

## 4. The Coming of the Kingship

In all the antiquities, there comes a time when the old sacred power is challenged by the appearance of a new secular power. In the Bible, the moment of transition is on record. Priest Samuel, speaking for the sacred power, had tried to argue the people out of wanting a king:

**1Sam 8:10.** And Samuel told all the words of Yahweh unto the people that asked of him a king. [11] And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. He will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; [12] and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make the instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots [13][ And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers . . . [18] And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you, and Yahweh will not answer you in that day.

From their secular standpoint, the people stood firm:

**1Sam 8:19.** But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us, [20] that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

The rise of the great empires meant that, one way or another there was going to be a king. The priests had no choice but to go along. To save face, they rewrote the record so as to make the king *Yahweh's own idea*:

**1Sam 9:15.** Now Yahweh had revealed unto Samuel a day before Saul came, saying, [16] Tomorrow about this time, I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel; and he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon my people because their cry has come unto me . . .

With the king came (1) chariot warfare; (2) administrative techniques like law, which benefitted individuals (including women); and (3) commerce and the money economy, which also extended the opportunities for individuals.

And here we see Modernity, in the very process of beginning to appear.

### 1. War

The great revolution in warfare was the coming of the light horse-driven war chariot, invented in Anatolia. It was a mobile archery platform. In attack, it was a shock weapon, and when the foe fled, the chariot could pursue, and continue to kill. Not only was the light chariot with its light spoked wheels a work of art, so was the training of the horses which would draw it. None of this technical stuff, be it noted, has anything to do with Yahweh, or with any other god.

There exists a manual of horse training by Kikkuli of Mitanni, written in Hurrian, but so esteemed that it was translated into both Hittite and Akkadian. It gives day-by-day instructions for the seven-month training period.

Here is the fifth day:<sup>1</sup>

Pace two leagues, run twenty furlongs out and thirty furlongs home. Put rugs on. After sweating, give one pail of salted water and one pail of malt-water. Take to river and wash down. Swim horses. Take to stable and give further pail of malted water and pail of salted water. Wash and swim again. Give handful grass. Wash and swim again. Feed at night one bushel boiled grain with chaff.<sup>2</sup>

Among the first rulers to employ the chariot force, still on a small scale, was Anitta of Kanesh, in his siege of Salatiwara, c01750.

A century later, the Hyksos, from Syria and Palestine, using chariots, conquered Egypt, and ruled it from their capital Avaris. Here is a description by an Egyptian warrior, Ahmose son of Eben, of the deeds of Thutmose I in expelling the Hyksos from Avaris, and pursuing them into Canaan:<sup>3</sup>

Then Avaris was despoiled. Then I carried off spoil from there: one man, three women, a total of four persons. Then his majesty gave them to me to be slaves. Then Sharuhén was besieged for three years. Then his majesty despoiled it. Thereupon I carried off spoil from there: two women and a hand. Then the Gold of Valor was given to me, and my spoil was given to me to be slaves.

Thus were the Hyksos driven from Egypt. And now, Egypt too had chariots.

From his capital, Amarna, Pharaoh Akhenaten (013352-01336) dominated the towns of Palestine. The towns beg for chariots to protect them from the marauding Habiru or 'Apiru.<sup>4</sup> It never comes. As long as they do not unite against him, Akhenaten does not greatly care who rules any one of them.

The highly mobile 'Apiru were the other side of the military revolution. Against them, the towns found no defense. The Amarna letters<sup>5</sup> complain:

**Amarna #288.** The land of the king is lost; in its entirety it is taken from me; there is war against me, as far as the lands of Seir (and) as far as Gath-carmel . . . I have become like an 'Apiru . . . for there is war against me . . . the 'Apiru capture the cities of the king . . . Behold Zimreda, the townsmen of Lachish have smitten him, slaves who had become 'Apiru.

**Amarna #289** . . . They have taken it, the town of Rubutu. And now as for Jerusalem – behold, this land belongs to the king, or why like the town of Gaza is it loyal to the king? . . . Behold the land of the town of Gath-Carmel . . . and the men of Gath have a garrison in Beth-Shan. Or shall we do like Lab'ayu, who gave the land of Shechem to the 'Apiru?

Such were the ravages of the 'Apiru, and the appeals of the several towns.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted from Drews **Coming** 91.

<sup>2</sup>Remarks Drews, "by the end of the seven-month program, the horses were capable of trotting long distances without tiring, and of pulling a chariot at top speed for a distance of slightly over a mile."

<sup>3</sup>ANET 233-234. Sharuhén is mentioned in Joshua 19:6 as in the land of Simeon.

<sup>4</sup>Not "Hebrews;" the meaning seems to be approximately "outcasts."

<sup>5</sup>For others, see ANET 483-490; for a complete translation, Moran **Amarna**.

The elite strike force did not pass away with Amarna times and the ‘Apiru. An earlier version of the story of Lot<sup>6</sup> shows Abram using such a force:

**Gen 14:12.** And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. [13] And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew: now he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Esheol, and brother of Aner, and these were confederate with Abram. [14] And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan. [15] And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. [16] And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also . . .

With this personal force, “born in his house” and thus entirely loyal to him, Abram defeated and despoiled an opposing army. Much later, we have David:

**1 Sam 27:2.** And David arose, and passed over, he and the six hundred men that were with him, unto Achish the son of Moch, king of Gath. [3] And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household . . . [5] And David said unto Achish. If now I have found favor in thine eyes, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country . . . [6] Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day . . . [8] And David and his men went up and made a raid upon the Geshurites, and the Girzites, and the Amalekites . . . [9] And David smote the land, and saved neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and he returned, and came unto Achish. [10] And Achish said, Against whom have ye made a raid today? And David said, Against the South of Judah . . .

In the time of his kingship, David’s power still rested on his “mighty men:”

**2 Sam 23:8** These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Joshebbasshebeth a Tah-chemonite, chief of the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite, against eight hundred slain at one time. [9] And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodai the son of an Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away. [10] He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword; and Yahweh wrought a great victory that day . . .

Notice the local affiliations: Eznites, Ahohites. These men had no powerful kinfolk in the land, and relied on David for their position. So also with the Janissaries of the Ottomans, or the Swiss Guards of Pope Julius II.

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The importance of these elite special forces still continues in our own time. A commando group can do things which less trained troops cannot. And in the civilian sector, the armed gang becomes something like the default ruler of neighborhoods or cities: wherever there is a failed government, or none at all.

<sup>6</sup>For the famously problematical Gen 14, see §12.

## 2. Law

Fairness is perhaps the most deeply rooted of all human ethical instincts. People should get what they have coming; not more, not less.<sup>7</sup> The early Near Eastern lawcodes are guides for the judges. They assure uniformity of practice – number of witnesses,<sup>8</sup> severity of punishments – across that ruler’s domain.

In c01850, the Sumerian king **Lipit-Ishtar** put together the first known lawcode.<sup>9</sup> It is only partly preserved. Two of its provisions were:

9. If a man entered the orchard of [another] man [and] was seized there for stealing, he shall pay ten shekels of silver.
10. If a man cut down a tree in the garden of [another] man, he shall pay one half mina of silver.

**Hammurabi** of Babylon (01792-01759) modeled his own code on that of Lipit-Ishtar. It was publicly posted.<sup>10</sup> The earliest Biblical code, the one in Exodus 21-23, included some Hammurabi rules, sometimes *in the same order*:

Ham	Exod	Content (Omitting Differences of Detail)
3, 4	23:1	False witness
8	22:1, 3b, 4	Stealing ox or sheep
9-10	22:9	Something lost is found in a man’s possession
14	21:16	Stealing a man; death penalty
21	21:16	Housebreaker may be killed
37	22:5	Animal feeds on neighbor’s field; pay the damage
117	21:2	Limited term of service for bought slaves
125	22:7f	Loss of money on deposit; restitution required
126	22:9	False claim of loss; must pay double
171	21:11	Slave concubine may go free if not provided for
195	21:15	Penalty for smiting a father
199	21:23-25	Penalty for injuring a slave
206	21:18f	Penalty for accidentally injuring another
209-214	21:22	Penalty for causing miscarriage
245-246	22:14f	Injury to borrowed animal must be made good
250	21:28	Ox gores someone to death; no claim on owner
251	21:29-31	If ox was known to gore, owner is liable
267	22:12	If sheep is lost through carelessness, shepherd must pay

This is from Driver **Exodus** 420f. In §22, we will look in on the Exodus “Covenant Code,” to see in detail how it handled those precedents.

<sup>7</sup>This is the also sense of Chinese yì 義, conventionally translated “righteousness,” but perhaps better as “rightfulness.”

<sup>8</sup>A sensitive matter. Num 35:30, “Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be slain at the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person that he die.” Deut 17:6, “at the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.”

<sup>9</sup>ANET 159-161.

<sup>10</sup>For the entire Hammurabi code, see Roth **Law** 71-139.

Law changed the status of women. It also changed the status of property. Two court cases show that transition. The first grants a right of inheritance:

**Num 17:1-11.** Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad . . . and they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest . . . saying, Our father . . . had no sons. Why should the name of our father be taken away from among his family, because he had no son? Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father. And Moses brought their case before Yahweh. And Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right; thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren . . .

and the second qualifies that right, on behalf of the families:

**Num 36: 1-12.** And the heads of the fathers' houses of the family of the children of Gilead . . . came near, and spake before Moses . . . and they said, Yahweh commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the children of Israel, and my lord was commanded by Yahweh to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then will their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of our fathers, and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they shall belong . . . And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of Yahweh, saying, the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaketh right. This is the thing which Yahwe doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, . . . only into the family of the tribe of their father shall they be married. So shall no inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe . . .

Thus, for a time, was resolved the conflict between personal and tribal rights.

### 3. Commerce

But if property can be inherited, it can also be sold, giving new options to anyone with money to invest. Canaanite tradition had always sought to protect the have-nots, by such customs as leaving harvest gleanings for the poor

In an area of marginal rainfall, one allows the land to lie fallow periodically. This custom was presently embodied in law, as the sabbath:

**Exod 23:10.** And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the increase thereof; [11] but in the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat . . .

**Lev 25:3 .** Six years shalt thou sow thy field, and six years shalt thou prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof; [4] but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto Yahweh: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard . . .

**Deut 15:1.** At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. [2] And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbor and his brother; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because Yahweh's release hath been proclaimed. [3] Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it; but whatsoever of thine is with thy brother thy hand shall release.

Loans within the community stood on a different basis from those outside, and the community became not just a patron of the poor, but a recognized barrier to their commercial exploitation.

That barrier did not hold. The last thing in the Book of Proverbs is “the words of King Lemuel” in Proverbs 31. It ends with a portrait of the ideal wife, presiding over a great estate. She does not forget the poor, but she shows how far the entrepreneurial spirit had come. With her, we conclude this chapter.

- 10 A worthy woman who can find?  
for her price is far above rubies.
- 11 The heart of her husband trusteth in her,  
and he shall have no lack of gain.
- 12 She doeth him good and not evil  
all the days of her life.
- 13 She seeketh wool and flax,  
and worketh willingly with her hands.
- 14 She is like the merchant-ships;  
she bringeth her bread from afar.
- 15 She riseth also while it is yet night,  
and giveth food to her household,  
and their tasks to the maidens.
- 16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it;  
with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
- 17 She girdeth her loins with strength  
and maketh strong her arms.
- 18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable,  
her lamp goeth not out by night.
- 19 She layeth her hands to the distaff,  
and her hands hold the spindle.
- 20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor,  
Yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy.
- 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household,  
for all her household are clothed with scarlet.
- 22 She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry,  
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
- 23 Her husband is known in the gates,  
when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
- 24 She maketh linen garments, and selleth them,  
and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
- 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,  
and she laugheth at the time to come.
- 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom,  
and the law of kindness is on her tongue.
- 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household,  
and eateth not the bread of idleness.
- 28 Her children rise up, and call her blessed,  
her husband also, and he praiseth her, saying:
- 29 *“Many daughters have done worthily  
but thou excellest them all.*
- 30 *Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain,  
but a woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised.*
- 31 *Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
and let her works praise her in the gates.”*