

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY STAVANGER

THE KING AND OTHER PARTS OF ARISTOCRACY:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT POWER DIVISION AND ITS
IMPLICATION FOR THE CHURCH

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE COURSE: MASTER OF THEOLOGY

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ABBREVIATIONS

In the process of writing, I have consulted some books in case of style and abbreviations. The style of this paper is based upon *The Chicago Manual of Style*, (14th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). However, the abbreviations for the biblical books, various commentaries and Bible dictionaries are done according to the book; Alexander, Patrick H. et al. eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999). Though not all abbreviations are in the mentioned book, those which are missing are defined accordingly below:

CD-Central Diocese

CHALOT-The Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament

ELCT-The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania

NCBC-The New Century Bible Commentary

NIDB- New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

WBD- World Bible Dictionary

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation and Statement of the Problem

My interest in doing a study on the mentioned theme springs out from observing the Old Testament canon. In the process I observed the traditional divisions of the Hebrew Bible which lead us to three parts: The Pentateuch (Hebrew תורה meaning instruction, the law, which is translated νόμος by the LXX and the New Testament); the Prophets (Hebrew נביאים which are further divided into Former, Hebrew רשאים i.e. the historical books and Later, Hebrew אחרונים which include all the prophets except Daniel, which Israel did not consider to be a prophetic book); finally the Writings (Hebrew כתבים covering the rest).¹

A closer reading of all these three parts reveals that In Israel there were people creating the Old Testament. In other words, these people serve as the institutions of power in old Israel. In the Pentateuch, priests are mentioned to play a great role in Israel especially on matters concerning the Law. In the Prophets, the historical books particularly Samuel and Kings are all about different kings working as leaders in Israel. However in the Prophets also we find another institution mentioned to be functioning is that of prophets. In the last part, the Writings we encounter wisdom literature, something which implies the presence of wise men that are behind this wisdom. The presence of all these people, working at the same time, awakens my curiosity on how did they work together to serve Israel as a nation.

As far as this canon is concerned, the Old Testament is believed to have some basic concepts about human life and dignity of the individuals and the society at large. One of the strong features in it is a sound distribution of functions of power which is one of the basic

¹ On more explanation about the canon see J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1898), 13-28.

principles of most democratic constitutions.² The book of Deuteronomy might serve as a starting point of this distribution of power due to its moral and humanistic character. This book contains many ethical laws which have no counterpart elsewhere in the Pentateuch.³ These (God's) laws as presented in chapters 12-26 are given to maintain Israelite society, in their justice and their ability to secure God's closeness.⁴ The law of kings (Deut 17:14-20) is one of these laws. The closer look of this law shows that the role of the king, the official likely to become the most powerful is surprisingly seen to be more deemphasized, as Tigay says, than any other official.⁵ Deuteronomy's policy of limiting power to the king, the one expected to be the highest authority, gives room for other officials to contribute on the leadership in Israel.

Moreover, the separation of different functions in different societies may differ, but to some extent there is a common trend, i.e. the distinction between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The only passage in the Bible which speaks about the duties of a king (the law of kings) indicates that the king was mainly doing the executive duties but nothing mentioned about legislature, judiciary or any other duty. As far as this law is concerned, someone may come up with questions: How was power distributed in the Israelite monarchy? Secondly, what does this power distribution imply in the modern society, particularly the Church?

1.2 Aim of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to study the Old Testament power division between the king and the other officials who worked beside him. However, this paper seeks to look for an implication of this power division in the Church as well.

² Norbert Lohfink, "Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Offices in Deuteronomy 16:18-18:22," in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*, ed. Duane L. Christensen, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 336-352.

³ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 282.

⁴ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), xvi.

⁵ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 166.

1.3 Research Methodology

The most part of this paper is exegetical and various methods are employed. This is taken into account because biblical criticism “methods” are theories rather than methods, resulting from the formalizing of intuitions about the meaning of biblical texts.⁶ This brings an insight that one method can not only apply but also needs to cooperate with others as well. First of all, form criticism has been very helpful to identify the genre of the text and its *Sitz im Leben*.⁷ By this method it is clear to what type of the text it is and in which context it was spoken, hence to bring an understanding of it. Secondly, the structuralist criticism tries to bring the meaning of the text in the Israelite culture and by utilizing this method; the text itself is thoroughly studied for a better interpretation. The textual criticism is done in this paper to establish the original wording of the texts which are interpreted. These mentioned exegetical methods are not applied to each text dealt with in this paper except to some. However, individual terms are studied semantically with a thorough lexical-syntactical analysis for the purpose of extracting the proper meaning of terms among a wide range of related terms. I have provided my own translation of texts for a better understanding from their original wording.

For the part of the situation of the Church in Tanzania, a qualitative research was done during the summer holiday (June-August 2008). In this method, I conducted interviews through conversation where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee.⁸ This method was chosen due to the culture of the interviewees where questions about leadership need a deeper conversation rather than using questionnaires. Open questions were used and the interviewees were able to give deep explanations.⁹ The groups focused were

⁶ John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), 244.

⁷ This is a German phrase which is suffering its English meaning. In this paper, the phrase means a social context in which the genre in question is appropriate. There are various definitions suggested for it but this one seems to be favorable at least to me. See also Barton, 32-33.

⁸ Steinar Kvale & Svend Brinkmann, *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009), 1-2.

⁹ For the nature of the questions asked, see appendix A.

pastors, evangelists and lay Christians. The named groups are the one that are either leaders in Church or close to Church leadership and their views are genuine. However, 20 people were interviewed but in this paper only 5 represent others because the ideas they gave were similar.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

Since I am dealing with power distribution between the king and other officials, I have worked on the texts related to the topic. For the king, I have done an exegesis of the text which talks about the duties of the king (Deut 17:14-20). However, Jer 18:18 gives me an insight on other officials i.e. the priests, the wise men and prophets. For this case, other officials working alongside the king are studied, the text concerning the priests, Deut 17:8-13, where the court of justice is mentioned, some text related to the wise men in Prov 22:17-24:34 as well. Concerning the prophets, the following ones serve as representatives of others: Samuel, Nathan, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos. These are chosen because their work with kings seems to be appropriate for my topic since they presented the word from YHWH to the kings. In this paper I have confined myself on the leadership roles particularly the power distribution between the top leader and those ones under him.

Chapter Two

EXEGETICAL INVESTIGATION OF DEUTERONOMY 17:14-20

2.1 Introduction

Now it is important to deal with the Law of Kings itself as we read in Deut 17:14-20. In this chapter, a thorough interpretation of the text in question is going to be done by employing textual, form and structural criticisms. However, I am going to survey the view of kingship in the Bible by showing examples on how kingship was perceived. This will be helpful for the rest of chapter 2 where the meaning of the text is expected to be exposed.

2.2 A Brief Survey of Perceptions on Kingship

The issue of kingship has been portrayed both positively and negatively in the Bible. Recent scholarship admits that different groups viewed kingship quite differently, this brings difficulties from what perspective kingship should be considered.¹⁰ In 1Sam 8 for example, kingship is seen not to be divinely ordained but simply a people's demand. In 1Sam 8:4-5, the Israelites are seen to ask for a king "such as all nations have." At first, this request seems to be that Israel wanted a king in response to the challenge of the surrounding world.¹¹ It was an imitation to what was happening to its neighbors rather than a natural order from Yahweh. Secondly, 1Sam 8:7 shows us that this request was contrary to kingship of Yahweh, it was against Yahweh's will. The same is said when Gideon was refusing to rule Israel and proposed that Israel was to be ruled by Yahweh and not human beings (Judg 8:22-23). After the inquiry for a king, Samuel is not happy (1Sam 8: 6) because the issue seems to be both a personal betrayal (1Sam 8:7) and religious

¹⁰ *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (IDB) vol.3*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 505.

¹¹ Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology Outline*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 86.

impropriety.¹² On one hand, someone may argue that this was only Samuel's problem since he knew that having a king walking before Israel would mean the end of his term of service. On the other hand Yahweh himself says he is rejected by his people Israel.

Then YHWH through Prophet Samuel gives the Israelites the consequences of having a king. The king is said to rule over them *וַיִּמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם*, this means he will be over the people and giving orders to them. This is followed by a list of things he will do as a dictator such as taking the best of the fields and vineyard, abusing sons and daughters of Israel, and taking the tenth of the flocks *עֶשֶׂר* (1Sam 8:10-18). The verb *עֶשֶׂר* "to tithe" as used here is said to be distinct from the tithe that supported the religious institutions (Deut 14:22-29, 26:12-15) based on YHWH as a king, the tithe referred here is a tax levied upon agricultural products for supporting the royal estates.¹³ Even if the point here is YHWH's kingship over Israel, I don't think that YHWH can rule directly. What I mean here is that there must be a leader (a human being) whom YHWH will use to rule over his people. A sharp discouragement of kingship might be understood as a negative view, not taking into consideration that YHWH uses human beings to rule.

The achievements of various kings are widely discussed in the OT. Starting from King Saul, he was given a task of punishing Amalek for what he did to Israel on their way from Egypt (Exod 17:8-16, Deut 25:17-19). The Amalekites were to be put under the ban, *חֶרֶם* that is exterminated to the last man, woman, child and animal (1Sam 15:3). In vv 4-9 we read, Agag, the Amalekite king is not killed but taken alive and the selected livestock are spared for sacrifice in Gilgal. This leads to what we find that he was charged for "not following YHWH's commands" and because of this, Saul is twice told (1Sam 15:25,26) "he has rejected you from being king." This rejection of the first king portrays a negative perspective of a king; it seems as if Saul did not do anything good at all in all of his time as a king!

Another example is Solomon. In 1Kgs 11:1-13 we read what can be called Solomon's apostasy. From the story, Solomon is seen falling in love with many foreign women to the extent of having 700 wives and 300 concubines (1Kgs 11:3) from the nations whom YHWH said "You

¹² P. Kyle McCarter, *1Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, (The Anchor Bible(AB), Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1980), 156.

¹³ McCarter, *1Samuel*, 158.

should not join with them and they should not join with you...” (לֹא־תִבְּאוּ בָּהֶם וְהֵם לֹא־יָבֹאוּ בָּכֶם). The verb בִּיא as used here is the same as in Josh 23:7, 12 meaning associating with, mixing with.¹⁴ These wives enticed him after other gods and YHWH responds to this apostasy in v 11 “Since this is your attitude...you have not kept my covenant and my decrees...I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.” Again if this text is regarded as a source of understanding kingship in the Bible, then someone will get a negative picture of the institution.

Many kings are portrayed as engaging themselves in the abuse of power. Among them, the following serve as a good example of this negative attitude. Rehoboam (1Kgs 12:1-19), Manasseh (2Kgs 21:1-18) who is said to do evil in the sight of YHWH and Amon (2Kgs 33:19-26) who also did evil as his father Manasseh.

On the other hand the Bible also portrays a positive picture on kingship. A good example can be that of Josiah, the reformer (2Kgs 23:1-25). There is a similarity in tradition between 2Chr 35:1 and 2Kgs 23:21 and this gives credit (Positive view) to Josiah as working for the benefit of the nation, probably not as other kings who abused their offices. Another example in this group can be Hezekiah who also did reformation activities (2Kgs 18:1-16). This story by the Chronicler is based on the Deuteronomist source (2Kgs 18) where in the evaluation of Hezekiah (2Chr 35:20-21) there is nothing like an extreme of the Deuteronomist to an extent of declaring Hezekiah as the best king ever.¹⁵

From this short survey it is evident that these biblical sources of kingship are either biased or incomplete since they do not portray a full picture of a king. Going to an extreme of saying that kingship should not exist is not fair because YHWH uses his creation to rule. It is true that some kings did evil in the eyes of YHWH but kings are human beings who need YHWH’s help always to overcome evil. How can they be helped to do according to YHWH’s will, is a very important question to be discussed here. The Law of Kings is given to guide kings to lead Israel. It is the purpose of this chapter to unveil the meaning of this law. Before the interpretation of the text itself, let us take into consideration the original wording of the text.

¹⁴ Mordechai Cogan, *1Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (Anchor Bible (AB), New York: Doubleday, 2001), 326.

¹⁵ Jacob M. Mayer, *2Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, (The Anchor Bible, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979), 184.

2.3 Textual Criticism and Translation

V16. Beside the word הַרְבִּיחַ which is read in Masoretic text, the Septuagint adds the word ἑαυτῷ thus it reads “for himself.” The Syriac version, the Targums and the Vulgate support the LXX. The prosodic analysis supports the Masoretic Text.¹⁶ The reading by the Samaritan Pentateuch and the MT אָמַר is a bit tricky. Despite the additional “ה” in the Samaritan Pentateuch it is read *amar*, “he said,” just like the MT. Thus, the Samaritan Pentateuch reads הָאָמַר “he said” the same as אָמַר “he said” of the Masoretic text. The Samaritan Pentateuch was copied from the Hebrew.¹⁷ That being the case, I favor the Masoretic Text. The word לָכֶם is omitted in one Hebrew manuscript and in some Septuagint witnesses. One manuscript reads אֲלֵי. There is a serious problem in the study of the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy especially the frequent change of the second person singular and the plural forms in verbs and pronominal suffixes, *Numeruswechsel*.¹⁸ From that point of view, the Masoretic reading remains convincing.

V18. The Septuagint reads το δευτερονομιον τουτο “this repetition,” see also the Vulgate (the phrase which is the origin of the name of the book), instead of אֶת־מִשְׁנֵי־נְהַחֲרָה הַזֹּאת “with a copy of this law” read by the Masoretic text.

V19. Sebir, Samaritan Pentateuch and Targum read בָּהּ “in her” (feminine, referring to the *torah*) instead of בּוֹ “in it” (masculine, referring to the scroll) which is in Masoretic text. Since the Targums are the Aramaic comments about the Hebrew text, dating from about 250BC to 300BC,¹⁹ and the Samaritan Pentateuch shows its dependency in the Hebrew text, still the reading by the Masoretic text is the original one. Some Hebrew manuscripts and some

¹⁶ Duane L. Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Deuteronomy 1-21:9* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 380.

¹⁷ James C. Bangsund, *Biblical Hebrew: A Simplified Grammar* (Usa River: Research Institute of Makumira University College, 2001), 244.

¹⁸ Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary*, C. English has no distinction between the singular and the plural in the second person, this makes the translation to be the same. Most commentators ignore it since the changes have no effect on the meaning of the text.

¹⁹ Bangsund, *Biblical Hebrew*, 244.

Septuagint witnesses read אלהיך “your God” instead of אלהיו “his God” as it appears in the Masoretic text. First of all, if someone considers the last letters ך of the reading by LXX and ם of the reading by MT, s/he might notice a slight resemblance which can easily confuse the reader or the scribe especially when the text is written by hand. May be the LXX scribe copied it wrongly from the MT. Secondly, if we observe the grammatical construction of the Hebrew of this sentence, it is all about the 3rd person singular “him,” something which might suggest “his God” to be the right reading. From these two arguments I have made, I suggest the MT to be followed. The Septuagint reads τας εντολας αυτας, “these commandments” האלה הדברים while the LXX^{Fmin} reads τας εντολας αυτου דבריו one Hebrew manuscript and Targum Pr. J add כל “all” to be read with the expression ואת-החקים Still the prosodic analysis shows an agreement with the Masoretic text as the correct one.²⁰

V20. The Samaritan Pentateuch reads רם “he lifts up” while some manuscripts read ראם “exalted.” For b, the Samaritan Pentateuch reads סר for סור “he turned aside,” while the Masoretic text uses an infinitive construct “to be exalted.” In both cases, regardless of the difference on letters, the meaning is the same. C-c the Samaritan Pentateuch reads על כסא ממלכתו “on the throne of his kingdom” for על-ממלכתו “on his kingdom” as read by Masoretic text. Since the Samaritan Pentateuch depends on the Masoretic text, the addition of כסא “a throne” can possibly be the editorial work and still the Masoretic text be the original reading.

From the above textual criticism, it has been evident that various witnesses show a discrepancy in the wording of the text. This is the main reason to the differences in readings found in different versions of the Bible. As it has been surveyed, the options which are suggested different from the Masoretic text have proved not to be strong. This makes the Masoretic text to stand, at least for this text to be the original wording. In this paper, the translation of the text follows the Masoretic text, thus the text reads:

V14. When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving to you and you will possess and dwell in it, and you will say “I will put over me a king as all the nations around me.”

²⁰ Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 381.

V15. You may indeed put over you a king he whom the Lord your God will choose, you will put a king from the midst of your brothers do not put over you a foreign man who is not your brother.

V16. Only he shall not multiply horses for himself lest his heart turn aside and he shall not send people back to Egypt in order to add horses, and the LORD said to you, you shall never return to that way again.

V17. And he shall not multiply wives for himself lest his heart turn aside, and he shall not multiply silver and gold in excess.

V18. When he is seated on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this Law on a scroll under the supervision of the priests the Levites.

V19. And it shall be with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this Law and these statutes to do them.

V20. That his heart not to be exalted above his brothers and lest he turns aside from the commandment to the right or to the left that the days may be prolonged in his kingdom for him and his sons in the midst of Israel.

2.4 The Form and Structure of the Text

Though to some people it might bring a question to why I appeal to this approach, for me it is very important to know the type of the text I am dealing with. As John Barton says, dealing with a book of unknown genre brings an imperfect understanding;²¹ Form Criticism here is to help us not only to understand but also to apply a text accordingly since its form and the social setting will be clear.

First of all, the book of Deuteronomy has four headings. The first one is Deut 1:1 “These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan...” This makes someone right after reading this heading to perceive that what follows is a kind of speech to all

²¹ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 42-43.

Israelites. The second heading appears in Deut 4:44-49 “This is the Law Moses set before the Israelites. These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them...” The third heading which to some extent resembles the second one if found in Deut 29:1 “these are the terms of the covenant the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.” These words sound like a renewal of the previous set of laws given to Israel. The fourth heading is the one in Deut 33:1 “This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death.” All these headings suggest different kinds of materials found in the book.²² However, for the sake of this part of the paper, the difference of the materials in the book is not a big deal but what kind of a book as a whole is this.

Some scholars have worked hard to assign Deuteronomy as a farewell speech, but in the wider context due to its different materials as “testaments” for office-bearers.²³ Beside that suggested “form” of Deuteronomy, basing on the contents of the book (which is seen as a homiletic instruction for the laity), the *Sitz im Leben* is said to be a cultic celebration, perhaps from a feast of renewal of the covenant.²⁴ Deuteronomy as a law code, incorporating the already existing laws also gained much attention.²⁵ Recently, there is a suggestion that Deuteronomy belongs to a genre known as “vassal” or “suzerainty” treaty which combined historical narratives, regulations and curses together.²⁶ However, form criticism has achieved by assigning Deuteronomy by most scholars agreeing that its genre can be a “wisdom book” with its *Sitz im Leben* in the classroom or a family.²⁷ From the above discussion, I agree that Deuteronomy is full of instructions which fit for the society at large. Calling it a wisdom book is convincing and

²² For more discussion on the four headings, see R.E Clements, *Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 13-14. For Clements, these different parts suggest different times and stages in the book’s composition.

²³ Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press, 1966), 22-23.

²⁴ Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 23.

²⁵ A.D.H. Mayers, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 29-30.

²⁶ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 40-41. This kind of treaty was common in the Ancient Near East especially the extra biblical tradition, c.f. Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 21, Mayers, *The New Century Bible Commentary*, 30.

²⁷ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 42.

possibly the social context for teaching it was the classroom or family. However, Deut 17: 14-20 is a set of instructions for the quality of an ideal Israelite top leader, the king.

In Deut 17:14-20, we find two main structures namely vv16, 17, 20a and vv18-19 explaining what the king must not do and what he must do respectively. These two parts bring a balance which for the structuralism approach can be called the binary opposition which is a key of understanding the text.²⁸ These verses tell us about a picture of an ideal king who is to be the leader of people and at the same time pleasing YHWH. There are other two complementary structures vv14-15 and v20b. The former gives conditions to get a king and the later gives the outcomes of following those conditions i.e. the king and his descendants to reign a long time. This also can be said to be the climax of the Law of Kings since it gives the expected goal.

2.5 Exegesis of Deuteronomy 17:14-20

2.5.1 Semantic Analysis of מֶלֶךְ Compared to מַלְאָךְ and מְשִׁיחַ

Before going further, there is an importance of studying the term מֶלֶךְ “king” as used in the Bible. This part will make a semantic study of the term and the other related terms in the Bible. In this semantic study, the lexical-syntactical analysis is employed for the purpose of extracting the meaning of this individual term. The questions to be dealt with are two, namely, which words are used to designate a king in the Old Testament? What are their possible meanings and how are they used? The Hebrew words to be analyzed here are three namely, מֶלֶךְ, מַלְאָךְ, and מְשִׁיחַ.

1. מֶלֶךְ is a noun appearing about 2500 times and is translated as king.²⁹ It refers to a male sovereign ruler who exercises authority over a defined territorial area, the state.³⁰ מַלְאָךְ is the designation for a king whereas other derivatives of the root מֶלֶךְ denote kingship, kingdom, to be

²⁸ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 104-137.

²⁹ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (CHALOT), (Laiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 198.

³⁰ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ABD) vol 4, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 40. Cf *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* (HBD), ed. Paul J. Achtemeier, (New York: Harper Collins publishers, 1985), 567. The authority said here is a political one.

king or reign while the notion of “dominion” or “rule” is expressed by the root מִשַׁל.³¹ In relation to the other languages, the Arabic root *mlk* means “to own completely” and this has been suggested to indicate a similar basic meaning with the Hebrew מֶלֶךְ.³² When someone makes a comparison between the Semitic languages for example, Hebrew against Akkadian, s/he finds, Hebrew has *melek* for “king” and *sar* for “official” or “prince” while the Akkadian has *sarru* for “king” and *maliku* for “counselor.”³³ This is an amazing feature to be found in the Semitic languages which I might say it shows a difference in the use of terms designating the king. Though the office of the king is common to the Semitic culture it is not necessarily the terminology used to be from the same root.

In the Hebrew Bible, the noun מֶלֶךְ is frequently used to refer to neighboring kings to Israel. This is clear for example for Egypt Gen 39:20, Exod 1:8, Deut 11:3, 1Kgs 3:1. For Mesopotamia, Shinar, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia Judg 3:8, 10, Gen 14:1-4, 2Kgs 15:19, 20, 29, 17:3-4, 18:13-15, Ezr 1:1-2, 4:3-5, Esth 1:2, 1Kgs 11:18, 40, 14:25, 2Kgs 17:4-6, 23:39. For Canaan, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Gen 14:2-4, 20:2, 26:1, 8, 36:31, Num 20:14, 21:1-3, 22:4, 10, Deut 1:4, 3:1-2, Josh 2:2, Judg 1:7, 5:19, 8:5, 12, 11:12-13, 2Kgs 3:4-7. For Tyre, 2Sam 5:11, 1Kgs 5:15, 9:11. All these uses of the term do not show any difference with the noun being used by Israel itself Gen 36:31, Num 23:21, 24:7, Deut 17:14-20, Judg 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25, 1Sam 2:10, 8:5-9, 2Sam 2:4-7, 1Kgs 1:33, 34-37. From this perspective, one may say that even if the concept of kingship was common to both Israel and its neighbors it is not true to say that the term used to designate a “king” was the same to all Semitic nations because others used the root *mlk* while the Akkadian for example, used *sar*. In the case where the term was the same, probably one might have borrowed it from another. Zimmerli says when the idea of kingship was taking its concrete form in Israel, elsewhere in the Ancient Near East it had long been there.³⁴ In my opinion, this idea is very difficult to be ruled out. The evidence we have from the biblical

³¹ ABD, 40.

³² ABD, 40.

³³ Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976), 296.

³⁴ Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology Outline*, 6.

source may lead us to conclude that despite the difference in terminology, Israel used the term מֶלֶךְ for king whether in Israel itself or a king of other nations.

2. מַנְיָד means chief, leader, sovereign.³⁵ The leadership said here has sometimes been specified to be military, i.e. being in front as a military leader.³⁶ The Hebrew Bible describes the term to have different uses, that is for kings (1Sam 13:14, 1Kgs 1:35, 2Kgs 20:5), and for military officers or captains (1Chr 12:27, 13:1, 2Chr 32:31). Other uses associated with the term are like the chief of the tribe (2Chr 19:11) and the temple (2Chr 31:13, Jer 20:1).

It is very interesting that when Saul is anointed, the term used is מַנְיָד (1Sam 9:16, 10:1). It has been said that in the pre-exilic period, the term occurs only in the singular, for the king as Yahweh's choice.³⁷ In most cases it is translated as "prince", and is used to make a clear distinction for example for the case of Saul, his divine ordination and his "human rank." This occurs 10 times in 1Sam-2Kgs (1Sam 9:16, 10:1, 13:14, 25:30, 2Sam 5:2, 6:21, 7:8, 1Kgs 1:35, 14:7, 2Kgs 20:5). This argument has even led to a deduction that the term refers to the designated successor of the king, that is the crown prince (cf. 1Kgs 1:20, 35), thus the recent investigations shows the term מַנְיָד as a title to contribute little to the semantic determination of מֶלֶךְ.³⁸

3. מִשָּׁח means "anointed one."³⁹ The noun מִשָּׁח is derived from the verb מָשַׁח which means to anoint and it occurs 39 times in the OT.⁴⁰ In the Pentateuch, anointing (and the root מָשַׁח) is connected to consecration rituals for the most part, and when it comes to people, it is the priests

³⁵ CHALOT, 226.

³⁶ *The New Bible Dictionary* (NBD), ed. J.D. Douglas, (London: Inter-varsity Press, 1962), 1035.

³⁷ ABD, 87.

³⁸ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT) vol.viii, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1997), 356.

³⁹ CHALOT, 218.

⁴⁰ *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (IDB): *An Illustrated Encyclopedia* vol.3, ed. Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 360.

who are anointed for special service to God.⁴¹ The root occurs only once in Genesis in a ritual in which Jacob anointed a pillar (Gen 31:13). The book of Exodus mentions about the anointing oil (Exod 25:6) and the anointing of the tabernacle and its furniture (Exod 30:26, 40:9-11) while the only people who are anointed are the priests (Exod 28:41, 29:7, 30:30, 40:15). The same is mentioned also in the books of Leviticus and Numbers (Lev 4:3, 5, 16, 6:20, 22, Num 3:3, 35:25). Nevertheless, there is no use of the root in the Book of Deuteronomy. The above use of the term gives us an impression that in the Pentateuch, the one who is anointed is set apart for God's service.⁴² In the OT, 29 times the term designates primarily the king of Israel who ruled at that time.⁴³ Once it is referring to Cyrus of Persia (Isa 45:1). In post exilic writings it is applied differently e.g. to the high priest who inherited certain functions of the king (Lev 4:3, 5, 16, 6:22, Dan 9:25). It also applies to the patriarchs who were regarded as prophets (Ps 105:15, 1Chr 16:22). The basic form of the title "the Lord's anointed" of Israelite kings e.g. of Saul 1Sam 24:6, 26:9, 11, 16, 23, 2Sam 1:14, 16, of David 2Sam 19:21, 19:22, of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah Lam 4:20 is addressed in various ways depending on the context, that is "my anointed" (1Sam 2:35, Ps 132:17), "your anointed" (Ps 84:9, 89:38, Hab 3:13), "his anointed" (1Sam 12:3,5) and the "anointed of the God of Jacob" (2Sam 23:1). These expressions show what may be called the close connection between the king and God, the relation between the two.⁴⁴ So long as the verb gives a variety of people anointed, i.e. kings, priests and patriarchs, various things also were anointed like a pillar, tabernacle and furniture, this limits the possibility of the king to be the only "anointed one." Thus the term is not strong enough to be applied to designate a king when compared to *melek*.

In this first place, this topic has discussed the semantic analysis of the term *melek*. In the lexical analysis it has shown that there are different words which are used in the Hebrew Bible to designate a king. From this range of terminologies *melek* dominates since it is used many times as compared to the others i.e. *nagid* and *masiah*. Though all were used for a king but *nagid* and

⁴¹ Tremper Longman III, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings" in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 15.

⁴² Tremper Longman III, "The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings", 15.

⁴³ IDB, 360.

⁴⁴ IDB, 360, cf. TDOT, 357.

masiah have very little to contribute to the widely used term *melek*. However, the recent scholarship supports *melek* from the others. This does not rule out that sometimes the king in Israel was addressed as the anointed one or the one chosen by God. In this paper, *melek* is taken as the right term for “king.”

2.5.2 *Qualifications to Kingship in Deut 17:14-15*

At this point, we have to expound thoroughly the Law of Kings for the purpose of throwing some light into the instructions we get from it. In Deut 17:14-15 we encounter the introduction to the Law of Kings. This introductory part really states the qualifications of a king. The opening of the Law of Kings follows the common trend of the deuteronomic laws where there is a reference to the future and specifically taking the possession of the land, followed by the commandment (cf. Deut 6:20-25, 7:1-6, 8:7-9). In these verses the phrase “when the Lord God brings you into the land...” or the like, then followed by the commandment seems to be common (cf. Deut 12:29, 19:1, and the law about the prophet Deut 18:9-22). The Hebrew text uses the initial כִּי both as temporal and conditional i.e. “when” you enter and “if” these conditions are met.⁴⁵

Though verse 14 shows that kingship is just people’s demand, verse 15 shows a permissive character (cf. Deut 12:20, 18:6-8). This permission to kingship is limited to two conditions namely, YHWH’s choice יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיָבִיחֶךָ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ and ethnic kinship מִקְרֵב אֲרָמִיךָ. The former, was conditioned to be communicated through the prophet and not otherwise.⁴⁶ This was the norm in both South and North kingdoms and various verses pointing to appointment of kings witness (cf. 1Sam 9:16-17, 10:20-24, 16:1-13, 1Kgs 11:29-39, 2Kgs 9:1-13 in contrast to Hos 8:4). If someone considers these two verses together, s/he may find verse 15 contradicting verse 14 because there are two conflicting phenomena. In verse 14 the emphasis is put on people’s desires to have a king and they are allowed while in verse 15 there is a limitation to people’s desires. The solution to this contradiction is not easy but one may guess that the institution of

⁴⁵Richard D.Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 223.

⁴⁶Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 166.

monarchy is thought (in this case) to be unnecessary and unworthy that is why it has to be limited.

No concrete reason is given leading to the second condition of the king to be an Israelite. May be the Bible can provide some reasons like that of people feeling more secure by having their kinsman as a king (Judg 9:2, 2Sam 5:1). This issue of electing a foreigner to kingship is heavily accentuated by “do not dare” לֹא תִירָא (cf. Deut 12:17, 16:5, 22:3). Nelson suggests that this brings a connotation of something dishonorable or contrary to duty (Gen 37:4, Lam 4:14).⁴⁷ A foreign man אִישׁ נִכְרִי is distinct from an alien or sojourner. The foreign man is interpreted as the one who passes through Israel, perhaps doing business, not integrated into the community, nor is he recommended to the charity of Israelites.⁴⁸ From this perspective there is no need for him to be elected to be a king in Israel since he might bring the foreign influences in. The good example can be Omri and Ahab, people whose names do not bare a Hebrew origin. Through Ahab’s wife Jezebel, foreign influence was particularly strong in Israel (cf. 1Kgs 16:31-34) i.e. the worship of other gods apart from YHWH. Another biblical example which can fit in this particular discussion is that of Isa 7:6-25 where an Aramean person called the son of Tabeel is proposed to be installed as a king in Judah to replace Ahaz. YHWH refuses by responding “It will not take place...”

The discussion above suggests that kingship in the northern and southern kingdoms was supposed to be God’s choice despite the fact that it is people themselves who initiated by demanding for it. This is what YHWH planned to intervene in the case of who is fit for the post. Again, the king was supposed to be one of the Israelites because it was believed that an Israelite would preserve the loyalty in monotheistic worship of YHWH and hence not leading people of the covenant into apostasy. The restrictions continue as we will see in the following subtopic.

⁴⁷ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 223.

⁴⁸ NCBC, 248.

2.5.3 *The Limitation of a King in Deut 17:16-17*

In Deut 17:16-17 we encounter the threefold limitation. A king shall not multiply for himself horses, shall not multiply wives for himself and he must not amass silver and gold in excess. The verses are held together with third masculine singular suffixes “acquire for himself” אֵלֵי implying a selfish character being prohibited.

Many scholars have tried to comment on these prohibitions to the king. Their views are summarized in this subtopic. Christensen on his side says the prohibitions are all about military, political and economic powers.⁴⁹ According to him, the horse stands for cavalry and chariotry which are all military symbols and can be compared to the modern tanks. Perhaps the warhorses are forbidden as something counter to the ideology of the divine warrior while in Isa 2:7-9 and Mic 5:10-15 horses are mentioned in the context of infidelity.⁵⁰ Verse 16 stresses the limitation with “only” אֶחָד (cf. Deut 12:23, 26) and the attention shifts from “you” to “he” signifying the fact that the law applies to him, the king.⁵¹ We can also see how the would-be Kings Absalom and Adonijah abused power for their own purposes (2Sam 15:1, 1Kgs 1:5) by using horses and chariots, developing a self confidence instead of trusting on YHWH. This view of prohibiting the multiplication of horses has been given credit as helpful for the king to be free from pride and loss of awareness of the need to trust in YHWH.⁵² So it can be argued that the prohibition has a religious implication as well. Another aspect which is associated with the prohibition of multiplying horses is what Von Rad calls the supply of Hebrew soldiers in return for Egyptian horses, of which the king had been guilty⁵³ (cf. 1Kgs 10:28-29, Isa 31:1-3).

All these arguments do not rule out the fact that the Israelite king was responsible for the army. Israel had enemies who were always threatening them as it has been surveyed on section 2.2 of this paper. Even the introduction of kingship is an effort to join power and fight the

⁴⁹ Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 384.

⁵⁰ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 224.

⁵¹ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 224.

⁵² NCBC, 272.

⁵³ Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, 119. It is in this exchange that garrisons of mercenaries, like that in Elephantine may have come into being in Egypt, cf. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

enemies. On the other hand, this law seems to limit Israel and probably to be in danger of being defeated by enemies. Some scholars have seen this danger and try to address the issue. One of them being an assertion that horses are not prohibited totally but the king may acquire only enough horses for military needs, but none for personal use or grandeur.⁵⁴ I doubt this interpretation because owning personal horses for a king does not necessarily mean unfaithfulness to YHWH. However, having “enough horses for military needs” as suggested is a relative term which might mean “as many horses as they can” for a strong army. Also there is no fixed number for the “enough horses for military needs.” Yet, in the OT there are various verses which show a proper use of horses (Deut 20:1, Ps 20:7-8) which according to Tigay, they indicate that YHWH must be put in the first place instead of a self confidence built on horses and chariots⁵⁵ (cf. Isa 31:1, Hos 14:4, Ps 33:16-17, Prov 21:31). From this point of view I am convinced that the prohibition has less to do with the number of horses, what is intended here is the king to trust on YHWH and not on a strong army he has.

The command not to multiply wives refers to the harem of the Middle East, which has been a center of political power in the second millennium B.C.E.⁵⁶ Israel as a chosen nation had to be careful with this so as not to offend YHWH. Limiting the number of wives for a king

[.....] would have both external and internal effects. Characteristically, the explicit reason given is the destructive effect such marriages would have on the king’s religious loyalty, pointing to the dangers of political alliances. (The reader would certainly think of Solomon’s wives and Jezebel). Although this is similar to the preventive ideology of Deut 7: 3-4, it is not actually foreign wives who are forbidden, but too many wives of any sort. Royal marriages were also important within Israel as a way of consolidating political power. A large number of such marriages would increase the influence of those families so favored at the expense of others. Numerous wives would also flaunt the conspicuous wealth required to support them. Moreover wisdom tradition warned Kings in particular of the distractions presented by women (Prov 31:3).⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁵⁵ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁵⁶ WBD, 384. For him, Solomon’s many wives were an integral part of the foreign policy system, as Israel indeed became “like all the nations” in direct violation of the Law of Kings. Each wife represents a formal political alliance with a foreign entity.

⁵⁷ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 224.

Furthermore, another danger of many wives evident in the Bible is the apostasy from YHWH to the religions of the wives (cf. 1Kgs 11:1ff, 16:31-33). Also, large harem would distract the king from God's teachings and performing his duties. Solomon and Ahab tolerated and even indulged in idolatry to please the foreign wives they married to cement political alliances.⁵⁸ One interesting point here is that the Law of Kings does not suggest the exact number of women the king should marry and their nationalities. In the OT polygamy was not a sin, something which Africans would like because for them polygamy is within their culture. On the other side, if marrying foreign wives would lead the king to idolatry, then what if he marries his fellow Israelites? It is obvious that for Israelite women, there would be no apostasy from YHWH to other religions. Also for a patriarchal society like Israel is it possible for a wife to influence a husband to such extent of turning him away from YHWH? These are important things to bear in mind when pondering this law and it might be thought that turning away from YHWH is a personal weakness rather than being an external influence. Responding to the question of the number of wives, Halakhic exegesis as cited by Tigay suggests the king to have not more than eighteen wives while the Qumran temple scroll limits the king to one wife (cf. 11QTemple57:17-18).⁵⁹ I think what should be grasped here is that many wives increase responsibilities to the extent that the king might be physically weak and have a short time to serve YHWH. To prohibit him to add more probably makes him to use his time to serve the position he has.

The command that the king must not amass (silver) כֶּסֶף and (gold) זָהָב in excess refers to the economic power. Although Moses mentions only these two metals, this expression might be standing for wealth in general. Again if someone makes a closer look on this law, s/he might find that Moses is not clear about what reasons can motivate a king to accumulate wealth nor does he mention the actions the king might take to reach his goal. Probably Daniel Block's suggestion that Moses had in his mind primarily the accumulation of private wealth will be reached by imposing heavy taxes,⁶⁰ can offer a sound contribution. Again, I think the intention of this

⁵⁸ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

⁵⁹ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 168.

⁶⁰ Daniel I. Block, "The Burden of Leadership: the Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deut 17:14-20)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (July-September 2005:259-278): 268.

prohibition is not to show that silver and gold are evil. If they are bad, what can we say about Solomon's case when he is blessed by YHWH himself to the extent of being the richest person (1Kgs 3:1-15)? What is prohibited here is a lust for riches which might lead the king to unrighteous ways. Excess riches if obtained in righteous ways as a blessing from YHWH and also spent according to YHWH's will is not a sin but a blessing to the humankind.

Up to this moment, the interpretation we get from these three prohibitions is that Moses did not intend to prohibit the king from purchasing horses, or marriage, or the accumulation of silver and gold in general. What was prohibited is the act of turning away from YHWH by trusting the strength of the army with an abundance of horses and chariots. For the case of many wives, the king should have enough strength and time to serve YHWH rather than multiplying wives to the extent of spending more time with them. For the case of silver and gold, what is prohibited is the abuse of power for the king's personal gain. It should be remembered that "personal gain" was a problem exercised by Samuel's sons that made Israelites to claim to have a king. The Hebrew Bible reads (1Sam 8:3) *וַיִּטּוּ אַחֲרֵי הַבָּצֵעַ* meaning, "they turned aside after a private gain" shows clearly that something went wrong especially the noun *בָּצֵעַ* which means "illegal profit."⁶¹ In other words I may say, the sons of Samuel used the office for their personal gains, office abuse. Moses gives the strict prohibition but he uses a threefold repetition of the preposition *לִי*, "for himself" meaning that leadership is for the sake of the majority, the citizens and not for personal gain. All in all, the king is just a person used by YHWH but in reality, it is himself who is the King of Israel. After these restrictions, there is a move explaining what the king is supposed to do.

2.5.4 A King's Duty in Deut 17:18-19

Verses 18-19 appear to be like a move away from negative limits to a king's positive duties and from the general circumstances of his rule to the specific situation of his accession.⁶² This part will try to discuss these duties given to the king in detail. Here, two duties are going to be

⁶¹ CHALOT, 45. Cf. McCarter, *1Samuel*, 156.

⁶² Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 224.

expounded namely (1) To write himself a copy of this Torah וְיִכְתֹּב לָּו אֶת־מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת and (2) The Torah to be “repeated” constantly by the King in oral recitation וַיִּקְרָא בֹּ. Also, these duties are said to have two purposes, to learn to fear YHWH and “all the words of this Torah... to do them. Therefore it is the intention of this part to discuss these purposes as well.

In the Ancient Near East, writing is seen to be associated with royal figures. The following examples may illustrate this: In the autobiography of Idrimi, king of Alalakh it ends like this, “I wrote the achievement of my statute. Let the people [read it] and ble[ss me].”⁶³ In Hammurabi’s code also we find the king boasting “I wrote my precious words on my stela.”⁶⁴ In Deut 17: 18, it is not the King himself who wills and initiates the act of writing but it is his duty, the first duty given by YHWH. This is the opposite of the culture of the king willing to write and in my opinion in Deuteronomy what is to be written is not personal and no elements of boasting, though the idea of a king to write is common.

Writing a copy of this Torah being the first duty of the king, this law seems to cast the king into the Torah arch-reader.⁶⁵ As soon as he seats on his throne, the king is supposed to write for himself a copy of this Torah (מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה) and he has to study in all the days of his life. There are various reasons suggested to the process of the king making his own copy. Philo as referred by Tigay says that the reason is the fact that the act of writing makes a more indelible impression than hearing it read alone.⁶⁶ On the other side there are different translations like in 11QTemple, the reading is “they shall write for him” instead of “he shall write for himself.” Even the Masoretic reading “he shall write for himself” grammatically may mean “he shall have written.”⁶⁷ In spite of these arguments, as I have shown above, from the historical perspective the king to write for himself was not strange and I am convinced that he was to write for himself.

⁶³ “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” Translated by A. Leo Oppenheim (ANET, 558).

⁶⁴ “The Code of Hammurabi,” Translated by Theophile J. Meek (ANET, 178).

⁶⁵ Jean-Piere Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 71

⁶⁶ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 168.

⁶⁷ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 374.

Block, pondering this act of the king copying the Torah for himself he goes beyond the memorability concern as referred by Philo. For him the act is also sacred for the following reasons: 1. It involved copying a sacred document that claims to have been uttered by Moses by the command of YHWH (Deut 1:5; 4:5, 14; 6:1; 26:13-14). 2. It involved copying a document that was stored next to the most sacred object in Israel's possession, the ark of covenant. 3. It involved copying a document in a sacred setting, at the central sanctuary in the presence of the Levitical priests, who served not only as the custodians of the document but also as witnesses and guarantors on YHWH's behalf that the king would copy the entire document without addition or omission and that he would be true to the torah that he was copying.⁶⁸

The "duplicate," (the word *מִשְׁנֵה* derives from the root *משנה* meaning to repeat, to do again) implicitly requires a standard copy, an *editio princeps* from which the transcript is to be made.⁶⁹ This resembles what Joshua did, (Josh 8:32) he wrote upon the stones a copy (*משנה*) of the Torah of Moses, which Moses had written (*אשר כתב*) before the eyes of the sons of Israel. The translation of the preposition *מִלְפָּנֶי*, "under the supervision of" is said not to mean as sometimes it has been understood, "at the dictation of" or "by" as if the transcription was achieved by the Levites.⁷⁰ Sonnet denies strongly the oral transmission by the Levites or instrumental mediation of the Levites in the act of copying to be brought into a play; instead they appear as the ones whom the standard copy emanates, the ones in charge of the *Urschrift*.⁷¹ Basing on what is explained in 1Sam.3:1 "Now the boy Samuel was ministering to YHWH under *לְפָנֵי* Eli," the proper meaning of the word can be deduced. Weinfeld says, keeping what is known up to now from the role of the Levites, divinely appointed as custodians of the *written* tablets in the ark (Deut 10:8).⁷² The Hebrew Bible witnesses that this specific function of Levite priests was in reference to the already written Torah (Deut 17:18, 31: 9, and 26). This brings an idea that a

⁶⁸ Daniel I. Block, "The Burden of Leadership," 272.

⁶⁹ Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 74.

⁷⁰ Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 74. The NEB uses the word *מִפִּי* "from the mouth of" instead of *מִלְפָּנֵי* cf. Jer 36:18. The NJPSV translates "he shall have a copy of this teaching written for him on a scroll by the Levitical priests."

⁷¹ Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 74-75.

⁷² Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 53.

custodian is not necessarily to be the writer. The Torah did not originate from the Levite priests. Also they were not original writers. Therefore, the king copied the already existing Torah and the Levites just supervised him.

Reading silently seems to be not common in antiquity. The copy (מִשְׁכָּלֶיךָ) of the Torah (תורה) was to be repeated constantly by the king in oral recitation. The word קרא means to call, in its specific meaning of “to read.”⁷³ The tradition of reading is evident in the Pentateuch where Moses has been the reader (Exod 24:7). Moses being the top leader of Israel at a time, there was nothing strange to see another Israel leader at a time (the king) to be associated with reading. The reading was to be done aloud because

[...] the reception of a written message in ancient times included a fair part of orality, since the record was read aloud. “One normally mouthed the words of the text and preferably voiced them aloud, not only in reading them but even in composing them or copying into writing. Reading was somehow resurrecting the voice of the words.”⁷⁴

Apart from Moses, Joshua also is asked to *הגה* “meditate on” the Torah (Josh 1:8, cf. Ps 1:2) day and night. This means the idiom *הגה* expresses a kind of meditative low-voiced recitation, and betokens the Hebrew Bible’s familiarity with soliloquy reading.⁷⁵ From the above discussion, it can be said that for the king writing for himself a copy of Torah would make him familiar with the words in it hence to open the door to the knowledge about the Torah.

There are two main reasons mentioned as to why the king has to do all these. The first one is to learn to fear YHWH (לִמַּד לְיִרְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה). The theme on the fear of the LORD is written in Deut 10:12-22 and it can be summarized as the sense of walking in YHWH’s ways by loving and serving him whole heartedly. It is now the time to have a closer look on the word *למד* (to learn). The Hebrew *למד* in qal form means to become accustomed, learn and it occurs 24 times in the OT.⁷⁶ As one of the twelve words for teaching in the OT, it has an idea of training as

⁷³ CHALOT, 323, cf. Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 76.

⁷⁴ Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 77.

⁷⁵ Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 77.

⁷⁶ *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament vol.3* (TLOT), eds. Ernst Jenni & Claus Westermann, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1997), 646. The root of the word occurs 94 times in the OT and in most cases Psalms, Deuteronomy.

well as educating in daily life in different spheres like the training of animals, training for battle and teaching and rehearsing songs.⁷⁷ In Hos 10:11 Ephraim is taught like a heifer by a yoke and goad. However, the principle use of the verb is well illustrated in Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, and 171 where the refrain “teach me your statutes or your judgments” is repeated. While Greek uses two different words for “to learn” i.e. μαθαινω and διδασκω “to teach, each having its own content, Hebrew uses the same root for both words because all learning and teaching are ultimately to be found in the fear of YHWH (Deut 4:10, 14:23, 17:19, 31:12, 13).⁷⁸

The word למד qal is said to belong to Deuteronomy and Psalms 119 in the typical verbs for observing the law “to learn to fear YHWH.”⁷⁹ The learning which is said here is not limited for a period of a certain time but it is a continuous process in the life of a person concerned. The terminology for “fear” in the biblical Hebrew is a noun יראה (Jonah 1:10, Prov 1:7) and its cognate is מורא (Ps 19:9) both derived from the verb ירא (Ps 130:4).⁸⁰ The LXX translates the Hebrew word יראה by the Greek word εὐσέβεια, “reverence,” “respect,” “piety” (Isa 11:2), although they sometimes used φόβος, which is the most common Greek word for “fear” (Prov 1:7a).⁸¹ The expression “fear of the LORD” has become the familiar way of describing the religion of post exilic biblical Judaism. The biblical religion is the total sum of

[...]the law to love God absolutely and exclusively (Deut 6:4-5), but this love, precisely because it is absolute and exclusive, imposes upon man a demand which is never devoid of fearful dimensions. Thus the love of God in the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-5) is never separated from the fear of God (cf. Deut 6:2, 13, 10:20, 28:58 with 11:1, 13, 22, 19:9, 30:6,16), because absolute love means total surrender.⁸²

These two words which appear here i.e. fear and love are quite different if someone just thinks of their primary meanings. Fearing something harmful like a bomb cannot be associated with loving

⁷⁷ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament vol.2* (TWOT) ed. R. Laird Harris, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 480, cf. TLOT, 646.

⁷⁹ TLOT, 647.

⁸⁰ IDB, 257.

⁸¹ IDB, 257.

⁸² IDB, 258.

it at all. On the contrary, to run away from it is a wise idea. On the religious point of view, fearing is the same as loving and loving God becomes the source of accepting His instructions and this is what is said “fearing YHWH.”

The second reason for the king to study the Torah is to “keep all the words of this Torah...to do them” לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת-כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת...לַעֲשׂוֹתָם: The root שמר occurs in numerous Semitic languages such as Akkadian, Arabic, Phoenic and others.⁸³ The basic idea of the root is to exercise great care over, but in the Hebrew OT the verb שמר in its Qal form is used to mean “to keep safe,” guard, preserve.⁸⁴ The verb can appear as it is in a sentence or it can be combined with another verb. When it is in conjunction with another verb expressing action, it acquires a meaning “to do carefully” (Num 23:12, Deut 4:6, 5:1), therefore Deut 11:32 שמרתם לעשות can be translated “be careful to do” i.e. perform carefully all the statutes and ordinances and Num 23:12 אשמר לדבר is read “speak carefully or faithfully.”⁸⁵ In Deut 17:14-20 particularly verse 19b it has been suggested that it is a programmatic text placed by a redactor to serve as a model, a kind of a mirror in which the various kings of Israel may see themselves reflected and judge themselves by its light.⁸⁶ This gives credit to the Mosaic Law as a norm, set to be observed parallel to the fear of HYWH. Thus we can say the king is supposed to observe the law carefully so as not to violate it. All these duties discussed in this subtopic are aiming to help the king to behave really as the leader of the citizens. The following subtopic tries to disclose this.

⁸³ TLOT, 1380, TWOT, 2414.

⁸⁴ TWOT, 2414, cf. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (NIDB), ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 489, TLOT, 1380. The translation of a variety of terms from this root is usually indicating a protective role. שמר indicates guarding and watching over.

⁸⁵ TWOT, 2414, TLOT, 1381.

⁸⁶ TDOT, 293.

2.5.5 A King's Position in Deut 17:20

Verse 20 starts with the word לְבַלְתִּי, meaning “not” or “except” and this is to show that it is trying to describe something about the previous verses particularly in this case the results of a king studying the Law of God. Now let us see the impact of the previous instructions to the king to the Israelite society at large. This verse has been explained to follow well on verse 17 to explain why the king should not multiply his wealth.⁸⁷ If this argument is true, then Nelson’s idea that vv.18-19 represent later supplement⁸⁸ might be true also.

Reading it from one angle, the Law of Kings points out the duties mentioned above to be aiming at preventing the king from exalting himself above all Israelites. His heart may not be exalted (רום-לְקַבּוֹל) above his brothers. This warning reflects what has been going on throughout the book of Deuteronomy when YHWH warns Israel not to forget him after being wealthy (cf. Deut 6:11-12, 8:11-17). Forgetting YHWH means disobeying him because of affluence, while in these verses it means ignoring his existence out of pride and reliance on one’s own power. Giving away to pride, the king would repeat himself and in the midst of people, the depravity that threatens the people itself.⁸⁹ Pride in many cases has been associated with the multiplication of possessions i.e. Deut 8:13 “And when your herds and flocks multiply (יִרְבִּין), and your silver and gold multiplied (יִרְבֶּה), and all that you have is multiplied (יִרְבֶּה).” Hos 13:6 reads “when I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me (שָׁכַחוּנִי:).” Enjoyment and satiety, which may cause apostasy and abandonment of the true ways of YHWH, are ideas most characteristic of the literature of the eighth and seventh centuries during which Deuteronomy came into being.⁹⁰ The same also we read in Deut 6:12 though here the wording is different but forgetting YHWH has been associated with pride caused by a successful life in this world. But from the other angle, even if these prohibitions are followed, still someone might exalt himself simply because of his natural behavior. It is true that material things can make someone proud of, but proud can be a behavior

⁸⁷ NCBC, 274.

⁸⁸ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 225.

⁸⁹ Sonnet, *The Book Within the Book*, 81.

⁹⁰ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol.5, (Anchor Bible, New York: Doubleday, 1991), 354.

developed by someone even without excess material things as well. In such circumstances, the limitations mentioned above do not work.

It seems that this idea of “forgetting YHWH” was common in the northern kingdom to the extent of bringing a considerable influence in Deuteronomy as well. Even if this is true, what is of interest here is the point that the king was required by the law to show a good relationship with his “kindred” not as someone who is above all Israelites. This would bring more freedom among the members of the society.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to exegete the Law of Kings as per Deut 17:14-20. In order to achieve convincing results, various methods have been employed throughout the process. In the first instance, the survey of perceptions on kingship has shown that kingship was viewed both positively and negatively. In a certain context, the king was praised and seen as a blessing from YHWH while in others it was the opposite. This has affected the OT books as the sources to be biased either in the positive or negative directions. This complicates the study of kingship to a student.

The form and structure approach to the book of Deuteronomy has revealed that the book is full of instructions which are aimed to Israel as a society. To assign it as a wisdom book seems to be convincing. These instructions or teachings might have a classroom or a family as their social context. Israel as the family of YHWH is the one aimed. However, the text in question has the structure of the instructions on what the king must do and what he must not do. This gives a picture of an ideal king who is expected to live according to YHWH’s commands. The range of meanings on the terms identifying the king in the OT has shown that the term מֶלֶךְ is much acceptable by recent scholarship over others.

The exegesis of the text has revealed that the Law of Kings gives two qualifications for someone to be a king namely, he must be chosen by YHWH i.e. through a prophetic message and he must be among the Israelites and not a stranger. Contrary to the Ancient Near Eastern way of leadership, The Law of Kings prohibits the king from being in charge of war (horses) and he also no longer symbolizes power and prosperity of the state (wives and possessions). The king is no longer a supreme judicial authority and he has even no right to appoint judicial officials.

Instead, a king has to write a copy of the law, be a student of the Law and an obedient constitutional monarch on the same level with ordinary citizens (not above them) and under the control of the Law. Therefore it might be concluded that this law limits the institution of kingship not in a position to be used freely by YHWH for the benefit of his people but rather, the holder must live in a strong limitation because he might be tempted by his harem or wealth to an extent of turning away from YHWH or “to lift up his heart above his brothers.” However, my own evaluation has shown that the king may own horses and excess silver and gold and still use them according to YHWH’s will because the problem is not in material things but rather someone’s behavior.

As it has been surveyed in ch.2, there are important segments of leadership like judiciary, counsel and ethical affairs which are not attributed to the king. How were they exercised in the aristocracy is the pending question. The following chapter will try to explore how these parts were carried out in the OT. However, in Jer.18:18 we encounter three expressions which might serve as the point of departure in the discussion of the other parts of aristocracy. These are “the Law from the priest” (חֹרֶה מִכֹּהֵן), “the Counsel from wise men” (עֲצָה מִחֲכָמִים) and “the Word from the prophet” (דְּבַר מִנְבִּיעַ). The verse reads from the New American Bible version:

"Come," they said, "let us contrive a plot against Jeremiah. It will not mean the loss of instruction from the priests, nor of counsel from the wise, nor of messages from the prophets. And so, let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word."

This is a response of people to Jeremiah whom they rejected and were sure still there would be strong institutions of revelation namely, the Instruction, Counsel and Word.

Chapter Three

OTHER PARTS OF ARISTOCRACY

The king did not work alone. The limitation of power to the king went hand in hand with other parts of aristocracy to function effectively together with him. This part will try to explore different duties performed by other officials apart from the king. Its main purpose is to show how other offices functioned to complement the king's office for the wellbeing of Israel as a nation.

3.1 The Law from the Priest and the Judge in Deut 17:8-13

3.1.1 Translation

V.8 If a case is too difficult for you to judge between one kind of homicide and another between one kind of civil suit and another and between one kind of assault and another cases of litigation lie unresolved in your gates then you shall rise and you shall go up to the place that YHWH your God will choose.

V.9 And you shall come to the priests the Levites and to a judge the one in charge at the time and you shall inquire and they shall declare you the decision.

V.10 And you shall do according to the pronouncement that they declare to you. From that place which YHWH will choose you shall be careful to do all they instruct you.

V.11 According to the message of the Torah that they teach you and according to the ruling that they tell you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the pronouncement that they will instruct you to the right or to the left.

V.12 And the person who acts with presumption by not listening to the priest, the one standing to minister there to YHWH your God, or to the judge, that person shall die and you shall purge the evil from Israel.

V.13 And all the people shall hear and they shall fear and they shall not act presumptuously again.

3.1.2 Interpretation

Preceding the Law of Kings in Deuteronomy is the “High Court of Referral” using Tigay’s term.⁹¹ It is said that time to time in fulfilling their duties, the Israelite judges faced cases which were difficult to be solved. This also happened in the time of Moses in the wilderness, where there were difficult cases and Moses himself, a top leader functioned as a court of referral (Deut 1:9-18). Moses summons his fellow Israelites with the following words: “And the case that is too hard for you bring to me and I will hear it” (Deut 1:17). According to Exod 18:24-26, the hard cases were to be brought to Moses or to those ones he appointed to work on his behalf (Exod 24:14).

In Deuteronomy 17:8 we find the same instruction that the difficult cases to be taken “to the place that YHWH your God will choose” that is to the central tribunal. This central tribunal has the central authority with the following officials namely the Levitical priests and the judge. In laying the institution already constructed by Moses, one thing to note, in (Exod.18:6) the term קשה, “hard” is used while the law in Deuteronomy uses the verb בלא, (niphil) “too difficult to decide” (Deut 17:8). Carmichael reasons that the term בלא, is often found in reference to YHWH’s extraordinary acts of Judgment...in the light of Aaron and the people’s failure to acknowledge YHWH’s true nature in Exod 32.⁹² If this is correct, then the Levitical priests and a judge are divinely ordained to judge on behalf of YHWH and any judgment they give should be regarded as final. Three types of cases are mentioned in this verse, “homicide” (דם, “blood” whether murder or manslaughter), a “civil suit” (דין, “lawsuit,” concerning theft or damage) and “assault” (נגע, “physical injury,” inflicted by one person on another). This included also all matters of criminal and civil law.⁹³ These are cases which are difficult to judge even in our current world especially the murder one. They need the highest authority. In the wilderness, Moses as the top leader was responsible, but for this case not a king as a top leader but the power

⁹¹ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 163.

⁹² Calum M. Carmichael, *Law and Narrative in the Bible: The Evidence of the Deuteronomic Laws and the Decalogue* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 96.

⁹³ WBC, 374.

is given to Levitical priests and a judge. This means, the king himself can be judged by the Levitical priests if he does something wrong and also any competition among them, the king was definitely a loser.

Who exactly are these priests given this authority? In V.9 we encounter a very debatable expression *הכהנים הלויים* (priests the Levites) which has been worked out by different scholars at different times. The question is about whether there is a distinction between the Levites and priests or the two of them are used synonymously. In 1954, G. Ernest Wright published an article to refute the view that according to Deuteronomy, all Levites are qualified to work as priests and that the two terms are used as synonyms.⁹⁴ His main argument based on the P and D sources is that when the Deuteronomist writes about priests (1Kgs 8:3-11), it means the altar clergy. However, when it simply writes of Levites (Deut 12:12, 18, 19, 14:27, 29, 16:11, 14, 26:11, 12, 13), it refers to members of the tribe of Levi who did not serve an altar but whose function was to give religious instruction.⁹⁵ Later his ideas were challenged by J. A. Amerton who argued that Deuteronomy confers the priestly office on the whole tribe of Levi and associates Levites with priestly rights and duties (cf. Deut 18:6-8).⁹⁶ However, all Levites were thought to possess the priestly status and that Levites were usually connected with sanctuaries before the policy of centralization came.⁹⁷ Having the same view with Amerton, Raymond Abba, uses the two expressions in (Deut 18:6-8) *לשרה בשם יהוה* and *לפני יהוה* to justify the view that the term “Levites” means altar priests.⁹⁸ For him, the use of *שרה* and *עמור* in Deut 18:7 does not imply the performance of distinctively priestly service by the Levites.

The debate does not end up there, Rodney Duke in considering the relationship between priests and Levites sees two questions to be worked on namely, what evidence would be needed to prove the thesis that in Deuteronomy there exists no distinction between priests and Levites or

⁹⁴ G. Ernest Wright, “The Levites in Deuteronomy,” *Vetus Testamentum* 4 No. 3 (July 1954): 325-330

⁹⁵ Wright, “The Levites in Deuteronomy,” 325-330

⁹⁶ J. A. Amerton, “Priests and Levites in Deuteronomy,” *Vetus testamentum* 12 No. 2 (April 1962:129-138): 138

⁹⁷ Amerton, “Priests and Levites in Deuteronomy,” 138.

⁹⁸ Raymond Abba, “Priests and Levites in Deuteronomy,” *Vetus Testamentum* 27 No. 3 (July 1977:257-267):265.

that all Levites were at least potential priests?⁹⁹ He responds to these questions that even in the material where a technical distinction is made between the offices of the priests and the Levites i.e. P, Jeremiah and Chronicles still sometimes Priests are called “Levites” as in Deuteronomy for the reason that they belong to the tribe of Levi (cf. Jer 33:21-22; 2Chr 29:3-16). Also in this material the people of the tribe of Levi, which had received a special “priestly” calling, are called “Levites” without any technical distinction being made between members (cf. Num 1:47; 2:17; 3: 12; 35:2, 6, 8; Josh 21:3, 8; 1Chr 16:4, 37; 2Chr 24:5-8).

Given these two evidences he concludes that all Levites are priests or potential priests in Deuteronomy.¹⁰⁰ From the above discussion, it is quite evident that Wright fails to prove his argument on how religious instructions and altar service as duties were done by different people. It should be understood that the Levites had no inheritance of their own as compared to other tribes of Israel. That means they were altar servants, and also gave religious instructions. I am convinced to agree with the view that the terms “priests” and “the Levites” are used analogously and there is no enough evidence to support the distinction between them.

Vv 10-13 are mainly about the authority of this court of appeal led by the priests and a judge. This is a very important part which has a sound contribution for this paper. The key phrase for explaining a Levite in Judah which we find in the Hebrew Bible especially the book of Deuteronomy is the Levite “in your gates” (בשעריך), the expression which symbolizes the jurisdiction matters which were taking place in the village gates. In Deut 16:18-18:22 we find that the institution of clan elders is eliminated from the national judiciary and replaced by “judges and magistrates” (שפטים ושוטרים).¹⁰¹ This is the recent work, in line with scholars like Alexander Rofe and Moshe Weinfeld; it suggests that the Hebrew term שוטר may be translated not simply as “magistrate” but as “scribe” from the ground that these terms designate roles that are official in nature and subject to the central juridical authority.¹⁰² Basing on the command in

⁹⁹ Rodney K. Duke, “The Portion of the Levite: Another Reading of Deuteronomy 18:6-8,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 No. 2 (1987:193-201) : 199

¹⁰⁰ Duke, “The Portion of the Levite,” 200.

¹⁰¹ Mark Leuchter, “The Levite in your Gates: The Deuteronomistic Redefinition of Levitical Authority,” *The Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, No.3 (2007: 417-436):420.

¹⁰² Leuchter, “The Levite in your Gates ,” 420.

Deut 16:18 where people are needed to recognize the authority of a royally appointed figure who can serve as both adjudicator and scribe, it has been suggested that שפטים ושוטרים refers to a single typological figure, the local Levites.¹⁰³

However, what can be deduced is that, the שפטים ושוטרים of Deut 16:18 and the הכהנים הלויים of Deut 17:8-13 appear to be drawn from the same social class, the local Levites of Deut 18:1-8 as illustrated below:

Deut 16:18 שפטים ושוטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך

You shall appoint judges and magistrates in all your gates

Deut 17:8 כי יפלא ממך...דבריו ריבת בשעריך

If a matter is too difficult for you...such disputes in your gates.

Deut 18:6 וכי יבא הלוי מאחד שעריך

If a Levite leaves any of your gates...

Once someone reads these verses together, the implication which comes is the one Leuchter mentions that the same individuals are repeatedly mentioned as “the Levites in your gates” as elsewhere in the Deuteronomical material.¹⁰⁴ What differs is just the context in which they are mentioned. Again if we take a closer look at Deut 17:8-13, there is a chiasmic structure which binds the system of judgment as follows:

A v.8 local dispute too difficult to be judged

B v.9 appeal to the judge and the Levitical priests הכהנים הלויים

C vv.10-11 generation and instruction of new national legislation

B' v.12 appeal to the judge and Levitical priests הכהנים הלויים

¹⁰³ Leuchter, “The Levite in your Gates ,” 420-421.

¹⁰⁴ Leuchter, “The Levite in your Gates ,” 422.

A' v.13 local implementation of new legislation

This passage puts the Levitical priests at the core in the whole process of making and establishing the law in Israel. The priests are responsible in teaching or instructing the law also they are having an administrative role serving as active priests in Jerusalem as well. This administrative role is evident in Deut 21:5 *לשרתו* where the term *שרת* is deployed to address the administrative role of the Levitical priests.¹⁰⁵ This is a new role of Levitical priests which is still sacral, ministering to YHWH and securing divine blessing through administering the law. The king is clearly not above the law; the passage denies the king's active participation in matters of supreme judicial authority. As we saw in section 2.2.3 of this paper, the king has to copy the law, not alone but in the presence of the Levitical priests *הכהנים הלויים* who are the law givers, teachers and administrators.

3.2 *עצה מחכמים* (Counsel from the Wise)

Another part of aristocracy is that one of the wise men who received the divine wisdom and were in a position to advise and instruct the king on how to act wisely. Before going too far, it should be clear that YHWH alone knows where wisdom has its abode, he is its Possessor and its Source¹⁰⁶ (cf. Job 28:20-27; 12:13a). This kind of wisdom (i.e. the wise men sayings) is collected in the book of Proverbs especially Prov 22: 17-24:22 and Prov 24:23-34. In this paper, a general overview of these wise sayings will be studied in relation to the main topic and their interpretation is expected to give an input to the topic of discussion. However, not all verses are going to be discussed in detail but a sampling of some will represent the others due to the limitation of pages of this paper.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. RSV, NAB, KJV and NIV Bible versions all translate the verb showing an administrative role.

¹⁰⁶ Leonidas Kalugila, *The Wise King: Studies in Royal Wisdom as Divine Revelation in the Old Testament and Its Environment*, (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1980), 92.

It has been thought that Israel's wisdom literature has an offshoot from a much older Egyptian literary tradition especially the teaching of Amenope.¹⁰⁷ Amenope was immediately linked with the section of Proverbs 22:17-24:22 pointing to the argument that Israel's wisdom literature was not a native product but a foreign importation.¹⁰⁸ This might be true at least when someone considers the outline of presentation of that wisdom to be borrowed from Egypt, but the content differs. It is beyond doubt that Israel as a society had its own kind of wisdom. However, it is not my intention to debate on the origin of Israel's wisdom but my major aim is to show how the counsel functioned as an office to help the king in his duties. It has also been thought that Prov 22:17-24:22 and 24:23-24 resembles Prov 1-9 at least to some extent especially when someone thinks the kind of instruction character observed in them.¹⁰⁹ Generally it can be said this part of proverbs is about the instruction given to someone by an elder.

3.2.1 The Prologue to the Wise Men Sayings Prov 22:17-21

3.2.1.2 Translation

V.17 Words of the wise. Bend your ear and listen to my wise words, and apply your heart to my knowledge.

V.18 For it is well that you keep them in your belly, let them settle together on your lips.

V.19 That your trust may be in the Lord, I make them known to you today, even you.

V.20 Have I not written to you the day before yesterday with counsels and knowledge?

V.21 To let you know truth, words that are reliable, to bring back reliable words to the one who sent you?

¹⁰⁷ R.N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 6. The publication by E.W. Budge of the Egyptian wisdom text in 1923 is the source of this idea. The text was known as The Teaching of Amenope (Papyrus 10474 in the British Museum).

¹⁰⁸ Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 78. cf. Roland E. Murphy, *World Biblical Commentary Vol.22: Proverbs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 169.

3.2.1.2 Interpretation

This title “Words of the wise” appear both in the Masoretic Text and the LXX which incorporates it in v.17a: Λόγοις σοφῶν παράβαλλε σὸν οὖς καὶ ἄκουε ἐμὸν λόγον, “to the words of the wise, lend your ear and hear my word.” The MT literary reads: “Incline/bend your ear and hear the words of the wise.” In verse 17 generally we encounter an opening invitation, with an emphasis on “ear” and “heart” which resembles Prov 2:1-2; 5:1 would be typical of any teacher, just as it also opens the first chapter of Amenemope.¹¹⁰ For a better understanding, Bruce K. Walkte suggests verses 17 and 18 to be interpreted together because they are bonded together syntactically by the subordinating conjunction כִּי (because) and by the pronoun “them.”¹¹¹ These verses image the learning process where the concerned organs are mentioned i.e. ear, heart, belly and lips.

The ear (אָזן) is the exterior organ responsible for collecting sound waves and for this case, information/wisdom and the heart (לֵב) is the interior organ that directs the whole body (Prov 4:20-27). What can be seen in this prologue is an invitation to listen to the words of the wise and store them in the heart by memorizing them since they are important and can provide guidance. It is rather a four steps move i.e. hearing, memorizing, reflecting and speaking.¹¹² It can be assumed that this part can serve as the introduction of the whole book and it is from a wisdom teacher addressing a pupil. The content of the material is “words of the wise” (דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים) and the addressee is just “you.” In the wider context, “you” can be any person but since the wise men instructed the king, this implies that these words were for a king.

V.19 is said to give a “theological motivation” for the teaching of wisdom, the increase in trust in YHWH.¹¹³ After the prologue, the emphasis on purpose now shifts from the addressee’s role in the learning process to that of the sage, the wise man, i.e. he aims at concretizing a relationship with Israel’s covenant keeping God. “That your trust may be in the Lord” (מִבְּטַחְךָ)

¹¹⁰ Murphy, *World Biblical Commentary*, 170.

¹¹¹ Bruce K. Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 221.

¹¹² Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 206.

¹¹³ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 223, cf. Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 416.

בְּיַהוָה) maintains the main clause of v.19b and entails that Israel's God inspired his sage in writing them and teaching them as well.¹¹⁴ YHWH in this verse is in the center, as in Prov 1:7 “revering YHWH is the beginning of wisdom,” placing one's trust in YHWH is the goal of teaching. The phrase “I cause you to know (הוֹרַעְתִּיךָ), cf. Prov 1:23 is said to represent the addressee to take an active part in an active internalization of the wisdom and the word “today” (הַיּוֹם) refers to each day in someone's life because he is to have wisdom always in his tongue (cf. Heb 3:13; 4:7 with Ps 95:7).¹¹⁵ This verse brings an impression that trust in YHWH is a lifelong process.

V.20 is a bit with an uncertain Hebrew term read שלשום (the day before yesterday) by MT (Ketib), שלישיים (officers) by (Qere), while the LXX reads τριπλοσως meaning “three times.” However, there has been a suggestion of the reading “thirty” and this is said to be originating from the “thirty” sayings of Amenemope.¹¹⁶ This is an introduction that the following teaching is identified as “thirty sayings” characterized by imparting advice and knowledge.

V.21 shows us that the final purpose of teaching wisdom is that the one that learns to go and speak them to the ones who sent him. This brings also a notion of a messenger, the role considered to be extremely important (cf. Prov 10:26; 13:17; 25:13).¹¹⁷ Walkte comes with an idea that through these sayings, the king ensures that the entire chain of command within his administration will be honest, making its decision on the basis of truth (קִשְׁט), not distortion, intrigues, and misrepresentation.¹¹⁸

3.2.2 Prov 22:22-23

3.2.2.1 Translation

V.22. Do not rob the poor, because they are poor, and do not crush the needy at the gate.

¹¹⁴ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 223.

¹¹⁵ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 223.

¹¹⁶ Murphy, *World Biblical Commentary*, 169, cf. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 206-207

¹¹⁷ LongmanIII, *Proverbs*, 416.

¹¹⁸ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 224. קִשְׁט is a *hapax legomenon* term but an Aramaic cognate and the use of its denominative verb in post-Biblical Hebrew shows that the term has the sense of right, justice, rectitude and aptness not just truth or pace as the NIV translates.

V.23. For the Lord will defend their cause and despoil those who despoil them of life.

3.2.2.2 Interpretation

This prohibition is in line with the general biblical concern with the poor, expressed in the law codes (Exod 22:20-26) and elsewhere in the book of Proverbs cf. 14:31; 17:5. From Prov 22:2 “Rich (עשיר) and poor (רש) have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all,” it is quite evident that the poor are the fact of life. In Israelite wisdom literature, the poor become the concern due to their origin that they were created by YHWH and to oppress them is like a curse. Grammatically, v 22 stands as a witness to this fact “Do not” (אל used with a second person jussive) shows an urgent personalized prohibition in contrast to לֹא when used with the imperfect which expresses legislation.¹¹⁹ This means the negative command has been personalized specifically and not to be taken for granted.

The word “rob” (גזל) is interpreted by Milgrom as taking something from someone else by unlawful force and to continue forcibly and illegally to withhold it from its rightful owner.¹²⁰ He further notes that the Tannaitic law distinguishes גזל “to rob” and גנב “to steal” the difference being that robbery is committed openly by force while theft is by stealth (cf. Lev 5:20-26 where the robber, in contrast to a thief is always identifiable).¹²¹ The illegally seized objects are evident in the Bible like a well (Gen.21:25), a donkey (Deut 28:31), a spear (2Sam 23:21, 1Chr 11:23), a field (Mic 2:2), houses (Job 20:19), flocks (Job 24:2).

Verset B elaborates verset A by picturing robbing the poor as crushing them and by pointing to the rich merchants who manipulate the economy, in cahoots with just as corrupt magistrates who drive the poor justice when they plead their case in the gate (שער) (cf. Exod 23:1-9; Exod 22:21-22, 25-26; Lev 19:13; Deut 27:25; Ezek 18:7ff.; Mic 2:1-11).¹²² The gate (שער) refers to the place

¹¹⁹ B.K. Walkte and M.P.O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 567.

¹²⁰ J.Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (New York:Doubleday, 1990), 335.

¹²¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 336.

¹²² Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 230.

where justice was dispensed and can be compared to the contemporary courts of law. It is the place where any difficult matters to be solved can be taken to at any moment.

The preposition “because” (כי) in v.23 introduces us to the reason to the prohibition in v.22. The robbers might cheat themselves that they are the most powerful people in the society. The good news we get is that the poor have a protector; the Lord himself (יהוה) will defend their cause (יריב ריבם). This means, the poor may bring their cases to YHWH when they are oppressed and he is ready to fight on their side. He is ready to give the poor whatever they lack (cf. Deut 10:17-18; Ps 72; Isa 1:23; 10:1-2; 11:4; 25:4; Jer 5:28; Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; Mic 3:11; Prov 15:25). However, v.23 concludes by revealing YHWH’s judgment over the oppressors and his advocacy for the poor and the mistreated ones. The saying discussed here instructs the king on how to treat the poor in a good way and also it cautions him on how he can be judged if he mistreats them. The following saying instructs the king on how to behave on matters concerning wealth.

3.2.3 *Prov 23:4-5*

3.2.3.1 Translation

V.4. Do not wear yourself to acquire wealth, have enough sense to stop.

V.5. Will you let your eyes fly on it? It is gone for it grows wings for itself and flies to the sky like an eagle.

3.2.3.2 Interpretation

Though this saying from the wise men is often cited as one that has a rather specific parallel in Amenemope,¹²³ still it has a great resemblance with the Law of Kings especially (Deut 17:17b) where there is a limitation to wealth. V.4 is prohibiting someone to become physically weary by toiling (יגע i.e. in the objective sense of the bodily toiling) to make himself rich (להעשיר). This has a deeper meaning when the word הרל “stop” is used. Walkte says the word refers to human withdrawal from or cessation of a particular activity, probably “refrain from” in the sense of “not

¹²³ Longman III, *Proverbs*, 424.

even beginning to do something,”¹²⁴ (cf. Num 9:13; Deut 23:22-23; Amos 7:5). This is unique because it is warning directly against the riches on the basis of wisdom. It should be clear that the Bible teaches that when wealth is obtained through modest ways, it is a blessing (Prov 3:16; 8:18; 10:22; 12:27; 14:23, 24: 22:4; 28:20). When obtained by the ways contrary to God’s they become a curse (Prov 10:2; 11:4, 18; 20:17; 22:4).

V.5 gives us the reason to why a person should not spend a lot of his energy for wealth. The Hebrew text is in disorder for example, the “flying of the eye” (תעוף עיניך) is an impossible expression and the “it” (בו) has no antecedent.¹²⁵ The first “fly” is suggested to be the scribal insertion from the nearly identical form “flies” at the end.¹²⁶ Walkte comes with a different idea that “eyes” is a figurative language used to represent the son’s character (cf. Prov 15:30).¹²⁷ Walkte’s point is good according to the interpretation he gives. On the other hand if “flying” is considered to be a poetic language, still the physical eyes “flying” on wealth can be interpreted as the act of having too much concentration on wealth. In any case, what we can learn here is that wealth does come, often go. This saying helps people to put riches in a proper perspective that it is not something which stays forever. The saying which follows warns about sexual affairs.

3.2.4 Prov 23:26-28

3.2.4.1 Translation

V.26 My son give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways

V.27 For a deep pit is the harlot and the woman who is a stranger a narrow well

V.28 For like a robber she lies in wait, and adds to faithless men.

¹²⁴ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 240.

¹²⁵ Crawford H. Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1988), 429.

¹²⁶ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, 429.

¹²⁷ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 241.

3.2.4.2 Interpretation

V.26 stands as a kind of introduction to the description of the character of a harlot in vv.27 and 28. To give someone your heart (לב) and eyes (עין) means to give him your mind and intention.¹²⁸ It has an intensive meaning of “rely absolutely on my advice and so do not oppose your opinions to my mature judgment.”¹²⁹ This may mean, even if the son has a right to his body, still he can hand it over to the safekeeping of his wise father. This is a very important move in a learning realm since as McKane comments, once a teacher asserts his authority over the mind of a pupil, there is an assurance of shaping a pupil’s way of life.¹³⁰ I think McKane’s idea brings us a half way of the whole process of learning. For the other half, the teacher’s authority has to stimulate a student’s independent thinking, i.e. a student also has to be given freedom to think for his/ her life as well. For me it is also very dangerous if someone remains passive, waiting for someone else to think for him/ her. This may bring an impression of colonizing someone’s mind.

In v.26b, Kethib reads “approves” (תִּרְצֶנָה) while Qere (תִּצְרֶנָה) and LXX read “observe” If the LXX and Qere are followed, a more intensive meaning emerges that the pupil’s powers of observation on what is taught and its consequences are sharpened too. This implies that these words are given by the sage (wise men), the same as those in 7:24. The word “way” (דֶּרֶכַּ) is a metaphor for the course of one’s life and derives from the idea that life is a journey, with the beginning, middle and end.¹³¹ If someone reads the book of Proverbs, this metaphor seems to be common especially in Chapters 1-9.

The reason to why the son should handle his heart and eyes to his father is to be protected from the unchaste woman, the harlot (זונה or זרה) which in the text it appears with נכריה. The last term is literary translated as “strange woman.” Toy says, she is a married woman, in character a harlot

¹²⁸ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 436.

¹²⁹ William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, (London: SCM Press Limited, 1970), 389.

¹³⁰ McKane, *Proverbs*, 390.

¹³¹ Longman III, *Proverbs*, 429.

(cf. Prov. 7:5, 10).¹³² He expands the notion by saying that these lines introduce the two classes of unchaste women, the unmarried and married but the same destructive character is in them.¹³³ This kind of a woman is compared to a well (באר) having the same extra-linguistic referent as “deep pit” (שוחדה).

Walkte suggests that a well and pit are figuratively used to represent the prostitute’s bodily orifices¹³⁴ but this idea has been refuted by some scholars who encourage the literal (i.e. a deep pit and a well) use of them.¹³⁵ Walkte’s idea is good but it is not strong especially when we think of instructing someone so that he can see the danger of unfaithful women. Interpreting the deep pit or a well as a prostitute’s orifice may not make someone to realize the right way to act. Since the nature of this saying is a counsel, a literal interpretation fits here. Even if the Bible witnesses both uses of the terms i.e. figuratively (Prov 5:15) and literal (Jer 2:6; 18:20, 22), still the literal use of the terms (i.e. a deep pit and a well) brings sense in terms of how dangerous they might be. I agree with the scholars who encourage this use as the correct interpretation. צרה באר is elucidated by Jer 38:6 where the prophet was lowered into a disused well (בור) in which there was no water and his feet sank in a muddy bottom. The prostitute then is like a deep pit with a narrow diameter in which the one thrown into feels a thorough confinement while his feet have no foundation to step on. No hope to escape unless through ropes from outside.¹³⁶ The (בור) leads to Sheol as we can see other references to יורדי בור (Isa 38:18; Ezek 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18, 24, 25, 29; Ps 28:1; 30:4; 88:5; 143:7).

V.28 gives an addition idea that a prostitute is not only a pit but also an active danger like a robber (חזקה). This means the prostitute ambushes men like a robber does to seize some goods. The techniques used by this kind of a woman are evident in Prov 7:6ff especially v.12 “at every corner she lays an ambush.” By using this techniques she adds the faithless men (בארים תוסף).

¹³² Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 437.

¹³³ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 437.

¹³⁴ See the discussion on the terms in Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 260-261.

¹³⁵ Murphy, *World Biblical Commentary*, 177, cf Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 437.

¹³⁶ McKane, *Proverbs*, 391.

בוגדים). The faithless here may refer to “unfaithful to YHWH’s law (cf. Prov 2:22; 11:3, 6; 13:2, 15; 21:18; 22:12), or untrustworthy (25:19). Clifford sums up this saying i.e. vv 26-26 as a condensed version of chap.7 with its emotional call to “my son” to beware of the foreign woman (7:1-5), her traps (7:21-23), and her intent to add the youth to her list of victims (7:24-27).¹³⁷ This proverb warns that sexual relations are a particularly difficult temptation even for those who are standing firm on the right path. This resembles the Law of Kings where a king is required to take precaution on sexual relations (cf. Deut 17:17) so that he might not be led astray.

3.2.5 Prov 24:3-4

3.2.5.1 Translation

V.3. By wisdom is a house built, and by understanding it is established

V.4. For by the knowledge are the chambers filled with all precious and pleasant wealth.

3.2.5.2 Interpretation

This saying by wise men consists of “sentences” and these sentences are said by McKane to have no element of instruction in them.¹³⁸ Crawford extends this view that the saying has three nouns namely, wisdom (חכמה), understanding (תבונה) and knowledge (דעה) which are synonyms, all expressing practical sagacity, without reference to moral and religious qualities.¹³⁹ This view may be correct depending on which ground these two scholars stand on giving their interpretations. For me, the context we have here allows us to interpret (חכמה) as the divine wisdom therefore to say that the sentences have neither religious nor instructive qualities becomes a weak argument. These nouns link the two verses and more than that, the same agents

¹³⁷ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 213.

¹³⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 396.

¹³⁹ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 442.

were used by YHWH when he “established” (בָּן) the world (Prov 3:19). Thus as YHWH did, so do humans need the same elements for building their “house” (בֵּית). This also proves that the saying has instructions in it.

There are different opinions on how the word “house” (בֵּית) should be interpreted whether a physical building or the household. Toy insists that it is not a family/household but a physical building and its erection signifies a domestic permanence and prosperity.¹⁴⁰ Some scholars say the way it is used here it means both the building and the household.¹⁴¹ Toy’s idea is even expanded by McKane when he says:

Here however the original intention of the sentence was to lay down the lines of domestic prosperity and there was no thought of using imagery metaphorically or proverbially...the sentence asserts that there are certain intellectual virtues which are the foundations of domestic wellbeing, and it assumes that the proper consolidation of one’s household is a necessary prerequisite of a more general prosperity. The acquisition of “strength” (כֹּבֶד) in the community is inseparable from the strength and harmony of the “house” (בֵּית). This includes wealth, rooms well filled with furnishings and the money to express the ideal of gracious living tangibly. It is more important to hang on to the earthiness of this sentence than to emphasize its metaphorical possibilities.¹⁴²

In the Hebrew Bible, wisdom is used both to build material things (Prov 3:9-10; 8:22-31) and metaphorically (Prov 31:10-31) and this might be the cause of the debate. Those who advocate the dual use of the term have thought the wider sense of it while others have taken its narrower sense. May be a combination of the two verses can contribute to the use of the term בֵּית. In v.4, the “chambers filled” (חֲדָרִים יִמְלֵאוּ) refers to the house i.e. the chambers of the house, though it can also mean the inmost part of a human being (cf. Prov 7:27; 18:8; 20:27). However, I agree with Murphy¹⁴³ who suggests the two sentences to have two moves i.e. from material building where practical knowledge is needed to the less tangible quality of knowledge that truly

¹⁴⁰ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 442.

¹⁴¹ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 214, LongmanIII, *Proverbs*, 436.

¹⁴² McKane, *Proverbs*, 397.

¹⁴³ Murphy, *World Biblical Commentary*, 180. For him, though he agrees that the form of v.3 is a saying, still the couplet provides the motivation in v.4, making it urgent to carry out the implication of the saying. Thus the wider sense of the use of the term is evident in relation to the trend which seems to be common in the book of Proverbs.

makes the “house” (בית) livable. The good example being Prov 31:15, 21, and 27. From the above discussion, this saying from the wise men teaches two things: first, wisdom brings the resources and it makes easier the whole process of constructing a good house building. Second, in the deeper sense it has to do with those who live in that house i.e. house relationships. The next subtopic is a general instruction on fear of the Lord.

3.2.6 Prov 24:21-22

3.2.6.1 Translation

V.21. My son fear the Lord and the king, do not associate with those who rebel against them

V.22. For destruction from them will rise suddenly, and the ruin from both who can know?

3.2.6.2 Interpretation

There are some textual problems which are suggested to be worked out. The expression “my son” (בני) is said to have a strange position and it disturbs the rhythm of Hebrew so it is suggested to be omitted as a scribal insertion.¹⁴⁴ The expression “who can know” (מי ידע) that appears suddenly also seems to destroy the flow of the sentence.¹⁴⁵ To some extent when someone reads the text, it is evident that there is a lack of flow of the verses but since nothing is suggested in the BHS, I am going to treat the text as it is.

Apart from this, Walkte asserts that the phrase “my son fear the Lord and the king” (ימלך בני ירא-את-יהוה) (cf. Prov 1:8) connotes that the father’s love for his son prompts his admonition to subject himself to God’s rule and the Lord’s anointed regent on earth who effects his rule dispensing life and death.¹⁴⁶ This expression is very strange as one reads the Law of Kings in Deut 17:14-20 and 1Pet 2:17 in the New Testament. It is as if this saying from the sage is putting

¹⁴⁴ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 449.

¹⁴⁵ Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 449.

¹⁴⁶ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 287.

the king in a higher position, contrary to the Law of Kings. Various reasons have been given by scholars regarding this. Hausmann as cited by Murphy comments that king and YHWH are characterized here rather as “Greats” to whom one must pay equal attention because one never knows when they will allow a misfortune to overtake the one who is not acting properly toward them.¹⁴⁷ This seems more terrifying and the one who fears is doing so because of seeking good fortune and not love. Probably Walkte is convincing when he argues from the intensive religious angle that the identification of the king with YHWH shows that the sage regarded the king’s throne on earth as a legitimate representation of God’s throne in heaven (cf. Matt 17:24-27; 22:21; Rom 13:1-5; Titus 3:1; 1Pet 2:13-17; cf. 1Sam 10:27; 2Pet 2:10; Jude 8).¹⁴⁸ In other words, the king who is said here might be assumed to be a godly one who would reflect YHWH’s kingship. This verse wants to teach us that fearing YHWH and the king is good especially when it is done for the honor of the legitimate authority. Contrary to that i.e. going against them and even plotting to overthrow their rule for personal interests may lead to danger.

The word “because” (כי) in the beginning of v.22 is trying to show what follows is the reason for the admonitions of v.21. The reason to fear the Lord and the king is to avoid “destruction” (אִירָה) and “ruin” (פִּירָה) from both of them. There are some examples of how the disaster came “suddenly” (פְּתָאֵם) on those who rebelled against the legitimate rule (2Sam 18:7, 8; 20:1, 2, 22; 1Kgs 2:22-46; Eccl 8:2-5; Acts 5:36, 37). There is an ambiguity on translation whether “the destruction on them or from them” i.e. the third person plural suffix to be translated as an objective genitive, “the destruction inflicted on them (rebellious) or “the disaster from them (YHWH and the king).” This has led to different translations as we witness from the following versions:

^{KJV} **Proverbs 24:22** For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

^{NAB} **Proverbs 24:22** For suddenly arises the destruction they send, and the ruin from either one, who can measure?

¹⁴⁷ Murphy, *World Biblical Commentary*, 182.

¹⁴⁸ Walkte, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31*, 287.

^{NAS} **Proverbs 24:22** For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin *that comes* from both of them?

^{NJB} **Proverbs 24:22** for suddenly disaster will loom for them, and who knows what ruin will seize them and their friends?

^{NRS} **Proverbs 24:22** for disaster comes from them suddenly, and who knows the ruin that both can bring?

^{RSV} **Proverbs 24:22** for disaster from them will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?

As far as the different Bible versions cited above are concerned (except the KJV), on one hand it is evident that since YHWH and the king are widely accepted as the highest authority, they are likely able to punish all who rebel against them, thus the disaster originates from them. On the other hand when someone observes the king's limitation to judiciary authority, it becomes difficult to assert that he can also punish someone as easily as YHWH can. And that is where the third person plural suffix to be translated as an objective genitive as does the KJV becomes possible.

The phrase "who knows" (מי יודע), a rhetorical question, can be analyzed in two groups. In its first place, there are five occurrences in the non-wisdom literature (2Sam 22:22; Esth 4:14; Joel 2:14; Jonah 3:9 and Ps 90:11). In these occurrences, the door is opened for the benefit of the human being to be saved. The second place is the other five occurrences, In Eccl 2:19; 3:21; 6:12; 8:1 and in Prov 24:22 where the door of salvation is closed. This second use is a strong denial which can be compared to the expression "no one knows."¹⁴⁹

These are some of the sayings by wise men which are collected in the book of Proverbs. It is said that when Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of the wise, they too referred to advisers in the courts of Judean kings.¹⁵⁰ Isaiah might have meant the political counselors of King

¹⁴⁹ J.L.Crenshaw, "The Expression *mi yodea* in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1986): 274-288.

¹⁵⁰ IDB, 855.

Hezekiah when he spoke of the wise whose counsel was resistance with the expectations of the aid from Egypt (Isa 29:14; 29:15; 30:1-5; 36:4-6) although YHWH's counsel was there (Isa 31:1-2). However, the use of the word "counsel" (עצה) in Jer 9:23-9:22 strengthens the argument that these wise men are king's counselors.

As far as this understanding of wise men as advisors of the king is concerned, it can be deduced from the above interpreted sayings, almost all important areas of life are touched and the king seems not to be able to lead in a good way without these counselors. Nevertheless, the king depends very much on these counsels to make various decisions in Israel. If this is so, then the wise men are very important people for leadership in Israel. In other terms, they were the ones leading Israel and the king was just there to follow their instructions. Let us now see another part of aristocracy, the prophets.

3.3 דבר מנביא (The Word from a Prophet)

The work done by the prophets is a very wide field to be discussed in this piece of work. I will limit myself in the relations of the prophets to kings and here only six among prophets will be surveyed briefly namely: Samuel, Nathan, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos. These are the prophetic figures whose relationship and responsibility to the word of YHWH (דבר יהוה), their response and proclamation of it, is very crucial for my paper.

3.3.1 Samuel Vs King Saul

As the first example, Samuel speaks to Saul secretly to present to him "the Word from God" (דבר אלהים) in 1Sam 9:27. This is the moment when Saul was to be anointed as נגיד and the word of God is for him alone so the servant is asked to travel ahead. No one but Saul alone is allowed to see and hear what Samuel is going to say and at the same time, Saul is asked to keep this as a secret (1Sam 10:16). The reason for this Israel's new monarch and his subordination to Samuel is said to be the "waiting until people have accepted Saul."¹⁵¹

Again, Samuel appears to King Saul to present "the word from YHWH" (דבר יהוה) in 1Sam 15:1. This came in different faces like instructions of what to do (cf. 1Sam 15:2-4) where

¹⁵¹ Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1Samuel 1-12*, (Sheffield: ALMOND, 1985), 317.

King Saul is instructed on how to fight the Amalekites. On the other hand, mainly the word from YHWH came to warn especially when there was a disobedience of YHWH's instructions. The good example of warning is 1Sam 15:22-23 especially v.23b "Since you have rejected Yahweh's word, he has rejected you as king." These words are thrown to Israel's first King Saul despite of their painful taste.

Another interesting Samuel's prophetic message is that in 1Sam 28:16-19 where Saul is in crisis and he wants a word from YHWH but he doesn't get as a result he consults the witch of Endor. Samuel (though a ghost) here is truly for the last time, acts as a prophet, and with his message utterly confounds the tongue of the soothsayers.¹⁵² In these verses the prophetic role appears when Samuel reproaches the king by stressing in v.16 that:

:מֵעַלְיָד נִוְהִי עֶרְדִּי: נִיהַיָּה סָר מֵעַלְיָד נִוְהִי עֶרְדִּי: meaning, the Lord has turned away from you and has become your enemy. This is a crush Samuel offers to Saul by bringing him face to face with the bitter truth he had sought to ignore and evade.¹⁵³ The noun עֶרְדִּי "enemy" fits excellently here to show that Saul and YHWH are never friends anymore but in war.

3.3.2 Nathan Vs King David (2Sam 12:1-12)

3.3.2.1 Translation

V.1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David and he came to him and said to him; "Two men were in a city one rich and another poor.

V.2 To the rich were exceeding many sheep and cattle

V.3. But the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb which he had bought. And he brought it up and it grew up with him and with his sons it ate of his morsel and drank from his cup and lay in his bosom and it was like a daughter to him.

¹⁵² W.A.M. Beuken, 1Samuel 28: "The Prophet as HAMMER OF WITCHES," *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament vol.6*, (Amsterdam C: Katholieke Theologische Hogeschool, 1978), 3-17.

¹⁵³ Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, (Bloomington:Indiana University Press, 1997), 74.

V.4. And a traveler came to a rich man and he spared to take from his sheep and from his cattle to make for a wanderer who came to him and he took an ewe lamb of a poor man and he made for a man who came to him.”

V.5. And the anger of David was much kindled on the man and he said to Nathan; “As the Lord lives that man who did this is a son of death.

V.6. He will repay the ewe lamb fourfold as a consequence because he did this matter and because he did not have pity.”

V.7. And Nathan said to David; “You are the man thus says the Lord God of Israel I anointed you to be a king over Israel and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

V.8. And I gave to you the house of your master and the wives of your master in your bosom I gave you the house of Israel and Judah and if this had been little, I would add to you much more.

V.9. Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in his sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Amon.

V.10. And now the sword will not turn aside from your house until eternity as a consequence because you despised me and you took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.

V.11. Thus says the Lord, behold evil is rising upon you from your house and I will take your wives in your sight and I will give to your fellow and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.

V.12. Because you did secretly and I will do this matter in the sight of all Israel and in the sight of the sun.”

3.3.2.2 Interpretation

Nathan is another prophet who brought the message from YHWH to the king. In 2Sam 7 which is the same as 1Chr 17 we find the word of the Lord (דבר יהוה) comes as a revelation to the prophet (2Sam 7:4, cf. 1Chr 17:3) so that he can report to the king what YHWH says (2Sam 7:17). This is a message of peace but on the other hand when king David sinned, the tone changed (2Sam 12) where we read the Nathan pericope. In V.1 some Hebrew manuscripts and

Pesh. insert הנביא, “the prophet” after Nathan. The LXX also adds the word “prophet” after Nathan. I think the reason is to identify the Nathan who was sent to King David.

Prophet Nathan describes to David an incident, 12:1-4, which happened between the poor man and “his little ewe lamb” and on the other hand a rich man with “his flocks and herds.” When the rich man was supposed to give a banquet he had “compassion” (חמל) upon his “flock and herd” and instead he takes the lamb which lies in the poor man’s bosom (ובחיקו חשכב). Because Nathan doesn’t mention names,¹⁵⁴ David flew into a rage against the man and said in v. 5-6:

“...as the Lord lives, the man who did this is a son of death! He shall repay for the lamb four times over (ארבעותים) because he had no pity (לא חמל)” in accordance with the regulation of Exod.21:37 which is also followed even in the New Testament times by Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke19:8). This is the reading by the Masoretic text but instead of “four times” (ארבעותים) the LXX reads “seven times” (ἑπταπλάσιον). Though the supporters of LXX link ἑπταπλάσιον to Prov 6:31 in a context similar to that of the Bathsheba episode,¹⁵⁵ still the MT is valid since for someone who is accused to violate the Law, the only way to show repentance is to do according to the Law. Since the Law demands a four times repay, I am convinced that David used ארבעותים as we also see elsewhere (cf.Deut 12-26).

The words “As the Lord lives” (חיייהוה) imply that David was taking an oath that that man has no means to escape the death penalty for what he did and according to the *Torah* since he himself was “that man” he had his verdict (1Kgs 20:40) by pronouncing it himself. What is interesting here is that after the king passes the judgment over himself,¹⁵⁶ Nathan the prophet comes with the word from YHWH (דבר יהוה) in v.7 that “That man is you” (אתה האיש). There is a suggestion that Nathan’s statement was followed by David’s response “I stand guilty before God” originally and the verses 7b-12 are the later addition.¹⁵⁷ Even this might be true; the main

¹⁵⁴ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 113

¹⁵⁵ R.A. Carlson, *David The Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel*, (Stockholm: Almqvist& Wiksell, 1964), 154.

¹⁵⁶ Carlson, *David The Chosen King*, 158.

¹⁵⁷ Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel: A Commentary*, (London: Trans. J.S. Bowden, 1964), 258, cf. Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 123. It is said that in the original version, David’s reply follows immediately

point here is that the prophet adds a new dimension to his rebuke, rather than repeating in explicit terms what he has already expressed indirectly in the parable.¹⁵⁸ This rebuke is entirely devoted to castigating his sin against God: “Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in his sight?” (v.9). Again, it has two dimensions, first, it adds a theological dimension to David’s sin against YHWH and second it heightens its gravity.¹⁵⁹

In normal grounds especially the society which has the “honor and shame” tradition, a top leader is always honored and it is very difficult if not impossible at all for anyone to rebuke him for any sin he commits. Despite this fact, as we have seen, the prophet here has a mandate to correct the king. For me, this brings an implication that being a top leader doesn’t mean being above YHWH’s law. The sins committed secretly can be put into light regardless of the rank of the one who committed. Acting like this, the prophet can be interpreted as a faithful co-worker of the king since that rebuke led to the king’s repentance.

3.3.3 Micaiah Vs King Ahab (1Kgs 22:1-7, 14, 17, 19, 28.)

3.3.3.1 Translation

V.1. And they dwelt three years without war between Aram and Israel.

V.2. And it came to pass in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah came down to king of Israel.

V.3. And the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us? And we are keeping silence from taking it from the hand of king of Aram.”

V.4. And he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to the battle at Ramoth-gilead?” And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am just like you, my people are like your people my horses like your horses.”

V.5. And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Seek I pray today the word of the Lord.”

Nathan’s accusation with no intervening verbiage. This also makes the prophet’s reassuring “you shall not die” v.13b come immediately after the death sentence that David passed on himself (v.5), thus annulling it.

¹⁵⁸ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 123.

¹⁵⁹ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 123.

V.6. And the king of Israel gathered the prophets about four hundred men and said to them, “Shall I go to Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall I refrain?” And they said, “Go up for the Lord will give in a hand of the king.”

V.7. But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord beside that we may enquire of him?”

V.14. And Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives I will speak to him that which the Lord will say to me.”

V.17. And he said, “I saw all Israel scattered over the mountains as the flock which is without a shepherd and the Lord said these have no master let them return a man to his house in peace.”

V.19. And he said, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord, I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the hosts of heavens standing from his right hand and his left hand.”

V.28. And Micaiah said, “If you indeed return in peace the Lord has not spoken in me,” and he said, “Hear all you people.”

3.3.3.2 Interpretation

It is suggested by Hens-Piazza that this is mainly the story of Ahab’s death.¹⁶⁰ However, I am very much impressed by her idea of dividing this story in three parts, (vv.1-4), (vv.5-28) and (vv.29-38).¹⁶¹ The first part is about the plans for a battle with the Arameans where the two kings of Israel and Judah are concerned, the king of Israel being the dominating figure (vv.1-4). These verses first establish a link back to 1Kgs 20:1-43 especially when the three-year truce between Israel and Aram is mentioned, which also dates the events.¹⁶² There are two questions in which Ahab identifies the problem, conceives the plan and establishes an alliance. The first question is in v.3 where Ahab speaks to his servants with a rhetorical question about returning Ramoth-gilead, a territory once belonging to Israel. The question is:

¹⁶⁰ Gina Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 212. In her literal analysis, Hens-Piazza divides 1Kings 22 in two parts while vv.1-38 serve as the first part which has to be read in conjunction with the larger narrative begun in 16:29 which brings the extended record of Ahab’s reign to a close.

¹⁶¹ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 212.

¹⁶² Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 218, cf. Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 213. Israel have been at peace with Aram for three years, but that peace is about to be interrupted by Ahab.

“Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are keeping silent to take it from the hand of the king of Aram?”

It is not certain to when and how Ramoth-gilead, a city which was a district centre in Solomon’s administration (4:13) came under Aramean control.¹⁶³ The nature of this first question is not blame to Aram but for him “to be quiet.” The word (השק) in Qal is “to keep silent” e.g. Ps 28:1; 107:29; in Hiphil, it can be accusative (Neh 8:11), but mostly it is intransitive (e.g. Isa 42:14; Ps 39:3).¹⁶⁴ However, the preferred translation is the one which is denoting the general inaction,¹⁶⁵ i.e. “we do nothing” (NAB, NEB, NJPS, and NRSV).

In the second question, King Ahab is speaking to King Jehoshaphat who came down to him from Jerusalem. The question is:

“Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?”

The word “with me” (אִתִּי) is read “with us” (μεθ ἡμῶν) by LXX^L. The question shows that Jehoshaphat is given a free choice whether to join Ahab or not. Gray comments that this free will is an evidence that Jehoshaphat was a member, though weaker, of a free alliance rather than a vassal with obligatory commitments.¹⁶⁶ Jehoshaphat’s reply “I am (ready) as you are; my people are as your people; my horses are as your horses” is a receptivity to Ahab’s plan and Hens-Piazza adds that this is a sign that Israel and Judah are also enjoying peaceful relations.¹⁶⁷ The same formula is used in a different context in 2Kgs 3:7 where it expresses the same unconditional support, meaning Jehoshaphat accepts to support Ahab goods, soldiers and unity of purpose.¹⁶⁸ Piazza’s conclusion might be true on only one side that the two kings agree to go for a battle but on the other hand Jehoshaphat might accept the plan for fear of the consequences

¹⁶³ Cogan, *IKings* 489. This is very strange because earlier, Ahab had released Ben-hadad, his prisoner in the battle, on the agreement that the northern territories would be returned (1Kgs 20:34). Ramoth-gilead was very important because it was the border city between Israel and Aram. For more discussion on this see Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 213-214.

¹⁶⁴ Cogan, *IKings*, 489.

¹⁶⁵ John Gray, *1&2 Kings: A Commentary*, (London: SCM, 1964), 448.

¹⁶⁶ Gray, *1&2 Kings*, 449.

¹⁶⁷ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 214.

¹⁶⁸ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 214. cf. Fritz, *1&2 Kings*, 218-19. For Jehoshaphat, there is no need of making of an evaluation first, he just accepts without any conditions.

that would happen if he refuses. The fact that these are two different kings is there, and one is totally not concerned with the issue rather than going there to support the other. Going together for a battle is not enough to verify that peace was there but what I can say, at least for this matter of battle, the kings agreed.

Following the protocol for any battle in Israel, there was a need to consult YHWH as one can read from Judg 20:27-28; 1Sam 14:36-37; 25; 1-5; 30:7-8; 2Sam 5:19. In V.5 we read “inquire/seek the Word of YHWH today” (דרש-נא כיום את-דבר יהוה). The verb דרש (literary “to seek”) is said to be a regular one and it means “to consult an oracle.”¹⁶⁹ The Hebrew כיום means “now, at once, first of all”; (cf. Gen 25:31; 1Sam 9:27; 1Kgs 1:51). Then in v.6 the king calls the prophets for consultation. Though they are not identified specifically, their number i.e. “four hundred” resembles the prophets of Asherah that this same king summoned to Mount Carmel along with the “four hundred fifty Baal prophets (1Kgs 18:19-20).¹⁷⁰ Ahab’s question to these prophets is direct to the point:

“Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?”

These prophets affirmed Ahab’s plan by promising victory. Hens-Piazza notes that the absence of the oracular formula “Thus says the Lord” in their pronouncement identifies that they are prophets of a god other than YHWH.¹⁷¹ This idea is good but it cannot be taken as a conclusion. The absence of the oracular formula is better to be understood as a sign which creates doubt about the authenticity of that prophecy. I am arguing like this because the best proof for any prophecy is whether it happens or not, thus it can be said it was a true or false prophecy respectively.

V.7 is a bit interesting because it takes us one step further. According to MT Jehoshaphat’s question is translated: “Is there not another prophet of YHWH here?” But the LXX and Vul. omit the word “another”, thus the question is read: “Is there not a prophet of YHWH here?” this is done intentionally to divest the 400 of being prophets of YHWH.¹⁷² This is

¹⁶⁹ Gray, *1&2 Kings*, 449.

¹⁷⁰ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 214-215, cf. Gray, *1-2 Kings*, 449.

¹⁷¹ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 215.

¹⁷² Cogan, *1Kings*, 490. According to other early writers, these were suspected to be “False prophets” cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 8:402.

followed by the second prophetic consultation where Ahab summons Micaiah for a word from the Lord (דבר יהוה). The messenger who went to Micaiah tried to explain what other prophets told the king and probably convince Micaiah to agree with them. Micaiah responds differently in v.14 that “As the Lord lives; I will tell him what the Lord tells me.” This reply is also seen in the Balaam narrative; cf. Num 22:38; 23:12, 26; 24:13.

Micaiah’s prophecy is evident in v.17 where he represents the word of YHWH received as a perfect vision “I saw” (ראיתי). The Arabic cognate of this verb means “to think” or “perceive intellectually” as well as “to see” physically.¹⁷³ But for Micaiah, I think it was not a matter of seeing physically or a normal thinking. What he got was a vision from YHWH that is why he reports it as a message from YHWH. Micaiah saw Israel scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and here it was Israel’s army that was destined to become the proverbial leaderless flock¹⁷⁴ cf., e.g., Num 27:17; Jer 23:1-2; Ezek 34:1-6; Zech 13:7. This is a prophecy of doom showing that there was no success as other prophets told the king but instead a serious destruction. Again in v.19 he insists by “hear the word of the Lord” (שמע דבר-יהוה) that “I saw” (ראיתי) a scene in the heavenly court. YHWH directs human affairs from his royal throne and here particularly the outcome of the battle is to be decided on.¹⁷⁵ Though Ahab did not accept Micaiah’s prophecy and decided to go for the battle, Micaiah sealed his prophecy by strong words in v.28 “If you return safely, YHWH has not spoken through me.” This is a criterion by which a true prophecy may be recognized; cf. Deut 18:21-22.

Vv.29-38 show how Ahab went for the battle and he died there. This happened as Micaiah prophesied and it is evident that the 400 were false prophets while Micaiah was the true one. Though the passage is mainly about true and false prophecy what I want to show here is the relationship between the king and the prophet for the various decisions to be made according to the “word of the Lord” (דבר יהוה). The prophet came with a warning to the king not to go to battle for the sake of his life and Israel.

¹⁷³ Gray, *1-2 Kings*, 451.

¹⁷⁴ Cogan, *1Kings*, 491.

¹⁷⁵ Cogan, *1Kings*, 492. God here is seen plotting how to entice Ahab to Ramoth-gilead so that he will fall and be destroyed there. At the divine assembly, a spirit comes forward volunteering to be a deceptive force in the mouths of the prophets. They will counsel Ahab to go for a battle deceptively.

3.3.4 *Isaiah Vs King Ahaz (Isa 7:1-17)*

3.3.4.1 Translation

V.1. And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz son of Jotham of Uzziah king of Judah that Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war against it but they were not able to wage war against it.

V.2. Now the house of David was told Aram has stayed loyal to Ephraim so the heart of Ahaz and of his people was shaken as the trees of the field are shaken by the wind.

V.3. Then the Lord said to Isaiah go out you and your son shear-Jashub to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool on the road to the Washerman's Field.

V.4. And say to him, "Watch and be quiet do not fear and let your heart not be timid from these two smoking tails fire brand for the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and son of Remaliah.

V.5. Because Aram has planned evil against you, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah saying;

V.6. Let us go up in Judah and tear it apart and divide to us and make the son of Tabeel to reign as a king in its midst.

V.7. Thus says the Lord It shall not stand and it shall not be.

V.8. Because the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and for sixty five years continually Ephraim will be shattered from people.

V.9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah if you do not stay faithful that you will not be confirmed."

V.10. And again the Lord spoke to Ahaz saying,

V.11. "Ask from the Lord your God a sign to you, ask in depth or high above."

V.12. And Ahaz said, "I will not ask and I will not test the Lord."

V.13. And he said, "Now hear house of David Is it little from you to weary people that you weary also my God?"

V.14. Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign, behold a pregnant young woman will bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

V.15. He will eat cheese and honey to know to reject evil and to choose good.

V.16. That before the boy will know to refuse evil and to choose good the land whose kings loathes you will be left from the surface.

V.17. The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon the house of your father days which have not come from the days Ephraim turned aside from upon Judah, with the king of Assyria.”

3.3.4.2 Interpretation

The event which is the context of what Isaiah prophesied is the attack planned against Jerusalem. This happened when Rezin of Syria (Damascus) persuaded Pekah, ruler of the kingdom of Samaria to ally him in an attack on Jerusalem with the purpose of forcing Ahaz to join their anti-Assyrian coalition. Verse 1 of this text puts someone in a position of being able to date a prophetic message which is presented here. Blenkinsopp puts this as follows:

The overlap between 7:1 and 2Kgs 16:5 suggests that the narrative core of the passage may have drawn on an alternative version of the account in History in a manner somewhat analogous to Isa 36-39 (cf. 2Kgs 18:13-20:19) and Amos 7:10-17 (cf. 2Kgs 14:23-27). 2Kgs 15-16 provides a broader perspective on the sequence of events, one that covers the reigns of Pekah (ca. 737-732) and Hoshea (ca. 732-722) in Samaria and Uzziah (ca. 783-742), Jotham (ca. 742-735) and Ahaz (ca. 735-715) in Jerusalem.¹⁷⁶

It is not clear to how the information about the attack came to the Davidic court but we are told that the “house of David” (בית דוד), i.e. the king and his courtiers¹⁷⁷ were shaken. The suffix in v.2, on לבבו (his heart) is specifically to Ahaz, then the hearts of his people. It should be clear here that the word “shake” (ניע) is used differently in the Bible. One shakes when s/he is drunk (Isa 29:9; 24:20; Ps 107:27); while blind people also shake (Lam 4:14). The imagery used by Isaiah shows that trees shake when there is strong wind blowing; it demonstrates a cause of that shake i.e. there was a kind of a threat which made the king to shake.

According to 2Kgs 16:2, Ahaz was only 20 years old when he became king. Thus at the beginning of his reign as king, Wildberger comments, he was certainly still very dependent upon

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible, New York: Doubleday, 2000), 229.

¹⁷⁷ John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 198.

the advice of the people in the palace, particularly his relatives and they even forced him to carry out their decisions.¹⁷⁸ In normal circumstances, this argument might be true but what I want to insist here is that, this was the time when YHWH decided to intervene and calm the situation. This part when Isaiah is commanded to meet King Ahaz on the highway to the Washerman's Field has been argued to be a later redactional feature which serves at the outset to contrast Ahaz with Hezekiah (36:2).¹⁷⁹ Despite this strong argument, Childs comments that the historical setting was a genuine feature of the encounter.¹⁸⁰

Again it is not clear how YHWH conveyed his word (דבר יהוה) to Isaiah whether by dream or vision. There has been a thought about the reason of Isaiah to be asked to go with his son especially when someone considers the name of the son שָׁאֵר יְשׁוּבָה which literary means "a remnant will return."¹⁸¹ The name might have significance for Ahaz but it is never specified what that significance was. Isaiah seems to calm the young king using the conventional formula of assurance "do not fear" אַל-תִּירָא, to this, he adds his confident assertion that Ahaz has no reason to fear his two enemies what remains is just smoldering firebrands (v.4).

The prophet comes with two strong words to command the king i.e. "Take heed" (השמר), "and be quiet" (והשקט). The former is probably put for the purpose of establishing assonance with the later.¹⁸² These positive commands are followed by the negative ones "do not fear" (אל-תירא) and "do not faint" (אל-יירך). This means Ahaz feared something which was not there, the dangers which he thought were present did not exist at all. Knowing the reality, Isaiah gives Ahaz the practical command from YHWH (דבר יהוה) not to fear. On the other hand, the act of Ahaz to fear, is a sign of lack of faith in YHWH because faith in YHWH removes fear of the heart (Prov 3:25, 26 NIV):

Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.

¹⁷⁸ Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 294.

¹⁷⁹ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 64.

¹⁸⁰ Childs, *Isaiah*, 64.

¹⁸¹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 199.

¹⁸² Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 272.

It is from this reality that Edward Young comments that being a theocratic king and of all people, Ahaz had to be calm and depend upon the true Ruler of the theocracy.¹⁸³ Ahaz might be blamed for what many see as lack of faith but we have also to think of his human nature. In normal circumstances, a person is likely to fear when he faces difficult situations like this. This is the main reason for the existence of the offices like that of the prophet where the word of YHWH was supposed to come to encourage people in such situations through prophets.

Furthermore, the plan was to replace the legitimate Davidic kingship with a puppet, אֶבְרָם־בֶּן־נֶחֱמִי (son of good for nothing) v.6. This also received a response from Isaiah that “It will not happen and it will not succeed” לֹא תִקְוֶם וְלֹא תִהְיֶה. Here, the evil which Aram had planned was proving failure. The plans of human beings are not God’s and it is only God’s plans which stand. This is exactly what is said in Prov 19:21 “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of YHWH that will be established.” Thus Isaiah used the formula which is familiar to the wisdom writings (cf. Prov 21:30; Job 8:15).

The final statement which Childs calls it a climax of this oracle comes as a direct challenge to Ahaz for a response in faith to the promise of the divine support (v.9).¹⁸⁴ The prophet here plays with words, since “believe” is a Hiphil of אָמֵן and “be established” is a Niphal of the same root (אָמֵן). The root idea is “to be firm” and the wordplay could be brought out by some translation as “unless you hold firm (in faith) you will not be made firm (in life).¹⁸⁵ Basing on the divine covenant made with the house of David (2Sam 7:12ff), Childs extends this idea by saying Unless Judah, the people of God, understands itself as a theological reality—a creation of God and not merely a political entity—the state will have no future existence.¹⁸⁶ What this prophecy wants to explain is that true security is neither found by maintaining friendship with

¹⁸³ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 272.

¹⁸⁴ Childs, *Isaiah*, 64.

¹⁸⁵ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 193. Some commentators make a point that this concept of faith is given a first priority here by Isaiah. But this is only so if one accepts the hypothesis that OT faith did not develop as the Scripture suggests; for as early as the Exodus of the Bible has Moses challenging the people to believe in YHWH and this same word, the Hiphil of אָמֵן is used of the Israelites response to YHWH after the Red Sea crossing (Exod.14:31). In fact from the very beginning of YHWH’s revelation, the issue had been whether human beings believe what YHWH says, thus it was not new to Isaiah.

¹⁸⁶ Childs, *Isaiah*, 64.

strong nations nor having a strong army but by trusting YHWH only. No matter how many and how strong might be your opponents, if YHWH is on your side, no reason to fear because he is a reliable security.

The following section which comprises vv10-17, giving a sign to Ahaz is a continuation of the previous section for faithfulness to the promise YHWH gave to the house of David. Here, it would be expected Isaiah to initiate the process but it goes the other way round. YHWH himself invites Ahaz to request for a sign. For many today, a sign is only an indication, but for ancient Israelite understanding, it was the beginning, the down payment, the ἀρραβών (earnest money) for what actually was to begin to take place.¹⁸⁷ But Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign for the fear of testing YHWH (v.12). The Hebrew שאל does not only mean “request” but also “demand, require.”¹⁸⁸ It is common for YHWH to put a human being to the test (Gen 22:1; Exod 16:4; Deut 13:14; 33:8; Judg 2:22; 3:14), but for a human being to test YHWH is a rebellious character (Exod 17:2; Deut 6:16; Ps 78:18; cf. Mark1:12ff and its parallels). Therefore according to the OT Law, Ahaz is right to refuse to test YHWH. Though this seems to be a pious character of Ahaz, Isaiah’s response in v.13 sees it as wearisome hypocrisy caused by lack of faith (cf. 2Kgs 16:1-4).

In vv14-25 a sign is given, and it has caused a debate whether it is an indicative of salvation or disaster.¹⁸⁹ This part uses very controversial words that need much attention. Starting from the word “sign” (אֵימֹתָ) is interpreted differently in the prophetic corpus as compared to the Priestly source of Pentateuch. In the prophetic corpus, אֵימֹתָ means a special event, either ordinary or miraculous special for confirm the prophetic word;¹⁹⁰ while in Priestly source e.g. Gen 9:12-16 it might mean differently. The Hebrew אֵימֹתָ is used deliberately by Isaiah instead of the covenant name יְהוָה. Young suggests that by such a use, Isaiah wants to bring to the fore the mighty and omnipotence of the one who is giving the sign.¹⁹¹ In this verse also we encounter a

¹⁸⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 304. However, it was less frequently provided as a message to counteract the suspicion that something was not going to happen,

¹⁸⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 305.

¹⁸⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 306.

¹⁹⁰ Childs, *Isaiah*, 65.

¹⁹¹ Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 284.

common birth announcement “Behold! a maiden (עלמה) will conceive and bear a son, and she will call his name Emmanuel.

Gen 16:11, the messenger of YHWH says to Hagar: Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael.

Judg 13:3, the messenger of YHWH announces to the wife of Manoah: But you shall conceive and bear a son, then in v.5 Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son, he would be the one who would begin to free the Israelites from the control of Philistines (cf. Luke 1:31). The same formula is said to be in the Ugaritic Text (Nikkal, line 7).¹⁹² It is a formula which has four elements namely: 1. A clause which begins with “Behold” (הנה) announcing the pregnancy and birth, 2. A clause in the perfect consecutive instructing the mother on how to name the child. 3. A clause introduced by “because” (כי) giving a reason to why this name is to be given and 4. The importance of the son including extraordinary deeds he is going to perform.

The translation of the word עלמה is even more controversial. Its Greek translation by the LXX παρθένος (virgin), Vulgate *virgo* and its subsequence in Matt 1:23 has raised a debate among the scholars. Hebrew has an independent term for a virgin namely בתולה. Childs disagrees with Jerome on the root of the noun that it is from “to be concealed” but for him, it is from homonym meaning “to be full of vigor,” to have reached the age of puberty, thus the noun refers to a female sexuality ripe for marriage.¹⁹³ In the OT there are some verses which use the term עלמה to mean a virgin (Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:26) while in some other places it just means a married woman (Prov 30:19), Williamson argues strongly that it can never refer to a woman who had borne a child some years before.¹⁹⁴

This controversy makes the (NRSV) too broad since it translates the term as “young woman” which is general and tries to balance the extremes discussed above. However, the significance of the sign itself has led to a discussion whether identifying Emmanuel with Jesus,

¹⁹² Childs, *Isaiah*, 66.

¹⁹³ Childs, *Isaiah*, 66. For Childs, the emphasis does not lie on virginity as such and, in this respect, differs from the Hebrew בתולה

¹⁹⁴ H.G.M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 103.

or by implication with any other figure more than two or three years into the future. Blenkinsopp comments:

Most critical readers of the Bible have also come to accept the possibility of plurality of meanings, what Bubber called the “infinite interpretability” of biblical texts, as they are “recycled” in different interpretative communities.¹⁹⁵

On his side, Sawyer adds that this identification of Emmanuel with Jesus and the young woman with the Virgin Mary came to have great significance in Christian theology and iconography.¹⁹⁶ For this possibility of plurality of meanings, the discussion is still open since none can claim to be authentic. The sign of Emmanuel is evident to be two edged if one takes a closer look of vv10-17 i.e. both salvation and disaster. For those of unbelief, the sign is one of destruction (v.17) but for those of belief, the sign of Emmanuel assures YHWH’s presence in life for salvation (v.16).

3.3.5 *Jeremiah Vs King Zedekiah (Jer 27:1-3, 6-7, 12-14, 22)*

3.3.5.1 Translation

V.1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying,

V.2. Thus says the Lord to me, “Make to you chains and yokes and set them on your neck

V.3. And send them to the king of Edom and to the king of Moab and to the king the son of Amon and to king of Tyre and to the king of Sidon in a hand of the messengers who came to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.

V.6. And now I gave all these lands in a hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babel my servant and also the animals of the field I gave to him to serve him.

V.7. And all the nations will serve him and his sons and son of his sons until the time of his land comes also many nations and great kings will serve him.”

V.12. I spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah saying, “Bring in your necks in a yoke of king of Babel and serve him and his people to live.

¹⁹⁵ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 234.

¹⁹⁶ J.F.A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66-70.

V.13. Why will you die with your people by the sword and by famine and pestilence as the word which the Lord spoke to the nation which will not serve the king of Babel?

V.14. And do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you saying you will not serve the king of Babel because they are prophesying lies to you.

V.22. They will be brought to Babel and there they will be until the day I visit them declares the Lord and I will bring them back and restore them to this place.”

3.3.5.2 Interpretation

Chapter 27 of the book of Jeremiah comprises three sections, namely: Jeremiah’s warning to the foreign ambassadors (vv.1-11), his appeal to Zedekiah the king (vv.12-15) and his appeal to priests and all people (vv.16-22). The whole v.1 is missing in the LXX, while the MT is presumably modeled on 26:1 (cf. 28:1).¹⁹⁷ V.1 intends to put forward the period which this event took place. The MT reads *בראשית ממלכת יהויקים* “in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim” but this is said to be impossible given the mention of Zedekiah in vv.3 and 12.¹⁹⁸ V.2 shows the symbol Jeremiah was told by YHWH to use in order to convey the message.

The words here translated “chains” (*מוסרות*) and “yokes” (*מטות*) are better to be explained. Many versions translate the word *מוסרות* as cords or traps and this has no problem because they are instruments used to tie the yoke pegs. These versions differ in allocating the meanings of the second term: Vulgate gives “chains” (*catenas*), Targums “yokes” (*גירין*), Syriac “yoke” singular (*גירה*), while the LXX translates “collars” (*κλοιούς*).¹⁹⁹ What might be said from this verse is that Jeremiah wore this yoke with a pair of pegs and the chains to tie the pegs showing that all people must submit to Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹⁷ Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press, 1986), 526.

¹⁹⁸ William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 115. For Holladay, the main reason of the name Jehoiakim to appear in this verse is an erroneous copying of 26:1 since there are few Manuscripts and the Syriac version which read correctly the name of the king, Zedekiah.

¹⁹⁹ Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 119-120. For a clear discussion on the yoke, Gottlieb Schumacher gives an illustration of the plow and yoke used by the Palestinian Arab peasant at the end of the 19th Century, see on p.120.

There has been a debate on the item Jeremiah was told by YHWH to send to the kings mentioned in V.3. There is a wide agreement that the word ושלחם should be read and that the grammatical object which should be supplied is “message” or “word.”²⁰⁰ This view is supported by the LXX^L which reads (καὶ ἀποστελεῖς) but its textual significance is doubtful. The word ושלחם (and you shall send them) as read by the MT in v.3 implies that YHWH is telling Jeremiah to send other “yokes” by the ambassadors to each of the kings mentioned. Though in v.2 there is no mentioning of other yokes made by Jeremiah, I agree with Holladay when he says that Jeremiah matched an action to the word he was sending to the kings.²⁰¹

In v.6, YHWH identifies himself as the one who gave the power to Nebuchadnezzar to take control of kingdoms. This can be interpreted that to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar would mean to rebel against YHWH. The LXX does not have the introductory phrase “but now I...” (ועתה אנכי) and for אה כל הארצות האלה has a text (τῆν γῆν) which according to McKane it differs not only qualitatively but also quantitatively from the MT.²⁰² Thus Holladay comments, the reading “the earth” is preferable to the MT reading “these lands” which refers to the omnipotence of Nebuchadnezzar over everything on earth, including wild animals (אתחית השדה) cf. Exod 23:11; Hos 2:14, not to specific nations.²⁰³ This shows how majestic the lordship of YHWH is. The reason to why YHWH does this is not given but I think, he does just to fulfill a specific purpose he has.

Nebuchadnezzar is here used as YHWH’s servant עבדִי as read by the MT. The LXX reads differently δουλεύειν αὐτῷ by which its Hebrew is לעבדו meaning “to serve him.” This has raised a discussion among the scholars. There is an argument that δουλεύειν αὐτῷ is an inner Greek phenomenon, a misplaced doublet of ἐργάζεσθαι αὐτῷ and that the LXX^s lacking any representation of עבדִי preserves an earlier stage of the Hebrew text than MT.²⁰⁴ I agree with Tov

²⁰⁰ William McKane, F.B.A., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 686.

²⁰¹ Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 120. For the reading by the MT, Jeremiah seems to make a yoke for each king as well as for himself. He puts each yoke on his own neck and then gave it to the appropriate ambassador to take to his king.

²⁰² McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 687.

²⁰³ Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 121.

²⁰⁴ McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 689.

as quoted by Carroll that the MT here reflects the original text rather than the LXX.²⁰⁵ However, the MT reading “my servant” fits the context of Jeremiah’s prophecy since it is the time when Nebuchadnezzar was used purposely by YHWH.

Verse 7 is lacking in LXX. Sometimes it has been taken as a late expansion (cf.25:12, 14). Basing on the expressions “to him and his son and his son’s son” (ואחִיבְנוּ וְאֶחְבֵּן־בְּנוֹ), i.e. Nebuchadnezzar with his successors, Thompson argues strongly that:

...it is not impossible that it was original, but was dropped in the Hebrew text lying behind LXX because Nebuchadnezzar’s son was superseded in 560B.C. when his line ended, even though the reference to Nebuchadnezzar and his son is simply a stereotyped formula, a figure of speech.²⁰⁶

In vv.12ff the speaker of “I have spoken” (דִּבַּרְתִּי) is Jeremiah himself showing that he has delivered the “word from YHWH” (דְּבַר יְהוָה) to Zedekiah and the foreign kings. The word “these” (הָאֵלֶּה) possibly refers to the words he spoke on vv.5-11. These words are not originating from Jeremiah himself but from YHWH (v.4), but he stands as a prophet delivering the דְּבַר from YHWH to the kings. The warning is given about listening to prophets who prophesy “falsehood” (שִׁקְרָה). These are called false prophets who, according to Thompson, their prophecy was contrary to those of Jeremiah, they were not sent by YHWH and Zedekiah’s rejection of YHWH’s true word through Jeremiah in preference to the word of these false prophets spelled his banishment and destruction.²⁰⁷ These false prophets had been castigated many times as one can read from (Jer 23:15-40) and this is the core of Jeremiah’s prophecy in ch.27 (cf. vv. 9, 14, 16 and 17).

V.22 gives a hope for the future though the vessels which are still in Jerusalem will be taken to Babylon, the Babylonian empire will not last forever and a time of re-gathering and reconstruction will come. In Babylon they would remain until YHWH would “give attention” (פָּקַד) to them. What can be said about this chapter is that, the nation of Israel stood under judgment from YHWH and this is what Jeremiah was sent to prophesy. Later, beyond the

²⁰⁵ Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 527.

²⁰⁶ J.A.Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, (Grand Rapids: William B.Eerdmans Publishing company, 1980), 533.

²⁰⁷ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 535. This was the fate of Zedekiah who after his attempt to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar (2Kgs 25:1) was captured in 587B.C. Nebuchadnezzar blinded him after slaying his sons before his eyes, and took him in chains to Babylon where he died (2Kgs 25:3-7).

judgment, YHWH promised restoration. Jeremiah stood firm before King Zedekiah to present the “word from YHWH” (דבר יהוה) as he was required.

3.3.6 *Amos Vs Amaziah (Amos 7:10-17)*

3.3.6.1 Translation

V.10. Amaziah Priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel saying, “Amos conspired against you in midst the house of Israel the land is not able to contain all his words.

V.11. For thus Amos said Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel to go into exile it will go away from above its land.”

V.12. And Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, flee away to the land of Judah and eat bread there and prophesy there.

V.13. And do not continue again to prophesy in Bethel because it is a sacred place of the king and it is the house of kingdom.”

V.14. And Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was not a prophet and I was not the son of the prophet that I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees.

V.15. And the Lord took me from behind the flock and the Lord said to me go, prophesy to my people Israel.

V.16. And now hear the word of the Lord, you are saying do not prophesy against Israel and do not speak against the house of Isaac.

V.17. Therefore thus the Lord says your wife will be a prostitute in a city and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword and your land will be divided by the line and you will die on the unclean land and Israel will go into exile away from its land.”

3.3.6.2 Interpretation

In v.10, Amaziah who is a high priest of Bethel sends a message to the king of Israel, Jeroboam II that Amos is “conspiring” (קשר) against him and the country is no longer in a position of tolerating this outspoken behavior. Amaziah was charged with supervisory functions at the state

sanctuary (cf. Jer 20:1-2 and 29:26).²⁰⁸ The original meaning of קשר is to bind (together) (cf. Gen 38:28; Prov 3:3; and Gen 44:30), and it is similar to Akkadian *rakasu* (to bind, conspire) and *rikiltu* (“conspiracy”).²⁰⁹ According to Israel’s understanding, not everyone would conspire. Hoffman says, the expression קשר על seems to refer only to the local residents in the Bible and not to the strangers²¹⁰ (cf. 1Kgs 16:16, 20; 2Kgs 10:9; 15:5, 25, 30). This concept is also familiar in my language, *swahili*. A local resident who conspires against the government is known as *haini* while a stranger who goes against the same government is known as *gaidi*. These two terms cannot be used interchangeably. So, Amos was seen as someone who was betraying “within the house of Israel” (בקרבו בית ישראל). This was sad news for the king since Amos seemed to be accused of planning to overthrow the government (to use the modern term) and the king had to fear.

Although it is not easy to trace the direct instigation against King Jeroboam himself except once in 7:8, Paul comments that the oracle of Amos was interpreted as undermining the dynasty.²¹¹ From that reason the country can no longer “contain” (להכיל) “his words” (דבריו). Wolff interprets the use of the verb “to contain” (כיל Hiphil), Amaziah looks upon the country as a huge container only to hold a limited measure (cf. 1Kgs 7:26, 38).²¹² For that case it cannot contain Amos’s words, i.e. his prophecies.

In v.11, Amaziah reports what Amos said. These are two things reported i.e. Jeroboam shall die “by the sword” (בחרב) and “Israel shall surely be exiled” (גלה יגלה). These are just the consequences of Amos’s oracles but there are reasons leading to these punishments which are not reported by Amaziah. What is not reported is even more important²¹³ i.e. first, the nature of

²⁰⁸ Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 310.

²⁰⁹ Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 239, see also Wolf, *Joel and Amos*, 310.

²¹⁰ Y. Hoffman, “Did Amos Regard Himself as a Nabi?” *Vetus Testamentum* vol 27 (1977): 209-212.

²¹¹ Paul, *Amos*, 239. For Shalom, the phrase “I will raise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword” is not meant to incite an insurrection but were referring to the forthcoming divine punishment upon the dynasty. Nevertheless, they could easily be taken out of context and intentionally reinterpreted.

²¹² Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 310.

²¹³ Paul, *Amos*, 240

the oracles as “the word of YHWH” (דבר יהוה) and not just mere “words of Amos” (כח אמר עמוס). The second important thing not mentioned by Amaziah is the fact that the punishment is a consequence of sins of the people. Amaziah shows his irresponsible character by not mentioning these things which would demand his response as a high priest. In other words, he is diverging from his responsibility and throws accusations to Amos the prophet.

Vv.12-13 represent Amaziah’s attempt to chase away Amos. He addresses him as a “seer” (חזה), a term which is very interesting. It would be expected Amaziah to address Amos as a “prophet” (נביא) but why a seer? Cripps argues that 1Sam 9:9 explains in reference to Samuel that at the late period at which the book of Samuel was compiled, he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer, a term which is a synonym.²¹⁴ If this is true then the term is legitimized and there is no problem as it also applied to Gad in 2Sam 24:11, when he is called the “seer” of David (cf. 1Chr 21:9; 2Chr 29:25). In some cases, the two words (“seer” and “prophet”) are used interchangeably as we can read that Gad is also called a “prophet” (נביא) (1Sam 22:5; and in 2Sam 24:11, both titles are given to him i.e. חזה and נביא).

The tradition of kings to have men at court who were called “seers” is very common in the book of Chronicles. In 1Chr 25:5, Herman was a seer for David; 2Chr 9:29, Jedo was a seer for Jeroboam I; 2Chr 12:15, Ido for Rehoboam (in 2Chr 13:22 he is called a prophet); in 2Chr 19:2 Jehu the son of Hanani for Jehoshaphat (in 1Kgs 16:7, 12, he is called a prophet); 2Chr 33:18, some men for Manasseh and 2Chr 25:15, Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for Josiah. On the contrary, Amaziah wants to keep the “seer” away from Bethel, the king’s sanctuary (מקדש־מלך) which may also refer to the “royal palace” that is the residence (בית) of the king.²¹⁵ Instead, Amos is told to go and prophesy in the land of Judah and “eat your bread there” (אכל־שם לחם). Judah is said to be Amos’s own native habitat. For an irresponsible government, the “word of YHWH” through the prophets was always a threat. Asking Amos to flee away was Amaziah’s thought that may be the government would be free from the disturbances.

²¹⁴ Richard S. Cripps, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*, (London:S.P.C.K, 1969), 230. For him, possibly seers, as such, died out as the prophets (נביאים) added seeing to the characteristics of their work.

²¹⁵ Paul, *Amos*, 243.

In vv.14-16 Amos replies Amaziah that for him, being a “prophet” (נביא) is neither his will nor something hereditary but it is rather YHWH’s precise commission. Wolff puts the idea in this way:

First of all, Amos decisively excludes his own person as the issue (in three short nominal clauses, each with the subject “I” (אני)), and then no less emphatically, he focuses attention upon the one under whose authority stand all concerned in three longer verbal clauses, of which the first two have YHWH as their subject i.e. 7:15a, 15b while the third introduces the “word of YHWH” (דבר יהוה) i.e. 7:16a.²¹⁶

By such a “reply” (ענה), this verb at times also is used when someone is replying to an accusation, for example, Prov 15:28; Job 9:3, 14, Amos wanted to assure Amaziah that what he hears does not originate from him as a person but rather, YHWH is the origin of those oracles. To stop it means to stop YHWH and this for Amos is impossible. Probably the idea Amos had in his mind was “he must obey YHWH rather than men” cf. Acts 5:29.

Then Amos moves from a defensive language, his self-justification to an offensive language, pronouncing an oracle of judgment. In the preparation for his last word, he summons Amaziah to “hear” (שמע) in v.16a. As in Amos 4:1; 6:13, the prophet quotes what has been said before by using the words “you say” (אתה אומר), then he uses the messenger formula (v.17a) to introduce the verdict of punishment (v.17b-e).²¹⁷ In v.17, Amaziah’s punishment will be to suffer the judgment which will fall upon the nation as a whole. When the nation goes to exile, he will go too. His wife shall become a public harlot (בעיר חזנה) meaning that she will publicly be shamed (cf. Ezek 16:17; Isa 13:16; Zech 14:2). His heirs will be slain and his own property will be divided up and taken out by victors (2Kgs 17:24; Mic 2:4; Jer 6:12). He himself whose work was to protect the cult and people against all uncleanness (Lev 10:10), will be carried away to die in the land that is unclean because of the foreign deities (1Sam 26:19; Hos 9:3-17; Ezek 4:13). Mays concludes that even if all these will happen to others, Amaziah’s priesthood will be brought to a terrible and final end.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 312.

²¹⁷ James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1969), 139-140.

²¹⁸ Mays, *Amos*, 139-140.

3.4 Conclusion

The whole of this chapter was analyzing the role of other parts of aristocracy i.e. the priests, the wise men and the prophets. The analysis has shown that the priests and the Levites are analogous terms. These were at the core in the whole process of making and establishing the law in Israel. They were responsible in teaching and instructing the law also they played an administration role of priests in Jerusalem. In other words the priests controlled the legislature and judiciary offices in Israel, the king himself did not have this access. This power division placed the king and the priests themselves under the law and not above it because none of them was the source of the Law. This part also made clear that the source of the Israelite laws is YHWH himself because the law discussed here is the *Torah*.

The wise men serve as another part of aristocracy who received divine wisdom from YHWH so that they can advise and instruct the king on how to act wisely. These were wisdom teachers who were responsible to teach pupils. To these wise men, the king himself was a pupil who studies divine wisdom. YHWH stands above as the source of wisdom on how to live wisely in Israel for both the king and the society at large. Their counsel occupies all important parts of leadership to the extent of the king to be dependent on them, a trend which leads me to the idea that these wise men were leading Israel indirectly and the king was just there to do what they instruct him.

The third part was that composed of the prophets. They came with the word from YHWH (דבר יהוה) to the king. The survey has shown that prophets in some cases were consulted to give what YHWH says about a certain action which was about to take place like a war in the case of Micaiah with King Ahab. They said what YHWH was instructing the king. In other places, the word from YHWH came through the prophets as an encouragement to the king like how Isaiah spoke to king Ahaz. In most cases the word from YHWH, came as a warning to kings who proved to go astray ethically. This is what happens with Nathan and King David, Amos with Amaziah and King Jeroboam. When it came to the issue of warning, the prophets were very much hated and they were accused as if those words were their own. All in all, YHWH was in reality the source of those words.

The other parts of aristocracy clarify how leadership in Israel was handled. This brings a holistic nature of leadership where the king worked with all parts and the parts themselves were intrinsically connected and interdependent. As far as this analysis is concerned, this power division in the monarchy has an implication both to Israel and to the modern Church. The following chapter will try to show this implication.

Chapter Four

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT POWER DIVISION

4.1 The Kingship of YHWH

The power division between the king, priests, wise men and prophets aims at not giving power to only one person but different people while YHWH is at the top as the source of power and this is all about his kingship. These different offices complement each other for the glory of YHWH himself. That is to say, the Old Testament power division shows that YHWH himself is the king, priest, wise and a prophet. It is beyond doubt that “every king demands exclusive loyalty from his subjects and in this respect YHWH is no different. The key stipulation of Israel’s constitution

is exclusive loyalty to YHWH.”²¹⁹ As we have seen, the survey of power division has shown that there was a much opposition for earthly kings to become “masters” over other people. Power division opened the door of democracy by which kings were in a position to be criticized when they did something wrong.

Klein suggests the root of this attitude to be contained in the first commandment and the theology it implies i.e. since YHWH was the king of Israel, it would be wrong to grant sovereignty to any other power.²²⁰ The first commandment as we read in Exod 20:3 says:

You shall not have other gods before my face.

There has been a wide debate about the translation of *עַל-פָּנָי* and this has risen a wide variety of translations like “beside me”, “to my disadvantage,” “over against me” and many others.²²¹ However, the following passages in particular show a similarity with the first commandment: Exod 22:19; 23:13; 34:14; Deut 13:2-5; Ps 81:10. As far as the first commandment is concerned, various conclusions have been reached on the theological implication of this commandment as Patrick says it protects YHWH’s sovereignty.²²² Martin Luther in the Large Catechism interprets a god as that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time we need. This means even a human being with prestige and power that can be depended upon might fall to the prohibition of this commandment. Klein adds, monotheism and its legal codification in the first commandment undercut the pretensions of any earthly rulers especially the unjust and oppressive ones.²²³ This also offers no excuse for those earthly rulers who credit themselves as champions of leadership. Hand in hand with this, those parts of the canon which show a positive view of rulers of this world (cf. Rom 13; 1Pet) should be treated with much care so that they cannot be the source of oppression. On one hand, they are in tension to the first commandment but on the other hand earthly rulers may use them to justify their wrong doings.

The kingship of YHWH is expected not to end. Exod 15:18 reads:

²¹⁹ George V. Pixley, *God’s Kingdom*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), 27.

²²⁰ Ralph W. Klein, “Liberated Leadership: Masters and Lords in Biblical Perspective,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 9 No. 5 (1982: 282-290): 282.

²²¹ For the mentioned debate see: Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1974), 402-403.

²²² Dale Patrick, *Old Testament Law*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 43.

²²³ Klein, “Liberated Leadership,” 283.

The Lord will rule as king forever.

Klein summarizes the kingship of YHWH in this way:

Whatever else divine kingship might mean or come to mean, it connoted right from the start that set of liberating and saving actions by which Israel had been set free and through which she had become a people. Israel hailed YHWH as king because he had saved them and initiated their peoplehood.²²⁴

Once YHWH is not feared, earthly kingship has gone astray to the extent of being criticized as something that is dangerous for the people. Samuel denounces it in 1Sam 8:11-17. Solomon also faces the same problem (1Kgs 11:1-13), Ahab with the issue of Naboth (1Kings21:1-19) and Jehoiakim (Jer 22:19). Their main problem is the one mentioned by Wolff that it is the lust for power which destroys the best in life.²²⁵ According to this evil side of the kings, the need for a supreme king is evident since YHWH as a king is passionate in the concern for the weak and oppressed; intolerant of social inequity.

YHWH's kingship is also evident in the Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97, 98 and 99. These Psalms have been classified in the *Gattung* of Enthronement Psalms.²²⁶ The reason to why they are characterized as such is their unique content (according to Gunkel's terms) which evokes praise of YHWH as king and the cry of enthronement (יהוה מלך).²²⁷ These Psalms present two different concepts of the establishment of YHWH as king. First, Pss 93, 96 and 97 show YHWH's rule to be resulting from his defeat of his divine adversaries, chaos and the abyss, in the creation event and second, Pss 47, 98 and 99 center YHWH's rule upon his activity as the Divine warrior who defeats the nations and establishes the Twelve Tribes in Canaan.²²⁸ Taking as an example, Ps 47:1-3, the verses read:

1. To the choirmaster, a melody to the son of Corah
2. All the people clap your hands, raise a shout to God a sound of a shout of joy.
3. Because the Lord the most high is to be feared a great king over all the earth.

²²⁴ Klein, "Liberated Leadership," 283.

²²⁵ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 193.

²²⁶ Leo G. Perdue, "Yahweh is King over All the Earth: An Exegesis of Psalm 47," *Restoration Quarterly* 17 no.2 (1974:85-98):85.

²²⁷ Herman Gunkel, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 36.

²²⁸ J.D.W. Watts, "Yahweh *Malak* Psalms," *Theologische Zeitschrift* XXI (1965): 341.

The clapping of hands (תקע-רכף) and the shout of a sound of joy (הריעו בקול רנה) are the cultic acts which people are to perform during the coronation of an Israelite king. The clapping of hands indicated the joyous acclamation of the people concerning the new king who had just been proclaimed king in the temple (2Kgs 11:12; cf. Nah 3:19; Isa 55:12 and Ps 98:8). In synonymous parallelism with the clapping of hands comes the cultic shout indicating a joy. The term הריעו is the imperative issued to the people who are to acclaim God as king²²⁹ (cf. Ps 95:1; 98:4; Num 23:21). Wagner on his side suggests the imperative רנה to be an indication of a creedal statement, a confession of faith in a God who acts in the events of history (Ps 98:4; 105:43; 107:22).²³⁰

V.3. starts with the hymnic כִּי introduces the reasons to why YHWH should be praised. YHWH is said to be the Most High and should be worshiped because he is “fearful” (נורא). There are various Psalms which show the characteristics of YHWH, power and actions like (Ps 66:9; 114:8; 135:21). Fear of YHWH is also common in the OT due to the nature of YHWH and it can be simply understood as honoring him. The word Most High (עליון) is also a very interesting attribute of YHWH (cf. Ps 7:18; 83:19; 97:9) then followed by the term “king” (מלך). This according to Perdue shows a great Canaanite influence since it resembles the high god of the pantheon, El, who was described both as king and Most High.²³¹

As far as YHWH’s kingship is concerned, what can be said is that this kingship is based on the salvation acts he has been doing throughout the history of his people Israel through various offices like those of kings, prophets, priests and wise men. So long as the interpretation of texts on these offices has revealed YHWH to be the source of everything, it is correct then to say, these acts are performed by YHWH himself and would never be performed by any human being. Those who appear with different offices are used as YHWH’s instruments.

Arguing like this doesn’t mean that human beings are extremely evil and do not have anything to do in terms of leadership. Though they are weak but God created them for a purpose. The following subtopic will try to show how humankind can play its part in response to the power division in the Old Testament.

²²⁹ Perdue, “Yahweh is King over All the Earth,” 92.

²³⁰ N.E. Wagner, “רנה in the Psalter,” *Vetus Testamentum X* (1960): 435-441.

²³¹ Perdue, “Yahweh is King over All the Earth,” 93. The fact that El Elyon is worshiped as a creator of heaven and earth in Gen 14:19, 20 may indicate Yahweh is recognized implicitly as a creator in Ps.47.

4.2 Humankind as God's Representatives

The fact that God is a supreme king does not rule out the different positions we have as human beings to work in this world as God's co-workers. These positions we have demand us to be faithful and just since we are representing God in this world. It is a great honor we are granted as mankind. Back to Genesis, man was created in the image of God as we read Gen 1:26:

And God said let us make a man in our image as our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the sky and the cattle and in all the earth and in all animals that creep on the earth.

This verse introduces a very peculiar creation of man. The verb "let us make" (נַעֲשֶׂה) as Von Rad says, it shows that God participates more intimately and intensively in this than in the earlier works of creation.²³² Again, the word "create" (בָּרָא) occurs three times in v.27 and its use receives its fullest significance for that divine creativity which is absolutely without analogy.²³³ The noun צִלְמִים in most cases means "sculpture, plastic image, statute" (1Sam 6:5, 11; 2Kgs 11:18; 2Chr 23:17).²³⁴ The term also is used in the Bible to signify the images of gods (Ezek 7:20; Amos 5:26; Num 33:52 molten images). Though this inclines much to only material likeness, the term has more than that i.e. man is placed on earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem.²³⁵ Man seems to be really only God's representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God's claim to dominion over the earth (Isa 40:6-8; 55:11). As far as this understanding is concerned, someone may grasp to why even the prophetic oracles begin with the formula "Thus says the Lord" and proceed to speak as if God is directly speaking to people. Thus the Church should make sure it delivers God's message and not otherwise, this will make it to be confident and help the society around.

²³² Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1972), 57. For him, the creation of man is introduced more impressively than any other preceding work i.e. by the announcement of the divine resolution.

²³³ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, 57. The triple use of the term in one verse make clear that the goal of creation aimed from v.1 on has been reached by the creation of the governor of the creation.

²³⁴ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 146.

²³⁵ Von Rad, *Genesis 1-11*, 60. So too argue M. Buber, K.L.Schmidt as we read in Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 146.

The likeness to God consists in both spiritual quality and external form, especially when someone considers Philo's statement ἡ δὲ εἰκὼν λέλεκται κατὰ τὸν της ψυχης ἡγεμόνα νουν.²³⁶ From these arguments I can say the creation of mankind is not only the climax of God's creating activity but also the best of it. Having this understanding in our minds, let us now reflect on our call and vocation. Here the Old Testament priests, wise men and prophets can serve as a good example since they did understand that they were called by YHWH himself to serve the mankind and not by their personal initiatives. Amos 7:15 reads:

V.15. And the Lord took me from behind the flock and the Lord said to me go, prophesy to my people Israel.

The wise men on their side received divine wisdom from YHWH and offered it to the community as we read that wisdom originates from YHWH himself. Job 12:13a reads:

With God are wisdom and might.

Any career was understood as God's call and for a person doing it was responding to what God asked him to do. This is a great challenge to the Church today since when we come to discuss even Church's ministries, the language which dominates is that of "job descriptions," "professional tracts," and "career choices." The Church has let the culture of the "call" disappear and has failed to encourage the voicing and hearing of God's call as a result it has been very difficult to differentiate it from any secular institution.

Being God's representatives in this world doesn't mean that we should live as isolated individuals in this world. To be part of the community is a good way of representing God whom we preach that he is a creator of the world. We are God's new and trusted creatures called to live a sensitive and caring life to people.²³⁷ We need to be the today's Sarahs and Abrahams, Rebekahs and Isaacs, Zipporahs and Moses's bringing God's blessings to the nations.

²³⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 149.

²³⁷ Klein, "Liberated Leadership," 290.

EXCURSUS

Let us now move from the Old Testament to the current situation of the Church in Tanzania especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania-Central Diocese (ELCT-CD). This being my third year of service in this Church as a pastor, I was also born and grew in that area, thus my experience and the research I did from June-August 2008 are of great importance in what I am going to discuss. Through various interviews with pastors, evangelists, theologians and various lay Christians, the information I got was a kind of accusations to the leaders for what is called authoritarianism style of leadership. Magandu calls it as lack of democracy in the Church.²³⁸ What is interesting is that, everyone at his/her level accused the leader. For example, pastors accused the bishop, evangelists at the congregation level accused the parish pastors, and the lay Christians accused the clergy in general for a kind of leadership which gives power to one person only.²³⁹ Although it might be not fair to jump directly to conclusions, at least this was an alert to me that such kind of leadership exists in the Church. Also, answering the question who exactly exercises it was a bit difficult since every leader at his/her level seems to be a victim.

The above situation led me to the second step of exploring the constitution of the Church in which the issue of leadership might have been clearly stated. The Diocese follows the Episcopal system. The organization chart shows that the bishop does not work alone; there is the assistant to the bishop, the secretary who is the executive officer, the treasurer and secretaries for different departments like women, youth, planning and construction activities. It is stated clearly in the constitution that the Diocese runs its daily activities through resolutions from various constitutional meetings.²⁴⁰ And it is not only one person who is responsible for this but power is to be delegated to different officials of the Diocese.²⁴¹ These meetings range from the diocesan level, districts and parishes where in all these meetings, the members are clergy and lay Christians. However, there is a constitution committee which conducts its meetings regularly to see if there are some parts of the constitution are to be amended and the suggestions are brought

²³⁸ Interview with Yohana Magandu, 20.06.2008.

²³⁹ Interview with Winjuka Makala, Anastazia Gwao, Zebedayo Mangi, 15.07. 2008.

²⁴⁰ The constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania-Central Diocese (2003):19.

²⁴¹ The constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania-Central Diocese (2003):19.

to the highest meeting i.e. the General Assembly for approval. In addition to these statutes, the diocesan leaders are given freedom constitutionally to choose their own counselors in case they need any kind of advice for leadership.²⁴² This freedom is good only when this is exercised in a positive way but also there can be the other side of the coin of the constitution where someone might misuse that freedom and choose only those counselors who please him/her and not for the betterment of the Diocese. In the same way, having a constitution written does not mean all people are acting according to it. But at first, it is a good step for an organization to have rules which govern them.

It is beyond doubt that having a constitution for an organization like a Diocese is a good idea since it defines many things which are supposed to be governing the Church. When I paid a deep attention to the constitution of the ELCT-CD I came to realize that it is a great treasure for the current Church and the coming generations. Though there might be some problems as I have stated, there is a room for amending it so that it can fit to the demands of the majority. Once there are problems on leadership as the one pointed out in this part, it is easy for someone to appeal to the constitution to see whether there are some duties which are not clearly stated. For the CD, the constitution itself as a document might be not the problem for the dictatorship which has been identified as a great problem. It analyzes duties clearly but it is not followed. Again if the problem is with one person, that could be easily dealt with but for the CD it seems everyone at his/her level violates it. Then my question was what can be the source of this problem and how to solve it?

There are two main reasons for this problem of leadership namely, the culture of the natives and the influence of colonialism. Geographically, the CD covers the whole of Singida, part of Tabora and Manyara political regions of Tanzania. In this area, the Nyiramba, Nyaturu and Nyamwezi ethnic groups live. This might mean most of the clergy and lay Christians are from these ethnic groups. Historically these ethnic groups were led by chiefs, known as *mtemi* (singular) or *watemi* (plural). This term is common for these ethnic groups though their vernaculars differ i.e. they do not speak the same language but they share the name for a traditional leader. These traditional leaders were very much honored and whatever they decided

²⁴² The constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania-Central Diocese (2003):29.

was regarded as the final say. For them, being a *mtemi* means prestige and power, all people are under him, he is the person who commands and people obey. Contrary to that means betraying the whole society and this must be followed by a punishment and sometimes being killed. For the side of the people, they had to obey everything which is commanded by *mtemi*. There was no room to ask why or any kind of reasoning rather than doing what the leader said.²⁴³ To sum up about this traditional leadership, *mtemi* was there to give orders and the people were there to respond positively to what they have been commanded. Although this system does not exist now, it has been passed to this generation and become known through oral tradition. In connection to that, the custom of honor and shame is the one which seals this type of leadership. It starts from the family level and spreads to the whole society. The father for example is to be honored by all the members of the family. The elders are to be honored always, and the chief must be honored by all members of the society. The family members are trained daily about this custom and are expected to practice it. Though he realizes how bad dictatorship is, Ng'enyi compares a religious leader to a *mtemi*, thus they deserve honor always regardless of what they do.²⁴⁴

For me as a researcher, this particular way of life has affected the minds of the people when we come to think of leadership today. Some people when they are elected for leadership or allocated to different places to work, still in their minds think as if they are a kind of *watemi*. On one hand they stand giving orders even if the constitution doesn't allow that system of leadership. On the other hand, people feel as if they are under a *mtemi* to the extent of not even daring to criticize any wrongdoings by top leaders. They just receive orders and complain in an underground way.

Apart from this traditional leadership, the colonial era in Africa was another cause of this kind of mentality since it introduced the master-servant relationship between colonialists and Africans. Though it is not my intention to explain more about colonialism, what I want to highlight here is the way colonialists related to the natives, something which has to a large extent affected the minds of people. This kind of relationship made someone in a higher position to feel as superior to the others thus to give orders always. On the other hand, those subordinates,

²⁴³ Interview with Zebedayo Mangi, 15.07.2008.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Stephen Ng'enyi, 06.08.2008.

though they might not like the system, they have no choice rather than submitting themselves to the masters. A good example can be seen from primary schools where teachers are honored as masters. Once he/she enters a class, the pupils have to stand up and greet him/her as a sign of honor and the teacher is the one to give them an order to sit down otherwise they will remain standing.²⁴⁵

These are some reasons which for me, they have contributed as sources of the problem which is evident now in the Church. For anyone who needs to improve the situation in the Church, there is a great need to address the root cause of the problem; otherwise it will be difficult to solve it. It is true that dictatorship is not always the only way of leadership. In the CD where the problem has been evident, to blame one person as a victim is not fair since the root causes of the problem have nothing to do with the leaders we blame now. We need a model to make us learn how to run our Church and for me this model is the Bible itself.

Chapter Five

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the introductory part of this paper I put forward that my aim is to study the power division in the Old Testament and to find the implication it has in the Church. This study has surveyed various Old Testament texts especially those ones about kingship in Israel and other parts of the aristocracy which all together have given a considerable contribution to reach the goal targeted. In connection to the texts surveyed, different exegetical methods have been utilized for the purpose of establishing the original wording and bringing out the proper meaning of the texts rather than imposing my own meanings.

I started by the exegetical investigation of Deuteronomy 17:14-20. This is the only text in the Old Testament which is speaking about the king in terms of qualities and duties. The close inspection of this text has revealed that there were special qualifications to kingship. Though it is people themselves who wanted to have kings as an imitation to other neighboring countries, the Israelite king was supposed to be YHWH's choice as well as an Israelite by nationality. This gives an insight that the Israelite kingship was meant to be bound to the covenant relationship

²⁴⁵ Interview with Anastazia Gwao, 15.07.2008.

between YHWH and Israel. This king was to be limited not having excess horses, many wives and excess silver and gold. This limitation aimed at making the king to be dependent on YHWH and not to trust on his humanly abilities. Also many wives were thought to be having different religions which would lead the king to apostasy from YHWH to the religions of the wives. This large harem would even affect YHWH's teachings to the king hence destroy the covenant. However, an Israelite king was not expected to be a symbol of prosperity as other nation's kings and this is the main reason to limit him from excess wealth.

In connection to that, the king had a duty of writing for himself a copy of the Torah in the presence of the Levitical priests. Hand in hand with copying the torah, he was supposed to repeat to read it continuously. For a king to write for himself a copy of Torah would make him familiar with it hence to open the door for the knowledge of it. This was aimed to discipline him to fear YHWH in all his life. In a religious point of view, this has a great meaning for the king to love YHWH by accepting his instructions. This would help the king to do the Torah carefully and not to violate it. From this point of view, an Israelite king was identical to the normal citizens since he was a student of the torah as others and he never thought to be above other Israelites. The general overview of Israelite kingship in the Bible is both positive and negative. In some cases we find it is explained positively and in other cases it is negatively. Though these views complicate the study of kingship, still we can learn something worthy from kingship.

The king was working with Levitical priests, wise men and prophets according to Jer.18:18. The Levitical priests were in charge of the High Court of Referral. These were divinely ordained to judge on behalf of YHWH himself and the judgment they passed was regarded as final. The law used was the *Torah* (the Law of Moses) and the *Torot* (i.e. they interacted with the Israelites and responded to the daily questions of the people). As a result they used this experience to define the moral conduct for Israel. To put this in a summary, the Levitical priests made and established law in Israel. Teaching and administration roles are also rendered to them. This is a very sensitive part of aristocracy while the king himself was neither above the law nor participating in matters of supreme judicial authority.

The wise men received divine wisdom from YHWH who is the origin of wisdom and instructed the king on everyday live, how to act wisely and live well. These wisdom words of the wise men are collected in Proverbs22:17-24:34. The interpretation of them shows that through

this wisdom, the king was advised in many aspects since the root of this wisdom is in reverence and commitment to YHWH. The last segment is that of prophets. These received the word from YHWH (דבר יהוה) for three purposes. First, the word from YHWH came to instruct the king in various matters he was supposed to decide as a leader. There was an importance for a wise king to ask to the prophet about what YHWH says before taking an action. Second, there were times when the kingdom was threatened by enemies and the king and his people were shaken, thus the word from YHWH through prophets came as an encouragement for the people. Third, the word from YHWH came as a warning to kings especially when there was something wrong ethically. This put the relationship between some kings and prophets to be in tension and some prophets were even threatened to be killed.

The power division between the king, priests, wise men and prophets did not mean to make a king inferior to the others but rather not to give all authority to one person. Giving authority to a single person is something which is dangerous especially when we consider our human nature. The interpretation of the various texts dealt in this paper has shown that with this power division, YHWH was the one who enabled each part of the aristocracy to perform their duties. The king did not work without any help from YHWH, so do priests, wise men and prophets. This being the case, the good relationship between these parts is also evident. The king needed to be helped by priests, wise men and prophets as well. Any kind of negligence of one part was dangerous and the king was on risk of losing. In other words, the king needed both vertical and horizontal relationship to perform correctly his duties. The interpretation of the wise sayings has shown that wisdom covers all areas to the extent of covering the work done by priests and prophets. This doesn't mean that the wise men replaced prophets and priests but they brought a different focus which was complementary with the other perspectives as well. They both belonged to the court of the king or in other terms, they worked in the same office so the relation between them was obvious there. Nevertheless, we do not see any clash between them either and this is the evidence of a good relationship between them. However, they had the same source of the message i.e. YHWH. It is YHWH himself who is on top of all parts of aristocracy controlling everything which is taking place in Israel. The human beings are representing him in this world, thus each member of the aristocracy is called to be a free, responsible and governor of creation in YHWH's stead.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, Central Diocese has something to learn from this Old Testament power division. The Old Testament power division puts clear the separation between the executive, legislature and judiciary duties. This is a nice division which if followed in the Church; it might help to reduce the problem of authoritarianism which is threatening the Church. However, someone might argue that the Church of Christ is not a state and there is no need of imitating this power division. According to this interpretation of these texts, power division is instituted by God himself by giving each of his creation something to contribute for the society. From this point of view the Church should, even if not exactly as it is in the OT, but at least not grant all authority to one person. One important thing with power division is that it brings the collective responsibility and reduces hatred which is a threat especially in the Church. Therefore, the Old Testament should be allowed to interact with the culture of the people and illuminate them. The Church constitution also should be set in a way that power is divided to different officials who together with the top leader will enhance the mission of God.

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APPENDIX

A. Questions

Introductory Questions

- Can you tell me about power division in this Church?
- What really happens in the situation you have mentioned?

Probing Questions

- Could you say something more about leadership in this Church?
- Do you have examples of what you have said?

Specifying Questions

- What do you do when a leader behaves in the way you have explained?
- How do you feel about it?

Indirect Question

- How do you believe that other people are aware of the style of leadership in the Church?