

Theopolitics in the Davidic monarchal system

A pilot study

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Abstract

Theopolitics in the Davidic monarchal system. A pilot study

Albeit the nomenclature theopolitics appears to be new to Old Testament studies, it has been and it is still being used extensively under other appellations. It is the postulate of this article that in the sphere of the historiography of Old Testament monarchal politics, the dialectic essence of theopolitics is unmistakable, namely the combination of two theoretically contradictory elements: the spiritual and the mundane aspects of human existence. In this article the claim in 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34¹ that Josiah was a king like no other – including the adored David – will be examined. It will be argued that Josiah was indeed unlike any other Davidite, because he lacked the courage to act independently and autonomously. He was a king like no other, because he was no king at all, only a puppet par excellence.

1. Introduction

This article comprises the preliminary deliberations of a study concerning *theopolitics* in the Old Testament and especially as it manifests in the Davidic monarchal history. According to Reventlow *et al.* (1994) politics and theopolitics form an integral part of the greater part of biblical literature. This supposition is endorsed by an analysis of the role of and the manner in which divine manipulation is applied in the Israelite monarchal history. Whereas this pilot study represents the initial findings of this analysis, it also supports the premise of this article, namely that from its inception an invisible force manipulated the Davidic monarchy. In a symbiotic state of interdependence, the secreted party steered and manipulated the visible Davidites. This manipulation of the visible by an invisible force triggered religious and political tensions easily discernible in the histories of different Davidic kings in specific situations. This tension always functions on two opposing levels of human existence, i.e. the spiritual and the mundane. The spiritual manipulates the people's assessment of

1 All textual references are to BHS (see Elliger & Rudolph, 1984).

the mundane, that is the competence or incompetence of leadership – and in the case of the Old Testament, of Davidic leadership. For the purposes of this article the spiritual manipulation of the mundane will be defined as theopolitics.

2. Hoffman, Ouspensky, Weber and theopolitics

In concurrence with Hoffman (1994:85-86) it is the postulate of this article that *theopolitics* should be understood as the determination and the manipulation of politics by the supposed will of God in order to justify or condemn certain political decisions by a leader at a given point in history. Furthermore, it would appear from the various cases examined as if the prerequisites and/or the circumstances of a specific situation require a certain standard and a certain category of leadership. Jointly, situation and circumstances provoke and stimulate determination to achieve a specified goal. At the same time they also assess and determine the measure of manipulation necessary to achieve a preconceived objective. While determining the standard and type of leadership, situation and circumstances also manipulate the elected leader's identified talents as well as his/her inherent competence or incompetence. Ouspensky's (1967: 340-345) model of two strands of history corresponds with these acts of manipulation of theopolitics. But at the same time the inherent elements of theopolitics concur with Weber's (1965:223-245) presupposition concerning the inevitable tension between religion and politics, especially when in a situation of having to determine or negotiate a power base.

2.1 Tension between the spiritual and the mundane

Hoffman (1994:85-87) theorises that theopolitics combine two theoretically contradictory elements: the spiritual and the mundane aspect of human existence. He cites Weber (1967:223-248) who does not use the word theopolitics, but who argues in a similar vein that tension is experienced as soon as religion progresses to a status of equality with the sphere of political associations. An inevitable question that needs to be addressed, is whether this tension is between religion and politics *per se* or between certain elements in religion and politics. It should be kept in mind that religion as well as politics comprises a multitude of divergent elements that could all cause tension. Therefore, in any discussion of theopolitics, the elements perceived to be responsible for the tension should be identified before one can continue with the investigation. It is the presupposition of this article that tension cannot be defused unless these elements are determined.

2.2 Two strands of history

In the same trend of reasoning the Russian philosopher, Ouspensky (1967:344-345), avers that in any society there are always two distinct yet concurrent

strands of history active. The one is visible, violent, well documented, while the other is silent and invisible. While this invisible manipulative force steers the visible strand, at the same time it uses structures erected by the visible strand to further its own interests. The inference is that the visible strand is well known, but that the invisible force is usually only hinted at – even when there are suspicions of its strength, its power and its manipulative abilities (cf. inter alia 2 Chr. 33:21-25). It could be argued, therefore, that in this symbiotic state of interdependence the visible Davidites were steered by the secreted *am ha-aretz* or the country Levites, and then in particular, the descendants of Caleb, the Judaeen Levites of Hebron.

A major shortcoming in this philosophical discourse is the fact that Ouspensky neglects to address the issue of leaders and led. However, notwithstanding the fact that without using the word *theopolitics* their presuppositions in fact introduced the current discourse, Ouspensky and Weber did manage to outline certain elementary aspects that form an integral part of that process, presently termed theopolitics.

3. Leadership

3.1 Introduction

According to the Old Testament (cf. inter alia 2 Sam. 2:4a, 1 Kings 1:28, 1 Chr. 5:2) the Davidites were the divine chosen leaders and they were usually accepted as such by their people. In their assessments the biblical writers openly and quite honestly (apparently) label a number of these Davidic kings as excellent leaders comparable to or on a par with the great David (cf. 2 Chr. 14:1-8, 34-35). Others are tagged as mediocre in the sense that they were not too religious and not too evil (cf. 2 Chr. 12:13-16; 16:7-13; 17:3-4). There are also many Davidites who, without much ado, are rated and denigrated as *evil* (cf. 2 Chr. 33:21-23; 36:5, 9, 11-13). Of only one king, namely Josiah, is it said that he was one of a kind. Not even the great David could be compared to him.

3.2 MacGregor Burns and leadership

MacGregor Burns (1979:1-5) avers that a hunger for compelling and creative leadership is one of the most universal human cravings. He maintains that in any discussion or investigation of leadership it is imperative to determine who is the leader and who is the led. According to his postulate leader and led enter into a relationship of power, mutual needs, aspirations and values (cf. inter alia 1 Sam. 19-22; 16:1; 1 Chr. 11:1-3). Paraphrased, Burns' premise appears to equate the role of leader-led to an archetype of parasitic coexistence. In this symbiotic relationship it is impossible for the one to exist or survive without the other. Without a leader there are no followers. Without followers there is no leader.

When transposed into biblical histories, events like that of inter alia Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:6-11; Chr. 10:6-11) and Amon (2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chr. 33:21-25) lead to the inevitable question whether the visible king is in fact the real leader. Is he not perhaps the led, the perfect or imperfect follower? For instance, were the real leader(s) not perhaps the unidentified friends of Rehoboam or perhaps the unidentified people of the land who snatched the throne from Amon's assassins?

3.3 Leadership and situation

It would appear from this pilot study that an essential element in the assessment of leadership is that at a particular point in time a situation develops demanding a capable and competent leader to take control of the people and the consequences of the situation. Therefore, without fail the circumstances of a people at a given point in history determines the type of leader and the specific qualities he/she should have that would be necessary to meet the demands of the situation (cf. David in inter alia 1 Chr. 11:1-3, 12:1-40; Solomon in 2 Chr. 1:8-12). To illustrate this point, in a certain situation qualities like charisma, authority, statesmanship and even military expertise may be regarded as essential to successful leadership. The moment that the circumstances change these qualities may no longer be rated as important or as necessary.

3.4 Old Testament leadership in a situation of transformation

It is the postulate of this article that the assessment of Old Testament leadership is very simple and completely one-sided. Leadership qualities and abilities are only measured in terms of fidelity and devotion to God. The circumstances, the importance and the timing of the situation are seldom mentioned. According to the analysis of certain Old Testament leaders, undertaken for the purposes of this article, it became increasingly clear that leadership and situation like leader and led, are inseparable.

3.4.1 Moses

An excellent example of the above-mentioned is the history of Moses as leader (Ex. 1-4) and also that of Aaron (Ex. 4:27-5:1) and their interaction with their situation. Instructed by God to lead a group of people to the Promised Land, Moses' charisma, his assertive leadership, his influence and the example he set in his devotion and fidelity to YHWH enabled a group of oppressed runaway slaves to transform themselves into a group of liberated freemen, the core of a nation-to-be. Their situation enabled him to employ his leadership qualities in such a way that it led to a transformation of their circumstances. Because of this shift in their circumstances because of leadership, the situation of a heterogeneous group of runaway slaves changed to such an extent that their bargaining power increased and the rudimentary beginnings of a feeling of solidarity began to develop. It

would take many more years and many other leaders before this process would be completed and they could be labelled a true nation. However, the journey through the desert wilderness under the leadership of a Moses gave them a common heritage of traditions that would form the foundations of a nation.

3.4.2 David

David's leadership was conferred on him because of an existing situation: a leaderless group of tribes (the Israelite tribes) feared nihilism because of oppression suffered under the Philistines. Once again the circumstances of their situation demanded competent leadership to free them from Philistine oppression. Saul's leadership abilities were not sufficient to perform this task. To prevent further military domination by their enemies, it became imperative for the Israelite tribes to be united in a nation. Because he could meet the demands of the situation, David emerged as leader-elect. Because the existing situation demanded it from him, his first function was that of military commander. Once he had managed to unite all the tribes in his person, he could emerge as nation-builder (2 Sam. 5:1-5; 1 Chr. 11:1-3; see Alt, 1930:1-66).

According to his historiographers, in the process of establishing a people, a dynasty and an empire, David would continue to rise to meet the needs of the situation as and when such needs became evident. Or could it be that he was prodded into action every time another silent force sensed that the circumstances and therefore the requirements of the situation had changed and that there were other demands that needed other leadership characteristics and abilities? It is even possible to argue that a militarist like David would probably not have anticipated the establishment of a bureaucracy. Once this silent force had appraised the nation's needs for structures and proper organisation, a rudimentary bureaucracy began to develop that involved the Levites of the Levitical cities to such an extent that they became David's watchdogs, his eyes, and eventually his civil service (cf. inter alia Haran, 1961:45-51; Hauer, 1982:33-50; Nel, 1989: 257-271).

It is the viewpoint of this article that the fact that such a bureaucracy was established cannot be ascribed to David's far-sightedness. The circumstances of the situation at that point in the history of the newly united Israelite tribes manifested a need for certain governmental structures outside Jerusalem. Once this need was identified by the silent strand of history, the manipulation of David was set into motion and a proto-bureaucracy was established. According to the postulate of the current study the Levitical cities in general and Hebron in particular, the *people of the land*, turned into protectors, manipulators and judges of the monarchy and of every Davidic ruler. However, their assessment of fidelity towards them and also their judgement of the quality of leadership of the

different Davidic kings were always clothed in religious terms to pacify and hoodwink the people.

3.5 Leadership, Levites and the people of the land

One of the most interesting, and also a very important fact that keeps on emerging, is the intimate interaction between the Davidites and the Levites. From the rudimentary beginnings of David's career there are signs that his leadership carried the blessings of the country cult officials (cf. 1 Sam. 21:1-9; 22:11-23). In particular the Levites from Hebron played a very prominent role in the election of the Davidic kings (cf. 2 Sam. 5:1-3; 1 Chr. 11:1-3; 12; 2 Sam. 15:7-12).

3.6 *Am ha-aretz*

The expression *am ha-aretz* or *people of the land* is very problematic. It is a collective noun that is never applied to an individual. After taking into account most of the available literature on this topic, it was concluded that a multitude of divergent and compliant interpretations concerning the meaning of this term exists. No scholar has, however, as yet been able to identify the group with absolute certainty or has been able to determine beyond any doubt what role they played in the Davidic kingship and in the Israelite society. This situation is primarily due to the fact that the Old Testament provides no definitive information. Even so, the presence of the people of the land is felt and it can be discerned like a thin continuous thread running through the monarchical history.

There is no reference to the political, social or religious nature of this group. The biblical authors take no stand; they do not evaluate or assess these people. References to the *am ha-aretz* relate to different historical periods (even from the time of the patriarchs – Gen. 23:12 – to Daniel – Dan. 9:6). Although the term usually refers to Israelites, there are a number of occasions where it is also used to describe non-Israelites (inter alia Gen. 23:12; Ezr. 3:3; Neh. 9:30; cf. Reviv, 1979:283-297; Asher, 1997:85).

Apparently there was a continuous interaction and interdependence between the *people of the land* and the Davidite rulers. However, this interaction and interdependence is never clearly or openly discussed or mentioned. Talmon (1967:71) notes that this term was never applied in a specifically Ephraimite setting. If this was indeed the case, then it is correct to argue that the *am ha-aretz* was specifically connected with Judaeon politics and especially with the House of David (cf. inter alia Japhet, 1993:1013-1014; Malamet, 1953:26-29; Nielsen, 1967:129-137; 2 Kings 21:21-26, 2 Chr. 33:22-25). Analogous with Ouspensky's two strands of history, it is therefore the opinion expressed in this article that the term *am ha-aretz* could well be understood as representative of the invisible strand of history where the Davidites form the visible, well documented

strand of history. Or the *am ha-aretz* could even represent the religious element that causes tension when in contact with politics in order to negotiate for a power base.

3.6.1 Leadership and statesmanship

The perception of the quality and the presence/absence of religious devotion of the Davidic kings, is always coloured by a theopolitical assessment of the different kings by biblical authors/historiographers. It is always the individual, the person, the king that is judged. Statesmanship is never at stake and therefore it is never judged – not even according to any divine principles or codes. It is as if the chroniclers' only concern was the measure of the leader's adherence to religion. Whose religion, is never mentioned. That of the Jerusalem cult or that of the Hebron Levites and the other rural Levites? And what role did the politics of the day played in this assessment?

3.6.1.1 Manasseh

An excellent example of the above-mentioned is the history of Manasseh who ruled for fifty-five years.

Although the duration of his rule could be taken as indicative of the quality of his statemanship, yet 2 Kings 21 describes him as the most evil of all kings of Judah. The leading theme of the annals of his reign are his transgressions (cf. 2 Chr. 33:1-20). As far as the Deuteronomistic history is concerned, Manasseh was evil and he remained evil until his death (cf. Kings 21). However, the Chronicler sketches Manasseh's conversion while in exile in Nineveh (2 Chr. 33:11-13). The issue is not whether this was a conversion as understood today, but rather whether his conversion should not be translated as a change in his rationalisation concerning the continuance of the Assyrian hegemony. On the other hand, did an existing situation at a later point in time, perhaps demanded a re-thinking of why Manasseh reigned for so many years despite the fact that he is denigrated as being so very evil?

It is important that during the latter part of his rule the situation changed considerably in the Ancient Near East. The hegemony of the Assyrians was drawing to an end. Already other powers were beginning to emerge and one of them would eventually replace the Assyrians. Is it not perhaps a fact that historiographers' view of Manasseh's long period of reign demanded an acceptable explanation? His conversion would then meet the needs of an existing situation. This might quite possibly have been a particular moment in the history of the people. The kings' assessment of the decline of the power of Assyria could also have been subject to the measure and manner of co-operation between

the Davidic royal house and the people of the land or Ouspensky's invisible strand of history.

3.5.2 Levite state administrators

If Nel's (1989:257-271) hypothesis is tenable concerning the Levites being state administrators, the inevitable question is whether Burns' real leaders could not be equated with the *am ha-aretz*. But who were the Davidites? Do they constitute the led, the perfect followers of their invisible leaders? The hypothesis of this article is that the judgement and the assessment of the different Davidic kings might quite possibly have been intimately linked to and influenced by the way in which they toed the line of the *am ha-aretz*.

3.6.2 A stabilising force

Asher (1997:85-86) avers that according to the various references to the *am ha-aretz* the impression is created that they were always loyal to the Davidites and that they always acted as a stabilising factor in Judah. Concurrent with this premise, this article postulates that the group who formed the structures that supported the theocracy (cf. 1 Chr. 23-27; Nel 1991) were not pro-Assyria, pro-Egypt or pro-Babylon. Their allegiance belonged exclusively to the House of David. By supporting and defending the Davidic dynasty of the Southern Kingdom they promoted their own interests, their own future and fortune (cf. inter alia 2 Kings 11:14, 18-20; 15:5; 16:15; 21:24; 2 Chr. 24; 32:13, 19). Ironically, without the Davidic empire there was no reason for their existence. Even more ironic, without their expertise in matters of government, the Davidic kings could not rule effectively.

4. Josiah, Davidite *par excellence*

4.1 Introduction

Certainly one of the very best illustrations of the way that theopolitics has been applied in the Old Testament, is the history of Josiah, scion from the House of David.

4.2 Protégé of the *am ha-aretz*

As the protégé of the *am ha-aretz*, Josiah succeeded his father Amon when only a mere eight years of age (2 Kings 21:24; 2 Chr. 33:25). Despite the fact that *the people of the land* were responsible for the counter *coup d'état* following Amon's slaying, it would appear as if apparently there were no objections when they accepted responsibility for the tutelage of the child king.

4.3 Josiah and the biblical historiographers

The only member of the House of David not denigrated by biblical historiographers, Josiah, is portrayed as a highly acclaimed king. Because of this idealistic view of him and based on Ouspensky's premise of history as well as the hypotheses of Weber and Hoffman, it is the postulate of this article that Josiah was no leader at all. He is an example of the perfect follower. Although to all outward appearances he was chosen by the *am ha-aretz* to continue the Davidic reign and rule of law (2 Chr. 33:25), it is the hypothesis of this article that it was *the people of the land* who formed the real power base. They were the power behind the Davidic throne. Josiah reigned by virtue of the *am ha-aretz* and therefore he could not be faulted but could only be loudly acclaimed.

4.4 Josiah, leader or led?

Josiah was so well trained by his tutors that his rule could not be faulted because he was never given an opportunity to prove his leadership abilities. Apparently he did not attempt to exercise his right to independent rule. In fact, it seems as if he was quite willing to accept the steering power – initially of all the Hebron Levites and later of the Jerusalemites. It is the premise of this article that Josiah's only claim to any form or any kind of fame is first and foremost to be found in the fact that he initially served as a mouthpiece of Hebron and later of Jerusalem. Should this hypothesis be correct, then his flawlessness as leader and the fact that he escaped criticism, were by virtue of his upbringing and training as ward of the *am ha-aretz*. That would cause the policies, politics and the politics of the *am ha-aretz* to belong to him, too. Taking into account their intimate relationship from his earliest childhood years, Josiah possibly did not have the *chutzpah* to take his stand against the real power behind the throne. Indeed Josiah '*did what is pleasing to YHWH*' (2 Chr. 34:1-2) because he had no other choice but to please his masters. Probably he did not even possess the inherent strength to confront or to withstand the *am ha-aretz*.

4.5 Josiah's career

Should we analyse Josiah further, we find that like Manasseh, his career can be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase lasted from the slaying of his father's assassins up to the eighteenth year of his rule. The second phase began with the finding of the Book of the Law by the Jerusalem priests and lasted until the battle of Megiddo where he met his untimely death in 609 BCE.

4.5.1 Phase One

2 Chronicles 3-7 refers to this phase. Judah as well as Jerusalem was religiously purged. Should we accept the Chronicler's claims (2 Chr. 6-7), Josiah enthusiastically carried his cleansing fervour into Samaria and the towns of

Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, Naphtali as well as the ravaged districts around these towns. If we measure these events against Ouspensky's model of history it is very likely that the *am ha-aretz* in the name of Josiah planned and executed a full-scale purge through the former united kingdom of David.

It is a question whether this zealous drive was indeed a religious fervour to clear the land of idolatrous abominations or do we detect a political undertone? Did the situation in the former Northern Kingdom call for a purge? Or did the South need to rethink its situation in terms of the characteristics required of the Davidite on the throne? It is possible to argue that this purge was not a sanctifying religious drive at all, but that it represented a full-scale attempt to occupy territories that the *am ha-aretz* rightfully or wrongfully regarded as part and parcel of the Davidic kingdom. The catharsis during the first phase of his rule was not at all Josiah's religious fervour to purify idolatrous towns and districts. According to the postulate of this article this purge introduced the first steps to realise the prodigious dream of *the people of the land* to re-possess and to re-establish the demarcation of the original Davidic realm. In order to achieve their aim they manipulated the name of God when they used the name of Josiah as leader of their zealous purification and thus once again employed religion to manipulate politics.

4.5.2 Phase Two

Undoubtedly this phase covers the most important part of Josiah's rule. According to his historiographers this phase was initiated in the eighteenth year of his reign (2 Chr. 34:8). It was preceded by a drive to purify the land and the Jerusalem Temple. During this process the Book of Law was found in the precincts of the Temple. This finding would eventually result in a re-deliberation and a re-definition of the role of the cult officials and also of which group should act as overseers of the Davidic dynasty.

Politically this was one of the most crucial periods in the politics of pre-exilic Judah. Like all historiography concerning the Davidites, the Chronicler presents this purge (2 Chr. 34:8-33) as a purely religious act. However, all the indications are there that this purge portrays a transition of power. It is the premise of this article that this purge was in fact a *coup d'etat* during which the seat of power of the *am ha-aretz* was re-established and re-located from Hebron to Jerusalem. From now on the town of Hebron and its Judaeen Levites would no longer be the power behind the throne. The Jerusalem *am ha-aretz* hijacked the Hebronites' hegemony. By extolling the finding of the so-called Book of Law in the Temple precincts, a deceptive religious hue was given to this revolution. From this moment onwards Jerusalem would no longer be the city of David, the city of YHWH, the city of Judah (in that order) with Hebron as the legislature. Jerusalem

now became the legislative and the executive seat of power of whoever appeared on the surface to rule the country.

A study of the results of this power struggle between Hebron and Jerusalem indicates that this struggle determined and also terminated the destiny of Judah and of the House of David. The only influence this struggle initially had on the House of David was political.

Despite the biblical portrayal of Josiah, a study of the politics and of the tension between Hebron and Jerusalem shows that he was indeed never an autonomous king. From that moment when the *am ha-arets* staged the *coup d'état* against his father's assassins, Josiah was but a pawn in the hands of the one or the other secreted force behind the throne. All that happened to Josiah the perfect king, was that, like any other pawn, the hands that manipulated and kept him in check changed because the power behind the throne changed from Hebron to the Jerusalem cult. From that point onwards the Davidites would be the puppets of Jerusalem. To Josiah it would make no difference who his manipulators were and who the actual leaders of the land and its people were. Josiah was indeed a king like no other – only because he was no king.

Their lack of experience and expertise in foreign politics show in the manner the Jerusalemites erroneously assessed international events. Eventually it would be their inexperience and shortsightedness that forced the Southern Kingdom into such a precarious corner that Josiah lost his life in the unequal battle against pharaoh Necho of Egypt. This debacle set Judah on a road of disaster that eventually culminated in defeat by the Chaldeans and in exile in Babylon (cf. Malamat, 1973:267-278).

4.6 God and leadership

Hoffman (1994:85-99) and Amit (1994:28-40) argue that in theopolitics, God's name and his interference in the mundane is used to sanction the leader, his acts of leadership and his abilities to rise to the needs of the situation. Hoffman and Amit do not identify the manipulative force they mention. The question that immediately arises is whether one can equate their unidentified force with the invisible strand of Ouspensky? Or is this unidentified force, this invisible strand of history, not perhaps a certain element in religion that creates tension in the political sphere?

When investigating the appearance and the use of theopolitics in the Old Testament, it is important that the only visible fiat and also the only acceptable and valid judgement of leadership, is the extent to which a leader is perceived to observe God's requirements. The two most pertinent questions thus are: In the eyes of whom or which beholder does the leader meet or fail to meet God's

demands? And in the second place, who or what alleges to have sufficient knowledge of God and his ways to be able to convey his demands, his judgements of a leader? Or is it a mere matter of a political element that rallies around the leader that creates tension by provoking a religious response? Could we, therefore, deduce from the scant information in 2 Kings 21:19-26 and 2 Chronicles 33:21-25 that the *coup d'etat* of the *people of the land* against Amon's assassins was a theopolitical act? Or were theopolitics employed when the *am ha-aretz* intervened on behalf of the Davidic throne?

Gelander (1991:9-15) explores what turned David into an incomparable symbol of ideal kingship and a measuring rod for righteous rule and leadership. He comes to the conclusion that the biblical historiographers felt the need to ascribe theological messages to David and that these messages form a single comprehensive theological concept. It is the postulate of this article that Gelander's theological concept could very well be translated as theopolitics. The theological (or theopolitical) concept historiographers ascribe to David's rule is the portrayal of the manipulative function of religion in politics. Therefore, the primary purpose of David's rule and his leadership abilities should be understood as a theological message clothed in politics. In accordance with Gelander's hypothesis, it is accepted that David's historiographers did not regard his rule as merely the foundlings of a new form of government. His reign represented to them a revolution in the realm of faith and religion.

4. Conclusion

In the power struggle between Hebron and Jerusalem the destiny of Judah and the House of David was determined and also terminated. As long as the *am ha-aretz* remained the power behind the throne, the House of David remained the ruling house albeit in name alone. While the people of the land were the steering force behind the Davidites, all kings were measured according to their faith and obedience to God, because the *am ha-aretz* used the name of God as a manipulating power in politics. How religious they were is no longer possible to ascertain. Except in the case of David, no other king appears to have achieved anything commendable. If a king (like Josiah) followed his leaders obediently, he was allowed to remain the visible sign of rule. If he did not conform to the requirements of the country Levites, he was removed, but his removal would always be clothed in a religious pretext and camouflage.

This conjectured struggle between Hebron and Jerusalem is also seen as the beginning of the end of Judah, one of the most important minor kingdoms in the Ancient Near East. But the struggle to rule the Davidic House and Judah had many repercussions. It is postulated that this struggle caused the defeat at Megiddo and brought about the exile. In the power struggle between the Judaeans Levites of Hebron and the Jerusalem cult, the Jerusalemites were undoubtedly

victorious. But, as so often in history, the cost of their success was too high. Judah and Jerusalem could not last. The Jerusalem cult officials who had staged the *coup d'état* lacked expertise, experience and the essential structures to rule a country or a city-state. Judah and Jerusalem would not recover from the total subjugation and elimination of the Hebronites and the leadership structures erected and maintained by the country Levites. The Jerusalem *coup d'état* assured that there would no longer be any loyal power base for the Davidites outside of Jerusalem. Possibly they hoped that this would mean that all peoples would rally around the House of David. Unfortunately they misconstrued the consequences of their power hunger. Therefore, the Kingdom of Judah quietly disappeared from the scene. The *Kingdom of Jerusalem* was all that eventually remained. Indeed, the temple officials had ensured that Jerusalem became the city-state of the Davidites.

On the national, political and societal structures of Judah *per se* and of Jerusalem in particular, this *coup d'état* caused far-reaching changes. Because the expertise of the country Levites in governmental matters was lost to the monarchy, certainly the most important result of the disbandment of the Levitical bureaucracy is that it left the monarchy too vulnerable to attacks by its enemies.

The history of Old Testament leaders *per se* and particularly of the Davidic dynasty need to be examined further to determine the extent of the application of divine manipulation by biblical historiographers in their assessment of sacral and secular leaders and of situations. In concurrence with Ouspensky's model of two different strands of history, the silent role of these theopolitical manipulators need to be considered very carefully and very seriously, especially because of its relevance to the situation in South Africa today – especially in the light of the findings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee *vis-à-vis* a silent strand of manipulation, exploitation and the terror of an invisible rule of law in the previous regime.

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