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Elijah as a religious pioneer

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THESIS

ELIJAH AS A RELIGIOUS PIONEER

BY

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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to show that Elijah was a trail-blazer for the Yahweh religion in three great fields; and that the appearance of Elijah in Hebrew prophecy marked a turning point in Hebrew religion. It contends that the religion of the Hebrews had reached a dead-lock, and that the appearance of Elijah marked the beginning of a new era.

After the United Kingdom, under the impetus of the prophetic party and the stupidity of King Rehoboam, had divided, a period of virtual anarchy set in, especially in the new rebelling northern kingdom, Israel. This anarchy was finally ended by Omri, who vigorously put things in order. Omri seized the throne about 887 B.C. and ruled until 876 B.C.

The popular religion of Israel at this time was a curious syncretism of two religions: the worship of the nomadic deity, Yahweh, with the customs and practices of the Canaanite agricultural deities or Baals. The union of these two religions presented many problems, socially, politically and morally. But the Baals were mere local deities of no great significance, and the worship of Yahweh dominated the syncretism.

But in the reign of Omri, and his successor, Ahab, the Phoenician influence was introduced into the politics of Israel and with it, the worship of the powerful Tyrian Baal-
Melkart. The active support of the religion by Queen Jezebel, and the persecution of the prophets of Yahweh threatened the very existence of the Yahweh worship. But into the picture stepped the prophet, Elijah.

The work of Elijah lies in three great fields: the clarification of the religious issues of his age; introduction of a new phase of prophetic experience; and the principle of social justice. It is our purpose to demonstrate how Elijah was a pioneer in these fields.

The method used to demonstrate the point of view set forth, is historical. The history of Israel, from the Hebrew fathers up to the time of Omri is reviewed, with the emphasis upon the religious development of the Hebrews, and the situation at the time of Omri is summarized, demonstrating the deadlock in religion. The paper then shows the political crisis that was precipitated and the religious crisis which arose from it.

In the career of Elijah, the paper deals with these three contributions of his, separately as if they were in no wise connected but this course is followed solely for the sake of clearness. The problem is a complex one, but the response of Elijah was epoch-making and important for the future of religion.
A. History & Religion of Israel from Moses to Elijah.
   I. From Antiquity to Moses.

In order to properly appreciate and evaluate the religion of the Israelites at the time of Elijah it is necessary to trace its beginnings back through Moses to the earliest of the Hebrew tribes. Of this period, Dr. Carl H. Cornill says "Properly speaking, there is no history of the people of Israel until the exodus from Egypt; not until this event did Israel become a people, only then did its history begin-------. To be exact, therefore we should have to begin with the exodus from Egypt. But as is well known, the recollections of the Israelite people reach much further back, and we must extend our examinations into their history as far back as we can possibly go. A subject of vast importance! For, as with the individual, the child is father of the man; so in the life of a nation the primeval history has a decisive influence on the whole following development."¹

Of this period, the tradition of the Hebrews themselves, archæology and extra-scriptural sources have many important things to say. Because of the influence of this early life and the combining trends of thought and the contributions of these early nomadic tribes, it is of great interest to investigate the early history and progress of those nomadic tribes which later come to be called the Hebrew people.

¹ Cornill, History of People of Israel, p. 16.
The land of Canaan in which the development of the Hebrew nation took place has been extremely important in the history of the world. Geographically insignificant, historically it has been of great significance. The land of Canaan has been a bridge between Africa and Asia, over which passed caravans of peace and armies of war since time immemorial. The land as a midway point and bridge was the battle-ground of opposing civilizations for centuries.

This little land has been the recipient of all the civilization that dominated Palestinian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Amorite, Hittite, Aramaean, Israelite, Philistine, Phoenician, Assyrian, Chaldaean, Persian, Greek and Roman. It was the meeting-place and melting-pot of the ideas and ideals of all these civilizations. This little land was most significant for, as Dr. Elmer A. Leslie says in his lectures on "The History of Israel"; "The land of Canaan was the stage upon which was enacted one of the most important dramas in the history of religion—the evolution of Israelite religion".

Into this territory, called by Breasted "the fertile crescent" came the Semites from the Semitic cradleland. The earliest migration of the Semites took place before 5000 B. C. for Mesopotamia was Semitic before 5000 B. C. These Semites were related to the Canaanite Semites but were of a different migration. The Semites were in Canaan as early as 3500 B. C. Those early Semites, like the latter Hebrews, had the ability

1. Lectures delivered at B. U. School of Theology, 1934-5.
to assimilate the savage tribes already there. Between 3500 B. C. and 1500 B. C. Canaan came under the influence of successive waves of Semite invasions—the Amorites, the Kassites, the Hyksos and the non-Semitic Hittites.


It is in the early history of the Egyptian Kingdom that the first mention of the Habiru occurs. The earliest historical record of the Habiru is in the reign of Naram Sin (2557-2520 B. C.) of the First Dynasty of Akkad of northern Babylonia. The Habiru are mentioned in the writing of that period as the SA-GAZ, the ideographic writing for Habiru. The SA-GAZ, or Habiru, were mercenary troops that Naram Sin employed in his armies. Again mention is made of them in the dynasty of Larsa. From the reign of Warad Sin (1997-1986 B. C.) the Habiru were mercenary troops. During the reign of Rim Sin (1985-1925 B. C.) the Habiru were still mercenaries.

From an Amorite source, in a letter from Hammurabi (1955-1913 B. C.) to Sid din nam, we learn that the Habiru were mercenaries under the command of Hammurabi. During the Kassite kings (1746-1171 B. C.) we find mention, not of groups, but of individuals as Habiru. In Hittite documents we find the Habiru mentioned as a people.

The question of the meaning of the term "Habiru" is under dispute and Biblical scholars are divided in their opinions. But the weight of evidence would seem to point to the conclu-
sion that the word "Habiru" was not originally a proper name "but a general appellative meaning"those beyond", i. e., beyond the frontiers or beyond the desert and connoting nomads of any race". The word Habiru is believed to be the equivalent of Habattu, which means robber or plunderer. "It would be natural for this general term to be applied to the Israelites when they were still wanderers and Hebraized under the form 'ibri'. It is significant that in Hebrew texts this is always the name used by strangers to designate Israelites; it was never used by themselves. This lends considerable support to the view that the word was not a true proper name".

In the famous Tel-El-Amarna letters or tablets we find scores of appeals for help, addressed to the Egyptian kings, nearly all written in Babylonia. These letters are largely denunciations of each other and appeals for help from Egypt against their neighbors. They also call attention to the growing danger of an invasion of the empire. These dangers were the advance of the Hatti in the north and the inroads of the Habiru in the south, especially in the neighborhood of Jerusalem.

The Hatti of these letters are the Hittites, a people of Asia Minor, united under Subbiluliumash (1380-1346 B. C.), who contested with Egypt for the mastery of Palestine. Many valuable discoveries have been found in the archives of these princes. The Habiru that were associated with the Hittites in...
the invasion of Syria were the mercenary soldiers or "free-booters". They were a nomadic people and were raiding Syria from the east and south. These Habiru were Semites or Arameans, of different groups and races, but later, combined by common interests. The name "Habiru" was originally a nickname rather than a racial name. All were committed to the same mode of living, therefore they were "Habiru", "nomads" or "free-booters". Because of this distinction of name and occupation, the habiru gradually developed a racial consciousness or ethnic.

These hordes of invaders from the edge of the desert flowed in upon the cultivated lands, troubling the insecurity of the cities and petty principalities menaced already to the point of extreme turmoil by feuds and quarrels among themselves. Warlike and plundering, they withdrew their attack when satisfied with booty, or perhaps, as the price of peace, extorted from the settled inhabitants, a strip of land upon which they established themselves. It is very likely that these fierce, warlike peoples overbore the resistance of an older culture and set their own mark upon the land.


In Egyptian records the Apiru (1501-1161 B.C.) are named as invaders of Egypt. Scholars are in general accord in believing that the Apiru were identical with the Habiru. The
Apiru are described as being chiefly mercenary troops in the service of various kings but also as nomads and freebooters. Hence scholars have arrived at the equation: Habiru--Apiru--Hebrew. Kittle states further on this matter that the Habiru were not identical with the biblical Hebrews but that the biblical Hebrews were part of the Habiru. During the Invasion of Canaan by the Habiru, the Egyptian empire was already beginning to weaken and crumble. But still some of the tribes felt the pressure of the Egyptian armies. Unable to establish themselves in Canaan, and urged by hunger, the newcomers crowded down into the fertile region of the Nile delta. There, few in numbers, they dwelt in peace amid the polyglot population of Egypt. These were the 'Apiru of Egyptian origin and mention.

It is not known how long the Habiru or Apiru remained in Egypt before a new Pharaoh, opposed to them and zealous of much public works arose. But if they remained shepherds, as they had come, it may be inferred that the Habiru's sojourn in Goshen was relatively brief, extending through hardly more than two or three generations.

The supposed ancestor or father of the Hebrews was "Jacob" or Israel. Jacob is his earlier name and a story is told to explain the changing of his name to Israel. In Hebrew tradition, Abraham, or Abram, Jacob's grandfather, is a greater and much more important figure than Jacob. It is difficult
to place Abraham with any degree of accuracy in the historical framework.

It is stated several times that Abraham lived about four hundred years before the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Dating back about four hundred years, this date corresponds roughly with the time of the Canaanite migration mentioned earlier. Scholars are not agreed on the historicity of the account of Abraham as found in Gen. 14. Dr. Barton says that regardless of the historicity of the episode and the possibility of a wide range of dates for the episode:

"The Biblical tradition of Abraham represents the coming of Amorite and Canaanite strains in the ancestry of the Hebrews, just as the traditions concerning Jacob represent the coming of the Aramaean strain. Abraham is said to have started from Ur in southern Babylonia, to have sojourned for a time at Haran, and then to have crossed to Palestine. There is abundant evidence from Babylonian sources that that is just the route followed by waves of Amorite migration. The Amorite element in the Hebrew nation was very real and was long remembered. The Hebrew traditions of Abraham are their historical testimony to the coming of the Amorites and Canaanites into the country, to the fact that they are in part their descendants, and also to the fact that in occupying the country of Palestine they had entered into an inheritance prepared in part by the people of whom Abraham was in their minds a symbol."

1. Barton, History of Hebrew People, P. 19
Accordingly the early migration of the Abraham nomads or tribe into Canaan must have taken place about 1830 B.C. In the Biblical account we find Abraham battling with four kings for the sake of Lot, his nephew. Lot is here interpreted to mean the people of Latan, or those people later known as the Ammonites and Moabites. It was in this way that the Hebrews expressed their kinship to the Moabites and Ammonites. Thus we find the Abraham tribes allying themselves with these peoples, their kinsmen, against a common foe.

The second invasion, or reinforcement of the Semites already in Canaan, is the coming of the Jacob tribes into Canaan. The earlier story of Abraham's entry tells of the entrance of the Amorite strain into the Hebrews. This entrance of the Habiru, personified by Jacob, is a reinforcement of an Aramaean strain. In the Biblical account, Jacob, youngest son of Isaac, and younger brother of Esau, cheated Esau of his birthright. He was forced to flee for his life and went to the "land of the children of the East." He entered in the service of his uncle, Laban, in Haran, and took Laban's two daughters to wife. Thus is the father, Jacob, related to the Aramaeans through his sojourn there. This entrance of Aramaean blood took place about 1400 B.C.

It was immediately following the entrance of the Jacob tribes into Canaan that Jacob changed his name to Israel. The exact significance of this is left to conjecture. Might it be a historical reference to a tribe or group of tribes having a
new national outlook? Noyes says that of all the tribes and clans that pushed forth out of the desert the tribes known as the Israelites combined.

"By what accident or design just these special few tribes, distinct from the rest, were welded into a closer union as the sons of Jacob-Israel is not known. Along their borders were other peoples, swept forward in the same great movement, with whom they recognized a certain original kinship."

Barton believes that the name Israel was a very old name of importance attached to some great chieftain whom all respected and feared. He says that for some reason these early tribesmen, when forming a confederacy, called themselves "The Sons of Israel." In some unknown way the name of Israel became associated with Jacob so that the two became synonymous. As a national entity, the name Israel was used as early as 1220 B.C. It is quite evident that the changing of Jacob to Israel took place in Canaan. It is also well to remember that only part of the Israelites went into Egypt.

1. Noyes, Genius of Israel, p. 22.
E. Religion of the Hebrew Fathers.

The great difficulty in reconstructing the religion of the Hebrew fathers lies in the fact that none of the documents, "J", "E", or "P" are historical, i.e. contemporary. They were written about 850 years after the events took place. A second difficulty is that the authors were not writing history—but the meaning of history. They were making a record of religious ideals and attitudes.

There is a division of views and opinions concerning the historical significance of Genesis. One group of scholars hold that the writers of "J" and "E" idealized the ancient Hebrew religion so that the accounts are not historical. The second group, headed by Dr. *Alit*, contend that the religion of Moses is a direct outgrowth of the ancient Hebrew religion and hence these documents are relatively historical and there is a direct relationship, present and discernible.

It is discernible that the documents present different views on the religion, especially upon the relationship between the "God of the Fathers" and "Yahweh." The "J" document, in the story of Moses, tells us that the God of the Fathers is the God of Moses. In the "P" document we find God addressed by only one designation—El Shaddai—"God Almighty."

In the "E" document we may trace the history of the development of religion. We learn that (1) "Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham,
and father of Nabor; and they served other gods." (Joshua 24:2) 
(2) The God of Abraham. (Ex. 3:6) (3) God of Isaac. (Ex. 3:6) 
(4) The God of Jacob (Ex. 3:6) (5) The God of the Fathers is 
the God of Israel (Ex. 3:6) (6) God of the Fathers is "I am" 
or "Yahweh" (Ex. 3:14) 

There are five general characteristics of the religion 
of the Hebrew fathers before Moses.¹ 

(1) The worship of god was inaugurated by a personal 
revelation of the god to the individual in which the 
characteristic nature of the god was made manifest. 
(2) This individual and the personal experience 
shared at first by no other persons issued in the 
founding of a cult of the god which was limited to 
the tribe or group of the founder. 
(3) The god thus revealed to the founder of the cult 
was designated by an expression which connected the 
god in his characteristic relationship in a unique 
sense with his pioneer worshipper. 
(4) The deity thus worshipped is not bound to any 
locality but is united in personal relationship to 
the founder of the cult and those who share in its 
ideas and rites. 

¹ For these characteristics I am indebted to Dr. Elmer A. 
Leslie, in his lecture, "History and Literature of Israel" 
at B. U. School of Theology.
(5) The most decisive trait of this religion is that each of the gods of the fathers respectively has by free choice entered into relationship with the founders of his cult and with the members of the tribes which participated in it.

Thus in the religion of the Hebrew fathers is the germ of a deity, divorced from the land of his worshippers and a deity with a covenant idea. The importance of the covenant idea was only developed by the great leader and statesman, Moses.
C. Moses' Contribution.

The river valleys of Babylonia and Egypt have always attracted hungry peoples. In Palestine and Syria, lack of rainfall means famine, while in the river valleys of the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates where water is abundant famine is very rare. So again and again nomadic tribes have journeyed to the Egyptian delta for food, and pasture for their flocks. At some time during the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty (1580-1350 B.C.) some Hebrew clans entered Egypt. The stories of Joseph (Genesis 37 ff.) give us the Biblical account of this going down into Egypt. It is probable that these tribes took the name Joseph as the name of their ancestor because the city, Josephel was in the territory they later occupied in Palestine. "Joseph became one of the most popular of heroes with Hebrew story-tellers, and we can show how some of the tales in which he figures were borrowed from Egyptian sources and, originally were told of others. Perhaps the tribes said to be descended from Rachel had tried to gain a foothold in Palestine, and, failing, blamed the Leah-tribes for the fact that they had to go to Egypt where they were reduced to servitude. Perhaps that is the historical kernel of the story." ¹

When the feeble hold of the later Pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty loosened in Canaan, the Hittites and Habiru were able to invade the land. Canaan was lost completely by

¹ Barton, History of Hebrew People, p. 43.
Amenhotep IV and his feeble successors. It was only under the Nineteenth Dynasty that part of Canaan was recovered for Egypt. Rameses II, fourth Pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty, after sixteen years of struggle, made a treaty in 1271 B.C. with the Hittite king. It was Rameses II who carried on extensive building programs and compelled the Hebrew foreigners who were living in Egypt to work for him. They helped him to build Pithom and Rameses. It has seemed even more certain that Rameses II was the oppressor, for both of the great cities he built, Rameses and Pithom are in the land of Goshen, reputed home of the Israelite tribes.

The entire narrative of the bondage is in keeping with all that we know about this great autocrat. Half the buildings in Egypt bear his name, as builder or restorer. This program called for tens of thousands of slaves to do the manual labor. The Egyptians acted as supervisors and directors. The Hebrews, ignorant of all art, would be given the simplest work, as making bricks.

I. Rise of Moses.

It was sometime in this period that the great leader, Moses, arose. Born of the tribe of Levi in Egypt, he was saved from slaughter by the cunning of his mother and was reared and educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians by the daughter of the Pharaoh. But the early training of his mother had its effect. He early showed a social passion, a concern
for the oppressed. An impetuous deed of bloodshed done in defense of a fellow Israelite, compelled Moses to flee from Egypt. He found refuge in Midian with Reuel or Jethro, the priest of Midian. Jethro gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage and Moses worked for him, tending his flocks. When forty years were completed a significant factor entered the life of Moses.

Under Jethro, Moses was introduced into the religion of the Kenites, the cult of Yahweh. The record, (Ex. 3) says an angel of Yahweh appeared in a burning bush to Moses on Mt. Horeb. Here he received the divine commission to be a ruler and deliverer of his people, the Israelites. Here also a new revelation of Yahweh was made to him. He whom the patriarchs had worshipped as God Almighty (El Shaddai) now disclosed Himself as Yahweh, the God who pledges Himself to Israel, to be with them throughout the course of their history as a leader and savior. Thus Moses took the Midianite religion of Yahweh and made it a vital and living religion through his personal revelation of God. To the Midianite cult of Yahweh, he added the idea of the covenant. He brought Israel into a fresh insight of the nature of their God, a covenant being, obligated to Israel. To this he added the beginnings of the Law.
II The Exodus.

According to the Biblical narrative, Moses and his brother Aaron entreated the Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt and when he refused, Yahweh sent the plagues upon Egypt. The historicity of this account cannot be determined but it is likely that the disorganization of the last days of the Nineteenth Dynasty allowed the Israelites to escape to the eastern desert to begin an independent nomadic life. The probable time of the exodus was during the reign of Merneptah (1225-1215 B.C.) or the period immediately following his reign, while Egypt was in great confusion.

In the main the three sources, "J," "E," and "P" confirm the general truth but they are very confusing in some minor details. The main thread of the story seems to be that the Israelites left Egypt and took the less frequented way to Palestine, the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea. They were able to ford the Red Sea when a strong wind blew the waters back but a reversal of the wind kept the Egyptians from following.

The materials for constructing an account of Israel's life in the desert are scanty. The lists of stopping places are of little value as they can no longer be identified. It is evident that the company had difficulty in securing food and water. "On the whole, it seems probable that the Israelites
went straight to Elim at the head of the Gulf of Akabah; they sought the mountain of Jehovah to the northeast in the vicinity of Mt. Seir, made their attempt to enter Palestine by way of Kadesh-Barnea and the South Country; lost their grip upon what little purpose they had and became nomads with Kadesh as their center; and last of all, struck for the richer grazing-lands that overlooked the Jordan from the east.¹

The most important incident of the period took place at Mt. Sinai. It was the seat of Yahweh; it was here that Moses had learned of Him when he dwelt among the Midianites. Moses saw that the people had lost their belief in their ancient deity and were acquainted with Egyptian deities. He, therefore, hastened to bring the Israelites to Mt. Sinai where Yahweh had revealed Himself to him, and then make a blood-covenant to adopt Yahweh as their tribal God.

It is here that Yahweh became the God of Israel and Israel the people of Yahweh. This essential fact is the basis of the remarkable dramatic representation in the biblical sources. From behind all the many figures of speech appear two facts: Yahweh had manifested his claim to Israel by what he had done for them by delivering them from the Egyptian bondage and pursuit; and that Israel's part involved the moral obligation to be true to him. But when Yahweh became the God of Israel He suffered no other gods beside him and Israel learned its first lesson in the intolerance of Yahweh and got its first great

impetus towards monotheism.

The people's duties in this covenant were expressed in the form of ten words or short statements, the Decalogue, doubtless so numbered as to be easily remembered. In order to assure the people of Yahweh's presence, Moses built the ark and had it carried on poles by a special class of priests. He also made for it a tent surrounded by a forbidden area. This ark and tent was to be the special abode of Yahweh.

Rumors of rich land to the north induced the tribes to transfer their base from Mt. Sinai to the Oases of Kadesh-Barnea. The Israelites probably remained here for one generation. From here eventually the twelve spies found their way into the land of Canaan. They brought news of a rich country but populated with giants. Only Caleb and Joshua brought a good report. The rabble refused to attempt the invasion and Moses in disgust refused to lead them further. A new spirit was necessary for the rabble. One generation in the desert with its terrible hardships produced a new, fierce, hardy generation, willing to carry on the invasion. It was at Kadesh that Moses completed his work of legislation. The covenant with Yahweh was strengthened and the priesthood developed.

III. Moses' Place in Israelite History.

The importance of Moses in the history and religion of Israel cannot be overestimated. Of Moses, Dr. Leslie says, "Here we are at the fountain-source of Old Testament Prophecy."
"Moses was the first," says Dr. G. W. Wade, "and in some respects the greatest, of the series of illustrious characters which adorn Hebrew History."¹ He brought to Israel the idea of a covenant with their God. He brought to Israel a new and fresh insight into the nature of their God, Yahweh,—a covenant being who obligated himself to Israel. Moses brought to Israel the beginning of law. With his masterful powers of control he was able to maintain himself as the leader of these fickle, irresponsible tribes and so unite them that his authority increased after his death, rather than decreased. "But the ultimate greatness of Moses rests not so much in what he accomplished as in what he was. It was his spiritual quality, rare in any day, but unaccountable in that primitive epoch that made him one of the few commanding figures of all time; it is his courage, his devotion, his wisdom, his unwavering trust in Jehovah. . . . . . . . . . He was indeed a lofty mountain peak, to which men toiling in the valleys afar off lift their eyes to find inspiration and blessing in its loftiness and purity and majesty."²


D. History and Religion of Israel from Moses to 850 B.C.

I. Conquest of Canaan.

After the death of Moses, the Israelites under the able leadership of Joshua began the invasion, conquest, and settling of Canaan. The first wave of invasion consisted of the tribes of Judah and Simeon. They conquered the King of Jerusalem, and took the cities of Hormah, Debir, and Hebron. The Kenites who were with them settled south of Arad. A second wave of invasion consisted of the House of Joseph—the future tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. The last crossed the Jordan, and camped at Gilgal. From headquarters here they captured Jericho, Ai, Bethel, and defeated a coalition of Canaanites under Adonizedek. Pressing northward, the Israelites met another confederation of Canaanites under Jabin, king of Hazor. With the brilliant victory the work of Joshua closed and shortly after, at the age of 110 years, he died and was buried in the hill-country of Ephraim.

Thus the conquest of Canaan was carried on by the Israelites. However, Palestine was by no means subjugated at Joshua's death. The Israelites were in control of many strategic points but much of the land was still in the control of the Canaanites. After the primary invasions of Canaan, there was a long period of tribal activity during which there were clashes between Canaanites and Israelites. In some cities the Canaanites
resisted the Israelites' onslaught while others fell into their control.

But gradually the Israelites conquered. But they, in turn, were conquered in another sense. The radical change in abode and customs threatened the existence of the tribal individuality they cherished. Intermarriage with the agricultural Canaanites helped to break the tribal ties and accidental links of immediate association and locality were replacing the old ties of kinship. The wandering nomads, keepers of flocks, became farmers.

Much of the culture of the Canaanites was absorbed by the Israelites. Canaanitic religious practices and sacred shrines and altars were incorporated into the worship of Yahweh. Many of the local gods or Baals, the Canaanitic gods of fertility, also became part of the religion of Yahweh. In the process of transition, tribal loyalties were almost forgotten. But these loyalties were strengthened and the impetus towards a monarchy supplied largely through invasions and oppressions of surrounding tribes.

II. Period of Judges.

The period of transition from the state of anarchy to monarchy is the period of the judges "in which, humanly speaking, Israel's higher life depended upon the force of character and singlemindedness of individual leaders."^1

^1. Ottley, Short History of Hebrews, p. 103-104.
The rule of these judges was not merely a social necessity; it was a safeguard of religion. These heroes or judges were begotten by the necessity of their age. They arose in a crisis and because they could deal with a specific danger, were accepted as a body. In the book of Judges, the account of these heroes is found. Oppressions by Syrians of Mesopotamia under Cushmanrishathaim were relieved by Othniel, brother of Caleb, a Kenizzite. (Jud. 3:7-11) Oppression by Moab under Eglon was relieved by Ehud. (Jud. 3:12-30) When the Philistines attacked Israel, the hero to arise was Shamgar. (Jud. 3:31) When the Canaanites in the north, headed by Jabin, formed a confederacy and attacked Israel, Deborah, a prophetess and seeress of Ramath and Bethel summoned Barak, of Kedesh-Naphtali, in Galilee to relieve the oppression. (Jud. 4 & 5) The next oppression is that of the Midianites and Amalekites upon the tribe of Manasseh. Here the hero was Gideon (or Jerubbaal) who defeated the Midianites with the small force of three hundred. The Israelites wished to make him a king and although he refused the title, he seemed to have assumed considerable estate; for his wives were numerous enough to give him seventy sons.

One of these sons, Abimelech, seized the sovereignty Gideon declined. The son of Gideon and a Canaanite woman of Shechem, with the aid of the Shechemites slew all his brothers save one, Jotham. Abimelech was made king but was later killed by a millstone cast from the walls of Thebez by a woman,
during the assault of this city.

The next judges receive only mention, Tola and Jair.
(Jud. 10:1-5) The next popular hero is Jephthah, a bandit-chieftain who relieved the oppression by the Ammonites.
(Jud. 10:6-12:7) The account next mentions three minor judges, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. (Jud. 12:8-15) We next come to two characters of contrasting nature, Eli and Samson. Samson's only claim to judgeship is the fact that he slew a number of his country's enemies to avenge his private wrongs. The seer, Eli, was of great character and influence and seemed to have what little central control existed in Palestine in his capacity as High Priest of Shiloh. During a battle between the Israelites and Philistines, his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, carried the Ark from Shiloh to battle. The sons were slain and the Ark captured by the Philistines and Eli died of the shock of the news. The Ark, however, brought disease and pestilence to the Philistines so they returned it to the Israelites where it finally came to rest at Kiriath-Jearim, a Gibeonite city. Thus the period of transition, the era of the judges, closes.

III. The Monarchy.

The next great period in Israelite history is that of the monarchy. The monarchy had its rise in connection with the priest, Samuel, (sometimes also called a Judge). Brought up under Eli in the temple he was called of God to be a prophet.
He continued his training and removed to Ramah, near Jerusalem, "to live and frequently officiated as a priest in a circuit of nearby cities. He became the first citizen of his part of the country and people looked to him for justice and leadership."¹ For a long time after his early work, Samuel is unheard of, but at last he came forth to preach repentance. By hard work, he was able to restore law and order and the regular administration of justice. But the Israelites were dissatisfied and began to demand a king. They wished a common factor to bind them together. Then, too, the danger of the Philistines demanded a great leader. Samuel saw the futility of resisting their plea and anointed as king, Saul, a young Benjamite of great stature, and a popular hero. Saul had led forth a band of Israelites to relieve the siege of Jabesh-Gilead by the Ammonites. His ability and popularity persuaded Samuel to anoint him king at Gilgal (1Sam. 11:14-15). At the beginning his kingdom was small, but he spent many years organizing his new kingdom. The task before Saul was no light one. His reign was filled with wars. He seems to have met and worsted his enemies on every side, Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the kings of Zobah and the Amalekites.

"But he was not free from internal strife. There were too many diverse elements to be harmoniously reconciled in one short reign. His view of the kingdom and kingly duty

clashed sadly with that of Samuel. (I Sam. 13:8-15; 15:1-35) In the country were men who for one reason or another questioned the wisdom of his election. (I Sam. 11:12; 10:27) The Gibeonites proved to be such a thorn in the side of the new king that he had to put some of them to death. (II Sam. 21:2-3) But more serious still was the alienation of David."1

David, of the tribe of Judah, was a very popular hero of Saul's army, a daring warrior and skilled on the harp. He first won Saul's favor, but David's growing popularity roused the envy and hatred of Saul. He finally sought David's life and David was forced to flee to the wilderness where he became the leader of a band of free-booters. He was finally forced to join the Philistines, and became a popular hero there also.

The Philistines were determined to defeat Saul and, during a convenient absence of David, attacked Saul and his army at Gilboa and slew Saul and his two sons. David mourned Saul's death greatly, and then, in response to an oracle, he went to Hebron, chief city of the tribe of Judah and was anointed their leader. Saul's general, Abner, in the meantime, enthroned Saul's son, Ishbaal, as king. Conflicts arose between David and Abner and finally between Ishbaal and Abner. But when both Abner and Ishbaal were assassinated, the northern elders sent an invitation to David to become their king and David was anointed a second time.

1. Mathews, Old Testament Life and Literature, p. 81.
"Religion likewise was in a state of turmoil. Old practices were still the order of the day. The teraphim, the uses of the Urim and Thummin, oracle-giving, necromancy, and sooth-saying, still formed part of the normal religious life. Taboos were considered important and there was insistence on the ban.

. . . . . . . . . . . The place of the Ark in religious thought, and the ritual surrounding it, also made some gain."¹

The process of assimilating Canaanitish religious ideas must have gone on very rapidly in those days. The people were familiar with the Baal worship that was carried on at the "high-places". This involved animal sacrifices and various native offerings. Spring and autumn festivals were celebrated with great gayety. Not only were the Israelites aware of these phases of worship, but in as far as they were farmers, they must have taken part in the agricultural and religious rites of the Canaanites. The ritual of Yahweh worship began to take on color from that of its long-established neighbor. The penetration of the Yahweh worship by Canaanite influences is assured by conditions found in later days.

Prophecy was emerging from little-known origins and was laying the foundations for later religious leadership. The bands of prophets moved from place to place, and partly under the influence of music and dancing, they developed a type of religious ecstasy that is found in many primitive peoples.

¹. Ibid, p. 84-86.
They were believed to be possessed by the spirit of God, although there is no record that moral results followed their activities. They served to unite the people for the defense of the nation and its god and to spread the teachings of ones like Eli, Samuel, and later, Elijah.

IV. The Reign of David.

In assuming the throne of Saul, David assumed the dead king's task of deliverance from the Philistines; and David succeeded where Saul failed. After repeated attacks and victories, David succeeded in driving them from Israel's territory. He further consolidated his kingdom by centralizing the government at the ancient Canaanite fortress of Jerusalem. David succeeded in capturing the city, added to its fortification, built a palace, and moved into it. Jerusalem now had a focal center.

Following his religious impulses, David remembered the Ark of Jehovah and took steps to bring it to Jerusalem. It had been in long neglect in the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim. With much rejoicing the Ark was brought to Jerusalem. During David's reign the Ark remained in a tent, but David had begun to lay the plans for the Temple which Solomon built. Here are the first steps toward the eventual centralization of the worship of Jehovah in the Temple at Jerusalem. The return of the "Ark stirred the deepest instincts of Israel, reviving ancient memories of triumphs. Without a doubt this
was a powerful influence toward the renewal of the pure worship of Jehovah by the Israelites.

David's activities in Israel led to conquests or treaties with the neighboring tribes and nations. David was forced to crush the Ammonites, and he also conquered the Syrians, reduced Edom and smote Moab. The Amalekites he had entirely destroyed. "The outcome of these wars was that Israel's boundaries reached the extreme limits they had in its entire history. . . . . .

The Philistines were satisfied to leave Israel alone. The nations in the north. . . . . respected and affiliated with Israel; Ammon, Moab, and Edom had been made tributary and Amalek helpless; the remainder of the Canaanites within the land had been subjected after a struggle of about two centuries; and Israel now had come into real possession of the land of promise and David had brought it to pass."¹

The internal affairs of the kingdom also showed David's guiding hand. He was the first to conscript men for the army. He organized a system of taxation, and of forced labor. But during the latter years of his reign, trouble arose. David's eldest son, Absalom, became embittered with his father and plotted to seize the throne. He set up headquarters at Hebron, with the Judeans approving and at last was proclaimed king. He proceeded against Jerusalem, and David fled across the Jordan. Here his forces gathered and moved against Absalom. Absalom was defeated, captured and slain by Joab, David's general. David was persuaded to return, but his best days were

¹. Peritz, Old Testament History, p. 139.
passed. His last days show him as a feeble old man easily controlled by scheming courtiers, who preferred Solomon as successor.

His son, Adonijah, the eldest, wished to succeed his father, but through the scheming of Beer-sheba, Nathan, the prophet, Zadok, the high priest, and Benaiah, the captain of the bodyguard, David ordered Solomon to be made his successor. Adonijah's party fled in fear and Solomon was king. David died shortly after this, having reigned a little over forty years.

V. Reign of Solomon.

Upon his ascent to the throne, Solomon had Adonijah executed, and all his supporters either banished or slain. Only then did he feel safe. Compared to David Solomon was less of a warrior and more inclined to peaceful pursuits. At the outset, Edom revolted successfully. Taking courage, Damascus and Moab also revolted. Thus in a short time the size of the kingdom was greatly reduced and the royal revenues curtailed. To make up this loss, Solomon resorted to enforced labor and heavy taxes.

Solomon was possessed with the ideal of magnificence and set out upon a large building program. He decided to build a new palace for his growing court on the slope of Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. In the planning and construction of this palace, Solomon was greatly aided by the engineering skill and finances of Hiram, king of Tyre. In connection with the palace Solomon
had a temple built. It was not large, only a hundred feet long by thirty feet wide in the main enclosure. In all probability the temple was first designed and used as a private chapel for Solomon but it soon came to be the central sanctuary of the kingdom. Upon the completion of the Temple, Solomon appointed a feast-day for its dedication. He publicly transferred the Ark from the tent to the Temple and inaugurated the services there.

The building of this temple had a powerful influence upon the religion of Israel. For the first time since their desert life, they had one central sanctuary that expressed Israel's religious unity in Jehovah. It was not the only legitimate sanctuary but its splendor and the possession of the Ark tended towards the centralization of worship. In like manner it led to the exaltation of Jehovah as the God of Israel.

Solomon himself had a much different attitude toward religion: "he did not even know enough to avoid shocking his people's religious ideals. Jehovah was Israel's God and, his father, David's God. To be sure, since the conquest, Jehovah had absorbed many of the qualities of the Canaanite Baal, even at times his name; and He was worshipped with many of the old rites that clung to Canaanite high places. But in essential ways Jehovah still bore a likeness to the God of Moses, and He still claimed first place in the affections of Israel. Solomon openly placed by the side of Jehovah, even in the
courts of his new Temple, the many heathen gods of his foreign wives. . . . . . . Solomon in his wisdom may have felt that it was a necessary state policy to strengthen his foreign alliances in this way but his unfaithfulness to the national God had a determining influence on the course his people took after his death."¹

The monarch was able to keep his throne until the end. Only once was there an attempted revolt under Jereboam, but it was quickly put down, and Jereboam forced to flee the country. "And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."²

VI. Division of the Monarchy.

It is now that the end of the united kingdom is near at hand. Saul, David, and Solomon had done a great deal for Israel but the friction between the northern and southern tribes could not be removed. A political revolution was expressly sanctioned and actively supported by the prophets as a means of extirpating Baalworship from the northern kingdom. The schools of the prophets in Israel arose under the stimulus of a school of similar heathen prophets or nebhiim. These wild and ecstatic companions of enthusiasts gradually became a

¹ Bailey and Kent, History of Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 137.
² 1 Kings 11:42-43.
professional order alongside of the priesthood in the religious life of the nation. Occasionally an individual of exceptional power arose among them, or outside their group. These men were qualified to be the public champions of Israel's traditional faith, and claimed the right to control and judge, in Jehovah's name, the conduct of statesmen and kings. They set themselves fearlessly against evil, even against malpractice in their own faith.

The prophets did not refrain from upbraiding unrighteousness even if on the part of the king himself. Ahijah, the Shilonite, rebuked Solomon's son and successor, Rehoboam, and encouraged Jeroboam against him. Jeroboam had tried to lead a revolt during the time of Solomon's reign but had failed and was forced to flee to Egypt. On the death of Solomon he returned to his native city of Zeredah and mustered his tribe. He then set out for the public assembly at Shechem. There he met the prophet Ahijah who wore a new robe. The prophet tore this robe into twelve pieces and gave ten of them to Jeroboam, to symbolize the bestowal by Jehovah of ten of the twelve tribes to him.

The enmity between the Judah tribes and the rest of the kingdom was great enough to make it necessary for the successor to the crown to have his authority over the northern tribes formally confirmed. It was here at Shechem that Rehoboam came to have his authority confirmed. The people, at
the instigation of Jeroboam, sought relief from certain grievances, especially taxation. Rehoboam refused to listen to the counsel of his courtiers and made the grievances even heavier. Consequently, the northern tribes refused to acknowledge his authority. An attempt to collect the levied tax ended in the death of the collector and the panic-stricken flight of Rehoboam to Jerusalem.

Thus Jeroboam found himself the successful leader of a popular cause and so the rebelling tribes sought him for a king. He accepted and was crowned at Shechem. Only two tribes, Judah and part of Benjamin remained loyal to the house of David. The union of the tribes under one throne for which David had successfully striven was now shattered forever. The Hebrews lost their independence and their chance to become a world-power. But it was also a blessing to Israel for it saved Israel from an Oriental despotism and was in the interest of universal democracy.

The new kingdom evidently regarded the fidelity of the southern tribes to the House of David as an act of national apostasy. The ten tribes assumed the name of Israel, and for a long period of years, tried to reduce the petty kingdom of Judah to subjection. But Judah, despite its insignificance in population and territory possessed certain elements of strength. The inhabitants had preserved many of the simple habits of the patriarchs. They adhered to the ancient Jehovah
worship with more fidelity than the northern tribes. Their fidelity to the House of David secured them from revolution and gave their government a stability unknown in Israel.

"Insignificant as the kingdom of Judah certainly was throughout this period, for even the book of Kings, though written from a strong Judean standpoint, has but little to relate concerning it, it displayed remarkable tenacity in adverse circumstances, and showed itself to be better qualified to endure calamity than its more favored neighbor."¹

In his new kingdom, Jeroboam saw the danger of a reaction in favor of the line of David. His first step was to make Israel independent of Judah religiously. The people had been proud of Solomon's temple, but now could no longer worship there. To console them, and give them no excuse to go to Jerusalem, Jeroboam built two shrines; one in Bethel on the southern border, the other in the extreme north at Dan. Jehovah was here represented under the form of a golden bull,—the bull being an ancient Semitic symbol of divinity. The Israelites did not feel that the setting up of the bull was an act of apostasy, but rather a return to the faith of the fathers, for the bull had been used as a symbol of Jehovah for centuries.

On the other hand, bull-worship never seems to have extended to Judah. The partiality of Israel for this form of worship may be traced to the influence of the Canaanite agriculturist who influenced the northern kingdom. The offense

of this schismatic worship lay in its reactionary character. It gave permanence and prestige to a popular system. It involved a practical abandonment of the Mosaic ideal; the simple and imageless services of Jehovah were debased to the level of a heathen ceremony.

Jeroboam reigned from 933 to 913 B.C. and at his death was succeeded by his son Nadab. Nadab was murdered after a reign of two years by Baasha while he was engaged in besieging the Philistinie city of Gibbethon. Baasha set about to strengthen his hold by murdering the entire family of Jeroboam. He carried on a losing war against Asa of Judah, and Ben-hadad of Syria. He had successfully oppressed Judah and fortified an outpost at Ramah. Asa in desperation made an alliance with Ben-hadad, and the two forces were too much for Baasha. His maintenance of bull-worship at Bethel and Dor was denounced by the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, and the fate of Jeroboam's house predicted for Baasha and his family. Baasha, however, had a fairly successful reign of twenty-three years (911-880 B.C.).

Upon the death of Baasha, his son Elah ascended the throne. Elah was a worthless and dissolute ruler and fell, a victim of a conspiracy, after a reign of two years. Zimri, one of his officers, murdered the king and seized the palace at Tirzah but he had neglected to win the support of the army encamped at Gibbethon. Accordingly, Omri, the commander of the Israelite forces, was saluted asking by the soldiers, and without an hour's delay marched upon Tirzah. The efforts of Zimri were
futile; the usurper perished, mid the flames of the palace after a reign of seven days. Omri entered upon a four year's struggle with Tibni, the son of Ginath. What took place is unknown, but the Biblical account says: "So Tibni died and Omri reigned."¹

¹I Kings 16:22b.
E. Religion of Israel at 850 B. C.

Among the more primitive races, religion is inextricably intertwined with men's regular associations. Israel had known Yahweh, as a God of storms, mountains and deserts. He had manifested himself in the volcano, the storm, the lightning. He had led them in safety through natural dangers, and by His military powers had beaten off all their enemies. Yahweh was interested in Israel alone and was satisfied with a devotion which restricted itself to His worship.

It was the conviction of the people that Yahweh's favor was secured and his anger averted by following out, in its forms, the ritual. These things were what Yahweh wished. Coupled with this thought was the general belief that Yahweh entirely overlooked moral delinquencies. They were not ignorant of moral duties, but notwithstanding their understanding of right or wrong, they did not believe that morality was a necessary factor in religion. This does not mean that the Israelites were an immoral people. "Nomadic people commonly have a fairly high ethical standard. Their sexual morality is comparatively pure." ¹

Jehovah was a covenant Being, i.e., he had established a covenant with Israel and was bound to protect Israel, even as Israel was bound to worship and serve Jehovah. The individ-

¹Robinson, Prophecy & Prophets, pp.16.
ual's duty and relation was tied up in the relationship of the nation to Israel. The subjective and individual element had no place in the Hebrew religion of this time.

The Israelites had reason to be proud of Yahweh and His victories but when they entered into the rich agricultural lands of Canaan, doubts entered their minds. Yahweh was a God of Nomads, desert dwellers. Perhaps he could not grow corn, for he had never shown his ability in that field. The local deities or "baals" were already in possession of Canaan. It is not surprising that Israel tended to worship the baals for agricultural purposes. At first Israel tended to neglect Yahweh but disaster followed. So the Israelites rallied about the one bond of union--Yahweh. In His Name they conquered and hence reasoned that Yahweh was also an agricultural God.

This brought up the problem of worship. If Yahweh was an agricultural God, he would surely require to be honored as such. "The result was the curious religious phenomenon which we call "syncretism" which means the coalescence of two religions, the god or gods of the one being worshipped with the proper ritual to the other. It seems that Israel took over almost intact the whole cultus of the Canaanites."¹ The high places or old Canaanitic sanctuaries became the sites of Yahweh's worship. The sacred objects and emblems remained untouched, at any rate in Israel. While the sacred stones or tablets in the Ark continued to be the most sacred and char-

¹Robinson, Prophecy & Prophets, pp. 22.
acteristic objects of worship, Yahweh was also represented and revered under two other forms, both probably derived from Canaanite sources. One was, especially in Judah, a species of snake. In Israel Yahweh was worshipped in the likeness of a bull.

"The Canaanite festivals also held their place in the new order. The regular lunar holy days were now strictly observed in honor of Yahweh. The feast for beginning of harvest coincided with the old Passover and combined with it. The Harvest Festival was observed seven weeks later and became the feast of Pentecost. The Vintage festival marked the close of the agricultural year, and later, combined with the Feast of Tabernacles, was used by the Jews to recall the nomadic life."¹

II. The Religious Crisis which Arose out of the Political Crisis.

Omri gets little notice from the biblical writer and even less from the modern reader. Yet it was he who stopped anarchy and the fruitless struggle for the throne. "The accession of the House of Omri is an important turning point in the history of both kingdoms. It is marked by the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Judah."² Omri must have occupied a conspicuous place in the history of his day for in far-off Assyria, Palestine was called the country of Omri, and Jehu was spoken of as a son of Omri.

¹ Cf. Lev. XXIII, 39-43.
Omri reigned over Israel for twelve years, 887–876 B.C., and during the first six years made Tirzah his capital. He then purchased a hill belonging to a certain Shemer for two talents of silver and built a new city upon it calling it Shomeron, or Samaria. The choice was an excellent one for the site possessed great military and political advantages.

The greatest exploit of Omri was the subjugation of Moab. The opening words of the "Moabite Stone", erected at Dibon by Mesha, record his success. Moab had set up as an independent monarchy, and Chemosh-Melech reigned for thirty years. Omri deprived him of all the debatable land and compelled Mesha, the next king of Moab, to pay a tribute of sheep and wool to Israel.

Meanwhile a new danger arose to threaten Israel. Since the seizure of Damascus by Rezin\(^1\) (ca. 890 B.C.) the growing strength of Syria was a constant source of danger and annoyance to the kings of Israel. Omri was seized with fear at the power of these Syrians, for, despite his military skill, Omri was not powerful enough to fight Syria. He therefore attempted to strengthen Israel's security by forming an alliance with Phoenicia (I Kings, XVI, 31). To make this alliance more binding, Omri secured the marriage of the Phoenician princess, Jezebel, to his son, Ahab. In all, very little is said about Omri in the Old Testament, but he succeeded in establishing a dynasty--- the first that can be properly

\(^1\) I Kings, XI, 23-25.
so called in the history of the Northern Kingdom, which flourished for nearly half a century.

What Omri began, Ahab brought to fruition. Through the treaty of his father with Phoenicia, Ahab had married the princess, Jezebel. This treaty and marriage brought him the support of Ethbaal, (or Itto-baal) (899-867), king of the Sidonians, father of Jezebel. During his reign (876-854 B.C.) Ahab remained upon friendly terms with Judah. It is likely that he did so to strengthen his power against the Syrians, hereditary enemies of Israel. A marriage between Jehoram, son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel, healed the breach between the sister kingdoms, but the Jezebel blood and vices were thus imported into Judah for further trouble.

Ahab inherited some of the military genius of his father and carried on the warfare with the Syrians. Ben-Hadad II marched against Samaria. By a feint attack and a sudden campaign against Hadad II, Ahab was able to defeat the Syrians just as they were pressing Samaria. The next year Ben-Hadad II again attacked Israel. The two forces met near Aphek and Ahab once again defeated Ben-Hadad II. Ahab refused to press his advantage and made a friendly alliance with Ben-Hadad. By the agreement Israel regained Transjordania and choice bazaar concessions in Damascus. The prophetic party was bitterly opposed to such a treaty but Ahab had a reason for his friendliness---the Assyrians under Shalmaneser III.
Ahab feared an invasion from these hordes so he planned a counter attack by an alliance of forces.

In 854 B.C., the Assyrian invasion of Israel began. Assyria had been highly successful in subduing all the major countries and now turned her attention upon Israel. The Assyrian forces met the allied forces of Ahab, the Syrians and some other peoples at Karkar. The outcome is very uncertain although most scholars hold that the allies were badly defeated by Assyria. At least the coalition broke up and shortly after Ahab attempted to regain Ramoth Gilead from his late ally, Syria. He entered the attack in disguise, despite the protest of Micaiah, son of Imlah, but was killed by a chance arrow. "Thus died miserably Israel's greatest king."¹

Ahab's evil genius was Jezebel, his wife. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, an ex-priest of Baal, who had seized the throne through murder and intrigue. Jezebel herself seemed to have been well versed in the Baal and Astarte worship. "She breathed the atmosphere of baalistic despotism and ruthlessness. There is every indication that her religious environment had engendered a genuine enthusiasm for the baal cults and all they implied. This Phoenician princess, to seal an alliance, was married into the family of a back-country petty king of an infant state many of whose subjects were still in the nomad stage. Tyre was an important commercial city, sophisticated, filled with the art and treasure of the

¹ Olmstead, History of Palestine and Syria, p. 387.
world; Samaria at best was a peasant realm with the rudiments of trade and international relationships developing.\textsuperscript{1}

In her youth, Jezebel had worshipped Baal Melkart, the "Lord, King of the City", of Tyre. Absence from home only intensified her devotion and her desire that all should worship Baal-Melkart. Jezebel prevailed upon Ahab to build a temple to Baal-Melkart. It contained the usual altar, standing stone, and Asherah. Jezebel was a forceful personality; her influence in the state was strong; so it paid to be in her good favor by worshipping her deity. Jezebel not only wished to establish the Baal-worship in Israel, but she actively advanced its cause. She supported some four hundred priests of Baal in the royal palace and later persecuted the prophets of Yahweh.

C. Religious Crisis.

The danger of the introduction of the worship of Baal-Melkart into Israel presented a many-sided peril. The simplest peril was that it was an injury to the majesty of the God of Israel on His own territory. Yahweh remained the national God and did not cease to be honored as such, but Yahweh could not share any of His honor with others. The greater evil of the new worship was its worship rites. Baal-Melkart was a god of fertility, as well as his consort, Astarte, or Adonis. As these two gods were fertility deities,\textsuperscript{1} Knopf, The Old Testament Speaks, p. 174.
everything connected with fertility is sacred. Sacred prostitutes of both sexes played an important part in the temple worship of these two gods, and the festivals held at the shrine quickly became periods of extreme license, and even no more than sexual orgies.

Human sacrifice was an important part of the worship of Baal-Melkart, and, especially, child-sacrifice. This practice had played a part in the early life of the Hebrews in Canaan but had disappeared, only to re-appear now under the auspices of Baal-worship. How quickly it re-appeared with the Baal-worship may be seen in the account of the rebuilding of Jericho: "In his (Ahab's) day, did Hiel, the Beth-elite, build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abraham, his first-born, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son, Segub." (I Kings 16:34). Thus this abominable practice was revived in Israel.

Concerning the entrance of the worship of Baal-Melkart by Jezebel, Dr. Budde says: "There are deeper reasons why the worship of the Tyrian Baal became a danger so great as to threaten the worship of Yahweh in North Israel with permanent extinction. We have not here to do with an entirely strange religion like that of Pharaoh's daughter, but with the same worship which Israel for centuries had practiced side by side with that of its God, Yahweh. Nominally, it had given up this worship but a little while before; but its principal elements, images and symbols, sacrifices and festivals, customs and
rites of all sorts, had been adopted into the worship of Yahweh. The process was still so recent that great masses in Israel could hardly distinguish between the worship of Yahweh and that of Baal. And now this Baal was again invading the land from without, only not as a god of vassals, as the Baal of Canaan was, but as a god of the proud and wealthy Phoenicians, whose superiority to Israel was apparent to everyone. Through his aid, land and people seemed to be recovering from grievous distress; no wonder men turned to him and forgot Yahweh more and more."

"In the Phoenician cults, too, there was a lack of social morality. It was out of the soil of Tyrian Baalism that the judicial murder of Naboth and his family grew." Ahab's desire for the land was quite normal but the method was illegal. Naboth was not stubborn or churlish in refusing to sell; he was a Hebrew of the old school who realized that private property has no vested rights that run counter to social welfare. A Hebrew land-owner held it in trust; from his father he received it; to his descendants it must go. No good Hebrew could squander the patrimony and thus cheat posterity.

Jezebel could "not appreciate the tenacity of the free peasant. She had spent her early years in a mercantile community where everything was bought and sold, where constant sea-faring had killed devotion to one spot of land. Accustomed to the merchant's trickery, she thought it nothing to dis-

patch orders under royal seal"¹ which orders enmeshed Naboth, convicted him unjustly, secured his death and confiscated his property for the crown. Ahab would have bought the land contrary to Hebrew law, covering it with a cash payment; Jezebel seized it contrary to Hebrew law, covering it with a trumped up legal fiction of Naboth's guilt. The whole proceeding was a base iniquity, a thorough transgression of the eternal principle of justice and truth on which Yahwehism was based, and probably was not the only case in which the grosser conceptions of heathenism triumphed. It is important because it is the particular one which led to Elijah's protest.

Into the scene of action, at this crisis in the history and religion of Israel, stepped Elijah, the Tishbite.

III. Elijah's Pioneering Contribution.

Like a meteor Elijah first sweeps into a Bible-reader's sky. Suddenly he appears, and as suddenly is gone. The prophet has ever been a mysterious character. His father's name is not given. His origin is unknown, for the name of Tishbite implies the name of a locality, Tisbeh, which never existed so far as scholars know. Dr. Renan² believes the account in I Kings to be largely a collection of popular legends and fables. Elijah is, he says, "an ideal personification of the puritan prophet of Yahweh, in opposition to

¹. Olmstead, History of Palestine and Syria, p. 382.
the religious eclecticism which Solomon had just introduced into Judah and which Ahab endeavored to imitate in Israel. Dr. Renan does not, however, believe that these legends have no basis, any more than those in the history of Jesus Christ. Elijah was a real prophet who appeared at Jezreel and who violently opposed the Baal worship, prevalent in Israel.

The place of Elijah and his successor, Elisha, hold the principal stage in the history of this period. The account of Elijah's life is so full of forceful events that it impresses the scholar with its vigor. All this prophetic emphasis may have been interpolated, as some critics think, for the glorification of the prophet, but its existence is not explained in this way. The prominence of Elijah in the record is so impressive and tremendous that it needs some colossal movement to account for it. There can be little doubt that he was a genuine historic character, although his actions have received poetic and legendary additions by the prophetic schools.

Of his place in early Hebrew religion, Dr. Jack says: "The fact is that the unique position Elijah occupied in the imagination and the hopes of the people can only be accounted for on the ground that he was an outstanding landmark in the history of Israel, the greatest since the era of Mosaism. There are particular resemblances indeed between Moses and him. As the former inaugurated a new epoch in the religious history of the Hebrew race, so now Elijah appears as the leader of a new religious enthusiasm, bent on far-reaching

internal changes. He stands out as the most conspicuous personality next to Moses, and must represent some vast conflict embodied in a single individual, some great radical change or some subduing and sweeping movement in favor of purer Yahwehism.¹

A. Clarification of the Religious Issues.

The story of Elijah begins with an incident historically traceable. He announces a famine that will effectively blast any self-confidence that Israel may have. An ancient writer, Menander, likewise left a record of a three year famine in the time of Itto-Baal (or Eth-Baal), between 874 B. C. and 867 B. C. "Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the so-journers of Gilead"² was apparently from the region of Gilead on the desert border. He was an intense Yahwehist, holding to the old desert ideals opposed to the Baalism of Israel.

The people to the east of the Jordan had never been as fully agriculturalized as those who dwelt to the west of the river. The fertile lands merge gradually into the desert, and from the desert new reinforcements of nomads were ever coming. Among these the nomadic ideal of Yahweh still remained.

Elijah suddenly appeared out of the Jordan wilds with his message, announced the drought to Ahab, and as suddenly disappeared into Jordan wilds again. "And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, Get thee hence and turn thee eastward,

². 1 Kings, 17:1.
and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there". (I Kings 17:2-4.)

Elijah retired to the brook Cherith where he drank of the water and was fed by the "orebhim", translated "ravens" and so usually pictured, though the word might also be translated "Arabs" with the suggestion of desert hospitality extended to this wandering prophet by local tribesmen. Either translation suggests the loving care with which Jehovah cared for His prophet. But soon the drought in the country dried up the brook Cherith and Elijah was forced to leave. "And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee." 2

Elijah was thus commanded to go to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon (or Phoenicia) where, according to the account, he was sustained by a poor widow's oil and meal which he caused to be never-failing. Here, also, is the story of his raising the widow's son from the dead. Far more important than these two miracles is the picture of the prophet making a survey of conditions in Sidon before he attacked the Sidonian Baal in Israel. Elijah, during his sojourn here, had ample opportunity to study the Tyrian Baal and the effects of the worship first hand.

In the heat of Elijah's conflict, how strange and significant that God should order His champion to accept the hospitality of one whom his experience taught him to be a born enemy of God. No doubt Elijah needed the softening influence of such an association lest his earnestness become bigotry. In that strangely peaceful interlude in Elijah's stormy career, when this stern man of God is living on the charity of this poor idolatress, comes God's teaching that humanity is a true service of God and that the deeds of benevolence are a worship which God accepts of those from whom His name is hidden. From this experience, Elijah learned to sympathize with another race and religion. He was prepared for a higher experience and a higher faith, necessary for the approaching Carmel experience.

Back in Samaria the effects of the drought and famine were very great. As no relief came, Ahab remembered the words of Elijah, and so, tried to find him. At last, in the third year of the famine, Ahab set out with Obadiah 'who was over the house' to find Elijah. The word of the Lord had brought Elijah back into Israel to announce the end of the famine. So it was that Obadiah met Elijah in the way and begged Elijah to meet Ahab, fearing that if he told Ahab he had met Elijah but could not detain him, Ahab would kill him. But Elijah announced that he had come especially to see Ahab. "So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah." (I Kings 18:16.)
The outcome of this meeting was the contest on Mount Carmel between Elijah as the champion of Yahweh and the priests of Baal. Here on Carmel the first great battle was fought against syncretism. Until now the teachings of Baalism had been working subtly and almost insensibly in the heart of Israel. The fusion of the dissimilar parts was accepted as the natural evolutionism of Yahweh. But the challenge of the Melkart Baal brought Elijah to clarify the religious issues of the day. Was Yahweh, or Baal, God? Would Israel worship Baal or Yahweh? The question was no longer the relative place of Yahweh and other gods---whether Yahweh was stronger than Baal---but the vital principle of faith itself. "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Yahweh be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21.)

The two altars were prepared on Mount Carmel for the contest. The priests of Baal erected a fine altar of hewn stone, killed and dressed a bullock and placed it upon the altar; then called upon Melkart to hear their petition. From morning to mid-day they called upon their god, "O Baal, answer us". "But there was no voice or any that answered". Then the priests began their peculiar limping or leaping dance about the altar, leaping high in the air and crying, "O Baal, answer us". This peculiar dance was a characteristic part of the ritual of the Baal worship and Elijah brings about a fine play on words when he accuses the Israelites of leaping or limping
between Yahweh and Baal. His accusation was suggested by this dance of Baalism.

By noon the priests of Baal had received no response to their petitions and so were subjected to the jeers of Elijah. Turning to the account, Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud for he is a god." In a ridiculing manner, the prophet suggests that the god may be slightly deaf and needs loud cries to attract his attention. "Either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey". Any of these accusations would be fatal to a god who would be so little concerned with his priests that he would not even know that four hundred of them were petitioning for his help. In this subtle way, Elijah suggests the uselessness of their Baal. If he could not hear or notice that four hundred of his priests were petitioning him, how would the individual ever gain his attention or help?

"Or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened". This jibe on the part of Elijah suggests one of the features of Baal worship. The Baal as a fertility deity in an agricultural land was closely joined to and influenced by the seasons. The Baal was thought to be awake and busy all summer, but at harvest time he fell asleep and was awakened in the following spring. How else could these farmers explain the seasons? In connection with this belief there arose in the worship life of Baalism two special festivals, one in the spring and one in the fall. The fall festival was a festival of weeping and lamentation for the god who had fallen asleep for the
winter months. This was a characteristic attribute of many of the Semitic deities. The Babylonian Tammuz was honored by such a festival. (Compare Ezekiel 8:14.) Then in the spring was the awakening festival when with great celebration the Baal was awakened from his long sleep by the worshippers. These were annual festivals, carried on with great pomp and ceremony.

The implications of such a belief are evident. Such a Baal or god was powerless for a part of the year as contrasted with the ever-living Yahweh. Moreover, the Baal was dependent upon the people to awaken him from his long sleep. The great weakness of such a god is apparent.

After these petitions failed the priests fell into an ecstatic frenzy, "crying aloud and cutting themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them." (I Kings 18:28.) The ecstatic cries and the slashing of their bodies with knives was a regular part of the ritual of Baalism, carried on in the attempt to awaken the god. But the prayers of the priests were unanswered.

Elijah built an altar to Yahweh, killed and dressed his bullock and placed it upon the altar. Then, to make the trial more difficult, Elijah ordered the wood and the offering to be soaked with water. After this was done, and "while the prophets of Baal cry and cut themselves with knives and dance wildly around in order to awaken their god, Elijah stands with out-stretched hands beside the restored altar of
Yahweh and prays in ordered and reasoned speech."\(^{1}\) Yahweh heard the prayer of Elijah, his servant, and sent down fire from heaven which lighted the wood and consumed the offering.

"The result of the ordeal was decisive for the whole future history of religion. From the moment when Yahweh answered by fire, it became evident to all who had eyes to read the signs of the times, not merely that Yahweh was the God of Israel, but that other gods were vanities. "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, 'Yahweh, He is God! Yahweh, He is God'; (verse 39). As against this true and living God, the Baal, even of the mighty Tyre, was but a name, unable to help his prophets in the hour of need---a mere shadow of a god, who could not defend his honor against the rude jests of the adversary."\(^{2}\)

The anti-climax of the event is reached when the prophets of Baal are led away and put to death. This is a final challenge to Baal, and a direct answer to Jezebel's challenge to Yahweh. This is no land of Baal; in this country he has no power and his servants may be destroyed with impunity.

Elijah prayed that the drought might cease, and before night-fall there was a tempest of rain. In the midst of the approaching storm, carried away with the emotion of triumph, the prophet rolled his mantle together and ran ahead of the chariot of Ahab all the sixteen miles from Carmel to the

\(^{1}\) Jack, Semeria in Ahab's Time, p. 135.

\(^{2}\) Gordon, Prophets of the Old Testament, p. 27.
gate of Jezreel. (I Kings 18:42-46.)

Elijah imagined that the battle for truth had been fought and won and that his task had been virtually accomplished. But his triumph was brief. Jezebel was furious at the outcome at Carmel and swore she would treat Elijah as she had treated other prophets of Yahweh and as he had treated the prophets of Baal. When Elijah received a message that Jezebel had sworn to take his life, (19:2), his hope for the restoration of the true religion was changed in a moment to blank despair. He felt with a sinking heart that he had labored for naught and in vain. Yahweh himself had labored in vain with human folly. Nothing could be made of a king whom miracles could not convince but who answered the call of a woman, Jezebel. In despair Elijah fled from Samaria to the desert. Leaving his servant in Beer-Sheba, he fled on alone into the wilderness. Out of this deep despair and discouragement was to rise a new phase of prophetic experience.

Concerning this experience, Dr. Knopf writes: "A stern Elijah and a stern religion condoned the massacre of the priests. Theoretically, this surgical operation should have cut out Baalism from the body politic, but force and blood never settle issues. Human problems are of the mind, and by the mind they must be met. From the early days, through the reign of David, and through the period of anarchy, bloodshed had prevailed. Elijah, man of God, and leader of the prophetic school, accepted the time-honored method. It failed. Jezebel
was furious. Baalism was not dead. Elijah had to flee far to the south, to the old Mount Horeb country, where centuries before Moses had faced crushing problems and despair.¹

Elijah's presence was needed now as never before. The work of destruction had begun and the people were in the mood to carry it to the bitter end. The tide had turned and was setting in God's favor, and Elijah was needed to direct its flow, keep the people to their choice, and complete the work of restoration by construction. It would be expected of him that he would receive the message with composure, confident that Yahweh would keep him from the wrath of His enemy—Jezebel. But "when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life". (19:3.) The threat had grasped his heart at a moment of physical and spiritual exhaustion. Fear and deep depression seized him, and he fled for his life into the wilderness. After leaving his servant at Beer-sheba, he fled on alone.

B. New Phase of Prophetic Experience.

Elijah wandered far into the south towards Sinai, and as the dull pain of the injury came on, he turned toward solitude in order to seek the ear of Yahweh. His soul became weary and he felt that his life had been wasted. At last, in the breathless solitude of the desert, he cast himself down under the poor shelter of a juniper tree and poured out his soul to Yahweh. Alone and weary, he prayed for death: "It is enough, now, O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than

Some part of Elijah's despondency was due to physical weakness and fatigue, but it was largely spiritual. "The tide of spiritual power had never risen so high, even in his soul, as it had done on Carmel. Never before had he felt so confident, and wielded with such absolute mastery, his sway over men's minds. Never before, perhaps, had such thoughts risen in his mind as rose then, of a kingdom conquered for Jehovah, and a nation born in an hour, and a realm cleansed of all impurities, and every knee bowed to the Lord. Victory for Jehovah was secure; and he thought he was the conqueror. But now spiritual reaction had set in in his own soul; and he is a fugitive crouching under a bush in a wilderness."¹ This despair of the prophet's mind was the effect of a great exercise of power by one entrusted with great power. Every great prophet must have had that experience.

It is well to note that this despair was not a weakness on the part of Elijah but rather a sign of great purpose. Some men are so self-satisfied that they feel they do no wrong. They realize their ideal—- because they have set no lofty mark. Their ideals are never of a high character. Such men never cast themselves under a juniper tree, bewailing their lives. The man under a juniper tree is, and will be, a man of deep life, high aim, and noble purpose. The despair that surrounds such a man is the disappointment of one who, although he has

gained a great harvest, still has not gained his ideal.

Worn out with travel and sorrow, Elijah lay down and slept. While he slept an angel came and touched him and he awakened to find cakes and water. In obedience to the angel he ate and drank, but still fatigued, he lay down and slept again. A second time the angel awoke him, bidding him to prepare for a long journey. Elijah had merely fled from Jezebel but Yahweh turned that flight into another and loftier search. Elijah was to journey to Mount Sinai, and regain his super-normal strength in that place of divinity.

At the end of forty days, Elijah, still in despair, arrived at Mount Sinai (Horeb). The history of Israel had not touched Horeb since the time of Moses, and it is significant that this was sacred ground. Moses had been the giver of the Law; Elijah was to be its restorer. His mission was to restore the Law of Yahweh to Israel, as given by Moses in the first place. Elijah's first reaction was disappointment, as it was intensified by the sacred associations of the place. In the presence of the wild scenery, and bringing to mind the giving of the Law to Moses, he could less than ever understand why the fire from heaven and the clear demonstration of God's power had not been the beginning of a vast change that would have wiped out every trace of Baalism from the land. The temper in which Elijah waited was a characteristically human one--- a heavy and restless heart, filled with good and bad emotions; when faith struggled with doubt, and pride with
shame, and the impulse to blame and complain struggled with the longing to trust Yahweh again.

Then the revelation came to Elijah. It was, as it were, a drama of nature in which the elements contested for mastery. "The narrative is spiritually one of the profoundest in the Old Testament." By a parable, Yahweh represented to Elijah the contrast between law and grace, judgement and mercy. As a prophet of Yahweh, Elijah had been using the weapon of force. He had not thought it possible to defeat the enemies of God by any other weapon. His strictness and forces had failed, for it left men hard and indifferent. Yahweh there experimented upon Elijah with his own weapons. The mountain was visited by a hurricane, an earthquake, and a fire. The prophet's wounded spirit was not healed by any of these; Yahweh was not in them. But in the calm that followed the tumult he heard a "still small voice", or better still, (the marginal reading of the Revised Version) "a sound of gentle stillness", which thrilled his innermost being. Seeing the truth, he wrapped his mantle around him and waited to hear the divine command. He was thus taught the reason for his failure. Force had only aroused force. Compulsion begets compulsion.

"The storm clouds do their work; earthquakes and fire have their mission in the progress of the universe, but mind is the master of the body, and the soul is superior to

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the flesh, and God is over all. And though He answers by fire, that is not the best answer He gives to the questions of the spirit of man; that best answer He supplies in the quiet of the inward life, by His gentle patience and forbearance, forgiving mercy and solacing love. The Kingdom of God comes not so much by startling miracles as through quiet human agencies in the slow movements of history.\(^1\)

Elijah's methods were tried upon himself—power, force, law, and their effects were naught. He did not wonder now at his past failure and the fickleness of the people. He had sounded the depths of the conception of God and had found a new revelation of Him. God was not in the extraordinary, in the extreme, but rather in the ordinary, the quiet and peaceful. The God which Elijah now felt was in the deepest part of the human soul and not in the external. Elijah now saw that his work must be slow and unobtrusive, but steady and sure.

Elijah was therefore shown that Jehovah had still a great work for him to do: he must shape the destinies of two great nations, and provide for the continuation of the prophetic succession. Three commands were laid upon him: to appoint Hazael to be king of Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be his own successor. It is interesting to note that, of the three commissions, only one was actually carried out by Elijah. Elisha was found plowing his father's field

and was called to his life-work as Elijah's successor. The choice of Hazael and of Jehu was carried out by Elisha and not by Elijah.

C. Prophet of Social Justice.

"Elijah was not only the herald of a purer conception and a truer conception of Jehovah, but he also proved himself the champion of the rights of the people against the oppression of the throne."¹ The reason back of the stand against Ahab was the revelation of Ahab and his court of the primitive "mishpat" or justice of Yahweh. According to the ancient "mishpat" or primitive justice, all nomads in a kindred group have a right to the resources of nature.

To review the situation, Ahab, in addition to his royal residence at Samaria, had a new palace in the Plain of Esdrælon at Jezreel. Near this palace was a piece of land that Ahab wanted to complete a plan of gardening he had in progress. The land was owned by a member of the peasant aristocracy, who might be called a conservative, who held it as an inheritance from his fathers, according to the "mishpat" of Yahweh, which forbade alienation of the soil as betrayal of kinship rights. The land was conceived as belonging to the family from an indefinite past into the indefinite future.

But Ahab had been reared in a different social atmosphere. His father, Omri, had bought the great hill upon which Samaria stood; and his wife, Jezebel was from a mercantile, Baalistic

¹ Kent, History of the Hebrew People, p. 53.
nation which had long since graduated from the stage of mishpat. Phoenicia, of necessity, due to her mercantile system, had left the communal mishpat. But a non-commercial, and agricultural nation, like Israel, still close to the nomadic tradition, still jealously guarded the "mishpat" of Yahweh. Ahab's ideas of property, therefore, were unlike those of the peasantry in the villages and farming centers, and in seeking to obtain the land of Naboth, he made the owner a straight-forward commercial offer, either to purchase it outright for silver, or to give a better piece of land in exchange. (I Kings 21:2) Naboth flatly refused: "Jehovah forbid it me, that I give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." Met with this refusal, there was nothing that Ahab could do under the old law of mishpat; for Naboth opposed the king, not on the basis of mere personal fancy, but as a matter of ancient constitutional principle.

When Jezebel heard of Naboth's refusal to part with the vineyard, she was highly indignant because in her eyes, the eyes of a child of a mercantile nation, the law of mishpat was foolish. So her active mind, with its heathen morality set about to gain secretly what Ahab desired. Using the methods of an oriental despot, she contrived a plot by which Naboth's profanity could be termed blasphemy of God and the king, and thus constitute the crime of high treason. The penalty for high treason was always death and confiscation of the criminal's property. Accordingly, Jezebel forged the
King's name on letters to the legal authorities of Naboth's district. Court was held, witnesses cited against Naboth; the helpless peasant was convicted and put to death. Jezebel then told Ahab, telling him to confiscate the property.

Numerous "legal" murders have taken place in Hebrew history but this case is of such importance because of the broader social implications of it. This action was symbolic of an economic system whereby the wealthy could gain a private monopoly of the soil and reduce the poorer classes to slavery. This problem was closely linked with the prevalence of Baalism in Israel. The trouble had started back in the earliest days of settlement in Canaan. The upper and wealthier class in the cities had assumed the rights and laws of the "baal," which originally meant "land-owner" while the poorer classes in the villages and farms held to the older nomadic ideal of "mishpat"; land, water, and such natural resources belonged to the social group and could not be private property. Thus the struggle between Naboth and Ahab was a struggle between the wealthy upper class and the poorer lower class, with the latter fighting for its very freedom.

And so, by the very nature of things, the opposition of Baalism by Elijah would carry with it the opposition to the new economic system coming in under the influence of Baalism. "The struggle for justice and the struggle against other gods, instead of being two separate movements, are logically one and the same; and thus the issue of Baalism raises the central
problem of Hebrew history. The baalistic master-class divides into a right and a left wing over the dispute about the relationship which rightly should exist between the members of the aristocracy. The poorer baalism (or land-owners) who have dropped into the slave class and lost their family property, contend that there should always be an open channel whereby the enslaved Israelite may reascend into the upper class, and regain his "possession"; so that he and his descendants may enjoy forever "the inheritance of their fathers." But on the other hand, the wealthier baalism contend with equal positiveness and sincerity that the mere fact of Hebrew descent carries with it no legal guaranty of one's economic and social status.\(^1\)

Under Omri the colliding usages of territorial civilization and the kinship group reached a crisis wherein the issue seemed to be very simple. Israel must go back to the ways of the forefathers, and observe the mishpat of Yahweh; or the nation must fall under the hard, commercial, baalistic rules which had been observed in Canaan and Phoenicia before the Israelites came from the desert. Mishpat, or law, involving the fate of Naboth resolved the whole problem to—"Yahweh or Baal."

The Naboth episode brought Elijah back into the scene, and into the battle between Yahweh and Baal. "What stirred Yahweh's deepest anger was not any ritual offense, but rather oppression and cruelty. The teaching of Yahweh condemned the

corrupt administration of the law, and called for justice in the gates. It protested against covetousness and greed, against luxurious living, and against the way in which the rich took advantage of their poorer neighbors, buying up their ground, joining field to field till there is no room in the land. It is otherwise with the licentious cults of Melkart and Astarte; and Elijah realized that if these obtained a prominent place in Israel, the result would be a gigantic step downward, not only religiously but morally and socially."

The appearance of Elijah marked the crisis of Hebrew religion and the turning point. Some scholars doubt if Elijah actually appeared before Ahab personally but he does symbolize a new stage in Israel's history. According to the account in I Kings, Elijah appeared before Ahab and condemned him, in the name of Yahweh, not only for taking the life of Naboth, but also condemned him for doing what Naboth refused to do in the first place. The king is arraigned, therefore, not merely for taking the life of an individual, but for depriving a family of the means of subsistence, and thus taking life on a collective scale.

Thus far, there have been set forth what Elijah taught—what he proclaimed in the name of Yahweh. That he was a pioneer in these fields shows itself more clearly upon a comparison with those prophets who followed him, more especially the eighth century prophets. Of his pioneering labors in the work of uprooting the vicious Baal-Melkart worship, there can be no doubt. A close inspection of the Scriptural text of the account (I Kings 16:29 ff.) will quickly reveal the fact that Elijah was the first to attack this problem. As hitherto discussed in this paper, the worship of Baal-Melkart presented a grave peril, not present in the worship of the local baalim of the Canaanites. Baal-Melkart and his consort, Astarte were introduced into Israel by the evil Jezebel and it was Elijah who first saw the danger. The issue was grave for the future of Israel and Elijah took the only path that was open for one of his character.

Indeed Elijah not only pioneered in clarifying the religious issue of the day, but it was he who dealt the death-blow to Baal-Melkart. Elijah's understudy, close friend and successor, Elisha, merely carried to fulfillment, the plans that Elijah drew up and put into operation, for the clarification of the religious issue—the separation of Baal and Yahweh. Never, after the work of Elijah and Elisha, did the Baal threaten the Yahweh-worship to any great extent. Idolatry, and evil practices continued in Israel for centuries
afterward but they never threatened the life of Yahweh-worship again.

Of the work of Elijah on this score, Dr. W. M. Taylor says, "Here first is brought before us the grand question which faces every man: "Who is your God--Baal, or Jehovah? sin or the Holy One? self, or God? mammon, or Christ?"

The eighth-century prophet, Hosea, has been termed "the prophet of love,"; the prophet who put a loving heart in the central place of religion. It was Hosea, who, through an unfortunate home life, learned that he was able to forgive his erring wife because of his great love. In like manner, Hosea saw that when Israel turned to idolotry and evil practices, she was unfaithful to Jehovah. But Jehovah, too, through love, would forgive Israel, if she repented and returned. Hosea has always been given the credit for first discovering the loving nature of Jehovah, but years before, on Mt. Horeb, Elijah had learned that Jehovah was not an external, blind force but an internal loving force, "a still small voice." Hosea's heart religion was only a further development of Elijah's new religious experience. Every prophet after Elijah dealt with God in a different manner because, of the Mt. Horeb experience. Never after that experience was Jehovah a blind external force, manifesting Himself in the earthquake, volcano, wind or fire; Jehovah became an internal voice of conscience.; a Being whose

1. Taylor, Elijah the Prophet, p. 95.
attributes were love, justice, majesty, mercy, holiness.

It was a few years before, that Amos appeared in Bethel to voice his fierce cry for social justice, with an alternative of doom for the nation, should she fail to show the social justice for which he cried. It has been customary to give to Amos the primary place in the field of justice, and from point of emphasis rightly so. From the point of time, however, the picture of Elijah and Ahab in Naboth's vineyard must clearly take precedence. The prophet's staunch stand in the force of the direst danger, and his sharp denouncement of Ahab, because of the social injustice blazes the trail for Amos and all other champions of social justice.

Elijah's pioneering contributions were due largely to the character of the man, as his soul responded to the needs of his day. We are struck "with his simplicity of faith and singleness of aim. He forms no plans of his own. He places himself wholly in the hands of God. He waits upon the Lord, that he may be of good courage, and that his heart maybe strengthened,"

Of special note also is his fearlessness of action. This characteristic is closely allied to his singleness of aim. Nothing gives strength and fearlessness in action like simplicity of faith. His character also shows sternness of spirit, tempered with

1. Milligan, Elijah, p. 185.
great love and pity. Possessed of a character such as this, Elijah could not be else but the religious pioneer that he was.
CONCLUSION

After the meeting of Elijah and Ahab at the vineyard of Naboth, nothing is heard of Elijah for four years. It would seem he retired to some secluded spot and from there issued forth to visit the schools of the prophets, over which he exercised a great influence. These years following the Mt. Horeb and the Naboth experience were probably the busiest of his life. Schools of prophets were established under his active leadership. He saw that the idolatry of his country could not be defeated by a single stroke. He closed his life work by organizing a system of means which required the cooperation of many men, and which it took years to carry into effect. These men would work silently but surely like the leaven in the meal. They would keep alive the light of truth, transmit the knowledge of the true God to the next generation, and train up sons of the prophets to succeed them. Elijah was now content that his work should be slow and unobtrusive, knowing then it would be sure. He no longer trusted the earthquake or fire.

The closing scenes of Elijah's life are wrapped in mystery. The prophet sensed his near departure and the manner of departure. Life had been a hard battle. He had stood alone for a great cause. He had fought a tough battle and had won. He now longed for rest and comfort. In the main he had served
his God faithfully, earnestly, steadfastly.

Elijah surveyed for the last time the scenes of his triumphs and went the rounds of all the consecrated haunts—Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho. One disciple, Elisha, was with him. At Bethel and Jericho he bade farewell to the schools of prophets, and finally, with Elisha stood by the Jordan. Elijah smote the waters and the waters parted, so they crossed on dry land. Now on the further shore, Elijah knew his hour had come. He asked Elisha's last wish, and promised to fulfill Elisha's wish for a double portion of Elijah's spirit.

And as they went on, climbing upward on the hills, "behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire and parted them asunder." This severed the two friends. Then came a furious storm. "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Elisha saw it, and gazed without flinching upon the marvelous vision, and filled with awe, cried after his departing friend, "My father, my father; the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Elijah's end was in keeping with his career. From his first abrupt appearance it had been fitly symbolized by the stormy wind and flaming fire which he heard and saw at Horeb, and now these were the vehicles which drew him to Him.

A quotation from Dr. Ottley might well serve as conclusion: "Elijah is the foremost of those great leaders of religion whom we call par excellence the Hebrew prophets. He "introduced into prophecy," says Kittel, "that species of categorical imperative which distinguishes him as well as the
later prophets; that brazen inflexibility, that diamond-like hardness of character which bids them hold fast by their moral demand, even should the nation be dashed to pieces against it. Moreover, the active life of Elijah illustrated the extent to which the prophets made their influence felt in the nation's public life. They exercised their ministry in close relation to the political circumstances of their time. They have been truly called "watchmen of the theocracy" since they habitually followed with close interest the course of events, whether political or religious, and regarded it their duty to intervene in public affairs from time to time in order to bring to the remembrance of their countrymen those fundamental religious truths on which the theocratic state was based, namely, that Jehovah alone was Israel's God, that Israel was His chosen people, and that His supreme requirement was the observance by the nation of the revealed law of righteousness. Thus they aimed at keeping Israel faithful to Jehovah, as He had manifested Himself at Sinai—as a God who delighted in pure worship, in righteous dealing, and in fraternal charity between man and man."

1. History of the Hebrews, Kittel, II p. 266.
2. The Hebrew Prophets, Ottley, p.9.
The great contribution of the Hebrew people has been their religious faith. Springing from a humble beginning in Asia Minor, that religious faith grew in spirit and quality until it influenced the entire world. Especially unique to the Hebrew religion and largely responsible for its spiritual quality were the prophets of Israel. It was the mission of the prophet to communicate the divine word to Israel just as it was the mission of the priest to communicate the human mind to God. "It was the prophets," says Dean Knudson, "who were the pioneers in God's progressive revelation of himself in Israel."

The ancestors of the Hebrews were small bands of nomads who came out of the Arabian deserts into the fertile lands of Canaan. These small tribes were headed by a patriarch or tribal father, who served as the priest and prophet of the tribe. To certain of these early patriarchs, God revealed Himself in a personal way, so a cult was formed of "the God of Abraham," "the God of Isaac" or "the God of Jacob." All in the clan shared in an intimate way in the worship of the deity.

The great fountain-source of prophecy, however, was Moses, a Hebrew born in Egypt and called by Yahweh to free the Hebrews whom He had chosen as his people. To the primitive religion of the Hebrews, Moses brought the powerful

Yahweh worship; Yahweh, who was a covenant being, pledged to support His chosen people, the Hebrews. Moses first awakened in the Hebrews a national consciousness and established among them the worship of one God. These two achievements were made possible by a marvelous deliverance from Egypt.

After a long wandering in the wilderness under Moses, the tribes entered Canaan, and finally, after many years, occupied the land. In the process they assimilated the customs and habits of the Canaanite people, together with their religious practices. The rituals, altars, sacred places and festivals of the local Canaanite deities or baals were taken into the Yahweh worship and given a new significance. There was some danger to the pure Yahweh worship from this syncretism but the danger was not great because of the unimportance of these local baals.

After the period of Moses, and during the period of the settlement of Canaan, there arose in various parts of Canaan, individuals who acted as messengers of Yahweh, to bring the Hebrews once again to Yahweh in time of crisis. These individuals are more commonly known as the judges of Israel. Of this group we may note Deborah, Samuel, Eli, and many minor prophets. It was under the guidance and direction of Samuel that the Israelites united with Saul as their king. Later, Saul and Samuel disagreed and Samuel chose David to succeed Saul. During the time of the monarchy, no great prophetic voice arose, but the voice of one Nathan carries
some significance, for he rebuked David for his sin in the matter of Beer-sheba. His stern ethical note was an important contribution.

The next prophet of any importance was Ahijah under whose instigation Jeroboam led the revolt of the northern tribes against Rehoboam. The history of the revolting kingdom, Israel, is full of murder and bloodshed for many years. It was not until the time when Omri seized the throne (887 B.C.) that peace came to Israel. But Omri, although a successful military leader, saw the necessity of having support, and consequently, allied himself with the Tyrian king, Eth-baal. To further strengthen the alliance he secured the marriage of his son Ahab to Eth-baal's daughter, Jezebel. With the entrance of Jezebel into Israel came also the worship of the Tyrian deity, Baal-Melkart. This religion fostered commercial practices of the Tyrians, child-sacrifice, sacred immorality, fertility rites with sacred prostitution, and, associated with the commercial practices, social injustice and oppression.

In the crisis appeared Elijah, the greatest of the preliterary prophets. The importance of Elijah's contribution can scarcely be overstated. Elijah first clarified the religious issues of the day. The people were accepting a syncretism of Baalism and Yahweh which would have been fatal to Israel. In a spectacular manner, Elijah defeated the priests of Baal-Melkart on Mt. Carmel and furnished
proof that "Jehovah, he is God," and not Baal. Here the Israelites saw their danger and saw clearly the vital importance of the choice between Baal or Jehovah.

Elijah's second great contribution was the introduction of a new phase of prophetic experience. Fleeing the wrath of Jezebel, Elijah sought out Mt. Horeb, where he experienced a revelation of Jehovah. In the revelation, the prophet saw that God's methods of working are not in the spectacular miracles by which Elijah hoped to conquer, but with the slow processes of history and the teachings of the still small voice within. This teaching of Elijah reached its climax in the statement of the Master when he said, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

The third message of Elijah was that of social justice. When Jezebel had Naboth put to death so that Ahab could acquire the vineyard which belonged to Naboth, all the tribal laws of justice were violated. As spokesman for Jehovah, Elijah appeared before Ahab and denounced him, proclaiming the righteousness of Jehovah and his social justice.

Thus was the prophet a pioneer in three great fields. He declared the power and living presence of Jehovah as against the dead Baals; he introduced into prophecy a new phase of religious experience, and a revelation of Jehovah's methods; and he proclaimed Jehovah as a Being interested in social justice. From these contributions of Elijah, the Israelite religion took a new lease on life and overcame the destroying effects of Baalism.
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