



A stone carving from the Temple of Amarna representing Pharaoh Akhentaton (ca. 1380–1312 B.C.) and Queen Nefertiti, probably accompanied by their daughter on the far left, in the act of worshipping the Sun Disc representing the god Aton. The sun's rays terminate in hands, two of which hold the "ankh," the Egyptian hieroglyph and sign for "life."

10 God and the Early Hebrews

In the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, the name "Hebrew" is first applied to the wandering patriarch Abram ("exalted father"), later called Abraham ("father of a multitude" of nations), a ninth-generation descendant of Shem, one of Noah's three sons who is considered to be the progenitor of the Semites. The nomadic character of the early Hebrews, described in several places in the Old Testament, is confirmed by references made in Mesopotamian

documents of the early second millennium B.C. to nomads called "Habiru," a word phonetically identical with "Hebrew" and meaning "wanderer" or "outsider." When the Hebrews finally settled and became a nation, they took the name "Israelites" ("Children of Israel"), just as other Habiru groups became known as Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Midianites.

A. HEBREW ORIGINS: THE PATRIARCHS

The following selections from the Book of Genesis describe the two most important episodes in the patriarchal history of the Hebrews: the wandering of Abraham and his family (about 1800 B.C.) from Ur in Sumer to the promised land of Canaan, and the descent into Egypt (about 1700 B.C.) of a group of Hebrews, fleeing famine, who followed the call of Joseph, son of Jacob (also called Israel) and great-grandson of Abraham. Modern scholars attribute Joseph's rise to power in Egypt, and the hospitable reception of his father's people there, to the presence of the mainly Semitic Hyksos, a multi-ethnic confederation of northern peoples that came to dominate Egypt by the eighteenth century B.C.

Abraham: The First Patriarch

Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren, she had no child.

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go unto the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land; and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south....

Joseph: The Migration to Egypt

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; and I will there make of thee a great nation, I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him: His sons, and his sons' sons with him, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.... All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; ...

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan, and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no

pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan; now, therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

B. BONDAGE AND DELIVERANCE

The Hebrews in Egypt experienced a sudden reversal of their fortunes after about 1570 B.C. when the first pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty succeeded in ousting the Hyksos. Under a pharaoh "which knew not Joseph," the Hebrews became state slaves and were forced to build fortress-cities in the Delta. After approximately a century and a half of oppression, God called on Moses to be his instrument in freeing the Hebrews from bondage. In answer to Moses' request, God tells him that his name YHWH, a form of the verb "to be" that is usually written Yahweh or Jehovah (most English translations of the Old Testament follow the practice, begun by Jewish priests who considered the name too sacred to be pronounced, of substituting the word "Lord"). Shortly after 1300 B.C., Moses led the "mixed multitude" in a dramatic escape across the Sea of Reeds (erroneously translated "Red Sea"), a shallow estuary of the Gulf of Suez, and into "the wilderness" of Sinai.

Bondage in Egypt

And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore

they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor; And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor....

God's Call to Moses

And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Egypt sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.¹ And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will not turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now, therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppressions wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

1. Named Sinai elsewhere in the Book of Genesis

And Moses said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations....

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall come to pass that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians....

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers....

The Escape

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations....

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall surely carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night....

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with a high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea....

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, has thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore has thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear yet not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, yet shall see them no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace....

And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.

C. THE SINAI COVENANT

Because it led to the formation of the nation of Israel, the Hebrews looked upon their deliverance from bondage in Egypt as the decisive divine act in their history. The sequel to the Exodus was the Sinai pact or covenant between Yahweh and the nation of Israel, which replaced the older covenants made with individual patriarchs such as Abraham. From this time on, the Israelites considered themselves the chosen people of the Lord, who would protect them in return for obedience to his Law.

Like an eagle bearing its young on its wings, Yahweh brought the people to Mount Sinai for the purpose of announcing, through Moses, the laws of the covenant. These laws are of two types, absolute and conditional. Absolute law is best illustrated by the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments: it expresses unconditional demands and general principles. Conditional law, on the other hand, is case law such as we have seen in the Code of Hammurabi: its object is the detailed regulation of society—if or when a circumstance occurs, then a specific legal consequence will follow. Most of the many laws of the Covenant Code, which follows the Decalogue, are of this conditional type. Because they reflect a settled agricultural rather than a nomadic life, most scholars conclude that they are from a period several centuries later than Moses and the Decalogue. They bear the stamp of the later settled life in Palestine, where Babylonian cultural influences—including law—had long been felt. This is thought to explain certain similarities between the Covenant Code and the Code of Hammurabi.

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai... and there Israel encamped before the mountain. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." ...

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments, and be ready by the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death; no hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." So Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day; do not go near a woman."

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up....

The Ten Commandments

And God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"You shall have no other gods before me.²

"You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

"You shall not kill.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's." ...

2. The existence of other gods is here not denied.

Various Laws of the Covenant Code

"Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons and daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out alone. But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

"When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt faithlessly with her. If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

"Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him treacherously, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

"Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

"Whoever steals a man, whether he sells him or is found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

"Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.

"When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and the man does not die but keeps his bed, then if the man rises again and walks abroad with his staff, he that struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed.

"When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be punished. But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be punished; for the slave is his money.

"When men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no harm follows, the one who hurt her shall be fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe....³

3. This law, similar to those of Hammurabi (see Selection 4), reflects social progress. It substitutes a stipulated legal punishment appropriate to the injury for the practice of the blood feud common to many archaic societies. Compare, for example, the boastful Song of Lamech in Genesis 4:23-24: "I have slain a man for wounding me, / a young man for striking me. / If Cain is avenged sevenfold, / truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

"When a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard....

"For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for ass, for sheep, for clothing, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, 'That is it,' the case of both parties shall come before God; he whom God shall condemn shall pay double to his neighbor....

"If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall give the marriage present for her, and make her his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equivalent to the marriage present for virgins.

"You shall not permit a witch to live....

"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

"If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear it, for I am compassionate....

"The first-born of your sons you shall give to me. You shall do likewise with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its dam; on the eighth day you shall give it to me....

"Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. You shall keep the feast of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the feast of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God....

"The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.

"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk...."⁴

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do." And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.

D. THE PEOPLE DEMAND A KING

"To govern us like all the nations"

The ineffectiveness of the loose Israelite tribal confederacy in the face of danger became fully apparent in the eleventh century. By that time the Philistines, who shortly after 1200 B.C. had settled along the coast of what is now called the Gaza Strip, were threatening to conquer all of Palestine. Israel's fortunes reached their lowest ebb around 1050 B.C. when the Philistines destroyed the central sanctuary of the confederacy at Shiloh and carried away the Ark of the Covenant as a trophy of war. The resulting demand of the people for a more effective type of centralized government was reinforced by the prevalence of injustice under the weak rule of judges. "In those days," we read in Judges 17:6, "there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." This desire to end lawlessness is touched on in the beginning of the following selection, in which the great prophet-judge Samuel, before reluctantly giving in to the demand of the people for a king, presents the conservative argument against strong, centralized government.

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.... Yet his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, hearken to their voice; only, you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking a king from him. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make him implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your menservants and maidservants, and the best of your cattle and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you

will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day."

But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No! but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles." And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to their voice, and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

E. THE UNITED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

"A great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth"

The beginning of the Hebrew monarchy under Saul (1020–1000 B.C.) was not auspicious. The prey of his own moody nature, jealous of the fame of the boy-hero David, and plagued by tribal disloyalty and the opposition of Samuel and the conservatives, Saul died tragically in his last unsuccessful battle with the Philistines. During the reign of the popular David (1000–961 B.C.), both the foreign and the domestic problems of Israel were solved. The Philistines were defeated and restricted to a narrow coastal plain, and among Israel's other neighbors, from the Gulf of Aqaba in the south to the Euphrates in the north, only the Phoenicians were not subdued. Tribal independence was greatly weakened when David established a national capital and a centralized administration at Jerusalem, a Canaanite stronghold that he captured despite the boast of its inhabitants that even "the blind and the lame" could defend it. Royal administrators replaced the elders and judges of the confederacy period, and a census of all Israel was taken, to be used as a basis for military service, taxes, and forced labor. David shrewdly provided a religious sanction for the new monarchy by transferring with great pomp and ceremony the recovered Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and by building a royal shrine—the forerunner of Solomon's great Temple—that he placed in the hands of an official priesthood. Thus was established the doctrine of the divine origin of David's monarchy and that of his successors.

David's son Solomon (961–922 B.C.) completed the work of his father in establishing an oriental type of centralized monarchy. Tribal loyalties were further weakened by the division of Israel into twelve administrative districts, which did not always correspond to the old tribal territories. Each district was supervised by a royal official, who was also responsible for provisioning the royal household during one month of the year. The construction of the Temple, together with a palace complex, government buildings, and "store cities," required the frequent levying of taxes and an oppressive program of forced labor. The "chariot cities" served to protect the trade that flowed through Palestine from places such as Egypt, Arabia, Phoenicia, and Cilicia (Kue). In cooperation with the Phoenicians of Tyre, Solomon built a trading fleet to

exploit the Red Sea area, and the "hard questions" that the Queen of Sheba travelled a thousand miles from southwest Arabia to put to Solomon are thought to have been connected with Solomon's monopoly of trade in this area.

Yet as Samuel had foretold when he sought to dissuade the people from their desire to have a king, the price of monarchy was high—limitations on freedom and exploitation by a despot. The resentment caused by Solomon's oppressive policies led to a revolution at his death that split the kingdom into two parts: Israel (or Ephraim) in the north and Judah in the south. Threatened by the rise of new great empires, these two weak kingdoms were to have little rest before Israel fell to the Assyrians (722 B.C.) and Judah to the Chaldeans (586 B.C.). Unlike the northern Israelites, the Judeans, or Jews, survived their exile in Babylonia and returned to their homeland after Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon (539 B.C.) and liberated them. From the turmoil of these years rose the great Hebrew prophets of doom and righteousness, who saw the history of their people as one of stubborn rebellion against "the one eternal, living God [who] is working out his own sovereign purpose for the good of his creatures, first for his chosen people, and through them for the rest of mankind."⁵

"David Reigned Over All Israel"

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past when Saul was king over us, it was you that led out and brought in Israel; and the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years....

And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.... And David built the city round about from the Millo inward. And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.

And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons who built David a house. And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel....

So David went and brought up the ark of God ... to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house

⁵ Burrows, "Ancient Israel," in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Robert C. Denton
7, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 128.

of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the horn....

Now when the king dwelt in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your son after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men; but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.'" In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David....

After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Methegh-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

And he defeated Moab,... And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.

David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. And David took from him a thousand and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers; and David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left enough for a hundred chariots. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew twenty-two thousand men of the Syrians. Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus; and the Syrians become servants to David and brought tribute. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went....

When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to greet him, and to congratulate him; for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with

him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze; these also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold which he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

And David won a name for himself. When he returned, he slew eighteen thousand Edomites in the valley of Salt. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.

So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and equity to all his people....

"King Solomon: His High Officials"

King Solomon was king over all Israel, and these were his high officials: Azariah the son of Zadok was the priest; Elihoreph and Ahijah the sons of Shisha were secretaries; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; Asariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan was priest and king's friend; Ahishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram the son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor.

Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each man had to make provision for one month in the year. These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; Ben-deker, in Makaz....

Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides harts, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl. For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates; and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon....

"The House Solomon Built for the Lord"

Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram always loved David. And Solomon sent word to Hiram, "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. And so I purpose to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set upon your throne in your place, shall build the house of my name.' Now therefore command that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me; and my servants will join your servants, and I will pay you for your services such wages as you set; for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians."

When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly, and said, "Blessed be the Lord this day, who has given to David a wise son to be over this great people."... So Hiram supplied Solomon with all the timber of cedar and cypress that he desired, while Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty thousand cors of beaten oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year. And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and the two of them made a treaty.

King Solomon raised a levy of forced labor out of all Israel; and the levy numbered thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in relays; they would be a month in Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the levy. Solomon also had seventy thousand burden-bearers and eighty thousand hewers of stone in the hill country, besides Solomon's three thousand three hundred chief officers who were over the work, who had charge of the people who carried on the work. At the king's command, they quarried out great, costly stones in order to lay the foundation of the house with dressed stones. So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the men of Gebal did the hewing and prepared the timber and the stone to build the house.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord. The house which King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high [90 ∞ 30 ∞ 45 feet].... He was seven years in building it....

"Solomon Excelled All Kings in Riches and Wisdom"

King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent with the fleet his servants, seamen who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon; and they went to Ophir, and brought from there gold, to the amount of four hundred and twenty talents; and they brought it to King Solomon.

Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king which he could not explain to her. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings which he offered at the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.

And she said to the king, "The report was true which I heard in my own land of your affairs and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me; your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report which I heard. Happy are your wives!

Happy are these servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness." Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices, and precious stones; never again came such an abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon....

And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon. So she turned and went back to her own land, with her servants.

Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, besides that which came from the traders and from the traffic of the merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and from the governors of the land. King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; ... The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with the finest gold. The throne had six steps, and at the back of the throne was a calf's head, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, while twelve lions stood there, one on each end of a step on the six steps. The like of it was never made in any kingdom. All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver, it was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. And Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty; and so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

"Solomon Did What Was Evil in the Sight of the Lord"

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women: the daughter of Pharaoh, and Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods"; Solomon clung to these in love. He had seven

hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

F. JEREMIAH: PROPHET OF THE NEW COVENANT

Between roughly 750 and 550 B.C., what is called the "prophetic revolution" raised the religion of the Hebrews to new heights. The great prophets who arose during these two centuries "spoke for" (from the Greek word prophetes) Yahweh in condemning social injustice and the general unfaithfulness of the people of Israel and Judah to the covenant with Yahweh. "I am filled with power," proclaimed Micah, "with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel its sin" (3:8). Amos, the first of these "literary" prophets, was a peasant shepherd of Judah who travelled to the northern kingdom of Israel to denounce the greed, violence, luxury, and idolatry that flourished there and to predict, as a consequence, the destruction of that kingdom by Assyria, called by Isaiah "the rod of Yahweh's anger." Driven back to the south, Amos became the first of the prophets to write down his message of Yahweh's demand for social justice and adherence to his covenant. Amos' successors among the prophets of the eighth century—Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah—elaborated on the same message that Micah summed up in a statement often cited as the essence of all higher religion: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:8)

One of the greatest of the prophets—so great that later generations of Jews referred to him as The Prophet—was Jeremiah. His career (626–586 B.C.) coincided with the troubled era that ended with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. and the exile of an estimated fifteen thousand leading Jews (Jeremiah escaped to Egypt). As illustrated by the following selections, Jeremiah's teachings in part echo those of the eighth-century prophets in condemning social injustice, "burnt offerings and sacrifices," and going "after other gods." Like Isaiah before him, Jeremiah affirms that Yahweh will save a "remnant" of his dispersed people and will raise up a king of the House of David to "execute justice and righteousness in the land." Such prophecies of the coming of a Messiah, "the Anointed One," were to sustain the hopes of the Jews for centuries and were also to prepare the way for Jesus.

But Jeremiah's most profound expression of hope is his preaching of a "new covenant" between God and his people. God destroys and overthrows but he also builds anew; he is like the potter who reworks the clay of a spoiled vessel into something new and better. The old vessel was the Sinai Covenant announced by Moses, which bound the nation as a whole. It failed because it became overlaid with ritual and ceremony formalized by priests and centered in the Temple. According to Jeremiah, God now demands a new covenant not with the nation but with each individual. External conformity is useless; what is needed is a moral and spiritual renewal on the part of each individual. Religion is now a matter of a person's own heart and conscience. No longer is the Lord to be viewed as he had described himself in the Book of Exodus: "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (see the section entitled "The Ten Commandments" in Selection 10C). Such teachings brought Jeremiah into conflict with the priests: "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie." Ultimately, however, his teachings made it possible for non-Jews to accept Judaism since they placed no stress on nationality or race. We know that Jesus admired Jeremiah above all other prophets, and his Sermon on the Mount was a profound expression of the new concept that God's law is written upon the individual heart rather than upon tablets of stone.

"Amend Your Ways and Your Doings"

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'

"For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever.

"Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the Lord. Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, says the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.⁶

"As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I do not hear you. Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven [Astarte]; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. Is it I whom they provoke? says the Lord. Is it not themselves, to their own confusion? Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched."

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the days that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.' But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to me, or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

"So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips....'

"You shall say to them, Thus says the Lord:

When men fall, do they not rise again?

If one turns away, does he not return?

6. The northern Kingdom of Israel, conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. Ephraim was the most important of its tribes, each of whose leading people were deported ("the ten lost tribes of Israel"). In tradition, those who remained behind became mixed with alien colonists and were despised as "Samaritans" (from Samaria, capital of the Kingdom of Israel) by the Jews of the Kingdom of Judah.

Why then has this people turned away
 in perpetual backsliding?
 They hold fast to deceit,
 they refuse to return.
 I have given heed and listened,
 but they have not spoken aright;
 no man repents of his wickedness,
 saying, 'What have I done?'
 Every one turns to his own course,
 like a horse plunging headlong into battle.
 Even the stork in the heavens
 knows her times;
 and the turtledove, swallow, and crane
 keep the time of their coming;
 But my people know not
 the ordinance of the Lord.

"How can you say, 'We are wise,
 and the law of the Lord is with us'?
 But, behold, the false pen of the scribes
 has made it into a lie.
 The wise men shall be put to shame,
 they shall be dismayed and taken;
 lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord,
 and what wisdom is in them?
 Therefore I will give their wives to others
 and their fields to conquerors,
 because from the least to the greatest
 every one is greedy for unjust gain;
 from prophet to priest
 every one deals falsely...."

"Like the Clay in the Potter's Hand"

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

Then the word of the Lord came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? says the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will repent of the good

which I had intended to do to it. Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'Thus says the Lord, Behold I am shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.'

But they say, 'That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.' ...

The Remnant and a Righteous King

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, says the Lord.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is righteousness.'

"Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when men shall no longer say, 'As the Lord lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' Then they shall dwell in their own land....

The New Covenant

"Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. In those days they shall no longer say:

The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge.

But every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon

their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

War and International Diplomacy

Societies in the Ancient Near East developed their distinctive identities as a result of local conditions and regional interactions, as well as through the mutual influence that they came to exert over each other. The development of a "global" long-distance network during the early Bronze Age was one of the signal achievements of these early civilizations. For a time, this network created such a high degree of integration that rulers of the different states regarded themselves as comprising a "brotherhood of kings." While this early international system did not long survive the middle of the second millennium B.C., the major Ancient Near Eastern states continued to engage with each other across vast distances through diplomacy, gift-exchange, warfare, and the movement of people and ideas.

11 Amarna Letters

A Brotherhood of Kings

The ancient kingdoms of Egypt, Babylonia, Mittani (northern Syria), and the Hittites were the international superpowers of their time. By the latter part of the fourteenth century B.C., they had developed such a degree of integration through long-distance diplomatic and economic ties that one may speak of an early Ancient Near Eastern world order. The so-called Amarna letters, a collection of some 350 cuneiform tablets found on the site of Pharaoh Akhenaten's new capital El-Amarna (See Selection 9), attest to the diplomatic relationships that the Kingdom of Egypt maintained with the wider world. Mostly written in Semitic Akkadian cuneiform, these letters illustrate how a shared scribal tradition among the Near Eastern courts made possible a meaningful international network. Those letters, addressed to and received from foreign rulers whom