

Sp. 00 Eickler, Bib 7350

1967 11, 23 12

FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF JEWISH STUDIES / vol. I / 1967

THE JUDAEAN 'AM HA'AREŞ IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

SHEMARYAHU TALMON
JERUSALEM

'Am ha'areş (in the singular I) is found fifty-two times in biblical literature. It is a collective noun which refers exclusively to a group of people, and never applies to an individual. Thirty-seven of the fifty-two occurrences of 'am ha'areş are clustered in four biblical books: II Kings, II Chronicles, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, i.e. in books which record the history of the rival kingdoms of Judah and Ephraim, and especially the later phases of the history of Judah. For the sake of accuracy it should be stated that ten of these latter thirty-seven mentions are found in passages of the Books of Jeremiah and Chronicles which parallel records of events that are also related in the Book of Kings.¹ Thus the figure of thirty-seven may be reduced to twenty-seven independent single occurrences of 'am ha'areş in those four books mentioned.

Outside these four it is extant nine times in the first four books of the Pentateuch: there are four occurrences in Genesis (xxiii:7, 12, 13; xlii:6), three in Leviticus (iv:27; xx:2, 4), and one each in Exodus (v:5) and Numbers (xiv:9). The remaining six mentions of the term are spread over six books: Isaiah (xxiv:4); Haggai (ii:4); Zechariah (vii:5); Job (xii:24); Daniel (ix:6); and Ezra (iv:4). 'Am ha'areş is never mentioned in Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, in the majority of the Minor Prophets, in Psalms and the Five Megilloth.

At this point a salient feature should be underlined: the conspicuous absence of the term 'am ha'areş from the Book of Deuteronomy and from the Book of Joshua, which is said to have been subjected to a far-reaching deuteronomistic revision. This absence of the term from the hard-core of deuteronomistic literature appears to take the wind out of the sails of the school, headed by von Rad, that credited the 'am ha'areş with a large share of responsibility for the Deuteronomy-centred reform that was carried out by Josiah.²

The preponderant majority of references to 'am ha-

'areş pertain to the Kingdom of Judah, and especially to the city of Jerusalem. All cases in which the term refers to non-Judahite groups are clustered in the Pentateuch and in the Hagiographa. Two of these are textually doubtful (Ex. v:5; Is. xxiv:4).³ Altogether they may be subdivided into:

- i. references to Israel as a whole, usually in settings of a cultic-legal nature (Lev. iv:27; xx:2, 4; Ez. xlv:16, 22; xlvi:3, 9; also xxxix:13 and xxxiii:2) which, though, pertain specifically to cultic traditions of the Temple in Jerusalem;
- ii. some references to non-Israelite ethnic groups: Egyptians (Gen. xlii:6; and possibly Ex. v:5); Canaanites (Num. xiv:9) and the *bnê hêt* (Gen. xxiii:7, 12, 13);
- iii. and one or two to groups without any explicit ethnic or political affiliation (Job. xii:24; and possibly Is. xxiv:4).

It should be stressed that not even once is the term 'am ha'areş employed in a specifically Ephraimite setting. Therefore it is quite in order to present the issue at hand as 'the problem of the Judaeon 'am ha'areş'. In other words we are dealing with a term which is specifically connected with the Judaeon body politic.

II

Scholarly endeavours to interpret the term 'am ha'areş and to characterize the social group or groups so designated were, and still are, severely hampered by the apparent inconsistency in the employment of this term in biblical literature. Furthermore, no clear-cut lines could be established by which to delineate the semantic field of this term from that of other, comparable or synonymous expressions, such as *kol hâ'am*, *zeqênim*, *nešî'im* etc. (In the present discussion I shall not apply myself at all to that latter aspect, an omission which I hope to remedy at a future occasion.) It is for this and other reasons that the suggestions offered in explanation of the term 'am ha'areş differ widely, and sometimes are diametrically opposed to one another.

1. Jer. lii:6, 25a, b = II Kings xxv:3, 19a, b; II Chron. xxxiii:13, 20, 21 = II Kings xi:14, 19, 20; xxvi:21 = xv:5; xxxiii:25a, b = xxi:24a, b; xxxvi:1 = xxiii:30.
 2. G. VON RAD, *Deuteronomium Studien* (Goettingen, 1948), p. 43ff; J. A. SOGGIN, 'Der Judaeische 'Am-Ha'areş und

das Koenigtum in Judah', *VT* 13 (1963), p. 187-195.
 3. In Ex. v:5 the Samaritan Version refers 'am ha'areş to the Egyptians, the *MT* to the Israelites. In Is. xxiv:4 the word 'am is not found in the basic text of *1QIs^a* and was superscribed by a corrector, in conformity with the *MT* reading.

Excepting Klamroth, who perceived in the 'am ha'areš 'die Volksmenge', that is to say the population of a country in the wider sense of the word,⁴ all other opinions appear to concur in presenting the 'am ha'areš as only one segment or stratum of a national society, in fact of Judah. But in the definition of this stratum a great variety of proposals were put forward, ranging from the top of the social ladder to its very bottom rung.

The 'am ha'areš was put highest by Judge Sulzberger in his book 'Am ha'areš — the Ancient Hebrew Parliament, published in 1909. To him, as to Elias Auerbach who developed the idea independently and presented it in a paper read to the First World Congress of Jewish Studies,⁵ it is a 'great national council', the democratic representation of the nation *vis-à-vis* the king. Somewhat less enthusiastic was the German sociologist Max Weber, who rather would describe this group as an upper social class, the 'Landadel', a sort of landed gentry.⁶ This definition was favoured also by R. Kittel, A. G. Barrois, R. Gordis and S. Daiches, who employed the rendition 'lords of the land'.⁷ A. Menes, on the other hand, and similarly K. Galling, nevertheless could see in the 'am ha'areš 'die aermeren Volksschichten', the proletariat that was opposed to the Judaeen aristocracy.⁸ The golden mean was struck by E. Gillischewsky: 'vollberechtigte Mitglieder eines politischen und kultischen Gemeinwesens'.⁹ It was put more succinctly by M. Noth: 'Die Gesamtheit der judaeischen Vollbuenger', and R. de Vaux: 'l'ensemble des nationaux'.¹⁰ With some adjustments and elaborations this is the definition which underlies the most recent and most detailed monographic discussion of the issue at hand, E. Wuerthwein's *Der 'am ha'areš im Alten Testament* (1936).

In view of this *embarras de richesses*, it can hardly come as a surprise that in the latest study of the term known to me, E. Nicholson can offer only a counsel of despair. He concludes his essay with the statement, 'the term has no fixed and rigid meaning, but is used

rather in a purely general and fluid manner and varies in meaning from context to context'.¹¹

It appears that the discussion of 'am ha'areš has reached low tide. Therefore a renewed attempt at putting some order into this chaos may be justified. But it would be futile simply to follow the beaten tracks, trying to improve on the efforts of predecessors where flaws in their reasoning can be detected. Promise of success, though, could lie in choosing some other avenues of approach to the problem at hand.

III

Before presenting my own proposals, I must put in relief two features which are common to all the different views surveyed:

I. All seem to arrive at their proposed interpretation of the term by taking their departure from etymological considerations. By virtue of its components, the construct 'am ha'areš is taken to designate an ethnically determined social group within the confines of a given territory.¹² Each commentator then elucidates further specifications of this group by using one or two of the variegated employments of the term in the Bible as his special launching pad.

Now, this is a rather dangerous procedure. The actual content of a term or a concept often is widely removed from its etymological basis, and cannot be adequately explained by it. The specific meaning of a word will be decided upon by its context, its literary and historical setting, much more than by its etymological derivation. By digging up the roots of a word, a pleasant pastime in itself, one has not yet unearthed the roots of its subject matter.

II. Practically all the suggested explanations of the term 'am ha'areš conceive of it on a nation-wide scale, and set out to peg it into a convenient hole in a system of socio-political institutions. Here the impact of some fairly basic concepts in recent biblical research makes itself felt.

4. E. KLAMROTH, *Die juedischen Exulanten in Babylon* (Leipzig, 1912), p. 99–101.

5. E. AUERBACH, 'Am ha'areš, *Proceedings of the First World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1947* (Jerusalem, 1952, Hebrew), p. 362–366.

6. M. WEBER, *Das antike Judentum* (Tuebingen, 1931), p. 30ff.

7. S. DAICHES, 'The meaning of am-haaretz in the O. T.', *JTS* 30 (1929), p. 245–249; R. GORDIS, 'Sectional rivalry in the kingdom of Judah', *JQR* N.S. 25 (1934/35), p. 237–259.

8. A. MENES, 'Die vorexilischen Gesetze Israels im Zusammenhang seiner kulturgeschichtlichen Entwicklung', *BZAW* 50 (Berlin, 1928), p. 70f.; K. GALLING, 'Die israeli-

tische Staatsverfassung in ihrer vorderorientalischen Umwelt', *AO* 28 (1929), p. 23.

9. E. GILLISCHEWSKY, 'Der Ausdruck 'Am haareš im A.T.', *ZAW* 40 (1922), p. 137–142.

10. M. NOTH, 'Gott, Koenig, Volk im A.T.', *ZThK* 47 (1950), p. 181 (repr. in *Gesammelte Studien zum A.T.* [Muenchen, 1950], p. 217); R. DE VAUX, *Les institutions de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris, 1958), p. 111–113.

11. E. W. NICHOLSON, 'The meaning of the expression עַם הָאָרֶץ in the O. T.', *JSS* 10 (1956), p. 66.

12. See L. ROST, 'Die Bezeichnungen für Land und Volk im A.T.', *O. Procksch Festschrift* (Leipzig, 1934), p. 125–138; and more recently: E. A. SPEISER, "'People" and "Nation" of Israel', *JBL* 79 (1960), p. 157–163.

Scholars seem unanimous in agreeing that throughout biblical times 'democratic' forces or institutions played an important role in the Israelite body politic.¹³ However the consensus completely breaks down when a more detailed analysis of the 'democratic' factors involved is attempted. Then the pendulum swings from their presentation as a mere *vox populi*, which in certain given situations, by the threat or the actual employment of physical force, gained an *ad hoc* ascendancy over the reigning monarch, to their definition as the spearhead of a legally constituted institution which by right took an active part in the administration of the realm. On the whole, the balance of the argument favours the assumption that the 'democratic' powers were constitutionally integrated into the Israelite monarchy. But the proper definition of the scope of their activities, the degree of their institutionalization, and the elucidation of their constitutional history yet remain a *desideratum*. Information in biblical literature on these democratic constituents of the Israelite society is extremely meagre and lacks clarity. They are referred to by a variety of expressions which in some cases appear to be used interchangeably, while again in others they seem to be employed with different connotations. Nowhere does the Bible offer a systematic definition of the social forces which were active in the affairs of the body politic, or a circumscription of the political theory which served as the basis of the socio-political life of Israel. What is given is a purely descriptive account of a series of seemingly unconnected events in the history of the Israelite state in which the impact of non-monarchic agencies on the fate of the monarchy became especially obvious.

As a result of the above trends of thought, the attempts to define the 'am ha'areš remain altogether on the plane of typology, and leave aside specifically historical considerations. Yet it appears that one indeed should probe into the genesis of the 'am ha'areš, whatever its definition be, and into its subsequent historical developments. This task becomes especially urgent if proper attention is given to the fact already mentioned that the term never is used in a purely Ephraimite setting, but, with respect to Israel, is exclusively applied to Judah. The explanation of this phenomenon must be sought in some specifically Judaeon historical experience which was not shared by the tribes that constituted the Northern Kingdom, and which had been

conducive to the emergence of the 'Judaeon 'am ha'areš'.

I cannot offer here a detailed presentation of my lines of thought, and therefore shall state my case in a series of working hypotheses. In view of the apparent inconsistency in the employment of the term 'am ha'areš in biblical literature, considerations of method lead us to base the ensuing analysis on the most salient occurrences, and then to explore whether the remaining cases, or some at least, can subsequently be fitted into the emerging frame of reference.

Let me first turn to the admitted variety of connotations which attach to the term 'am ha'areš in the Bible. I propose to explain this phenomenon by assuming a semantic division of the term which resulted in its synchronic employment:

- a. as a general noun which refers to a variety of human groups;
- b. as a technical term which can be applied only to a specific entity in the Judaeon body politic.

Such a semantic duality can be observed in other biblical words, e. g. 'ebed and na'ar.

Being historically and sociologically circumscribed, the technical term 'am ha'areš always was used as a collective singular, and never was accompanied by a plural form. On the other hand, the general connotation, which in the singular also could relate to Israel, or for that matter to Judah, did have a complementary plural form — עמי הארצות or עמי הארץ — which was applied exclusively to non-Israelite ethnic groups, such as the native inhabitants of Canaan (Deut. xxviii:10; I Chron. v:25), or the motley population of Palestine that was encountered by the returning exiles (Ezra ix:2). Further, the employment of the technical connotation was virtually discontinued after the disintegration of the body politic to which it specifically pertained, i.e. after the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah. The general connotation, on the contrary, experienced a diachronic semantic development which resulted in its preponderance in post-exilic literature, especially in the plural form עמי הארצות which is used synonymously with עמי הארצות. There and then it became saturated with the opprobrium which attaches to the singular 'am ha'areš in post-biblical Hebrew, already in early rabbinic literature.¹⁴

IV

Now an elucidation of the history and the character of the 'am ha'areš in the technical sense can be attempted.

13. The literature on this issue is fairly extensive. We shall make mention here only of the following items: M. STOLUSH, 'Representative government among the Hebrews and Phoenicians', *JQR* N.S. 4 (1913), p. 303-310; R. GORDIS, 'Primitive democracy in Ancient Israel', *A. Marx Jubilee Volume* (Philadelphia 1950), p. 347-369; C. U. WOLF, 'Traces

of primitive democracy in Israel', *JNES* 6 (1947), p. 98-108. A dissenting opinion was voiced by P. A. H. DE BOER, 'Israel n'a jamais été une démocratie', *VT* 5 (1955), p. 227.

14. Cf. the classical monograph by A. BUECHLER, *Der galilaeische 'Am-ha'areš des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 1906).

As already stated, our information on the Judaeans 'am ha'areš derives almost wholly from the historiographies Kings and Chronicles, and from the prophetic books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Irrespective of the fact that these books were finally edited only after the destruction of Judah, their reports on the actions of the 'am ha'areš presumably are contemporaneous with the events recorded.

Explicit references to the 'am ha'areš are spread over a period from about the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. to the beginning of the sixth.

The earliest mention, put on record in II Kings xi (cf. II Chron. xxiii), relates to events of the year 836 B.C.E. We learn that the 'am ha'areš was instrumental in the overthrow of Athaliah who had usurped the throne of Judah. In the wake of the rebellion, the 'am ha'areš restored to the throne the crown-prince Joash, the rightful heir of the murdered King Ahaziah.

The last reference to the 'am ha'areš in a distinctly historical context is set in the detailed description of the conquest of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Among the civic leaders who were captured in Jerusalem, and then were executed by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, together with King Zedekiah's sons, sixty members of the 'am ha'areš figure prominently, as well as the *sōfēr* of the 'am ha'areš (II Kings xxv:19; Jer. li:25).¹⁵ These two, chronologically speaking widely removed events in the recorded history of the 'am ha'areš clearly illustrate that in weal and in woe this body was aligned with the Davidic dynasty, and ultimately shared its unfortunate fate. The first impression is fully substantiated by a survey of the other historical incidents in which the Judaeans 'am ha'areš was involved.

On three further occasions this body safeguards the uninterrupted succession of Davidic kings on the throne of Judah. King Amaziah met with the same fate as his father Joash (II Kings xii:21-22). In 769 he was assassinated in Lachish by some of his courtiers who had plotted against him in Jerusalem (*ibid.*, xiv:19). Again partisans of the Davidic dynasty intervened, and made Amaziah's son and heir, Uzziah, King of Judah (*ibid.*, xiv:21; II Chron. xxvi:1). True, in this case the faction is referred to as '*kōl 'am yehūdāh*'. Therefore, in order to prepare the ground for the inclusion of this incident in a discussion of the 'am ha'areš, I wish to state provisionally that 'am ha'areš as well as 'am yehūdāh may be considered two different abbreviations of the same full designation of that body: 'am ha'areš *libnē yehūdāh*. I shall tie in this proposition with my argument at a later stage of our inquiry.

It would appear that in the period which we have covered so far, i.e. the second half of the ninth century and the first half on the eighth, the Davidic dynasty repeatedly was threatened by internal rift, and that for this reason the 'am ha'areš time and again had to put into effect its protective power. From the inception of the Kingdom of Judah until Athaliah's *coup d'état*, the Davidic line never had been in tangible danger. This statement includes even Jeroboam's rebellion which resulted in the very creation of a separate Judaeankingdom. During that period the 'am ha'areš lay dormant, so to speak, yet kept a watchful eye on the affairs of the realm. Thus may be explained the silence of our sources with respect to this body until Athaliah's seizure of power. It may well be that the recurrent assassinations of Davidic kings between 842 and 769 B.C.E. — Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah — necessitated a regularized and continuous association of the 'am ha'areš with the royal house, more so than in the past, or, as we yet shall see, in the future. Therefore, when, as a result of his illness, Uzziah was unable to control the realm effectively, but yet did not relinquish power, his son, the crown prince Jotham, took charge of state affairs and at the same time appears to have assumed direct control of the 'am ha'areš: ויהם בן-המלך על-הבית שפט את-עם הארץ (II Kings xv:5).

The next mention of the 'am ha'areš, the last before the apprehension and subsequent execution of sixty of its members by the Chaldeans, pertains to the year 640 B.C.E. Again a king of Judah, Amon, is murdered by his courtiers. Again the 'am ha'areš quickly reacts, and restores order by inflicting the death penalty on the plotters, and by putting Amon's son Josiah on the throne (II Kings xxi:23-24). In this, as in virtually all the other cases mentioned, we find a similar constellation of opposing forces. The 'am ha'areš intervenes to counteract an imminent threat to the continuity of the Davidic dynasty, a threat which was brought about by regicides from among the royal courtiers who hatched their plots in the metropolis. This recurring constellation indeed may disclose an underlying tension between the 'am ha'areš and the city, or the acropolis of Jerusalem. This point will call for some further elaboration at a later stage of our inquiry.

At this juncture we can offer some provisional conclusions which follow from the foregoing survey:

Not once in its recorded history did the 'am ha'areš serve in an advisory capacity, as do the *zeqēnim*, e.g. at Rehoboam's invitation. *Ergo*, the 'am ha'areš is not an institution of deliberation, but rather an instrument of

15. When the title *hasōfēr hamašbi* 'et 'am hā'āreš was no longer properly understood, the interpretative gloss *šar hašābā* was infused into the text of II Kings xxv:19. The

resulting syntactical difficulty, *hasōfēr 'šar hašābā*, was subsequently eased in the parallel reading in Jer. li:25 by the elimination of the determinative article before *sōfēr*.

action. Any attempt to describe it as a 'national council' of some sort or other therefore is completely misleading.

The 'am ha'areš never was formally convened, or called upon by the king or some other agent, although it apparently was headed by a functionary designated *sōfer*. It follows that this body was not an institution at all, but a fairly loosely constituted power group within the Kingdom of Judah. This characteristic is further put in relief by the fact that the 'am ha'areš does not function continuously, but always goes into action *ad hoc*, when extraordinary political conditions make action imperative.

The deployment of the 'am ha'areš, apparently in full force, in the overthrow of Athaliah, within the confines of the Temple precincts, indicates that this body was comprised of a comparatively small number of individuals, running into not more than a few hundred. This supposition is borne out by the explicit reference to 'sixty' members of the 'am ha'areš who were executed after the conquest of Jerusalem. Therefore it is unlikely that in the 'am ha'areš were incorporated all full-fledged citizens of Judah.

Our sources do not permit us adequately to describe the socio-economic composition of the 'am ha'areš. The exclusive concentration of all its actions within the city of Jerusalem, in fact within the confines of the acropolis, militates against its definition as a stratum of landed nobility.

The only recognizable *raison d'être* of the 'am ha'areš is the *de facto* championing of the house of David which lacks any *de iure* circumscription in the political framework of the Judaeen kingdom. Accordingly the 'am ha'areš can not be defined in terms of a constitutional-legal nature.

V

At this stage we have to broaden the scope of our investigation, in order to work in a set of references to an 'am ha'areš outside the political limits of Israel or Judah. We refer to the 'am ha'areš of the *bnē hēt* in Hebron that plays such a central role in the sale of the Machpelah to Abraham (Gen. xxiii).

The very existence of the *bnē hēt* in Hebron, and their identity, is a vexing problem on which I can not elaborate here. Neither can I go into a detailed analysis of this episode. But some comments which bear directly on the problem under discussion are in order:

1. Independently of Prof. Mazar, who presented his views in the illuminating paper which he read at this congress, I had arrived at the conclusion that the Abraham stories reflect motifs and concepts of the late

premonarchic and the early monarchic period. In fact, I would maintain that Abraham's meetings as an equal with Melchizedek, King of Salem, i.e. Jerusalem (Gen. xiv), and with the 'am ha'areš of Hebron (Gen. xxiii) are prefigurations of David's future relations to and claims on these two cities, each of which served as the metropolis of his realm, at different stages in his career. It is in this light that the portrayal of Abraham as a monarch-like figure may be explained. The honorific title *נשיא אלהים* bestowed upon him by the 'am ha'areš of the *bnē hēt* in the Machpelah episode (Gen. xxiii:6) recalls the equally honorific comparison of David to a *מלך האלהים*, by the wise woman of Tekoah (II Sam. xiv:17, 20), and by Mephibosheth (II Sam. xix:28), with its late echo in Zach. xii:8, *ובית דוד כאלהים כמלאך ה' לפניו*.

ii. As the old name Qiryat 'Arba' suggests, and as was shown by Professor Mazar in his article on Hebron,¹⁶ the population of this city was of a heterogeneous composition. The different ethnic groups occupied different quarters of the city, each of which may have maintained some sort of autonomy within the wider city organization. This may explain why Abraham addresses his request for the acquisition of a plot of land to the 'am ha'areš of the *bnē hēt*, and not to the *'ansē hā'ir*. It is worthy of note that in the Dinah incident, Shechem and his father Hamor refer their proposal to enter into an alliance with the house of Jacob to *'ansē 'irām* (Gen. xxxiv:20), the equivalent of the Mesopotamian *puhrum*, or *'alum*. True, the sale of the Machpelah is finally ratified by Efron in the presence of *kōl bā'ē ša'ar 'irō* (Gen. xxiii:18; cf. also v. 10). But in the preceding negotiations only the 'am ha'areš of the *bnē hēt* is involved.

It seems to follow that the term 'am ha'areš in the Machpelah episode designates one segment of the population of Hebron, namely the *bnē hēt*, which as such has no formal legal power. This legal power rests with the *'ansē hā'ir*. In other words, although the 'am ha'areš has some standing in the city community, and does have some influence on one component of its population, namely the *bnē hēt*, this influence is not legally or constitutionally circumscribed, but rather appears to be derived from common interest and group cohesion.

Let us now return to the Judaeen 'am ha'areš. Is it a mere coincidence that the term 'am ha'areš can be shown to apply almost exclusively to the city of Jerusalem and to the city of Hebron, the two successive capitals of the Davidic realm? Should we not rather assume that, in the process of the transfer of the capital

16. B. MAISLER (MAZAR), 'Kiryath 'Arba' — Hebron', *B. Dinaburg Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1949, Hebrew), p. 310-325, where previous literature on the subject is

quoted; and again: *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. III, cols. 16-20 (Jerusalem, 1958, Hebrew).

to Jerusalem, some components of the Hebronite population and some of its civic concepts and terminology were infused into the new metropolis? The answer to this question without doubt must be in the affirmative. Biblical evidence clearly indicates that David rebuilt Jerusalem after having conquered it, and repopulated it, settling there his *gibbōrim*, former Hebronites and other elements of the tribe of Judah. In fact he had previously done so also with respect to Hebron, immediately after he had chosen this city as his first seat of government: *וְאִנְשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר-עִמּוֹ הֵעֵלָה דָוִד אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ וְיֹשְׁבֵי בְעָרֵי הַכְּרִיָּן* — 'And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities (rather boroughs) of Hebron' (II Sam. ii:3). It is probable that some of these new Hebronites at a later stage again followed David, becoming part of the population of Jerusalem. The comparison of Hebron with Jerusalem in respect to the *'am ha'areš* and its functions is especially meaningful in view of the fact that the population of Jerusalem was of as composite and heterogeneous a character as that of Hebron. *Vis-à-vis* the autochthonic Jebusites, and the foreign mercenaries in the service of the king, with their fickle allegiance to the royal house, the Judahites, the *'am ha'areš libnē yehūdāh*, constituted a hard core of staunch defenders of the Davidic dynasty. The confrontation of these two antagonistic factors in the citizenry of Jerusalem helps in explaining the fact on which we have already remarked, namely, that in recurrent historical situations the *'am ha'areš* is found in open opposition to the royal courtiers.

The infusion of Judahite followers of David into his new capital and its citadel is reflected in two ecological terms which pertain to the city-plan of Jerusalem: *bēt haḡibbōrim* — 'the house of the mighty men (of David)' which is mentioned as late as the times of Nehemiah (Neh. iii:16); and *bēt hā'ām*, which I propose to take as an apocopated reading of *bēt 'am hā'areš* — 'the house of the *'am ha'areš*'. This latter was obviously a building of some prominence and was burned down by the Chaldaeans after the capture of Jerusalem, together

with the king's palace (Jer. xxxix:8) and the Temple (Jer. lxi:13; II Kings xxv:9).

In fine, I should like to review some of the conclusions which arise from the preceding analysis:

i. The *'am ha'areš* is a social phenomenon which is rooted in city life in the territory of Judah, *ergo* in the structure of a sedentary society. In the early stages of the Davidic monarchy it was assimilated into the emerging socio-political framework of the empire, which thus can be shown not to be solely derived from axiomatic tribal-amphictyonic institutions.

ii. Contrary to the institutionalizing tendencies which haunt recent biblical research, the *'am ha'areš* of Judah can not be viewed as a democratic or otherwise constitutionally circumscribed institution. Rather is it a body of Judaeans in Jerusalem that rose to some power and importance which was ultimately derived from their loyalty to the Davidic dynasty. The *'am ha'areš* in fact constitutes a sociological phenomenon that belongs to and illustrates a power structure which appears to be typical of a hereditary monarchy without clearly defined constitutional foundations. The readily given support of a group like the *'am ha'areš* helps in maintaining the political equilibrium by counteracting the possible, eroding impact of an ascending class of courtiers and ministers. Unwavering loyalty arising from kin ties balances a pragmatic allegiance rooted in vested interests.

However at the very same time the support given by the *'am ha'areš* to the king entails a dependence of the king on the *'am ha'areš* which effectively circumscribes the king's power. Thus, although lacking a constitutional definition, the *'am ha'areš* is a supportive yet restrictive force which prevents the deterioration of the monarchy into an absolutist regime.

iii. Viewed in historical retrospect, the *'am ha'areš* served as an important means for the implementation of an ideology inspired by the Davidic dynasty which took the form of a prophecy from the mouth of Nathan (II Sam. vii:16): *וַיֹּאמֶן בֵּיתְךָ וּמַמְלַכְתְּךָ עַד-עוֹלָם*: 'And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever'.