

**A STUDY OF CHANGE  
DURING THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES**

**Jennifer Ann Cohen**

2000/587

**A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities,  
University of Cape Town,  
in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts.**

**Cape Town : July, 1999**

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the Kaplan Centre scholarship and for the Bender Memorial Prize. The confidence in my ability and their financial assistance have helped to make this dissertation possible.

My sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Azila Talit Reisenberger for her academic guidance and her continuous enthusiasm, which inspired me through the long years of study.

To my family, for their support and interest, thank you.

Finally, my thanks to Elaine Thornton for her patience and expert typing.

**ABSTRACT**

A study of change during the period of the Judges, including:

- (a) Biblical historiography and method;
- (b) An analysis of the Biblical text itself.

This is a detailed study of tensions involved in the Israelite change from Confederacy to Monarchy as reflected in the Biblical text. The texts used are the Book of Judges and I Samuel (1-12).

The study is divided into two parts,

Part A looks at the methodologies and perspectives of various 20th century Biblical scholars - for example the sociological perspective of Weber and Gottwald, the religious/historical perspective of Bright and Kaufmann, the literary perspective of Polzin and the close reading approach of Eslinger.

(ii)

Part B concentrates on analyses of the texts. An awareness of the methodologies discussed in Part A led to the choice of a method to be used in the analyses: a close reading of the Biblical texts in their final form; in other words, a synchronic approach to the texts is used.

Part B (the analyses) provide:

- (i) a tabulation of the Judges where questions are asked to determine when change can be detected.
- (ii) A more detailed study of Judges Deborah and Gideon, of Abimelech the Canaanite king, of the Book of Judges (17-21) and of I Samuel (1-12).
- (iii) An investigation of the tensions involved in change, in the period immediately preceding the establishment of the monarchy.  
Key-words in the contradictions that apparently exist in the text of I Samuel are used in discerning 'opposing voices' behind the text.

(iii)

That is, a close reading of the Biblical text led to the apprehending of an ongoing pro- and anti-monarchic debate concerning the establishment of the Israelite monarchy - the principal change that occurred in the period of the Judges. This is discussed fully.

University of Cape Town

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**A STUDY OF CHANGE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES INCLUDING**

**(A) BIBLICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHOD, AND**

**(B) AN ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT ITSELF**

**PRELIMINARY CHAPTERS**

Page No.

**CHAPTER 1**

1

Introduction

The important change that took place during the period of the Judges - the institution of monarchy in place of the Judge System. The tensions involved in change; the 'old way' or mind-set, of Israel, and the 'new way'.

**CHAPTER 2**

4

Historical Background and Survey of the Period

The occupation of the land of Israel, the tribal Confederacy which was to last more than two hundred years, and the eventual transition from the Judge System to Monarchy.

**PART (A) BIBLICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHOD**

CHAPTER 3	8
<u>Early Approaches to the Biblical Narrative prior to the Twentieth Century</u>	
From a unitary view of the Biblical text to composite views: the Documentary Hypothesis .	
Textual redaction and the Deuteronomistic Hypothesis - the linkage between the writer's time and the text per se, and its importance to a synchronic reading of the text. (See Chapter 9).	
CHAPTER 4	13
<u>Recent and Diverse Approaches to the Biblical Narrative</u>	
A survey of the approaches of six Biblical scholars leading to the selection of a method for the present study.	
CHAPTER 5	17
<u>M. Weber</u>	
The Sociological approach, and the sources used by Weber.	
CHAPTER 6.	23
<u>N. Gottwald</u>	
The Sociological Approach, and Gottwald's attitude to sources. The models (interpretations) of the Israelite land-taking, the Peasant's Revolt model being basic to a sociological understanding.	

CHAPTER 7	31
<u>J. Bright</u>	
A Religious / Historical perspective incorporating some sociological ideas regarding the Israelite land-taking.	
CHAPTER 8	36
<u>Y. Kaufmann</u>	
A Religious / Historical perspective with emphasis on the synchronic reading of the text, and the fact that its apparent contradictions can be explained historically.	
CHAPTER 9	42
<u>R. Polzin and L. Eslinger</u>	
A Close Reading Approach to the text, with positive use made of its contradictions and anomalies; with a review and comparison of the diachronic and synchronic approaches as an introduction.	
Polzin's Literary Interpretation	
Eslinger's view that the apparent textual discrepancies may represent a controversy.	

(vii)

The selection of a method for the present study; a Close Reading of the text per se (that is, a synchronic approach) chosen for the analyses of Part (B).

## **PART (B) ANALYSES OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT**

### **CHAPTER 10**

52

#### Introduction

Methodological recapitulation, showing the role of apparent textual anomalies in reporting an ongoing debate on the monarchical issue and anticipated change in Israel. The intention of tracing from its origin the tension between the 'old way' and the 'new way' (Later to become the anti- and pro-monarchic debate).

### **CHAPTER 11**

54

#### Tabulation of the Judges

Tabulation and synopses of the several Judge accounts, with the aim of identifying any change in Israel's attitude and any move to break with the past.

CHAPTER 12	70
<u>Arising from the Tabulation and Synopses of Judges</u> Identification of the accounts of Deborah, Gideon and Samuel and of Abimelech and Judges 17-21 for deeper analysis regarding change.	
CHAPTER 13	73
<u>Deborah and her Times (Judges Chs. 4 and 5)</u> A glimpse of a new attitude (when Deborah summons the tribes to battle).	
CHAPTER 14	92
<u>Gideon (Judges Chs. 6 - 8)</u> A request for a king. Gideon's refusal. Gideon's later ambivalent behaviour.	
CHAPTER 15	106
<u>Abimelech (Judges Ch. 9)</u> An account containing <u>Jotham's Fable of the Trees</u> . A comparison seen between Israel's Judge system and the institution of monarchy. A brake on the impetus to change, but an anti-monarchic comment, rather than the reflection of opposing voices in the debate.	

CHAPTER 16

116

Judges Chs. 17 - 21

A revealed polemic depicting chaos in the absence of leadership and authority. (Also differently interpreted as containing two concealed polemics).

The above synchronic reading of the text per se seen as a pro-monarchic comment rather than the reflection of opposing voices in a debate.

CHAPTER 17

129

1 Samuel Chs. 11 - 12

Part 1 with two parts to the analysis.

The 'opposing voices' in a monarchic debate seen in Section 14 of the study (Gideon) and Section 17 (Samuel 1).

Overview of 1 Samuel 1 - 12, with comments where relevant to change.

From Chapter 6 the debate detected in the textual anomalies to be analysed in Part 2.

Part 2

The examination of four apparent textual anomalies in I Samuel Chapter 6 onwards through the identification of key-words and phrases.

Suggested explanation for the discrepancies in the context of the anti- and pro-monarchic debate and its final accord.

The installation of Saul as first King of Israel, with a footnote regarding Samuel's oration in Chapter 12.

CHAPTER 18

153

Conclusion to a Study of Change during the Period of the Judges

A summation of (a) this study's approach (no over-arching perspective involved, but attention given to the question of change) and (b) its attitude to the Biblical source (the text per se used).

The approach's success in detecting the mood of Israel prior to the installation of the first king.

The satisfaction experienced in discerning the 'voices' of controversy and ultimate compromise behind the text, as a result of the narrative's being closely read in its final form.

## A STUDY OF CHANGE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES<sup>1</sup> INCLUDING:

- (a) Biblical historiography and method and
- (b) An analysis of the text itself

### PRELIMINARY CHAPTERS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

During the biblical period of the Judges (including Samuel) fundamental change was presaged in Israel<sup>2</sup>:

The tribal confederacy founded at the time of the 'conquest' - where the people were bound together by a common devotion to Yahweh in a theocratic dispensation - would finally give way to a secular monarchy, with the appointment of the first king, Saul.

Such a change was not a sudden phenomenon, taking more than 200 years to crystallise. The years preceding the final decision to make the change have been variously interpreted as an 'unstable confederacy'

<sup>1</sup> Eslinger, Lyle M. Kingship by God in Crisis ; A Close Reading of Samuel 1-12 J S O T Press - Almond - Sheffield, England(1985), says "In the view of Noth [M.Noth] and most scholars since, 1 Samuel 12 constitutes a summary and conclusion to the period of the Judges, which in the biblical narrative stretches from Judg 1.1 to 1 Samuel 12.25" p51 (my underlining). This therefore includes all of the Book of Judges including Judges 17 - 21 where no Judge is mentioned and 1 Samuel 1 - 12, Samuel being the last of the Judges.

<sup>2</sup> "Israel" here refers not to the land, which was then known as Canaan, but to the Israelite people (who were then in Canaan).

(Weber 1962: 83) or as a period of 'remarkable tenacity' (Bright 1960: 159). In any event, it represents a time of tension between the 'old way' with God as King and the 'new way' with a human king - a theocratic compromise would eventually be reached, with Saul as king beneath divine authority. In such a process of change the 'new way' (in this case the pro-monarchic trend) struggles to shed itself of the 'old way', while the old way (here anti-monarchic) struggles to conserve its principles. There would be, in the period under discussion, adherents to Israel's former ways, to whom a monarchy was an anathema, and at the same time there would be those to whom the old way seemed impractical, and who promoted the idea of a King.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the issues became hotly debated, and increasingly a flurry of voices is heard behind the Biblical text.

I intend to listen to some of these voices, and to establish the attitudes of a people moving towards transition. Therefore, Part B of this work will culminate in a textual analysis of the period.

This will, however, be preceded by a survey of Biblical historiography and method (Part A of this work). There have been diverse ways of approaching the Biblical narrative, and I intend to review some of them where they touch on this important period in order to select an approach for my analysis.

---

<sup>3</sup> The change discussed here, the advent of the monarchy, was political but affected religious principles greatly. Economic and social developments (for example the commerce of the Jezreel valley and the existence of towns in a mainly agricultural community) will be mentioned only in passing.

Particularly in the twentieth century, new perspectives (sociological, historical and literary as well as close reading techniques) have been introduced, all of which facilitate the perception of trends and attitudes reflected by the text.

However, first it is necessary to set the scene - that is, to provide a historical background (an outline of events as they appear in the Bible) in order to orientate the reader in the interpretations being made.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> I was prompted to embark on this investigation by the changes taking place in South Africa in the 1990's. However, regarding the initial *raison d'être* of this discussion i.e. change in South Africa vis-a-vis change in ancient Israel, it was realised that, although the tensions involved in turning from an 'old way' to a 'new way' may be similar, the actual dramatic changes in South Africa and ancient Israel cannot be equated. Change in South Africa was a long time coming, being held back by conservative forces, but it was ultimately inevitable that the change to democracy be achieved. It will be seen that change in Biblical Canaan was the reverse: it was delayed for more than 200 years by the interim period's being suitable to both the need for autonomy of the tribes, and the desirability for cohesion in a people, the ultimate change to monarchy being forced by necessity (the Philistine pressure on Israel).

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In considering the period of the Judges, which culminated in the above change from theocracy to monarchy, it is necessary first to look at the time of the occupation of Canaan by the Israelite tribes. The books of Joshua, Judges and I Samuel (1-12) are relevant. The phases concerned are Conquest, Confederacy and the request for a King.

In Canaan at the time of Joshua, life was totally different from the forty years of wandering with Moses in the desert. There, as described in the Books of Exodus and Numbers, the twelve tribes had moved and camped together. There had occurred a phenomenon which irrevocably bound them: the revelation of the Law at Mount Sinai. In the wilderness there had been one Law, one unchallenged God, one people and throughout, one permanent leader. This commonality had a binding effect.

Now, Joshua had to set the stage for the continuation of the same commitment and co-operation in the new environment of Canaan. His role, as the successor to Moses, was to lead in possessing and dividing the Land, and he was to be "strong and of good courage" in upholding the Law and ensuring the people's loyalty to God. But Joshua's instructions still came from God. The relationship of Israel and God was one of loyal vassalage and protection. There was no question yet of an earthly monarch.

His role too was to ensure that tribal solidarity would continue. To these two ends - religious fidelity and tribal co-operation, Joshua called

the people together at Shechem and reminded them of their obligations to God and to each other.

Under Joshua, the prospects for confederacy (a loose federation of the tribes) bode well. The settlement and dispersal of the tribes had already begun when two and a half tribes decided to remain in Gilead, east of the Jordan River.

Although they did not have to struggle for possession of their own land, it was expected that they - the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of Menasseh - would assist in capturing the area west of the Jordan for the remaining tribes. Feelings of tribal co-operation were manifest in this command, and in the tribes' unquestioning willingness to participate.

However, fragmentation would occur as a result of the geographical separation of self-concerned farming communities, and also the religious ethic would be undermined as some Israelites became influenced by their idolatrous neighbours. At the same time the tribes were vulnerable to oppression or attack by remaining pockets of Canaanites (not subdued at the conquest of the land), by other internal enemies, notably the Philistines, or by external forces on the borders. In these circumstances, according to the accounts in the Book of Judges, God, who not only punishes but also protects, would provide a 'saviour', or a Judge - a temporary leader who would re-order the people's lives, inspire them, and lead them against the enemy. Peace would be restored for a number of years until, in the absence of more permanent and national leadership, another crisis occurred.

The Book of Judges tells of thirteen such leaders. None was a judge in the accustomed sense of the word (though some were approached for advice). A Judge was rather a military commander who led one or more tribes to repel the enemy, and once the need was gone, disappeared. The role was temporary and non-hereditary, in contradistinction to a monarchy. Moreover, the leadership of a Judge fell within the parameters of the traditional relationship of the people to God, the Divine King: the Judge was appointed by God, invested with his spirit and was, of course, subordinate to him.

With the Philistine enemy moving inland and eventually reaching the central mountain area of the land, which the Israelites had always controlled, "all Israel" requested that Samuel find them a king to lead them in battle: they needed a permanent defender, a hereditary monarch. Though hesitant at first, Samuel received divine instructions to anoint Saul as King.

The land-taking ('conquest') has not yet been discussed in this historical background (although obviously it began close to the establishment of the confederacy). The reason for this is that there are two accounts of the Israelite land-taking and occupation of Canaan. According to the Book of Joshua (Chs 1 - 12) the conquest was swift and practically complete. But Chapter 1 of the Book of Judges refers to certain areas not yet captured. Therefore scholars hypothesise the nature of the Israelite occupation of Canaan. Some say the second account (in the Book of Judges) is historic, while the total onslaught account is Deuteronomistic - that is, it is due to a later redaction of the text. Some, such as N. Gottwald (The tribes of Yahweh: 1979) see an internal social revolution successfully (in most areas) overpowering the

Canaanite oppressor. And Y. Kaufmann (The Religion of Israel: 1961) sees no contradiction in the two accounts, the names of the unconquered people mentioned in the Book of Judges account referring to groups beyond Israel's actual borders established at the conquest. (These hypotheses and explanations will be discussed).

It can be seen that such contradictions in the Biblical narrative are bound to result in various understandings of the nature of events, but their sequence remains:-

land-taking (or conquest, or revolution), confederacy, and, finally, the establishment of a monarchy.

The foregoing historical background was given in order to facilitate orientation to the Biblical account when the work of various writers who exemplify the interpretations, methods and perspectives of 20th century Biblical scholarship, is discussed.

The map of Israel attached as an appendix to this study indicates:

- (i) the division of the land among the tribes, and
- (ii) places mentioned in my analysis of the text.

## **PART (A): BIBLICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND METHOD**

### **3. EARLY APPROACHES TO THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE (PRIOR TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY)**

As mentioned above in the Historical Background, duplicate and sometimes contradictory accounts exist in the Bible, for it is a composite work: numerous sources have been used and much redaction done. The authorship is multifarious.

This was not accepted until the 19th century, when thorough scientific exegesis of the texts was carried out. The following surveys briefly the progress of Biblical scholarship before the 20th century.

The Hebrew Bible ('Old Testament') was canonised in the late Second Temple Period. Thenceforward the main concern was that it should be copied correctly, with deference to the holy text (this principle was so satisfactorily adhered to that the Hebrew version to hand today is substantially the same as the Dead Sea Scrolls texts, some of which date from about second century B.C.E. and early C.E.). But a backwards look at how the textual edifice had come about prior to canonisation was not undertaken.

It was only in the more open and critical environment of 11/12th century Spain that Ibn Ezra indicated anomalies in Deuteronomy, the fifth Pentateuchal book. This, attributed by tradition to Moses, records Moses's own death; also Moses "the humblest of men" according to the text, would hardly (being humble) have described himself thus. Such contradictions were explained away, although it was suggested

that in this case another writer could be discerned, and that the latter part of Deuteronomy might belong to the following book (Joshua).

Eventually, another Biblical phenomenon was to prompt serious investigation. It was realised that parallel accounts of the same story, indicated the presence of various 'strands' of tradition, each deriving from a different parent text, whose characteristics it bore. For example, there are two elements in the Creation account, one with the divine name 'Elohim', one using the Tetragrammaton. Before, it had been assumed that the two parts of this so-called 'doublet' were complementary in sense, with a single author. Now it was agreed that the various pairs of accounts derived from more than one author, describing the same event.

The hypothesis described above has been beset from both sides : Cassuto, U. (The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch : 1941) re-asserts the unitary authorship of the Torah (Pentateuch); others while acknowledging the composite nature of the Bible, have pointed out that in most cases the entanglement of traditions is too complex for textual reconstruction.

The Documentary Hypothesis of J. Wellhausen in the late 19th century assembled blocks with similar characteristics. However although the hypothesis is now used with discretion, the method arising from it - that of linking the text and the historical time of author, is of prime importance. Wellhausen saw that a known institution, for example the priesthood, was described differently by different writers, each according to his own frame of reference. That is, the influence of the

writer's milieu and time was imprinted on his description and on his account of events Friedman, R. E. (Who wrote the Bible?: 1987))

In the same way, the redaction (copying and organising) of a text is time-bound. (Most parts of the Bible are multi-layered, having undergone these processes of transmission many times between the original telling - probably orally, with its own problems of perspective - and the canon to hand).

A significant instance of redaction is the work of the Deuteronomist in the production of the section known as Early Prophets, that is, the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel I and II, Kings I and II. The Deuteronomistic Hypothesis was presented by M. Noth in 1943.<sup>5</sup> Noth detected in these books a warning, or explanation<sup>6</sup> that the Covenant is to be kept, infidelity to Yahweh means punishment (God will no longer protect his people).

The warning was for this reason: In 721 B.C.E. the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria. This was seen as divine punishment for its backsliding and disobeying the Covenant. Now, the Southern Kingdom was conducting itself in similar manner and the Babylonian Empire was on the horizon. The people were being

---

<sup>5</sup> Although Noth's work on the Deuteronomist belongs later, it slots in well at this point, being an example of the redaction process which was now being recognised by scholars.

<sup>6</sup> R.E. Friedman Who wrote the Bible?: 1987 feels that this is a warning. Other writers feel the Deuteronomist is commenting on the reasons for the exile which has already taken place. In any event, the Deuteronomist's message is that the Covenant is to be adhered to.

warned to return to the Covenant, under the threat of a divine punishment analogous to the fate of Israel in 721 B.C.E.

It is hypothesised that the Deuteronomist used the Judges episodes for this didactic purpose. Throughout the Book of Judges, the cycle of apostasy/punishment/saving judge and renewed faith/further apostasy and punishment, is repeated.

It has been seen that Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis was a turning point. It confirmed that the Bible is a composite and not a unitary document. The Deuteronomistic Hypothesis and the realisation that redaction is done, intentionally or unintentionally, from the point of view of the writer's time, is another important factor in the development of Biblical scholarship.

Lyle M. Eslinger (Kingship of God in Crisis 1985: 22) comments on this important feature of the Deuteronomistic Hypothesis. He says:

"In Noth's case, it appears that at least part of his success was due to his emphasis on the conglomerate process and on the redactional meaning thereby imposed on the traditions ... [it appears] that interpretation is more satisfactory when it includes the final form in its purview" (my underlining).

This inclusion of the 'final form in its purview' would temper the tendency to concentrate exclusively on the history of the tradition (known as 'tradition history' or 'higher criticism'). For the Deuteronomistic Hypothesis resulted in the linking of the two approaches used with regard to the Biblical narrative - that of looking

for the history of the tradition (tradition history) and that of using the text per se in its final form as an entity suitable for analysis. Here, the tradition's history involved the redactor's intention to persuade the reader and to bring forward his message within the text.

When a literary medium has been used by the writer, as detected by Polzin, a similar transmission of ideas occurs (see R. Polzin Samuel and the Deuteronomist in chapter 4), and when we recognise that the redactor decided to reflect the views held in a controversy (suggested by L. Eslinger : Kingship of God in Crisis - section 4), once again there is a linkage of the historical process and the final form of the document. In these cases there is no emphasis on the historical background of the documents, but rather on an analysis of the text per se. (It is obvious that generally speaking, the approaches of tradition history and the reading of the text per se, would not be compatible in considering the same unit).

These and other 20th century historians have been chosen in this study as representative of modern methodology and perspective.

4. **RECENT AND DIVERSE APPROACHES TO THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE:**

A survey of the methods and perspectives of six 20th century scholars

This discussion falls under three headings:

- a. The Sociological approach,
- b. The Religious / Historical approach,
- c. The Literary approach and Close Reading of the text.

The purpose in digressing to examine some of the more recent works regarding the Biblical narrative is to decide upon an appropriate approach for my own study of change during the Period of the Judges.

At the same time, of course, new light is thrown upon this period by the scholars and new perspectives are used. These factors are integrated into the survey. In fact it will be seen that discussing their method necessitates looking at the content of their works and the results of their various interpretations.

The scholars whose work is surveyed are:

- (a) Reading from a sociological perspective:
  - M. Weber, a pioneer in the sociological method as applied to Biblical history.
  - N. Gottwald, a historian who followed this trend and built upon it his hypothesis of the conquest as being equated to a social revolution. (with Yahweh's being God of that social revolution,

and the Confederacy's being organised on the principles of social egalitarianism).

- (b) Reading from the more accustomed religious - historical perspective (though somewhat modified):
- J. Bright, who traces the linear development of Biblical history through the prism of religion (and has also been influenced by the work of Gottwald)
  - Y. Kaufmann, describes the development of religion in ancient Israel, against a historical background with an ingenuous nationalistic flavour.

All the above scholars focus to an extent on the text per se. The following justify the exclusive use of the text to hand:

- (c) Analysing the text per se (a close reading approach):
- R. Polzin, who explains and justifies his literary approach to 1 Samuel and therefore does not use the Deuteronomistic explanation of anti-monarchic passages
  - L. Eslinger who justifies close reading as a technique for finding the contextual role of the various anomalies in the text, and from whose close reading of I Samuel this study has derived much help.

The books to be consulted are :-

- (i) Weber, Max Ancient Judaism :1952 - the essays first appeared in 1917/18
- Weber, Max The Sociology of Religion : 1963 - first published in Germany in 1921.
- (ii) Gottwald, Norman K. The Tribes of Yahweh : a Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250 - 1050 B.C.E. :1979
- (iii) Bright, John A History of Israel : 1960 edition and also 3rd edition : 1981 (both editions consulted).
- (iv) Kaufmann, Yehezkel The Religion of Israel from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile translated and abridged by M. Greenberg : 1961
- (v) Polzin, Robert Samuel and the Deuteronomist : a literary study of the Deuteronomic History Part 2 : 1 Samuel : 1993.
- (vi) Eslinger, Lyle M. Kingship of God in Crisis : a Close Reading of Samuel 1 - 12 : (1985)

### **The Sequence of Presentation**

As the sociological perspective pioneered by Weber at the beginning of the century added a radically new reading of the Biblical narrative to the familiar religious reading, the works of Weber and Gottwald will be considered first.

Next comes the work of Bright, who re-moulded his thoughts in view, inter alia, of new sociological and archaeological evidence. His stated

method is "to examine the Biblical tradition in the light of such evidence as is available and then draw such conclusions as seem to be warranted." (J. Bright 1981 : 120). The purpose of the next book considered in the religious/historical category is, as seen in the title (The Religion of Israel), not strictly historical. Nevertheless, Kaufmann's investigation of the 'religion of Israel from its beginnings to the Babylonian Exile' does throw light on the period of the Judges, and his methodology is refreshingly reactionary, as he reverts to the evidence in the text itself.

The two most recent books are discussed next - those of Polzin and Eslinger - both involving a close reading of the Deuteronomistic text and finding in it a literary hand (Polzin), and what might be called today 'investigative journalism' on the debate leading up to the establishment of the monarchy (Eslinger).

A movement towards finding meaning in the text in hand, despite its composite nature, can be seen in the above range of styles and approaches.

As Polzin says: (when proposing a literary reading of the text), "whether the present text is the product either of a single mind or of a long and complicated editorial process we are still responsible for making sense of the present text by assuming that the present text, in more cases than previously realised, does make sense" (cited by Eslinger Kingship of God in Crisis : 433-my underlining).

## 5. M. WEBER : SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

Ancient Judaism (M. Weber) originally appeared as a series of essays on Mediterranean antiquity and great world religions in 1917 - 18. The Sociology of Religion (M. Weber) is adjunct to it. Both books have been used here, although their scope is wider than the subject chosen for this study i.e. the Period of the Judges in Biblical Canaan. In this particular area, Weber's source is the Bible and so it is appropriate to appraise his methodology.

For a long time the science of Sociology, born in the 19th century as a response to the Positivist understanding of the complexity of society, and history were not thought to be compatible. Both History and Sociology study men in society. Sociology's focus is more on the general condition of Society, while History's is the particular events and personalities, in a linear context. However, early in the 20th century the two disciplines came to terms - as the less positivistic and more open aspect of recent sociology<sup>7</sup> was seen to be successful in interpreting information left untapped by History. It was a matter of posing new questions to old facts.

This is explained in the preface to Ancient Judaism (M. Weber). H. Gerth and D Martindale say:

"Weber does not claim to have unearthed new facts ... source data may be grouped in a manner to emphasise some things differently than usual." The editors continue :

---

<sup>7</sup> Positivism sought to discover laws of human behaviour in society. Sociology is more open, working on trends and patterns ('models').

"This emphasis, a general theoretical contribution is sociological."

Further, "regarding Weber's broad intellectual contribution new relations are perceived between old facts when Weber brings the varied talents of jurist, economist, historian, linguist and philosopher to the task of integrating..." (Ancient Judaism ix).

Weber, himself a sociologist, was a pioneer in reading the Bible from the perspective of sociology, and he is chosen here as representative of the sociological approach to the Biblical narrative. It was now realised that the Biblical text could be approached in a different way from the traditional religious - historical approach.

Three of Weber's sources of information will be noted. One of them is indicated under the section heading 'The laws as an index to social development'...) (Ancient Judaism: 61ff).

The laws referred to are the social laws of the Torah/Pentateuch, found principally in the Books of Exodus (Ch 21 ff) and Deuteronomy. These laws are similar to, and probably derived from, the Mesopotamian Code of Hammurabi. The Patriarchs originated in that area, and the laws would have been widely used in the ancient near East.

Therefore, they would have applied during the period of the Judges.

In Mesopotamia there had been commerce and a money economy. In ancient Israel, too, the same laws indicate a money economy and trade at least in the towns. (Exodus 21 : 32 refers to monetary compensation for damages).

Weber explains the contribution of the laws to the understanding of Biblical society: "The social conditions are expressed more in various symptoms and the mentality (geist) of the literature, more in the attitude toward the typical [class] antagonisms, than in the formal nature and context of the Collections" (Ancient Judaism : 61). He concludes with the following interpretation: "With the growing accumulation of pecuniary funds through commerce, the tension between the urban patrician and the usuriously exploited peasant developed into a typical class antagonism and was viewed as such" (Ancient Judaism : 68).

That is, Weber sees a commercially thriving but oppressive community, with the free peasant of Deborah's time "socially, militarily and economically descending" (Ancient Judaism : xii), and becoming urbanised as "a plebian, standing below the developing urban patriciate. Doubtlessly," (he concludes) "the need for codification of the social laws derived from the antagonisms called forth in Israel by these developments". (Ancient Judaism : 69).

Other sources used by Weber regarding the social background to the period are the Tel el Amarna letters and the Biblical story of Deborah.

The Ancient Judaism notes refer to the Tel el Amarna tablets. These are letters sent from governors in Canaan to Egypt, which tell of corvées and taxation. General discontent is reflected. Some scholars say that this trend of oppression continued to the time of the Judges about two hundred years later. However, in the opinion of N. Gottwald the connection between the earlier and later periods of oppression has

been over-emphasised, and Y. Kaufmann finds no independent evidence of the oppression.

Of course, the Biblical account of Deborah (Book of Judges 4,5) is the most obvious source of social information. It tells of the militarily-equipped patricians of the cities at the coastal plain, and the hardships of the then rural peasants further inland, who would defend the local trade routes to be free of the tribute exacted from them. (These rural peasants later became urbanised and oppressed in the towns, according to Weber).<sup>8</sup>

So far it has been seen that Weber's methodology includes the use of a number of sources - not only those texts pertaining to Judges, but also the Pentateuch Book of the Covenant, and the archaeological discoveries revealed by his time.

According to the Preface of Ancient Judaism, Weber traces two main themes in his work: changes due to the people's movement and ultimate urbanisation (this has been touched on above), and society's relationship with Yahweh.

With regard to the latter, Weber points out that Yahweh is seen as war god by Israel ( Ancient Judaism : 131), who provided the Judges when

---

<sup>8</sup> N. Gottwald contests the suggestion of an Israelite patriciate. This notion is in conflict with his hypothesis of a social revolution (against the Canaanite overlords) whose egalitarian aims were carried through to the Confederacy. He says: "the positing of an early Israelite urban patriciate class prevents Weber from establishing the most distinctive structural and ideological feature of Israelite society, namely its deliberate break with political and social stratification (Gottwald 1979: .621, my underlining).

necessary, and for whom the Israelite soldiers were 'men of God', fighting his battles. Not responding to a battle call was a betrayal of God, not just of the confederates. At other times Yahweh is characterised as a rain god bringing blessing, and identifying himself with the individual and his economic interests.

Weber calls the 200 years of the period of the Judges an unstable confederacy. "As far as can be determined, this unstable Israelite confederacy till the time of the kings, had no permanent political organ at all. The League members in the story of Deborah partly withheld their support. There existed no common citizenship. Such was present apparently only in the tribe. Grave violations of metic rights were revenged by the Confederacy. But there existed no unitary court with unified administrative organs of any sort in time of peace. Confederate unity found expression in that a Yahweh-certified war hero or war prophet [Judge] regularly claimed authority even beyond the boundaries of his tribe. People came to him from afar to have him settle their legal disputes or to seek instruction in ritual or moral duties". Ancient Judaism : 83.

That is, Weber's assessment of the more than two-hundred year period of the Judges, tells of class antagonism, a political vacuum, and a confederacy that only functioned in time of war - and then only partially.

And yet, Weber identifies the factors that counter-balanced the above and explain the Confederacy's survival. He mentions the Judge, whose authority in time of war linked some of the tribes; he speaks of the peripatetic Levites; and he also finds a situation analogous to that

of Israel - that of "the Rehabites, of the strictly Yahwistic Kenite tribe achieving stability under adverse conditions because of its religion. Apparently only such a religious organisation provided solid basis for permanent political and military structure". (Ancient Judaism : 79. In similar fashion, implies Weber, there was some cohesion among the Israelites because of their religion.

And so, because of its covenantal interaction with Yahweh, because of the binding force of the Berith, and because of religious derivatives such as the Judges themselves and the Levite priests, the Confederacy survived until the Philistines threatened the centre of Israel.

All these cohesive factors are mentioned by N Gottwald, the next historian to be discussed, who also reads the text from a sociological perspective - but over and above this he extends his hypothesis of a social revolution's welding together of the people to be known as Israel, and their together establishing a non-stratified egalitarian society. This causes some differences of interpretation, as will be seen.

6. **N. GOTTWALD: THE TRIBES OF YAHWEH : SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Gottwald also has a sociological approach to Biblical history. He explains his perspective in a similar way to Weber. He says by asking different questions of the same material, new perspectives can be opened up and untapped data focussed upon. Gottwald claims, in addition, that "the sociologist can survive on less historical detail than the historian, provided it is of the sort that facilitates understanding of the social system from some clearly articulated analytical perspective" The Tribes of Yahweh 1979: 31. This appears to refer to Gottwald's own hypothesis regarding the 'land-taking' of Canaan by Israel which, he says, took the form of a class revolt.

There are three models applied by historians to this event: the Bible (Joshua 1-12) describes a conquest of the country by the returning Israelite tribes after their wanderings in the wilderness; an alternative gradual infiltration model has been proposed; the third model is that of a peasants' revolt at the outset of the social revolution effected by the oppressed class of Canaan. This is the model used by Gottwald.

Regarding Gottwald's methodology, as a prelude to his works he sifts out unreliable traditions. (As he explains, the Biblical narrative has suffered time bias - where the memory of the writer recording the event is fallible - and ideological bias. Also, earlier traditions have survived within the narrative, while later traditions have been superimposed in the assemblage and redaction process).<sup>9</sup> After this Gottwald works

---

<sup>9</sup> It can be noted regarding reliability that, prior to the Court Records of King David there was no carefully chronicled history and there are also few extra-Biblical sources, to

with the remaining traditions to establish what they report (source criticism) and why they were written (tradition history).

According to Gottwald, the pre-monarchic narratives which include the accounts of the 'conquest' - derive to a great extent from the cultic memory of the peoples in Canaan who would later become Israel. These memories told of deliverance from oppression, with the assistance of a deity who was to become known as Yahweh. The concept of a conquest had been superimposed on the earlier source.

In other words, Israel was not formed of a single group which had escaped from Egypt and ultimately arrived in Canaan with a view to conquering and settling the Holy Land and re-establishing itself there (the accepted reading of the Bible in the books of Exodus, and Numbers through to Judges). Rather, Israel was composed of many elements who had rebelled against oppression.

There are theories that the oppression had come about in the following way. Canaan had been part of the Egyptian Empire. Discontent with Egyptian oppressive domination is attested to in the Tel el Amarna letters of about 1350 B.C.E. which were written by Egyptian governors and their Canaanite vassals to the Egyptian government (p. 19 of this study refers). When Egypt withdrew from Canaan, the oppressive mode was perpetuated by the rulers of the Canaanite city states, the peasants being reduced to serfdom and corvée labourers. It was these people, who had initiated a social revolution with the overthrow

---

corroborate Biblical information. The only evidence available is usually the narrative itself. Where other sources (for example archaeology) have been used, this will be mentioned.

of the dominant class - a peasants' revolt. Gottwald says that the connection between the Tel el Amarna situation and the unrest of the later 'peasants' revolt' should not be over-stressed, however.

Proponents of the Peasant's Revolt model believe that the Canaanite groups and the Exodus group overthrew the rulers together. Interestingly, for Gottwald (social perspective) the Canaanite rebels are the main group in the operation whereas for J. Bright (Religious/Historical perspective) the Exodus group is the main group. This will be discussed.

The idea of Israel's being an amalgam of peoples is not novel. But the locus of Gottwald's 'main group' (inside Canaan, and not in Sinai), and the reason for Israel's becoming a nation (due to class revolt, and not due to the Covenant between God and his people) are. It was in these circumstances, says Gottwald, that the religion of Yahweh was adopted, in recognition of his assistance in the social uprising. (Yahweh was seen as God of the Social Revolution and not God of the Chosen People). It was in these circumstances that the Israelite Confederacy was established (its egalitarian nature will be discussed).

One of the earliest to query the concept of a total and united conquest of Canaan was M. Noth. Subsequent historians such as G.E. Mendenhall hypothesised a class struggle against the feudal-type domination of the Canaanite city-Lords, as part of the unrest throughout the Ancient Near East in the period prior to Israel's establishing itself in Canaan. J. Bright, it will be seen, moved towards the Revolt Model used by Gottwald in the revised edition of his book, A History of Israel (3rd edition, 1981). Gottwald himself says of the

Revolt Model, "the model may have to be adjusted to the possibility that some Canaanite settlements were not so much polarised..." in the uprising "... as neutralised, thus adopting a kind of live and let live policy which Israel was willing or obliged to accept." (1979 : 219). But an entirely new order was established with the Confederacy.

Gottwald provides detailed evidence in support of his hypothesis of a revolt. Diverse examples from The Tribes of Yahweh suggest as follows:

- the tribe of Issachar ('able to rent') comprised freed serfs (1979: 216);
- an increase in trade occurred once the feudal stranglehold was broken by the revolt (1979 : 217);
- 31 rulers mentioned in the Book of Joshua were overthrown by their own people (Gottwald takes 'Yoshev' to mean that the ruler, not the city, was defeated - that is, in a revolt, not by conquest);
- the Gibeonites responded favourably to Israel, who assisted in the uprising. For this reason the surrounding areas sought retribution against Gibeon (1979 : 216);
- philological criticism of the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) indicates the success of the peasant class in the Jezreel revolt, and criticism of the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15) shows

Pharaoh as a prototype oppressor who was recognised as such by the rebels in Canaan (1979 : 503, 507);

- the stories of Rahab and Jericho and of the reaction to the defeat at Ai show that the rulers of the Canaanite city states felt themselves to be insecure because of the unrest;
- the Song of Hannah (I Samuel Chapter 2) is seen as a pre-monarchic hymn praising God for the reversals of fortune among the downtrodden - as in the rebellion. These are examples of Biblical references to oppression and revolt during the so-called conquest period.

Regarding the areas involved in the unrest, Gottwald provides the following evidence. He says that there were instances of:

- cities in league with Israel, for example the Gibeonites;
- neutrality - the city's leader having been overthrown, but its autonomy being retained, with restrictions on the right to form military leagues against Israel - this applied, for example, to Shechem (Judges 9);
- Israel's existing side-by-side with city-states that had ousted their rulers;
- areas that remained unabsorbed, but defeudalised as a result of Israel's impact - (for example, Jerusalem);

- residual city-state areas and rulers such as those opposed by Barak and Deborah in the Jezreel valley (Judges 4 and 5).

Gottwald concludes "even if we acknowledge that there were breaches of protective alliance from both sides (Meroz - Judges 5 - and Penuel and Succoth - Judges 8 - are mentioned) the network of treaty relations between Israel and its Canaanite allies was "effective in securing a non-exploitive framework for the cities" (Gottwald 1979 : 581). In these ways the social uprising was successful in gaining much of Canaan for Israel and in setting in motion a social revolution.<sup>10</sup>

Gottwald talks about the new order established (the Confederacy or tribal league).

"Early Israelites recognised themselves as a distinct social formation banded together in egalitarian tribal coalition from which imperialism and feudalism were to be categorically excluded. They experienced their own distinction as social actors who expelled alien authorities and struggled to prevent the development of centralised authority within their own community." (1979 : 595, my underlinings).

The Confederacy was politically decentralised; there was no central authority, and the Judges who led the people in time of need were seen to be God-chosen and were non-hereditary - only Gideon

---

<sup>10</sup> Society was now committed to a non-stratified non-hierarchic policy. Monarchy was an anathema. The resultant anti-monarchism is relevant to my analyses in Part (B) of this study.

continued his rule for a length of time. Society was non-stratified (both for reasons of egalitarian social principle and because chiefdom - and the idea of monarchy - was an anathema in a religious sense). For the Israelites only God was king. Power was diffused among bodies of elders, and adequate participation in crucial tribal decisions was ensured. The linch-pin question needed to assess the well-being and mood of society under the Confederacy is how was it that such a loose federation resisted change for more than 200 years? Was the strength of society its social or its religious (Covenantal) appeal?

Gottwald says: "especially characteristic of this socio-political egalitarianism was its paradoxical combination of political decentralisation on the one hand, and of socio-cultural cohesion on the other hand" (1979 : 614). The Confederacy had the dual effect of permitting autonomy among tribes who were isolated in geography and concern, and at the same time of facilitating their cohesion and feeling of unity as one people. It delayed the establishment of a monarchy, until the Philistine crisis, as it was suitable to all.

The question: 'why did this interim period between settlement and monarchy endure so long?' is answered in social terms: For, cross-cutting the tribal autonomy and binding the loose federation together were the army, "which was not a citizen army but drew people together across tribal lines" (1979 : 318), and the Levitical priesthood who were distributed throughout the land as educators and who, in addition, encouraged Israel to take up arms for Yahweh when necessary.

Of course, the Covenantal linkage was strong too (the stance of J. Bright) - so much so that modes for inter-tribal consultation from the

time of Joshua no longer appeared necessary at the time of the Judges, and it is clear that the cohesion of the Confederacy had a religious basis as well as a social one.

For both these reasons, anti-monarchic voices will be heard when the Confederacy has to give way to the new dispensation of King Saul.

Comparing the content and approaches of Weber and Gottwald, the social revolt model was not applied by the sociologist Weber in his study of the period of the Judges. Gottwald implies that this was because when Weber's work appeared the tools of tradition history and form criticism were less developed than at his own time: in 1917/18 Weber lacked such analytical tools as the theoretical models of land-taking described above. Weber speaks of oppression but does not identify a general social uprising nor its corollaries: the specifically egalitarian Confederacy, and the adoption of Yahweh as God of the revolution. On all these matters, Gottwald expands further.

Henceforward both the sociological as well as the religious/historic perspectives were to be considered by historians. Not only had history and sociology come to terms (see p. 17 of this study); history saw the discipline of sociology as one of her great allies.

Next it will be seen that Gottwald's suggestion of an uprising is taken up by J. Bright, who at the same time retains his religious view of events; (as his religious view has at first no social base and rests on faith alone, Gottwald terms Bright's perspective one of 'religious idealism'.)

7. **J. BRIGHT: A HISTORY OF ISRAEL : RELIGIOUS/HISTORICAL APPROACH.**

Except where indicated the revised version of this publication will be referred to. The forward of this (3rd) Edition (1981) explains:

"...everything seems once again to have been thrown into question at many points where one could have spoken a few years ago of something resembling a consensus, one finds a veritable chaos of conflicting opinions. One thinks in this connection of :

the nature of Israel's tribal system before the rise of the monarchy...";

(the Confederacy, was once thought to be parallel to the Ancient Greek amphyctiony);

"... of the manner in which she gained control of the land ...";<sup>6</sup>

(the Revolt model having been suggested)

"and the date at which this took place"

(fresh archaeological evidence had come to light) 'Forward to 3rd edition' 1981 : 15).

(Bright's above revision is an indication of the developments which have occurred in Biblical scholarship as a result of ventures into new ways of approaching the text. There have been new perspectives and

techniques, for example the sociological reading has been added to the accepted religious/historical perspective; the analytical technique of a close reading of the text per se is, as will be seen, once again considered legitimate, despite the composite nature of the text).

Gottwald presented a hypothesis of class revolt, socio-egalitarian politics and he posited that Yahweh was seen as God of the social revolution. Bright presents no new hypothesis but incorporates certain aspects of the Revolt Model (1981 : 137) into his own religious/historical reading., where the faith of the people is seen to be as much a motivation to action as is social discontent.

Bright looks to extra-Biblical sources for corroboration regarding Gottwald's concept of a social uprising at the beginning of the period of the Judges. He uses the evidence of general unrest prior to the entry of the 'Exodus group' into Canaan, as contained in the Tel el Amarna letters. He mentions the archaeological evidence that appears to support the notion that some areas in Canaan were destroyed at the time<sup>11</sup> whether by rebels and/or by the incoming desert group is not clear. The paucity of evidence of a wholesale destruction has made him think rather, that a class revolt could have taken place. After all, he argues, people who had just liberated themselves from the ruling clique would be unlikely to burn the town in which they themselves lived (1981: 132). However, there is no substantial evidence of conquest or revolt to be found.

---

<sup>11</sup> Archaeology shows that in the Ai (or nearby Bethel) area there was some destruction in the 13th century B.C.E. The town was replaced by a simple Israelite structure. Debir, Lachish, Eglon and Hazor show a similar fate. (Lachish remained deserted).

Bright applies reason to his understanding of the text. He theorises that a number as small as the Exodus group could not alone have overthrown powerful feudal city-states, and he asks how it came about that so many divergent peoples united at this time in Canaan. Bright supplies the answers himself: he considers that the land-taking was an 'inside-job': elements of the oppressed people of Canaan made 'common concern' with the incoming Exodus group (utilising their conquering zeal and rendering their own willing assistance in removing their Canaanite overlords. Together they destroyed, removed or made treaties with them. (See Gottwald, p. 27-28 of this study, regarding Canaanite/Israelite arrangements). Moreover in Bright's opinion only a nucleus of the Israelite tribes was in Egypt, the rest staying in Canaan. So the Exodus group retained close connections with the local people in Canaan. Their co-operation in the revolt is therefore understandable.

However, despite the above sociological understanding, Bright retains a Religious - Historical perspective. For example he maintains that the origins of Yahwism were with the Covenant at Sinai and not with the social uprising in Canaan. He says, "It may be regarded as certain that the origin of her (Israel's) faith lay in the desert, and that it was brought by Israel into Palestine" (1960 : 15). The fact of a social uprising which Bright now recognises and of its outcome, the social revolution it originated (the new social egalitarian order of the Confederacy) does not change his view of the religion of Israel as unique and apart. Gottwald's comment on this is: "In view of his [Bright's] having to largely come to see the origins of Israel in social revolution, one expects of him rather a different reading of a religion born in such circumstances of social unrest" (Gottwald 1979 : 592).

For Bright the origins of Israelite Yahwism, its reappearance in Canaan and the Confederacy with its socially-binding Covenant, all have religious connotations. By comparison, for Gottwald, the anti-feudal uprising and its egalitarian Confederacy - even the origins of Yahwism - all have a social undergirding. The response of Bright to Gottwald (or of the response of the Religious to the Sociological point of view) is to be found in the following statement of Bright: "Had it not been for a group of Hebrews having undergone the Exodus and Sinai experience that thrust their way into Palestine bringing their new faith with them, the Israel we know today would not have existed". (Bright: 1981 : 164 - my underlining).

That is why the interpretations of Gottwald and Bright, despite meeting at a point are still diametrically opposed.

The emphasis of Bright is highlighted in the following comment by Gottwald. Talking of the peasant uprising against the entrenched power of city states he says that for Bright the event was "... in no way unique, and one which history would scarcely have noticed, had not the newcomers brought with them the faith quite without parallel in the ancient world" (Gottwald: 1979 : 592, referring to Bright's religious point of view). He continues, "Bright offers an untenable distinction: the social revolution of early Israel was not at all unique but the religion of that social revolution was unparalleled. I believe that the evidence supports a totally different reading." (1979 : 594). For Gottwald the revolution was the unique phenomenon.

It has been mentioned that Gottwald speaks of Bright's view as 'religious idealism' or as 'self-generated faith', which is not attributable

to any cause. To Gottwald Yahweh is the God of the social revolution - this is what brought Yahwism to Israel. For Bright, Yahweh is the God of the Chosen People, it is a matter of faith.

Paradoxically, Bright identifies social as well as Covenantal reasons for the longevity of the Confederacy. For some two hundred years this institution managed to survive, despite the fact that there was no centralised power and despite the tendency of the tribes to become isolated. Bright gives the following explanation: Its achievement was "in circumscribing the actions of the clans in certain well-defined areas while otherwise leaving them their freedom..." (1960 :110) (my underlining). All the same, he concludes by saying that the Confederacy "expresses the spirit of Yahweh's Covenant which had created it." Once again it can be seen that, given the same information, in the last resort the conclusions of Gottwald and Bright diverge.

The methodology of Bright has been mentioned, his regard for new hypotheses and ideas noted, and his turning to extra-Biblical sources for substantiation described. He says: "We shall examine the Biblical tradition in the light of such evidence as is available and then draw such conclusions as seem to be warranted." (1960 : 110).

As with the next writer whose approach will be discussed, Bright's starting point is the Biblical narrative per se. For Yehezkel Kaufmann it is both a starting point and his final position. For he finds some accepted hypotheses to be wanting, and challenges the general consensus of opinion in several noteworthy areas.

8. YEHEZKEL KAUFMANN: THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL: A RELIGIOUS/HISTORICAL APPROACH.

It will be noted from the full title of Kaufmann's book: 'The Religion of Israel from its beginnings to the Babylonian Exile'. that it is not simply a national history, but looks at Israel's history and religion in tandem. (For this reason it can be described as having a Religious/Historical approach). This combination of perspectives is eminently possible; as each national event (the Exodus, the Conquest, the Confederacy period) plays itself out against a corresponding phase in the firm establishment of monotheism - the religion of Israel'

For, in addition to Israel's history being described along with her religion, Kaufmann also notes that there is an ongoing battle with paganism. He says for example: "The narrative of the Exodus represents national liberation as the object of the wonders that were performed in Egypt. But another motif is also present: the battle between the God of Israel and arrogant heathendom. ... Pharaoh ends by recognising Yahweh and submitting to him..." (1961 288).

On the foregoing pattern, The Religion of Israel discusses the events as tabulated below. (with regard to the Period of the Judges).

	<u>Events (Israel)</u>	<u>Religious aspect</u>	<u>Struggle with paganism</u>
1.	Conquest of Canaan	with God's assistance	end of Canaanite culture
2.	Confederacy	God sends deliverers (Judges).	Struggle against all idolatry

That is, Kaufmann deals with his subjects, the religion of Israel and the history of Israel, in the context of the wider struggle of monotheism and paganism.

It can also be noted that Israel has a role to play in that struggle: that of opposing non-monotheistic forces

- (a) through the herem (annihilation) of the Canaanite culture/religion, at the Conquest<sup>12</sup>, and
- (b) through Israel itself abandoning idolatry - see Kaufmann's argument regarding the so-called 'idolatry' of the period of the Judges - which interpretation he rejects.<sup>13</sup> In this, Kaufmann's method involves a return to the text per se.

As a result, regarding the land-taking/conquest by the returning Israelite tribes, Kaufmann differs from those scholars who support the model of a class revolt, or of a gradual infiltration of the land - both models involving some continued existence of the Canaanite religion side by side with the Israelite religion. Kaufmann rather sees a total conquest of the land and the annihilation of Canaanite culture.

---

<sup>12</sup> Kaufmann explains: "Terrible though it was, the herem had important social and religious consequences. Israel did not assimilate to the indigenous population - it provided Israel's new religious idea with an environment in which to grow free of the influences of a popular pagan culture." (1961 : 254).

<sup>13</sup> Kaufmann explains the nature of paganism to show that Israel's 'idolatry' in the Book of Judges is not genuine paganism. Paganism proper, he says, is accompanied by myths about the god's family and his activities. This is rare in instances of Biblical history. (1961: 60 ff.

However in the Biblical narrative itself there is also conflict: Joshua (1-12) indicates a complete end to Canaanite rule, whereas Judges 1 says that numerous Canaanites remained among the Israelites. (Israel was being punished, according to this version, for not having eliminated them from its midst).

Kaufmann follows the former ('herem') concept, accounting for the textual anomaly - in Judges - as below. (Previously, some had said the insertion in the Book of Judges was due to a Deuteronomistic redaction which contained a warning against idolatry).<sup>14</sup>

Kaufmann explains the anomaly between the Joshua and Judges sources by differentiating between the 'Real Land', the land actually occupied by the Israelites, and the 'Ideal Land' which they had failed to conquer. Foreign influences and encouragement to worship Baal might come from beyond the borders, in the 'Ideal Land', but Israel had fulfilled its obligations in conquering the 'Real Land', (1961 : 247/8).

According to Kaufmann then, a complete conquest took place: there was no amalgamation of people or ideas. He says, moreover, that a conquering spirit motivated the Israelites: "the desire of the tribes to return to Canaan... became a religious ideal. Possession of the land is the earliest eschatological motif of the Israelite religion..." (1961 . 241). Kaufmann discerns, too, that there was a unified plan of conquest (Kaufmann 1961 : 245/6). Most important of all, the 'herem' was

---

<sup>14</sup> Other ways of accounting for textual anomalies will be discussed in section 9: Polzin and Eslinger. They also deal with what they see, each from his own perspective, as a complete and unfragmented unit of the text per se and they cannot, therefore, dismiss discrepancies as mere interpolations.

complete. Finally, only pockets of Canaanites, politically and militarily crippled, remained.

Regarding the Confederacy, it has been seen that Kaufmann employs a careful reading of the text per se, as well as his own erudition, in order to correct what he regards as a misrepresentation, when the period of the Judges is called 'the first idolatrous period' in Israelite history. He says: "The evaluation of this age as idolatrous... is part of the historiosophic idealism of the Bible, according to which every national distress is the result of apostasy. The truth is that even the schematic framework of the Book of Judges knows only of a generalised worship of Baals and Ashtoreths, without being able to supply further details". (1961 : 260). And idolatry to qualify as genuine paganism, needs a mythology. (See footnote 12).

Kaufmann agrees that the reasons for the change from a confederacy to a monarchy in Israel are the frequent inability of the tribal league to answer the military summons, and the advance of the Philistines. An alternative reading would not be possible.

However, it is well at this stage (because it is relevant to the analysis in Part B) to point out that Kaufmann believes that the anti-monarchic voices heard at the installation of the first king are historically authentic and characteristic of the time, and of the people. He says that they are not superimposed on the text by a redactor. He adds: "The isolated passages [in the Bible] in which kingship is opposed do not... represent an ideology that prevailed in Israel at any time after the establishment of the monarchy. The origin of this hostility must be sought in the premonarchic period... All the anti-monarchic passages refer to the

historical moment of the beginning of the monarchy. A historical reminiscence alone is involved, not an ideal or a demand of later times. These passages preserve the mood of a specific occasion..." (1961 : 264).

There are other occasions on which Kaufmann employs his profound understanding of the Biblical text per se in re-assessing generally accepted conclusions. His approach will be mentioned in two other instances.

Firstly a study was made of the distinctive characteristics of Torah references and of Prophetic references to monotheism, to show that these sources must be regarded as distinct domains and that literary prophecy had not "created ethical monotheism", with the Torah stating merely "the later popular - priestly formulation of prophetic teaching." (1961 : 157). This idea had emanated from the hypothesis of Wellhausen. (Chapter 3 of this study). Kaufmann says the Torah, in its own right, talks of ethical monotheism.

In the second instance, logic and textual awareness lead to Kaufmann's refuting the notion that the Midianite priest, Jethro, brought Yahwism to Moses his son-in-law. Kaufmann points out that Jethro's legal advice to Moses is described in detail (Exodus 18 : 10/22 ), but no religious counsel is mentioned; it surely would have been had Jethro introduced a new religion . (1981: 242/5)

Kaufmann's methodology is connected to a conviction that the historical truth is to be found in the Biblical text per se. His thoroughness regarding sources is borne out in the footnote to his

conclusion regarding the `herem'. He says: "the view taken here of the nature of the Conquest does not flow from the assumption that the stories of the Bible are historical reports. The general considerations that have been advanced... are not founded on the denial that the stories are merely etiological legends. On the contrary, it is they that prove that these stories do contain a historical substratum..."

(1961 : 247 - my underlining) . Nothing is assumed; everything possible is substantiated, such is Kaufmann's sensitivity to the truth in the texts.

Yehezkel Kaufmann is renowned for his erudition in Biblical matters. He is also known for the nationalistic flavour and enthusiasm he imparts to his work, when speaking of the national/religious "New Divine Drama" being played out at the tribes' return to Canaan (1961: 240-241) or when describing the "Early Eschatology" of the Period of the Judges, and Yahweh's bounty to Israel; the language is sure and warm: "Yahweh has given Israel a land of grain and wine, and has settled it in insulated security..." - and it is objective: "...the horizon is bright, despite an occasional cloud". (1961 : 261).

The work of R. Polzin and L. Eslinger will be discussed next. Their perspective (use of text per se) is similar to that of Y. Kaufmann. But, whereas Kaufmann explains anomalies in the text, both Polzin and Eslinger use these apparent inconsistencies, and find that they contribute to its meaning - Polzin discovering their literary role and Eslinger tracing their contextual role. They see that additional and new meaning is to be found in the narrative of I Samuel when approached in this way.

9. **ROBERT POLZIN: SAMUEL AND THE DEUTERONOMIST, AND**  
**LYLE M. ESLINGER : KINGSHIP OF GOD IN CRISIS - CLOSE**  
**READING APPROACHES USING THE TEXT PER SE.**

So far, the approaches and methodological contributions of four 20th century Biblical historians have been appraised. These have comprised both sociological and religious/historical viewpoints.

Regarding sources and methodology, the Biblical texts have been 'sifted' for reliability (for example, by Gottwald), and complemented by the use of other Biblical sources (Weber), and archaeological findings (Bright). (It should be noted that few other sources exist for this period). It was shown that Kaufmann focuses on the Biblical text itself as authentic.

Of course, close readings of the text per se have been incorporated in the methodologies of the other scholars so far discussed. The deep understanding of the sources by Weber (spoken of in the Preface to his book) and Bright attest to their analyses. A close reading of the texts is evident in Gottwald's substantiation of his hypothesis (see pages 26 - 28 of this study) as well as in Kaufmann's re-interpretations.

Each one of these scholars naturally met with contradictions and seeming anomalies when endeavouring to read so composite a text as the Bible, as a unit, but a difference can be seen in their approach to the problem. There are various possibilities: the areas containing discrepancies may be rejected as interpolations emanating from another tradition; or where regarded as 'belonging', the existence of

the discrepancies may be explained - as Kaufmann has done regarding the 'Ideal Land' and 'Real Land' of the Conquest. Polzin and Eslinger have a completely different approach to the phenomenon of contradictions in the source material.

Robert Polzin and Lyle M. Eslinger (here selected as representative of the literary perspective and close reading technique - that is, representative of the approaches using the text per se as their source), neither dismiss nor explain away the apparent textual inconsistencies. Each reckons, from his own particular viewpoint, that the seeming anomalies are not incompatible but are rather intentional authorial devices contributing to the meaning of the story they appear to interrupt: the following examples explain.

Polzin regards the text per se as a document in which the apparent irregularities have a literary role: the Book of Samuel through analogy tells the story of the establishment of Israel's monarchy; the Song of Hannah - I Samuel chapter 2 - is not seen as an intrusion but rather as an artistically contrived comment on the saga. In similar manner, Eslinger believes the contradictions in I Samuel 1-12 have a contextual role deliberately highlighting, it has been suggested, the features of a historical controversy.

As explained above, the approach of Polzin and Eslinger is different because it enables them to read the selected text as an uninterrupted unit. Their approach is also different because they are thus able to fully utilise the text per se. The four historians already discussed, as has been indicated, refer to the text per se and even, in Gottwald's case, supply a close analysis of it. But they are still concerned with the

historical background of the traditions, (or their explanation, in the case of Kaufmann), with the existence of interpolations and the fragmentation of the text. Inasmuch as Polzin and Eslinger are able to see their chosen unit as a whole, its history does not affect their reading. They concentrate upon the text in its final form and not on its historical background.

As the approaches of Polzin and Eslinger represent a break with the past, where looking at tradition history had seemed the only option, it is well to recapitulate briefly on the difference between their view and that of earlier scholars. This was mentioned in Chapter 3: 'Early Approaches to the Biblical narrative'. In this section it was said that the Deuteronomistic Hypothesis of M. Noth was to be a major step forward in 20th century Biblical scholarship, because of its linking of the writer's time with the text to hand (page 10 - 12 of this study). The text's history in this case became self-explanatory and because of this, Noth's work can be considered a bridge between the diachronic and the synchronic approaches to the text.<sup>15</sup> The following quotations (cited, as indicated, from the work of Eslinger) tell of the limitations/possibilities of the two approaches. Opinions which explain the use of the diachronic approach are those of H. Gressmann (in 1913) and H.P. Smith (in 1899) (both as in Eslinger, 1985 - see p 45 of this study). Those which explain the use of the synchronic approach, and find the means of obviating an excursion

---

<sup>15</sup> The diachronic approach regards the Biblical narrative as composite and looks at the tradition's history. The synchronic approach enables scholars to regard the narrative as a unit and deals with the text itself and its meaning. For a method of approaching the text in diachronic and synchronic ways side by side, see: L.C. Jonker Exclusivity and variety: Perspectives on Multidimensional Exegesis. Kok: Kampen in the CBET series 1996.

into the tradition's history, for they find meaning in the text's final form, are those of Lyle M. Eslinger (writing in 1985) and F. Crüsemann (in 1978 as in Eslinger, see p. 46 of this study). It can be seen that over the years, attempts have been made to 'legitimise' the use of the text per se.

In his 'Review of Scholarship' at the beginning of Kingship of God in Crisis, Lyle M. Eslinger says of H. Gressmann (diachronic approach): "Gressmann summarises his approach to texts that are 'unreadable and incomprehensible' in their final form..." (because they are multi-layered) and "become readable and understandable only when taken out of their present literary context and reset in a historical context... It is obvious that the meaning of the narrative in its existing shape is totally irrelevant to Gressmann"(1985: 21-2).

In this connection, Eslinger says of H.P. Smith: "speaking of the tensions of I Samuel (8-12) H.P. Smith stated 'so great a discrepancy ... is not conceivable in one author. It can be accounted for only on the hypothesis that various works have been combined in one' (1985: 36-7). That is, being composite, the meaning of the text per se is irretrievable.

However, writing almost a century later, Lyle M. Eslinger himself makes the comment that: "Smith's view...fails to examine the possibility that the differing viewpoints within I Samuel 8-12 may be subordinate to a single encompassing authorial point of view that is expressed and can only be heard in the narrative as a whole".(1985 : 37 - my underlining).

More explicitly, when talking of persuasive texts identified by F. Crüsemann, Eslinger, says: "when we are faced with a text that holds [the] two contrary views in a state of narrative tension ... the possibility that a neutral perspective - a study of a debated problem - is being voiced cannot be overlooked. In fact... the existence of a text containing contradictory views, should be assumed to present an examination of a controversy". (1985 : 38 - my underlining).

Eslinger's above justification for a synchronic reading of a text such as I Samuel : 8-12 - he suggests it might be reporting a controversy regarding the monarchy - leads directly to the literary and close reading analyses of both Polzin and Eslinger, who concern themselves with the text per se and the issue of the monarchy. Both have accounted for contradictions / opposing views in the text. As examples of a new way of regarding the text, they represent the climax of this discussion on Biblical methodology.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> (a) Today the synchronic approach is widely used. But, having been "cued to the tensions, doublets and various points of view by historical criticism" (Eslinger, 1985: 42) scholars must still remain aware of the actual composite nature of the text, and its 'unevenness' has to be 'accounted for' - by being harnessed to "a singular authorial point of view" (Eslinger 1985: 37) or to a more neutral report, be it conveyed as literature or by means of another communicative process.

(b) Regarding tradition history, (Eslinger 1985 : 38), paraphrases Crüsemann's concluding remark, that generic explanations of the text should be considered only "as a last resort", and Eslinger 1985 : 432 note 16 to Chapter One cites Edwards: "Plurality is not to be assumed without necessity". Edwards, P. (ed.) The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. New York, London, MacMillan & The Free Press, 1967 vol 7/8 : 307.

Much detail has been given above regarding the approach of Lyle M. Eslinger (according to his introductory 'Review of Scholarship' in the publication Kingship of God in Crisis).

Less has been said of Robert Polzin Samuel and the Deuteronomist, Part Two: I Samuel, to whose literary analysis this survey will now turn.

Whereas Eslinger identifies an intentional interweaving of pro and anti-monarchic voices in the text of I Samuel (8-12), Polzin says there is a literary intent and meaning behind the writing from I Samuel Chapter 1 onwards. In both cases, that which in a diachronic reading would have been deemed a misfit in the account of the transition from Judges to monarchy, has found a role in the narrative.

Polzin justifies his use of the synchronic approach to the text in general terms when he says: "The present book presumes the text of I Samuel makes sense, however worked over the text is scribally..." (1993: 17)

He reasons that the Biblical narrative is a literary source and should be read as such. He refers to the idea of John Van Seters<sup>17</sup>. Van Seters talks of proclaiming the literary merit of the Bible through comparative research, and says: "Israelite historiography will be seen to be a truly literary and authorial activity, and of conscious compositional techniques. Any labelling of such techniques as 'redactional' would destroy completely the compositional work of the Biblical authors" (Polzin 1993 : 14, quoting Van Seters - my underlining). Although Polzin has misgivings about Van Seters's actual assessment of the

<sup>17</sup>

R. Polzin's bibliography gives - John van Seters In Search of History 1983 : 232.

writing, he says, "It would be hard to conceive of a scholarly clarion call more congenial to the kind of reading of the history I am advocating than that sounded by Van Seters's much needed statements".

(1993 : 14 - my underlining). In other words, Polzin himself identifies purposeful 'literary and authorial activity' in I Samuel. And he presents his analysis accordingly.

I Samuel reflects more than the pro- and anti-monarchic controversy mentioned by Eslinger. According to Polzin, there is an overall literary investigation of monarchical issues at this time of change from divine leadership to a secular monarchy.

Polzin entitles his analysis of I Samuel 1, 'Hannah and her son: a parable...' In this sense, the birth of Samuel is parallel to and anticipates the birth of Israel's monarchy. There are hints at the analogy. For example, Eli is depicted as a regal figure (he is in command at Shiloh, and sits at the entrance to the 'hey-chal' or courtyard - before the sanctuary). The name of Israel's first king, Saul, is hinted at. Samuel is so named by Hannah because she had asked God for a son. In I Samuel 1 : 20 Hannah says 'I requested him, or 'Sha-altiv'. But this word is more akin to the name Saul (Sha-ul) than to the name Samuel (Shmu-el). So Polzin suggests (1993 : 27) that God's decision to give Hannah a son -Samuel - prefigures God's decision to give Israel a king - Saul'. The confusion in names could be intentional. Regarding the ideological issues, too, Polzin points to parallels between the birth of Samuel and the birth of the monarchy: Hannah must wait for a child (it is God's decision); Israel must wait for God to accede to the monarchy; Hannah was considered

drunk when she prayed for a child. The question is inferred: is Israel foolhardy in requesting a king?

The literary reading of the beginning of I Samuel, which sees analogies with pre-monarchic Israel, is also useful for assessing the attitude of the Israelite people at this critical time. As Hannah is frustrated by being childless but fervent about her needs, so Israel becomes more insistent about the need for a king. In this way, such an approach is able to tap the feelings of the historical protagonist in the narrative (here, the Israelite people).

So too, the Song of Hannah (I Samuel : 2) which is thought by many to be an intrusion in I Samuel, becomes surprisingly relevant to the monarchial theme. Hannah's maternal joy is celebrated along with other reversals of fortune - both the birth of Samuel and the birth of the Israelite monarchy follow adversity: Hannah is persecuted by Peninah, Israel by its enemies.

Polzin's approach (reading the Biblical narrative as a literary composition), solves the textual problem and enables him to read the text on hand as a unit which, through its analogies, contributes much to our understanding of the monarchial issue in Israel..

---

A methodology for my analysis of the text (Section B of this study), must now be formulated.

The approach of the four writers that were looked at originally, were found to provide much information regarding the nature of the Conquest (or land-taking) and of the Confederacy. A social dimension was added to the religious/historical reading. Kaufmann's revision of facets of this period's history has been noted. In other words new perspectives and new techniques have been profitably used.

Though it is shown that there are many methods of studying the text, because of the limited volume of this work I would like to concentrate on one. I find the close reading approach to the uninterrupted non-fragmented textual unit (the Biblical text per se) particularly valuable because of the additional insight into the period which it affords.

Therefore I shall use the close reading / analytical approach in my analyses. I shall submit the texts to a careful scrutiny, noting anomalies and the contribution they make to the meaning, seeking allusions to Israel's attitude during change, as well as being guided by evident linguistic and literary devices.<sup>18</sup>

To conclude, my desire to get close to the reality of the times led me to scrutinize the text itself. Polzin says "That-which-is [the text to hand] is as valuable as all the valuable might-have-beens [hypotheses of textual reconstructions]" (1993 :17). Moreover, he submits that, once

---

<sup>18</sup> The method used in Part (B) could be called a literary analysis insofar as it sees the Bible as literature. However the analyses view the text from a more general perspective and concern themselves with any information that can be gleaned about change as well as the narrative's use of literary devices to convey meaning.

the apparent anomalies and inconsistencies have been accounted for (by for example being interpreted as different viewpoints - Eslinger, or because of their role in artistic composition - Polzin), "we are... responsible for making sense of the present text..." (Eslinger 1985 : 433, note 17 to Chapter One, citing Polzin).<sup>19</sup>

Part (B) of this study attempts to be guided by this attitude.

University of Cape Town

---

<sup>19</sup> Eslinger's agreeing with F. Crüsemann (page 46 of this study) that the presence of opposing views in a text shows the evidence of a controversy, has been of great assistance in identifying the gradual movement from the 'old way' to the 'new way' and its changed attitudes. This separation would later become an ongoing debate between the anti-monarchic and the pro-monarchic stances.

## PART B ANALYSES OF THE TEXT

### 10. INTRODUCTION

#### (a) Methodological recapitulation

Examples of various historical and sociological approaches to the Biblical narrative were discussed in full in Sections 5 to 9. As was seen, each approach contributes in its own definitive way to Biblical methodology and its handling of the sort of textual unevenness described below<sup>20</sup> is but one facet of its outlook. This is nevertheless an extremely important item and it will now be expanded upon. (The problem of the composite text and its unevenness was mentioned briefly on pages 42/3).

In fact, of all the methodological considerations reviewed in Part (A), the highlight for me was the notion that anomalies appearing in the textual unit (when it is read synchronically) can be deemed to have a positive role, contributing to its meaning. This may be a literary function (as interpreted by R. Polzin), or the anomalies may be seen as cues demanding special attention in the search for meaning.

When looked at this way, the synchronic approach can be accepted as an authentic approach to such a composite, worked over text as the Biblical narrative.

And, thanks to the concept of contributory roles, there is no need to reject seemingly alien passages nor is it necessary to account for their

---

<sup>20</sup> The Biblical text is composite. This means that when read synchronically as a non-fragmented unit, there are apparent inconsistencies, contradictions and repetitions - for its parts are from diverse sources. This problem has to be solved when embarking on textual analysis.

'intrusion'. In fact, such dismissals and explanations would be counter-productive: the 'irregularities' in fact facilitate understanding.

The idea of textual anomalies' having a contributory role to play in suggesting meaning is particularly relevant to the later Samuel episodes - once regarded as a motley array of textual strands, challenging to the source critic, less meaningful to the historian. It has more recently been proposed that when I Samuel 1-12 (an ostensibly composite text) is looked upon as a unit, an on-going debate of the monarchical issue emerges.

Arising from the idea of an on-going controversy I also felt challenged to discover its origin and thence to trace the evolving attitudes of Israel regarding the anticipated changes.

To this end, the Tabulation and Synopses of Judges which follow will note allusions to the subject of change.

In the Tabulation, questions will be posed regarding Israel's leadership and the monarchical issue, and regarding the 'old way' / 'new way' tension.

## 11. TABULATION OF JUDGES

### (a) Categories Tabulated

The stories of the Judges reveal certain common characteristics. The categories considered for each Judge are as follows:

#### A Judge details

A1 Name, genealogy and tribe of Judge  
(for identification).

A2 Special features (of Judge or episode).

A3 Relationship with God.

(This often indicates the Judge's own religious attitude: Deborah responds with alacrity to the need to fight God's war. Though there are other reasons for this, Gideon is at first hesitant then zealous. Hence, the Judge's commitment to the 'old way' of thinking in Israel - for example regarding the theme of divine rule and the Judge system, as opposed to human rule - is revealed. **Note:** this feeling is not always the same as that of the people.

For questions eliciting the total picture see C and D below).

#### B Political / Military Situation

B1 The enemy faced by Israel at this point.

B2 The factor which has brought the Judge to the forefront. (This is sometimes due to a direct meeting with the Divine, sometimes due to God's spirit enveloping the Judge before or during the battle with Israel's enemies. That is, a religious experience - a 'summons' - takes

place. The oppression and suffering is also a motivating factor, according to the Deborah and Gideon narratives).

B3 Other persons involved, if any.

B4 The outcome of the confrontation and the period of stability ensuing.

(A representative cyclical pattern to events can be noted in the Book of Judges: Israel's apostasy is followed by punishment/ enemy oppression; the people cry out to God; a deliverer-Judge is sent; peace follows Israel's deliverance).

C The question will be asked:

Does the passage refer to the current leadership preference of the people, or to the monarchical issue in any way - the question of Judge or King, 'old way' or 'new way' being the main factor of tension in change during this period. (The evidence of the text itself will be used here).

D Finally, an assessment will be made of the episode's position on a continuum depicting the evolution of Israel's attitudes as change is approached.

**Note:** The chronological sequence of the Judges is unknown. It is even thought that some of them might have lived at the same time, in different areas. However, although the chronology of the episodes is in doubt, the progression of Israel's thought regarding leadership can be plotted in terms of C and D .

## 11. TABULATION OF THE JUDGES

### (b) **The Judges**

The Judges are listed in the order of their appearance in the Book of Judges followed by Judge and king-maker Samuel, in I Samuel 11-12.

#### 1. **OTHNIEL: (Judges 3: 7-12)**

##### A. **Judge Details**

A1 Othniel, son of Kenaz brother of Caleb, and son-in-law of Caleb. Tribe of Judah. Caleb was known for his leadership in the desert, being one of the spies sent to Canaan who was positive about the venture - Numbers 13:6, 30 and 14: 6-8, saying: "Only rebel ye not against the Lord... The Lord is with us" - and for his leadership at the Conquest - Judges 1:12ff.

A2 Special features: see above.

A3 Although nothing is indicated regarding his personal religiosity, Othniel's family connection and good relationship with Caleb (Judges 1: 14) suggest his commitment to the traditional mode of faith in God as divine ruler.

(See also B2 regarding Othniel's summons as Judge).

##### B **Political Military Situation**

B1 A Mesopotamian army sent by King Chushan-rishathaim, whom Israel has served for eight years.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Historically, it is suggested that the incursion was by Mesopotamian troops en route to Egypt and that no dire threat was posed to Israel. (The need for a king in Israel would only be voiced later, when the security situation was more acute).

- B2 "...the Lord raised up a deliverer... and the spirit of the Lord came upon him" (Judges 3: 9, 10).
- B3 No other personality is mentioned.
- B4 Israel prevails: forty years of peace ensue. (The episode conforms with the cyclical pattern described on page 55).
- C No suggestion is made of a need for change in the type of leadership at this early stage of settling the land.
- D It appears that the Judge system is deemed adequate for Israel's defence, its main function. On a continuum denoting the evolution of attitudes in Israel, Othniel would definitely appear as representative of the 'old way'.

---

## 2. EHUD (Judges 3: 15-31)

### A Judge Details

- A1 Ehud, son of Gera. Tribe of Benjamin.
- A2 Left-handed, using this to his advantage in the story when he draws his dagger from his right thigh.
- A3 He recognises that God is behind his actions, saying when he musters his troops: "... The Lord hath delivered your enemies... into your hand" (Judges 3:28).

**B Political/Military Situation**

B1 Moab (in confederation with Ammon and Amalek) "smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees" (Judges 3:13). This incursion is followed by eighteen years of servitude to Moab-king, Eglon.

B2 "When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer." (Judges 3:15).

B4 Eglon is killed by Ehud. Moab is subdued by the Children of Israel from the mountain of Ephraim area (3:27), who respond with seeming alacrity to Ehud's call: "The land had rest fourscore years" (3:30).

C Israel responds, Moab is repelled. No mention is made in the text of any agitation for new leadership. The Judge system has worked admirably.

D The Ehud episode appears to belong where it is positioned, among the early Judge narratives, when the 'old way' still applies and the Judge successfully rallies the tribe or tribes in his area. (This will be compared with Deborah's rallying of Israel).

**3. SHAMGAR (Judges 3:31)****A Judge Details**

A1 Shamgar, son of Anath. No tribe given.

A2 Also mentioned in Judges 5:6 - is a contemporary of Jael, Deborah.

A3 -

## **B Political/Military Situation**

B1 Shamgar "slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad" - possibly in the farming area of the foothills or coastal plain where the Philistines still lived.

B2 No response to his being summoned as Judge; he is possibly motivated by the oppression described in Judges 5: 4-7

B4 "He also delivered Israel" is the terse remark in the single verse reporting this episode.

C The tone of this verse does not indicate a desire for change. ^

D Shamgar would belong near the start of, but not within, the process designated 'evolving attitudes'. (See Deborah and Gideon).

#### 4. DEBORAH (Judges chs 4 and 5)

##### A Judge Details

- A1 "Deborah... woman of Lapidoth" is described as dwelling "between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim" (Judges 4: 4,5).
- A2 She "dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah... and the children of Israel came up to her for judgement (4:5).
- A3 The text reflects constant acknowledgement of God's presence, as seen in the following: [Deborah to Barak] "Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded..." (4:6), and "this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand" (4:14). Also, in the Song of Deborah, "the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty" (5:3). There is abundant praise of God in the song.

##### B Political/Military situation

- B1 The Canaanites oppress Israel for twenty years - King Jabin, his captain: Sisera.<sup>22</sup>
- B2 Deborah's awareness of God's command, her own motivation (see A3), and her empathy with the suffering about her (at 'the palm tree of Deborah' counsel must have been given), are factors propelling her to leadership.
- B3 Barak, Israel's chief of staff, and Jael wife of Heber the Kenite, are essential to the story.

<sup>22</sup> Both Deborah and Shamgar are described as being after Ehud (Deborah, specifically and Shamgar according to the words "after him [Ehud] was Shamgar". Shamgar contested the Philistines; Deborah and Barak fought Sisera, who is also thought to have been of the 'sea peoples' arriving in Canaan at this time. This means that after Ehud there was turbulence along the coast, from the Philistines in the South to Sisera and the Canaanites in the north.

- B4 The Canaanite army is overcome by the rising Kishon River; Sisera is murdered by Jael; forty years of tranquillity ensue.
- C Victory is achieved; Deborah exults; she praises the tribes who help. However, the co-operation and tribal cohesion, so fundamental to the Judge system, is not one hundred percent.
- D After Ehud (See footnote 21), the simultaneous existence of turbulence at the coast and in the Jezreel valley make Deborah's rallying call to the tribes the more urgent. However, commitment to the 'old way' can be seen to falter in the reluctance of some tribes to respond. (Although he had to call only the immediate tribes at Mount Ephraim, the willingness of the response to Ehud's rallying was seen to be significantly different). For this reason the Deborah episode finds its place on the continuum at the beginning of a change in Israel's attitude.

-----

### **GIDEON (Judges Chs 6-8)**

#### **A Judge details**

- A1 Gideon, son of Joash the Abi-ezrite, of the tribe of Manasseh.
- A2 Gideon is also called Jerubaal, meaning 'let Baal argue against him' (6:32). The tone is ironic, dismissing Baal's power after Gideon casts down the altar of Baal (6: 25-28).
- A3 Despite his initial hesitance Gideon's point of view is clearly announced when, despite his fear of reaction from local idol-

worshippers, he destroys the idol. This anticipates his loyalty to God in the rest of the story. The query regarding his religious attitude later in life will be discussed in the full analysis of the Gideon narrative.

## **B Political/Military Situation**

**B1** Desert tribes from the east, principally the Midianites, raid the crops and stock of Israelite farmers, penetrating Canaan as far as Gaza (6:4) and Jezreel (6:33).

**B2** An angel of God summons Gideon and encourages him.

**B3** This time, there is extensive tribal assistance, but the men of Succoth (4: 4-8) and Penuel (8:8) withhold their support when needed.

**B4** The enemy is vanquished and their princes and kings killed; there is forty years of peace.

**C** The relationship of the later Gideon to God may be enigmatic, (see A3), but his stance on the monarchical issue broached by his people is clear: he refuses their request that he be king. Gideon thus represents the 'old way', the people represent the 'new way'. Both voices are clearly heard.

**D** Therefore on the continuum of tension between old and new, the Gideon episode - because of the peoples' expressed desire, represents another move towards a changed attitude which was almost undetectable at the time of Deborah.

At the same time, a dichotomy of opinions is expressed, and the pro- and anti-monarchical debate has begun.

## ABIMELECH<sup>23</sup>

A **Details.** (The difference from the Judge data can be seen).

- A1 Abimelech (meaning 'my father is/was King'), son of Gideon/Jerubaal and his concubine from Shechem, establishes the house of Millo and lives in Shechem.
- A2 Abimelech kills his half-brothers in order to become King of Shechem. The remaining one, Jotham, likens Abimelech to a bramble (useless) for his connivance with the sycophant men of Shechem and his kingly ambitions - Jotham's Fable (Judges 9: 7-2).
- A3 Being a local upstart king, there is no question of a summons by God to lead the children of Israel as with the true Judge, and no relationship with the God of Israel exists. (Shechem was a non-Israelite enclave in the land). On the contrary, "when Abimelech had reigned three years... God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem." (9: 22-23), his erstwhile supporters. The anti-monarchic tone of the passage is thus

---

<sup>23</sup> Although the Abimelech episode features in the Book of Judges, Abimelech the upstart King of Shechem, is more of an anti-judge than Judge. Nevertheless, the episode is very important for its anti-monarchic Fable of Jotham, which will be analysed later.

carried through, God's spirit as it were strengthening the forces of opposition.

**B Situation: Abimelech and Shechem**

B1 No external enemy as with the Judges.

B2 However, Abimelech is eventually opposed by Gaal ben Ebed. His name, which means 'son of a slave/servant' hints at social resentment. The two names Abimelech and ben Ebed are also in chiasmic opposition, underlining the anti-monarchism of the narrative.

B3 The outcome is catastrophic: Abimelech is murdered and the curse of Jotham fulfilled (9: 53-57).

C Jotham's Fable is a significant anti-monarchic comment. This tone pervades the entire chapter.

D Chronologically, (because Abimelech is the son of Gideon) as well as on a continuum of change in attitudes, the anti-monarchic Abimelech narrative is situated at a point immediately after the monarchic debate has been opened (viz. the people's request for a king and Gideon's negative response).

---

There are 5 minor judges<sup>24</sup> appearing in the following order:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 7. Tola (Ch 10: 1,2)                                       | 10. Ibzan (Ch 12: 8-11)       |
| 8. Jair (Ch 10: 3-6)                                       | 11. Elon (Ch 12: 11, 12)      |
| (No 9 in the Book of Judges is Jephthah, a 'major judge'). | 12. Abdon (Ch 12: 13, 14, 15) |

The elements they have in common are personal description (name, tribe/place of origin). Additionally three have an 'inventory' of family and possessions and all include place of burial and tenure of office, usually lengthy. Notably missing from their description is any hint of their relationship with God (this is generally evident with the defender-type judge who responds to God's call. Neither is any specific enemy or crisis mentioned. (Tola "arose to defend Israel" (10:1) but as he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died (10:2) - it seems his role was more permanent than that of a spontaneous defender). The facts could indicate rather, that the minor judges had some civilian non-military function.

This being so, the passages regarding the minor judges cannot be used to estimate preference for the 'old' or 'new' way with regard to leadership (these judges being neither equated with the faltering 'old way', nor with a desire for change).

## A JEPHTHAH (Judges 11, 12; ch 10 is also considered)

### A Judge details

A1 Jephthah, a Gileadite, son of Gilead and his harlot.

<sup>24</sup> The term 'minor' relates to their indeterminate role. They are described very briefly, as is Shamgar (no. 3). But Shamgar is not considered a minor judge. This seems to be because his exploits are more definitively those of a Judge/Defender.

- A2 a) is rejected by his half-brothers, flees to the land of Tob, is recalled to lead the worried Gileadites (princes and people) against Ammon (Judges 10: 18 reflects their anxiety).
- b) Jephthah is known for the vow he made to God, offering as a sacrifice the first thing emerging from his home after victory (11: 30/31). His daughter is the first, when she comes to greet him,
- A3 Before the final confrontation with Ammon, "the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" (Ch 11: 29). Significantly, Jephthah recognises that it is God, behind human actions, who delivers Israel (11:9).

## **B Political/Military situation**

- B1 Ammonites, ruled by a king. (Jephthah's communication with him is in 11: 14-29).
- B2 Jephthah is assigned captain by Gileadite elders.
- B3 -
- B4 After the unsuccessful diplomatic approach to the King of Ammon, the Ammonites are vanquished. (Ephraim has again been excluded from this, and conflict ensues between Gilead and Ephraim).

**Note:** Preamble to this episode in Judges Ch. 10

Regarding the cyclical pattern which recurs in describing the episodes of the Judges, the preamble to Jephthah's activities in chapter 10 is

typical: the people's apostasy is followed by God's punishment in sending enemies against Israel: the Philistines to the West, and Ammon in the East.

However what follows is unusual: even after Israel's acknowledging their sin, God says: "... I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen. Let them deliver you..." (Judges 10: 13,14). And so, even after once more demonstrating their loyalty to God (Judges 10: 16), the people of Gilead are still worried about the fact that God has threatened to abandon them. See also A2 (a). The probable demoralising effect of this is considered in section 16 of this study regarding chapters 17-21 of the Book of Judges.

- C There is no mention of the monarchical issue in this episode. Jephthah is chosen as sole leader, but as a military deliverer in a time of crisis. There is no mention of a kingship, all the same, the aforementioned feeling of being abandoned by God could eventuate from the people's plight, and this could precipitate a desire for changes in leadership when in a critical situation threatens. (see the pro-monarchism of Chs 17-21).
- D Regarding the hypothetical continuum and evolution of attitudes, in changing times, the attitudes are a little similar to the dichotomy in the Gideon episode. Jephthah himself, like Gideon, seems to look no further than the 'old way'. The elders of Gilead on the other hand seek a judge without reference to God. The controversy hardens as independent, secular action, is now felt.

### 13. SAMSON (Judges 13-16)

#### A Judge detail

- A1 Samson, son of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan.
- A2 He is to be "a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death". (13:7)
- A3 An angel of God instructs the wife of Manoah regarding the Nazirite rearing of Samson. "The child grew and the Lord blessed him" (13:24). When captured by the Philistines, Samson prays to God for renewed strength (16: 28). The narrative points to a commitment to God by Samson.

#### B Political/Military situation

- B1 Philistine domination for forty years. This applies to the southern location of Dan<sup>25</sup>
- B2 It was forecast by the angel "he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (13:5). In the end the factor that propels Samson to counteract them is revenge for his imprisonment and suffering.
- B3 Samson is killed as the Philistine temple collapses around him.

C The issue of monarchy is not mentioned in this narrative. Samson, like Shamgar, faces a localised Philistine threat. The

---

<sup>25</sup> Samson belonged to the tribe of Dan in the south. However Dan is mentioned in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5: 17), and is known to have migrated to the north. This means either that the Samson episodes precede Deborah or that some of the tribe migrated north and some remained in the south, Samson belonging to this element. This is relevant to the Deborah analysis, section 13.

Philistines are apparently still based at the coastal plain and have not yet advanced towards the foothills in the central mountain area. When the danger does occur, Samuel will be asked for a king.

- D The Samson episode will not be used when charting the evolution of attitudes in Israel. The information in C shows that the pro- and anti-monarchic debate will not take place here; the concerns are local, and A3 and B2 show an attachment to the 'old way' of God's providing Israel's deliverer.

### **SAMUEL** (Last Judge and king-maker I Samuel 1-12)

#### **A Judge details**

- A1 Samuel son of Elkanah of Ephraim.
- A2 Samuel is a Levite and to fulfill the promise of his mother Hannah he is brought to serve at the Shiloh sanctuary.
- A3 God reveals himself to Samuel at night indicating his future responsibilities as a Prophet.

#### **B Political/military situation**

- B1 The enemy is the Philistines, who are moving from the coast of the country.
- B2 The decline of the House of Eli at Shiloh leads to Samuel's acceptance as "a prophet of the Lord" (3:20) and thence to leadership in Israel (as Judge and spokesman for God).
- B3 Samuel is not a combattant in the wars with the Philistines - chief of staff unknown.

B4 After losing heavily at Aphek, the Holy Ark being taken into battle and captured, a repentant Israel now once again loyal to God defeats the Philistines at Eben-ezer and much land is restored. However, the Philistines continue their onslaught. This is the main reason for the people's demanding a king.

C From Chapter 6, occur the ostensible breaks and 'irregularities' in the narrative which are seen as cues to attend closely to the 'voices' behind the text.

D Thus Samuel 1-12 represents the culmination of Israel's gravitation from the 'old way' to the vision of the 'new way' and the resolution - albeit in compromise form to Israel's extensively debated dilemma.

## 12. ARISING FROM THE TABULATION OF JUDGES

### (a) Selection of specific texts

Reviewing the foregoing Tabulation of Judges, certain phenomena appear which are relevant to Israel's attitudes as change is approached during the period of the Judges.

The first three narratives listed (Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar) do not reflect any interest in change. The Judge system is working well, the people are apparently happy with the 'old way' of doing things. God sends a deliverer to save them from the enemy. They respond with alacrity when called upon to do so. There is no problem with the

kingship of God. No change of outlook can be charted on the continuum reflecting the evolution of ideas in Israel...

... until the Deborah story. Although it is not easy to detect, for Deborah's own commitment to the world-view of Othniel and Ehud rings out, this episode does hint at a problem in the system of Judges: the tribal response is not as eager as Deborah would like.

With Gideon, there is a more distinct dichotomy. Gideon stands most of the time for the 'old way' but the people would embark on a new, monarchical route. This episode records the first firm utterances of Israel's opinion regarding monarchical rule, and the situation prefigures the anti- and pro-monarchical comments heard in Jotham's fable regarding Abimelech (Chapter 9) and the description of chaos arising in the absence of authority (Chapters 17-21).

The issues are gathered together with Samuel and the culmination of the evolution of attitudes described above is reached. After hesitation and delays; after stops and starts, with the narrative focussing on one point of view then the other, the monarchy under Saul is finally established.

Therefore, the episodes of Deborah Judges (Chs. 4 & 5), Gideon Judges (Chs. 6-9) and of Samuel (I Samuel Chs. 1-12) will be analysed. In addition the chapters regarding Abimelech (Judges Ch. 9) and Judges Chs. 17-21, which serve as comments on the monarchical issue will be scrutinised.

(The situation emanating from the time of Jephthah will be mentioned when discussing Judges 17-21. It will be noted that the 'minor judges' and Samson have been omitted, as not being relevant for the monarchical topic -see Synopses).

The Judge Shamgar has been fully considered in the Tabulation of Judges).

(b) Additional note regarding methodology.

Having reviewed the Tabulation of the Judges and identified chapters for deeper analysis, a further word must be added regarding the methodology to be used.

Much has been said of the ability of the composite text to provide clues to its meaning through the very anomalies which have resulted from its composition. (They are seen in the pre-monarchic chapters of Samuel and in the Gideon story).

However, such clues are really a means to the end of penetrating the text and so, where joinings have not occurred, or are not obvious, an analytical close reading technique will still be employed.

In the analyses which follow, a close reading will scrutinise the minutiae of the texts in order to gain access to their meaning.

### 13. **DEBORAH AND HER TIMES (Judges chs. 4 and 5)<sup>26</sup>**

In order to detect the 'voices' behind the text and the attitudes amongst a people gravitating towards change, it was decided that a close examination be made of the Deborah episode. The story of Deborah abounds in useful historical data, and the approach to be used here will be a close reading of the minutiae of the text. (It will not be necessary to locate textual anomalies or an authorial intent as cues to the meaning). The interpretations of Biblical historians will also be referred to; for example regarding the Canaanite adversary (pp. 76-77 of this study refer to J. Soggin) and in regard to the lack of cohesion among the tribes (p. 83-84 refer to J. Bright).

Regarding the general background to the episode, it has already been mentioned that the tribes, at the time of the conquest and settlement of the land of Israel, were loosely linked in a political confederacy, but firmly joined by their understanding of the Kingship of God, and their obligation to God's Covenant with them. This portrayal of Israelite society is referred to as the 'old way' of life. The 'new way' will be when the tribes, grown distant from each other, and despite the above-mentioned covenantal dispensation, desire a human king as their protector.

The chapters containing the Deborah stories: (her role as Judge, her rallying of Barak and an army, their conquest of the Canaanite oppression, and the murder of the Canaanite leader Sisera by Jael the Kenite) are, in the main, representative of the 'old way' of Israelite life.

---

<sup>26</sup> Chapter 5 (the Song of Deborah) and Chapter 4 (the historical account of the episode) are complementary in that one explains allusions in the other. For example 5: 20-22, praising the might of the River Kishon, would attribute the discomfiting of Sisera's army - 4: 15 to a storm, flooding and the bogging down of his chariots'.

Although A. Brenner (*A Feminist Companion to Judges*) finds that the reader is being prepared for the future controversy regarding the establishment of a monarchy, the tone is anti-monarchic. At this stage no change in the type of leadership from Judge to King is envisaged for Israel.

On the other hand, upon close examination of the outlook of the people at the time of Deborah, a link to the later more fragmented life and more independent attitude (vis-a vis God and the partnership with him) can be detected. This is the chink in Israel's mode which will eventually permit the request for a king.

In considering Israel's changing outlook at the time of Deborah, the following three elements and their possible variance from the 'old way' will be considered:

- (1) the leader Deborah herself (she is a conservative Judge of the 'old way', and no departure from this can be expected in her behaviour);
- (2) the Canaanite adversaries (they do present a new type of threat, internal, and dire in its implications);
- (3) the people (who might be expected to react in one of two opposing ways: either responding readily to their leader's rallying, or evincing a tendency to drift away from their religious and social obligations to God and to the other tribes, perceiving this to be a matter of their own survival).

## 1. **Deborah**

Deborah is presented in the Book of Judges, chapters 4 and 5, as a deliverer par excellence, answering to a need in times of oppression - oppression that continued "until I Deborah arose" (5:1) to rally the tribes. "Awake, awake, utter a song..." she calls (5: 12). Deborah is known to the people, who come to her as judge and counsellor (4: 4, 5). In this way she is charismatic. She upholds the notion of God's control over history (4: 6, 14) and his redemption of Israel, as exemplified in wondrous acts (5: 4, 5). These great acts, is her message, Israel must forever recall, and the people must play their part in the covenantal agreement, with a devotion to God as King and a physical commitment to fight his battles.

Naturally, Deborah assumes that the faithful tribes will respond with alacrity to her call for support in the battle against the Canaanites. (They did so in answer to Ehud's summons - Judges 3: 27, 28). Their response is crucial to put an end to the enemy threat. It is also crucial as a demonstration of their traditional relationship with God (the 'old way'). If they do not support Deborah, it means that a move away from the covenantal expectations is commencing.

## 2. **The Canaanite Adversary**

The circumstances facing Israel at the time of Deborah, are forbidding, with political, economic and social ramifications as well as the above-mentioned religious implications of the tribes' response to Deborah's mobilisation.

Politically, the battle to be fought for control of the Jezreel valley is defensive (the Canaanites under Sisera mass an army), but where

other Judges face cross-border attacks, from Aram or Moab, this time the enemy is internal.<sup>27</sup> The seriousness of the threat now facing Israel has been likened to the later onslaught of the Philistines when they approach the central mountain area of Israel. Indeed, J. Soggin points to a possible liaison between Sisera and other 'Sea People', "and thus with the Philistines, even though they are not mentioned in the book". (1981 : 63). He continues this line of thought: "It is by no means rash to suppose that [where] in Ch. 3: 31 [Shamgar] we possibly had a coalition between the Israelites and the Canaanites against the Philistines, here we have a coalition between the Philistines and the Canaanites against the Israelites. In other words... We have a break in the earlier balance of power which is replaced by a new situation, hence a new form of struggle" (1981: 63) [my underlinings]. (see also footnote 21, p.60 regarding turbulence at the coast).

The seriousness of the situation is exacerbated by the fact that the enemy has Iron Age weaponry: "and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord for he [Sisera] had nine hundred chariots of iron and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel". (4.3). Israel lacks such advanced technology (also mentioned in 1:19). "Was there a shield or spear seen...", complains Deborah (5 : 8); and the secret of iron smelting is closely guarded.

According to J. Soggin, the basis of the battle is economic. Victory by Israel in the Jezreel valley battle against Sisera will relieve the oppression by the Canaanites and break their economic stranglehold

<sup>27</sup> Kaufmann, J. Shoftim (1968) Jerusalem. The definition of the Jezreel valley confrontation as a liberation (Cherut) battle (pp. 3/4 and, 10). This is similar to the sociological interpretation of N. Gottwald.

of the rich traffic along the 'Derech Ha - melech / The King's Highway' - obviously to the advantage of the surrounding tribes. Explaining, J. Soggin says: "... the text connects the battle [between Israel and Canaan, near the Kishon River] with the control of traffic through the plain of Jezreel, a control which was impossible [for Israel] to apply while the region was still in the hands of the Canaanite city states, which according to 1: 27ff., Israel had not succeeded in conquering. What is said in 5.6ff is eloquent testimony here ["... The highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways"]. The impossibility of crossing the plain, (except by devious routes which would have cost time and money and which would not have been without danger), separated the north central tribes from those of the north" (1981 : 97-8). That is, Manasseh, including the trans-Jordan clan of Machir, Ephraim and possibly southerly Benjamin would be affected, and isolated from Issachar, Zebulon and Naphthali in the north. Deborah is from Ephraim, thus feeling the central tribes' restrictions, and Barak is from Naphthali, the northernmost of the tribes who participate.

Both leaders would be closely in touch with their tribes' poverty and sufferings: Deborah in her capacity as a prophetess upholding social justice is approached for counsel (4: 5). But Deborah also sees herself as a representative of God (5: 13), when she calls God's people (5: 11) to fight God's war (5: 23, 31). The same religious persuasion is used in her conversation with her captain, Barak (4: 6, 9, 14).

Therefore, in summing up the confrontation, J. Soggin (Judges) says: "We have moved from a war which broke out for political and economic reasons.. to a 'holy war' from voluntary participation limited to the

tribes directly interested in the enterprise, to compulsory participation (and woe to those who do not come) which has now become a cultic matter". (1981 : 95) [my underlinings].<sup>28</sup>

In the conflict of interests which arises (a tribe's own concern vis-a-vis the common good) an evolution of attitudes towards a new way might be glimpsed. It is obvious that not the leader but the populace ('the people') of the various tribes could be affected by this dilemma.

### 3. The People

It has been seen that in the person of Deborah no change from the 'old way' appears. It has been seen that Israel's critical situation at this stage would precipitate some wish for change. It remains to examine the response of Israel.

To recapitulate: a dire situation threatens. A call goes out from Deborah, God's appointed judge, to the people. Their positive response is crucial to Israel in order to overcome the enemy. It is also crucial in regard to their covenantal relationship with God.

In order to probe any change in Israel's responses and attitude regarding its leadership system and regarding the lending of support in God's war, (that is any change from the concept of defending the common interest in the name of God who is King, to a concern for own affairs, ultimately with a human king at the helm), two lines of approach may be followed.

<sup>28</sup> Soggin draws the foregoing conclusions when identifying two strata of composition in the text - the two levels, roughly speaking, are an epic about 'the mighty men of Israel' and a theological stratum about the glorious deeds of the Lord. Even without regard to the tradition history identified here by Soggin, the twin motivations of self-interest and religious obligation can be seen, and will be considered below.

- 3(a) A comparison of the three selected texts ( Judges Deborah, Gideon, Samuel - see number 12A), which have some bearing on the question of Israel's leadership may be made. As a prerequisite, there must be some chronological sequencing in order to establish any evolution of attitudes.<sup>29</sup>
- 3(b) A textual appraisal of the Deborah stories may itself reveal some change in attitude amongst the people. These two approaches follow.

---

<sup>29</sup> The Question of Chronology. Were the Judges episodes arranged in chronological sequence, it might be simple to trace any change in attitude as originating at the time of Deborah. However, the lack of chronological sequence in the Book of Judges is well known, and it would be impossible to envisage a continuum for assessing changing attitudes on this basis were it not for the simple check which seems to corroborate that the episode of Deborah did in fact historically precede that of Gideon (Samuel belongs to a subsequent book and from its content obviously refers to the final judge). Apart from their clear attitude to kingship, the criterion used to place the three selected judges in sequence is the nature of the threat posed by the enemy. Both criteria seem to confirm the order Deborah - Gideon - Samuel (See the Table which follows, in the main body of my argument).

3(a) **A Comparison of Three Selected Texts**

(i) The Threat Posed by the Enemy Affects Israel's Response.

(Escalation of danger brings pressure to change leadership).

		<b>Criterion Enemy</b>	<b>Criterion Leadership</b>
1.	Deborah Book of Judges Chs. 4, 5	Residual Canaanite city states after conquest	No mention of King. God is King
2.	Gideon Book of Judges Chs. 6, 7, 8	Cross-border attack (City states no longer offensive) - the enemy penetrates deep into Israel	A King requested requested but refused
3.	Samuel I Samuel Chs. 4-12	Total onslaught of central hill country anticipated	King requested, theocratic monarchy compromise reached

**Note:** The common denominator in this selection is an enemy threat which spurs Israel to action. At Deborah, the Canaanite threat affects the northern and central tribes west of the Jordan River (there is no mention of a King); at Gideon the Midianites reach inland to Gaza (6: 4) and Jezreel (6: 33) (a King is requested but refused); at Samuel the danger is that the Philistines might reach Israel's defensive stronghold in the central mountain area. (A monarchy is eventually established).

Israel's response may be further analysed. Motivated by these threats, the reactions of (i) the leader and (ii) the people diverge. They are as follows:

3(a) **A Comparison of Three Selected Texts**

- (ii) Table indicating an evolution of attitudes amongst the people through three given points

✓ = the need for a King is recognised ✗ = the need for a King is not accepted		
Judge period	Leader's attitude (± constant)	People's attitude (changes)
1. Deborah	X	X * - see note (4)
2. Gideon	X (refusal)	✓
3. Samuel	X compromise agreement	✓

**Notes:**

- (1). It will be seen that X represents the 'old way' and ✓ represents the 'new way'.
- (2). All three leaders display a reticence regarding kingship/leadership change.
- (3). On the other hand, the people display a new trend when in a vulnerable situation, at the times of Gideon and Samuel. (Not all people are pro-monarchic: the opposing voices of society will be heard later).

- (4.) Before that, at the time of Deborah, neither she nor the people (that is, the tribes and clans associated with her, as recorded in the text), evince the new trend. They do not actually consider a change in the system of leadership and there is definitely no pro-monarchic tendency evident. (Such a concept would be completely alien to the people at the time of Deborah - kings belonging for example, to Canaanites and city states. Rather, in a crisis, a temporary and charismatic leader or Judge would be found to call for a reply to the threat - as with Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar and as now, Deborah).

However, in view of the new trends which clearly appear subsequently, from the time of Gideon, there is a need to look for earlier symptoms of this for example at the time of Deborah, and to search in the text for any hint of other new phenomena in the people's attitude (excluding the leadership question) - such as, for example, the already mentioned reluctance to support her mustering of the tribes. Therefore a close look at certain parts of the Deborah stories themselves follows. (\* in the foregoing table refers to a new trend in the people's attitude, but no thought of a change of leadership).

### 3(b) A TEXTUAL APPRAISAL

#### (i) Background Information

It has been said that there is no evidence of a desire for change in the leadership system at the time of Deborah. In fact, as far as Deborah is concerned, the kingship of God and the people's obeisance to him, is the premise of her call to the tribes to join the battle. For according to the tenets of their Covenant, there is a reciprocity in the relationship between God and the people. God (through his Judge) commands, directs and assists Israel (4: 6, 14); Israel is to respond. There is

praise for those who do respond (5: 2, 9) - "Barchu Adonay" is translated by H Rabin as "Baruchei Adonay / praised of God "[are those who came forward]<sup>30</sup> and there is upbraiding for those who fail to respond: "curse ye Meroz, ... because they came not to the help of the Lord..." Deborah says bitterly. (5: 23)

The modern English translation of 'Lehitnadev' (5: 2, 9) is 'to volunteer' and the English Bible translation is 'to offer willingly'. But do the people (in some cases) offer themselves willingly? H Rabin traces the meaning of the verb to the fulfilling of a military obligation: the tribes have no choice in the matter. The mustering is an obligatory military call-up. Failure to appear is regarded as a breach of the treaty contracted with God.

However, no coercion can be exerted on the tribes, for there is no central authority in Israel. The tribes are held in loose federation by a Confederacy and by their common allegiance to God. This is the way Joshua used to lead them. But once the tribes are settled through the land, centrifugal forces tend to strain the Confederacy.

These centrifugal forces result from the geographical separation of the tribes and from their new way of life, either settled as farmers - sheep farming (in the case of the dry mountainous Gilead and the territory of Reuben), or involved in sea-borne commerce (as Asher at the coast and, for a while, Dan). J. Bright concludes: "local interests quite naturally tended to take precedence over the common good" (1960 : 165). It will be seen that these interests, in at least one case,

<sup>30</sup> Rabin, H. Iyunei besepher Shoftim/Studies in the Book of Judges 1966 Jerusalem (p 113 to 115) deals with the concept of obligatory vis-a-vis voluntary participation by the tribes.

obstruct the tribe's will to fulfil its regular Covenantal obligations when Deborah rallies Israel for the fight at Jezreel. This facet of change, a reticence to respond to the leader's call without a desire to actually change the Judge system, is already recognisable in Chapters 4 and 5 of the Book of Judges, the stories of Deborah.

### 3(b) A TEXTUAL APPRAISAL

#### (ii) Motivation behind the Desire for Change

It has been noted above, that forces isolating the tribes from one another during the period of the Judges, made change inevitable.

It is indeed possible to identify such a tendency towards local self-interest (rather than the common good) in the account of Gideon. A new trend surfaces at the time of Gideon - when the people request a king, at a time when "monarchy was an anathema to all true Israelites" (Bright 1960 : 150).

But what has brought about this volte-face? In the Gideon passage the people are asking for permanence of leadership. ("Rule... both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also...") and for security ("for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian" (8: 22)). When they ask for a king they are not motivated by nationalistic unity or by any high ideal, but by a desire for permanent protection, that is, by a concern for themselves.

If self-interest motivates the people of the time of Gideon, does the same apply to the time of Deborah? And does the motivation of self-interest emanate from other concerns besides defence, such as the need to be busy with agriculture or with commerce - the livelihoods of

Reuben and Asher - rather than being drawn into a distant battle?

Alternatively, one could ask, of how long standing is this inclination to depart from the norm of Covenantal allegiance and for local interests in some form, to take precedence?

The situation will be different for Deborah, but the symptoms of local self-interest can already be identified. At Gideon the movement from old to new manifests itself in the people's request for a King. This does not apply to Deborah.

In the Deborah texts, another instance of departure from the 'old way' must be sought. And here it appears to be when matters of local self-concern get in the way of a tribe fulfilling its Covenantal obligations and prevent its participation in the battle of Jezreel.

This by-passing of sacred duty, of course, ultimately opens the way for further attempts to establish a monarchy and is the chink through which change can be seen.

### 3(b) A TEXTUAL APPRAISAL

- (iii) **Examining the Book of Judges Chapters 4 and 5 in terms of the above possibility - i.e., is there evidence of self-concern among the people at the time of Deborah?**

The motivations behind the tribes' answers to Deborah are now sought (particularly in Chapter 5, where the subject is dealt with more fully), in order to determine whether any one of them is ready to abandon the stance of allegiance to God when called to battle, in favour of its own,

particular concern. This will be an indication of a changing attitude at the time of Deborah.

The question posed is, does the local (for example, economic) interest of a tribe take precedence, or is its sacred obligation more important? Care must be taken not to accept those who respond positively to the call as being motivated solely by an altruistic desire to participate in God's battle, for they may have their own agenda. This will be discussed. Similarly, those tribes and clans such as Meroz who fail to respond cannot be simply regarded as representing a new trend and as abandoning the 'old ways' of allegiance to the Covenant. For conflict may have existed in their decision, though unreported in the story.

It is necessary to know that both positions (the positive and negative response to Deborah's call) were considered by a tribe. It will be sufficient substantiation of a shift in the people's outlook at the time of Deborah if just one report of such soul-searching is found. This will indicate that both options have been weighed, and a conscious decision to break with the past has been made.

To turn to the evidence: Deborah calls the tribes to participate. (It should be noted that Judah and Simeon are omitted. This is unfortunate for some information might have been gleaned, had they been included, about the current cohesion or fragmentation of Israel. Whether Deborah fails to call them because of distance - others are summoned who are not involved in the Jezreel valley problems - or whether, involved in their own affairs, they preferred not to come, the

existence of changed attitudes in Israel could have been inferred. But this is hypothetical).

Deborah calls the tribes in her role as God's appointed Judge: "... the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty" (5: 13); for they are God's people, in covenant with him... "then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates" (5: 11); and they will wage his war (5: 23) against his enemies (5: 31).

In the name of God, Deborah calls the tribes to the north of the Jezreel valley: Napthali, Zebulon and Issachar; she calls the tribes to the south: Manasseh, her own Ephraim and Benjamin. These six respond positively. But as noted above, care must be taken when evaluating such positive responses. For it is impossible to know if these tribes are motivated by their own need to liberate Jezreel - they are all near the nerve centre of the problem, and even Benjamin would benefit from the subjugation of the Canaanites near the central mountain area<sup>31</sup> - or whether perhaps a selfless commitment to wage God's battles and fulfil their obligations is in fact included in their objectives (but because of their bias this cannot be assumed).

It is necessary therefore to eliminate these six tribes from consideration and to consider those tribes with no personal interest in the outcome of the conflict.

The four remaining tribes (as mentioned above Judah and Simeon have been excluded from consideration) fit the bill. Being distant from

---

<sup>31</sup> See p. 76-77 of this study regarding trade routes and the separation of north and south.

the Jezreel valley, they have nothing to gain from participating in the conflict. The four are Dan and Asher, the Gileadites (presumably including the tribe of Gad) and Reuben. Three of them, Gilead, Dan and Asher, appear to refuse categorically: "Gilead abode beyond the Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships. Asher continued on the seashore and abode in his beaches" (6: 17), complains Deborah. As noted above, such 'negative' responses are not necessarily indicative of a change in attitude. There may indeed have been conflict in making the decision not to participate. Nevertheless it cannot merely be assumed that they debated the two conflicting calls: of Deborah for God on the one hand, as against the demands of their own concerns - agricultural and commercial, or distance and inconvenience - on the other, for no such dilemma is reported in the text.

The tribe of Reuben remains. The factors regarding Reuben are as follows:

1. Reuben, like Gilead, Dan and Asher, does not agree to participate and is not concerned with the others' economic interests in Jezreel.
2. Reuben too, is involved in farming and needs to be at home.
3. The tribe of Reuben is different from the others in that the Reubenites suffer conflict in their decision. "For the [military] divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart" (5: 15), and "... for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart". (5: 16)<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> 5: 15 Hikkei-Lev: The noun 'Hekak' has the meaning 'meditation, resolve', as well as 'thought' - 'thoughts of the heart'.

1: 16 Hikrei-Levi: The noun 'Hekar' is consistently translated as 'searching' - 'searchings of the heart'. Although 5:15 and 5:16 are very similar in meaning, 5:16 is chosen for emphasis and to illustrate the point regarding Reuben's soul-searching.

The tribe of Reuben, like the tribes of Gilead, Dan and Asher, does not participate in the battle. But the tribe of Reuben, unlike the Gileadites, Dan and Asher, is reported to have misgivings, even anguish, involving the heart and emotion. That is, the difference between Reuben and the others is that Reuben makes a clear choice to break with the traditional and expected mode of allegiance in Deborah's 'holy war' and to pursue an independent course of action. The conflict of Reuben denotes this tribe's consciousness of the two alternatives faced: the 'great searchings of the heart' by this tribe seems to reflect the touching of the 'old way' and the 'new way' which is already observable at the time of Deborah.

### 3(b) TEXTUAL APPRAISAL

#### (iv) Emphasis on the Theme of Tribal Responses

One of the main themes of the twin texts of Deborah is that of the tribes' responses to the call-up. It is felt that the two texts complement each other; Chapter 4 being a more straightforward historical account with Chapter 5 expanding significant aspects of it. Thus Ch. 4: 6-10<sup>s</sup> regarding Deborah's conversation with her officer Barak about his involvement and that of the tribe of Naphthali, is picked up in Ch. 5 where the theme of participation receives thorough treatment in 5: 9, 14-18 and significantly, begins the chapter in 5: 2. Finally, the theme homes in on Reuben's dilemma, this being highlighted by being repeated twice (5: 15 and 5: 16). The Song of Deborah is largely recounted in the first person. This makes it a good vehicle for Deborah to convey her feelings about the tribes' responses. Her satirical, mocking tone concerning Reuben: "why did you stay among the sheepfolds to hear the bleatings of flocks" (5: 16) reflects her disappointment. At that tribe's eventual response: "curse ye Meroz...

curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof because they came not to the help of the Lord" (5: 23) expresses her anger.

The emphasis on the theme of tribal responses provides a preview to a change in attitudes which will eventually bring the monarchy.

### 3(c) **TEXTUAL APPRAISAL**

#### (v) **Tension Revealed in these Sources**

The tone of 5: 16 (regarding Reuben) is paralleled in 4: 6-9 (Deborah's conversation with Barak, mentioned above). Here the first note of tension characteristic of the Deborah texts is sensed. Whatever the reason for Barak's hesitation (it can not be lack of confidence in his own ability - Deborah herself has selected him - and it is presumably not a lack of confidence in God's assistance), it is a surprising response hinting at a break with the norm. In a literary sense the twin themes of participation in the common cause and of tension, are prefigured. Other Biblical personalities hesitate, showing humility, when called to serve God. But in this case the reason is essentially pragmatic: "if thou wilt go with me I will go..." (4: 8).

A. Brenner (1993) notes the satirical chiding of Deborah in her urgency to muster the tribes and to commit Barak to his role of commander, while L. Bronner (1993) says that the great sages find Deborah to be aggressive - admittedly in terms of their own criteria of modesty and restraint in womanhood. But a close examination of the Deborah episode leads the reader to concur that her tone in the build up to the battle evinces some irritation and urgency.

In addition it can be asked: why does Deborah need to cajole, praise, curse and urge a positive response which is already known to be an

obligation, if society is not already showing a shift from the 'old way' and a move towards change? In fact these early tensions are an indication of the socio-political stress under the Judge system and of the gradual splintering of the tribes and their increasingly independent action.

### **Conclusion**

When the ultimate change comes - about two hundred years later - it will be because the now independent and self-contained tribes find a common need (for protection against the Philistines). They will have retained the separateness that can be observed at the time of Deborah and that will only be ended under King David.

They will also have retained a belief in the supremacy of God notwithstanding the reticence of some to participate in a 'holy war' at the time of Deborah. The theocratic monarchy that is established will in this way be a synthesis between change and continuity, with elements of the 'old way' in a radically new dispensation.

#### 14. GIDEON (Judges Ch 6-8)

In Section 13 - Deborah - a close reading technique was used and the phrase Hikrei-Lev ('searchings of the heart') (5: 15, 16) was found to be pivotal to the meaning . It was felt that one of Israel's tribes faced the dilemma of whether to participate in the battle for control of the Jezreel Valley (this was a 'holy war' where it was expected of the people - because of God's Covenant with them - to take part), or whether to follow its own local interests and independent route. One tribe (Reuben) apparently did not participate in the battle. That is, prior to the time of Gideon there was already a tendency in Israel to break from the past and move towards a new mode of behaviour.<sup>33</sup>

By the time of Gideon, the trend which was nascent when Deborah was Judge finds expression, and the request for a king is articulated (Judges 8:22).

The approach to be used regarding the Gideon narrative will become clear as a crucial problem in the text is tackled - that is, the situation surrounding the response of Gideon to the people's request for a king. (This textual problem in fact affects both verses 22 and 23 of Chapter 8, for they form a unit).

This analysis will concentrate upon the above-mentioned verses (Judges 8:22-3). They represent the climax of the Gideon episode insofar as attitudes to change is concerned. The passage reads as follows:

---

<sup>33</sup> Substantiation of the above chronological sequence of the Deborah and Gideon episodes can be found on pages 79-80 of this study - the footnote, table and concluding notes of No. 3(a) apply.

“Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.” (8: 22).

“And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you” (8: 23)

The underlining indicates that the main textual problem is in Ch 8: 23. At a glance it can be seen that the two verses encapsulate the debate concerning the ‘new way’ (voiced by the people - ‘the men of Israel’ - when suggesting that a hereditary monarchy replace the Judge system) vis-a-vis the ‘old way’ of divine rule, affirmed by Gideon. The essence of this ‘new way’ / ‘old way’ debate is, then, the pro- and anti-monarchic controversy which becomes increasingly audible in the texts under consideration by this study. The controversy’s important issues are given here:

Those who want a king feel that this would be an ongoing solution to Israel's continual military problems (for Gideon had delivered them, and kingship is hereditary and ongoing); those who don't want a king believe that God alone is king over Israel.

It can be noted here that Gideon's reply intimates that he would be loyal to God, and have nothing to do with idolatry in any guise or allow himself kingly inclinations.

The protagonists uttering the ringing words of the passage are the people<sup>34</sup> and Gideon himself.

<sup>34</sup> The people in the Biblical texts are known variously as ‘the men of Israel’, ‘the elders of Israel’, ‘the people’, and ‘the children of Israel’. As the term ‘Israel’ refers here to a spiritual entity rather than a political one (the Confederacy was not an organised political institution) these collective terms seem to refer to the vociferous and noticeable majority. When talking of a particular tribe (in the Gideon episode Menasseh), when talking of the Israelites generally or when talking of the leaders of the group (for example, when the king issue is raised as here by ‘the men of Israel’, the same collective terms are used.

The position of each protagonist will now be examined (referring to the narrative as a whole) and the textual difficulty mentioned at the outset will be discussed. In this connection the following literary criterion will be borne in mind.

The discourse of a person (or persons) in a narrative must accord with what is known of his personality and situation to be acceptable in a literary sense. That is, the words should 'belong' to the speaker.

In the Gideon narrative, therefore, the 'new way' request for a king would emanate from the character and need of the people, while the 'old way' response of Gideon would ideally be a reflection of his personality and concerns.

The two indented passages above set parameters for:

- the proper relationship between discourse and speaker (p 95-97), and
- the anticipated profile of Gideon (p 97, 98ff).

Regarding the people, firstly, the following may be asked: does the sentiment expressed by 'the men of Israel' in 8: 22 'belong' to them or does the idea of kingship refer to a scenario remote from their own personal experience?

The initial words of the Gideon narrative tell the reader something about the Menasseites: 'The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord' (6:1). In common with occurrences in other Judge episodes the people are to be punished by God for idolatry or the equivalent, for serving alien gods.<sup>35</sup> In this case the punishment (enemy oppression) is described in great detail. L. Klein The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges (p. 52) says: "that the Israelites have escalated their anti-Yahwist behaviour to warrant more onerous punishment is corroborated by the words of the prophet who... specifies the sin for which they are being punished: worship of Amorite gods (6: 10)" - the meaning of this verse would be that Manasseh is not to worship foreign gods or idols. The religious affiliations of the community of Ophrah - Gideon's home town - are revealed when Gideon is threatened with death for casting down the statue of Baal and cutting down its grove, which he has to do secretly for fear of them (6: 27 ff). Idol worship obviously prevails in Ophrah.

The severe punishment suffered by the people of Menasseh has taken the form of seasonal attacks by Midianites from the desert. The people take refuge in caves and strongholds; the land is impoverished; crops are destroyed; wheat has to be threshed secretly (6: 2). The Midianites penetrate deep into the country - as far as Gaza (6: 4) and Jezreel (6: 35) and are so numerous that they are likened to locusts - a metaphor of double significance. It can be seen as an allusion to the locust plague suffered by the anti-Yahwist pharaoh (Israel's intransigence and idolatry is paralleled) and at the same time by

<sup>35</sup> It was seen, The Religion of Israel (London) 1961 that Y. Kaufmann feels that this is a superimposed interpretation probably by the Deuteronomist. (He is talking from the point of view of tradition history).

contrast it alludes to that faithful Israel of the past, when a then loyal people was redeemed by God. The metaphor's message is clearly that Menasseh should change its ways.

With their distancing from God and propensity for idolatry, it would not be a great step for these people to envisage having a human king despite their traditional belief that only God is king. Such was the change in their religious outlook and the national character.

And, given the extent of their perennial suffering, it would be logical for them to seek permanent protection in the form of a hereditary monarchy - to alter the Judge system so that, as the elders of Israel were to put it later, 'a king may go out before us and fight our battles'. (I Samuel 8: 20).

The choice of such a deliverer would obviously be Gideon, the well-supported liberator who gathers participants in the battle against the Midianites from Asher, Zebulon and Naphtali as well as his own tribe, and who gains the reputation of being a great deliverer (I Samuel 12: 11).<sup>36</sup>

An already wayward people, under extreme pressure, wants change and sees the ideal person to rule them, as he vanquishes the last of the Midianite marauders (8: 21).

---

<sup>36</sup> Whereas in the Deborah story the people's own (local) interests had been served by their non-participation in the battle (for they had become isolated from each other), in the Gideon episode it is in the people's own interests to join forces with Gideon in combating the extensive Midianite threat to Israel. In fact, the number of volunteers has to be reduced (7: 2ff).

In other words, the request for a king by the 'men of Israel' is the natural outcome of their situation, and it accords with what is known of the present personality of a people who have distanced themselves from God and their traditional religious outlook.

The request passage is integral to the Gideon narrative, according to the literary criterion mentioned above: it emanates from their historical situation and is in keeping with their mood and personality.<sup>37</sup>

This is not always the case with Gideon, however. It will be recalled (8: 23) that Gideon refuses the people's request for a king, saying that only God, and no human being may be king in Israel.

On the one hand, this utterance is true to what has been learnt of Gideon's personality. L. Klein (p55) Says: "The spirit that was not given to Ehud [there is no mention of Ehud's being imbued with God's spirit either at the killing of Eglon or upon the rout of Moab - God's spirit would usually come upon a Judge prior to battle] and only implicitly to Deborah, does come upon Gideon'. In fact God's spirit 'envelops' Gideon (Judges 6: 34). Thus Gideon appears closer to God than his predecessors.

Gideon, Judge par excellence, would indeed be the kind of person to refute the offer of kingship and to affirm the sovereignty of God, in this way declaring his own faith.

---

<sup>37</sup> The actual voice of the people is not heard until their request for a king. But it must be realised that Gideon himself is one of the people as a young person in Ophrah experiencing the same oppression (6: 11) and having the same doubts (but not turning to idols). In 6: 13 there are seven usages of 'we', 'our', or 'us' showing Gideon's sharing of the people's feelings of hopelessness. Their doubt is expressed (by Gideon) in his querying and by the word 'if' - where expected results are not fulfilled. (As in, if this was supposed to happen, why did it not?)

However, there comes a flaw in this perfection.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, on considering Gideon's whole life, an inconsistency is noted. The pattern of Gideon in his later life and certain phenomena which feature there will be examined in order to ascertain whether all that is known of Gideon accords with the utterances of 8: 23. It will be seen that there is a significant discrepancy.

Judges: 7 (the actual battle against the Midianites) is focussed upon God, as if Gideon himself is well aware that God wins the battle, with Gideon the Judge his agent.

After the battle, and after dealing deftly with Ephraim's chiding that they had been excluded, a change can be detected in Gideon and in his former close relationship with God. L. Klein : 60 attributes this to a new-found confidence in himself experienced by Gideon: 'a belief not in Yahweh but in himself'. She points out, with regard to Gideon's distancing from God, that there is no mention of a prayer by Gideon prior to his capture of Zebah and Zalmunna as there was prior to the Midianite battle (7: 15). Another instance of the change is that Gideon is now proceeding on his own whereas before, God reduced the number of Gideon's fighting forces so it would be clear that he, not Gideon, was responsible for the victory. In addition, referring to 8: 21, Klein: 63 says, "As if in one swoop, Gideon kills the enemy leaders and takes booty (the moon crescents which hung on their camels' necks)" and then in 8: 24 he asks for the golden earrings of the forces'

<sup>38</sup> Up to this point, (in Judges: 7), it has been noted that Gideon was close to God. Afterwards a flaw is seen in his attitude. When discussing this it must be noted that it is not morality that is being considered, but the literary compatibility of discourse and speaker. In fact without the change that is to be seen in Gideon and its ironic impact, the general moral tone in the Book of Judges where the point of view of Yahweh is offset by the point of view of Israel might not be achieved (see page 104 regarding L. Klein and Irony).

captives, defying the custom that the spoils war were to be shared between the warrior and the congregation. It is as though Gideon's fine spiritual values have been replaced by material ones.

The gold is made into an ephod. There has been much debate about the meaning of the word 'ephod' in this case. The gold would be too heavy to make a priestly garment - the original meaning of 'ephod'. An oracle (consulted regarding divine directions) and an idol have been suggested meanings. The various possibilities will be discussed, to establish what is now important to Gideon. By association - being elsewhere the garment of the High Priest, the word suggests 'ruling' and could be an allusion to the idea that Gideon later possibly does become a local ruler - even a king, in contradistinction to the sentiments expressed in 8: 23. Whatever 'ephod' means here, says Klein, it has earthly, not spiritual connotations. "That the holy spirit is not within Gideon is revealed when he symbolically displaces the spirit of Yahweh with an ephod of gold" (Klein : 68). The negative influence of the ephod is such that "all Israel went a whoring after it". (8: 27).

(Regarding the phrase "ve ruah adonei lavshah et Gidon" (6: 34) the modern meaning of the verb 'lavash' is 'wore'. But here it is the spirit which is the subject, and Gideon the object of the verb - the reverse of the conventional usage of 'wore'. So, the spirit is external to Gideon, and active. It can attach itself to, or leave, Gideon at will. It is suggested that this connotation of 'lavash' is entirely intentional: God's spirit dispenses with Gideon once his personality and inclinations change so radically).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Recent translations of 'lavash' in this sense give the meaning as 'enveloped'.

The above examination has revealed the inconsistency of Gideon's attitude and behaviour when compared with what was learned of him earlier. As a result, the affirmation of 8: 23 no longer appears to accord with his total personality. It seems not to 'belong' to the person who creates a golden ephod, an item which is then venerated.<sup>40</sup> Such a lack of correlation between speaker and discourse is not acceptable in a literary sense, and demands that a strategy be devised to account for it when analysing the narrative of Gideon and the crucial passage regarding attitudes to change (8: 22-23).

Various methodological approaches are used when textual problems of this nature occur (see p. 42-44 in Part A).

The following is a survey of the approaches of diverse Biblical scholars.

1. An interpolation is seen  
8: 23 has been regarded by some as an interpolation added later. Reading the synopses below it will be realised that language and conceptual anachronism is given as substantiation for their viewpoint. Gideon's reference to kingship refers here. (He says: 'I will not... rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you'.)

---

<sup>40</sup> Besides the creation of the ephod, there are other items which give rise to the problem. For example, based on the name of his son, Abimelech / 'my father (is) king' and also on the information in Judges 9: 2, there is the idea that Gideon accepts some sort of kingship rule, despite 8: 23. However, because this information is given indirectly and based on supposition, and because one example (the ephod) of a discrepancy is sufficient to reveal a problem in 8: 23, kingship is not discussed here - although the scholars mentioned when considering ways of handling the textual problem, refer to it.

Mayes, A.D.H. Israel in the Period of the Judges : 58 says: "The passage... presupposes a knowledge of dynastic rule. It is unlikely that this element of the tradition can be dated before the time of David..."

Soggin, J. Alberto, Judges: 159 points to the fact that 'moshel' (rule) rather than 'molech' is used, to accord with the theocratic ideal of the Deuteronomist redactor - 'molech' refers only to Yahweh. He concludes that the passage "proves to be an interpolation of later date, with an ideology similar to that of I Samuel 8: 11ff and 10: 17-21", (when a king is requested of Samuel, and Saul is chosen).

Emerton, J.A. (Gideon and Jerubaal in Journal of Theological Studies vol. 17 pt. 2: 298-9) also finds "affinities with the anti-monarchic and theocratic teaching of I Sam. 8" and says that the passage's "historicity is suspect".

(note: although verse 8: 23 is used in their substantiation, the whole passage 8: 22/23 being a unit, is in question).

2. An explanation is given

The composite nature of the text is also acknowledged by the following scholars whose explanations are based on the changed meaning of the term 'ephod'. (Its original meaning presented no problem; there would have been no inconsistency in Gideon's attitude and behaviour; and no conflict with 8: 23). M. Buber, (Kingship of God : 59) for example, is able to see Gideon's response to the 'men of Israel' as a sublime affirmation. He says: "Gideon's refusal goes beyond all that is personal. Not only is it intended to withhold the rulership over this people, it is intended to count as an unconditional 'no' for all times and

historical conditions" (see also pages 63, 72 and 73 of Kingship of God for Buber's acceptance of the passage as integral to the Gideon narrative).

The changed meaning of the ephod is believed to be as follows:

Buber, M. (Kingship of God: 167, note no. 9) says, "that Gideon founded an independent oracle place is true enough but it does not become illegitimate until later" when it was dedicated to Baal of the covenant. (note no. 32) (my underlining).

Soggin, J. Alberto (Judges : 159-60) says that the ephod was "something capable of becoming an object of idolatrous worship which fell under the Deuteronomist prohibition" (my underlining).

He notes that the term 'a-whoring' /<sup>h</sup>va-yiz-nu' (8 : 27) is Deuteronomistic.

Albright, W.F. (Yahweh and the gods of Canaan : 203) says "as a cult object the ephod... could be interpreted as an idol by Yahwists adhering to the strict Mosaic tradition, or treated simply as the visible symbol of the invisible deity".

3. The text is read synchronically, in its existing form.

Although the foregoing strategies (rejecting the passage as an interpolation, or explaining Gideon's actions as the result of developments in the tradition history and the meaning of words) provide solutions to the problem, because this study on attitudes to change during the period of the Judges is committed to reading the

text as it is in its final form, a different approach must be sought, (while still remaining aware of the implication of the diachronic understanding).

There is, then, another possibility of achieving a smooth reading of the text: that is, simply to accept the text per se, including the apparent contradictions as well as the negative implications of Gideon's setting up the ephod. The Anchor Bible Dictionary and L. Klein The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges both see the difference in Gideon simply attributable to personality change. The later Gideon becomes as it were, a different person from the earlier Gideon - the Judge, who had been enveloped in God's spirit.

The apparent contradictions are, in fact, resolved. This way, no layers of meaning have to be uncovered, and no justification for the ephod need be given. Gideon speaks the sublime words of 8: 23 from the heart. The changed Gideon later sets up the ephod to suit his purposes. The actions are just as described in the text.

The Anchor Bible Dictionary : 1015 puts it succinctly, saying of Gideon "while piously declining the right to rule, he eagerly accepted the power of oracular authority" - the ephod, which Gideon himself creates to replace Yahweh's authority.

Many of the ideas of L. Klein regarding the change in Gideon have already been cited. She, too, sees the meaning of the ephod as anti-Yahwist (being a memorial to Gideon's victory without acknowledging Yahweh) and negative.

Instead of equating Gideon's fine speech with his setting up of a harmless ephod (approach 2, page 101) or rejecting the speech as an interpolation (approach 1, page 100), and so ruling out inconsistencies, The Anchor Bible Dictionary and L. Klein link Gideon to an ephod which is a betrayal of the faith he has proclaimed. They do not look for consistency in Gideon but acknowledge his fallibility.

Klein maintains, in fact, that the oppositions perceived in Gideon are not only explicable but are necessary. To overlook the contradictions would spoil the potential for irony (page 98, footnote 38 of this section indicated that what was then described as a flaw in Gideon's personality serves an ironic purpose). Klein says that the Book of Judges is structured around two points of view, often in opposition, and with a potential for irony: the point of view of Yahweh and the point of view of Israel. "With Gideon's narrative", she says, "... irony is invested in the character of the judge..." (1988 : 67). "Ironically, it is Gideon of all the judges who does most harm to Israel. It is he who introduces the conflict of human values... with those of Yahweh..." (1988 : 68). She explains: "Instead of judging his people according to the covenant, Gideon introduces Israel to a belief in human perceptions, human creations, leading the people yet further from Yahweh". (1988 : 67).

Pages 42-44 and 52-53 of this study pointed out that seeming contradictions - an anomalous situation pertains here - can have a positive contributory role to play. They draw attention to the features or style of the narrative (Polzin discovers, pondering the seemingly alien chapter two, that I Samuel is a literary comment on the monarchical issue then current; Eslinger discovers that the shifts of

perspective in I Samuel represent the opposing views in a controversy. In this case, L. Klein discovers that the polarity of 'the two Gideons' points to the potential for irony in the account).

Despite the synchronic approach used in this study, an awareness of the original composite background of the Bible is desirable. L. Klein handles the matter this way. She says, "Various redactors have left their imprints in the language and the concepts of the book of Judges... One hand, nevertheless, must have given it its present form. I regard the work as an entity and credit the work of perhaps, many hands to a single author...". (1988 : 11)

It has been indicated that an acceptance of the personality change in Gideon through a synchronic reading of the text provides an answer to the problem surrounding 8: 23 (and so of 8: 22) in the narrative. The inclusion of these verses in any analysis is therefore a sine qua non.

That being so, it is possible to use 8: 22/3 when noting the evolution of attitudes regarding change during the period of the Judges. (page 92 of the Gideon section did this). A close reading of the whole narrative was done when the backgrounds of the people and of Gideon were investigated to establish the nature of the textual problem.

The information assembled there regarding the attitudes of the people is of particular relevance, for they provide the momentum for change while the more conservative proponents of the 'old way' are a restraining element. This can be seen from the Gideon narrative.

The 'old way' / 'new way' monarchial debate now becomes even more prominent. (The similarity to Klein's point of view of Yahweh / point of view of Israel mentioned on page 104 of this study is obvious).

The Gideon narrative having broached the monarchial issue, the next text to be analysed will be Judges 9 regarding Abimelech. Of particular relevance is Jotham's Fable which expresses anti-monarchic feelings, while Judges 17-21 attributes Israel's problems to the lack of a king - that is, these later chapters are explicitly pro-monarchic.

Judges Chapters 9 and 17-21 can be seen as anti-monarchic and pro-monarchic comments on monarchial rule, setting out for consideration its disadvantages (Chapter 9, Abimelech) and its advantages (Chapters 17-21). (There will be no actual request for a king until 1 Samuel 8, although the ongoing debate amongst the people can be detected earlier).

#### 15. **ABIMELECH** (Judges Ch 9)

In the Gideon episode the issues of the debate were clarified: security was paramount to the pro-monarchists, while anti-monarchism had a theological basis averring God's sovereignty. The lines were drawn for a controversy which was to continue until Samuel provided Israel with its first king.

Two sections of comment intervene: Judges Ch. 9 (Abimelech) represents a comment on the anti-monarchic stance and Chs. 17-21 are identified with a pro-monarchic view. Despite its ending the Book of Judges has mainly an anti-monarchic viewpoint: Judges led Israel in battle but God was still supreme and his intervention saved his

people from their oppressors. Although Abimelech was not a Judge, (see footnote 22) Ch. 9 continues along the same anti-monarchic lines.

In the account of Abimelech, which is now surveyed, the issue of monarchy is removed from its Israelite context, where the demand for a king is equated to a need for protection. It is also removed from the theological spotlight and the question of God's sovereignty. For the enclave of Shechem - to be ruled by Abimelech - though part of Israel, retained Canaanite customs and religious practices, so no theological problem would arise in their having a king.

Nonetheless the relevance of this account of kingship to the anti-monarchists stance in Israel can be demonstrated. It is the purpose of this survey to do so by discovering the nature of its anti-monarchism - and to assess whether this is critical of Abimelech alone or of the institution of monarchy generally and its limitations. Finally, once its relevance to the Israelite situation is established it will be realised that this narrative serves as a powerful anti-monarchic comment, when changes are taking place.

Regarding methodology, a close reading of the following sections will be used to reveal their relevance. Chapter 9:1 to 9: 21 covering Abimelech's route to the kingship and Jotham's Fable regarding the institution of monarchy as well as his accompanying remarks, are salient to my argument; 9: 22/3 tells of the end of Abimelech's rule and the beginning of rebellion, and 9: 56/7 concludes the plot. (The last mentioned sections are not relevant to this discussion). The literary devices employed by the writer and revealed in a close reading of the narrative will sometimes be noted.

Abimelech was the son of Gideon and his Shechemite concubine. The first component of the Abimelech narrative (9: 1-5) tells of Abimelech's route to the kingship of Shechem. It commences with his bid to rule (using the fact of his Shechemite ancestry in his lobbying). He "... went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren and communed with them..." (9: 1). It ends when "... he went unto his father's house at Ophrah and slew his brothers..." (9: 5) that is his half-brothers, Gideon's other sons, to remove the possibility of a counter claim.<sup>41</sup> A clear parallel has been delineated here. At Shechem there is the extended family of Abimelech, who will be king. At Ophrah there is the house of Gideon who had been a Judge. A background has been given to Jotham's later criticism of 'the men of Shechem' (Abimelech's supporters) for promoting Abimelech, although he had slain the opposition, and for their part in destroying the house of Gideon although Gideon had saved Israel from the Midianites. At that point - 9: 16-20 - when the inappropriate treatment of both Abimelech and Gideon is taken up and challenged, Gideon's name - which has not featured in the meantime - is re-introduced into the narrative. The abilities he showed as Judge/Protector<sup>42</sup> of Israel can then be compared with those of a king, and thus the relevance of this entire passage to Israel's anti-monarchist argument will be glimpsed. (For now, a comparison of the ideal leader to anti-monarchists - a Judge, and the leadership advocated by pro-monarchists - a king, is only hinted at).

---

<sup>41</sup> It is believed that Gideon's sons held fiefs in the Shechem area. There was a chance that they would tighten their hold on the region at the expense of Abimelech: in 9: 2 the men of Shechem are asked whether it was better if seventy (- the sons) - or one -(Abimelech) - ruled over them.

<sup>42</sup> The term 'Protector' seems to signify the military role of a Judge or a king in all its manifestations - whether he provides protection, security or deliverance from enemies. In this study the term 'protection' is usually used.

Analysing the opening verses of the narrative in more detail, it is realised that they are permeated with indications of conniving and intrigue. This is apparent in the devious route Abimelech follows in lobbying the 'men of Shechem'. He speaks with his mother's family "and with all the family of the house of his mother's father"(9: 1).

Containing four possessive forms, this phrase becomes circuitous, for these people are to speak on his behalf; they are to "speak... in the ears" (9: 2,2) of the community - an expression which implies whispering and subterfuge. The "remember..." (9: 2) hints at coercion, while more directly, verse 9: 4 tells that Abimelech "hired vain and light persons which followed him". The persons follow Abimelech to - and it seems took part in - the slaughter of Gideon's sons. An ironic hint of retribution to come for the killings is in the men of Shechem's misquoting Abimelech's "I am your bone and flesh" (9: 2) as "he is our brother" (9: 3) - so too were the seventy slain the brothers of Abimelech.

The first section of the Abimelech narrative is replete with references to the sychophantism and corruption of all concerned. With such a record, Abimelech's rule could not last long and indeed the exaggerated repetition in 9: 6 of 'all' and of the Hebrew root 'm-l-k' in 'they made Abimelech king' draws attention to the possibility of a reverse of what is depicted, that is to the existence of dissension; while the allusion to Mount Gerizim in 9: 7 hints that the blessing of Abimelech's installation may be followed, as indeed it was, by a curse.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal are the twin mountains at Shechem. The former symbolises blessing, the latter a curse (Deut. 11: 29). Jotham mentions this duality when he upbraids the men of Shechem in 9: 16-20.

The list of ills attending Abimelech's route to kingship is damning. The irony and sense of foreboding referred to above contribute to the negative impact of the description of Abimelech. However this close reading of 9: 1-7 has shown that it is not so much anti-monarchic as 'anti-Abimelech', a disastrous example of kingship which could be an exception. It certainly does not touch on the Israelite debate. (The later rebellion against Abimelech and the story of Gaal ben Ebed - from 9: 25, is not relevant to this discussion of anti-monarchism. The issue of heredity is given as important in a leader (9: 28) but the fundamental question of a leader's protecting his subjects, hinted at in Jotham's Fable - 9:15, does not recur here).

Before proceeding with a discussion of Jotham's important Fable, it is advisable to recapitulate. The aim of this survey of the Abimelech narrative is to establish its relevance to the anti-monarchic debate in Israel, and hence its effectiveness as 'propaganda'. There are three forms that criticism of monarchical rule appear to take in the Abimelech saga.

- (1) Criticism of Abimelech himself - an upstart who became king of Shechem, is evoked in 9: 1-7. Although it may be argued that Abimelech is not a typical example of kingship, (others may be better), the point is that the concept of monarchical rule itself is not appraised.
- (2) In Jotham's 'Fable of the Trees' (9: 8-15) there are remarks pertaining to the institution of monarchy itself, without regard to any specific king.

The fable is identified by J. Soggin (Judges 1981 : 176-7) as a genre of Ancient Near East popular wisdom. "... it is the product of the

experience which centuries of subjection have created in those who experience power, in those who are governed, the irrationality and arbitrariness of the claims, the emptiness of the promises..." (Jotham's Fable speaks more about the type of person who becomes king than about oppression, but it is still generally anti-monarchic and not specific to the failures of Abimelech). "Thus here we have a deliberate rejection of the institution of the monarchy as such, and not just some of its worst aspects", concludes Soggin. M. Buber Kingship of God, 1973 : 75 describes Jotham's Fable as "The strongest anti-monarchical poem of the world".

The anti-monarchism of Jotham's Fable is indeed telling. But for the warning to be meaningful to the Israelite pro-monarchist, concerned with ongoing security, (a king must "go out before us and fight our battles" - I. Sam. 8: 20), anti-monarchic material would need to show kings as weak in the matter of protection, and Judges as strong. This will now be discussed. (see no. 3).

- (3) Direct reference to Israel's problems with the concept of monarchy is not likely to appear in the Abimelech saga. After all, as explained, the kingship of Abimelech was a local, Shechemite monarchy quite acceptable to the community and having a totally different context from the Israelite one. For Israel, other reservations would apply. The character of a king would certainly be important (see Section 17 regarding the ultimate selection by Samuel of Saul as king).

However, more important than that for Israel were the religious implications described above. This factor would render the monarchy unacceptable in Israel, whatever the benefit to national security. The essential item of protection had to be maintained under God's sovereignty - as in the current Judge system with a leader such as Gideon. (The problem being though, that the office of Judge was not permanent). These matters were specific to Israel.

Because no direct reference to Israel's situation will be found in the Abimelech saga, some indirect indication must be sought of how this narrative and its anti-monarchism can be seen to apply to Israel.

Jotham's Fable of the Trees (9: 8-15) including its surrounds: (9: 6-7; 9: 16-20) is the next component of the narrative to be discussed.

9:6 and 7 have already been mentioned (p. 109) when noting the possibility of dissension to the choice of Abimelech as King of Shechem. Of greater significance when seeking relevance to Israel, is Jotham's epilogue to the Fable (9: 16-20), where he vents his personal feelings, as the sole survivor of the massacre of Gideon's sons.

Jotham's Fable starts "The trees went forth upon a time to anoint a king over them" (9: 8). First the trees of bounty - the olive, the fig and the vine are approached. But they refuse, preferring not to forsake their productive ways - productive people, it is implied, do not become kings. Soggin (1981 : 177) says a person engaged in productive activity "refrains from seeking political power... he even refuses it when: it is offered to him." Conversely, then, the one who agrees to become king has little to offer. The bramble is approached. Far from being in line with the fatness of the olive, the sweetness of the fig, or the good cheer of the wine, the bramble's 'tzayl' /'shade', which it proffers so readily, is in fact scanty;

the bramble apparently accedes to the trees' request to be their king and invites them 'to come and put your trust in my shade' (also translated as 'shadow' 'tzayl here becomes 'tzili' - my shade). Soggin (1981 : 176) comments: "when it comes to power, the bramble promises something which it evidently cannot perform. Just as it cannot give shade, so too it cannot give security [or protection - see footnote 42, p. 108] which is often expressed by the term shade". The bramble makes an empty promise.

Far more important to my argument than the emptiness of the bramble's promise is the area in which the bramble is deficient. The bramble (a king) cannot provide protection. This is to be recalled shortly (page 114).

As was mentioned the Fable itself is anti-monarchic (the unsuitable bramble accepts power). It is critical of the institution of monarchy and the type of person who becomes king, and so belongs to type no (2) p 110 . However Jotham, who is bitter, personalises his message in the epilogue (9: 16-20). Consequently that which was anti-monarchic and general in sense becomes in the epilogue directed against Abimelech and his supporters once more - type no (1) p110. All the same here lies the essence of its relevance to Israel-type (3) p 111.

In his epilogue to the Fable, Jotham says that the house of Gideon should have been more honoured, and Abimelech less so, for the following reason. He (Gideon) 'fought for you [all Israel] and delivered you out of the hands of Midian' 'va-yatzayl etchem miyad Midian' (9: 17) - that is, Gideon had been a protector par excellence in charge

of military security, who had saved his people from onerous oppression (Chapter 14 of this study: Gideon).

The locution `va-yatzayl' - he delivered - (in 9: 17) harks back to the noun `tzayl' - shade - (9: 15) discussed on page 113, although its derivative `tzili' is used, the alliteration and sibilance of both occurrences and their nearly identical meanings - `tzayl' approximates to protection, in 9: 15, and `va-yatzayl' approximates to `he protected' in 9:17 - invites a comparison of these two instances where the concept of protection, a matter so vital to Israel, is referred to.

In this connection it may be noted that over and above the ostensible comparison by Jotham of the ill-deserved treatment of Abimelech (who became king despite the murders he committed on his way) and of Gideon (whose sons were killed and dynasty ended despite his own worthiness) exists another comparison. The difference is shown between the protection afforded by a king - which according to the analogy of a bramble in Jotham's Fable (9: 15) is limited, and that of a Judge such as Gideon whose achievements according to the Fable's epilogue (9:17) are worthy and proven.

If a king, like a bramble, is unable to provide his subjects with adequate protection, while a Judge such as Gideon did so effectively, it means that the needs of Israel would be better served by a Judge chosen by and inspired by God, than by a king. (The fact that a judge was temporary whereas a kingship could be hereditary and permanent - as suggested to Gideon, 8: 22 - would be brought up again at a later stage of the pro- and anti-monarchic controversy).

This is the conclusion to be drawn from the anti-monarchism in the Abimelech narrative on the issue of the protection of Israel against its perennial enemies.

The theological issue would also be satisfactorily resolved, for the captaincy of a Judge implies the sovereignty of God.

It has been shown in this study that the potent anti-monarchism in the Abimelech narrative is applicable to the special situation of Israel - see note (3) p. 111. There is relevance to Israel's need for protection. There is recognition of the worthiness of a Judge above a king, and hence preference, it is inferred, for the 'old way' and Divine sovereignty.

Thus the narrative is included in the anti-monarchic chapters of the Book of Judges, where it can be seen as a brake resisting the gathering forces of change.

## 16. JUDGES CHS. 17-21

### 1. General Introduction: different levels of interpretation

These chapters present two tales with sub-plots. The stories describe events in Israel which ostensibly occurred towards the end of the period of the Judges and before the time of Samuel. They appear as final chapters of the Book of Judges and are usually considered to be an integral part of that collection. The story of Micah and his system of private worship features in an account of the relocation of the tribe of Dan and the idolatrous altar it set up there.<sup>44</sup> The story of the death of the Levite's concubine - a crime perpetrated in Gibeah - develops into one of internecine war between the rest of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin. The fact of there being no king in Israel at the time is given as an explanation for such untoward events. That is, these chapters are pro-monarchic and against the status quo: they point to the consequences of a vacuum of authority.<sup>45</sup>

The foregoing is a sketch of the straightforward reading of the text - further analysis follows in 3(a) and 4(a). However, these chapters can be understood at another level. Yairah Amit: A concealed polemic<sup>46</sup> in the story of the conquest of Dan, and the episode of the concubine in Gibeah as a concealed polemic against the kingship of Saul and its supporters - full references follow - sees the chapters as an annexure

<sup>44</sup> Regarding the relocation of the tribe of Dan from the south to the north of the country, it has been pointed out that at the time of Deborah, Dan was already located in the north. A part of the tribe apparently remained - Danites were still in the south at the time of Samson. Judges Ch. 18, implying the relocation of the whole tribe at this later time, cannot therefore be regarded as completely historical.

<sup>45</sup> Israel was traditionally anti-monarchic and against central authority for socio-economic as well as religious reasons. (See surveys 6 and 7 of N. Gottwald and J. Bright). Only acceptable to Israel was the confederacy of tribal representatives and the temporary leadership of a Judge, while a religious and social code bound them.

<sup>46</sup> The polemic concerns the shrine of Beth El and its pagan rites.

to the main Book of Judges and interprets them differently, so removing them from the contemporary scene. She says that the annexed tales are used to polemicise targets from a different epoque. And; indeed, the texts in question do differ from the preceding chapters in tone and content. There is no Judge; no element of the familiar cyclical pattern; no mention of an external enemy (though the movement of the Philistines towards the interior would soon have begun, in terms of a linear progression of events from Jephthah and Samson to Samuel); there is an abrupt change in society's mores and values; God is not perceived as being in command. Amit does not counter, but underplays, the message that society is ailing from want of guidance. But for her the polemics concealed in the stories are crucial. The evidence she supplies to support her hypothesis is noted briefly in 3(b) and 4(b).

2. Background to situation described in Judges 17-21

Judges 17-21 states four times that there was no king in Israel (17: 6, 18: 1, 19: 1 and 21: 25) The Anchor Bible Dictionary vol III says, "Out of context that statement might describe either a bad scene (anarchy) or a good one (governance by internalised ethic )"page 1108. The examples described in Judges 17-21 suggest the former.

In fact, Israel seems to have experienced a vacuum in leadership for a while before these difficult years. Jephthah and Samson were the major Judges preceding this time and the interest of each was localised. There is certainly no Judge at the time of Micah and only later will Samuel fill an authoritative role.

On top of this, Judges 10: 13-16 tells that God announced the withdrawal of his support from a disobedient and disloyal people (although they repented, only subsequently did the people put away the images of their false gods). At that point, Israel must have felt hopeless and abandoned, with no divine presence, no saviour, and no Judge at the helm. And now, even the tribal confederacy appears ineffective.<sup>47</sup>

Without guidance and without God's concern (as it seemed), Israel becomes removed from its traditionally acceptable mode. There is political anarchy - Dan goes its own way, there is civil war, there is religious decline - the actions of Micah, the Levite priests and the tribe of Dan are highly irregular; ethical values are disregarded and there is social disaster. A totally negative picture results. This is the scenario described in Judges 17-21.

### 3. Analyses, Chapters 17, 18

For clarity the analyses will be enumerated as follows:

3(a) The more straightforward reading will be discussed<sup>48</sup>

3(b) Y. Amit's alternative interpretation will be noted briefly.

3(a) The straightforward reading: a survey of points in Judges 17 and 18 which describe the contemporary scene and show how, in the absence of a guiding authority (for example a king) norms have become

<sup>47</sup> There is no consultation or support from any other tribe for Dan when enemies encroach on its land, and the assembly which gathers to discuss punishment for the crime in Gibeah seems unable to avoid civil war.

<sup>48</sup> The non-interpretive reading mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section is here termed the 'straightforward' reading. It is preferred to the term 'per se' in this case as Amit's interpretation also uses the text itself as the starting point of her hypothesis.

inverted, as every man does that which is right or convenient in his own eyes.

Chapter 17 tells the story of Micah's response to conditions at this period of decline.

Micah has stolen money from his mother. When he admits to it his mother blesses him (v.2) with endearments (this behaviour is odd). Micah's mother uses some of the silver which she had wholly dedicated ... unto the Lord from my hand for my son" (v.3) for the purchase of idols. (Idolatry was the abhorred antithesis of the Israelite religion).

The images are added to Micah's 'house of gods' collection at Mount Ephraim. There, Micah appoints his own priest - first his son and then an itinerant Levite is employed (vv. 5,10). Micah is pleased with his acquisitions, which he feels have earned him God's blessing. There is an ironic allusion to Jacob's reaction at Beth El (Luz) after he dreams of the ladder reaching to heaven, Jacob says: 'the Lord is in this place and I knew it not/' '...lo yadati' (Genesis 28: 16). Presumptuously, Micah says: 'Now I know the Lord will do me good' (because he owns a priest)/ 'ata yadati...' Jacob wonders at God's presence. Micah 'knows' he has bought God's approval. Micah's attitude is further denigrated by this comparison.

Similarly Micah's name is an ironic comment on his occupation as idol-maker. Micah is the beginning of the phrase 'mi cahmokka' which is addressed to God. The phrase means 'who is like you', God. The maker of images alludes in his name to the sublime declaration that

God is incomparable. The irony of it highlights the distance between Micah's behaviour and acceptable norms.

In Chapter 17, there are two persons who would normally be thought of as 'authority figures' but in this ailing society the authority figures fail to fulfil their traditional roles (this is of course symbolic of the lack of authority in society). One such person is Micah's mother. She expects neither repentance nor explanation concerning the theft. She gives no moral lesson and fails as a primary educator. The other erstwhile authority figure is the Levite priest whose behaviour as a role model would impact not on the family but on the whole community. A true Levite did not work for money and certainly was not hired by an individual. Micah's Levite does both.

Chapter 18 also rejects the traditional. On the basis of reports received from their spies and the oracle of Micah's priest, the tribe of Dan leaves the land of its inheritance and does that which is right (or opportune) in its own eyes, but contrary to religious dictates.

The description of negative responses to the contemporary plight of Israel continues in chapters 19-21 but, as Yairah Amit has discovered within this first tale, evidence of another entity - a concealed polemic - her interpretation should be noted first.

3b Y. Amit's interpretation of chapters 17 and 18, with an introductory section relating to methodology.

3b(i) Steps to an alternative interpretation

- (1.) Having read chapters 17 and 18 as a straightforward description of the contemporary scene, one looks in vain for redeeming factors in the demeanour of society.

Indeed, the narrator does account for it by saying that there was no king. Granted, the darkest possible events have been selected to prove the pro-monarchic point, but the picture is still unremittingly grim.

- (2.) Such a sudden and complete change of tone in these final chapters of the Book of Judges demands attention. As explained on pages 42 of this study anomalies may be rejected as interpolations or explained.

The explanation of the change in society's behaviour has been given as the absence of authority. With a king, it is implied, normative behaviour would be restored. This explanation is clear in the text and is known as a *Pulmus Galui* / revealed polemic (a pro-monarchic polemic).

Amit believes the chapters are an annexure to the Book of Judges - that is, an interpolation in the Judges/I Samuel unit, so the revealed polemic explanation is not applicable.

- (3.) She pursues the matter further. In the knowledge that the *Pulmus Samui* / concealed polemic is characteristic of all types of Biblical writing, Amit provides an answer to the problem of meaning: the tales of woe (chapters 17 to 21) conceal other, hidden polemics.

3b(ii) Y. Amit. Concealed Polemic in the story of the Conquest of Dan in Betmikra vol, 126 (3) 1990 Nissan-Sivan, pp. 267-278.

Two of Amit's considerations when identifying a concealed polemic are:

- that the target of the polemic should not be named in the text;
- that many signs in the text point to the target of the polemic.

She says that of all the negative aspects in Chapters 17 and 18, the focus is on Mount Ephraim and the activities there. She is of the opinion that Mount Ephraim is a synonym for Beth El. Her reasons include the adjacent usage elsewhere in the Bible of Beth El and Beth Elohim as a couplet (Micah has a house of gods/ Beth Elohim at Mount Ephraim), and of Dan and Mount Ephraim, then of Dan and Beth El as twin shrines - that is, Beth El is substituted for Ephraim. It is felt that this polemic was used in the 7th century B.C.E. prior to the reforms of Josiah, and targeted the pagan rites at the shrine of Beth El.

None of the above relates to the end of the period of the Judges, despite its being based on Judges 17 and 18.

#### 4. Analyses, Chapters 19-21

4a. The straightforward reading: a survey of points in Chs. 19-21 which describe the contemporary scene, where norms have become inverted due to the lack of authority (that is a king). This survey is complementary to Analysis 3a, which it follows.

Chapter 19 tells of a Levite and his concubine who spend time at her father's house before returning home to Mount Ephraim, the focal point of the earlier chapters. There, the Levite is shown great hospitality. This is in keeping with other Biblical accounts, for example Lot's welcome to the strangers (angels) at Sodom - Genesis 19. This behaviour is traditional and represents the norm.

By comparison the treatment the couple is to receive at Gibeah puts that town on a par with Sodom, notorious for its hostility to strangers and for its 'wickedness'. (Genesis 18f.)

En route home to Mount Ephraim, they pass Jebus and Ramah<sup>49</sup> and arrive at Gibeah, hopeful of finding lodging. But they must stand in the street (Judges 19: 15), as do the angels at Sodom (Genesis 19:2) until an old man welcomes them. The old man is an exception to the rule (as is Lot in Sodom), so the reader's impression of Gibeah's behaviour as unwelcoming and a-normative is reinforced.

Worse is to come when (as at Sodom), the sons of Belial, local hooligans, surround the house. The concubine dies after being raped all night. The Levite then sends the dissected corpse to the tribes, calling them to assemble.

"And... all that saw it [presumably meaning the evidence of the hooligans' deed] said there was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day..." (19: 30). This is a testimony to the uniqueness of the crime

<sup>49</sup> These two place names are important to Amit's interpretation. They do not appear to be particularly significant in the straight forward reading. (See 4b re forced motifs).

at Gibeah. More pervasive and more representative of Israel's general deviation from acceptable standards is the coldness of the reception received in Gibeah.

When attributing Israel's attitude at the end of the period of the Judges to a feeling of despondency, it was mentioned that even the tribal assembly seemed ineffective (see above). This can be seen in its handling of the problem of the crime at Gibeah. The Assembly is called and on hearing about the crime "the men of Israel were gathered against the city". (20: 11), before asking the Benjaminites to search through the city for the perpetrators. (Even though the Levite blames 'the men of Gibeah' generally (20: 5), it can be seen from their request (19: 13) that the Assembly knows the offenders were 'the children of Belial'). Not surprisingly then, the Benjaminites have already prepared to fight. The civil war between Benjamin and the rest of Israel ensues.

At the initial gathering of the Assembly it is decided by the other tribes not to marry their daughters to Benjaminites. Afterwards they realise that the future of the tribe of Benjamin with insufficient women, is endangered, that "there is one tribe cut off from Israel this day" (21: 6) - and arrangements have to be made to ensure its survival.<sup>50</sup>

In chapters 20 and 21 there is constant reference to the tribal bond which had always existed "... the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel." (20: 13); "the children of Israel... wept... saying shall I go up.. to battle against

<sup>50</sup> Women were brought for the Benjaminites from Jabesh-Gilead. Their bloodline is mentioned in the interpretation of Amit, 4b.

the children of Benjamin my brother?" (20: 23). Though they go "as one man" to the Assembly and the battle, afterwards, "... the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribe of Israel". (21: 15).<sup>51</sup>

4b. Y. Amit

The episode of the concubine at Gibeah as a concealed polemic against the kingship of Saul and its supporters *Bet Mikra* vol. 129 (2) Tevet-Adar, 1991. pp. 109-118.

As with the earlier chapters the revealed promonarchic polemic is bypassed, for a concealed polemic is identified.

The reader of Judges chapters 19-21 is likely to be struck not only by the vehemence of the Levite's action in dissecting the corpse but by the similarity of the motif in Judges 19: 29 to Saul's call to the Israelites in I Samuel 11: 7. (He divides a yoke of oxen into twelve and sends messages to the tribes that the same will be done to the cattle of those who do not respond). In other words, a reference to Saul, the first king of Israel is intimated.

According to this interpretation (that chapter 19 conceals a polemic against the kingship of Saul,) the dissection motif is 'forced'. It belongs to the polemic, where it is used as a sign to point to the target, Saul. It serves no purpose in the story of the concubine. (The

---

<sup>51</sup> On the treatment of strangers and guests and in the treatment of 'brothers' from other tribes, chapters 19-21 as 17 and 18 report a distancing from the traditional, sometimes without care and sometimes with regret.

threatened consequence of not responding to the Levite's message is not symbolised by a dissected corpse).

In support of the hypothesis of the concealed polemic, Amit identifies other forced motifs, or motifs which serve the polemic and not the tale in its straightforward reading. For example the town of Ramah, well known in Saul's history - he was anointed there, is superfluous in the concubine tale. The couple do not even visit Ramah.

Notable from the point of view of the polemic is the denigration of Saul's home town, Gibeah. The negative image it is given in chapter 19 would transfer to one of its inhabitants.

The reason for this polemic, annexed at the end of the Book of Judges, is given as the desirability of preparing the reader for the downfall of Saul, Israel's first king and his replacement by the House of David (described in I Samuel).

Again, this interpretation does not relate to the end of the period of the Judges but here it accompanies the straightforward reading given in 4(a) because they both have a common source, that is, Judges 19.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5(i) Different levels of understanding the text.

It has been shown that most of Judges 17-21 can be understood at two levels (the Episode of the Concubine ends with chapter 19, but the internecine warfare that ensues is its outcome). Judges 17-21 can be understood:

(1) As a narrative told against a background of the contemporary scene, the lack of a king being the explanation for ignoble actions and a chaotic situation (It can be said to contain a revealed promonarchic polemic).

or

(2) as a narrative with concealed polemics

- regarding Beth El and its rituals in chapters 17 and 18,
- regarding Saul, the first king of Israel in chapter 19.

Although many signs indicated in 3b and 4b, particularly those which would appear to be created with a concealed polemic in mind (the 'forced motifs'), point to this being polemic material (interpretation no. 2), the straightforward reading (no 1) is preferred in this study for the following reasons.

- a. The text per se is used.
- b. The situations described in it are explicable in terms of a promonarchic (revealed) polemic and are in keeping with the tensions of the times.
- c. Pages 117-18 show that the situations are plausible in describing the contemporary scene, (the possible later use of the stories for polemicising notwithstanding).

In this case, Judges chapters 17-21 is not considered an annexure, but is seen as an integral final section of the Book of Judges. The text is not fragmented or disjointed.

The interpretations of Y. Amit are included here, because an opportunity is provided to describe a method where seemingly anomalous situations in a text could initiate a quest for alternative interpretations (see pages 122-21).

5(ii) An appraisal of phenomena regarding change so far examined.

The subject of change during the latter Judges texts (as analysed from Chapter 14 - Gideon, onwards) has focussed to a large extent on the pro-and anti-monarchic controversy, whose issues can be equated with the differences between the 'new way' and the 'old way'. Its 'opposing voices' are to be met with in the text of I Samuel.

The controversy is on-going and has diverse facets.

- The pro-monarchic issues in Judges 17-21 are internal - the demeanour of society. Usually the pro-monarchic issues are external - the need of protection against Israel's enemies.
- The anti-monarchic view is invariably based on religious tenets (God is king) or are a simple preference for the Judge system. In Judges 17-21 no anti-monarchic response appears.

The debate usually surfaces when the security situation is critical. I Samuel commences with Elkanah the father of Samuel at Shiloh, which is for a while insulated from external problems. In fact, this book describes a crisis and ultimately, the resolution of the 'old way/ new way' controversy.



## Part 1

### 1a Introduction: Opposing Voices and the Issues Concerned

The monarchial debate is first clearly set out in Judges 8: 22-23 when the people ask Gideon for a hereditary king, and he refuses. That is, opposing voices, pro-monarchic and anti-monarchic, are heard.<sup>53</sup>

The fundamental reasons behind the request and the refusal, are also stated clearly, Gideon himself is asked to rule, "for thou has delivered us from the hand of Midian" (verse 22). That is, the Israelites recognise the need for the ongoing security and protection that would be afforded by the establishment of a hereditary monarchy. (Judges were temporary, usually being appointed at the time of an enemy attack, and the danger to Israel was constant). However, Gideon tells the people firmly that "the Lord shall reign over you" (verse 23) - no earthly king.

That is, the political need of Israel is in conflict with the traditional and religious view. These are the two opposing voices 'heard' in the text.

In 1 Samuel 8 (referred to later in this section), the same opposing voices continue the debate. A king is requested (verse 5), even insisted upon (verse 19). (The reasons are similar to Judges 8 : 22 -23 the tribes needed security and protection and 'to be<sup>h</sup> like all the nations". 1 Samuel 8 : 5 and 20).

---

<sup>53</sup> Pro- and anti-monarchic voices are also referred to as views according to a 'new way' or the 'old way' / wanting change or accepting the status quo / desiring a human king or affirming that God is king; and in many forms which are understandable from the context.

Such a change will be granted, although the kingship of God is thus denied: "... they have rejected me, that I should reign over them" (verse 7), Samuel is told by God.

In the end, as will be seen, a theocratic compromise is reached, bridging the people's political needs and the religious principle that only God is king.

However, between those two points, in Judges 8 and 1 Samuel 8, no other request for a king, nor its theological response, is mentioned.

There are anti- and pro-monarchic passages in Judges 9 (Abimelech) and Judges 17-21, but these appear to be comments rather than manifestations of a contemporary debate among the people. (see page 106 of this study).

Alternatively, it seems that such opposing voices are heard when the end of the Book of Judges (chs. 17-21) is paired with the beginning of 1 Samuel (chs. 1-3). The former does express the need for a king - though the reasons here are social, not military; the beginning of 1 Samuel does represent its antithesis: a king is not even thought of. But it cannot be called anti-monarchic for though events take place in a religious setting - the Shiloh sanctuary - there is no statement of religious principle which could be regarded as a response to the proposed monarchy.

The opposing voices in the text covering the period of the Judges, then, are:

- i) at Gideon - the request for a king and its refusal;
- ii) at Samuel - the request, its being regarded as a rejection of God, and its finally being granted in compromise form.

A third type of occurrence can, however be noted:

- iii) There are textual anomalies, four of which are examined in Part 2 of this section. These are not statements and responses, but they do represent opposing voices (see p.138 Introduction to Part 2). These apparent anomalies occur when the texts seem to present contradictory views. (In fact, as will be seen when the passages are analysed in 2b to 2d, the seeming anomalies are explicable).

1b) Overview of Events in 1 Samuel (1-12) plus Close Reading and Comment on passages to Chapter 6

In order (a) to note the importance of Samuel, and (b) to follow the route of the monarchical debate, an overview of events with some commentary, will be given. (Chapters 6 to 11 are further discussed under Textual Anomalies in Part 2).

1b i) Shiloh

The importance of Samuel, who is to feature in the changes at Shiloh as well as in Israelite society at large, is established at the outset of 1 Samuel, even before his birth. This is done when referring to his parents, Elkanah and Hannah.

### Elkanah, the father of Samuel

L. Klein, The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges, when talking about Micah in Judges 17-21, says that details of family affiliation in the Biblical text, point to a sound relationship with tradition and the covenant. Micah has no such dimension: - "and there was a man of Mount Ephraim whose name was Micah" (Judges 17: 1). However Elkanah is introduced with the words: "Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-Zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of... ..an Ephraimite (1 Samuel 1: 1). There is a genealogical list of four generations beside his name. This, as well as the detail of where he lives, announces Elkanah as a respected personage and a historical one - the father of Samuel.

### Hannah, the mother of Samuel

The importance of Samuel is hinted at, too, in the way Hannah is portrayed. Another artistic device is used. This is the Convention of the Barren Woman.<sup>54</sup> As the narrative of Samuel begins, Hannah has been barren for some time. (This is emphasised in 1 Samuel 1 : 5, 6 and the importance of children is stressed in many ways). By analogy with Hannah's situation, the Biblical mothers of Israel, Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel, are recalled. For all were childless until a special son was born to each of them. Consequently, on hearing of Hannah, the reader's expectations are raised that she, like the others, will bear a special son. He will be Samuel.

1b(ii) Change comes to Shiloh - as a prelude to outside change. The relative stability of life in Shiloh is soon to disappear. The special

<sup>54</sup> Reisenberger, Azila. The Rhetorical Power of Literary Conventions: Artistic meaning and persuasion in Biblical Discourse Koers vol 61 (2) 1996: 203-212

positions of the High Priest Eli and his sons will end due to their misdemeanours. The young Samuel, ministering to the Lord, contrasts well with them. In addition, (though it is not mentioned before Chapter 4), the movement of the Philistines towards the foothills at Aphek (where Israel is to be defeated), must have been noted in Shiloh - perhaps a traveller passing through its gates would have told the inhabitants.

All these changes: the failing health of Eli, Samuel's replacing Hophni and Phinehas, the encroachment of the Philistines, prefigure the larger change of the judge system's being replaced by a monarchy.

1b) Aphek / Eben-ezer

- iii) At the beginning of I Samuel 4 there is a change of scene when, beyond Shiloh, "all Israel" is defeated by the Philistines at Aphek / Eben-ezer. (The Philistines are camped at Aphek, the Israelites and Ebenezer). This defeat marks a turning point in the people's outlook and, for some, in their attitude towards God.

The narrator focuses on their reaction, Dismay is voiced: "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us this day before the Philistines?" (4: 3) they ask. God is responsible; his actions are being queried. They seem to feel that there is neither the spirit of God, nor a Judge to deliver them. (See comment: The Role of Samuel. ) (p. 135 ).

So instead, they turn to the Holy Ark as a replacement for God's help: "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (4 : 3), they say. That is, that the physical Ark may save us,

not God. This is far from the 'old way' of thinking where God cannot be represented by an inanimate object. It is rather a 'new way', an irreverent and secular way. (The later Gideon seems to have used such as approach when he created an 'ephod' - see pages 99 - 104 of this study).

The Israelites' changed attitude, when the Ark 'replaces' God in battle is revealed in the terminology of the text. 4: 3-5 refer to the Ark as "The Ark of the Covenant": the Israelites are yet conscious of the Covenant and its obligations. 4: 11f talk of "the Ark of God". The word 'covenant' is missing, as if their covenant with God is overlooked by a resentful people.<sup>55</sup> (The Philistines themselves on seeing the Ark say "God is come into the camp"<sup>56</sup> - 4: 7, for they are idol worshippers incapable of understanding the concept of a spiritual God).

The focus is on a people who query God's intentions and wish to break away from their Covenant with him. Their mood will eventually bring them to demand a king.

#### Comment: The Role of Samuel

Samuel has featured at Shiloh. His name appears only once (4 : 1) in the Ark episodes. From chapter 7 onwards Samuel plays a most important role. Samuel's absence in chapter 4 (except verse 1) is

---

<sup>55</sup> L. M. Eslinger. Kingship of God in Crisis says that the people may have resented being punished (as they saw it), for the misdemeanours of Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, and they wanted to free themselves from the obligations of the Covenant, to be themselves in charge of choosing their own military command. (see Lyle M. Eslinger, 1985: 175 and 185-6 regarding the seeming injustice of the punishment).

striking and it is necessary at this point to survey the part played by Samuel in Israelite history.

Samuel is known as the last Judge but he is not a military leader; he is not a deliverer of the people, calling them to fight and leading them to battle as, for example do Ehud and Gideon.

Samuel's function, as God's agent, is to invoke his intervention. "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines" (7 : 8) /... "The Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines and discomfited them and they were smitten before Israel" (7 : 10).

The limitations of Samuel's area of influence are seen in 4 : 1 "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out, against the Philistines to battle..." 'The word' is associated with prophecy, not with mustering troops - ("and all Israel... knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord" 3 : 20). That is, Samuel was concerned with prophecy; the armies of Israel went out to battle. Samuel does not participate in the battle. Apart from 4 : 1, line 1, Samuel does not appear at Aphek or in the Ark episodes.

On the other hand, Samuel is prominent in Israelite political and religious life. He gives Israel counsel, he tells them of the socio-economic pitfalls of a monarchy - "the manner of the king" (8 : 11). He tells them of the "manner of the kingdom", or constitution (10 : 25). He discusses the request for a king with God.

Samuel is God's earthly agent during the most critical period of Israel's existence - the time of transition and change at the end of the period of the Judges.

iv) The Holy Ark

The Ark, taken by the Israelites into battle at Aphek / Eben-ezer, captured by the Philistines and feared by them, is finally brought back.

At this point occurs the first of the textual anomalies to be found in 1 Samuel (chapters 6-11). They will be discussed in Part 2. They serve as cues that meaning is to be sought. Here, opposing voices are heard reflecting the 'old way' politic or favouring change to a 'new way', and so indicating the course taken by the monarchical debate.

v) Chapter 7

After the Ark episodes and the Israelites' perplexity at their defeat by the Philistines, there ensues a time of reconciliation to the 'old way'. The people are urged by Samuel to leave their false gods and to serve God alone. This has a political as well as a religious connotation (the people are not to serve a king and not to serve other gods), and in chapter 7 no wish for a king is expressed.

vi) Chapters 8 - 10

The lull is temporary. A king is asked for and a compromise reached whereby the earthly king (Saul) is given limited powers and God remains supreme.

vii) Chapters 10 and 11

There is dissension on this score, but the new king (Saul) is accepted when it is realised that the limitations on the monarchy do not preclude Israel from overcoming the Ammonite threat to Jabesh Gilead, that is, that Israel's own security is not compromised by the arrangement.

viii) Chapter 12

This is the closing chapter of the period discussed. It contains Samuel's own apologia and his admonishment to the people to "turn not aside from following the Lord..." (12 : 20).

In fact the period of transition surveyed in this study concludes when Saul is made king at Gilgal. (11 : 15).

**Part 2: Textual Anomalies**<sup>56</sup>2a Introduction

From the story of the Ark's return to Israel after its capture by the Philistines (chapter 6), until resolution is reached regarding the kingship (chapter 11), there are apparent textual anomalies. For this reason the text is usually thought to be fragmented and derived from many sources.

However, it is suggested here that the passages in question do not in fact contain contradictions and that the 'anomalies' can be explained. This will be done in 2b to 2d.

---

<sup>56</sup> Although the four examples of textual discrepancies cited below are explicable, they remain textual anomalies (anomalies in the text) and are referred to as such.

These apparent anomalies usually occur when there is a shift of public opinion from supporting the traditional 'old way' to a desire for change and a 'new way' or occasionally vice versa (I Samuel 7) or, there is a shift in focus.

Opposing voices are heard in the text. They are not heard so much in actual debate on the monarchical issue - a debate which must nevertheless have been taking place, they are heard more in references to the people's moods and inclinations as gleaned from the narrative.

The further treatment of the textual anomalies is as follows:

- 2b Examples of four anomalies
- 2c Key words, which are a clue to understanding each of the passages
- 2d Suggested explanation of each anomaly.
- 2e Conclusion to chapter section 17.

## 2b. Examples of Apparent Textual Anomalies

### (1) I Samuel 6 : 13 / I Samuel 7 : 1-2

"and [the men of] Beth-Shemesh lifted up their eyes and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it" (6 : 13)<sup>57</sup>

That is, they rejoice at the return of the Ark to Israel. Their mood is apparently inconsistent with the fact that they send the Ark away to Kirjath-Jearim for twenty years (7 : 1-2).

---

<sup>57</sup> The feelings of the men of Beth-Shemesh can be accepted as representative of the feelings of 'all Israel', for everyone had shared the same despair at the Aphek defeat. (See Part I, Historical Overview No. (iii).

The argument could be advanced that this was done for the Ark's protection. Kirjath-Jearim is in a mountainous area, and a properly sanctified person was put in charge of it - 7 : 1. But as they feared the Ark greatly, the Philistines - Israel's immediate enemy - would be unlikely to attempt to capture it a second time, and so the Ark was not in need of protection from them.

(2) I Samuel 7 / I Samuel 8

Despite the negative feelings which made the people send the Holy Ark away for twenty years, chapter 7 has a tone of reconciliation with the 'old way': the people have turned away from their false gods, the Philistines have been checked, Samuel is firmly in charge as leader. Things are turning out so well - there should be no desire for change.

This is inconsistent with the request for a king. (8 : 5, 19).

(3) I Samuel 10 : 24 / 10 : 27

"And Samuel said to all the people, see ye him whom the Lord hath chosen... And all the people shouted... God save the king" (10 : 24). That is, Saul, God's chosen is unanimously acclaimed as king. There is apparent inconsistency with 10 : 27 which says "... the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him..."

(4) I Samuel 10 : 27 / I Samuel 11 : 14-15.

(As above) Saul - or the kingship - is rejected in 10 : 27.

This is inconsistent with the fact that by the end of chapter 11, there is total acceptance of Saul as king (11 : 14-15): “Then said Samuel, Come, and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there...”

2c Key Words in Analysing the above Anomalies

In each of the foregoing, there is a key word or phrase which is pivotal in understanding the seeming inconsistency of the opposing voices.

(The voices are opposing voices with different ways of reacting to a situation - for example, the ‘old way’ vis-a-vis the ‘new way’ but because there are reasons for the reactions and the so-called anomalies are explicable, the inconsistencies disappear).

- (1) Regarding the Ark’s return and the people’s change from joy to frustration and their sending the Ark way: this occurs when the Beth-Shemeshites are punished “because they looked into the Ark of the Lord” / “ki ra-u ba-aron adonai” (6 : 19) - a curious sin, arousing God’s great displeasure.
- (2) Regarding the apparent reconciliation in chapter 7:
  - (i) the agreement that the people would serve God only ‘le-va-do’ denotes a key-word (7 : 3 and in different form, 7 : 4).  
and
  - (ii) “Hitherto [or up to this point] hath the Lord helped us” / ‘ad heina...’ (7 : 12) will also be discussed.
- (3) The volte-face in chapter 10 (the seeming contradiction between verses 24 and 26, 27) revolves around “the manner of the kingdom” [or

constitution] / “mishpat ha- melucha” mentioned in 10 : 25) and the nature of the monarchy to be established.

Note: God’s otherwise democratic response to the people’s request for a king is accompanied by a condition: `ach - ki ‘./ `yet’..(8 : 9).

The conditions appear to be in the key words as follows:

- (a) In 9 : 16 Samuel is told by God “Thou shalt anoint him [Saul] to be captain” / u - mashachto le-nagid”<sup>58</sup>
- (b) In 9 : 17 Samuel is told “he will reign over my people / ye-atzar be-ami”  
(Items (a) and (b) do refer to the nature of the monarchy).
- (c) ‘Mishpat ha-melech/ the manner of a king’: in 8 : 10-18 the people are warned by Samuel of the possible socio-economic consequences of having a king (this does not refer to the nature of the monarchy to be established).

## 2d Suggested Explanations for the Apparent Textual Anomalies

It will be seen that attempting to explain the apparent contradictions contributes to the understanding of the text as a whole and the dynamics of the monarchical controversy: that is, contemporary trends - the ‘old way’, or ‘new way’, anti-monarchic or pro-monarchic are

<sup>58</sup> The phrases referred to in (a) and (b) - that is the concepts which appear in 1 Samuel 9 : 16 and 9 : 17 are seen by Lyle M. Eslinger Kingship of God in Crisis as being God’s conditions for the granting of monarchy (see my acknowledgement at the end of 2d).

reflected in the opposing voices of the text, (and the route to the establishment of Israel's theocratic kingship can be traced).

- (1) Suggested explanation regarding the return of the Holy Ark and the people's mixed feelings.

Key words: 'because they had looked into the Ark' / 'ki ra-u ba -aron'.  
It was seen that the explanation in 2b(f) of the Ark's being sent away for its own protection is not satisfactory.

The reason for the Beth Shemeshites' turning from the uncritical 'old way' to questioning God has been an accumulative change in attitude: when defeated by the Philistines the people questioned God's intentions: "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us..." (4 : 3). Taking the Ark to battle was a symptom of their changed attitude, and looking into the Ark could be interpreted as another sign of their scepticism. Now, the heavy punishment (for looking into the Ark) is queried - "who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" (6 : 20), they say in frustration. This itself shows their ambivalent attitude: It combines the frustrated querying of people turning to a 'new way' with a habitual reverence for the 'old way' implied in the phrase "this holy Lord God" .

The people's ambivalence - their spontaneous joy at seeing the Ark mixed with the deep despair which started with their defeat by the Philistines is the most likely explanation for their actions.

An already changing attitude seems to account for textual anomaly (1).

- (2) Suggested explanation regarding the discrepancy between 1 Samuel : 7 (a tone of reconciliation and satisfaction with the status quo) and 1 Samuel : 8 (a king needed).

Key word: 'le - va - do' / [God] only.

The sceptical and disillusioned trend described in (1) is to be checked by Samuel. He tells the people that they are now to serve God only / 'le - va - do'.<sup>59</sup> This implies that before, they had combined worshipping other gods and the God of Israel - they now have to choose. (The prophet Elijah would later say, "How long will you hop between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him". (1 Kings 18 : 21). The people in 1 Samuel have also been hopping between two opinions and keeping their options open, in not serving God 'le - va - do'.

If the people had been keeping their religious options open and avoiding any commitment, there is an element of doubt about their making a commitment in the future. With his instructions to serve God only, Samuel seems to sense this.

So, when he places the stone at Eben-ezer (where the positions are reversed, and the Philistines defeated) and says, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (7 : 12), this seems to be a warning to ensure that the people adhere to their newly-made resolve. Samuel is saying, God has defeated the Philistines for a now faithful people.

---

<sup>59</sup> Only God is to be revered. It can be noted that serving God only has a political connotation as well and excludes serving a king.

This idea can be extended. Although the marking of the spot of the defeat with a stone seems to indicate the locality where God has helped, the English translation of `ad heina' as `hitherto' (meaning time, not place), indicates the precise meaning of the sentence: a limit is placed on God's help: `ad heina' / `to here', and no further - that is, up to this point in time. It is as if Samuel says, God has helped us until now; until now we have been faithful. But God, too, is keeping an open mind in case there is any regression.

In chapter 7 there are hints (the warning to "serve God only" and the limits placed on his patience which extends "up to this time"), that the people's tendency to shrug off the `old way' may recur. So there is no real inconsistency between the reconciliation of chapter 7, which is tenuous, and the request for a king in chapter 8 - a disloyalty seen then as the equivalent of idolatry, where power is vested in another venerated being, in place of God.

An irrepressible and continuous desire for change seems to account for textual anomaly (2)

3(i) Concerning anomaly number three: Introductory detail.

When God agrees to Israel's having a king (Samuel is told "hearken unto the voice of the people" - 8 : 5, and "hearken unto their voice, and make them a king - 8 : 22), there are to be conditions attached to bring the monarchy into line with theocratic principle. Samuel is directed to take certain steps to safeguard the theocracy: the people, though successful in their request must remember that God is supreme, and

that they (the people of Israel) are his subjects. There are two indications of this in the text.<sup>60</sup>

- (a) Samuel is told, therefore, "And you will anoint him [Saul] as captain" (9 : 16). This at first seems to be a contradiction in terms: kings are anointed, not captains. And the people do not want a captain - they have asked for a king. In fact, the phrase means exactly what it says. The people are to have a limited monarchy - a monarchy within a theocracy. The king will be a captain, or officer, of God.<sup>61</sup>
- (b) A similar limitation is implied in the description, "He will reign over [literally, restrain or manage] my people" (9 : 17). Even with a king, God is to retain possession of his subjects, the people of Israel, and his closeness to them.

In addition, Samuel is to explain the 'mishpat ha-melech' - the manner of the king - 8 : 9, regarding the possible abuse of a king's power. This he does in 8 : 10 to 8 : 18.

All These items have been mentioned before (p. 142), but it is significant that the people pay scant attention to the earlier socio-economic warning, so keen they are at this stage to have a king, whereas items (a) and (b) - recognised later as part of the constitution, have a dire effect.

---

<sup>60</sup> Lyle M. Eslinger identifies the limitations mentioned in (a) and (b) above as being contained in the 'Mishpat ha-meluchah', the Constitution of 10 : 25.

<sup>61</sup> He will, however, be different from a Judge, his position is permanent.

3 (ii) Suggested explanation regarding anomaly number three: unanimous acclaim of the king (10 : 24) followed by dissension and rejection (10 : 26-27).

The 'mishpat - ha - melucha', or Constitution<sup>62</sup> (mentioned in (10 : 25) seems to contain details of the limitation to the monarchy mentioned in I Samuel : 9 (see also the previous page nos. (a) and (b). The change of heart described at the end of chapter 10 is therefore quite understandable.

Saul is a pre-possessing figure who fits the image of a hero-deliverer and as such he is acclaimed in 10 : 24 (Moreover, the drawing of lots in public has confirmed his appointment.

However after the Constitution is outlined and written up (10 : 25) "only a band of men who hearts God has touched" (10 : 20) can assent to the terms. The 'children of Belial' do not. They 'despise him' [Saul] 'va - yiv - zu - hu'. L. M. Eslinger, 1985: The Kingship of God in Crisis 357-8 points out that this verb may be associated with those who spurn a sacral-legal arrangement or oppose God's choice (Esau 'despises' his birthright, the God-given status of the elder son, when he sells it to his younger twin brother Jacob - Genesis 25 : 34).<sup>63</sup>

2d (4) Suggested explanation regarding anomaly number four. Division, and rejection of the king (10 : 27) becomes accord, and acceptance of Saul

<sup>62</sup> The erstwhile anti-monarchic 'old way' supporters could agree to God's conditions and a limited monarchy. The pro-monarchic dissenters who were unwilling to compromise, and wanted complete independence from God, could not. Changed circumstances seem to account for anomaly (3).

<sup>63</sup> In this case, God's choice is the theocratic monarchy which the children of Belial dissidents reject.

as first king of Israel (11 : 14-15) - Israel confronts Ammon  
(Chapter 11).

There are now two opposing groups in the political arena. (They are not heard as the original 'opposing voices', for now their positions are reversed - see footnote 62 and the previous explanation).

The band of men "whose heart God had touched" (10 : 26) are happy with a king groomed by Samuel for a monarchy, which is defined in theocratic terms.

The dissident group would, however, feel that the security so crucial to Israel had been compromised. "How shall this man save us?" they ask (10 : 27) - and could have added, he has neither the charisma of a Samuel who cries out to God for victory (7 : 8-11) nor the political muscle, independence and authority that is expected of a king to win battles. Saul himself would not gain support and no-one would turn to him in a military crisis under the circumstances. No-one, that is, except for the people of Jabesh-Gilead when threatened by Nahash the Ammonite. For Saul and the people of Gilead share a common ancestry. Judges chapter 20 tells of the near extermination of the tribe of Benjamin which is saved only when four hundred virgins from Jabesh-Gilead are imported as wives for the Benjaminite men (Judges 21). It has been suggested that Saul of Benjamin is a descendant of the Benjamin / Jabesh-Gilead liaison, and in their crisis the people of Jabesh Gilead do turn to Saul for assistance and he in turn, calls on Israel to respond.

To recapitulate regarding the deadlock at the end of chapter 10, when the monarchy is rejected and the people are sent home. This appears to occur when the Constitution has been read out (10: 25) and it is understood that Israel is not to be "like all the nations" (8 : 20); rather, for Israel, God is supreme, and to him Israel owes allegiance; Israel's king is a `nagid' (captain). This is seen by some as an impediment to their king's success in battle.

With the appeal from Jabesh-Gilead, there is an opportunity to test the strength of the theocratic monarchy. Saul and Israel must prove themselves capable of victory. And they must do it alone. So Saul does not muster the forces in the name of God, and the people of Gibeah, when they hear of Ammon's threat to Jabesh-Gilead, do not cry out to God for assistance in the way described at the time of the earlier Judges. So, too, the omniscient narrator may know that "the spirit of God came upon Saul" (11 : 8) when he heard of the plight of Jabesh Gilead; but when they defeat Ammon, it seems that the people believe that they themselves, under the leadership of Saul (the `nagid') are responsible for the victory - Eslinger 1985 : 371 and 61.

It shows them that their king is strong enough. In their perception they are in charge of their own affairs, ("like all the nations"). That is, the theocratic monarchy has proved to be workable - although God's ultimate control of events is acknowledged in 11 : 13.

Rejection has finally become acceptance. There is no inconsistency between chapter 10 : 17 (rejection of the monarchy) and 11 : 14-15 (acceptance).

The increased confidence of everyone in the theocratic monarchy after its military success accounts for the apparent inconsistencies between chapters 11 and 10 : 17 of the text - Anomaly (4).

2e Conclusion to Section 17

It was suggested at the beginning of this study that diverse 'voices' would be heard behind the Biblical account of the period preceding the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. As indicated in Section 17, those voices are heard when reading I Samuel : 1-12.

The voices of those wanting change are at their most urgent after the Philistine defeat of Israel at Aphek / Eben-ezer, where an increasingly secular tone is noted and the idea that God as king had not saved Israel is expressed (4 : 3).

At the same time, and with equal persistence, is heard the argument of those who would reject the monarchical solution. It is noticed in the joyous reception of the Beth Shemeshites at the Ark's return (6 : 13); it is noticed behind the events of chapter 7, when all is going well for Israel, and the inclination for change has temporarily disappeared.

The 'voices' of I Samuel may be less distinct than the people's earlier plea to Gideon for a king and his rebuttal, but they are heard more regularly now, with first one and then the other point of view claiming dominance in the debate - monarchist opinion being countered by the anti-monarchist, and then again those who want a king, rousing Israel to the idea of change.

The debate and its resolution is summed up by Eslinger, Lyle M. Kingship of God in Crisis. He says, "the people requested a *melekh* [king] and political independence. Yahweh responds with a *nagid* [captain, officer] and an emphatic 'my people' meaning the reaffirmation of the Covenant" Eslinger, 1985: 356-7<sup>64</sup>

The proponents of the 'new way' and the 'old way' have to make adjustments in the new dispensation. But in the theocratic monarchy which eventuates, the two principles which formed the essence of the monarchical debate are upheld; the people's need for security is recognised and Israel's spirituality is endorsed.

Chapter 11 of I Samuel ends with accord. Samuel says, 'lechu ve-neilchah ha-gilgal...' "let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there" (11 : 14). The opposing voices are quiet. The debate is no longer heard.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Much use has been made of the source Eslinger, Lyle M. Kingship of God in Crisis, particularly concerning:

- i) the identification of phrases regarding limitations to the monarchy - 'u-mashachto le-nagid' (9 : 16) Eslinger, 1985: 303-4 - 've-y-atzer be-ami' (9 : 17) Eslinger, 1985: 309-10; and of 'mishpat ha-melucha' (10 : 25) as the Constitution (the manner of the kingdom') Eslinger, 1985: 352..
- ii) the understanding of 'the children of Belial' (10 : 27) as political dissidents. (This source refers to them as 'renegades' Eslinger, 1985: 376-7.

<sup>65</sup> With 1 Samuel Ch 11 the new king is installed. But I Samuel Ch 12 (Samuel's oration) also belongs to the textual unit defined as the period of the Judges. In it, Israel's past history is recalled, the people are reminded of God's supremacy and told that the new monarchy is to operate according to his law. The period of the kings commences.

## 18. CONCLUSION TO WORK

To conclude this study of change in the period of the Judges, the approach which has been used is compared with the approach of other Biblical methodologies.

On examining the methodologies, perspectives and attitudes to sources of the six writers discussed in Part A of this study (page 15 to 52), it appeared that a close reading (a literary analysis) would best detect data and attitudes to change in Israel at the time of the establishment of the monarchy (the most important change that occurred during the period of the Judges) and the tensions involved in taking such a step.

### 1. Regarding the Approach Chosen

- a) There has always been consensus that the Israelite confederacy and its judge system were ultimately replaced by a monarchy, the first king being Saul. The Bible is clear on this historical fact.
- b) However, the nature of the transition was subject to diverse interpretations and surveyed from various perspectives. A sociological interpretation was given, for example, by N. Gottwald; a religious/historical perspective was used by J. Bright.<sup>66</sup> R. Polzin's literary approach discovered analogies to the monarchical issue in the beginning of 1 Samuel.

---

<sup>66</sup> For example, Gottwald attributes the longevity of the Confederacy and the delay in establishing a monarchy to a social revolution in Israel's history. Bright attributes the same phenomena to religion and the binding force of the Covenant.

- c. The present study views events from no such particular perspective. But it is a close reading of the text which does ask questions and seeks answers relevant to change.

## 2. Regarding the Treatment of Sources.

- a. The same texts (in the Bible) regarding the change to a monarchy are available to all scholars.
- b. Some concern themselves with source criticism and omit passages thought to be interpolated - for example N. Gottwald carefully sifts sources. When sources are used despite apparent contradictions, they may be explained and accounted for - as with Y. Kaufmann's distinction between the 'ideal land' and the 'real land' of Israel. Polzin's belief that reference to change threads through 1 Samuel (1-12) explains what is usually thought to be an intruder: 1 Samuel 2.
- c. The present study used as its source the complete text per se - that is, the Book of Judges and 1 Samuel (1-12), synchronically. Moreover, the apparent textual anomalies were found to make a positive contribution to the meaning of the text. This can be seen in Chapter 17 (Samuel) when they represent opposing voices in the monarchical debate.

Through the close reading and synchronic approach used in the present study, the agitation that fermented beneath the surface of Israelite life at this time of change has been revealed. It commenced at the time of Deborah when a shift in attitude from the 'old way' was

glimpsed, and culminated in a vital and determined move for change at the time of Samuel, the last Judge of Israel.

It was exhilarating indeed in completing this study to find within the Hebrew text itself the words of controversy and compromise surrounding the monarchical debate, and to hear diverse 'voices' behind the text.

University of Cape Town

**A Study of Change in the period of the Judges**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Albright, W.F.

Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan Doubleday and Co., N.Y. 1968.

Amit, Yaira

A concealed polemic in the story of the conquest of Dan in Bet Mikra Vol. 126 (3), 1990 and

The episode of the concubine at Gibeah as a concealed polemic against the kingship of Saul in Bet Mikra vol. 129 (2), 1991.

Boling, R.G. in

The Anchor Bible Dictionary Vols. II (Gideon) and III (Judges) Doubleday, New York, N.Y., 1992 ed. David Noel Freedman.

Brenner, Athalya

A Triangle and a Rhombus in Narrative Structure : A Proposed Integrative Reading of Judges 4 and 5 in a Feminist Companion to Judges pp. 98-110 JSOT, Sheffield, 1993 ed. Athalya Brenner.

Bright, John

A History of Israel SCM Press, London, 1960.

Bright, John

A History of Israel (revised edition) SCM Press, London, 1972.

Bright, John.

A History of Israel (3rd edition) SCM Press, London, 1981.

Bronner, Leila Leah

Valorized or Vilified? The Women of Judges in Midrashic Sources in a Feminist Companion to Judges pp. 72-98 JSOT, Sheffield 1993 ed.

Athalya Brenner.

Buber, M.

Kingship of God Harper and Row, London 1961.

Cassuto, Umberto

The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch

Magnes Press, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, tr. by I. Abrahams, 1941.

Emerton, J.A.

Gideon and Jerubaal in Journal of Theological Studies No 17 pt (2)

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976.

Eslinger, Lyle M.

Kingship of God in Crisis : a close reading of I Samuel (1-12) JSOT

Press, Almond, Sheffield, 1985.

Friedman, R.E.

Who Wrote the Bible? Harper & Row, New York, 1987.

Gordon, J.P.

Samuel 1 and 2 JSOT Press, University of Sheffield, 1984.

Gottwald, Norman K.

The Tribes of Yahweh : A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel  
1250 - 1050 B.C.E. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1979.

Jonker, L.C.

Exclusivity and variety : Perspectives on Multidimensional Exegesis Kok :  
Kampen in the CBET Series, 1996.

Kaufmann, Yehezkel

The Religion of Israel translated and abridged by M. Greenberg Allen &  
Unwin, London, 1961.

Klein, Lilian R.

The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges Almond Press, Sheffield,  
1988.

Mayes, A.D.H.

Israel in the Period of the Judges JSOT Press, University of Sheffield,  
1985.

Noth, M.

Überlieferungs geschichtliche p1 - 110 : The Deuteronomistic History  
JSOT/15 tr, by Jane Doull et al JSOT Sheffield, 1981. (details given in  
Bibliography of L.M. Eslinger).

Polzin, R.

A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History Part 2 of I Samuel, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1993.

Rabin, H.

Shirat Devorah 'ke mismah tarbuti' / The Song of Deborah as a cultural text in Iyunim ba-Sepher Shoftim / Studies in the Book of Judges Kiryath Sepher, Jerusalem 1996.

Reisenberger, A.

The Rhetorical Power of Literary Convention - Artistic Meaning and Persuasion in Biblical Discourse Koers Vol. 61(2) 1996 : 203-212.

Soggin, J. Alberto

Judges Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1962.

Weber, Max

Ancient Judaism Free Press, New York tr. D. Martindale, 1962.

Weber, Max

The Sociology of Religion Beacon Press, Boston, 1964.

The Sociology of Religion Beacon Press, Boston, 1964.

The Bible used in this study, Old Testament Hebrew and English British and Foreign Bible Society.

The Period of the Judges  
the Israelite Tribes  
and towns mentioned  
in the present study

