

Yx18 – The Law Lie 5 – Leaders

With the previous four posts in this series, I tried to show at least a little of the history of some features of the Law Lie (itself part of the God Lie), including the lies:

- That morality is defined by the gods,
- That justice is the jurisdiction of the gods,
- That judges are judged by the gods,
- That customs were created by the gods,
- That oaths are binding when sworn to the gods,
- That covenants can be established with the gods...

In this post, I want to show a little of the history of an additional feature of the Law Lie, namely, *the lie that leaders are chosen by the gods*.

In reality, closer to the truth is that social animals (such as wolves, monkeys, and humans) form groups, members of each group develop concepts of morality, justice, and customs through experience, and within each group, commonly a leader emerges. For most social animals, this leader (commonly called “the alpha male”) is usually the strongest member of the group, e.g., King Gilgamesh.

As humans became more knowledgeable, most people probably hoped that the leader would be the most intelligent member of the group. Such a hope would be consistent with the Sumerian proverb (from more than 4,000 years ago!):

Strength cannot keep pace with intelligence.

There are, however, many forms of intelligence, and history has unfortunately shown that human alpha males have commonly excelled in deceit, evasion, and treachery.

In this series of posts dealing with the Mountainous God Lie, I’ve been trying to provide evidence to support the indictment that examples of such treacherous alpha males were those who fabricated the Old Testament (OT), whom I’ve been identifying as Ezra and co-conspirators (abbreviated to Ezra & C-C). Evidence suggests that Ezra & C-C collected and concocted fictitious stories (e.g., about Moses), assembled them to form the OT, and used the result to rule the Jewish people on behalf of their Persian masters.

In subsequent posts, I'll try to provide evidence to support the indictments that Christian conspirators (primarily “Saint” Paul, “the butcher emperor” Constantine, and a host of popes), Muslim conspirators (particularly Muhammad and subsequent caliphs), and Mormon conspirators (especially Sydney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young) followed the example set by Ezra & C-C to rule those they had similarly duped.

LEADERS CLAIMING TO BE GODS

It doesn't seem outrageous that primitive people would accept the idea that their leaders were chosen by the gods. In the worldview of primitive people, the gods control everything; therefore, the people probably reasoned that, since some alpha male had become their leader, it must have been because the gods had chosen him to rule – illustrating, once again, how preposterous conclusions can logically follow from false premisses. In fact, the first examples in Western history suggest even more preposterous conclusions: given that their leaders had life-and-death power over the people, they apparently accepted their leaders' claims that the leaders were gods, themselves (sometimes, “resurrected” gods), or at least, partially gods.

One example is the leader who united Upper and Lower Egypt in about 3100 BCE. His name is uncertain:¹ he has been identified as Menes (or Meni or Min), but he may have been pharaoh Hor-Aha or his father Narmer. Whoever he was, he apparently claimed to be a re-incarnation of the god Horus (the son of the god Osiris and the goddess Isis, who in turn may have been “deified” earlier rulers). Horus was typically represented as a falcon, which soars so high “into the heavens” that it becomes invisible. He's shown in many details in what's been called “[the world's oldest historical document](#)”, the Narmer Palette (shown on the next page); the falcon Horus appears prominently in the left side of the figure (to the right of Narmer), but if details of the Palette are examined, many depictions of Horus can be found. And I'll add that, as interested readers can find,² interpretation of the Palette has been controversial during most of the century since it was found, and in fact, full interpretation of “the world's oldest historical document” is still unsettled.

¹ See, e.g., <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meni>.

² See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer_Palette.



Subsequently, essentially all Egyptian pharaohs similarly claimed to be the resurrected or re-incarnated Horus, i.e., they claimed to be gods. Approximately 3,000 years later, Christian clerics claimed that their Jesus was the son of god (or even god, himself, in human form), and approximately 5,000 years after Menes, the Japanese were still claiming that their emperor was a god.

Returning to the ancient past, an example from Mesopotamia of a leader claiming to be a god or related to a god is “the shepherd king”, King Dumuzi (c. 2800 BCE). He was claimed to be son of the Lord of the Earth (Enki) and to be married to the fertility goddess Inanna (subsequently called Ishtar, Aphrodite, and in northern Europe, Oestre or Ester, from which the English word ‘Easter’ and associated celebrations are derived). Later, in ancient Babylonia (and in the OT), Dumuzi was called Tammuz; he was worshipped as the god of spring fertility,³ as was Osiris in Egypt.

³ See, e.g., <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2734&C=2445>.

For readers of these posts, a more familiar example of a leader claiming to be a god or related to a god is King Gilgamesh (c. 2700 BCE, king of the city of Uruk, spelled Erech in the OT). In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh is claimed to be “two-thirds god, one-third human”, which is genetically impossible. In his stimulating analysis of *The Epic*,⁴ Bob Trubshaw suggests that, with such a description, Gilgamesh is being depicted as the planet that we call Mercury, which the Greeks called “the messenger of the gods”, which moves through only two-thirds of the Zodiac, and which the Sumerians might have concluded spends the other third of its time on Earth as King Gilgamesh!

LEADERS CLAIMING TO BE CHOSEN BY THE GODS

Speculations aside, subsequent written records clearly show the lie (or, more generously for ancient people, “the mistake”) that leaders were chosen by the gods. The oldest surviving example seems to be the claim made by “the world’s first social reformer”, Urukagina, who became “lugal [ruler] of Lagash” in about 2400 BCE. In the depiction of conditions prior to his reforms (some of which I included in an earlier post in this series)⁵ clay tablets state the following, in which someone else (maybe the translator) has added the notes in parentheses and I’ve added the notes in brackets, [...]:

When the god Ningirsu, the warrior of the god Enlil [En = lord; lil = wind; therefore Enlil = Lord of the Wind, similar to the wind god Odin, called Woden in Germanic and Anglo-Saxon versions of Norse mythology and whom many of us still honor every Wednesday = Wodnesdaeg = Woden’s Day], granted the lugal-ship of Lagash to Urukagina, picking him out of the entire population, he [Ningirsu] enjoined upon him (the restoration of) the divinely decreed way of life of former days. He [Urukagina] carried out the instructions of his divine lugal, Ningirsu.

Happiness is having the sky god’s warrior god chose you to rule! Incidentally, notice also that (consistent with my earlier post on [the lie that customs were created by the gods](#))⁶ Urukagina described his community’s customs as “the divinely decreed way of life of former days.”

⁴ Available at <http://www.indigogroup.co.uk/edge/gilgamsh.htm>.

⁵ At <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2008/09/basic-ideas-borrowed-for-bible.html>.

⁶ At <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2009/03/law-lie-3-customs.html>.

A second written example of the lie that leaders are chosen by the gods appears in the law code of Ur-Nammu, written in Sumerian in about 2100 BCE. Its prologue includes:⁷

After An [king of the gods] and Enlil had turned over the Kingship of Ur to Nanna [sure they did!] at that time did Ur-Nammu, son born of Ninsun [a goddess, the “lady wild cow”], for his beloved mother who bore him, in accordance with his principles of equity and truth... Then did Ur-Nammu the mighty warrior, king of Ur, king of Sumer and Akkad, by the might of Nanna, lord of the city, and in accordance with the true word of Utu [the Sun god and god of justice], establish equity in the land...

Still another example appears in the law code of Lipit-Ishtar,⁸ who ruled the first dynasty of Isin from about 1934–1924 BCE:⁹

When Anu [same as An, the king of the gods] and Enlil had called Lipit-Ishtar, Lipit-Ishtar the wise shepherd whose name had been pronounced by Nunamnir [another name for Enlil], to the princship of the land in order to establish justice in the land, to banish complaints, to turn back enmity and rebellion by force of arms, and to bring well-being to the Sumerians and Akkadians, then I, Lipit-Ishtar, the humble shepherd of Nippur, the stalwart farmer of Ur, who abandons not Eridu, the suitable lord of Erech, king of Isin, king of Sumer and Akkad, who am fit for the heart of [the goddess] Inanna [but, come to think of it, I’m not that “humble”!], established justice in Sumer and Akkad in accordance with the word of Enlil.

Probably the most famous example from ancient Mesopotamia, however, is the claim by Hammurabi, king of Babylon from c.1795–1750 BCE and the first king of the Babylonian Empire, who had the following written in the preamble to his law code:¹⁰

When Anu the Sublime (King of the Anunaki [which seems to mean “King of the gods”]) and Bel (the lord of Heaven and earth, who decreed the fate of the land) assigned to Marduk (the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness [for the Babylonians, Marduk replaced Enlil as the sky god]) dominion over earthly man and made him great among the Igigi [the host of gods], they called Babylon by his illustrious name [maybe that means that cities were “male” – whereas, nowadays, cities are commonly considered “female”], made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it, whose foundations are laid so solidly as those of heaven and earth.

⁷ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Ur-Nammu.

⁸ See <http://www.re-quest.net/g2g/historical/laws/lipit-ishtar/>.

⁹ Copied from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lipit-Ishtar>.

¹⁰ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi.

Then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak, so that I should rule over the black-headed people like [i.e., “as does”] Shamash [similar to the Sumerian god Utu, the Sun god and god of justice], and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.

Many other examples are available, some of which I showed in earlier posts in this series. Thus, in earlier posts I quoted from tablets and stelae demonstrating:

- 1) That “the Alexander the Great of ancient Egypt”, Thothmes III (c.1480–1425 BCE), claimed that he was chosen to rule by the chief Egyptian god of the time, Amen-Ra,
- 2) That the ruler of the Assyrian Empire from 1115–1077 BCE, Tiglath-Pileser I, claimed he ruled on behalf of his chief god, Ashur, and
- 3) That even Cyrus the Great, ruler of the Persian Empire from 559–530 BCE, claimed he conquered Babylon because:

...he [the god Marduk] pronounced the name Cyrus, king of Anshan, declared him... to be(come) the ruler of all the world.

Consequently, when Cyrus freed the Jews (permitting them to return from Babylon to “the promised land”) and when subsequent Persian Emperors gave power over the Jewish people to the Jewish priests (who in turn were under the Persian governor!), the priests certainly didn’t set a precedent by claiming (as they wrote in their OT) that their god (Yahweh) had chosen prior Jewish leaders: leaders had been making similar claims for at least the previous 2500 years!

The redactors of the OT (i.e., Ezra & C-C) did, however, take such silliness to an extreme. They apparently re-worked, re-invented, and re-wrote essentially the entire history of the Hebrews and their neighbors, claiming:

- That everything was under control of their creator god,
- That he dictated and controlled the past, present, and future,
- That he had “personally” chosen the Hebrews as “his people”, and (surprise, surprise)
- That he had chosen them as his priests.

Their rewrite of Jewish “history” (i.e., the resulting books in the OT, from *Genesis* up through *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*) is such blatant theological propaganda, such a pack of priestly fabrications, such a distortion of reality, such balderdash, that to anyone whose mind hasn’t been warped by religious indoctrination, the result is simply one humongous pile of BS.

CLERICAL CONCOCTIONS ABOUT CHOOSING LEADERS

Below, I’ll try to illustrate what I mean. First, though, I’d like to make a couple of general comments. Then, my plan is to ease into at least a cursory examination of the “humongous pile of BS” contained in the next seven “books” of the OT that follow the *Pentateuch*.

In my first general comment, I’ll diminish my criticism of Ezra & C-C. As a way of introduction, consider the final paragraph of an article¹¹ by Daniel Lazare published in the March 2002 issue of *Harper’s Magazine* and entitled “Archaeology Refutes the Bible’s Claim to History”:

Does this mean that monotheism was nothing more than a con, a ruse cooked-up by ambitious priests in order to fool a gullible population? As with any religion, cynicism and belief, realpolitik and genuine fervor, all came together in a way that we can barely begin to untangle. To say that the Jerusalem priesthood intentionally cooked-up a phony history is to assume that the priests possessed a modern concept of historical truth and falsehood, and surely this is not so. As the biblical minimalist Thomas L. Thompson has noted, the Old Testament’s authors did not subscribe to a sequential chronology but to some more complicated arrangement in which the great events of the past were seen as taking place in some foggy time “before time”. The priests, after all, were not inventing a past; they were inventing a present and, they trusted, a future.

Stating it differently – and being as generous to the clerical authors of the OT as I can stomach – I’d say this: Similar to essentially everyone living at the time (except followers of Confucius and the Buddha, some atheistic Greek philosophers, and no doubt other atheists who had sufficient presence of mind to keep their views on “the god idea” to themselves – so they’d be able to keep their heads attached to their bodies!), the Jewish clerics who were living in Babylon during the fifth century BCE and who had learned from the Persians about their all-powerful creator god (Ahura Mazda) were certain that the creator god controlled everything – past, present, and future.

¹¹ Copied from [http://www.worldagesarchive.com/Reference_Links/False_Testament_\(Harpers\).htm](http://www.worldagesarchive.com/Reference_Links/False_Testament_(Harpers).htm).

Starting from that faulty premiss, Ezra & C-C apparently challenged themselves to understand why they were losers in Babylon rather than winners in their homeland. With their experiences (no doubt) of being punished by their own fathers when they were children and had done something contrary to his will, they concluded “the obvious”: the Jewish people must have done something that had offended the all-powerful creator god. Whereupon, given some fables, myths, songs, and similar known by the Hebrews and given that they quite likely possessed scrolls that they repeatedly describe in the OT as the “**Annals of the Kings...**”, the clerics then apparently filled in details with “explanations” of what they assumed the Hebrews had done wrong, “justifying” their current predicament.

In my other general comment, I want to compare clerical *vs.* other leaders. Thus, although earlier Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Hittite, Assyrian, Persian... leaders claimed that the gods chose them to lead, yet such (political) leaders undoubtedly backed-up their claims with their weapons and warriors, relying on the law of the jungle that “might makes right”. Clerics, however, are a breed apart.

Just as Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Hindu priests had done for thousands of years earlier (and to varying degrees of success), the Jewish clerics in Babylon apparently agreed with the Sumerian proverb “**strength cannot keep pace with intelligence.**” In particular, Ezra & C-C apparently concluded that, instead of trying to rule the returning Israelites on behalf of their Persian masters by force (which would require bravery, a virtue deficient in essentially all clerics), they saw that they could rule the people by capturing their imagination. Again, the result is the OT.

Subsequent clerical con artists similarly concocted the New Testament (NT), the Koran, and the Book of Mormon. In times past, clerics were able to get away with fabricating such stories, because the majority of people were superstitious – and today, a horrible number of people still are. As a result, claims that God had chosen a particular person as leader (e.g., Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, Joseph Smith) could be “corroborated” simply by fabricating stories of sundry supernatural stunts. As an example (as given in the OT), God obviously chose Moses, for otherwise, how could he have caused the Egyptians so much trouble (including parting the Reed Sea, drowning the Egyptian army) and how could Moses have provided the Hebrews with so much (including water from rocks in the desert and manna from the heavens)?

Similar “justification” was used to “prove” Joshua parted the Jordan River (when it was in flood, no less), used trumpets to blow down the walls of Jericho, and to top it off, made the Sun stand still “for about a full day” – for in those days, doncha know, the Sun moved around a nonspinning, flat-plate Earth! And by the way, there’s no doubt that the Sun did stand still, because (*Joshua 10, 13*) “**the event is recorded in the Scroll of the Upright One**”, and everyone who is anyone knows that “the Upright One” never lied! ☺

Readers who can tolerate reading such silliness will encounter a continuous string of such supernatural nonsense throughout the Bible, both in the OT and the NT. Thus, similar supernatural silliness “supports” the claim that God chose Jesus, who (not to be outdone by Moses and Joshua) walked on water, turned water to wine, fed thousands with two loaves of bread, cured people of infirmities by driving out evil spirits, and brought people (including himself) back to life. As Marilla Young Ricker summarized:

Man has asked for the truth and the Church has given him miracles. He has asked for knowledge, and the Church has given him theology. He has asked for facts, and the Church has given him the Bible. This foolishness should stop.

Actually, though, Ricker’s criticism certainly shouldn’t be restricted to “the [Catholic] Church”. For more than 100 generations, people have been indoctrinated with the idea that the foolishness concocted by Ezra & C-C is “the truth”. That is, the OT is the foundation not only of Judaism but also of Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism. In the later religions, additional silliness is added, such as fictitious supernatural-beings called “angels”:

- Informing the mother of Jesus that she would bear a savior who was the son of the first symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in the original void that led to the Big Bang (i.e., “God”),
- Informing “the prophet” Muhammad about the desires of the same omnipotent God (who, if he were omnipotent, could have no desires!), and
- Informing Joseph Smith where the same omniscient God had hidden a “golden Bible” (who, if he were omniscient, would have known that the original inhabitants of the America were not the lost tribes of Israel and that his choice of Joseph Smith as his “prophet” would be a disaster, since even the people and police of New York State knew that he was a “gold digger”, a con artist, and a philanderer!).

Nowadays, for some strange reason, whenever such claimed supernatural stunts are investigated scientifically, they're found to be fraudulent, apparently designed to increase clerical power. Further, when scientists propose to test such claims, Christian and Mormon clerics still commonly repeat the admonition reportedly made by Jesus (e.g., *Matthew 4, 7*):

You are not to put the Lord your God to the test.

It's understandable why Christian and Mormon clerics would advocate such a policy (and I certainly prefer their policy over the policy advocated in both the OT and the Koran, namely, "kill the unbelievers"), but perhaps clerics of all the Abrahamic religions would like to explain why it conflicts with the procedure allegedly followed by Gideon, who repeatedly required God to produce evidence, e.g., starting at *Judges 6, 36*:

Gideon said to God, "If you really intend to use me to deliver Israel, as you promised, then give me a sign as proof. Look, I am putting a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece, and the ground around it is dry, then I will be sure that you will use me to deliver Israel, as you promised." The Lord did as he asked. When he got up the next morning, he squeezed the fleece, and enough dew dripped from it to fill a bowl. Gideon said to God, "Please do not get angry at me, when I ask for just one more sign. Please allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make only the fleece dry, while the ground around it is covered with dew." That night God did as he asked. Only the fleece was dry and the ground around it was covered with dew.

I'd say: "Good for Gideon!" Unfortunately, though, his subjecting his god to such tests is about the only praiseworthy aspect of his bloody career (as described in the OT), and even that praise should be tempered, since he erred by not making the results of his tests public knowledge and by not waiting for independent confirmation of his experimental results before acting on them, e.g., as given at *Judges 8, 17*, by executing the men of the city of Penuel for not believing him.

Apparently, though (at least according to the authors of the OT), the test was sufficiently convincing (at least for Gideon) for him to lead his men to attack the Midianite army and to personally murder their kings (*Judges 8, 21*). In turn, according to the story, that "success" was sufficient for the Israelites to offer Gideon authority over them, saying (*Judges 8, 22*)

Rule over us – you, your son, and your grandson. For you have delivered us from Midian's power.

Gideon, however, refused (at least, so the clerical authors claim), saying:

I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.

In essence, that's the theme of *The Book of Judges*, a theme contained in its fictitious tales about Gideon, Samson, and other brutes (with the Samson myth being a Hebrew plagiarism of the myth about the superhuman and subsequent Sun-god Hercules, 'Samson' being a Hebrew word for 'Sun'). Thus, the reader is repeatedly told: **In those days, Israel had no king.** Instead, the priests ruled (as judges) – at least, according to the fantasies of the authors.

In the next several books of the OT, we learn about the kings whom God allegedly chose to rule the Jewish people. To start the story, in *Ruth* we meet the great grandmother of King David, i.e., Ruth, over whom a lot of ink has been uselessly spilled. On the one side, detractors of the story point out that Ruth was a Moabitess, and therefore (consistent with one of the alleged proclamations by Moses), she wouldn't have been permitted to join the Jewish religion [allegedly showing that the Laws of Moses weren't known to the author(s) of *Ruth* or that the clerical authors were just sloppy]. But on the other side, defenders of (or "apologists for") the OT point out that the Moabite restriction from Moses was applicable only to males (women of course not being "real people", according to the misogynist clerical authors).

Yet, all that aside, the story of *Ruth* is one of the few stories (is it the only story?) in the OT showing love and cooperation between women; it's therefore a most welcome relief from the male mayhem, murder, and misogyny that dominate the rest of the OT.

More of such mayhem, murder, and misogyny appears in the *First Book of Samuel* (i.e., *1 Samuel*), in which we're introduced to another of the real heroes of the clerics' tales, i.e., fellow clerics (or prophets), such as Moses, Joshua, and now Samuel, who wasn't a king but a "**prophet of the Lord**". I'll skip some of the earlier supernatural stunts that Samuel allegedly performed and, instead, start with the story that, when Samuel was old and his sons became judges who perverted justice, the elders of Israel reportedly said to him (*1 Samuel* 8, 5):

Look you are old, and your sons don't follow your ways. So now, appoint over us a king to lead us, just like all the other nations have.

* Go to other chapters via

Samuel reportedly warned the people about the excesses of kings (that they weren't good people, like the priests!) and warned the people that Yahweh would abandon them if they chose to be ruled by a king rather than by the clerics' god (i.e., in reality, by the clerics), but the people reportedly insisted and persisted (at least, so the clerical authors say).

Succumbing to the people's will (so the story goes), we learn in *1 Samuel 10* how "the prophet" Samuel "anointed" Saul to be king and about Samuel's prophetic abilities. A slight problem exists, however, in that prophets in the religious sense are all fakes: no one (not even an omniscient god) can foretell the future in the detail claimed by clerics, since even a god can't overcome the inherent uncertainties of the nonlinear system called "the human system" (or more simply, 'humanity'). For readers who desire details to support that statement, they should have at least a bachelor's degree in math and then investigate what are called "positive Lyapunov coefficients", which lead to exponential divergence of nearby states of nonlinear systems.

In essence, the results show that the detailed future of nonlinear systems is, not just unpredictable in practice, but unpredictable in principle. Thus, although general constraints on nonlinear systems can be prescribed, details can't. For example, the future climate will continue to conform to the first and second principles of thermodynamics (conservation of energy and increase in entropy); therefore, the future climate (the 30-year average of the weather) can (in principle) be predicted – but not the future weather (i.e., the specific state of the atmosphere at a given place and time). Similarly, uncertainties in initial conditions (in the limit including quantum uncertainties) preclude exactly predicting the evolution of any nonlinear system (such as humanity). And it's not just that scientists and "prophets" can't do it, even an omniscient god couldn't do it – assuming that even such a god would be restricted by Nature's requirement expressed in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.

Meanwhile, though, anyone can guess the future (of course), and there's a chance that the guesser will be lucky – but the more details guessed, the less likely that they'll be correct. For example, someone might guess that I'll die on August 27, and given that there's 365 days in the year and ignoring variations in death rates with season, then there's 1 chance in 365 that the guess will be right.

Further, if that same someone guesses that I'll die on the highway on August 27, then if the chance of anyone dying on the highway is one in 3000 (pulling the number out of my hat), then the chance that the guesser would be right would be roughly 1 chance in $365 \times 3000 = 1$ chance in roughly a million $= 1 / 10^6 = 10^{-6}$. And if the guesser further "prophesied" that I'd die on August 27 on the highway because a bridge will collapse, then if the chance of anyone being killed in such an accident is 1 in a million (again pulling the number out of my hat), then if it were to occur, then it would certainly be an impressive feat to have made such a call correctly, when there was only 1 chance in $10^6 \times 10^6 = 10^{12}$ (i.e., one chance in a trillion) that "the prophet" would be correct.

With that example in mind, consider "the prophet" Samuel's prediction for the first king of Israel, Saul (*1 Samuel 10*, 1–6):

Then Samuel took a small container of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head [which was the "anointment" procedure]. Samuel kissed him and said,

"The Lord has chosen you to lead his people Israel! You will rule over the Lord's people and you will deliver them from the power of the enemies who surround them. This will be your sign that the Lord has chosen you as leader over his inheritance. When you leave me today, you will find two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on Benjamin's border. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you have gone looking for have been found. Your father is no longer concerned about the donkeys but has become anxious about you two! He is asking, "What should I do about my son"?' As you continue on from there, you will come to the tall tree of Tabor. At that point three men who are going up to God at Bethel will meet you. One of them will be carrying three young goats, one of them will be carrying three round loaves of bread, and one of them will be carrying a container of wine. They will ask you how you're doing and will give you two loaves of bread. You will accept them. Afterward you will go to Gibeah of God, where there are Philistine officials. When you enter the town, you will meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place. They will have harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, and they will be prophesying. Then the spirit of the Lord will rush upon you and you will prophesy with them. You will be changed into a different person."

I invite the reader to estimate the probability that such a "guess" would be correct (complete with the exact words of the two men, exactly where Saul would meet the three men, where they were going, what each was carrying, and what instruments the "prophets" had). And I'll add: I won't argue with anyone whose estimate is anywhere near 1 chance in 10^{24} !

But, ‘lo and behold, Samuel guessed it right; in fact, he got it right on the nose! How do I know? It says so, right there at *1 Samuel 10*, 9:

All these signs happened on that very day.

Isn't that proof enough? I mean, if you can't trust that the Bible is the unerring word of God, what can you trust? Would clerics lie? And if there's some cynic who suggests that maybe Samuel staged the whole thing (telling the people where to be, what to say, what to be holding, etc., similar to the antics of the Mormon's first "high priest" Sidney Rigdon), then I'm not even going to respond.

In any event, as a result of all that, the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. But Samuel did it (allegedly) with additional help from Yahweh: at *1 Samuel 10*, 20 we're told that Yahweh "fixed" the drawing of lots – which, as all gamblers know, is exactly what God does; i.e., he (or Satan) controls the outcome of every bet! Meanwhile, though, the people were apparently pleased with Yahweh's choice of Saul, since: "There was no one among the Israelites more handsome than he was; he stood head and shoulders above all the people."

In time, however, Saul did what was "evil in the sight of the Lord" (at least, according to the clerical authors), namely, 1) as described at *1 Samuel 13*, 9, Saul took it upon himself to offer burnt offerings to Yahweh (rather than have a sacred priest do the job!) and 2) as described at *1 Samuel 15*, 22, he didn't obey some orders given him by Yahweh (i.e., by Samuel), exactly, to the letter. Specifically, so the story goes, the bloodthirsty orders (*1 Samuel 15*, 3) given to Saul were to entirely exterminate the Amalekites:

Put them to death – man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey alike.

Foolish Saul: didn't he know that when God says to kill everything, he's to kill everything? Be a good little Nazi, Saul: follow orders! As Samuel reportedly said (*1 Samuel 15*, 22):

Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as he does in obedience? Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice; paying attention is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and presumption is like the evil of idolatry.

So, people, don't presume anything! Just do as you're told (by the clerics).

Anyway, with Saul failing to follow orders, Samuel, himself, did the Lord's will: he had the army bring him the Amalekites' King Agag, and then (apparently realizing that he was safe from harm), "**Samuel hacked Agag to pieces there in Gilgal before the Lord.**" Apparently, also, Samuel was unaware of one of the minor, nuisance commandments that the Lord allegedly gave to Moses: **Thou shalt not kill.** In fact, the commandments of Moses aren't even mentioned, anywhere, in the first or second books of Samuel.

Following Saul's failure to follow the orders of Yahweh (or Samuel), so the clerical authors contend, Yahweh regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel (*1 Samuel 15, 35*). Thereby, once again the reader learns that Yahweh certainly isn't omniscient, since once again, Yahweh made a mistake (choosing Saul) – just as in *Genesis*, Yahweh admitted that he made a mistake by making the first humans. Yet, apparently "the prophet" Samuel didn't see that he was depicting Yahweh as a knucklehead; instead, Samuel kept proclaiming Yahweh's greatness (*1 Samuel 15, 29*): "**The Preeminent One of Israel** [i.e., Yahweh] **does not go back on his word or change his mind.**" Assuming he has one!

The new king allegedly chosen by Yahweh to replace Saul (*1 Samuel 16, 12*) was David. Conveniently, the people's choice was also David, because Yahweh had arranged (so the story goes) for the boy David to defeat the champion, the "giant" Goliath, of the coastal people, the Philistines. King Saul, however, wasn't pleased with Yahweh's choice of David: Saul told his son, Jonathan, to kill David. Jonathan, however, loved David as much as he did his own life (*1 Samuel 18, 1*) and managed to convince his father to swear: "**As surely as the Lord lives, he [David] will not be put to death.**"

David wasn't killed by Saul – though not for want of his trying (his oath to the contrary, sworn to "the Lord", apparently being inconsequential). Simultaneously, David kept himself busy (of course with the Lord's help) killing every man and woman in the cities of the Geshuities, Girzites, and Amalekites that he raided and then allying himself with Israel's enemies, the Philistines (*1 Samuel 27*).

The reader is then provided with details of another supernatural stunt. At Saul's request, a magician brings Samuel back from the dead (!) to inform

King Saul that the Philistines would kill him and three of his sons the next day. And sure enough, they were all killed – exactly as the Lord’s prophet, Samuel, said. Aren’t the prophets of the Lord amazing?!

Meanwhile, though, there’s a curious aspect to the story about Saul and his sons. Specifically, as pointed out by Frank Smitha in his online book:¹²

The First Book of Samuel, 9:15, describes Saul as the Lord’s choice. And in Chapter 10 of *the First Book of Samuel*, Saul is described as one of Yahweh’s prophets. [Yet,] Saul appears to have been close to the worship of the Canaanite god Ba’al. He named one of his sons Eshbaal (meaning Ba’al exists) and another son he had named Meribaal (meaning Ba’al rewards)...

I’ll leave it to the reader to investigate questions such as: Were the clerical authors of these fanciful tales just careless or were they (who apparently were clerics primarily from the southern kingdom of Judah rather than the northern kingdom of Israel) purposefully undermining the “legitimacy” of the larger kingdom of Israel, by suggesting that the Israelites weren’t “true believers”?

In any event – at least according to the story – a civil war subsequently erupted (*2 Samuel*) between Israel and Judah in about 1000 BCE. Israel was led by Saul’s son Eshbaal (or Ish-bosheth);¹³ Judah was led by David. As an outcome of the civil war, David became king of both Judah and Israel. Later, he led his army to defeat the Jebusites (or Amorites) and captured the old city of Jerusalem (first settled approximately 2,000 years earlier!), which for the next ~450 years was the capital first of the united Kingdom of Israel and then of the Kingdom of Judah, until the Babylonian conquest in 587 BCE.

Eventually, David fell out of Yahweh’s favor (wouldncha know) because of a woman (wouldncha know): after committing adultery with her (Bathsheba), and impregnating her, David had her husband killed and married her. Thus did David do “**evil in the sight of the Lord**”, and so (so the story goes) Yahweh cut short David’s rule. Later, when he was near death, David chose his and Bathsheba’s second son, Solomon, to be king – of course with the Lord’s oversight.

¹² From <http://www.fsmitha.com/h1/ch04.htm>.

¹³ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ish-bosheth>.

According to the clerics' story, Yahweh communicated to Solomon in dreams (e.g., *1 Kings 3, 15*), but (according to Homer's tales about Agamemnon, the Koran's tales about Muhammad, and the Mormon's tales about Joseph Smith) relying on dreams can be dangerous, since sometimes gods apparently send "lying dreams". But by proclaiming Solomon as king (with or without Yahweh's involvement), David thereby adopted a practice that was probably initiated tens of thousands of years earlier, namely, leaders try to choose their successors.

The clerics claim that Solomon was wise, e.g., *1 Kings 4, 31–33*:

He was famous in all the neighboring nations. He composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. He produced manuals on botany, describing every kind of plant, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on walls. He also produced manuals on biology, describing animals, birds, insects, and fish. People from all nations came to hear Solomon's display of wisdom; they came from all the kings of the earth who heard about his wisdom.

In contrast to such claims about his wisdom, however, Solomon (or the authors of the story) apparently thought that the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle, π , is exactly 3.

That error can be seen in the description of details of the temple that Solomon allegedly built. It states (*1 Kings 7, 23*, as given in the New English Bible):

He [Solomon's craftsman, Hiram of Tyre] then made the Sea [a large bronze basin] of cast metal; it was round in shape, the diameter from rim to rim being ten cubits; it stood five cubits high, and it took a line thirty cubits long to go around it.

So, for the basin, $\pi = 3$. In contrast to such an estimate, the Wikipedia article¹⁴ on the history of π provides the following information.

The earliest known approximations [for π] date from around 1900 BCE [approximately 1,000 years before Solomon]; they are $25/8$ [= 3.13] (Babylonia) and $256/81$ [= 3.16] (Egypt), both within 1% of the true value.

Not incidentally, readers should be alert to biblical "apologists" and "revisionists". As an illustration of what I mean, consider the following.

¹⁴ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_pi_-_History.

In the text of my on-line book¹⁵ and in an earlier appendix,¹⁶ I almost invariably quote *The New English Bible*, not only because it's relatively easy to read (compared, e.g., with the *King James Version*) but also because I found that the scholars who produced it were careful to show readers alternative translations (e.g., “**Reed Sea**” rather than “**Red Sea**” and “**a young girl will give birth**” rather than “**a virgin will give birth**”). The choice of the New English Bible, however, forced me to (laboriously!) type all the quotations.

In these posts, in contrast (which I'm also using as another appendix of my book) and in part because I'm older, lazier, and in truth, “sick and tired” of reading the damnable Bible, I've been copying and pasting the NET Bible.¹⁷ It's produced by Regent University, “**the nation's top online Christian university**” – which already should cause concern, since “Christian university” is an oxymoron.

In particular, I want to call the reader's attention to the fact that the same verse (*1 Kings 7, 23*) is given in the NET bible as:

He also made the large bronze basin called “The Sea.” It measured 15 feet from rim to rim, was circular in shape, and stood seven-and-a-half feet high. Its circumference was 45 feet.

That may initially seem to be a small change from the version given above (with ‘cubits’ changed to ‘feet’), but I'd ask the reader to notice that, from the NET version, a reader might conclude that the OT is not saying $\pi = 3$, because in the NET, it's unclear what diameter and circumference are meant: is one an inside dimension and the other an outside dimension?

In contrast, in the *New English Bible*, since it's extremely difficult to use a line (e.g., a string) to measure the length of the inside of a basin and since, with ‘rim’ meaning “**the upper or outer edge of an object**”, then “**rim to rim**” would mean an outside measurement, therefore, the clerics are clearly contending that $\pi = 3$.

¹⁵ At <http://zenofzero.net/>

¹⁶ At http://zenofzero.net/Part_3x.html.

¹⁷ Available at http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=3086.

And to those biblical apologists who would say something similar to “What’s the big deal? $\pi = 3$ is close enough for religious purposes”, I think that the following two responses are appropriate:

- If it’s “no big deal”, then why do biblical apologists manipulate the text of the Bible to promote an ambiguity?
- Since it’s claimed that the Bible is “the word of God”, then if God doesn’t know the correct value of π , who’s to say that his commandments aren’t similarly wrong?

For example, is God correct in the details provided in the OT about how to beat one’s slave to death and how to sell one’s daughter into slavery?

But moving on with the story, Solomon’s downfall (similar to David’s) was his women (according to the misogynist clerics who wrote this silly story). And it wasn’t that Solomon was a sex maniac; instead, eventually some of his 700 wives and 300 concubines conned him into worshiping their gods (with different clerics, which was definitely unacceptable, according to the clerical authors). As a result, Yahweh allegedly abandoned Solomon, choosing Jeroboam to be the next king, to punish Solomon and the United Kingdom. In turn, Jeroboam “**did evil in the sight of the Lord**”, and so, with the help of some supernatural stunts, Yahweh ended Jeroboam’s rule.

According to the priests, Jeroboam’s unforgivable sin was to appoint common people as priests at the high place (*1 Kings 13, 33*). How Jeroboam could have been so dumb is unfathomable, when anyone who is anyone knows that only the established priesthood is permitted to assign priests. It was a sin that caused Jeroboam’s dynasty to come to an end and to be destroyed from the face of the earth, which (I trust) will be sufficient warning to anyone who tries to undermine any existing priesthood.

Interestingly (at least to me) is that, in the process of destroying Jeroboam’s dynasty, Yahweh lied to Jeroboam’s wife, saying (*1 Kings 14, 8*) that Jeroboam was “**not like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me wholeheartedly by doing only what I approve**” – unless, of course, Yahweh approved of David’s adultery and then his murdering the woman’s husband. Thereby, the clerics are apparently saying that Yahweh approves of lying. But I admit that it seems rather superfluous for the clerics to put such words in the mouth of their puppet Yahweh, since surely the entire OT adequately illustrates the clerics’ principle that it’s okay to lie.

Meanwhile, the list of kings goes on. After King Jeroboam comes his son, King Asa of Judah, who fought against a string of kings of the northern nation of Israel: Nadab, assassinated by Baasha, followed by his son Elah, who was assassinated by Zimri, who ruled for seven days, followed by Omri, the commander of the army, followed by his son Ahab. Ahab did more “**evil in the sight of the Lord**”, doing what his wife (Jezebel) wanted – which should be a lesson to all men who do what their wives desire: as anyone who read the story of Adam and Eve knows, women are to serve men, not *v.v.*

And in part, I added all that to point out that Yahweh lied not only to Jeroboam’s wife but also to Ahab. In particular, at *1 Kings* 22, 19–23, another of the clerical heroes of these fictitious tales, “the prophet” Micaiah, relays the following.

That being the case, hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the heavenly assembly standing on his right and on his left. [The Lord sits on a throne like a tyrant king? Who would have thought?!] **The Lord said, “Who will deceive Ahab, so he will attack Ramoth Gilead and die there?”** [The Lord deceives people? Really?!] **One said this and another that. Then a spirit stepped forward and stood before the Lord.** [Spirits “step” and “stand”? Aren’t they supposed to float through the air?!] **He said, “I will deceive him.” The Lord asked him, “How?”** [God doesn’t already know? He needs to ask “How”? But, but, but... what about God’s claimed omniscience?!] **He [the spirit] replied, “I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.” The Lord said, “Deceive and overpower him. Go out and do as you have proposed.”** [The Lord approves of deception? Who would have thought? Or is it that religious people don’t think?!] **So now, look, the Lord has placed a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours; but the Lord has decreed disaster for you.**

Talk about disaster! Once Yahweh approved putting lying spirits in the mouths of his prophets, all sorts of troubles started:

- Jesus told his followers that the world would end during their lifetimes (showing that he was a liar),
- Muhammad lied to his followers (in “the Satanic verses”) that it was okay to worship other gods at Mecca (and Salman Rushdie is still under a death *fatwa* for saying so in his book *The Satanic Verses*), and
- Joseph Smith damn near scuttled Mormonism by promising success to his followers who tried but failed to publish the Book of Mormon in Canada.

And as bad as it is to see that God's prophets are liars, to learn that God, himself, arranges such deception is enough to destroy a person's faith in him and his various "holy books". Of course, rather than just having blind faith and belief, people can build trust and confidence in the scientific method by performing experimental tests – just as Gideon did (although his test left a lot to be desired) and just as we're next told "the prophet" Elijah did (assuming he didn't cook the experiment).

Oh, true enough, the clerical authors claim that Elijah pulled off some "pure" supernatural stunts, such as at *1 Kings 17*, where we're told that he was fed bread and meat each morning and evening by ravens, and then he was fed by a woman whose "jar of flour was never empty and the jug of oil never ran out", no matter how much she took from them. In addition, Elijah supernaturally outclassed the Baal priests by having fire come down from the sky to kill two captains and their fifty men (*2 Kings 1*, 10) and he parted the river Jordan with his cloak (*2 Kings 2*, 8). But supernatural-silliness aside, Elijah (budding scientist that he was) also tested god (again assuming he didn't rig the experiment). Thus, at *1 Kings 18*, 20–25, we learn the following unquestionable "truth" from the "holy Bible".

When [King] Ahab saw [the prophet] Elijah, he said to him, "Is it really you, the one who brings disaster on Israel?" Elijah replied, "I have not brought disaster on Israel. But you and your father's dynasty have, by abandoning the Lord's commandments and following the Baals. Now send out messengers and assemble all Israel before me at Mount Carmel, as well as the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah whom [your wife] Jezebel supports."

Ahab [the King, doing what he was told to do by the prophet Elijah – which, I suppose, is designed to tell us where the real power was] sent messengers to all the Israelites and had the prophets assemble at Mount Carmel. Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision? If the Lord is the true God, then follow him, but if Baal is, follow him!" But the people did not say a word. [At least according to the reporters on the scene.]

Elijah said to them: "I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left, but there are 450 prophets of Baal. [The prophet-hood business was obviously quite lucrative for the Baalists! No wonder the Yahwists were displeased!] Let them bring us two bulls. Let them choose one of the bulls for themselves, cut it up into pieces, and place it on the wood. But they must not set it on fire. I will do the same to the other bull and place it on the wood. But I will not set it on fire. Then you will invoke the name of your god, and I will invoke the name of the Lord. The god who responds with fire will demonstrate that he is the true God." All the people responded, "This will be a fair test." [I guess that, as numerous as they were, the prophets of Baal never learned

the first rule of the prophet-hood business: no matter what the people say, don't let some other con-artist set the rules of the game!]

Elijah told the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls for yourselves and go first, for you are the majority. Invoke the name of your god, but do not light a fire." [It couldn't be (could it?) that Elijah said "do not light a fire" because he had hidden an incendiary device beneath the altar?] So, they took a bull, as he had suggested, and prepared it. They invoked the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "Baal, answer us." But there was no sound and no answer. They jumped around on the altar they had made.

At noon Elijah mocked them, "Yell louder! After all, he is a god; he may be deep in thought, or perhaps he stepped out for a moment or has taken a trip. Perhaps he is sleeping and needs to be awakened." [Oh, Elijah, you're bad!] So they yelled louder and, in accordance with their prescribed ritual, mutilated themselves with swords and spears until their bodies were covered with blood. [Prophets of Baal, don't listen to Elijah: he's setting you up for a fall!] Throughout the afternoon they were in an ecstatic frenzy, but there was no sound, no answer, and no response.

Elijah then told all the people, "Approach me." So all the people [being obedient, and tired of standing all day!] approached him. He repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of tribes that descended from Jacob, to whom the Lord had said, "Israel will be your new name." With the stones he constructed an altar for the Lord. Around the altar he made a trench large enough to contain two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut up the bull, and placed it on the wood. Then he said, "Fill four water jars and pour the water on the offering and the wood." When they had done so, he said, "Do it again." So they did it again. Then he said, "Do it a third time." So they did it a third time. [Which leads one to wonder: were the "water jars" filled with water – or were Elijah's henchmen pouring a flammable fluid on the offering and the wood?!] The water [?] flowed down all sides of the altar and filled the trench. When it was time for the evening offering, Elijah the prophet approached the altar and prayed: "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are the true God and that you are winning back their allegiance."

Then [after Elijah gave a signal to his accomplice to light the fluid!] fire from the Lord fell from the sky. [Did the fumes from the flammable fluid ignite first?] It consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and the dirt, and licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and said, "The Lord is the true God! The Lord is the true God!" Elijah told them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Don't let even one of them escape!" So they seized them, and Elijah led them down to the Kishon Valley and executed them there.

Apparently, also Elijah had never heard about the nuisance commandment “**Thou shalt not kill**”, but beyond that, surely one should question if it’s desirable for the moral of this little story to be promoted. Think about it. Obviously the Baal priests were quite certain that their beliefs were right – that their ideas were “true”; otherwise, would they have carried on in such a manner, mutilating themselves until “**their bodies were covered in blood**”? Then, Elijah pulls off his little stunt (starting a fire), in essence saying: if your beliefs aren’t supported by experimental tests, then you deserve to die. But is that really what the people who promote the Bible believe: that all those who hold beliefs more strongly than relevant evidence justifies should be executed?

They might want to give such a policy a little more thought. In essence the policy is that those who don’t practice the scientific method in their daily lives (i.e., hold beliefs only as strongly as relevant and reliable evidence justifies) should be killed. Not only does that seem to be a very dangerous policy for any religious person to promote (!), it seems to be at the extreme of intolerance and hate: kill people whose beliefs are different from yours! Which then makes me wonder not only why Yahwists, Christians, Mormons, etc. complain when Muslims practice a similar policy (viz., kill the unbelievers of the one, true religion, i.e., Islam) but also why “we the people” permit, for example, the Gideons International¹⁸ to distribute the hideous Bible (as they do “**in 80 languages and more than 175 countries**”) when the Bible is the epitome of “hate literature” – although I admit that the Koran is a close runner-up for that title.

But setting such puzzlements aside, I’ll continue with the story about Elijah. When he was near his death (so “the good book” tells us), he passed on his prophetic powers (and his failure to follow the commandment “**Thou shalt not kill**”) to Elisha, who “**called down God’s judgment**” on 42 boys for calling him “**baldy**”. As a result, the boys were ripped apart by two bears. Apparently neither Elijah nor Elisha (nor Yahweh) had heard of the expression: “**Let the punishment fit the crime.**” And obviously, too, Yahweh was with Elisha, since (so the story goes) he brought a child back to life who had been dead for multiple days (*2 Kings 4*, 32–37), he fed a hundred men with 20 loaves of bread – and there were leftovers (a prelude to a similar claim made about Jesus), and he cured a Syrian of skin disease (*2 Kings 5*, 8–19), made an ax head float (*2 Kings 6*, 1–7), blinded a raiding party, etc.

¹⁸ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gideons_International.

Meanwhile, though, getting back to reality, there's relatively little reliably known about any of the "prophets" or kings of Israel or Judah. One exception is the Tel Dan Stele, which was found during the 1990s and is dated to the 9th or 8th Centuries BCE. It was "erected by an Aramaean king in northernmost Israel to commemorate his victory over the ancient Hebrews; its author is unknown, but may be a king of Damascus..." The stele's inscription has been translated (not without controversy) by André Lemaire as follows:¹⁹

1. [.....].....[.....] and cut [.....]
2. [.....] my father went up [.....f]ighting at/against Ab[....]
3. And my father lay down; he went to his [fathers]. And the king of I[s-]
4. rael penetrated into my father's land[. And] Hadad made me – myself – king.
5. And Hadad went in front of me[, and] I departed from[.....]
6. of my kings. And I killed two [power]ful kin[gs], who harnessed two thou[sand cha-]
7. riots and two thousand horsemen. [I killed Jo]ram son of [Ahab]
8. king of Israel, and I killed [Achaz]yahu son of [Joram kin]g
9. of the House of David. And I set [.....]
10. their land ...[.....]
11. other ...[..... and Jehu ru-]
12. led over Is[rael.....]
13. siege upon [.....]

In contrast to the Tel Dan Stele, the only uncontested, extra-biblical reference to a Jewish king seems to be a caption on "the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III" found in 1846 at the ancient Assyrian capital of Kalhu. This Shalmaneser (whose name means "the god Shulmanu is foremost") was king of Assyria from 858–824 BCE. One of the five scenes on the obelisk has the title: **Jehu of Bit Omri** [the name of ancient northern Israel], who presumably is the fellow prostrated before King Shalmaneser III:²⁰



¹⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Dan_stele.

²⁰ Copied from http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/t/black_obelisk_of_shalmaneser.aspx

Written in Assyrian cuneiform, the caption for the above figure states:

The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king [and] spears.

Someone seems to be mistaken or lying, however, because in the OT, Jehu isn't the son of Omri. As readers can find from their own investigations, perhaps the obelisk is depicting Joram, grandson of Omri, or perhaps it does depict Jehu, and Shalmaneser is "legitimizing him" as a son of the former dynasty.

In any event, after spending much more time investigating the topic than I expected to (or wanted to!), I concluded that the following line from the Wikipedia article²¹ on the Archeology of Israel to be a concise and revealing summary of what I had found elsewhere.

Despite an on-going debate of the issue, the prevailing view still holds that the Bible is not wholly a work of fiction...

That's quite a summary: "the Bible is not wholly a work of fiction"! If religious leaders would permit their followers to learn about that summary, I suspect that religious fundamentalists would be dissatisfied with such an assessment. In contrast, given the current problems in the world caused by such religious fundamentalists, I admit I find it satisfying to speculate that, when Judaism collapses under its load of clerical lies, then so, too, will Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism.

But in particular, with respect to the subject of this post (dealing with lie that leaders are chosen by the gods), I've been unable to find any reliable historical or archeological evidence to support the claim, made throughout the OT, that Jewish rulers were chosen by their god. Such claims were made by Jewish clerics, but because their claims commonly appear along with various supernatural stunts allegedly performed by their god (commonly with the involvement of some alleged "prophet"), sensible people don't take such claims seriously.

To summarize, the clerics provide (at *2 Kings 17*) the following summary of "Israel's sinful history".

²¹ At http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archeology_of_Israel.

This happened because the Israelites sinned against the Lord their God, who brought them up from the land of Egypt and freed them from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods; they observed the practices of the nations whom the Lord had driven out from before Israel, and followed the example of the kings of Israel. The Israelites said things about the Lord their God that were not right. They built high places in all their cities, from the watchtower to the fortress. They set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. They burned incense on all the high places just like the nations whom the Lord had driven away from before them. Their evil practices made the Lord angry. They worshiped the disgusting idols in blatant disregard of the Lord's command.

The Lord solemnly warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and all the seers, "Turn back from your evil ways; obey my commandments and rules that are recorded in the law. I ordered your ancestors to keep this law and sent my servants the prophets to remind you of its demands." But they did not pay attention and were as stubborn as their ancestors, who had not trusted the Lord their God. They rejected his rules, the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and the laws he had commanded them to obey. They paid allegiance to worthless idols, and so became worthless to the Lord. They copied the practices of the surrounding nations in blatant disregard of the Lord's command. They abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God; they made two metal calves and an Asherah pole, bowed down to all the stars in the sky, and worshiped Baal. They passed their sons and daughters through the fire, and practiced divination and omen reading. They committed themselves to doing evil in the sight of the Lord and made him angry.

So the Lord was furious with Israel and rejected them; only the tribe of Judah was left. Judah also failed to keep the commandments of the Lord their God; they followed Israel's example. So the Lord rejected all of Israel's descendants; he humiliated them and handed them over to robbers, until he had thrown them from his presence. He tore Israel away from David's dynasty, and Jeroboam son of Nebat became their king. Jeroboam drove Israel away from the Lord and encouraged them to commit a serious sin. The Israelites followed in the sinful ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and did not repudiate them. Finally the Lord rejected Israel just as he had warned he would do through all his servants the prophets. Israel was deported from its land to Assyria and remains there to this very day. [Which indicates when the story was written!]

My own summary (in the vernacular) is: **What BS!** Somehow or other the clerics' versions fails to mention that the real heroes weren't the cloistered clerics and prophets (living off the producers), but the Jewish people – who struggled to survive in a brutal environment, fought off marauders and diseases, and tried to feed their families, keep their communities functioning, and understand the world.

In fact, as can be seen (for example) in the NOVA program *The Bible's Buried Secrets*,²² there are hints that the Jewish people of the time were even more heroic than just to survive in such a hostile environment. Thus, archeological evidence suggests that the Jews were not only Canaanites, but Canaanites who rejected the feudalism of the time, seeking freedom. Their exodus wasn't from Egypt but from Canaanite cities, to live in the hills, where at least some of them may have adopted some of the customs (e.g., circumcision and eating no pork) perhaps suggested by one or more Egyptian priests who lived among them (Canaan having been ruled by Egypt).

If that's something similar to what actually occurred, then it's not only an inspirational story for anyone seeking freedom, it's also a story with an important moral: eventually the poor Jewish people struggled out of a feudal frying pan and fell into a clerical fire. As Daniel Defoe (the author of *Robinson Crusoe*) wrote in *The True-Born Englishman*:

And of all the plagues with which mankind are cursed
Ecclesiastic tyranny's the worst.

And the reason, of course, is clear: civil tyranny can enslave and brutalize a person's body; ecclesiastical tyranny (be it Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Mormon, or whatever) enslaves and brutalizes both body and brain.

But regardless of what actually occurred, the heroes of the stories in the OT are clearly neither the people nor the kings: every one of the kings (David and Solomon included) “**did evil in the sight of the Lord**” – which, then, doesn't say much for the Lord's ability to choose leaders! Instead, the heroes of these clerical fantasies are (surprise, surprise) the clerics – or more specifically, the damnable “prophets” (such as Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah) who lied about their capabilities to perform supernatural stunts, lied that they could communicate with the first symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in the original void (i.e., “God”), lied that they knew intimate details about the history of the Jewish people, and in particular, lied that their God had anything to do with choosing the people's leaders.

In contrast to such lies, the following two quotations seem to be honest appraisals of what really happened. The first is from Wikipedia:²³

²² See <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bible/>.

²³ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_David.

Surveys of surface-finds aimed at tracing settlement patterns and population changes have shown that between the 16th and 8th Centuries BCE, a period which includes the biblical kingdoms of David and Solomon, the entire population of the hill country of Judah was no more than about 5,000 persons, most of them wandering pastoralists, with the entire urbanized area consisting of about twenty small villages.

The second summary is more from the article²⁴ by Daniel Lazare, also quoted earlier in this post.

If the Old Testament is to be believed, David and Solomon, rulers of the southern kingdom of Judah from about 1005 to about 931 BCE, made themselves masters of the northern kingdom of Israel as well. They represent, in the official account, a rare moment of national unity and power; under their reign, the combined kingdom was a force throughout the Fertile Crescent. The unified kingdom is said to have split into two rump states shortly after Solomon's death and, thus weakened, was all too easy for the Assyrian Empire and its Babylonian successor to pick off. But did a united monarchy encompassing all twelve tribes ever truly exist?

According to the Bible, Solomon was both a master builder and an insatiable accumulator. He drank out of golden goblets, outfitted his soldiers with golden shields, maintained a fleet of sailing ships to seek out exotic treasures, kept a harem of 1,000 wives and concubines, and spent thirteen years building a palace and a richly decorated temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. Yet, not one goblet, not one brick, has ever been found to indicate that such a reign existed.

If David and Solomon had been important regional power brokers, one might reasonably expect their names to crop up on monuments and in the diplomatic correspondence of the day. Yet once again the record is silent. True, an inscription referring to "Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of the House of David" was found in 1993 on a fragment dating from the late ninth century BCE [the Tel Dan Stele]. But that was more than a hundred years after David's death, and at most, all it indicates is that David (or someone with a similar name) was credited with establishing the Judahite royal line. It hardly proves that he ruled over a powerful empire.

Moreover, by the 1970s and 1980s a good deal of countervailing evidence – or, rather, lack of evidence – was beginning to accumulate. Supposedly, David had used his power base in Judah as a springboard from which to conquer the north. But archaeological surveys of the southern hill country show that Judah in the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE was too poor and backward and sparsely populated to support such a military expedition. Moreover, there was no evidence of wealth or booty flowing back to the southern power base once the conquest of the north had taken place. Jerusalem seems to have been hardly more than a rural village when Solomon was reportedly transforming it into a glittering capital. And although

²⁴ From [http://www.worldagesarchive.com/Reference_Links/False_Testament_\(Harpers\).htm](http://www.worldagesarchive.com/Reference_Links/False_Testament_(Harpers).htm).

archaeologists had long credited Solomon with the construction of major palaces in the northern cities of Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo (better known as the site of Armageddon), recent analysis of pottery shards found on the sites, plus refined carbon-14 dating techniques, indicate that the palaces postdate Solomon's reign by a century or more.

Finkelstein and Silberman concluded that Judah and Israel had never existed under the same roof. The Israelite culture that had taken shape in the central hill country around 1200 BCE had evolved into two distinct kingdoms from the start. Whereas Judah remained weak and isolated, Israel did in fact develop into an important regional power beginning around 900 BCE. It was as strong and rich as David and Solomon's kingdom had supposedly been a century earlier, yet it was not the sort of state of which the Jewish priesthood approved. The reason had to do with the nature of the northern kingdom's expansion. As Israel grew, various foreign cultures came under its sway, cultures that sacrificed to gods other than Yahweh. Pluralism became the order of the day: the northern kings could manage such a diverse empire only by allowing these cultures to worship their own gods in return for their continued loyalty. The result was a policy of religious syncretism, a theological pastiche in which the cult of Yahweh coexisted alongside those of other Semitic deities.

When the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians, the Jewish priesthood concluded not that Israel had played its cards badly in the game of international politics but that, by tolerating other cults, it had given grave offense to the only god that mattered. Joining a stream of refugees to the south, the priests swelled the ranks of an influential political party dedicated to the proposition that the only way for Judah to avoid a similar fate was to cleanse itself of all rival beliefs and devote itself exclusively to Yahweh.

“They did wicked things that provoked Yahweh to anger. They worshiped idols, though Yahweh had said, ‘You shall not do this’.” Such was the “Yahweh-alone” movement's explanation for Israel's downfall. The monotheistic movement reached a climax in the late seventh century BCE when a certain King Josiah took the throne and gave the go-ahead for a long-awaited purge. Storming through the countryside, Josiah and his Yahwist supporters destroyed rival shrines, slaughtered alien priests, defiled their altars, and ensured that henceforth even Jewish sacrifice take place exclusively in Jerusalem, where the priests could exercise tight control. The result, the priests and scribes believed, was a national renaissance that would soon lead to the liberation of the north and a similar cleansing there as well.

But then: disaster. After allowing his priests to establish a rigid religious dictatorship, Josiah rode off to rendezvous with an Egyptian pharaoh named Necho in the year 609 BCE. Although *Chronicles* says that the two monarchs met to do battle, archaeologists, pointing out that Josiah was in no position to challenge the mighty Egyptian army, suspect that Necho merely summoned Josiah to some sort of royal parley and then had him killed for unknown reasons. A model of pious rectitude, Josiah had done everything he thought God wanted of him. He had purified his

kingdom and consecrated his people exclusively to Yahweh. Yet he suffered regardless. Judah entered into a period of decline culminating some twenty-three years later in the Babylonian conquest and exile.

The Babylonian conquest and exile, however, certainly didn't end the lie that leaders were chosen by the gods. Throughout history, many political leaders have similarly used religion to rule "the masses". As Aristotle said:

A tyrant must put on the appearance of uncommon devotion to religion. Subjects are less apprehensive of illegal [or, maybe better, "immoral" and "unjust"] treatment from a ruler whom they consider god-fearing and pious. On the other hand, they do less easily move against him, believing that he has the gods on his side.

In his book *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon summarized well how Roman politicians used religion:²⁵

The various modes of worship... were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful.

Similar continued throughout history, into the 20th Century. For example, Hitler claimed:

I follow the path assigned to me by Providence with the instinctive sureness of a sleepwalker.

Similarly, George W. Bush reportedly made the following statement to Texas evangelist James Robinson:²⁶

I feel like God wants me to run for President. I can't explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen... I know it won't be easy on me or my family, but God wants me to do it.

And sad to say, there was widespread support for Bush's claim among fundamentalist Christians, such as the statement by General William "Jerry" Boykin:²⁷

Why is this man [George W. Bush] in the White House? The majority of America did not vote for him. He's in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this.

²⁵ At <http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume1/chap2.htm>.

²⁶ See <http://www.freepress.org/columns/display/3/2004/942>.

²⁷ See <http://www.slate.com/id/2106590/>.

Subsequently, Bush apparently did what God told him to do, for as he reportedly said to Abud Mazen (Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority) when they met in Aqaba:²⁸

God told me to strike at al Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam [Hussein], which I did...

That ancient people concluded that the gods chose their leaders is understandable and forgivable; that “modern” people conclude similar is also understandable – but unforgivable. Surely to sanity it won’t be much longer until any leader who claims to be chosen and/or guided by some god will commit political suicide, by thereby providing ample evidence of his or her megalomania.

²⁸ See <http://www.gainesvillehumanists.org/dubya.htm>.