

Chapter 11

Vassal of Assyria

(700 to 632 BCE)

‘Love the crown prince designate Ashurbanipal,
son of your lord Esarhaddon, King of Assyria,
as you do your own lives’¹

An author whose work is included in the second book of Kings reported that Hezekiah fell sick after the ending of the siege of 701 and that he received letters, a gift and a visit from envoys of the Babylonian leader Merodach-baladan. Hezekiah was supposedly chided by Isaiah for showing the envoys all the gold and treasure of the Temple. If the account in 2 Kings 18 concerning Hezekiah’s stripping of the temple of all its gold is accurate - and it is confirmed from Assyrian records - then there would have been no gold to show the visitors.² There is general scholarly agreement that envoys from Merodach-Baladan may have secretly visited Hezekiah sometime around the death of Sargon in 705 in order to encourage a rebellion against Assyria and that the account in Kings is a re-interpretation of events by a scribe who was writing a century later - around the time of the Babylonian invasion.

Assyrian Emperors	
Event	Date BCE
Tiglath Pileser III Crowned	745
Shamaneser V Succeeds	727
Sargon II Succeeds	722
Sennacharib Succeeds	705
Esarhaddon Succeeds	681
Ashurbanipal Succeeds	668
Ashurbanipal Dies	627

It is certain, however, that the country, if not the King, was sick in the aftermath of 701. The devastation caused by the Assyrians had destroyed many of the surrounding towns and villages. In Isaiah’s words “*Yahweh has taken away the covering of Judah*”³ According to Assyrian records, Sennacherib handed over the towns he sacked to various Philistine states – Ashdod, Ekron and Gaza. Isaiah writes of the reduced state of Judah thus:

*Your country lies desolate, your cities burned to the ground.
Before your very eyes, foreigners devour your land,
Daughter Zion is left as a shut-up city,
like a lean-to in a vineyard,
like a shack in a cucumber field
If Yahweh of armies had not left us a few survivors,
we would have been like Sodom,
would become like Gomorrah.*⁴

In the poem as it appears today, the nation and the city are ruined because the people failed to follow the way of Yahweh in their hearts, but instead conducted hollow rituals in the temple, for he continued:

*When you come to appear before me, who asked this of you -
this trampling of my court.
Bring no more futile offerings.
Incense disgusts me.
New moon and Sabbath and holy gatherings—
I cannot abide iniquity in solemn assembly.
I hate your new moons and appointed feasts.
They have become a burden to me, I am tired of them.*

...

¹ Extract from the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon. Pritchard (1975) p 59 para 24

² The 2 Kings 20 passages began ‘In those days...’ and ‘At that time...’. These phrases often indicate a later insertion by an editor. It is thought that the historical material was copied from Kings into Isaiah 38 and 39 by a later scribe or editor. If this is true, then the Isaiah accounts are no more contemporaneous with the events they describe than those in Kings.

³ Isaiah 22:7

⁴ Isaiah 1:7-9

*Learn to do good.
Seek justice, rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*⁵

There is more than a little recollection of Hosea and Amos here. Speaking of Israel, Hosea too had talked of putting an end to *'her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts'* and had said that the people should offer *'steadfast love and not sacrifice'*. And Amos proclaimed that Yahweh had said *"I hate, I despise your festivals and take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ...But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*⁶

The Book of Isaiah in the lifetime of the prophet

A little after the events of 701, Isaiah himself fell silent although the book that bears his name continued to receive additions for perhaps another half-millennium. Scholars have for some time divided this book into at least three components - each with its own time and author. In this view, 1st Isaiah runs from the beginning to chapter 39, 2nd Isaiah (or Deutero-Isaiah) from 40 to 55 and 3rd Isaiah from chapter 56 to the end. It is now recognised that the picture is more complex and that each division is a collection whose final assembly was the work of a late editor. Many of the poems and other writings of which the texts were composed were of a quality which encouraged their use on occasions other than that for which they had been originally composed. Thus the famous *'Unto us a son is born'* poem could have been re-used to celebrate the arrival of more than one royal birth and continues in use to this day in Christian circles as a celebration of the birth of Jesus. Their re-use no doubt contributed to the durability of these poems, but may also have led to the stripping from the texts of material that was specific to the original composition – thereby making the dating of particular compositions hazardous. The original texts frequently inspired additional material - often marked by the phrase *'On that day...'*. In forming the final compilation, the editors mainly used the themes of the compositions as the organising principle – a procedure that broke up the chronology of the texts. Editorial activity over time has sometimes split individual poems apart or interspersed comments between their stanzas. The final redactor imposed a structure on the book that further complicated the task of recovering the form that the scrolls had reached by 700 BCE⁷. Nevertheless, the writings of Isaiah ben Amoz (aka 'First Isaiah') are still believed to be largely within the first 39 chapters, although it is now recognised that this section also contains significant amounts of later material.

It would be nice if it could be believed that the history contained in Isaiah chapters 36 – 39 was written contemporaneously by Isaiah or his disciples. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case. Whilst the bulk of this passage is identical with passages from Kings, the section stating that Hezekiah stripped the temple of gold in order to pay the Assyrian ransom is omitted; no contemporary writer would omit an event of such significance. A later author, however, writing after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, may well have seen the need to omit this passage in order to make it consistent with the story in which Hezekiah showed the gold to the Babylonians. Thus it appears that Kings is the source of the historical material that was later copied into Isaiah long after the Isaiah ben Amos had completed his work.

⁵ Isaiah 1:7-17. Part of the great poem which opens and summarises this part of Isaiah. The individual stanzas may have different origins.

⁶ Hosea 2:11 & 6:6 and Amos 5:21-24

⁷ J. Blenkinsopp's impressive review of Isaiah 1-39 (Anchor Bible volume 19) is the main source for the divisions in the book and the dating of individual passages used here. The final redacted structure of the whole of 'First Isaiah' referred to is as follows. Chapter one includes a long title which may have been intended for the book as a whole together with some material from various times selected to give a kind of overview of the material that follows. Chapters 2-12 starts with a shorter title; it appears to have been put together as a distinct unit; it includes frequent references to the Holy one of Israel and it places the prophet's moment of revelation at its midpoint. Chapters 13 to 23 begin with a new title; this section mainly contains sayings concerning foreign peoples. Nine or these are called *'massa'* – oracles. Chapters 24 to 27 are often treated as a separate work known as the "Little Apocalypse"; it may have originated in the 5th or 6th centuries, an era more disposed to Apocalyptic thinking. Chapters 28 to 31 contain a series of 8th century 'woe' sayings, but the assurances that follow them may come from the end of the 7th century. The next two chapters, on good governance, are written in the wisdom tradition by yet another author. Chapters 34 and 35 are late; they form an appreciation of the message of the book in eschatological terms. Chapters 36 to 39 are formed from material taken from the Deuteronomic History

There are other important differences between the Isaiah in the book that bears his name and the Isaiah ben Amoz as described in Kings. In Kings, Hezekiah is recorded as going out of his way to consult Isaiah, but in the book of Isaiah, the prophet's word was rejected and the state officials, including even the king, were described as lying children. It would seem that the Isaiah material is likely to be original and the version in Kings an establishment gloss.

In a speech reported by the author of Kings (and later copied into Isaiah), the Assyrian emissary to Jerusalem asked "*On whom do you rely?*" – precisely the same question that Isaiah so persistently raised in his oracles. And Isaiah would have agreed with the comment that Egypt was a '*broken reed*' that would pierce the hand of those who relied on it. The author set this interchange in the same place that Isaiah had used for his meeting with King Ahaz during his intervention at the time of the threatened invasion by an Aramean-Israelite coalition.

Some would argue that the beautiful optimistic poem "A shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse"⁸ was the last of the poems of Isaiah ben Amoz, but there is little evidence for this. Blenkinsopp argues for a late date, possibly 3rd Isaiah, mainly on the basis of vocabulary⁹. Certainly there are phrases in the poem that reappear in Isaiah 65. The redactor may have decided to place this poem in today's chapter eleven because of the metaphors it used and because of an interesting 'fit' with the end of the previous poem. Thus:

*He will cut down the forest thickets with an axe;
Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One.*

But: -

*A shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,
From his roots a branch will bear fruit.*

Overall, around 300 verses of the material in Isaiah 1-39 originated from the 8th century prophet; the rest are more likely to be the work of later authors. Nevertheless, the scrolls attributable to Isaiah ben Amoz would still have amounted to a substantial work – equivalent to about 15 of our present chapters.

There is a tradition, preserved in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds as well as in the pseudographic work entitled the 'Martyrdom of Isaiah' that Isaiah lived out the rest of Hezekiah's reign, but was arrested and killed by being sawn in half on the orders of Hezekiah's son Manasseh.

Manasseh

Assyria was the uncontested regional power in the early years of the 7th century. She was led by a succession of strong emperors. Sennacherib, who laid siege to Jerusalem in 701, ruled from 705 to 681 and was succeeded by his son Esarhaddon, who in turn was succeeded by his son Ashurbanipal who reigned from 669 to 627.

It was into this world that Manasseh, Hezekiah's son was born, probably around the year 710 when Judah was economically and politically successful. He would have experienced the full horror of the siege and the probable loss of his mother and sisters as they became part of Sennacherib's prize. It is likely that he was appointed crown prince in 698 at the age of 12¹⁰ and came to rule in his own right in 687, probably on the death of his father.¹¹

The great triumphs of Hezekiah's reign, political, economic and spiritual all occurred before Judah suffered the consequences of his resistance to Assyria. He reigned over a small country that, in a testing time, produced an enduring body of outstanding spiritual literature. Whilst he himself survived the confrontation with Assyria, a success of a kind, his country was ruined and reduced in size, with the rich farmland of the Shephelah being passed to Assyrian Philistia.

In 690 Taharqua, Shebitku's son, was crowned in Memphis. He would create a model army

⁸ Isaiah 11:1-9

⁹ Blenkinsopp, Joseph: Isaiah 1-39: AB; pp 263-265. Here Blenkinsopp discusses the various alternative views. He notes that key words – such as those for shoot, stump, branch and root occur predominantly in late texts such as Job, 2nd or 3rd Isaiah, Proverbs, Daniel and Ezekiel.

¹⁰ 2 Kings 21:1,

¹¹ Edwin Thiele 'The mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings' (3rd Edition 1983). Note that 2 Kings 20:6 suggests that Hezekiah was given 15 years of life from the beginning of Assyrian Siege so that he would have died in 687 or thereabouts if these 15 years were reality. It is also possible to interpret the biblical evidence as indicating that Hezekiah died in 698, when Manasseh's reign is said to begin. But this solution ignores the plausible co-regency idea adopted here.

which would be capable of running military campaigns in support of Egypt's commercial interests as far north⁶ as Phoenicia. The struggle between Egypt and Mesopotamia was not over yet.

In the meantime, Assyria's vassals prospered. The neighbouring provinces of Samaria and Philistia were under direct rule and there the governing Assyrian officials were able to live in considerable style as exemplified by the beautiful 'Assyrian palace ware' that archaeologists have uncovered from within their houses. Although self-governing Judah had been reduced to Jerusalem and its immediate surrounds, the population of the city itself increased as refugees migrated from the newly expanded Philistia. The increased population together with membership of the Assyrian economic area brought new wealth into the city. Manasseh's policy seems to have been to remain a loyal vassal of Assyria and as a result, over time, he was able to recover much of the territory stripped from Judah in the immediate aftermath of the siege. But before this happened, whilst Judah remained little more than Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings, a text emerged from the temple which required that all slaughter, for whatever reason, should take place before the Holy Tent in the temple. This was a reforming text, written to define what holiness meant for priest and people.

The Holiness Code

It has already been noted that there were two main pieces of priestly writers, P and H. Small insertions concentrating on H's special interests can be found at various points throughout the P text but H's main contribution was the Holiness Code which, in today's bible, can be found in Leviticus between chapters 17 and 26.

One of his main concerns was the need to distinguish between ordinary people, animals and things and those that were set apart for the practice of the cult. In one short passage he used the verb *to set apart* four times to emphasise the point. He employed a characteristic chiasmus to do this: -

*I am Yahweh your god;
I have set you apart from the peoples.
You shall therefore set apart
the clean animal from the unclean,
and the unclean bird from the clean.
You shall not make yourselves detestable
by an animal or by a bird
or by anything which creeps on the ground,
which I have set apart for you to hold unclean.
You shall be holy to me; because I, Yahweh, am holy,
I have set you apart from the other peoples to be mine.¹²*

Whilst P was largely content to declare the laws without explanation, H was more inclined to justify his statements. He was particularly fond of the dominical phrases "you shall be holy, because I am holy" and the much repeated "I am Yahweh, your god. H was particularly concerned with the proper respect for the Sabbath.

The two Priestly writers had fairly similar styles but there are some differences in vocabulary and usage between P and H. For example, where P wrote about the 'congregation of Israel', H would have used the 'congregation of Yahweh'. H used some words with different meanings to P: for example, when P used the Hebrew '*ma'al*', he meant 'desecration', but in H it meant 'rebellion' against either man or god. H was less careful in his use of technical terms: thus when P used the word '*miskan*', he was referring to the inner covering of the holy tent and when he wrote about the outer, less sacred, covering he used the word '*ohel*'; but H used both terms interchangeably. Whilst both writers enjoyed chiasmus, H deployed them with greater density and complexity as the example quoted above illustrates. The prevalence of structures like this are often obscured in the translations, partly because they are written out as continuous text and partly because the key words are often translated with different words so as to enhance the English by avoiding repetition, whereas the artistic intention in the Hebrew writing was to exploit the power of repetition. Milgrom, in his extensive analysis of Leviticus emphasised the importance of chiasmus for identifying H texts but also used a set of characteristic words and phrases.¹³

¹² Leviticus 20:24b – 26.

¹³ Milgrom (1991); p 35

Date

Elements of H-style writing are found embedded at various points throughout the P text. Milgrom, argued strongly for H's role as the editor of P¹⁴. A good example of H's editorial activity can be found in Exodus 31 where P described the construction of the Holy Tent. At that point there is an insertion in H language concerning the law of the Sabbath – a reminder that even the great holy work of making the sacred tent did not justify the breaking of the Sabbath¹⁵.

It is also reasonably clear that H's text predated the final version of the law code in Deuteronomy 12-26 – the second law code. This Deuteronomistic law code depended on H at a number of points: -

- The laws on hybrids in Deuteronomy 22 followed those of the Holiness code (Leviticus 19) but are later since the Deuteronomist chose to explain the archaic term *sha'atnez* – linen and wool woven together – presumably because the term had gone out of use by the time the Deuteronomist was writing¹⁶.
- The law on leaving the gleanings of the field for the poor follows that in the Holiness Code (also Leviticus 19).
- The prohibition of pagan practices – child sacrifice, divination, sooth-saying, sorcery – in Deuteronomy 18 follows the Holiness Code in Leviticus 20.

The content of the Holiness Code provided additional clues as to its date: -

- The requirement that all slaughter be undertaken at the Jerusalem Temple, a requirement that is unique to this author, suggests a date when Judah was small enough for this to be practical. It would have been practical only in the early part of the 7th century, but not in the expanded Judah of Josiah.
- More generally, the regulations relating to the care of the poor and to honesty in commerce may have been the response of H to the rapid growth in wealth experienced by Jerusalem as it exploited its membership of the Assyrian trading area.

The 680's – plus or minus a decade – may therefore be a plausible estimate as to the most likely time for the writing of the Holiness code.¹⁷ Such a date is not inconsistent with the attention given by H to child sacrifice, ancestor worship and paganism. Child sacrifice was dealt with twice in H, suggesting it could have been a significant issue at the time of writing. Manasseh was accused by the author of Kings of sacrificing his own son. The author of Kings may not be reliable with regard to Manasseh, who he chose to blame for the catastrophe that took place in the reign of Josiah, his hero. Perhaps that was also the reason that he omitted to mention the child sacrifices of which Jeremiah complained. Jeremiah, writing at roughly the same time, stated that child sacrifices was practised then in the valley of Tophet¹⁸. The author of Kings also accused Ahaz, who reigned in the middle of the 8th century, of passing his own son through the flames. There is evidence that child sacrifice was practised in neighbouring Samaria in the seventh century, for Sennacherib is said to have settled the Sepharvaim there at sometime around 700. These people worshipped Adrammelech by burning children, or so it is alleged in 2 Kings 17. This may be a reference to the god Adad-milki, a god of Tell Halaf on the Turkish/Syrian border, whose worship by means of child sacrifice is attested in non-biblical sources. These recurrent references to child sacrifice suggest that it was never completely eliminated prior to the Babylonian Exile. The denunciations against ancestor worship and shamans point to a time when these things are alleged to have occurred; whilst Manasseh's reign was one such time, Isaiah also notably

¹⁴ Milgrom (1991); p 13

¹⁵ Exodus 31:13-17

¹⁶ Alternatively, *sha'atnez* may have been a technical term, understandable only within a narrow circle. But both H and this Author were writing for the educated laity as well as priests so this hypothesis is perhaps the less likely one.

¹⁷ However Knohl, Milgrom and others argue that similar conditions existed in the reign of Ahaz and argue therefore for the H text to have been written then (AB Leviticus 1-16 p 26). But this chronology creates difficulties in that it places P and J in times which are too early to be consistent with the texts. (For example, J could not have depicted Rebekah as riding on a camel to meet Isaac if camels had not been domesticated by the time of writing, nor could Kadesh Barnea have been given as the place where the Israelites camped before it existed.)

¹⁸ Jeremiah 7:31, 19:5 & 32:35

complained about ancestor worship.

The text

As with the rest of Leviticus, H sets out the Holiness Code as if they were the laws of Yahweh being relayed to the people of Israel by Moses whilst they were still in the wilderness. In reality, the code is being presented to the people of Jerusalem and its environs. Its content addresses a people in a settled urban setting – not a nomadic people. The ‘camp’ therefore should be interpreted as the city and the ‘tent of the meeting’ as the part of the temple where the Holy Tent was kept.

The Holiness Code began with the prohibition against the non-sacrificial slaughter of animals:

Anyone of the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, a lamb or a goat, whether within or outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to Yahweh before the Tent of Yahweh, shall be held guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood, and must be cut off from the people¹⁹

NRSV uses the word ‘slaughter’ rather than the NIV’s ‘sacrifice’. It appears that the Hebrew verb (*shachat*) is used in both sacrificial and non-sacrificial contexts. The more general term is perhaps the better translation here as there is an alternative Hebrew word which explicitly means sacrifice. Many scholars hold that this author would have seen the killing of any of the species that could be set aside for sacrificial purposes as a sacrificial act. Whilst an absolute prohibition on slaughtering meat far from the Holy Tent might have been practical in the scenario under which H was presenting these laws (when all the people were encamped in the wilderness), it would have been impractical in the Judah of the 8th Century BCE or the late 7th century. It would have meant that many people could only eat the meat of domesticated animals when they visited Jerusalem where the Tent of Meeting was enshrined in the temple. Such a prohibition, if enforced, would have destroyed the livelihood of the nomadic pastoralists whose whole economy depended on the management of their flocks and herds. Such a regulation would have been practical, however, in the early part of the 7th century when Judah was reduced to a city-state around Jerusalem. This part of the Holiness Code would be abandoned later when Judah recovered substantial surrounding territory, for in Deuteronomy it would be written that “you may sacrifice and eat meat, as much as your soul desires, within any of your gates”²⁰

Foreign Cults

A particular concern of H and the prophets was the prevalence of foreign cults in Judah and even in the temple. As noted above, he singled out the sacrificing of children to Molech for special attention; it is dealt with both in Leviticus 18, where it was placed in the context of sexual prohibitions, and chapter 20 where it was written that:

Any of the people of Israel, or of the immigrants who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death... And if the people of the land should ever close their eyes to those who give their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, I myself will set my face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech²¹.

Sexual Laws

Today’s Chapter 18 lists people ‘whose nakedness you shall not uncover’, that is, have sexual relations with. Earlier Hosea had preached against the sexual laxity of his time, and especially against ritual prostitution. The Holiness Code banned sexual relations with immediate family members, with any woman and her daughter, with a woman as a rival to her sister, and with any menstruating woman. Furthermore, “you shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and become impure by it. And a woman shall not stand in front of an

¹⁹ Leviticus 17:3-4

²⁰ Deuteronomy 12:15. The Hebrew verb here was ‘*zabach*’, which was almost always used in sacrificial contexts.

²¹ Leviticus 20: 1-4

animal to mate with it. It is a perversion.”

Like Hosea, H opposed ritual prostitution; he wrote:

“Do not desecrate your daughter by making her a prostitute, lest the land go into prostitution, and be filled with depravity.”²²

Do these laws indicate Could moral and religious laxity could have become the norm under Manasseh’s more tolerant rule?

Holiness

In the text that is today’s Leviticus 19, H introduced a powerful section with his key phrase *“You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy”²³*. In this section H emphasized the link between religious piety and moral behaviour. Some of the laws here (shown in bold) could have formed the basis for the Ten Commandments.

Each of you shall each revere his mother and his father.

You shall keep my Sabbaths:

I am the Yahweh your god.

Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves:

I am Yahweh your God.

...

You shall not steal

You shall not lie

and you shall not deal falsely with one another

You shall not swear by my name falsely, so that you would desecrate your god’s name.

I am Yahweh.

*You shall not defraud your neighbour; **you shall not steal**; and you shall not keep for yourself an employee’s wages through the night until morning.*

You shall not hate your brother in your heart.

You shall not take revenge or maintain a grudge against the children of your people.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

I am Yahweh

You shall observe my Sabbaths, and revere my holy place:

I am Yahweh

....

You shall love the immigrant as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt

...

***If a man commits adultery with a man’s wife – commits adultery with his neighbour’s wife - both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.**²⁴*

Just as a sacrifice should not have a blemish, so the priest himself should have an unblemished body. This was explained in a characteristic intricately patterned Chiasmus: -

*A man from your seed, throughout their generations,
who has a defect*

Shall not come forward to offer the bread of his god,

because any man

who has a defect

shall not come forward:

*a blind man; a cripple, one with a mutilated or elongated limb, or
a broken leg or arm; a hunchback; a dwarf; one with a spotted eye,
or scabbed or scurvied, or who has crushed testicles.*

Any man, from the seed of Aaron the Priest

²² The final sentence is from Leviticus 19:29; the other sexual regulations come from chapter 18.

²³ Leviticus 19:2

²⁴ Leviticus 19:3-34 & 20:10

who has a defect shall not come near to bring Yahweh's offerings by fire.
He has a defect
*He shall not come near to bring the bread of his god.*²⁵

The idea of the layered separation of the holy from the ordinary was developed, resulting in the complex rules that applied to priests. The consecrated food, for example, could be eaten by the priest, his unmarried daughter or his slave, but not by his married daughter, his employee or a visitor. The idea of holiness was explained in terms of the people being chosen by God and therefore separated by him from others; therefore, they in turn must separate the clean from the unclean. “*You shall be holy to me, for I Yahweh am holy*”. In order to carry out his tasks, the priest had to be more separated, more holy therefore, than the people. Those close to him fell into a graduated scheme of degrees of separation

Commercial and other laws

The success of Jerusalem as a trading centre was reflected in the inclusion of a trading standard for Jerusalem's merchants:

*You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity. You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin:
I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt*

Many of these laws are compatible with modern standards, but there are others which reflect the culture and religion of H's time: -

*You shall not wear a garment made of two kinds of material
You shall not round off the hair on your temple.
You shall not tattoo any marks on your body*²⁶

There were the rules against witchcraft and ancestor worship – apparently common at the time.

*If any turn to dead ancestors or the spirits of acquaintances, prostituting themselves, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people.*²⁷

The festivals

H included a list of the festivals as they were practised in his time.²⁸ These were: -

- *Massot* - The festival of unleavened bread (15th day of the first month for seven days). Passover was to be celebrated the previous evening, though not much emphasis was placed on it in this text. It seems to have been celebrated privately, in families, as a preparation for the festival to follow. *Massot* was the first pilgrimage festival, or ‘*hag*’.
- An un-named festival to celebrate the first grain harvest. A sheaf of newly harvested grain was waved before Yahweh.
- The Festival of Weeks, so-called because of the requirement to count seven full weeks between the celebration of the first fruits of the harvest and this festival. Later it became known as Pentecost (following the Greek) after the roughly 50 days that this interval amounted to. It was the second ‘*hag*’.
- The festival of Trumpets (first day of the seventh month) – this festival principally involved the priesthood. It was not a ‘*hag*’. Later it became the Jewish New Year.
- *Yom Kippur* - The Day of Atonement (tenth day of the seventh month). In other times this was the day the priests purified the sanctuary, though that was not mentioned here. A day of fasting for the people.

²⁵ Leviticus 21:17b-21

²⁶ Leviticus 19:18 & 26-28

²⁷ Leviticus 20:6. It was noted earlier that Isaiah described ancestor worshippers as the people who lived in darkness.

²⁸ Leviticus 23: 1-38

- *Sukkot* – The fifteenth day of the seventh month, for seven days. Probably the last of the harvest festivals, celebrating the gathering of the last fruit and the grapes. The third *'hag'*.

Later the festivals of Passover, Unleavened Bread and the First Fruits of the first harvest became combined into one so that the fifty days to Pentecost came to be counted from this combined festival. H was interested in explaining how the festivals are to be celebrated, not why. The note concerning the building of booths²⁹ was a later addition, probably inserted in 2nd temple times. Nehemiah states that the idea of building and living in booths was a new idea³⁰, something they discovered in their scriptures that had not been done since the days of Joshua. (An explanation was attached to this late additional festival, but not to any others; it was that the booths were to remind the people of the hovels they lived in whilst slaves in Egypt – a characteristically Deuteronomic concern).

This was followed by regulations concerning the sabbatical year, when the land must lie fallow, and the year of jubilee, the fiftieth year³¹. The rules associated with the jubilee meant that land in open country and un-walled villages was essentially leasehold with the leases terminating in the jubilee year. All Judeans who had become slaves must be freed in the jubilee year, but not foreign slaves.

Enforcement

In the early sections of the code, the question of punishment was not addressed. Most of the laws that are now found in Leviticus 19 were simply plain commands – the form that was used in the Ritual Decalogue and will be used in the Ten Commandments. In chapter 20, however, H did develop the penalties for breaking some of the laws, resulting in a degree of duplication. The penalties were often severe by modern standards - death for adultery; and death for cursing your father or your mother. The chapter includes Yahweh's advice that his laws should be kept *so that the land to which I bring you to settle in may not vomit you out*.³²

The epilogue of the Holiness Code contained rewards for obedience and the penalties for disobedience. Some of these penalties will re-appear amongst the curses for disobedience in Deuteronomy³³. As originally written, the Holiness Code probably ended with the threat that Yahweh would punish a disobedient people by scattering them in the land of their enemies and sending faintness into their hearts so that *“the sound of a blown leaf will put them to flight”*. At the suggested time of writing Israel had already been scattered and many people had been taken as slaves from Lachish. Assyria - the scatterer - was in the ascendant and the prophets had appealed to the people to learn the lesson of Israel's fate.

Judah's Recovery

It seems to be generally agreed that Judah became open to foreign influences, adopting foreign fashions in dress and foreign ideas in religion. Assyrian and other foreign deities were worshipped in the temple³⁴. The archaeological record reveals that 7th century Judah recovered from the disastrous siege and once more engaged in extensive foreign trade. The nation became integrated into the Assyrian economic and political system and prospered as a result. Under Manasseh, Judah imported more foreign goods and enjoyed more luxury items than at any other time in the surrounding centuries.

A more tolerant attitude to popular religion emerged. The *bamah* were rebuilt and sacrifices to Yahweh performed on them. Asherah returned to the Jerusalem temple. Religious tolerance in their vassal states was a normal policy of Assyrian rule, and if Assyrian gods were worshipped in Jerusalem, this would not have been because Assyria enforced such worship - indeed Assyrian rulers were even

²⁹ Leviticus 23:33-36

³⁰ Nehemiah 8: 13 –18

³¹ Leviticus 25

³² Leviticus 20:22

³³ Compare for example *“I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze”*, (Leviticus 26:20) with *“The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron”* (Deuteronomy 28:23)

³⁴ According to II Kings 21:3-7, Manasseh ‘erected altars to Baal, made a sacred pole, ... worshipped all the host of heaven, ... and built altars (to them) in the temple of Yahweh... He built altars to all the starry hosts’. All the ‘host of Heaven’ and the ‘starry hosts’ no doubt included the gods of the Assyrians.

known to sacrifice to the gods of the countries they had conquered.³⁵ The relaxation of the requirement to sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple alone would have resulted in a reduction of Temple, and therefore state, revenues – a phenomenon that is consistent with the archaeologically observed reduction in state building during this century. The renewal of worship in the rural shrines may also have been associated with a decentralisation of power away from Jerusalem, a factor which may have helped restore the rural economy.

The influence of foreign cultures and customs of dress probably persisted throughout the period of Assyrian hegemony. Zephaniah writing in the latter part of the century referred to this when he wrote: -

*I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who dress in foreign clothes...
I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold.*³⁶

Sennacherib's domestic troubles culminated in his assassination by his sons in 681. Egypt's Taharqua took the opportunity of the subsequent Assyrian power struggles to make an alliance with Sidon and to cultivate the other Phoenician cities³⁷. But Sennacherib's youngest son Esarhaddon secured his power base in Assyria more quickly than might have been expected. Without problems at home, he determined to reassert Assyrian authority on the Levant. The Treaty that Taharqua had established between Egypt and Sidon directly challenged Assyrian authority in the area. It was therefore important for Esarhaddon to remind his vassals of their duties.

With the loyalty of his subjects confirmed through oaths, Esarhaddon moved to establish military bases south of Gaza and along Egypt's northern border. The fort at Kadesh Barnea in the Negev was rebuilt to Assyrian designs using Assyrian money. Other supporting forts were built with the aim of controlling the routes that crossed the Egyptian border – forts such as the one at Haseva, twenty miles south of the Dead Sea. These forts were manned by troops from Judah and Edom.³⁸ Uncooperative tribal leaders in northern Sinai were removed. A swift military action in Phoenicia destroyed Sidon and brought Tyre into line. The kings of the Levantine states were made to build Esarhaddon a new city as a demonstration of their loyalty. Manasseh's name is included in the list of loyal vassals who helped with the project.

In 674 Esarhaddon attacked Egypt, but was defeated and Taharqua pushed north again into the Philistine plain. But in 671 Esarhaddon tried once more. He had the campaign recorded in his annals thus:

*I departed from my city Ashur. I crossed the Tigris and the Euphrates at their flood. I advanced over the difficult territory like a wild ox. In the course of my campaign I threw up earth work against Balu, King of Tyre, who had put his trust in his friend Taharqua, king of Nubia (Kush) and had thrown off the yoke of Ashur my lord, answering with insolence. I withheld from them food and water which sustain life. Then I removed my camp and marched directly towards Meluhha...which is in the region of Samaria as far as Rapihu (Raphia?) in the region adjacent to the 'Brook of Egypt' – but there is no river. By means of cords, chains and buckets I had to provide water for my army by drawing from wells. When the oracle-command of Ashur my Lord came to my mind, my soul [rejoiced?]. I put [water jars?] ...upon the camels which all the kings of Arabia had provided.*³⁹

After a hard journey across the desert – he complained of poisonous two-headed snakes and green creatures with dangerous wings - he reached Magan with the assistance, he claimed, of the god Marduk. From there he seems to have marched south and engaged the 'wicked enemy' in a surprise attack near a town he calls Ishhupri. Taharqua was forced to fall back towards Memphis – his forces being harassed all the way. The Assyrian annals continued:

I laid siege to Memphis, his royal residence, and conquered it in half a day by means of mines,

³⁵ Cogan, Mordecai (1998) p 339.

³⁶ Zephaniah 1:8b-9a. leaping over thresholds was a Philistine custom - see I Sam 5:5)

³⁷ Redford (1992) p 355-357

³⁸ Finkelstein & Silberman (2002); The Bible Unearthed p 268. The excavations at Kadesh Barnea were carried out by Nadav Naaman, whose conclusions concerning the design and manning of the forts are quoted.

³⁹ ANET. Pritchard J. B. (1955). Ancient Near Eastern Texts p. 292 from the report on the tenth campaign in the British Museum. English text based on the translation by H Winkler.

breaches and assault ladders. I destroyed it, tore down its walls and burnt it. His queen, the women of his palace, Ushanahuru, his heir apparent, his other children, his possessions, large and small cattle beyond counting I carried away as booty to Assyria. All Ethiopians I deported from Egypt – leaving not even one to do homage. Everywhere in Egypt, I appointed new kings, governors, officers, harbour masters, officials and administrative personnel. I installed regular sacrificial dues for Ashur and the great Gods, my Lords, for all time.⁴⁰

At last Assyria seemed to have achieved her long-term objective: she took possession of Lower Egypt. But having won the country, the Assyrians found they could not hold it on their own. They needed allies and local support. So they appointed Necho, a member of the dynasty of Sais that Taharqua had defeated, to rule the delta. But Necho was weak and when Taharqua recaptured Memphis the following year, he went over to the Kushite side.

There is evidence of significant Assyrian investment in the region around Judah. Some of the projects required a degree of supra-national commercial planning. The Philistine city of Ekron, destroyed by Sennacherib, was rebuilt and became a great centre for olive oil production with an annual output of around a thousand tonnes from its more than 100 presses. But as Ekron was not a major olive growing area, the olives for this industry were brought in from Judah and the province of Samaria where large scale growing evolved to supply the presses. Ekron was apparently chosen because of its proximity to the major distribution centres on the coast to the west. From there the oil could be exported to Assyria or Egypt – areas devoid of suitable land for olive growing.

Judah was involved in the Arabian trade as well. Trade in incense and other luxury goods available from Arabia had always been a source of Israelite and Judean wealth whenever the times enabled the trade to flourish. The Assyrians built a number of forts, administrative centres and warehouses in the region around Gaza, where the Arabian caravans brought their goods to the coast for trans-shipment. Tilglath-pileser III had earlier described the town as the ‘custom-house of Assyria’ and derived revenues from the shipment of goods through the port. Tell Jemmeh was a base for camel caravans. Archaeologists have found a concentrated collection of mature camel bones there that can only be accounted for by supposing the management of a domesticated camel operation. South Arabian scripts engraved on Judean jars dating from this time have been found in Jerusalem indicating an expatriate community of Arabian traders in the city. Some scholars even argue that Manasseh’s wife Meshulemet was an Arabian; some indeed go on to speculate as to whether this was the inspiration for the Solomon and Sheba stories, for the Judah of Manasseh’s time has left an archaeological record of substantial wealth – not fantastical, but dramatic in comparison to the evidence of actual nomadic poverty found throughout Judah from the time when Solomon is supposed to have lived until the 7th century.

Merchants from Judah took advantage of the new open borders to such an extent that the Shekel became the standard unit of weight in Mesopotamia. Luxury goods were to be found in the area around Jerusalem as never before. The archaeological evidence reveals an abundance of jewellery and metal artefacts, double the quantities found in the previous century, wealthy as the late 8th century had been. The 7th century has left abundant written material too, twenty percent more than has been found in the 8th century strata, mainly in the form of trade records and receipts. Archaeology has turned up a sale document by one Netanyahu, presumably a Judean, who was doing business in Philistine Gezer, where the document was found sealed by an imprint that included Assyrian lunar imagery. A truly international operator! But he was probably not particularly unusual.

The Beersheba valley, about 40 miles south of Jerusalem experienced a dramatic increase in population – rising to ten times its level in the 8th century.⁴¹ Beersheba was an arid zone, not easy to cultivate, but with good organisation it could have gone some way to fulfilling Judah’s need for grain – and thereby replacing the Shephelah, lost to the Philistines after 701. Judah must have been prosperous indeed to be able to afford the high cost of cultivating such marginal land.

The Vassal Treaties

In 672, Esarhaddon chose Ashurbanipal, the younger of his two surviving sons, as his successor. To secure the succession he created a ‘Vassal Treaty’ which required all the vassal states to

⁴⁰ ANET; Pritchard J. B. (1955) p 293 from the Senjiri Stela. English text based on the translation by Luckenbill.

⁴¹ Finkelstein & Silberman; ‘The Bible Unearthed’ (2002) pp264-270. The archaeological record of the Arabian trade, olive oil production, and the occupation of marginal land are described.

renew their existing treaties with Assyria and in particular to support the new crown prince when the time came.

The treaty required the vassal to fight for the crown-prince-designate, to love him and, if necessary, to die for him. One such treaty has been recovered from which it is possible to reconstruct the treaty with Manasseh. The heading of that treaty would have been: -

*The Treaty of Esarhaddon, king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Sennacherib...
With
Manasseh, ruler of Judea, with his sons, grandsons and all the people under his command,
young and old, from east to west,
all those over whom Esarhaddon acts as king and lord;
with you, your sons, grandsons and all who will live in the future after this treaty*

The form of the Treaty comprised:

- a title and purpose
- a historical introduction
- the main laws and terms of the treaty
- the commitment on behalf of future generations
- a list of local and foreign gods who will act as witnesses
- the instructions on how to deal with rival powers and those who support them
- the deposition of the scrolls
- the process for the regular recital of the terms
- the curses for disobedience⁴²

The curses for disobedience were the most terrible sets of curses imaginable: they were to be enforced by the Assyrian gods.

Such treaties were required to be read out to the assembled people at regular intervals. Local Judean scribes would no doubt have been involved in the translation of the treaty into their own language and in the ceremonies at which this treaty was read. Note that the treaty was not just with the king, but with all the people; and not just with this generation, but with all subsequent generations. Amongst other things the treaty stipulated that:

If you do not fight for the crown prince Ashurbanipal, if you do not die for him, if you do not seek what is good for him, if you act wrongly toward him, do not give him sound advice, lead him on an unsafe course, do not treat him with proper loyalty ...then may Ashur, king of the gods, who determines the fates, decree to you an evil, unpropitious fate, and not grant you fatherhood.⁴³

The vassals were required to ‘love the crown prince... as you do your own lives’.⁴⁴ The word ‘love’ in the vassal treaties was understood as connoting loyalty. Emperors commanded their vassals to love them – that is, be loyal to them. Vassals were expected to love their lord, to swear loyalty to him with ‘all their heart’⁴⁵, and to provide aid with all their strength (for example, with chariots and soldiers).

In Judah, Manasseh’s policy of loyalty to Assyria seemed to have paid off. But at a price. The temple was no longer dedicated to the exclusive worship of Yahweh. Religious tolerance prevailed and sacrifices made to the gods of other nations. Although the long list of religious misdeeds attributed to Manasseh by the Deuteronomic Historian⁴⁶ cannot be taken at face value, it is nevertheless plausible that Assyrian ideas of religious tolerance were readily accepted along with Assyrian investment and trade.

Esarhaddon died in 668, four years after the first proclamation of the Vassal treaty. The death of an emperor was always a time of instability. Vassals that were disposed to rebel would do so at these times, exploiting the requirement of the new emperor to remain at home until he had secured his domestic power base. Even in vassal states whose leaders were inclined to offer their continued loyalty to the new emperor, those who held different views would be likely to press their case more vigorously.

⁴² The recovered text of Esarhaddon’s treaty can be found in translation in Pritchard (1975).

⁴³ Pritchard (1975). The ancient Near East Volume II p.59. Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon. para 24

⁴⁴ Ibid para 24.

⁴⁵ Ibid para 34

⁴⁶ II Kings 21:2-9

The Treaty with God

Some members of the religious community would have found the Vassal Treaty, which now came into effect, to be incompatible with their belief in the supremacy of Yahweh their god. They would have felt the worship of foreign gods to be intolerable, and they may not have been able to give their assent to a treaty sworn under the authority of such gods. Indeed, they would not have been willing even to acknowledge the existence of any such gods. It is entirely understandable if, in response, they created a document which took the same form as the Assyrian Vassal Treaty, but instead of swearing exclusive allegiance to the Assyrian crown prince, pledged instead exclusive allegiance to Yahweh. This document could have been the book that was later discovered hidden in the temple in 622. There are other hypotheses as to the content and origin of that book, including the idea that it was a 'pious fraud' written to stimulate Josiah's actions in repressing the popular religion of the time⁴⁷. However there are no good reasons for rejecting the Chroniclers dated and straightforward account of the book's discovery. The book, which does take the form of a Vassal Treaty, clearly surprised and shocked those who found it. It established the Ten Commandments⁴⁸(or more literally the Ten Words) at the centre of this 'Treaty'. The core thus began with the commandment "*You shall have no other gods before my face*". Obedience to this commandment would have banished Assyrian gods from the temple if not from Jerusalem and the whole of Israel. And that would have been seen as an act of gross rebellion.

The text may have included the Shema – regarded today by religious Jews as the most holy words in the Hebrew Bible.

Hear, Israel:

Yahweh is our god. Yahweh is one.

Love Yahweh your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength

This would have precluded loving the crown prince '*as much as your own lives*', as required by the Vassal Treaty.

The 'Treaty' that this group compiled could be described as a 'Treaty with God'. The hypothesis put forward here is that this text was so subversive that it had to be hidden whilst Assyrian power was pre-eminent in Judah, and that it comprised the 'book' that was found when the temple was cleansed in Josiah's time. It can be found in today's bible in the first half of Deuteronomy. Further arguments supporting this hypothesis will be examined later in the context of the discovery of the book in Josiah's time; what is important now is to recognise how the 'book' mimics the Vassal Treaties that would have been read to the people on Esarhaddon's death, and that there would have been good reasons both to write and to hide such a declaration of loyalty to Yahweh

Whilst, as will be discussed later, the compiler of much of Deuteronomy was a scribe, the creator of this text was probably a priest with a commitment to the 'Yahweh Alone' theology and with a background in the Northern tradition. The content of this text relied on the work of E, J and P – seemingly in their original form as independent texts: this contrasts with the rest of Deuteronomy which, where it does not incorporate material from the updated Covenant Code, has many connections with the writings of Jeremiah and Baruch. The name this author used for the Holy Mountain was Horeb, which was the name used in the North and in the E text. But as he was living in Jerusalem, he was able to tell the story of the Israelite's refusal to enter the land and their subsequent repentance by quoting from the J material found in Numbers 14 – obviously without the P material which was inserted there when the texts were merged. The likelihood is therefore that the author was a priest with a northern background working in Judah at a time before the E, J and P texts were merged but after they had been written. He must have worked with Assyrian officials for he knew the contents of their state annals and was familiar with the structure of their treaties.

Date

⁴⁷ Friedman (1987) p101-102

⁴⁸ Hossfeld in his 1982 article '*Der Dekalog*' (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 45; Gottingen; Vendenhoek & Raprecht) suggests that the Ten Commandments was not a source document quoted by the Deuteronomists, but rather a creation of the Deuteronomic school. This would imply that Exodus 20 was a late insertion possibly by the same person who created Genesis 1 as a theological introduction to the Torah as a whole.

The priest who prepared this document sought to give it added authority by setting it as the last words of Moses on the banks of the Jordan before his people crossed into Israel. In this respect, he is following the literary device already used by the other priestly authors. This author claims to be relaying the words of Moses who was speaking to his people from 'beyond Jordan'. The bible is clear that Moses never crossed the Jordan. The scenario the author envisaged has Moses on the East Bank of the Jordan, whilst the author himself was recording Moses' words from the Israel side. This was an impossible place for any Israelite scribe or priest to be before any had crossed the Jordan – a fact that led the distinguished 12th century scholar Ibn Ezra to recognise that Moses could not have been the author of the Book of Deuteronomy and that it must have been written after Israel had become established. If this 'Treaty with God' was indeed the book that would be found when the Temple was cleansed as part of the Josianic reforms, then it must have been written at some time between 664, when the Vassal Treaty that it emulates was promulgated, and the discovery of the book in 622.⁴⁹

The place names used in the text confirm that the date was around the middle of the 7th century as its author refers to a substantial camp at Kadesh-Barnea and we know from archaeology that a fort had been built there by the Assyrians in the middle of the 7th century but had been finally destroyed by its end.

The text

There is a general acceptance that today's Deuteronomy comprises a number of layers and additions to the original book. Many of these additions can be identified by their style and vocabulary or by introductory markers such as the phrase 'At that time...'⁵⁰ Stripping away these insertions a text is revealed that had at its core the Commandment to have no other God, and which adopted the structure the Vassal Treaty. Like a Vassal Treaty it comprised: -

- the title and purpose (Deuteronomy 1: 1-8)
- an historical introduction (Deuteronomy 1:19 – 2:25)⁵¹
- the main laws and terms of the treaty (Deuteronomy 5:1- 6:9)
- the commitment on behalf of the children (Deuteronomy 6:20-25)⁵²
- the instructions on how to deal with rebels (Deuteronomy 7:1-11)
- the rewards for obedience (Deuteronomy 7:12-26)⁵³
- the deposition of the scrolls (Deuteronomy 9:1-10:5)⁵⁴
- the process for the regular recital of the terms (Deuteronomy 27:12-26)
- the curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:20-35)

The list of local and foreign gods who in most vassal treaties would act as witnesses is inappropriate here as this Treaty is with Yahweh – the only god.

The detail of the curses is particularly significant in establishing the relationship of this 'Treaty with God' to the Assyrian Vassal Treaties. From the perspective of Judah, there was no obvious reason for recording the curses in the order given, but in an Assyrian Vassal Treaty the order was given by the seniority of the gods whose curses were being invoked. The order in this document was the same. We may compare a text of Esarhaddon's treaty with the text of Deuteronomy 28. Ashur was the most senior Assyrian god and thus the curses began with a curse from the god of fates.

Assyrian Treaty Text ⁵⁵	Deuteronomy 28: 20-35
May Ashur, who determines fates, decree for you an evil fate ...and not grant you fatherhood, old	Yahweh will send upon you disaster, panic, frustration in everything you attempt; until you

⁴⁹ It could even have been written as late as 621/622, since some scholars hold that the book was written in order to be found and thus influence Josiah's reforms. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁵⁰ Weinfeld, M. (1991). *Deuteronomy 1-11*. New York: Doubleday.

⁵¹ This excludes 1:9-18 (inserted archival material dealing with the appointment of the judiciary). It is followed by verse range detailed material concerning the capture of the towns of Sihon and Og flagged by the 'at-that-time' marker and therefore probably added later. The original historical introduction may therefore not have included this material.

⁵² Deuteronomy 6:10-19 is a poem on the dangers of complacency.

⁵³ Assyrian Vassal Treaties did not contain any rewards for obedience; but Hittite Treaties did.

⁵⁴ The whole of Chapter 8 is a more extended poem on the danger of complacency – based on 6:10-19.

⁵⁵ Pritchard, 1975 p 62-64

age. May Ninlil, his wife ... not intercede for you.	are destroyed and perish quickly
May Anu, king of the gods, rain upon all your houses disease, exhaustion, sleeplessness, worries, and ill health.	Yahweh will afflict you with consumption, fever, inflammation, ...
May Sin... clothe you in leprosy	Yahweh will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and itch, ...
May Shamash... not give you a fair and equitable judgement; may he take away your eyesight; walk about in darkness.	Yahweh will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind; you shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness...
May Ninurta... fell you with his fierce arrow, fill the plain with your corpses, and give your flesh to eagles and vultures to feed upon.	And you shall be continually abused and robbed, without anyone to help
May Venus... let your wives lie in the embrace of your enemy before your eyes, may your sons not have authority over your house and may a foreign enemy divide your possessions.	You shall become engaged to a woman, but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house, but not live in it....
May Zarpanitu... eradicate your offspring and descendants from the land.	Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, while you look on.
May Belet-ili...put an end to birth giving in your land May Adad ...put an end to vegetation, ...hit your land with a destructive downpour, and may locusts ...devour your crops	A people whom you do not know shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labours; you shall be continually abused and crushed...
May Gula the great physician, put illness and weariness in your hearts and a sore that cannot be healed on your body so that you bathe in your blood...	Yahweh will strike you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils, which cannot be healed...

The ‘Treaty with God’ began “*These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan*”. The Esarhaddon Vassal Treaty of which we have a copy began in a similar manner by stating “*This is the treaty of Esarhaddon, King of the World, King of Assyria etc. ... with all the people...* In both cases the aging leader (Esarhaddon or Moses) sought to ensure that an existing covenant continued in force when the leadership past to his successor (Ashurbannipal in Esarhaddon’s case or Joshua in Moses’ case). In both cases, the recording of the leader’s intentions was done by scribes who were not principles to the action.

Historical Introduction

The treaty began its historical introduction and a description of the land by recalling some instruction from Yahweh⁵⁶.

Yahweh our god spoke to us at Horeb saying:

“Go to the hill country of the Amorites and all the neighbouring regions (the desert, the mountain, and the lowland) and to the Negev and the coast (the land of the Canaanites) and to the Lebanon as far as the great river (the river Euphrates). See, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession.”

The targeted territory was ambitious. Neither Israel nor Judah ever gained control of such a large area, but it may have indicated the scope of Judean aspirations. Much of this territory, like Judah herself, was still under Assyrian control at the time of writing. Such an ambition would not be well received should Assyria officials hear of it. It was well known that Ashurbanipal was exceptionally cruel to rebels. It is alleged, for example, that one defeated king had a hook put through his jaw and was chained to a kennel like a guard dog There was therefore an incentive to restrict knowledge of this document to a small trusted group. The author went on to describe the journey to the ‘Promised Land’ in language that is reminiscent of the description quoted earlier of Esarhaddon’s journey towards Egypt. In the process, the author dealt with the disposition of the land as determined by Yahweh. Yahweh allocated Mount Seir to Esau, and Moab and Ammon to the children of Lot. Israel was

⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 1:19-2:25

instructed to pass through these lands carefully - buying food and water and leaving the inhabitants undisturbed. But Sihon, king of Heshbon, was placed into the hands of Yahweh's people and they were instructed to go and dispossess this king and take his land. Og, king of Bashan, was dealt with similarly. Their territories were allocated to Yahweh's people. This territorial allocation was much more realistic.⁵⁷

In this way the historical introduction reviewed the story of the people's journey from Horeb, the holy mountain, to the Jordan. It included the story of the spies, the refusal of the people to enter their allotted land, the penalty for this refusal, the resultant wanderings in the desert, the territories they were forbidden to acquire and the territories they were commanded to acquire until they came to the border of the Canaan.

Of particular interest is the spy story. The version here was different from the J and P versions (found intertwined in today's Numbers 14) in that the sending out of the spies was the people's idea; it was neither Yahweh's command nor Moses instruction. Furthermore, the spies were not sent to test Yahweh's statement that the land was 'flowing with milk and honey', but purely for military reasons. Although written in Judah, this story reflated the author's northern background for it contained the only northern version of the story of the spies. Its treatment of Moses' role was the most favourable, for although Moses was prevented from entering the land as a result of the people's faithless response to the spies report, he was portrayed as suffering for the weakness of his people.⁵⁸ Nevertheless it showed evidence of the influence of the southern version for it talked of the people's hearts being 'melted' by the spies' reports (a J phrase); but it also referred to the people's concerns that their '*little ones would become spoil*', which was a quotation from the P story. The passage also shows that the Treaty author was using a version of the J text that had not yet been combined with P. The text quoted below on the right in normal type is the J material now in Numbers. It omits verses 26 to 39 which are from P (whose beginning and end are shown in small type). It appears that the treaty author was using the Yahwist (J) source on its own, not one that had been merged with the Priestly text.

Treaty text: Deuteronomy 1:40-42	J: Numbers 14:25b & 40 – 42 (P: Numbers 26 - 39)
<p><i>...turn back and march into the wilderness, in the direction of the Reed Sea”</i></p> <p><i>You answered me, “We have sinned against Yahweh! We are ready to go up and fight, just as Yahweh our God commanded us.” ...</i></p> <p><i>Yahweh said to me, “Say to them, ‘Do not go up and do not fight, for I am not with you: you will be defeated by your enemies.’”</i></p>	<p>...turn back tomorrow and march into the wilderness, in the direction of the Reed Sea.”</p> <p>(P text: And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: How long shall this wicked congregation complain against me? ...</p> <p>...When Moses told these words to all the Israelites, the people mourned greatly)</p> <p>They rose early in the morning ...saying, “Here we are. We will go up to the place that Yahweh has promised, for we have sinned.”</p> <p>But Moses said, “... Do not go up, for Yahweh is not with you; do not let yourselves be defeated by your enemies.</p>

With the introduction thus dealt with, the main laws could be laid out. These words were put into the mouth of Moses as Yahweh's representative:

*Hear, Israel. You shall learn and observe diligently the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today. Yahweh our god made a covenant with us at Horeb. Yahweh did not make this covenant with our ancestors, but with us, we here today, all of us living!*⁵⁹

This was a crucial point for the author. The covenant, the treaty, was to be understood as being with everyone at all times. Although originally made with their ancestors it was to be renewed with each generation, just as the terms of a Vassal treaty were made with everyone and were passed on

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 2:4 – 3:7

⁵⁸ One might have expected to find this story in the E text, but it is not there – or at least it has not been retained in the E texts that have been merged into the first four books of the Bible

⁵⁸ Deuteronomy 4:44 - 6:6

⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 5:1-3

to each successive generation.

The Ten Commandments

With this beginning, the author wrote or incorporated the Ten Words known to us as the Ten Commandments. The idea of Ten Words had been established by J's Ritual Decalogue, which had included three of the Ten Words that were now to be incorporated. The first of these was rewritten to be more powerful, more clearly monotheist, and more universal. Whilst J had written of the need to make no agreements with local people "because Yahweh your god is a Jealous god", the author of these Words did not want to write about agreements, but about the absolute supremacy of his god over all others, so he wrote

*I am Yahweh your god, who brought you out of the land of Egypt— out of the house of slaves.
You shall have no other gods before my face.*⁶⁰

The second Word, about not making idols, was already in the Ritual Decalogue; this was now included in an expanded version. "*You shall not make for yourself an idol or any form that is in the skies above or the earth*". The third Word, "*You shall not use of the name of Yahweh your god falsely.*" came from the Holiness code (Leviticus 19:12) as did the fourth "*Observe the Sabbath day*" (Leviticus 3b and 30). In today's bible, this version is linked to the opening line reminding the people once more that they had been slaves in Egypt.⁶¹ All the next five Words came from the Holiness Code, thus:

Honour your father and your mother, (from Leviticus 19:2a)
You shall not murder. (A version of Leviticus 19:17-18a, "You shall not hate...you shall not avenge")
You shall not commit adultery. (from Leviticus 20:10)
You shall not steal (from Leviticus 19:11a)
You shall not bear false witness (from Leviticus 19:11c)

"*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*" (Leviticus 19:18b) defined in general terms the relationship required between you and your neighbour. It may have been the basis of the more specific tenth Word: -

*You shall not desire your neighbour's house; you shall not desire your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's*⁶²

There is a suggestive similarity between the Hebrew verb for 'loves' and that for 'desires' (*ahav* and *avah*). The unprecedented riches that were available in middle of 7th century may have made this exposition of the requirement to love your neighbour particularly apposite.

It is often suggested that the Ten Commandments was an independent document with none of the hallmarks of E, J or P within it and that it was probably written at some time between 700 and 622. In fact it is clear it was dependant on J and H in that it is quoted from both. Here it is suggested that it was part of the hidden book that was found in 622, whether incorporated by the author of that book or developed by him from material within the Ritual Decalogue and the Holiness Code. This text of the Ten Words with its emphasis on the historical slavery of the people in Egypt and its use of a direct style addressing each individual Judean has much in common with other writings in key parts of Deuteronomy.

These were 'rules for living' addressed to all the people and for all time. Whether with land or without, whether a roaming nomad or part of a hierarchical society; they were unconditionally addressed to the individual. They were not addressed to a group – for the 'you' is singular implying 'you, friend, shall have no other gods' not 'you, Israel, shall have no other gods'. They could not have formed the basis of a secular law code since no sanction was specified; they did not say, as many

⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 5:6

⁶¹ Some scholars feel that the original version of the Ten Words contained no explanation or justification of any of the Words, so neither this explanation (so that your slaves may rest) nor the Exodus 20 explanation (because Yahweh rested on the seventh day) would have been included. There is, however, a version of Deuteronomy amongst the Dead Sea scrolls that uses both explanations.

⁶² Deuteronomy 5:21 The verb 'avah' is traditionally translated here as 'covet'. Elsewhere it conveys the idea of 'desire' or 'lust after'

ancient law codes did, ‘if a man kills another, then he shall be...’; they simply said ‘*you shall not kill*’. The last law, beginning ‘*you shall not desire...*’ seems to be un-testable, for who can look into the heart of another. They are regarded by some as a definition of a community; anyone might be a member of this community by entering into this covenant with God.

Then the author, writing in the voice of Moses, declared: -

*These words Yahweh spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more.
He wrote them on two tablets and he gave them to me.*

The people were reminded that they were terrified by the experience of hearing the voice of God directly and that they had pleaded with Moses, saying.

“Look, Yahweh our god has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire. Today we have seen that God may speak to a human who may still live. So now why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. We shall die if we hear the voice of Yahweh our god any longer, for what flesh has heard the voice of the living god speaking out of fire, as we have - and lived? You go near, you yourself, and listen to all that Yahweh our god will say. Then tell us everything that Yahweh our god tells you, and we will listen and will do it”

This established Moses’ key role as the mediator between the mind of God and the people. It is followed in today’s bible by an instruction to the pass on these laws to the succeeding generations:

This is the commandments which Yahweh your god instructed me to teach you to do in the land to which you are going to possess, so that you will fear Yahweh your god and keep his commandments. These are the commands I give to you; you, your child and your child’s child all the days of your life, so that your days may be many.

Just so, in the vassal treaties, the signatories were required to give orders to their sons saying to them ‘*keep this treaty; do not sin against it lest you lose your lives*’⁶³

The Shema

The Treaty with God continued by emphasising the first of the Ten Words and the importance of teaching it to the children. The first verse has become known as the Shema from its opening words in Hebrew. It reads:

*Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our god, Yahweh is one. You shall love Yahweh your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*⁶⁴
*These words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. Sharpen*⁶⁵ *your children’s awareness of them and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

In today’s bible, the text is interrupted here by a short reflection on the risk that when the people become prosperous, as they would have been in the middle 50 years of the 7th century, then they would forget Yahweh and worship other gods. This may be a later insertion; if so, the original text would have continued with advice on how to sharpen the children’s awareness of these laws⁶⁶: -

When your child asks you in time to come “What are the decrees the laws and the judgements

⁶³ Pritchard, J. B. (1975). *The Ancient Near East Volume II*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon; para 25.

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4

⁶⁵ The hebrew word ‘*shanan*’ is here translated as ‘sharpen awareness’ as the hebrew is elsewhere always used with the connotation of ‘sharp’ or ‘sharpen’. More traditional translations include ‘teach diligently’ and ‘impress’.

⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 6:20-25

that Yahweh our god has commanded you?”, you shall say to your child “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand. Yahweh gave us great and wicked signs and wonders against Egypt - against Pharaoh and all his household. He took us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he swore to our ancestors. And Yahweh commanded us to observe all these laws and to fear Yahweh our god for our good every day, so as to keep us alive - as we are this day. It is righteous for us to keep these commandments before Yahweh our god, as he has commanded us to do.”

The requirement to teach the children continues in Judaism to the present day. The text required that the child be induced to ask about the meaning of the decrees that Yahweh commanded the people to obey. Today, at Passover, the youngest child is expected to ask about why that night is different from all other nights.

Enforcement

The Vassal Treaties understandably had a section dealing with the repression of insurgency. They warned that the full horror of the curses should fall upon the vassal ‘*if anyone instigates you to revolt and you do not seize them, kill them and eradicate their name*’⁶⁷.

In the ‘Treaty with God’, there was a similarly uncompromising instruction for dealing with those who failed to show loyalty to Yahweh alone.⁶⁸ It could have been taken from the first Word of the Ritual Decalogue.

*You must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them. Show them no mercy... This is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, break down their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire.*⁶⁹

To modern ears the brutality of this instruction jars with the concept of a loving god, but it makes sense when seen in the context of the vassal treaties that it emulates. Nevertheless, such brutality has been justified by religious extremists of many sects and times; indeed the actions listed are just what Josiah will be described as doing in his twelfth year - before the Book had been discovered in the temple⁷⁰. He did not need the book to have his justification.

The Assyrians saw no need to reward obedience, but the earlier Hittites did, and surely it was natural to expect that Yahweh who loved his people and had brought them from Egypt, from the house of slavery, would also reward obedience. And that is so, for the ‘Treaty with God’ included a section on the rewards for obedience.⁷¹ If the people observed the commandments faithfully, then Moses states that Yahweh will...

*Love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. Yahweh will turn away from you every illness; nor bring upon you all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced,*⁷²

This section picked up words from Exodus 23, where the Elohist had written, “You shall worship Yahweh your God, and I will bless your bread and your water and take sickness away from among you. No one shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfil the number of your days.”⁷³

Deposition of the tablets

⁶⁷ Esarhaddon Vassal Treaty para 12

⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 7:1-11

⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 7:2b & 5.

⁷⁰ 2 Chronicles 34:4-7 & 2 Kings 23: 14-15

⁷¹ Deuteronomy 7:12-26

⁷² Deuteronomy 12-15a

⁷³ Exodus 23:25-26

The next section described the deposition of the tablets on which Yahweh had written the laws.⁷⁴ The author recorded Moses words: -

"I set the tablets in the ark that I had made. And there they remain - as Yahweh commanded."

The crucial text describing the deposition of the tablets was, perhaps later, given an introduction that contrived to reconcile the various traditions with regard to the writing of the tablets of the law. The author had inherited: -

- an E tradition in which the tablets, containing the Covenant code, were destroyed by an angry Moses when he saw the people cavorting around the golden calf,
- a J tradition in which the tablets contained the Ritual Decalogue written by Moses at Yahweh's dictation.
- a P tradition in which the Tablets of Witness written by the 'finger of Elohim' contained the cultic instructions.

The creator of this Treaty built his own story around three instances in which Moses fasts for 40 days and 40 nights (something which he does, but just twice, in the J text⁷⁵). After the first instance Yahweh gave him the tablets written by the finger of Elohim. On his way down the mountain, Moses saw the people worshipping the calf and he smashed the tablets before their eyes. Moses fasted a second time and pleaded with Yahweh to have mercy on the people. Yahweh was so incensed with the calf-maker, Aaron, that he threatened to destroy him, but Moses interceded and saved him. Moses prayed that Yahweh would not destroy the people lest '*the land from which you brought us says that Yahweh was unable to save his people*'. Then, taking material from the E text⁷⁶, the author described how the calf was burnt, crushed, ground and thrown into a ditch. Finally, Yahweh asked Moses to carve two new tablets and Yahweh wrote on those the words that were on the first. Moses remained on the mountain fasting for a third time. Then he carried the tablets down the mountain and placed them in an ark which he, Moses, had made.

Thus the author was aware of all three traditions. He used the J texts about Moses fasting for 40 days and nights, but elaborated them. The tablets were destroyed in a similar manner to E, but their replacements were written by God (not Moses, as J had stated). The ark is made by Moses and not by Bezalel (as P had written). While the story was thus an original compilation, it was influenced by all three traditions.

The Curses

It is probable that the Book that was found included the horrible set of curses discussed earlier – curses that matched those with which the author would have been familiar from his work distributing the Assyrian Vassal Treaties⁷⁷. Today's Deuteronomy 28 contains additional sets of curses, but we can be reasonably sure that the set based on the Vassal Treaty is the one associated with the 'Treaty with God'. The other curses will be shown to be associated with other events or with other texts⁷⁸.

There was however one additional curse which may have been deliberately added to the set inspired by the Vassal Treaty: -

Yahweh will bring you back in ships to Egypt, by the way that I promised you would never see again; and there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies as male and female slaves. But no-

⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 10:1-5

⁷⁵ The three instances are Deuteronomy 9:9, Deuteronomy 9:18-25 and Deuteronomy 10:10. The J references are Exodus 24:18c and Exodus 34:28.

⁷⁶ Exodus 32:20

⁷⁷ Deuteronomy 28:20-35

⁷⁸ It will be seen that the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28:1-19 which immediately followed the '*torah*' were foreshadowed in Deuteronomy 11:26-32 which introduced it. Assyrian Vassal treaties had no blessings, so the introduction contained in 11:26-34 cannot relate to curses of 28:30-35, but must relate to the matched blessings and curses of 28:1-19. The curses of 28:63-67 seem to be exilic in origin, so cannot be part of core Deuteronomy. The curses of 28:38-62, describe events that were similar to those that happened to Judah following its destruction by the Babylonians and furthermore include a specific reference to the Book of the Law, '*sepher ha torah*', to which therefore they should be attached.

one will buy.”

This particular curse⁷⁹ followed the set of curses threatening exile in a manner similar to the actual events that followed the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. This has led some to argue that this curse was added after that event. But the curse quoted above does not deal with Babylon; it deals quite distinctly with Egypt, and a return to the House of Slavery. Exile would have been a very real fear at any time during the periods of Assyrian and Babylonian expansionism – and particularly after the falls of Israel and of Lachish – both with substantial deportations. It is the writer’s particular concern with the story of slavery in Egypt that makes the return to Egypt seem the worst of all curses for him.⁸⁰

Both the Vassal Treaty and the Treaty with God required the regular public recital of their main terms. A liturgy for the recital of the key elements of the Treaty may have been included as part of the Feast of Weeks in a re-enactment of the events at mount Horeb/Sinai. This service of remembrance may have gone back to the convocations at Shiloh in pre-monarchic days. Psalm 50 appears to comment on this.

Elohim says to the wicked

“What right have you to recite my statutes, or take my covenant on your lips?”⁸¹

The ceremony of the recitation of the statutes that was an integral part of the liturgy of the 2nd temple remains a part of several liturgies to this day. In the Acts of the Apostles the disciples had gathered together for the purpose of this re-enactment at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit overcame them. In Deuteronomy 27-29 there are two descriptions of renewal ceremonies. It is the first of these⁸² that contains elements from the liturgy associated with the Sinai covenant. The people were assembled between mounts Gerizim and Ebal and the Levites began:

Levites: Cursed be anyone who makes an idol or casts an image – a thing abhorrent to Yahweh, the work of a craftsman - and sets it up in secret.

People: So be it.

Levites: Cursed be anyone who dishonours father or mother.”

People: So be it

These two curses relate to the Ten Words. It may be that this account represents a development of the liturgy, for the text as it occurs in today’s bible continues with material from the Holiness code, the Covenant code and from elsewhere in Deuteronomy. This particular version seems to be focus on situations where the covenantal laws are broken in secret.

The hiding of the book

The Assyrians practiced religious tolerance and would not have understood the religious exclusiveness expressed in this document. The statement that you shall have no other gods before the face of Yahweh effectively forbade the possibility of there being any other gods in the temple. The embodiment of this demand, at a time when Assyrian gods had been in the temple for decades, and in a vassal treaty complete with curses for disobedience set it up as a direct repudiation of Assyrian gods. If the writer of this document had shown it to his High Priest, it is quite understandable that the High Priest might have suggested placing it beside the Ark of the Covenant – a place where it could only be uncovered by a High Priest; and this is where it was stated that these Ten Words, as written by the ‘*finger of God*’, were deposited. The nature of the document as an offering to Yahweh justified it. The need to keep it secret and thereby preserve good relations with the Assyrian overlords suggested it. His own life and that of the document’s author may have required it. The Assyrians dealt out severe punishments to those who failed to keep their oaths – as Ashurbannipal was to demonstrate when faced with a rebellion in Arabia in 644/3.

Only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies and therefore only he could

⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 28:68

⁸⁰ It may be merely coincidental that after the book was found and Josiah developed an expansionist military policy, it was his intervention of an Egyptian expedition that cost him his life and returned Judah to the status of an Egyptian Vassal.

⁸¹ Psalm 50:16

⁸² Deuteronomy 27:12-26

place a document legitimately alongside the Ark and only he could recover it. It was indeed a high priest that found the book in 622.

Ashurbannipal

After stabilising his throne and appointing his older brother to be the ruler of Babylon, Ashurbanipal ordered another invasion of a rebellious Egypt in 666. This time he made use of some token help from Manasseh's Israel. Necho managed to persuade the Assyrians that he had been compelled by the ruthless Kushites to change sides. He survived in power on this occasion, but the next Kushite counter-play retook the delta and resulted in Necho's execution, an event that prompted Ashurbanipal to send a punitive force back to Egypt. This time the Kushites were driven back to Nubia, Thebes was sacked and its treasures removed to Assyria. A more permanent Assyrian presence was established in Egypt.

Manasseh must have been content that he was on the winning side. By 660, Egypt had been out of the Levant for over a decade, and things looked set to stay that way.

But relations between Ashurbanipal and his brother deteriorated. Babylon revolted in 652. The rebels had put together an impressive group of allies including a number of Arab states. It took until 646 for Assyrian supremacy over Babylon to be restored. Ashurbanipal decided that it was necessary to punish the Arab states who, in siding with Babylon, had clearly broken the oaths they had sworn under the Vassal Treaty that established Ashurbanipal as their ruler. In his ninth campaign, Ashurbanipal marched against Uarte, king of Arabia. The Assyrians defeated the rebels and claimed to have deprived many of the Arab towns of water: -

Irta the Warrior (a god of pestilence) struck down (the army of Uate) and Uate, who had not kept the oaths sworn to me, fled before the onslaught of Ashur my Lord and ran away. Famine broke out among them and they ate the flesh of their children against their hunger. ...

And went on to comment: -

Whenever the inhabitants of Arabia asked each other, "On account of what have these calamities befallen Arabia?", (they answered) "Because we did not keep the solemn oaths to Ashur, because we offended the friendliness of Ashurbanipal the King beloved of Enlil"”⁸³

This text was inscribed – probably around 643/2 - on a cylinder placed in Ashurbanipal's library in Nineveh. The lesson that this text taught was certainly well learnt in Judah. Variants on this rhetorical 'Ashurbannipal question' would be asked and answered in Deuteronomy, Kings and Jeremiah⁸⁴

In describing the events of the middle of the 7th century, the author of Kings was describing events that might have occurred in his lifetime or that of his father. He professed no admiration of Manasseh who, he alleged, had shed much innocent blood⁸⁵. Was this true, or was it a part of the process of blaming Manasseh for the subsequent disasters – disasters that we would now say were not of Manasseh's making? If the allegation was true, was the bloodshed a result of the increased stratification of society, or was it a result of the repression of a prophetic movement that would have been in strong opposition to the admission of foreign gods into the temple area – or was there some other cause? The chronicler, writing somewhat later and with a different agenda, took a more favourable view of Manasseh, stating that later in his reign he restored the temple to its purpose as a place for the proper worship of Yahweh alone. Whatever lies behind the differing views of these writers, the archaeological evidence remains that Judah prospered mightily under Assyrian Vassalage and the rule of Manasseh.

A story that occurs in Chronicles, but not in Kings, states that Manasseh was taken by the Assyrians and imprisoned in Babylon for a time. Whilst there, he turned to Yahweh. So Yahweh arranged for him to be released and he returned to Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, restored the altar of Yahweh and sacrificed upon it. There are some difficulties with this story. It is understandable that the story should be omitted from Kings – for the scribe who finally edited Kings was trying to show that Yahweh was provoked into putting Judah into the hands of the Babylonians as a result of all the 'evil that Manasseh did'. That argument would have been weakened if he had had to tell of Manasseh's repentance. But, just as the author of Kings had a motive for omitting the story, so the author of

⁸³ ANET p 200-300

⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 29: 24-26; I Kings 9:8-9 and Jeremiah 22:8-9 all employ variations on this scenario.

⁸⁵ 2 Kings 21:16

Chronicler had a motive for inventing it. Under the Chronicler's view of reward and punishment, it would have been inconceivable for Yahweh to have rewarded Manasseh with an outstandingly long reign if Manasseh had been an unrepentant evil-doer. So therefore, perhaps, the Chronicler assumed repentance in order to account for Manasseh's long reign. Then there is the odd location of Manasseh's imprisonment by the Assyrians. Why not in the capital of Assyria? Why in Babylon - a rebellious centre of resistance to Assyrian rule? The chronicler was writing long after the Babylonian exile, so his story might have been a metaphor for Judah's sin, transportation to Babylon, repentance and subsequent return, or he may simply have been muddled concerning the capital cities of Judah's conquerors. The Assyrian records, with no theological axes to grind, record Manasseh as being a consistently loyal vassal; there is no mention of any imprisonment. All this serves as a warning against accepting at face value either of the Biblical accounts of Manasseh's reign. He was probably neither the most evil King that ever reigned, nor imprisoned by the Assyrians. It would be understandable if his religious views changed in later life and he began to take the national faith more seriously. The reforms he was alleged by the Chronicler to have carried out were not great. He removed the foreign gods from Jerusalem and restored Yahweh's altar; but he did not remove the *bamah* or the foreign gods from elsewhere in the country. There are good reasons to believe that he allowed his grandson to spend time with the priests, acquiring a good education and a sound knowledge of religion. Such an action would not have been inconsistent with the pragmatic tolerant view of religion for which he was known - and condemned - by the Author of Kings.

At some time during Manasseh's reign, the Judean lands that the Assyrians had transferred to their Philistine territories were returned to Manasseh's control. This is one indication of the Assyrians' satisfaction with their Judean vassal; another is said to be the tribute they asked of him - apparently it was only 10 Minas of Silver (about four kilograms). Moab and Ammon paid more. Whilst they paid in gold, it was only one and two Minas respectively - equivalent to 15 and 30 Minas of silver.⁸⁶

Outside Judah, events were taking place amongst the regional superpowers that would give Manasseh and his successors some challenging opportunities.

In Egypt, Psammetichos, son of the side-changing Necho, turned out to be made of sterner stuff than his father. Starting out as an Assyrian protégé in a small Delta chiefdom, he used the local Assyrian garrison to support his acquisition of the whole of the Delta. From this base he repulsed a renewed Kushite drive, halting their advance just south of Memphis. Over the next few years he strengthened his position in Middle Egypt so that in 656 he was able to place his little daughter as the partner of the High Priestess at Thebes. A large number of towns were obliged to donate property to the young princess on her elevation to the priesthood. Thebes and its territories came under Psammetichos' control.

Meanwhile in Assyria, Ashurbanipal had become tied up in a long war against the expansionist kingdom of Elam (in the south of modern Iran), and this gave Psammetichos the opportunity to secure the departure of the Assyrian garrison from Thebes. A few more Delta raids and the recruitment of some Greek mercenaries established the 26th dynasty with Psammetichos at its head. This was a dynasty interested in trade in a world that Phoenician and Greek entrepreneurs were opening up.

From 650 onwards, Egypt was able to increase its influence over the Levant due to the weakened state of an Assyria that was preoccupied with civil war when not fighting Elam. The Egyptian army was largely mercenary and employed Greeks, Syrians, Asiatics, and also, probably, Judeans. Perhaps the rule of the king forbidding the sending of people to Egypt in exchange for horses (Deuteronomy 17:16) was added later to prevent a recurrence of this of this type of bargain.

The earliest written text from Yahwism that has so far been recovered dates from the seventh century. It is a copy of the priestly blessing (*May Yahweh bless you and keep you...*) engraved on silver, rolled up and worn as a piece of jewellery.⁸⁷ Was this a gift to a beloved daughter or perhaps a token of affection from a man to his betrothed: and was it worn for superstitious reasons or as a token of faith or

⁸⁶ ANET p.301. Details the payments. Gold was about 15 times the value of silver (see the notes on the shekel in ABD's article on Coinage)

⁸⁷ What did the biblical writers know; Dever; p.216 & p.180. Although difficult to read, the 'z' like character which occurs several times may be the Hebrew 'yod', and the vertical line with three horizontal bars just to the left of the first of these may be the character 'he'. Together they form the first two letters of the divine name. Further down the page there is a hook-like symbol with a 'y' like symbol to the left of it; these could be the letters 'pe' and 'nun' - the first two letters of the word meaning 'face'.

just because it was a beautiful gift? Whilst the Deuteronomists were in favour of binding written copies of the Commandments on hands or foreheads, this was not a law, but a blessing: as such, it may not have met with their approval for they were opposed to anything suggestive of charms or magic. Whatever the motivation, its existence confirms that this aspect of the Yahwist liturgy was well established, appreciated and valued – even during the years of Assyrian supremacy.

The ideal king protected the poor, the widow and the immigrant, and ensured that justice was administered impartially. There is an ostrakon in which a field labourer complained that his garment had been seized; he wrote, or had a scribe write on his behalf, to the area governor seeking redress. The idea that it was worthwhile to do this testifies to the quality of the administration of justice.

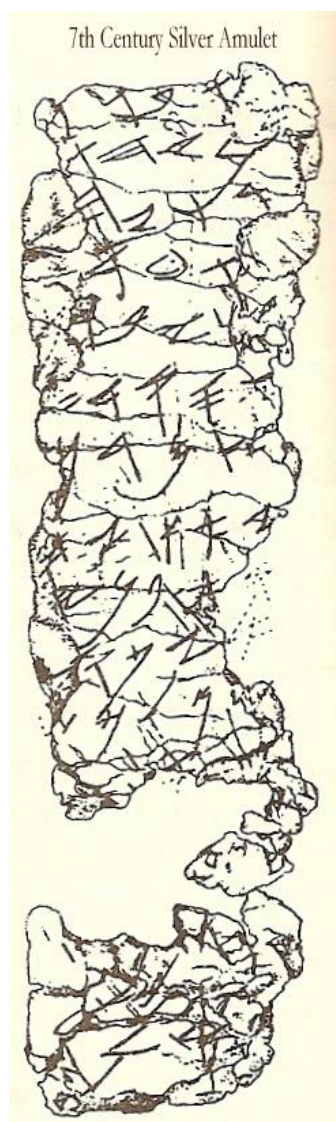
From Arad, near Beersheba, there was correspondence from the garrison responsible for monitoring the border with Edom. One ostrakon says that the *‘temple of Yahweh is well; it endures’*. This may have been a reference to the 8th century temple in Arad that was used for the worship of both Yahweh and Asherah.⁸⁸ Documents found at Arad indicate that there were both Judean and Greek troops present.

The seventh century was not only the century in which major biblical texts were first written down, it was also the time of in which ‘Homer’s’ Iliad and Odyssey were first committed to writing. The apparent wealth and developed culture of this century seems to have made it possible and worthwhile to write down material which up to this time had been preserved in predominantly oral forms. Whilst the culture would remain predominantly oral, certain highly valued texts were becoming stabilised by being committed to Papyrus. Trade not only provided the wealth that made this possible, it also facilitated the exchange of ideas and introduced new ways of thinking. The presence of Greek and Judean soldiers working together at Arad, and Greek mercenaries in the Egyptian army is evidence that people were prepared to travel over substantial distances in order to make a living. Ideas and cultures would inevitable be exchanged.⁸⁹

A modern commentator would regard Manasseh’s reign as a remarkable success. He kept Judah at peace for at least 45 years. He increased the wealth of its citizens and reduced the proportion of that wealth taken by the state. He restored previously lost territory to the west and to the north – and he achieved this without resorting to war. He paid remarkably little by way of tribute to Assyria. He may even have presided over a resurgence of Yahwism, especially in his later years when his grandson was being educated by the temple priests. He promoted religious tolerance.

But it was precisely this last point that enabled the author of Kings to describe him as the most evil king ever to rule Judah.

In 642, Manasseh’s long reign came to an end. One of his younger sons, Amon, came to the throne but ruled for just two years before being assassinated. If it was Amon’s elder brothers who were behind the coup, then they would have been disappointed in the final outcome, for a counter-coup organised by the ‘people of the land’ put Amon’s eight-year-old son Josiah on the throne. The ‘people of the land’ would no doubt have been able to have considerable influence on the affairs of state – at least until the young monarch came of age; until then, Josiah probably continued his education in the hands of the scribes and priests.



⁸⁸ Excavations by Yohanan Aharoni quoted by Dever in “What the biblical writers knew...”, pp 182 & 211

⁸⁹ The first two letters of the Greek alphabet were called Alpha and Beta; the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet were called Aleph and Beit.

Proverbs; Collections 2 and 5

The largest collection in the Book of Proverbs, comprising some 365 proverbs, begins in Chapter 10 of today's Book of Proverbs. It is known from its first line as the 'The Wise Sayings of Solomon'. It is, however, improbable that many, or indeed any, of its contents would have been used by King David for the instruction of his son.⁹⁰ Although the social settings of the collections are varied, none are appropriate to the instruction of a 9th century leader of a small and undeveloped tribal group. Although it is highly unlikely that the collection had anything to do with the mythical Solomon, it is understandable that, along with other Wisdom material, it was categorised under the Solomon brand.

The only name of god referred to in these proverbs is Yahweh, but these references occurs in less than one in seven of the proverbs. The vast majority make no mention of god at all. This, together with the eight proverbs which refer to rule by kings, suggests that they were collected in monarchic Judah once Yahwism had become the established religion, but at a time when religion was not a strong factor in the minds of the scribal community. Such was the case in the middle of the 7th century. The material largely comprises epigrammatic couplets such as the opening.

*A wise child makes a father happy,
but a foolish one is a mother's grief*⁹¹

Some have the earthy characteristics of folk-sayings such as the vivid: -

*Like a gold ring in a pig's snout,
is a fair woman who lacks discretion.*⁹²

Or the assonant memorability of 'ba zaddon, w'yabo qalon', which means: "comes insolence, comes disgrace". In this case the folk saying was sufficient in itself, so that compiler had to add 'for the wise are humble' so as to comply with his desire for a couplet. A similar issue arose with the neat 'noser piw somer napsa, meaning 'He who guards his lips protects himself', where 'but those who open wide their lips come to ruin' was added.⁹³ A more scribal approach can be seen in the reminder that: -

*A king's majesty is derived from a populous nation,
without people, a prince is nothing*⁹⁴

whilst popular religion may lie behind: -

*The eyes of Yahweh are everywhere,
watching the bad and the good.*⁹⁵

and

*Better to have little and the fear of Yahweh
than great treasure and the trouble it brings.*⁹⁶

'The fear of Yahweh' is a common phrase - used seven times in this section of Proverbs. It is possibly best understood as the awe that the contemplation of Yahweh inspires. This particular proverb had an antecedent from the Egyptian Amen-em-ope, who wrote, "Better is poverty in the hand of the god, than riches in a storehouse"⁹⁷

Another proverb showing potential foreign influence is the poetic 'poter ma'im resit madon' meaning: -

⁹⁰ Fox (2000) p. 56

⁹¹ Proverbs 10:1

⁹² Proverbs 11:22

⁹³ Proverbs 11:2 and 13:3

⁹⁴ Proverbs 14:28

⁹⁵ Proverbs 15:3

⁹⁶ Proverbs 15:16

⁹⁷ ANET p.422 b

*'Like the opening of a sluice is the beginning of a quarrel'
So stop before the dispute breaks out.*⁹⁸

which can be compared with the Akkadian 'If it is really your quarrel, extinguish the flame'

There are several proverbs emphasizing the importance of fair weights and measures; but these may be balanced by one which observes that customers are also deceptive for: -

*'It is bad, really bad' says the buyer,
but then goes away boasting*⁹⁹

Although formal religion does not feature much in these proverbs, the consistent preaching of the prophets is reflected in:-

*The practise of righteousness and justice
Is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice*¹⁰⁰

This period, when Judah was trading with all parts of the Assyrian economic area, will certainly have exposed her to ideas and sayings from well outside her borders. The last section of today's Book of Proverbs contains the famous acrostic poem on the perfect wife, the numerical sayings discussed earlier and two poems of foreign origin. The contribution from Agur ben Yakeh, a citizen of Massa in Northern Arabia, almost certainly of Aramean origin, is one of these. The problems it poses to the translator has resulted in many choosing to introduce the proper name Ithiel as a way out of their difficulties despite the fact that neither the Septuagint nor the Vulgate use proper names here. An alternative approach is to recognise that the words '*la iti el*' are Aramaic meaning '*there is no god*' are being quoted by the author in 'the man's own language'.¹⁰¹ 'The man' uses *el* as a generic word for god and sarcastically plays up his ignorance. He is answered by a believer whose name for God is Eloah, as it was for the author of Job. Thus we have: -

*The man says,
"There is no god. There is no god!
I eat, I am a stupid. I lack the sense of humankind.
I have not studied wisdom, I know nothing of the holy.
Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the winds in his fist, wrapped the waters in his cloak?
Who has fixed the ends of the earth?
What's his name? What are his son's names?
Surely you know!"*

The believer replies

*"Every word Eloah says is true,
He is the shield of those who trust in him.
Do not bandy words¹⁰² with him,
or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."¹⁰³*

The other potentially foreign poem takes the form of a queen mother's rebuke to her son. It too may have suffered in so far as some translators suggest the poem was addressed to an otherwise unknown King Lemuel, rather than treating *muel* as a misspelling of the Hebrew word meaning 'foolishness'. If the latter approach is adopted then we get the title: -

"Words to a king concerning foolishness".

⁹⁸ Proverbs 17:4 which can be compared with ANET p 426 b

⁹⁹ Proverbs 20:14

¹⁰⁰ Proverbs 21:3 following Micah 6:8, Amos 5:21 and Isaiah 1:15-17 – all late 8th century.

¹⁰¹ Scott (1965)

¹⁰² bandy words with him; literally 'add to his words'.

¹⁰³ Proverbs 30:1-6.

The poem continues: -

*Do not give your virility to women,
your loins to those who destroy kings.
It is not for kings to play the fool
it is not for kings to be wine drinkers,
nor for rulers to desire strong drink¹⁰⁴*

The poet suggests that a ruler needs a clear head in order to carry out his duty to see justice done and to defend the deprived, who could make better use of the drink as solace in their misfortune!.

The resurgence of Egypt

In about 640 BCE, early in the regency ruling on behalf of Josiah, Assyria finally won its war with Elam, but the effort had left the super-power exhausted. At about the same time, a horde of Scythians rampaged down the Levant, an incursion that Ashurbanipal was too weak or too pre-occupied to prevent. When they reached Egypt, the Scythians were bought off by Psammetichos and they returned by the way they came, pillaging Ashkelon en route. Psammetichos followed the departing Scythians northward and took control of the city of Ashdod. From then on Egyptian dominance over the coastal Levant as far North as Tyre was gradually reinstated. There is a text from 613 BCE stating that the rulers of the Phoenician cities had Egyptian officials appointed over them and paid taxes to Egypt as if they had been part of Egypt proper.¹⁰⁵

Manasseh's long reign and Assyria's weakness had bequeathed to the young King Josiah a country which had regained the territory it had lost under Hezekiah and which now incorporated under its effective control a substantial proportion of the territory of the former Israel. The mercantile influence of Josiah's Judah extended well beyond those borders. It was a country that was wealthier than it had been at any time in its history.

The government of 7th Century Judah

Leading families of northern, Israelite, origin had come to be amongst those advising king Josiah. and officiating in the temple. The young Jeremiah was aged about 10 when Josiah became king and he and his friend Baruch would be helped, protected and sponsored by influential members of this group through most of their careers. As leading officials of an Assyrian Vassal, they were in contact with fellow officials in the international community and thus exposed to ideas coming from the wisdom traditions of the time. They probably dealt with Egyptian officials, certainly on commercial matters, for the shekel became an international standard in the 7th century – used elsewhere as well as in Egypt. It would certainly have been wise to strengthen contacts with the resurgent regional power at a time of declining Assyrian influence.

The governing group would have been responsible for maintaining the state and temple documents used for regulating state and religious affairs. Amongst those documents was the key law code or 'torah' by which both religious and state affairs were governed. Although many have tried, it is hard to discern a distinct organising pattern within the law code. This suggests that the document was continuously being updated. New laws and revisions of old ones were added as and when required – probably into the available space on the scroll or scrolls that comprised this working text.

The governing group may have reviewed and revised the laws they inherited from the Covenant code and other legal writings in the light of the evolving situation. The most likely period for such revision was during the minority of the new King. They may also have proposed new laws, especially when the direction of policy under Josiah became clear. But before looking at the new laws that can be associated with Josiah's rule, it is worth reviewing the developments to the inherited laws that were made in the years leading up to 620. These developments can be found in the law code – the 'torah' – now to be found in Deuteronomy 12-26. They were either part of the book that was found in 622 or were incorporated into it shortly afterwards as part of the process of compilation that eventually produced our present version of the book of Deuteronomy.

Developments from the Priestly Writings

¹⁰⁴ Proverbs 31: 1 & 3-4. See Scott (1965) p 183-4.

¹⁰⁵ Redford (1992,1993) p.442

The most obvious area in which the *torah* followed the Priestly P source was in regard to dietary laws, especially the list of forbidden birds. Here the *torah* forbade:

*the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, the buzzard, any kind of the kite; every kind of raven; the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull, any kind of hawk; the little owl and the great owl, the water hen and the desert owl, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, the stork, any kind of heron; the hoopoe and the bat.*¹⁰⁶

Bird for bird, phrase for phrase, this compares precisely with Leviticus 11:13b–19.

The *torah* made no mention of certain offerings – the sin, the guilt and the peace – the proper execution of which on behalf of the supplicant was of such immense importance to the Priestly author. By contrast P filled the first seven chapters of Leviticus with the details of the rituals of the sacrifices. But this *torah* is imbued with a theology in which the people were not separated from Yahweh by any intermediary – not angels and certainly not priests.

This *torah* reduced the role of the temple priesthood in various aspects of Israelite life. Slaves who voluntarily chose to remain with their masters after the sabbatical year needed to have their ears pierced. According to P, this was done ‘before God’ (that is, in the temple before a priest) whereas this *torah* allowed it to be done at any convenient door-post. The new rules on local slaughter meant that animals needed no longer to be taken to the temple to be slaughtered; this could be done at home provided the blood was left to run out on the ground. And judicial cases were now to be heard by a panel comprising a scribe as well as a priest.

These reforms reduced the need to maintain a large establishment of cultic Aaronite priests and accordingly this *torah* reflected a different view as to the amount of produce that the community needed to set aside for the maintenance of the priesthood. P required that a tithe (a tenth of all the produce) be given to the priests. But this *torah* simply required that the worshipper, together with his household should consume his tithe ‘before God’.

*Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. You shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock before Yahweh your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, so that you may learn to fear Yahweh your God all the days...and you shall rejoice, you and your household*¹⁰⁷

Further, the text required that once every three years the tithe should be left in the home town of its owner so that the Levites (the rural priests who had no allotments of land), as well as immigrants, resident foreigners, orphans and widows “may come and eat and be full, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work that you do.”¹⁰⁸

The emphasis in this text was on a personal and direct spiritual life in which the individual sought to serve Yahweh through obedience to the *torah*. This contrasted strongly with P’s view that Yahweh was best worshipped through ritual and sacrifice mediated through the priest and in which the ordinary worshipper had little involvement – other than in providing the animal or grain to be sacrificed. The compiler of the *torah*, by contrast, placed emphasis on prayer uttered by the worshipper and not the priest. In the ceremony associated with acquiring land, for example, this text ordained a liturgy based on prayer; a liturgy from which sacrifice was absent: -

*You shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground... and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that Yahweh your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him,
“Today I declare to Yahweh our God that I have come into the land that Yahweh swore to our ancestors to give us.”*

Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and shall set it down before the altar of Yahweh your God. You shall make this response before Yahweh your God:

“A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an immigrant with others, few in number, and there became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we

¹⁰⁶ Deut 14:12-18

¹⁰⁷ Deut 14:22-23

¹⁰⁸ Deuteronomy 14:29

cried to Yahweh, the God of our ancestors; Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, Yahweh, have given me.”

You shall set it down before Yahweh your God and bow down before Yahweh your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the foreigners who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the good things that Yahweh your God has given to you and to your house.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, in the elder’s ceremony dealing with an unsolved murder, the emphasis was on absolution through prayer. True, the neck of a heifer was symbolically broken, but unlike P’s ceremony of the scapegoat, no attempt was made to transfer the sin to the heifer by laying hands on it; instead the elders pray:

“Our hands did not shed this blood, and our eyes did not see it. Absolve, Yahweh, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel.”¹¹⁰

Developments from the Covenant Code.

The civil section in the Covenant Code¹¹¹ had been an administrator’s law book; it dealt with matters of compensation for loss or damage to property. By contrast the consolidated *torah* was a teaching about how to live. It included a moral code that sought to protect the weaker members of society. In the law of the slave, the Covenant Code had viewed the slave as property and thus protected the rights of the master – he was, for example, entitled to beat his slave severely (provided he or she did not die within the next three days). He owned the children of his slave. In complete contrast this *torah* focused on the rights of the slave; the slave was even to have a share, when released, in the wealth that he or she had helped to create; and slaves should be released following six years of slavery. The slave was thus viewed as an independent person who sold his or her labour for 6 years in exchange for food and lodging and a terminal bonus¹¹². Female slaves were to be treated in the same way and not kept for life (as they were in the Covenant Code). In this *torah*, the law was underpinned by a lesson from Yahweh.

“Remember you were a slave in Egypt, and Yahweh your god redeemed you”

Similarly, whilst the Covenant code dealt with the rape of a virgin purely from the father’s financial perspective (for he was to be compensated for the loss of his daughter’s bride price), this *torah* addressed the needs of the woman; the violator was required to marry the woman and never divorce her.

In the Covenant Code it was forbidden to ‘oppress the immigrant, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt’¹¹³. In the introductory summary of this *torah* however, the phrasing was identical but the language was stronger; you must ‘love the immigrant, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt.’¹¹⁴

Whereas the Covenant code required that a garment taken in pledge from a poor person should be returned before sundown¹¹⁵, this *torah* expanded the idea.

When you make your neighbour a loan of any kind, you may not go into the house to take the pledge. You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. If the person is poor, you may not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbour can sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before Yahweh your God.

¹⁰⁹ Deuteronomy 26:1-9

¹¹⁰ Deuteronomy 21:7-8

¹¹¹ Exodus 21:17 -22:16

¹¹² Deuteronomy 15:12-18

¹¹³ Exodus 22:20

¹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 10:19

¹¹⁵ Exodus 22:25

*You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers, whether they are other Israelites or immigrants who reside in one of your towns in your land. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor ...; otherwise they might cry to Yahweh against you, and you would incur guilt.*¹¹⁶

The Covenant Code dealt with law of the firstborn, stating “*The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me*”, although the human child was to be redeemed and another animal was sacrificed in its stead. But in this *torah*, the firstborn animal was not to be given to Yahweh (in practice the priests), but rather enjoyed by the owner and his family with appropriate reverence¹¹⁷.

The concept of an ‘*eye for an eye*’ inherited from Hammurabi and retained in the Covenant Code remained: but the context was changed. Now it was restricted to being part of the law concerning false witnesses; the punishment of the false witness was to suffer the damage he or she intended for the other party – ‘*life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*’¹¹⁸

Particularly significant are the laws that existed in the Covenant Code but were omitted from this *torah*. These were mainly laws of property. Even when dealing with injury to people, it was the question of compensation, not the protection of the victim, which was foremost in the Covenant Code. For example, according to the Covenant Code, if an ox gored a slave, the owner should pay to the slave-owner thirty shekels of silver and the ox should be stoned – but there was no mention of what was to be done for the slave. By contrast, this *torah* was mostly concerned to establish a moral and social code by which people should live and which would protect the vulnerable – the slave, the immigrant, the rural priest, the widow, the orphan and the poor. This *torah* was not interested in the compensation of property owners and omitted all such laws.

The Influence of Wisdom Tradition

The laws on making vows were to follow wisdom concepts:

*When you make a vow to Yahweh your God, do not delay fulfilling it; for Yahweh your god will require it from you, and you would sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not sin.*¹¹⁹

The same idea was expressed later in the wisdom writings of Ecclesiasticus 5: 4-5

“When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it.”

The *torah* rule ‘*Do not return slaves who have escaped ... to their masters*’ seems to parallel Proverbs “Do not slander a slave to a master, or the slave will curse you, and you will be held guilty”.¹²⁰ This proverb comes from the foreign source, Agur son of Jakeh of Massa that we met earlier¹²¹. Another of Agur’s proverbs reads “Every word of God proves true... Do not add to his words”¹²². This sentiment was echoed in the *torah* when the scribe concluded the agreement that is now recorded in Chapter 12 with the words “*You must diligently observe everything that I command you; do not add to it or take anything from it.*”

For difficult legal matters, the *torah* required that a court of appeal be set up comprising both priests and a judge, probably a scribe, acting together. If a difficult dispute needed resolution then those involved should...

¹¹⁶ Deuteronomy 24:10-15

¹¹⁷ Deuteronomy 12:6-7 etc.

¹¹⁸ Deuteronomy 19:20

¹¹⁹ Deuteronomy 23:21

¹²⁰ Proverbs 30:10 & Deuteronomy 23:15

¹²¹ Proverbs 30:1-15. Some translators prefer ‘an oracle’ to ‘of Massa’, but what follows is a collection of proverbs and not an oracle

¹²² Deuteronomy 12:32 in protestant bibles; 13:1 in the Hebrew bible. The comparable phrase is from Proverbs 30:5-6

*...immediately go up to the place that Yahweh your god will choose, where you shall consult with the levitical priests and the judge who is in office in those days; they shall announce to you the decision in the case. Carry out precisely the decision that they announce to you from the place that Yahweh will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you. ... do not deviate from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left....*¹²³

Evidence of possible Egyptian influence comes from the laws on false weights and measures. Those who use such fraudulent equipment were described in this *torah* as ‘abominations unto Yahweh’¹²⁴ which is paralleled in Egyptian literature where such fraud was described as being “an abomination to Ra”¹²⁵. The fact that the shekel became the international standard of weight in the 7th century may have something to do with the importance Judean officials attached to reliability in such matters and may suggest that the influence was from Judah to Egypt.

Developments from the Holiness Code

This *torah* followed the Holiness code in forbidding the use of mixed materials in clothing,

You shall not wear clothes of “sha’atnez” - wool and linen together.

It is often argued that the author needed to explain the meaning of the term ‘sha’atnez’ as he did here, since the term had gone out of fashion between the time it was used in the Holiness Code and the time when this *torah* was created in the late 7th century.

The *torah* generally followed the Holiness Code in the law against all mixtures - mixed seeds, mixed animals and mixed clothing¹²⁶ and in a number of other areas. But sometimes it followed the Holiness Code but applied modifications. One example is the practice of leaving the gleanings for the poor. In the Holiness Code it had been written:

*“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the corners of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the immigrant: I am Yahweh your God.”*¹²⁷

But in the *torah*, this was modified to read

*When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore, I am commanding you to do this.*¹²⁸

Thus the *torah* advised leaving not only the gleanings for the poor, but also the odd sheaf – a recommendation that was followed by Boaz in his kindness towards Ruth in the book of her name¹²⁹. They were also allowed to strip the olive trees, a more useful concession than just being able to pick up stray fallen grapes from the ground of a vineyard. The motivation is significant too; the author expects the people to have empathy towards the poor because they too were poor when slaves in Egypt. But the suggestion that the owner leave the ‘corners’ of the field for the poor, was omitted - possibly because it was reminiscent of a tradition whereby the spirits of the field were left something in the corners where they were supposed to live and the compiler of the *torah* was opposed to anything that encouraged superstition or magic. Indeed, whilst it followed the Holiness Code in condemning anyone who made a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practiced divination, or was a soothsayer, or an

¹²³ Deuteronomy 17:8-12

¹²⁴ Deuteronomy 25:16

¹²⁵ Wisdom of Amenemope 18:15-19.3. A similar phrase also occurs in Proverbs 20:10 - “alternate weights, alternate measures, both are abominations to Yahweh”

¹²⁶ Deuteronomy 22:9-10 follows Leviticus 19, save that the requirement not to breed two kinds of animals together (Leviticus) has been changed to not ploughing with an ox and ass together

¹²⁷ Leviticus 19:9

¹²⁸ Deuteronomy 24:19-22

¹²⁹ Ruth 2:16

augur, or a sorcerer”¹³⁰, this *torah* added “*anyone who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead.*”¹³¹

This may also be the reason that the *torah* did not mention giving the field a rest in the Sabbatical year; this was perhaps too close to offering a Sabbath to the spirits of the field. For the compiler of the *torah*, the importance of the Sabbatical year was that it involved the release of slaves and the remission of debts – both humanitarian acts of financial significance. The compiler of this set of updated laws was moving from cultic towards humanitarian motivations.

It was not merely pagan magic that this *torah* opposed, but also anything ritualistic. For the author feared that there was a danger that the mere performance of ritual can come to seem more important than the will of Yahweh. Thus the author removed the cultic element from the asylum laws. For P, it was the cities in which the Levites resided that should provide sanctuary for the man who has accidentally killed another. For P, the man had to reside there until the death of the high priest, who took with him, so to speak, the blood guilt involved. But in this *torah* the cities were chosen for the practical logistical reason that they were well placed for the purpose (that is, the person fleeing from the avengers of the dead had only a little way to go to find one). And the procedure was an administrative not a religious one; the asylum seeker had to stay there till the anger of the blood vengeance redeemer had subsided – he did not have to wait for the death of the high priest.

The similarities and the differences between the Holiness Code and this *torah* with regard to the festivals further illustrate the differences in background and theology between the two texts. In the *torah*, the first festival was now to be Passover, whereas this had scarcely been mentioned in the Holiness Code. That Code had just stated “on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, there shall be a Passover offering to Yahweh” and immediately went to describe the festival of unleavened bread – a much more elaborate affair; but of the details of the Passover there was no mention. Perhaps it was not held in Judah, except during Hezekiah’s reign following the arrival of the northern refugees from the Assyrian invasion of Israel. Passover was a remembrance of the flight from Egypt, which was a constant theme throughout the *torah*. It devoted more verses to this festival than to any other – covering everything from its timing, the selection of the sacrifice, what was to be eaten with it, and where it was to be celebrated and for how long. It appears that Passover had absorbed into itself the festival of unleavened bread. The *torah* agreed with the Holiness Code that the timing of the festival of weeks, *Shavuot*, should be seven weeks after the ‘*sickle was first put to the standing grain*’, but omitted the cultic observances that the Holiness code prescribed for the beginning and end of this period – perhaps showing the authors’ wariness of rituals such as the ‘waving of the sheaf of corn.’ This text followed the Holiness Code with regard to the ‘festival of booths’ (the new wine festival), giving it the same name, *sukkot*, and requiring Israelites to celebrate it for seven days. It did not deal with the building of booths, but neither did the version of the Holiness Code that was extant at the time¹³². Both codes invited the people to celebrate, but the *torah* made it a real family affair:

*Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the immigrants, the orphans, and the widows who are resident in your towns. Seven days you shall keep the festival to Yahweh your God at the place that Yahweh will choose; for Yahweh your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall be filled with joy.*¹³³

It is hard to imagine that the whole town would decamp to a central shrine for this festival. The phrase ‘*the place where Yahweh will choose*’ is somewhat ambiguous; it may simply have meant ‘a suitable place’. It certainly excluded any place where other gods were worshipped, the so-called high places or the Asherah groves. When this *torah* referred to a more formal place of worship it was usually described as, “*the place where Yahweh chooses for his name to dwell*”.

The other festivals mentioned in the Holiness Code, the Festival of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, were not mentioned at all in the *torah*, perhaps because these were temple-based festivals in which the people had little involvement. The *torah* was a code for the people; the private cultic practices of temple priests were a different matter - adequately described elsewhere.

¹³⁰ Deut 18:10 cf. Lev 20:1-6

¹³¹ Deut 18:11

¹³² Leviticus 23:39-43 dealing with the building of booths is clearly a later insertion since it follows the closing remarks concerning the festivals of Yahweh in verses 37-38. Booth building could have developed to enable pilgrims to celebrate the festival after the destruction of Jerusalem.

¹³³ Deut 16:14-15

The extension of Jerusalem’s sphere of influence into the territory of Samaria and the north required new laws to be promulgated that reflected the new situation. Whereas previously the Holiness code had restricted all slaughter to the temple precincts, the extension of the territory made this impractical. The new law probably existed initially as two separate drafts both of which would be incorporated into today’s Deuteronomy 12. The two versions were substantially the same but included sufficient variations for the redactor to feel unable to choose one over the other. One version, the inner text, runs in today’s bible from verse 8 to verse 19 (omitting verses 13&14): this version is more secular and more concerned to protect the Levite - the rural priests. The other version, the outer text, straddles this, extending from verse 4 to verse 27 (but including 13&14): it is more Aaronite, more concerned to protect the interests of the temple priesthood and to preserve as much as possible of the old rituals. Both texts used the pronoun ‘you’ in a mixture of the singular and the plural - suggestive of the work of a committee rather than a single author.¹³⁴For ease of comparison, the two texts are shown side by side with the singular ‘you’ shown in italics and with words unique to a particular version shown in bold.

Outer (Temple) Version	Inner (Scribal) Version
<p>³Destroy! You shall destroy all the places where the people you shall dispossess serve their gods – on the high mountains, the hills and under every leafy tree.</p> <p>⁴You shall not do that for Yahweh your God.</p>	<p>⁸ You shall not act as we are acting here today, all of us according to our own desires, ⁹ for you have not yet come into the rest and the possession that Yahweh your God is giving you. ¹⁰ When you have cross over the Jordan and live in the land that Yahweh your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around and you live securely,</p>
<p>⁵ You shall seek the place that Yahweh your God will choose from any of your tribes to put his name, to tent it.</p> <p>You shall go there,⁶ bringing there your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your hand’s donations, and your vows and your contributions and the firstlings of your herds and flocks.</p>	<p>¹¹ Then it shall be the place that Yahweh your God will choose to tent his name:</p> <p>You shall bring there everything that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your hand’s donations, and every choice one of the vows that you make to Yahweh.</p>
<p>⁷ And you shall eat there in the presence of Yahweh your God, and you and your households shall rejoice concerning everything your hand has taken on, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you.</p>	<p>¹² And you shall rejoice in the presence of Yahweh your God, together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levite within your gates since he has no allotment or inheritance with you.</p>
<p>¹³ Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place you happen to see. ¹⁴ But only at the place that Yahweh will choose in one of your tribes—there you shall offer your burnt offerings and there you shall do everything I command you.</p>	
<p>²⁰ When Yahweh your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you, and you say, “I am going to eat some meat,” because you wish to eat meat, you may eat</p>	<p>¹⁵ Yet whenever you desire you may slaughter and eat</p>

¹³⁴ There is a view amongst some scholars that the plural and singular layers represent different editorial layers with the plural text being later than the singular. (C Bultman. Oxford Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy; Introduction). Others disagree (M Weinfeld. AB. Deuteronomy 1-11: p 15-16). Dividing the text up in this way does not remove the duplications in this chapter, and leaves problems where both forms exist in the same sentence. The use of mixed forms occurs elsewhere both within and outside the bible, probably for literary or dramatic purposes.

<p>meat whenever <i>you</i> desire. ²¹ If the place where Yahweh your God will choose to put his name is too far from you, and you slaughter as I have commanded you any of your herd or flock that Yahweh has given you, then <i>you</i> may eat within <i>your</i> gates whenever <i>you</i> desire. ²² Indeed, just as gazelle or deer is eaten, so <i>you</i> may eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat it.</p>	<p>meat ...</p> <p>within any of your gates, according to the blessing that Yahweh <i>your</i> God has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as they would of gazelle or deer.</p>
<p>²³ Only be sure that <i>you</i> do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat. ²⁴ Do not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. ²⁵ Do not eat it, so that all may go well with you and your children after you, because you do what is right in the sight of Yahweh.</p>	<p>¹⁶ Only, you shall not eat the blood.;</p> <p>you shall pour it out on the ground like water.</p>
<p>²⁶ Only, <i>you</i> shall carry the holy things that <i>you</i> have and <i>your</i> vows and shall come to the place that Yahweh will choose. ²⁷ <i>You</i> shall do your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of Yahweh <i>your</i> God. But the blood of <i>your</i> sacrifices shall be poured out beside the altar of Yahweh <i>your</i> God, and the meat <i>you</i> shall eat.</p>	<p>¹⁷ <i>You</i> may not eat within your gates the tithe of <i>your</i> grain, <i>your</i> wine, or <i>your</i> oil, the firstlings of <i>your</i> herds and <i>your</i> flocks, or all of <i>your</i> vows that <i>you</i> make or <i>your</i> contributions or <i>your</i> hand's donation. ¹⁸ These <i>you</i> shall eat in the presence of Yahweh <i>your</i> God at the place that Yahweh <i>your</i> God will choose, you together with your son and your daughter, your male and female slaves, and the Levites resident in your towns, rejoicing in the presence of Yahweh your God in all your undertakings. ¹⁹ Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.</p>

Whilst both authors agreed that the people could eat meat whenever they chose within their own gates, their tithes and donations were to be brought to the place ‘*that Yahweh will choose*’. But there, according to the earlier Aaronite P text, the sacrifices, tithes, and firstlings were either to be burnt or consumed by the priest¹³⁵. Similarly, the northern Covenant Code had stated that “The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me”¹³⁶ (although the human child was to be redeemed.) But now, the firstborn animal was not to be given to Yahweh or the priests, but rather enjoyed by the owner and his family with appropriate reverence. In so writing, the authors transformed the old ideas of sacrifice into a communion meal.

Whilst the two texts were very similar, there were interesting differences. The inner text was concerned for the well-being of the ‘*Levite within your gates*’, who were specially mentioned three times. The outer version did not mention Levites at all. But the outer version did mention the sacred nature of the donations and limited the local slaughter of meat to those occasions when the place where Yahweh chooses for his name to dwell was ‘*too far from you*’- but what was ‘*too far*’ was left for you to decide.

That this was a difficult issue for these priests and scribes to agree is suggested both by their failure to produce a single agreed text but also by the final sentence – which permits no further adjustments:

*You must diligently observe everything that I command you;
do not add to it or take anything from it.*¹³⁷

Punishment in the torah

This compiler of this *torah* occasionally suggested punishment for transgression of the laws, but more often he simply recommended that the people should reflect upon their origins.

¹³⁵ Numbers 18:8-32

¹³⁶ Exodus 22:29

¹³⁷ Deuteronomy 12:32 or, in the hebrew bible, 13:1

“Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed you; it is for this reason that I lay this command upon you today”

Phrases such as this recur again and again. Egypt was recollected over 18 times in the *torah*. This intense recollection of slavery became a major feature of the Deuteronomic tradition that emerged in the late 7th century. Whilst other Israelites may have had their origins in Canaan, it seems that those responsible for compiling this *torah* came from a group of Levites who traced their traditions back to Moses and were profoundly conscious of an Egyptian past – a fact that lends support to the theory that it was these Levites who experienced the Exodus as former slaves, whilst others may have left as defeated conquerors. These remembrances of slavery together with the advice to be obedient, - “*so that you may live long in the land*” - were the principle motivations suggested within this *torah*.

But there were exceptions. Penalties were threatened in a restricted number of cases; generally death by stoning. These cases were:

- diviners or others who enticed the people away to worship other gods (Deut13:5 & 10)
- those who themselves worshiped other gods (17:2-7)
- the deliberate murderer (19:11-13)¹³⁸
- persistently disobedient children (21:18-21)
- adulterers (22:20-25)

These situations relate to the first, fourth, fifth and sixth commandments. They seem extreme by modern standards (although there are societies that might accept some of them even today). But it is noteworthy that the use of the death penalty in this *torah* was surrounded by a number of safeguards. The death penalty might only be carried out if the accused was convicted on the evidence of more than one witness. Those witnesses would themselves be subject to the death penalty if they were found to have lied. The whole community must participate in the execution by stoning and the witnesses themselves must throw the first stones.

In the case of sexual offences, the same punishment was generally prescribed for both the man and the woman. An exception to this rule occurred in the case where the offence took place in the wilderness – where it was presumed on the woman’s behalf that she struggled and cried out, but no-one heard; therefore she was not to be blamed. In these circumstances, only the man was to be executed. By contrast, if a woman was found not to be a virgin when she married, then she could be stoned because she must have secretly lain with a man whilst in her father’s house.

It is possible that these laws were deliberately harsh as a deterrent – “*thus you shall root out evil from your midst*”¹³⁹ It is also possible that these laws were not always rigorously enforced. The New Testament story of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery described such an incident. In that instance, Jesus adds the prescription that the person who is without sin shall throw the first stone – and then he writes something on the ground. Did his writing remind the mob of the very precise conditions under which a life could be taken without sinning?

This *torah* covered marriage laws, how to deal with rebellious sons, the law of the cities of refuge, sexual laws, sanitary laws, dietary laws, laws of admission to the assembly. (Moabites were out, but 3rd generation Egyptians were in), the rights of female captives, cross dressing (it was banned), the law concerning murder by an unknown person, fair trial (no-one was to be convicted on the testimony of a single witness), the sabbatical year, tithes and much else.

The law of the King¹⁴⁰

It may have been during the time when Josiah was still a boy and the country effectively governed by a cadre of senior civil servants that the law of the King was drafted. It might have seemed a good opportunity to adjust the balance of power.

The story of Samuel showed him to have been dubious about the concept of kingship and to have only reluctantly agreed to anoint Saul. The Solomon tradition included a story involving the dispossession of a priest whose descendants had now, in the minority of Josiah, become powerful officials.¹⁴¹ Even though much of the Solomon tradition is incompatible with the physical evidence of

¹³⁸ Deuteronomy 19:11-13 is a concise version Numbers 35:16-21 (P text)

¹³⁹ Deuteronomy 22:21b

¹⁴⁰ Deuteronomy 17:14-20

¹⁴¹ Abiathar was the surviving priest of Nob (1 Sam 22:20) after his fellow priests were executed on Saul’s orders. Nob was where the main northern priesthood went to after the destruction of Shiloh in

10th century Judah, it is possible to speculate that the tradition hints at an ancient struggle between the ruling house of Judah and the northern priesthood. According to the writer of Kings, the northern priesthood had not been given favourable treatment under Hezekiah and would have remembered the consequences of his allegedly discriminatory use of royal power.

Whilst we can only speculate about the background to the law, the text itself is unequivocal; it states that the king...

... must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since Yahweh has said to you, "You must never return that way again." He must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; He must not acquire silver and gold in great quantity for himself.

And significantly,

When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests¹⁴²

Nor did this text make it easy for the king to raise an army. This law code restricted the ability of a King to wage war by imposing a set of ideal procedures that would have created difficulties even in the days of the tribal confederacy when 'ad hoc' volunteer forces were assembled as the need arose, but they were completely inappropriate for the days when kings had standing armies. The impracticality of these procedures may well reflect the fact that the code had been compiled at a time when Judah had not been permitted any troops other than those who were effectively under Assyrian command. They may also reflect a theology that the state of Judah should rely on Yahweh alone for its protection.

According to the procedures outlined here, the priests had to address the troops first, then the officials had to ask a series of questions, designed to release those who had more important things to do than to go off to fight. They were to ask: -

- *Has anyone built a new house but not dedicated it?
He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another dedicate it...*
- *Has anyone planted a vineyard but not yet enjoyed its fruit?
He should go back to his house...*
- *Has anyone become engaged to a woman but not yet married her?
He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another marry her.*
- *Is anyone afraid or disheartened?
He should go back to his house....".*

Note the relationship of these questions, in Deuteronomy 20:5-8, to the curse of Deuteronomy 28:30 which read "You will be engaged to be married to a woman, but another will take and ravish her. You will build a house, but not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but not even begin to enjoy its fruit." Only when the officials had finished addressing the troops, were the commanders permitted to take charge of them! In reality kings required (and most established) standing professional armies free of the opt-out system described.

By contrast to this attitude to the monarchy, the text was favourably disposed towards prophets; it may have been that the compilers came from a group that included prophets in their number; in addition to Moses, they claimed Samuel as one of their forbears; and Ahijah the Shilonite who supported Jeroboam in opposition to Rehoboam for the kingship of Israel; and later Jeremiah, who came from the town to which Abiathar was banished.

I will raise up for them prophets like you (Moses) from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouths of the prophets, who shall speak to them concerning everything that I

Eli's time (I Sam 14:3). Abiathar was banished by Solomon (I Kings 2:26-27) to Anathoth and it was the family of Priests from Anathoth that were closely involved in the discovery and promulgation of the Book we now call Deuteronomy (see II Kings 28:8 for the discovery and Jeremiah 1:1 for the Anathoth connection). This family were leading members of the state/temple administration under Josiah and held very similar views to the Authors. It would scarcely be surprising if earlier members of that family group were responsible for the law of the King.

¹⁴² Deuteronomy 17:16-20

*command. I will personally hold accountable anyone who does not heed the words that the prophets speak in my name.*¹⁴³

It was into this wealthy and apparently well-regulated world that the youthful Josiah grew to maturity. It is not clear when he was able to convert his tutors into advisors and assume the powers normally attributable to kingship. What is clear is that the power of Assyria was waning whilst Egypt's was growing and that he himself was a highly committed Yahwist. It was a combination that would have profound consequences for Judah.

¹⁴³ Deuteronomy 18: 18-19; the normal translation refers to 'a prophet', singular, being raised up. The NRSV offers the alternative plural translation.