God's politics: Three political experiments found in Genesis and Exodus

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God's Politics: Three Political Experiments

Found in Genesis and Exodus

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ABSTRACT

God's Politics: Three Political Experiments
Found in Genesis and Exodus

by

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My thesis is an examination of three political experiments of governance located in the first two books of the Old Testament of the Bible. The first two political experiments, which I call Artificial Politics and Personal Politics, must be considered failures because God, the ruler, fails to create a political structure that satisfies the masses or Himself. Both of these experiments are learning experiments that God uses to create the third experiment, which I entitle Mountain Politics. In this experiment, God successfully creates a form of governance that has lasted well over 2000 years by satisfying the masses and God. The importance of this thesis is that it makes the political theorist reexamine the origin of many political ideas that have thought to originate with other political philosophers. This thesis could help in reevaluating the impact the Bible has had on politics.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING

The Bible is a collection of books that reflect the Hebrew's interpretation of the religious, historical, and moral beliefs that are presented to mankind by God. God in this context is viewed as a super-natural entity that is the creator of everything in the universe. In this context, mankind is supposed to do everything in its power to please God and to be accepted into His kingdom. This is a small part of the religious aspects attached to the Bible. In no way is my description complete nor does it do justice to the beliefs that emanate from the Bible. The problem with the beliefs that emerge from the Bible is the way they have multiplied so much that today these beliefs have become, as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger states, "a veritable fence which [has] blocked access to the Bible for all" of the people of the world.¹ These beliefs have turned the Bible into a jumbled mess of contradictions where "one no longer reads what the [Bible] says, but what it should have said."² Therefore, we have lost interest in examining the Bible for any real meaning besides spiritual guidance. I believe this is a grave mistake because the Bible can help us to examine the politics that govern us.

² ibid.
Why has God created the Earth? What does He want? These two questions are never explicitly answered in the beginning of the Book of Genesis. However, by chapter 2 it seems that the answers can be deduced from God's extreme interest in mankind. From this chapter of Genesis until the end of the Bible, God's main concern is making sure mankind follows His instructions, His laws. In other words, God wants to be the ruler over mankind. God wants to be King and have mankind as His subjects. God's need to rule is based upon His desire to have a large congregation of followers. From God's strong desire to rule, He attempts to create a form of governance that will successfully achieve this goal. By examining the books of Genesis and Exodus, I believe we can learn how God went about trying to achieve this goal. In these two books of the Bible, I believe God provides prime examples of three political experiments about governance: two that fail and one that endures. I am going to discuss Genesis 1-8.12. from the creation to the flood, as the first political experiment. In Chapter 2, I will show that God does indeed create a political structure with Adam, which I will call Artificial Politics. This political structure is often overlooked as a stepping stone in the path to the politics of the Ten Commandments. With Adam, God creates only one rule: Do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In this experiment, God forces Adam to agree to His leadership. Adam is not given any other choice, but to follow God's leadership. God follows this by not enforcing this law and allows Adam and Eve to live approximately 800 years after breaking His law. I will show that by not strictly enforcing His law, God's first political experiment begins to crumble. It crumbles because the inhabitants of the earth soon realize that God's leadership and subsequent laws are artificial: artificial in terms of lacking any real credibility. As a result the masses ignore
God's leadership. Consequently, God is led to destroy all of the inhabitants on earth in order to reestablish His political leadership again. Through this first experiment, we learn that laws need to be strictly enforced and the punishments need to be swiftly enacted.

Since the Artificial Politics experiment fails, God must create a new political experiment if He wants to achieve His goal of having a large congregation of followers. God's second attempt at a political experiment is described in the passages of Genesis 8.12- Exodus 19.9. I call this second attempt Personal Politics. The main principle of Personal Politics is to provide a few chosen leaders with God's laws in order to ensure a loyal following. By personally providing for these individuals, God is trying to ensure that they will be loyal to His laws and His leadership. In this political experiment, God does not make His laws universally known to all of the inhabitants of the earth. He only makes them available to His chosen leaders, Noah, Abraham and Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. These chosen leaders are anything but the most loyal of followers of God, and yet He continues to overlook their disloyalty. All the while He punishes many other people who follow His laws, even though they are not part of Personal Politics. These individuals eventually turn against God himself.

In this experiment, God does not force anyone to agree to follow His leadership. Instead, He attempts to entice His chosen leaders with rewards if they will be loyal to God's leadership. The other inhabitants of the earth are ignored by God and receive few rewards from being loyal to Him. The inhabitants of the earth feel rejected by God and therefore turn against Him. Because of this dissension, God is forced to create a new political experiment of governance I call Mountain Politics.
In Mountain Politics, God, for the first time, proceeds to create written laws and punishments that are distributed universally to anyone who wants to follow His leadership. God also inflicts punishments for breaking these laws on everyone equally. No longer does God overlook the indiscretions of His chosen leaders; He punishes them as He punishes anyone else who breaks the laws. We also see in this political experiment the creation of a variety of human leadership positions such as an Executive and a Judicial body. These positions will act as liaisons between God, the laws, and the masses. In this experiment, God asks all of the inhabitants of the earth if He can be their ruler. God asks for consent to become their leader. From the previous experiments, God learns that forcing the people to accept Him as their leader fails to keep them loyal. He also learns that enticement fails to keep the people loyal, because they only want more enticements. In Mountain Politics God attempts to receive consent in order to ensure that He has willing followers before He begins His rule. This experiment helps to demonstrate that consent is important in creating a loyal following. Mountain Politics is the last experiment God undertakes in the Bible. What we see in the books following Exodus is the various permutations that Mountain Politics undergoes in order to keep the masses happy with God's leadership.

These three political experiments provide us with a brief understanding of how one ought to rule. Artificial Politics and Personal Politics are failed political experiments. By failed I mean they do not create forms of governance that helps God achieve his goal of having a large congregation of followers. In Artificial Politics God loses all power over the masses and they begin to disregard His laws and leadership abilities. God decides that it is time to destroy the disloyal people and create a new form
of governance. In Personal Politics, the masses feel ignored by God's leadership and in return, they ignore Him. God fails in both of these experiments to meet His goal of having mankind follow His leadership. In both of these experiments, the masses realized God's leadership provided sporadic, unequal, and artificial laws and punishments. This left the masses in a state of anarchy in Artificial Politics and in a state of rebellion in Personal Politics.

Artificial Politics and Personal Politics failed to create successful political structures, yet they can be viewed as part of a learning process for God. Through the mistakes God makes in these two political experiments, He discovers a way to rule that has lasted well over 2000 years. Mountain Politics. In Mountain Politics God establishes a successful political experiment because He creates laws, punishments, and various political offices that help to facilitate a credible political leadership position. By learning from the mistakes in the previous experiments, God creates a form of leadership in Mountain Politics that the masses voluntarily agree to follow. Mountain Politics achieves God's goal to rule successfully over the masses and it has endured for well over 2000 years. By examining these three political experiments, we can get a glimpse of what succeeds and fails as a political theory of governance.
CHAPTER 2

ARTIFICIAL POLITICS

THE FIRST POLITICAL EXPERIMENT

GENESIS 1 - 8.12, FROM CREATION TO THE FLOOD:

Why has government been instituted as all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice, without constraint.


A good place to begin anything is at the beginning. A good place to begin looking at the politics of the Bible is with the book of Genesis, specifically Genesis 1 - 8.12. Typically the political significance of this section of Genesis is overlooked, but I believe it has much to offer in the area of teaching potential leaders how not to rule. God is the political leader in the Bible. He is the creator of mankind and everything else. He is the one who establishes the laws and punishments. God created the first "state of nature" which many political philosophers discuss and debate. God's state of nature is quite different from what these political philosophers envision. God's state of nature is

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3 This paper was presented at the San Diego State University Conference entitled Political Science at the Turn of the Century on January 30, 1999.
simple and pure, no fighting or quarreling over food, shelter, or companions. Mankind is obedient, to a point, and lives a peaceful existence. It is in this state of nature that God, the political leader, learns His lessons about how to rule.

Mankind was created on the sixth day and God saw everything He had created and said it was good. So what happened? If mankind was good when God originally created it, then why did things go wrong? If God is omniscient then why did He not prevent Adam and Eve from eating of the Fruit? I believe the answer lies in the fact that God is not omniscient. God is surprised when He encounters Adam and Eve just after they eat the fruit. "Who told you that were naked? Have to eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" This reaction demonstrates that God does not know what is going to occur. God is surprised that Adam and Eve broke His law and ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Eve made the first decision to disobey God. Adam concurred with her decision and soon joined her in her indiscretion. What is significant is God's response to this disobedience. However, before we look at how God responded, we need to address the law that was broken by Adam and Eve. The law that was broken is located at Genesis 2.16-17:

...and the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

This is the only law and subsequent punishment that God gives Adam.

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5 Gen. 3.11, NRSV.
6 Gen. 2.16-17, NRSV.
It has been debatable whether this is a law at all. Robert D. Sacks, in his *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, states that "the first law, in the proper sense of the word, will be given to Noah after the flood. This period of development of man [the period of Adam and Eve] will be called the pre-legal period." Sacks does not discuss the passage of Genesis 2.16-17. By glossing over that verse I believe Sacks misses a vital part in the political development of God. Sacks states that the first law is presented to Noah at the time of the flood and not with Adam and Eve. Daniel Elazar disagrees with Sacks. He argues that up until now God has only instructed man to do things; Genesis 2.16-17 is the first time man is commanded to do something. Elazar states, "This is the first negative commandment in the Bible and involves the first prohibition on man's activities." Steven J. Brams agrees with Elazar that Genesis 2.16-17 is indeed a law and that God needed to create this law.

In *Biblical Games: A Strategy Analysis of Stories in the Old Testament*, Brams uses game theory to describe how it was in God's best interest to create a law for man. Brams argues that game theory can be applied to the Garden of Eden story because the outcome of this story depends on the interdependent decisions of God and mankind. Both mankind and God must decide the path they are going to pursue. They must also decide how their decisions are going to affect one another. Brams argues that this is a game between God and mankind, and each is trying to win. Brams begins by stating that "the first constraint God imposed on man was not to eat from the tree of knowledge of

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good and bad in the Garden of Eden."⁹ God had two choices. impose constraints or do not impose constraints. Why did He choose to impose constraints? Brams creates a 2-by-2 matrix with God's decision to impose constraints on one side and Adam and Eve's decision to adhere or not to adhere to those constraints on the other. By examining the diagram, we can see that God received the most satisfaction from not imposing constraints, but that Adam and Eve were the most displeased by this option since they had to voluntarily adhere to the restraints. By voluntarily adhering to the law, Adam and Eve would be surrendering any power they had to God. God would enjoy this because His power grows. God, however, does not believe Adam and Eve will voluntarily restrain themselves from eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is evident in the fact that God included a punishment along with the law. By adding the punishment God shows us that He felt it was necessary to impose constraints upon Adam and Eve because He thought they would eat from the tree. Therefore, the best option for God, voluntary constraint, is unrealistic. The next best option for God, according to the diagram, is to impose a constraint on Adam and Eve, who prefer this option to the previous one. God is forced to create the law and the punishment; otherwise, there is no guarantee that Adam and Eve will not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Brams uses a few more diagrams to prove his point that it was in God's best interest to impose the constraint on Adam and Eve. Otherwise, Adam and Eve will defy God's leadership. If God fails to impose constraints upon Adam and Eve, they will have no reason to abide by His leadership. Adam and Eve will realize that they can break God's

laws and not suffer any punishment. Therefore, they will be the ones dictating their
custom to God, and in effect ruling God by creating the laws that they will follow. By
not constraining Adam and Eve, God would lose all credibility as a leader, and the power
of leadership would then be transferred over to Adam and Eve. This choice Brams calls
the "rational outcome" because it yields the most rational decision for both of the parties
involved.

According to Brams and Elazar, Genesis 2.16-17 is a law given by God to Adam
and Eve. It is not a warning or even a non-essential bit of advice as Sacks would have us
believe. It is a law because of the way God presents it to man. After God places man in
the Garden He gives the law to him with a very stern punishment. This situation occurs
prior to Adam naming the animals and prior to Eve being created. I believe it can easily
be inferred that this law is an extremely important item to which man must adhere if he
does not want to face the wrath of his creator. This law is the first and only law God
gives man in Eden.

With the appearance of Eve we see that the law has changed a little: it has grown
in its intensity and scope. Genesis 3.3 states:

...but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of
the Garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."\textsuperscript{10}

Here Eve is reiterating the law and punishment to the serpent, but we do not know how
Eve learned of the law. There are two possible explanations: God told her the law, or, as
Isaac Asimov states, "the likeliest explanation is that the man told her of it, and such a

\textsuperscript{10} Gen. 3.3, NRSV.
secondhand prohibition is never as forceful or as persuasive as the original. The law gets harsher, but the means of communicating the law may have made it weaker in its interpretation. Brams continues his game theory analysis with Eve's decision to eat the fruit. He surmises that Eve is tempted to eat the fruit prior to the serpent making an appearance before her. Brams believes Eve is drawn to the tree, but she does not eat because of fear. This changes once Eve realizes that her fear is not grounded in logic and then she happily eats from the tree. This proves Eve wanted to be persuaded. The serpent must persuade Eve to eat; otherwise she will not eat. Hence the serpent's best choice is to persuade Eve. This is what occurs in Genesis 3.6. Eve's decision to eat was a reasonable choice given her desire to eat prior to the serpent's appearance.

God discovers that Adam and Eve have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and now must decide whether to punish them or not. Brams again utilizes a game theory analysis distinguishing between God's choices of punishments, and Adam and Eve's choices of those punishments. God's least favorable choice, least favorable to Himself, would be to ignore Adam and Eve's defiance of His law. His best choice of punishment would be to punish them short of death, since killing them would end any possibility of achieving His goal to have a congregation of followers. This, of course, is Adam and Eve's second best choice, no punishment being their preferred choice. Therefore, according to Brams, God makes the rational choice in punishing them without killing them. I disagree with Brams.

God's punishments encompass giving the woman pain in childbirth and an

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undying desire to follow her husband, forcing the man to be a gardener with difficulty in achieving success, and making both some day perish from this earth. The problem with this punishment is that the death is not immediate, but delayed. This shows Adam and Eve, and future humans, that they can commit crimes and not suffer immediate retribution. Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden, create a family, and live a long life with no problems other than death some 930 years after being born.

Although the Bible does not mention if Adam and Eve told their sons about the incident in the Garden of Eden, it would be reasonable to surmise that they had. After being evicted from the Garden, Adam and Eve would be fearful of angering God again. Therefore, I believe they would tell their sons what happened to them, and why it was necessary to follow God’s laws. From this explanation of how God punished Adam and Eve, I believe Cain hypothesized he could murder Abel and receive little if any punishment from God. I believe Cain premeditated the murder of Abel and that means he considered the consequences related to this act. Genesis 4.8 states:

Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field," and when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.¹²

Cain planned to kill Abel. He postulated what God’s punishment for the act might be, and he concluded that God would be more lenient than He was with Adam and Eve. Why? Adam and Eve broke a law that God had emphatically stated and Cain breaks an unspoken and unstated law. Although we read of no law prohibiting murder, there is evidence that it must have existed since Cain tries to deny that he did anything wrong and makes an attempt to evade punishment. God’s punishment for Cain, Genesis 4.11-12.

¹² Gen. 4.8, NRSV
makes Cain a wanderer unable to till the soil anymore. God then protects Cain from further punishment by other humans by putting a sign on Cain. God protects Cain because He realizes Cain's crime is less severe than Adam and Eve's crime. God did not force Adam and Eve to be punished by the other inhabitants of the earth, then why should Cain be punished by them since his crime was less severe? Cain then proceeds to have a family, create the first city, live a prosperous life, and suffer no further punishment for killing Abel. Then we read that Lamech, the fourth descendant from Cain's family, murders a man. He boasts to his wives that he should be avenged 11 times more than Cain would have been had he been punished by other humans for killing Abel. This boastfulness shows that the breakdown in God's leadership is enormous. A person boasts about an event only if they are proud of it. Lamech is proud he killed someone. This demonstrates that God is losing control of His leadership because the people are proud to disregard His laws. The masses are no longer afraid of breaking God's laws because He does not fully punish them. God allows the masses to escape the punishments He creates and, thereby, He loses any credibility and legitimacy in His leadership. The people are starting to ignore God's leadership because of this credibility problem. This is evident in Genesis 6.5-6 where God first begins to realize the wickedness of humankind:

The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.\(^\text{13}\)

God is sorry he ever created mankind and decides that He will finally fulfill the punishment He established with the law of the Tree of Knowledge, death. However, God decides to save Noah because God considered Noah to be a righteous man. Noah was the

\(^{13}\) Gen. 6.5, NRSV.
only person on earth who believed in God and followed His leadership. God tells Noah the earth is corrupt and that He is going to destroy it. "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them: now I am going to destroy all of them along with the earth." ⁴⁴

God brings the rains to earth at Genesis 7.12 and the earth floods, thereby ending God's first attempt at ruling. What can we learn from God's first political structure? God's weakness in ruling was created when He failed to enforce His Laws and their subsequent punishments. This ruined God's credibility and His power over the masses. The lesson we learn is to establish well-defined laws and punishments, and to enforce those punishments if the laws are broken. This is a lesson God learns the hard way and will implement in Mountain Politics discussed later in this work.

Daniel Elazar discusses another possible lesson learned from God's first attempt to rule:

...subsequent human disobedience to this commandment [the law of the Tree of Knowledge] may be the Bible's way of indicating the problematics of commanding rather than securing consent... Thus, commanding is no better than speaking. ⁵⁵

God's law of the Tree of Knowledge was commanded to man and received a forced agreement to follow the law. Man began to realize he could break the laws of God because he had not voluntarily agreed to them, nor were these laws strictly enforced, as was shown earlier. God rectifies this problem at Mount Sinai after he learns that commanding without enforcement fails.

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⁴⁴ Gen. 6.13, NRSV.
CHAPTER 3

PERSONAL POLITICS

THE SECOND POLITICAL EXPERIMENT

GENESIS 8.13-EXODUS 20: FROM THE FLOOD TO MOUNT SINAI

Genesis chapter 7 begins with God telling Noah to gather his wife, his three sons and their wives, and two of every kind of animal on the earth. Then they are to enter the ark because a huge flood is about to destroy the earth. The rains fell and the wells in the earth overflowed for forty straight days. All of the life which had existed on earth was killed, except for those in the ark and the seas, since they were not corrupt. God flooded the earth because "The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth."  

but Noah was saved. Why? Genesis 6.9 informs the reader that Noah was a very righteous individual who was blameless in his generation. In other words, Noah was not wicked in the eyes of God; therefore, God decided to save Noah from the flood and to begin a new political structure with him. Nahum M. Sarna argues that Noah was saved because he was the only person during this period that followed God's commands. Noah was "righteous" because he openly did as God commanded and God saved him because of this obedience.  

However, "The preservation of Noah and his family made possible a
kind of fresh start to creation...but this was not a new creation from which the causes of human sin which had led to the flood were eliminated."  

With Noah God begins what I call the Personal Politics approach to political leadership. God's goal in Personal Politics is to create a large congregation of followers that consent to His leadership. Since the approach to achieve this goal failed in God's first attempt at governance, Artificial Politics, God creates a new approach in Personal Politics. In Personal Politics God wants to ensure that a few chosen individual human beings will follow His leadership in hopes of inspiring the other human beings, the masses, to do the same. These chosen human beings are better referred to as God's chosen political leaders, since they are chosen from among the masses and act as vehicles which will carry God's laws to the masses.

The problem with God's attempt to achieve His goal and His approach to it lies in the way by which God distinguishes the chosen political leaders from the masses. This distinction centers on God providing special privileges to the chosen leaders and not to the masses. As chosen leaders these individuals are given special privileges that involve access to God's laws and punishments, the advantage to break these laws and suffer no punishments, and to be rewarded with God's personal protection from harm. Whereas, the masses are ignored by God not provided with any of these special privileges for following God's laws. Although Moses is later punished in the Bible for breaking one of God's laws, this does not occur while Moses is a chosen leader in Personal Politics. Moses is punished as a member of the next political experiment I call Mountain Politics. The masses encounter tremendous difficulty in remaining loyal to God's leadership.

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because God does not provide the masses with His laws. The masses are also not rewarded for following the laws, as the chosen leaders are rewarded. Instead, God repeatedly punishes these loyal members of the masses and ultimately drives them and the rest of the masses to rebel against His leadership. The Egyptian Pharaoh Abimelech is a prime example of God repeatedly punishing a loyal member of the masses. Abimelech's example will also demonstrate how God's punishments of the masses lead them to rebel against Him.

By only providing for His chosen leaders, God creates a situation where He cannot lead a people only a person. In Personal Politics God has only one or two chosen leaders at any one time. When He finally decides that Personal Politics has succeeded at creating His goal, He realizes three things. First, Personal Politics has temporarily created a large congregation of followers, but these followers soon abandon God and follow Moses. Secondly, Personal Politics has created an even larger congregation of disbelievers, the masses. These masses want to destroy God's followers and end God's leadership, as is evident in Exodus 13.17-18. Prior to these two verses, God has begun to lead His large congregation of followers, but, as Exodus 13.17-18 demonstrates, God is frightened of how the masses might influence His followers. The masses are preparing to fight God's followers and God thinks, "If the people [His followers] face war, they may change their minds and return to [the masses in] Egypt."19 The masses are prepared to fight and God realizes that His congregation of followers is too insignificant in size to fight them. This portion of Exodus also describes the third thing God realizes about Personal Politics. He realizes He does not know how to lead a large congregation of followers.

19 Exod. 13.17-18, NRSV.
people. In Personal Politics God has only led one or two chosen leaders at one time. His leadership is tailored around this type of political structure and not around a political structure necessary to lead a large congregation. Exodus 13.17-18 illustrates that God is fearful He will not be able to successfully lead His people into battle. For these three reasons, God is forced to end Personal Politics and create a form of governance that is better suited to lead a large congregation.

Through a chronological examination of Personal Politics, I will demonstrate how Personal Politics revolves around one or two chosen leaders. I will also illustrate how this ruins God's ability to achieve His goal of having a large congregation of followers. A chronological list of God's chosen leaders include: Noah, Abraham and Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. Through these chosen leaders God establishes Personal Politics. I will also show that in Personal Politics the masses are excluded from receiving some benefits from being loyal to God's leadership, and this leads them to ignore and resist His leadership. Personal Politics fails to achieve God's goal of creating a large congregation because it is tailored to the needs of a few chosen leaders. Personal Politics teaches God that He needs to create a form of governance that provides for both His chosen leaders and the masses.

When the waters dry up God feels remorse for having destroyed the life on the earth. Therefore, He establishes a Covenant with Noah and his descendants promising to never again destroy every living being on earth. After grieving briefly, God immediately institutes His new political leadership over Noah and Noah's family. God first commands them that they should be fruitful and multiply. He then grants them dominion over all of the animals on the ground, in the seas, and in the air. Quickly, however, God begins to
provide them with laws that these humans must follow in order to be accepted by God: 1) "You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."20 2) "Whoever sheds the blood of a human by a human that person's blood be shed."21

Law number two is a lesson God learned from not stating this law clearly in the previous experiment. Recall the previous chapter, when Cain killed Abel God had little recourse for Cain because no punishment had been clearly stated before the murder. Cain, consequently, received a slap on the wrist and proceeded to have a life void of any harm from God or anyone else on earth. This is evident from the lack of textual descriptions describing how Cain suffered after receiving the mark. Instead, Genesis suggests that Cain immediately obtained a wife, family, and lived comfortable thereafter. The people of the earth witnessed how Cain was not harshly punished so they began to murder (recall Lamech), and soon they began to defy God's laws altogether. This is not a mistake God wants to repeat; therefore, God clearly states the rule and the punishment concerning murder.

When God creates the Covenant with Noah and promulgates the two laws, He has decided two things already. First, He establishes an agreement with mankind, through Noah's descendants, that will allow mankind to decide whether or not to have God as their ruler. Secondly, God decides to create laws "in an effort to curb their inclinations and passions."22 This allows Him to rule efficiently and without the problems that existed prior to the flood. If mankind accepts God's laws, then mankind must consent to allow God to rule, argues Elazar. This consent is predicated on the fact that only God's

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20 Gen. 9.4, NRSV.
21 Gen. 9.6, NRSV.
22 Elazar, op. cit., 113.
chosen leaders receive the laws, and therefore God receives the consent of a very small number of people. This principle is key to why Personal Politics fails. The masses have no allegiance to God since they have not consented to the laws. They resent God for punishing them for not following the laws. Therefore, they rebel against God's leadership and force Him to end Personal Politics if He wants to achieve His goal of having a large congregation of followers.

After God presents Noah and his descendants with the two laws, the Bible discusses the genealogy of Noah's family and how it grew and began to populate the earth. Genesis chapter 11 shows a decisive political decision: God divides the people of the earth into different nations. The families of Noah are numerous and have begun to spread over the earth; this creates a problem for God because all of the people speak the same language and have the same written word. God fears they may build great things and accomplish much and possibly disregard His leadership. Therefore, God disperses the people. He confuses their language so they can not communicate, and He makes them distrustful, unfriendly, lost, lonely, and in desperate need of help. In other words, they must rely on God for leadership. Leo Strauss describes another possible interpretation of this disbursement, "the division of mankind into nations may be described as a milder alternative to the flood." Strauss states that God has already begun to realize that His leadership abilities are being called into question. He, therefore, must destroy the humans' ability to organize against Him. This is the beginning of God feeling disturbed about the inhabitants of the earth. By splitting them up God begins to create favorites, which leads to His creating the Personal Politics.

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After God disperses the inhabitants of the earth He begins His Personal Politics with Abram, a descendant of Noah. This is the beginning of what Robert Sacks calls the progression to "The New Way." This new way is a different approach to ruling, which God will establish at Mount Sinai, but first "The New Way will depend on family relationships, since it cannot be given to all men at once." The new way must begin with an individual and his descendants. The new way is too large a project to develop overnight and to be given to everyone at once, hence, Personal Politics. Later in his book Sacks reaffirms the new way's need to have only a few people participating by stating, "The New Way, the Way of Law, requires the singling out of a particular people" and ignoring everyone else. Although God tells a few of His chosen leaders that He will bless all of the families on earth. In reality God ignores them. This began "because of the division and scattering of mankind, [and the consequences of this action make God believe that] any law or custom must begin as the specific law of a specific people." 

This new way, as Sacks identifies it, begins with Abram, his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot. God calls upon Abram and tells him to "go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." God's new way begins with a migration away from everything and everyone that is familiar to Abram, Sarai, and Lot. Daniel Elazar comments that all successful "new societies or nations began with a great migration." Elazar only provides one example of this, the Puritans who immigrated to Massachusetts Bay in the seventeenth century. However, to add

24 Sacks, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. 65.
25 ibid, 77.
26 ibid.
27 Gen. 12.1, NRSV.
28 Elazar, op. cit., 125.
weight to Elazar's argument I believe we can recall other successful migrations: 1) the other U.S. colonists who migrated from Europe, and 2) the Mormon migration to Salt Lake. Elazar also states that it is not only the migration that creates a successful new nation, it is also the creation of new frameworks, new political orders, and new ways to rule and be ruled. This is what God does when he begins His Personal Politics with Abram.

After telling Abram to leave his homeland and begin the journey to the new way, God declares:

I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing, I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse: and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.  

God establishes his chosen leader, the one who will reign over everyone, the one whose family will be great. In other words, God has chosen the first man to begin His Personal Politics. From this point on God follows Abram around and helps to lead him in the right direction, even when Abram lies, cheats, and is otherwise a miserable follower of God. A prime example of this is Genesis 12.10-20. This is the first time God allows a chosen leader to behave in a manner which the masses are punished for when they behave in the same way. Here Abram is migrating to his new land when a famine overruns that country and Abram is forced to go to Egypt to find food and shelter. When they arrive in Egypt, Abram and his wife decide to lie about their relationship stating that they are only siblings and not married. They do this in order to protect Abram from the Pharaoh who may kill Abram in order to have Sarai as his new wife. Although this is an honorable cause, it does not excuse the punishment the Pharaoh receives for unknowingly marrying

29 Gen. 12.2-3, NRSV.
a married woman. Although Abimelech has not broken any law, he is punished just the same. Before the Pharaoh consummates the marriage to Sarai, God afflicts the Pharaoh and his household with great plagues in order to prevent the consummation. The Pharaoh discovers Sarai's married status and returns her to Abram. By this action, he demonstrates to them that he would never have married Sarai if he had known she was a married woman. He believes in the sanctity of marriage and gets harshly punished for a crime he did not knowingly commit. Daniel Elazar agrees, "If anything, it is the Israelite [Abram] who is less than honest with his hosts." and should be the one who is punished.30

From Abram's account with Abimelech God begins to create two unstated laws: lying is acceptable and adultery is unacceptable. Is Abram punished for lying? No, in fact he prospered from his excursion into Egypt. As Genesis 13.2 states, "Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in Gold."31 God allows Abram to lie in order to help him receive wealth. Sacks states that being wealthy is a main necessity of all the participants in God's Personal Politics. "The Biblical prophets in general are not presented as poor men...A certain amount of wealth will clearly be required for the fulfillment of the New Way."32 According to Sacks, God is only interested in allowing the wealthy to be part of His New Way. This is certainly true of all of God's chosen leaders. All of them become exceedingly wealthy with God's help.

Abram can cheat others and receive great wealth for lying, while the Pharaoh, a respectable man according to the Bible's account of him, is punished by this deception of Abram's with great plagues and having to provide Abram with money. God is clearly

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30 Elazar, op. cit., 127.
31 Gen. 13.2, NRSV.
32 Sacks, op. cit., 87.

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favoring Abram and not allowing the Pharaoh to receive any benefits from adhering to God's laws. This is the first incidence of God providing special benefits to His chosen leaders, and punishing a loyal follower. This situation is the first time where God's leadership begins to treat the masses differently from the chosen leaders.

God's reaction to Abimelech's unknowing attempts to commit adultery clearly establishes adultery as unacceptable. However, Genesis chapter 16 involves another story concerning adultery where adultery is permitted. Abram is in desperate need of an heir. His wife Sarai is unable to have children so Abram gets Sarai's slave-girl Hagar pregnant. This form of adultery was often considered acceptable during this time, however God does not fully demonstrate this principle. Abram receives no punishment for committing adultery, but Hagar and her son, Ishmael, do. Hagar is punished by Sarai, and Ishmael is denied access into Personal Politics. After Genesis chapter 16 Ishmael and Hagar are treated as members of the masses and are not welcome into Personal Politics. This demonstrates that God disapproves, albeit in a minor way, to the adulterous affair Abram had with Hagar; however, Abram goes unpunished. As Genesis 12.10-20 demonstrated. God disapproves of adultery and clearly punishes those who attempt to conduct it.

Abram receives no punishment for this activity, whereas Abimelech had previously received great plagues for only considering adultery. God is really giving Abram a lot of latitude in his actions, just so God will have a loyal following, a pattern that repeats itself a number of times in Genesis with the other chosen leaders of Personal Politics. Then in Genesis 17.1 God removes all of Abram's sins by stating, "I am God
Almighty; walk with me, and be blameless."  

Abram's sins are all removed, another way of God watching out personally for Abram. However, for Abram, now Abraham, to be fully accepted by God he must abide by a new law: Every adult male must be circumcised immediately and every newborn male must be circumcised eight days after being born. This law is also a prerequisite for anyone else who wants to be accepted by God. As an incentive to abide by this new law, God says He will provide Abraham with a child who will be personally blessed by God. This child will become the next chosen leader in Personal Politics, and will be born to Sarai, now Sarah. As for Abraham's other child from the adulterous affair, Ishmael, he is blessed by God but will not be a chosen leader of God's Personal Politics. Abraham will receive all of these benefits if he will follow the law concerning circumcision. How can he refuse? God does not provide this incentive to everyone, yet, as we will see later, He expects everyone to abide by this new law. God is really trying to ensure that He has a few loyal followers, yet He is allowing these people to be sinners. God's Personal Politics creates problems for Him because the masses are not following His laws. How can they when He does not share the laws with them?

Genesis 18.17 is the first place where Personal Politics begins to show its flaws. This passage is where God begins to realize that His Personal Politics has created a small collection of rebellious human beings, because they have not been following God's laws. These people are the citizens of the cities named Sodom and Gomorrah. Sacks informs us that God decides to eliminate these disloyal people to teach Abraham a tough lesson about being the ruler of nonbelievers. The question I raise is how have these people

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33 Gen. 17.1, NRSV.

become sinners? The Bible does not answer this question, but I believe the answer lies in God's inexperience as a leader. According to Cicero, the necessity of universal law is rooted in the fact that it is the only common factor that affects all of a commonwealth. Universal law is the only thing that brings men of different backgrounds together under one ruler. God's Personal Politics have made Abraham and his family believers, but the rest of the world does not receive the rewards, or even the laws for that matter, that would give them incentives to follow God's laws.

As Abraham discusses the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah with God, God's angels go to Sodom to rescue Lot and his family. Lot hesitates at leaving and has to be physically removed from the city by the angels. Why does God save Lot and not the others? This is another example of God protecting His chosen leaders, even those who do not follow His laws. Lot does not follow God's laws as Genesis Chapter 19 demonstrates. First, as they leave the city the angels instruct Lot to flee to the hills. Lot asks and is granted permission to live in a nearby city, even though God disapproves of cities and discourages anyone from residing there. Second, as Lot and his daughters settle in the city they become afraid that God might punish them for living there. Therefore, they decide to leave and settle in a cave in nearby mountains. By allowing Lot and his daughters to disregard God's warning about living in cities, God has once again shown the masses that disregarding His leadership is acceptable. Lot and his family are truly protected by God although they do very little, if anything, to show support for God or His laws. God has included them in His Personal Politics and is not setting a very good example of how to rule effectively. Lot and his family are good examples of

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unworthy individuals being given a tremendous gift, which is not offered to more faithful people.

Chapter 20 of Genesis is another example of God only protecting Abraham and Sarah while punishing other good and honorable men. In this chapter Abraham and Sarah visit Gerar and once again lie about Sarah being Abraham's sister. God once again punishes the Pharaoh for taking Sarah as his wife even though the Pharaoh, once again, is unknowingly committing a crime. This time the Pharaoh is punished by having all of the wombs of the women of the land closed until Sarah is safely returned to Abraham. The Pharaoh is also forced to provide Abraham with money and sheep as atonement for trying to bed his wife. God talks to the Pharaoh, Abimelech, in a dream and tests him to see if he is a follower of His. Abimelech passes the test and proves that he is a follower of God, and yet he does not receive anything from God except punishment. Why does God punish Abimelech, a more loyal follower than is Abraham or Lot? Sacks states, "God never intended to kill Abimelech and was aware of his integrity all the time." God was just testing Abimelech to see how he would respond. Abimelech passes the test but is still not privileged enough to receive God's blessings. This is the beginning of Egypt's distrust of God's followers. This is also another example of how Personal Politics is creating a larger congregation of disbelievers than believers.

In Genesis chapter 21 Abimelech and Abraham exchange sheep to come to a compromise over some disputed land. Genesis chapter 22 begins, "After these things God tested Abraham." This suggests that God wants to maintain the division between the chosen leaders and the masses. God becomes distrustful of Abraham and wants to

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36 ibid, 142.
37 Gen. 22.1. NRSV.
test his loyalty. God tests Abraham's loyalty by instructing Abraham to sacrifice to the Lord his son Isaac. God conducts this to gauge whether or not Abraham has lost faith in God. God informs Abraham that he must take Isaac to a designated location and sacrifice him. Abraham obliges without reservation and proves his loyalty to God; therefore, God saves Isaac from death and restores Abraham's position in Personal Politics.

Genesis chapters 23-24 deal with Isaac's soon to be wife, Rebekah, and how she came to be his wife. Then Abraham takes a new wife after Sarah died, he has a few more children, and then he himself dies. His son Isaac becomes the next chosen leader in God's Personal Politics, and begins where Abraham left off: lying to Abimelech. God does not punish Abimelech this time for marrying a married woman; in fact God does not even intervene in this scene. Through luck Abimelech did not bed Rebekah before he realized she was married to Isaac. He did not have to offer Isaac anything in reward for not bringing God against him, as he had to with Abraham.

Isaac remains in Abimelech's land and, according to Sacks, satisfies one of the requirements to be included in God's Personal Politics: he becomes exceedingly wealthy. Abimelech has to ask Isaac to leave because Isaac's wealth is upsetting the other inhabitants of Gerar, who are not as fortunate and who dislike having a stranger becoming wealthy in their land. Abimelech is afraid the people might try to overthrow Isaac and take his wealth, and thereby bring the Lord's wrath upon the land of Gerar. Abimelech and Isaac make peace over this situation and create a covenant to never harm one another again. Once again God is not involved in Isaac's affairs, but this time Isaac is not tested for having made this agreement with Abimelech, as his father was tested for making a similar agreement with him.
Isaac's involvement in God's Personal Politics is short and uneventful, yet it shows how God chooses the not-so-great as his chosen leaders. Abimelech is once again a better candidate for God's Personal Politics, but he is denied such an honor. Through Isaac and Abraham God teaches us that being a follower of the rules and laws of God does not guarantee that that one will not be punished by God. God favors a few deceitful and thieving individuals who often disregard His laws, yet He still gives them His personal attention. As Visotzky asks, "must Abraham always come out on top just because he's the hero? Does it matter how he behaves or is it sufficient that God has chosen him to transmit the covenant?" God's lack of justice as a ruler teaches the masses to reject His laws and rules because they will be punished either way: Sodom and Gomorrah and Abimelech are prime examples. God has set the stage for a great revolt, or rather a great movement of disbelief in His followers. Whereas if He had chosen to provide guidance to everyone, as He did to Abraham, Lot, and Isaac, He might have a less sinful world than He has presently.

The next chosen leader in God's Personal Politics is Jacob, the second son of Isaac. Jacob obtains this lofty position by outsmarting his brother and tricking his father with help from his mother. In other words, Jacob lies and cheats his way into becoming the next chosen leader of God. Jacob leaves his father's house in search of a bride. On the voyage Jacob makes a vow to God that if He helps him obtain food, clothing to wear, and help in returning safely to his father's house then he will follow God's laws unquestionably. In return, God, through a dream, informs Jacob he will be the father of a

great nation and will receive God's blessing and protection. The next few chapters of Genesis involve the story concerning Jacob's trials and tribulations in obtaining not one, but two wives, lots of money, and an entire flock of sheep. This story once again involves adultery, lying, enormous amounts of money, and trickery. In other words, it involves all of the necessary elements for the induction into God's Personal Politics. Again God does not punish anyone involved in this story and is once again absent for most of the story. This makes the third time God has been absent from the dealings of His chosen leader. Recall how He was absent twice with Isaac. By remaining absent, God has blessed His chosen leaders' actions, and they follow the similar path of lying and committing adultery to achieve great wealth. It is only in the end that God makes an appearance to tell Jacob it is time to return home. Jacob leaves his father-in-law's house and returns home protected by God from any abuses that might have been inflicted upon him by his father-in-law.

Jacob settles in a town near his brother's town and soon his family has a crisis: a local boy rapes Dinah, one of Jacob's granddaughters. Jacob and his sons trick the rapist and his family into believing everything will be fine as long as he marries Dinah. All of the boy's family agree to this condition and also agree to become followers of God. To show their acceptance of God as their leader they circumcise themselves; however, they do not receive God's blessing and protection. Instead, Jacob's sons murder all of the boy's family, plunder the city, take all of their sheep and cattle, and then take all of their wives and children and make them their own. Jacob was angry with his sons because he felt other cities might attack them for killing an entire city. However, Jacob was not

39 Gen. 28.13-15, NRSV.
frightened that God would punish them for breaking one of His laws: "Whoever sheds the blood of a human by a human that person's blood be shed." In fact, God does not punish Jacob or his sons at all: rather, He protects them from the other humans who do want to punish them. God does not fulfill the punishment for this law which Jacob's sons blatantly broke. He makes very poor decisions concerning the enforcement of His laws against the chosen leaders of His Personal Politics. How will anyone outside of His chosen leaders be willing to believe in Him if He does not enforce His laws on everyone equally? By excluding Jacob's sons from punishment God has once again established Himself as unjust, thereby creating a political world full of misinformation that leads the masses to reject most of His laws and teachings.

God changes Jacob's name to Israel and once again establishes His covenant providing a great nation to Israel's descendants. Israel had twelve sons and they all had great families. Joseph, the second youngest son, became Israel's favorite son and the son he wanted to carry on in God's Personal Politics, which is what occurs. Joseph becomes the next chosen leader and, although He never blatantly disregards God's laws, He is not a very good supporter of God. As chapter 38 of Genesis demonstrates. Joseph's brothers dislike him and decide to get rid of him by murdering him. Fortunately, Joseph is spared death, but instead is sold into slavery. Meanwhile, God kills a baby who "was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. This baby was going to grow up to be a disbeliever of God and God wanted the baby destroyed. God then kills a man who would not sleep with his brother's wife. God also allows Judah, one of Israel's sons, to have a child with his daughter-in-law, although God would not allow Abimelech to

\[40\] Gen. 9.6, NRSV.
\[41\] Gen. 38.7, 9-10, NRSV.
have relations with Sarah, Abraham's wife. God shows poor judgement in killing those two people who broke His laws. God kills a baby because he was wicked in the sight of the Lord, yet God does not even punish, let alone kill, those in His Personal Politics that do wicked things. Then God kills a man because this gentleman would not commit adultery, yet God allows all of His chosen leaders to commit adultery. God's method of rule is confusing; by protecting the participants in Personal Politics, God has set a bad example for the rest of the people. These unlucky individuals, those not in God's Personal Politics, received mixed messages about which of God's laws to follow. He kills those who do not commit adultery, those who do not break His laws, and allows those who flagrantly break His laws to go free.

Joseph was taken to Egypt and "The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man."42 God makes everything Joseph does become prosperous so that Joseph will become rich, again one of the ingredients Sacks argues is necessary to be part of God's Personal Politics. God even protects Joseph when he is falsely accused of trying to rape a married woman even though he is thrown in jail for this crime. Joseph spends over two years in jail, not as a prisoner, but as an unharmed captive worker because, as Joseph informs his brothers later in Genesis, God was protecting him from harm. Finally Joseph is released from jail and rises to rule over Egypt along side the Pharaoh. Joseph becomes more powerful than the Pharaoh, raises a large family, and gains tremendous wealth again because God provides for him. The Bible does not report if Joseph thanks God, provide sacrifices, or does anything else that the previous followers of God have done to show support for Him, yet God still protects Joseph. In Genesis chapter 46, we see that

42 Gen. 39.2, NRSV.
God still protects Jacob and his family even after the wrong they did to Joseph and the rapist and his family. This apparent disregard for punishing His chosen leader for breaking his laws is beginning to hurt God's leadership. The masses are becoming more disenchanted with God's leadership and soon they will demonstrate this by enslaving all who follow God.

Israel finally dies and is buried in the cave where Abraham and Isaac are buried. Joseph has led God's Personal Politics to Egypt where, once he dies it remains until Moses is born many centuries later and rekindles the spark. God's Personal Politics continues into the book of Exodus where we learn that the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob (Israel), have been extremely fruitful and have multiplied into a large congregation of God's followers. A new Pharaoh has come to power and he enslaves the Israelites in fear that they may some day seek to overthrow the Egyptians. The new Pharaoh does not believe in the power of God, and is a prime example of how God's Personal Politics has turned most of the masses against Him. Once the Pharaohs of Egypt believed in God's powers: recall the first Pharaoh who dealt with Abraham, then Abimelech, and finally the Pharaoh who shared his power with Joseph. God's prior inconsistencies in dispersing the laws and punishments have led the masses to disbelieve in Him and turn against His followers.

The enslaved Israelites are worked hard and treated very harshly by the Egyptians and God is nowhere to be found. Soon, however, some believers in God, although they are not Israelites, come to the rescue of the Israelite women. The Egyptian midwives fear God and do not carry out the Pharaoh's order to kill all of the boys born to the Israelites. God protects the midwives and rewards them with large families. This is the first time
God has rewarded anyone other than those participating in His Personal Politics. Could God be shifting from Personal Politics into another form of rule? No, we see in the next few chapters that God is still going to have one more chosen leader in His Personal Politics, Moses.

Moses is an Israelite who was raised by the Pharaoh's daughter and is chosen by God to help begin the New Way. Exodus 2.23-25 is the first time God decides to help the enslaved Israelites by remembering His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God begins by talking to Moses at Exodus 3.2 and informs him that he is the chosen one. Moses reluctantly acquiesces to God's plan involving the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt. He soon discovers that the Israelites believe in him and in God, but the Pharaoh does not. The Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites leave, so God punishes the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but spares the Israelites. As God is punishing the Egyptians, He begins to realize that He is unsure if the Israelites, His congregation of followers, are truly loyal to Him. He therefore informs Moses in Exodus chapter 10 that He is punishing the Egyptians in order to make the Israelites afraid of His powers. This way the Israelites will never lose faith in God or His laws and will always be loyal followers.

Finally the Pharaoh releases the Israelites, and it seems that God has obtained His goal to have a large congregation of followers. However, at Exodus 13.17-18 we notice that God is still not confident that the Israelites will abide by His laws, because God thought, "If the people face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." The Israelites were traveling into a hostile country, and God was afraid His people would not fight to show their allegiance to Him. God still does not know how to rule a people.

43 Exod. 13.17, NRSV.
only a person. God is still in His Personal Politics, and this form of rule is not applicable to a large group of people.

Throughout this ordeal Moses is protected by God and is promised to become the ruler of a large nation. The Israelites are finally delivered out of Egypt and escape the Egyptians, but they are still not completely believers in God. God becomes extremely angry and tells them:

If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statues, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you.**

After hearing this warning by God the Israelites still do not know what the Lord's commandments and statutes are because God is still involved in Personal Politics. He has not made those laws available to the Israelites so they still complain to the Lord because they can not follow laws which they have not received. Instead of God punishing the Israelites for misbehaving, Moses takes it upon himself to become the judge and executioner of God's laws. At this point in God's Personal Politics never before has one of God's chosen leaders actually created policy for themselves. It could be argued that God has implicitly given Moses the power to rule over the people, but nothing in Exodus has indicated this to be true. In the next political experiment it will become more evident that God has given Moses something of a free rein in terms of creating and executing public policy. However, in Personal Politics Moses has taken it upon himself to be the ruler of the people and to administer punishments if they are needed. Indeed God's Personal Politics is working too well; no longer is God needed to be the ruler because the people have found a new leader in Moses. God is not pleased
with this and decides to end the Personal Politics that He has been implementing since the flood. God finally decides to create a form of governance that is better equipped to rule a large congregation. Mountain Politics.

After the Flood God decided to try again at being a political leader. He decides to create a political structure that I have labeled Personal Politics. As we have seen, God chooses Noah, Abraham and Lot, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, and Moses as the chosen leaders, or vehicles to carry out the policies of Personal Politics. Through these chosen leaders God provides them rules and laws which they will need to follow in order to receive God's blessing. Personal Politics allowed these chosen leaders to break those laws, commit crimes, and go to unpunished for deeds that other men and women were punished for. Some more honorable men, like Abimelech, are punished for not even committing crimes. This creates problems in Personal Politics because the masses begin to realize God punishes them no matter how loyal they remain. Therefore, they begin to rebel against God's leadership and His followers. According to Aaron Wildavsky, "The God of the Hebrews is personal: the people are to obey" God's commandments, laws, and teachings. However, God does not give His laws to everyone, just to a selection of chosen leaders who disregard most of His laws. Abraham believes in God yet still lacks complete faith until the sacrifice of his son. "Isaac is passive, more acted upon than acting. And to these qualities of his grandfather and father, Jacob adds deception." These are not the only bad qualities that these chosen leaders bring to God's politics; they also deliver murder.

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44 Exod. 15.26, NRSV.
46 ibid.
While God is involved in Personal Politics, cities like Sodom and Gomorrah are filled with people who disregard God's laws because God has not helped them at all. God ignores almost everyone on the planet, and He wonders why they have all become sinners. God demonstrates to us that Personal Politics is a flawed form of governance because the masses lose confidence in a ruler who ignores them, or punishes them for crimes He rewards His chosen leaders for committing. Personal Politics lacks the ability to lead the masses when God has finally achieved his goal of a large congregation of followers. Therefore, Moses must take over, or the Israelites may revolt against God. Only after Moses calms the masses does God decide to create a universal political structure that will effectively rule the masses. This new political structure will be discussed in the next chapter and I call it Mountain Politics.
CHAPTER 4

MOUNTAIN POLITICS

THIRD POLITICAL EXPERIMENT: EXODUS 19-40.38:

Prior to Exodus 19 we have seen that God has preferred to rule in a very nonchalant manner. His political experimentation with ruling has revolved around providing oral laws and personal attention to a select group of individuals. Never has God attempted to rule His entire Kingdom at once by dealing with all of them, but this changes in Exodus 19. This chapter of Exodus begins with the Israelites approaching Mount Sinai and camping at the base of the mountain. Moses, the last of God's chosen leaders in Personal Politics, is transformed from God's chosen leader to God's assistant executive. Moses can be "better described as a covenant mediator. He does not give law; he simply communicates" the laws and enforces them, but this does not fully describe Moses' role as assistant executive. He should be viewed as a sort of Vice-Minister.

This would be the splitting of the role as Vice-President and Prime Minister. Moses should be viewed as a Vice-Minister because he does more than just expound the views of the sovereign, as the Prime Minister does, and he cannot take over as ruler as the Vice President would if the President were unable to fulfill his duties. That would break the First commandment. However, Moses does take over the position of Vice-President in

47 Elazar, Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel, 177.
terms of enforcing God's laws and punishments when either God fails to do so, or Moses feels it is necessary to punish the sinners. Moses also acts as a representative of the masses to God because he has been given that special role by God and by the masses. Moses is more and less than a Vice-President and more and less than a Prime Minister; therefore, he is best described as a Vice-Minister. The public can identify with Moses more than they are able to with God. Therefore, God elevates Moses to the Vice-Minister position. Moses climbs the mountain and God tells him to convey this message to the masses:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my reassured possession out of all the peoples.**

God's first address to the masses is a warning and a promise. He is hoping to show them that if they agree to His laws and become loyal followers He will treasure them more than anyone else on earth. From this address to the Israelites, we see that God has learned from the previous two political experiments that He needs to gain the masses' consent prior to providing them with the laws. In Artificial Politics, God first gives Adam the law of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In Personal Politics, God promises, through a Covenant, to never destroy all of the living creatures on Earth again and then He gives Noah two laws. God never informs the people in these two political experiments that He wants to govern them, nor does He ask for their consent. This changes in Mountain Politics where God first informs the masses that He wants the job as their ruler if they will have Him. Does it work? Yes. Moses conveys God's message to

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48 Exod. 19.4-5, NRSV.
the masses at the base of Mount Sinai, and they all answered in unison, "Everything that
the Lord has spoken we will do."49 God receives immediate consent from all of the
people He wishes to rule.

Upon receiving the masses' consent, God decides it is time to present to Moses
and the masses the new commandments and ordinances that will establish the foundation
of His new politics. Exodus 20.1-17 lists the Ten Commandments and Exodus 21-23.19
lists a variety of laws concerning over 50 individual topics. When God gives these laws
to Moses, God also tells him that He will protect His followers as long as they do not
rebel against Him or His supporting staff. He also tells Moses and the Masses that as
long as His followers do not worship another ruler, or disobey their God He will provide
them with a variety of benefits. God will provide all of these benefits to "the people in
return for their hearkening to" His laws and ordinances.50 God learns to provide to all in
order to receive consent from all.

By Exodus 24, God has given Moses all of the laws and ordinances, and Moses
presents them to the masses that have been waiting at the base of Mount Sinai. After
receiving the laws and ordinances the masses respond in unison saying, "All the words
that the Lord has spoken we will do."51 Moses then decides, on his own accord, to write
down all of the words of the Lord. Why did Moses do this? This is the first time God's
laws are written down. God had previously given His laws orally to Adam, and to the
chosen leaders of Personal Politics. Moses takes it upon himself to write the laws down

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49 Exod. 19.8, NRSV.
50 Elazar, op. cit., 177.
51 Exod. 24.3, NRSV.
and thereby adds some permanency to God's law and the public's consent to them.\(^{52}\)

After writing these laws down, which is from now on referred to as the Book of the Covenant, Moses reads them to the public in order to cement their consent. Once again they respond in unison saying, "All the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."\(^{53}\) After this response from the people, God changes His mind and orders Moses back up to the top of the mountain. God wants to provide Moses with tablets of stone upon which God will write the laws and ordinances by His own hand. After Moses writes the laws down and God views how the public responds to them, God realizes that He had better write the laws down Himself. God fears the public may believe Moses is the author of the laws, and thereby their leader. God needs to secure Himself in the position of ruler, otherwise He may lose his followers again as was the case in the previous two political experiments.

Chapters 25 through 29 of Exodus discuss the creation of the Ark of the Covenant which will house the tablets with the laws written on them. Chapter 29, however, is the beginning of God creating a new part of Mountain Politic: an Executive and a Judicial Branch of His political structure. Aaron, Moses' brother, and his sons are to become priests and God's helpers. It is unclear in this chapter about the specific role Aaron and his sons will play as priests except that they will be the liaisons between God and the people concerning the laws. This is more evident when we examine Moses' comments to the public before his ascension to the mountain. "Wait here for us [God and Moses], until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may


\(^{53}\) Exod. 24.7, NRSV.
God has made Aaron and his sons the judges of the laws and the body that will decide the disputes amongst the public. Delegating authority is indeed a new political approach for God, one we have not seen in the Bible before this occasion. By creating a vice-minister and the judges, God has allowed His leadership to expand, thereby not confining it to few individuals whom God can personally watch over, as He did in Personal Politics. God retains ultimate authority over all of the people, but God is no longer required to be involved in every situation involving the people.

Another addition to Mountain Politics is God's decision to register all of His followers in order to collect taxes from them. In Exodus 30.12, God tells Moses, "When you take a census of the Israelites to register them, at registration all of them shall give a ransom for their lives to the Lord." The Lord informs Moses that the collected money must be used to pay for the construction and moving cost of the meeting tent, the tent where the priests shall judge the public's disputes. God adds a new item to Mountain Politics: taxing the people in order to use public money to fund some of the governments' operations.

God has finally finished writing the laws down and gives Moses the two Tablets of the Covenant that have been written upon by His fingers. Daniel Elazar states that the importance of having written laws by the ruler, God, is crucial:

once the power of judging [Aaron and his sons], or interpreting and applying the commandments [Moses], is delegated, then a written collection of basic laws is necessary to provide the basis for those who are not privy to direct communication with the almighty.

54 Exod. 24.14, NRSV.
55 Exod. 30.12, NRSV.
56 Elazar, op. cit., 179.
However, while God and Moses have been writing the Tablets of the Covenant, the public asks Aaron to make a god for them. They are desperate to believe in a god, but Moses has not yet returned and they need something. Aaron agrees to help by making a golden calf for the public to worship and becomes, as Stephen Brams states, "involved in a serious breach of faith."\(^\text{57}\) Aaron is a representative of God's authority (a member of the Judiciary), and if he is willing to break God's laws then the public must question God's ability to rule. The masses have already consented to the laws and God needs to enforce His rule in order to give credibility to His leadership. Therefore, when He realizes what the public is doing, He orders Moses off the mountain so He can be alone to inflict His wrath upon them. God feels obligated to punish the public since they have broken their vow to uphold His laws (recall Exodus 24.7). Moses convinces God not to inflict a punishment on the masses because of the covenant God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning not hurting the Israelites. Therefore, as Moses descends the mountain he feels joy about delivering God's Tablets of the Covenant to the people. However, Moses finds the people dancing in jubilation over having the golden calf to worship, and as God's Vice-Minister, Moses decides to punish the public for disobeying God's laws. Why the change of heart? Moses realizes the severity of the public's disloyalty and decides they need to be punished. The punishment is necessary, otherwise God's laws will be taken for granted as they were in the previous two political experiments. This time, however, Moses, and later God, only punishes those who sin, and not all of the public as God had done with the Flood and Sodom. This shows that God is becoming aware of the need to reward the faithful and punish the sinful, a lesson learned from

Abimelech.

Moses calls the true followers of God to stand next to him and only the sons of Levi do so: therefore, Moses orders the sons of Levi to kill those who are dancing and worshiping the golden calf. About three thousand people were killed that day for disobeying God's law not to worship any other God besides Him. In his anger Moses broke the Tablets of the Covenant and ground the golden calf into dust. On the next day, Moses tells the people, "You have sinned a great sin. But now I will go to the Lord: perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." The Lord does not forgive the sinners, but instead sends a great plague upon them and kills all of those left who have worshipped the golden calf. God also threatens to abandon the people since they have disobeyed His laws, but Moses tries to convince God to give them one more chance. Therefore, as Stephen Brams states, "despite [God's] wariness and cynicism. He" attempts to revitalize the Mountain political experiment once more. Exodus chapter 34 begins with God telling Moses, "cut two tablets of stones like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were the former tablets, which you broke."

God and Moses spend another forty days and forty nights together on top of Mount Sinai writing the laws upon the two tablets. Finally Moses descends the mountain and presents to the Israelites "All that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai." This time Moses does not ask the masses for their consent to the laws as he had done the previous times he presented the laws to the masses. There is implicit evidence, however, found in chapter 35 of Exodus that suggests the public consented to these new laws.

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58 Exod. 32.30, NRSV.
60 Exod. 34.1, NRSV.
61 Exod. 34.32, NRSV.
Chapter 35 discusses how the Israelites were anxious to help in building the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was to be the resting place of the laws. It seems that Moses' and God's previous punishments inflicted on the sinners inspired the rest of the Israelites to work for their God and support His leadership.

Chapter 40 is the last chapter of Exodus and it concludes by describing the journey that Moses and the Israelites are beginning to undertake to reach the land God had promised to them. Exodus ends with God having established a new political theory concerning ruling. Mountain Politics is a vast change in the way God had previously approached ruling. We see the creation of written law, unforced consent to those laws, the establishment of a Vice-Minister and other assistants like judges, and the use of taxes to pay for governmental operations. God no longer provides laws to the chosen leaders of His politics, but to everyone as long as they obey His laws. He also learns that destroying everyone on earth, as He did with the flood and Sodom, does not eliminate dissension. After these total destructions, the people still rebelled against God's leadership. He therefore learns to punish only the wicked and reward the good.

The purpose of Mountain Politics is to create a specific political structure and method of governance that is "designed to transform a goy, a nation like all other nations, into an am, a people whose existence and identity rests upon their connection with a power greater than they."\(^{62}\) This political experiment also hopes to transform these people into a polity based upon an assembly of citizens dedicated to the principles laid out in the written laws. We see the transformation of the citizenry from a loose collection of tribes into a polity at Exodus 12.3-28 with the sacrificing of the Lamb and Passover.

This is also evident in Exodus chapters 42-51 when Moses orders the death of the 3,000 golden calf worshipers and God's plague on the survivors of Moses' wrath. Although the sacrificing of the Lamb and the Passover occur before Mountain Politics, it is part of the selection process for the polity that begins at Mount Sinai. This is when God critically selects who will participate in Mountain Politics. Thereby, He selects whom His future politics will be structured around.

Does Mountain Politics succeed in providing God with His goal of achieving a large congregation of followers? From the reading of Exodus, it is difficult to answer this question. Exodus concludes too soon after the political structure has been created and therefore we can not fully study the effects the application of this political theory. However, if we read further in the Old Testament we realize that indeed Mountain Politics does become a very successful form of governance. If we also study Hebrew law we discover that the Exodus from Egypt and the founding of the Mountain political structure "transforms the Hebrew tribes into a national entity.... [and] since ancient time. Moses has been recognized as the founder of the nation and its constitutional maker."63 Not only is Moses considered the father of the modern Jewish polity and law, but the people at the base of Mount Sinai are also considered the founding people of the modern Jewish State: "They became Israel, in so far as their existence was now ordered as a theopolity under fundamental rules emanating from their God."64 Therefore, since the Exodus laws and ordinances govern these people, they are not only "a catechism of religious and moral precepts, but also a proclamation of the God-King laying down the

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63 ibid, 186.
fundamental rules for the order of the domain."\textsuperscript{65} These laws and ordinances became "the basic constitutional referent for the entire edah [nation as a whole], throughout its history. All subsequent constitutions would claim to do no more than elucidate and explicate this first classic text."\textsuperscript{66} What was created at Mount Sinai was a successful political experiment because it became the foundation of a political structure that still exists today, the modern day Jewish and Hebrew laws.

\textsuperscript{65} ibid, 425.
The first two books of the Bible are often overlooked for their political significance, especially their contribution in the area of political philosophy. However, by examining these two books more closely I have identified three political experiments in the area of governance that God conducts in order to create a successful polity. The first political experiment I titled Artificial Politics. This experiment encompassed the time from the creation to the flood and was God's first attempt at leadership. In this experiment God strives to provide His followers with everything with one exception. Do not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This was the only law that Adam and Eve were expected to follow. God even provided a punishment along with this law, in order to solidify its meaning and importance. However, mankind failed to adhere to this law and God was expected to administer His punishment. Instead, God alters the punishment and allows Adam and Eve to live approximately 800 more years. This is the beginning of the destruction of God's first experiment. By not strictly enforcing His law, God demonstrates to the other humans that they can break His laws and suffer little if any punishment. Eventually all the humans on earth are disregarding God's leadership, and God is forced to destroy them all in a flood. From this first political experiment God learns that He must enforce His laws and their punishments. God also learns that ruling without consent leads the masses to resent the ruler. In this experiment, God forced a law
onto Adam and Eve, thereby not allowing them to agree to His leadership. Therefore, when Adam and Eve no longer appreciated the law, they broke it. From this, God begins to understand that through consent the ruler can obtain loyal followers who will appreciate the law and the ruler more.

The second political experiment I call Personal Politics. This experiment encompasses the time from the flood until the Israelites arrive at the base of Mount Sinai. In this experiment God chooses a few individual human beings whom He will entrust with His laws, all the while ignoring the rest of mankind. God provides the laws, punishments, and protection to these individuals who are anything but loyal followers. God hopes by protecting these individuals the other human beings on earth will want to become His followers in order to achieve the same benefits these individuals receive from Him. However, God displays poor leadership qualities in this form of political leadership. First, He only provides the laws and punishments to an exclusive group of people. This denies to the rest of the humans the ability to follow God since they lack the laws necessary to do so. God fails to enforce these laws and punishments among His chosen leaders. Instead, God forgives their sins and punishes the rest of mankind for either breaking His laws or not breaking His laws. In other words, God does not punish His chosen leaders, but indiscriminately punishes the other humans. This inconsistency in God's leadership makes the masses lose confidence in God's ability to lead and they begin to rebel against him. This leads God to decide to create a new political experiment that I call Mountain Politics.

From Personal Politics God learns that His laws must be provided to all humans and not only to an exclusive group of individuals. That universal laws must not only be
equally distributed amongst the masses, but they must also be equally enforced. By seemingly not to punishing His chosen leaders, God alienates everyone else on earth, a mistake He learns and will correct in the third political experiment.

Mountain Politics is the final political experiment God creates because it becomes a successful form of political leadership. The main tenets of this experiment, which make it a success, are the universal laws, the written laws, the creation of human leadership positions, equal protection under the laws, and the masses' unforced consent to God as their ruler. All of these items have contributed to the lasting support of Mountain Politics for well over 2000 years.

From the examination of these three political experiments, the field of political theory can begin to realize that the Bible is more important in the development of political beliefs. These three political experiments are similar to ideas that political philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Niccolo Machiavelli and many others have developed over the years. The origin of these ideas seems to emanate from the Bible, and therefore the Bible needs to be reexamined for its political significance. Daniel Elazar agrees, "serious students of political thought must inevitably become aware of the Bible in shaping the political ideas of the western world."67 The third political experiment becomes further developed in the rest of the books of the Old Testament and into the New Testament. These books need to be examined in order to understand how Mountain Politics adapts to the needs of the masses, and thereby, is able to last as a form of governance. Upon this examination it becomes clear that Mountain Politics is a long way from being a universally accepted form of governance. The

Mountain Politics of Exodus is a transformation from the personal attention of God towards individuals, the chosen leaders, to the personal attention of one particular people, the Israelites. As shown in the rest of the Bible, when the Israelites encounter other groups of people these people are offered the opportunity to join Mountain Politics. Through this slow progression of encounters Mountain Politics expands and becomes universal.

The Bible has been ignored for its contribution to the area of political theory, but these three political experiments help to show that the Bible is indeed a large part of political theory. Although the history of the Bible's different versions throughout time has created some doubt as to its credibility, this should not discourage political theorists from examining its impact on political philosophers. No matter how the Bible has evolved over the centuries, it remains highly influential in 20th century social, moral, and political development. The Bible is the oldest philosophical work; it dates back to an ancient oral tradition, which still has impact on modern politics. By examining the political theories contained in the Bible, political theorists can better understand why some political ideas have developed and prospered, or failed to become successful. The Bible can not be ignored as an important document in the field of political theory.
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