

**THE COURT OF PERSIA,  
VIEWED IN  
CONNEXION WITH  
SCRIPTURAL USAGES**

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The court of Persia, viewed in connexion with scriptural usages by John Kitto

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**JOHN KITTO**

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BY JOHN KITTO, D.D.

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# CONTENTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
PRINCIPLES OF EASTERN REGAL GOVERNMENT . . . . .	7

## CHAPTER II.

LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS . . . . .	21
---------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III.

JUDICIAL AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS . . . . .	39
--	----

## CHAPTER IV.

STATE PUNISHMENTS AND REWARDS . . . . .	57
---	----

## CHAPTER V.

A ROYAL DAY . . . . .	86
-----------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

STATE CEREMONIALS . . . . .	109
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## CHAPTER VII.

A CORONATION . . . . .	149
------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD . . . . .	172
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THE  
COURT OF PERSIA.

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CHAPTER I.

PRINCIPLES OF EASTERN REGAL GOVERNMENT.

As the conditions of kingly power and the usages of royal courts in the east are, in all essential respects, the same now as they were in ancient times, it has seemed that the description of an oriental government and court would supply not only an interesting subject of contemplation in itself, but would incidentally furnish much information, illustrating the numerous allusions to regal functions and usages which the sacred Scriptures contain.

When the Israelites rebelled against God in becoming weary of the form of government under which they had lived to the time of Samuel,

their avowed desire was to have a king to judge them like the nations, 1 Sam. viii. 5. The prophet on whom they urged this demand, concerned that they should not be ignorant of this kind of government, explained to them "the manner of the king that should reign over them," if they had one such as they desired. The picture which he gives is in all respects that of eastern monarchy at the present day, and as it has existed in all ages. And when the Hebrew state actually became a monarchy, we are at no loss to discover that the form of government, and the customs of the court, gradually, but rapidly, acquired that character which the prophet had, by anticipation, assigned to it—a character of as much conformity as the free habits of the people and the restrictions of the law allowed, to the aspects in which sovereign power and royal life appeared in other countries. It had, indeed, more conformity than these limitations suggest; for many of the Hebrew kings gave no great heed to the restrictions which the law of Moses imposed; and that due regard was not always paid to the free habits of a people trained up in the independence of pastoral life, and under the influences of a theocratical commonwealth, may

be seen by the public discontents which embittered the last years of Solomon, and which produced a revolution after his death, under whom the Hebrew court was brought into complete approximation to the standard oriental character.

But the Scriptural indications of regal customs and ideas are not confined to those which the thrones of Israel and of Judah offer. Many regalities of Syria and Arabia are brought under our notice, and we are introduced to the great courts of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, many very remarkable customs of which are historically produced. Taking all these portions together, the matters pertaining to kings and courts occupy a considerable part of the sacred volume, which, if from extent alone, is fully entitled to the degree of illustration which may be given to it from a survey of the Court of Persia.

The writer has made choice of it for several reasons. The Scripture itself—in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther—furnishes more ample accounts of the customs of that court than of any other not of Israel. It is the only ancient court mentioned in the Bible which subsists to this day. Notwithstanding great