THE HEBREW REPUBLIC

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THE HEBREW REPUBLIC

Carlo Sigonio

With an Introduction by
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Carlo Sigonio (1520/24-1584), Italian historian, taught at the San Marco School in Venice and at the Universities of Padua and Bologna. He wrote several works on Roman and Greek history, focusing especially on political institutions, and on the history of Italy in the Middle Ages. His book on the Hebrew Republic was one of the first analyses of the political and religious institutions of the Ancient State of Israel and one of the most read works on this topic in Europe.

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INTRODUCTION

IN 1582, CARLO SIGONIO, a historian of Greek and Roman antiquity, published *De republica Hebraeorum* (*The Hebrew Republic*), on the institutions of the ancient state of Israel.[1] The book was initially published in Bologna, the second city of the papal states, and was reprinted several times, becoming the most famous work on its topic in all of early modern Europe.[2] The cultural and historical context of Sigonio's work has posed something of a problem for scholars seeking to recover its meaning and historical significance: while the study of the Hebrew polity and its employment as a model for politics was not uncommon in Calvinist countries, Sigonio was writing in a Catholic environment and dedicated his book to the pope. Furthermore, like some of his Calvinist contemporaries, Sigonio presented the Hebrew state as a possible model for the separation of powers between the religious and secular realms, which would effectively neutralize the papacy's secular authority.

The implications of Sigonio's work for contemporary political studies have not been given sufficient consideration by scholars. Sigonio is usually characterized as an objective historian and a champion of antiquarianism, and his book on the polity of the ancient Hebrews has been seen as a collection of source texts devoid of meaningful ideas that could be applied to his own context. Yet, as we shall see, the matter is far more complicated. To determine the meaning of Sigonio's work in its time, one must take into account a wide array of issues, including his relationship with the archbishop of Bologna, his interest in historiography, his knowledge of contemporary European political debates, and his long-running quarrel with the Catholic censors. Ultimately, Sigonio will be shown to have had mixed motivations, writing at some times for political purposes and at others out of a commitment to objective history. In this respect, he was no different from his contemporaries researching the ancient Hebrew state, in Italy or abroad.[3]

One reason scholarship has failed to see Sigonio as part of the greater phenomenon of *Respublica Hebraeorum* study in early modern Europe has to do with how scholars have accounted for the increased interest in the ancient

Jewish polity during the period.[4] Some have identified the primary stimulus as the study and dissemination of the fourth book of Josephus Flavius' *Jewish Antiquities* during the second half of the sixteenth century. Others have pointed to the progressive "secularization" of biblical history, which permitted scientific analysis of the Jewish political model.[5] This model then became—as classical political models had been for some time—a means of legitimizing specific political positions (although "secular" here is something of a misnomer, since the model was used in religious debates).[6]

This assessment that the "secularization" of Bible study is fundamental to the political study and use of scripture has resulted in modern-day historians', with few exceptions, concentrating on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and studying works published in countries such as England and the Netherlands. The concurrence of political strife, advanced Bible study, and a ruling Calvinism (in all its variations) explained the presence of works devoted to the Hebrew republic.[7] Accordingly, scholars have focused on the works of Cunaeus, Grotius, Selden, and Harrington, disregarding the founders of this genre, such as Bonaventure Corneille Bertram and Carlo Sigonio (authors of *De politia Iudaica* [1574] and *De republica Hebraeorum* [1582], respectively), since their works were deemed to be of less political relevance.[8]

A more careful analysis may show that Bertram, a sixteenth-century Calvinist theologian and Hebraist, could also be included in the aforementioned group.[9] But Sigonio is different: an eminent historian of Greco-Roman antiquities and professor at the *Studio* (or university) in the papal city of Bologna, he resists the mold scholars have constructed to account for political Hebraism. His omission is particularly problematic when we consider that of all the works on the polity of the ancient Hebrews published in early modern Europe, Sigonio's was the most frequently cited. In fact, all subsequent authors even remotely interested in Jewish political institutions referred to the work of our Modenese historian. Nonetheless, *The Hebrew Republic* has been considered "mere erudition," dismissed as a curiosity, or viewed as the product of the political-religious agenda of Sigonio's patron, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti. In other words, Sigonio's work has always been isolated from others in its genre and from both the Italian and broader European cultural context in which he lived.[10]

CARLO SIGONIO IN CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Carlo Sigonio was born in Modena (ca. 1520–1524) and moved, over the course of his life, between the most important cultural centers of northern Italy.[11] His cultural gestation took place in Modena, where his teachers included Francesco Porto and Ludovico Castelvetro, and where he replaced Porto as Greek lector. He taught at the St. Marco school in Venice between 1552 and 1559, then in Padua until 1563, when he moved to Bologna to hold the chair of humanities at the *Studio*. From the beginning, Sigonio divided his interests between Greek and Roman antiquities and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. In the first field of research, he concentrated on different magistracies throughout Roman history and later on Livy's history of the Roman republic. He also analyzed Roman law and the history of Athenian institutions.[12] As for his other field of investigation, Sigonio had lectured on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* while teaching at St. Marco and had published a translation of it.[13] During this period, Sigonio developed some of his cardinal ideas, which ultimately shaped all his activity as a historian.

Venice

In Venice, Sigonio wrote *Oratio de laudibus historiae*, which is enormously helpful in understanding his historical method within the cultural context of his time. In this work, Sigonio finds history to be the noblest of the humanities, writing that those who overlook the passage of time and past events cannot really be considered men; they are rather like inexperienced boys unable to distinguish one thing from another. Grammarians, rhetoricians, poets, and philosophers must resort to the art of history in order to truly understand their own disciplines,[14] since history—the analysis of particulars with the aim of reaching universals—lies at the foundation of every science.[15] After further explaining how grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy are indebted to history, he adds that this discipline is of capital importance in understanding civil institutions. Philosophers who wrote on the state had to investigate and compare the different kinds of constitutions and determine which forms survived, which degenerated, and which turned into tyranny.[16] Sigonio ends the *Oratio* with the remark that philosophers draw their conclusions not by means of the secrets of their discipline but rather by direct observation of

the history of the particular states whose description they find in the works of the ancients.[17]

The *Oratio* addresses—in embryonic form—two fundamental issues that illuminate the subsequent scholarship of our author. The first is his method of historical inquiry, whereby universal conclusions are reached by analyzing and comparing particulars. This approach had its foundations in Italian humanism and had been employed, for example, by Guillaume Postel in his study of languages and religions. During the second half of the sixteenth century, it became a cornerstone of the new historiography, whose most prominent exponent was none other than Jean Bodin. The second issue is Sigonio's defense of the study of history. He argues that historical research should be regarded not just as a "cult of antiquities" but as an effort to reconstruct the evolution of certain foundations of human society, particularly those of juridical and civil institutions. Humanism had attacked traditions using philology. Sigonio considers himself part of this historical-philological trend and applies it with full force.

Sigonio's library held several French works, namely Bauduin's *De institutione historiae universae et eius cum iurisprudentia coniunctione*; the works of Hotman, among them the *Francogallia*; and probably Bodin's *Methodus* (*Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*).[18] His reflections on the ancient states of Rome and Athens belong to the same Venetian period in which he wrote the *Oratio* and developed his historical form in the greater European context. Already in his lectures on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where he lauds the mixed-constitution model of Cicero's *Scipio*, Sigonio reveals his predilection for the form of the Venetian republic that hosted him and which for his audience was formed mainly by the ruling class of the Lagoon republic.[19] His praise for the mixed model of government accorded with the Aristotelian concept of the six types of state.

A similar dependence on Aristotle can be found in one of Sigonio's most important works, *De Antiquo Iure Civium Romanorum*, where he analyzes the Roman state from its origin to the end of the republican period.[20] The first of several ideas on which Sigonio dwells is Aristotle's analysis identifying the three just forms of government (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) and the three corrupt ones (tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocracy). He adds that what distinguishes the two groups is not the number of people taking part in the administration of the state but rather the purpose they set for themselves: the rulers of just forms always govern for the sake of the common good, whereas the rulers of degenerate forms govern in pursuit of their own interests.[21] Interestingly, Sigonio offers an additional type of government:

the *respublica temperata*, which combines all three just forms and which he considers the best.[22]

Bologna

Sigonio's time in Bologna, where he taught from 1563 until his death in 1584, was a turning point in his career. This period was characterized by a shift in his interests, which had heretofore centered on history from the late Roman empire until medieval Italy. Paolo Prodi has dwelt on Sigonio's collaboration with Gabriele Paleotti, archbishop of Bologna from 1566, during this period, pointing out that Sigonio became the instrument of Paleotti's attempt at cultural and religious reform.[23] But there was life in the papal city of Bologna beyond the presence of Paleotti and his ecclesiastical policy, which sought to reform the Church according to the principles of the Council of Trent. The city was also imbued with strong political tensions between the central government of Rome, on the one hand, and the Bolognese aristocracy, with its aspirations of autonomy, on the other.

Sigonio was torn between these two positions. While he collaborated with the bishop, being involved in 1569 in the reformation of the liturgical office of St. Petronius, he also showed interest in the history of Bologna and in its longstanding autonomous tradition, and the city's senate even asked him to write on the subject.[24] In the resulting tract, when he described events closer to his own time—particularly the birth and development of the Roman Church—Sigonio was forced to step into the contemporary historiographical debate and take a stand in the controversy between Catholics and Protestants. At this point he had to deal with a conflict between his historical-philological method and the Church's need to legitimize its positions against attacks originating in transalpine Europe.

Beginning in 1569, Sigonio became a target of ecclesiastical censorship. The first criticisms were directed at his *Historia Bononiensis* and accused him of doubting the privilege granted to Theodosius and of questioning the veracity of other historical documents, to the detriment of the Church of Rome.[25]

Sigonio's works following this period reflect a continuous conflict between Rome, represented by Cardinal Sirleto, and Bologna, home of Sigonio's greatest advocate, Paleotti. *De regno Italiae* is another work which was to cause numerous problems for its author. In a memorandum written in 1569, Sigonio states that he was asked to write a history of Bologna, adding that he intends to extend his research to other Italian cities, particularly in Lombardy and Romagna.[26] This is the basis of Sigonio's history of the Italian peninsula,

especially its northern part, from the Lombard invasion to the defeat of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I at the hands of the Italian *communes*.[27] While Sigonio describes these events in the style of a chronicle, he allows himself some digressions of particular interest for our discussion because they touch upon the connection between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. Sigonio claims that the communes ultimately owe their freedom not to the papacy but to the empire. Furthermore, he states that the pope, who represented spiritual authority, held no political power over the communes in his land, as everything secular was the domain of the empire.[28] This work encountered papal censorship, and Sigonio was compelled to modify some sections considerably.

Sigonio's next work, *De occidentali Imperio*, which covered the centuries from Diocletian to Justinian (284–565 CE), was also very controversial, especially regarding the "Donation of Constantine,"[29] which the author considered a forgery. The Church (specifically Cardinal Sirleto) considered the "Donation" authentic and requested that it be integrated into Sigonio's work. The dispute ended when Sigonio yielded to the Church, which permitted the publication of the work in 1578.

The year 1578 marked an improvement in Sigonio's relations with the papal court, though it was not to last: Gregory XIII, elected in 1574, decided to avail himself of Sigonio's erudition and summoned him to Rome to entrust him with the task of composing a history of the Church that would confute the Protestant work *Centuriae magdeburgenses*. Once again, however, Sigonio's research and his conception of the proper role of history clashed with the polemical spirit that drove the actions of the Holy See. Although Sigonio devoted himself fully to this project, producing the first three books in a short time, the reaction of the Holy See was so negative that publication was interrupted at Book 14, and the rest of the work remained in manuscript until the eighteenth century, when Argelati edited it as part of Sigonio's *Opera Omnia*.[30] The authorities objected that Sigonio's history neither faulted the Protestants nor defended the Roman Church. This clearly emerges from the censor's reports on Sigonio's works: the author is accused of using language inappropriate for the narration of the history of the Church and of failing to condemn the heresies of antiquity, which, according to the Church, only anticipated new ones. Sigonio responded to this criticism by stating his priorities and explaining that the integrity of his philological method did not allow him to describe the past with the polemical language of the present.[31]

Despite Sigonio's conflict with the Holy See, Paleotti—who was engaged in the cultural reform of church institutions and popular religious sentiments in Bologna and of Christians in general—commissioned him to prepare an

annotated edition of Sulpicius Severus' *Historia Sacra* (published in 1581) with the aim of providing the clergy with a tool for the study of biblical history.[32] As we shall see, it is here that Prodi identifies the origins of Sigonio's *De republica Hebraeorum*. This book on the ancient state of the Jews was to be Sigonio's last historical work.

Sigonio would die two years later, in 1584, devastated by the scandal surrounding the publication of his edition of the *Consolatio*, a work supposedly written by Cicero but considered by many to be a fabrication. Some scholars had accused Sigonio of writing the book himself, and therefore he spent the last years of his life defending its authenticity.[33] After Sigonio's death, his works were no longer published in Italy, as the friction he had encountered with the ecclesiastical censors had impugned his reputation as a historian, in particular of late-ancient Italy and of the Jewish state. His works did, however, continue to be very successful in the rest of Europe.

THE COMPOSITION OF 'DE REPUBLICA HEBRAEORUM'

Prodi's Hypothesis

What motivated Sigonio, hitherto concerned with classical topics, to study the Hebrew polity? As mentioned, Prodi connected the genesis of *De republica Hebraeorum* to Sigonio's work on Severus' *Historia Sacra*. A dedicatory letter to Paleotti, included in Sigonio's edition of the latter, demonstrates the Bolognese bishop's and Sigonio's shared interest in a history of Christianity that treated the people of the Old and New Testaments as part of one continuous history of salvation, which began with Adam's first sin and would end with Christ's salvation.[34] Prodi's explanation *seems* plausible, because Sigonio's previous research cannot be reconciled with his choice to pursue an analysis of Jewish institutions unless we take into account the intervention of Paleotti.

Verifying any hypothesis regarding the reasons Sigonio wrote *De republica Hebraeorum* is complicated by the conspicuous absence of correspondence documenting its composition. Whereas Sigonio's method of writing was usually characterized by continuous dialogue with colleagues and constant requests for information from them, in this case there is no trace of the process by which he collected material or progressed in his work. Strangest of all, we find no reference to this work in Sigonio's letters to his dearest friends, such as Pinelli, with whom he discussed his research at length. This seems to leave no option but to accept the hypothesis that the work ultimately originated in

the dialogue between Paleotti and Sigonio on the history of the Church and its continuity with the Old Testament. Additional evidence supporting this theory can be found in the dedicatory letter to Gregory XIII placed at the beginning of *De republica Hebraeorum*, in which Sigonio declares the ancient state of the Jews an appropriate model for the Roman Catholic Church, as this state exemplifies the Augustinian idea of a City of Man and a City of God. Sigonio adds that the pope himself gave him the idea of writing this work when he asked him to compile a history of the Church.[35] Thus Sigonio seems to imply that all the works he wrote between 1578 and 1582 (*Historia ecclesiastica*, the commentary on Severus, and *De republica Hebraeorum*) were part of the same concept.[36]

Connections to Thinkers Elsewhere in Europe

Sigonio's claim in the dedicatory letter that the pope inspired the project would make sense if not for the following quotation from Corneille Bertram, a French theologian who taught Hebrew in Geneva, in the introduction to his *De politia Iudaica*:

> And so, while we both were waiting until someone who would deal with these things would appear, behold Sigonio, a very learned man and one of extraordinary skill in Roman and Greek history, promised a specific treatment of this topic.[37]

De politia Iudaica was published in 1574, four years before Gregory XIII would entrust Sigonio with writing the history of the Church. Therefore both Sigonio's version of events (according to which the idea of *De republica Hebraeorum* came about as a consequence of this invitation in 1578) as well as the hypothesis suggested by Prodi (according to which the inspiration for writing the book began with Paleotti's commission to write a commentary on *Historia Sacra* in 1581) are untenable.

How should we date this statement by Sigonio to which Bertram refers? On the basis of Bertram's dedicatory letter to Bèze, where he reconstructs how he began thinking in 1561 about writing on the ancient state of the Jews, we could say he came into contact with Sigonio around the time of the first publication of his *De politia Iudaica*. Here is the evidence: in the second edition of Bertram's text, in 1580, he amends the sentence, which originally stated that Sigonio had "promised" (*pollicetur*) to write a work on Jewish institutions, to read that he "seemed to promise" (*polliceri visus est*),

apparently because a few years later Bertram no longer believed his colleague actually intended to write it.[38]

The second problem posed by the quotation is how Bertram became aware of Sigonio's intention to write about the ancient state of the Jews. Once again the answer is problematic, because we have no statements of this kind in the works written before 1574 or in his letters. One possible connection could be through Henri Estienne, the French printer and eminent Hellenist who lived in Geneva and was in contact with Sigonio. The association between the two dated back a long time, presumably to 1555, when they visited Bessarione's library in Venice.[39] We also have a letter from Sigonio to Estienne dated 1563, written while Sigonio was in Padua and about to move to Bologna. This is the only known correspondence between the two, and it testifies to a certain familiarity and a frequent enough exchange of information, demonstrated by the fact that Sigonio updates Estienne on his research.[40]

Still, all this amounts to rather weak evidence considering that we have no indication that Estienne and Bertram were ever in contact. At best, it shows a part of the network built by Sigonio within the Republic of Letters. By overemphasizing Sigonio's collaboration with Paleotti, Prodi dismisses the possibility that Sigonio's involvement in other cultural settings could have spurred his interest in the Hebrew polity and the fact that the cultural life of Bologna cannot be reduced to the politics of its bishop.

Insofar as Sigonio's involvement in other environments is concerned, it is worth considering his strong ties with German scholars, and in particular with the renowned Joannes Caselius, who between 1563 and 1566 lived in Italy, where he met Sigonio. Numerous letters indicate that this relationship continued in the following years; Sigonio even hosted Caselius' students in his house in Bologna.[41]

Sigonio's scholarly reputation also reached France: Bodin quotes him often, criticizing some of his positions; Bauduin refers to his works on Roman law already in 1561. The polemics on the curiate law[42] saw Sigonio opposing Grouchy, which reinforced his image in transalpine Europe. Similarly, from the correspondence between Dupuy and Pinelli, we learn of the success Sigonio's works enjoyed all over Europe, drawing the attention of Parisian printers and even of Wechel in Frankfurt.[43]

In this respect it is useful to note the history surrounding the text of *De regno Italiae*. This work was published in Venice in 1574 after being harshly attacked both by the Church of Rome and by the government of Venice, which objected to the way the city was portrayed. From the Pinelli-Dupuy correspondence, we learn how Sigonio (thanks to Pinelli) made his way into the European book market.[44] Together with a letter dated March 18, 1575,

Pinelli sent Dupuy a non-censored copy of *De regno Italiae*.[45] Dupuy's reply to Pinelli on March 25 clarifies Sigonio's editorial strategy, confirming that the text would have three editions: in Venice; in Frankfurt, published by Wechel; and in Lausanne (actually Basel), published by Pietro Perna.[46] The three versions have yet to be compared, but from the different sources we can gather that Sigonio had very good connections in the European intellectual community, in particular on account of Pinelli.[47]

Bologna as a Cosmopolitan Environment

Just as Sigonio was not interested exclusively in Bologna, having works from other European cities in his library and seeking to publish abroad, so the cultural world of Bologna was not monopolized by Paleotti. It was permeated by different trends, particularly concerning the rule of the city and republican virtues. The tension between the local government of Bologna and the State of the Church was very high at all levels, as Angela De Benedictis has shown, and resulted in a trend toward republican writing, typified by Camillo Paleotti's *De republica Bononiensi*.[48]

This republicanism affected the Bolognese Printing Society, of which Sigonio was the scholarly director, and it should be placed within the context of the life of the city and its citizens' pride in their form of government. This trend is evident not only in the publication of Sigonio's history of Bologna, promoted by the city's senate, but also by the emblem chosen by the Printing Society, which portrayed Felsina (the female anthropomorphization of the city of Bologna) holding a cornucopia in her left hand and a flag bearing the motto "*Libertas*" in her right. Another cultural icon of Bologna was Ulisse Aldrovandi, a famous naturalist who was close to Cardinal Paleotti and at the same time involved in the great European debates and in particular in discussing the origins of culture and the genealogy of peoples. In unpublished works such as *Bibliologia* and *Theatrum biblicum naturale*, Aldrovandi makes a series of characteristic assertions that the Jews were the founders of all human knowledge. According to this line of reasoning, philosophy, physics, and even politics were invented by the Jews, and other cultures (including the Greeks) had copied from them. These works should be placed within the European and Italian context of the book and compared in particular to contemporaneous chronologies of ancient peoples and their *prisca sapientia*.[49]

However little detail it contains, the passage cited from the introduction to Bertram's *De politia Iudaica* is crucial for recovering the factors that led Sigonio to compose his own work and for constructing an alternative to

Prodi's hypothesis that will place *De republica Hebraeorum* in the context of the political debates of its time.

THE CONTENT OF 'DE REPUBLICA HEBRAEORUM'

As mentioned, *De republica Hebraeorum* was dedicated to Pope Gregory XIII and is divided into seven books. In the first book, in the chapters on the history of Jewish religious and civil institutions, Sigonio lays out a precise structure for the rest of the text, to which he later refers at various points in his discussion. After introducing the history of the Jewish people, Sigonio dwells upon the focal point of the Hebrew republic: the law given by God to Moses. Sigonio claims it is possible to delineate the representation of every institution according to a scheme that distinguishes the proper precepts for religious jurisdiction from the laws designed to regulate the civil order. Accordingly, the remaining six books are divided into two sections: one concerning religious institutions, and the other, civil.

The first section (Books II–V) contains an antiquarian analysis. The description of the sacrifices, the priests, the calendar, and the holy places is mostly a dry list of citations, without comment, from sources ranging from the Bible through the church fathers, ancient Jewish authors such as Josephus Flavius and Philo of Alexandria, and the Talmud and other rabbinical texts cited through secondary sources.

The second section contains a strictly political reading of the ancient Hebrew polity. Here Sigonio elaborates a view which diverges both from pre-Bodin political thought, which ignored the Hebrew model, as well as from precedents set by Bodin and Bertram, who advocated monarchic and mixed-constitutional readings of the Hebrew polity, respectively. This "aristocratic" view would become common in writings of subsequent thinkers.[50]

Sigonio finds the distinction between the religious and civil authorities in the Israelite polity to be grounded in Mosaic law, and hence chapter 4 of Book I, "The Law Given by God to the Israelites," is key to understanding the work in its entirety. Sigonio imposes a two-part structure on Mosaic law and further divides each part into two. The resulting four-part structure breaks with medieval tradition,[51] which viewed ancient Jewish law as composed of three kinds of precepts: moral, ceremonial, and judicial. For Christian theologians, first among them Aquinas, only the first part (pertaining to moral precepts) remained valid for Christians, while the other two applied solely to Jewish history.

Sigonio takes a different approach. He begins his construct of Jewish law with the two commandments of loving God and loving one's neighbor, claiming they represent the categories of religious life and civil life, respectively. These categories cover between them all of Jewish law. Sigonio then differentiates between two types of commandments that regulate religious life—mandates and precepts—and between two types of commandments that rule the civil sphere: *iudicia* and *iustificationes*. The first two categories include norms of ritual and religious organization, and the last two are strictly juridical (being, in effect, the God-given tools by which humanity condemns the guilty and acquits the innocent).

This four-part scheme sheds light on Sigonio's controversial views on the validity of the Ten Commandments and the book of Deuteronomy. Although Sigonio concurred with Catholic consensus on the Ten Commandments, seeing them as an elaboration of the first two principles (love of God and love of man), on the book of Deuteronomy he parted ways with the Church, seeing it as a development and interpretation of the Decalogue.

This has two important implications that help us understand the intentions of our author and his vision of the Jewish state:

The first concerns the structure of the law, which makes it relevant politically-juridically and not just theologically. Jewish law and its commentaries then became relevant and comparable to the secular legacy of Greece and Rome. It almost seems as if Sigonio is referring to the same conception of the history of law that dominated the European debate in those years and was attempting to reconstruct a genealogy of the various ancient juridical traditions, placing the Jewish model at the top of the hierarchy dictated by chronology.[52]

The second, which is actually more important for understanding the contribution of the Jewish state, concerns the result that this division of the law produces in the distribution of powers within the state itself. The theoretical separation between the religious and civil spheres also requires a practical separation between the investment of religious authority and civil authority in the hands of individuals. In other words, those in charge of the administration of religious matters (the priestly class) could not intervene in the administration of the state, particularly the activities of the court. The pontiff could preside over the Sanhedrin (when it acted as a court of law) only if the crime to be judged was of a religious nature.[53]

One is consequently led to question the sincerity of Sigonio's recommendation, in his dedication to the pope, that the Hebrew republic serve as a model for the Church of Rome, because an application of the separation of powers identified in the Hebrew model would effectively cause the Church to forfeit

its secular authority. Sigonio must have recognized the political ramifications of such a doctrine for Rome, since the separation of religious and secular powers dominated the debates in Europe among all confessions.

This distinction between religious and civil jurisdiction was a central point of debate in the Calvinist world. I do not have enough space here to discuss the development of this idea, but it is important to emphasize that the issue was analyzed in much the same way by one Calvinist author whom we have already mentioned: Corneille Bertram. In several places in his *De politia Iudaica* (published eight years before Sigonio's own study of Hebrew polity), he discusses the difference between these two jurisdictions and identifies its origin in a parallel distinction between the two purposes of law. At the beginning of the first chapter, for instance, Bertram presents his general conception of law, maintaining that good laws always have a double task: (1) to direct man's *pietas* to God; (2) to articulate the duties that tie every man to his neighbor. Bertram makes this division of the law the basis of a double policy administered by two different groups of magistrates, one ecclesiastical and one civil.[54]

Although it is possible to find parallels between Bertram's and Sigonio's works, Bertram did not use the same four-part scheme described by Sigonio. This, together with the fact that we have no evidence that Sigonio had read the work of Bertram, forces us to seek another explanation for their similarities.

Jonathan Ziskind has maintained that Sigonio's scheme might correspond to the Hebrew division into *mitzvot*, *hukim*, *mishpatim*, and *dinim*.[55] I do not accept this thesis for two reasons. First of all, this Hebrew typology of law was absent from the Jewish sources studied by Sigonio. Second, Sigonio's use of specific Greek terms in his analysis might be traced to Suidas' lexicon, the *Suda*; this is a possibility that I have examined elsewhere.[56] Nevertheless, one can find a connection between the Hebrew typology referred to by Ziskind, Sigonio's four-part scheme, and Bertram in a work published in 1575 entitled *Thesaurus linguae sanctae*. This Hebrew-Latin dictionary was originally written by Sante Pagnini, one of the most important Italian Hebraists of the sixteenth century, and published in 1529, seven years before his death.[57] Pagnini's dictionary was reedited in 1575 by Bertram. In his preparation of the new edition he also used the material of Antoine Chevalier (d. 1572) and Jean Mercier (d. 1570).[58] In the *Thesaurus*, Bertram adds to the entries written by Pagnini, distinguishing the various additions by printing them in italics and adding a letter at the end, referring to the author of the note: M for Mercier and C for Chevalier (Bertram's own comments were apparently included with those of Chevalier). While the first edition of 1575 included

the names of the three editors on the title page, the second one, published in 1577, included just the name of Mercier, probably because he was the only author formally considered to be Catholic.[59] The additions concern not only linguistic and grammatical questions, but also problems of Calvinist theology. Thus, even with the changes to the title page, the *Thesaurus* in its "Calvinist" form was added to the Roman *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1593 (nine years after Sigonio's death).[60] Despite the unorthodox status of this book, which would ultimately lead to its prohibition, a copy of the 1577 edition had been in the private library of Ulisse Aldrovandi, a close friend of Sigonio, who would share his books with friends in Bologna; it is therefore possible that Sigonio had been exposed to the book.[61]

The analysis of Hebrew law is discussed in different entries of the dictionary. The first relevant definition is in the entry for *hok*, a word that Mercier translates into Latin as *statutum*. Mercier identifies this term with the ceremonies related to religion and the worship of God, such as circumcision, sacrifices, and holidays. He also makes a distinction between two different sets of commands: *hukim*, or *hukot*, on the one hand, and *mishpatim* on the other, the latter meaning "political judgments" (*iudicia*) and laws that concern the administration of society.[62] Under the entry *mitzva* Mercier gives its meaning as "precept" (*praeceptum*): a compulsion of the individual to observe some matter. Later on, in reference to a passage from Nehemiah, Mercier also states that *mitzvot* (here referred to as *mandata*) are general in nature, whereas *hukim* refer to specific rites and ceremonies.[63]

This first distinction presented by Mercier within the religious sphere can be compared to the first part of Sigonio's scheme, but it is necessary to clarify some points of terminology. Sigonio uses Latin terms rather than the Hebrew terms defined by Mercier: *mandata* and *praecepta* as opposed to *mitzvot* and *hukim*. Nonetheless the meaning given to each of the two parts of the law by the two authors is similar. Mercier's *mitzvot* and Sigonio's *mandata* have the broad applicability of general precepts of divine command and prohibition; in other words, they have a "universal" meaning. Mercier's *hukim* and Sigonio's *praecepta*, by contrast, both correspond to specific ceremonies and to the different manners in which man is to worship God.[64]

The same correspondence can be found in the sphere of civil law. In his gloss added to the entry on *mishpat*, Mercier explains that this term refers to the magistrate's power and, in particular, his power of judgment over particular kinds of cases.[65] In the *Thesaurus*, in the entry on *tzedaka*, one finds a specific analysis of civil power that is the work not only of Mercier but also of Chevalier and probably of Bertram. In the course of this entry the authors distinguish between "judgment" (*mishpat*), which refers to "the

punishment of guilty men and criminals," and "justice" (*tzedaka*), which means "to defend good people from the offenses of evil people." The authors explain that both concepts fall under the jurisdiction of the court. Nonetheless they add a particular nuance to these terms, shifting their sense from the juridical field to the theological one. They do this by maintaining that *mishpat* corresponds to the preaching of the law that requires people to avoid evil and to respect the commandments of God. *Tzedaka*, on the other hand, correlates with the gospel that teaches us to have faith in God's mercy as guaranteed in Christ.[66] Following Calvinist theology, the authors transfer the division of Jewish law to the domain of religion, linking it to their idea of justification *ex sola fide*.

This analysis, which we have ascribed to all three authors, corresponds to parallel concepts developed by Sigonio. Nonetheless, the Calvinist editors of the dictionary suggest an analogy between civil and theological justice, while, at the end of his examination, Sigonio stresses the fact that his definition of justification is not considered from a religious point of view. It is as though Sigonio wanted to distance himself from both his source and the debate, raging at the time between various Christian confessions, concerning the significance of justification.[67]

Even if the structure of Sigonio's scheme is derived from Pagnini's *Thesaurus*, the Greek vocabulary that he uses and its correspondence with the Hebrew terminology present another problem. Sigonio probably made use of another dictionary that he had in his library, namely, the *Dictionarium trilingue*, edited by Sebastian Münster in 1530. In this work we find not definitions of words, but rather the correspondence of terms in three languages: Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. If we look at the four Latin words used by Sigonio in defining Hebrew law, we find a correspondence with the same Greek terminology that he uses, as well as with the parallel Hebrew terms defined in the *Thesaurus*. Concerning the first part of the law, *mandatum* is translated into Greek as *entolma*, *entolē*, *ephetmē*, and *prostagma*, and into Hebrew as *mitzva*;[68] *praeceptum* is translated into several Greek words, including *prostagma*, and into Hebrew as *mitzva* and *hok*,[69] while *cerimoniae* is translated into Greek as *prostagmata* and into Hebrew as *hukim*, *hukot*.[70] For the civil part of the law, *iudicium* is translated into the Greek *krisis*, *krima*, and into the Hebrew *mishpat* and *din*.[71] There is no *iustificatio* in the *Dictionarium*, but there are two related terms: (1) *Iustitia*, which is translated into Greek as *dikaiosunē* and into Hebrew as *tzedek*, *tzedaka*; and (2) *Iustifico*, which is translated into the Greek *dikaiō* and into the Hebrew verb *hitzdik*.[72] The correspondence of the different words in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew shows how Sigonio worked. He founded his research on Greek sources such as Josephus, Philo, and in

particular the Greek translation of the Bible. For this task, Sigonio needed a Greek vocabulary for his analysis of the law, but the meaning behind these words was taken from Hebrew sources, and in particular from the *Thesaurus* of Pagnini, Mercier, Bertram, and Chevalier. Since Sigonio did not know Hebrew, one of his friends probably helped him to distinguish the different Hebrew words and to combine them with Latin and Greek terminology. For example, his friend Ulisse Aldrovandi had studied Hebrew in Bologna as a youngster and may have helped him.

Sigonio's scheme, then, makes use of a combination of sources that were deeply influenced by Calvinist literature. Even though he tried to distance himself from the most evident dangers of the Calvinist authors (for example, concerning the definition of "justification"), there is no doubt that Sigonio had looked to these authors as a model for his work and that he had used them for his own political aims.

The political significance of Sigonio's work becomes most evident when we analyze the pages of this book devoted to the birth and development of the Jewish state. In this discussion, Sigonio distances himself from the nuances of his earlier writings on ancient institutions, and he seems to modify his language in light of the contemporary European political discourse. His thoughts on the Hebrew state are summarized in the fifth chapter of the first book, where he outlines its history, particularly with respect to the transition from aristocracy to monarchy.

Aristocracy Versus Monarchy

First of all, Sigonio distinguishes between the relevant forms of state based on who holds the authority: a few individuals or just one.[73] In this context, he considers two kinds of constitutions: one based on law, and the other on the will of one person. The aristocracy was founded on the initial will of God (manifested in laws), but following the rejection of his will (i.e. the rejection of the laws),[74] God granted by concession a second constitution in the form of a monarchy.[75] Thus, from Moses to Samuel, the Hebrew state was an aristocracy, and from Saul up to the destruction of the Second Temple, it was a monarchy.[76]

Starting from this identification of the form of a state with the number of its rulers, Sigonio develops a theoretical approach profoundly different from that in his earlier works. First, he abandons the scheme of the mixed constitution in favor of simpler forms. Second, he analyzes the two forms of state without ascribing a moral quality to either of them (unlike his analysis

BOOK I

The Form of the Republic

PREFACE

I PROPOSE in this book to examine the ancient republic of the Hebrews that was established by God long ago, and that is contained within the deepest recesses of the holy scripture; and, once I have discovered it, to somehow bring it into the light as a record for future generations. For this topic is, as everyone will admit, both a wonderful field of study in its own right, and so useful for understanding the holy books that anyone could be forgiven for wondering why none of the ancients ever stayed awake nights working on it. After all, it is generally agreed that the latter were men of exceptional ability and learning and were driven by an unbelievable eagerness to explain matters of theology. I wish that I too had seen this some time ago, for I would not have put my energy and industry to the test with any other kind of research. In fact, this work is incumbent upon anyone who would both use his time efficiently and show some regard for his own salvation. But in truth, it seemed best to submit to God's will; and he has, I think, reserved my declining years for the most sacred undertaking of all. And now that I am advanced in age, and my ability to stay up late is diminishing with each passing day, he wants to show me what I did not consider as a young man who was driven to write—that is, which people it was that God chose for himself, the kind of republic he set up, and the laws he gave it. For my intention in this book is, as I have said, to dig out from the sacred texts and expose to the light of day the character of the Hebrew rites and their priests; the structure of the councils, the courts, and the magistrates; and every aspect of the training they received for both war and peace. As a young man years ago, I did the same for the Athenians and the Romans, bringing to light the secrets of their laws, customs, states, and republics, which had been hidden away in their various books. But I now realize, after considerable efforts to achieve excellence in my writing, that just as the works of the Greeks and Romans have supplied me with a generous abundance of words for use in my own work, so they have also furnished me with powerful tools for recreating the ancient world even after the passage of so many years. On the other hand, the works of the

Hebrews show little of the ornament of rhetoric; but even though they do not demonstrate the same literary elegance as the works of the classical authors, they are of value to us because of the holiness of their mysteries. Even if I cling, as I ought, tightly to the heels of the ancient Latin translator,[1] I will often have to employ the kinds of expressions that might understandably offend the elegant and refined tastes of many of my readers. But when the matter at stake is important, and especially when it is absolutely necessary, I think that any attempt I might make deserves respect, and that even if I may lack the means to perfect this work I should not be faulted for trying. So let us agree to the proposition that God himself has been summoned to our aid, he who told his prophet: *Blessed are they who keep my testimonies and seek me with a whole heart*.[2] For the only testimony of God is Christ himself, his son, who is the end of all Hebrew history. To him refer, by way of certain hidden mysteries, all the commandments of the law, all the visions of the prophets, and all the actions of the Hebrews.[3] Here is Moses, who showed men the true God and his true law. Here is Joshua, who conquered the enemies of the Hebrews and distributed to them the heavenly land of Canaan. Here is David, who built heavenly Jerusalem, which God had reserved for himself from the beginning. Here is Solomon, who prepared the heavenly Temple—a temple which, I say, was not built by human hands[4]—for those selfsame believers. And here, finally, is that king who gave both the Jews and his converts an equal share, in heaven, in the republic whose rough copy God handed down to Moses on earth. For just as in the terrestrial republic King David judged the people of Israel alongside the twelve chiefs of the tribes, so in the celestial kingdom Jesus the king, with his twelve apostles, will judge the faithful. Since, moreover, I have divided my discussion into two parts, "Religion" and "The State," I would like to make it clearer by prefacing my explanation of these topics with a description of the ancient origin of the Hebrews. This will be followed by a discussion of the history of the law that was handed down to them, the republic that they established, and the state that was chosen for this system of government. After all, as I have already explained to the person who would read about those ancient times, it will make his labors much more useful and productive if he can acquire some understanding of the deeds performed by the Hebrews, and drawn from their sacred histories, before he applies himself to learning about these matters. I too devoted myself as best I could to this duty, in that work in which I explained the *Sacred History* of the blessed Sulpicius Severus.[5]

CHAPTER 3

The Kings

THE JUDGES WERE then succeeded by the kings, who were very unlike them—the manner of their investiture was different and they enjoyed much greater power and authority, which came not so much from the laws as from the king's own preferences and desires. The Hebrew concept of a king was like that of Aristotle—he was freed from the laws and ruled with unlimited powers.[38] The king's coronation was as follows: first he was given his crown with the support of the entire people, and then he was anointed with the holy oil, and finally he was placed on the royal throne amid a great deal of pomp. As for his authority, he was first of all given control over the twelve tribes; for we are told about Saul: …*When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?*[39] Second, he judged the tribes, and he had—both in conjunction with the council and by himself—absolute power to grant life or death as he saw fit; he was, in a sense, above the law. Third, he declared and waged wars as he liked. Now, I would like to discuss these matters in their proper order; so I will review from beginning to end the Bible's account of the kings, quoting from the holy books their description first of Saul, and then of David, and finally of Solomon. Once I have set out all this material, it will be easy for the reader to see the truth of my claims.

Since, then, God had known from the beginning that the Hebrews would not settle for judges, i.e. an aristocracy, and would long to be dominated by a king, he included among his laws one which they were meant to employ should the lust for a king ever overwhelm them. This law prescribed both the method of installing a king and his rights once he had been enthroned, in the following words in Deuteronomy 17: *When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother. But he shall*

not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write himself a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.[40] Josephus describes the law as follows in Book 4 of his *Antiquities*: *But if you have been overwhelmed by the desire for a king, make him one of your own nation; and see that he always pays close attention to justice, along with all the other virtues. He should also take care not to consider himself smarter than the laws or than God; nor should he do anything without the advice of the high priest and the senators, or take many wives, or chase after large sums of money or horses. It is through such practices that a king's arrogance*[41] *is swept beyond the limits of the laws. And he should also take care that even if he has indulged any of these appetites, he should not become more powerful than your own interests would permit.*[42] So much for Josephus. What God had foreseen—i.e. that the Hebrews would someday be seized by the desire for a king—actually happened in the time of Samuel, the prophet and judge. As it is written in First Samuel, the people were distressed by the unfair judgments of Samuel's sons Joel and Abijah, whom he—now fettered by age—had appointed to administer justice in his place. So the elders approached Samuel and demanded of him a king to make their laws for them, just like the other nations had. In effect, they were asking for a king who was above the law, or was exempt from the body of legal codes.[43] The matter has been passed down to us as follows: The elders *said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel… And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people… for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them… howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king who shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people who had asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king who shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some*

shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep; and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out on that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you on that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel reported *all the words of the people… And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city*.[44] The passage reveals that among his duties the king had two above all, which were required by the law: he was in charge of trials and of wars. As the people say: *…and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles*. All this serves to demonstrate well enough that the kings did indeed have powers that outstripped those of the judges (I have already discussed what Aristotle has to say about their powers).[45]

Now I will move on to some other issues having to do with the king's selection and anointment. The next thing to happen was that God ordered Samuel to anoint with oil Saul the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, who had come to him looking for his father's lost asses. Samuel kissed Saul and said:[46] *…Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? And thou shalt deliver his people out of the hands of their enemies, that are round about them*. And he ordered Saul to wait for him in Gilgal… Then he assembled the people in Mizpeh so that they could choose a king. There all the tribes cast lots, and the lot fell on Benjamin; and the tribe itself cast lots, and the lot fell on the family of Matri. And then the draws proceeded all the way to Saul the son of Kish. So the people immediately sent for Saul, who was found hiding at home; and when he was brought to Mizpeh, they shouted: *…God save the king. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house*. Then the Bible describes Saul's consecration, which was done by means of anoint-ment.[47] This is why the king is often called "the anointed of the Lord," as in

Psalm 17: *…and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David.*[48] And in First Samuel 24: *…that I should not do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed…*[49] When, moreover, several men had said that they were not going to obey Saul, Samuel told the people: *Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal; and Samuel anointed King Saul; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings…*[50] Where the Latin has *renew the kingdom there*, the Greek has *enkainidzōmen*;[51] and *enkainidzein* means not only "to renew," but also "to consecrate" and "to dedicate." This is why the consecration of the Temple is called *encaenia*,[52] as in First Maccabees chapter 4, where it is written: *…the altar of holocausts… according to the day wherein the heathens had defiled it, in the same was it renewed.*[53] In Greek it is *enekainisthē*, that is, "it was dedicated." Hence a little farther on, *enkainismos* is rendered as "dedication."[54]

Then God rejected Saul because he had violated custom by making a burnt offering without waiting for the priest,[55] and as king he chose David the son of Jesse from the tribe of Judah, who was still a boy and a shepherd. Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse so that he could look over his seven sons and finally anoint David.[56] So after David, who was the youngest of the brothers, had been anointed king, he was summoned to the court of King Saul to serve as a harp player. Saul kept him there, and David went on to perform many brave and difficult deeds for him; but in particular he struck down the Philistine giant Goliath, who had challenged him to single combat. This victory provoked Saul to jealousy against him and led him to persecute David in various ways. Then when Saul was killed, David was again anointed king by the men of Judah, in Hebron in the tribe of Judah, while the other tribes anointed Saul's son Ishbosheth.[57] After Ishbosheth was killed by his own men, David was anointed a third time, over all of Israel and by the entire people; as it is written later on in the fifth chapter of Second Samuel: *Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh… So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and King David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.*[58] During his reign he expelled the Jebusites who were holding Jerusalem and built a fortress on Mount Zion, where he came to live, and which was therefore called the city of David. It was there that he moved the ark of the covenant and readied the materials for building the Temple; and finally he chose his son Solomon to rule after him and ordered him anointed. So we are told in the first chapter of First

Kings: *The king also said unto* Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, *Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon; and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save King Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.*[59] And all this was carried out according to his orders.

Then, after David's death, Solomon became king. He built the Temple and placed the ark in the holy of holies, and in his wealth and glory he far outrivaled all the other kings, as it is written in Second Chronicles.[60]

When Solomon left this mortal coil, all of Israel assembled in Shechem to appoint his son Rehoboam as king. But when he answered rather acerbically the people's request that he relieve them of the tribute that his father had placed upon them,[61] ten of the tribes deserted him and took as their king Jeroboam the son of Nebat, from the tribe of Ephraim. This is how the kingdom was split into two parts: one was the tribe of Judah, which was joined by the tribe of Benjamin, and the other was the remaining ten tribes, which were known altogether as the kingdom of Israel.

Judah was ruled at all times by the same tribe and by the family of David, so that a father usually left the kingdom to his son, while the kingdom of Israel was passed among a number of tribes and families, because instead of keeping to the law of God it turned to the worship of idols. Yet even though the kingship of Judah was hereditary, it was confirmed by the acclaim of the people. Hence in the twelfth chapter of First Kings: *…all Israel were come* to Shechem *to make* Rehoboam *king*.[62] And in the twenty-third chapter:[63] *And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his… son king in* his father's *stead…* So it was in all the other cases. Moreover, there was a king of Judah named Joash, whose coronation is described with such precision that I would like to quote the account from the twenty-third chapter of Second Chronicles: *Then they brought out* Joash *the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.*[64] And in chapter 26:[65] *Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah,* and anointed him,[66] *and made him king in his father's stead…* The Israelite kingdom fell much more quickly than the Judean: while the former lasted until Hosea, whom Shalmaneser the king of Assyria defeated and carried off to Assyria along with the population of Israel,[67] the latter fell only many years later under Zedekiah, who was transported to Babylonia by its king, Nebuchadnezzar, along with all the Judeans.

It is easy to understand from these passages the procedure with which the kings of the Jews were installed, and the powers they enjoyed, and the fact that they reached this lofty rank not only because of their birth but with the support of the people. In order to see this even more clearly, one need only look closely at the stories of each of the remaining kings.

The king judged the people in three different ways, but in only one was he the sole judge. As in Second Samuel, chapter 15: *And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man who had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him… And in this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment…*[68] This is why I said before that David performed justice and judgment for the entire people. In fact, David himself asked God to bless as follows his son Solomon, whom he had chosen to succeed him: *Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy justice unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment*:[69] Nor was he wrong to do so; for it is written in Psalm 96: *…justice and judgment are the habitation of* God's *throne*.[70] And in Psalm 98: *…thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and justice in Jacob*.[71]

The king executed a second type of judgment when he formed a judicial council, of the sort I have already described, together with the elders and the priests. In the third type, the king summoned the elders and the magistrates so that he could hold trials and issue verdicts. I will prove this in a little while, when I discuss the leaders of the tribes.

As I explained above, the kings convened the senate and summoned the people to public meetings.

That wars were declared at the king's behest, and fought under his leadership, is clear from the Books of Kings[72] and Chronicles, which are full of descriptions of royal wars. To these we may add the statement of the Hebrews when they requested a king: *and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles*.

27. Judges 11:5–6.

28. Perhaps Sigonio is thinking of Deborah, whose leadership was acknowledged even by the general Barak.

29. This is not stated explicitly anywhere in the Book of Judges. Sigonio may be alluding to the fact that in most cases, the decision to go to war began with a divine pronouncement.

30. Cf. Judges 3:9, 15.

31. Judges 6:14, 16. Although the phrase "as one man" seems to mean that Gideon will easily defeat the Midianites, Sigonio is apparently taking it to refer to the people of Israel, who will be united in their support of Gideon.

32. Judges 11:6.

33. Othniel: Judges 3:9–11; Ehud: Judges 3:15–30; Deborah: Judges 4:4–14; Gideon: Judges 6:11–8:32.

34. Shechem. Cf. Judges 9.

35. Jephthah was from Gilead, the part of Manasseh which settled across the Jordan.

36. His name is Abdon in both the Hebrew and Latin Bibles, but he is called Labdon by the church fathers.

37. Tola: Judges 10:1–2; Jair: Judges 10:3–5; Jephthah: Judges 11:1–12:7; Ibzan: Judges 12:8–10; Elon: Judges 12:11–12; Abdon: Judges 12:13–15; Samson: Judges 13:1–16:31; Eli: 1 Samuel 1:9–4:18.

38. Cf. Aristotle *Politics* 3.16, where he places even absolute monarchy under the rule of law. Nor is the idea that the king was above the law found in the Bible—if anything, David and his successors are told to live by God's law, and punished when they do not. But Sigonio may be thinking of the kinds of constitutional restraints—such as term limits and the imposition of vetoes—that limited the power of many Greek and Roman officials, and of which the biblical narratives give no hint. See the discussion in the introduction, pp. xxiii–xxv.

39. 1 Samuel 15:17.

40. Deuteronomy 17:14–20.

41. *Superbia*, the quality with which Roman writers associated the kings who first ruled Rome but were expelled when the people decided to create a republic.

42. Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 4.8.17.

43. This is Sigonio's interpretation of the phrase "like the other nations," guided as he is by the Greek idea that living under a king—and in particular the Persian king of kings—meant voluntary enslavement to the will of another.

44. 1 Samuel 8:5–7, 9–22.

45. The only power, both here and earlier in the chapter, that Sigonio seems to attribute to kings alone is the power to wage war, which the Bible in fact never explicitly denies to the judges.

46. The following passage, up to "*every man to his house*," is a paraphrase of 1 Samuel 10:1–25.

47. In both the Hebrew and Latin versions of 1 Samuel 11:15, Saul is "made king" at Gilgal, and there is no mention of anointment. Sigonio's text, which he quotes below, has "Samuel anointed King Saul," which is the reading found in the Septuagint.

48. Psalms 17:50.

49. 1 Samuel 24:6.

50. 1 Samuel 11:14–15.

51. ἐγκαινίζωμεν, "let us renew."

52. The Greek name for Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication.

53. 1 Maccabees 4:53–54.

54. 1 Maccabees 4:56, 59.

55. Cf. 1 Samuel 13:8–14. The "priest" here is in fact Samuel, but Sigonio is suggesting that Saul's error was procedural: as a king he should not have usurped the prerogatives of a priest, which Samuel enjoyed as the successor of Eli.

56. Cf. 1 Samuel 16:1–13.

57. Cf. 2 Samuel 2:3–10.

58. 2 Samuel 5:1, 3–5.

59. 1 Kings 1:33–35.

60. Cf. 2 Chronicles 1–9.

61. Cf. 2 Chronicles 10:14: *My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*

62. 1 Kings 12:1.

63. 2 Chronicles 22:1.

64. 2 Chronicles 23:11.

65. 2 Chronicles 36:1.

66. This phrase appears only in the Septuagint.

67. Cf. 2 Kings 18:9–11.

68. 2 Samuel 15:2, 6.

69. Psalms 72:1–2.

70. Psalms 96:2.

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