation of the two accounts of Saul's election in our present Bible is an attempt to synthesize the two camps, an integration of what was for Israel a new ideal of earthly monarchy with the older covenant ideology of the federated tribes, both established under Yahweh's command.<sup>31</sup>

That a synthesis of the covenant and monarchy ideologies was eventually effected is obvious from the fact that the monarchy's harshest critics, the prophets, never hinted at its abolition though they mercilessly criticized its opulence. Isaiah, for example, foresaw the coming of a virtuous king when the present era reaches its end. (Isa. 11:1-4) An attempt at a combination of the ideal of the monarchy with that of the covenant is apparent in I Kings 7 in the covenant with David. Final proof is that Deuteronomy, steeped in Josiah's reform that faithfully reinstated the covenant stipulations, does not view earthly kingship as antithetical to the ideology of the covenant, though it does carefully regulate the behavior of the king by redefining the role of earthly kingship as that of a servant of

the people. (Dt. 17:14ff) It is a mistake, however to attempt to explain the anti-monarchical view as a later criticism made with the benefit of centuries of hindsight as some have attempted to do.<sup>32</sup> There is no reason to doubt that the establishment of the monarchy posed a real threat to the old covenant tradition which recognized Yahweh alone as king and deliverer of Israel. All the accounts of Saul's appointment to be ruler over the people emphatically stressed the exodus tradition:

Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, I have brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I have delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms who were oppressing you; and today you have rejected you God, who Himself (is) your savior out of all your evils and your distresses; and you say to Him, But You shall set a king over us. (I Sam. 10:18-19)

In terms of the exodus ideal, Israel's demand for a human king who could lead Israel in battle like other nations was viewed as a betrayal of her heritage and faith in God. When Israel was oppressed by Egypt, "and your fathers cried to Yahweh, then Yahweh sent Moses and Aaron, and they brought out your fathers from Egypt and caused them to dwell in this place, Solomon reminded the elders at Mizpah,"and [when] you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites was coming against you, and you said to me, No, but a king shall reign over us. But Yahweh your God (is) your king." (I Sam. 12:8, 12) Yahweh had delivered Israel from Egypt, but now Israel sought a human deliverer. The redactor attempted to reconcile the establishment of the monarchy with the exodus tradition, for Yahweh himself had placed Saul as king over Israel. (v. 13) The test was not the form of

government, but whether Israel would obey Yahweh commandments: "If you fear Yahweh, and will serve Him, and will listen to His voice, then you shall not rebel against the commandment of Yahweh; and both you and also your king who reigns over you shall be followers of Yahweh your God." (v. 14)

Saul's early career justified the faith reposed in him by the people. Saul proved himself a legitimate savior of Israel when he dealt a decisive blow against the Philistines. Saul's small army was able to overpower an outlying post of the Philistines (I Sam. 13:3) and in the skirmishes that followed Saul smashed a main garrison with its thirty thousand chariots. (v. 5) The Hebrews that had defected to the Philistine camp rejoined Saul (v. 7) and through the heroics of Saul's son, Jonathan, the Philistine threat to Israel was crushed. (14: 21-23) The Biblical account emphasizes that what was basically a small group of farmers was able to defeat a formidable military power. The Philistines had forbidden the Israelites to fashion weapons of war. (13:19) So Israel went against the Philistines trusting that Yahweh would deliver them. They took with them only farm implements: "Every Israelite went down against the Philistines, each man to sharpen his plowshare and his plow blade and his axe and his mattock and his axe ... and his digging hoe." (13:20-21) The rise of the monarchy did not alter Israel's reliance on Yahweh, the heavenly king. Yahweh, not Saul, was given credit for the victory: "So Yahweh saved Israel on that day." (14:23)

Saul's mental health deteriorated under the weight of his numerous duties, however, and his ability to rule was severely impaired. Saul began to show signs of depression and wild mood swings from fits of despair to ecstatic behavior. (I Sam. 10:9-13) Saul's mental state is perhaps understandable given the strains and challenges that he faced in establishing the monarchy. Saul faced a protracted war with the Philistines and his abilities were strained and overtaxed by the constant threat of war and rebellion. A possible political conflict arose when Samuel, who played a significant role in Saul's installation as king in all accounts, broke with Saul's leadership. It is likely that Samuel harbored serious misgivings about establishment of the monarchy all along, but when Saul usurped the functions of the priesthood in his zeal to insure a military victory, Saul had, in Samuel's eyes, profaned the priesthood and placed Israel in jeopardy. (13:14-15) When Saul violated the requirements of herem, failing to consecrate all the spoils of victory to Yahweh, Samuel may have perceived a break with the old covenant ideal that was imply unforgivable for Samuel. (15:17-23) Samuel therefore publicly renounced Saul and rescinded Saul's election to the kingship. The redactor adds that Yahweh repented of having made Saul king over Israel. (15:35) The problems of Israel and his failure to respect the old covenant tradition weighed heavily on Saul, and he began to doubt himself.

Saul was pushed beyond the brink of sanity by the popularity of a new hero in Israel, David. David was a skilled musician when only a young boy. (I Sam. 16:14-23) David endeared himself to Saul by soothing his fits with music, and Saul undoubtedly had a great affection for and trust in David, so much so that David became Saul's armour bearer. (16:21) David soon became a major political threat, at least in Saul's demented mind, when the people began to look to David as the new savior, a legitimate king, because of his military exploits. (I Sam 18:7-8) Underlying Saul's paranoia was the popular expectation that Yahweh would demonstrate who should lead Israel by making him mighty in battle, mighty to deliver like Yahweh himself. David was the personification of those virtues which gave Israel greatness, faith that Yahweh was greater than any enemy.

A Philistine warrior, Goliath of Gath, personified in grotesque caricature the military power of this world - the arm of flesh in gigantic proportions. He stood six cubits and a span (nine feet nine inches), and was protected by a coat of armour weighing five thousand shekels (125 lbs. 15 oz.) and carried a spear whose staff "was like a weaver's beam" and whose iron tipped point weighed 600 shekels (15 lbs.). Goliath symbolized the most ferocious challenge in a single person that the world could imagine in David's day. It was common at the time for a battle between armies to be preceded by single combat between gladiator-like champions.<sup>33</sup> These champions, called giants (is habbenayin that is translated giant in the Goliath story means literally "the man in between," meaning the man

between the lines of battle), would challenge and taunt until engaged in hand-to-hand combat as Goliath had done.<sup>34</sup> The ancient world knew of stories of ritual, single-person combat which illustrated that the gods controlled the outcome of war and ruled by the "big-man," the personification of the gods.<sup>35</sup> The Goliath story served a similar function, but its point was that the foreign gods, symbolized by Goliath, were no match for Yahweh, who could produce military victory without superior power, or indeed without any power at all that would be recognized by the world. The Goliath story served the same function as the Exodus story. It proved that Israel was God's people because he delivered them from foreign domination by acts so spectacular that only divine providence was a sufficient explanation.

When David presented himself before Saul and announced that he was willing to face Goliath's challenge, Saul responded with the typical mindset cast in trust in superior military strength as the key to victory: "You cannot go against this Philistine in battle because you are only a young boy and he is a man of war from his youth." (17:33) By all worldly standards, Saul was right. David was no match for the Philistine mercenary. David responded in a sense reminiscent of the old Sinai covenant: "Yahweh delivered me from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from this Philistine." (17:37) Saul responded, "then go, and may Yahweh be with you." Saul attempted to arm David in the armor of the contemporary warrior. David rejected Saul's sword however, and



Saul's armor: "I cannot go with these things that I have never used." (17:39) David took up his familiar sling and five smooth stones and approached Goliath. When he saw David, Goliath taunted the young boy: "Am I a dog that you come to me with a shepard's staff?" Goliath had humiliated Israel; now Yahweh would humiliate his enemies. David responded:

You are coming to me with sword, and with spear, and with javelin; but I come to you in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, which you have reproached....And all this company shall know that Yahweh does not save by sword and by spear, that the battle (belongs to) Yahweh, and He has given you into your hands (17:45-47)

Whether David in fact fought and became a victor over Goliath is open to question; it is possible that the exploits of another Israelite called Elhanan (cf. II Sam. 21:19) were later transferred to King David.<sup>36</sup> David's victories over the Philistines were well known and may have become embodied in the Goliath story. Whatever the historical reality, it is certain that David's victories over the Philistines established from as a popular favorite. David was able to establish himself as king over a unified Israel after many years as a fugitive from Saul's royal jealousy. Saul's entire royal lineage had been killed in a last-stand against the Philistines. Saul's three sons were all killed, and Saul himself was severely wounded. Saul finally took his won life after the humiliating defeat. (ch. 31) With no royal lineage left to claim the loyalty of the people, Saul's followers flocked to David in Hebron where he was declared king over all Israel in a covenant ceremony. (II Sam. 5:1-3) David was in the line of the ecstatic prophets from which Saul had

gained his prestige, and David was able to consolidate his power because the people saw him as Yahweh's anointed, endowed by the anointing with the spirit of understanding. David was declared king by popular acclamation. Unlike Saul, however, the old tribal confederation played no part in David's rise to power. A sweeping reorientation of the basis of legitimate authority and government structure was effectuated by David.

The Davidic covenant, like the Sinai covenant, had its antecedents in Near Eastern treaty forms. The Davidic covenant, like the Abrahamic covenant, was an unconditional promise of grant as a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed rather than an inducement to loyalty in future actions as the vassal covenant had been.<sup>37</sup> The new concept of covenant was one of unconditioned grace, of hesed or a steadfast relationship, such as the grant a son would receive from a father. Yahweh granted David a promise of royal dynasty:

I have found David my servant ... with whom my hand shall be established, my arm shall hold him ... I will smash his adversaries before him and will defeat his enemies ... he will call me 'you are my father' my god ... and I will make him my first born, the highest of the earthly kings. I will keep my grace forever and my covenant shall endure for him. Should his children forsake my law and will not follow my decrees ... I will punish their rebellion with the rod and their sin with afflictions. But I will never annul my grace with him and shall not betray my pact (or treaty) with him. I will not profane my covenant and alter what came out of my lips. (Ps. 89, trans. by Moshe Weinfeld)

The Davidic covenant altered the Sinaitic covenant concept. Yahweh's promise to preserve Israel as a people was

altered to a promise to preserve the royal lineage of David: "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David my servant, I will establish Your seed forever, and built up Your throne to all generations." (Ps. 89:3-4. See also Ps. 132:11-13) Because Yahweh had chosen Zion (Jerusalem) for his eternal abode, no enemy could prevail against his chosen king. (Ps. 2:1-6; 18:31-45; 132:13-18; 144:10). Yahweh's promise to preserve the royal house of David was unconditional; it did not depend upon the faithfulness of the people to the covenant stipulations. There were no attendant cursings and blessings - there were only blessings. While Psalm 132:12 spoke of Yahweh preserving the royal house "if your sons will keep my covenant and my testimony," the covenant would inevitably remain intact despite their sins. (Ps. 89:19-37) The authority of the monarchy had to be maintained even in the face of national scandal, David's adultery and murder. The force of the covenant was thus divorced from moral conduct and equated with nationalism. Status before Yahweh was a matter of mere place of birth. The goal to forge a holy people and polity that mirrored Yahweh's holiness was swallowed up in the necessity of preserving the royal lineage. As John Bright noted, "[t]he temptation was inevitable to hallow the state in the name of god and to suppose that the aims of the state and the aims of religion must necessarily coincide. In many minds the cult was accorded the wholly pagan function of guaranteeing the security of the state...."<sup>38</sup>

David was the last ruler of Israel of which we have record, who consulted Yahweh before engaging in battle - an indispensable feature of the sacral war tradition associated with the old covenant ideology.<sup>39</sup> David also obeyed the requirement of herem, dedicating to Yahweh all the wealth of the vanquished nations. (2 Sam. 8:9-14) David thus continued to venerate Yahweh as the ultimate authority whose approval was necessary to wage war. The emphasis in the narratives of the Ammonite wars in which David was victorious, however, was clearly upon David rather than Yahweh, who is scarcely mentioned. The emphasis was shifted from Israel to David, from Yahweh to the kingship, and from miracles to the technology and military strategy of a professional army.<sup>40</sup> This shift in emphasis marked a changing political order.

Before the time of David, there was no centralized bureaucracy in Israel. Due to David's successful conquest of Philistine controlled city-states that had transferred loyalty to David, the old tribal system of government was no longer tenable. Many of the outlying cities in the Israelite empire formed by David's conquest were Caananite, and hence could not be bound together by the common covenant which recognized Yahweh alone as God. Further, David had to depend upon a professional army. The defense of Jerusalem and the outlying cities could not be accomplished by the traditional method of rallying the clans and tribes to action.<sup>41</sup> These changes necessitated some administrative mechanism of provincial governments that were centrally located. David established a cabinet which consisted

of the commander of the army, two chief priests and several cabinet officers.

The administrative structure set up by David simply exploded under his successor, Solomon.<sup>42</sup> Though he added only two members to the cabinet, Solomon added more than 550 "middle-management" supervisors to watch over the growing government. Solomon established a lavish domestic policy and military build-up, including purchase of 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses for the army - all in a time of peace. (1 Kings 10:26-29) The cost of supporting an opulent military expansion, building program, a large state priesthood and the monarchy placed a tremendous financial strain on Israel's economy. To support his cancerous military and domestic policies, Solomon divided the land into twelve districts for calculating taxes, each with its own provisional ruler answering to Solomon and his cabinet. (1 Kings 4:7-19) The burden on the smaller districts was overwhelming. (1 Kings 4) Israel's commitment to generations yet unborn had been lost and the royal glory purchased at the expense of Israel's future.

Though some in Israel apparently enjoyed a great prosperity during Solomon's reign, his policies were a heavy burden on the common people. (1 Kings 12:1-11) Many in Israel profited considerably from Israel's new region-wide trading. Solomon especially profited from his vast property holdings, his by virtue of his position, and industrial monopolies established to finance his building program. The prosperity was uneven, however, and for the first time in Israel's history forms of

economic slavery appeared. Indeed, Solomon established enforced labor to accomplish his building program of the royal palace and state buildings. (2 Sam. 12:31; I Kings 5:13f; 9:20-22) The tribal social structure of the league had been obliterated. The simple economy of the classless, agrarian tribal league gave way to a more complex social structure where wide disparities in accumulation of wealth occurred.<sup>40</sup> The tribal identity destroyed, Israel was in serious danger of political fragmentation without a strong leader.

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam acceded to his throne. The people of the Northern Kingdom who had been united to the South (Judah) by David, requested Rehoboam to abolish the corvée, the practice of forced labor. The people remonstrated, "your father made our yoke too hard." (2 Kings 12:10) Rehoboam rejected the advice of his elders to lighten the burden of the people and listened instead to a group of young advisers. His response was less than diplomatic. "Tell them," the young king demanded, "my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." (12:11) Not unexpectedly, the administrator of the corvée was killed by an angry mob after he delivered this message and Rehoboam fled the rebellion. Jeroboam was then established as king over the Northern kingdom. (12:20) The empire thus became divided and Israel and Judah warred against one another. (1 Kings 15:6-34; 2 Kings 14:8-14) Everything that Samuel had warned the elders at Mizpah about the establishment of the monarchy had been realized.

The monarchy established Israel as a major world power, but at a price too heavy for the nation to bear. Israel paid the price for her status as a military power not only in outrageous taxes and slave labor, but also in the collapsed moral fiber of her society. Yahweh's goal to create a holy people was forgotten. The promise of protection on conditions of righteousness were displaced by unconditional election independent of moral conduct. The commitment to Yahweh was reinterpreted as a commitment to the monarchy and lineage of David. Commitment to God became merely an expression of nationalism. The emphasis on Yahweh's decisive saving act was displaced by trust in human forms of government and ways of war. Trust in Yahweh was displaced by a military build-up so superfluously sufficient that Yahweh was not longer needed. While it is true that Israel's society and military practices were primitive in comparison to modern society, the moral problems that they faced as a nation sound all too familiar. Immediate security was purchased at the price of human dignity and loss of faith in the goals of the nation. Fiscal irresponsibility was indulged to build a military so powerful that none could match it, while ignoring the much greater threat to national security from economic oppression and lack of moral resolve. Israel finally achieved her status as a world military power, only to learn that more weapons did not mean well-being. Lack of trust in Yahweh proved disastrous for Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> The view of the covenant and conquest elucidated herein consciously chooses to follow the line of scholarship that sees the covenant as the agreement among a new social entity and the conquest as a rather decisive struggle for possession of the promised land rather than a long process settlement and idealized projection into the past. See generally, Norman K. Gottwald, "Two Medels of the Origins of Ancient Israel: Social Revolution or Frontier Development" in The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1963), eds. H.B. Huffmon, F.A. Spina and A.R.W. Green, 5-24; George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine" Biblical Archaeologist 25 (1962) 66-87; J.M. Miller, "The Israelite Occupation of Canaan," Israelite and Judean History, ed. J.H. Hayes (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 213-84 and John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Bright, A History of Israel, 122. The early poems in question are treated by W.F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (University of London Athlone Press, New York: Doubleday, 1968) 1-52; Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry, (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1950); David Noel Freedman, "Divine Names and Titles" in Magnalia De. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1976), Frank Moore Crowe, Werner E. Lemke and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (eds.), 55-107, D.a. Robertson, Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry (Missoula: SBL Dissertation Series 3 [1972]).

<sup>3</sup> Robert R. Wisen, "Enforcing the Covenant: The Mechanisms of Judicial Authority in Early Israel," The Quest for the Kingdom of God, 59-76; Moshe Greenberg, "Some Postulates of Biblical Criminal Law" Journal of Biblical Literature 78 (1951) 5-28, N.M. Moss, "The Old Testament Law and Economic Society" Journal of the History of Ideas 34 (1973): 323-44

<sup>4</sup> J. Wijngaards, "The Dramatization of Salvific History in the Deuteronomic Schools," Oudtestamentische Studien (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967): 52-64

<sup>5</sup> For the various concepts of election, see H.H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), George E. Mendenhall, The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville Abingdon Press, 1962): II, 76-82

<sup>6</sup> Moshe Greenberg, "The Biblical Attitude Toward Power Ideal and Realty in Law and Prophets" (Paper Delivered at Proceedings of Law and Religion Symposium, University of Utah, March 5, 1985)

<sup>7</sup> Id



8 The treaty formula of the vassal \_\_\_\_\_ and the Biblical Covenants is treated in George Mendenhall's Law and Covenant In Israel and the ancient Near East (Pittsburgh 1955); -- "Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law", Biblical Archeologist 17 (1954); Klaus Blutzer, The Covenant Formulary (Oxford Blackwell and Co. 1971 2d 3d.); D.R. Halers, Covenant The History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1969); Dennis J. McCarthy, The Old Testament Covenant (Richmond: Staatsvertrage (Leipzig: Leipziger Vechts Wissenschaft Liche Studien 60, 1931)

9 This thesis was treated by George E. Mendenhall, The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973): 63-66

10 Id. at 65. Mendenhall states, "It is not in the content, but in the functional relationships that the Decalogue constitutes a revolutionary movement in human history....What happened at Sinai was the formation of a new unity where none had existed before, a "peace of God" among a "mixed multitude" and tribally affiliated families who had in common only the deliverance from an intolerable political monopoly of force. Perhaps for the first time in history, a real elevation to a new and unfamiliar ground in the formation of a community took place--a formation based on common obligations rather than common interests--all ethic, rather than on \_\_\_\_\_" pp. 21-22

11 Gerhard Van Fed. Studies in Deuteronomy, a translation from Deuteronomy Studien, (Zurach 1947) See also von Rad's De \_\_\_\_\_, (Zurich: Zw \_\_\_\_\_ 1951).

12 A Glock, "Warfare in Man and Ancient Israel" dist., University of Mich., University Microfilms, Inc., An Arbor, Mich.). Manfred Weippert, Heiliger Krieg in Israel and Assyrian: Kristische Anmerkungen zu Gerhard von Rads Kenzept des 'Heiligen Krieges im alten israeL,' " Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 84 (1973): 46c-93. Israel's concept of sacred warfare is also studied in Patrick D. Miller, Jr. The Divine Warrior in Early Israel (Cambridge Harvard Univ. Press. 1973), N.H. Gottwald, "Holy War" in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976); 842-44

13 U. Kaufmanns. The Biblical Accounts of the Conquest of Palestine (Jerusalem: 1953)

14 Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Faith and Ideology in the Old Testament" in Magnalia Dei, 464-70, see especially 471-73, (H.W. Bickel Maus., Die Herem in Het Oude Testament Hymegen: Centiale drukkeriz, 1959).

15 John Bright, A History of Israel, 142, Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine" BA 23 (1962) 74

16 Bright at 142

- 17 Martin Noth The History of Israel (New York: Harper & Roe, 1960): 73ff
- 18 Freedman, "Divine Names and titles," 96
- 19 See sources in note 1
- 20 Martin Noth Das Buch Josua (Tubingen \_\_\_\_\_)
- 21 Millard C. Lind. Yahweh is a Warner: The Ideology of Warfare in Ancient Israel (Scottsdale, Penn., Herald Press, 1961)
- 22 M. Weippert, "Heiliger Krieg' in Israel and Assyrian" 2AW 84 (1972) 460-93
- 23 N. Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narrative" Zeitschmidt fur die Alttestaurenliche Wissenschaft, 77 (1965): 297
- 24 Mendenhall, "The Zuzerainty Treaty Structure: Thirty Years Later (Paper Delivered at Proceedings of Law and Religion Symposium, Brigham Young University, March 7, 1985).
- 25 Mendenhall, The Tenth Generation, 32-62
- 26 Mendenhall, "The Suerainty Structure"
- 27 Bright, 159-60
- 28 J. Wellhausen. Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen des Alten Testaments ( 1963): 240-43; Siegfried Herrman. A History of Israel in Old Testament Times (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1975). trans. John Bouden, 134-37
- 29 W. Richter, "Die nãgid - Formel, Ein Beitrag zur Erhellung des nãgid-Problems," Biblische Zeitschrift 9 (1965): 71-84 [W.F. Albirhgt, Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1961)]
- 30 The conflict was undoubtedly between the loyal Yahvists and the younger monarchists, though the elders or tribal leaders figure prominently in the establishment of the monarchy. Saul's appointment has all the earmarks of a political compromise. For the tension between the old covenant ideology and the establishment of the monarchy, See: Dennis J. McCarthy. "The Inauguratio of Monarchy in Israel" Interpretation 27 (1973): 403; Millard D. Lind. Yahweh is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel (Scottsdale, Penn: Herald Press, 1980): 100-103
- 31 Ed Firmage, Jr., Yahweh is a Warrior: A Survey of Early Israel's Conception of Yahweh as Warrior (Paper presented to Berkely, Cal.) I am indebted to Ed Frimage, Jr. for this insight.

- 32 Millard C. Lind, Yahweh As a Warrior, 100
- 33 Siegfried Herrman, A History of Israel in Old Testament Times, 138
- 34 [Re De Vaux, "Les Combats Singliers clans "Ancient Testament," Bibliea 40 (1955): 495-508]
- 35 Mendenhall, Social Orgnaization in Early Israel, in Magnalia Dei, 149 n.22; G. Lanczkowski, "Die Geschichte vom Riesen Goliath und der Kampf Sinuhes mit dem Starken von Retenu," Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaolo-gischen Institute, 16 (1959): 214-18
- 36 Herrman, 138
- 37 Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East" Journal of the American Oriental Society 90 (1970): 184-203
- 38 John Bright, A History of Israel, 277
- 39 Millard C. Lind, Yahweh is a Warrior, 120
- 40 Id at 116-18
- 41 Mendenhall, "the Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26" Journal of Biblical Literature 77 (1958): 61-70
- 42 John Bright, "The Organization and Administration of the Israelite Empire, In Magnalia Dei, 193-208