

Fear of God at the Nexus of Divine and Human Kingship I

Fear – Safety and Obedience

1. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1532), “Of Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved or Feared”

...one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting. **For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain;** as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours; they offer you their blood, their goods, their life, and their children, as I have before said, when the necessity is remote; but when it approaches, they revolt. And the prince who has relied solely on their words, without making other preparations, is ruined; for the friendship which is gained by purchase and not through grandeur and nobility of spirit is bought but not secured, and at a pinch is not to be expended in your service. **And men have less scruple in offending one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared; for love is held by a chain of obligation which, men being selfish, is broken whenever it serves their purpose; but fear is maintained by a dread of punishment which never fails.**

Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that if he does not gain love, he at any rate avoids hatred; for fear and the absence of hatred may well go together, and will be always attained by one who abstains from interfering with the property of his citizens and subjects...

I conclude, therefore, with regard to being feared and loved, that men love at their own free will, but fear at the will of the prince, and that a wise prince must rely on what is in his power and not on what is in the power of others, and he must only contrive to avoid incurring hatred, as has been explained.

2. Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (1651), Ch. 13

...Hereby it is manifest that **during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe they are in that condition which is called war**, and such a war as is of every man against every man. For WAR consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. **In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently, no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no**

knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short...

[Through this thought experiment] it may be perceived what manner of life there would be where there were no common power to fear, by the manner of life which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government use to degenerate into, in a civil war...

3. Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, Ch. 17

The final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint particular upon themselves in which we see them live in commonwealths is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war, which is necessarily consequent (as hath been shown [ch. xiii]) to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants and observation of those laws of nature set down in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters...

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort as that by their own industry and by the fruits of the earth they may nourish themselves and live contentedly, is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person... This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a COMMONWEALTH; in Latin, CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that *Mortal God* to which we owe, under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that by terror thereof he is enabled to conform the wills of them all to peace at home and mutual aid against their enemies abroad.

4. Mishnah Avot 3:2

רַבִּי חַנִּינָא סָגַן הַכֹּהֲנִים אוֹמֵר, הָיוּ מִתְפַּלְלִים בְּשִׁלּוּמָהּ שֶׁל מַלְכוּת, שֶׁאִלְמָלָא מוֹרָאָהּ, אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ חַיִּים בְּלֵעָו. Rabbi Hanina, the vice-high priest said: pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear it inspires, every man would swallow his neighbor alive.

Fear of the Sovereign God

5. Shemot 20:15–17

טו וְכָל־הָעָם רֹאִים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת־הַלַּפִּידִם וְאֵת קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת־הַהָר עָשָׁן וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וַיִּגְעוּ וַיַּעֲמְדוּ מֵרָחֹק: טז וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר־אַתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאַל־יְדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים פֶּן־נָמוּת: יז וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם אֱלֹהֵי־תִירָאוּ כִּי לִבְעֹבוֹר נְסוּת אֲתֻכֶם בָּא הָאֱלֹהִים וּבְעֵבֹר תִּהְיֶה יְרֵאתוֹ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם לְבַלְתִּי תִחַטְּאוּ:

15 All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance. 16 “You speak to us,” they said to Moses, “and we will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.” 17 Moses answered the people, “**Be not afraid**; for God has come only in order to test you, **and in order that the fear of Him may be ever with you, so that you do not go astray.**”

6. Devarim 6:12–15

יב הַשֹּׁמֵר לָךְ פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאָךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים: יג אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא וְאֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע: יד לֹא תִלְכּוּן אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים מֵאֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם: טו כִּי אֵל קָנָא ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּקַרְבְּךָ פֶּן־יִחַרְרֶה אַף־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּךְ וְהִשְׁמִידָךְ מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

12 Take heed that you do not forget the Lord who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. 13 **Fear only the Lord your God and worship Him alone, and swear only by His name.** 14 Do not follow other gods, any gods of the peoples about you—15 for the Lord your God in your midst is an impassioned God—lest the anger of the Lord your God blaze forth against you and He wipe you off the face of the earth.

7. Devarim 10:12–14

יב וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֹׂאֵל מֵעַמָּךְ כִּי אִם־לִירְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ וּלְעַבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ: יג לְשׁוֹמֵר אֶת־מִצְוֹת ה' וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מִצְוֶה הַיּוֹם לְטוֹב לָךְ: יד הֵן לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם הַשָּׁמַיִם הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּהּ:

12 And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? **Only this: to fear the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul,** 13 **keeping the Lord’s commandments and laws,** which I enjoin upon you today, for your good. 14 Mark, the heavens to their uttermost reaches belong to the Lord your God, the earth and all that is on it!

8. *Sefer HaHinukh* §432

The commandment of fearing God: That the fear of God, may He be blessed, should always be on our faces, that we not sin; meaning to say that we fear with a fear of His punishment and that our hearts not be without fear of Him, the whole day. And about this is it stated (Deuteronomy 10:13), "The Lord, your God, you shall fear." ... The root of the commandment of fearing God, may He be blessed, is revealed to all who see the Sun, as the greatest protection from sin is the fear of His punishment.

9. **Rambam, *Moreh Nevukhim* III:52**

Man does not sit, move, and occupy himself when he is alone in his house, as he sits, moves, and occupies himself when he is in the presence of a great king; nor does he speak and rejoice while he is with his family and relatives, as he speaks in the king's council... He, may He be exalted, is constantly with us, examining from on high: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?" (Yirmiyahu 23:24) Understand this well. Know that when perfect men understand this, they achieve such humility, such awe and fear of God, such reverence and such shame before Him, may He be exalted—and this in ways that pertain to true reality, not to imagination—that their secret conduct with their wives and in latrines is like their public conduct with other people... all this being intended firmly to establish the notion that I have mentioned to you, that we are always before Him...

This purpose to which I have drawn your attention is the purpose of all the actions prescribed by the Law. For it is by all the particulars of the actions and through their repetition that some excellent men obtain such training that they achieve human perfection, so that they fear, and are in dread and in awe of, God, may He be exalted, and know who it is that is with them and as a result act subsequently as they ought to. He, may He be exalted, has explained that the end of the actions prescribed by the whole Law is to bring about the passion of which it is correct that it be brought about, as we have demonstrated in this chapter for the benefit of those who know the true realities. I refer to the fear of Him, may He be exalted, and the awe before His command... fear is achieved by means of all actions prescribed by the Law, as we have explained. Understand this summary.

Realism and Human Nature

10. Bereshit 6:5

ה וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וְכָל-יַצָּר מַחְשְׁבֹת לְבוֹ רַק רָע כָּל-הַיּוֹם: וַיִּנְחַם ה' כִּי-עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֶל-לְבוֹ:

5 The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time. 6 And the Lord regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened.

11. Bereshit 8:21

וַיִּרַח ה' אֶת-רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-לְבוֹ לֹא-אֶסֶף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יַצָּר לִב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְעֻרָיו וְלֹא-אֶסֶף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי פֶּאֶשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתִי:

The Lord smelled the pleasing odor, and the Lord said to Himself: "Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the devisings of man's mind are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done.

12. Bereshit 9:1–6

א וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נֹחַ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ: ב וּמוֹרָאֲכֶם וְחַתְכֶם יִהְיֶה עַל כָּל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְעַל כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּרְמַשׁ הָאָדָמָה וּבְכָל-דָּגֵי הַיָּם בְּיַדְכֶם נִתְּנוּ: ג כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי לְכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה כִּיִּרַק עֲשֹׂב נִתְּתִי לְכֶם אֶת-כָּל: ד אַךְ-בָּשָׂר בְּנֶפֶשׁ דָּמוֹ לֹא תֹאכְלוּ: ה וְאֵף אֶת-דְּמֹתֵיכֶם לִנְפֹשְׁתֵיכֶם אֲדַרְשׁ מִיַּד כָּל-חַיָּה אֲדַרְשֶׁנוּ וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אֶחָיו אֲדַרְשׁ אֶת-נַפְשׁ הָאָדָם: ו שִׁפְךָ דַם הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָךְ כִּי בְצַלְם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת-הָאָדָם:

1 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. 2 The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. 3 Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. 4 You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. 5 But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man! 6 *Whoever sheds the blood of man, By man shall his blood be shed; For in His image Did God make man.*