

DELIVERANCE AND NATIONHOOD

A Comparative Political Study of T. E. Lawrence and Moses

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INTRODUCTION

The embryonic nation is a tumultuous one. It consists of a disjointed agglomeration of often diverse people who struggle to live and thrive as one. With no prior knowledge of self-rule, this nation tends to cannibalize itself through tribal rivalries and infighting, thwarting the prospect of true nationhood. Its people are servile and incapable of fathoming veritable political freedom. They are depraved, fractious, and irreverent. Hence, they are most unfit to be citizens of any free, united nation. How then might they coalesce into such a nation? As this thesis will demonstrate, they require the guidance of a shrewd founder.

This thesis will attempt to answer the following question: **who is the founder, and how does he found the nation? More specifically, it will investigate how the founder delivers a nation from a prior state of servitude or oppression, how it helps this nation shed its servility, and how it sets it on the path toward nationhood.** This, however, begs the question of what a nation truly is. In a political analysis of the Hebrew Bible, Jean-Jacques Rousseau offers the following description of Moses' nation:

To keep his people from being absorbed by foreign peoples, [Moses] gave it morals and practices which could not be blended with those of the other nations; he weighed it down with distinctive rites and ceremonies; he constrained it in a thousand ways in order to keep it constantly alert and to make it forever a stranger among other men, and all the **bonds of fraternity** he introduced among members of his republic were as many barriers which kept separated from its neighbors and prevented it from mingling with them. This is how the singular nation, so often subjugated, so often scattered and apparently destroyed, yet ever idolizing its rule, has nevertheless maintained itself down to our days, scattered among other nations without ever merging with them, and how its morals, its laws, its rites subsist and will endure as long as the world itself does, in spite of the hatred and persecution by the rest of mankind.¹

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Considerations on the Government of Poland," in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 184.

From this description, readers are to infer that the nation is a collection of people bound together by a distinct set of morals, laws, rites, and ceremonies. The nation also apparently “idolize[s] its [own] rule”, suggesting a certain patriotism or reverence of the nation. Finally, the assertion that this nation “maintain[s] itself” over time and persists even when “scattered” leads us to surmise that it is **not necessarily a territorial entity, but a social or political one that can be transmitted to future generations.**² It is thus more of an abstract idea than the modern conception of the nation-state. Moving forward, this thesis will adopt the above definition of a “nation” with the following stipulation: it must be composed of a free people. That is, citizenship must be voluntary rather than coerced.

Exploring the founder’s role in deliverance and nationhood, this thesis will consider both Moses and a more contemporary founder: T. E. Lawrence, the legendary British officer at the forefront of the Arab Revolt during the First World War. These two figures are appropriate and insightful case studies since they are both outsiders delivering a fledgling nation from the clutches of a tyrannical regime. In this case, an “outsider” denotes a cultural stranger to the oppressed people who serves as a mediator between that people and an overarching delivering force (that force being God in Exodus and the British military in the Arab Revolt). The initial instance of oppression is significant, as prolonged servility inculcates certain noxious values which the people must unlearn before pursuing nationhood. Far from a *tabula rasa*, the servile people must undergo social conditioning before it is prepared to accept the responsibilities that arise when birthing a nation. A primary role of the founder is to erase those vices that impede

2. Corey Robin, “Readings for Passover: Rousseau on Moses and the Jews,” last modified March 15, 2019, <https://coreyrobin.com/2015/03/19/readings-for-passover-rousseau-on-moses-and-the-jews/>.

nation-building (cowardliness, capricious loyalty, distrust of one's fellow man, etc.) and supplant them with values that are more conducive to nationhood (intrepidity, selflessness, dedication to the nation, love of laws, etc.). The founder's outsider status is key to this, as it endows him with an abstruse and effective approach to nation-building. As the following chapters will reveal, this status also ascribes to him an air of impartiality and authority which helps authenticate his role as founder and build trust with his people. While he is a cultural stranger, he is able to portray himself as an "insider" by integrating himself with his people. He suffers with them, fights alongside them, and celebrates with them in moments of triumph. This in turn further cements their mutual trust.

The first chapter will compare and contrast Moses' and Lawrence's respective approaches to leadership. In doing so, it will explore their psyches, motivations, and ambitions to unearth the qualities that make for a successful founder. As this chapter will illustrate, the founder must exhibit certain contradictory attributes to effectively lead his people toward nationhood. The second chapter will assess the pertinence of the founder's outsider status to his role as an arbiter and lawgiver. It will underline the need for an impartial founder that can both institute and implement laws in cruel and lenient ways to help condition his people for nationhood. Finally, the third chapter will elucidate the founder's role in guiding identity formation through the experience of war. It will further argue that the founder must, by means of a civil religion, inspire his people to deliver *themselves* and take nation-building into their own hands. Together, these chapters will shed light on how the founder guides his people through an intricate metamorphosis—from a slavish people under the thumb of an oppressive ruler to a united, independent nation.

To better compare Moses with Lawrence, this thesis will read the Biblical figure politically rather than theologically when exploring his role as founder. Moreover, it is important to note that “Moses” and “God” will be used interchangeably in this thesis insofar as Moses serves as the channel through which God enacts His will. If their actions differ in any significant way (i.e. Moses disobeys God’s commands and acts unilaterally), this thesis will explicitly make that distinction. Finally, I must declare the inherent biases in the sources I have selected as research material. Since Lawrence is one of the few historians who had directly recorded the events of the Arab Revolt, this thesis will rely on his recreation thereof as its primary source. Epistemologically, this means that my analysis may unconsciously espouse a white, European interpretive framework that negates Arab and other perspectives when drawing its conclusions. Since Lawrence’s military memoir, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*, is highly normative, moralized, and rife with sweeping ethnic generalizations, I must caution the reader that these elements will necessarily appear in this thesis due to the paucity of other primary sources detailing the events of the revolt.

Chapter I

THE DUALITY OF THE FOUNDER

Here we see Lawrence the soldier. Not only the soldier but the statesman; rousing the fierce peoples of the desert, penetrating the mysteries of their thought, leading them to the selected points of action and as often as not firing the mine himself.¹

—Winston S. Churchill

While having only met Lawrence in the spring of 1919 amid the post-war frenzy of treaty negotiations and border reconfigurations,² Churchill would soon take a keen interest in this hitherto unknown Englishman's colossal military exploits. Fascinated by his unrivaled military acumen and zeal on the battlefield, the incumbent Secretary of State for War became fast friends with Lawrence. This is unsurprising, as Churchill had too been a soldier with an insatiable thirst for adventure as well as an intellectual with renowned tactical cunning.³ What he admired most about Lawrence in his acclamatory reflections of the man was perhaps his dichotomous nature. Churchill depicts him as, simultaneously, "a mechanic [and] a philosopher".⁴ A man with both the practical know-how needed to detonate explosives on a railway sabotage and the rare holistic vision needed to command large armies. A soldier and a statesman. A follower and a leader.

1. Winston S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries: Churchill Reflects on FDR, Hitler, Kipling, Chaplin, Balfour, and Other Giants of His Age*, ed. James W. Muller (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2012), 164.

2. Churchill, 155.

3. Jeffrey Meyers, "Winston Churchill and T. E. Lawrence: a brilliant friendship," *The Article*, November 7, 2021, <https://www.thearticle.com/winston-churchill-and-t-e-lawrence-a-brilliant-friendship>.

4. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, 166.

Such versatility is, as I will argue in this chapter, what characterizes the successful deliverer of a people and founder of a nation.

In its nascency, a nation can seldom ascertain the means to secure its political future and carve out an enclave for itself in the existing geopolitical landscape. As many such nations are initially conditioned to living under an oppressive regime—be it the Ottoman Empire or the Egyptian monarchy—their ingrained servility may impede the nation-building necessary to assert and sustain their independence. A shrewd founder is thereby required to guide them. In the case of Exodus, God (through Moses) regularly tests His chosen people and admonishes them to “[shed] their slavishness”⁵ lest they permanently subordinate themselves to the Egyptians. As will be more thoroughly explored in the third chapter of this thesis, a founder cannot unilaterally *save a people*; the people must, to some extent, *save itself*. As with the Israelites, the Arabs are initially portrayed in Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars* as an amorphous patchwork of pugnacious tribes showing little more promise of unity than a common language and religion.⁶

As an ethnic category, Arabs have existed for centuries—some historical accounts even tracing the first mentions of “Arabs” as far back as the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which reigned between the 10th and 7th centuries BCE.⁷ Perhaps paternalistically, Lawrence nevertheless

5. Leon Kass, “Exodus and American Nationhood; The story of the Israelites shows that peoples are formed by shared ideals of justice and aspirations for the future,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/exodus-and-american-nationhood-11610121319>.

6. T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1935), 33.

7. Peter Webb, “The origin of Arabs: Middle Eastern ethnicity and myth-making,” *British Academy Review*, February, 2016. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/843/BAR27-10-Webb-reduced_0.pdf.

characterizes the Arabs as a nation in its infancy. Being a respected archaeologist and a savant when it comes to Middle Eastern culture and history, he surely acknowledges the ancientness of Arabs as a *people*. However, he likely does not equate them with the modern notion of a full-fledged *nation*. While a staunch defender of Arab nationalism, Lawrence's censorious depiction of the Semites suggests that they are particularly ill-suited for nationhood: "They were a limited, narrow-minded people, whose inert intellects lay fallow in incurious resignation".⁸ Entrenched in their myopic views and tribal rivalries, the prospect of a pan-Arab state seems quixotic. Indeed, their internal strife makes them slavish, and the Turks had been fomenting this strife for centuries through a divide-and-conquer kind of rule that exacerbated sectarian animosity in such a way as to quell Arab nationalist sentiments.⁹ Preoccupied with these religious and tribal divides, the Arabs had, much like the Israelites, become accustomed to oppression, and until the Young Turks—secular Turk reformists opposing Abdul Hamid II's absolute monarchy—rose to power, asserting independence from their overlords had not been attempted in earnest.

To launch and sustain a successful Arab nationalist movement, Lawrence stresses the need of a prophet—a prophet he doggedly seeks out in the early days of the revolt. This individual would require the tact, charisma, and pertinacity to unite a fledgling people—attributes he discerns in Prince Feisal, the third son of Sharif of Mecca Hussein bin Ali, while visiting his camp in Wadi Safra.¹⁰ Moses, while a prophet to God, too adopts his own

8. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 38.

9. Lawrence, 44.

10. James J. Schneider, *Guerrilla leader: T. E. Lawrence and the Arab revolt* (New York: Bantam Books, 2011), 31.

intermediary to both Pharaoh and the Israelites: Aaron. Although Aaron is chosen by God without Moses' explicit consultation,¹¹ Moses later takes initiative in selecting leaders and delegating holy tasks. In this comparison then, Aaron is to Moses what Feisal is to Lawrence: an insider link between the deliverer (an outsider) and the delivered people.

This chapter will explore in what ways the founder's duality—that is, existing simultaneously within and above a political movement, as both a leader and a follower—is necessary to ensure the coalescence and deliverance of a servile people in its embryonic stages of nationhood. His insistence on living “as one” with his followers—that is, immersing himself in the throes of battle and enduring the same hardships as his people—is, as this chapter will demonstrate, motivated chiefly by guilt. This chapter will also investigate an array of idiosyncrasies shared by both Moses and Lawrence and consider how these shape their approaches to leadership and effectiveness as founders. In doing so, it will show how these qualities occur, quite paradoxically, in the form of conflicting dualities: unfettered ambition is coupled with utmost humility, bold leadership with reluctance and circumspection, and fervent loyalty with deception. From such dualities, both founders derive a more holistic, esoteric view of their peoples and the nature of their plight. It is with this sharp mental discernment and expert diplomacy that these two founders, each aided by his prophet, succeed in delivering their peoples and conditioning them for nationhood. Together, these dualities are united by one essential feature of the founder: his comprehensive understanding of the nation. He is not confined to the bird's eye view upon which other leaders rely. While he shows profound understanding of the “big picture” of his people's plight and can navigate pathways to nationhood, his macroscopic

11. Exod. 4:14-16. (NRSV).

insights are informed by his integration with the fledgling nation. To borrow a Platonic metaphor, he is the stargazing “ship captain”. Prima facie, he may seem aloof and lost in the stars above. His generalist, recondite knowledge and insight, however misunderstood, makes him most qualified to command the ship. Although his mutinous crewmembers may protest to his direction given the captain’s apparent dearth of specialized seafaring skills, no man is more apt to be captain.¹² This is the ideal founder.

The Reluctant Servant Leader

According to leadership theorist Robert K. Greenleaf, the “servant” leader’s primary impetus comes from “the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*”.¹³ Unlike the tyrannical leader, the servant leader evinces little personal ambition; instead, this individual seeks chiefly to improve the well-being and independence of his followers. “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”¹⁴ These are the key concerns of the servant leader. While this person may naturally aspire to leadership roles for these selfless reasons, such leaders as Lawrence may be hesitant to do so. Throughout his campaign in the Middle East, Lawrence is urged to assume a number of commanding positions. From humble archaeologist to de facto general in the Arab Revolt, Lawrence’s careful diplomacy and tactical prowess entices others into following him. At no point in his movement does Lawrence actively attempt to amass

12. Plato, *Republic*, trans. Joe Sachs (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 488a-e.

13. Robert K. Greenleaf, “The Servant as Leader,” in *Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance*, ed. Walther C. Zimmerli, Klaus Richter, and Markus Holzinger (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 83.

14. Greenleaf, 83.

adherents and soldiers to his company—his industrious spirit and devotion to the Arab cause are sufficient to attract riders to accompany him on arduous treks across the desert, sabotage operations, and firefights.¹⁵ They follow Lawrence entirely by their own volition. Devoid of any lofty aspirations for power, Lawrence is often impelled by his superiors into the positions he begrudgingly accepts rather than pursuing them outright.

Some may dismiss this as a façade of humility as opposed to sincere self-effacement. As this chapter will later discuss, Lawrence does indeed admit to his guilty penchant for fame. While this innate desire for renown is poignant, the contrition he feels while misleading the Arabs tempers it. This guilt causes Lawrence to deem himself unworthy of praise and humbly reject all the honours he rightfully merits. Even after the war, he refuses to accept medals for his outstanding military service from King George V.¹⁶ Throughout the revolt, the Arabs are circumspect with respect to the British involvement therein. Lawrence’s lack of imperial ambition and genuine sympathy for the Arab cause, however, allays their concerns. For Lawrence, his humility is genuine, and the Arabs discern this, setting a foundation of trust. His selflessness—examples of which this chapter will discuss—further solidifies that foundation. The usefulness of this guilt will be further explained in the next section of this chapter.

Moses is chosen as God’s prophet for a similar reason. Bible scholar Leon Kass describes Moses as “ripe for the catching” when God reveals Himself to him on Mount Horeb.¹⁷ Several confrontations have hitherto exemplified Moses’ strong commitment to justice—which the next

15. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 358.

16. Meyers, “Winston Churchill and T. E. Lawrence”.

17. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 61.

chapter will expound upon—and readers are left to infer from his old age that any youthful ambition he once possessed has since waned. Perhaps most importantly, however, Moses is an outsider in Midian—an outsider in search of some transcendent calling. God recognizes this and unearths Moses’ yearnings for “father and fatherland, for vocation and purpose, for great distinction, [and] for knowledge about the god most high”.¹⁸ Moses too harbors guilt, if currently abeyant, for abandoning the Israelites. With God’s assistance, however, he is able to derive a sense of duty from his guilt—a duty to lead his people not toward a slave-like subservience to God, but toward an independent kind of holy nationhood.

After Lawrence is sent to make preliminary reports on Feisal’s position in the Hejaz campaign, General Gilbert Clayton exhorts him to serve as an acting advisor on the status of Feisal’s army to the British Intelligence Unit in Cairo. In response, Lawrence argues his unsuitability for the task, purporting that he lacks both the necessary acumen and expertise to occupy a position bearing such responsibility.¹⁹ Here, once again, Lawrence is evincing his characteristic humility. Since his adolescence, Lawrence had been an avid reader of military history.²⁰ In particular, he had been well versed in Hannibal’s tactics and Napoleon’s campaigns, and he had read the works of Clausewitz, Jomini, Mahan, and Foch.²¹ As a result, Lawrence began to develop a peculiar enthrallment with the literary “heroic leader”, and with this came a

18. Kass. 61.

19. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 114.

20. Schneider, *Guerrilla Leader*, 5.

21. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 114.

concomitant yearning to “free a people”.²² Although Lawrence may initially doubt his own aptness for military authority, readers of Machiavelli would likely disagree with this self-assessment—assuming Lawrence’s professed extensive knowledge of military history and tactics is accurate. The Machiavellian prince is one who is wholly fixated on the “art” of war; he is learned in battle strategy, geography, and all other aspects related to defending his state.²³ Having toured expansively across the Middle East years before the revolt while researching his thesis, Lawrence had early on become closely familiar with both the topographical and cultural landscape of Arabia. Subsequently, Lawrence had partaken in an internship on an archaeological dig in Carchemish, over which he developed his competencies in colloquial Arabic and helped cure scorpion bites afflicting many of the Arab workers, earning himself a level of repute equivalent to that of an Arab elder.²⁴

It was over these pre-revolt excursions in Arabia that Lawrence became acutely aware of Arab customs, tribal rivalries, and regional politics. Such esoteric knowledge later proves invaluable in winning the Arab Revolt. Throughout the war, Lawrence continues to learn new regional dialects and intimately acquaints himself with those tribes that Feisal and his brothers gradually integrate within their ranks. With these rare insights and connections, Lawrence learns which tribes are likely to quarrel as well as which tribes are better suited for certain tasks. He knows, for instance, that the Bedouins—while unseasoned in traditional warfare—make for exceptional guerrilla fighters given their “mobility, toughness, self-assurance, knowledge of the

22. Schneider, *Guerrilla Leader*, 5.

23. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 61-63.

24. Schneider, *Guerrilla Leader*, 7-13.

country, [and] intelligent courage”, and he considers these qualities when deciding when and where to deploy them.²⁵ On the other hand, Lawrence hesitates to rely on such auxiliary forces as the East Indians chiefly on account of their apparent ineptitude at camel riding and vulnerability to the wretched conditions of Lawrence’s gruelling expeditions.²⁶ To thwart infighting, Lawrence and his fellow commanders avoid pairing inimical tribes on raids. To maximize mobility, they also elect tribes based on their familiarity with the territory in which the raids are orchestrated.²⁷ It is not his tactical prowess alone, however, that entices the Arabs to trust him; it is his social and cultural knowledge of Arabia. While a stranger to the Middle East, Lawrence is learned in their customs and ways of life. This is evident by the way he behaves on the camps, constantly vigil to avoid cultural offence.

Moses too displays continued reluctance to serve as God’s prophet, and while he may not be endowed with the same military genius as Lawrence, he nonetheless proves himself fit for the position. Much like Lawrence’s childhood aspirations of “freeing a people”, Moses early on exhibits a similar emancipatory impulse. Having witnessed an Israelite slave be mercilessly beaten, Moses unilaterally delivers justice and kills the Egyptian slave master.²⁸ This act demonstrates independence and free will; Moses is not restrained by the same servility as his Hebrew brothers, and he thus does not hesitate to act.²⁹ Lawrence illustrates similar

25. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 224.

26. Lawrence, 425.

27. Lawrence 338.

28. Exod. 2:11-13 (NRSV).

independence when he—without informing his caravan, knowing well that the Ageyl tribesmen would not risk their lives to save another tribe’s man—turns back alone to save Gasim, a camel-less rider lost in the mirage-inducing desert.³⁰ Although Auda Abu Tayi, commander of the Howeitat section, subsequently reprimands Lawrence for imperilling his own life at the expense of such an incompetent and disposable rider,³¹ his selfless act asserts his agency—a dearth of which appears to characterize the slavish Arabs. In juxtaposition with the Arabs, who—entrenched in their clannish ways—fail to perceive their fellow tribes as brothers and therefore often refuse to assist them, Lawrence appears unfettered by such tribal sectarianism; he is an independent man of action, willing to deliver any and all Arabs no matter the sect, tribe, or status. This independence of spirit eventually unifies the Arabs under one common cause.

God too likely interprets Moses’ bold agency as a remedy for the Israelites’ slavishness—this being, in addition to their repeated impiety and act of apostasy at Mount Horeb, one of the main factors obstructing their path to divine nationhood. Moses’ two confrontations after killing the Egyptian slave master—intervening in a brawl between two Israelites and rescuing Jethro’s daughters from their shepherd assailants—further exemplify Moses’ dedication to justice and his innate predisposition to assist the weak and oppressed. Counterintuitively, however, his yearning to manumit the Israelites coincides with a reluctance to lead them—an apparent contradiction that Lawrence seems to reflect as well. When God instructs Moses to go deliver the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, he demurs profusely—unlike Abram in Genesis, who more readily

29. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 50.

30. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 253-255.

31. Lawrence, 256.

accepts his holy commission.³² Firstly, Moses pleads: “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring out the Israelites from Egypt?”, implicitly judging himself unworthy of such a task given his status as an on-the-run fugitive turned humble shepherd.³³ Despite God’s reassurances, Moses later proffers his lack of eloquence as a disqualifying factor.³⁴ To address his averred deficiency in speech and persuasion, God assigns Moses’ Levite brother Aaron as his mediator and confers three divine proofs on Moses to convince the Israelites of his holy authority.³⁵ For the moment, this allays Moses’ concerns, but he later grows recalcitrant, ignoring God’s instructions and decrying His selection of Moses as prophet.

Despite Moses’ repeated assertions of inadequacy, a factor other than his apparently innate devotion to justice and deliverance also justifies his suitability as God’s prophet. Like Lawrence, he intimately *knows* his people. This is not to say he is conversant with the Israelites’ customs and culture. Although Exodus curiously omits details pertaining to Moses’ childhood and adolescence, theologians conjecture that he would have received a noble education, likely segregated from the Israelites.³⁶ There is also a paucity of evidence in Exodus to substantiate Moses knowing any specific details relating to his true ethnicity or ancestry.³⁷ Hence, upon

32. Kass, 65.

33. Robert Alter, “Exodus,” in *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 320.

34. Exod. 4:10-11 (NRSV).

35. Exod. 4:3-10, 4:14-15 (NRSV).

36. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 45.

37. Kass, 48.

meeting God at Mount Horeb, Moses, likely unconsciously, refrains from referring to the Israelites as “*my people*”; instead, he simply addresses them as the “Children of Israel”, or the “Israelites”. This underlines Moses’ self-perception as an outsider and tacitly diverts the onus of delivering God’s people to God Himself.³⁸ If Moses is so unattached then to the Israelites—to him, an alien people—how can he intimately know them? Just like Lawrence, Moses appears to be a percipient empath, as he is able to penetrate his people’s psyche and unearth their fears, motivations, and underlying nature—ironic given that his introspection is so shrouded that he cannot recognize his own suitability as prophet.

It is likely for this reason that Moses always seems cognizant of imminent revolt. After fleeing Egypt and venturing into the wilderness, the Israelites begin to regularly impugn Moses and God’s intent to deliver them to Canaan, only to have their fears repeatedly quelled by some divine miracle whenever they begin to grow mutinous. Such an uprising is narrowly averted, for instance, when the Israelites enter Rephidim. To their consternation, no potable water is found there, and the Israelites become exasperated and prepared to riot and possibly murder Moses. As with the other times the Israelites have been in ferment, Moses is apparently vigilant in monitoring the situation, and the severity of the crisis compels him to defer to God for assistance.³⁹ Of course, it does not take a particularly keen perception to deduce that a displaced people on the brink of starvation might attempt to usurp a leader that guides them to a dry, inhospitable land. What makes Moses truly perceptive is the way he uses these instances of adversity as case studies to reveal his people’s depraved and fickle nature.

38. Kass, 68.

39. Exod. 17:3-4 (NRSV).

Much like the Arabs, the Israelites are not initially amenable to nationhood. Their mercurial reverence of God reveals their servile loyalty; they obey whomever ensures their survival, no matter how wicked or oppressive. Hence, after Moses has apparently abandoned them on his forty-day absence at Mount Horeb, their faith in God wanes, and they seek a new god to secure their survival: the Golden Calf.⁴⁰ Upon descending and witnessing this egregious apostasy, an incensed Moses shatters the stone tablets enumerating God’s Ten Commandments.⁴¹ Some theologians, however, have imputed his abrupt destruction of the tablets to more than mere anger. One interpretation posits that Moses immediately shatters the tablets in order to temporarily annul God’s covenant before the Israelites have the opportunity to transgress it—a plausible explanation given that, in Babylonian legal nomenclature, “break[ing] the tablet” is used to describe the abrogation of a contract.⁴² At this point, Moses has earnestly taken note of the Israelites’ conditional fealty and proclivity for sin. He *understands* their perfidious nature—something that God Himself apparently fails to do; after all, why would He have elected the Israelites as His chosen people had He initially known they would be so “stiff-necked”⁴³ as to merit annihilation?

Instead of accepting the Israelites’ depravity as a vice to be mitigated, God seeks to purge it through fear; He sounds the ram’s horn and conjures an ominous display of smoke and lightning when addressing His people, and He routinely threatens those who violate His

40. Exod. 32:1-4 (NRSV).

41. Exod. 32:19-20 (NRSV)..

42. Aaron Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader* (Jerusalem and New York: Shalem Press, 2005), 116.

43. Exod. 33:3 (NRSV).

commands with death. In these moments, God wants His people to fear Him so as to exact veneration. Moses, however, admonishes them to do the opposite: ““Do not fear, for in order to test you God has come and in order that His fear be upon you, so that you do not offend””.⁴⁴ Moses does this because he wishes to *serve* and not *rule* his people. Like Lawrence after the Arab revolt, Moses relinquishes most of his responsibilities following his people’s deliverance, as Aaron assumes authority over the priesthood. Since Jethro advises the delegation of holy duties, Moses “continues to divest himself of the facets of his authority”, whereby he yields “personal power” for “institutional immortality”.⁴⁵ Once again, this unveils his dual nature: Moses has a desire to secure his people’s manumission and holy nationhood, but not to lead them to this end. He is a servant first. Lawrence too voluntarily abnegates his duties following deliverance—once a provisional government is established in the wake of Damascus’ capture, he leaves Arabia shortly thereafter. By necessity, however, many of the rebel leaders were “bad subjects and worse governors”.⁴⁶ Thus, Lawrence helps Auda oust Abd el Kader and Mohammed Said from this government—two rebel leaders whose theological views were draconian and in many ways anti-Arab. Before relinquishing their authority, then, both Moses and Lawrence ensure their respective nations are left in good hands. Their intention is merely to found a nation with the fortitude to resist reverting to servility, not to rule it.

By virtue of this desire to *serve* first, the successful founder instinctively seeks to know his people so as to better assist them. As demonstrated by Moses, discerning their nature—

44. Exod. 20:20-21 (NRSV).

45. Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader*, 163.

46. Lawrence, *Severn Pillars*, 649.

which, in the case of slavishness, becomes evident when exposed through adversity—is a prerequisite for deliverance and nationhood. He uses his understanding of human nature when persuading God to honor his covenant to Abraham. Given his special insight in this regard, Moses bears the onus of “convinc[ing] God to accept human nature”, for “where there is freedom, there is sure to be transgression”.⁴⁷ Human nature is here assumed to be flawed and bear with it an inherent predilection for sin. The Israelites’ repeated infringement of God’s commands in the wilderness and their generally capricious faith exemplifies this. Moses, ever the diplomat, takes it upon himself to reconcile this nature with God’s stiff expectations for His people.

While God may see divine nationhood as a freedom in itself, politically speaking, Moses must remind Him that freedom includes the freedom to sin and suffer the consequences. The threat of annihilation, as the third chapter will explain, will not produce a love of divine nationhood; the people must *want* to pursue it without being coerced. They must *want* to follow God’s commands. The goal here is not to keep the Israelites servile under God. As Kass points out, the mere emancipation of a people engenders anarchy, as they have no “experience of self-rule”.⁴⁸ Without a vigorous education in independent nationhood, they remain slavish and flock to whatever power guarantees their survival. Once left to their own devices, they descend into chaos since they lack any national unity. The founder must tailor this education in nationhood to the people, and knowing their nature is a crucial part of this.

47. Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader*, 115.

48. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 36.

Lawrence is equally keen on knowing his people. Using the cultural and social knowledge he acquires over his adventures in Arabia, he strategically deploys the diverse forces under his command. Moreover, Lawrence's intrepid displays of heroism show that he does not—while thoroughly understanding their particularities from logistical and military standpoints—morally distinguish between different tribes or sects; he seeks to unite all Arabs under the banner of Arab nationalism and therefore refuses to relegate himself to the paltry factional politics that beset the Arab world. This is not to say that he is a stalwart supporter of a pan-Arab state; he merely recognizes that tribal animosities as a serious impediment to a united Arab campaign. It is unclear whether Lawrence sees a centralized pan-Arab state as desirable or not, but the cultural differences between Arab tribes and their ubiquitous feuding make the very notion chimerical. The main reason why a pan-Arab state is not erected in the end, however, is the Arabs' parochial perception of nationality; instead of “an organized state or extended empire”, they merely seek “the independence of clans and villages” from Turkish rule.⁴⁹ Regardless, Lawrence is at least able to help forge an ephemeral alliance between these factions before post-revolt discord in Damascus begins to imperil its provisional government and the Sykes-Picot Agreement ushers French and British imperial forces into the Middle East. He supports Arab nationalism, but reveals few details as to whether this entails a territorially contiguous state governed by Arabs or a patchwork of independent Arab nations.

On the Front Lines: A Nation Founded on Contrition

So far, we have learned from Lawrence and Moses that acquiring the cultural and social knowledge of one's people is essential to deliverance. Moreover, one cannot lead solely from

49. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 100.

above, as God does. The founder of a nation must intimately *know* the people he seeks to deliver and guide toward nationhood. He must thoroughly understand their nature, predilections, and motivations, for these may be strategically wielded to facilitate the founder's objectives. To this end, he must be a follower *first*. Knowing his people more intimately, however, is not the only reason the founder integrates himself with his people and his fighters. His stoicism in the face of danger—as portrayed by Moses' composed reassurances to his people when they are cornered by the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds, for example—serves as an inspiration to his people. Every time Lawrence outrides his caravan or charges dauntlessly into battle, it is as if to say, "If I can do it, so can you." He descends his ivory tower to suffer with his people, and this common strife both emboldens them and forges a kind of bond and trust one cannot hope to sustain by leading solely from above. For both Lawrence and Moses, guilt is a driving factor for wanting to suffer with their peoples. As this section will show, the moral weight of deception evokes a sense of unworthiness that entices the founder to endure the same hardships as his people. Especially for Lawrence, contrition impels the founder to a level of self-abasement that the people conflate with a kind of rugged fortitude: a tenacity which they respect and admire. Witnessing the founder's willingness to suffer with them, the people are led to believe in the authenticity of his commitment to their cause—even if he is an outsider.

Lawrence's reluctance to lead reveals his intention to embed himself amongst the common soldiers. He observes them with the careful diligence of an anthropologist—meticulously dissecting their customs, mannerisms, religiosity, ambitions, and fears. Moreover, Lawrence directs such scrutiny to the other revolt leaders to assess their usefulness and reliability. In doing so, he quickly finds his own prophet: Feisal. Unlike with Hussein's other sons, Lawrence immediately recognizes Feisal as possessing the "necessary fire" to unite the

warring Arabs and lead them to victory.⁵⁰ He has an infectious optimism and an unflagging morale which his men appear to look up to. With his assertive presence, his command over his troops seems effortless. Like Lawrence, Feisal is a man replete with dualities: “fiery yet sensitive [and] apparently frail yet courageous”.⁵¹ These conflicting qualities humanize Feisal; his subjects *extol* him for his virtues and *identify* with him through his flaws. Despite being lavished in such adulations, Feisal too evinces utmost humility throughout his campaign, standing side by side with his men on the battlefield and keeping his tent regularly open to welcome subjects with grievances or concerns.

Conversely, Lawrence’s unfavorable depiction of Abdulla, Feisal’s older brother, illustrates the dangers of isolating oneself from one’s people. Limiting himself to a more perfunctory role in the revolt, Abdulla is stationed in Wadi Ais under Feisal’s advice, and he is doing the bare minimum to attrite the Turkish forces. Although speciously heralded as the “intellectual father of the revolt”,⁵² Abdulla’s languid leadership and nefarious motives quickly become clear to Lawrence upon meeting him in Jidda. His involvement in the revolt merely entails keeping his family at its center so as to ensure their uninterrupted rule following its expected success; most military planning is deferred to Feisal.⁵³ At his camp, Lawrence notes a deficient esprit de corps, surely exacerbated by Abdulla’s hedonistic behaviour, reclusiveness,

50. Lawrence, 64.

51. Schneider, *Guerilla Leader*, 34.

52. Schneider, 28.

53. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 216.

unwillingness to join his men on raids, and indifference to the cause of Arab nationality.⁵⁴

Indeed, Abdulla represents the antithesis of Lawrence. Whereas Abdulla eschews soiling his own hands in the squalor of war, opting instead to insulate himself and his retinue of aristocrats from the lowly soldiers, Lawrence integrates himself with the latter and unflinchingly welcomes this squalor. Juxtaposed with Abdulla's self-indulgence, Lawrence's asceticism—at times bordering on masochism—demonstrates his dedication to the Arab cause. This dedication once again builds trust: a rare and precious asset for an outsider like Lawrence.

What makes Lawrence the quintessential servant leader is his devotion to the cause of Arab nationality—a cause that is alien to him, yet one that he pursues with a fervor eclipsing that of most Arabs. By subjecting himself to fatigue, famine, sickness, bodily risk, and other such hardships of war, Lawrence himself exudes that “necessary fire” which initially drew him to Feisal. Lest his Arab followers capitulate at the first sight of danger, regressing to what Lawrence perceives as their characteristic slavishness inculcated over centuries of oppression under Ottoman rule, Lawrence teaches them how to be an independent nation—how to place the good of the nation above the good of the person or the tribe.

Although Lawrence initially professes his unfitness to be a soldier to General Clayton, the Director of Intelligence in Cairo,⁵⁵ he nevertheless displays an evident eagerness to enter the battlefield. Having voluntarily enlisted in the British army at the outbreak of war, he was denied and instead offered a position as Second Lieutenant of Intelligence by Colonel Walter Coote Hedley, who also recommended his transfer to Cairo on account of his familiarity with the

54. Lawrence, 212-216.

55. Lawrence, 114.

region.⁵⁶ In parallel, Moses' three confrontations before settling in Midian suggest his readiness to imperil his own life in the act of deliverance. Mourning the loss of his two brothers in May and September of 1915, a bereaved Lawrence is haunted by a kind of "survivor's guilt" that beckons him to the front lines.⁵⁷ Doubly haunted by his divided loyalty—that to the British Crown, intending to exert post-war hegemony over much of the Middle East; and that to the Arabs, expecting full post-war autonomy free of imperial oversight—Lawrence is grossly anguished by the moral weight of his contrition. Throughout the revolt, he continuously excoriates himself as an imposter or spy rather than a true leader, and no matter the praise he receives for his military success and dedication to the Arab cause, he remains "a standing court martial on [him]self".⁵⁸ Little by little, his remorse grows to such an intensity that he begins to develop a lascivious fascination with self-punishment—a kind of masochism which he instills in his bodyguard. Under his authority, the latter apparently "[make] it a point of honor never to mention fatigue", taking "pleasure in subordination [and] degrading the body".⁵⁹ Strangely, relishing one's own abasement in this way seems, *prima facie*, to align with the very slavishness Lawrence is attempting to purge. This self-degradation, however, has a favorable psychological function: it abates each guard's personal ambitions and tribal fidelities such that they relinquish their bodies and souls entirely to Lawrence's command and the greater Arab cause. For Lawrence, such self-abasement is both a reconciliatory and an expiatory gesture. By pushing his

56. Schneider, *Guerrilla Leader*, 19.

57. Schneider, 21.

58. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 565.

59. Lawrence, 465-466.

body to its limits and imperilling his life, he hopes to redress his deception of the Arabs. He seeks atonement. As perhaps an unintentional consequence of this, Lawrence exculpates himself from the British colonial agenda of which the Arabs would have otherwise accused him.

Much of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is organized as a typical military memoir, detailing Lawrence's thoughts and experiences over the course of the revolt and chronicling the pivotal events therein. While a large portion of it is spent outlining detailed descriptions of the key tribes and players of the revolt—incisively probing their thoughts, consciences, ambitions, and mutual trusts—his work is curiously devoid of much introspection. In the rare chapters where he does at length discuss his own feelings, wants, and fears, he appears continuously at odds with himself—mainly, as previously discussed, on account of his perceived betrayal of the Arabs. His relative silence on this subject may, however, reveal clues as to his true feelings. By deemphasizing his own emotions and instead shifting focus onto the other leaders of the revolt, Lawrence is likely attempting to morally divest himself from the war and marginalize his significance therein. In one of said chapters, Lawrence decries his involvement in the revolt: “It might have been heroic to have offered up my own life for a cause in which I could not believe: but it was a theft of souls to make others die in sincerity for my graven image”.⁶⁰ Clearly, Lawrence deems himself wholly complicit in Great Britain's duplicitous dealings with the Arab rebels, regardless of the fact that he vehemently opposed the colonial provisions of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Hence, he does not feel that he merits glorious commemoration for his deeds; if anything, he likely expects scorn. This diminutive portrayal of his role in the revolt mirrors his approach to leadership. Being a reluctant leader, Lawrence does not demand respect, admiration, or subservience

60. Lawrence, 550.

from his adherents. He inspires the Arabs to lead themselves by being a servant to their cause as opposed to creating a legacy for himself.

Moses too is at odds with himself, for he must serve simultaneously as God's prophet and as the deliverer of the Israelites. As the former, he is beholden to God's commands, and as the latter, he is expected to protect and guide his people in their collective pursuit of divine nationhood. These two roles, however, are at times difficult to reconcile. As the third chapter of this thesis will discuss, God's motivation for inflicting the Ten Plagues upon Egypt is not so much emancipatory as it is retributive and pedagogical. By deliberately "hardening" Pharaoh's heart, making him increasingly steadfast in his decision to retain his Hebrew slaves, God is able to punish Egypt tenfold for the subjugation of His people—an unfathomable show of power that dwarfs that of the Egyptian "gods", revealing the God of Israel as the one true deity.⁶¹ Moreover, a premature capitulation from Pharaoh could conceivably portray him as the veritable deliverer of the Israelites; by having him consistently renege on his promises to liberate his slaves, God exposes Pharaoh as the arrogant fool who invokes God's wrath solely out of vanity.⁶²

God's need to assert divine supremacy by smiting the Egyptians often occurs, however, at the expense of the Israelites. While he offers them a safe haven in Goshen (a segregated Hebrew settlement in northeastern Egypt),⁶³ this sanctuary is only mentioned in anticipation of the fourth plague.⁶⁴ Although theological consensus as to whether Goshen is spared in the first

61. Kass, *Founding God's Nation*, 82.

62. Kass, 82.

63. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 355.

three has yet to be reached, the lack of Biblical evidence on the matter suggests that the Israelites and Egyptians suffer equally here. Moreover, instead of overseeing a peaceful exodus out of Egypt, God once again hardens Pharaoh's heart, compelling him to pursue the runaway slaves in order to set the stage for God's grand finale—now the eleventh installment of His desolation: the parting of the Sea of Reeds and drowning of Pharaoh's soldiers. In the face of the advancing Egyptian army, Moses does not waver in his faith, and he attempts to calm the panic that has overtaken the Israelites.⁶⁵ Yet, throughout their journey through the wilderness to Mount Horeb, Moses continues to question God's true intentions, just as Lawrence questions those of the British Crown. They are both innately skeptical, and thus strong founders. As such, it is Lawrence and Moses' duty to attend to their people's interests and reconcile these with those of their superiors: for Lawrence, the British intelligence headquarters in Cairo, and for Moses, God. In many cases, such mediation necessarily entails deception. After all, why would the Israelites agree to flee Egypt knowing God had planned to impel Pharaoh to send his forces after them? Why would the Arabs forge such a strong allegiance with the British knowing they sought to capitalize on the ensuing postwar confusion to extend their empire into Palestine and Mesopotamia?

Machiavelli offers a particularly relevant aphorism on this matter: “as a prince is forced to act like a beast, he must learn from the fox and the lion”.⁶⁶ As for the fox, the shrewd prince

64. Exod. 8:18-19 (NRSV).

65. Exod. 14:13 (NRSV).

66. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 74.

must be versed in mendacity insofar as circumstances compel him—not only is this his prerogative, but it is also his duty to his people. As Lawrence and Moses have shown, the same applies to the founder of a new nation. Had they chosen to divulge the true intentions of God and the British Crown to their respective peoples, it would be difficult to envision Exodus or the Arab Revolt occurring at all. The prince (and founder), while dedicating himself to the good of his people, must nevertheless “know how to do evil, if that is necessary”.⁶⁷ While both founders evince considerable guilt for this, it is this guilt that drives their characteristic humility.

Lawrence’s mixed feelings of pride, remorse, and sense of duty culminate in yet another duality: he desires to be liked and famous for his contributions to the war,⁶⁸ yet he equally wishes to be reproached for them. His “sense of the falsity of the Arab position had cured [him] of crude ambition: while it left [him] craving for good repute among men”.⁶⁹ Moses displays similar disillusionment with his role as prophet when, in the aftermath of the apostasy at Mount Horeb, he implores God to either pardon the Israelites or let him die, for Moses cannot not bear the guilt of allowing God to abandon the Israelites for their indelible fallen nature while Moses carries on, conferring divine nationhood solely on his progeny.⁷⁰

Clearly then, guilt engenders humility and deters personal ambition. The more the good founder apparently deceives his people, the greater the onus he feels to remain faithful to them

67. Machiavelli, 76.

68. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 563.

69. Lawrence, 562.

70. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 499-500.

and their interests—as if this were an expiatory path. It is likely for these reasons that Lawrence attempts to maximize his own suffering and Moses feels obliged to die for his people. Refusing to accept tents, cooks, or servants,⁷¹ and often insisting on trudging barefoot alongside his Arab brothers to inure himself to the scorching desert,⁷² Lawrence utterly debases himself in pursuit of what dignity he has left as he consciously misleads the people he is charged with leading. It is this self-abasement that makes him a great founder. As he marginalizes his own significance in the war, he aggrandizes the Arab cause by portraying it as something much more precious than his own comfort and life—a cause to which one must devote one’s body and soul. Guilt propels him to show deference to the cause through such self-abasement, and in doing so, it inspires other Arabs to see beyond their individual ambitions and tribal rivalries. In turn, this impels Lawrence’s adherents to devote themselves entirely to the pursuit of Arab nationhood.

71. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 449.

72. Lawrence, 170.

Chapter II

THE OUTSIDER AS ARBITER AND LAWGIVER

A prince must want to have a reputation for compassion rather than cruelty: none the less, he must be careful that he does not make bad use of compassion.¹

—Machiavelli

Before coalescing politically and asserting its sovereignty, an inchoate nation must surmount the preliminary hurdles posed by its own sectarian animosity. However, tribal rivalries and mutinous dispositions, when deeply rooted, are often too inveterate to dismantle from within. In such cases, an outsider must emerge as an impartial arbiter. Lawrence understands this, wielding his outsider status as a unifying asset in the Arab Revolt. Much like Moses, Lawrence's role in deliverance and nation-building obliges him to mediate disputes on both macro and micro levels: between the British military and the Arab rebels as well as between the Arab tribes themselves. Since the bias inherent to tribal leaders often shrouds their judgement, prompting them to deal favourably with their own and their allies while undermining those tribes with which they have feuded, a concerted Arab movement—no matter how reasonable, cosmopolitan, or broad-minded such Arab leaders as Feisal may have been—would likely not have been tenable without outsider arbitration.

Lawrence's relationships with both General Edmund Allenby and Feisal in the later stages of the revolt endow him (an outsider to both British military bureaucracy and Arab militias) with a rare insider understanding of both spheres. With this comes an esoteric and holistic view of the Allied campaign in the Middle East as well as the rise of Arab nationalism therefrom. Moses has a similar divine sight undiluted by the impiety of the Israelites.

1. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 70.

Uninhibited by the latter's slavishness—a vice ingrained over generations of bondage—Moses is not as inclined to indict the Lord of wrongdoing. Although Moses is a skeptic, a reluctant prophet, and by no means an obsequious servant, his faith in the Lord and the nation of Israel is not nearly as fickle as that of his followers. To inculcate such faith and nationalism, Lawrence and Moses must act as tactful mediators, wielding both cruelty and compassion at their superior discretions. When adeptly applied, cruelty serves as an impetus for action and commitment to the nation as well as an effective deterrent for those who would otherwise let their slavishness or tribal rivalries obstruct the collective path to nationhood. When poorly applied, cruelty alienates one's people from their cause and welcomes barbarism and chaos, which in turn eclipse the cause's overarching nationalist objectives. On the other hand, compassion may serve as a neutralizing buffer to cruelty, but its overuse may invite indolence and apathy toward the cause. As Machiavelli cautions, excessive compassion is conducive to societal disarray and collapse, for it fails to instill any kind of discipline among a prince's subjects.²

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli's advice is chiefly directed toward founders erecting a *new* nation, and he even uses Moses as a Biblical case study.³ One of the greatest challenges of founding a new nation is the absence of laws and legal institutions to implement them. Once the oppressed people is severed from its master, it enters into a state of lawlessness, which may exacerbate rivalries and lead to turmoil and power struggles. This is evidenced by the Arabs' incessant infighting during the revolt and the Israelites' constant defiance of Moses' commands. To abate this anarchic behaviour, the founder must sometimes implement provisional laws to

2. Machiavelli, 70.

3. Machiavelli, 23.

extreme degrees. Extreme compassion may elicit positive social responses in some cases, and extreme brutality may yield propitious outcomes in others. As Aristotle remarks, it is the legislator's duty to intervene with "equity", or "decency", when the implementation of imperfect laws does not align with their universal intent in certain cases.⁴ The need for equity is arguably more pronounced during the founding process, for the founder—acting as temporary arbiter and lawgiver—has no recourse to formal, or even imperfect, laws. For Lawrence, such discretionary measures include ad hoc courts or unilateral judgements. While Moses is typically the channel through which God implements His laws, he too dispenses justice unilaterally after the Golden Calf apostasy.

Only an outsider can lucidly navigate between the extremes of leniency and truculence, for only his judgement is undiluted by the factional hostilities raging inside the incipient nation. This chapter will compare and contrast the role both leaders' outsider statuses play in fostering nationalist sentiments and ethnic cohesion amongst their respective peoples. In doing so, it will explore how this status interplays with their role as founder and will consider how cruelty and compassion are effectively (or detrimentally) employed in the context of arbitration.

Justice, Executions, and Impartiality

Often, cruelty is obliged by the bestial circumstances of war. When weaponized as a deterrent against tribal infighting, its application risks invoking yet more factional tumult. It is for this reason that, throughout his campaigns in the Middle East, Lawrence is regularly forced to act both as a mediator and an executioner—two duties which Moses must equally assume. One

4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 1137b.

particular example stands out. In the midst of the Hejaz campaign, as Lawrence's company is traversing Wadi Kitan, one of the Ageyl men (a central Arabian tribe) is murdered by a Moor. After the tribal leaders convene in an ad hoc trial and extract the accused's confession of guilt, the Ageyl demand *lex talionis*. Knowing well that the execution could not be performed by another Ageyl without the Moroccans among his company retaliating, Lawrence elects himself as executioner. His lack of kinship ties to either group allows a civil conclusion to the dispute without invoking further hostilities.⁵ Machiavelli stresses the usefulness of executions in sustaining order and averting inner discord, noting that such punishments merely harm the individual transgressor as opposed to the community as a whole. Without executions, Machiavelli suggests that the consequent discord can endanger community cohesion to a far greater extent than the individual punishment ever could.⁶ By stepping in as executioner, Lawrence purges the execution of the potent retributive symbolism it would have otherwise born. Hence, the act of punishing ceases to be a vehicle of tribal retaliation. It instead stands as a beacon of Arab justice: an ideal to which all Arabs, no matter their sect or family, must comply. Lawrence's outsider status helps substantiate his impartiality in the affair, further portraying this indiscriminating form of justice as a fair and desirable alternative to tribal retaliation. In this way, the execution implicitly fosters cohesion to the Arab cause—a cause wherein all Arabs are treated equally before the law (as dictated by the company's leaders), even in the absence of formal legal institutions.

5. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 181.

6. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 70.

In Exodus, however, collective punishments are favoured by God. When He dispenses divine justice, He seldom differentiates between the sins of the person and the sins of the people, meaning that the recalcitrance of one may incur the smiting of many innocents. As God unleashes His tenth plague and kills every firstborn in Egypt (with the exception of those wary Hebrews who heed God's instructions on how to protect their families against it), retribution for His people's oppression is exacted at a monumental level. Evidently, most of the firstborn children to be smitten had no hand in subjugating the Israelites, and other Egyptians who may have defied Pharaoh's draconian rule and infanticide decree are presumably stricken down by God as well. While not "personally just", this notion of "political justice" proceeds from the assumption that "communities suffer as one".⁷ In this view, then, to dispense justice upon the individual transgressor would be to treat the person as alienable from the community. While all the Egyptians are affected, this plague serves as a lesson specifically for Pharaoh: not even he, a god in the minds of the Egyptians, is invulnerable to His wrath. In this way, the plague is pedagogical in addition to being a form of retribution.⁸ God's proclivity for sweeping, fatal punishments leaves Moses with the difficult task of adapting these collective punishments in such a way as to not eradicate the ineffaceably sinful Children of Israel. This proves especially challenging since "there can be no repentance without renewal and no renewal without survival".⁹ Following the Golden Calf apostasy—lest God, in His fury, abandon, or perhaps

7. Kass, *Founding God's Nation*, 158.

8. Kass, 135.

9. Wildavsky, *Moses as Political Leader*, 127.

annihilate, the Children of Israel—Moses must unilaterally administer a punishment that will simultaneously appease God, ensure the survival and continued faith of the Israelites, and discourage recidivism. The ensuing mass execution Moses orders as a fitting punishment is the second time he kills without divine authority—the first being his slaying of the Egyptian slave master, as briefly discussed in the previous chapter. This initial venture in dispensing justice results in the Israelites rejecting his arbitration.¹⁰

Unlike Lawrence, Moses' lack of apparent kinship ties to the Israelites in this initial instance likely delegitimizes his status as an ad hoc arbiter. However, when Lawrence performs his first execution, his lack of kinship ties to the offender and victim is perceived as a *sine qua non* of impartiality. Why the discrepancy? Lawrence has authority when he executes the Moor, whereas Moses has none when he murders the slave master. Hence, when Moses subsequently intervenes in a brawl between two Israelites, one of them questions what business he has in the dispute: “Who set you as a man prince and judge over us? Is it to kill me that you mean as you killed the Egyptian?”¹¹ The diction in this retort is relevant, as the quarrelling Israelite accuses Moses of *killing* the Egyptian as opposed to *lawfully* or *justly executing* him. Equating his slaying of the Egyptian with murder—no matter his emancipatory intentions—is understandable since, in the eyes of the Hebrews, Moses shares no apparent familial ties with his oppressed people. Having been reared in the royal family and ensconced in a life of luxury and affluence, Moses cannot relate socioeconomically to his people; he is as different from them as can be. Even given this privileged status, he does not appear to have any authority over civil matters in

10. Wildavsky, 117.

11. Exod. 2:14 (NRSV).

Egypt. This is evidenced by the fact that Moses does not simply order the slave master to refrain from thrashing the Hebrew, as a concerned Egyptian prince presumably would; he must instead violently intervene.¹² Thus, despite his royal upbringing, Moses does not yet have the authority required to be a legitimate arbiter and thus founder of the nation of Israel.

While their own slavishness may hinder the Israelites from pursuing nationhood in this pre-deliverance phase of Exodus, their initial repudiation of Moses as a “man prince and judge” implicitly illustrates that they are capable of discerning and adhering to just, divine rule—or at least denouncing tyrannical rule. From a Rousseauian perspective, they understand that “force does not make right”, as they do not extol Moses as a great emancipator merely due to the fact that he is brazen enough to slay a slave master. Although they are bound in servitude, they refuse to willfully endorse any self-ascribed savior with the power to liberate them, for as Rousseau contends, “to yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will”.¹³ Early on, the Israelites evince a predisposition for just, divine rule over Pharaoh’s tyranny. When Pharaoh orders the Hebrew midwives to dispose of the male infants, Shiphrah and Puah blatantly defy his command on account of their fear of God. Pharaoh’s infanticide decree, however, precedes the theophany at Mount Horeb. Since the Israelites have yet to witness the wonders and horrors of YHWH, this alleged “fear of God” is likely a “generic fear or reverence for the divine in general—a natural piety—that restrains them”.¹⁴ This natural piety is conceivably one reason why God finally judges his people as worthy of deliverance and elects Moses as their deliverer.

12. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 53.

13. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract,” in *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Two Discourses & the Social Contract*, ed. and trans. John T. Scott (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 167.

After God equips Moses with several divine portents, the Israelites gradually begin to acknowledge Moses' sacred authority as prophet. Clearly then, he has *earned* their faith through the execution of the ten plagues. However, without repeated affirmations that God has not abandoned them in the wilderness, the Israelites grow riotous. Although they may possess a “natural piety” which the Egyptians apparently lack, that piety is capricious, and Moses bears the onus of constantly reinforce it. The Israelites' conditional faith in Moses—a faith that is sustained insofar as he is capable of performing miracles—makes them slavish. Lest he recreate the conditions of servility to which they were accustomed in Egypt, Moses must join faith with a love of the nation to render the former unconditional. The next chapter will explain how this is achieved using the Battle of Rephidim as a case study.

Moses' forty-day absence on Mount Horeb tests his people's fickle piety, as they are left without divine affirmations of God's presence. The ensuing apostasy convinces God that they are unworthy of holy nationhood, and Moses must therefore intervene to reassert their collective faith in Him. He must once again kill without authority. At this climactic moment in Exodus, God is poised to decimate the Israelites, but Moses' nimble diplomacy dissuades Him. Instead, Moses descends Mount Horeb and orchestrates a quasi-collective punishment—one that will discourage recidivism, restore collective obedience to God, and most importantly, ensure the survival of the burgeoning nation. He orders, “Put every man his sword on his thigh, and cross over and back from the gate in the camp, and each man kill his brother and each man his fellow and each man his kin”.¹⁵ Although Moses claims that God had requested this specific

14. Kass, *Founding God's Nation*, 32.

15. Exod. 32:27-28 (NRSV).

punishment, his prior conversation with Him on Mount Horeb involves no such discussion, suggesting that Moses here is spuriously assigning himself divine authority where none exists to enact a mass execution. The punishment is collective in that a supposed three thousand Israelites are executed. Hebrew scholar Robert Alter insists, however, that rather than an “indiscriminate massacre”, this mass execution is a targeted “assault on the ringleaders” of the apostasy.¹⁶ While this constitutes a departure from the true collective punishments favoured by God in the earlier chapters of Exodus, the pitting of brother against brother effectively subordinates one’s kinship ties to one’s devotion to God. This execution equally shows God that Moses’ love for Him surpasses his love for his brothers.¹⁷ Thus, fidelity to the Israelites’ cause of divine nationhood is restored, and the slavishness which had impelled them to revere a specious idol is, for the moment, quelled. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the inauguration of holy traditions and festivals as well as the establishment of several rules and directives will further push the Israelites to assume a more active role in their pursuit of nationhood; their salvation will be placed in their own hands, discouraging the passive and slavish expectation of God’s protection.

Lawrence too must prove himself before earning the authority needed to be an effective arbiter. He achieves this through his abiding dedication to the Arab cause, his endurance and out-performance of his peers on the battlefield, and of course, his military victories. As Machiavelli argues, “nothing brings a prince more prestige than great campaigns and striking demonstrations of his personal abilities”.¹⁸ Lawrence’s audacious rescue of Gasim, his proficiency at camel

16. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 499.

17. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 92.

18. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 94.

riding, his successful capture of Aqaba, and his apparent imperviousness to the hostile desert environment, inter alia, portray him as a strong asset to the revolt. Not only this, his impartiality in dealing with tribal disputes paints him as a trusted ally—not to any one particular tribe, but to the Arab cause as a whole. At the onset of the war, the Arabs evince much reluctance to forge an enduring allegiance with the British. While elated to have their military support, the Arabs are initially leery of their new allies' colonial intentions given the disproportionality of their forces,¹⁹ and such suspicion is continually voiced by King Hussein. Lawrence, however, distances himself from the British military bureaucracy, whom Lawrence later comes to refer as his “familiar vermin”.²⁰ His disdain for the latter is evidenced, among countless other examples, by his incessant challenging of Colonel Holdich's (Captain Clayton's successor in the Intelligence Section at Cairo) administrative competence.²¹ Lawrence's disillusionment with the British military bureaucracy, while not explicitly clear to the Arabs, is inferred by his constant presence in the Arabs' company and his reluctance to return to headquarters in Cairo. He goes above and beyond to remain on the front lines with his troops, even when no other British officers are as involved as he is in Arab field operations. While Lawrence would have a more affable and productive relationship with Allenby, his distance from British military authorities paints him more as an Arab nationalist than a British colonialist, and thereby a more credible arbiter. To gain trust as arbiter, then, the founder must be an outsider to both his people and his superior(s).

19. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 99.

20. Lawrence, 318.

21. Lawrence, 62-63.

As intermediaries between a burgeoning nation and God and the British military, respectively, Moses and Lawrence must exude a certain detachment from both sides in order to buttress their credibility. They cannot be so integrated with their peoples to arouse suspicions of bias when ordering executions or dispensing justice, and they cannot be so cooperative with the overarching delivering force (God or the British) to alienate themselves from the nationalist cause; a delicate balance must be struck. Lawrence strikes this balance by consistently challenging the British military bureaucracy so as to distance—although not divorce—himself therefrom, and by assimilating himself among the Arabs to a cautious degree such that he does not become entangled in their tribal politics. Similarly, Moses strikes this balance by consistently challenging God’s intentions all while regularly reaffirming his allegiance to Him, and by heeding the Israelites’ concerns without stooping to their level of irreverence or commiserating with them in their fickle faith. Sustaining such a prudent diplomacy is a crucial task of the founder, for identifying too closely with one side may alienate the other, and both sides are essential to ensuring deliverance and pursuing nationhood. If Moses, for instance, were to side entirely with God in the wake of the apostasy, the Israelites would conceivably be purged from the Earth. If he were to, conversely, side entirely with the Israelites and pardon such an unholy act without any repercussions, God’s trust in Moses would surely dissipate, and his people would likely suffer a similar fate. Parallel arguments can be made regarding Lawrence and his proportionate affiliation with both the military bureaucracy and the Arab rebels.

Seeking a Mean between Cruelty and Compassion

In the above section, we have learned that the founder is simultaneously a lawgiver and an executor of laws. Given the lawless conditions of deliverance, the founder must create provisional laws using his superior discretion, uninfluenced by the tribal rivalries besetting his

people. Capitalizing on the impartiality his people tend to impute to his outsider status, he must implement these laws as well. While upholding provisional laws is essential for quelling internal feuding and mutiny, it also helps the people envisage a lawful nation and inculcate a love for the latter. If the people is simply taught to abide by laws through fear of punishments, they will only endorse the nation by necessity instead of by independent will. In this case, they remain servile. The founder thus has the difficult task of inciting in his people a genuine *desire* for nationhood, and with it, the will to uphold its laws. This, however, will be the subject of the next chapter.

Once the founder has strategically positioned himself as intermediary in such a way as to optimize his influence and legitimacy as arbiter, a new balancing act must be executed between treating one's followers and enemies callously or leniently. Machiavelli, famously positing that it is far better to be feared than loved if one cannot be both, suggests that “[a prince] need not worry about having a reputation for cruelty; because, without such a reputation, no army was ever kept united and disciplined.”²² Indeed, this proposition seems to ring true with Lawrence, who by fostering an austere and at times masochistic esprit de corps, manages to inculcate fervent allegiance and discipline among his recruits.²³ However, lest the barbarity of war shroud the pursuit of the greater Arab cause, Lawrence is diligent to avoid overly harsh punishments for his own men as well as the sadistic treatment of enemy prisoners of war (POWs). Whereas the Turks regularly execute their POWs, Lawrence and Feisal make efforts to treat them with dignity.²⁴ In extreme circumstances, however, barbarity is justified if it is done to protect

22. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 72.

23. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 466.

24. Lawrence, 103.

Lawrence's company. For instance, when his men encounter a Circassian at Khau, they are unsure as to what should be made of the stranger. If they let him go free, he would perhaps alert his village and send horsemen after Lawrence, and if they fettered him there, he would surely die of thirst. In Lawrence's eyes, "to kill him seemed unimaginative: not worthy of a hundred men".²⁵ As the least cruel alternative, then, they opt to stab the Circassian's feet, forcing him to crawl to the nearest railway for help and thereby afford Lawrence's company time to flee before any horsemen can reach them.

Lawrence is also consistently the first to discourage or mitigate the more inhuman punishments administered by other rebel leaders. When Awad and Mahmas—two of his bodyguards—engage one another in a knife fight, they are subsequently punished for the transgression. Lawrence, however, intervenes prematurely during the flogging, for "the Zaagi's shrill whip-strokes were too cruel for [his] taught imagination".²⁶ In other instances, Lawrence's restraint and self-control serve as an example to his at times more reprobate Arab troops. After mining a train from Mudowwara Station and prevailing in the ensuing skirmish with Turkish soldiers, Lawrence's men are seized by an animalistic hysteria. In their pillaging frenzy, Lawrence describes how they "[go] raving mad [and rush] about at top speed bareheaded and half-naked, screaming, shooting into the air, clawing one another nail and fist, while they burst open trucks [...] smashing what they [do] not want".²⁷ Far from the sober asceticism Lawrence

25. Lawrence, 292.

26. Lawrence, 486.

27. Lawrence, 369.

promotes among his personal guard, these belligerents degenerate into the most ravenous states. Amid the ferment, Lawrence tends to those frightened civilians that had been on the train, aiding whomever he can.

The stark contrast between the rabid Arab troops and the more level-headed Lawrence further contributes to his perceived dignity and suitability as arbiter. Who among his delirious company could better navigate right from wrong, benevolence from sin, in such heated moments of the revolt? Once again, he is here distancing himself from the vulgar behaviour of his people so as to demonstrate discipline and adherence to the cause over material gain—much like how Moses forces the Israelites to consume the ashes of the Golden Calf they had crafted out of the gold of which they despoiled Egypt in order to reaffirm their allegiance to God.²⁸ Clearly then, Lawrence is at once a rally cry to war and the voice of humanity restraining excess violence: another duality that characterizes the successful founder. He must be severe enough to promote steadfast devotion to the cause, but equally demonstrate compassion so as to not allow his men's animalistic tendencies to eclipse said devotion. His men presumably learn from this experience since Lawrence never thereafter reports such frenzied pillaging.

Moses too acts as both a rally cry and a voice of humanity, for he must repeatedly beseech God to treat the Israelites mercifully despite their incessant relapses into sin all while being cruel enough in punishment to discourage such relapses and prioritize the pursuit of divine nationhood over familial bonds. Much like the hedonistic behaviour of the Arabs described above, the Israelites show their turpitude and lack of discipline in the wilderness even when God satisfies their needs. When He forbids the gathering of bread the morning after God provides it in

28. Exod. 32:20 (NRSV).

the Wilderness of Sin, for instance, those who fail to heed His directions find the bread they had left over decaying and worm-ridden.²⁹ This test God puts to His people is designed to expose their enduring recalcitrance even in the face of abundance, and in doing so, demonstrate to them that insubordination to His will is met with consequences.³⁰ Moses' compliance with God's instructions here demonstrates a self-control parallel to that of Lawrence, as he is not beholden to the carnal temptations that afflict his people. Once again, this fortifies his legitimacy as arbiter and later executioner, for he portrays himself as far less corruptible than the Israelites.

While Lawrence acts as a role model for compassion, he does not understate the cathartic power of exacting retribution. Indeed, a disciplined disdain for the enemy may catalyze rather than inhibit devotion to a nationalist cause. This evokes the notion of "properly directed hatred": a concept propaganda scholar Thomas P. Doherty explores in his study of the Office of War Information's (OWI) depiction of Axis soldiers and leaders in the Second World War. Lest further social and cultural schisms threaten the prospect of post-war peace, the OWI exhorted Hollywood to portray the enemy not as an entire people or an assemblage of soldiers, but rather as the overarching ideology and militaristic system of the Axis.³¹ The mentality behind this "properly directed hatred" was to pave the way for cultural reconciliation and avoid the kind of alienation from the global community which had a hand in propelling Germany toward Nazism in the first place. As the outsider arbiter, Lawrence grasps the importance of treating his enemies

29. Exod. 16:19-20.

30. Alter. *Five Books of Moses*, 408-409.

31. Thomas P. Doherty, "Properly Directed Hatred," in *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 122-124.

with dignity lest they retaliate once hostilities have formally ceased. He does not discriminate between sects or depict the Turks as a necessarily *evil* people, and his restraint in this regard makes the prospect of a unified Arab nationality and a harmonious coexistence with the Turks all the more viable. The brutality of war may nonetheless tempt the founder to endorse the demonization, torture, or senseless massacre of enemy soldiers when their actions are too egregious to go unavenged. As the next example will show, he should still resist this temptation, as the result of profligate retribution in such a case may in fact be detrimental to group cohesion.

After witnessing the grisly scene of slain women and children littered throughout Tafas (Sheik Tallal el Hareidhin's village), Lawrence's men are left aghast and vindictive. Incensed by the devastation, Tallal charges temerarily toward the retreating Turks and is shot dead. Lawrence goes on to recount the morbid details of their ensuing slaughter of the Turks: "we killed and killed, even blowing in the heads of the fallen and of the animals; as though their death and running blood could slake our agony".³² Once the voice of humanity, Lawrence here allows revenge to seize his men as he orders the total annihilation of Tafas' raiders and the unconditional execution of any prisoners. While one could argue that the unbridled violence is a necessary evil to consolidate common antipathy for the enemy, Lawrence admits that "sleeping clan-jealousies [awaken] in the blood thirst of the afternoon of killing".³³

Although the cathartic release that accompanies a people's indulgence in the suffering of their enemies may, at first glance, seem as a way of unifying them through their scorn, excessive retributive measures may forsake the core values that differentiate that people from their

32. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 633.

33. Lawrence, 634.

enemies. At the onset of the revolt, the Arab rebels can rightfully boast their superior morals on the battlefield, for the Turks consistently violate three sacred rules of Arab warfare: that “women [are] inviolable”, that “the lives and honor of children too young to fight with men [are] to be spared”, and that “property impossible to carry off should be left undamaged”.³⁴ While their senseless massacre of the Turks near Tafas may not violate these specific tenets, their conduct reveals the Arabs to be more akin to the rapacious Turks than they would like to admit. It illustrates that the Arabs have more in common with the enemy than perhaps even each other, which in turn jeopardizes their provisional unity. Although the exacting of retribution may be an ineluctable part of war, Lawrence learns from this experience not to allow the pursuit thereof to contravene the values and principles that hold his patchwork of quarrelling tribes together. As the outsider arbiter and voice of humanity, it is in these fierce moments that Lawrence must allay his people’s appetite for revenge.

In Exodus, the Israelites are seldom given a chance themselves to exact retribution against their oppressors, for the plagues on Egypt are inflicted by God. The most satisfying instance of retribution is perhaps when God engulfs their Egyptian pursuers in the Sea of Reeds, since—aligning with God’s penchant for *lex talionis*—the drowning of Egyptians serves as fitting poetic justice for the earlier systematic drowning of male Hebrew infants in the Nile.³⁵ Before leaving Egypt, however, God directs the Israelites to despoil the land of its gold and jewelry, which directly involves them in the act of retribution. Unlike the Arabs’ profligate looting, however, this mass seizure of Egyptian wealth is divinely ordained and executed strictly

34. Lawrence, 93.

35. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 395.

under Moses' purview.³⁶ It is likely no coincidence that the despoiling occurs in the immediate aftermath of the tenth plague—the plague in which the Israelites are forced to follow God's instructions in order to protect their firstborns from the sweeping death consuming Egypt. From this they learn the fatal consequences of not strictly abiding by His word, and hence, there is no excess ravaging of Egypt before their departure. Their strict abidance by Moses' instructions implies that they show restraint when despoiling the land despite now having God's infinite might on their side. Although their obedience will, as previously discussed, falter in the wilderness, the recency of the last plague likely frightens the Israelites into stern observance of His divine commands. Thus, Moses allows his people to directly participate in their retribution without relegating them to the impiety and cupidity of their Egyptian overlords. Avoiding Lawrence's folly in Tafas, Moses is able to maintain group cohesion (for the most part) and set his people apart from and morally above their former Egyptian overlords.

The mean between cruelty and compassion is difficult to discern, especially for those entrenched in their enmity for their foes. Thus, the outsider arbiter—comparatively impervious to the clannish rivalries and resentments which tend to grip his people—must navigate between these two extremes. He must know how to wield cruelty in punishment to instill adherence to the greater cause of deliverance and nationhood, and he must equally know how to wield compassion and avoid gratuitous brutality to ensure his people's thirst for revenge does not obscure their pursuit of this cause or allow them to become as morally depraved as their enemies. As impartial, judicious arbiters, both Moses and Lawrence manage to keep their peoples fixated on this cause and sustain a—albeit imperfect—unity while founding their nations. Not only

36. Exod. 12:35-37 (NRSV).

arbiters who execute the laws, they are lawgivers who create the provisional laws that span deliverance. The laws and judgements dealt by the founder are often extreme, as the heightened disarray that follows emancipation or sedition obliges extreme measures to keep the people in line. While these laws must stave off internal unrest, they must not be so draconian as to keep the people servile or so passive as to invite anarchy. As an outsider, the founder's esoteric vision and approach to justice is thus necessary for finding a mean.

Chapter III

WAR BEGETS THE NATION

A nation is born in blood and purchases with blood its right to stand in the ranks with other nations.¹

—Steven Pressfield

In the Bible, blood is portrayed as a thematic dichotomy. Depending on how it is shed and ritualized, blood may embody “the source and substance of life, an apotropaic and redemptive agent, [or] the token of violence and death”.² What are readers to make of such inconsonant symbolism? Let us first consider blood as a token of violence and death. Indeed, when men are pit against one another by God, blood is drawn, and death naturally ensues. When man disobeys God, He is equally inclined to induce mass bloodshed. The smiting of the Egyptians and the mass execution at Horeb attest to this. Although blood is typically shed through acts of mass violence in Exodus, it is subsequently employed in a ritualistic capacity to regain God’s favor. For instance, to force the Israelites to confront their lingering speculations with respect to God’s supremacy in the wake of the first nine plagues, He instructs them to smear the blood of slaughtered sheep on their doorposts lest they show themselves to be as recalcitrant as their doomed Egyptian overlords. Following the Golden Calf ordeal, blood is used in a similar way. As the Israelites are founding their priestly system to God’s meticulous specifications, He commands Moses to slaughter a ram and apply its blood, which is perceived as a purifying agent,³ to Aaron’s (the apostasy’s ringleader) and his sons’ right earlobes to ordain them as priests. This ritualistically conveys their penitence and renewed reverence of God. Thus, while

1. Stephen Pressfield, *The Lion’s Gate: On the Front Lines of the Six Day War* (New York: Penguin Group, 2015).

2. Alter, *Five Books of Moses*, 348.

3. Alter, 481.

God draws blood as punishment for acts of sacrilege, He equally treats it as a symbol of redemption with which the perpetrators of these acts may be forgiven.

What does this thematic dichotomy of blood have to do with the pursuit of nationhood? For both the Israelites and the Arabs, the experience of war and the sacrifices it obliges serve a pedagogical function: to show that conflict and bloodshed are both ineluctable and indispensable prerequisites of nationhood. War begets the nation. While bloodshed may initially emblemize death and restitution, its memorialization in the post-war period betokens a kind of renewal—the death of a shapeless people and the subsequent birth of a nation. While shedding the blood of its own—whether this be in the form of executions, sacrifices of its cattle, or combat casualties—the people sheds with it its slavishness. It is for this reason that God so emphatically consecrates the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. He commands Moses and his people to celebrate this day “through [their] generations, an everlasting statute”.⁴ The lessons learned during deliverance are thereby enshrined through tradition and immortalized via the nation’s founding. This is the founder’s chief responsibility: to ensure that his people’s experience of war indelibly ingrains the values that will come to undergird the nation. He must ensure that the death of the people will sustain the life of the nation. God institutes traditions, rituals, and festivals to perpetuate these values. While Lawrence does not reimagine his people’s traditions and religious beliefs as God does, he imparts to them a newfound national ideology—one that beholds the Arabs as a cohesive nation capable of securing its own deliverance under the guidance of a judicious founder.

4. Exod. 12:17-18 (NRSV).

The last two chapters have been centered on the founder himself, describing his idiosyncrasies, his aspirations, and his ethos. However, the nation's own identity and the manner in which the founder cultivates the latter through war has been largely absent in these discussions. Being a sine qua non of nationhood, identity formation will be the focus of this chapter, as its challenges and opportunities are too complex to merit a cursory glance. Firstly, this chapter will explore how an inchoate nation initially emerges through the identification of a common enemy. As this chapter will show, identifying oneself by contrast to one's enemy is initially necessary so that the oppressed people may recognize their distinctness. However, it is insufficient for developing a fully-fledged national identity. If it were sufficient, the nation could not exist without being continuously at war with that enemy. While the nation is founded on blood, it is not necessarily sustained by it. Rather, this chapter will argue that the enemy initially serves as a model of what not to emulate—an antipode of the nation to be. By distancing itself morally from that enemy, the fledgling nation is able to renounce its servility thereto on moral grounds. Once this is achieved—marking the completion of deliverance—it may pursue nationhood independently of that enemy. Finally, this chapter will explain why a people's direct involvement in its own deliverance is key to founding a cohesive nation, and it will elucidate the founder's role in establishing a civil religion to this end.

Us and Them: Exposing the Ungodly Enemy

During the early phases of deliverance, the notion of one's own nation is educed through what one is not—and one is not one's enemies. In the context of war, the most evident commonality between a patchwork of Arab tribes or a caste of Hebrew slaves is their shared oppressor. For the Arabs, this is the Ottoman Empire. Given their inveterate aversion to centralized rule and oppression, the Arabs naturally sought autonomy therefrom. As Lawrence

remarks, “they were fighting to get rid of Empire, not to win it.”⁵ Anticipating a political future in which Arab tribes could coexist independently of the Turks, European imperial powers, and other Arab tribes, they lacked interest in a pan-Arab state. A loose, uncoordinated contingent of Arab troops, however, would not fight and die as one. Without a national identity binding them together, no Arab man would willingly put his own life at risk for another tribe’s man. Thus, they would not coalesce under the Arab cause.

This is not to say that the Arab tribes had no unifying features. They shared a common language—albeit with distinct regional dialects—and a common geographic heritage. While Lawrence portrays them as a “manufactured people”,⁶ suggesting significant cultural heterogeneity, he nevertheless describes them using sweeping generalizations throughout *Seven Pillars*. Overall, he characterizes them as a particularly reverent, at times doctrinaire, people. Moreover, he depicts the Arabs as “great in religious thought, reasonably industrious, [and] solvent rather than dominant in character”.⁷ As this chapter will later show, the latter quality renders them quite amenable to civil religion.

While diverse, the Arab tribes clearly have much in common. These existing commonalities, however, are insufficient to spur the nationalist fervor needed to launch the Arab cause. Thus, at the onset of the revolt, several Arab leaders take preliminary steps to cultivate their germinal identity, initially shrouded by tribal jealousies. This is achieved by exposing the spurious piety of their enemies. Hussein, who openly denounces the Turks as “godless

5. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 100.

6. Lawrence, 33.

7. Lawrence, 57.

transgressors of their creed”,⁸ for instance, impugns their alleged pursuit of Jihad on account of their alliance with Germany, a Christian power. In many cases, the Turks themselves expose their degenerate morals. Before Feisal had made his secessionist intentions known, Jemal Pasha—one of the Three Pashas at the head of the Ottoman Empire—would invite him to spectate the callous executions of Feisal’s fellow Arabs.⁹ Indeed, the Turks had not attempted to conceal their brutality; they flaunted it, which counterintuitively stoked the fires of rebellion.

When Lawrence finally arrives in Arabia, he helps to further demonize the Turks by exposing them as wicked and undisciplined on the battlefield in comparison with the Arab fighters. As explained in the previous chapter, he imposes a stern moral code upon his men and attempts to show the enemy mercy wherever possible—the massacre of Tafas’ raiders being the only truly egregious exception. Thus, the Arabs are able to take pride in their superior morals vis-à-vis the Turks, who are prone to kill indiscriminately, execute prisoners, and routinely violate the sacred tenets of Islam. In some instances, however, their learned discipline is overtaken by their hedonistic impulses—the frenzied pillaging after mining the train from Mudowwara station being a prime example,¹⁰ as outlined in the last chapter. To mollify these impulses, Lawrence conducts himself virtuously in moments of agitation, thereby displaying to the Arabs how they ought to behave in war—a leader by example. In this way, he assumes the pedagogical function of inculcating morals that distinguish the Arabs from the “godless” Turks.

8. Lawrence, 52.

9. Lawrence, 50-52.

10. Lawrence, 369-370.

Similarly, the Israelites first learn to identify themselves in opposition to their oppressors. Given the rigid social stratification of ancient Egypt and the absolutism of Pharaoh's rule, their subordinate status in this oppressive regime overshadows their common ancestry. That is, they are slaves before they are descendants of Jacob. However, Moses is able to see through this Egyptian caste system—be it through compassion or ignorance—and behold the man in the slave. During the flogging Moses witnesses as prince of Egypt, for example, he “sees before him not so much slave master smiting slave but (Egyptian) *man* smiting (Hebrew) *man*”.¹¹ He discerns humanity where the Egyptian overlords see none.

As God hardens Pharaoh's heart and impels his obstinate refusal to release the Israelites, He exposes Pharaoh as both a headstrong fool and a depraved madman. Who else would have the audacity to challenge a supernatural force that has baffled Egypt's most renowned soothsayers at the expense of collapsing Egyptian society? Moses' role in this standoff against Pharaoh is to unmask the impotence of the Egyptian gods as well as Pharaoh's destructive hubris. Much like how Lawrence and the Arab leaders expose the ungodliness of the Turks, Moses reveals the “lack of goodness in Egypt's ‘gods’ [...] and especially the maleficent character of Pharaonic rule”.¹² But how do the plagues accomplish this? The Egyptian pantheon comprises several deities tied to some element of nature. Such “nature gods” include the sun god (Ra), the gods of the Nile (Khnum and Hapi), and a myriad of others. Acting as the divine channel between man and the gods, Pharaoh himself is venerated as a god as well. The plagues directly assail these deities by overtaking nature.¹³ The first plague, for instance, turns the Nile

11. Kass, *Founding God's Nation*, 49

12. Kass, 156.

into blood and kills its aquatic life. The ninth plague challenges Ra, perceived as one of Egypt's most powerful deities, by plunging Egypt into a three-day darkness. Even worse, Pharaoh's consistent reneging on his promises to release the Israelites only to have his empire repeatedly desolated reveals his apathy toward the wellbeing of Egypt; he is prepared to watch his empire crumble before conceding to the Israelites.

What is perhaps most unique about the plagues is their discriminatory nature. Whereas natural disasters believed to have been incurred by the Egyptian gods affect the Egyptians indiscriminately, the God of Israel's wrath exhibits a certain selectivity. God is capable of targeting his foes all while sparing the residents of Goshen.¹⁴ This definitively establishes the Israelites as God's "chosen people"—an epithet which the Israelites *passively* accept since, for the first nine plagues, God obliges no direct involvement from the Israelites in their own manumission or the pursuit of holy nationhood. Thereafter, however, they will have to *earn* God's benediction through their obedience and reverence.

Another preternatural feature of these plagues is their cyclical character. The first nine plagues display a certain regularity, unlike other natural disasters. Kass explains:

The first nine [plagues] can be divided into three cycles of three plagues each, based upon a tripartite literary form used in the preliminaries. For the first plague in each cycle (numbers 1, 4, and 7: blood, flies, and hail), Moses is told to deliver a warning to Pharaoh the next morning, when he comes down to the Nile River to bathe. For the second plague in each cycle (numbers 2, 5, and 8: frogs, cattle plague, and locusts), he is told to warn Pharaoh in his palace. For the third plague in each cycle (3, 6, and 9: gnats, boils, and darkness), the blow comes with no prior warning. As Nahum Sarna suggests, "the controlling purpose behind this literary architecture is to emphasize the idea that the nine plagues are not natural vicissitudes of nature; although they are natural disasters, they are the deliberate and purposeful acts of divine will—their intent being retributive, coercive and educative."¹⁵

13. Kass, 156.

The plagues are thereby contravening the assumed omnipotence of the Egyptian pantheon. The latter could not possibly recreate these phenomena with such precise discrimination and regularity. Therefore, Egyptian society is left utterly defenseless before the God of Israel's might, and its own deities are exposed as false gods. This helps precipitate identity formation among the Hebrews, who as aforementioned, were a people characterized uniquely as slaves to Pharaoh. Their "chosenness" distinguishes them from their malignant and heretical Egyptian masters.

Civil Religion: An Education in Fighting As One

In the last section, we learned that both the Arabs and the Israelites first start to identify themselves in opposition to their oppressors. This in itself is a form of moral emancipation: they are denouncing the wickedness and impiety of their masters and beginning to think freely. While this is a necessary first step in forging a national identity, it only establishes what the nation *is not* as opposed to what it *is*. The burgeoning nation must next take deliverance and the pursuit of nationhood into its own hands to carve out its own identity. Lawrence and Moses cannot impose upon their peoples an identity, as this would render them ideologically passive, reverting them back to a state of servility. The adversity endured in the pursuit of nationhood forces the oppressed people to abnegate its passive victimhood and take nation-building into its own hands. In doing so, it enshrines values that compose good citizens of this new nation, such as courage on the battlefield and subordination of one's personal needs to the needs of the nation. When this is accomplished, there is no further need for the shrewd founder—hence, Moses gradually

14. Kass, 156.

15. Kass, 141-142.

divests himself from nation-building once the fundamental laws of Israel are securely erected, and Lawrence leaves Arabia shortly after the allied victory in Damascus. The forging of the national identity is thus an exercise in independence. The people can no longer continue to identify itself solely in opposition to its former master, as that would mean that its identity is already predetermined. As this section will show, forging one's own identity is only possible when the people develops a genuine desire to pursue nationhood, and is not simply pressured into nationhood by the founder. This is the ultimate purpose of civil religion in the founding of a new nation.

The biblical conception of national identity is gradually refined as one reads through the Books of Moses. Genesis, for instance, treats national identity as a mere “union of individuals and tribes”.¹⁶ As this broad definition is continuously distilled, it begins to focus on certain “ethical ideas and practices” in addition to “concrete responsibilities toward one another”.¹⁷ When God's chosen people are finally delivered from Egypt and shepherded into the wilderness, He tests their faith and suitability for holy nationhood. At this point, the Israelites' “chosenness” ceases to be an *inherited* feature; it becomes an *active process* of reaffirming their allegiance to God and their adherence to His commands. In other words, the Israelites grow to understand their chosen status as entailing a set of duties rather than privileges.¹⁸ Since nationhood is obliging their direct participation via these responsibilities, they are effectively being tasked with nation-building, and by extension, the forging of a national identity. Once the oppressed people

16. Mira Morgenstern, *Reframing Politics in the Hebrew Bible: A New Introduction with Readings* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2017), 173.

17. Morgenstern, 183.

18. Morgenstern, 179.

finally acknowledges and accepts these responsibilities, it has been sufficiently conditioned to pursue nationhood on its own.

Until then, however, the founder must ensure that deliverance and war fulfill their pedagogical functions in this conditioning, and guiding (though not imposing) the formation of a national identity is an integral part of this process. The first step is shedding one's slavishness, which is only truly accomplished when a people begins to take ownership over its deliverance. The next hurdle is arguably the most challenging: a people must actively *seek* nationhood and accept its accompanying responsibilities. The people must fight not only for their liberation from an oppressive regime, but also for their right to exist as a distinct nation. This step is especially difficult to navigate since the people's self-identification as a nation must naturally precede the desire to pursue nationhood politically and territorially. As previously discussed, most Arabs who take part in the revolt only participate on the exclusive terms of securing tribal autonomy rather than pan-Arab nationhood. This—in tandem with the imperial powers' wanton partitioning of the Middle East after the Turks' defeat—is likely the greatest impediment to the establishment of a pan-Arab state in the post-war period. Nevertheless, Lawrence is able to subtly implant the notion of a united Arab nation so as to rally different sects and tribes together against the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Lawrence succeeds in forging a national identity—albeit a transitory one—just as Moses does. How exactly is this accomplished? How does the founder entice his people to *want* nationhood and arouse the collective will to pursue it? He must institute a civil religion—one that consecrates service to the nation.

Before expounding on the relevance of this Rousseauian concept,¹⁹ it is worth discussing the social value of war in nation-building from a Machiavellian perspective. Denouncing the deployment of auxiliaries and mercenaries as a useless allocation of state resources given their

disloyalty, Machiavelli emphasizes the need to fill one's military ranks with one's own citizens. In his words, "no true victory is possible with alien arms".²⁰ Likewise, no true nation may be built from the outside. While the outsider founder is key in precipitating the formation of a national identity, this must ultimately be achieved by the people themselves. The founder is there to provide an esoteric outsider perspective to help them forge this identity, but not to force an identity upon them. They have to show that they *want* to be a free nation, beholden to no other. Although auxiliaries—such as the Indian contingents—are occasionally deployed alongside the Arab fighters in the revolt, Lawrence inspires the Arabs to wage their own war and curb their dependence on auxiliaries and the British navy. In the closing stages of the Syrian campaign, the Arab leaders are debating whether or not to sit idly by as Allenby's forces capture Deraa, effectively securing an imminent victory. Lawrence, however, is torn by this inaction. In his eyes, the Arabs "had joined the war to win freedom, and the recovery of their old capital by force of their own arms was the sign they would best understand".²¹ In other words, the Arabs would likely not perceive a British triumph over the Turks as an Arab victory—a victory that would hopefully come to lay the foundation for a true Arab nation. Feisal too recognizes the necessity of Arabs fighting their own battles. From the very beginning of the revolt, he seeks to make "his ancient race justify its renown by winning freedom with its own hands".²²

Likewise, God does not bestow upon His people all the necessary provisions for a comfortable life in the wilderness, despite manifestly possessing the powers to do so. Instead, He

19. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 263-272.

20. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 51-58.

21. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 624.

22. Lawrence, 216.

compels the Israelites to struggle—to deliver themselves. Only when the dearth of food and water becomes too dire does God save them. By holding His intervention in abeyance, He forces the Israelites to fend for themselves, and He equally leads them to fear the consequences of losing faith. It is easy to be reverent when God has granted one abundance and prosperity. In moments of utmost desperation, however, such reverence is put to the ultimate test. It is for this reason that God chooses not to smite the Amalekites at Rephidim as He did the Egyptians.

This Battle of Rephidim is especially significant, as it constitutes the first time that Israel fights for its own right to exist as a nation. As Kass notes, there are no panicked pleas for divine assistance in the moments leading up to the epic battle; Moses, “in a novel display of independent leadership”, immediately assigns Joshua as *de facto* commander of an *ad hoc* Israelite army, and Joshua acquiesces without demurrer.²³ This is in stark contrast with the Israelites’ previous encounter with the Egyptians at the Sea of Reeds, where in their characteristic helplessness, they do nothing but await God’s deliverance. In Rephidim, Moses retreats to a hilltop overlooking the battleground with Aaron and Hur, and conjuring the whole of his faith, raises his arms to bless his warriors with divine fortune. This apparently summons some indication of godly intervention: whenever his arms begin to descend, Amalek takes the upper hand, but when they are once again propped upright, Israel prevails. Kass, however, is not so hasty to confirm God’s intervention in this battle. In fact, God is not even mentioned during Exodus’ recounting of the skirmish until it finally concludes with Israel as the victor. As Kass suggests, Moses’ symbolic gesture of channeling divine power atop the hill may in fact

23. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 247.

function as a placebo, convincing the Israelites that God is once again fighting in their midst or conferring upon them the strength to vanquish their foes.²⁴

At any rate, it is not God who is ultimately heralded for defeating Amalek—it is Joshua who “disable[s] Amalek and its people by the edge of the sword”.²⁵ Here, Joshua is likely a proxy for the people of Israel. The victory at Rephidim can thereby be claimed by the Israelites as a national triumph wherein they learn to fight as one and risk their lives for the nation. What makes this victory possible, as Kass suggests, is trust in the Lord. This is not to say, however, that trust in Him engenders His divine salvation; rather, trust itself likely *constitutes* such salvation.²⁶ By believing God is with them, they summon the will to fight. This triumph is significant from a nation-building perspective since it teaches the Israelites to be courageous when defending the nation. When Moses later pits brother against brother after the Golden Calf apostasy, they also learn to put one’s love for the nation above one’s familial ties. When they begin to establish priestly rituals and ceremonies, they further learn the importance of being punctilious in their reverence of God and His holy nation. Thus, they learn to be better citizens in anticipation of nationhood.

Their battle also conveys a concomitant lesson regarding tribal rivalries. Amalek was the grandson of Esau, who in Genesis is revealed to harbor antipathy for his twin, Jacob, after he cheats Esau out of Isaac’s blessing. Despite Jacob and Esau being brothers, the Hebrew Bible treats the Israelites as the descendants of the former and not of the latter. Although Jacob and

24. Kass, 249-250.

25. Exod. 17:14 (NRSV).

26. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 253.

Esau eventually reconcile, the Amalekites' wanton onslaught on the Israelites suggests that the brothers' rivalry, dormant for generations, has once again erupted with a vengeance.²⁷ By leaving the Israelites to fend off this existential threat themselves, God plainly demonstrates that tribal rivalries are indeed capable of destroying a nation—even if they had formerly been quiescent—and places the onus of quelling them squarely on the Israelites. Thus, He compels His chosen people to either accept the responsibilities of nationhood or perish. It is trial by fire. In this case, the national threat is purely exogenous, as it does not involve repressing any internal strife. Nevertheless, the predicament forces Joshua and the Israelites to shelve their skepticism and place their trust in Moses. They thereby coalesce as a nation and readily defend their right to exist without awaiting God's rescue.

Although the Battle of Rephidim is apparently inevitable, the Israelites' readiness to fight and die for Israel instead of cowering behind God's might hints to the incipience of a civil religion. To *want* to pursue nationhood, the people must direct their reverence to the prospective nation. This is achieved through civil religion, which enshrines the nation's laws as sacred and inspires a certain deference to the role of the citizen. Rousseau distinguishes between three religions: one is "law-giving" and thereby conducive to nation-building (civil religion), and the other two are ultimately detrimental thereto. The "religion of man" features an inherent detachment from the state and its institutions; it solely entails the individual pursuit of the divine. While seemingly innocuous, this religion is injurious to nation-building in that its preoccupation with transcendence after death breeds apathy for temporal affairs. The "religion of the priest", Rousseau contends, is especially pernicious since it divides man's loyalty between the civil state

27. Kass, 245

and institutionalized worship. That is, it assigns men “two bodies of legislation, two leaders, two fatherlands, [and] subjects them to contradictory duties”.²⁸ For nationhood to be achieved, religion cannot be at odds with one’s devotion to the nation; their respective laws should be coextensive or at least complementary. Thus, Rousseau advocates a third, “law-giving” kind of religion: the “religion of the citizen”. This, he posits, conjoins “divine worship and the love of the laws, and since it makes the fatherland the object of the citizens’ worship, it teaches them that to serve the state is to serve its tutelary god”.²⁹

While the wielding of faith in the service of nation-building in Exodus and the Arab Revolt may not fit neatly within Rousseau’s specific definition of civil religion, it underlines the usefulness of civil religion as a broader concept in arousing devotion to the unborn nation. Even before the Israelites reach Canaan and formally constitute Israel, God instructs His people to institute festivals and rituals commemorating their divine journey. Through such memorialization, the founding of Israel becomes a central feature of their religion, and it is celebrated by subsequent generations so as to ineffaceably ingrain the lessons learned in this founding process. In this way the lessons of deliverance and nationhood are immortalized. It is for this reason that Moses has the Israelites so scrupulously adhere to God’s guidelines when constructing the Tabernacle and arranging the inaugural rituals to institute His priestly system. These formalities, together, enshrine the national narrative.

Lawrence too endeavours to exploit the Arabs’ aforementioned “solvent character” to institute a civil religion. Their religious zeal, he recognizes early on, can be harnessed and

28. Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, 267-268.

29. Rousseau, 267-268.

weaponized against the enemy. From the stringent moral codes he imposes on his personal guard to his austere (although not callous) implementation of Arab law and justice, he leads his people to accept Arab nationhood just as they accept Islam. As the war marches on, their “need to fight” effectively becomes a faith in its own right.³⁰ While their Turk masters had implanted in them the notion that “the interests of the sect were higher than those of patriotism”,³¹ Lawrence helps the Arabs unlearn this Turkish myth and convinces them that—on the contrary—the interests of the sect align with those of Arab nationhood.

Like Moses, Lawrence attempts to enshrine the Arabs’ national narrative. Knowing full well that the Western annals of the First World War would likely omit the historical details of the Arab Revolt, he takes it upon himself to diarize his experiences and record the pivotal events of the war on the Middle Eastern front. Not only acting as a soldier and de facto general, he serves as an embedded historian—a predictable consequence given his passion for history and archeology. Finally compiling his journal entries into *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence immortalizes the Arabs’ journey toward nationhood. Although the prospect of nationhood would swiftly crumble with the ensuing encroachment of imperial powers in post-war Arabia and the general lack of interest in a pan-Arab state, this ephemeral triumph would forever be commemorated as a united *Arab* victory—a nation which, with the guidance of its shrewd founder, delivered *itself*.

30. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, 29.

31. Lawrence, 44.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to shed light on who the founder is and how he founds his nation. It has shown that the founder is at once an outsider and an insider. He is a leader and a follower. He is an arbiter and a lawgiver. Moreover, he is a deliverer and one who inspires his people to deliver themselves. These qualities endow him with an esoteric vision that enables him to guide his people from servility to nationhood. It is a rare set of attributes which only those founders with an unflagging fortitude and a holistic understanding of their peoples' plight share. Moses and Lawrence are such founders, and they are therefore appropriate case studies for this thesis. While independent thinkers and leaders, they thoroughly integrate themselves with their peoples and commiserate with them. Initially a cultural outsider, each founder manages to assuage his people's circumspection and gain their trust. Lawrence is thereby able to exonerate himself from the colonial ambitions of the British, and Moses is able to foster in his people an increasingly unconditional faith in both God as their ultimate savior and Moses as His prophet. In this process of deliverance, the people learns those essential civic values that ready them for nationhood. They renounce their slavishness and affirm their devotion to the nation.

Can these lessons somehow illuminate and inform the founding of contemporary nations? Some may dismiss their application to the modern world as too anachronistic to prove useful. After all, the ancient Hebrew conception of God's nation differs starkly from the modern Western nation-state, mainly in that the latter is not a theocracy. In addition, contemporary nations look much different than those nations existing in the early Twentieth Century. To determine whether there is any use for these lessons in today's world, we must turn to Kass for insight. He suggests that a new form of servility is on the rise in the contemporary West: an emergent hedonism begotten by rapid technological innovation that keeps us "feasted in our

body but famished in soul”.¹ Consequently, he contends that our nations are quickly eroding before our very eyes. Recall from the introduction of this thesis that Rousseau regards Moses’ nation as one that is indefinitely transmitted from generation to generation. Kass imputes this “permanence” to good founding—that is, to the establishment of good, durable laws and morals.² With the recent propagation of individualism and atheism, Kass ultimately argues that bettering one’s own socioeconomic benefit in society and satiating one’s consumer wants has eclipsed one’s devotion and service to the nation. In the Hebrew Bible, the nation of Israel is able to avert this fate apparently because its “Law teaches service rather than servility or mastery, reverence rather than idolatry or insolence, aspiration to communal perfection rather than complacency or despair”.³

Lest our western nations succumb to civic apathy and deteriorate into servile states, it behooves us to closely examine Israel and the Arab nation. Why is Israel able to sustain itself in an everlasting covenant? Why does the Arab nation coalesce in war yet fail to produce a pan-Arab state at the end of the revolt? The lessons the founder imparts on his people are not to be taken for granted; they are a blueprint for creating and sustaining nations. In this respect, studies like these are indispensable to modern national life. Insofar as our nations continue to drift away from those universal values that had initially produced good, law-loving citizens, we will always have a reason to study the founder.

1. Kass, *Founding God’s Nation*, 602.

2. Kass, 601.

3. Kass, 603.

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