

LEXICAL-HISTORICAL GRAPHICS OF פָּהֵן, הַיִּכָּל and מִלְךָ AS TEMPLATE
FOR UNDERSTANDING CULTIC ROLES OF KINGS DURING THE
MONARCHY

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ABSTRACT

In the light of numerous studies which have been conducted and are still ongoing with respect to various aspects of ancient Israelite socio-political and religious life, this paper looks into the operation of Israel's civil administration vis-à-vis her religious life by conducting a comparative study of the functions of her key leaders, the king and the priest. Employing a historical-grammatical approach, the paper tries to answer the question, "Are kings justified to perform priestly functions?" "Was there any moral or spiritual justification for Israel's priestly class to rebuke or reprimand kings who perform such functions?" "Were the priests right in arrogating the cultic functions as solely for priests?" The thesis of this paper is that a correct understanding of the cognate words, פָּהֵן, הַיִּכָּל and מִלְךָ, would serve as medium for better understanding the religious and administrative system of ancient Israel especially as it concerns the tension between kings and priests in the performance of cultic obligations and in relation to the translation of *hekal* as temple and palace.

INTRODUCTION

Ancient Israel was renowned in the Near East for its reputation as a nation governed by Yahweh. She flaunted her theocracy in the faces of her adversaries. Whenever she was involved in any battle, the battle was fought by Yahweh Sabaoth on her behalf. Hence, she was sure of victory. Whenever Israel lost any battle, it is assumed that such defeat was certainly as a result of her disobedience to Yahweh's command. Israel prided herself in the knowledge that the LORD, the creator of heaven and earth, is her own God and king, and this is reflected in many aspects of her national and religious life.

For a long time, the nation was under the leadership of charismatic judges who rose as deliverers in moments of troubles; and also priests and prophets who led her by means of words from the LORD. Samuel was the last of such charismatic leaders. As the nation grew and the ineptitude of Samuel's sons became obvious, the people desired a politically structured leadership. Hence, they requested for a king to lead them "as other nations." Even after the institution of the monarchy, Israel still considered herself as being under the direct rulership of Yahweh, the human kings merely served as vassals to Yahweh, Israel's sovereign king. Similarly, the priesthood continued to administer the religious aspect of the nation's life; serving both as the conscience of the nation as well as God's mouthpiece to the people.

Studies are continually undertaken into the various aspects of ancient Israelite socio-political and religious life; and these have left in their trail a reasonable volume of works which have contributed enormously to knowledge in the field of Biblical Studies as well as materials in the field. In the light of these, this paper looks into the

operation of Israel's civil administration vis-à-vis her religious life by conducting a comparative study of the functions of her key leaders, the king and the priest. Employing a historical-grammatical approach, the paper attempts a lexical and semantic analysis of the cognate words for these offices, traces their historical development and juxtaposes between their differing and inter-twinning functions, especially in relation to their place of operation, the **הַיִּבֵּל**.

Sequel to this, the paper tries to answer the question, “Are kings justified to perform priestly functions?” “Was there any moral or spiritual justification for Israel's priestly class to rebuke or reprimand kings who perform such functions?” “Were the priests right in arrogating the cultic functions as solely for priests?” The thesis of this paper is that a correct understanding of the cognate words, **כַּהֵן**, **הַיִּבֵּל** and **מֶלֶךְ**, would serve as medium for better understanding the religious and administrative system of ancient Israel especially as it concerns the tension between kings and priests in the performance of cultic obligations and in relation to the translation of *hekal* as temple and palace.

GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF **כַּהֵן**, **הַיִּבֵּל** and **מֶלֶךְ**

The term **כַּהֵן** (sometimes written in the longer form **כַּוְהֵן**; this does not however affect its meaning) is a noun masculine absolute which lexically means priest (Brown et al, 1997). It appears as **כַּהֵין** or **כַּהֵנָא** in the Aramaic. Its plural absolute form is **כַּהֵנִים** meaning “priests” while its plural construct form is **כַּהֵנֵי** meaning “priests of” Abe (2004) traced its etymology to the Akkadian **כַּאֲנֻ**, *kanu* from the root **כָּאן** *k'n* which means “to bend down, to do homage.” It is in this wise related to the verb root **כּוּן** which means “to stand upright.” As observed by Danby and Segal (n.d.), it is rendered **כַּהֵן גָּדוֹל** when used in reference to the high priest, but rendered **כַּהֵן הַדְּיוֹט** when used in reference to a common priest. Although the meaning of the term “common priest” is not clear Danby and Segal remarked that it probably refers to a priest lower in rank to the high priest or probably to any of the priests of the heathen nations. The priests of the heathen nations may be so referred since Israel considered her own God, Yahweh, as superior to the gods of other nations. If Yahweh is superior, his priests must necessarily be superior to other priests.

The word was also used in Exo 19:6 with reference to the nation of Israel as priest and king in relation to other nations. Here, the plural absolute form was used in construct relationship with an inflected form of **מֶלֶךְ** to construe **מַמְלַכַת כַּהֵנִים** which is translated “Kingdom of Priests” (Brown et al 1997). In this sense Abe (2004) advanced that it expressed the concept of the priesthood, rendered **כַּהֵנָה** and denoting the office of one saddled with the responsibility of exercising priestly functions.

Used in the generic sense, **כַּהֵן** denotes anyone who for one reason or the other and at any point in time performed a cultic function, especially that of sacrifice. Brown et al (1997) further noted that, it was used in this sense of Potiphara, the **אֵן כַּהֵן** (Priest of On), Ahab's priests of Baal, **כַּהֵן בְּעֵל** the priest of Midian **מִדְיָן כַּהֵן**, and of the sons of David, his grandson, and Ira the Jairite, who as princes performed priestly or cultic functions.

According to Tregelles (1988) the usage of כָּהֵן as a verb occurs only in the piel stem and is rendered in its perfect 3ms form as כָּפַח meaning “to presage, to predict.” He noted further that it is rendered as יִכְהֵן, “he will act as priest” in the imperfect state. Brown et al (1997) added that in the strict piel stem, it occurs as כָּהֵן meaning “to be or become a priest” and as כָּהֵן in the infinitive construct state. It was rendered in this form in Exo 31:10; 35:19; 39:41; Lev. 16:32; and Num 3:3-4 where it appeared in the absolute and was translated “minister as priest.” When rendered as כָּהֵן לַיהוָה, it is usually in reference to the Aaronic order except in Eze 44:13; 2 Chron 11:14 where the Levites were restricted from ministering and also in Hos 4:6 in reference to Israel whose national priesthood has been taken away.

הַיִּכָּל: According to Davidson (1976), the word הַיִּכָּל is one of the Hebrew words with attendant ambiguity and ambivalence regarding its root and gender. He identifies it as a masculine noun and offers the alternate rendition הַיִּכָּל. Tregelles (1988) on the other hand identifies it as a common noun, which had earlier been thought of as feminine. He traced its root to a number of cognates including הָכַל, כָּהַל, and כָּהַל. In this sense, he ascribed the meanings “to be great, lofty, capacious and spacious” to it. He further described הַיִּכָּל as “a large and magnificent building, a palace” especially as used in Pro 30:28; Isa 29:7 and Dan 1:4. This description was as well in consonance with Davidson’s (1976) definition – “a large splendid building, a palace” (182).

Its usage in 1 Kings 6:5 and Dan 5:2-5 refers to the temple, especially the space between the entrance and the holy of holies. Tregelles (1988) noted that its translation as the holy of holies itself in Simonis Winer’s Lexicon was an error. He also noted that when used in construct relationship with the holy name יְהוָה, and taking the form הַיִּכָּל יְהוָה, it is to be translated as “the palace of Jehovah.” This construct is an appellation for the temple at Jerusalem, which is elsewhere referred to as בֵּית יְהוָה, “the house of the LORD.” The house of the LORD is his temple, his abode and the place of his glory and name.

מֶלֶךְ: Tregelles (1988) remarks that the word מֶלֶךְ is the noun masculine form of the verb מָלַךְ which means “to reign, to be king,” hence, מֶלֶךְ is translated “king.” The root means to exercise the functions of a monarch. According to Davidson (1976) when the root מָלַךְ is used with עַל or בְּ, it is translated “to reign over or to be king over.” מֶלֶךְ is often applied to God as well as to false gods especially when used with the definite article and having the form הַמֶּלֶךְ. The inflected form מֶלֶךְ transliterated *molech* or *moloch* is identified with an idol of the Ammonites, who was at various times worshipped by Israel in the valley of Hinnom (Tregelles, 1988).

The verb form takes on different related translations as it transits from one stem to the other. In the hiphil stem, it is written as הִמְלִיךְ, and implies “to make king” while it connotes “to be made king” in the hophal stem, הִמְלִיךְ. When rendered in the niphil stem, נִמְלַךְ, it has the idea of “to consult, to take counsel” (Brown et al, 1997). In the Arabic, it means one who possesses or owns exclusively while the

Assyrian context denotes a counselor or adviser. In the Aramaic and Hebrew sense, it implies one whose opinion is decisive. This concept has a familiar root with the ancient Near Eastern perspective of the king as the son of the gods. The Egyptian Pharaoh is seen as a divine being, while the Babylonian king is viewed as a sort of messenger of the gods; an intermediary between people and gods, though not himself divine.

The root מִלְאָךְ also has the inflection מְלִאָךְ which denotes messenger or servant. By implication, the king is not just a leader but a servant and messenger. He serves the people of his community by providing justice and making the community habitable by all standards. The inflection מְלִאָךְ is also translated angel when used of divine messengers. This implies that the king is as well a messenger of the deity to the people.

Some of the variant usages of מִלְאָךְ include being used in respect to the Davidic kingship to connote one under divine protection as well as conveying the Messianic promise. מִלְאָךְ is also often used in figurative or metaphoric parlance to convey ideas with allegoric undertones, hence, it appears as מִלְאָךְ עֵצִים “king of trees” in Judges 9:8; as מִלְאָךְ עַל-כָּל-בְּנֵי-שָׁחַן in Job 41:26 where it was used figuratively of the crocodile as “king over all that are proud” and as מִלְאָךְ בְּלִהוֹת in Job 18:14 where it was used in reference to death as a king of terror (Grissanti, 2004).

Another term used sometimes synonymously to express the concept of מִלְאָךְ is נָגֵד meaning “leader.” The word occurs 11 times in Samuel and Kings to denote the king-designate whom God has chosen and appointed to rule over Israel or a tribal chief, military commander, or leader (Bonfiglio, 2014). While some have argued that the meaning of נָגֵד should be restricted to non-monarchical leaders, and particularly military commanders, its usage in Samuel-Kings as well as other historical usages suggest the opposite. It was used in reference to Saul, David, Jeroboam, Baasha and Hezekiah, all of whom were kings and not mere military leaders. Buttressing this, Hertzberg submitted that נָגֵד refers to the individual whom God has designated as a regal figure (Abe, 2004).

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTS OF מִלְאָךְ, הַיָּבֵל, AND כֹּהֵן

Ryan Bonfiglio (2014) noted that few topics are more central to Jewish life and society than priests and priesthood. The Hebrew Bible has Priestly colourations and concerns on display in various places, from legal materials to historical narratives and from the prayers of the Psalms to the discourses of the prophets. In many ways, the Hebrew Bible bears witness to a community of people whose social identity, religious beliefs, and ritual practices were deeply enmeshed in matters related to the priesthood.

In the light of the lexical analysis presented in the previous section, it can be deduced that a priest is “one who officially stands before a deity or a superior in the capacity of his priesthood” (Abe, 2004). In the Hebrew Bible, the term priest (*kōhēn*) generally designates “an official who was set apart from the rest of the community in order to carry out certain duties associated with worship and sacrifice” (Bonfiglio, 2014). However, the priesthood as a religious institution is not unique to the Israelite or Hebraic community. Apart from priests being attested in societies throughout the

ancient Near Eastern world, the root *khn*, from which the translations, “priest” and “to act as priest,” are deduced, is also known from Northwest Semitic literature.

Priesthood in some form appears to have existed from the earliest times. In patriarchal times the ‘office’ was occupied and its functions were performed by individuals holding some sort of headship, especially by the father or the chief of the family and of the tribe. Thus, in this capacity, Noah on behalf of his household “built an altar unto Yahweh, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar” (Gen 8:20). Abraham offered the ram “for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son” (Gen 22:13). In like manner, Job offered burnt offerings for his children and later for his three friends when the great trial had passed (Job 1:5; 42:8). In the aforementioned and similar instances individuals performed priestly roles of similar status with that of Aaron or of any regularly appointed priest in Israel.

The official Israelite priesthood has its origin in the Mosaic-Aaronide administration where Moses was the ‘ruler’ and Aaron was his priest. The Priestly historian (P – source) limits the priesthood to the Aaronic branch of the Levitical order while the Deuteronomist (D – source) expands the scope of the priesthood to include all Levites. Hence, he employs the term *hakkōhānīm halwiyyim* to underscore that all Levites were qualified to be priests. The dichotomy between Aaronides and other Levites is traceable to Exo 32:26-29 where Aaron made a Golden Calf for Israel to worship while Moses was on the mount to receive the Tablets of Law.

Owing to Aaron’s ineptitude to hold the people in check while Moses was away and the Levites’ show of zeal for Yahweh and regard for his worship, the Deuteronomist historian alluded that the priesthood no longer was an exclusive right of the Aaronide dynasty but became the inclusive privilege of all Levites. This was the beginning of branding the tribe of Levi as a priestly tribe. Subsequently, Levites were not given any land in the allotment of land to tribes, and they were not to do any work; but the other tribes are to take care of the needs of the Levites through offerings and sacrifices that were brought to the temple. Bonfiglio (2014) observes that while other Levites play an important role in Temple activities as gatekeepers, singers and caretakers of the sanctuary, the High Priesthood was solely reserved for the Aaronide and Zadokite dynasty.

Priests generally functioned as mediators of God’s presence and were responsible for the operation of cultic sites, whether the tabernacle, local shrines, or the Temple in Jerusalem. Abe (2004) reiterates that the priests represent the worshipper before the deity when they offer offerings and sacrifices on behalf of the worshipper and poured the blood of the sacrificial animal on the altar. They, however, represent the deity to the worshipper when they pass instructions and teachings from the deity to the worshipper. The priests also carried out numerous administrative roles, including the collection of tithes, the maintenance of the Temple, and the blowing of the trumpet on festive occasions.

The Temple as an institution of worship in Israelite cosmogony has its origin in the Mosaic wilderness Tent of Meeting *’ohel mo’ed* as well as in the Davidic Tent. Drane noted that as the people journeyed out of Egypt, they worshipped God in a special tent erected in the centre of their camp. Numerous scholars including Abe (2004), Drane (1986), and Merrill (1988) have submitted that the practice of having such movable places of worship was not unique to the Israelites. It was a common practice among the nomadic tribes of Middle East during the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages. This is still in practice till today in some places. This wilderness place

of worship was described in terms such as “tent of the LORD’s presence,” or “tabernacle.” God’s presence in this tabernacle was symbolized by the cloud which covered it, and the movement of this cloud provided the signal for the people to either move on or stay put (Drane, 1986). Eichrodt (1975) submits that it was in this tent that the Ark of Covenant was placed and it served as “the meeting-place between Yahweh and Moses, where he makes known his will to the captain of the people.” At its entrance the nation gathered to hear the words of the LORD from Moses anytime he had a message for them. It also served as the seat of judgement where matters of civil and social concerns are settled.

Whatever happened to the tent of the LORD’s presence and Ark remains a mystery. After the wilderness wandering, the Ark was mentioned a number of times – at the crossing of the Jordan, in the sanctuary at Shiloh, in Jerusalem during David’s reign and later in Solomon’s Temple. It was probably used during religious festivals at the time of the monarchy and may have been captured or destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar when he overthrew Jerusalem in 586 BC. The tent, however, had disappeared from mention even earlier than the Ark as there was no mention of it after the settlement into Canaan. It was probably for a while at Shiloh but that would have been for a short time since there was already an erected building for worship at Shiloh by the time of Samuel (Drane, 1986).

However, the sanctuary at Shiloh suffered moral and spiritual deterioration climaxing in the capture of the Ark and sacking of the town itself by the Philistines ca1104 BC. Subsequently, Samuel operated a kind of itinerant priesthood-prophethood moving round the year from Beersheba to Dan and returning to Ramah where he lived. By the time of Saul, information about the central location of the tabernacle was hazy. There are suggestions linking it with Gibeah, the administrative centre of Saul, as well as Gilgal, its initial location at the time of the conquest (Merill, 1988).

There are indications that the location of the tabernacle shifted from either Gibeah or Gilgal to Nob and remained there until Saul ordered the destruction of the town because the priests had entertained David. The tabernacle was then relocated, probably to Gibeon, because its next mention during the reign of David was in Gibeon and it was also in Gibeon that Solomon worshipped after his enthronement.

After establishing a stately Israel, David had the intention to build a house for the Ark of the LORD but was restrained from doing so and, instead, the honour was passed on to his son, Solomon. Upon his enthronement, Solomon set to build the Temple according to the grand plan already put in place by his father. He was able to do that with the help of Hiram the king of Tyre who supplied materials as well as workmen for the project. Commenting on the impact this had on the design and outlook of the Temple, Ogba (2005) remarked that “The best materials were imported at great cost, and skilled artisans were brought in from Phoenicia. They used their own art forms in its construction, and the general design of the temple they produced was thoroughly Canaanite.” Kaufmann (1969) maintained that regardless of the Canaanite touch on the Temple, the Priestly writers portrayed it as the place where God revealed himself and manifested his election of Israel.

The beginning of kingship in Israel had its roots in the request by the elders of the land owing to Samuel’s old age and the ineptitude of his children at managing the affairs of the land. After acceding to their request, Samuel appointed Saul for them as the first king. Saul was, however, rejected by God as king after a series of disobedient acts and David was anointed king in his stead.

David's initial shot to limelight was occasioned by his defeat of Goliath, which brought him into the royal family as Saul's in-law and by implication, a potential heir to the throne. Saul's jealousy of David's successes led him to make a number of attempts on his life, thus making David flee for his life and becoming a fugitive. Although David had opportunity to kill Saul on two occasions, he spared him under the conviction that he would not lift his hands against the LORD's anointed. At Saul's demise David was made king over Israel; an incident viewed by many monarchists as the real beginning of Hebrew monarchy (Unger, 1982) for it was he who "carried into effect the whole system, civil and ecclesiastical, which had been foreshadowed at Sinai" (Oesterly and Robinson, 1948).

According to Anderson (1988), the nation was transformed, under David's leadership, from a loose union of Tribal Confederacy into an empire sculpted along the structural blend of neighbouring states. David was, without doubt, a great leader and shrewd military strategist who routed the enemies of Israel. He was also an incisive leader who applied tact and diplomacy in uniting various estranged parties within the Tribal Confederacy he inherited from Saul. In the words of Ogba (2005), "David achieved what Saul had failed to do: he established his own position independently of the continued acclamation of the people. His own army, with his own city, controlled the nation; even perhaps, his own national shrine at the center of things" (118).

In the twilight of David's reign he made Solomon co-regent with him and at his death Solomon was made king; it was under Solomon that the kingdom attained the peak of her glory. Solomon's reign was characterized by wise, strategic policy making, state of the art architecture, and explosive international trade which resulted in a blossomed economy. Ogba noted that Solomon was not just a leader among equals, he represented a new aristocracy determined to maintain its affluence and influence by whatever necessary means (Ogba, 2005). It was under Solomon that Samuel's prophecy of the king exerting heavy taxes on the people found its total fulfillment. In the construction of the Temple and palace, he made the people pay heavy taxes and conscripted many to join the labour force. Solomon's greatest undoing, however, was his marriage alliances with foreign women, princesses of surrounding pagan nations, who turned his heart from following Yahweh to following after their own gods. After reigning for forty years, Solomon died and Rehoboam his son was crowned king in his stead.

Rehoboam's lack of adroitness in handling the request of the people concerning relief from their heavy burden led to the disintegration of the land into two separate kingdoms. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained with Rehoboam and made up the Southern kingdom, called Judah while the remaining ten tribes went with Jeroboam to form the Northern kingdom, called Israel. The two kingdoms continued under monarchic rule until their captivities in 721 BC and 586 BC respectively.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN כֹּהֵן AND מֶלֶךְ IN THE CONTEXT OF הַיְסוּד

From the grammatical analysis in section one and the history in section two, a number of deductions can be made as regards the functions and relationship between the priest and king in relation to the temple.

Perhaps the most significant relationship between kings and priests in ancient Israel lies in their functions. While the priests are saddled with the temple and its administration, kings are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the society using the palace as base. However, some of these functions overlap each other. For

instance, the priests gave instruction to the people on how they were to live their lives both in the religious and civil spheres. The kings were also known to have undertaken cultic functions at various times in history.

From the lexical perspective, the priest is one who bends down to do homage to a superior while the king is one who holds regal honour and to whom homage is paid. In the light of this, the king could be said to be superior to the priest. While the king is construed as one who owns or possesses exclusively and whose opinion is decisive, the priest's services and actions are subject to the ratification of a higher authority. This can either be the god(s) he represents or the king who appoints him to serve in the priesthood. By the time of the monarchy, the appointment of priests, especially the high priest, became the sole prerogative of the reigning king. As a result, a priest could be appointed to priesthood by a king if the king is pleased with him. Such could also be removed from priesthood if he proves disloyal to the king or displeases him in any form. The ensuing drama upon Solomon's enthronement serves as a case in point to illustrate this.

The lexical analysis also reveals that the word כֹּהֵן can also be translated minister as found in 2 Samuel 8:18; 2 Samuel 20:26 and 1 Kings 4:5. This implies the performance of an act of service or servitude for or on behalf of a superior. The priest here ministers to the deity on behalf of the people. Similarly, as noted in the lexical analysis an inflected form of the root מָלַךְ translates as messenger, both of people and of the gods. In this perspective, both the priest and the king are divine messengers who serve as intermediary between a people and their god.

Further, the priest's sphere of operation is the הֵיכָל, temple; the king's domain is also the הֵיכָל, palace. Westermann describes the Temple as a part of the palace complex (Westermann, 1969). Drane (1986) established that the priests and kings had a close relationship with one another during the period of the monarchy. He also reiterated the assumption of scholars that the priesthood officially came into existence at the time of the monarchy although its existence and functions go further than that. He stated that priests operate in a restricted capacity in the national cultic sanctuaries that were closely controlled by the kings.

Drawing from the Samuel encounter at Shiloh, William (1999) submitted that the temple housed other adjoining rooms and living quarters in which priests, Levites and other sanctuary workers lived. Hence, he argued that Samuel was sleeping in one of these rooms when he had his encounter with Yahweh. Since the temple was an enlarged form of the Shiloh tabernacle, and in support of Westermann's (1969) assertion that the temple was a part of the palace complex, it could be deduced that there were living quarters within this complex. This argument is also in consonance with Tregelles's (1988) description of הֵיכָל as "a large and magnificent building, a palace" and Davidson's (1976) description of it as "a large splendid building, a palace." This implies that the הֵיכָל was a large magnificent building which housed the king's living and administrative quarters (palace) as well as the nation's centre of worship, temple.

JUSTIFICATION OF מָלַךְ PERFORMING THE ROLES OF כֹּהֵן IN THE הֵיכָל

Religion and politics have always been meticulously connected in ancient and contemporary civilizations. A look at Israel's ancient Near Eastern neighbours reveals that kings have always had a special role in religion although their specific functions vary from place to place. While the kings of Judah and Israel could not be said to have

ascribed divine status to themselves like some of their ancient Near Eastern counterparts, evidences of Israelite kings assuming cultic roles are spread across the pages of the Hebrew Bible. This, however, led to confrontations between the kings and the priestly class. Beginning with the Samuel-Saul episode and running through to the Azariah-Uzziah episode, there were confrontations between kings and priests over the former's right to minister at the altar. The questions then arise: "Do kings have any right to perform cultic functions?" "Do the priests have any justification to arrogate the sole operation of the temple and its altar to themselves?"

Evidences from the ancient Near East, and the Hebrew Bible, reveal that kings obviously have an important role in the religious life of their people. Since kings were believed to be appointed by God and they are his legates, they moderate over the affairs of the people including the religious aspect. According to Drane (1986), kings, as leaders of the people, are responsible for the "general tenor of organized worship." Some instances in the Hebrew Bible where kings are portrayed as directly in-charge of religious policy-making include the case of Asa, Ahaz, Joash, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah in 1 Kings 15:11-15; 2 Kings 16:1-18; 2 Kings 12:1-19; 2 Kings 18:1-7; 2 Kings 21:1-9 and 2 Kings 22:3-23:23 respectively.

Going by the aforesaid description of the temple as a part of the palace complex and the lexical inference that priests, as subordinates, answer to kings it could be inferred that kings control public worship. By implication, the priests were themselves members of the royal household albeit not necessarily by biological descent. This being so, they have their lots determined by the king. Since the king determines the lot of the custodians of the cultic centre, he also has power over the worship and should have access to perform cultic functions.

In addition, shrines, temples and sanctuaries are thought of in ancient Near Eastern religious philosophy as the king's place of worship. The lexical analysis earlier presented reflects the king as being conceived of as one who owns and possesses exclusively. Hence, all within his domain and kingdom, including the temple belong to him. Amaziah reiterates this idea in Amos 7:13 when he describes the shrine as "the king's sanctuary, and a temple of the kingdom." If the temple belongs to the king, can he then be prevented from offering sacrifices therein?

The construction of the king not only as leader but also as servant or messenger also lends weight to his being able to perform cultic functions. As a servant-leader, the king serves the people of his domain by making available quality leadership, being of exemplary conduct, providing basic amenities and representing them in matters of civil and religious disposition. He is also a messenger of the deity and represents the deity to the people. Though not officially a priest, the king by virtue of being a messenger of the deity, is in position to pray on behalf of the nation, issue blessings in God's name and even offer sacrifices as exemplified in 1 Kings 8:14-66; 2 Kings 19:14-19; and 2 Samuel 6:12-19 respectively.

In describing the Messiah, the Psalms refer to the messianic king as priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4). As priest, the messianic king is qualified to offer sacrifices on behalf of his subjects. Since Israelite kings are seen as vassals of Yahweh, the sovereign king of Israel; the Messiah is Yahweh's anointed, and the earthly Israelite king is a type of the coming Messianic king, then the type can also perform the function of that which he points to. As a type of the coming Messiah who is both king and priest, the king is empowered to offer sacrifices on behalf of his subjects as he mediates for them in the presence of the deity.

Moreover, the exclusive functions of priests were not yet as clearly defined as at the time of the monarchy as they became after the exile. This is based on the premise that most of the writings that make up for the early history of Israel were not fully composed until well after the establishment of the monarchy. Some were as late as after the exile. Before this time, the *paterfamilias* (referring to family heads, fathers, heads of clans and others in similar leadership capacity) was responsible for making sacrifices on behalf of their families, clans, communities or tribes as the case may be. Noah, Job, Abraham and the other patriarchs all offered sacrifices on behalf of their families; Micah consecrated one of his sons as priest before a Levite came along. These instances indicate that there was no rigidity attached to the performance of cultic functions prior the establishment of the priesthood. If 'mere men' performed priestly functions and were not condemned either by their people or the deity for doing so, then what stops kings, the sovereign rulers of communities, from performing 'priestly' functions?

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined from grammatical and historical perspectives, the nature, development and functions of priests and kings in relation to the temple/palace. It was discovered that the same word translated palace has the connotation of temple and that the temple could in fact be an extension of the palace. From the aforesaid, there appears to be enough lexical, hierarchical and historical grounds to justify the undertaking of cultic functions by kings. However, it needs be noted that kings are not priests hence their operational scope goes beyond the performance of cultic functions. In addition, the performance of cultic functions by kings was mostly on special occasions; the day-to-day running of the temple and the cultic functions associated with it were mainly handled by the priests and other religious officials so appointed by the king.

In the light of the above analysis and juxtaposition, this paper concludes that it is not an aberration for kings to perform cultic functions, especially that of making sacrifices. Since their sphere of operation is the **הַיְכָל** which literally means a large magnificent building or palace of which the temple is a part, the kings' function transcends administrative and civil obligations in the palace to include cultic functions in the temple. Congruently, the priestly class of Israel that chastised kings for performing cultic functions could be said to be merely fuelling their ego and creating an unnecessary distinction. The condemnation of Saul by Samuel and Uzziah by the Azariah-led company of priests for performing sacrifices is not justified in the light of ancient Near Eastern practices and the lexical implication of the cognate words.

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