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ABSTRACT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOSEA 13:11: A STUDY OF
THE MONARCHY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

by

Tuo Wang

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOSEA 13:11: A STUDY OF
THE MONARCHY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

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Problem

In Hosea 13:11, God said that “I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath.” Why did God say that? What is the meaning of this expression? It is obvious that God expressed a negative view in this verse. Regarding the reason, why God held such an attitude, there are four common understandings: (1) because of the sins of the Israelites, (2) because the Israelites did not trust God in demanding a king for themselves, (3) because God wanted to give the Israelites a lesson in their disobedience, (4) because God denied the monarchy as a political system. The fourth point of view is more logical for several reasons. It is reasonable to believe that the negative view of God was not toward a certain king, as an individual, but the monarchy as a political system. Thus, the monarchy concept is essential for exploring the significance of Hosea 13:11 and a detailed study needs to be conducted.

Method

The study was based on the hermeneutic analysis of Hosea 13:11 and related verses, and by examining the monarchy in the context of history, politics, and theology.

Results

The results of this study showed that the defects and the effects of the monarchy, as a political system, were the very reasons why God expressed a negative view in Hosea 13:11.

Conclusion

Hosea 13:11 reflects the denial of the monarchy as a political system because God's plan could not be fulfilled under the monarchy. Superficially, the monarchy was a betrayal of God and the foundations of Israel as a nation were shaken by the various system defects of the monarchy. The root cause was that according to the clues in Genesis 18:19, the goals that Israel as a nation should have practiced in God's plan, could not be fulfilled under the monarchy. Thus, due to the monarchy, Israel as a nation failed in God's plan and God's negative view of the monarchy in Hosea 13:11 was reasonable.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
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2022

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version
BBE	Bible in Basic English
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CJB	Complete Jew Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
KJ21	21st Century King James Version
KJV	King James Version
NKJV	New King James Version

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Human beings initially committed sin because they attempted to become gods or “similar to God.” From the perspective of 1 Samuel 8:7, the establishment of monarchy was actually placing humankind in the position of God, which was the forbidden fruit to the people of Israel. However, for the Israelites to reach out for the forbidden fruit, that is, to demand a king, during the era of Judges was another expression of disobedience and rebellion. “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25).¹ Because the existence of God made no sense for the people, they acted as gods by determining their own standards of right and wrong, inventing the principles of how to judge good and evil. During that time, the failure of theocracy was not the fault of God, but humankind, who judged everything according to their own law and not the law of God. The time when humans became judges of good and evil by their own will, that was the time when they reached out for the forbidden fruit.

The chaos of the era of Judges forced the people of Israel to long for strong protection, and the monarchy was their hope. “Give us a king to lead us” (1 Sam 8:6).

²However, the greatest frustration in the world is that many believe that there is some

¹ This Thesis will employ NKJV and NIV as the basic Bible versions; if otherwise, it will be indicated.

² “Give us a king to lead us” is a verbatim citation of “Appoint a king to lead us.”

hope in despair, which by itself can be a positive thing. Unfortunately, very soon these human beings figure out that their hope was a false hope, which, when recognized as such, they cannot bear it anymore, because of the consequences of the so-called hope. Therefore, the Israelites were stubbornly holding onto the false optimism simply because they did not want to admit that their hope was false. God asked them, “Where is your king, that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns, of whom you said, Give me a king and princes” (Hos 13:10)?

The Bible teaches that for human beings, the ultimate concern is not what the truth is, but what they want to be the truth. Thus, the so-called truth becomes something that human beings believe wishful that it should satisfy their own hopes, but that is nothing but a false truth. It was true for Israelites in the issue of monarchy, which was the false hope and the false truth, but they were so fascinated by that political system, even though the defects were obvious.

Without the true eternal King, the monarchy was a lie, but the Israelites loved this lie so much, because it contained something that met their expectations, and the lie became the easiest way to solve the problems they had to face. However, a lie was nothing but a false fact. When the lie could no longer be maintained, the state collapsed with the lie together, and the destruction approached. That is what we see in the history of Israel.

“I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath” (Hos 13:11).

Why did God say so? To answer this question, we cannot simply say that demanding a king was a betrayal of God or the monarchy was not the plan of God for His people.

We have to trace the history and figure out the purpose of why God promised that the descendants of Abraham would become a great nation. In Genesis 18:19, according to the Hebrew text, צדקה and משפט will be the keys to explore the significance of Hosea 13:11.

Thesis Statement

The purpose of this study is to have a deeper understanding of Hosea 13:11 where God expressed a negative view toward the monarchy. This study focuses on monarchy as a political system in order to explore why it was unable to fulfill the will of God for His people and is presented with the hope that everyone who reads it may find satisfaction with the explanation exposed here and learn more about the monarchy of ancient Israel and the reasons why God dethroned the king.

Justification

The studies of Hosea 13:11 focus on the sin committed by human beings. Only a few studies have explored the essence of the system defects of the monarchy. Studies of the monarchy of ancient Israel and many types of research covered the perspectives of archaeology, politics, or sociology. This study will take the essence of the system defects of the monarchy as the starting point, connect Hosea 13:11 and Genesis 18:19 from

the perspective of Theology and Politics to explore the significance of Hosea 13:11.

Delimitations

There are limitations to this study, because of its volume and the numberless aspects and elements of the subject. Thus, the thesis will be based primarily on the information in the book of Hosea and the book of Genesis. In general, the study will focus on the monarchy as a political system. In the era of the United Kingdom, based on a particular point of view, one of the main factors for the division of the United Kingdom was the monarchy itself, and a lot of the problems of the Northern Kingdom originated from the system defects of that monarchy. Therefore, this study will mainly focus on the monarchy as a political system and the essence of it from the perspective of theology and politics rather than some particular historical events.

Methodology

Chapter 1 covers the essential elements of the proposal and a proper background for the study of the significance of Hosea 13:11.

Chapter 2 will deal with hermeneutics of Hosea 13:11, which will lay the foundation for the entire study and present an explicit denial of the monarchy as a political system.

Chapter 3 will deal with a fundamental analysis of the monarchy as a political system in ancient Israel. This will include an analysis of the establishment and the

collapse of the monarchy from the perspective of theology, history, and politics.

Furthermore, this chapter will present a discussion on the essence and the system defects of the monarchy.

Chapter 4 will cover the interrelationships of the contexts of Genesis 18:19 and Hosea 13:11, and explain why Genesis 18:19 is the key to understanding Hosea 13:11.

This part will serve as the basic hermeneutics of Genesis 18:19 to point out צדקה and משפט as the keywords in Genesis 18:19. These keywords will function as the basis for exploring the significance of Hosea 13:11.

Chapter 5 will focus on Genesis 18:19 which contains the keyword צדקה. It will be analyzed and examined to find out the reasons why the monarchy as a political system was denied in Hosea 13:11. It will also try to explain the problem under discussion from the perspective of צדקה.

Chapter 6 will discuss another keyword משפט which is also found in Genesis 18:19. In this section, the focus will be on the term משפט in the given context.

Finally, chapter 7, which functions as the conclusion and the summary of the entire study, will summarize the basic points of significance of Hosea 13:11 and the reasons why the monarchy as a political system was denied in Hosea 13:11.

Literature Review

Since the purpose of this thesis is to have a deeper understanding and explore the significance of Hosea 13:11. This section will present the major or common

understanding of Hosea 13:11.

“I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath” (Hos 13:11). It is obvious that God expressed a negative view in this verse, but why did He give a king to them in His anger and take the king away in His wrath? What is this verse really talking about? Here are some common explanations and conclusions.

First, there is a general understanding that the main reason why the Israelites suffered was their sins. Augustine thought that the evil king brought punishment, as, in turn, he was God’s tool to punish people. In other words, the basic reason why the Israelites suffered was because of their evil deeds.³ Thus, David Allen Hubbard pointed out that the nations that attacked Israel were the tools of God.⁴

Second, the reason why God dethroned the king in His wrath was that the Israelites did not trust God and demanded a king for themselves, but the king could not protect them. James Wolfendale believed that the King of Israel should be God, and only God could bring them salvation. But the Israelites did not trust God. It was a sin for them to choose a king for themselves, so the Israelites could not fulfill the plan of God.⁵ According to E. B. Pusey, the Israelites did not trust God and betrayed Him. They sought help from a human. For the people of Israel, choosing a new king would not help to

³ Alberto Ferreiro, *The Twelve Prophets* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture--Old Testament; Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2012), 77.

⁴ David Allen Hubbard, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Hosea* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 1998), 248-249.

⁵ Rev. James Wolfendale, *The Preachers Homiletic Commentary: The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 180-181.

solve the problem. The fact that God took the king away in His wrath, was a kind of mercy for Israel.⁶ Similarly, Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman stated that the Israelites longed for a king, but the king they longed for could not bring them salvation.⁷ Likewise, according to *Daniel and the Minor Prophets* edited by Frank E. Gaebelain, Israel did not lack kings, but none of the kings could lead them. About the unbelief of the Israelites, it reads: “God had been allowing them to rule; but because of their unfaithfulness to him, he had been also been setting them aside. Many had come to a violent end.”⁸ William Rainey Harper considered that only God was the real king of Israel, and the reason for taking the king away was the displeasure of God.⁹ Henry Mckeating believed that demanding a king, was not only displeasing to God, but it was also a huge mistake. In a case, the king was to be taken away, the whole country would be left destroyed.¹⁰

Third, God dethroned the king because He wanted to give them a lesson in their disobedience. Only a handful of people mentioned the advantages of the monarchy.

Douglas Stuart evaluated the advantages of the monarchy: stable continuous government,

⁶ E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets: A Commentary. Barnes' Notes on the Old & New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 1:130-131.

⁷ Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*. The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (NY: Yale University Press, 1996), 636-637.

⁸ Frank E. Gaebelain, *Daniel and the Minor Prophets*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 7:221.

⁹ William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*. International Critical Commentary (London: T. & T. Clark, 1979), 399-400.

¹⁰ John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical by John Peter Lange - Ezekiel, Daniel and the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1980), 7:94-95.

equity with other nations, as the international system of that day was royal in structure, leadership in war. However, he also mentioned that the monarchy was the rejection of theocracy, although God was not pleased with the Israelites, He still used that as an opportunity to teach the people of Israel a lesson which reflected God's love.¹¹

Fourth, what God expressed in Hosea 13:11 was the denial of the monarchy as a political system. Henry Mckeating believed that God was not only antagonistic to the northern kingdom but to the monarchy as such. The monarchy was powerless to save the country and Israel was wrong to demand a king.¹² George Arthur Buttrick considered that there was no salvation in the king, and the Israelites had chosen a wrong way for their hope for politics could not change anything.¹³ In contrast, H.D. Beeby viewed this issue from another perspective. He thought that Hosea had a negative attitude toward the monarchy, but he did not pursue theocracy. He talked more about God Himself.¹⁴

In summary, there are at least four major or common understandings of Hosea 13:11, and the fourth point of view will be adopted in this thesis that God denied the monarchy as a political system and the reason will be expounded in the following pages.

¹¹ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1987), 31:205-206.

¹² Henry McKeating, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*. Cambridge Bible Commentaries on the Old Testament (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 148-149.

¹³ George Arthur Buttrick, *Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Twelve Prophets*. The Interpreter's Bible (NY: Abingdon Press, 1955), 6:712.

¹⁴ H. D. Beeby, *Grace Abounding: A Commentary on the Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 168-173.

Summary

It is obvious that in Hosea 13:11, God had a negative view of the monarchy. In general, the history of Israel under the monarchy showed that dethroning an evil king and replacing him with a good one won't solve the problems of Israel as a country. It was the essence or the system defects of the monarchy that prevented Israel from fulfilling the plan of God. With regard to the monarchy, 1 Samuel 8 presents very important insights. Obviously, the demanding of a king by Israelites was a betrayal of God, for only God should be their king. But this simple answer could not fully reflect the problems of the monarchy nor explain the reasons for the negative view of God toward the monarchy in Hosea 13:11. There is an important intertextual clue in Genesis 18:19, where God promised that the descendants of Abraham would be a great and mighty nation that would do what was “right” and “just”.¹⁵ In Hebrew the terms, “right” and “just” in this verse are *צְדָקָה*¹⁶ and *מִשְׁפָּט*.¹⁷ However, this goal was ultimately not achieved.

¹⁵ “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Gen 18:19).

¹⁶ R. Laird Harris and Gleason L. Archer Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Taipei: China Evangelical Seminary Press, 1995), 853.

¹⁷ Harris, 1076.

CHAPTER 2

HERMENEUTICS OF HOSEA 13:11

Introduction

In this chapter, a hermeneutical study of Hosea 13:11 will be conducted. The contextual and historical background will be the starting point, Thus, the text will be put into a larger context that will deal with the literary structure of Hosea 13:11 and its specifics, its theological nuances, and literary devices. The hermeneutics of Hosea 13:11 will be based on the Hebrew text and compared with various Bible versions of translation.

Contextual and Historical Background of Hosea 13:11

The Information in the Book of Hosea

Hosea is considered to be the prophet of the Northern Kingdom, and apart from the biblical record, we know almost nothing about his personal life.¹⁸ Although the information in the book of Hosea was addressed to the Northern Tribes, somehow, in many cases, it had a direct reference to the Southern Kingdom.¹⁹ Therefore, when reading the book of Hosea, the reader should not assume that the information mentioned in this book was only for the Northern Kingdom.

¹⁸ Michael D. Coogan, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1275, Kindle.

¹⁹ Samuel Y. C. Tang, *A Commentary on Hosea* (vol. 1; Bible Commentaries Series; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 1984), 10-11.

The concept of “marriage” functions as a metaphor in the book of Hosea for the relationship between God and His people.²⁰ It is not surprising that there are such strong emotions in the book of Hosea; the emotions brought by the unfortunate marriage of the prophet reflect the emotions, only to a much higher degree, that God had towards Israel. During the time of Hosea, Israel enjoyed a revival.²¹ If the divided northern and southern parts were spliced together, Israel would have basically restored the territory of the David era.²² Israel was prosperous economically, but in the very heart of this prosperity, there was a religious crisis.²³ People were disloyal to God. Hosea used marriage as a metaphor to rebuke the Israelites for their spiritual disloyalty to God.²⁴ However, this infidelity did not concern only religion per se. According to the information of the book of Hosea, this infidelity or disloyalty expressed itself in the matters of politics, too.²⁵

Hosea had considerable insight into political issues. Concerning the international situation faced by Israel at that time, despite the prosperity of the nation, Israel had to deal with the threats from the superpowers like Assyria, which finally conquered Israel.²⁶

²⁰ Tang, 12.

²¹ D. David Garland, *Hosea* (Bible Study Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 1991), 10-11.

²² Tang, 2-4.

²³ Tang, 6.

²⁴ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey* (Hongkong: International Bible Society, 2001), 440.

²⁵ Garland, 22-23.

²⁶ Tang, 5-6.

Geographically, Israel was between two superpowers and it had to carefully handle the foreign affairs between Egypt and Assyria. Showing a political irresolution, Israel sometimes relied on Assyria and sometimes relied on Egypt.²⁷ “Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense—they call to Egypt, They go to Assyria” (Hos 7:11).

Nevertheless, it turned out that Israel or the Northern Kingdom was finally ruined by this kind of foreign policy. Neither Assyria nor Egypt could bring salvation to Israel since only God was the one who could bring Israel salvation.²⁸ Thus, seeking help from foreign countries was, in fact, a useless endeavor and political infidelity to God.

Only God was the lawful king of Israel,²⁹ and the political infidelity of Israel was also reflected in their demanding of a king for themselves and the establishment of a monarchy. According to the book of Hosea, Israel dedicated her love to the lovers, and these lovers were pagan religions, foreign countries, and her own kings.³⁰ These developments replaced the status of God in Israel. The problems of Israel could no longer be solved by changing one king for another.³¹ There were pieces of evidence that God had never recognized the monarchy and never recognized any king as the real or lawful king of Israel.

Many people consider that the book of Hosea was written only for the Northern

²⁷ William Sanford La Sor, *Old Testament Survey* (Hongkong: Seed Press Book Centre Limited, 1988), 430-433.

²⁸ Katheryn Leung, *Meditating with the Twelve Minor Prophets* (CA: CCM Publishers, 2008), 38.

²⁹ Wolfendale, 180.

³⁰ Garland, 24-26.

³¹ Leung, 60-61.

Kingdom; however, the basic information was for the entire nation especially on the issues of the monarchy and their spiritual condition.³² The reasons are as follows: First, the book of Hosea reflected Israel's breach of the covenant with God, which was the covenant for the entire nation.³³ Second, in the context of the covenant, only God should be the lawful king of Israel, which should include the entire nation, not only the Northern Kingdom.³⁴ Third, it was the whole nation of Israel, not just the Northern Tribes that demanded a king, so the establishment of the monarchy was not just a matter of the Northern Kingdom.³⁵ Fourth, despite other issues, politically, one of the major factors for the division of the United Kingdom was the defects of the monarchy.³⁶ After the division of the state, the ten Northern Tribes adopted the monarchy, which was inherited from the United Kingdom. Thus, the information, concerning the monarchy in the book of Hosea was for the entire nation of Israel and not just for the Northern Kingdom.

Literary Structure and Text Analysis of Hosea 13:11

Concerning the literary Structure, it is generally believed that Hosea 13:9-11 should be a unit, and most Bible commentaries divide the text in that way. Some argue that Hosea 13:9-14 should be taken as a unit, and this division fits into the pattern found

³² Tang, 28-32.

³³ Garland, 66-67.

³⁴ Chien-kuo Paul Lai, *Exodus* (vol. 2; Tien Dao Bible Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2005), 40.

³⁵ Silas Chan, *1 Samuel* (Tien Dao Bible Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2001), 277.

³⁶ Paul Li, *1 King* (Tien Dao Bible Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2003), 163-164.

in chapters 12 and 13:1-3, 4-8.³⁷ But from the perspective of the hermeneutical or exegetical significance of the monarchy, it is more appropriate to take Hosea 13:11 as a part of the unit of 13:9-11.

Verse 9, in Hebrew reads : שְׁחַתֵּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־בִי בְעִזָּרְךָ: . There are significant differences in the translations between different versions of the Bible. NKJV reads: “O Israel, you are destroyed, But your help is from Me.” NIV reads: “You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against me, against your helper.” NET reads: “I will destroy you, O Israel! Who is there to help you?” CJB reads: “It is your destruction, Isra’el, although your help is in me.” KJ21 reads: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help.” BBE reads: “I have sent destruction on you, O Israel; who will be your helper?” KJV reads: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” There are some other versions of the translation that are not listed here.

Comparing the translations of different mainstream versions mentioned above, the people posed the questions: Who destroyed Israel? Was it God? Did Israel destroy herself? Or were there other people responsible for the destruction? One key point is how to translate שְׁחַתֵּךְ which is a Piel (expressing the intensity of action), perfect, third person, masculine, singular verb with a second person singular masculine suffix, literally meaning, “has destroyed you.”³⁸ The problem is very complex, which is why we can see so many different versions of translation. It seems that every translation is

³⁷ Beeby, 168.

³⁸ Harris, 1042.

reasonable.

In order to understand the meaning of Hosea 13:9, one needs to find clues on a larger scale, and according to the context and the theme in the book of Hosea. The meaning of this verse can be understood like this: God was the helper and the destruction was caused by the disloyalty or betrayal of Israel.³⁹ Marriage as a metaphor for Israel's infidelity to God was mentioned at the very beginning of this book. "When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, 'Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.' So, he married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to Hosea, 'Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel'" (Hos 1:2-4). In addition to that, there are some other verses with similar information, such as Hosea 2:2-13; 6:4-10; 7:8-16, etc. Especially in Hosea 8:1, this idea is very clear. "Set the trumpet to your mouth! He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law." In summary, Israel destroyed herself because of the betrayal and the sin she committed.⁴⁰ According to the Hebrew text, a viable translation is: "It destroys you, O Israel, which you are against me, against your helper."⁴¹

³⁹ Pusey, 1:130.

⁴⁰ Leung, 40.

⁴¹ Gleason L. Archer Jr. and Leon J. Wood, etc, *Daniel and the Minor Prophets*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 7:221.

Furthermore, verse 10, in Hebrew reads:

אֶהְיֶה מְלֶכְךָ אִפּוֹא וַיִּוְשִׁיעֶךָ בְּכָל־עָרֶיךָ וְשֹׁפְטֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ תִּנְהַלְלֵי מֶלֶךְ וְשָׂרִים:

NKJV translates the verse in the following way: “I will be your King; Where is any other, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, ‘Give me a king and princes’?” BBE reads: “Where is your king, that he may be your saviour? And all your rulers, that they may take up your cause? Of whom you said, give me a king and rulers.” NIV reads: “Where is your king, that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns, of whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'?” ASV reads: “Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? And thy judges, of whom thou saidst, give me a king and princes?”

The Hebrew word אֶהְיֶה is Qal impf. 1 c. s. apoc. vol. (from הָיָה),⁴² literally meaning, I (will be) want to be מְלֶכְךָ means “your king”,⁴³ אִפּוֹא means “well” or “then” or “now” in this case.⁴⁴ Together, אֶהְיֶה מְלֶכְךָ אִפּוֹא can be translated into: “Now, where is your king?” Compare with the translations, NIV and BBE read “where is your king?” NKJV reads “I will be your King”, which put אֶהְיֶה מְלֶכְךָ אִפּוֹא וַיִּוְשִׁיעֶךָ בְּכָל־עָרֶיךָ together as one whole unit and the phrase is translated into “I will be your King; Where is any other, That he may save you in all your cities? ” Comparing this translation with KJV, there is no essential difference between the two, except that in the NKJV, old

⁴² Harris, 17.

⁴³ Harris, 571.

⁴⁴ Harris, 73-74.

English was replaced with modern English. If we put the translations of NKJV or KJV in the context of the book of Hosea, these translations reflect the theme of the book of Hosea more accurately, since only God should be the king of Israel. This issue will be discussed in detail in the following pages. Translations such as NIV and BBE are more closely related to the Hebrew text, two different kinds of translations can complement each other for study. With regard to the rest of this verse and its translation, there is no essential difference in the mainstream versions of the Bible but differs in the choice of vocabularies and the order of words. According to the Hebrew text, a viable translation is: Where now is your king, that he may save you in all your cities; and your judges, of whom you said, give me a king and princes.⁴⁵

Verse 10 mentioned the historical event when Israel demanded a king, which was recorded in 1 Samuel 8. Israelites were not only choosing a leader for themselves but also establishing a political system that deviating from God.⁴⁶ When Samuel became old and the leaders came to him, they said, “You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have” (1 Sam 8:5) . Whatever the reason or rationale the Israelites were actually rejecting God. In 1 Samuel 8:7, God said to Samuel, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.” In this case, the reading of

⁴⁵ Pusey, 1:130.

⁴⁶ Chan, 280-282.

the Hebrew text is clearer. In 1 Samuel 8:5, Hebrew noun מֶלֶךְ means “a king,”⁴⁷ which is in singular just as in English. What did “a king” mean here? Apparently, the Israelites did not want God to choose another leader to replace Samuel. What the Israelites demanded was not a king, but a political system.⁴⁸ From then on, God was no longer their king. In Hosea 13:10, מֶלֶכְךָ (your king) which is singular and originates from מֶלֶךְ can be understood as a king or as a monarchy.⁴⁹ Therefore, according to the account of this historical event in 1 Samuel, demanding a king should be understood as the desire to establish a monarchy.⁵⁰

Verse 11, in Hebrew, reads: אֶתְּוֹזַלְתִּי מִלְּךָ בְּאַפִּי וְאָקַח בְּעִבְרָתִי: ס. NIV presents the following English translation: “So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath, I took him away.” NKJV reads: “I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath.” ESV reads: “I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath.”

There is no significant difference between mainstream Bible versions. For this verse, the most important issue is how to understand it or how to interpret it. There are two questions that are crucial to understanding in this verse. First, God gave Israel “a king” and what did “a king” mean in this case? Second, why God did so? What was the

⁴⁷ Harris, 571.

⁴⁸ Chan, 283.

⁴⁹ Harris, 571-572.

⁵⁰ Sow-pheng Liew, *Hosea* (Tien Dao Bible Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2010), 524.

reason?

Concerning “a king”, we need to find clues from the Hebrew text. In Hebrew, it reads מֶלֶךְ, which is the same vocabulary that is used in Samuel 8:5.⁵¹ Therefore, when God said that “I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath” (Hos 13:11). What is expressed here is God’s denial of the monarchy.

There are two reasons to support this point of view. First, in Hosea 13:10, מֶלֶךְ originates from מֶלֶךְ which is the same vocabulary used in Hosea 13:11 and in 1 Samuel 8:5.⁵² According to the analysis above, the historical event described in 1 Samuel 8 was actually the rejection and betrayal of God by Israelites, and their desire was to establish a monarchy. In Hosea 13:10, this historical event has been described, so there is a reason to believe that Hosea 13:11 continued the topic of the previous verse, and “a king” which in Hebrew reads מֶלֶךְ should be understood as a monarchy. Therefore, in Hosea 13:11, God was talking about a political system but not of a certain individual. Second, for the problem of Israel, the changing of one king for another did not mend it,⁵³ and what God wanted to do was to abolish this human-centered political system.⁵⁴

For the Israelites, the original purpose of establishing a monarchy was to establish a political system comparable to that of their neighbors, and they longed for a

⁵¹ “And said to him, ‘Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king (מֶלֶךְ) to judge us like all the nations’” (1 Sam 8:5).

⁵² Harris, 571-572.

⁵³ Pusey, 1:131.

⁵⁴ Liew, 526.

strong leader to lead them and protect them.⁵⁵ But it turned out that the monarchy was incompetent, and the kings did not protect them with the protection they expected.⁵⁶ This was not a problem that could be solved by dethroning a bad king and replacing by a good king. In the history of Israel, during the time of the United Kingdom, the greatest kings were considered to be David and Solomon, but they were not perfect.⁵⁷ After the division of the country, there was no king who was positively evaluated in the Bible of the Northern Kingdom. In contrast, there were some kings who were affirmed in the Bible of the Southern Kingdom. Although they were not perfect, the nation could always turn the corner under the deliverance of God. Somehow, Judah ultimately did not escape the fate of destruction.⁵⁸ It was obvious that the monarchy could not provide everything that the Israelites originally expected, and the system defects were not possible to be solved by a good king. In 1 Samuel, the various problems of the monarchy were mentioned, and in Hosea 13:10, the incompetence of the king, or we should say the incompetence of the monarchy was indicated. Therefore, the only way to solve the problem of Israel was to abolish the monarchy and let the Israelites return to God who should be their real king.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 525-526.

⁵⁶ P. R. Ackroyd and A. R. C. Leaney and J. W. Packer, *The Books of Amos, Hosea, and Micah*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 148-149.

⁵⁷ Guang Pan and Shaonan Chen and Jianhua Yu, *The Jewish Civilization* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2000), chap. 1, Kindle.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Summary

In summary, to understand the significance of Hosea 13:11, it is necessary to regard Hosea 13:9-11 as a unit, and according to the hermeneutical analysis above, what is concerned in this passage is not a certain king but the monarchy. Therefore, what is expressed in Hosea 13:11 is a denial of the monarchy as a political system.

According to the text of Hosea 13:9-11, there were two main reasons why God rejected the monarchy. First, the establishment of the monarchy by the Israelites was a betrayal of God. Second, the kings under the monarchy provided no real protection for the Israelites.

Somehow, the conclusions above do not address the most critical issue. What kind of problems existed in the monarchy, so that God rejected it? Why the problems could not be solved by replacing a king for another that God must abolish the whole system? On the other hand, why the establishment of the monarchy by Israelites was a betrayal of God? What was the reason that the kings under the monarchy could not provide real protection? In this case, was it possible that a perfect king would solve all the problems and provide the real protection for the Israelites; or even, if there was a perfect king, but he would fail to save Israel from destruction due to the essence or the system defects of the monarchy, what then?

It is obvious that the conclusions above cannot answer these questions nor give a clear understanding of Hosea 13:11. To understand the significance of Hosea 13:11, it is

necessary to conduct an in-depth study of the monarchy of Ancient Israel.

CHAPTER 3

A BASIC ANALYSIS OF THE MONARCHY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

Introduction

This chapter will focus on a multifaceted analysis of the monarchy in ancient Israel. The monarchy is considered by many historians to be the most successful political system in the ancient world; nevertheless, the system has defects that are obvious. The monarchy was adopted by Israel and the consequences were catastrophic. The establishment and the collapse of the monarchy in Israel will be analyzed from the perspective of theology, history, and politics, its essence, and the defects of the monarchy as a political system will also be expounded in part.

The Establishment of the Monarchy

The Reasons for the Establishment of the Monarchy

According to the biblical text, the main incentive for the establishment of the monarchy was the desire of the Israelites to emulate the political system of their neighboring countries; and from another perspective, it was hoped that the establishment of the monarchy would end the chaos of the era of the Judges.⁵⁹ 1 Samuel 8:5 contains a documented request of the people: “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” The Israelites were eager to have a political system that was similar to the one their neighbors had; unfortunately, but they turned a blind eye to the defects and flaws of this

⁵⁹ Coogan, 396, Kindle.

political system. Although Samuel attempted to persuade them and told explain to them the inherent problems and deficiencies of the monarchy, the desire for a new political system surpassed everything.⁶⁰

From a historical perspective, Israel had been repeatedly oppressed by pagan nations during the era of the Judges.⁶¹ In the opinion of Israelites, the theocracy was not successful; otherwise, they would not deny God as their king. In the book of Judges, the most classic evaluation of the era of the Judges is: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25).

Many scholars believe that the establishment of the monarchy is justified by Judges 21:25 and the rationality, of such a political system, speaks by itself. There are two stories recorded in Judges 17-21, both of which repeatedly emphasized that there was no king in Israel during the era of the Judges, and both stories inform about the religious and political chaos in Israel.⁶² For example, the story of referring to Micah’s idols, indicate the fact that there was no king in Israel during those days. Moreover, this reality is reemphasized two times in Judges 17:6 and 18:1. It is obvious that the author of the book of Judges refers to the general understanding of the nation, namely, the reason for the religious chaos was the absence of a king.⁶³ However, in the future, life under the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 452.

⁶¹ Arthur E. Cundal and Leon Morris, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Judges and Ruth* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2002), 202.

⁶² Coogan, 396, Kindle.

⁶³ Ibid.

monarchy and the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem would have solved all the problems.

There is a reason why the story of the Levite and his concubine does not omit the same fact that there was no king in Israel. Thus, the same motif is reemphasized again and again. Moreover, at the end of the story, which is also the end of the book, the comment on the whole era of the Judges and its concern that there was no king in Israel is reemphasized one more time. On the one hand, one may easily think that the cause of the religious and political chaos was that there was no strong political system in Israel, on the other hand, the establishment of the expected monarchy should solve any problem.

However, there are two questions. First, during the era of the Judges, was Israel's religious and political disarray a failure of the theocracy? Second, did the monarchy really solve the religious and political anarchy in Israel?

Concerning the Theocracy

With regard to the issue of the theocracy, there are some clues from the evaluation of the era of the Judges at the end of the book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:25). The text highlights two aspects, 1) that everyone did what was right in his own eyes, and 2) there was no king in Israel, but is there any connection between the two? Or was it the normalcy in the theocracy that everyone did what was right in his own eyes?

To answer these questions, one can do a textual comparison. In the books of Kings and Chronicles, there are comments on the kings, such as: “Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin” (1 Kgs 15:25-26). “In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Zibiah of Beersheba. Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him” (2 Kgs 12:1-2). Obviously, in the days of kings, the standard of evaluation for the kings was whether they did what was right in God’s eyes.

In the case of the Judges, the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes, but would that be right in God’s eyes? The answer is obvious, as the religious and political disarray speaks by themselves. In the context of the theocracy it was wrong for the Israelites to do what was right in their own eyes. Their deviation from the faith in God was the fundamental cause of the chaos in the era of the Judges. The book of Judges shows that every time the Israelites turned to God, the nation prospered; and every time the Israelites turned against God, the nation failed.⁶⁴ Therefore, the theocracy was not the cause of the widespread anarchy in Israel.

⁶⁴ Cundal, 42.

Concerning the Monarchy

Superficially, it seemed that the monarchy had successfully resolved the religious and political problems of Israel, but as paradoxical it may sound, it had set the stage for even greater turmoil and the destruction of the nation.

The construction of the Temple in Jerusalem had completely changed the center of religious worship in Israel, and the capital city of the country operated more than simply the holy city of their religion. At that time the regime and religion were closely linked. For example, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, the covenant between God and David was repeatedly emphasized.⁶⁵ The relationship between the king and God was similar to that between the father and the son, as 2 Samuel 7:14 reads, “I will be his Father, and he shall be My son”. The king became the intermediary between God and His people, and the king became the representative of Israel before God.⁶⁶ In this way, the kingship was directly related to God. Thus, under the monarchy, politics, and religion were combined.

However, this combination of politics and religion was fundamentally different from the theocracy and set the stage for the collapse of Israel. Under the monarchy, the religious unity of Israel was directly linked to the crown. In that political system, the king became the intermediary between Israel and God, and the preference or loyalty of

⁶⁵ Xin, Xu, *A History of Jewish Culture* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011), chap. 1, Kindle.

⁶⁶ Bin You, *The Literary, Historical and Thought World of the Hebrew Bible: An Introduction* (Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher, 2016), 152-157.

the king would directly affect the religious situation of the entire nation.⁶⁷ As it is seen from the Old Testament when the king was loyal to God, the country could maintain a stable unity in religion, but when the king betrayed God, the whole country would betray God. When the monarchy was too human-centered, the individual decision of the king could influence the fate of the entire country, and the consequences were always disastrous.⁶⁸

In fact, under the monarchy, Israel was unable to escape from all the evils and calamities of the era of the Judges, as stability of politics and true religion that the Israelites longed for was never realized.⁶⁹ On the political front, the country was eventually divided; on the religious front, the betrayal of God led not only to greater chaos but also to the disintegration and destruction of the country.⁷⁰ The monarchy was not a good solution to the problems of Israel, at all. However, the Israelites were willing to go their own way, and ultimately the division and destruction of the country were inevitable.

A Basic Analysis of the Monarchy as a Political System

The Definition of Monarchy

It is generally believed that a monarchy is a political system in which a single

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 163.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

person holds the supreme authority in ruling a country, and there are different types of monarchy.⁷¹ In the book of *Republic* by Plato, the monarchy did not belong to the four classical political systems.⁷² In the book of *Politics* by Aristotle, the monarchy was discussed in detail. According to Aristotle, there were five types of political systems, and the monarchy was one of them. The difference between monarchy and tyranny depended on whether the throne was inherited or elected, whether the king ruled by law or not, whether the power of the king was restricted or not. In Aristotle's view, there was no essential difference between monarchy and tyranny, and it only depended on how the king used his power.⁷³

In the ancient world, in many ways, the monarchy was the most reasonable political system since it was the most effective way to rule a country. In contrast, democracy was not the majority. A very typical example was Rome, which had accumulated many problems under the republic and eventually reshaped into the monarchy. Although the monarchy was the most powerful political system in the ancient world, when power was excessively concentrated on the king, it was possible that the king might abuse that power for some reason.⁷⁴ This was the potential crisis of the monarchy.

⁷¹ "Monarchy," Wikipedia, last modified December 23, 2019, accessed January 9, 2020, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy>.

⁷² Plato, *Republic* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2009), chap. 8, Kindle.

⁷³ Aristotle, *Politics* (vol. 3; Beijing: Beijing Publishing Group, 2012), chap. 11, Kindle.

⁷⁴ Jeremy Bentham, *A Fragment on Government* (Beijing: Taihai Publishing House, 2016), chap. 2, Kindle.

The Foundation of the Monarchy in Israel

The landmark event of the establishment of the monarchy in Israel was when the Israelites demanded a king (recorded in 1 Samuel 8), but from the perspective of the political system, the monarchy in Israel did not take place until the arrival of King David.⁷⁵ Saul, the first king of Israel, had no regular standing army, except for a few warriors chosen by him. He did not establish a complete administrative system. At that time, there was no definite territory or an official capital in Israel.⁷⁶ Saul was more like a judge rather than a king. From this point of view, during the time of Saul, there was no absolute monarchy in Israel.⁷⁷

David is considered to be the greatest king in the history of ancient Israel. His most significant contribution to Israel was not to defeat the enemies and expand the territory but to establish a new political system, which was a combination of monarchy and theocracy.⁷⁸ Although Saul was called the first king of Israel, in many ways, he was just a transitional figure. David followed Saul and reshaped the entire country.⁷⁹ For David, an unavoidable issue was the legitimacy of his kingship. Although, according to the Bible, the authority of his throne came from God and Samuel was the intermediary who anointed him as the king of Israel, but still, David was conscientious about dealing

⁷⁵ You, 145.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 150-152.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁸ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

⁷⁹ You, 145.

with the issue of the legitimacy of the throne.⁸⁰

First, David never launched an armed rebellion against Saul nor threatened the throne or personal safety of Saul. Second, David never forced Israelites to accept his kingship.⁸¹ At first, he only reigned in the tribe of Judah, and then the northern tribes took the initiative to ask David to be their king in the absence of the leader. Third, David carefully dealt with his first wife, who was the daughter of Saul. Before he officially became the king of all Israel, he asked the representatives of the northern tribes to bring him the daughter of Saul, who had been remarried to another man so that he could succeed the throne as the son-in-law of the king.⁸²

The whole process of how David became the king of Israel showed some important details that could help to outline the foundation of the monarchy of the Davidic Dynasty. In 2 Samuel 2:1-4, David was anointed as the king of Judah in Hebron. At that time, David did not rely on anyone. From the simple biblical record, one can conclude that the people of the tribe of Judah voluntarily chose David as their leader.⁸³ Politically, this was not different from treason. At that time, one of the sons of Saul had inherited the throne in the north of Israel. After the civil war, the leaders of the northern tribes came and made a covenant with David before God. David was once again anointed

⁸⁰ Silas Chan, *2 Samuel* (Tien Dao Bible Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2009), 64-65.

⁸¹ Ibid. 66-67.

⁸² You. 145.

⁸³ Chan, 164-170.

and became the king of all Israel. When David became the king of Judah, there is no mentioning of a covenant; but when David officially became the king of Israel, the covenant played a pivotal role. After the conclusion of the covenant, followed by the anointing, the northern tribes officially granted the kingship to David and accepted his rule.⁸⁴ So, in the days of David, the foundation of the monarchy was inseparable from the covenant with the people.⁸⁵

However, there was an underlying destabilizing factor in the covenant-based monarchy. There was no description of the content of the covenant in the book of 2 Samuel, and from a military point of view, for the northern tribes, the covenant was more like a surrender agreement.⁸⁶ The condition of the northern tribes to accept the rule of David was to make a covenant with him, which meant that if the northern tribes or David tore up the covenant, then the relationship between the two sides would cease to exist. This scene happened tragically when David's grandson, Rehoboam, succeeded to the throne. The secession of the northern tribes from the house of David could not be simply interpreted as a betrayal. According to the Bible, the two sides just did not renew their covenant. From the perspective of the covenant, the Davidic Dynasty was established in the name of David,⁸⁷ and the country depended on the covenant between the king and the people, which became the key factor to the legitimacy of the king.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 171-172.

⁸⁵ Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation. Order and History* (Nanjing: Yinlin Press, 2010), 1, chap. 4, Kindle.

⁸⁶ Chan, 172.

⁸⁷ Voegelin, 1, chap. 4, Kindle.

Somehow, the covenant with the people was not enough. The legitimacy of the kingship of David needed to be supported by a more powerful covenant.⁸⁸ That was the covenant with God. 2 Samuel 7:8-16 is considered to contain the covenant description between God and David, the Davidic covenant.⁸⁹ There are two verses in this passage that are the core of this covenant. “I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel” (2 Sam 7:8). “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam 7:16). According to these verses, it was God who chose David to be the king of Israel and God promised that the kingdom would endure forever.⁹⁰ The contextual background of this passage informs that David wanted to build a temple for God in Jerusalem, but God refused. However, God conveyed to David a clear message that the legitimacy of David’s kingship came from God.⁹¹

By means of the covenants with the people and God, David became the intermediary between Israelites and God, and the kingship was closely linked with the theocratic authority, and the key to this connection was the capital of the country, Jerusalem. From the time of Judges, in Israel, there was a tendency to divide between the north and the south. The tribe of Judah was a kind of superpower, and the only one that

⁸⁸ Chan, 171.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 255.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: 1 and 2 Samuel* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2010), 244-247.

could be compared with Judah was the tribe of Ephraim. In the days of David, the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin formed a close alliance, while the tribes of the north were led by Ephraim. Although Canaan was the land that God gave to the Israelites, the conquest of this land was far less successful than expected, and in relation to geographical factors, the two parts of Israel, the north and the south, were relatively isolated. It was wise for David to choose Jerusalem as the new capital of the country.⁹²

First, Jerusalem was a foreign land that did not belong to any tribe. This would prevent a particular tribe from gaining a special status in Israel because the capital was in its territory.⁹³ Second, Jerusalem was the junction connecting the south and the north. It was beneficial to the unity of the country.⁹⁴ Third, Jerusalem was suitable for building fortifications and it would be militarily advantageous to locate the capital here.⁹⁵ However, David did not choose Jerusalem as the capital just for political and military reasons. He wanted to make Jerusalem the new religious center of the country. Building the temple for God was the most crucial step. From the perspective of the covenant, political and military considerations were reflected in the covenant between David and the Israelites, and the religious considerations were reflected in the covenant between David and God. These were the two cornerstones of the monarchy of the Davidic Dynasty, and Jerusalem was the key to the integration of the two.

⁹² Coogan, 492, Kindle.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

⁹⁵ You, 152-157.

The Unrestricted Power

David was the king who brought Israel to the age of the empire, but the monarchy was not complete until the days of Solomon. The completion of the Temple in Jerusalem could be seen as a milestone.⁹⁶ On the one hand, the establishment of the monarchy meant full exertion of the power bringing prosperity to the country; on the other hand, it meant that the flaws of the monarchy could be exposed that would eventually bring the country to ruin. When the Israelites demanded a king from Samuel, he explained to them the deficiencies of the monarchy, but the Israelites who yearned for the monarchy like their neighboring countries only saw the favorable side of it. It was evident that by turning a blind eye to the inherent problems of the monarchy, the Israelites will have to pay a painful price, and the uncontrollable power will be the beginning of that nightmare which will be discussed in detail next.

In the time when the monarchy was not yet completely established, Saul, the first king in the history of Israel, became arrogant after he took the throne and achieved some successes. During a battle against the Philistines, Saul ignored the rules about the procedure of bringing sacrifices; he asked the Israelites not to eat any food until the victory over his enemies; and later he insisted on killing Jonathan, who had made the most significant contribution in that battle, but who had not heard about Saul's order. In a battle against Amalekites, Saul set up a monument in his own honor and kept the king of Amalek alive, who was supposed to be killed; he also brought a sacrifice as an excuse to

⁹⁶ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

keep the spoils. Later, Saul became jealous of David, who was loved by people; he tried to kill him several times; he chased David after he escaped him, and as if it were not enough, Saul even ordered the killing of the priests. With every day, Saul's behavior became more and more erratic, till one day before the final battle against the Philistines, he went to the witch of Endor for help. The Israelites were scared by him, and it is not surprising that people thought that God's mercy had been transferred to another person.⁹⁷

From the perspective of politics, one of the fundamental defects of the monarchy was the lack of restrictions on the king's power. No one could force the king to take responsibility for his actions.⁹⁸ This was repeatedly practiced and demonstrated in the monarchy of Israel. In the days of Saul, the prophet, like Samuel, could balance the power of the king.⁹⁹ However, Samuel's influence on Saul was limited. In the time of David, an adverse change about the prophets had set the stage for the collapse of the monarchy. According to the biblical text, when David was the king, the prophets acted as the counselors, and when the general situation in the monarchy had improved, the prophets became the quasi-subordinates of the king. Not only the prophets but all the religious leaders, including the priests, gradually became the officers in the government. This system was quite mature in the days of Solomon.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Ian Morris, *Foragers, Farmers, and Fossil Fuels: How Human Values Evolve* (Beijing: China CITIC Press, 2016), 88.

⁹⁸ Melissa Lane, *Greek and Roman Political Ideas* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House, 2018), 75-76.

⁹⁹ You, 138.

¹⁰⁰ You. 172.

However, in the case of the prophets, they had before them two choices, namely, either to become the quasi-subordinates or to find themselves outside the administrative system. Somehow, there were many professional prophets who were not chosen by God but served the king for money. Nevertheless, there was only one choice for the priests because a priest could not fulfill the duties of a priest without the religious system. Due to the efforts of David, the religious institution became wholly affiliated with the administrative system, so the only option to be a priest was to serve the royal family. Thus, the relationship between the king, the prophets, and the priests under the monarchy was intricate. In fact, no one could really limit the power of the king.¹⁰¹

One may find a list of officials of the Israeli administrative system in 1 Kings 4. “Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest” (1 Kgs 4:2). The first official mentioned was the priest. Obviously, the religious institution at that time was fully affiliated in the administrative system. In 1 Kings 4:7-19, there is a list of governors. After analysis and comparison of two administrations of Solomon and David, one will notice that there is a fundamental difference between them.¹⁰² For example, the 12 administrative divisions were not divided according to the territories of the 12 tribes, which meant that the re-division of the state administrative regions and the governors appointed by the king strengthened the royal power and weakened the power of the tribal leaders.¹⁰³ Therefore,

¹⁰¹ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰² Li, 314-315.

¹⁰³ Coogan, 538, Kindle.

compared with David, the power of Solomon was more concentrated, and no one could really balance this power.

Samuel had warned the Israelites about how the king would restrict their freedom and impose taxes to satisfy his personal desires. In the days of Solomon, when the power was so concentrated in the hands of one person, all these things became reality.¹⁰⁴

During that time, there were large-scale construction projects in Israel, and the prosperity of trade led to the rapid accumulation of wealth. 1 Kings 10 describes the wisdom and the wealth of Solomon with astonishing detail. “Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king’s merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price. Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria” (1 Kgs 10:28-29). According to the information from some inscriptions, Solomon’s purchase of these chariots and horses was costly. These chariots had to be richly decorated and the horses had to be the thoroughbred ones.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the chariots and horses were not only for military purposes but also to demonstrate the wealth and the power of the country. In addition, according to the Biblical text, Solomon's luxury was apparent. In the ancient world, when the productivity was not developed, the desire of the king would quickly drain the savings of

¹⁰⁴ You, 182.

¹⁰⁵ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2013), 490-495.

the people.¹⁰⁶ When the whole country focused on one person's needs and tried to satisfy all his desires, the intensification of social contradictions was inevitable.

The Collapse of the Monarchy

The Breach of the Covenants

As the analysis above shows, during the era of the United Kingdom, the monarchy was based on two covenants, namely, with God and the people, but unfortunately, as soon as the powerful monarchy was established, King Solomon destroyed both covenantal foundations of it. The consequences were disastrous. With the overly centralized power, it was evident that no one could really restrict the king like Solomon.¹⁰⁷ It sounds paradoxical, but under the prosperity, the whole country faced the crisis of justice and righteousness.

Concerning the covenant with God, it should be analyzed from the angle of the Davidic Covenant. According to the text of 2 Samuel 7:8-16, there was nothing about the obligations of David, but only a unilateral and unconditional promise of God.¹⁰⁸ From a perspective of politics, the Sinaitic covenant was directly related to the founding of Israel as a nation and, in form, was more like a political treaty or agreement during that time. Therefore, compared with the Sinaitic covenant, the Davidic covenant could not be regarded as a formal and complete covenant as far as the monarchy was concerned.

¹⁰⁶ Ma Kegui, *History of Civilizations* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ You, 164.

¹⁰⁸ Chan, 255.

However, the Davidic covenant could not exist without the Sinaitic covenant, or the Davidic covenant would be meaningless. From a historical perspective, the Israelites were God's people. Although they had betrayed God on the issue of the monarchy, this did not change the fact that the Israelites had made a covenant with God. David was the king chosen by God and he belonged to God's people. These identification elements were essential. When God instructed Samuel to make Saul a king, he said to Samuel, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people" (1 Sam 9:17). That is how it happened, although the Israelites wanted to choose another leader, God's choice was different. David, who succeeded Saul's throne, was not a man who seized power by force or other means, but a person appointed by God to be the leader of His people.¹⁰⁹ Thus, there were two foundational indicators of the Davidic covenant. First, Israelites were the people of God. Second, God chose David and his descendants as the leaders of Israel. Therefore, in the framework of the Davidic covenant, the Israelites were God's people and the king of Israel was the leader of God's people.¹¹⁰

If the king of Israel violated the Sinaitic covenant, then the Davidic covenant, which was based on the Sinaitic Covenant, would lose its validity, and one of the aspects of the monarchy would collapse. In spite of the fact that the betrayal of God was tantamount to tearing up the Davidic covenant, in some way, the Davidic covenant dealt with an unconditional promise of God, which He would never break. This truth was

¹⁰⁹ 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

¹¹⁰ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

repeatedly indicated by God's judgments in Solomon's life. 1 Kings 11 refers to political marriages, which generally and eventually led to religious betrayal.¹¹¹ Thus, the worship of various pagan gods led Solomon to infidelity towards the true God. Moreover, it also tore up the Davidic covenant.¹¹² Thus, Solomon did not justify his high calling as he lost the qualifications to be the king of Israel. "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen" (1 Kgs 11:11-13).

Solomon struggled to maintain the unity of the country, but of no avail, for he had also destroyed another foundational dimension of the monarchy, the covenant with the people. Unlike David, when Solomon was enthroned, he simply inherited his father's throne after he made a covenant with the northern tribes.¹¹³ In the campaign for the throne, David declared that Solomon was to be the heir, and his kingship was no longer challenged by anybody. After Solomon's death, when his son Rehoboam planned to inherit the throne, the leaders of the northern tribes once again put the issue of the

¹¹¹ Coogan, 538, Kindle.

¹¹² Ibid., 472, Kindle.

¹¹³ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

covenant on the agenda. “Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you” (1 Kgs 12:4). It is obvious from the request of tribal elders, that Solomon became a tyrant and mistreated the northern tribes.¹¹⁴ Although there is nothing recorded about the content of the covenant between David and the northern tribes in the biblical text, it is clear that Solomon trampled on the dignity of the northern tribes and inevitably broke the covenant with them. The purpose of the covenant with the people of the northern tribes was definitely not to make them the slaves of the king or the second-class citizens of the country, as their expectation was to be treated equally. Therefore, by mistreating the northern tribes, Solomon lost his qualification as the king.

On one occasion, the tribe of Judah took the initiative to invite David to be the king, but the foundation of the kingship was not the covenant. When Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the descendant of David, unwisely dealt with the request of the northern tribes, he lost the dominion over the northern tribes.¹¹⁵

“What share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David” (1 Kgs 12:16)! This scene was so dramatic. Failed to reach a new covenant, the northern tribes betrayed the house of David, and only the tribe of Judah that believed that the kingship was not based on the

¹¹⁴ Coogan, 538, Kindle.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

covenant was still loyal to Rehoboam.¹¹⁶ The consequences were precisely the same as in the case of the judgment of God.

Betrayal?

Was it a betrayal that the northern tribes refused to accept the rule of the house of David? According to the information found in the book of Hosea, many people believe that Hosea had accused the northern tribes, because of the betrayal of the house of David. There are some relevant passages in the book of Hosea.

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass, in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’ Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel, shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel” (Hos 1:10-11)! There was an expectation of Israel’s reunification,¹¹⁷ but was the so-called “one head” referring to a descendant of David? “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days” (Hos 3:4-5). According to this passage, the so-called

¹¹⁶ Michael Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 702.

¹¹⁷ Fishbane, 1145-1146.

“one head” should be the descendant of David.¹¹⁸

However, in the following paragraphs, some information is confusing. “Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure. The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark; I will pour out My wrath on them like water” (Hos 5:9-10). “O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and your judgments are like light that goes forth” (Hos 6:4-5). “For Israel has forgotten his Maker and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces” (Hos 8:14). Obviously, the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the Northern Kingdom of Israel were both criticized by God, and historically, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was eventually destroyed. Thus, returning to the House of David was not the solution and one cannot simply assume that the Southern Kingdom of Judah was the legitimacy.¹¹⁹

There are some clues in the Bible. The first one is God's judgment of Solomon. In 1 Kings 11:11-13 points out that it was God who tore the kingdom away from Solomon and gave the northern tribes to another person.¹²⁰ Second, a short paragraph in 1 Kings 11:26-40 shows that it was prophet Ahijah, who, when commanded by God, informed

¹¹⁸ Garland, 32-33.

¹¹⁹ Leung, 40-41.

¹²⁰ Fishbane, 698.

Jeroboam that he would become the king of the northern tribes.¹²¹ Third, 1 Kings 12:23-24 reveals that Rehoboam wanted to conquer the northern tribes by force, but then God sent the prophet Shemaiah to convey a clear message that the division of the country was the will of God.¹²² Although the northern tribes' betrayal of God was an undeniable blunder in the history of the Northern Kingdom, at the same time, it was unreasonable to blame them for their refusal to accept the rule of the House of David.

There is a paradox. On the one hand, the message in the book of Hosea was clear that the northern tribes should return to the House of David. On the other hand, their betrayal of the House of David could not be called betrayal for that was God's will.¹²³ The problem was something like a dead-end situation, as in the case of re-accepting the rule of the House of David there would be no solution to salvage the country, since Judah, the southern kingdom, which was under the rule of the House of David, was finally destroyed.¹²⁴ To understand this paradox, one needs to find more clues and conduct more in-depth research on the monarchy.

Concerning the Legitimacy of the Monarchy and the Real King of Israel

Did God Acknowledge the Legitimacy of the Kings?

Did God acknowledge the legitimacy of the kings? This seems to be an

¹²¹ Ibid., 699.

¹²² Ibid., 698.

¹²³ Leung, 45.

¹²⁴ Coogan, 674, Kindle.

reasonable question. However, if the Bible is used as the basis for studying it, the answer will be surprisingly obvious. No!

Back to history, when the Israelites demanded a king, God said to Samuel: “It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king” (1 Sam 8:7). Here, in the Hebrew text, God used the word מֶלֶךְ that originates from מָלַךְ which means “king”.¹²⁵ In contrast, when God chose Saul, he said to Samuel: “Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam 9:16). Here, in the Hebrew text, God used the word לְנָגִיד that originates from נָגַד which means leader or ruler.¹²⁶ Although in the Biblical text, God occasionally used מֶלֶךְ to describe things related to the kings of Israel or Judah, when it came to the establishment of a new political system, God chose a different word נָגִיד rather than the word מֶלֶךְ.¹²⁷ In other words, God used the vocabulary “king” to describe only Himself when it came to the status of the king of Israel.¹²⁸

In some other passages of the Bible, God, the prophets, or some other people, used the Hebrew word נָגִיד to describe the kings of Israel or Judah, which indicated God’s view of the identity of the human kings of His people. In 1 Samuel 10, Samuel said to Saul, “Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over his inheritance?” (1 Sam 10:1) In 1 Samuel 13, Samuel said to Saul, “But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has

¹²⁵ Harris, 571.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 621.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 620-622.

¹²⁸ Fishbane, 574-577.

sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command" (1 Sam 13:14). In 1 Samuel 25, Abigail said to David, "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you and has appointed you ruler over Israel" (1 Sam 25:30). In 2 Samuel 5 mentions, the representatives of the northern tribe, who came to David and asked him to be their king by saying, "In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler'" (2 Sam 5:2). In 2 Samuel 6, David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel—I will celebrate before the Lord" (2 Sam 6:21). In 2 Samuel 7, God sent Nathan to tell David, "I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel" (2 Sam 7:8). The historical events involved in these verses occurred before the Israeli monarchy was fully established. The Hebrew term מֶלֶךְ translated as "ruler" also means leader. In the Hebrew text, מֶלֶךְ sometimes refers to the king and sometimes refers to the official or the person in charge.¹²⁹

According to the passages above, that was God who chose Saul and David to be the leaders of His people by using the term מֶלֶךְ, which is a completely different word than the concept of "king" to describe the identity of the human kings. In the following books of the Bible, the term מֶלֶךְ was used numberless times to describe the kings of Israel and

¹²⁹ Harris, 620.

Judah.¹³⁰ Officially, God did not call these human kings “king,” as they were only the leaders of God’s people.¹³¹ Therefore, can this difference in vocabulary be seen as the evidence for God’s denial of the legitimacy of the human kings of His people? To answer the question, it is not enough with the specifics of the mentioned terminology, as there is a need for more identifiable and clarifying the issue clues.

The True Eternal King

Who was the real king of Israel? This was dramatically shown in the first vision of the prophet Isaiah.

The monarchy established by David collapsed, and the United Kingdom was divided. From the perspective of the covenant, the Northern Kingdom of Israel completely broke the Sinaitic covenant, while the Southern Kingdom of Judah was much better. Although there were some evil kings, the Southern Kingdom of Judah had a significant advantage in the legitimacy of the kingship. First, from a particular certain perspective, the monarchy of the United Kingdom was established in the name of David, so the kings of Judah, who were descendants of David, had the irreplaceable legitimacy.¹³² Second, although some kings were not loyal to God, Judah still held the covenant with God. It seemed that the legitimacy of the kings in Judah was not questionable, and surely there was an affirmation of Judah in the book of Hosea, but this

¹³⁰ Ibid., 622.

¹³¹ You, 149-152.

¹³² Li, 314-315.

did not mean that the kings of Judah had the legitimacy recognized by God.¹³³

The glory of David and Solomon did not last too long. The Kingdom of Judah had to face a dilemma from the very beginning of the division of the United Kingdom, namely, the narrow territory, the small population, Jerusalem, an essential fortress which was too close to the borderline. Judah, with the declining national power, had to deal carefully with the superpowers and struggle to survive in a complex international situation.¹³⁴ The temple in Jerusalem was still there, but things had changed totally. Because of the anarchy in religious life, the ups and downs in the political sphere, and unceasing military endeavors, the people of Judah gradually lost their hope.¹³⁵ However, that was not the destiny God wanted to see.

Uzziah, who inherited the throne at the age of 16, ruled Judah for about half a century, and, the glory that was lost, as it seemed, was gradual to be restored. “His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful” (2 Chr 26:15). However, people’s hope once rekindled did not last too long as things changed suddenly and dreadfully. “But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense” (2 Chr 26:16). Tragically, God struck the king with leprosy, and he

¹³³ You, 149-152.

¹³⁴ Guang Pan and Shaonan Chen and Jianhua Yu, *The Jewish Civilization* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2000), chap. 1, Kindle.

¹³⁵ Xu, chap. 1, Kindle.

was forced to spend the rest of his life in an isolated house till his death.¹³⁶

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne” (Isa 6:1).

The death of Uzziah played a vital role in this vision. Death was a symbol of the end.

When the human king died, the eternal King appeared on the throne. This contrast

between mortal and immortal presented a special significance in the theme of death.¹³⁷

“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa

6:5). Isaiah was unclean, and the whole nation was unclean, not only Uzziah but the

whole nation died because it was contaminated by sin.¹³⁸ “Keep on hearing, but do not

understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and

their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,

and understand with their heart, and return and be healed” (Isa 6:9-10). The message of

this vision was so frightening that the prophet interrupted it by exclaiming, “Lord, how

long” (Isa 6:11)? “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are

without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the

forsaken places are many in the midst of the land” (Isa 6:11-12). The destruction of the

country was inevitable, but this was not the end. “But yet a tenth will be in it, and will

return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when

¹³⁶ Coogan, 674, Kindle.

¹³⁷ Voegelin, 1. chap. 4, Kindle.

¹³⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39* (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary; South Pasadena, CA: A Kearnel of Wheat Christian Ministries, 2015), 365.

it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump” (Isa 6:13). There was hope in despair, God’s people were destroyed because of uncleanness, but they would reborn in ruin.¹³⁹

It is obvious that “the holy seed” played an important role in the given context. Though the tree was cut down, the stump would be remaining,¹⁴⁰ but what or who would be the holy seed? “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.” (Isa 11:1). Isaiah 11 says that the stump that remained on the ground was resurrected, which means that a new king would come and rule by righteousness, and the land would be filled with the knowledge of God. He would assemble the scattered people of Israel and Judah.¹⁴¹ We can find the same message in Jeremiah 23. After rebuking those who failed to take good care of the sheep of God, the Lord said, “The days are coming...when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.” (Jer 23:5-6)

In the contextual application of the righteous Branch in Isaiah 6, the legitimacy of the descendants of David, that is, human kings were denied;¹⁴² thus, the returning of the children of Israel to King David mentioned in Hosea 3:5, should not refer to the Southern

¹³⁹ Voegelin, 1. chap. 4, Kindle.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Oswalt, 365.

¹⁴² Voegelin, 1. chap. 4, Kindle.

Kingdom of Judah, as David functioned only as a symbol.¹⁴³ The central point of this information is further clarified in the New Testament. When Jesus explained the reason for the parable to the disciples,¹⁴⁴ he said, “And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matt 13:14-16). Once Jesus asked a pointed question to the Pharisees, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He” (Matt 22:42)? They answered, “The Son of David” (Matt 22:42). Obviously, people had a unified understanding of the identity of the Christ or the Messiah at that time. In the court, Pilate said, “‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king’” (John 18:37). When we put everything in a larger picture, the answer becomes clear that Jesus is the king symbolized by David and returning to the House of David means returning to God, thus the issue of the reunification of Israel as a nation is not merely about politics but also an issue about

¹⁴³ Coogan, 1290, Kindle.

¹⁴⁴ D. A. Carson, *Matthew* (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary; South Pasadena, CA: A Kearnel of Wheat Christian Ministries, 2013), 601-603.

salvation.¹⁴⁵

Jesus and the Monarchy

In the Bible, Jesus was exposed to only two incidents that were related to the monarchy: one was paying taxes to Caesar, the other was that people wanted to make him king by force. When Jesus was asked if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, he replied, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matt 22:21). Evidently, Jesus paid the taxes. Except for taxation, there was no connection between Jesus and Caesar Augustus. After feeding the five thousand, Jesus perceived that people were about to make him king by force. The very fact that after feeding thousands of people. He withdrew to a mountain by himself shows that the monarchy was not an option for Jesus.¹⁴⁶

The concept of the Messiah was derived from the Old Testament and was closely related to the Davidic covenant. On the other hand, the monarchy established by David constituted the essential elements of the concept of the Messiah.¹⁴⁷ However, the monarchy would be an obstacle to God’s plan. To understand this notion, we have to put the issue of the monarchy into a bigger picture; to look at it not only from the perspective of history but also from the perspective of salvation.

¹⁴⁵ Colin G. Kruse, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to John* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2005), 371-373.

¹⁴⁶ Carson, 875-877.

¹⁴⁷ You, 128.

After the fall, the concept of salvation is mentioned in Genesis 3. Thus the choice of the Israelites to be or not to be God's people was closely related to the repeatedly given promises, as for example, "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him" (Gen 18:18). Obviously, God's choice of Abraham's descendants was to be not only a blessing to one nation, but to all humankind.¹⁴⁸ "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Israel was supposed to play an important role in the context of salvation. The national glory of Israel was not the main focus of God, as there was no plan to make Israel this world's superpower.¹⁴⁹ There was a clear misunderstanding among people about the role of Israel in God's strategy and about the mission of Jesus.¹⁵⁰ When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, the disciples asked, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6)? Surely, Israel would be restored, but in what sense? "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). When the Holy Spirit descended, the restoration of Israel started, but that was a completely different Israel from the Old Israel.¹⁵¹ How about the monarchy in this new Israel? "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are

¹⁴⁸ Andrew P. C. Kwong, *Genesis* (vol. 1; Tien Dao Bible Commentary; Hongkong: Tien Dao Publishing House, 2010), 369.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 370-372.

¹⁵⁰ George Campbell Morgan, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Morgan's Expository Series; Monterey Park, CA: Living Spring Publications, 2000), 45.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:25-28). Yes, in the kingdom of God, there will be no positions characteristic to the monarchy.¹⁵² “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him...they shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:3-5).

Based on the discussions above, we can see that there is no place for the monarchy in the plan of God, and Jesus as the King of the Kings is so different from all the human kings. We should be clear that although the monarchy was a metaphor in the Bible, there was an essential difference between the “monarchy” used to describe spiritual issues and the “monarchy” in human history. In other words, the title of the king or the imagery of the king could be used to describe Jesus and the disciples, but it did not mean the reign of Jesus would be essentially the same as that of human kings. But the question remains, is there any evidence in the Bible, directly or indirectly, that Jesus as the King is against the monarchy?

To answer this question, we can make a simple comparison. According to the discussion in Chapter 5 of this paper, we can draw a very clear conclusion that monarchy implies an essential inequality, which was contrary to the biblical ideal of the ruling. However, in the book of Revelation, the picture is completely different. “I saw thrones

¹⁵² Carson, 828-830.

on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. ...They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ...They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:4-6). This is the political system established by the ministry of Jesus as the King, which is completely equal for the people who are saved, and they will reign with Jesus for a thousand years. After that, we can even see a more glorious picture in the book of Revelation. “Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ ...And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.’ ...The old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:1-4). Jesus told everyone with the practical actions written in the Bible that the old order of things will pass away, and the monarchy which belongs to the sinful world will pass away.

Jesus came to this world to live and die for His creation in order to give them the most magnificent hope of life eternal. For Him, in order to fulfill his mission and the plan of God, the monarchy concept was not an option among many.

Summary

The monarchy, as a political system, ultimately failed to fulfill the plan of God. Although God is described as a king in the Bible, according to the biblical record of Jesus’ life, it is clear that in the kingdom of God, there is no place for such monarchy as we have seen in human history. In other words, the relationship between God and His

people is fundamentally different from the relationship between a human king and the people in that country.

The direct cause of the establishment of the monarchy in Israel was the religious and political confusion during the era of the Judges, but the root cause was their betrayal of God. The fact that theocracy was not successful, was not the fault of God. Samuel warned the Israelites about the deficiencies and weaknesses of the monarchy but the Israelites who desired a new political system turned a blind eye to the negative aspects of it. The consequences were catastrophic, as the people gained nothing they expected to get from the monarchy. But above all, the very concept of “monarchy” proved to function like a betrayal of God Himself.¹⁵³

The Bible informs that the Israeli monarchy matured in the early days of Solomon’s administration. Earlier the kingship of the house of David was based on two covenants, one was the Sinaitic covenant and the other one was the covenant between David and the northern tribes. Under the monarchy, the kingship gradually strengthened, and some prophets and all the priests became the quasi-officials subordinate to the administrative system. The consequences of this sad change led to the unrestricted power of the king, which was one of the flaws of the monarchy.¹⁵⁴

The Sinaitic covenant, the covenant between the king and the people in northern tribes, which were the foundations of the Davidic Dynasty or the United Kingdom of

¹⁵³ Chan, 255.

¹⁵⁴ Shenggang Bao, *The Common Sense of Modern Politics* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2015), chap. 3, Kindle.

Israel, was torn by the constant abuse of power. Regarding religious affairs, the betrayal of God, which has always been there, emerged in Solomon's administration. In terms of internal affairs, the northern tribes were treated unfairly and thus intensified social conflicts. When Rehoboam inherited the throne, he did not make a new covenant with the northern tribes and the United Kingdom was divided. Although the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah became two independent countries politically, from the perspective of nationality, the people in those two countries were still one, and the two countries shared the same political system which originated from the United Kingdom.

From a general point of view, the people in the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom were still the chosen people of God, but they all were affected by and suffered from the obvious defects of the monarchy. Therefore, when studying the monarchy, we cannot separate the Northern Kingdom from the Southern Kingdom. Instead, we should consider the two as one whole; moreover, it is reasonable to believe that God denied the monarchy as a political system in Hosea 13:11, where one of the immediate causes among many was that the plan of God could not be fulfilled under the monarchy.

CHAPTER 4

A BASIC HERMENEUTICS OF GENESIS 18:19

Introduction

To do a general analysis of the monarchy is not enough; it does not address all the problems about why God had a negative view of the monarchy. It is necessary not only to put Hosea 13:11, including such concepts as monarchy and Israel as a nation in a larger picture but also to focus on specific hermeneutical details.

As it was mentioned earlier, one of the causes of why God denied the monarchy was that Israel failed the plan of God under that political system. Thus, one of the references to God's purpose in choosing Israel as a nation, found in Genesis 18:19, becomes the key to understanding the significance of Hosea 13:11. In this chapter, the question of relevance between Hosea 13:11 and Genesis 18:19 will be expounded, and a basic hermeneutics of Genesis 18:19 will be conducted.

The Key to Understand Hosea 13:11

The analysis above has repeatedly shown that Israel failed the plan of God under the monarchy, that is, God's purpose in choosing Israel as a nation did not realize in the given political context. In order to understand God's purpose in choosing Israel as a nation and to unlock the real meaning of Hosea 13:11, it will be helpful to research some of the statements, found in the book of Genesis. Thus, Genesis 18:18-19 contains a

powerful statement:

“Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

There are three main points in the text above: First, the descendants of Abraham would become a great and mighty nation. Second, they would do what was right. Third, they would do what was just. Therefore, according to Genesis 18:19, doing what was right and just would function as the two fundamental principles of the future Israeli state.¹⁵⁵

Contextual and Historical Background of Genesis 18:19

The Literary Structure and Background of Genesis 18:19

The literary structure of Genesis 18:19 is located in the context of the story in Genesis 18, and from a literary perspective, Genesis 17 and 18 are related.

In Genesis 17, God reaffirmed His promise to Abraham and circumcision was the sign of the covenant, but God also announced something extraordinary that put Abraham in a dilemma.¹⁵⁶ “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless

¹⁵⁵ Kwong, vol. 2, 458-460.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 315.

her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her” (Gen 17:15-16). Surely God promised that He would give Canaan to Abraham and his descendants; however, at that time, Abraham had only one son from Hagar. “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?... Oh, that Ishmael might live before You” (Gen 17:17-18)! But God insisted, “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him” (Gen 17:19).

The issue of the descendants is answered in Genesis 18 by God Himself, that at the appointed time Sarah would have a son. “Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son” (Gen 18:14). Therefore, although the story of Genesis 18 is about the approaching destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, thematically these two chapters form a unit.¹⁵⁷

After mentioning the issue of descendants, God again reaffirmed His promise to Abraham on the way to Sodom. In this case, descendants were essential for establishing a country, and the country of Abraham’s descendants must do what will be right and just.¹⁵⁸

“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 368.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 370.

bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Gen 18:19) To understand the meaning of “right” and “just,” which are two central keywords in Genesis 18:19, there is a need for a Hebrew word study.

A Basic Text Analysis of Genesis 18:19

The Hebrew text of Genesis 18:19 reads:

כִּי יִדְעַתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָדְךָ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה
וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הֵבִיא יְהוָה עַל־אַבְרָהָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר עִלָּיו:

NIV has translated this verse followingly: “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” NKJV reads: “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” KJV reads: “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

There is no significant difference in the translations between different versions of the Bible, except for the keywords צְדָקָה (right)¹⁵⁹ מִשְׁפָּט and (just).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Harris, 853.

¹⁶⁰ Harris, 1076.

A Word Study of the Two Keywords in Genesis 18:19

צְדָקָה in Genesis 18:19

The Hebrew word צְדָקָה means “righteous,” which can be translated as righteousness, right, justice, etc.¹⁶¹

In the Old Testament, צְדָקָה is often used to describe the righteousness or justice of God.¹⁶² NKJV has translated צְדָקָה in Genesis 18:19 as “righteousness”; and in KJV, the same Hebrew word is translated as “justice”. The same can be observed in Deuteronomy 33:21. NIV translated the following: “He chose the best land for himself; the leader’s portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the Lord’s righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel.” Here the term צְדָקָה translated as “righteous” is the noun form of “righteousness”. NKJV reads: “He provided the first part for himself, because a lawgiver’s portion was reserved there. He came with the heads of the people; He administered the justice of the Lord, and His judgments with Israel.” However, NIV has translated the term צְדָקָה as justice here. As it can be seen from a few English translations, צְדָקָה can be translated as both righteousness and justice. Thus, because the basic meaning of צְדָקָה is “right doing or right action,” the righteousness and the justice of God are inseparable concepts. In other words, in Hebrew, the righteousness and the justice of God go hand in hand.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Harris, 853.

¹⁶² Ibid., 854-855.

¹⁶³ Kwong, vol. 2, 370-372.

In the Old Testament, צדקה can also be used to describe the righteousness of humankind.¹⁶⁴ As a good example that can be mentioned in Job 27:6. The NIV has translated it: “I will maintain my innocence and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.” The most literal translation, namely, ASV reads: “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” ESV has put it in the following way: “I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.” As was seen above, NIV has freely translated the term צדקה as “innocence,” and in most mainstream versions, צדקה has been translated more literary as “righteousness.”¹⁶⁵ How to understand the righteousness of humankind is a very complicated issue, which is not discussed in this thesis. However, the word study of צדקה contains some clues, which indicate various nuances of the term, when it is used to describe the righteousness of humankind.¹⁶⁶

There are two verses in the Old Testament that may help us to understand what it means when צדקה is used to describe the righteousness of humankind.¹⁶⁷ “And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness” (Deut 6:25). In this verse, keeping the law is the key to צדקה. The other verse is found in Habakkuk 2:4, which in KJV it reads, “Behold, his soul

¹⁶⁴ Harris, 855.

¹⁶⁵ Kwong, vol. 2, 370-372.

¹⁶⁶ Harris, 855.

¹⁶⁷ John Arthur Thompson, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2010), 99.

which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” Literally, the verse says, “a righteous man by his faithfulness shall live.”¹⁶⁸ In this verse, the Hebrew word צַדִּיק has been translated as “just or righteous.” Since צַדִּיקָה and צַדִּיק share the same root which is צַדַּק,¹⁶⁹ and one can simply link the Hebrew word צַדִּיקָה in Deuteronomy 6:25 and the Hebrew word צַדִּיק in Habakkuk 2:4 together, and according to Habakkuk 2:4, faith can be another aspect of צַדִּיקָה.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, when צַדִּיקָה is used to describe the righteousness of humans, the two aspects involved are keeping the law and faith.

However, the key issues for a country are not only religious affairs but also the political matters; in other words, what does צַדִּיקָה mean for the descendants of Abraham as a nation or the administration of the country. One cannot simply adopt the concepts of צַדִּיקָה as it is used to describe the righteousness of God and the righteousness of human and leave out the sphere of politics. There is a need to analyze צַדִּיקָה from the perspective of politics and this will be discussed in chapter 5.

מִשְׁפָּט in Genesis 18:19

The Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּט (mishpât) means judgment, which can be translated as “judgment, manner, ordinance, custom,” etc.¹⁷¹ As one of the keywords in Genesis

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 854.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 853.

¹⁷⁰ David W. Baker, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2011), 66-68.

¹⁷¹ Harris, 1076.

18:19, it is important to understand the meaning of the whole verse.

Throughout the Old Testament, there is a clear connection between **משפט** and the law including both religious and civil law.¹⁷² In ancient Israel, religious and civil laws were not separated from each other, so if to compare the usage of the two terms, **צדקה** and **משפט**, it becomes obvious that they are directly connected with the legal system of Israel as a country.¹⁷³

Here are some verses which contain the Hebrew word **משפט**. “And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances (**משפט**): and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do” (Exod 24:3, ASV). “You shall do no injustice in judgment (**משפט**). You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor” (Lev 19:15). “Wherefore ye shall do my statutes and keep mine ordinances (**משפט**) and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety” (Lev 25:18, ASV).¹⁷⁴

According to the verses above, **משפט** can be used to describe the legal system of Israel or the nation of Abraham’s descendants; **משפט** may mean a fair trial, judicial fairness or obedience to the law of God.¹⁷⁵ The meaning of **משפט** seems clear here, but the biblical legal system is very complex when **משפט** is applied to Israel’s legal system

¹⁷² Ibid., 1076-1078.

¹⁷³ Kwong, vol. 2, 371.

¹⁷⁴ Hariis, 1077-1078.

¹⁷⁵ Kwong, vol. 2, 371.

during the monarchy, and this will be discussed in chapter 6.

Summary

Genesis 18:19 is a vitally important text in order to understand God's purpose in choosing the descendants of Abraham to become a mighty nation, and also functions as the key to understand the significance of Hosea 13:11. There are two keywords in Genesis 18:19, צדקה and משפט. According to Genesis 18:19, God wanted the descendants of Abraham, as a nation, to practice צדקה and משפט. However, under the monarchy, both foundational concepts, צדקה and משפט failed. Why the purpose of God could not be achieved under the monarchy? As crucial and obligatory characteristics both צדקה and משפט will be discussed respectively in chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 5

CONCERNING צְדָקָה

Introduction

The underlying meaning of צְדָקָה is the justice or righteousness of God, and it can also be used to describe the righteousness of human.¹⁷⁶ However, when it comes to politics, what צְדָקָה means for a country is not clear. From the text of Genesis 18:19, it is impossible to fully understand the meaning of צְדָקָה. This chapter will focus on such points as, what the term, צְדָקָה means for a country and why Israel did not practice צְדָקָה under the monarchy.

A Basic Analysis of צְדָקָה

Politics-Related Scriptures Containing צְדָקָה

There are several verses containing the Hebrew word צְדָקָה which are related to politics.¹⁷⁷ Here are some examples:

“And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice (צְדָקָה) unto all his people” (2 Sam 8:15, KJV).

“Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice (צְדָקָה)” (1 Kgs 10:9, KJV).

¹⁷⁶ Harris, 1076.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 1076-1079.

“Thus saith the Lord God; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice (הַקִּדְּוָה), take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God” (Ezek 45:9, KJV).

In these verses above, הַקִּדְּוָה is translated as justice. It is evident that justice is fundamental to a country in the field of politics, and for Israel as a nation, the practice of justice is the request of God.¹⁷⁸ When justice failed, the whole country suffered. Thus in this context, הַקִּדְּוָה means justice for Israel as a nation. Therefore, what is the justice that a nation should practice in the plan of God?

Justice in Politics

The understanding of justice and its meaning differ in different cultural contexts. In politics, justice is an essential concept. According to the logic of Plato, justice is an idea. No one has ever seen perfect justice in this world, but we understand the meaning of justice by our hearts, and that is one reason why the concept can be varied. It is generally believed that for a society or a country, the concept of justice involves a reasonable distribution of benefits and obligations,¹⁷⁹ and the two most important points are fairness and legality.¹⁸⁰

According to the theory in Frank Thilly’s book *A History of Philosophy*, we can

¹⁷⁸ John B. Taylor, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Ezekiel* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2009), 268.

¹⁷⁹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2012), chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁸⁰ Frank Thilly, *A History of Philosophy* (Changchun: Jilin Publishing Group, 2013), chap. 10, Kindle.

roughly divide justice into two categories, fairness and legality, as mentioned at the end of the last paragraph. Thus, the concept of justice should function as a backbone or main dimension of the legal established political system of a country.¹⁸¹ Judging from the translations of צְדָקָה and מִשְׁפָּט in various Bible versions, the concepts of these two Hebrew words overlap with each other. Since the issue of the law will be discussed in chapter 6, justice as fairness will be mainly dealt with in this chapter.

Justice as Fairness

Justice as a Social System

The concept of justice contains the virtue of interpersonal relationships¹⁸² that promotes the interests of others, that needs to be balanced between personal obligations and the interests of society, which are acceptable to all the members.¹⁸³ This concept includes the social contract theory that had been discovered by John Locke, Rousseau, and Kant.¹⁸⁴ Fairness is the foundation of justice as a social system, but in the case of its absence, it can also be one of the main causes of inequality, which may finally ruin the social contract.

Fairness is a tricky issue, especially in the realm of politics. According to the secular understanding of the concept of justice, a reasonable social distribution system is

¹⁸¹ Guanhong Sun and Yuchun Hu, *Politics* (Shanghai: Fudan University Publishing House, 2010), chap. 2, Kindle.

¹⁸² Thilly, chap. 10, Kindle.

¹⁸³ Rawls, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

fair when you work more and get more, but this flexible system also means inequality. Since under such a system, the rights, obligations, resources, and benefits of the members of a society will be uneven, unavoidably inequality will arise that may finally ruin the social contract or the whole society. However, inequality does not merely originate from the social distribution system since human beings are inherently unequal. There is natural or physical inequality, including age, mental, physical, and spiritual inequality¹⁸⁵ that is inevitable.

The existence of natural inequality means that under a fair system, social distribution is inevitably unequal. Therefore, in the concept of justice as fairness, we must add the idea of equal justice. The members of a society must be rewarded according to their contributions. For example, if “A” does one, then “A” should get one, but not ten as a reward.¹⁸⁶

Unfortunately, justice as fairness is the foundation of inequality in human society. According to Rousseau’s theory, the formation of inequality in human society can be divided into three stages. The first stage is the formation of the law and private property, the second stage is the establishment of judges, and the third stage is the transformation of legal rights to authoritarian power.¹⁸⁷ Under the framework of social contract theory, the three stages above require a rule or a common sense that can be accepted by all

¹⁸⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Publishing United Group, 2017), Introduction, Kindle.

¹⁸⁶ David Miller, *A Very Short Introduction: Political Philosophy* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2013), chap. 5, Kindle.

¹⁸⁷ Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, chap. 2, Kindle.

members of a society, that is, the social contract, and justice as fairness is the easiest to reach consensus in society.¹⁸⁸ Since a social contract is a kind of covenant or agreement, which is a principle of justice suitable for society.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, justice as fairness, which is the basis of inequality in human society, is only a lie fabricated by human beings, and justice as a social system inevitably brings autocracy, which is obviously not the *הַקְּדוּשָׁה* that God wanted Israel as a nation to practice.

Justice, Collective Will and Social Contract

Without justice, the so-called social contract is nothing more than a manifestation of tyranny. But when the collective will as the basis of a social contract is taken into account; the social contract will be off the track of justice.

According to the theory of Rousseau, the social contract is not an oath to the ruler, but an agreement that the individuals submit their own judgments, rights, power, or strength to the society. When a member accepts the protection of the law in society, it means that he or she accepts the social contract. In such a society, there is no ruler but the collective will.¹⁹⁰

A contract means the transfer of rights,¹⁹¹ and when a social contract is established, it means that members of society have transferred their rights to the

¹⁸⁸ Sun, chap. 3, Kindle.

¹⁸⁹ Rawls, chap. 1, Kindle.

¹⁹⁰ Will Durant and Ariel Durant, *Rousseau and Revolution: The Story of Civilization* (Beijing: Taihai Publishing House, 2018), 10:201.

¹⁹¹ Herbert Spencer, *On Government* (Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2017), 114.

collective will. In a well-organized society, the social contract guarantees the interests of all members of society to the greatest extent. Thus, it may seem that there is nothing wrong to transfer individual rights to the collective will. However, this transfer of rights is also the cause of injustice and the collapse of the social contract.

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the social contract as the collective will, autocracy is inevitable.¹⁹² Once the collective will is determined, there will be no toleration of any behavior that violates the collective will within the framework of the social contract. If the collective will is abused, autocracy may appear and follow by the collapse of justice.¹⁹³

The country is the possessor of the collective will within the framework of the social contract. There are contradictory views toward the country in Christian theology. On one hand, the country is a kind of outcome because of the fall. There was no country in the world before humans sinned. On the other hand, the country can stop the occurrence of evil to the greatest extent, and the containment of evil depends on the autocracy of the country. According to Kant, when the individual will and the collective will collide, conflict is inevitable, and the ultimate judgment is war. Within the framework of the country, the pursuit of power will inevitably evolve into a political conflict, and usually the collective will may become rhetoric or an excuse. Even if some individuals or groups do not control the so-called collective will, it is unavoidable that

¹⁹² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (vol. 1; Wuhan: Wuhan Publishing House, 2012), chap. 7, Kindle.

¹⁹³ Bao, chap. 4, Kindle.

the collective will may override the individual will.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, the collective will may always evolve into autocracy, and the so-called social contract and justice are all misrepresentations.

Justice and Human Nature

From the perspective of human nature, different people have different understandings of justice, and when justice becomes a standard that is beneficial to oneself, justice is no longer justice. In the book of Politics, Aristotle's point of view was unobstructed. Everyone has a specific idea of justice, but no one can implement the idea of justice consistently and only a few people can fully explain the meaning of justice. The concept of justice is relative because it involves the vital interests of everyone, and when it comes to self-interest, human judgments are prone to errors. Although people think that their concept of justice is pure, they are always intentionally or unintentionally limited by certain factors,¹⁹⁵ and justice becomes the desire that is formulated in their own favor.

Is justice only propaganda or mirage? Throughout history, human beings conceived many ideas for a perfect society, including the social contract theory, and tried to put these ideas into practice to establish their dream countries when they had opportunities. Unfortunately, just like the metaphor of Pandora's box in Greek mythology,

¹⁹⁴ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Meaning in History* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2014), chap. 5, Kindle.

¹⁹⁵ Aristotle, chap. 7, Kindle.

what human society lacks is hope,¹⁹⁶ and all attempts to establish the perfect country in history ended in failure. Plato's *Republic* is a typical example of all the ideas of establishing a perfect country. In such a completely idealistic country, the philosopher-king must be a perfect person, and only a perfect ruler can maintain the normal operation of that country.¹⁹⁷ Unfortunately, there is no such perfect person in the world, so Plato's ideal country, the *Republic*, is just an unrealistic ideal. In human history, from the very beginning to modern times, from monarchy to communism, many people tried to put their ideas into practice to establish a perfect society, a perfect country, or even a perfect world. Somehow, no matter what kind of government forms were designed by humans, there were very similar incurable deficiencies in all these "ideal" countries. The more perfect a society was, the more it needed a perfect ruler. Since there was no perfect person, under this kind of perfect system, the weaknesses of the rulers would be amplified and accumulated, and disasters would be the end. According to Thucydides, if human nature has not changed, disaster is inevitable.¹⁹⁸

Due to the sinfulness of human nature, the rule of this world is very simple, what is good for the strong is called justice. According to Rousseau, the social contract will not undermine the natural equality of human beings. No matter what kind of inequality

¹⁹⁶ Judith M. Barringer and Jeffrey M. Hurwit, *Periclean Athens and Its Legacy: Problems and Perspectives* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 40-41.

¹⁹⁷ Sun, chap. 3, Kindle.

¹⁹⁸ C. F. Smith, *History of Peloponnesian War* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 142.

exists, human beings have complete equality through social contracts and the laws.¹⁹⁹

Therefore, justice can be put into practice. But Rousseau's vision can only be based on the perfection of human nature. Imperfections of human nature make ideals, including the social contract, impossible to be achieved. The law should be the guarantee of the practice of justice, but human nature makes the law a tool of autocracy. The issues of the law will be discussed in detail in chapter 6, so it will not be elaborated here. According to Plato, rulers are always individuals who are strong or powerful. The rulers always make laws that are in their favor and tell all the members of society that whatever is good for the government is justice, and whoever does not obey the law is unjust. Therefore, in any country, the so-called justice is the interest of the government, the government has authority, and justice is the interest of the strong.²⁰⁰ This view is inconsistent with our conception of justice. Plato did not say that it was correct; he was merely stating the facts of human society. The justice distorted by human nature is not justice.

Justice and צדקה in the Premise of Imperfect Human Nature

Justice, like many of the basic concepts in the Western world, is derived from the Bible, and the underlying meaning is righteous, lawful order, the just deed. The concept of justice involves personal behavior and the public order of the country. Justice originates from God and it is the way to maintain the fundamental order of life between

¹⁹⁹ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, vol. 1, chap. 9, Kindle.

²⁰⁰ Plato, chap. 1, Kindle.

humans and God, people, and their neighbors, defining the rights and duties of every member of society.²⁰¹ Regarding the concept of justice, the Bible-related theories that people are familiar with are basically derived from the studies of the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity. From the perspective of secular politics, there is no definition of justice in the Bible; thus, justice, as one understands, is a kind of understanding of the Scripture.

Establishing a perfect society or country in the name of justice is a false proposition because justice cannot be practiced under the premise of imperfect human nature. But this does not mean that human beings have no hope. If people wish that their attempts to establish a good society or country will not end in failure, they have to face the problem of human nature, namely, the problem of sin and deal with it, instead of only designing a system that can only be run by perfect people. As human beings, people have to realize that they cannot establish a perfect country, but what they can do is to deal with the imperfect world to make it a better place to attempt to practice justice in the realm of politics. Therefore, this kind of justice that can be achieved in the human domain is obviously not צדקה.

The Significance of צדקה for Israel as a Nation

A Larger Picture of God's Choice of Israel

To understand the significance of צדקה that needed to be practiced by Israel as a

²⁰¹ John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, *Christianity and Law* (Beijing: Chinese Democracy and Legality Press, 2014), chap. 7, Kindle.

nation, one must place the purpose of God’s choice in a larger context, because it was not about one nation but the whole world.

At the beginning of the Bible, God created a perfect world and gave it to human beings to rule. “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Gen 1:26). In this verse, the word translated as rule is the Hebrew word *רָדָה* which means to have dominion, rule, and dominate.²⁰² In the Old Testament, *רָדָה* can refer to the master’s management of slaves or hired workers.²⁰³ “You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule (*רָדָה*) over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly” (Lev 25:46). It can also refer to the rule of a ruler over his people or over another nation. “For he ruled (*רָדָה*) over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides” (1 Kgs 4:24). The problem is that in the context of the verses above, *רָדָה* is used to describe the situation after the fall of human beings, which is imperfect and distorted from the original plan of God. To understand the meaning of *רָדָה*, one needs to discover some hints in the biblical account of the world before the fall.²⁰⁴

There are some details about *רָדָה* before the fall in Genesis 2:15. “Then the Lord

²⁰² Kwong, vol. 1, 103.

²⁰³ Harris, 946.

²⁰⁴ Kwong, vol. 1, 103-106.

God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (Gen 2:15). In this verse, the Hebrew words translated as tend and keep are **עָבַד** and **שָׁמַר**. The term **עָבַד** means work or serve which can be used to describe the serving of people to God or others and to indicate that people work somewhere or for something.²⁰⁵ “So you shall serve (**עָבַד**) the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you” (Exod 23:25). “Six days you shall work (**עָבַד**), but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest” (Exod 34:21). **שָׁמַר** means to keep, watch, and preserve which can be used to describe carefully obeying or observing the orders of God and guarding or preserving something.²⁰⁶ “And you shall observe (**שָׁמַר**) this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever” (Exod 12:24). “Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep (**שָׁמַר**) the house” (2 Sam 15:16). Therefore, God gave Adam a perfect world to **רָדָה** and under the authority of God, Adam became the ruler of this world.²⁰⁷ Thus, to have the sovereignty of the world means serving the world, working in the world, and carefully preserving the world.

The fall of human beings had completely changed the once perfect world, and also changed the interpersonal relationships and the relationships between human beings and the world. But the story of human beings had not ended tragically there. When

²⁰⁵ Alan Cole, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Exodus* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2013), 204.

²⁰⁶ Harris, 1068.

²⁰⁷ Kwong, vol. 1, 105-107.

proclaiming the fate of human beings, God first punished the perpetrator and stated the hope of humanity in the judgment. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). In the following verses, God illustrated the reality after the fall of human beings. Obviously, the changing relationships are not the original intention of God, but a kind of phenomenon in the world.²⁰⁸ However, the impact of sin on the world did not stop there. Because of the total corruption of the entire humanity, the universal flood had to end the biblical prehistoric civilization. Noah’s family became the ancestors of the new world, but sin still flooded the world, and God’s choice of Abraham symbolized a new era.²⁰⁹

God's Call to Abraham and the Choice of Israel as a Nation

There is an important shift in Genesis. In chapters 1 to 11, the concerns of God were universal, somehow from chapter 12, God started to focus His attention on a person or a nation, and this transformation had great significance. From the perspective of literary structure, Genesis can be naturally divided into 10 parts, and the genealogies are the marks. The term “descendant” is a very important concept in Genesis and the following books of the Bible, all of which can be traced back to “the seed of the woman” in Genesis 3:15, which that is the hope of human beings. Although the consequences of

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 34-36.

the fall of human beings seemed to be an inescapable fate, God said no to this fate, and the original redemption was included in God's judgment in Eden.²¹⁰ Many passages in the Bible showed that God's call to Abraham and His choice of Israel as a nation was clearly linked to salvation.

“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing” (Gen 12:2). “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him” (Gen 18:18). According to the verses above, it was clear that God's choice of Abraham's descendants as a nation was related to all human beings, and this nation would become a blessing to all nations.²¹¹ From Isaac to Jacob, who would become the heirs of God's promise, God is working out His purpose. After a series of ups and downs, then, the time came for Israel to show up as a nation; it was the time when God saved Israelites from slavery in Egypt. “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6). Obviously, God chose Israel as a nation to be a holy kingdom of priests. As priests of nations, the Israelites should shine the truth of God in the world and lead the nations to God.²¹²

צְדָקָה Should Be Practiced by Israel as a Nation

According to the analysis above, it was clear that God's choice of Israel as a nation was related to salvation, and the ultimate purpose of making Israel a holy nation

²¹⁰ Ibid., 179-182.

²¹¹ Ibid., 369.

²¹² Cole, 163-165.

of priests was not to establish a kind of new order in the world but to restore this fallen world to the state before the fall which was perfect. From this perspective, one can surely figure out the meaning of צדקה for Israel as a nation.

A perfect world or the order of a perfect world contains three aspects. The first aspect to consider is the perfect relationship between human beings and God. Second, is the perfect interpersonal relationship with God. Third, is the perfect relationship between human beings and nature or the world. Sin destroyed these three relationships. God chose Israel as a holy nation of priests. Under the priesthood, the relationship between human beings and God would be first restored, which should be the foundation and prerequisite for restoring the two other relationships. When the relationship between human beings and God is restored, then, the interpersonal relationship and the relationship between human beings and the world will also be restored.

From a certain point of view, salvation means restoring a fallen world to its original perfection or perfect order. For Israel as a nation or regime, under the historical condition at that time, the issues related to politics in the domain of the perfect order mainly involved the relationship between human beings and God, the interpersonal relationship. In the context of salvation, the significance of Israel was to restore these two perfect relationships or the perfect order. In the previous discussions, צדקה was linked with the concept of justice in politics, but the justice that Israel should have

practiced had to be the justice or the righteousness of God.²¹³ Regarding the justice or the righteousness of God that the ruler had to practice in the reign, one can refer to Adam who lived in a perfect world and who was the ruler appointed by God.²¹⁴ Adam, as the agent of God, was similar to God in a sense of bearing His image.²¹⁵ Adam ruled according to the will of God and would surely practice the justice or the righteousness of God. The reign of Adam over that perfect world meant serving it, working in it, and carefully preserving it, which should also be the principle of the reign of Israel as a nation.

In summary, צדקה for Israel, as a nation, meant the restoration of the perfect order before the fall of human beings, which included the perfect relationship between human beings and God, the perfect interpersonal relationships, and the responsibility of the Israeli ruler to serve the country, to work in the country, and carefully preserve the country.

The Monarchy and צדקה

Concerning צדקה under the Monarchy

According to Genesis 18:19, צדקה was one of the two aspects that the nation of Abraham's descendants had to practice. As the discussions in previous paragraphs showed, צדקה is related to the concept of justice in the field of politics, which means

²¹³ Kwong, vol. 1, 370.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 104-106.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 103.

the perfect cosmic order before the fall, And this perfect order includes the perfect relationship between human beings and God, the perfect interpersonal relationships, and the responsibility of the ruler to serve, work, and preserve the country.²¹⁶ However, under the monarchy, צדקה could not be practiced at all. Thus, the negative view towards the monarchy in Hosea 13:11 was reasonable.

Thus, the reasons why צדקה could not be practiced under the monarchy included the above discussed three aspects. Unfortunately, none of these three aspects could be realized due to the essential flaws of the monarchy.

The Perfect Relationship between Human Beings and God

What does it mean to have perfect relationships between human beings and God for a country? In the perfect world, before the fall of human beings, the relationships between human beings and God were perfect. Though there are only a few hints and details in the Bible, it is evident that sin was the critical factor of the disruption of the once perfect relationship between human beings and God. Thus, it is logical that solving the problem of sin is the fundamental way to restore that relationship. Unfortunately, human beings cannot solve the problem of sin by themselves, so the salvation of God is the sole solution. God will never force anyone to accept salvation, and what is needed is human acceptance, but human beings must acknowledge God first. When God made the covenant with Israel, in the Ten Commandments, God said, “You shall have no other

²¹⁶ Ibid., 369-372.

gods before me” (Exod 20:3). God’s choice of Israel was salvation-oriented, and as a nation of priests, they had to acknowledge God and serve the Lord alone, which was the basis for the solution of sin.²¹⁷ God is full of love. Although human beings are incapable of solving the problem of sin themselves, if men will seek help from God, He will solve all problems. God is the initiator of specific actions to solve the problem of sin from both the perspectives of covenant and salvation.²¹⁸ In other words, all that Israel as a nation needed to do concerning the problem of sin was to acknowledge God and serve Him only, and with the help of God, the perfect relationships between human beings and God would be restored.

Israel, as a nation, had to serve God alone, but under the monarchy, the king was actually in the position of God and thus became a false god. There is a dramatic description of the relationship between human beings and nature in the book *A Study of History* by Arnold Toynbee, and somehow his reasoning applies not only to the relationship between human beings and nature but also to the relationship between human beings and God. According to Arnold Toynbee, as early as around 4000 BC, human beings won a decisive victory over nature. At that time, the ancient civilization in Mesopotamia thrived. That was one of the earliest major victories for collective human power. The encouraging experience had also caused human beings to regard their collective power as the highest object of worship, replacing the worship of the forces of

²¹⁷ Fishbane, 148.

²¹⁸ Wang Xinsheng, *The Bible Reading* (Philosophy; Shanghai: Fudan University Publishing House, 2010), chap. 1, Kindle.

nature. In Sumerian city-states and later Greek city-states, the various deities that originally represented the powers of nature were changed into some other things to represent the collective power of human beings. In Egypt, the worship of human collective power was dramatically direct, and Pharaoh as a person was worshiped as a god. In other words, the worship of human collective power is the worship of human beings themselves. Human beings changed the nature of their worship objects, and fell into arrogance, thus incurring disasters.²¹⁹

It is true when one speaks about the relationships between human beings and God under the monarchy. The monarchs in ancient times were keen to deify themselves so that they could fool the unsophisticated people to submit to their unjust rule. Under the names of gods, the monarch was actually a god in the country, and in such a political system, there is no place for God.²²⁰ When people take the place of God, it is impossible to restore the relationship between human beings and God.

According to Melissa Lane's analysis in her book *Greek and Roman Political Ideas*, Herodotus considered that the monarchy depended too much on the monarch's personal qualities. An extraordinary monarch makes excellent decisions, but it is possible that he may be misled by the mediocre ministers. Thus, Herodotus believed that no government could guarantee good governance,²²¹ but it is obvious that monarchy which

²¹⁹ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2010), chap. 6, Kindle.

²²⁰ You, 101.

²²¹ Lane, 99.

depends too much on one person is more dangerous. From Tacitus' point of view, Nero's teacher Lucius Annaeus Seneca pinned his hope on the cultivation of a good ruler. He vividly and eloquently expressed what an ideal ruler should be, and the fate of the country depended on one's good and evil.²²² Unfortunately, Nero's "good reign" was not long-lasting and became a typical example in a negative sense. He used to be good, but the unreliability of the monarch would ultimately bring an unbearable disaster. It is undoubtedly the best case if a monarch shows good personal qualities to rule a country. But no one is perfect.²²³ In order to maintain the reign, the monarch cannot avoid the dirty hands. From a particular perspective, a robust political strategy that can be regarded as a so-called virtue is the necessary means to maintain the stability of the country.²²⁴ Somehow, goodness cannot depend on evil means and a country cannot indeed prosper under the dirty governance of the ruler. Thus, under such a political system that depends too much on one person, the speed of the country's destruction only depends on the speed of the accumulation of problems.

The biblical account affirms the unreliability of the monarchy, especially in the issue of keeping loyalty to God. One can easily find a pattern in the books of the Kings and Chronicles. If the king was loyal to God, the whole country was loyal to God. If the king betrayed God, the whole country betrayed God. Even the good kings who were

²²² Ibid, 324-325.

²²³ Machiavelli N., *The Prince* (Beijing: China Textile & Apparel Press, 2012), chap. 15, Kindle.

²²⁴ Bao, chap. 1, Kindle.

praised were not perfect. David, Solomon, Hezekiah, etc., they all had faults.²²⁵ The most typical example is Josiah. When the book of the Law was found, Josiah sent officials went to speak to the prophet Huldah, and the reply was, “Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see entire calamity which I will bring on this place” (2 Kgs 22:19-20). However, the good kings were able only to delay the destruction of the country. From the moment when the monarchy was established by Israelites, the destruction of the country was doomed.

Under the monarchy, the king usurped the position of God and such a political system relied too much on the personal qualities of the monarch that lacked reliability. The history of Israel proved that the monarchy could not guarantee the country’s loyalty to God what supposed to be the premise and foundation to solve the problem of sin. Therefore, Israel as a nation under the monarchy could not restore the perfect relationship between human beings and God.

The Perfect Interpersonal Relationship

Regarding the perfect interpersonal relationships, there are several verses in

²²⁵ Wang, chap. 4, Kindle.

the biblical account that reflect the perfect interpersonal connection. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Gen 2:18). “So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:21-24). According to the verses above, it is clear that both the man and the woman have the image of God. Although the man was created first from the dust of the earth, the material for creating (“building,” בָּנָה) the woman was a rib of the man. Thus, from the perspective of creation, the man and the woman were equal in that perfect world. However, there was a problem.²²⁶ According to Genesis 2:18, the woman was a helper suitable for the man. Does it mean that women are inferior to men? In this verse, the word helper is translated from the Hebrew word עֲזָרָה which means help or a helper.²²⁷ This word can be used to describe God’s helping for human beings in the

²²⁶ Kwong, vol. 1, 204-206.

²²⁷ Harris, 746.

Bible. “There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty” (Deut 33:26). “We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield” (Ps 33:20). Obviously, God helps human beings and is a helper to us, but God is not inferior to us. Therefore, it is untenable for women to be inferior to men because the woman was the helper of the man. Although there are not many details about the perfect interpersonal relationship before the fall of human beings in the biblical account, from these verses above, it is clear that the essence of the perfect interpersonal relationships is substantially equal. Albeit the perfect interpersonal relationship is like the concept of Plato’s idea, we cannot describe it accurately, but it is not difficult to realize that equality is the essence and foundation of the perfect interpersonal relationship.

The basis of the monarchy is a kind of essential inequality. There is no government based on equality in this world because people cannot have the right to do so. In the history of mankind, no government was established by a group of people who were independent and equal.²²⁸ The only exception is the United States. Unfortunately, when the United States was founded, it did not grant the slaves equal rights.²²⁹ After human beings were expelled from Eden, there were various inequalities in human society. Regardless of the forms of the government, after the countries were established, all

²²⁸ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (vol. 2; Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2009), chap. 8, Kindle.

²²⁹ Shunguo He, *The Evolution of Civilizations: A History of the World* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2012), chap. 3, Kindle.

people were under the rule of a visible or invisible government at birth. Everyone must obey the government, and nobody can create a new government at will without conflicts.²³⁰ The country has the supreme authority which is above all members of society.²³¹ In the monarchy, the individual will of the monarch replaces the collective will of the country to some extent. In the history of human beings, the forms of the monarchy were different, the powers of monarchs were different, and the degree of influence of the monarch's personal will was different. According to Otanes, there are two major defects of the monarchy. First, the monarchy motivates the arrogance and selfishness of the monarch. The arrogant monarch domineers among the people and rules arbitrarily in the country. Second, under the monarchy, the power of the monarch lacks restrictions, and it is impossible to prevent the abuse of power.²³² It is undeniable that under the monarchy, there is an essential inequality among members of society.

Under the monarchy, the monarch is unique in the country. In order to maintain this inequality, the kings of the ancient world usually associated themselves with gods, and this special relationship with the gods became the basis of inequality. Although the theory of the divine right of kings, which people are familiar with appeared relatively late, this idea was common in the ancient world. No matter what the legal basis of the monarch's rule, and no matter how the monarch obtained this power, there were always

²³⁰ Locke, vol. 1, chap. 8, Kindle.

²³¹ Thilly, chap. 10, Kindle.

²³² Lane, 75-76.

groups of people who flattered the monarch and affirmed that the monarch had this kind of authority granted by gods. Recognizing the unique status of the monarch is denying the natural equality and freedom of human beings. Thus, in the country, everyone is the slave except the monarch alone.²³³ According to this theory, the people of the country are born as slaves, and they must continue to be slaves since the identity of a slave is inherent and cannot be changed.

In the biblical account of the perfect world, human beings were created in the image of God. Thus, all human beings are necessarily equal. Somehow, this equality is obviously destroyed in the monarchy.²³⁴ In human society, people have different occupations and perform different duties. Some people are given leadership powers, while others need to obey them. But in essence, as human beings, all people are equal. In the monarchy, the monarch and the subjects share the same image of God but are completely unequal, and this inequality cannot be changed unless the monarchy is overthrown. Therefore, the premise and foundation of the perfect interpersonal relationships are deprived under the inherent inequality of the monarchy as a political system.

The Responsibility of the Ruler

The monarchy is one of the most powerful political systems in which all the

²³³ Locke, vol. 1, chap. 1, Kindle.

²³⁴ Bao, chap. 3, Kindle.

power is closely united and held by the monarch. But this political system harbors the danger that the monarch abuses this power for short-term benefits or for the purposes of oppression. Although a wise monarch will limit his or her violence, when the monarch becomes more and more arrogant, he or she may exploit the whole country to satisfy his or her personal will,²³⁵ instead of preserving the country and its order. Therefore, the monarchy may inevitably transform into autocracy.

There is no monarch who does not want to implement autocracy. Compared with other political systems, the monarchy is more focused on the personal will of the monarch or ruler, and all administrative power and resources will serve it.²³⁶ Sometimes people place their hopes on a wise monarch, but unfortunately, in human history, the more capable monarch was, the more he or she would do whatever he or she wanted on the throne. It is evident that the personal will of the monarch is not always in the public interests of the country, but under the monarchy, such errors are difficult to correct, and the destruction of the country is inevitable.²³⁷

Generally, the difference between autocracy and tyranny is that the power of the ruler under autocracy is limited, and the power of the ruler under the tyranny is absolute, but the essence of the two is the same.²³⁸ A wise monarch will control the abuse of power that can be endured by the people, and give some small favors in a timely manner,

²³⁵ Bentham, chap. 2, Kindle.

²³⁶ Bao, chap. 5, Kindle.

²³⁷ Romain Rolland, *Rousseau* (Beijing: China Commerce and Industry United Publishing House, 2015), 72.

²³⁸ Bao, chap. 4, Kindle.

but this cannot change the fact that the monarchy is autocratic, and the line between autocracy and tyranny is blurred.

The essential inequality will inevitably lead to the emergence of the autocracy, and in the monarchy, the highest principle of order is the favor of the monarch. There is no justice but the interests of the authoritarian ruler. This kind of political system can only be maintained by force.²³⁹ This essential inequality is indoctrinated into the people as a so-called principle of justice, and inequality is naturalized and rationalized. When the entire country is overly dependent on the monarch alone, many people will win the favor of the monarch by courting. Under the monarchy, rogues, liars, and conspirators are often the winners.²⁴⁰ The essence of the autocracy is that in reality, or legally, there is no challenge to the unrestricted power of the ruler. There is no congress, no opposition parties, no freedom of the press, no judicial independence, and no law protects people from the arbitrary rule from the monarch. There is no public opinion, but only the will of the ruler.²⁴¹

God has never given anyone the autocratic power. From a certain perspective, God gave the world to Adam, but this sovereignty did not mean that he had the power to control the lives of others, nor did it mean that he had the supreme arbitrary power.²⁴²

According to the analysis above, the responsibility of Adam as a ruler should be serving

²³⁹ Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2008), chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁴⁰ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, vol. 3, chap. 6, Kindle.

²⁴¹ Minogue, chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁴² Locke, vol. 1, chap. 4, Kindle.

the world, working in the world, and carefully preserving the world, not to exploit others under inequality. The authoritarianism in the monarchy distorted the responsibility of the ruler, thus, it deviated from the plan of God.

Summary

The significance of צדקה is related to the concept of justice in the field of politics. Justice is important to a country, and its two main points are fairness and legality. Since the concepts of צדקה and משפט overlap with each other, the issue of law will be discussed in chapter 6, so the emphasis in this chapter is on justice as fairness.

Unfortunately, there is no absolute fairness in a sinful world, and justice as fairness is the basis of the inequality of human society. Although the social contract theory is a seemingly blueprint for the establishment of a good society, the conflicts and the tyranny inevitably caused by the implementation of collective will make that it is impossible to practice justice under the framework of social contract theory.

Our understandings of justice are unreliable because of the unreliability of human nature. The justice of human society ultimately becomes the justice of the strong which is far from צדקה that is described by God. Thus, the concept of justice in the field of politics is essentially different from צדקה. To understand the significance of צדקה that Israel as a nation should have practiced, one needs to explore the biblical clues in the narrative of the world before the fall of human beings and put this issue in a larger picture and consider that God's choice of Israel as a nation was salvation-oriented. The

significance of צדקה for Israel as a nation was restoring the perfect relationships between human beings and God, restoring the perfect interpersonal relationships, and the responsibility for the ruler that to serve the country, work in the country, and preserve the country.

However, in the monarchy, the monarch is placed in the position of God, and the loyalty to God cannot be guaranteed, thus, the perfect relationship between human beings and God cannot be restored. In addition, the perfect interpersonal relationships and the responsibility of the ruler are destroyed and distorted by the inequality and the autocracy under the monarchy. Therefore, the significance of צדקה cannot be practiced under the monarchy. From the perspective of צדקה, the monarchy deviates from the plan of God, which is one of the reasons why God had a negative view of the monarchy in Hosea 13:11.

CHAPTER 6

CONCERNING **מִשְׁפָּט**

Introduction

The Hebrew word **מִשְׁפָּט** means judgment, and in the Old Testament, this word can be used to describe the legal system of Israel, which refers to judicial fairness and obeying the law of God. As one of the two keywords in Genesis 18:19, **מִשְׁפָּט** is vital to understand the significance of Hosea 13:11. In the realm of politics, there is a clear connection between **מִשְׁפָּט** and the law. In this chapter, the issue of **מִשְׁפָּט** will be discussed in the domains of politics and philosophy of law to explore the significance of **מִשְׁפָּט** based on the scripture from the perspective of salvation.

A Basic Analysis of **מִשְׁפָּט**

****מִשְׁפָּט** for Israel in the Realm of Politics**

In Genesis 18:19, God promised that the descendants of Abraham would become a great nation that would practice of **מִשְׁפָּט** within the framework of a nation. According to the analysis in chapter 4, there is a clear connection between **מִשְׁפָּט** and the legal system of Israel.

Religious law and civil law were united in the Israeli legal system, and Ten Commandments were equivalent to the constitution of the country. One of the specific characteristics of the Israeli legal system was that **מִשְׁפָּט** involved not only the sphere of

the law but also the sphere of religion. Compared with the legal systems of other countries, the legal system of Israel was more historic. According to the preface of the Ten Commandments, the historical event of the Exodus was the premise and basis of the biblical law, which served as the content of the Israeli legal system. The spirit of freedom originated from the historical event of Exodus laying the tone for the legal system.²⁴³ Generally speaking, the most basic premise of the existence of a country is that a group of people hold sovereignty over a specific territory. However, for Israel, the historical event that marked the establishment of the nation was the promulgation of the law from God. Religion brought to Israel the law, justice, and the moral order of society,²⁴⁴ which was the foundation of the country.

Therefore, the **משפט** concept which is clearly related to the biblical law and the issues of law in the realm of politics was the foundation and the core of maintaining Israel as a nation.

משפט in the Domain of the Law

In politics, the law and the country are closely connected. From a particular perspective, the country represents the order of the law.²⁴⁵ From a philosophical point of view, the law is an idea. Although it is almost impossible to transform a purely ideal

²⁴³ William R. Smith, *The Prophets of Israel and Their Place in History* (Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing, 2013), 97.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2014), 35.

concept into reality, people still explore the meaning or value of the law from an abstract hypothesis. In Plato's ideal, the good in philosophy should be the ultimate goal of the law.²⁴⁶

Since the biblical law secured the content of the legal system of Israel, that is why religious issues became also the political issues. In theology, it is easy to find the ultimate goal of biblical law. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:37-40). “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). Thus, love is the ultimate goal of biblical law. In the field of philosophy, from a certain point of view that within the framework of Plato's metaphysics, good is God.²⁴⁷ Thus, from the perspective of *טוֹבָה*, the biblical law and the law in politics share the same ultimate goal which can be called God's love or absolute good as we know.

The Law in Politics

The Concept of Law

According to Montesquieu, the law is divided into natural law and positive law.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Zitang Fu, *Nomocracy Republic: A Study of Plato's Laws* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2018), 172.

²⁴⁷ Will Durant and Ariel Durant, *The Life of Greece* (vol. 2 of *The Story of Civilization*; Beijing: Taihai Publishing House, 2018), part. 3, chap. 3, Kindle.

²⁴⁸ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Beijing: China Workers Press, 2016), 5.

Natural law can be roughly understood as a series of fundamental, universal moral norms. Positive law is a series of clauses enacted by human beings to protect individual rights and achieve justice or economic, political purposes.²⁴⁹ In politics, the law and the country are inseparable. From a certain point of view, the country is the order of law, but the country is neither the creator of the order of law nor the source of the order of the law.²⁵⁰

In Greek philosophy, natural law is related to the concept of *logos*. It is a kind of universal rule of nature which is higher than the highest authority of human laws.²⁵¹ The natural liberty of human beings is not subject to any superior authority in the world and not coerced to obey someone's will or legislative authority, but only comply with natural law.²⁵² The problem is that in different cultures or ethical systems, the understandings of right and wrong are so different, which makes the moral norms of natural law uncertain. Therefore, people need to reach a consensus of moral norms that can be universally adhered to in the framework of equality and define them in the form of law. Morality or moral norms become a kind of principle that is experienced and examined for an extended period of time, which has become a mode of life; as a result, morality eventually turns out to be the spirit of the law and becomes a dominant factor.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Raymond Wacks, *Law* (Nanjing: Yilin Press. 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁵⁰ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 35.

²⁵¹ Montesquieu, 5.

²⁵² Locke, vol. 2, chpa. 4, Kindle.

²⁵³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (vol. 3; Beijing: Taihai Publishing House, 2016, chap.1,

Somehow the order of the law and the order of morality are fundamentally different. In a way, morality lacks clauses similar to the clauses of the written law. Thus the law appears relatively invariable, but there is no ultimate moral value in the concept of the law.²⁵⁴ This means that the liberty of the members in a certain society is only subject to the legislative authority in the country, which is consented by people, not to any other legislative authority or the will of anyone. The only laws that should be obeyed are the laws enacted by the legislature entrusted by people.²⁵⁵ Ideally, good which is the ultimate goal of law and moral norms, which are the principle of natural law should be harmonious, but the law that contains moral values is not exactly the same as morality.

Legislative power is one of the most essential powers of the country. Ideally, the law is a tool to protect the rights, interests, and welfare of members in society. The power of the legislature is given by the people. This power is sacred and cannot be changed.²⁵⁶ However, in human society, certain people have legislative power only when they rule over others,²⁵⁷ and such power is not granted by people. Ideal legislators will do their best to make laws to maximize the interests of all members of society. Somehow, in this concept, the ultimate unification of interests is entirely artificial. People do things according to the laws only because they see the laws as a means to realize their own

Kindle.

²⁵⁴ Neil MacCormick, *Rhetoric and the Rule of Law* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2014), 17.

²⁵⁵ Locke vol. 2, chap. 4, Kindle.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, chap. 11, Kindle.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, chap. 13, Kindle.

interests.²⁵⁸ Thus, in an unequal society, only the ones who possess a dominant position in the country have the legislative power, and these legislators will only make laws that are in their own favor.

Under the framework of the social contract theory, the law must be agreed upon by all people, and everyone enjoys freedom and joins the social contract voluntarily. Once a social contract is established, it cannot be invalidated by the objection of anyone. When a country is established, as long as a person lives in its territory, it means that he or she accepts the social contract of the country.²⁵⁹ Unfortunately, this kind of ideal countries do not exist in the real world. No country was established according to the ideal social contract theory, and people born in each country could not choose whether to join that social contract or not. Although ideally, the purpose of people joining a society or country is to protect and enjoy their rights, interests, and welfare. But this situation is almost nonexistent in the real world. This is also true for immigrants because they are not the creators of social contracts and there is no perfect society or country that may make everyone satisfied. The law is ultimately a mandatory rule enacted by the country which reflects the so-called collective will.

Religion and the law are closely related, and the spirit, the principles of justice of the law are endowed by religion.²⁶⁰ Even in modern society, there is a considerable

²⁵⁸ Rawls, chap. 8, Kindle.

²⁵⁹ Rolland, 77.

²⁶⁰ Witte, introduction, Kindle.

number of laws that originate from the doctrines of different religions. In the ancient world, usually the sacredness of the law originated from religion. The doctrines of religion were straightforward expressions of the concept of justice which should be the spirit of the law.²⁶¹ There are some common ideas shared by the law and religion, such as the concepts of right and wrong, responsibility, and covenant. There are also some standard methodologies between the law and religion, such as the methodologies of ethics, rhetoric, and textual analysis. The law and religion balance justice and mercy, rules and fairness, discipline and love.²⁶² Once, legislators always legislated in the name of gods, and the law was religious. Somehow, in ancient Greece and Rome, the essence of the law had changed. The legislative power of Solon came from the authorization of people, and the legislative committee was also authorized by people. In this way, legislators no longer represented religious traditions, but the interests of people and based on the wishes of the majority.²⁶³ Somehow, this is only ideal. Generally, in human society, the law represents the will of a few people who are in the dominant position. Even so, the Law of the Twelve Tables was a milestone that people gained the power to enact new laws by voting. Therefore, the law has gradually become something that can be discussed and negotiated by people and represents the will of people.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, vol. 4, chap. 8, Kindle.

²⁶² Witte, introduction, Kindle.

²⁶³ Numa Denis Fustel De Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2014), 215-220.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

The law must be practically reasonable. In the real world, many values and interests do not intersect with each other, and the reasonability of the law means that the legislators deal with the conflicts of values, interests seriously and attempt to find a range that may be acceptable for everyone.²⁶⁵ For instance, in an ancient world, the rich had legislative power, so they would make laws in their favor. The poor were oppressed under those laws. When the oppression was too severe, the poor would resist and could even overthrow the rule of the rich. Therefore, for the long-term political stability of the country, the rich had to restrain their desires and make certain compromises to the poor to maintain their interests. Therefore, the law is the result of mutual compromises concerning absolute good which should be the ultimate purpose of the law, but which is an unrealistic ideal that is far from **משפט**.

Law and Justice

Ideally, the law embodies the spirit of justice, and justice is the expression of the absolute good in the framework of law, but this is not always the case in human society. No matter if the law reflects the wills of a few rulers or the wishes of the majority, the law, and justice may never achieve perfect unity in the realm of human society.

When the legislative power is in the hands of a few people who are dominant, it is natural for them to make laws in their favor. Many scholars, including Rousseau, believed that the emergence of property rights is an important factor of inequality in

²⁶⁵ McCormick, 222.

human society.²⁶⁶ The conflicts for properties usually resort to violence, but the cost of violence is too high. For the rich, violence is not the best way to possess property, and the law becomes the tool for establishing order which protects the vested interests of the rich. Therefore, the scam of the rich to deceive the poor is the idea that political rights are based on the economy.²⁶⁷ Thus, if a certain political status is not granted to the poor in an imbalanced political system, the poor will always be at the mercy of the rich.²⁶⁸ The law brings order which ought to have embodied the spirit of justice, but an order construed by the law that is beneficial to the rich is unfair. Nominally, the law protects the public interest, which is the so-called justice.²⁶⁹ But in the end, under the unequal distribution of power, the interests of the rich or the strong become the justice,²⁷⁰ and the law is only a means for the rulers to maintain their interests.

However, even when the legislative power is in the hands of the majority, justice still cannot be guaranteed. Different people have different interests. When an equal vote is used in the law-making process, it means that the interests or the will of people are regarded as the goal of the law. The law is something that may restrain everyone equally and also benefit everyone equally, but this system does not take into account the fact whether everyone is indulged in selfishness. Although we can see many examples of

²⁶⁶ Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, chap. 2, Kindle.

²⁶⁷ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2016), 290.

²⁶⁸ Lane, 35.

²⁶⁹ Strauss, 103.

²⁷⁰ Plato, chap. 1, Kindle.

selflessness in the real world, the existence of selfishness cannot be denied, so people may vote for their desires, and the so-called justice is only the interests.²⁷¹ Generally, groups are less prone to corruption than individuals, so groups are less likely to make mistakes. But this situation is based on the assumption that everyone in a group is kind or virtuous,²⁷² and this obviously does not always happen. Plato believed that one of the disadvantages of democracy is that the same equality is given to all people no matter if they are really equal.²⁷³ Like other professions in the real world, enacting laws requires certain specific professional skills and judgment. Many times, the public does not have a sharp vision, and, as a result, the will of the majority not always turn out to be the truth. Therefore, it may not be wise to vote for laws that will become the public will; moreover, enforcing the opinions of the majority on all members of society may develop into intolerance or even tyranny.

Obviously, the law may be implemented equally while containing injustice that is not enough to guarantee essential justice.²⁷⁴ A legal system is a series of mandatory public rules or regulations. These rules or regulations are proposed to adjust the behaviors of people and provide a certain framework for social cooperation.²⁷⁵ When these rules or regulations are just, they form the basis of the expectation of justice.

²⁷¹ Strauss, 291.

²⁷² Aristotle, chap. 12, Kindle.

²⁷³ Plato, chap. 8, Kindle.

²⁷⁴ Rawls, chap. 2, Kindle.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, chap. 4, Kindle.

However, the unreliability of justice in human society makes the co-called justice to become the defender of the interests of the strong in the real world. The law loses the reason to be obeyed while it contains injustice²⁷⁶ and this dilemma makes the law impossible to represent essential justice in the realm of human society.

משפט in the Bible

משפט and Torah

There is a clear connection between משפט and biblical law, but משפט is not equivalent to the law in the Bible.

One of the Hebrew words referring to “law” is תורה (“Torah” or “instruction”), and the meaning of Torah is much broader than the law.²⁷⁷ The first five books of the Old Testament are called Torah (Pentateuch, in Greek); it contains not only the clauses of the law but a rich amount of narratives and poetry. The creation, the fall, the redemption, the history of humankind, are the contents of the Torah. Although there are clauses of the biblical law in the Torah, these are the law clauses with a grand background. Torah means teaching, direction, and instruction, which contains a lot of content that is not in the legal domain. From a certain perspective, the Torah is a worldview or a norm.

In the Bible, the meaning of משפט can be understood as judging or judgment.²⁷⁸ “Do not show partiality in judging (משפט); hear both small and great alike. Do not be

²⁷⁶ Ibid, chap. 6, Kindle.

²⁷⁷ Harris, 452-453.

²⁷⁸ Thompson, 99.

afraid of anyone, for judgment (טִשְׁפֶּנֶה) belongs to God” (Deut 1:17). טִשְׁפֶּנֶה can also be used to describe the clauses of the law or Torah and translated into law or ordinance.²⁷⁹ “See, I have taught you decrees and laws (טִשְׁפֶּנֶה) as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it” (Deut 4:5). Analyzing the multiple meanings of טִשְׁפֶּנֶה in the framework of Israel as a nation, the result is clear.

טִשְׁפֶּנֶה means judging or judgment where the standard or norm should be Torah. Since ideally, the law of Israel should be the biblical law or Torah, any cause of judging or judgment should be based on Torah. Thus, טִשְׁפֶּנֶה does not only refer to judgment but also to “the how” to judge, and the significance of טִשְׁפֶּנֶה is more complicated than merely political or legal issues.

The Significance of טִשְׁפֶּנֶה for Israel as a Nation

According to the analysis above, טִשְׁפֶּנֶה is related to the law or judicial system. The term טִשְׁפֶּנֶה means judgment and it can also be used to describe the standard or basis of judgment. On the other hand, טִשְׁפֶּנֶה can be understood as judging by the right principle.²⁸⁰

God’s choice of Israel was salvation-oriented, so it is not difficult to understand that טִשְׁפֶּנֶה which Israel as a nation should have practiced must be related to salvation

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 118.

²⁸⁰ Harris, 1077.

too. To understand the significance of מִשְׁפָּט, one needs to put this issue in a larger picture and analyze the issue of the fall, since there is a clear connection between the law and sin in the Bible, and surely there should be a connection between מִשְׁפָּט which is law-related and sin.

There is a very brief definition of sin in the Bible. “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness is translated from the Greek word *ἀνομία* which can be used to describe a state of lawlessness that means there is no boundary or limit on behavior.²⁸¹ The Hebrew word עָבַר which means to pass over or through can be understood as to violate or transgress when it is used to describe the concept related to sin.²⁸² “Israel has sinned; they have violated (עָבַר) my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions” (Josh 7:11). Obviously, if the law is the boundary set by God for human beings and passing over it, it results in sin.

The narrative of the fall of humankind in Genesis enriches the understanding of sin as passing over the boundary. The only temptation addressed to human beings was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 2:9, the Hebrew word יָדַע meaning “knowledge” does not only mean learning but also indicates some kind of ability that can be acquired through experience.²⁸³ In fact, humans sin by experiencing

²⁸¹ John R. W. Stott, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: The Letters of John* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2013), 132.

²⁸² Fishbane, 475.

²⁸³ Harris, 411.

sin just like Adam and Eve sinned by experiencing sin through eating of the forbidden fruit. Such an ability or knowledge was not given by God, but it is experienced.

According to the instruction of God, the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil were not good for food. That was the boundary set by God for human beings at that time and it was the principle by which to judge good and evil.²⁸⁴ After talking to the snake, Eve changed her mind about the forbidden fruit. “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Gen 3:6). Eve began to judge the forbidden fruit with a different principle or standard, and what was not good for food according to the principle of God, became something good for food in the opinion of Eve. Therefore, the starting point of sin or the fall is that human beings replace the principle or standard of God with their own principles or standards.²⁸⁵ When human beings judge according to their own opinions, sin does not just mean passing over the boundary set by God but drawing the new boundaries in accordance with their own principles to redefine good and evil. Thus, human beings become their own gods by setting new boundaries or principles according to their own wishes, and this is the origination of the fall and sin.

In general, traditional understanding, sin means a life of moral corruption. This simple idea does not actually reflect the real situation of the impact of sin on human

²⁸⁴ Kwong, vol. 1, 175-177.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

beings. In the Bible, sin does not necessarily mean a life of moral corruption. Sometimes, the more enterprising people are more inclined to sin. The sins committed by human beings are not always caused by moral incompetence, but a kind of wanton indulgence or intentional deviance.²⁸⁶ Sin reflects a different judgment of good and evil from the principle of God, and sometimes people may sin against their own conscience because of their desire for sin, but other times people may use a different principle to judge good and evil and do whatever they think is right.

The story of the Tower of Babel is a good example. For such a huge project, a unified goal, an elaborate plan, good organizations are needed. These traits that we consider to be virtues were what the builders of the Tower of Babel had. “If as one people speaking the same language, they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Gen 11:6). Human beings were united and working together for the same goal, and even God considered that there would be nothing impossible for them.²⁸⁷ Obviously, the Tower of Babel was the embodiment of the collective will of human beings and the builders just did what they thought was right. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isa 5:20). They had a different worldview or value from God and judged according to their own principle and redrew the boundary of good and evil.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Coogan, 80, Kindle.

When God made the covenant with Israel, the law was given, and ideally, biblical law should be the principle of judgment for Israel. There is a brief commentary on judgment and the law in the New Testament. “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (Jas 2:12). It is clear that biblical law reflects God’s principle of judgment.²⁸⁸

According to the discussions above, in the Bible, **משפּט** refers to both judgment and the clauses of the law, so **משפּט** is not only about judgment but also about “how” to judge. God’s choice of Israel was salvation-oriented. From a certain perspective, salvation means restoring perfection which was before the fall of human beings. Regarding the issue of judgment or judging, the principle of sound human judgment was consistent with that of God. Therefore, **משפּט** for Israel, as a nation, means to restore the sound judgment of human beings and judging good and evil according to the principle of God.

משפּט under the Monarchy

From the Perspective of Politics

According to the discussions above, **משפּט** for Israel as a nation means to practice the principle of God’s judgment of good and evil. From another perspective, the order of the entire country should be established by the law of God. However, under the monarchy, **משפּט** could not be practiced in the aspects of sovereignty and nomocracy.

²⁸⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: James* (Taipei: Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 2012), 89.

From the perspective of sovereignty, there is an essential contradiction between the monarchy and *מִשְׁפָּט* which makes them incompatible.

In terms of the nature of the monarchy, the sovereignty of a country under the monarchy belongs to the monarch and the legislative power as one of the most critical parts of the sovereignty.²⁸⁹ No matter how the legislators flaunt justice, the laws under the monarchy are derived from the power of the monarch and there is nothing to do with justice.²⁹⁰ The law embodies the will of the legislators. Under the monarchy, this kind of will is the will of the monarch and the law is only a tool to implement that will.

The law is the foundation of the order in the country. From a particular perspective, the law is an embodiment of sovereignty. However, ideally, the legislative power did not belong to the kings under the Israeli monarchy, which was developed from the theocracy. The legislator of the biblical law was God, and in that way, the sovereignty of Israel belonged to God even under the monarchy. Therefore, *מִשְׁפָּט* means that the sovereignty of Israel should belong to God from the perspective of legitimacy.²⁹¹

On the issue of sovereignty, the essence of the monarchy leads to an essential conflict between the monarch and God. Although that contradiction was reconciled within the framework of the Davidic covenant, the loyalty of the king to God could not be guaranteed due to the unlimited power of the monarch and the unreliability of human

²⁸⁹ Bentham, chap. 5, Kindle.

²⁹⁰ Strauss, 190.

²⁹¹ Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1996), 231-232.

nature. When the king was loyal to God, the king shared the sovereignty of Israel with God within the framework of the Davidic covenant, but when the king betrayed God, the sovereignty of Israel was usurped by the king.²⁹² Thus, under the monarchy, מִשְׁפָּט could not be practiced in the domain of sovereignty.

From the perspective of nomocracy, the monarchy undermines the basis of the rule of law. Nomocracy or the rule of law means that the administration of the government should be based on a system of law which is the foundation or the norm of order in the country.²⁹³ However, under the monarchy, the law is only a tool for the monarch to maintain the rule and there is no substantial restriction on the monarch. Ideally, no one in a country can be above the law, since no matter what kind of form a government is, if there is an individual who has the right to disobey the law, all others will be under the arbitrary control of that person. The very essence of the monarchy makes nomocracy impossible. Although in theory, the king of Israel would be restricted by biblical law, somehow the restriction depended on the king's personal loyalty to God was totally unreliable.²⁹⁴

David was a good example. When David committed adultery and murder, the prophet Nathan went to David and told him a story. After hearing the story, David judged, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb

²⁹² You, 72.

²⁹³ Sun, chap. 4, Kindle.

²⁹⁴ Wang, chap. 6, Kindle.

four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity” (2 Sam 12:5-6). Under the monarchy, the king has the highest judicial power, and no one can judge the king based on the law. Thus, in such a situation, David judged himself under the guidance of the prophet. When there was an individual with the highest judicial power and this person could be judged only by himself, justice was impossible.²⁹⁵ Even under the rule of a good king, nomocracy and the order established by the law would collapse. Therefore, **משפט** cannot be practiced due to the essence of the monarchy in the domain of nomocracy or the rule of law.

In summary, **משפט** reflects the principle of God’s judgment of good and evil, which should be practiced by Israel as a nation. According to the analysis above, in the realm of politics, law-related **משפט** means God’s sovereignty over Israel and the nomocracy or the rule of law based on biblical law. However, due to the essential system defects of the monarchy, there was a contradiction of sovereignty between the monarch and God. The nomocracy or the rule of law could not be implemented either. Therefore, **משפט** could not be practiced in the realm of politics under the monarchy in Israel.

From the Perspective of Salvation

God’s choice of Israel was salvation-oriented, and biblical law is directly related to salvation. It means that there is a clear connection between salvation and **משפט** which is law-related and the reason why **משפט** could not be practiced by Israel as a

²⁹⁵ Baldwin, 271.

nation, under the monarchy, is very dramatic.

As the analysis above shows, the starting point of sin and the fall was judging good and evil by one's own principles instead of God's principle. Biblical law is the principle of God's judgment. When Israel as a nation practiced *משפט*, it was restoring the sound principle of judging good and evil. However, the essence or the system defects of the monarchy made the functioning of *משפט* in the domain of salvation an impossibility.

The essence of the monarchy is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the monarch has the supreme power higher than the law. From a certain perspective, the law is only a tool for the monarch to maintain the rule, and there is no actual restriction for the monarch by the law.²⁹⁶ Although ideally, the king of Israel should be restricted by the biblical law, in fact, that restriction depended on the king's personal loyalty to God. When the king betrayed God, there would be no addressed restrictions on the king from the biblical law; thus, the principle of Israel to judge good and evil became a personal will of the king.²⁹⁷ That is exactly the same situation when human beings committed sin in the Garden of Eden. Under the monarchy, the king had the supreme jurisdiction and became the individual who redefined good and evil. When the Israelites chose the monarchy, they did not realize the serious and catastrophic consequences of the choice. The essence of the monarchy made the principle of judging good and evil of the whole

²⁹⁶ Ma, chap. 1, Kindle.

²⁹⁷ You, 89.

country depended on the personal loyalty to God of the king, and the unreliability of human nature turned the principle of God inevitably into another principle.

In the monarchy, the monarch is actually in the position of God. In the Garden of Eden, human beings became their own gods by redefining good and evil according to their own principles and that was exactly the situation for the king in Israel under the monarchy.²⁹⁸ The monarchy dramatically repeated the process of the fall, and due to the essence of the monarchy, it was impossible for **משפט** to be practiced under the monarchy.

Summary

There is a clear connection between **משפט** and biblical law or the legal system of Israel, which was the foundation and the core of maintaining the country. Although from the perspective of **משפט**, biblical law and the law in politics share the same ultimate goal, somehow in the real world, the law does not genuinely reflect justice, but the will of the rulers. The law is merely a kind of tool to maintain domination.

Although there is a clear connection between **משפט** and biblical law, they are not the same. **תורה** is not just about judgment but also about “how” to judge. From the perspective of salvation, the starting point of the fall of human beings was judging good and evil according to the principles of their own ideas, thus becoming little gods by redefining good and evil. God’s choice of Israelites was salvation-oriented, thus

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

טִּשְׁבֵּת should have been practiced by Israel, as a nation, as it was directly related to salvation. From a certain point of view, salvation means to restore the original situation or state before the fall of humans, so טִּשְׁבֵּת means to restore the sound principle of judgment and to judge good and evil according to the principle of God.

It was impossible for Israel as a nation to practice טִּשְׁבֵּת due to the essence or the essential systematic defects of the monarchy. In the realm of politics, law-related טִּשְׁבֵּת for Israel, as a nation, meant the sovereignty of God and the nomocracy established by biblical law. From the perspective of sovereignty, the monarch usurped the sovereignty that should belong to God. From the perspective of nomocracy or the rule of law, the essence of the monarchy undermined the basis of the rule of the law that was established by biblical law. Moreover, from the perspective of salvation, Israelites were the chosen people of God and טִּשְׁבֵּת meant that they had to restore the sound principle of judging good and evil in the framework of Israel, as a nation. However, the significance of טִּשְׁבֵּת could not be practiced due to the essence or the essential system defects of the monarchy, since the monarchy dramatically repeated the process of the fall and human beings actually became their own gods by redefining good and evil.

Therefore, as one of the two keywords in Genesis 18:19, טִּשְׁבֵּת should be practiced by Israel, as a nation, but the Israelites as the chosen people failed due to the essence or the essential systematic defects of the monarchy. Thus, it is not surprising that God had a negative view of monarchy and denied the monarchy as a political system in

Hosea 13:11.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to have deeper insights into Hosea 13:11. To understand the significance of Hosea 13:11, it is necessary to put this verse in a larger picture. In the process of the hermeneutical analysis, it was concluded that Hosea 13:9-11 forms a unit. Superficially, one of the reasons why God dethroned the king was that the monarchy was a betrayal to God and the kings under the monarchy provided no real protection for Israel. Somehow this simple answer cannot solve all the problems. According to the hermeneutical study in chapter 2, God denied the monarchy as a political system in Hosea 13:11.

The monarchy, the most powerful political system in the ancient world, failed the plan of God. Although God is described as the king in the Bible, the essence of God's government is completely different from that of the monarchy and there is no place for the monarchy in the kingdom of God. The direct cause of the establishment of the monarchy in Israel was the religious and political chaos during the era of the Judges. However, that chaos was not the fault of the theocracy. The betrayal of God was the cause. Israel longed for a new political system and turned a blind eye to the defects of the monarchy and the consequences were disastrous.

The Israeli monarchy matured in the early days of Solomon's administration. That political system was based on two covenants, one was the Sinaitic covenant and the

other one was the covenant between David and the northern tribes. With the establishment of the monarchy, its defects also began to emerge. The unrestricted power of the monarch destroyed the two covenants which were the foundations of the United Kingdom of Israel. As a result, when Rehoboam inherited the throne, he failed to reach a new covenant with the northern tribes and the country divided. Politically, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah were two independent countries, but in terms of ethnicity and salvation, the people of these two countries still belonged to one nation especially from the perspective of Sinaitic covenant. The defects of the monarchy had shaken the foundations of Israel as a nation, so it is not surprising that God had a negative view of the monarchy in Hosea 13:11.

It is impossible for a basic analysis of the monarchy to fully expound why God's plan could not be fulfilled under this political system, and therefore a study of the purpose in God's choosing Israel as a nation is needed, and there are clues in Genesis 18:19 which is the key to explore the significance of Hosea 13:11. According to the analysis in chapter 4, **צְדָקָה** and **מִשְׁפָּט** in this verse were the goals that Israel, as a nation, should have practiced. However, these goals could not be fulfilled due to the essence of the monarchy. Thus, the monarchy became an obstacle to the plan of God.

There are three main aspects of the significance of **צְדָקָה** for Israel, as a nation: restoring the perfect relationship between human beings and God, restoring the perfect interpersonal relationship, and the responsibility for the ruler, who should serve the

country, work in the country, and preserve the country. Unfortunately, loyalty to God could not be guaranteed under a political system in which human beings were placed in the position of God and the perfect relationship between men and God could not be restored. The perfect interpersonal relationships could not be restored and the responsibility of the ruler could not be fulfilled under a political system full of inequality and autocracy. Therefore, all these three main points mentioned above could not be practiced under the monarchy.

The substance of **טִפְשָׁה** refers to judgment and the principle of judging, for Israel as a nation, **טִפְשָׁה** was mainly reflected in three aspects. First, God's sovereignty of Israel. Second, the nomocracy or the rule of law based on biblical law. Third, restoring the perfect principle of the judgment of good and evil from the perspective of salvation. However, due to the essence of the monarchy, God's sovereignty of Israel was usurped, and the foundation of the nomocracy or the rule of law established by biblical law was destroyed, and the process of the fall was repeated so that human beings judged according to their own principles and redefined good and evil, which made an attempt for restoring the principle of justice in vain. Therefore, the significance of **טִפְשָׁה** could not be practiced under the monarchy.

In summary, Hosea 13:11 reflects the denial of the monarchy as a political system and God's plan could not be fulfilled under the monarchy. Superficially, the monarchy was a betrayal of God and the foundations of Israel, as a nation, were shaken by the

system defects of the monarchy. The root cause was that according to the clues in Genesis 18:19, the goals that Israel, as a nation should have practiced in God's plan could not be fulfilled under the monarchy. Thus, due to the monarchy, Israel as a nation failed in God's plan and God's negative view of the monarchy in Hosea 13:11 was reasonable.

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