



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

COURSE CODE: CTH210

COURSE TITLE: HISTORY AND RELIGION OF ISRAEL

Course Title: **CTH210 HISTORY AND RELIGION OF ISRAEL**

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COURSE GUIDE

CTH210

HISTORY AND RELIGION OF ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION

History and Religion of Israel is a one-Semester 2-Credit unit's course. It will be available to all students as a course in Bachelor of Arts and Post-Graduate Diploma Programmes in Theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the Theology Study of Christian faith. The course will consist of 12 units which involve the meaning of Israel, Israel as the chosen people, and Israel as covenantal people, pre-history of the Israelites, Israelites salvation history, the history of Israel from the time of Judges to the period of captivity, the history of Israel from the development of prophecy to the period of post-exilic prophets, the history of Israel from the time of Exile to reconstituted state of Israel, the Jewish religious denominations, the religious institutions in Israel, the Jewish major feasts and the significance of feasts in the religious and social life of Jewish people.

The material has been especially developed for students in African Context with particular focus on Nigeria. There are no compulsory pre-requisites for this course. The course guide tell you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course material is about, what course material you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for tutor-marked assignments. Detailed information on tutor-marked assignments is found in the separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

What you will learn in this Course

The overall of CTH 210: History and Religion of Israel is to introduce you to the basic issues in the history of creation of man, the people of Israel and their religion. These topics will be studied through integrating, Theological approach. The Bible is the major source to formulate and study theology. However, history and religion of Israel also interacts with science, philosophy and some other liberal arts. Your understanding of history and religion of Israel will equip you to explain Christian faith to other people-Christians and non-Christians. History and religion of Israel is an interesting study and you will benefit from the insights of other theologians.

Course Aims

The aim of this course is to give you an understanding of the following basic facts of Christian history and religion: the history of creation of humankind, the people of Israel and their religion. This will be achieved by aiming to:

- Introduce you to the meaning of the name Israel
- Lead you to examine the usage of the name Israel
- Assist you to narrate the history of the people of Israel
- Expose you to the various forms of religions of Israel
- Highlight the role of religious institutions such as the Torah, the temple, the Priesthood and feasts in the religious and social life of the people of Israel.
- Explain to you the relevance of history and religion of Israel for Christian faith, life and mini
- Hist.stry.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims set out above, there are set overall objectives. In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always included at the beginning of a unit. You should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress. You should always look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. In this way, you can be sure that you have done what was required of you by the unit. Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole.

On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Define the meaning and the usage of the name Israel
- Narrate the history of the people of Israel
- Give various forms of the religions of Israel
- Highlight the role of religious institutions such as Torah, temple and priesthood in the religious and social life of the people of Israel.
- Explain the significance of feasts in the religious and social life of the people of Israel.

Working through this Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials. Each unit contains self-assessment exercises and points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course is a final examination. Below you will find listed all the components of the will and what you have to do.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment File

5. Presentation Schedule

In addition, you must obtain the materials. Obtain your copy. You may contact your tutor if you have problems in obtaining the text materials

Study Units

There are twelve units in this course broken into five modules of three units and two units. They are as follows:

Module I Introduction to People of Israel

- Unit 1 The meaning of Israel
- Unit 2 Israel as the chosen people
- Unit 3 Israel as covenantal people

Unit 2 The History of Israel from the call of Abraham to Post-exilic Period

- Unit 1 Pre-history of the Israelites
- Unit 2 Israelites salvation history
- Unit 3 The history of Israel from the time of Judges to the period of captivity
- Unit 4 From the development of Prophecy to the period of Post-Exilic Prophets
- Unit 5 From the time Exilic to reconstituted State of Israel.

Module 3 The Religions of Israel

- Unit 1 The Jewish Religious Denominations
- Unit 2 The Religious Institutions in Israel
- Unit 3 The Jewish major Feasts
- Unit 4 The Significance of Feasts in the Religious and Social Life of Jewish People.

The first eight units examine the history of Israel. The next four units discuss the religion of Israel and its relevance in their religious and social life. Each unit contains a number of self-tests. In general, these self-tests questions on the materials you have just recovered or require you to apply them in some ways, and thereby, help you to gauge your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

Set Textbooks

These textbooks are recommended. The first one is compulsory for your study of this course.

The Holy Bible (RSV or Catholic Edition)

Mauchline, J. (1978) God's people, Israel, Ibadan: The Caxton Press (West African) Ltd.

Paul de Surgy, (1966), The mystery of Salvation: step by step Throughout the Bible, Great Britain: Sheed and Ward Ltd.

Edwin Thiele (1951), The Mysterious Numbers of Hebrew Kings, New York: Macmillan Press.

Assignment File

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the assignment File itself and later in this course Guide in the section on assessment.

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor-marked assignments; and second, there is a written examination. In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for final assignment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the assignment. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignments

There are twelve tutor-marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignment. The best four (i.e. the highest four of the twelve marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best total course mark. Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your view point and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, together with TMA (tutor-marked assignment) to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given to the Assignment File. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination of CTH 210 will be of three hour’s duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the tape of self-testing, practices exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed. You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assignment	Marks
Assignment-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count 70% of course marks
Final Examination	30% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Table 1: Course marking Scheme

Course overview

Units	Module of work	Weeks activity
Unit 1	Meaning of the name Israel	
Unit 2	Israel as chosen people	
Unit 3	Israel as covenantal people	Assignment 3
Module 2		
Units		Assignment 4
	Post-exilic history of the Israelites	Assignment 5
	Post-exilic elites salvation history from the time of the return to the period of the Second Temple	Assignment 6

	the history of Israel from the time of Judges to the period of the Judges	Assignment 7
	from the development of the monarchy to the period of Post-Biblical Prophets	Assignment 8
	from the time of the Exile to the establishment of the State of Israel.	Assignment 9
Module 3		
Units		
1	Jewish Religious Denominations	Assignment 10
2	Religious Institutions in Israel	Assignment 11
3	Jewish major Feasts	Assignment 12
4	The Significance of Feasts in the Religious and Social Life of Jewish People.	Assignment 13

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take the complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

How to get the most from this course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, you study units provide exercise for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and course as a whole. Next

is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study.

When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a

Reading Section

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Reading this Course Guide thoroughly.
2. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Objective' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking. Do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule.

When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment from what is written, consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.

10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

Tutors and Tutorials

There are hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
- You have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises,
- You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

CTH 120 intends to introduce you to the basics of history and religion of Israel. Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

- What is the meaning and usage of the name Israel?
- What are two accounts of the history of Israel?
- What are the major forms of the religions of Israel?
- What are the major sects of Jewish sects?
- What are the major feasts of Jewish people?
- What are the significances of religious institutions: Torah, temple and priesthood in the religious and social life of the Jewish people?
- What is the relevance of the history and religions of Israel to Christian faith, life and ministry?

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History and Religion of Israel

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MODUEL I INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

Unit I The Meaning of Israel

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Origin of the name of Israel
 - 3.2 Usage of the name Israel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings.

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MODULE 1

Unit 1: Thee meaning of Israel

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
 - 3.1 The Meaning of Israel
 - 3.1.1 Origin of the Name Israel
 - 3.2 Usage of the Name Israel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You are welcomed to the course, CTH 210: The History and Religion of Israel.

Since the history and Religion of Israel is central to Christianity, it is an important course for all Christians to study. In this unit, we shall examine the historical background of the people of Israel and generally explore the Origin of the name Israel and discusses its usage. However, the important point for you is to be able to understand the basis for studying the people of Israel as the beginning of the history of human race.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Understand the people of Israel.
Trace the origin of the name Israel
Give the usage of the name Israel.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Origin of the Name 'Israel'

There are two different traditions in Israel regarding the origin of its name. These traditions are ancient because they have been contained in Hosea 12:4-5. According to one account (Gen.32:22-31), the name Israel was bestowed on Jacob at phanuel near East of the Jordan. According to the other account (Gen. 35:9-15), God changed the patriarch's name from Jacob to Israel after he had left phanuel and returned to Bethel. The first account ventures a folk etymology and is boldly anthropomorphic. It also depicts Jacob wrestling with God or the Angel of the Lord and stresses the patriarch's victory, whereas the second account offers no conjecture on the origin or meaning of the name. From the view point of etymology, the actual derivation and meaning of Israel (yistel) still remains uncertain up to date. However, it is believed that it is theophoric, proper noun "el" (God), as in El-lohim, El-shadah. If the verbal component is the root "Sry", the name "Israel" means "God, contends". But if related root is "Srr" or yrs (both of which occur in Arabic but in the name Hebrew, the name Israel" would mean "God shrines forth" or "God heals" "Israel" is from respectively.

3.2 Usage of the Name Israel

The name Israel implies the Biblical name of the people of God and of its anonymous ancestor who was also called Jacob. The Bible insists that the name Israel was conferred on the patriarch Jacob by God. Yet there are divergent accounts of its bestowal on him and various theories regarding its meaning. Besides, being used to designate the Patriarch, the name "Israel" is more frequently used as a collective title for his blood or spiritual descendants, "the children of Israel" or "the House of God." The name "Israel" is also used as a mere substitute for the personal name Jacob. It is frequently used as tribe of Israel. Thus, in Ex. 1:1 the name "Israel" is frequent in the phrase "the sons or children of Israel (b'ne yisrael), which is used of the immediate sons of Jacob. It is used along with such terms as "the seed of Israel, the house of Israel, and the assembly of Israel to describe the descendants of Jacob.

The name Israel alone is applied to the immediate family of Jacob in Gen. 34:7. Prior to the secession of the Northern tribes and again after the restoration of the people of the Southern kingdom, Israel designated the entire people of God. During the period of the existence of the Northern kingdom, Israel signified that kingdom in contradistinction to the Southern kingdom which was called Judah. In post-exilic times, Israel was occasionally used to designate the laity in contrast to the priests, the Levitical Orders and the temple servant (I Chr. 9:2; Ezz 6:16, Neh 11:3). As used by St. Paul, the term is more complex. It may signify the elect of the new dispensation, the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:19), the unconverted Jews, "Israel according to the flesh" (I Cor. 10:18).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

(1) Name the two traditions concerning the origin of the people of Israel

- (2) Discuss the two senses of using the name Israel.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Though, we have examined the origin of the name Israel and the usage of the name, it is equally essential to note that the name Israel is often used as Biblical name for the people of God and the anonymous ancestors, called Jacob. It is also used more frequently of the descendants of Jacob. The origin of the name is uncertain up to date. However, there are two different traditions in Israel regarding its name. From the view point of etymology, the name Israel is a compound word combining verb and the proper noun “el” (God). If the verbal component is the root Sry, the names Israel mean “God contends” or “God is strong, sovereign, He rules”. But if the verbal root is yrs or Srr (both of which occur in Arabic but not in Hebrew), the name mean respectively “God shines forth” or “God heals”.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the origin of the name Israel, the two accounts concerning the name Israel, the two senses of using the name and the meaning within the constraints of space, the basic aspects of those components have been highlighted in such a manner as would help your understanding of the course. Towards meeting the overall modular goal of introducing the History and Religion of Israel, however, you will still need to read the next four units

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Give two traditions concerning the origin of the name Israel and discuss the two senses of using the name.

7.0 References/Further Readings

The Holy Bible (RSV or NIV).

John, Mauchline (1978). *God's people Israel*: Ibadan: Daystar Press, pp. 50-70

Hester, H.I. (1940). *The Heart of Hebrew History: A study of the Old Testament*, Missouri: The William Jewell Press, pp. 45-78.

Kwesi, Dickson (1969). *The History and Religion of Israel*. London Darton, Longman and Todd, pp. 30-46.

Max Kadushim (1938), *Organic Thinking: A study in Rabbinic Thought*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, P.145-150.

Ziv Yaron (1976), “Religion in Israel,” *American Jewish year Book*, vol. 76, pp. 41-90.

Joseph Friedenson (1978), *A History of Agudat Israel*, New York: Agudath of American.

Eliazer Don-Yehiya (1981), “Origins and Development of the Agudah and Mafdal parties”, *Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 20. pp. 84-96.-6.

UNIT 2: ISRAEL AS THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Man, the chosen creature of God
 - 3.1.1 The fall of man and its consequences
 - 3.1.2 Consequences of the fall
 - 3.1.3 Promise of salvation
 - 3.2 Purpose for the choice of Israel
 - 3.3 The Hebrew Patriarchs
 - 3.4 Life among the Hebrews
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In first unit of this module, we have learned about the origin, meaning and usage of the name Israel. We discovered that it is a necessary preliminary step in the effort to introduce History and Religion of Israel to students. In continuation of the quest to gradually lead students to a full comprehension of what the course is about, this second unit explains the second component of the course, title, namely man, the chosen creature of God.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Narrate the story of man as the chosen creature
- Explain the purpose for God's choice of Israel
- Discuss God's choice of the Hebrew patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph).
- Discuss the religious and social life of the Hebrew people.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Man: The chosen creature of God

There are two accounts of the creation of man. The first and more recent account (Gen. 1:1-2,4), relates to the creation of the universe, whose summit is man while the second, older and account (Gen. 2:4-3,24), which belongs to the Yahwist tradition deals primarily with the creation and destiny of man. The first which would be dated to the (6th century B.C.), describes in majestic and almost liturgical style, the creation of the universe and man. It belongs to the "Priestly" tradition and manifests its main characteristics: a preoccupation with theology and liturgy, sober style, logical and carefully arranged presentation.

The detailed list of creatures is typically Semitic; where a Greek would have been content to declare that God created the world. The logic and clarity of the priestly code show clearly in the listing of the creatures. The works of creation are set forth in an order that moves from the general to the particular, and from the less perfect to the more perfect, and can be divided into two groups: (1) Separation of the elements and (2) The preoccupation with rituals. This literary device was meant to remind the Israelites that the Sabbath rest made by God. The logical purpose of the author was not to give scientific details about the creation of things, the logical order in which the creation was placed or the artificial frame work with light created before the sun, but to teach the followings:

(a) That the creator is one God, distinct from the world and anterior to it. Compared with the Mesopotamian myths, the Bible accounts stands out in the transcendence and purity of its monotheism. God does not come out of chaos like the gods of Babylon, and he is not distinct from the universe he creates. We are creatures of the one God; though the Semitic peoples were given to star-worship. The biblical writers make it clear that the stars shining so brightly in the eastern sky are only created things.

(b) That, God created the world with wisdom. Every thing was planned in order and harmony the plants with their seeds, the animals able to reproduce, and all was arranged with the view to giving man dominion over the world. God created the universe by his words omnipotence. God created things effortlessly, by his words alone. God said, and it was so". The fact that God deliberated with himself before creating man, the account of that creation (Gen 1:27), reveals important truth in concrete language namely, the special inter-evection of God in forming the first man and woman. This first account of creation left God's hands as something good. "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

The second, and oldest account which we date from 10th or 11th century BC, belongs to the yahwist tradition. The fall describes the first state of man and woman, and its consequences, which mark man's present state and put him in the situation of needing to be saved. The subject is treated with a seriousness, delicacy and gravity that make these pages the finest in Genesis. The author used language and oriental imagery that would make the story so exquisite and to translate religious teaching in a way that all could grasp. We can divide the main teachings into four groups in this order

- (a) Those dealing with man and woman
- (b) Those dealing with the fall
- (c) Those dealing with the consequences of sin and
- (d) Those dealing with the promise of salvation.

In order to teach that God created man and gave him life, the author, having observed that man disintegrates into dust after death, and must breathe to live, describes God forming the first man out of clay and breathing the breath of life into his nostrils. Man's superiority to the animals and his role as leader are expressed in the verses in which he names animals (Gen 2:20), and the woman (Gen 2:23). The dignity of the woman comes precisely from her being like man and therefore of the same nature: The image of the woman taken from man's side expresses the identity of nature between man and woman, complementary divine origin of marriage. (Gen 2:21-24). The state of innocence in which the man and woman were created is expressed by the absence of carnal concupiscence: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Gen 2:25).

3.1.1 The fall of man and its consequences

The story of the fall man does not seem to be uniform. We note that two trees are mentioned: the tree of life that was in the midst of the garden in which man dwelt, so that we can conclude that he had access to its fruits. He enjoyed the gift personal immortality, until the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was the beginning of man's awareness of moral conflict, and the clash between God's will and his desires which made him to disobedience to God. The author describes how man listened to the insidious whisperings of the serpent, and articulate desires or appetites within him, and ate the forbidden fruits under penalty of death. He did not only listen to his own promptings and had disobeyed God's law but had risen up in presumption against God. The tempter is shown in the guise of a serpent, because that was an image often linked with the fertility cults, so widespread in the East, which attracted the lukewarm among the Israelites and drew them away from the worship of Yahweh.

The first sin of man is shown as pride in the form of serious disobedience to God. The knowledge of good and evil means in effects "the power to decide what is good and evil for oneself and to act accordingly". According to symbolism of the story, eating of the tree that gives that knowledge against God's command represents "a claim to moral autonomy", whereby man rejects his creaturely status, and reverses the order established by God.

This spirit of revolt shows how serious this first sin was. Thus, for one to interpret it literally in terms of a tree and fruit is not only to misunderstand the account but also minimize the importance of the sin.

3.1.2 Consequences of the fall

Man suffered the following penalties as .the result of his presumption and sin against God.

- (I) The lost of friendship with God, God drove man out of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:23-24).
- (ii) Death: The blessedness man had been lost; and the gift of personal immortality was denied him. The only immortality which man has now is in his descendants who keep his name alive in the human community.

(iii) Sufferings and Pains. The distressing facts of human life and activity which were not part of God's original plan for mankind: were now experienced by mankind. The serpent's hostility to man, woman's pain at child-birth, man's unending toil for his daily bread are all consequences of the fall of mankind. Thus, man's present painful state is linked with original sin because before the fall mankind had to cultivate and keep the Garden of Eden. It is only the toil element that results from sin. These penalties laid upon man were not part of God's original intention but were imposed on mankind as punishments for disobedience.

3.1.3 The Promise of salvation

Despite the tragic fall of man, with its consequences of pain and punishment, the door of hope was not closed. A gleam of hope came with the promise of salvation in man's struggle with the devil; God declares that man will have a final victory. This promise is called the *proto-evangelium*" because it is the far-off, announcement of the salvation that is to come.

3.1.4 Purpose for the Choice of Israel

The choice of Israel as the people of God had no history of imperial greatness. Apart from the smallness of its numbers, Israel was destined even geographically to be a buffer state and Empire. Yet, it had in the purpose of God, an office to fulfill which could bring its political greatness and honor of a distinctive kind. The office of Israel was to be the servant of the Lord to take the knowledge of true religion to the ends of the earth, and to lead mankind into the way of life. As the Lord says:

You are a holy people unto the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6).

Israel was not chosen because of any inherent greatness or spiritual pride but their choice was an act of God's love:

The Lord did not cleave to you nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all peoples; but because the Lord loved you and because he would keep the Oath which he had sworn to your fathers that the Lord brought out with a might land, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the land of Pharaoh, king of Egypt" (Deut 7:7).

Since Israel had been so chosen by God their primary responsibility was to be faithful to demands. Between God and Israel, there was a fellowship of life and activity. God promised that he would not turn back from His purpose and would not fail His people. He would be constant in His goodness and would keep righteousness. He would be true to himself. His people, on their part, must remain faithful. "And it shall be our righteousness if we observe all these commandments before Lord our God, as He has commanded us" (Deut 6:25).

If Israel remained faithful in God's service; they would be blessed by success and prosperity. If you hearken to these judgments and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep into you the covenant and the mercy which He swear unto your father; and He will love you, and bless you multiply you; also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your corn and wine and your oil, the increase of your kin and the flocks of your sheep, in the land which He swear unto your fathers to give you" (Deut 7:12f).

This promise was to be faithfully kept by the descendants of Israel from generation to generation as the people chosen by God to fulfill His divine plan.

3.1.5 The Hebrew Patriarchs

The Hebrew Patriarchs are the twelve sons of Jacob who represent the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve sons are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin (Gen 29:32-30:24; 35:18). Levi, though one of the twelve sons of Israel is usually omitted from biblical passages listing the tribes of Israel. The descendants of Levi were consecrated as priests to God and were responsible for the services of the tabernacle in the wilderness and later with the temple in Jerusalem. Instead of receiving land as an inheritance in Palestine, the Levites received tithes and offerings from the children of Israel (Numbers 18; Duet, 18 etc).

Although Joseph was also one of Jacob's sons, his name also is usually omitted from the list of the tribes of Israel. This is because the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, were adopted by Jacob in Joseph's stead (Gen 48). Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, had two wives and two concubines by whom he had twelve (12) sons and a daughter. These twelve sons later become the ancestors of the tribes of Israel.

At different times, for various reasons, the Bible listed the 12 tribes of Israel but excluded two of Jacob's sons and replaced them with two sons of Joseph (who is one of Jacob's sons). But their father, Israel, gave Joseph a double portion, so that each of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh became a tribe rather than just one tribe of Joseph (Gen 48:5). This choice of Joseph children increased the tribes of Israel to the total of thirteen tribes. However, the tribe of Levi received no contiguous region of land like the other tribes. Instead, the Levites were given the cities suburbs, scattered over the lands of other tribes Numbers 35:1-8). Thus, they were twelve tribes that had contiguous region of land, instead of thirteen tribes with the addition of Ephraim and Manasseh.

After the reign of King Solomon, around 930 BC, the kingdom of Israel was divided into two. The ten northern tribes rebelled against king Rehoboam, the son of David, of the tribe of Judah. The ten northern tribes (including Simeon) made Jeroboam, one of the sons of Solomon's servants, their king. While the southern tribes Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam, who reigned from the capital city of Jerusalem.

3.1.6 Life among the Hebrews

The Hebrew were nomadic people who live in tents and move frequently, having a time no home, but looking forward for the time they would be at home in the land of promise. They were shepherds, farmers and artists who seem to have been acquainted with some arts works they were not crude and barbaric in culture as often held by other tribes. Their life was flavored with certain refinements, hospitality, courteous entertainment, and an appreciation of finer things

The Hebrew were also wealthy people who had, in addition to their great flocks and herds, abundance of jewelry (rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, jewels set in silver and gold), and precious metals which they used as money. Their religious life seems to have been very simple. They erected altars, made their

sacrifices and offerings of the tithes to God in genuine and simple prayers in time of special needs. Their religious life was without the elaborate forms that later developed, but was humble and sincere.

The Hebrew's attitude towards God was one of genuine reverence and real faith. They were examples of the quality of their faith by the great respect that was always accorded to the rights and interests of other people. They touched the foremost civilizations of the time and displayed the finest traits of oriental culture such as hospitality, generosity and courtesy. Abraham was a dignified chieftain and was accepted by his contemporaries as a distinguished adviser and citizen.

The Hebrew government was simple, being patriarchal in nature. The central idea of government was high position of authority held by the father or head of the tribe. His authority was extended to every area of life. In the family, he was the chief leader and his wife and all the children seek for his guidance and judgment in all the cases. He was head of the house. Even after their marriage, his children were subjected to him as long as he lived.

In case of his death, the eldest son assumed leadership of the family. However, his authority seems to have been a benevolent one, neither autocratic nor tyrannical. The chief was also the leader. He served as priest in religious matters. In civil affairs he was the judge whose decision usually was final. In the orient today this idea still prevails to a remarkable extent.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- (1) Why did man fall?
- (2) What are the consequences of the fall of man?
- (3) What was the purpose for God's choice of Israel?
- (4) Who are the Hebrew Patriarchs?
- (5) List five features of life among the Hebrews

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have learnt about man as the chosen creature of God, his fall and consequences, God's promise of salvation, the purpose of God's choice of Israel, the Hebrew patriarchs and life among the Hebrews. However, the question of Monogenism such as: Did the human race originate from one couple or from several?, does humanity belong to a single phylum, or several? or Has it one human founder or several? Remained unanswered, we have also learnt that to address the questions of monogenism one must first question how many couples the human race is descended. This will help in resolving the dilemma of monogenism and polygenism as well as monophyletism and polygenism both on the theological and scientific levels.

In other words, for us to resolve this dilemma between monogenism and polygenism, Genesis Chapters 1-3 must be taken into isolation. In this chapter, Adam and Eve are considered to be specific individuals. We may say therefore, that the texts deal with a single pair and not collective beings. God, in His unique and transcendent nature made heaven and earth, is the same God who chose Abraham, who was made flesh, and now gives every man the possibility of being saved. He is also the same God who at the end of time will raise the living and the dead. Man was created in God's image, and he should remember

this in all his dealings with his fellow man. Creation, as a work of God's omnipotence, makes the whole universe and especially man radically dependent on the creator.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this module, we have seen that man was the chosen creature of God and he was created male and female in the moral likeness and image of God. We also saw that Man's superiority to the animals and his roles as leader is expressed in the names he gave to the animals and the woman God gave him. As the chosen creature, man was created to live for eternal happiness. But unfortunately, man's disobedience to God for eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil brought sufferings, pains and even death into the world. The friendship between God and man came to an end.

The lost of the gift of integrity and the awakening of concupiscence are also noted as the most expensive manifestation of the disorder brought into the harmony of creation by man's revolt. However, God promise salvation or *proto-evagelium* for man and his descendants.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Why is man regarded as the chosen creature of God?
2. Why did man fall? What are the consequences for his fall?
3. What was the promise of salvation God made to man?
4. What was the purpose God had for the choice of Israel?
5. Discuss the social and religious life of the Hebrew people.

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Unit 3 ISRAEL AS COVENANTAL PEOPLE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we learnt the origin, meaning and the usage of the name Israel. In the subsection on the origin of the name Israel, we have presented two traditions concerning the etymology of Israel. In this unit, our focus will be on the history of Israel as covenantal people. Many scholars are of the view that this period is the most significant one in the history of Hebrew race. For many years, there have been competent scholars who hold that with Abraham, we have the real beginning of the Hebrew people as a race. Abraham was selected for this purpose and this idea dominates the covenant relationship between God and them. In both Old and New Testament, this idea is emphasized. The Hebrew people themselves always looked upon Abraham as founder and father. With him, a new era in history was inaugurated. After Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph became in turn the depositaries of the divine promise.

Like him, they are semi-nomad existing in Canaan as shepherds, moving every season, till the day when the sons of Jacob and himself arrived in Egypt and dominated the country for a long time, leaving Semitic elements among them.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the development of Hebrew covenants in Old Testament
- Define the term covenant
- Trace the historical development of Old Testament Covenant.
- Explain the differences between a covenant and a treaty
- Examine the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Israel.
- Show how the covenants were fulfilled by God.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 What is a covenant?

A covenant is an agreement between two parties or a bond that binds two or more persons/parties together. It is a solemn promise made binding by an oath which may be either a verbal formula or a symbolic action (Mendenhall, 1982:714). Sometimes, this is the undertaking of one of the parties. In the Bible, God is regarded as the witness of this pact (Gen. 31:50, 1Sam. 20:8). God in expressing Himself through the covenant has taken something that is already understood as the starting point of a

relationship. It is the core of the Hebrew understanding of their relationship with God, as well as an important means of regulating behavior between people, especially in the area of international relations.

A covenant in this sense is different from Suzerainty treaty which spelled out the terms of relationship between the Hittite state and the vassals (lesser group of peoples). It is an agreement between parties of unequal ranks—a strong king and a weak one. The strong king offered to protect the subjects (peoples) in exchange for their support and tribute. This was the only choice for many peoples who were caught between larger powers, and it provided for them a means of security amid troubled time.

Etymologically, the Hebrew word "berith" is used for covenant and it occurs more than 200 times, many of these referring to covenants or treaties or agreements made between men. The covenant between Laban and Jacob is an example of this type (Genesis 31:44,45). But we find that the same term is used to describe God's dealings with mankind. God chooses something familiar to people in order to impart divine truth, and the Old Testament covenants are a striking example of this. Covenants between God and humans show the free movement of God towards humanity, in grace. The initiative and form of such covenants are within God's authority, not humans.

Unlike human covenants, these are not made between equals. God is active, blessing, giving, commanding, and arranging; humans are passive, receiving, submitting, believing. The word "testament" derives from the Latin translation of "covenant". To prevent confusion of these terms this article will use the abbreviations "OT" and "NT" to designate the collection of books known as the Old Testament and New Testament respectively. The word *berîṯ* occurs 286 times in the Masoretic text. Despite extensive research on its etymology its verbal root remains unidentified and its meaning must be determined from its usage alone.

Depending on the context it can be translated as "treaty", "pact", "agreement", "solemn promise", "and obligation" or more familiarly as "covenant". As this latter term is used in English to express the idea of a solemn binding agreement it matches the semantic range of *berîṯ* very well (Nicholson, 1986: 105-106). ἑλεσθηκη Greek word for covenant is used 270 times in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *berîṯ*.

In the NT it occurs 33 times (7 citing the OT). It has a similar semantic range to *berîṯ*, but includes one additional meaning for which it was commonly used in Greek jurisprudence, that of a "testament" or "will". This meaning is added to the concept of covenant by the New Testament writers from their use of the Septuagint and forms a distinct development in the concept of covenant in the theology of Paul and the writer to the Hebrews particularly.

Types of Covenant

There are two main types of covenant in the Old Testament. The first is an agreement between equals called a *parity* agreement. (The best OT example is [4.2.8](#) below, but note also [4.2.11](#).) The second, between a Lord and his vassal, is known as a *suzerainty* or *vassal* treaty. (The best OT example is [4.2.5](#).) Typically the parties of the former type of covenant refer to each other as "brothers", while parties to the second call themselves "Lord" and "Son".

Korosec identified six basic elements in the structure of Late Bronze Age Hittite treaties, but it should be noted that not every treaty contained all of these elements (Mendenhall, 1992: 1180). These elements are as follows:

(a) **Title / Preamble.** This identified the giver of the treaty, his titles and the nature of the relationship between that parties (whether parity or suzerainty). In the Old Testament there were two kinds of treaty: the *parity treaties* and *suzerain-vassal treaties*. These were typically set up at specific transition times in the relationships between nations, and formalized the nature and obligations of the relationship. There are clear differences between them, as shown by examples outside of the Biblical text.

Parity treaties were made between two essentially equal parties. Typically they refer to each other as '*brother*' and contain details of mutually beneficial actions. As a non-Biblical example we have the treaty made between Ramesses II and Hattusilis III. Happily, both the Hittite and Egyptian versions of this still survive for study and comparison.

The second major kind of treaty was made between two unequal parties. The suzerain or Great King imposed conditions on the junior or vassal party.

If on good terms, the two might be called '*father*' and '*son*', if not then '*lord*' and '*servant*'. Such a treaty typically set obligations on both parties (for example military protection would be provided to the vassal by the suzerain) but the disparity of the two parties was always evident. The vassal was bound by an exclusive relationship with the suzerain.

The content of treaties is reasonably well-known to us from a wide variety of sources, as are the arrangements for periodic renewal and succession in the event of one or other ruler dying. However, we have little information as to the rituals and practices accompanying either the initial establishment of a treaty or its renewal. Slaughtering of animal sacrifices and the sharing of a ritual meal between both parties and their gods were, however, common elements in binding agreements in the Middle East. In some of the surviving treaties there is an obligation on the vassal to visit the suzerain annually to renew the vows, and it is possible that this underlies the requirement on the Israelites to assemble annually at the great festivals.

b) Historical Prologue. The history of the relationship between the two powers was recalled in order to make the vassal feel obligated to the suzerain because of the benefits he had received in the past. Out of gratitude the vassal would then seek to fulfil the suzerain's wishes which followed. It is important to note that in order to instil this sense of obligation the history of relationship recounted had to be factual (Hillers, 1969:31).

c) Stipulations. Typically these were casuistic in form, i.e. "If you do such and such a thing, then you act in disregard to your oath." They commonly included the following requirements: no alliances were allowed with other nations; no enmity was permitted with other vassal states; the vassal must mobilise its armies when called upon by the suzerain; the vassal must be loyal to the suzerain; no asylum must be given to refugees (cf. 1 Kings 11:40); vassals must appear before the suzerain annually (usually with tribute) (cf. Exod. 23:17); and disputes between vassals were to be settled by the suzerain.

The treaty had to be made known to the people of the vassal state and become a part of their thinking. Deposit in the temple placed it at the heart of their society and emphasised that there was no higher appeal that could be made against its commands and served to remind the gods of their obligations.

e) The list of witnesses. The deities of both the suzerain and vassal are called upon to witnesses and enforce the treaty. Often the gods of mutual enemies were included in order to ensure that there could be no power to whom the vassal could legitimately appeal. In addition to the gods the "(deified) mountains, rivers, springs, sea, heaven and earth, the winds and the clouds" were also listed (Mendenhall, 1955:34). Enforcement of a covenant by the gods themselves was intended to make it self-policing and reduce the need for military force.

Clearly it was inappropriate for other deities to be included in the biblical covenants (cf. Deut. 4:35), but not for certain elements of the world to be referred to as witnesses to divine statements (Deut. 32:1; Isa. 1:2; Mic. 6:1-2). The idea of witnesses to covenants is apparent in the setting up of piles of stones and pillars (Gen. 31:44-52; Josh. 22:25-26), while at other times the Israelites themselves served as witnesses (24:22-23).

f) Blessings and Curses. Obedience to the terms of the covenant brought corresponding blessings and disobedience cursings similar to those described in Deuteronomy 28. Later Iron Age covenants significantly contained only curses.

g) Oath & Solemn Ceremony. The most common method of ratifying a treaty involved the cutting up of an animal. The unspoken implication was that if the covenant was broken, then the offender would become like the animal. It is thought that from this ceremony is derived the common Hebrew idiom *karat berît* - "to cut a covenant" (Gen. 15:18; Jer. 34:18) (Hillers, 1969:41). Whatever the original derivation of the term it seems to have meant simply "to make a covenant" (Nicholson, 1986: 102).

h) Note of Sanctions. If the treaty were to be broken the suzerain could then act as the agent of the deities and attack the vassal kingdom.

Although much of the early evidence is fragmentary, Kenneth Kitchen has successfully traced the development of the structure of the covenants. Those which bear the closest relationship with the Sinai Covenant date from the mid second millennium BC. He concludes that there is no warrant for dating this covenant later than around 1 200 BC (Kitchen, 1977: 79-85). In later Iron Age treaties military force and coercion replaced the moral concepts of obligation, loyalty and fear of supernatural agents. What was implicit in the earlier treaties was now made explicit (Mendenhall, 1992:1182-1183).

Table 1: The Structure of the Suzerainty Covenant (Mid Second Millennium BC) Compared With the Mosaic Covenant

	<i>deuteronomy</i>	<i>deuteronomy</i>	<i>deuteronomy</i>
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<i>e / Preamble</i>		5	-2
<i>Historical Prologue</i>		3:29	13
<i>Regulations, basic & detailed</i>	17, 22-26; 21-23, 25-26; Lev. 1-25	11 12-26	4-15 (16-25)
<i>Provision for a) deposit in the temple and b) periodic public reading</i>	5:16; cf. 34:1, 28, 29	1:9;24-26 1:10-13	4:26 34
<i>List of witnesses</i>		6-30, 26; 32:1-2	2
<i>Blessings and curses</i>	ev.26:3-13 6:14-33	8:1-14 8:15-68	implicit in 24:19-20 (cf. 25:16)
<i>Witnesses & Solemn promises</i>	d. 24:1-11	t. 27:1-8	35
<i>Conclusion (List of Sanctions)</i>		t. 32	

The people soon violated the covenant and made its renewal necessary by setting up and worshipping the golden calf (32:1-24). Moses broke the stone tablets of the covenant and cleansed the camp with the help of the Levites. Punishment for violating the covenant came from the Lord in the form of a plague (32:25-35). The incident brought about a change in the way in which the Lord would be manifested amongst His people. He would fulfil his promise that he made to the Patriarchs (33:1-3), because He is abounding in *hesed* (covenant faithfulness) (34:5-7). However, from that point onwards His presence would be manifested to Moses alone (33:14).

3.3 The Development of Hebrew Covenants

Archaeology has provided us with examples of covenants making dating from around 750 BC as far back as the third millennium. The idea of the development of this covenant in Old Testament is implicit in the promises made to many patriarchs of Israelites. It began with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 and it is reflected in God's merciful promise to Cain (Gen. 4:15) in marking him so that no one would slay him. Properly the covenant idea does not appear before God's promises to Noah.

3.3.1 Covenant with Noah (or Covenant with Creation)

The first reference to covenant in Scripture is found in Gen. 6:18. However, the way in which it is used here when God speaks of "establishing his covenant" with Noah indicates that this was merely the continuation of a relationship that was already in existence (cf. Gen. 17:7, 19, 21; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:9;

Deut. 8:18; 2 Kings 23:3; Jer. 34:18). The terms of this pre-existing relationship are not stated explicitly, but W. J. Dumbrell (1984) has argued that it is possible to deduce them from the earlier chapters of Genesis and the contents of the description of its renewal in Genesis 9. **a) Divine image and kingship.** Man was created in the image of God and established as ruler (under God) of all of creation (Gen. 1:26-28; cf. 9:1, 7). **b) Rest.** The setting aside of the seventh day (2:2-3) is an important theme in Scripture (Deut. 3:20; Josh. 11:23; 14:15; Heb. 4:11). **c) Covenant Demand.** The divine command given in Gen. 2:15-18 was intended to prevent man from moving beyond his assigned sphere of control and intruding on an area rightly reserved for Deity alone. Adam's failure to do so and its consequences are described in chapter 3.

Following the **flood** the covenant is re-established with Noah as the representative of both mankind and the creation. The role of man and creation are described which take into account both the divine purposes described in Genesis 1-2 while taking into account the consequences of the Fall (9:1-6; cf. 1:26-30). The Lord promises that the **flood** would not be repeated and confirms this with the sign of the rainbow, which serves to remind Him of His eternal promise (9:11-17). (Dumbrell, 1984:33-39). The element of command is evident in the prohibitions against murder and the consumption of blood (9:4-6).

Notice that even before the flood God says to Noah: "I will establish my covenant with you..." (Gen. 6:18). God then told Noah that he and his family are to come into the ark. Here the basis of the covenant as solemn promise is apparent, for God takes the initiative to promise Noah and his family deliverance.

The covenant is then sealed after the flood (Gen. 9:1-17). Notice here, the covenant is not merely a contract between two parties. God comes to Noah and his sons to announce that he will establish his covenant with them and with every living creature. The scope then of this promise is not limited to Noah and his seed, but is universal; that all creation is included indicates how little God expected a conscious, favorable reply!) There are no conditions given, and the validity is to "all generations". As a sign of God's promise the rainbow become symbolic of the covenant between God and the earth (V.13). Keeping the condition of God's promises to Noah, Even before the flood, God says to Noah that He will make a covenant with him" (Gen. 6:18), Then God told Noah that he and his family are to come into the ark. Here the basis of the covenant as solemn promise is apparent, for God takes the initiative to promise Noah and his family deliverance.

3.3.2 The Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15 & 17)

The Lord made covenants with Abraham twice (Gen. 15 & 17), but both are developments of the initial promises made in Genesis 12:2-7. The promises form three distinct strands: **a) Descendants** (12:2; 15:5; 17:4-5; 22:17); **b) Land** (12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:18) **c) Blessing to the nations** (12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Elements a) and b) can be seen expressed in the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 1:8, 11; 4:37-38; Josh. 1:2-6; Psalm 105:8-11; Jer. 3:18). The third element rarely occurs under the Mosaic covenant (Psalm 72:17; Isa. 2:2-4; 49:1-6; Jer. 1:5; 4:1-2; Jonah 1-3), but is developed by Paul as an important element in the New Covenant. (See 3.6.4). Genesis 15 describes the covenant ceremony by which the Lord confirms his promise that Abraham will possess the land. The details of the ceremony (15:9-21) are usually linked with a similar passage in Jeremiah 34 (vv.18-22) and seen in terms of an enacted curse: the party who violated the covenant was bound to become like the slain animals.

Instead of walking between the separated bodies Abraham was sent into a deep sleep (v.12) and so the Lord passed through alone (v.17) and this is generally seen as indicating that he was solely obligated to fulfil the covenant promises. However, other passages in Genesis make it clear that Abraham still had a part to play in the covenant relationship (Gen. 17:1-4; 18:19; 22:2, 16-18; 26:4-5) (Youngblood, 1983: 36-41). The basis of this covenant is present in Genesis 12: 1-3, where God calls Abram to leave his home and promised to make him a great nation. In chapter 15, in response to Abram's question about his possessing the land (V. 8), God performs with Abram a solemn rite concluding in verse 18: "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram". Nothing could assure the certainty of this promise more than this solemn ceremony sealed by God's path (see Jer. 34:18-22). First he promises to give the land (see also Gen 17:8). (That this reference is to the Davidic Empire is hinted at in 17:6, where God promises that "Kings shall come forth from you."). Then God promises that Abram will become the father of a great nation, in fact, of "a multitude of nations" (17:4). Finally, God pledges to be God to them and to their descendants after them. (17:7)

God's initiative is once again in the forefront, God is the suzerain (15:18; 17:7). The covenant is finally to be entered (17:19) for all their descendants after them. Isaac is specifically included in this covenant (17:21), the first in the long line of descendants that will know God as their God and become his people. Ishmael is blessed but pointedly excluded from the covenant (17:20). In this instance Abraham and his seed must "keep" the covenant (17:10-14). As a sign of this every male shall be circumcised (V. 10), and any one that is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people. M.G Kline believes the cutting off circumcision to be symbolic of the curse pronounced on any one who breaks the covenant-1968, 43), here is the first sign of reciprocity in the covenant. On the one hand, it is hard to conceive of circumcision as an obligation in the sense of stipulation. Rather, it is a "Sign" of the covenant "a guarantee through time of the validity of Yahweh's oath" (Mendenhall 1962). As in the case of the rainbow, circumcision was to be an identifying marker of those who were later to share in God's promise.

On the other hand, their grateful participation in the grace that God was extending was registered by their faithfulness in circumcising their children. It served as a type of the ordinances that were later to be signs of God's promises: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Circumcision was to be the symbol of purification of their lives later explained in the elaboration of covenant law. All of this is an expression of God's desire for communion with his covenant people. And while the covenant was unconditional in the sense that God would never forget his promises and leave himself without a witness; that is, those who would respond in faith to these promises; the continuance of each individual in the blessings of these promises was contingent upon their response of faith. Failure to undergo circumcision meant exclusion from the promises and suffering the consequences of the sanctions of the covenant (17:14) - probably divinely imposed in the form of a premature death (cf. Exod. 4:24-26) (Wenham, 1979: 285-286).

3.3.2.1 Abraham's positive Response and migration

Abraham responds positively to God's command and call through obedience, submission and worship (Gen 12:4-5 12:7-9, 17:3-17). He obeyed God and left for where he was commanded to go (Gen 12:4-5). He departed into the unknown, with no security apart from God's words to follow the call he heard. He submitted totally and did not argue with Him. He arrived in Canaan and built an altar to worship God. Abraham began his journey from the city of Ur of the Chaldees, and moved northward to Haran, the

valley in Mesopotamia. He journeyed southward and entered Canaan around 18050 BC, where he was going and came to the plain of Moreb, where he felt impelled to pitch his tents.

It was here Abraham built an altar to God who appeared to him and promised that he would give the land of Shechem to him. But the Canaanites were in the land and for this reason Abraham moved to Bethel. He pitched his tent on the plain, east of the village and built an altar to worship God. Breaking the camp at Bethel, Abraham continued to move southward and entered the land of Egypt, but was afraid of Pharaoh and so persuaded his wife to pose as his own sister. God was angry with Pharaoh and sent plagues upon him for taking Abraham's wife, Sarah. When Pharaoh discovered the truth of the matter, in great fear, and he ordered Abraham and Sarah to leave the land, making rich gifts to them. Abraham returned with Sarah back to Bethel and made his second stop at Canaan, where he stayed for some time and built a house. But his flocks and herds, as well as those of Lot, his nephew multiplied so rapidly that crisis developed between their herdsmen.

This compelled Lot to move down to the fertile valley of Jordan, where pasture and water was in abundance, while Abraham moved to Hebron in the Southern Palestine, where he considered as his home. God promised to give this goodly land to him and his descendants. Hebron was an accident city located at the head of a valley on an elevated plain. It was famous for good pasture and fine vineyards. Here, Abraham had many notable experiences, including the visitations of God under the famous Oaks of Mamre. He also sought a burial place for himself and his family, the historic cave of Machpelah, where he, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and others of his family were buried. God appeared again to Abraham reviewing the covenant and promising that he would have a son of his own blood. Abraham and Sarah, though married for many years, were without a heir and God promised that he would be the father of a race. His seed would be as the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens in number. Abraham accepted in faith and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Even after God had spoken to Abraham a period of time passed and yet there was no sign of fulfillment of the promise of a son. Abraham was ninety-nine years of age when God once more appeared to him and assured him that the time had come for the fulfillment of the promise. Sarah was to be the mother of his son, but he himself and all male descendants hereafter should submit to the rite of circumcision. His name was to be changed from Abraham (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). At first Sarah doubted, and even laughed at what appeared so utterly impossible. This son was to be called Isaac meaning laughter.

3.3.3 The Mosaic Covenant

After four generations of Abraham's descendants had suffered slavery in Egypt it was time for the promise made in Genesis 15:16 to be fulfilled (Exod. 2:24). Revealing Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Yahweh sent Moses to lead His people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (3:7-14; 6:2-5). At Sinai the terms of the covenant are revealed in a form that follows very closely the contemporary Hittite suzerainty treaties (See 2 above) as shown in Table 1. Like the Hittite treaties Israel's obligation to Yahweh is derived from His gracious acts on their behalf (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). He delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh and has now given this opportunity to serve Him, which they accept (19:3-5; 20:2; cf. Jer. 11:1-8), but it adds no further promise to those given to Abraham (Hillers, 1969:52). After the terms of the covenant had been revealed it was ratified by the people after whom they were sprinkled with the blood of bulls - the blood of the covenant (24:3-9). Finally, Moses, Aaron and the Seventy Elders of Israel ate a covenant meal in the presence of the Lord (24:9-11).

The parallel of this covenant with international treaty forms now become so striking that it is clear that Israel viewed this as the basis of her religious and social life. We saw earlier a fundamental variation from the secular form of treaty: God stood in the place of the king as their ruler, their suzerain, thus, accounting for the ancient antipathy to kingship, (Judges 8:23). Unique also-and following directly from the first difference-is the placing of moral and spiritual values above political and economic considerations. The implications of this for Israel will be seen further alone.

The people were sovereignty chosen and delivered from the house of bondage in Egypt (Ex. 19:4). The motive for this is later expressed as God's love for them (Deut. 7:6-8). Yet as we noted, this choice was also an expression of God's remembrance of his covenant with that fathers (Ex. 2:24). This continuity is particularly evident in the joyful recounting of God's protection in Palms 105: 8-15. The purpose of the Exodus was redemptive, delivering the people from bondage and making it possible for them to worship God in purity and truth (which helps to explain the important but difficult statement in Ex. 3:12; see also Ex. 6:6-8 and 19:4-6). While the treaty parallel suggests a fundamental suzerain-vassal relationship between God and his people, it would be a mistake to limit our understanding of the covenant relation to this. The people are also adopted into a filial relationship with God (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 8:5). He was not only their suzerain he was their father.

In this covenant, definite stipulations are present. Here, keeping the covenant is enlarged to mean Israel's obedient response to God's initiative (Ex. 19:4-5; Deut. 26:16-19). They include both apodictic "You shall not" and case law "If...then, you will". These stipulations are not to be viewed as one of the bases on which the covenant rests the other being God's promise-as though this were a bilateral treaty-but rather the condition of their continuous to enjoyment of the blessings the suzerain promised them. But in this case, since the suzerain is God himself, the stipulations involve a life of obedience in which his holy character-is to be reflected. This idea is summed up in Leviticus 19:2: "You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy."While the promise evident in Abrahamic covenant is not missing, the emphasis here is on the stipulations which God imposes on his people. That is, the covenant made and put in operation is on the basis of God's (the suzerain's) decision. It is because of this prior fact that they were God's people, his personal possession and were urged to reflect this reality by their obedient response. God's choice of them is fixed. Only their continuance in the blessings of that promise is a result of their obedience. This covenant challenge to Israel is a recurrent theme through the books of the kings-sometimes called "the Deuteronomic history".

In these books their continued existence as a nation is made to rest on their faithfulness to their covenant obligations. For the northern kingdom the crucial event was the great sin of Jeroboam (1 Kings 13:33-34). Until the final catastrophe comes, the writer repeats the judgment was against each king. "He walked in the way of Jeroboam." When thus, blow falls and Assyria captures Israel, the reason is clear: "The people of Israel walked in all the sins which Jeroboam did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight". (2 Kings 17:22-23). The curses of the covenant are brought to pass because of Israel's sin. Her doom is sealed.

3.3.4 The Covenant with David

Running side by side with the treaty of Israel in the Deuteronomic history is the promise to David. Here we are impressed again with God's patterns of taking up his promises and repeating them, each time in a larger and more comprehensive framework. God not only remembers his promises, but each time he

speaks of them he throws in additional blessings for good measures. The promise to David, spoken through the prophet Nathan, is found in 2 Sam. 7:12-17. The word covenant does not appear there, though the idea is present. In Palms 89:3-4, 27-28, God's covenant with David is described in much the same terms as his covenant with Abraham. Again its immutable character based on God's initiative is evident-the promise element is to the heir (Ps. 89:3-4; 2 Sam. 7:13). Here, however, a new element is added: to say that he will take David's throne for himself and make it his own to ensure its permanence (2 Sam. 7:16).

The descendants of David are urged to keep his testimonies so that they will continue to sit on the throne (Ps. 132:12), but a novel element is added to the covenant promises: "When he (that is, your offspring) commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men" (2 Sam. 7:14; cf. Deut. 8:5). That kind of judgment could this be that would ensure the continuance of this throne. Now, for a moment, we move ahead several centuries to the post-exilic Chronicles, who again features the covenant of David. The theology of the books of the Chronicles is as part of the most interesting and overlooked-section of the Old Testament. Written sometime around 400 B.C, the books are set in the midst of one of the great challenges to the people of Israel. The refugees have returned from exile and are faced with the immense task of rebuilding the nation.

Where could they draw strength to live in such unsettled times? Would this remnant be able to find a source of strength in its own (southern) traditions? The answer given by the Chronicler is that the rebuilding must be a restoration. Only by recalling the covenant that David received from Moses that was most perfectly realized in the temple worship could God be properly honored. They must remember, moreover, that God is their true king and that David's reign was a sign of this greater reign. Recalling Nathan's promise, the Chronicler reiterates God's intention for the Davidic line: "A son shall be born to you...He shall be my son," God tells David, "and I will be his father and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever" (I Chron. 22:9-10). The idea that a child of God would be the mediator of an eternal covenant had earlier played a role in the servant songs of Isaiah. In Is. 42:1,6, God chooses his servant "my child" in the LXX to bring justice to the nations. "I have given you as a covenant to the people" God says, "a light to the nations" (V. 6). Is. 55:3-4 refers to the everlasting covenant as God's steadfast, sure love for David." Malachi calls this same figure "my messenger" (Mal. 3:1; "Who can endure the day of his coming?").

This rule will be a universal kingdom, involving all nations as God has promised Abraham (Is. 2; 2-4), but bringing judgment (chastening) as well as blessing (Is 2:9-12). The Prophet Jeremiah calls this kingdom a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Writing in the midst of the destruction of all the outward symbols of God's covenant promises just before the exile, Jeremiah insists that God is not finished with his covenant people. One day God promises to make a new covenant, new in the sense that it will be unlike the former covenant which the fathers broke (V. 32). The Hebrew construction here implies that though the new covenant will succeed where the other did not, it will carry forward (as well as supersede) the reality of the Mosaic covenant. What would be the nature of this covenant? First, it would be realized "after those days" (V. 33), that is, after another of God's redemptive acts described earlier in the chapter as a building and gathering (see vv. 4, 10, 16). Second, it would involve placing the law in the heart, which is interpreted as knowing the Lord (v. 34). Israel's failure had been a lack of knowledge (see. 4:22; 8:7 and 24:7). Now by inward revolution knowledge would be natural. Third, this new standing before the Lord would be of or for everyone "from the least of them to the greatest," V. 34, not just for the prophets or priests. Finally, this new relationship would include the forgiveness of

sins (v. 34). Sin would be dealt with in a final way that it would no longer be remembered. In the midst of personal and national tragedies, Jeremiah lifted the hopes of the people and prophesied a new and living way, the new covenant Christ would seal by his blood (cf. Luke. 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25).

Immediately after the exile Ezra and Nehemiah were faced on their return to Jerusalem with widespread syncretism and paganism. It was natural to focus on the covenant as God's reassuring promise and also to attempt to ensure enforcement of the law by political means. If failure to keep the law had been the cause of their tragedies, they must ensure that the law be kept. The people responded to Ezra and made an oath to walk in God's law: Now therefore, our God, the great and mighty and terrible God, who deepest covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to thee that has come upon us...Yet thou hast been just in all that has come upon us...Because of all this we make a firm covenant and write it" (Neh. 9:33-38). God was bound to his promise to Abraham as Israel was bound to keep the law that was given. It was common at this time that the Chronicler holds up before the people the hope to be found in the theocratic rule of David. For the rabbis, during the inter-testamental period the covenant conception of the Chronicles was still central. They often spoke of God as king, who has solicited their worship by his saving acts. But the conditional element was also prominent. God's people had to accept God's kingship by obedience. In the covenant, God had provided for atonement the keeping of the law which in turn established (or re-established) the covenant relationship scholars refer to this view as covenantal normism. What Paul set out to correct was a misconception, not about the requirements of the covenant, but about the way that it is established. The new covenant is established, not by the keeping of the law, but through Christ's redeeming death and believers' faith response to him.

Before we discuss some theological principles that grow out of the covenant idea, two items call for examination. First, a question: was the covenant conditional or unconditional? From our brief survey we can see that it is oversimplifying to speak of either a conditional or an unconditional covenant. In sense there are two sides to the Old Testament covenant. One emphasized the promissory, as in the close of God's promise to the patriarchs and to David. The other covenant stemming from Sinai and featuring in the Deuteronomic school, gives more place for conditions or stipulations (though either lacks promise or stipulation). But the two perspectives complement rather than contradict each other. The promise of salvation given to the patriarchs becomes the blessing of the Sinai covenant which Israel would enjoy through its continued faithfulness. Nathan voices again the promise of eternal blessing (2 Sam. 7), while Isaiah promises a faithful successor to David who will realize the covenant blessings for all his people. At this point the treaty form while not excluded is taken into a larger covenant idea that will be brought about through the work of the son of David, Jesus the Messiah.

3.3.5 Covenant with Isaac

The terms of the covenant are made clear in Genesis 17 that the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled through the line of Isaac and not Ishmael (17:18-21). Isaac received his own divine visitations (26:2-5; 26:24). On both occasions it is made clear that he is the recipient of the promise because of the faith of his father. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when Isaac the promised child, was born by Sarah his wife who had been barren (Gen 17:21; 21:2-4). Isaac grew into boyhood and was naturally the idol of his parent. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Though Abraham was not able to understand this awful command, nevertheless he obeyed. Immediately after, God renewed his covenant promises to him. God promised descendants through Isaac, who was not yet married:

I promise that I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the seashore. Your descendants will conquer their enemies. All the nations will ask me to bless them as I have blessed your descendants—all because you obeyed my command". Abraham went back to Beer-Sheba where he settled. Sarah died at Hebron and was buried in the cave of Machpelah. Abraham was married to Keturah who bore him six sons, who became the ancestors of North Arabian peoples. Isaac remained his father's sole heir, and on Abraham's death the blessing of God became his. After twenty years' waiting, Jacob and Esau were born.

3.3.6 God's covenant with Jacob (Gen 24-36)

In a similar way Jacob was assured that even though he received his father's blessing by deceit (27:1-29) he would receive the promises made to Abraham by divine choice (28:13-15; 35:9-12). Following the massacre carried out by his sons at [Shechem](#), Jacob carried out what appears to be a rededication of himself and his household to Yahweh. By putting away all the foreign gods (cf. 31:30-35) and their earrings (cf. Exod. 33:6) they put their trust in Yahweh alone. In response to this act of faith they were protected from reprisal from the Canaanites (35:1-5). His sons became the heads of the twelve tribes of the nation, and thus are kept continuously before the Hebrew people in their history. Jacob (supplanter), in a memorable experience during the night on the river Jabbok, as he moved back to his old homeland, became Israel (prince of God). This change in name is significant.

His early life is remembered mainly for his two acts of treachery: purchasing Esau's birthright and deceiving his blind father to steal Esau's blessing. Esau cared nothing for these privileges which Jacob wanted. But Jacob had great ambition and real appreciation of these things which had meant so much to Abraham and Isaac. Rebecca, Jacob's mother, encouraged him in his unethical designs, which he later suffered the consequences of his deeds. According to the Hebrew law, the first-born should always possess the birthright, which involved a double portion of the property. It also carried with it the privilege of leadership in the family and tribe. Thus, Jacob had good reasons for wanting the birthright which belonged to Esau, because even though he and Jacob were twins, Esau was the first born. Among the Hebrews, as with other oriental people, great importance was attached to the ceremony in which the father formally gave his "blessing" to his children. It carried the authority of a will and involved, especially in religious matters, a sort of prophecy or foretelling of their place in the future.

The father's pronouncement of greatness for the future naturally would be coveted by young Jacob. In these stories we get a glimpse of a divided family. Rebecca was passionately devoted to Jacob, always taking his parts, encouraging, and engineering his ambitious designs. But Isaac was inclined to favor Esau. Thus, when Jacob had carried out his design against Esau, who in his anger became a threat to Jacob, Rebecca assisted Jacob in his plans to escape and circulated a previously arranged tale that he was going away to secure a wife. Jacob fled from the fury of his brother, and moved northward to seek the home of his mother's kins people. His first days travel brought him to Bethel, where his grandfather Abraham has previously lived. Here, he anxiously waited his meeting with Esau and spent the whole night in prayers, struggling with an angel. God spoke with Jacob and made a covenant with him and changed his name from Jacob (supplanter) to Israel (prince of God).

3.3.7 The Covenant with Israel

At Mount Sinai, God made covenant with Israel which gave them moral, civil, and religious laws to live by. Then were building and furnish a place of worship for Him. He also gave them regarding the priests and worship. The implications of this covenant were for Israel: (a) To be totally obedient to God (b) To be God's treasured people (c) To be a Holy nation (d) Torecognized God's saving deeds (e) To worship and reverence God (f) To honor the name of God (g) To love/relate properly with others (h) To respect human life (i) To respect the property of others and (g) To maintain the standard of faith. The covenant was to be the frame work of religious education of God's people dominated by personality of the prophets, wise men and poor of Yahweh. It also made possible the formation of qualitative Israel whose summit was Mary, which proceeded the coming of Christ, the mediator of the new covenant. Thus, the covenant at Sinai was a prelude to the new covenant now being established through Christ to receive its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem described at the end of revelation. The significance of the covenant, therefore are as follows: (a) God continued His faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 30:15-20). (b) God freed Israelites from bondage (Deut. 2:25; 19:4), and (c) God gave them the ten commandment as principles by which the nation was to live upon.

3.3.8 Similarities and Dissimilarities between the covenant with Abraham and Israel

3.3.8.1 Similarities

Both covenant followed the pattern of Suzerainty treaties of the Ancient Near East. For example, they both have preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, and blessings and cursing, oath, God's revealing of Himself by a personal name, demands of obedience for their blessings, sealing of the covenant with blood and accepting of the terms for the covenant or readiness to obey.

3.3.8.2 Dissimilarities

1. The covenant of God with Abraham was an everlasting one, while God's covenant with Israel was to be renewed by each new generation
2. God's covenant with Abraham announces what God's will do at the end of history, while the covenant of God with Israel announces what God response during history to each generation of Israel. These who keep the laws will be blessed and those who disobeyed will be disciplined.

3.3.8.3 Significance of the Covenants

Lying behind the covenant is the sovereign will of the gracious God: I will be God, and you shall be my people (Lev. 26:12). His will now directs a particular course of events. The importance of this can hardly be overestimated. Now the life of Israel (and thus of each person in Israel) has taken on a unique meaning. History itself receives direction and significance. This is because God has entered into history and has tied himself to particular events, which he promises will have everlasting consequences. The end is only dimly envisioned, but this is because God sets the terms and fixes the goals. This implies that for this people there is a new security to life. The covenant, as it is filled in by the law, helps man to know where he stands. He can count on things because a stable element has been added to his life and to history. Trust is possible and the paralyzing capriciousness of Near Eastern gods is totally excluded. At the same time, each man and woman, each family, is called on to surrender in obedience and love. Apart

from such a response there is no bulwark of protection against this God. He has lovingly provided the means of communion, but at the same time, he has excluded all other ways.

With such a foundation it now becomes possible to establish a well defined moral and social order that will consistently reflect this foundation. The order, which comes to expression in the law and the cult shall be examine allow. The basic demand is to know the Lord, that is, to enjoy a living and personal relationship with this God. This is of more consequence than the sacrifices and offering which are to express this relationship (Hos. 6:6). The spirituality of this bond, which is the goal of the covenant, has important implications. It embraces potentially all the people, from the least to the greatest, and makes possible a remarkable individual and group cohesion. Without diminishing individual responsibility, it makes real human solidarity possible. oreover, all of life takes on the character of a response to God, and walking humbly in accordance with God's will (Mic. 6:8). From the start then there can be no split between the sacred and profane spheres of life. Potentially every moment can be sacred unto the Lord. Finally from its very beginning this association between God and his people hints of a universal application. It could not happen at once, but the covenant bond was not essentially exclusive. Now it is possible to understand the biblical view of history, this relationship between God and his people arose in the course of actual events. It is not a bond inherent in nature, as with most primitive religions, but one that God has made in particular events. Event can now-when viewed in relation to this program-be decisive.

3.3.9 Joseph, a man of Destiny (Gen. 37-50)

There is no admirable or attractive man in all of the Old Testament than Joseph. He possessed so many desirable qualities that one is inspired by even the most casual study of his life. Joseph was the first born of Jacob and Rachel, Benjamin being the last son. He was the most favorite son of his father. His father's indulgent favoritism towards him made his senior brothers to be jealous and envy. His brothers had to wear the ordinary short tunic of men who must work for their living, while Joseph wore a long tunic, reaching to the feet and fitted with long sleeves, very elegant, double but not adopted for practical purpose. His father spoiled Jacob as a child. Joseph had remarkable dreams the meaning which was unmistakable and he thoughtlessly related these to his elder brothers. This together with the undisguised favoritism their father had already exhibited towards him (Joseph), aroused the anger and jealousy of his brothers to the point of danger. They did not regard the dreams as premonition given to Joseph of the greatness which was in store for him.

3.3.9.1 Joseph Sold into Slavery

The ten older brothers of Joseph who were shepherds out of anger and envy felt that the situation had become unbearable and so they plan of getting rid of him. But by the counsel of Reuben, they were prevailed upon not to shed innocent blood and so they then decided to sell Joseph into slavery in the temporary absence of Reuben to some midianites merchants who transported him to Egypt, while his brothers went home to their father with a trumped-up story of Joseph's death and circumstantial evidence to support it. They took Joseph's coat, rent it, dipped it in the blood of a kid and then took it to Jacob, their father with the declaration that they had found it by accident. Their father would naturally assume that his son, Joseph had been slain by wild beasts.

This heartless deception of their father reveals the cruel and unprincipled nature of the elder sons of Jacob. Despite the anger and jealousy of Joseph's brothers which made them to sell him into slavery, the destiny of Joseph remained unchanged. The Midianite merchants who bought Joseph from his brothers took him to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Pontiphar, an officer of the pharaoh. Joseph accepted the situation, behaved wisely and was in high favor with his masters who placed him in the highest position of the household. Joseph's great temptation came when Pontiphar's wife became infatuated with him and used every means to induce him to commit adultery with her. In his refusal, Joseph exhibited great strength of character. He said: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God"? She then charged Joseph with the very crime which he had refused to commit. As a slave, Joseph had no chance before Pontiphar to defend himself when accused by his own wife. In this experience, also the Lord was with Joseph so that he soon rose to a position of authority over all the other prisoners. Among the prisoners were the chief cup-bearer and the chief baker of pharaoh. Each of these had a dream which Joseph interpreted. The butler was to be restored to pharaoh's favor in three days, but the baker was to die. Joseph's prediction was realized, but the butler, being realized straight way for got his promise to intercede for Joseph.

3.3.9.3 The Dreams of plenty and Famine

Joseph remained in prison for two more years, and Pharaoh himself had two dreams which none of his wise men could interpret. The butler remembered Joseph who had interpreted his dream and favored him. At his suggestion, Joseph was sent for and upon hearing the dreams, he announced their meanings as coming from God. He advised Pharaoh to appoint a food commissioner to store up supplies in the years of plenty against the years of famine which were to follow. This made Pharaoh to appoint Joseph to assume responsibility for the program which he had just recommended. He was dressed in royal robes, and was given an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-Paneach (revealer of secrets). The Egyptian maid; Asenath was also given to him as his wife. He and his wife gave birth to two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. At the age of thirty years, Joseph occupied the most prominent position in the land of Egypt. His position was "second only to Pharaoh"; His service comparable to that of any man of his time.

3.3.9.4 Joseph and his brothers in Egypt

When the brothers of Joseph came into Egypt, they did not recognize him. They thought that the hard life of a slave had long since killed him. But he recognized them and tested them by rough treatment. He accused them of being spies, and agreed to sell them corn only on the condition that their brother, Simeon should be kept as a hostage until they bring the younger brother, Benjamin, to take his place. Reluctantly, they agreed to these terms. And after their departure, they were surprised to find that the money each of them had was placed in his sack of corn. Upon their return, they told their aged father Jacob of their experiences but he vowed that Benjamin should never leave him. But as the famine continued, Judah persuaded him to let Benjamin go with him, vowing that he would assume full responsibility for him. When Joseph came at noon and saw Benjamin, he was so overcome with emotion that he retired for a while to weep alone.

Joseph revealed himself to his brothers when he tricked them for stolen his money. But when they denied the charge and Benjamin's sack was found with the money, Joseph declared that Benjamin must remain in Egypt. The intercessory plea of Judah, explaining the grief this loss would bring their aged father, and offering himself for his younger brother's release, made Joseph to open the secret to them. At

last he told them to return to Egypt together with Jacob, their father. God appeared to Jacob at Beersheba and promised his blessing upon him in the transfer to Egypt and renewed his promise to him as to the destiny of his sons, and assured him that in due time, his family should be brought back to their home land of Canaan. At the invitation of Joseph and permission of the Pharaoh, the families of Jacob were settled in fertile territory in eastern Egypt, known as the “land of Goshen”. At the age one hundred and ten years, Joseph called his brothers about his bed, reminded them that in due time, they were to return to Canaan, and then having secured the promise to take his body back to the home land with them, he quietly passed away. His body was embalmed, placed in a casket and was kept until the time when they should go back to the land of their fathers. We close this period of history with the descendants of Jacob residing in Egypt, having been there approximately seventy years when Joseph died.

3.3.10 Joseph’s character and leadership qualities

Joseph possessed many desirable characters and leadership qualities which made him a successful leader in Israel. These characters and leadership qualities can be summarized as follows: generosity, wisdom, discernment, self-reliance, and trust in God, competence, trust worthiness, a forgiving spirit, usefulness, clean living, perseverance, and the ability to see things in perspective of God’s guidance, among others. He used all these talents to do the work of God. For example, Joseph used his wisdom and discernment to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams and to make a proposal for the control of famine in Egypt. Jacob’s spirit of endurance and perseverance in adversity and sufferings exalted him from a prisoner to the position of prime minister, from humiliation and honor in Egypt. His total trust in God and reliance on His providence made him to see everything from God’s point of view. The ability of Joseph to put in the right perspective of God’s plan in his life made him not to hold his brother’s accountable for the blessings in disguise. He knew that God had a purpose for his life. The forgiveness and reconciliation spirit of Joseph made him to forgive his brothers, reconcile with them, embrace and kiss them. He also invited his family to stay with him in Egypt.

3.3.11 The lessons of Joseph’s leadership style

We can learn many lessons from the style of Joseph’s leadership as leaders of tomorrow. These lessons are as follows: (a) That God use suffering to purge Joseph’s life and encouraged him to be humble, God can also use sufferings sometimes to produce godly character in our lives. (b) That sufferings and injustice can easily make us better and resentful, lent we must trust that God is in control of all that happen to us. (c) Joseph learns to work hard, even as a slave and prisoner. His life illustrates the truth of Jesus’ promise that if we are faithful over little things entrusted into our care; God will set us over much.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit gave you an overview of the dimension of the history of Israel as covenantal people. It is an undisputable fact for one to say that Israel as a distinctive people has survived despite their wandering in the desert and submerged into more powerful groups. The Israelites who went down to Egypt in a time of famine and were in due course subjugated to force labor where delivered from slavery. God fulfilled his covenant with Israel by choosing them as his own people. God on Mount Sinai entered into covenant, with them, thereby binding them together with him in a living communion. They were now in the one bundle of life. God demands service from them.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have learnt how God gave his assurance to covenanted people of Israel to be always present with them. God in His grace communicated the purpose and promise to keep the covenant, and the children of that covenant came to wear in the flesh a distinctive mark. However, the sign of the covenant made after the flood had been the rainbow, a sign which remained, irrespective of what man might do. In the same way, the testing of Abraham's faith is a splendid example of trustful obedience. God did not in the end demand the sacrifice of Isaac. Unlike Abraham, Jacob was a man with inconspicuous gifts. His securing the birthright and the blessing of his brother, Esau are indications of the promise than notable brethren. The story of Joseph and his selling to Egypt as a slave, his imprisonment and placement to the position of leadership are clear manifestations of the fulfillment of his destiny in Egypt. The Israelites group prospered until after the death of Joseph when the rule of the Hyksos kings came to an end.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) Defined the term covenant and show how it is different from a treaty.
- (2) Why did God choose Abraham as the founder and father of the Hebrew race?
- (3) What was the covenant God made with Abraham? What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Israel? What sign God gave Abraham as a symbol of ratification of the covenant?
- (4) Explain the covenant God made with the people of Israelites and show how it was fulfilled through David.
- (5) List ten leadership character and qualities of Joseph that made him a successful leader in Egypt?
- (6) What can we learn from the style of Joseph's leadership as leaders of tomorrow?
- (7) What was the covenant God made with the people of Israel?

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MODULE 2

Unit 1 PRE-HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the first module, you learned about the people of Israel. You were presented with the origin of Israel, the choice of Israel by God and God's covenants with the Israelites. In this module, which is made up of three units, you will treat the history of Israel from the call of Abraham to the institution of monarchy to further enhance your knowledge of the history of the people of Israel. This history which covers the period of ancient Israel beginning with Abraham can be viewed from biblical perspectives, giving scant attention to post-biblical period. This is because it is difficult to understand the history of Israel within the modern archaeological contexts of the Ancient near Eastern religion.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Narrate the events that took place in the formative periods of Israelites history
- Give current approaches to the study of Israelites history.
- Discuss the history of Hebrew patriarchs as founders of the Hebrew race.

2.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The formative periods of Israelites history

The formative period explores the history of the beginning of Hebrew people as a nation which covers the period of four hundred years from around 1500 BC. The Book of Genesis traces the formative period (sometimes called pre-history) of Israel, to four patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, also known as Israel and Joseph.

3.1.1 The Call of Abraham and his positive Response

Abraham was a semi-nomad or shepherd who came from Mesopotamia and settled in Canaan, but continued to live a nomadic lifestyle. He stayed in the land for the rest of his life except for a short period when famine forced him to go to Egypt. His name Abram (high father), was later changed to Abraham (father of a multitude), by God. His wife was first known as Sarai and later changed to Sarah. Abraham was called by God to become the father of a great people and to receive blessing that will

extend to all the nations of the earth. This covenant contains four promises: (1) A great nation fulfilled in the Hebrew people (2) A great name, fulfilled in the Hebrews, Christians and Mohammadans as all call him religious father (3) A land, fulfilled in the possession of Canaan by the Hebrew, and (4) A blessing to all nations. Abraham responded positively to God's covenant and went as God commanded him (Gen. 12:14). This covenant of God with Abraham was both a command and promise given to the Patriarch, Abraham. He departed into the unknown, with no security, apart from God's word to follow the call Abraham heard.

Abraham began his journey from the city of Ur of the Chaldees, and moved northward to Haran, the valley in Mesopotamia. He journeyed southward and entered Canaan around 1850 BC, where he made his first stop at Shechem. He went forth, not knowing where he was going and came to the plain of Moreb, where he left impelled to pitch his tents. But the Canaanites were in the land for this reason, Abraham moved to Bethel. He pitched his tent on the plain east of the village and built an altar to worship God. From here, he continued to move southward and entered the land of Egypt, where Pharaoh took his wife and God was angry with him. When Pharaoh discovered the truth of the matter, he expelled both Abraham and his wife Sarah out of his land. They then went back to Bethel and made their second stop at Canaan where he stayed for some time and built a house.

3.1.2 The Birth of Isaac

Abraham's son, Isaac, was born in Canaan, and never left it. He was weaned and the event was celebrated. But when Ishmael his half brother was born by Hagar, the slave woman, Sarah demanded her unconditional expulsion with the child. They were banished to dwell in the desert where Ishmael grew up later becoming renowned in the use of the bow. He later married an Egyptian and bore twelve sons and one daughter. These sons of Ishmael became the ancestors of the Arabs. Isaac grew into boyhood and was naturally the idol of his parents. The greatest trial and test of Abraham's faith was when God commanded him to take this boy, his only son and offer in sacrifice.

Though he was not able to understand this awful command, nevertheless, Abraham obeyed God's order. The great man of God proved his faith, his beloved son was spared and thereafter God renewed his covenant promise to him. Isaac and Rebecca bore twin sons, Esau and Jacob who revealed disappointing traits of character. Esau (unguarded profane) had a serious mind and never manifested any appreciation of the family heritage and destiny so cherished by Abraham. He was harmless, but without purpose or ambition. He did not have in him the makings of a man.

3.1.3 The Career of Jacob

Jacob (supplanter) was notoriously tricky and unscrupulous, with great ambitions for himself. He could without hesitation for himself stoop to deceive his own brother and even his blind old father. But God can take a man like Jacob with worthy ambition but whom admittedly, is inclined to deception in his actions, and change his character so as to use him for a great purpose. In other words, God can use someone like Jacob who has all forms of deceptions and questionable ethics rather than a harmless person who has no ambition. Jacob, who is called a "wandering Aramaean" in Deuteronomy 26:5, is the grandson of Abraham, that had four wives Leah and Rachel, and their maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah. He fathered twelve sons and one daughter. Jacob traveled extensively outside Canaan. For example, he traveled to Haran, the home of his ancestors, to find a wife.

3.1.4 The Career of Joseph

Joseph was attractive man who possessed so many admirable qualities such as generousities, high ideas, unselfishness, clean living, a forgiving spirit that inspires one, even the most causal study of his life. He was the first-born son of Jacob and Rachel, Benjamin being the last. Joseph was the most favorite son of his father Jacob. He had two remarkable dreams, the meaning of which was unmistakable and the thoughtlessly related these to his elder brothers. This together with the undisguised favoritism their father had already exhibited toward him, aroused the anger and jealousy of his brothers who planned to slay him at initial stage but were dissuaded by Reuben not to shed blood of all innocent soul. Later in the temporary absence of Reuben, they decided to sell him as a slave to the midi- mite merchants on their way to Egypt. They took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an officer of the pharaoh, where Joseph behaved wisely and soon was in high favor with his masters that he was placed in the high position of the household. Joseph's great temptation came when pontiphar's wife became infatuated with him and used every means to induce him to commit adultery with her: Joseph's refusal to commit, and Joseph had no chance to defend him against the accusation, he was placed in prison. There in prison, God was with Joseph and he was rose to a place of authority over all the other prisoners. He remained in prison for two years.

Joseph's destiny was realized when he interpreted the dreams of the butler and the pharaoh. He advised the pharaoh to appoint a food commissioner to store up supplies in the years of plenty against the years if famine which were to fellow. This made pharaoh to appoint him to assume responsibility for the program which he had recommended. He was given an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah (revealer of secrets) and an Egyptian maid; Asenath was given to him as his wife. He occupied the most prominent position in the rich land of Egyptian as "second only to pharaoh"; his service comparable to that of any man of his time.

3.1.5 The chronological dates of events in formative periods of Israelites history

The stories of the Hebrew patriarchs locate the formative history of the Israelites first on the East bank of the Jordan and then move to the west bank with the story of the sacking of Shechem (Genesis 34:1-33), after which the hill area of Canaan is assumed to have been historical core of the area settled by the Israelites. The patriarchs are said to have been buried at the cave of the Patriarchs, in Hebron. There are differences of opinion as to the dating even assigning this narrative to legend traditional rabbinic dating based on the Seder Rabbah) which places the birth of Abraham in Mesopotamia in 1976 BCE, the birth of Ishmael, Abraham's first son at the age of 87, in 1890 BCE and the birth of Isaac in 1876 BCE and the birth of Jacob in 1816 BCE. See Chronology of the Bible) William F. Albright, Nelson Glueck and E. A. Speiser, located these Genesis accounts at the end of Middle Bronze Age I (which is consistent with the three Jewish dating) and at the beginning of Middle Bronze Age II based on three points: personal names, mode of life, and customs.

Other scholars, however, have suggested later dates for the Patriarchal Age. Cyrus Gordon features were long-lived characteristics of life in the ancient Near East, for example, based his argument on the rise of nomadic pastoralism and monotheism, at the end of Amama age. He who suggested that they more

properly applied to the Late Bronze Age. John Seters argued on the basis of the widespread use of camels of the Philistines kings at Gerar, monetarised economy and the purchase of land. He says that the story of Hebrew Patriarchs belongs to the end of Amama age, He the Iron Age. Other scholars (particularly, Martin Noth and his students) find it difficult to determine any period for the patriarchs. They suggest that the importances of the biblical texts are not necessarily their historicity, but how they function within the Israelite society of the Iron Age. Thus, they held that the earliest document, the Yahwist, at the basis of these narratives was not written down until almost 1,000 years after the event was described. It could not have given any accurate account of the events through which the patriarchs lived and by which the Israelite people were formed and their faith awakened. Such a negative attitude has recently been shown to have been wholly erroneous.

An extensive comparison between the names in Genesis and Northern Mesopotamian names, now known from extra-biblical sources of the 1st half and the 2nd centuries B.C, have established that the names, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Haran, Nabor, Sarug, and Benjamin, among others, were common during the general period the patriarch's wanderings in the general area whence Abraham and his semi nomadic group migrated. This is not true of the later period in Palestine when the Yahwistic traditions were definitely written down. The Genesis description of Patriarchal life and wanderings, including the places where they temporarily settled on the central Palestinian ridge fits accurately into what is now known about the tribes of ass nomads, which were in the process of becoming sedentary during the major part of the 2nd millennium B.C. Even journeys of such nomads to Egypt and their quasi settlement there on the fringe of the "sown" are well exemplified during this period from non-biblical sources.

Finally, many of the customs and institutions found in Genesis are now known not to have been those of Israel and Judah in the later monarchial period but ones found in sources from the mid-2nd millennium B.C. from Nuzu (Nuzi) and Mari, sources that were themselves records of more ancient customs that were prevalent in the general northern Mesopotamian region. The honest historian should therefore conclude the Israel's remembrances of its origin, although not to be classified as history by intended and plan, were nevertheless rooted in histoIsrael's traditions evoked a response of faith from those who believed in the God who chose the Patriarchs, which is not contradictory by what is now known of the Near-East history during the Middle Bronze (c. 2250-1500 B.C) and 1st Bronze Ages. Interestingly, archaeological evidence has shown that prior to 1000 BC individual dwellings in Canaan were, essentially, of equal size, (suggesting perhaps, that the Levitical law regarding the Jubilee year was practiced, although this can not be conclusively proved).

All these facts indicate that the origin of the Hebrew people can be traced back to three successive waves of migration that occurred in the ancient near-east towards the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age and extending to 15BC. History tells us that the first wave of migration which took off from Arabia is made up of the Semites. They moved into South Mesopotamia and the great river valleys, dispossessing their predecessors, the Sumerians, and taking their place. The principal language spoken by this group was Akkadian. The first wave was followed by a second that was made up of the Ammonites. They moved east of Mesopotamia and West of Syria. Their language was classical Hebrews. The third wave, like the second, took two directions and it was closer to the second than the second to the first. The language spoken by this group was Aramaic. These groups probably began as nomads and only later embraced agriculture as a result of their contact with the natives. Scholars strongly believe that the origin of Israel can be best traced to any of or combination of Semitic elements

in addition to the Hurrians and the Hittites. We can therefore say that the three groups constitute the common ancestry of the Israelites (Eze. 16:44-46). Apart from these physical ancestry, we have much to gain or gather from the area of tradition because it has much to say about the origin of a people.

About the Israelites, the tradition we have about their descent invariably refers to the Arameans who invaded Palestine in the early Iron Age period (19000-1200BC) and gradually but successively imposed their religion and social theory on the country. Therefore when we talk of the Israelites, it is those groups of Arameans that our mind goes to but however before the Arameans, we have the Ammonites who inhabited Palestine long before the advent of the Arameans. They were of a mixed race with very strong huririan elements and their political organization was that of small city states. These assumed origin of the Israelites is supported by evidenced from the language spoken (classical Hebrew), the language of the Old Testament which is a mixed language. Investigation shows that it is basically the language of pre-Israelite Canaan with the addition of certain words from the Aramean stocks. The above historical reconstruction notwithstanding the biblical tradition traces the early beginning of Israel to the nomad stage of the Aramean tribes. It is established that among these tribes of Arameans, some of them moved from south reaching as far as Egypt during the reign of the Hyksos (1800-1600BC). It was here in Egypt that they were reduced to slavery and forced labour, and eventually found their way out through divine intervention under Moses and made for the Southern and Eastern region of Palestine, where they settled.

3.1.6 Characteristics of Nomadic Arameans

A few characteristics may be noted among the Arameans to whom the history or origin of Israel is often traced. First, the nomadic Arameans have a **social mentality** which places much emphasis on the value of “person” as compared to “things” this mentality. They had no property that could be called their own. Their wealth that which was made up of flocks (cattle), was the common properties of the community just as he himself belongs to the tribe. The notion “corporate personality” leads the nomads lay many traits on matters which affect the community as a whole and hold their tribal standards or norms in such things as law, sex, custom and ritual among others. These senses of community soul accounts for **the practice of blood revenge** which was an important phenomenon in the early history of Israel. The second trait is that among the nomad religion was a simple affair just like the governance of the community which was devoid of all sophisticated complication. Their deity worshipped was bound to the community in an intimate relation. Whether these deities by their relationship with community were the tribal ancestors or not, we have no means of knowing.

3.1.7 The Sedentary Palestinians

Unlike the nomadic Arameans, the sedentary Palestinians, that is, the Ammonites practiced Agriculture and trade as their main occupation. From archaeological record and history, they are known to have developed the system of civil law which was generally not very different from that found elsewhere in western Asia. Like their method of government or political system, it is also reliably learnt that their religious system, was more developed and complicated than that of the nomads. They had a sanctuary with complex system of rituals while gods of fertility feature prominently among deities worshipped. As characteristics of agriculturists, they operated a regular calendar of agricultural festivals, practiced animal and human sacrifice and the moral standard deemed by their religion was very low. It is to this type of Canaanite sedentary life that the Israelites tried to adapt to after centuries of nomadic experience.

The norms and practices of later Israel are therefore to be assessed against the background of these two different beginning.

3.2 Current Approaches to the Study of Israelites History

The history of Israel as a subject has over the years attracted the attentions of different scholars from various fields. The desire to prove the authenticity or otherwise of the biblical account has led to the postulation of different theories or supplementation of the biblical account with records from extra biblical sources. Though much has been done in this area, it is worth noting that no decisive result has yet been obtained. The religious inclination and scholarly disposition of researches and the propriety of the research tools used remain the main dividing factors among scholars. Although, immediate solution to the matter is not yet in sight, the following methodological approaches may be highlighted.

3.2.1 The Conservative Approach

This approach is also called the orthodox or the traditional approach and is held among the conservatives. These groups of scholars hold the view that the bible is of supernatural origin and its autograph is completely devoid of error. This means that every word of the Bible was divinely inspired or dictated. A section of this conservation groups however holds that though the bible is divinely inspired, yet its evidence would be illustrated, supported, and if need be, its apparent contradictions harmonized with materials drawn from extra biblical texts and archaeological data. Those who held this view are called the liberal. The first groups of conservative unlike the later believe accurate historical dates could be worked out from the biblical account even of the creative narrative. Thus, it is held that Abraham was born in 2166BCE. That Isaac married Rebecca in 2026BCE and that Jacob was 77 years old when he went to marry where he hired himself to Laban for fourteen years. This conservatism is extended to the accounts of biblical miracles. Thus, it was held that at the exodus, the sea opened to approximately one mile wide to allow passage of the fleeing Hebrews. Also, it is held that the earth slowed down on its axis approximately half that of its normal speed of rotation in order to provide Joshua with additional daylight in his battle near Gilboa.

This approach is completely unscholarly and no serious researching has taken place to formulate these assumptions. It does not entertain the assumption that one has to reconstruct the history of Israel but rather that one should only support and elucidate the history which the Bible already has.

3.2.2 Archeological Approach

This approach to Israelite history aims at substantiating the biblical data with appeals to evidences which is external to the biblical text but supportive of it. As a tool in the Old Testament story, the archeological approach can be described as comparatively new and reactionary method. It was evolved and developed in the late 19th century in reaction to Welhausean Documentary Hypothesis and other historical approaches. Its father and progenitor is W.F. Albright. Although his methodological approach differs from that of other archeologists, yet they all agree that archeological remains could serve as better proof of the authenticity of the biblical traditions. It was also their opinion that the biblical traditions are reliable because they undoubtedly contain elements of historical memory. The Old Testament records should therefore be regarded as embellished historical facts rather than formulated stories.

3.2.3 Traditio-Historical Approach

The third approach to Israelite history can be traced to Herman Gunkel its founding father. It became popular and generally acceptable through the work of Albrecth Von Rad, Martin North and Douglas Knight. This approach which is still very popular among Old Testament scholars rests on the following assumptions. That:

- (1). The Old Testament tradition took literary shape only after centuries of oral tradition (transmission).
- (2) The writers of the document were therefore more like redactors or editors rather than authors.
- (3) The Old Testament traditions like other secular literatures could be divided into genres, saga, prose, poetry.
- (4) The determining factor of nature of each tradition is therefore its individual unit or genres
- (5) The patriarchal tradition belongs primarily to the unit or saga.
- (6) The individual sagas had their particular function in the setting of life they were used to. And the function of many of these were etiological a story told about the past to legitimate a current practice).

(a) As an etiology, their primary aim was to explain the origin of some physical features, customs, and practice of ethnic relationship with an artistic touch. This stage could be combined to produce circles of traditions. Israelites historiography stemmed from the combination of these saga traditions.

Working with these basic assumptions of the tradition-historical approach, Gerandus Von Rad gave the research tool a new impetus in his little credo thesis.

His research was carried out under the guiding principle of tradition history in Deuteronomy 26 vs 5-12. Based on this, he uncovered for new dimensions of the approach.

He first identified the creedal summary as an act of faith used during cultic celebration. As a creed, he discovered that a Sinai tradition which featured so prominently in the pre-monarchical history of Israel has no place in the creed and on the basis of this, he concluded that it was originally not a part of the historical summary but its own separate settings in the cult. These cultic summary or recitals were seen as a frame work of Jehovah's history of early Israel into which he later incorporated this Sinai tradition and with the primary history (that is history before the 27) provided it with a preface. He then held that it was during the time of David and Solomon that Israelite historiography took its proper shape based on the saga narratives.

Another Old Testament scholar who made his impacts using the tradition historical analysis is Martin North. In his own approach, he used the Greek concept to explain early tribal organization in Israel prior to the institution of the monarchy. The basis of the concept was religious, though it had some legal overtones. He claimed that the Pentateuchal laws of Israel were born with the society. He divided up pentateuchal traditions into five major themes.(a) Guidance out of Egypt, (b) Going Guidance into the arable land (c) Promise of the patriarch (d)Revelation at Sinai, and (e) Guidance in the wilderness. He claimed that they were all originally dependent themes. Martin North came out with some assumptions and they are as listed: (a) North sees the history of Israel as taken off with the anphictiony unit. (b) The historicity of the various themes which became associated with the union after the coming together is therefore doubtful and unreliable because Mosaic traditions were introduced at the second stage into the thematic traditions, therefore nothing can be said about him with precision except his death.

(c) Also, the patriarchal traditions cannot be penetrated to unravel anything of real historical value. (d) The account of the conquest is deuteronomistic and etiologic in their setting and because he holds the view that the tribe moved separately into Palestine. He dismissed the idea of leadership of a united Israel concept done on Israel and what was an originally independent tribal tradition became appropriated by all. To conclude this introductory section of the study of Israelite history, mention may be made of the more recent theory evolved by some American scholars from the study of the history of Israel. This new thesis attempts to understand pre-monarchic Israel in terms of socio-economic activities. This theory was initiated by Max Weber, a sociologist, who was a non scholar of Old Testament in the last century. His theory received new spirit. Its appropriateness for the study of Old Testament was convincingly demonstrated by Old Testament scholars like Mendenhall, and Norman Gottwald.

Apart from some minor differences in method, there appears to be a consensus among scholars on this school of thought for the following points:

- (a) That Israel as a people or united tribal confederacy came into existence in the land of Canaan.
- (b) The tribal unit of confederation resulted from a demand of the internal revolt within Canaan against the Canaanite city states; economic and political structures. The oppressive measures of the overlords made the peasants join forces with the pastoralists to seek liberation and freedom.
- (c) The new society that emerged called Israel was different in the context of its tribal affiliation and covenant relationships.
- (d) The antiquarian thesis which sought Israelite origin in nomadic culture and in the concept of a general conquest from outside should or must be thrown overboard. In the light of the above, the institution of the monarchy was therefore a return to pre-revolutionary affairs and this represent a pagan life and faith of liberated Israel. Thus, the four approaches represent the current tools used by scholar in the field of Old Testament studies, most scholars who work on the different period of early Israelite history, proper to use different approaches than stick to one approach.

3.2.4 Patriarchal Narrative as History

The chronological reconstruction of the history of Israel contained in the patriarchal narrative is as difficult as proving the historicity of the personages (individuals) involved in the stories. Literary criticism has revealed the discrepancies, duplications and at times contradictions contained in the narratives which make the work of the historian difficult, but extra biblical evidence from archeology favors the acceptance of the narrative history. To the ancient Israelites, what may pass the test for a historical account may not be acceptable to us as history today? This is because their sense of history and method of narration are different from our own refined approaches.

The interpreted account presented to us in the patriarchal narratives by the biblical authors seems to have occurred within the span of four generations. Patriarchs may have occupied several countries but events of remote antiquity at later time assumed literary form of being telescoped through correct sequence. It is clear from the accounts patriarchal studies are nothing but personifications of trivial movement which biblical authors have pictured as personal history of far away ancestors whose names have survived. Here, an example may be cited of the names of the several sons of Moab, Ammon, Median, Jacob and Edom. (Gen. 19:30-38, 25:23-24). It is also important to recognize that very often the biblical writer read back into primitive times the national or tribal unity of his own day like what we have in the case of Jacob and his sons acting in concert to take Shechem in a manner that would have

been impossible during the patriarchal period Gen. 34: 25-29. Also The account has been discovered to be etiological stories told to explain certain phenomenon about people who were asking questions during the writer's time. For instance, Altars, Circumcision, eating of Sinews of the thigh and pillar of salt. Apart from this, some of the patriarchal accounts are religious interpretations of events rather than historical records of what happened. For instance, the cause of migration from Ur is pictured in Genesis as a privilege of Abraham and his family.

Whereas, some historians has attributed the migration to change of religion effected by Hammurabi in Babylon. This interpretation is possible on the ground that the Hammurabi, the sixth king of the first Babylonian Dynasty (BC 2123-2081) is identified with Amraphel king of Shinar mentioned in Genesis 14:1 who was a contemporary of Abraham. Prior to his reign, Hammarabi's two predecessors Abisin and Sinmubalit, had been worshippers of the moon deities, but when Hammarabi ascended the throne, he instituted the worship of the sun God (Shamash), a change which caused the adherents of the old religion to migrate. On investigation, it has been found that Ur from where the immigrants set out and Haran where the group of them personified in Abraham settled were both the northern and southern limit of the moon cult and if we recall the meaning of Sinai, the name of ancient Israelites holy mountain, there will be no doubt where earliest Hebrew conception of God was connected with the loving and kindly attributes of "Sin" the moon deity (Joshua 24:21). Thus it stand questioned why the Hebrew narrators in Genesis regards the migration as a religious movement "God calls Abraham and he went not knowing where he was going".

As a group of Semite migrants personified in Abraham and his kindred journeyed down south. One of the groups settled or stayed in Haran and subsequently became the Arameans i.e. the present Syrians according to Gen. 22:21. A nation which descended from the grandson of Nahor (Abraham's brother Gen. 10:23) but the group represented by Abraham and Lot continued their journey from Haran down south into Palestine where they become known as the Hebrews, a narrow which means "from the outside" It was probably after the arrival in Palestine of Abraham and his group that another body of Semites migrated in Egypt to find the Hyksos of the Semitic dynasty. Although we are not sure when precisely the Hyksos dynasty was established but it is on record that they ruled Egypt till 158BC. When Ahmosi the founder of the eighteen dynasties overpowered the Hyksos, he expelled them from Egypt and drove them back into Palestine. This expedition initiated by Ahmosi I was continued by subsequent king of the eighteenth dynasty and by the time of Thutmos I and III, the whole of Palestine up to Syria had been incorporated into Egyptian Empire.

Under the Egyptian rule, Palestine made up of small city states was governed either by local vassal princes or by Egyptian officials and this type of political organization remain in force till the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, (1375-1358BC). It was during his reign that Egypt lost her grip of Palestine. This loss of Asiatic promises by Egypt Tel-el-Amarna tablets, discovered at the site of Aknaton new capital in 1887. These tablets contain diplomatic correspondences between Amenhotep III and IV and various foreign rulers together with reports and appeals for aids by local princes and Egyptian governors. One important feature of this diplomatic correspondence is the information that at a time, Palestine was being invaded by a group of people whom the governor at Jerusalem Arad Hiba designated or identified as 'Apiru' meaning the Hebrew. Among the places the governor of Jerusalem mentioned had fallen to the Apiru in Shechem. This period of unrest may coincide with the movement of the patriarchs in Palestine and their position of the land in Egypt. The Hebrew invasion therefore, described in Tel-el-Amarna tablets is very likely the basis of the biblical story of Jacob's return with his

sons from Haran. What has generally been described for the weakness of Egypt during the reign of Amenhotep is the king's pre-occupation with religious matters. He changed the religion of Egypt from the worship of Amon to that of aton which was responsible for his change of name of Aknaton. Thus, the reign of Aknaton saw Egyptian power in Palestine on the wane. Tutnamon ascended the throne after him and he reigned from 1358-1350. The chapter of the 18th dynasty in the history of Egypt was closed.

3.2.5 Information from Tel-el-Amarna

Among other things, we are told is that: (1) toward the end of the 18th dynasty, there was famine in Palestine and many Semites migrated into Egypt. This account corroborated the story of Jacob and his sons when there was famine in Palestine and they sought shelter in Egypt. (2) Officers in Egypt with Semitic names are mentioned especially that of a governor in a corn growing district, a position similar to that held by Joseph in Genesis. (3) Inscription on a tombstone gives a pictorial representation of Egyptian officials receiving Asiatic refugees seeking permission to enter Egypt in time of famine. From the above it is clear that the 18th dynasty witnessed the elevation of Semitic officials to high position in Egypt as well as mass migration of some Canaanites into Egypt because of famine.

3.2.6 Archeological Evidence in Support of the Patriarchs as Historical figures

That certain individuals like the patriarchs once lived in Palestine can no longer be doubted. Although what is generally ascribed to them may raise some questions, the historical period in which they functioned has been identified and the religious cultural traits associated with that have been proved authentic for their historical period by archeology. From the evidence of the NUXTEXT, the following can be said with confidence about the patriarchs that:

- (a) The patriarchal narrative recorded in chapter 12-50 of Genesis fit the period 17-12 century BC.
- (b) The incident recorded in Gen. 15:1-4 regarding Abraham's fear that the slave Eliezer might become his heir reflect the custom of slave adoption well explained in the NUXTEXT.
- (c) A childless couple could therefore adopt a slave who would inherit after them.
- (d) The surrender of the slave girl Haggai to Abraham by Sarai on account of her childlessness is supported in the NUXTEXT as the custom of the Semites around the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates.
- (e) In the NUXTEXT a wife of childless is obliged to provide her husband with a substitute. (b) The fruit of such union is recognized by law. This may be the reason why Abraham was willing to send Haggai away (Gen. 21:10).
- (f) Nuzian customs also validates Jacob/Laban story as facts of history.
- (g) The adoption of Jacob into Laban's household and the conditions laid on him (Gen. 13:50), and Rachel and Leah indignation against their father Laban (Gen. 31:15) and stealing of his own god was intended to entitle them to their father's inheritance.

The marriage contract made in 15th century in Syria shed light on the story of Jacob and his sons in respect of the law of primogeniture. The first born is not by birth right but the choice of the father who could designate whom he wants to be his first son: For example, Jacob made Joseph's son Ephraim the first son, instead of Manasseh (Gen. 48:1-22). Jacob chose Joseph the son of his favorite wife, Rachel in place of Reuben (Gen. 48:22, 43:3. cf I Chr. 5:1). In later Israel however, this custom is found legislated against the law of primogeniture (Deut. 21:15-17). Name in the patriarchal narratives appear to be the popular names of some of the Semitic population in Mesopotamia and Palestine in the second millennium. Jacob is found as 'Y' aqubel but in actual fact the Hebrew word for Jacob is Ya'aqob. In

18th century text of Chagarbazar, in upper Mesopotamia, Mari tablet, a hyksos chieftain was found bearing the name Ya'qubel. In a Babylonia text of the first dynasty, the name Abram was found. In the Mari text, Nahor is found as the name of the town of Nakhur, located near Haran (Gen. 24:10). Also in the same text, the name Levi and Ishmael are found, while Benjamin appears as a large confederation of tribes. We also find the name Zebulun in the Excretion text Issachar in the 18th century Egyptian list.

Some of the specific sites or locations mentioned in Genesis narratives of the patriarchs who wandered in the wilderness include: Scheme, Bethel, Hebron, Bersheba and Gerah. These patriarchs settled between 2100 and 1500BC as attested by archeologists. In the light of these evidences from archeologists, the acceptance of the patriarchs as actual historical figures became incontestable. They lived and functioned in Palestine during the second millennium BC, although what is narrated in the Bible is religious interpretation of historical facts.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- (1) Describe in brief the formative periods of Israelites history.
- (2) List and discuss five approaches to the study of Israelites history.
- (3) Give the information from Te-el-Amarna as archeological evidence in support of patriarch's history.

4.0 CONCLUSION

You should by now have a fair idea of Israelites history. Before 1550BC, the nation with its own government and its own territory was considered to have existed from c. 1200 B.C to A.D 70. The ancient oral and liturgical traditions of the people were the foundations upon which they built the theological centered summation of their origins. This was a unique type of literature that combined authentic, historical memories with profound theological insights into God's activity in bringing Israel into existence.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned about the pre-history of Israelites, especially how before 1500 BC, the people were into slavery in Egypt and were ruled by a foreign dynasty called the Hyksos. This dynasty was later driven out by Amos I, the first king of the eighteenth dynasty that reigned between 1550-1525 BCE. He founded the 18th Egyptian dynasty which ushered in a new age for Egypt known as the "New Kingdom". The Egyptian Empire was maintained in the area of what was to emerge as Israel up to the reign of Rameses VI in about 1150 BCE. Other events that took place in pre-Israelites history includes: the Egyptian reign of Amenhotep II, (1440 BCE), during which the first mention of the Habiru is found in Egyptian texts. Recently discovered evidence (see Tikunani Prism) indicates that many Habiru spoke Hurrian, the language of the Hurrians. In 1400 BC the first mention of the Shasu (or "Wanderers") in Egyptian records was made and it was located just south of the Dead Sea. Also, between 1350-1330 BCE, the Amarna correspondence detailed account of letters exchanged during the period of Egyptian domination in Canaan, during the reign of Pharaoh. This period is also one of the extensions of Hittite power into Northern Syria for the first time, and is noticeable for the spread of a pandemic through the region. Some Bible commentaries place the birth of Moses around 1300 BCE.

This time, Egypt's 19th dynasty began with the reign of Ramesses I. Ramesses II in 1292 BCE and filled the land with enormous monuments between 1279-1213 BCE during which a treaty was signed with the Hittites after ceding the northern Levant to the Hittite Empire. The conquering of the Hittite empire of Anatolia by allied tribes from the west took place around Circa 1200 BCE and the northern, coastal Canaanites (called the Phoenicians by the Greeks were temporarily displaced by the so-called "People of the sea," but returned when the invading tribes showed no inclination to settle. In 1187 BCE the Sea people attempted the invasion of Egypt. Amongst them were a group called the *P-r-s-t* (first recorded by the ancient Egyptians as *P-r-l-s-t*), and generally identified with the Philistines. The five principal Philistine cities were Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Ashkelon. Modern archaeology has suggested early cultural links with the Mycenaean world in mainland Greece. Though the Philistines adopted local Canaanite culture and language before leaving any written texts, an Indo-European origin has been suggested for a handful of known Philistine words. In 1150 BCE there was an internal trouble within Egypt that led to the withdrawal of the last Egyptian garrisons at Beth Shean, the Jordan Valley, Megiddo and Gaza, during the reign of Ramises VI. These events give a summary of pre-history of the Israelites which started with Abraham and closed with the experience of Israelites in the land of Egypt, there by looking forward for a history of salvation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) List and discuss three patriarchs that contributed to the formative periods of Israelites history.
- (2) Give five events that took place with approximate dates during the periods of pre- Israelites history.
- (3) Give five approaches to the study of Israelites history
- (4) Give information from Tel-el Amarna as archeological evidence in support of the patriarch as historical figures

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Unit 2 Israelites salvation history

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the first unit of this module, you learned about the history of Israel, from the call of Abraham to the institution of the monarchy. You were told that the formative periods of Israelites history covers the period of four hundred years from around 1500 BC. The Biblical accounts traced the formative period of Israel to four patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, (also known as Israel), and Joseph. In continuation of the quest to gradually lead you to a full understanding of what the course is about, other aspects of Israelites history characteristics of nomadic Arameans, current approaches to the study of Israelites history, archeological evidence in support of the patriarchs as historical figures and information from Tel-el-Amarna were presented. In this unit, we will examine Israelites salvation history which covers several years starting with Joseph's death in Egypt to about 1400 BC. The major events to be considered in these periods of Israelites salvation history are: The status of the Hebrews in Egypt after the death of Joseph, the birth and preparation of Moses, to deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the Exodus, including: The experience at Mt. Sinai, the forty years of wandering, the advance of Israelites towards Canaan through Moab Eastern Palestine, and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua.

The Biblical accounts of these events are contained in four books: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Exodus (going out) is so named because it is chiefly concerned with the departure of the Hebrew people from Egypt. It contains forty chapters and begins with the story of the oppression of the Jews in Egypt, and closes with the story of the tabernacle at Mt. Sinai. The Book of Leviticus containing twenty-seven chapters is the Levitical book which is concerned with the worship of the Hebrew (priesthood offerings and various laws). Numbers, thirty-six chapters, is composed of narratives, giving vivid experiences in the under ness, legal matters and statistics. Deuteronomy (second law giving) contains thirty-four chapters and it largely devoted itself to the law giving, and the Hebrew people. It has important historical accounts of the experiences of the Hebrew journey towards Canaan. These four books provide us with adequate informations about the people of Israel, especially their experiences in Egypt after the death of Joseph before they departed to the land of Canaan.

1.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this study, you should be able to:

- Narrate the story of Israelites deliverance from the land of Egypt

- Give account of Moses as a leader
- Explain the experiences of Israelites in Egyptian bondage
- Give account of Israelite's experiences in Canaan
- Discuss some of the major Judges in Israel
- Narrate the story of the conquest of Canaan by Joshua
- Give account of the institution of the monarchy in Israel.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Israelites experiences in Egypt

After the death of Joseph, a new Egyptian dynasty emerged. This dynasty regarded the Hebrews as political danger in the land and so reduced them to the condition of slaves. The Israelites who were now quite numerous were oppressed under Serti I (1310-1290) and Rameses II (1290-124), and forced to do hard labor such as painting of frescoes Rekhmre's tomb (15th century), and making of bricks. To break their spirits and at the same time, utilize their labor force (Ex 1:8ff), the people were subjugated to more hard works. This measure in the end was not regarded as adequate measure and so the Pharaoh ordered that all male children born to the Israelites should be put to death. It was during this time of suffering and death that God decided to send deliverers to the people of Israel who will take them out of the land of Egypt to the promise land of Canaan. God then chose Moses leader to accomplish this noble task. The tradition that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt is confirmed by the Old Testament, in the Exodus events, which constitute the central pivot or element in the later religion of Israel (cf. Deut. 6:31-35; Deut. 26:5-9). This summarizes the fate of Israel that God brought them out of Egypt. However, it is very difficult for one to explain that this assertion is so central to the faith of Israel if it has no basis in history. Thus, the time came when God, faithful to his promises, delivered the Israelites from the house of bondage, thus realizing an important stage in the execution of his plan of salvation.

3.1.2 The Career of Moses

Moses, the son of Amram and Jochebed, of the tribe of Levi had an older sister, named Miriam and an older brother, named Aaron. He was born at the time Pharaoh's order for the death of all male Hebrew babies was being enforced. He was hidden for three months at home by his mother, and later he was forced to find a hiding place elsewhere. A daughter of Pharaoh took Moses to the king's place where he was nurtured and trained in the Egyptian education which includes: reading, writing of hieroglyphic scripts, copying texts, letter-writing and other administrative works. He also learnt how to shoot and throw arrows (archery) and other physical exercises. Moses was further recruited into the army and supervised building projects, among others. From the point of view of his human formation, both his careful upbringing, familiarity with the Egyptian liturgy and temples, the contact with Jethro, his father-in-law and priest of Medianite sanctuary were all providential preparations for his role as a liberator, legislator and religious leader of the Israelites. But as a semite, Moses did not loose track with his ancestors, His training was meant to equip him for the arduous tasks of leading his fellow Jews to God's Promised Land.

3.1.2.1 Preparation for Moses Career

The career of Moses falls into three periods of forty years of training and preparation in Egypt. The second period was spent in the land of Midian, and was a time of unconscious preparation. The third was the period of actual accomplishment of his task. The story of his preservation as a child from harm is not without parallels in the traditions of other people than the Hebrews. That, a woman, should seek to save her child from death was natural. That, a woman should put him in the basket of papyrus reeds and placed him by the bank of river Nile where women came to bathe, shows the resourcefulness of a mother's love. That, an Egyptian princess should show pity for a helpless infant, and arrange for his nurture needs is not a romantic story telling. And if it to be objected that permission would never have been given by Pharaoh for the nurture of a Hebrew child within his own household in violation of his own decree, the rejoinder may be made that there was no occasion to regard one child as a political danger. So, Moses with his own mother as a nurse was brought up in the royal household and in due course instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt.

3.1.2.2 Moses call

Moses call was a dramatic one. He met with God at the burning bush and God sent him back to Egypt to ask Pharaoh to allow his people to leave for where he wanted them to be. Moses complained that he was not an eloquent speaker. Aaron was then assigned to help him. Moses discharged his duties according to God's will (Ex 23). His previous royal training helped him to accomplish his task.

3.1.2.3 Moses patriotism

Moses patriotism is clearly manifested in his refusal to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter and shared in the sufferings of his people thus showing them patriotism when he killed the Egyptian who was beating his kin's man. He taught his fellow Jews to remain faithful always in the saving power of God. In all circumstances, Moses kept God's commandments and showed love to his fellow Jews by constantly interceding to God for them as a faithful leader.

3.1.2.4 Moses personal character and leadership qualities

Moses had many desirable personal and leadership qualities which made him a successful and accomplished leader in Israel. These personal and leadership qualities include: (a) Obedient (Ex 5:1-5, 7:6; 14:16, 21,27). (b) Funnel and flexibility (Ex. 32:9-13). (c) Confidence in God's strength (Ex 14:13-14). (d) Trustworthy leader (Ex 14:31). (e) Patient (Ex 14:1-4). (f) Communicated with God formally (Ex 5:22-23). These aforementioned personal and leadership qualities made Moses a successful leader. Jochebed taught him (Moses), God's way as a child (Ex 6:20). For example, He murder of the Egyptian taught him that he could not liberate his people by himself. He learned humility and survival skills as an exile.

3.1.2.5 Moses as a Successful Leader

Moses accepted God's call with reluctance and his forty years in the desert had destroyed all the ambitions and pride in him. He was not afraid to express his frustration and honest feelings to God (Ex 5:22-23). He was obedient to God (Ex 7:6). He trusted God and did not complain of the people as discouraging him (Ex 14:10-14). He was teachable. And so did not feel too big to take godly instruction

from those beneath him (Ex 18). He was willing to even die for the sins of the people (Ex 32:32). He was more concerned about God's reputation than his own (Ex 32:11-13; Num 14:13-16). He prayed for his people and interceded for them (Ex 21:11-13; Num 14:19). He stood for the truth and refused to compromise in spite of pressure and popular opinion (Num 14). Saving the people was more important for Moses than his personal reward or ambition (Num 14:12). He instituted for Jewish history, a new form of leadership and was a servant of God, not a strong man who ruled by military power or accumulated wealth.

3.1.2.6 The Problem of Moses with Egyptian Authority

Despite all these personal and leadership qualities, Moses still consider his task of delivering the Hebrew people from the bondage as not an easy one. He had two great problems to face. The first problem was how to make the impossible Pharaoh to allow the Israelites go. The second problem was how to persuade the people themselves that they could and must leave Egypt (Ex 3:19; 5:1-13). Moses had the assurance of God's help and he soon had the need of it. The people were fearful and have lost consciousness of their mission as a race (Ex 14:10; Num 13:31-14:4). For long, they had been slaves, and their confidence in themselves had been destroyed by the years of servitude. They were completely defeated and demoralized and Moses was to build up their morale, persuade them that they could and must leave Egypt. With strong courage, Moses appeared before the Pharaoh to get his consent for their people to leave Egypt. Pharaoh defiantly refused to grant this request and describes God as unworthy of worship. He regarded Moses request as evidence that the Israelites were not sufficiently broken in spirit and so hardened the conditions of their servitude. He ordered his taskmasters to increase the already severe requirements made of the slaves. They must not only make the same number of bricks hithe to require of them when the straw was provided but they must provide their own straws.

3.2.1 The Ten plagues

Moses problem with the Egyptian authority is preceded by a striking account of Moses' interviews with Pharaoh, and the plagues of Egypt, from which we can deduce the major fact that God, who called Moses, was more powerful than Pharaoh, and intervened effectively to force him to let the children of Israel go (Ex 7:8-11,10). To overcome the resistance of this monarch, God sent ten plagues to the people of Egypt. With the coming of each plague, Pharaoh gives his consent for the Hebrews to depart, but when the plague passes over, he changes his mind until a more severe pestilence was sent. The order of ten plagues is as follows (1) water turned to blood, (2) Frogs, (3) Lice, (4) Flies, (5) Murrain, (6) Boils, (7) Hail, (8) Locusts, (9) Darkness, (10) Death of the first-born of animals and human beings.

These plagues have been dismissed by some scholars as either having no historical significance or has been described as natural events that need no comment and do not merit the name of miracles. Plague in Egypt are not common on the other hand, we have no cause to assume that Pharaoh was either a fool or a neurotic. It is true that at other times such plagues as lice and flies have been visited upon the land. However, in view of the increasing severity of these, and the timing of them (at the command of Moses), and the fact that the Hebrews were not subjected to them, seems that the only satisfactory explanation of them is on the basis of the miraculous. God had other purposes in mind by these plagues. In this way the power of God of the Hebrew people would be manifested. The plagues served also to frustrate the false ideas of the worship of the Egyptians. For example, the murrain (disease of the cattle) exposed the weakness of their worship of the sacred bull since this bull was expected to protect and save

the cattle of the land. These miracles were a means by which the God of Israelites could show to all his power and superiority over the gods of the Egyptians.

3.2.2 The Exodus from Egypt

The departure from Egypt is one of the fundamentals of Israel's faith, along with the creation and election of Abraham. The exodus account is very central in the both political and religious history of the people of Israel. It portrays them to have lived or sojourned in the land of Egypt, where God, out of his own saving grace took them out of the land of slavery to the promised land of Canaan. The exact date when the Exodus from Egypt took place is still disputed. The arguments for dating the Exodus even in the 15th century B.C are being more and more discounted, while those indicating the 13th century B.C. are gaining found and adherent. Some of the reasons supporting the later theory of 13th century are: the Pharaoh of the nineteenth dynasty who lived in the 13th century B.C. resided in the Delta, where they carried out extensive building programme, the kingdoms of the Edomite, Moabites and Ammonites are now known not to have existed before the 13th century, yet Israel's journey in the Trans Jordan supposes their existence; archeology shows a distinct introgression in arts and crafts in Palestine at the beginning of the iron age in the last of the 13th century, which would indicate the displacement of a higher civilization by nomadic tribes, such as were the Israelites; excavations at Bethel and Lachish show the destruction of these cities in the last half of the 13th century. Israel was named as a defeated foe but classified as people who are and not yet sedentary.

This clearly pointed out that the exodus took place, about the mid 13th century B.C. during the later part of the reign of Ramase (1290-1224 BC). If the Hebrews were employed on the building projects, then they did not leave Egypt before 1305 and since Menephtath tell us in his inscription that when in 1220, he went to Canaan on a military expedition, he defeated a group of people known as Apiru Israel, then the Hebrew people must have left Egypt before then, so the Exodus must have taken place between 1305 and 1220 BC. The reason for this is that the capital city "Avarice" was rebuilt during the time of the two Pharaohs, Sethos I (1305-1290) and Ramases II (1290-1224) BC. The significance of the Exodus is that it marks the beginning of the Hebrew nation. They are no longer a tribe of people with little morale and limited vision, concerned chiefly with maintaining an existence, but they are now a great multitude of people, a new nation conscious of some mission from God, embarking on the first stages of their course as a nation.

3.2.3 Crossing of the Red Sea

As the host of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt, deliverance was to be completed, only after the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 7:41). The crossing of the "sea of Reeds" was to place the children of Israel finally beyond Egyptian domination. After their first confusion, the Egyptian pulled themselves together, and rushed in pursuit of the Hebrews, but just as their situation became critical, God intervened to save his people. When Pharaoh drew near: The people of Israel cried out to the Lord...Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the Lord driven the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went in after them, with all Pharaoh's horses, chariots and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians, dogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. Then

the Lord said to Moses: “Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariot and upon their horsemen”. So Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its wonted flow when the morning appeared, and the Egyptians fled into it, and the Lord routed the Egyptians in the midst of the sea...not so much as one of them remain. Thus, the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the great work which the Lord against the Egyptians and they believed in Lord and his servant Moses (Ex 14:10-31). Basically, the story is that of divine assistance given to the Israelites at the critical moment when their Exodus was bound to become a disaster. It appears that God made use of natural causes (the east wind blowing throughout the night).

The text makes quite clear the reality of divine help. The Egyptians said, “let us flee before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians” (Ex 14:25). God had delivered his people. And what happened when the Jews were leaving Egypt like the division of the river by an East wind and the consequent drowning of Egyptian soldiers when they attempted to cross the river like the Israelites, we are not very certain. Apart from this, various bodies of water had been suggested by Old Testament scholars but there seem to be no agreement as to which suggestion should be accepted. It may be that the bodies of water crossed by the Israelites when they were fleeing from Egypt no longer exist but without doubt, the body of water they crossed must not have been very far from where they were working in Avarice building the house of Ramases. It was on this fantastic building project that he employed the Hebrew slaves.

3.2.4 The conquest of Canaan

At a point later, they crossed the Jordan River and began the conquest of Canaan itself. According to the book of Joshua, chapter 7:, the conquest was completed in the three stages (a) Campaign in the centre (Joshua 7:9) (b) Campaign in the south (Joshua 10) (c) Campaign in the North (Joshua 11). Thus, according to the book of Joshua, the land of Canaan was subdued within a relatively short time but according to the book of Judges, especially chapter 1, the fighting continue long after all Israel but rather by individuals.

The Tribes of Judah and Simeon, along with allied, non-Israelites tribes, gradually conquered southern Palestine from the south and also from the east, over a rather very long period that was not completed until when David took Jerusalem and some Palestine cities. These cities which are named in the book of Joshua as captured by Israel are said to have been captured for the first time, thereby creating an apparent contradiction. The difference between Joshua and Judges has led scholars to disagree on the real nature of the conquest. Those who reject the picture claimed that the conquest was a peaceful infiltration, while other said it requiring only occasional fighting. However, the evidence of archeology does not support either of the two cases. According to Joshua chapter 6, the city of Jericho was the first to fall to the Israelites and the city of Ai was second, (Joshua chapter 8). Jericho had existed for about 6000 years before the invasion and had been in the 13th century. At those times, it apparently was a very small town without city walls.

The archeological finding appears to contradict the biblical picture of the capture of the city of Jericho. Excavation of Ai shows that it was destroyed about 2,500 years BC and not rebuilt until after the 13th century, so it could not have been destroyed by Israel in the 13th century. However, a number of other towns were destroyed and some showed indication of having been rebuilt shortly therefore apparently by the same people who destroyed them. The rebuilding was carried out in a style similar to that in

which new villages were rebuilt at the same time in the Mountains of Canaan. Because the rebuilding exhibits the same style like that of later Israelite villages, it has been included by some scholars that the cities were destroyed and rebuilt by the Israelites. So the conquest did involve some degree of violence and it did take place at a certain time in the history of Canaan, but whether it was completed within a short time or continued for a long period as depicted or told in judges, we do not know.

3.2.5 Wandering in the Desert

However, between the Exodus and the point of entry into Canaan, the Israelites were wandering in the Sinai Peninsula. It was at Sinai that God revealed himself to them and entered into union with them, establishing a covenant which spelled out the terms of their reciprocal relationship. He spoke to Israel out of the fire, the cloud and the thick darkness (Ex 19:18; 22:18; Deut 4:11; 22-23), asking then for a selfless service. The people made positive response to God and were bound together in a living communion (Ex. 24:1-8). This demands of God service at Sinai were set forth in what we call the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), which declare man's duty towards God and towards his fellows. The exact location of this mount is not certain and in the Old Testament, it was called by various names for example, some places, it was called Mount Sinai, while others it was called Horeb.

This Peninsula claimed to contain mountain which is regarded sacred and frequented by Pilgrims even before the advent of Christ. Some had suggested its location in North-Western Arabia called Median because it contains Volcanoes, since the Old Testament picture of Sinai is that of volcanoes. Some suggested the northern portion of Sinai because some Old Testament passages suggest Kadesh to which Old Testament wandering names are associated. No one however seems to know neither the actual location of the route taken by the Israelites during the wandering nor even the location of the places named in the account of the wandering. In the biblical narrative, there are materials of early and late traditions and we are not in a position to say exactly what the details were but all the Old Testament says is that it was at this time and place that Israel received the law and covenant. The Israelites left Egypt as a rabble but emerged from the Sinai Peninsula as an organized people of Yahweh. It was also at Sinai that Israel began to worship her God Yahweh. In the redemption story, Moses played a prominent role as God's chief instrument to affect Israelites freedom. In the negotiation with Pharaoh and at Sinai, Moses is presented as God's mouth piece to the people and the people spokesman with God. From what has come to be ascribed to Moses it seems that Moses' role at Sinai has somehow been magnified but since the Bible is the only source of information, it is not easy to determine which elements are historically or literally true or not.

3.2.6 The Covenant on Mount Sinai

Nevertheless, the general picture of Moses as the founder of Israel's religion is probably accurate because such leaders were required by the people at Sinai. Moses is portrayed as introducing the worship of Yahweh to the Israelites. The question then arises; how did Moses himself come about the worship of Yahweh? Yahweh had his first encounter with Moses during his first visit to the mount. This could imply that Yahweh was located at Sinai and worshipped there by other people before the time of Moses. These other people may have become the knits clan to whom Moses' father in-law belongs. Jethro may have been a worshiper of Yahweh. This possibility that Moses learnt the worship of Yahweh from the Kenites is called the Kenite Hypothesis. Though this is probable, it may not be true. According to the books of Numbers, the Hebrew on leaving Egypt went to Kadesh located about fifty miles south

of Canaan. From here an attempt was made to enter Canaan from the south, but it was unsuccessful. This was followed by another period of wandering in the desert. The actual route followed cannot be traced while the places mentioned can no longer be identified. But however, they proceeded north along the eastern part of the Jordan valley through Edom, Moab and Ammon, until they came to the city of king Sihon (Ammon). They waged war against him and defeated him, and went northward until they came to king of whom they also defeated. This first stage of the conquest was thus completed.

3.2.7 The Israelites Experiences in Canaan

Israel as a people with organized twelve tribes from regional bases is found only in Canaan. Before that time, they were tribes with no systematic form of organization. What is found in Canaan as the people Israel is a mixture of different elements. Old Testament gives the impression that all the Israelites were the descendants of the sons of Jacob whose families numbered 70 souls in Egypt. This raises some doubt because apart from the difficulty of so few people producing so many descendants in Egypt, there are statements in Old Testament to the effect that Israelite migrants were such as the Midianites and the Edomites (Exodus 12:37-38). Israel also absorbed groups which he found already living in Canaan. This she did, either by conquest or absorption or through peaceful negotiation with the tribes on their own volition. A famous example of this is the treaty which Israel sought with the Gibeonites in Joshua 9:3). Also, the fact that several Canaanite cities are listed in Joshua as part of the tribe of Manasseh indicated that Gibeon was not the only Canaanite group absorbed into Israel. Shechem which later became the tribal capital of Israel belongs to this group.

There is no mention of its destruction in the Bible, neither is there archeological evidence that it was destroyed during the conquest. The only information we have is that shortly after the invasion, Israel was in possession of it (Shechem). The implication of this is that Shechem might have voluntarily surrendered to Israel or joined her. The reason might that they were able to trace some kingship link with Israel or that they represented certain groups which entered Canaan independently and found it easy to join forces with Israel against the aborigines. It is important to know that part of Israel was already in the land when the exodus groups arrived from the wilderness of Sinai. This implies that all the tribes did not settle in the land at the same time. For example, the tribe of Reuben, Simeon and Gad settled earlier in the land of Canaan before the others arrived. Secondly, some groups seemed to have entered from the south despite the reported defeat of Israel in Num 14 when she attempted to do so. According to Numbers chapter 21, there was victory for Israel in this same area and in Judges Chapter 1, the kenites, a group related to Israel were settled in this area. The implication of this is that some groups succeeded in entering Canaan from the south. Thus, in the land of Canaan, Israel was made up of different elements, all of whom did not have ancestors in Egypt nor come from Sinai. Some of them were already living in Canaan and they have entered Canaan as independent groups. According to Joshua chapter 24, after the conquest, all the components of Israel met at Shechem and made a covenant to be the people of Yahweh and to serve him alone. It is from this point in time that the history of Israel as people occupying a land begins. Israel was organized on the basis of Religion, that is, the tribes were united in covenant with Yahweh and with each other.

The religion of Israel at this early time could be summarized in what we find in Exodus 20, Deut 5, Deut 6:26, Lev 17:26ff. The story of the Judges contains some information which can be regarded to go back to the earliest period. Some of the oldest records we have in the Old Testament are in the form poetry like song of Deborah, Judges Chapter 5 and the song of Moses Deut Chapter 32). Yahweh as a deity was

not worshiped in Canaan before the entry of the Israelites. There is no evidence of Yahwehism in Canaan before the entry of the Israelites. Yahweh became the God of Israel because of his redemptive work in Egypt and by entering into a covenant, he made Israel his people. The Israelites also believed that the fact that God chose to enter into covenant with them is an evidence of their election. This election is expressed especially in Exodus and it is found in the religious of Israel from their earliest period in the land.

The promises of the patriarchs were understood by the biblical authors as expressing the doctrine of election. They saw the promises as having their fulfillment in the Exodus and conquest. The biblical doctrine of election is termed by the Old Testament as God's favor. Israel as recipient of this favor did nothing to deserve it, and in the stories of the wilderness wondering, Israel is portrayed as being constantly rebellious and ungrateful. Therefore, Yahweh elected Israel simply because he wanted to make them his possession in the covenant at Sinai; the people affirm their loyalty to Yahweh as his people. The later covenant at Shechem represented the same affirmation by the various groups which had joined Israel after Sinai and had become part of Israel. The covenant at Shechem marked the beginning of the actual tribal organization in Canaan.

3.2.8 The Hittite Treaty

It begins in a preamble in which the king identifies himself, followed by a prologue in which he speaks in the first person. He mentions what he has done for his vassals and the things for which the vassals ought to be grateful. The second section contains a statement of obligation to be imposed on the vassal who includes complete loyalty to the king and respect to other vassals. The payment of tributes and military service to be rendered by the vassals are also stipulated. Added to this is the submission of legal disputes with other vassals of the king. Provision is made for keeping a copy of the treaty in the shrine of the vassal and for a public reading of it at regular intervals. Section five all the gods who are witness to the treaty. It closes with section six which contains all the blessings for obedience to the terms of the treaty and curse for disobedience.

3.2.8 The similarities between Hittite treaty and Israelites covenant

These similarities between Hittite treaty and Israelite covenant can be found in:

(1) The preamble which is also parallel is Exodus 20:2 and Joshua 24:2 (2) the prologue which is also found in Exodus 20:2 and Joshua 24:2. (3) The statement of obligation which in the Old Testament is contained in the proscription of relationship with other gods and the recognition of other Israelites as vassals of Yahweh as contained in the Ten Commandment. (2) Although some of the obligations are not found in the covenant, in the organization of the tribes, the impositions on members like military service and sacrifice to Yahweh may be analogous to payment of tributes. (4) The provision for keeping of the ark which contains the tables of the Lord in the sanctuary. In Deut. 31:9-13, Moses commanded the reading of the law at regular intervals. Blessings and curses similar to the Hittite treaty are found in the covenant with Israel (cf Deut. 27 and 28).

These similarities point to it that the Hittite treaty and the Old Testament covenant belong to the same historical period. It also means that the Israelite tribes had banded themselves by oath as vassals to their king (Yahweh who had delivered them) and were ready to live in peace with one another under His rule

and in obedience to the obligations Yahweh has placed on them. It can also be observed that the covenant made is very different from that between Yahweh and the Patriarchs. With the Patriarchs, the covenant was based on promises for the future and it required faith and trust. But in the case of the exodus groups, the covenant was based on past events and it entailed heavy obligations. The fact that Yahweh was in effect the king of Israel meant that the covenant was not an agreement between two equals (i.e parity covenant) but between a superior and an inferior (i.e Suzerainty covenant) just like the Hittite treaty. If the terms of the covenant were not met by the inferior, then the covenant was no longer binding upon the superior party and of course the inferior will suffer the consequences of his action. So the covenant could be broken if the king's subject failed to obey the terms of the agreement, but if the law was kept, the subject had the promise of the king fulfilled for them and he will continue to be gracious into them. This was Yahweh's path in the covenant. He promised Israel continued possession and prosperity in the land of Canaan on the condition that they obey the terms of agreement.

Hittite treaty demanded complete loyalty to the king and in the first commandment, Israel is forbidden to worship any other than Yahweh, unlike the gods of the Ancient Near East. Yahweh had no wife, no children and no other gods to compete with. He only had courtiers made up of angels and the heavenly hosts (Cherubim and Seraphim (Is.6) who though subordinate to him were not worshiped. Israel was forbidden to recognize the existence of the gods of other nations referred to by the Bible as mere images and statues. For the Israelites, the second commandment strictly forbids images of gods and goddesses of Canaan which connected with agriculture and their activities reflected in the cycle of the seasons the growth and death of vegetation. The impact of these fertility cults is that Canaanite unlike the Israelite had no historical base. The Canaanite gods might perform certain acts but were not leading their people toward any particular goal in the future except in the next season in the agricultural year. Yahweh was not associated with this circle of nature but with historical events, like the exodus which constituted the basis of Israel's gratitude to him as expressed in the covenant.

3.2.9 Israelites Tribal Associations

For 200 years in the land of Canaan, Israel had a tribal association based entirely on the covenant. This tribal association traced its origin to the sons of Jacob born by his two wives. At an early period, Levi was given a special provision in Israel but it was ceased to be part of the twelve tribes' organizations. To make up for this loss, the tribe of Joseph was divided into two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. While Manasseh was divided in two parts by her occupation of western and eastern portions of the conquered land, the organization of the twelve tribes was centered on the shrine which in the early days was a tent containing the Ark of the Covenant. This tent was located at Shiloh, the centre of Palestine. Similar organizations were also found in the ancient Near East and in the surrounding cities like Italy, Greece, and Ancient Sumeria and in Mesopotamia. Though the federated union of Israel's link to nations could have been similar to that of other nations around her, yet it had internal nature of the god under whose authority it was found.

The name given to this organization in modern times is AMPHICOTONY which simply means "an organization of dwelling around". Outside Israel, amphykotony consisted of twelve or six members all dwelling around a shrine the reason for the number is that each tribe was responsible for the

maintenance of the shrine for one month in a year and in the case of six members for two months. Israel had twelve tribes which therefore mean a monthly rotation of responsibility for the maintenance of the shrine. Although the amphicotomy had a central shrine, it had no central government. Whatever it did as a unit was done on the basis of the covenant which bound of loyal subjects of Yahweh. These common bound of loyalty meant assistance to each other in the time of crisis. Any tribe which failed to respond to such a call was put under a curse. The call to arm was given by the so called judges. The judge was not an appointed leader or a legal expert but a man upon whom the spirit of Yahweh has descended. He was a temporary military leader who led the tribes to war under the guidance of Yahweh this means that the wars carried out by the anphictiony were holy wars in which the real leader was Yahweh himself.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- (1) What is Exodus? Narrate the story of the Exodus of Israelites from Egypt.
- (2) Give account of the desert wandering of the Israelites after their departure from Egypt.
- (3) Describe the experience of Israelites in Canaan.
- (4) Defined the term “treaty” and show the similarities between the Hittite treaty and Israelites covenant?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, the goal has been to sensitize the student to be aware of Israelites salvation history and the reason for the choice of Abraham as the founder of Hebrew race. With Abraham we have the real beginning of the history of Hebrew people. In calling Abraham to be the head of a new race, God had a specific purpose. The call which came to Abraham was an event of great significance, the most important religious events since the fall of man-a new starting point for genuine religion. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have seen that Israelites salvation history started with the patriarchs who were the founder of Hebrew people as a race. Through the help of Moses and Aaron, God’s plan of salvation for the people of Israel was to be accomplished. This promise of God which was later ratified by the sign of circumcision of every male child came to be fulfilled in the birth of Isaac. Thus, the people of Israel departed the land of Egypt between 1300-1200 BC and wandered in the wilderness of sin before crossing the red sea into the promise land of Canaan. Although the exact location of the Exodus is not clear, however, it is a known fact that many of Israel victories that took place at this time were attributed to a great hero Joshua, the successor of Moses as God’s charismatic leader who still remains the predominate figure in the conquest of central Palestine.

7.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1.) Briefly describe three of the patriarchal figures that have contributed to Israelites salvation history.
- (2). Give chronological account of the Exodus of Israelites from Egypt to the promise land of Canaan. What were their experiences in Canaan?
- (3) Discuss the periods of the Judges and show how they rose to power in the land of Israel
- (4) Give reasons why the Israelites demanded for a human king

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Unit 3 THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL FROM THE TIME OF JUDGES TO THE PERIOD OF CAPTIVITY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learned the salvation history of Israelites. In the subsection on the Exodus from Egypt you were told that the departure was one of the fundamentals of Israelite's faith which portrays them to have sojourned in the land of Egypt, where God out of his salving grace took them out of the land of slavery to the promised land of Canaan. Remember, however, that the subsection ended on the note that the Israelites crossed the red sea and after the conquest of Canaan, they wandered in the desert and came to Mount Sinai where God made a covenant with them. In this unit our focus will be on examine the experiences of Israelites from the time of Judges to the period of captivity. After the return of Israelites to the land of Canaan, around 1200 BCE, the great powers of the region were neutralized by troubles of various kinds. This was the time of the "the peoples of the sea", during which the philistine

settled along the coast from Gaza in the south to Joppa in the north. The entire Middle East fell into a “Dark age” from which it took centuries to recover. Recovery seems to have occurred first in the trading cities of the philistine area, passing northwards to the Phoenicians, before moving inland to affect the interior areas of the Judean and Samarian hills, the historic core of Judea and Israel.

According to the biblical account, in their initial attacks under Joshua, the Israelites occupied most of Canaan, which they settled according to traditional family lines derived from the sons of Jacob and Joseph (the tribes of Israel). No formed government existed and the people were led by leaders (the “Judges” of the biblical book of Judges) in times of crisis. Around this time, the name “Israel” is first mentioned in a contemporary archeological source, the Merneptah Stele. The withdrawal of the Egyptian garrisons in 1150 BCE created a power vacuum in the region in which the Canaanite tribes tried to destroy the developing power-base of the Israelites tribes of the northern and central highland areas. According to the Bible, the Israelites response was led by Barak, and the prophetess Deborah, who mustered some of the Israelite tribes in a common defense. The Canaanites were defeated and the core of Israel extended north into Galilee and Jezreel (Jud. 4-5). But as Bronze Age collapsed and trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia recovered, new interior trade routes opened up that runs from Kadesh Barnea in the South, through Jerusalem and Lachish to Samaria, Shiloh and Shechem and on through Galilee to Megiddo and the plain of Jezreel. This new route threatened the trade monopoly of the Philistines, who sought to dominate the inland routes. Israel to effectively resist the philistine menaces was allowed to demand for a human king to judge them (I Sam 8:6, 20). Although Samuel tried to dissuade them, they were resolute and Samuel reluctantly anoint Saul ben Kish from the tribe of Benjamin as king. The increasing pressure from the philistines and other neighboring tribes, forced the Israelites to be united under one monarchy after the death of King Saul in C. 1050 BCE.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Explain what led to the reign of Judges in Israel.
- Discuss the roles of some judges in Israel.
- Give reasons for Israelites demand for a human king.
- Give accounts of the institution of monarchy in Israel.
- Discuss the nature of captivity of the people of Israel by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Rise of Judges

The crises in Israel resulted to the rise of some leaders called “Judges”, These judges rose to power during the period of “Dark Ages” of Hebrew history. It was a time of decline, apostasy, disorder and demoralization in all areas of life-economic, political, social, moral and religious activities. The oft-recurring statement in the Book of Judges is that “the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of God: and God sent an oppressor to persecute and enslave them. The people in distress for deliverance God raised up a judge or deliverer to defeat the enemy and deliver the people”. In the struggle of the Israelites for survival, there were certain great crises in which one or more of the tribes were involved. It was during these crises that God rouse up judges to deliver his chosen people, the Israelites.

3.1.1 Functions of the Judges

The function of these Judges was to serve as military leaders to deliver the people from their oppressors. In some cases, the functions of the judges involved political and judicial. In some instances they served as religious leaders and were highly respected by the people in the society.

3.1.2 The Major Judges

The names of the major Judges include: (a) Othniel of Judah, (b) Ehud, a Benjamite, (c) Deborah, the prophetess, and Barak, (d) Gideon from Manasseh, (e) Abimelech, son of Gideon, (f) Jair of Gilead, (g) Tola of Issachar, (h) Jephthah of Gilead, (i) Ibzan from Bethlehem, (j) Elan of Zebulun, (k) Abdon and (l) Samson of Dan. Some people include both Ruth and Samuel as judges, while others do not. Of this, six are regarded as leaders and are as follows: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson.

3.1.2.1 Othniel

Chronologically, Othniel came as the first deliverer, and apparently served not many years after the death of Joshua. The people of Judah had yielded to the temptation of indulging in the wicked ceremonies of Canaanite worship, having forsaken the worship of God. From far-off Mesopotamia, a king named Cushan Rishathaim was sent as an oppressor. For eight years, his oppression grew steadily worse until the people called upon God. Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, rose up a deliver and in an encounter, the details of which are not given, defeated the enemy, drove them out and this delivered the people of Judah.

3.1.2.2 Ehud

Ehud, a man of Benjamin delivered the Israelites from the invader of Moab, East of the Jordan valley. Eglon, king of Moab, crossed the Jordan, captured Jericho and for eighteen year oppressed the tribes east of the Jordan as well as the people of Benjamin and Judah. Ehud, a left-handed warrior from Benjamin, went to the palace of Eglon and asked for a private interview with the king. When he was left alone with Eglon he whipped out his dagger and stabbed him, hurried from the room, locked the door and quickly crossed the Jordan to mount Ephraim. According to the biblical account, Ehud slew then thousand of Moabites and allowed not one to escape.

3.1.2.3 Deborah and Barak

Their great victory was over the Canaanites in the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon. Deborah, a prophetess from Ramah in Ephraim and Barak a man of Naphtali rallied an army to fight these invaders (the Canaanites) who occupied much of the valley of Esdraelon and oppress the Hebrews. Deborah persuaded Barak to undertake to raise an army. Barak was able to assemble an army of ten thousand men on mount Yabor, over-looking the valley of Esdraelon. His army met that of the Canaanites on the bank of the river Kishon in Esdraelon. Sisera, with his nine hundred war chariots, led the forces of king

Jabin. The Hebrews led the attack and threw the Canaanites into confusion. Just then a furious storm broke over the valley, rendering the bows of the Canaanites useless. The rapidly rising waters descending with flood caused the heavy iron chariots to bog in the mud. In this hopeless confusion, Sisera leaped from his chariot and fled to the north. The victory against Canaanites was decisive.

Sisera in his flight came to Kedesh in Naphtali and was given shelter in the tent of a woman named Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite. Exhausted, he fell asleep. Then Jael took a long tent pin, drove it through his head and fastened him to the ground in death (Judge 11:17-22; 5:24-27). After the overwhelming victory, Deborah composed her famous song which was used in celebrating this impressive deliverance (Judges 5:1-3). Deborah was a prophetess, a channel of God's word to the people of Israel (Judge. 4:4). She was a trusted judge, holding court (Judge 4:4-5). She encouraged and inspired Barak and the people to throw off oppressors (Judge 4:6,7;9,9). She fearlessly helped Barak to lead the warriors into the battle (Judge 4:8-10). She became an outstanding example of how God can use women just as well as men to proclaim His word and lead His people. Deborah believed in God and she was an inspiring and motivating personality such that Barak relied on her (Judge 4:6-9; 14:8). She was bold and courageous leader. She used adequate resources (human and material), willing people, proper motivations and incentives to successfully accomplish her duty as a leader.

3.1.2.4 Gideon

His story of deliverance of the Hebrews against the Midianites is the most familiar one in the book of Judges. The Midianites, the Amalakites and the Arab tribes from the East under the leadership of Zebah and Zalmunnah with the two chiefs Oreb and Zebah attacked the Israelites, destroying crops and inflicting the severest sufferings on the people for seven years. Gideon, the deliver, came from the tribe of Manasseh and slew the Midianites at the Lord's command. He also destroyed the altar of Baal and in its place erected an altar to God. Gideon was then commissioned to gather an army to fight the Midianites. He took three hundred men on the hill overlooking the valley where the Midianites were encamped. Dividing his camp into three equal companies, he gave each man a horn, an earthen pitcher and a torch. Gideon and his men took the Midianites by surprise, chase and captured them and their army defeated. Gideon then returned in triumph back home.

3.1.2.5 Jephthah

Jephthah an illegitimate son which was without respectable standing was commissioned by God to deliver Israelites from the hands of the Ammorites. The oppression of the people of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim who were guilty of idolatry was so severe and prolonged that they cried for a deliverer. Jephthah agreed and promised that if he was victorious, he would be given proper recognition among his people. He recruited an army with which he met the Ammotrites in the forests of Gilead, and decisively defeated them, taking twenty of their strong cities. Before going to battle, Jephthah foolishly vowed to God that if he should be victorious, he would upon his return home sacrifice whatever should first come out of his house to meet him. Unfortunately, it was his daughter that came out to meet him. He kept his vow and sacrificed his child.

3.1.2.6 Samson

Samson is one of the strongest and most pathetic characters in the bible. The Biblical account of his remarkable exploits which culminated in his tragic death are not possible in this connection, however, the story of his birth has indicated that he was endowed with supernatural strength and set apart for a special mission. But as one reads the story of his youth, his determination to marry a Philistine girl, his frivolous behavior, the prodigal use of his powers for his own selfish purpose, his indulgence in forbidden pursuits, his immoral conduct, his capture by the enemy and his death, a sense of being disappointment comes over him. He never understood his mission as a people. The Philistines, who had long been a serious threat to the Hebrews in the central and southern Palestine, would have been averted if Samson had been the right kind of man. His selfish indulgence and wasted opportunities led to the long bitter struggles of the Israelites with his enemy nation, which they had to endure for the next hundred more years.

3.1.2.7 Ruth

The story of Ruth is a lovely and wholesome one believed to have written around 1100 BC. The exact date of the book is uncertain, however, some feel that it should be placed at end of the period of Judges. It is the story of Elimelech and his wife Naomi and their two sons who lived in the vicinity of Bethlehem. During a severe famine, the family left their ancestral home and took up their abode in Moab, East of the Dead Sea. While sojourning in this land, Mahlon and Chilion, the two sons married two Moabite girls, Ruth and Orpah. Elimelech and later the two sons all died in Moab, leaving Naomi and her daughter-in-law in the land. In due time, Naomi decided to return to her old home and her daughter-in-law offered to go with her. Orpah returned to her family but Ruth declared her purpose to accompany her mother-in-law. Upon their arrival, Ruth found work gleaning in the fields of Boaz, a rich farmer. She and Boaz came to love each other and, after a time, they were married they gave birth to a baby boy named Obed who became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David the great king of Israel. Since Jesus of the line of David, Ruth, the Moabites were an ancestress of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. All these judges had a function of delivering the people of God from the hands of the enemy. From them God's providential care of His people and His governance of human affairs were so real that no event was without significance.

3.2 The United Monarchy

This period covers more than one hundred years. It begins with the closing years of the judges and terminated with the death of Solomon around 975 B.C. During this period, the life of the Hebrew nation underwent a radical change with the influence of Samuel, the statesman, prophet and priest chosen by God to lead his people. But due to increasing pressure from the Philistines and other neighboring tribes, the Israelites were forced to unite under King Saul in c. 1050 BCE. The Bible describes how Saul was defeated by the Philistines and David originally a shepherd from Hebron, who, while serving Saul, managed to secure an independent power base (though victory in battle) in Jerusalem. David seized Jerusalem from the Jebusites, the tribes of Canaanite and took the throne in 1000 BCE. Although there is debate about the chronology of this period, Solomon the son of David, supposedly took the throne in 965 BCE.

According to the Bible, this United Kingdom lasted until c.920 BCE when it split into two kingdoms of Israel as a result of irreconcilable differences between the northern and southern regions. As a result, two states developed separately, with Israel, the northern state, being culturally dominant. Unfortunately

little if any independent archaeological confirmation of the existence of the United Monarchy has been found, and the subject remains highly controversial. Jonathan N. Tubb argues that the two states that developed in C. 922 were culturally identical to the secondary Canaanite states of the Middle Eastern Iron Age II period. Archaeologists like Israel Finkelstein and others also opened there was never a united monarchy and that the stories about its existence were mostly developed during the kingdom of Josiah (see *The Bible unearthed*). Josiah and his priests wanted, according to Finkelstein and other archaeologists, claim rights to the lands of Israel after it was taken over by the Assyrian empire.

3.3 Origin of the United Monarchy

As the wealth returned to the region at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the collapse of trade with Egypt and Mesopotamia recovered, new interior trade routes opened up. The route running from Kadesh Barnea in the south, through Hebron to Jerusalem and the one running from Lachish to Samaria, Shiloh and Shechem through Galilee to Megiddo became great commercial linking points. These new routes threatened the trade monopoly of the Philistines, who sought to dominate the inland routes, either directly, through military intervention against the growing strength of the tribes of Israel, or indirectly, through promoting and employing mercenaries to positions of power. As outlined in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 7, for Israel, to effectively resist the Philistine menace, it demanded for a king to rule over them (I Samuel 8:6, 20). According to the books of Samuel, the nation appealed for a king because Samuel's sons, who had been appointed judges over Israel, misused the office. Although Samuel tried to dissuade the people, they were resolute and Samuel reluctantly anointed Saul ben Kish from the tribe of Benjamin as king.

3.4 Institution of the Monarchy

There are two accounts or traditions of Israelites choice of king: The anti-monarchist tradition (I Sam. 8:1-22; 10:17-27) and the monarchist Tradition (I Sam. 9:1-10,16).

3.4.1 Monarchist Tradition (I Sam 8:1-22; 10.17-27).

This first account is a little more difficult, and to some extent contradictory to the second account. It shows how Samuel first rejected the popular demand for the king and later acceded to it only after a divine command. Samuel having been aware of the people's wishes, called a public assembly to Mizpah to hear their statement. The demand for a king displeased him. That a prophet should be their leader was in order, for a prophet would act as God directed him so that true religion would prevail. But a king might become intoxicated with power and utterly turn away from God, acting in pride and presumption which could lead to Israel's ruin. Therefore, to the assembled people, Samuel spoke at length about the consequences, and the defects of a monarchy, such as compulsory military service, forced labor on the crown lands, taxation for the upkeep of the court and the menarche of government (I Sam. 8:11-17). And in a menacing farewell discourse gave up his judgment in the very act of excising his role as prophet, that is, spoke man for God (I Sam. 12). The people refused to heed Samuel advice. They were willing to believe that any condition was preferable to that of the powerlessness in which they found themselves. Samuel reflected upon that attitude, prayed for God's guidance and in the end decided to grant their request. So he made the tribes pass before him, and Benjamin was chosen by lot; and of that tribe the clan Saul, the son of Kish was chosen.

3.4.2 Anti- Monarchist Tradition (I Sam. 9:10-11, 16, 11:1-15)

The second account which is more vivid, memorable and intelligible, describes how Yahweh himself guided the secret election of Saul as king of Israel; how Saul defeated the Ammorites, and how the people acclaimed him as king. According to this account, Saul, a man of Benjamin, was sent by his father to find some strayed asses, and passing near Ramah, was advised by his servant to seek the advice of the seer, Samuel: He is a man held in great honor, all that he said come surely to pass". Saul accepted the advice and found that it was a festival day in Ramah. On Samuel's invitation, he took part in the celebrations and was highly honored. Thereafter, the two of them returned to Samuel's house and conversed together on the housetop. Samuel obviously had become convinced, not that Israel needed a king but that God would guide him to find the right man. Now that man had been found; the conversation on the house-top had revealed to the seer the worth of Saul. Therefore, in the morning, he sent him on his journey, Samuel anointed Saul as prince over Israel, and bade him to go to the hill of God (Gibeah), where he would meet a band of prophets and the enthusiasm which possessed them would lay hold upon him.

Thereafter, Saul returned home as he had not yet been publicly acknowledged. He waited the occasion which would summon him to action. It came without delay. Nahash of Ammon laid siege to Jabesh Gilead beyond Jordan. The besieged people asked for terms of surrender, but these were so harsh as to be utterly unacceptable. Either out of supreme confidence in his own power or contempt of Israel or both, Nahash permitted the people of Jabesh Gilead to send messengers through out Israel. Word in due course came to Gibeah where Saul was. He was galvanized into action, sent a fiery cross through the tribes and gained a magnificent response. The people had obviously been awaiting a leader, and they went out with Saul to win a resounding victory over Nahash of Ammon. It was after this that the people gathered together at Gilgal and in a public assembly at that sanctuary proclaimed Saul king, thus confirming Samuel's choice and anointing (I Sam. 11:15).

Both traditions are ancient and from different points of view and they transmit the essential facts, the need for centralized political and military power to defend against outside pressures and a nostalgic reluctance to give up the freedom of anphictiony rule with its closer and more initiate ties with the ultimate king, God. The type of kingship rule Saul exhibited very likely resembled that of the kings of the recently established kingdoms of Ammom, Moab, and Edom rather than the allied tyrannies of the Philistine and the prince-lings of the Canaanite city-states. Thus, national monarchy was formed to join together warlords of previous federated tribes. Many Kings that hold over these claims depended upon their success in battles, loyalties of religious clans that united Israel's tribal loyalties. Thus, after Saul's initial victories over the Ammonites, Amalekites and the Philistine in the hill country and his repulse of Philistine attempts to invade Israelite highland strongholds via the narrow valleys leadings eastward from the coast, he inevitably lost popularity for his dynasty. This was caused by the disastrous confrontation of Philistine's chariots on the plain below Mt. Gilboa around 1000 B.C. where he and his oldest son died and Israel collapsed before Philistines was irrevocable.

3.4.3 Comments on Monarchist and Anti-Monarchist Traditions

Some biblical scholars tend to think that the monarchist narrative is late. It presupposes an experience of the failure of the monarchy. The monarchist tradition is taken to be near the events. The argument is that the monarchy is the natural fruit of the unity that was being achieved towards the close of the period of

Judges, for unity was imperative in the face of the growing peril. The last judge anointed the first king, and this first king has a charismatic nature: he is chosen by God and possessed by his spirit, and the spirit moves him to great exploits. The present author has some reservation about the monarchist tradition and doubts very much if there were unity in the monarch as he intends to show in 2 Sam. and the kings. Moreover, the author seems to have accepted the view that the anti-monarchy tradition presupposes sad experience of the failure of the monarchy. The thing is that despotism, cruelty and vindictiveness of rulers in ancient times were well known to the Israelites. Their fathers had experienced it in Egypt under Pharaoh; all the petty states around them groaning were under such rulers. The truth is that, without the fear of God, no rulers can be good. Instead of Israel seeking God, she wanted a king like other nations whose rulers were full of evil just as Samuel had mentioned. To suggest that Samuel never explained these evils to the people and that only someone after the exile could have written them after experience is hard to accept. After all, what the people said about Samuel's sons is true which suggests that they did not Samuel's household to continue in ruler. Could Samuel not have seen this as his virtual dismissal? The present author is inclined to put the two versions together. Even if the people preferred a king instead of God as their king, the truth was that God's covenant and his laws were still binding, and must be observed. Both the people and the king would s but by walking in God's ways.

3.5 The Reign of Samuel

The transition from the dark and chaotic days of the judges to the glorious era of the kings soon find out that there was no way of securing the prosperity and peace of the nation was nor a sudden nor an accident one. It came through Samuel, who is called by some as the last of the judges. Others think of him as the first figure in the new era. He was a religious leader of reformation whose call came when he was about twelve years old. As Eli grew feebler and his sons continued in their wicked course, people began to turn to Samuel as a prophet of deep spiritual life destined to lead the nation in the crisis of the Philistines.

3.6 The Reign of Saul (I Sam. 9-18).

The years of Saul's reign are dominated with great opportunities. The account of his rule opens with description of a military episode the Ammorites attack under their king Nahash. A number of men were dismissed from the army but 3,000 were retained to begin a standing army. War started at Geba where Jonathan was the commander and was formally declared throughout Israel and the people came to meet Saul at Gilgal, a place suitable to deplore armies and at the entrance of the gorge valley deep and narrow with rocky sides. The number of the enemy was enormous. They occupied Michmash, a Benjaminite city, some 70 miles NE of Jerusalem. Saul withdrew down the gorge to Gilgal while Jonathan still remained at Geba at the South of the gorge. Many of the Israelites were terrified and they showed great cowardice.

According to the biblical record, Saul made seven military campaigns during his period of reign as a king in Israel. These include: the campaign against the Ammorites at Jabesh-Gilead, against the Philistines, several against Moab-Edom and Zobah, against the Amalekites, against the Philistines under Goliath, and against the Philistines, at Mt. Gilboa which resulted in his death. Saul's first mistake was his failure to wait before assuming the role of a priest when he had received instruction from Samuel. The deadly peril of the Philistine invasion compelled Saul to proceed himself to offer the burnt offering seeking the help of God. For this, Samuel sternly rebuked him and told him that the kingdom would be

taken away from his family and gives to another. However, Saul joined Jonathan at Geba and they faced the Philistine at Michmash with about 600 men. The Philistines had encamped at Michmash and their destroyers, went forth on raids to the north, west and east destroying the land. In fact, the Philistines had imposed a thorough disarmament on the Israelites. For example, smiths were allowed; in Grael for fear that weapons of war would be made. An Israelite had to go down to the Philistines to sharpen his sickle, his ploughshare and his hoe.

Unknown to others, and with only his amour-bearer, Jonathan crossed the valley secretly to the Philistine side-about three miles, while Saul remained at Migron in the Geba district, with Ahiah the grandson of Phinehas, now High Priest. The place where Jonathan crossed is recognizable from the two conical hills on each side, Bozez and Seneh. The valley had acacia trees. Jonathan was confident that God would give them a sign by making the enemy say "come up to us". When the Philistines saw them, they thought they were deserters coming out of the holes where they had been hiding. The Philistines then gave the sign Jonathan had hoped for and Jonathan knew that the Lord had delivered them into their hand and rapidly slew the garrison of 20 men. When Jonathan attacked, an earthquake caused a very great trembling. Saul's men across the gorge, saw the excitement and behold the multitude melted away, beating down one another in confusion.

The absence of Jonathan was then discovered when Saul asked for a head count of the army. He called Ahiah to consult the Ark, but in his characteristic impatience he did not wait for the answer. They went in pursuit of the enemy, who fought one another, and soon crowds and deserters joined Saul in the hour of victory (vv 20-22). To avoid delay, Saul took an oath of his men not to eat anything, a demand which weakened them physically and hindered them (24). Jonathan was ignorant of the oath and he took a sip of the abundant honey. His eyes were made clear, while the eyes of the rest were dim with fatigue. When the period of that oath was expired, they flew moldy on the spoil, breaking the Mosaic Law both by eating with the blood Lev.17:20-10 and by killing calves with the dams (Lev 17:22:28). A great stone was set up for the slaughtering and this was also the first altar Saul had built for God.

Saul wanted a total crack down on the Philistines but first he enquired of the Lord if he would deliver them into his hand. As a result of Jonathan's unconscious lapse, the Lord refused the answer Saul's enquiry. Then Saul swears that whoever is responsible shall die-a foolish oath (38-44). The people, however, saved Jonathan, insisting that God had done a great victory through him (45). The mention of Urim and Thummim in (41-42) deserves some comment. They were two diamond dice to be used in casting lots, to know the divine will. When the Urim are the answer, it would be 'yes'; when Thummim gives the answer was 'No'. The second mistake of Saul which merited his rejection as a king has to do with his refusal to carry out God's command given to him through Samuel. After successfully defeating Moab, Ammon and Edom, Samuel appeared to Saul with the command that he should go to war against their bitter and cruel enemy in the South, the Amalekites. He was to administer decisive defeat upon them by slaying men and women, infant and suckling, oxen and sheep, camel and ass. Saul went as commanded and was completely victorious in the campaign. He carried out the instructions to the letter except for sparing the life of Agag, the king and saving the best of the cattle. Samuel considered Saul's action as disobedient, and rebellion against God and for that he was rejected from being king (I Sam 15:22-23). Even though Saul was allowed to remain king until his death, his last years were tragic ones. His mind was affected and his judgments and actions were no longer normal.

3.6.1 Saul Leadership qualities

Saul possessed several admirable qualities as a leader. He was a man of large physique and attractive appearance. He was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upwards. He was modest and humble. He did not seek the office and was not eager to serve. His obedience to God and humility in the beginning were very commendable. He had the ability to organize and to execute. He was also an able military leader as indicated by the decisive victories in the early part of his career. He had the qualities of a leader and made a good beginning. The situation offered Saul a great opportunity and was the first king, the one to blaze the trail and set pattern for later rulers. He was all but unanimously accepted. He had all the authority of his kingly office. He had the benefits of the wise counsel and the valuable experience of Samuel, the honored and respected leader for so many years. He stood on the threshold of a new day.

3.6.2 Saul and David

The following events must be examined when discussing Saul and David. There are:

3.6.3 David's Introduction to Saul

There are two separate accounts of David's introduction to Saul. According to the first one (I Sam. 16:14-33), Saul had become subject to fits of Melancholia and there was sought a musician who might be able to soothe the king's spirit. In this way, David was chosen as a harpist. The second account shows how David appeared before the public eye (I Sam. 17:55-18:5). According to this account there was war with the Philistines and the armies confronted each other in the valley of Elah. It was expected Saul's amour-bearer would have been in the field with the king, but it is said that, whereas his three eldest brothers were there, he himself was shepherding near his home in Bethlehem. When he was sent by his father with provisions for his brothers, David learnt that a hero of the Philistines, Goliath of Gath, had thrown down a challenge, offering to meet any Israelites in single combat.

Not even Saul would accept the challenge and all the people were dismayed and greatly afraid. David now a young man accepted this challenge and announced to Goliath that he was going to kill him in the name of God of the Hebrews (I Sam. 17:46). The Goliath perished at the hand of David who had firm faith in God. The Philistines fled into disarray, and David became the popular hero.

3.3.5.4 Tension between Saul and David

When David, after slaying Goliath and was praised with loud acclaim by women who sang praises: "Saul has slain his thousand and David his ten thousands," tension was created between Saul and David. These praises however, were not uttered in response to Goliath's death alone, but were in line with the former tradition which describes David as the king's amour-bearer. From this time forth Saul became fiercely jealous of David and his bouts of melancholy increased. He saw David, not without reason as one who might split the kingdom by faction and undo all the good work that had been done. He therefore, disregarded him in military rank (I Sam 18:5, 13), and removed him from court; and more and more openly plotted for his destruction (I Sam 18:25; 19:1; 19:8-10). Also, when Micah, Saul's daughter married David and loved her husband and Jonathan, his own son was David's bosom friend, more fuel was added to the fire of the king's jealousy (I Sam. 18:28; 19:2).

3.65 David's Flight

The period from David's flight from the court of Saul to his death in the battle of Mount Gilboa, are unusually full and detailed in information that it is difficult for one to give the exact date of events and the situation at a time. It is therefore, easy to applaud David as an attractive personality and valiant hero and deride Saul as a jealous monarch of unstable temperament, suffering acutely from what is today termed an inferiority complex. For one to make such a statement, would be an over generalization of conclusion on the part of David and unfair comparison on the part of Saul. The narrative, when studied carefully in its literary deserves careful analysis of events which could be broadly divided into three dimensions: (1) That, it is an undisputable fact that David was driven from Saul's court and had to live a fugitive life in the fields and caves of Judah and the south country, but he was not simply an innocent sufferer. He lived the life of an outlaw, and gathered to himself a band of mal-contented (I Sam. 22:1,2). He maintained himself and his men by various means, sometimes by plunder taken in battle (22:1-5), at other times, by blackmail as is illustrated in the story of the churlish Nabal and the wise, tactful Abigail (25). On one occasion he claimed for himself and his men some of the showbread from the sanctuary at Nob which had come to take the place of Shiloh, and so brought down upon the priests dire vengeance from Saul, only one, Abiathar, escaped to seek refuge with David. It is obvious that David must have been a sore in the body politic; he weakened the loyalty to the reigning sovereign and so weakened the kingdom at a time when it needed, beyond all else, consolidation.

(2) David had undoubtedly a personal attractiveness and this made Jonathan, his friend and Jonathan stuck with him through thick and thin. Saul found that the members of his own court were very unwilling to inform against David (I Sam. 22: 7,8). Abiathar attached himself to David as priest, apparently bearing him no ill-will because his action had led to the destruction of Nob, priests and sanctuary. And at Engedi and Hachilah, David displayed magnanimity of spirit in sparing Saul's life which marks him as a man of true greatness. (3) That, Saul is shown as jealous and relentlessly pursuing his enemy. That he had received severe provocation must likewise be admitted. Saul was merely human and when he expelled David gathered about him his company of followers, Saul cannot be blamed for taking a serious view of the situation. The existence of such a company was a reflection upon his government of his kingdom; for his own reputation as a ruler he had to track down his rival. The story of the hostility between Saul and David illustrates the truth that a little spark may kindle a great fire.

3.6.6 The Death of Saul

After being hunted throughout the length and breadth of Judah, David betook himself to the Philistines (I Sam 27.). This step he took as the last desperate remedy. Anywhere else Saul would seek him; he would not dare to seek him among his inveterate foes. It was some time after this that the Philistines gathered together again for battle with Israel, but their encampment was not in one of the valleys running from Judah to the coastal plain near their own five towns, but away at Shunem in the plain of Esdraelon. That may have meant that Saul was attempting to get possession of that plain to bind the northern tribes into the kingdom. Be that as it may, the Israelites opposed them in Mount Gilboa. This was the final crisis of Saul's reign and he was ill prepared for it. His confidence in himself had been undermined and David had made him unsure of his people's loyalty. It was a cruel fate that at such a time he had to face his most dreaded foe.

If Samuel had been still alive, he would, in humility, have sought him out in the hope of giving guidance and help. But now Samuel was gone, without any reconciliation ever having taken place. Saul felt desperately alone. He sought God, but there was no answer, neither by dreams, nor by sacred lot, nor by prophets (I Sam 27 6). Saul was desperate. In the twilight of his faith, superstition revived. He who had himself put down all necromancy and witchcraft within his kingdom now disobeyed his own law and consulted a witch, asking her to seek a communication from Samuel. It is deeply significant of Saul's character that in this hour of desperate need he sought an answer from God's prophet from whom, to his great distress, he had been estranged. That is not the act of a rebel, but of one seeking desperately to have his faith and peace of mind revived. But from Samuel he received, not a message of comfort, but one of disaster and doom. Saul was a defeated man before the battle of Mount Gilboa was engaged, and the issue of the battle was never in doubt. He and his sons perished. The Lord's anointed had fallen; the house of Saul was discredited; the kingdom was dominated by the Philistines. The future was very dark, but for postscript to the narrative we are thankful. The people of Jabesh Gilead, whom Saul had delivered from the power of the Ammorites, did not forget their deliver. Their warriors risked their lives to take down from the walls of Beth-shan the bodies of Saul and his sons and in their own land they gave them decent burial (I Sam 31:3-13).

3.3.5.7 The Reign of David

The ancient traditions recount the rise of David (c. 1000-c 961) to prominence as a valiant warrior in Saul's militia, the jealousy of Saul that eventually led to David's life as the exiled leader of an outlaw band, and David's adventures as the prince of Siceleg (Ziklag) in the employ of the Palestine ruler of Geth (Gath). These traditions have the form of popular sagas and are of different and variant origin, but they agree essentially in their pictures of David as a very talented warrior. The loyalty he inspired in his small band of marauders and his partial friendship with the Philistines gave him freedom to develop his power in the south, where he protected the established towns by his raids against pillaging nomads. After Saul's death, David reigned as king in Hebron for about 7 years and emerged, after, Abner and Is-Baal was killed, as the only hero who could possibly save Israel from Philistine oppression. When the elders of the northern tribes had submitted to him and accepted him as the king of Israel, he wisely moved the capital to Jerusalem, which had been conquered by his own army of loyal mercenaries, was not connected with tribal traditions, and was centrally located on the border between the southern and the northern tribes.

It became known as "David's City" and he soon made it the central sanctuary for all Israel by bringing it the Ark of the Covenant. He thus established a strong focus of unity for the northern and southern elements of Israel, although his reign always remained a divided one. He was separately the king of Israel (the north) and the king of Judah (the south) but certainly never the king of a completely united nation that had loyalties only to him. By his victories over the Philistine, of which very little is known, and by his subjection of the Ammorites, Moabites, and Eomites, and Arameneans of the central Syria and Damascus area, David secured Israel from all its surrounding enemies. He thereby established a small empire whose extent was never matched under any other Israelite king. He organized the liturgy around the ark by favoring the survivors of the high-priestly clan of Eli, which Saul had almost exterminated. One problem he never solved was the dynastic succession to his throne. His sons were at odds with him and each other. Absalom rebelled against him with the aid of some of David's formerly strongest supporters and of the Benjaminite tribes who were favor of Saul's line. After this revolt was suppressed by his loyal mercenaries, David had to deal with another rebellion by the Benjaminites. Now

the danger was that, with the death of Saul and the severe defeat of his army at Mount Gilboa, some of the former divisions would reappear and the hope of a united Israel would be shattered. This fact led to the formation of a united monarchy that would join together the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel.

3.8 The Reign of Solomon

The successes of David were consolidated and organized by the reign of Solomon (c. 961-c. 922 B.C), who was fortunate to reign in a period when the great powers, Egypt and Assyria were at their weakest, when the Sidomians were interested in maritime expansion and trade, and when the Armenians had not completely recovered from David's victories. Solomon and his kingdom were thus at peace, a peace ensured by the chariot army and garrisons that he established at great expenses throughout his kingdom, of which the excavations at Megiddo have provided noteworthy evidence. He freely engaged in all kinds of commercial endeavors with the surrounding countries allying himself with Hiram of Tyre in the production of metals and other trade and taking advantages of and exploiting the newly established camel trade over the vast wastelands of Arabia.

His building program included, besides the Jerusalem temple and royal palace, many fortified cities, such as Gazer, and Hazor, facts which have been confirmed by recent excavations. The Phoenicians aided him with artisans and materials, but the main bodies of his workers were enslaved Canaanites and other neighboring people, and even Israelites themselves were drafted into forced labor battalions in alarming numbers. Solomon continued with his father's attempt to break down tribal barriers in order to concentrate Israel around the throne. Twelve governmental units were created over which the king appointed prefects whose main duty was to collect tributes from each unit to provide for the royal court for a month each year. From even a rough estimate of this tribute the magnitude of Solomon's court and the terrible burden of taxation on the people are clearly apparent. The seeds of rebellion had been sown by such extravagance and economic imbalance. Yet the 70 years during which David and Solomon ruled the United Kingdoms were prosperous and fruitful for the Israelites people. They increased immensely, perhaps even doubled in the period. New towns and cities were founded. Arts and crafts were perfected. Literacy and literature became no longer an extreme rarity relegated only to a few scribes. The Hebrew language, so glorious already in its oral transmission entered its golden age as a written language in both prose and poetry. The economic oppression and draining of their still tribally oriented people, especially of the north, however were factors too explosive to allow for peaceful transmission of power to the next Davidic king. Added to the burden of maintaining the royal court, the weakening of the pristine, centralizing Yahwism, by syncretistic religious practices encouraged by Solomon's foreign harem and by his commerce with neighboring nations and one can easily see why the northerners shouted in the adamant face of Rehoboam, (Rehoboam), King of Judah (c.922-c.915), what portion have we in David?, (3 Kgs 12.16).

3.9 The Divided kingdom

The causes of this schism were both indirect and direct. Indirectly, the causes go back for some time. For many years there had been keen rivalry between the strong tribe of Judah in the south, with its capital city of Jerusalem, and some of the tribes further north. We have seen this showing up in at least two instances. Upon the death of Saul, Judah was quick to accept David as king while the northern tribes

set up a rival kingdom under Ishbosheth. Later in the reign of David, Sheba, who probably knew of the old feeling of jealousy, was able to launch a rebellion against King David which he might well have succeed. So the idea of division was not a new one. The direct cause was the foolish behavior of Rehoboam who succeeded Solomon. When Rehoboam went up to Shechem for the confirming of his coronation the northern tribes under Jeroboam, who had hastily returned from Egypt after the death of Solomon, flatly demanded a statement of the new king as to his policy. They were tired of heavy taxes and tyrannical treatment by their king. Rehoboam wisely asked for time to prepare an answer. Three days were allowed for this. During this time the king sought advice from two groups. The older and wiser men urged him to be cautious and considerate, warning him of the peril.

The younger men, probably his friends in the court, advised that he treat the people harshly and put them in their place at once by a bold threat. At the end of the three days the king appeared before the assembly to announce his decision. He had foolishly decided to follow the course recommended by his luxury-loving associates, and as the people faced him, he declared roughly; "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. The reaction was immediate. Contrary to what Rehoboam probably expected, they shouted defiantly, what portions have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: Now see to thin own house, David." The die was cast. The kingdom splinted. Jeroboam set to work at once and the new kingdom became a reality. Since these two rival governments were to exist side by side for about 250 years it will be well to make a brief comparison of them. In size Israel was three or four time as large as Judah. In addition, the northern people had all the advantages economically. They were better situated for trade with other nations, and their territory, with its more fertile soil, was much better agriculturally. In one respect Judah was stronger. They had the capital city, Jerusalem, with all its magnificent buildings and the traditions gathered around it as the natural center of political and religious life. Certainly the temple, together with the central Levites, gave Judah great strength religiously.

The relations between these two monarchies varied from time to time. For the first sixty years there was almost unbroken strife between them, for it took a long time to convince Judah that they could not ultimately force the rebellious tribes back into a united government. There was a long period when by intermarriage there was more or less peaceful relation between the two. With the destructive work of Jehu this cordial alliance was broken up and amicable relations were never successfully maintained afterwards.

For the southern tribes there was never any change in a capital city, Jerusalem, so splendid and beautiful, served without interruption as headquarters for its government? The northern government had three different capital cities. At first governmental affairs were administered from the historic old city of Shechem. This was not altogether satisfactory, and for a time the capital was moved a few miles north to the little city of Tirzah. But this, too, proved unsatisfactory. Omri bought the hill of Samaria, admirably suited for this purpose, and on it he built a strong city called Samaria (Shemer's watch-mountain) which remained the capital city until it was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

With its fall the history of Israel as a kingdom came to an end. Thus, there are major problems in the chronology of the period of the two kingdoms, with different chronologies being derived from the Septuagint, the Hebrew Masoretic text, and Josephus. There is a further problem on whether or not it is known if the two kingdoms used the same calendar. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the number of

years monarchs reigned refers to full years, partial years or whether the reign went from New Year to New Year. Although the Mesopotamian New Year was from Spring Equinox to Spring in-box, it is still not known what period was used for counting by the time the Kingdom in which these records were recorded, ended. This is compounded by the possibility of a shift during the period to a new cylindrical system, and by possible periods of co-regency amongst kings.

There are also possible copyist errors, which may explain why the biblical dates seem internally inconsistent. Edwin R. Thiele in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (1951) concluded that two different methods for counting the years of a king's reign were used at different times and places. In the accession method, the year in which a king ascended to the throne was called his accession year, and the following year was first year of that king's reign. In the non-accession method, the year of a king's accession is simply counted as the first year of his reign. According to Thiele, the kingdom of Israel appears to have used the non-accession year method while the kingdom of Judah used the accession method until Athaliah seized power in Judah, when Israel's non-accession method appears to have been adopted in Judah. In addition, Thiele also concluded that Israel counted years using the ecclesiastical New Year starting in the spring month of Nisan, while Judah counted years using the civil year starting in the autumn month of Tishrei.

3.9 The Kingdom of Israel (From the Division of the kingdom to the end of Ahab's reign- I Kings 11-12, II Kings 1-10).

The kingdom of Israel has nine different dynasties or ruling families who occupied the throne in these periods of two hundred and fifty years. Revolution were frequent, many kings were slain by usurpers who established their own dynasties. One ruler, Zimri, lasted only seven days; Shallum lasted only one month; another, Zachariah lasted only six months. The following kings usurped the throne and set up new lines of rulers: Jeroboam I, Baasha, Zimri, Omri, Jehu, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea. All these kings were guilty of idolatry but some were worst than others. Thus, we may speak of this history under four periods: (1) the first half century ruled by five kings was a time when idolatry flourished. (2) The second fifty years (4 Kings), saw idolatry all but universally established. (3) The time of more than one hundred years ruled by through the work of mighty prophets, when Baalism was effectively checked. (4) The period of some fifty years that witnessed the fruitage of idolatry that caused the downfall of the northern kingdom. We shall begin to look at the activities of Jeroboam I, who led the formation of this new government.

3.9.1.1 Jeroboam I, the Agitator

Around 920 BCE, according to the biblical account, Jeroboam led the revolt of the northern tribes, and established the Kingdom of Israel (I Kings 11-14). B.S.J. Isserlin, in his examination of the Israelites, shows, from an analysis of the geographical setting, the origins of the Israelites, their neighbors, the political history of the monarchy, the socio-economic structure, town-planning and architecture, trade, craft and industry, warfare, and literacy as well as art and religion, that the kingdom of Israel was typical of the secondary Canaanite states established at about this time. Economically, the kingdom of Israel seems to have been more developed than its southern neighbor. Rainfall in this area is higher and the agricultural systems are more productive. According to the biblical account, which can not be checked by outside sources, there were 19 separate rulers of Israel. Politically, the kingdom of Israel seems much less stable than Judah, maintaining a form of charismatic leadership by merit and competition between

ruling families who seem to have depended much more on links with outside powers such as Tyre, Aram and Assyria in order to maintain their authority. This need to placate powerful neighbors was demonstrated early on during the reign of Jeroboam, when, despite reputed actions of establishing fortifications at Tirzah, Shechem and Israel was invaded by Egyptian Pharaoh Sheshonk I (the Biblical Shishak) of the Libyan 22nd dynasty. The Kingdom of Israel appears to have been most powerful in the first half of the ninth century BCE, during which time Omri (a. 885-874) BCE) founded a new dynasty with its capital city at Samaria with support from the Phoenician city of Tyre.

Omri's son and successor, supposedly linked through dynasty marriage with Tyre, contributed 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers to a coalition of states which fought and defeated Shalmaneser III at Qarqar in 853 BCE. Twelve years later, Jehu, with assistance from the Kingdom of Aram (centered Damascus), organized a coup in which Ahab and his family were put to death. The Bible makes no references to the fact, but Assyrian sources refer to Jehu as being a monarchy of the house of Omri, which may indicate that this coup was the result of struggles within the same ruling family. Jehu is shown kneeling to the Assyrian monarchy in the black obelisk of Shalmaneser III, the only monarchy of either of the two states for which any portrait survives. As a result of these changes, Israel, like its southern neighbor, fell within the influence of Aramean Damascus. King Hazael led the Arameans in battle against the forces of King Jeroboam of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah. After defeating them at Ramoth-Gilead, Hazael repelled two attacks by the Assyrians, seized Israelite territory east of the Jordan (the Philistine city of Gath), and sought to take Jerusalem as well (2 Kings 12:17). A monumental Aramaic inscription discovered at Tel Dan is seen by most scholars as having been erected by Hazael after he defeated the Kings of Israel and Judah. Recent excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath have revealed dramatic evidence of the siege and subsequent conquest of Gath by Hazael.

To end this domination from its two northern neighbors, Judah appealed to Tiglath Pileser III for Assyrian intervention, which ultimately (in 720 BCE) led to the fall of Israel to the Assyrians under Sargon and to the incorporation of Israel into the Assyrian Empire. Israel fell to the Assyrians in 721 BCE and was taken into captivity, 2 Kings 17:3-6. Despite the attempt by Assyrians to decapitate the Israelite kingdom by settling people on its eastern frontier with the Medes, archaeological evidence shows that many people fled south to Judah at this time, whose capital city, Jerusalem, now seems to have grown by over 500%. This also seems to have been a time when many northern traditions were incorporated within the region of Judah. This period of Israel's eclipse seems to have coincided with the rise of a line of independent prophets Amos, Joel, Hosea, Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah—all highly critical of the monarchs of Israel. The spiritual tradition that was later to coalesce in the biblical story, according to many biblical scholars, would have had its origins here.

3.7 The Kingdom of Judah (From the Accession of Jehu to the capture of Samaria II Kgs 10-17).

In the southern kingdom all the rulers except the usurper, Athaliah were in direct line from David. They were no revolutions resulting in a change of dynasties. Thus, in 922 BCE, the Kingdom of Israel was divided, Judah, the southern Kingdom, had Jerusalem as its capital and was led by Rehoboam, who was responsible for leading them to war with Israel (which according to the Bible, continued during the reigns of Abijah and Asa of Judah) and during whose reign Israel penetrated to Ramiah, 5 km north of Jerusalem was supposed to have sent a delegation to Ben Hadad I, son of Tab-rimmon of Damascus (King of Aram), to attack Israel from the rear. The Dynasty of Omri brought an end to the war with

Judah and cemented a dynastic alliance through Queen Athaliah, daughter of King Ahab and Jezebel of Tyre.

3.9.2.1 The Reign of Jehu

Jehu, a captain in Jehoram's army was anointed by Prophet Elisha and commissioned to destroy Jehoram and all descendants of Ahab and Jezebel. He fulfilled the mission by slaying the kings of Israel and Judah, since both kings were descendants of Ahab. Also, Jehu ordered the eunuchs to throw Jezebel on the housetop down to the street and her broken body was devoured by the scavenger dogs. He had proved himself a ruthless destroyer and dealt a severe blow to Baal worship. However, as king, he proved a disappointment. He not only showed no concern for the worship of God, but actually gave his hearty support to the worship of the calves at Bethel and Dan as set up by Jeroboam. No wonder that the prophet Hosea condemned his actions of unjustifiable cruelty. (Hosea 1:4) During the latter part of Jehu's reign, most of the holdings in eastern Palestine were lost to the Syria king Hazael. The Assyrian monuments state that Jehu had to pay tribute to the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser II. The sacred writer summarizes the character of his reign with the familiar words: But Jehu took no heed and did not walk in the law of Jehovah, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin". After a reign of twenty-eight years he "slept with his fathers" and was buried in Samaria.

3.9.2.2 Jehoahaz and Jehoash

Jehu's son, Jehoahaz succeeded him on the throne. Hazael, the cruel king of Syria, who had successfully contended against Jehu, soon came again to ravage the territory east of the Jordan and to massacre its people. He compelled Jehoahaz to cut his army down to fifty horsemen, ten chariots and 10,000 infantry. There is nothing good reported of his reign of seventeen years. He died leaving the throne to his son Jehoash (Joash). Joash followed the practice of his predecessors in supporting idolatry in spite of the warnings of the aged Elisha. When Elisha was stricken with his last illness, Joash called on him and wept at the prospect of death for the prophet. Elisha told him to open the window facing the east and to shoot his arrow in that direction. He shot three arrows, but was told by the dying prophet that in not shooting a larger number he had limited his victories to three. After the death of Elisha, Joash gained three victories over the Syrians and recovered the cities formerly taken by them. There is also a statement to the effect that Joash "fought with might against Amaziah, king of Judah." Being challenged by Amaziah to come and "let us look one another in the face" Joash accepted the challenge and "Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent.

Joash went to Jerusalem, broke down part of the wall and took golds and silvers, and all the vessels that were found in the house of Jehovah, and in the treasures of the king's house," and then returned with hostages to Samaria. Jehoash reigned for sixteen years and "slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. During the reign of Ahaz, the population of Jerusalem seems to have grown enormously, possibly as a result of the arrival of many Israelites refugees fleeing from the north. The result was that the city grew from a small local market town to a sizable city. By the time of the reign of Hezekiah, his son, the population seems to have swelled to over 500%. Hezekiah undertook a number of major works, including the expansion of the city wall to include the new population at Jerusalem and Lachish, the digging of the well of Siloam, to give the city an independent source of water within the city limits and a major expansion of the temple. Philip Davies and others suggest that at this time Jerusalem established

its own scribal school for the first time, gathering the previous oral tradition into what became known as the J Source.

The Bible also claims that Hezekiah undertook major religious reforms, attempting unsuccessfully to centralize Judean religious practices in the Temple and eliminate the worship of the Hehushtan serpent, which may have been placed since the days of Moses. Hezekiah also seems to have been fascinated by the Wisdom of Solomon, making a collection of the verses attributed to this monarch. Hezekiah's ambitions seem to have been over-stretched when, in part, prompted by promises of aid from the monarchs of the Egyptian 26th Dynasty, he took leadership of a coalition with the Philistines and asserted independence from Assyria, attempting to unify Judah and Israel. This led to disaster, and Lachish razed of Christ with its population taken in the slavery to Assyria. The Bible, however, speaks of the angel of the Lord having smitten the besieging Assyrian. The account certainly does read as if there was some kind of plague. (Hezekiah himself is spoken of as having been afflicted but recovered). The Assyrians extracted an enormous tribute, which seems to have pauperized the Judean population leading to complete reversal of all of Hezekiah's reforms.

Manasseh, Hezekiah's son from careful cultivation by the Assyrian monarch Esarhaddon and his son Ashurbanipal, seems to have taken steps which led to recovery of Judah's fortunes despite the universally bad policy the monarch has received. For instance, it is known that Manasseh spent time with Esarhaddon in Babylon and accompanied the latter in his invasion of Egypt. Nevertheless, Manasseh's son Ammon had an insignificant reign before passing the throne to his little son Josiah. In 633 BCE, the book of law (a "Sefer Torah") was found by Hezekiah, the priest. It was examined that this book was composed by Moses, as major reforms of the state cult. Martin Noth contended, that speculating on internal grounds, this Deuteronomist was largely composed by someone during the reign of Josiah, making the king a "hero" "Messiah", with the collapse of the Assyria Empire, Josiah attempted to follow in the path of Hezekiah, centralizing all worship in Jerusalem and instituting the Passover. He was also tempted to enter into a power-politics too big for Judah, and he died in battle resisting the advance of Pharaoh Necho's forces, trying to aid the Assyrians at Harran. Judah fell to Babylonians in 587 BCE and was taken into captivity. 2 Kings 25:1-9.

3.8 The fall of Samaria

Tiglath-pileser III (called also, Phanue, the name he took when he became king of Babylon), by victories over Urartu, had freed his armies for campaigns in Syria. Manasseh of Israel, who had killed Sellum a month after the latter's seizure of the throne, was forced to pay tribute to Tiglath Pileser in 738. After Manahen's son, Pekah was killed by an anti-Assyrian faction led by Pekah. It was not long before Phanu reacted to Israelite revolt. Meanwhile, Pekah had strengthened his alliance with Razin, king of Damascus. While Israel and Damascus were trying to force Judah, now ruled by Ahaz into anti-Assyrian coalition by threatening to replace him with Ben Tabeel, the Assyrians were busy in the north giving the final blows to Urartu. It was in these circumstances that the prophet Isaiah encouraged Ahaz to trust in Yahweh alone, but Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser for help and sent him a vassal's tribute. In 73 the Assyrians marched on Philistia to cut off any body that might come to coalition from Egypt, conquering a good part of Galilee as they passed through it. They then turned to Damascus, took it in 732, and in the same manner captured Israel's possessions in the Transjordan. The kingdom of Israel was thus reduced to the small highland around Samaria, while a large part of Israelite population that

occupied territories was deported and their land given to colonists from other regions of Assyrian empire. The Assyrians had found a practical plan for deterring the repetition of vassal's rebellion.

3.10.1 The last days of Samaria

Israel's misfortune led to another palace revolution. Hosea had assassinated Phacee and quickly sent tribute to the Assyrians, and was thus allowed to reign as a vassal king over a much reduced kingdom. Ahaz made his vassalage official by submitting to the Assyrians at Damascus and thus rendered any move that Juda might attempt against Assyria an act of rebellion. At the same time, the Assyrian religious cult was forced unto Judah, and Yahwism was endangered. The Next Assyrian king Salmanasar V, in the course of a campaign against Tyre, invaded Samaria and laid siege to its capital. King Osee, who had vainly hoped to receive military aid from the king of Sais in the Egyptian Delta and had refused to give his annual tax to Assyria, was taken prisoner by Salmanasar. But the city of Samaria withstood the siege for almost 3 years. A few months before Salmanasar died, it fell to the Assyrians and was destroyed. Sargon II of Assyria, who boasted of his conquest in his inscriptions because it took place in his accession year, deported most of the remaining inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom to northern Mesopotamia. Thus Israel disappeared from history. Its deported people lost their identity in foreign lands. The people who remained in the land were mixed with the new colonists, and many of them succumbed to the new religious forms by the amalgamation of various pagan creeds with an already watered down Yahwism. Those who remained true to Yahweh were the ancestors of the later Samaritans. The history of the Israelite people and their religion was henceforth to continue in Judah alone.

3.10.2 Judah until its fall

Since the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is certainly to be dated in 701 and since it occurred in the 14th year of Ahaz's son Hezekiah, king of Judah, the date c. 715 for the beginning of Hezekiah's reign seems better than that indicated by the synchronism afforded by 4Kgs 18.1-2-10. Hezekiah had a long reign in a period that saw the greatest extent of the Assyrian empire. That the tiny kingdom of Judah was not completely absorbed by the mammoth empire, as Israel had been absorbed remains one of history's tantalizing problems. Sacred history has given an answer that transcends the historian's purview: Judah was saved because of a religious, and, hence, also a national revival that procured for it Yahweh's protection. Whatever his judgment of this theological interpretation the historian must admit that Judah could not have had a national renewal without a preceding religious revival.

3.10.3 Hezekiah

During the 1st half of Hezekiah's reign, the times were generally propitious for his reform. Assyria had temporary problems at home, and except for the campaigns of the Assyrian army against Azotus (Ashdod), Palestine was left in peace until Sennacherib's invasion of Judah 701. The reform which wiped out the Assyrian cultic importations was motivated by the pure Yahwism preached by Isaiah and Micah. It then, apparently for the first time attempted to destroy all local sanctuaries, even those dedicated to Yahweh, and to make the temple in Jerusalem the sole focus of the orthodox cult. The vital school of religious thinkers behind the attempt, probably never successful in Hezekiah's time, remained

dormant under the long and idolatrous reign of the weak Manasseh (Manasesh), to reappear in its full vigor under king Josiah of Judah.

The campaign of Sennacherib as recounted in the Bible may be a telescoping to two separate Assyrian expeditions, one in 701, the other quite some time later. This would explain the appearance to the scene of the Egyptian King Taharqo, who did not begin his reign until c.685. Another possible explanation is that in 701, Sennacherib had quickly reduced to rubble most of Judah and while he was just about to crush some strong fortified cities of Lachish and Libna, more essential to his coastal campaign than Jerusalem, an Egyptian army, anachronistically said to have been under the command of Taharqo, advanced from the south. It was in these circumstances that a plague broke out in the Assyrian army, and Sennacherib was forced to return home leaving Judah devastated, "Like a shed in a melon patch" (Is 1.8). The silence in the Assyrian royal records about such a setback is understandable, given the general success of the campaign and the relative unimportance of Jerusalem as an obstacle to an Assyrian invasion of Egypt.

3.10.4 Manasseh

Under Hezekiah's son Manasseh, a ravaged Judah returned to its vassal status, paying tribute to Asarhaddon (Esarhaddon) in 673 and to Assurbanipal (Ashurbanipal) in 668. The religious reform was suppressed and God's prophets lay hidden. The next king Amon was murdered by his own officials, but another group started a counter revolution gained control of the small kingdom for Amon's son Josiah, when he was still a boy.

3.11 Josiah Reformation

Josiah reigned until his tragic death in the battle of Megiddo, when he vainly tried to prevent the Egyptian army under Nechao (Necho) from invading Syria. Under Josiah a religious reform, with which the Bible is almost exclusively concerned, accompanied and abetted a national resurgence that was possible because of the Assyria's entrance into a fatal decline. As the Judean political and military reorganization progressed, the reform expelled from the land all foreign influences, religious and cultural. The discovery in Josiah's 18th year of at least the legislative part of the book of Deuteronomy (I Kgs 22-23.) added impetus and purpose to the renewal and led to the suppression of local sanctuaries and the concentration of priests in Jerusalem. Although the reform was short lived, it expressed a religious fervor that was to survive the ruin of Jerusalem and exile and be developed and formulated in the homiletically sections of Deuteronomy and the doctrines of the book of Jeremiah. When the cities of Ashur and Nineveh were destroyed in quick succession by the Medes and Chaldeans, the Judeans rejoiced to see their old arch enemy Assyria humbled. Josiah was so eager to hasten the total destruction of the remaining Assyrian forces that he tried to impede the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho from marching to their aid, and he was killed in 609 at the pass of Megiddo.

3.11.1 Eliakim

After the death of Josiah the anti Egyptian faction in Judah set his second-oldest son Sellum (Shallum) to the throne under the name of Joachaz (Jechoachaz). But after a reign of only 3 months, he was deposed by the Egyptians and taken prisoner into Egypt. The Egyptians then installed, as their puppet king of Judah, Josiah's oldest son, Eliakim, who took the throne name of Joakim (Jehoakin). Despite the

enormous tribute that Judah had to pay Pharaoh Necho. Joakim received no substantial military aid from Egypt when the Chaldean king of Babylon, Nebuchodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar), invaded Palestine in 603-602 and he was forced to become a vassal of Babylon. But three years later, egged on by Egypt, he threw off the Babylonian yoke. In 598 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar set out to punish his rebellious vassal in Judah. Joakim, however, died shortly before the Babylonian army encamped before Jerusalem. As the only way to save the city, his son and successor, Jehoiachin, after a reign of only 3 months and 10 days, offered himself, his family, his whole court, and most of the nobles as prisoners. This was the first deportation of Judeans to Babylon. On the shaky throne of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar set Joakim's younger brother Mathania, who took the throne name of Sedecia (Zedekiah). Although his nephew Joachin received a somewhat liberal captivity in Babylon, so that he survived to carry on the Davidic line, Sedecia ultimately brought a tragic end both to himself and his kingdom. Against the pleadings of Jeremiah, who continually counseled him to submit to Babylon, Sedecia followed the popular, stubborn nationalism in more than one seeking help from Egypt to start a rebellion.

In 589 Nebuchadnezzar marched. He laid siege to Jerusalem in January 588, sent detachments to storm other Judean strongholds, and at the approach of the Egyptian king Apries, stirred up the false hopes of the fanatic defenders by sending most of his besieging forces against the Egyptians. But Egypt proved false once more: they withdrew across the sands, and Jerusalem remained alone the focus of Babylonian fury. In August 587 a breach was made from the North, and Sedecia fled southward down the Cedron (Kidron) valley, but he was captured, blinded, and imprisoned. Jerusalem was laid waste by fire, and most of the people of Judah who escaped the sword were deported as slaves. With their Temple destroyed, their last two kings held captive, their towns and country smoldering in ruins, the people of God bitterly faced exile and oblivion. Yet already in Babylon a man of visions, Ezechiel (Ezekiel), had seen God's glory coming from His Temple to hover over His faithful and purified remnant, to give them new hope, and to lead them back to their home.

3.12 Captivity

After the fall of Samaria and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were taken away as captives to Babylonia. Only a small remnant of poor, discouraged and leaderless people was left in Judah. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah as governor to control them. But insurrection soon broke out among those left in Judah and Gedaliah was murdered by Ishmael, a member of the royal family, and civil war resulted. Most of the people fled to Egypt, and continued to live there even after those from Babylonia returned to Jerusalem.

In 722 BCE, nearly twenty years after the initial invasions and deportations, the Assyrian king Sargon finally finished what Tiglath-Pileser III began in 740 BCE. He completed the conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by taking captive the capital Samaria after a three year siege (which happened to kill Shalmaneser V) and deporting the remaining Israelites, including the ruling class, to the cities of the Medes and other disputed areas, generally believed to be in or near the vicinity of conquered lands occupied by the Assyrian Empire. Conversely, peoples from those lands were deported to Samaria. Thus, the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were dispersed amongst the nations by being planted in the epicenter of the human migration tides of Eurasia. It is believed they were ultimately assimilated into new cultures, and eventually became unaware of their original identity. According to First Century Rabbis, and the historian Flavius Josephus, they had yet returned to the land of Israel even up to the time of the Roman destruction of the Second Temple. With the kingdom of Judah being dispersed once more

from their homeland in 70 BCE, there is little evidence the Northern Kingdom Israelites ever returned in any substantial representation to rejoin the Jews of the Kingdom before or after that time. The years of exile produced a crisis for the Jews in their religious life in two folds: (1) amidst the prosperity of Babylon with all its attractive opportunities for material gain, many were tempted to drift away from the faith of their fathers. (2) Many who genuinely desired to be loyal to their God also had a problem. Many Hebrews thought of God as tribal or national God who could be worshiped only in Palestine. This misconception of God led to the emergence of some star figure prophets of exile such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel. In their repeated teaching, these prophets urged the captives to remain loyal to God. They warned against injustices, immorality and idolatry. They also preached message of hope, even in dark exile.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- (1) Give two accounts of the institutions of Monarchy in Israel and briefly comment on them
- (2) What were two mistakes of Saul that made him to be rejected by the people as a king?
- (3) Narrate the story of David flight from Saul.
- (4) Describe how David rose to power in Israel.
- (5) Discuss how Deborah was chosen as a leader in Israel.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Though we have seen that starting from the period of the Judges to the institution of monarchy in Israel, a lot of fighting took place to maintain and expand their hold on the hill territory against three arch-enemies, namely: The settled Canaanites, the aggressive and iron-armed Philistines and the Amalekites, it is very clear from the pre-history of Israelites that the repeated battles were for existence of Israel as a nation and to strengthen their sense of unity. The central symbol of Israel's religious and national unity, the Ark of the Covenant which at many times was captured by the enemies, was to maintain their very existence as chosen people of God and to show the presence of God among them. Thus, the conquest and expansion programmes of the Israelites was almost completely marred by the philistine aggression in the southern and central parts of Palestine who at Aphec defeated Israel, capturing the Ark of the Covenant and destroying its shrine at Shiloh. This incident introduced a new spirit among the Israelites whose fate was now hanging in the balance. If they have to continue to exist as a people, then they need to be united to be able to withstand their neighbor's aggression especially the Philistines, the Amalekites and the Midianites. The solution therefore was to have a king who will lead them into battle against their enemies and subdue them, and so they demanded for a king from Samuel, the prophet of God who at the point was appointed by Yahweh to speak to his people Israel. It is therefore this entire process that culminates into what is known as the institution of the monarchy where Israel as a nation is to be ruled by kings and not by God or his representatives, the prophet of God.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have learnt that the Judges rose to the position of power after the various tribes of Israel had gained a foothold in Palestine and them to term struggle for survival among their hostile neighbours. In the struggle of Israelites for survival they were certain great crises in which one or more of the tribes were involved. It is of these crises that we read in the stories of the Judges. The chief function of these judges was to serve as military leaders to deliver the people from their oppressors. In some cases their

work continued as statement or political and judicial leaders after the crises was past. In some instances, they served as religious leaders. In most cases these Judges seem to have passed off the stage shortly after the crisis was over. This period of the judges which covers more than one hundred years, is preceded by the institution of the monarchy under the reign Saul, David and Solomon. The transition from the Dark Age and chaotic days of the judges to the religious era of the kings was neither a sudden nor an accidental one but it came gradually and was affected largely through the life and influence of one man, Samuel who is seen as the last of the judges. Others think of him as the first big figure in the new era. He served as a statesman, priest (to direct their worship) and prophet (to speak the word of God). Even when his two sons had proved to be a disappointment to him and the nation, by demanding for a human king, he gave serious consideration to their request and anointed Saul as king.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- (1) Explain the religious and political situations in Israel during the period of Judges.
- (2) What were the reasons for Israelites to demand for a human king?
- (3) List and explain the factors that necessitated the institution of monarchy in Israel.
- (4) Why did Saul change his attitude towards David?
- (5) Give the two accounts of the institution of monarchy in Israel and comment on them.

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Unit 4 From the Development of Prophecy to the Period of Post-exilic Prophets

CONTENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first two modules of this course have dealt with the introductory aspects of the history of Israel. You were told that the history of Israel as the chosen and covenantal people began with the call of Abraham to the period of captivity. The covenantal idea was implicit in the promises that God made with the Hebrew patriarchs, namely, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In this module, you will learn about the post-exilic period of Israelites history. This period covers the development of prophecy and prophets in pre-exilic and post-exilic periods of Israelites history. It is important to note that this period of Israelites history was prey to various sinful acts such as injustice, debauchery, idolatrous worship of baals and ashtores, child sacrifice, forgetfulness of Yahweh, among others, which needed renewal.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Make a historical survey of the period
2. Trace the history of prophecy and prophets in Israel
3. Name the great prophets.
4. List the types of prophecy in Israel.
5. Give the common ground of eight century prophets in Israel.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The meaning of Prophecy

Prophecy is the power of being able to foretell future events or the art of making things to come true. A prophet is therefore, essentially one who speaks in the name of another, and the Israelite prophets were

those who speak in the name of Yahweh (cf. Jer 1:9; Is. 30:2). They are men of action counselors, preachers, and champions of the cause of God. Their life is a struggle calling for much courage and not without its dangers. In their prophesying, they judge events in the light of God, attack hypocritical and formalist worship, idolatry, social injustices, as well as moral corruption. They also announce divine punishments which, in the framework of the covenant, are designed not just to punish, but to bring about the conversion of the people and restore them to God. And further, the prophets offer a vision of healing and salvation. These three aspects met with in all the prophetic books can more than once be found together in a single oracle: “when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me. They kept sacrificing to the Baals, and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them...They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. The sword shall rage against their cities (Hosea 11).

3.1.1 Historical Survey of the Period

After the fall of the Northern kingdom, a period of great political unrest ensued in the land of Israel. Many kings who reigned were besieged and the people carried away captives and settled in other parts of the kingdom. Many Jews who might have resisted the prevailing trend had become supine and listless, content only to make what they could out of the opportunity situations during the eighth century called for the development of prophecy in Israel. Thus, prophets such as Ezekiel, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea taught the doctrine of individual responsibility, explained the purpose of punishment and affirmed the possibility of finding favor again with God. As against the notion of solidarity in punishment, they upheld the principle of individual retribution and foretold the new covenant.

3.1.2 History of Prophecy in Israel

3.1.2.1 The Seer

A seer was a prophet with the ability to foresee the future and predict coming events. For example, Saul was advised by his servant to seek the help of Samuel (I Sam 9:6). The gift of foreseeing the future and predicting coming events was commonly that came their way. Judges were corrupt and the prophets had to alleviate the rigour of it by legislation. There was a class in the community which had greatly prospered, and was using its wealth, not for the good of the community, but for selfish ends. On the other hand, the small land owners and farmers found it more difficult to make ends meet. The centralized government made taxes heavy. Tax collection by divisions gave ample scope for excessive exactions and exploitation. And redress by legal judgment was extremely difficult to obtain. Power was passing to the commercial class and many who might have resisted the prevailing trend had become supine listless, content only to make what they could out of the opportunity that came their way. All these social regarded by the prophets themselves as the irrefutable sign that God was with them (Amos 3:7)

3.1.2.2 The Ecstatic Prophets

These were groups of prophets, who went about the country in companies and who, by rhythmic movements as in a dance, by music, or bodily lacerations, sought to induce a state of sentient life, they became. They believed more fitting vehicles of God's spirit and proclaimers of His world. Such as ecstatic prophets were not peculiar to Israel and probably had their origin in Asia Minor. They represent a level of prophecy which in due course was superseded in Israel. As a type they remained prominent in the service of Baal after they had faded out in the service of God. For example, he was given this as a convincing sign: "You shall come to the hill of God where is the garrison of the Philistines; and it shall come to pass, when you are come thither to the city, that you shall meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tablet, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy and the spirit of the Lord will come upon you and you shall prophesy with them and shall be tuned into another man" (I Sam 10:5f). Just as in the early days of Christian church, ecstatic of the Day of Pentecost, was later discouraged and regarded as unedifying. So in Israel the ecstatic came to have a diminishing place as such and became the schools or guilds of prophets who were attached to the great shrines. They stood for the maintenance of the established order and were ready to pander to the pride and prejudices of those who consulted them or seem to have sought beyond all else to maintain themselves in popularity that they might remain in office. They became prone to give the pleasing answer to an inquirer and to proclaim peace where there was no peace.

3.1.2.3 The Solitary prophets

In the history of Israel, a third type of prophets was found who were neither ecstatic nor members of a community, but solitary workers who were valiant for their faith, were unafraid to criticize the established order in religion or on politics. And while they might be in touch with the guilds of prophets, were never of them. Such men were in very truth the saviours of their people from errors and illusions, from faithlessness and treachery. They rather than standing armies were the defense of Israel. But they were inevitably unpopular too uncompromising and too often prophets of doom and woe.

3.1.2 The Great Prophets

These are prophets who did not arise as an inexplicable phenomenon without antecedent of forerunners. The guilds of prophets prepared the way for them, and the solitary prophets like Nathan, Micaiah, Elijah and Elisha were their prototypes. But with the eighteenth century prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and their successors, formed this category of great prophets.

3.1.3 The Prophet's Sense of Vocation

The great prophets were not ecstatic nor members of any guild nor had no hereditary offices, but they were prophets because they believed God called them to be prophets. In a word, they had a sense of vocation (cf Amos 7:14). Thus, Amos thought and as he thought, he became convinced that God entered into his thoughts and directed them. He believed that he had something to declare to men which was not simply his opinion but was the word of God. It was because of that he left his native Tekoa and went to Samaria and Bethel to recall men to the true way of God's services. Such a prophet lived in fellowship with God.

3.1.4 The Prophet Message

Their message was addressed to the contemporary situation. They have often been described as critics and so they were. In their great moments, the prophets uttered what they believed to be God-given word which might be distasteful not only to their hearers but to themselves. It was an authoritative word, expressive of the will and purpose of God. The messages of the prophets contain prophetic interpretation of history and the future. The prophets in their utterances dealt not only with the contemporary events, but they looked both before and after. They interpreted the course of past history and made known the shape of coming events. God, they believed, was working out His purpose on the plane of human history. Thus, the prophets declared how in Egypt and at the Red Sea, in the wilderness and in Palestine, God had kept and cared for His people, how by prophets, priests and Nazarite He had sought to keep them faithful, how by judgment in fire and famine, Pestilence and Siroco He had rebuked and endeavoured to recall them. More importantly, the prophets in their utterances spoke also of the future. Sometimes, the prophets not only declared that judgment would come from God upon the sinful people, but they specified the occasion of the judgment, or its nature or the agent through whom it would be accomplished (Is. 7:8ff, 9:6ff; Jer. 6:22ff as examples). This is termed as Messianic Prophecy". That was a type of prophecy which became dominant after the exile in the sixth century B.C.

3.1.5 False Prophets

The origin of false prophets, as it is stated in the narrative of Kings 22 is one which is not acceptable to us to day in the light of the Christian revelation of God. That God deliberately put lying words into the mouths of the four hundred prophets of Samaria in order that in that way He might encompass the death of King Ahab of Ephraim in battle. To do this is to attribute to God deceit which would be condemned in a man. That there were prophets whose message contradicted that of the great prophets and who were on that account called false prophets is undeniable, but the source of their message was not a lying spirit sent from God. In fact, the false prophets were of several kinds:

(1). There were these who claimed to have received a message from God in a dream and in good faith proclaimed that message. They were in no sense deceivers; their motives their honourable, but they were believed that man could adequately apprehend God's will in that way. Thus, Jeremiah 23:28 states: "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has my word, let him tell a dream; and he who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully, what is the chaff to the what? Said the Lord". It is implied that the word spoken by the true prophet was the word which he had received in fellowship with God. It was God's word for a definite human situation, living relevant and urgent.

(2). There were those who claimed to maintain a tradition and communicated to their hearers a theological inheritance. They induced them to give the pleasing answer, so that their words were liable to be time –serving and politic, not God-inspired and fearless. Thus, said the Lord concerning the prophets who make my people err, who as long as they are fed, prophecy peace, but against those who do not feed them. They sanctity war. Therefore, might shall be years visionless, exceeding dark with divination" (Mic 3:5ff; Jer. 16:13ff) (3). There were those who deliberately played false. They uttered as God –given words that were simply the imaginations and desires of their own hearts (Jer. 23:16). It was of them Jeremiah was thinking when he said: Thus, said the Lord, I did not send these prophets, yet they ran. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesized. But if they had stood in my counsel and had

caused my people to hear any word, then they should have turned them from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings” (Jer. 23:21ff).

3.1.6 Prophetic Writings

These were the books written under the inspiration of the prophets. The historical and cultural backgrounds of the books are adequately understood and the sequences of thought in the verses are extremely difficult to grasp because often there is no sequence of writing. What is preserved for us in the case of most great prophets is a collection of utterances belonging to many occasions, often arranged in no kind of chronological order. Some of them are very brief, not so much Sermons as Sermon themes and there may be nothing to indicate where one ends and another begins. Nothing difficult to decide who the speaker is, for example, Isaiah 11:6-8 “the Angelic Voice said, “Cry”, And I (the prophet) said: “what am I to cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness there of is as the flower of the field; the grass, withered, the flower faded because the spirit of the Lord wowed upon it; surely the people is grass? (That is, is that to be my message, one of inevitable dooms?). Then the Angelic voice answered: “The grass withered, the flower faded, but the word of our God shall stand for ever”. The golden age of Israelite prophecy was from the eighth to the fifth century B.C.

At that time, Israel was living through a double drama: the religious drama of the people’s fidelity to God, and the political drama of their decadence and downfall as a people. In the midst of this double drama, the prophets were the religious conscience, as it were, of the people of God, and the heralds of revelation. Unwearyingly, they recalled the terms of the covenant, thus acting as men of tradition and of the past. But that tradition was not something dead; as “champions of the cause of Yahweh”, the prophets stressed all the aspect of God’s belief, the commandments of the covenant in regard to the dangers threatening Israel’s religion at the time, and the concrete circumstances of life around them. Thus, they were also men of the present. And lastly, enlightened by God, they deepened the spiritual message of the covenant showing glimpses of the salvation to come, and foretelling the messiah. They were men of the future, forerunners of the new covenant and of Christ.

3.2 The Prophets in Post-Exilic Judaism

It is essential to mention some of the major prophetic figures of the ninth century BC. These include Elijah, Amos and Hosea.

3.2.1 Elijah

He appeared during the reign of Ahab (874-853) and his wife Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre, when faithfulness to the true religion was endangered by the introduction of the cult of Baal in Samaria. Elijah appeared to defend the faith of Israel, and compelled the people to choose Yahweh to the exclusion of Baal. “If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (I Kgs 18:21). After his victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah was pursued by Jezebel, and as the only prophet of Yahweh left, and went on pilgrimage to the sources of Yahwism, to Horeb the mountain of God. Thus, indicating that his ministry was linked with covenant and was part of the religion of Israel. We do not know the circumstances of Elijah’s calling, and his prophecies were not collected in writings; but by his courage in being loyal to Yahwism, and his struggles against religious contamination from abroad, he deserves to be considered in the biblical tradition as the perfect example prophet, and the symbol of prophecy.

We need only recall Malachi's words about his returning in the time of the Messiah, and his appearance at the transfiguration-when Moses and Elijah were there to express the law and the prophets bearing witness to the son of man in suffering and glory.

3.2.2 Amos

He appeared around 750 B.C during the reign of Jeroboam II. Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa near Bethlehem, went into Samaria to announce the word of the Lord. As a straightforward and honest peasant, Amos vigorously denounced injustices (the oppression of the simple people), the corruption of the judges, moral decadence and the formalism of religious practice (Am. 2:6-8; 5:12, 2;21-2;6:4ff). He foretold punishment to come; the day of darkness and not light (Am. 5:18). But also, Amos gave hints of a messianic perspective, and for the first time in prophetic literature, we find the theme of a "remnant" of the faithful escaping the disaster, and continuing to receive help from the Lord". Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate. It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious ton the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15). Amos is popularly refers to by most people as "the prophet of Doom and social justice".

3.2.3 Hosea

He appeared shortly after Amos and denounced the same abuses, but he laid greater stress on worship, religious life and attacked formalism. "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6). He too foretold punishment for Israel. "The Lord...will remember their iniquity, and punish their sins. They shall return to Egypt" (Hos. 8:13). But the punishment will be the saving of the chosen people. The suffering they are to go through is a call of God's love to return to him. God's love for Israel is symbolized as the love of marriage. The second chapter of the book is dedicated to the theme of God as bridegroom-and as the paternal and maternal love of Yahweh. "I led them with cords of compassion, the bands of love and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to fed them" (Hos. 11:4). Despite all his faithfulness, Yahweh who punishes out of mercy will forgive Israel when they repent: "If I am God and not man" (Hos. 11:9).

3.2.4 Isaiah

He was a man of culture, from an important family of Judah who carried out his ministry in Jerusalem, from 740 B.C onwards. His message is strongly marked by belief in the holiness of Yahweh, "The holy one of Israel". He preached justice and devotion-for without these worship is merely an empty formalism. He called for trust in God alone, and not in political alliances which endangered the true religion by making contacts with false religions. "Do not fear what (this people) fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regards as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Is. 8:12-13). Isaiah also spoke of the punishments, the day of Yahweh, but foretold the faithfulness of a "remnant". "A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God" (Hos. 10:21) especially known for his messianic prophecies, notably those from the "Book of Emmanuel" (Chapters 7-11). The messiah, a descendant of David, will make justice and peace reign, and make Yahweh known.

3.2.5 Micah

Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah's left a far smaller collection of the effect his ministry produced in Jerusalem (Jer. 26:18-19). From the Judean country side, Micah's concrete and direct language is somewhat reminiscent of Amos; and he is like him, too, in his love of simple people. The beginning of his book speaks of the fall of Samaria, and the punishment hanging over Judah, but the prophet retains some hope, and the rest of the book speaks of messianic restoration, returning, yet again to the theme of the "remnant" and stressing the Davidic origin of the messiah (Micah 5:2).

3.3 Pre-Exilic Prophets (Seventh Century Prophets)

Among the last of the pre-exilic prophets, Jeremiah appears, along with Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk, as the most important.

3.3.1 Jeremiah

He was born around 645 BC, of a priestly family living near Jerusalem; Jeremiah was a man of sensitivity and deep piety. Called by God in 627 B.C, he was throughout his ministry a model of fidelity in spite of suffering. Though Jeremiah loved his country dearly, he had constantly to announce unhappiness for it. Peace loving, he had to struggle continually with violent enemies. Affectionate by nature, he had to live alone and persecuted. Despite the discouragement that constantly tempted, and into which he sometimes fell, Jeremiah proclaimed the word of the Lord. His life was to all appearances a failure, but he was of major importance in the religious development of Israel, during and after the exile. He was not only the man who foretold the punishment of Jerusalem, but he also preached and lived a heartfelt religion and heralded the new covenant. Thus, Jeremiah had great influence on the spirituality of the "poor of Yahweh", and was "the father of Judaism in its purest development". Although he was never sent to Babylon, yet he was the chief religious guide of the exiles. The letters he sent them from Jerusalem after the first deportations urged them to hear the word of Yahweh, and not to comfort themselves with any illusions of a speedy return (Jer 29). Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah took up and enlarged upon themes central to Jeremiah's preaching-hope, the new covenant and the religion taught within man's heart by Yahweh.

3.3.2 Ezekiel

Ezekiel, son of Buzi, belonged like Jeremiah to the priestly world. He was a priest in Jerusalem which explains why the theme of the temple is so important in his works, and which together with the vision recorded in Ezekiel 1:3-28, gave rise to the sense of the sacred and of the glory of God, which is so marked in his prophecy. Taken to Babylon in 598, with the first group of exiles, Ezekiel was called by God in 593. He began by foretelling the fall of Jerusalem as a punishment for the sins of Israel (Ezek 4-12), but after the city had been sacked in 587 B.C, Ezekiel became the prophet of hope. For more than twenty years, this extraordinary man was the centre of the fiery preaching which served the conscience of Israel from a torment in which any other national conscience would have perished. Ezekiel worked to reanimate the wavering faith of his compatriots and proclaimed the certainty of salvation (Ezek 37:11-14). He taught the doctrine of individual responsibility, explained the purpose of punishment and affirmed the possibility of each one's finding favour again with God. As against the notion of solidarity in punishment, Ezekiel upheld the principle of individual retribution. Every one is responsible for his own acts and will suffer in consequence of them. Equally every one has the possibility of returning to God's favour through conversion, which is the true purpose of punishment (Ezek. 18:21, 30-32).

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, foretold the new covenant. Yahweh would let the house of Israel seek him once more. He himself would, through his spirit, effect the purification and renewal of hearts (Ezek. 36:25-7).

3.3.3 Deutero-Isaiah

The work of religious renewal began by Ezekiel was pursued, towards the end of the exile, by a distant disciple, Isaiah. It was the period when Cyrus' victories over the various people of the East had awakens a great hope in the exiled Jews. It was also the time when Deutero-Isaiah announced the end of the exile, and foretold the universal and final arrival of Yahweh. His message is to be found in the consolation of Israel (Is 40-55). Those who were in anguish over the length of the trial, Deutero-Isaiah gave them new hope (Is 40:1-2). Cyrus was the instrument chosen by God to fulfill his plans (Is. 40:1-4; 45:1-6; 12-13). The book of consolation contains several prophecies known as prophecies of the servant. "They relate to a mysterious "Servant of Yahweh", a suffering just man, certain of whose traits recall Jeremiah, yet whose nature and mission seem to be something quite outside the scope of any Old Testament personalities.

3.3.4 Common Grounds of Post-exilic prophets

The pre-exilic prophets were speaking in God's name to the same situation, namely: (1) the offering of due sacrifice with appreciate ritual will not ensure God's favour or appease His anger. He is not subject to man's control or to man's cajoling. It is man who must walk in His way, not He who must respond to man's desire. The offerings of a righteous man are the visible expression of a true service. Those of a wicked man are an empty form and a hypocritical ceremonial-and that is as true of the offerings on a church plate today as of those upon a sacrificial altar centuries ago (Is. 1:13ff). (2) Injustice and oppression must cease not simply because they are anti-social, but because they are sin against God's creatures and so against God. Amos speaks of the merchants who justify their weights and measures, and are ready to buy the poor for silver and the needy, while their word to their husbands is the insatiable Amos 8:5ff).

Selfish indulgence and luxurious living are condemned. They serve but to increase the moral laxity of which they are born. Amos speaks of those who lie upon beds of Ivory and stretch themselves upon couches; the epicures who eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves from the stall...who drink wine by the bowlful and anoint themselves with choice Ointment; but are not distressed for the affliction of Joseph (their people) (Amos 5:4,6). (4) God is God of righteousness and justice. He keeps covenant faithfully with His people. He never forsake them, they too must keep covenant that is they must love truth justice and mercy Is. 1:16ff). If His people do righteously, God will punish them, and if they persist in evil-doing, He will destroy them from off the face of the earth.

3.3.5 Significance of Prophecy in Religious life of the Israelites

The whole of Old Testament bears witness to the major importance of prophecy in the religious life of Israel. One section of the Bible consists solely of the writing of the prophets, and there are also historical books that recount the activities of various prophets. And in the Pentateuch, Numbers proclaims Moses, to whom God speaks "Mouth to mouth", or as we should say, face to face, as being greater than the prophets to whom God only revealed himself in visions or dreams (Num.12:6-8), and Deuteronomy recognizes in him as the greatest of the prophets (Deut. 34:10). God spoke to his people through those

he sent, and thus when prophecy stopped, it seemed to them that God was punishing them by silence (Ezek. 7:26). The return of the prophecy on the other hand, meant a sign of God's favour, and as the question of those sent by the Jews to John the Baptist show, Israel expected the prophecy of Malachi to be fulfilled by the coming of a new Elijah just before the Messiah (Mal. 3:1;4:5-6). Thus, among the many prophets the Bible speaks of, the "Sons of the prophets" and the professional prophets (the Nabis), deserve special attention. They are prophets in the wider sense of the word that, though they received no direct personal call, chose their way of life for themselves, and lived near the various sanctuaries-Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal and so on. The professional prophets-(the Nabis first appear as recognized bodies in the time of Samuel. Samuel, Elijah and Elisha had connections with these groups of people.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Define the term prophet
2. Give two reasons why prophecy is a major element in the religious life of the Israelites.
3. Mention three types of prophets in Israel and discuss them.
4. Briefly discuss the history of prophecy in Israel.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have examined the history of the development of prophecy and the post-exilic prophets in Israel as the basis of understanding the religious viewpoint of the Bible. Christian feels an awareness of the prophet's solidarity and such do not look upon them as strangers because they were the heroes of Yahwism whose influence in Israel was decisive, and contributed so much to the fulfillment of the plan of salvation in which they are also engaged. They find in them spiritual guides, and reading their prophecies helps him/her both achieve a sense of God, as holy, faithful and merciful and to discover the proper attitude of man towards him. Above all, the prophets unswerving fidelity to Yahweh and determination to apply to the problems of their time the prescriptions of the covenant, provide wonderful lessons for us who live in the new covenant.

5.0 SUMMARY

Prophecy in Israel as indicated in this unit was meant to correct social injustices, idolatrous worship and forgetfulness of Yahweh in the society. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, prophets were raised up by God to exhort the people on failures to keep the covenant that made some form of cleansing suffering necessary. Thus, Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant, brought the law and the prophet to fulfillment; though he was not merely a prophet, he was God himself speaking to men the word, the incarnate logos of God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List four common grounds of pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets.
2. Mention the three types of prophets in Israel and discuss them in details.
3. Give a short history of the origin of prophecy in Israel.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 3 THE RELIGIONS OF ISRAEL

Unit 1 From the Time of Exile to Reconstituted State of Israel

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learned about the development of prophecy and prophets in pre-exilic and post-exilic periods of Israelites history. You were presented with meaning of prophecy, historical survey of the period, common grounds of pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets as well as the significance of prophecy in the religious life of the Israelites. In this unit, you will learn the history of Israelites from the time of exile to the period of reconstitution of the Jewish state in 400 BC. This period for the Jews was not only full of humiliation and sorrows, but of radical changes in every area of their lives. The invasion of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia made the Philistines, Ammorites, Moabites and Edomites to take advantage of the weakened condition of the remnant of Israel. Consequently, Idumeans, were incorporated in the Maccabean kingdom and many of them intermarried with the Jews. Some Jews were taken to Egypt, while some went to Babylon.

Although the Jewish exiles was said to be full of freedom to do practically what they close, they were being persecuted on religious grounds, and without a country. They were subjects of another power and a strange people in a strange land. They were to return after seventy years. Hence, the time from the captivity of the first group around 607-06 B.C to their return in 536 B.C. Also, the time from the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C, and the taking of the last group of exile, to the time of the completion of the temple in 516 B.C, would make seventy years. It is customary however, for historians to speak of the period as fifty years from 587 B.C. when the city fell to 537 B.C. when the first group returned to Jerusalem.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should to able to:

- Narrate the process of restoration of the nation's glory carried out by King Cyrus.
- Assess the contributions of prophet Zachariah, Ezra and Nehemiah in the building of Hebrew nation and in bringing back of the remnants from exile to Jerusalem.
- Compare the forces that motivated the struggle of Maccabees and the rule of the Hasmoneans.
- Discuss the Jewish sects such as the Pharisees, Sadducees Essenes, and the Zealots.

3.0 Main Body

3.1 The Period of Exile

The long, hard years of humiliation and sorrows in exile had some beneficial results in the life of the Jews people. They were thoroughly cured of adulatory; the synagogue came into existence instead of the smaller houses which served as centers of worship (3) they did a great deal in the collecting of their literature during the time (4) Religion for them became distinctly more spiritual and personal. (5) The Law of Moses took on a new significance for them. These benefits became more meaningfully during the reign of King Cyrus who played a big role in the life of the Jews. He determined the destiny of millions of people in the sixth century B.C. by bringing a new alignment of nation and by setting up a great empire which displayed the Semitic peoples in the role of leaders in southwest Asia. As a liberal leader, Cyrus was concerned with the welfare of his subjects and freely parted with tradition to accomplish his purpose. He reversed all former policies by making it possible for all peoples who had been brought in by force and who wanted to return to their homes to do so.

3.2 King Cyrus Edict

This is the policy of leniency, which allowed not only the Jews the privilege of returning home but which gave them protection and assistance as well as freedom of worship. The generous nature of the proclamation is given in Ezra 1:2-4 thus: Thus said Cyrus, king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he was charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left, in any place where he dojourne, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold, and with goods, and with boasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. The tone of this edict makes people to assume that Cyrus was a believer in Jehovah, the God of Israel. Scholars accepted this view until the inscriptions of Cyrus were deciphered. These inscriptions represent him as a polytheist who probably desired the favor of all gods. Thus, he was the agent of Jehovah to accomplish his purpose for Israel. This edict issued in 538 B.C. made it possible for the Jews who wanted to do so to return to their homeland.

3.3 The Return of Judah to Jerusalem

Many Jews who were in Babylonia at the time went back to rebuild the wastes of Judah. Most of them were satisfied with their new home, especially since Cyrus manifested a lenient attitude toward them as citizens. They became well established and had formed strong friendships in Babylonia culture. There were about sixty thousand Jews to return to Israel. The first group was led by Zerubbabel, while the other group went back under Ezra and Nehemiah.

3.4.1 The Inter-Biblical Period

The period between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New is known as the inter-testamental period. Some scholars have called it “the dark Period” of Israel’s history in Pre-Christian times because throughout this period, there was no prophet nor inspired writer. To the historians, however, the Centuries were anything but silent. The only sources that furnish us information’s about this period are the history of Persia, Greece and Rome. We have no record in the Bible of the experiences of the Jew during this time, but the period is important because vast changes in social, economic, political and religious life took place during this time. The history of Persia, Greece and Rome furnish a great deal of information for the period. Thus, the period is divided into four stages. These are: (1) Persia 538 B.C (400)-332 B.C; (2) Greek 332-167 B.C; (3) Hebrew Independence, 167-63 B.C; (4) Rome, 63 B.C. 70 A.D. There are fourteen books of Jewish writings which belong to inter-Biblical period and are known as the Apocryphal (“Secret” or “hidden”). These writings, historical and religious in nature, are not included as part of our Canon of the Bible, though there has been frequent debate and difference of opinions on the matter. Even though they are not included in the list of inspired books, they have great value in the understanding of Jewish history and life of this period.

They are: I Esdras II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther (additions). The wisdom of Solomon (The Book of Wisdom), Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Song of the Three Holy children (The Song of Song), the

History of Susana, The History of the Destruction of Bel and Dragon, The prayer of Manasseh, I Maccabees and II Maccabees. These colourful character and religious books (deutero-Canonical, apocryphal and Institutions help one to understand the New Testament. Inter-Biblical period was a difficult and ye a crucially important one in the history of the Jewish people and it covers the time between the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC and the futile revolt against Rome in A.D. 135. This history between the Testaments is divided into four stages.

3.4.2 The Persian Empire

In 539 BC, the Babylonian Empire fell to Persia under King Cyrus who appeared in the history of the Jews as a Messianic figure. In 550-333 B.C.E, the Persian Empire ruled over much of western Asia, including Israel. Like most imperial powers during the Iron Age, King Cyrus is reputed to be the brain behind the Persian kingdom. Cyrus first appears in history when in 559 B.C. at the age of forty, he inherited the small kingdoms of Anshan. When Cyrus became the Lord of Babylon, he adopted a benevolent policy towards those former Babylonian provinces. He tolerated the peculiar cultures of those territories he conquered and also restored all the captive deities and peoples under Babylon. He allowed citizens of his empire to practice their native religion, as long as they incorporated the personage of the Persian Great King into their worship (either as a deity or semi-deity, or at the very least the subject of votive offerings and recognition).

This tolerated attitude plus the fact that he returned the sacred property of Mesopotamian temples which had been removed to Babylon by Nabonidus and issued explicit instruction for the renovation of sanctuaries and restoration of cults, must be emphasized, since it renders believable the edict of Cyrus, quoted in Ezra 1:2-4; 3:3-6 permitting the reconstruction and the return of the Jewish treasures to Jerusalem. It is in line with this decree that about 50,000 Jews on their return appointed as leader of the returnees a man named Sheshbazar, also associated with Shenazzar of 1 Chron. 3:8 by some scholars, and called "the prince of Judah" in Ezra 1:8.

Furthermore, in the 5th century the Jews, who had remained in Mesopotamia, wanted to consolidate as a community in Jerusalem. Upon the commission of Cyrus, Nehemiah undertook to surround Jerusalem with a fortified wall and exacted from the Jews a sworn promise not to enter into any marriages with members of alien neighbouring tribes. Then Ezra returned to Palestine in order to teach the city's inhabitants the law. Needless to say, this royal decree gave Israel's law not only the status of the Persian Law on the land of Jerusalem and Judah but also accorded to the Jewish cultus the protection of the Persian government. No wonder then that second Isaiah speaks of Cyrus as the anointed of Yahweh (45:1) called by God to be the deliverer of Israel. These reforms are reflected in the famous Cyrus Cylinder and Biblical books of Chronicles and Ezra which state that Cyrus released Israelites from slavery and granted them permission to return to the land of Israel in 539 BC.

3.4.3 Restoration of the Temple

The exiles did not return in one great caravan but kept coming back after 538 in separate groups and various tribes. Sabasra (Sheshbazzar), apparently a son of Joachim, the king of Judah who had been deported in 598 led the first group. Their hopes of rebuilding the Temple were soon frustrated by the necessity of providing food and lodging for themselves in depopulated and desolate land and by the opposition of the Samaritans who considered Jerusalem under their control. The first group of resettle

succeeded in only leveling the Temple area and arranging the foundations of the Temple. Another Davidic prince, Zorobabel (Zerubabe), succeeded where his uncle had failed. Encouraged by the Prophetic utterances, and perhaps by the loosening of Persia control over Palestine, while the king of Persia, Darius I, was securing his throne, the Judeans under the leadership of Zerubabel and the high priest, Josue (Joshua), son of Josedel began again in 520 B.C.E to rebuild the Temple.

Against the Samaritans objections, they completed the reconstruction in 515 B.C.E under the spiritual leadership of prophets Haggai and Zechariah. At this time the Holy Land was a sub district of a Persian satrapy (province) known as Yehud and issues Yehud coinage. It was more than 20 years since the first group of the deported had returned. The glorious hopes of Duetero-Isaiah had not materialized, but at least the Temple had been restored. More than half a century would pass before a new religious reform led by Ezra would pave the way for political renewal under Nehemiah that would culminate in the rebuilding of Jerusalem walls.

3.4.4 The Reform of Ezra

It is reported that in 458 B.C. Ezra, a secretary in charge of Jewish affairs in the Persian court, came, armed with a royal decree, to reorganize the Judean community in accordance with the law of Israel's God in which he was an expert. He read part of the Law of Moses to the assembled people which they accepted by celebrating the rites of the feast of Booths (Tabernacles). The law thus became the official constitution for the hieratic society. The out come of Ezra's severe strictures on marriages with non-Jews is unknown, for his report ends abruptly. These structures certainly caused a great commotion among the faithful and in all probability were not very effective as evidenced by Nehemiah grappling with the same problem. Ezra's commission was temporary, and he probably returned to his duties in Babylon when it expired.

3.4.5 The Reform of Nehemiah

Ezra's religious reform gave birth to a national resurgence that had as its prime objectives the rebuilding of Jerusalem's fortified walls. Nehemiah, a high official in the Persian court heard of these events and won from Artaxerxes a commission to repair Jerusalem's battlement. Soon after he arrived in Jerusalem, he received a further commission as temporary governor of the Judean enclave. He stood firm against the threats and connivances of the Samaritans and their Judean collaborators and completed the basic fortifications within a few months. He then proceeded to populate the city, and regulate its social institutions. He returned to the Persian court in 433 B.C. but was again present in Judea some years later, when he was forced to reconfirm his reform by having the community solemnly accept the obligations of God's law. After Nehemiah's time until the Greek conquest in 333, hardly anything is known of the Judean ethnarchy. Thanks to the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, Judea had become a land ruled by its own sacred law and thus enjoyed a certain autonomy and even the power to coin its own money.

3.4.6 The Greek Empire

The Greek empire which began to emerge as a nation several centuries before Alexander the Great occupied the South-east fringe of Europe and Aegean isles-the territory now called Greece. The Greeks developed the most effective language the world has known. They also made a contribution unequalled

by any other people in philosophy, literature, sculpture, architecture and other liberal arts. They gave to the world such men as Thucydides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Alexander, Demosthenes and many others. In the 4th century before Christ, their culture was to be taken by zealous apostles far east into the Orient itself. Before the victory of Alexander the Great at Issus in 333 B.C. Greek influences had already spread into Palestine, but soon after that the whole of the near east began to take on the Hellenistic appearance. His father Philip who was the king of Macedonia, one of the chief states of Greece had two great ambitions: first, to see Greece attain a place of leadership in the world, and second, to prepare his son, Alexander to realize this dream. He was able to give to his people a conception of their possibilities as a nation and he inspired in Alexander an ambition to rule the world.

Alexander began his career in vigorous fashion after his accession in 331 BCE, by defeating the Persian empire-(the forces of Darius in the two famous battles of Granicus and Issus), and then moved through Syria and Palestine to Egypt. On his way to Egypt, he approached Jerusalem, after a delegation of Jews met him and assured him of their loyalty and by showing him certain prophecies contained in their writings. After the confusion following the death of Alexander, Judah became a liberally controlled border land of the kingdom of Palestine in 198 at the battle of Pancton. The Jewish Diaspora grew, especially in Alexandria; by the Greek-speaking Jews. This led to translation of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint. Ptolemy Soter made many achievements and after his death was succeeded by Philadelphus who built the famous lighthouse, called Pharos, at the mouth of the Nile. He also erected the great library in Alexandria which was the important centre of culture and learning in the Mediterranean world for several centuries. It was burnt by the Mohammedans in the seventh century after Christ. Around 281-246 BC, the famous Septuagint translation of the scripture from Hebrew to Greek language began in Alexandria that Hellenism came to dominate the Mediterranean world to the extent that the Jews themselves ceased to speak the Hebrew language, and instead were using the Greek language. In Palestine, Jerusalem was allowed to retain its ethnarchic autonomy throughout the conflicts between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, which were alluded to in Daniel chapter 11. When Antiochus III finally succeeded in winning control of Palestine it was not long before the relatively peaceful existence in Jerusalem was disturbed by Seleucus IV and his brother, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

3.4.7 The Maccabean Period

The history of the Maccabees recorded in the book of Maccabees recounts the direct threat to the existence of the Jews since their exile in Babylonia. He endeavored to conquer Egypt itself from the Ptolemies but was unsuccessful. Seleucus IV came to the throne in 187 B.C and ruled until 176 BC. The hard years for the Jews came with Antiochus Epiphanes IV who succeeded his father Antiochus the Great. He is given by history to have ruled the Seleucid kingdom established by Seleucus I between 175-163 B.C. He attempted to complete Hellenization of the Jews by strengthening his hold on Palestine, destroying the core of Jewish unity, and dedication to Yahweh's law, through the process of Hellenization. He also attacked Judaism by forbidding the practice of fundamental Jewish customs, such as their dietary laws and circumcision, and by forcing them to idolatry. Thus, one of the biggest problems the Jews had to face under Greek control was how they could accept Hellenism and remain loyal to the faith of their fathers. Some felt that they could, and hence a few openly accepted it. While the big majority of them felt that they could not become Hellenists without betraying their faith. Many Jews therefore, resisted Hellenism even unto death.

3.4.7.1 Antiochus IV Epiphane's

Antiochus IV is given by history to have ruled the Selachian kingdom established by Seleucus 1 between 175-163 B.C. He succeeded his father Antiochus the Great and belonged to the Antiochian dynasty. Surnamed Epiphanes (God made manifest), Antiochus IV was taken hostage after the battle of Magnesia in 190 BC and held in Rome for 15 years. Within this period, his father, Antiochus the Great died. A succession dispute arose as Heliodorus, the chief minister to Antiochus III murdered Demetrius the rightful heir to the throne within this period, Antiochus IV was released and, supported by Rome; he eliminated Helidorus and seized the throne. Antiochus IV was a very vigorous man and pursued war expeditions like his father even if he was not as successful. For example, his advancement on Egypt was frustrated by the Romans. Having been frustrated at all angles, he could not but divert all his ambition to Jerusalem. After unsuccessful expeditions to Egypt he rallied his army under Appolonius and attacked the Jews on a Sabbath Day. As could be expected he met with little opposition and cruelly murdered the male Jews, enslaved the women and children and built a garrison in the city.

Determined to live up to his name, Epiphanes (God manifest), Antiochus IV did everything to Hellenize the Jews and have them totally under him. He was so ruthless in the pursuit of his ambition that his unchecked zeal earned him the name Epimanes-a "crazy" or madman. His exploit of the Jewish religion began with his politicizing the office of the high priest. He intervened to settle the dispute between Onias III and his brother Jason. Antiochus, after receiving a huge amount of bribe from Jason deposed Onias III and enthroned Jason as High Priest. Another character, Menelaus soon bribed his way in and Antiochus did not hesitate to depose Jason for him. Jason's attempt to revolt against this only attracted the wrath of Antiochus IV. He stripped the temple of its treasures and put Jerusalem under another despot, Philip who was determined to consolidate his hold on the Jews. bHe insisted and issued his famous edict that declared that all within his kingdom be of one religion, law and custom. With that Edict, the Jewish Sabbath observances, circumcision and food laws were abolished.

Any Jew discovered with a copy of the Jewish law was executed. The height of the insult that could be was the erection of an altar to the Olympian Zeus in the Temple. This is the highest insult that could be given to the Jewish faith. This is why the Jews can never blot out his name from their history. He is known to be the cruelest tyrant of all times, furious and precipitate almost to the degree of madness. The Jews were compelled to take part in pagan festivals on pain of death. Though some pro-Hellenists like Menelaus, welcomed the move by Antiochus, most Jews remained conservative and refused to submit to the new faith. This led to the Maccabean revolt in 167. All these are typical of the inter-testamental period out of which grew apocalyptic literature. For example the text of Dan 11:29ff is said to refer to the Olympian Zeus, erected in the temple by Antiochus IV. Antiochus Epiphanes died while leading an expedition against the Parthians in 163 BC (1 Macc. 6:1-6).

3.4.7.2 Mattathias

Mattathias was a priest of Modein and father of Judas Maccabeus during the reign of Antiochus IV and the era of Hellenism, in which the emissaries of Antiochus erected a pagan altar at Modein. And in order to show their loyalty to the government, the Jews were compelled to offer sacrifices at the pagan altar which was contrary to the Jewish laws. The aged priest of the village, Matthias was asked to come forward first to set a good example for the others. Mattathias refused to sacrifice at the pagan altar. A Jew, who was afraid of the wrath of Antiochus, made his way to the altar to offer the sacrifice. Mattathias, who was enraged, approached the altar, slew the apostate Jew and the emissary of

Antiochus. With his sons, Mattathias destroyed the heathen altar and fled to the hills to avoid the certain reprisals which might be expected from Antiochus. Others joined the family of Mattathias.

In the early days of the Maccabean revolt, as the struggle against Antiochus and Hellenism was on, Mattathias was joined by a group of Hasideans and with his small force carried on guerrilla warfare against the Hellenizing Greeks. From their stronghold, Mattathias, his sons and their allies raided the towns and villages killing the royal officers and the Hellenistic Jews who supported them. A religious factor favoured the Syrians. Religious scruples kept the Maccabean from fighting or taking to arms on the Sabbath. One Sabbath a band of Maccabeans was surrounded and slaughtered. They would not defend themselves, sensing the gravity of the situation. Mattathias adopted the principle that fighting in self-defense was permissible even on a Sabbath day. Soon after the beginning of the revolt, Mattthias died in 166 B.C. and was buried in Modein. But before his death, he urged his followers to choose as military leader his third son Judas known as the Maccabee”. His continuing victories in guerilla warfare proved the choice a good one. This made more and more Jews rally to the banner of Judas.

3.4.7.3 Judas Maccabeus

Judas avoided open attacks but he got series of victory by his use of surprise attacks. He defeated the Syrian army three times, first under Apollonius who died at the same battle.

At Beth-horon he defeated a second army under a commander named Seron, and a third time at Emmaus under Nicanor and Georgias. While all these were going on, Antiochus IV was on a campaign against the Parthians and Lysias who was left behind wanted to put a stop to the Jewish conflict. He was however, defeated so woefully that he had to inaugurate a revision of the Seleucid policies. Later, a letter came from Antiochus IV and the Romans to the Jews (II Macc. 11:27-33; 34-38). In his letter, Antiochus specifically allowed the Jews “permission to enjoy r own food and laws” and at the same time extended amnesty to all rebels who returned to their home town within fourteen days.

After three years the law binding the Jews from obeying the Torah and the Plois constitution which had been forced upon the people were abrogated. Judas then went ahead and conquered and purified Jerusalem and reinstated the Temple cult. Judas sent a delegation to Rome to establish peace with the Romans who were interested in making their influence felt in that region. With this treaty the Romans pledged that if war comes first to the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall willingly act as their allies. And so, a letter was written and sent to Demetrius threatening in these words; “if they (Jews) appeal again for help against you, we will defend their rights and fight you on sea and on land” (1 Mac. 9:32). At the end Judas lost his life in the vicinity of Jerusalem by an army sent by Demetrius under Bacchides. Alcimus was again made High priest and with the help of Bacchides all the doors of lawlessness and injustice re-opened (1 Macc 9:23).

3.4.7.4 Jonathan

After the death of Judas, Jonathan reassembled and organized an armed resistance. First, he attacked an Arabian tribe in Transjordan which killed his brother John. Bacchides only saved his life by fleeing when he attacked Jonathan. It is said that Jonathan took the position of High Priest He died. But in some sources, it is said that Jonathan died before Alcimus. Jonathan is said to have expelled the followers of the Quran “teachers of righteousness “from office. He had thus become so powerful that he was not only able to survive without trouble as a result of a change of administration in Syria but also was successful

in obtaining further concessions in the struggle for power. He succeeded in luring Jonathan to accept terms, and had him imprisoned (1 Macc 12:39-49). It was there that he had Jonathan killed, when he could not get the throne that Simon had been elected to head.

3.4.7.5 Simon

After Jonathan's murder, Simon established contact with Demetrius II who, more than ever, was dependent upon the support of the Maccabees. In recognition of Judas' sovereignty, Demetrius marked the new change in alignment with an amnesty decree, of a grand permanent exemption from taxation. For that reason the author of 1 Maccabees noted that in 142 B.C. the yoke of the Gentile oppressors was removed from Israel (Macc. 13:41) and marked the decisive break to the Maccabean rebel. This new feeling of freedom found expression in the fact that the Jews began their own era and their documents and contracts according to the years of Simon's administration (1 Macc. 13:41ff). The hymn in 1 Macc. 14:4-15 celebrated Simon and his success in almost messianic tones as the saviour of the nation and prince of peace. In 140 BC a decision was taken at Jerusalem to legitimize the Maccabean family formally and to grant Simon as hereditary honor of the office of prince, high priest and of commander. The restriction "until a trustworthy prophet should arise" seem to point to a compromise between the gymnastic ambitions of the Maccabees and the eschatological expectations of the "devout". Simon was very successful during his period of leadership. Though he had scarcely any reason to fear serious dangers to his rule from the outside; he was the first Maccabean to fall victim to an intrigue from within. His son-in-law Ptolemy who was governor of Jericho, sought to gain control of the government and had Simon and his sons Mattathias and Judas treacherously murdered at the beginning of 135 BCE during a banquet in the fortress of Dok near Jericho (Macc 16:11-22).

3.4.8 Roman Occupation

The Roman Empire occupies an important place in the history of the world. For centuries, it dominated the civilized world in which Jesus lived and did his work. The Jews were subjects of Rome, and like all their neighbours, were governed by Roman officials. They represented this domination chafed under its restrictions and so frequently rebelled against it, but to no avail. Their rebellion against Roman authority brought their national destruction, especially when Titus burnt Jerusalem and scattered them abroad in 70 A.D. The Jewish sects of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Qumran community originated in this troubled Maccabean period and continued their bitter rivalry during the 1st century B.C. It was a land divided and ravaged by civil war between the two claimants to the royal high-priesthood of the Hasmonean dynasty. Antiochus and Hyrcanus, supported by the Sadducees and Pharisees defeated the Roman General, Pompey when he marched on Jerusalem in 63. He demanded tribute from Judah and took from the rule of Hyrcanus, whom he allowed to serve as high priest, all the coastland conquered by the Hasmoneans.

An Idumean, Antipater, who had been continually aiding Hyrcanus' case, during the civil wars that followed Caesar's rise to power and his assassination, was quite adroit at staying in the favor of whoever gained control of the Roman Empire. His son Herod the Great finally succeeded in having the Roman Senate recognize him as king of Judea. In 37 Herod laid siege and took Jerusalem with Roman aid, killed Antigonus, the last Hasmonean, and began his long rule, which was to last until 4 B.C. Herod, like his father, cleverly changed policies to fit the changes in Roman policies. After the battle of Actium, he submitted to Augustus and won a good deal of independence for the internal control of his kingdom, which was expanded to the extent it had under the most powerful Hasmonean, Alexander Jannaeus. His

building projects especially, the reconstruction of the Jerusalem Temple was significant contribution in Jewish eye. However, his half-Jew never won the support of his people, because of his fostering of the emperor worship, his cruelty to his family, and the opposition of the Pharisees.

After his death the Romans disregarded his disposition of his kingdom by dividing it between three of his sons, Herod Antipas, Archelaus, and Philip. In A.D 6 Archelaus was deposed by the Romans on a complaint from the Jews, and the regions of Judea, Samaria and Idumea were placed under the direct control of Roman procurators except for the period from 41 to 44, when Herod Agrippa was allowed an internal control of Samaria and Judea. The increasing tyranny of the procurators, for example, of Pontius Pilate, despite the benign rule of Porcius Festus finally led to a Jewish rebellion in 66.

It was put down mercilessly in the campaigns of Vespasian and Titus between 67 and 70. A.D., Jerusalem with its holy Temple was captured and destroyed in April of the Year 70 A.D and thus the political history of Israel ended. Its sacred history continued in that of Christianity and in the Post-Biblical history of the Jews. In 66, the First Jewish-Roman War broke out, lasting until 73. In 67, Vespasian and his forces landed in the north of Israel, where they conquered the Jewish armies from Ptolemais to Sepphoris. The Jewish garrison at Yodfat (Jodeptah) was destroyed after a two month siege. By the end of this year, Jewish resistance in the north had been suppressed. In 69, Vespasian seized the throne after a civil war. By 70, the Romans had occupied Jerusalem. Titus, son of the Roman Emperor, destroyed the Second Temple on the 19th of Av, ie, Tisha B'Av (656 years to the day after the destruction of the First Temple in 587 BCE). Over 100,000 Jews died during the siege, and nearly 100,000 were taken to Rome as slaves. Many Jews fled to Mesopotamia, and to other countries around the Mediterranean. In 73 the last Jewish resistance was suppressed by Rome at the mountain fortress of Masada; the last 900 defenders committed suicide rather than be captured and sold into slavery. Rabbi Yochana ben Zakai escaped from Jerusalem.

He obtained permission from the Roman general to establish a center of Jewish learning and the seat of the Sanhedrin in the outlying town of Yavneh. This is generally considered the beginning of Rabbinic Judaism, the period when the Halakha became formalized. Some believe that the Jewish canon was determined during this time period, but this theory has been largely discredited. Judaism survived the destruction of Jerusalem through this new center. The Sanhedrin became the supreme religious, political and judicial body for Jews worldwide in 425, when it was forcibly disbanded by the Roman government. During this period, it was officially controlled by the Christian Church. In 132 the Bar Kokhba's Revolt was led by Simon bar Kokhba, and an independent state in Israel was declared. By 135, the revolt was suppressed by Rome. The Romans, seeking to suppress the name of "Judea", reorganized it as part of the province of Syria-Palestine.

3.4.9 The Modern State of Israel

The independent Republic of Israel was established on May 14th, 1948 in a part of ancient Palestine. The state of Israel occupies Galilee, the Plain of Esdraelon, the Mount Carmel range, the coastal plain and the Shephelah, (the foothills of ancient Judah) from Carmel south to the Gaza Strip, including a corridor to Jerusalem, and finally the Negev reaching to a point at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqada. It is therefore, an irregular, generally narrow strip about 265 miles in length with disproportionately long borders, 590 miles on land and 158 on water. Its total area of 7,992.6 square miles is somewhat smaller than that of Massachusetts. It is bordered on the north by Lebanon and Syria, on the east by Syria and Jordan, and on the south by the Gaza little of the strip and Sinai Desert, both held by Egypt. Modern

Israel includes but little of the heartland of ancient Israel-the highlands of Samaria and Judea. The largest cities in Israel are Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. The state of Israel grew out of the Jewish national Home, the establishment of which was undertaken by the Balfour declaration in November 2nd 1917, favoring a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, and secured by the attribution of Great British of the mandate of Palestine in July 24th 1922. The working of the mandate was greatly hindered by the continuous friction between Arabs and Jews. Major riots occurred in 1921, 1929 and 1936. Matters were brought to a head after World War II, when the British refused to allow the immigration of Palestine of many thousands of Jews who had been victims of the Nazi persecution.

Finally Great Britain reined her mandate, and the second General Assembly of the United Nations, (UN), recommended the partitioning of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states and the creation of a separate enclave embracing Jerusalem and its surroundings under UN supervision in November 29, 1947. The Arabs rejected outright the resolution and the mandatory administration refused to allow this special commission charged with its implementation to come to Palestine. The mandate was to expire on May 15th 1948. On the eve of this day the Jewish National Council and the General Zionist Council at Tel Aviv proclaimed establishment of a Jewish State, to be called Israel. A provincial government was set up, which was promptly recognized by the United States, the USSR and a score of other Nations. Israel was admitted to the UN on May 11, 1949. The Arab-Jewish war had actually started many months before the proclamation of Israel's independence. Until this day, however, only irregular cities were engaged in warfare. Thereafter, the troops of the Arab countries (Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan and Egypt), invaded the region of that had previously been under British mandate. After few weeks of fighting, the invaders were defeated, and Israel succeeded in occupying a larger part of Palestine than that stipulated by the UN partition plan.

Active hostilities did not cease until the beginning of 1949. After protracted negotiations held in Rhodes in the spring and summer of 1949, armistic agreements, were signed between Israel and the Arab countries except Iraq and Saudi Arabia. These agreements, which are still in force, fixed the provisional boundaries of the state of Israel according to the territory held at the end of the hostilities. Jerusalem was divided into two parts, the old city under Jordan's rule, and the new city under Israeli administration. In 1950 Jerusalem was proclaimed the Capital of Israel. On October 29, 1956, Israel launched the so-called Sinai Campaign and occupied the Sinai Desert and the Gaza Strip. In compliance with the resolutions of the UN general assembly, Israel withdrew its contingents from the occupied areas.

3.4.10 The Government of Israel

The State of Israel is a republic headed by a president who is elected for a five year. The Knesset is a one-chamber parliament of 120 members who are elected for a 4-year term by secret ballot and the universal direct suffrage. Electors choose between national lists of candidates, seat being allocated in proportion to the number of votes obtained by each list. The government consists of the prime minister and a number of ministers who may, or may not be members of the Knesset. Because of the great diversity of views on the nature of the state, no constitution has been adopted. A certain number of basic laws deal with most of the topics usually set forth in the constitution. The most important laws passed by the Knesset are the following: the law of return, (1950) providing that every Jew shall be entitled to come to Israel as an immigrant; the Equality Rights-for-women Law (1951); the Nationality Law (1952); the Compulsory-and free-Education Law (1949); and the National Insurance Law (1953).

3.4.11 The Emergence of Jewish Sects

This is traceable to the inter-Testamental period, especially between the years 200 B.C-200 A.D. The political and religious tumult was so traumatic for the Jews that the unity of their religious vision disintegrated irreversibly. The cause of these religious squabbles was the influence of Hellenism on the life and culture of the Jews in Palestine. Many Jews were willing to “acculturate” Hellenism but others stood vehemently against it. Those who resisted Hellenism in it’s entirety at the beginning were known as the “Hasidim” or Hasidian. The unity within the Hasidim, however, did not last as some of their members advocated for some compromise in the scene of “giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar”, while others saw nothing wrong in combining both their religious role with a political office. But there were others who remained unyielding to everything else outside Judaism seeing it as corruptible and sacrilegious. This situation of protestation and reformation within the Hasidim got a climax during the Hasmonean dynasty under the reign of John Hyrcanus at about 134 B.C. Consequently, there emerged different groups with different religious ideologies. There were those who were a little to the left and those who were a little to the right. Yet some others went either extremely to the right or to the left. Each group in an attempt to defend its position, claimed originality and authenticity some of these sects are discussed below.

3.4.11.1 The Sadducees

Traditionally, the name “Sadducees” has been linked to the name of Zadok, a priest of the time of David and Solomon. In spite of the attempts to explain the origin of the word nothing is actually known about its meaning or the origin of the group. There is no reference to a group called the Sadducees until the reign of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC). They appear as loyal supporters of the Hasmonean kings, unlike the Pharisees who refused to support John Hyrcanus. It is probable, therefore, that the Sadducees had not existed for very long before the reign of John Hyrcanus. The Sadducees were an epitome of conservatism. They were strictly legalistic in following the letter of the law. They admitted no tradition developed by the Pharisees or oral interpretation of the law. During the Hasmonean period, they compromised their office by accommodating membership from a non-priestly line and accepting political offices. For example, when Jonathan Maccabees assumed the role of the High Priest, as sons of Zadok the Sadducees should have opposed this Hasmonean usurper of the High Priestly-King, probably to ensure their own influence.

In social and political matters, they restricted association to the priestly and aristocratic families. They denied the reward and punishment for the Soul in the afterlife which implied that belief in the existence of immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body ruled out and rejected divine intervention in human affairs. They believed that man is absolutely responsible for his actions. While the Sadducees had great political powers during the reign of John Hyrcanus, they lost many of their important positions during the reign of Queen Salome of Alexandra (76-67 BC) who favoured the Pharisees. Even when they did not have much political power, they still had the power which comes from wealth. They regained the political power in A.D 6, when Judea, Samaria and Idumea were ruled by a Roman procurator. For the next sixty years, they controlled the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin) and most of the High Priests during this period were Sadducees. The Sadducees played an important part in the arrest and trial of Jesus. Undoubtedly, they saw the message of Jesus as a threat to their own power. They probably saw the incident commonly called the “cleansing of the Temple” (Mt 21.12; 13; Mark 11, 15-17; Lk 19.45-46; Jn 2.14-16) as a threat because their attitude to life and religion was conservative and because they were concerned for the stability of the Jewish community under Roman rule.

They controlled the Temple which was controlled by the priests and were given power and control of the Temple area by the Romans. The Sadducees avoided these ideas because they might offend the Romans and risk their own powers and privileges. Although there are great differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the two groups did not usually argue with each other in public. Tension arose between the two groups because they interpreted the law differently. Each group consisted of faithful Jews who believed firmly that God had a special relationship with and of the people of election as an offence against the majesty of God in Israel while their task was to achieve that freedom which would allow them to live in their own manner according to the revealed law. Worth mentioning here is the fact that they were not content to wait for the apocalyptic revelation of the wrath, and believed the reign of God would not come unless the Jews did what they could to hasten its coming. Being a dedicated ministry group they eventually succeeded with the aid of Roman misgovernment in 66 A.D. Although the rebellion ended in the shattering disaster of 70 A.D. in which Jerusalem was destroyed, the Zealots' spirit was not completely quenched.

3.4.11.2 The Pharisees

Not much is known about the origins of the Pharisees. They were however, the most powerful sect in the time of Jesus. We need to remember that the criticism of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which we find in the New Testament was often as a result of a prejudiced desire to show that Christianity was better than both groups. They saw the alien domination of the Holy Land 'Pharisee' is thought to have come from the Hebrew word "perush" which means "separatists" or the separate ones". They may have belonged to the group of the Hasidim, the godly or holy people who separated themselves from the Hasmonean rulers during the reign of John Hyrcanus. Separated from the common people, it is probably why they were so named and because of their Zeal for the law which involved separation from the influences of Hellenism. In this sense they were the heirs of the Hasidim. Some scholars interpret the name "Pharisee" to mean 'people who expound or explain', because the main work of the Pharisee was to expound or explain the Jewish Law.

Other scholars explain the name Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, good and evil spirits, and rewards and punishments, and these beliefs were influenced by Persian ideas. In spite of these theories, however, no body really knows where the Pharisees come from. The party of the Pharisees is first mentioned by name during the reign of the first Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC). Josephus says that the Pharisees appear more religious than others and seem to interpret the law more accurately. The laws regarding ceremonial purity were punctiliously observed by members of the Pharisaic brotherhood. They Pharisee were close to the ordinary working people who worshiped regularly in the synagogues. The Synagogue was their domain in pre-Christian Judaism. In a sincere desire to make the law relevant in the changing culture of the Greco-Roman world, their scribes developed the system of oral tradition which became a burden to Judaism during the time of Christ. During the first century B.C two schools of thought emerged within this sect. the school of Hillel, known for their regard for the poor and their willingness to accept Roman rule as compatible with Jewish orthodoxy and the school of Shammai with their strict interpretation of the law and thus bitterly opposed to the Romans. This later school found expression in the Zealots whose resistance to the Romans brought the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D 70.

The Pharisees, in addition to the scripture believed in the resurrection of the dead and immortality of the Soul. They represented the combination of the high priesthood with civil authorities in the successors of the Maccabees, represented initially in the reign of John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean. They were

craftsmen who earned the respect of the people by their devotion to the law and their study and explanation of it, not because they had been born wealthy and powerful. Their power base was in the local synagogues and their teachings and acts of piety in the synagogues and the kind of hope they offered to the ordinary people, made them to become popular with the ordinary people. The Pharisees had no political ambitions. They believed that in the end God would replace the power of the Romans with his own power. The Sadducees also believed that the Messiah would do nothing political which might upset the Romans. The Pharisees believed in an eschatological Messiah who would appear at the end of the age to set up the kingdom of God and remove and destroy all earthly kingdoms like the Roman Empire. Jesus and his followers held beliefs about the kingdom of God which was very close to the belief of the Pharisees. These beliefs were political, because they looked forward to the conquest of the Roman Empire with God Himself and the replacement of the Roman Empire with the kingdom of God.

3.4.11.3 The Samaritans

The Samaritans were those who settled in the territory generally referred to as Samaria. Initially, Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. With the dispersion during the exilic period, Herod the Great renamed this capital city Sabaste in 27 B.C. that is, the Greek equivalent of Augusta. The term Samaria then came to designate the entire territory beyond the Jordan River, comprising various cities, some of which Christ visited during his public ministry (Jn 4:4). Common presumptions, usually influenced by Jewish prejudice and polemics, take the Samaritans to be a generation of half caste people, the accidental consequence of the cultural intercourse between the Jews left behind during the deportations and the foreign peoples that came to settle in Israel. Some scholars, however, prefer to see them as the other Jewish tribes who seceded from the Davidic dynasty after the death of Solomon, and later got colonized by the Assyrians during the mass conquest. The sharp division between the Jews and Samaritans began during the restoration period under the Persian domination. Internal evidence (Bible) has it that in the process of rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple, the assistance of the Samaritans was wholly rejected and the Jews openly denounced any affiliation with them, branding them as unorthodox and somewhat inferior stock (Ezra 4:1-4).

Extra-biblical sources reveal further that with their exclusion from the Temple cults, the Samaritans bitterly resorted to establishing their own worshiping centers, taking Mount Gerizim as the “chosen place” in opposition to the Jewish Mount Zion. And they distinctively restricted themselves to recognizing only an ancient text of the Pentateuch as their Holy Scripture, a version which deviates from the Hebrew masoretic text at some 6000 points. Fluctuations in relations had already been generated with the schism over the Temple cults. But the tension reached a climax in 128 BC when the Samaritan Temple at Gerizim was destroyed **by** the Jews under the Hasmonean reign of John Hyrcanus. In retaliation, the Samaritans are said to have desecrated the Jerusalem Temple. This heightened the tension between the two. During the inter-testamental period, the Samaritans stood out as a unique group, enjoying a middle status between the Jews on the one extreme and the Gentiles on the other. However, towards the close of the period, the Jews could no longer take it, and the break between the two became final, with the Samaritans placed on the same scale as the Gentiles.

3.4.11.4 The Zealots

The party of the Zealots being one of the most formidable Jewish sects was founded by Judas the Galilean who led a revolt against the Roman domination in 6 A.D. A suggestion that Israel should pay

tribute to pagan overlords was intolerable to the Zealots. Consequently, they considered it a sin to acknowledge loyalty to Caesar, for God alone was to be reckoned as king of Israel. They were called zealots because they followed the example of Mathathies and his followers who manifested Zeal for the law of God when Antiochus IV tried to suppress the Jewish religion. n They were more or less fanatical Nationalists who did not only believe in prayer but in physical combat. The Romans called them “Sicarii” meaning “assassins” the name which comes from their practice of assassinating their political enemies in crowded streets. They, in fact, bear some resemblance to terrorist groups in modern times, but their terrorism had a distinctly Jewish theological basis. Unlike the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Zealots did not believe that the condition of Judaism in the Roman Empire was a permanent state.

3.4.11.5 The Essenes

The Essenes were one of the leading Jewish sects. They flourished in the second century BC and rank after the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Concerning their origin, history, and tenets, there has been much inclusive controversy. The sect arose about 150 B.C (the first named Essene is Judas, 100 BC) and disappeared towards the end of the first century A.D. They worshiped one God, Creator and Ruler of all things. They had great reverence for Moses, and they kept to the strict observance of the Sabbath to the later. They were also fanatical adherents to the law of circumcision. This sect came out of the syncretic tendencies that were manifested by their neighbours, that is, the mixture of the syncretic elements in their tenets and customs. To salvage the true religion of the Jews, this sect came into being, and they believed very much in the Levitical law of defilement, if one had contact with people or things. For this reason they isolated themselves from others. Because of his observance of purity, they would not attend the temple worship for fear of defilement or corruption. Buddhism, Pharisaism, Pythagoreanism, Hellenism etc. have all had their claims put forth as one of the parents of this hybrid sect. they believe that John the Baptist and Jesus were Essenes because of the ascetic and voluntary of poverty they lived. The Essenes, however, went to the extreme, for they even accused Jesus of mixing with sinners and tax collectors.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. How was the glory of Israelites nation restored by King Cyrus?
2. Explain the contributions of Ezra and Nehemiah in rebuilding the nation of Israel.
3. Assess the process of hellenization enforced on the Jews by Antiochus II.
4. Explain briefly how the government of the modern state of Israel is run.
5. List any four Jewish sects and discuss them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have discussed the post-exilic history of Israel starting from the period of restoration of the nation's glory to the time of reconstruction of the new state of Israel as a basis of understanding the problems and struggles of the various dynasties for power.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we saw that the reconstruction of the Israelites nations started by King Cyrus. The long years of Jewish humiliation by and sorrows in exile were brought to an end by Cyrus who had concern for the welfare of his subjects, and reversed all former policies and by enacting an edict which gave the people protection, assistance and freedom of worship. Many Jews returned from exile in Babylon to take part in reconstruction process of the nation. This paved way for inter-biblical period, and formation of modern state of Israel.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is Inter-Biblical period?
2. Explain the process of hellenization enforced on the Jews by Antiochus II
3. How King Cyrus did restored the glory of Israelites nation?

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MODULE 3

Unit 1 Jewish Religious Denominations

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In unit five of module 2, you learnt about the history of Israel time of exile to reconstituted state of Israel. You were told that Jews experienced many years of humiliation and hardship under Persian and Palestine kings, until the reign of King Cyrus whose policy of leniency allowed them freedom to return to Jerusalem. In this module, you will learn about the religion of Israel as a central feature of the country that plays a major role in shaping the culture and lifestyle of the people. Religion played a central role in Israel's history not only as a country in the world where a majority of citizens are Jewish but also as a result of its population.

According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, the population in 2008 was 75.4% Jewish, 20.6% Arab, and 4% minority groups. The religious affiliation of the Israelite population as of 2005 was 76.2% Jewish, 16.1% Muslim, 2.1% Christian and 1.6% Druze, with the remaining 4.0% not classified by religion. As of 2009, 8% of Israelite Jews defined themselves as Haredim; an additional 12% as "religious"; 13% as "religious-traditionalists"; 25% as "non-religious-traditionalists" (not strictly adhering to Jewish law or halakha); and 42% as "secular" (Hebrew: Hiloni). As of 1999, 65% of Israelite Jews believe in God, and 85% participate in a Passover Seder. However, other sources indicate that between 15% and 37% of Israelite identify themselves as either agnostics or atheists. Israelites tend not to align themselves with a movement of Judaism (such as Reform Judaism or Conservative Judaism) but instead tend to define their religious affiliation by degree of their religious practice. Of the Arab Israelite, as of 2008, 82.7% were Muslims, 8.4% were Druze, and 8.3% were Christians. Just over 80% of Christians are Arabs, and the majority of the remaining is immigrants from the former Soviet Union who immigrated with a Jewish relative. About 81% of Christian births are to Arab women. Israel was founded to provide a national home, safe from persecution, to the Jewish people. Although Israelite law explicitly grants equal civil rights to all citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity, or other heritage, it gives preferential treatment in certain aspects to individuals who fall within the criteria mandated by the law of Return. Thus, the Law of Return does not strictly follow the traditional Jewish religious law (halakha) in relation to the definition of who is a Jew.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss all forms of Judaism
- Explain the origin of Islam in the Jewish nation.
- Give the historical development of Christianity in Israel.
- Discuss other religious minorities in Israel.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Jewish Religious Denominations

The origin of Israelite religion is ascribed to mosaic tradition which makes frequent references to the Exodus traditions (Am 2 9-11) where God made a covenant with the people of Israel. The external forms of Israelite worship bear different form from the native Canaanites which they have they have been principally drawn. Animal sacrifice was normative (Is 1:11; Am 5:4); there was also the offering of incense and cereal sacrifices (Is 1:13, Am 5:22). Festivals were kept at ancient shrines like Galgal and Bethel (Am 5:4-5) on the occasion of Sabbaths, feast days and new moons (Is 1: 13-14, Am 8:4-5, Am 4-5). Tithes were paid for the support of the sanctuaries (Am 5.4), and sacred banquets were eaten there (Am 2:8). Prophecy with its living word of God provided a religious direction for monarchic Israel that is unparalleled in any other ancient people maintained the covenant ideal imperturbably in the face of institutions that should otherwise have brought its eventual extinction. Prophecy was always harsh in its criticism of the monarchy, but it did not seek to abolish it. In general prophetic religion was indifferent to human institutions. The religion of Israel that began in historical events was also strongly affected by them in its subsequent developments. These forms of religious organizations are broadly group under major and minorities forms of Israelites religion.

3.1.1 The Major Forms of Israelites Religion

3.1.2 Judaism

Most citizens in the state of Israel are Jewish, and most Israelite Jews practice Judaism in some form. In the last two centuries the largest Jewish community in the world, in the United States, has divided into a number of Jewish dominations. The largest and most influential of these dominations are Orthodox Judaism, Reform Judaism, and Conservative Judaism. All of the above denominations exist, to vary degree, in the State of Israel. Nevertheless, Israelites tend to classify Jewish identity in ways that are strikingly different from American Jewry.

3.1.2.1 The Secular Traditional Spectrum

The secular traditional spectrum of Judaism covers a wide range of ideologies and levels of observance, and is based on a self definition phenomenon rather than an organized movement. However, the Shomer Masoret generally perceives them as partly observant. Many Jewish Israelites feel that being Israelite (living among Jews, speaking Hebrews, in the land of Israel), is in itself a sufficient expression of Judaism without any religious observances. This conforms to some classical secular-Zionist ideologies of Israelite-style civil religion. In 2007, a poll by the Israelite Democracy Institute found that 27% of Israelite Jews say that they keep the Sabbath; while 53% said they do not keep it at all. The poll also found that 50% of the respondents would give up shopping on the Sabbath as long as public transportation were kept running and leisure activities continued to be permitted; however only 38% believed that such a compromise would reduce the tensions between the secular and religious communities. Because the terms “secular” and “traditional” are not strictly defined, published estimates of the percentage of “secular” Jews vary even more widely: from 20% to 55%. Estimates of the percentage of “secular” Jews vary even more widely: from 20% to 80% of the Israelite population.

3.1.2.3 The Orthodox Spectrum

The Orthodox spectrum deals with “Techillim neged Tilim” (“Psalms (reacting) to counter Missiles”). This was a slogan initially coined during the First Gulf War, 1991, and turned into a popular slogan-sticker ever since, especially among the Israelite Religious Zionism (“National Religious”) community and the Haredi Judaism sector. The spectrum covered by “Orthodox” in the Diaspora exists in Israel, again with some important variations. The Orthodox spectrum in Israel includes a far greater percentage of the Jewish population than in the Diaspora, though how much greater is hotly debated. Various ways of measuring this percentage, each with its pros and cons, include the proportion of religiously observant Knesset members (about 25 out of 120), the proportion of Jewish children enrolled in religious schools, and statistical studies on “identity”.

What would be called “Orthodox” in the Diaspora includes what is commonly called dati (“religious”) or haredi (“ultra-Orthodox”) in Israel. The former term includes what is called Religious Zionism or the National Religious” community (and also Modern Orthodox in US terms), as well as what has become known over the past decade or so as Haredal (haerdi-leumi, i.e. “ultra-Orthodox nationalist”), which combines a largely haredi lifestyle with a nationalist (i.e. pro-Zionist) ideology. Haredi applies to a populace that can be roughly divided into three separate groups along ethnic and ideological lines: (1) “Lithuanian” (i.e. non-hasidic) haredi of Ashkenazic (i.e. “Germanic”-European) origin; (2) Hasidic haredim of Ashkenazic (mostly of Eastern European) origin; and (3) Sephardic (including Mizrahi) haredim. The third group has the largest political representation in Israel’s parliament (the Knesset), and has been the most politically active since the early 1990s, represented by the Shas party.

There is also a growing baal teshuva (Jewish penitents) movement of secular Israelite rejecting their previously secular lifestyles and choosing to become religiously observant with many educational programs and yeshivas for them. An example is Aish HaTorah, which received open encouragement from some sectors within the Israelite establishment. The Israelite government gave Aish HaTorah the real estate right to its massive new campus opposite the Western Wall because of its proven ability to attract all manner of secular Jews to learn more about Judaism.

In many instances after visiting from foreign countries, students decide to make Israel their permanent home by making aliyah. Other notable organizations involved in these efforts are the Chabad and Breslov Hasidic movements who manage to have an ever-growing appeal, the popularity of Rabbi Amnon Yitzhak’s organization and the Arachim organization that offer a variety of frequent free seminars on “introduction to Judaism” to secular Jews, the Lev LeAchim organization that sends out senior yeshiva and kollel students to recruit Israelite children for religious elementary schools and Yad LeAchim which runs counter missionary programs. Shalom Hartman Institute of Jerusalem runs the Be’eri program to bring Jewish thought, philosophy, culture and history to more than 50,000 Israelite school students and IDF officers without teaching religious practice or demanding observance of religious norms. At the same time, there is also a significant movement in the opposite direction toward a secular lifestyle. There is some debate which trend is stronger at present. Recent polls show that ranks of secular Jewish minority in Israel continued to drop in 2009. Currently the secular make up only 42%.

3.1.2.3 The Secular Religious Status quo

Secular religious status quo, agreed upon by David Ben-Gurion with the religious parties at the time of the declaration of independence in 1948 is an agreement on the religious Jewish role in government and judicial system of Israel. The agreement was based upon a letter that was sent by Ben-Gurion to Agudat Israel dated 19 June 1947. Under this agreement, this still operates in most respects today:

- The Chief Rabbinate has authority over kashrut, Shabbat, Jewish burial and personal status issues, such as marriage, divorce, and conversions.
- Streets in Haredi neighborhoods are closed to traffic on the Sabbath.
- There is no public transport on that day, and most businesses are closed. However, there is public transport in Haifa, since Haifa had a large Arab population at the time of the British Mandate.
- Restaurants who wish to advertise themselves as kosher must be certified by the Chief Rabbinate.
- Importation of non-kosher foods is prohibited. Despite this, there are a few local pork farms in kibbutzim, catering for establishments selling white meat, due to its relatively popular demand among specific population sectors, particularly the Russian immigrant of the 1990s. Despite the status quo, the Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that local governments are not allowed to ban the sale of pork, although this had previously been a common by-law.

Nevertheless, some breaches of the status quo have become prevalent, such as several suburban malls remaining open during the Sabbath. Though this is contrary to the law, the Government largely turns a blind eye. There have been many problems brought forth by secular Israelites regarding the Chief Rabbinate's strict control over Jewish weddings, Jewish divorce proceedings, conversions, and the question of who is a Jew for the purposes of immigration. The state of Israel enables freedom of religion for all its citizens but does not approve of any civil marriages or non-religious divorce performed amongst the secular Israel Jews within the country. Because of this some Israelites choose to marry outside of Israel. The Ministry of Education manages the secular and religious streams of various faiths in parallel, with limited degree independence and a common core Curriculum. In recent years, perceived frustration with the status quo among some members of the secular sector has strengthened parties such as Shinui, which advocate separation of religion from the state, without much success so far.

Today the secular Israelite-Jews claim that they aren't religious and don't follow the Jewish rules and that Israel as a democratic modern country should not force the old outdated religious rules upon its citizens against their will. The religious Israelite-Jews claim that the separation between state and religion will contribute to the end of Israel's Jewish identity. Signs of the first challenge to the status quo came in 1977, with the fall of the Labor government that had ruled Israel since independence and the formation of a rightwing coalition under Menachem Begin. Right-wing Revisionist Zionism has always been more acceptable to the religious parties, since it did not share the same history of antireligious rhetoric that marked socialist Zionism. Furthermore, Begin needed the Haredi members of the Knesset (Israel's unicameral parliament) to form his coalition and offered more and benefits to their community that what they were accustomed to receiving, including a lifting of the numerical limit on military exemptions.

On the other hand, secular Israelites began questioning whether a "status quo" based on the conditions of the 1940s was still relevant in the 1980s and 1990s, and perceived that they had cultural and institutional support to enable them to change it regardless of its relevance. They challenged Orthodox control of personal affairs such as marriage and divorce, resented the lack of entertainment and transportation options on the Sabbath (then the country's only day of rest), and questioned whether the burden of military service was being shared equally, since the 400 scholars, who originally benefited

from the exemption, had grown to 50,000. Finally, the progressive and Masorti communities, though still small, began to exert themselves as an alternative to the Haredi control of religious issues. No one was happy with the “status quo”; the Orthodox used their new-found political force to attempt to extend religious control, and the non-Orthodox sought to reduce or even eliminate it. In 2010 a report released by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics showed that 8% of Israel’s Jewish population defines itself as Haredi, 12% as religious, 13% as traditional-religious, 25% as traditional and 42% as secular, on a descending scale of religiously. Among the Arab population it showed that 8% defines themselves as very religious, 47% as religious, 27% as not very religious and 18% as not religious.

3.1.2.4 The Chief-Rabbine

The chief-Rabbinate was established during the British Mandate of Palestine by the British administration established as an official dual Ashkenazi-Sephardi “Chief Rabbinate” (rabbanut harashit) that was exclusively Orthodox, as part of an effort to consolidate and organize Jewish life based on its own model in Britain, which encouraged strict loyalty to the British crown, and in order to attempt to influence the religious life of the Jews in Palestine in a similar fashion. In 1921, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1864-1935) was chosen as the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi and Rabbi Jacob Meir as the first Sephardi Chief Rabbi (Rishon LeTzion). Rabbi Kook was a leading light of the religious Zionist movement, and was acknowledged by all as a great rabbi of his generation. He believed that the work of secular Jews toward creating an eventual Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael was part of a divine plan for the settlement of the land of Israel. The return to Israel was in Kook’s view not merely a political phenomenon to save Jews from persecution, but an event of extraordinary historical and theological significance. Prior to the 1917 British conquest of Palestine, the Ottomans had recognized the leading rabbis of the Old Yishuv as the official leaders of the small Jewish community that for many centuries consisted mostly of the devoutly Orthodox Jews Eastern Europe as well as those from the Levant who had made aliyah to the Holy Land, primarily for religious reasons.

The European immigrants had unified themselves in an organization initially known as the vaad Ha’ir, which not live or preach in Israel. Bahai individuals from other countries, wishing to visit Israel, have to seek written permission from Bahai World Centre in Haifa prior to their visit.

3.1.2.5 Buddhism

The Buddhist Community in Israel practice Tibetan buddism. The small community of Buddhists in Israel is made up of scholars from all schools of Buddhism. Presently, Buddhism has large population of followers, especially in countries like Thailand, China, Mongolia and Sri-Lanka. Some of these states in America have Buddhist temples which attest to the emergence of Buddhism in the United States.

3.1.2.8 Bahai

The small Bahai Community in Israel was made up of European migrants who had unified themselves in an organization initially known as the vaad Ha’ir, which is not live or preach in Israel. Thus, the Bahai members from other countries wishing to visit Israel had to seek written permission from Bahai world centre in Haifa prior to their visit.

3.1.2.6 Samaritans

Israel is home to significant populations of Samaritans and Karaites in the world. As of November 1, 2007, there were 712 Samaritans. The community lives almost exclusively in Kiryat Luza on Mount Gerizim and in Holon. Ancestrally they claim descent from a group of Israelite inhabitants from the tribes of Joseph and Levi.

3.1.2.7 Hinduism

The small Hindus community in Israel is mostly made up of representatives of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. In 2002, most of the devotees lived in Katzir-Harish. Today, the Hindu community is found in many parts of Israel and surrounding countries like India, Nepal and Bali in the Indonesian archipelago. Substantial Hindu communities are also found in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Fiji, the Caribbean, East Africa, and South Africa. Scattered Hindu is found in most parts of the western world. Hindu today number nearly 900 million, including about 20 million who live outside India, making them the third largest religious community in the world, after Christians and Muslims.

3.1.2.5 Sanctity of Jerusalem, Mount Gerizim, and Haifa/Acre

Jerusalem plays an important role in three monotheistic religions, namely-Judaism, Christianity, and Islam-and Haifa and Acre play a role in a fourth, Bahai. Mount Gerizim is a holy site to what can be considered a fifth-Samaritanism. The 2000 Statistic Yearbook of Jerusalem lists 1204 synagogues, 158 churches, and 75 mosques within the city. Despite efforts to maintain peaceful religious coexistence, some sites, such as the Temple Mount, have been a continuous source of friction and controversy. Jerusalem has been sacred to the Jews since the 10th century BC. The Western Wall a remnant of the Second Temple, is a holy site for Jews, second only to the Temple Mount itself. Christianity reveres Jerusalem not only for its role in the Old Testament but also for its significance in the life of Jesus. The land currently occupied by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is considered one of the top candidates for Golgotha and thus has been a Christian pilgrimage site for the past two thousand years. In 1889, the Ottoman Empire allowed the Catholic Church to re-establish its hierarchy in Palestine

. Other ancient churches, such as the Greek, Armenian, Syrian, and Coptic churches are also well represented in Jerusalem. According to tradition, Jerusalem is the third-holiest city in Sunni Islam. The Temple Mount is topped by two Islamic landmarks intended to commemorate the event-al-Aqsa Mosque derived from the name mentioned in the Qur'an, and the Dome of the Rock, which stands over the Foundation Stone, from which Muslims believe Muhammad ascended to Heaven. As for the importance of Haifa and Acre in Bahai Faith, it is related to Baha'u'llah, who was imprisoned in Acre and spent his final years there. Mount Gerizim is the holiest site to Samaritans, who used it as the site of their temple.

3.1.3.1 Religious tensions within the Jewish community

The State of Israel allows freedom of religious communities, both in law and in practice. Freedom House reports: "Freedom of religion is respected. Each community has jurisdiction over its own members in matters of marriage, burial and divorce. "Religious tensions exist between Jewish haredi Israelite. Haredi Israelite males devote their young adulthood to full time Talmudic studies and therefore generally get exemptions from military service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Originally the exemption from uniform conscription was intended to apply to a small number of elite religious students. Many leaders of haredi yeshivas encourage student to apply for exemptions from service,

ostensibly to protect them the secularizing environment of the IDF. Over the years, the number of exemptions has grown to about 10% of conscript able manpower. Many secular Israelite consider the system of exemptions to be systematic shirking of duty to serve in the IDF by a large segment of society. Haredi couples tend to marry young and often rely on government assistance sooner and to a greater extent than do secular Israelite. Haredi Israelite are also represented by haredi political parties, which like all smaller parties in a system of proportional representation may tend to wield disproportionate political power at the point when government coalitions need to be negotiated and formed following national elections.

As of June 2008, the two main Haredi parties in the Knesset are Shas, representing Sephardi Mizrahi interests, and United Torah Judaism, an alliance of Degel HaTorah (Lithuanian Haredi) and AgudathYisrael. Secular Israelite often views haredi Israelite with distrust or animosity. The Shinui party was created as a backlash to the perceived influence of the haredi parties, and to represent the interest of secular Jews that supposedly were not seen to by the other non-religious parties. Tension also exists between the Orthodox establishment and the Conservative and Reform movements.

Only Orthodox Judaism is officially recognized in Israel (though conversions conducted by Conservative and Reform clergy outside of Israel may be accepted for the purposes of the Law of Return). As a result, Conservative and Reform synagogues receive minimal government funding and support. Conservative and Reform rabbis cannot officiate at religious ceremonies and any marriages, divorces, and conversions they perform are not considered valid. Conservative and Reform Jews have been prohibited from holding services at the Western Wall on the grounds that they violate Orthodox norms regarding participation of women.

3.1.3.2 Religious Tensions between Jews and Christians

Messianic Jews who are members of Messianic congregations, and separately Jehovah's Witnesses and evangelical Christians, are among the most active missionary movements in Israel. Their proselytizing has faced frequent demonstrations and intermittent protests, most prominently by the haredi anti-missionary group Yad LeAchim, which infiltrates those movements, as well as other proselytizing groups including Hare Krishna and Scientology, and maintains extensive records on their activities. Attempt by Messianic Jews to evangelize other Jews are seen by many religious Jews as incitement to "avodah zarah" (foreign worship or idolatry). Over the years there have been several arson attempts and firebombing of messianic congregations. There have also been attacks on Messianic Jews and hundreds of New Testaments distributed in Or Yehuda were burned. While missionary activity is legal, it is illegal to offer money or other material inducements, and legislation banning missionary work outright has been attempted in the past. Orthodox Jewish communities in Israel have come under scrutiny for the negative stereotyping and scapegoating of Christian minorities in the region, including violent acts against Christian missionaries and communities. A frequent complaint of Christian clergy in Israel is being spat at by Jews, often haredi yeshiva students. The Anti-Defamation League has called on the chief Rabbis to speak out against the interfaith assaults. Thus, the Christian leaders, Israelite's foreign ministry staffs, the representatives of Jerusalem municipality and Haredi community met to discuss the problem in January 2010. The Haredi community Tribunal of Justice published a statement condemning the practice, stating that it was a "desecration of God's name. Several events were planned in 2010 by the liberal Orthodox Yedidya congregation to show solidarity with Christians and improve relations between the Haredi and Christian communities of Jerusalem.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. List three major religions of the Israelites and briefly discuss them
2. Give three reasons for the tension between Christians and Judaism in Israel.
3. Name six religious minorities in Israel and comment on any three.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have seen that religion play a central role in the history of Israelites. You were also told that the religious tensions within the Jewish community and the tension between Jews and Christians tend to wield disproportionate political power which divided the religious groups into major and smaller groups. The unit also discussed the ideological and functions in Jewish community which provided significant points for organization and common interest.

5.0 SUMMARY

Religion in Israel is a central feature of the nation which play a major role in moldings the culture lifestyle as well as the history of the Israelites. The people of Israel define their religious affiliation by degree of their religious practice. Israel was founded to provide a national home, safe from persecution, to be Jewish people. Most citizens in the state of Israel are Jewish, and most Israelite Jews practice Judaism in some form. The largest and most influential of these denominations are Orthodox Judaism, Reform Judaism, and Conservative Judaism. Many Jewish Israelites feel that being Israel is in itself a sufficient expression of Judaism without any religious observances. This conforms to some classical secular Zionist ideologies of Israelites-style of civil religion. The spectrum covered by “Orthodox” in the Diaspora exists in Israel, with some important variations. Various ways of measuring this percentage, each with its pros and cons, include the proportion of religiously observed Knesset members (about 25 out of 120), the proportion of Jewish children enrolled in religious schools, and statistical studies on “identity”.

There is also a growing baal teshuva (Jewish penitents), movement of secular Israelites rejecting their previously secular lifestyle and choosing to become religiously observant with many educational programs and Yeshivas for them. The religious Jewish quo was an agreement on the religious Jewish role in government and Judicial system of Israel which provides authority over Kashrut, Shabbat, Jewish burial and personal status issues, such as marriage, divorce and conversions. Thus, the centrality of an orthodox dominated chief Rabbinate became part of the new state of Israel as well when it was established in 1948. Islam and Christianity were major religious sects in Israel. Most Muslims in Israel are Sunni Arabs, while Christians are presently the smallest religious groups and denomination of the Abrahamic religion in Israel. Most Christians living permanently in Israel are Arabs or have come from other countries to live and work mainly in churches or monasteries, which have long histories in the land. According to both historical and traditional sources, Jesus lived in the land of Israel and died and was buried on the site of the Holy sepulcher in Jerusalem, making the land in the view of Christianity. However, very few Christians now live in the area, compared to Muslims and Jews. Messianic Judaism is a Christian religious movement that incorporates elements of Judaism with the tenets of Christianity. In addition to worshipping God (the father), as the Jews do, they also “worship Jesus, whom they call Yeshua”. They emphasized that Jesus himself was a Jew, as were his early followers. Although followers of messianic Judaism are not considered Jews under Israelites law of Return, there are an

estimated 10,000 adherents in the state of Israel, both former Soviet Union. The other religious minorities include Karaites, Bahai, Buddhists, Samaritans and Hindus.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List the three major religious groups in Israel.
2. What are the six religious minorities in Israel?
3. Explain the religious tensions in Israel between the Jews and Christians.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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Unit 3 Religious Institutions in Israel

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Torah
 - 3.2 The Temple
 - 3.3 Priesthood
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Conclusion
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learned the formative history of the religions of Israel. You discussed the major religious denominations and the tensions between the adherents. In this unit, specific focus will be brought to bear on the religious Institutions in Israel, which play significant roles in the three Jewish monotheistic religions, namely: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. These religious institutions include: the Torah, Temple and Priesthood. They have been sacred to the Jews since the 10th century B.C. The temple provides the immediately personal and interpersonal ritual-cum-social functions demanded by the community. The Torah also known as “Pentateuch” refers to the “five containers” in which scrolls were kept. These are the most important Books for the Jews as they enjoy the prestige of being the expression of God’s will in their regard. The name is derived from the Greek Pentateuch’s or “five containers”. While the institutions of priesthood serves as the core of sacredness in the three monotheistic religions of the Jewish people.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the significance of Torah in the religions of Israelite.
- Give a historical survey of the institution of priesthood in religions of Israelites.
- Describe the sanctity of the Temple in religious worship of the people of the Israel.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Torah (Pentateuch)

The term Torah also known as “Pentateuch” derives from the Greek “Pentateuchos, which means “five containers” in which scrolls were kept. It also refers to the five Books of Moses. These books tell the stories of creation of God’s promises to Abraham and his descendants, of the Exodus from Egypt, of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai and how God brought the people of Israel into the Promised Land. The Torah contains a variety of literary genres, including allegory, historical narrative, poetry, genealogy and the exposition of various type of law. According to rabbinic tradition, the Torah contains the 63 mitzvot (commandments), which are divided into 365 restrictions and 248 positive commands 5 of which are in rabbinic literature.

The word ‘Torah’ denotes both the written text “Torah shebibichtav” (Torah that is written as well as an oral tradition), and Torah shebe’al Peh” (Torah that is oral). The oral portion consists of the traditional interpretations and amplifications handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, now embodied in the Talmud and Midrash. According to Jews tradition the Torah was revealed to Moses in 1312 BCE at Mount Sinai another date for this event is 1280 BCE. The zotar the most significant text in Jewish mysticism stated that the Torah was created prior to the creation of world, and that it was weed as the blueprint for creation Modern biblical scholars see no signs Mosaic another ship but indications of much later writing.

Here and there in the Pentateuch Moses is said to have written certain things...but nowhere it is affirmed that the Pentateuch was authored by Moses...one would therefore think that what calls for an explanation is not why most people stopped believing in the dogma of mosaic authorship, but rather while anyone believed it in the first place. The Torah is accepted by Christianity as part of the Bible comprising the first five books of the Old Testament, the various denominations of Judaism and Christianity hold a diverse spectrum of views regarding the exactitude of scripture. The Torah has also been accepted to varying degree by the Samaritans, an authentic revealed message of (Y.H.W.H) to the

early Israelites and as factual history, in both cases as conveyed by Moses. It is also accepted by Muslims as a Divine book, though they think it was modified after the death of Moses. Judaism refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (we don't use the term Old Testament) as the Torah. There are three sections to the Hebrew Bible or as it is called in Hebrew "TANAKH" Torah prophets, writings.

The Talmud generally refers to Mishnah, the first codification of law by Rabbi Judah the prince in 200 CE and the Gemara which is a commentary and discussion of the Mishnah. There are two Talmud; the Yerushalmi or Jerusalem Talmud that developed in what was ancient Palestine's/Israel and the Babylonian Talmud, both edited and concluded approximately by 600 CE Jewish law and history begins with the Torah and that most sacred source in Judaism, although we practice today Rabbinic Judaism based upon the Torah and subsequently the Talmud. Torah or law is the first of three parts of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), the founding religious document of Judaism and is made up of the first five books of the Old Testament, namely: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

3.1.1 Genesis

The Book talks about the origin of the world, of man, of sin and of God's people. The English title "Genesis" was given to the Septuagint translation of the book because of its concern with the origins of the world (Gn 1.1;2.4), of the human race, and, in particular of the Hebrew people. Among the Hebrews the book is known as "bereshit", "in the beginning", the first word with which the scroll opens.

3.1.2 Exodus

This book describes the departure of the Hebrew people from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. It recounts the history of the chosen people from the point where the book of Genesis leaves off. It recounts the oppression by the Egyptians, the ever increasing descendants of Jacob and their miraculous deliverance by God through Moses. The Hebrew title "Elleh Shemot" is the name and the first word of the book, the ancient manner of naming scrolls.

3.1.3 Leviticus

The title of the book is derived from Levi, the name of the third son of Jacob, whose descendants were the Levitical priests dedicated to caring for the tabernacle and later, the Temple. The book is so called because it contains the rules to be followed in the worship and the duties of the Levites and priests. The book is almost entirely concerned with laws and rubrics and served as the liturgical handbook of the Levitical priesthood meant to teach the Israelite that they should always keep themselves in a state of legal purity, or external sanctity, as a sign of intimate union with the Lord. It is called in Hebrew "Wayyiqra" "and he called ...", the words with which the book opens.

3.1.4 Numbers

This book derives its name from the designation "arithmo" given to it in the ancient Greek translation. The Greek word meaning numbers was apparently chosen in reference to the census figures in chapters 1 & 26 as well as the arithmetical data elsewhere in the book. The Book is a combination of law and

history. Among the Jews, it is called “bemidbar in the wilderness” which is taken from the first verse of the book.

3.1.5 Deuteronomy

This is the fifth and last book of Pentateuch. The book derives its name from via the Latin from the Septuagint Deuteronomy which literally means the second law because it deals with the inauguration of the law of the covenant. It is one of the most important books in the Bible.

3.2 Temple

The term “temple” as derives from the Hebrew word “Beit Hamikdash” meaning “House of the Holy” or “The sanctified House”, and only the Temple in Jerusalem is referred to by this name. The Temple is also called by a variety of other names in the Hebrew Bible, such as Beit YHWH (House of God) or simply Beitechah (Your House) or Heichal (Temple). Biblically, Beyth Hamiqdash refers to one of a series structures located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem. Historically, two temples of the Jews stored at this location and functional as the centre of Ancient Jewish worship, according to classical Jewish belief, the Temple acted as the figurative “footstool” of God’s presence and a third Temple will be built there in the future.

3.2.1 Location of the Temple

There are basically three theories as to where the Temple stood: (1) The Temple was where the Dome of the Rock is now located (2) The Temple was located a little to the north of the Dome of the Rock (3) The Temple was located a little to the east of the Dome of the Rock. Other theories have the Temple either located to the north or to the South of the Temple Mount. Scholars generally reject more outlandish theories that claim the Temple was located some place other than Jerusalem or even outside the land of Israel. According to the Talmud, the Temple had an Ezrat Nashim (Women’s Court) to the east and main area to the west. The main area contained the butchering area for the sacrifices and the Mizbaeach (Outer Altar) on which portion of most offerings were burned and blood was poured or dashed. An edifice contained the Ulam (antechamber), the Heichal, and the Kodesh Kodashim (Holy of Holies). The Heichal and the Kodesh Kodashim were separated by a wall in the First Temple and by two curtains in the Second Temple. Heichal contained the Menorah, the table of showbread and the Incense Altar. The main courtyard had thirteen gates. On the south side, beginning with the southwest corner, there were four gates:

- The *Shaar Ha’Elyon* (the Upper Gate)
- *Shaar HaDelek* (the Kindling Gate) where wood was brought in
- *Shaar Ha’Bechorot* (the Gate of Firstborn), where people with first-born animal offerings entered.
- *Shaar HaMayim* (the Water Gate) where the Water Libation entered on Sukkot.

On the north side, beginning with the northwest corner, there were four gates:

- *Shaar Yechonyah* (The Gate of Yechoyah), where kings of the Davidic line enter and Techonyah/Yehoyachin left for the last time to captivity.

- *Shaar Koban* (The gate of the Offerings), where priests entered with kodeshei kodeashim offerings
- *Shaar HaNashim* (The Women's Gate), where women entered into the Azara or main courtyard to perform offerings
- *Shaar Hashir* (The Gate of Songs), where the Levites entered with their musical instruments.

On the east side was *Shaar Nikanor*, between Women's Courtyard and the main Temple Courtyard, which had two minor doorways, one on its right and one on its left. On the western wall, which was relatively unimportant, there were two gates that did not have any name.

3.2.2 Destruction of the Temple

The Talmud (Yoma 9b) provides theological reasons for the destruction: Why was the first Temple destroyed? Because the three cardinal sins were rampant in society; Idol worship, licentiousness, and murder...And why then was the second Temple-wherein the society was involved in Torah, commandments and acts of kindness-destroyed? Because gratuitous hatred is equal in severity to the three cardinal sins: idol worship, licentiousness, and murder.

3.2.3 The Role of Temple in contemporary Jewish services

Part of the traditional Jewish morning service, that part surrounding the Shema prayer, is essentially unchanged from the daily worship service performed in the Temple. In addition, the Amidah prayer traditionally replaces the Temple's daily tamid and special-occasion Mussaf (additional) offerings (there are separate versions for the different types of sacrifices. They are recited during the times their corresponding offerings were performed in the Temple. The Temple is mentioned extensively in Orthodox services. Conservative Judaism retains mentions of the Temple and its restoration, but removes references to the sacrifices. References to sacrifices on holiday are made in the past tense, and petitions for their restoration are removed. A mention in Orthodox Jewish services includes:

- A daily recital of Biblical and Talmudic passages related to the korbanot (sacrifices) performed in the Temple.
- References to the restoration of the Temple and sacrificial worship in the daily Amidah prayer, the central prayer in Judaism.
- A traditional personal plea of the restoration for the Temple at the end of private recitation of the Amidah.
- A prayer for the restoration of the "house of our lives" and the shekhinah (divine presence) "to dwell among us" is recited during the Amidah prayer.
- Recitation of the psalm of the day; the psalm sung by the Levites in the Temple for that day during the daily morning service.
- Numerous psalms sung as part of the ordinary service make extensive references to the Temple and Temple worship.

- Recitation of the special Jewish holiday prayers for the restoration of the Temple and their offering, during the Mussaf services on Jewish holiday.
- An extensive recitation of the special Temple service for Yom Kippur during the service for that holiday.
- Special services for Sukkot (Hakafot) contain extensive (but generally obscure references to the special Temple service performed on that day.

The destruction of the Temple is mourned on the Jewish fast day of Taisha B'Av. Three other minor fasts (Tenth of Tevet, 17th of Tammuz, and Third of Tishrei), also mourn events leading to or following the destruction of the Temple. There are also morning practices which are observed at all times, for example, the requirement to leave part of the house unflustered.

3.2.4 The Role of the Temple in other Religions

3.2.4.1 The Role of the Temple in Christianity

In addition to the Hebrew Bible, the Temple is mentioned many times in the New Testament. In this scriptures, Jesus prays there (Mark 11:25-26) and chases away money changers and other merchants from the courtyard, turning over their tables and accusing them of desecrating a sacred place with secular ways. According to the New Testament Gospel, it was to the Temple Court that Jesus was brought as a child, to be presented at the Temple (Luke 2:22) and to attend festivals (Luke 2:41). Jerusalem historian, Dan Mazar, reported in the Jerusalem Christian Review on the numerous archaeological discoveries made at this location by his grandfather, Prof. Benjamin Mazar, which included the first century stairs of ascent, where Jesus and his disciples preached, as well as “mikvaot” (or baptismal) used both Christian and Jewish pilgrims. The events of Pentecost, which are recorded in the Book of Acts, also took place at this location. At the area in which Jesus cleanses the Temple of the moneychangers, chasing various commercial traders of doves necessary for the sacrificial rituals away from the sacred precincts (Mark 11:15, see also Mark 11), remarkable findings were uncovered by the elder Mazar, such as a first century vessel with the Hebrew word “Korban”, meaning sacrifice(s). It is believed that inside this vessel, merchants would have stored the sacrifices sold at the Temple Court. Jesus also predicts the destruction of the Second Temple (Matthew 24:2) and allegorically compares his body to a temple that will be torn down and raised up again in three days. This ideas, of the temple as the body of Christ, because a rich and multi-layered theme in patristic and medieval Christian thought (where temple/body can be the heavenly body of Christ, the ecclesial body of the Church, and the Eucharistic body on the altar).

3.2.4.2 The Role of the Temple in Islam

Imam Abdul Hadi Palazzi, leader of Italian Muslim Assembly, quotes the Qur'an to support Judaism's special connection to the Temple Mount. According to Palazzi, “The most authoritative Islamic sources affirm the Temples,” He adds that Jerusalem is sacred to Muslims because of its prior holiness to Jews and its standing as home to the biblical prophets and kings David and Solomon, all of whom he says are sacred figures also in Islam. He claims that the Qur'an “expressly recognizes that Jerusalem plays the same role for Jews that Mecca has for Muslims”. This view is not universally accepted. Assertions by Muslims that Jews never inhabited the land of Israel in ancient times and therefore have no claim to live

in the land today and denial of the eutheics of Jewish claims to ancient holy sites-such as the Temple Mount and the Cave of *Machpelah*-appear to be on the increase. In his 2007 book, *The Flight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City*, Ambassador Dore Gold calls such claims “Temple Denial”. Israelite intellectual David *Hazon*y has described the phenomenon as “a campaign of intellectual erasure [by Palestinian leaders, writers, and scholars]...aimed at undermining the Jewish claim to any part of the land” and compared the phenomenon to Holocaust denial.

Archaeological excavations have found one hundred ritual immersion pools surrounding the Temple Mount. This is strong evidence that this area was considered of the utmost holiness in ancient times and could not possibly have been a secular area. Ever since the Second Temple’s destruction, a prayer for the construction of a Third Temple has been a formal part of the thrice-daily Jewish prayer services. However, the question of whether and when to construct the Third Temple is disputed both within the Jewish community and without; groups within Judaism argue both for and against construction of a new Temple, while the expansion of Abrahamic religion since the 1st century CE has made the issue contentious within Christian and Islamic thought as well. Furthermore, the complicated political status of Jerusalem makes initiation of reconstruction presently difficult, while the traditional physical location of the historic Temple is presently occupied by the *Al-Aqsal* Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. In 363 CE, the Roman emperor Julian ordered Alypius of Antioch to rebuild the Temple as part of his campaign to strengthen non-Christian religions. The attempt failed, perhaps due to sabotage, an accidental fire, or an earthquake in Galilee.

The Hebrew Bible reports that the First Temple was built in 957 BCE by King Solomon As the sole place of Jewish sacrifice, the Temple replaced the portable sanctuary constructed in the Sinai Desert under the auspices of Moses, as well as local sanctuaries, and altars in the hills. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE when they sacked the city. Construction of the second Temple began in 538 BCE, and it was dedicated 23 years later, in 515. According to the Book of Ezra, rebuilding of the Temple was authorized by Cyrus the Great and ratified by Darius the Great. The Second Temple suffered desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BCE but was rededicated under Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BCE. Over a century later in around 20 BCE, the building was renovated by Herod the Great, and became known as Herod’s Temple. During the Roman occupation of Judea, the Temple remained under control of the Jewish people. It was later destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE during the Siege of Jerusalem. It is believed that only part of the Western Wall of the complex remains standing.

During the last revolt of the Jews against the Romans in 132-135 CE, Simon bar Kokhba and Rabbi Akiva wanted to rebuild the Temple, but bar Kokhba’s revolt failed and the Jews banned from Jerusalem by the Roman Empire. The emperor Julian failed to have the Temple rebuilt in 363 CE. After the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in the 7th century, Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan ordered the construction of an Islamic shrine, the Dome of the Rock on the site of the Temple. The shrine has stood on the mount since 691 CE, the *al-Aqsa* Mosque, from roughly the same period also stands in the Temple courtyard. The mount bears significance in Islam as it acted as a sanctuary for many Hebrew prophets. Islamic tradition says that a Temple was first built on the Temple Mount by Jacob and later renovated by Solomon, son of David.

The Temple Mount, along with the entire Old City of Jerusalem, was captured by Israelite forces in 1967 during the Six-Day War. Israel officially unified East Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount,

with the rest of Jerusalem in 1980 under the Jerusalem Law, though United Nations Security Council Resolution 478 declared the Jerusalem Law to be in violation of international law.

3.2.4.2 Priesthood

The priesthood is an essential part of the Jewish religion. It is a unique office found in Jewish monotheistic religions and other religions of the world such as Judaism, Islam, Christianity, African Traditional Religion, among others. Priesthood is an institution of consecrated people, especially chosen or set apart by God for a special mission. This mission is broadly divided into mediator and mediums roles. The Christian priesthood, which is our main concern in this unit, is the unique and eternal priesthood of Christ. It is the priesthood of the New Covenant and Christ is the High priest. This is the priesthood in which all Christians share by their incorporation into Christ in Baptism. This participation is actuated in the whole of the Church's worship centered upon offering the Eucharist to which every Christian is called. And because Christ is the chief priest, the people of God are priestly people. The priests as clerics or presbyters share in the ministerial priesthood of Christ (Sacerdos). They participate in the sacrament of holy orders in different degrees and together create a sacrament of unity as men ordained into the church's ministerial priesthood. Through the sacrament of holy orders, the priests are given a new function in the community of sacerdotium. Vatican II explains these functions of presbyters thus:

Priests perform these roles as those who participate in one priesthood of Jesus Christ and as mediators between God and creation, with the institutionalized church behind them and the people before them, accountable to both. They are ordained ministers called to be leaders in daily search for holiness and daily witness of fidelity. Although the ministerial (Sacerdos) priesthood compliments the common priesthood of the faithful which every baptized person shares in it, there is distinction between the two in terms of function and status. Every baptized Christian shares in the priesthood of all believers, while in sacerdos or priesthood of the ordained only few people are chosen by God (Heb.7). When Christ called and chose his disciples, he did not formally ordain them. However, the institution of Christ's priesthood took place a night before his death.-Holy Thursday, at the last Supper. It was during the celebration of the Passover, Jesus gave a radical and different meaning to the Passover, and thereby the Old Jewish priesthood was brought to fulfillment. This last Supper was a symbolic sacrifice of that which took place the following day at the calvary where "He offered up himself as the sacrificial victim on behalf of the entire human race." Jesus showed himself here in his role as mediator of the New Testament and also in his high office of priest, offering his sacrifice, the sacrifice of his Body and Blood in which was sealed the new and eternal covenant with the new people of God. Thus Christ at the last Supper instituted a new sacrifice. Along with this he also instituted the priesthood of the New Law.

The Council of Trent, in its decree on the Holy Sacrifice of the mass, taught that Christ ordained the Apostles priest at the Last Supper; adding "By the words 'Do this in commemoration of me' e.t.c, as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught, He commanded them and their successor in the priesthood to offer His sacrifice. With these words, our Lord clothed the Apostles with the fullness of priestly consecratory and sacrificial power. So, when Jesus bids the Twelve to remember his spiritual sacrifice and his gestures of giving himself to the world in the bread and wine, he is certainly giving them a priestly task. They are to see that celebration of his mediating sacrifice of thanks and praise and his forgiveness of sinners are organized. Thus by ordaining His Apostles priests, and giving them power to ordain others in their turn, Christ established in His Church a permanent and perpetual Order of Christian Priesthood. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine (cup) you proclaim the

Lord's death until he comes again. This is just what the priest does in the mass. The events of the Last Supper was completed after the Resurrection of Christ during a mysterious scene when He gave the apostles power to forgive sins, and delegated them pastors or rules over His Church.

The scene related by John, therefore, has clear priestly implications and the Fathers of the church often understand it as a real ordination. Particular emphasis must be laid on the meaning of Jesus' action in breathing upon his apostles and saying to them "Receive the Holy Spirit." For the Christian priesthood has always been considered an anointing by the Holy Spirit, a sharing in the anointing received in his humanity by him whom, according to the meaning of the Hebrew Messiah and the Greek Christos, is the anointed of God in the highest sense of the word. This anointing by the Holy Spirit affected invisibly in Jesus when "the power of the most high" overshadowed Mary and visibly after his baptism by John the Baptist, is continued in the apostle. This gift of the Spirit to the apostle did not transform them principally for their own sake, for their personal holiness, but rather for the sake of others that they might remit or retain sins and do what Christ did at the Last Supper in memory of him, that is, reproduce among men his sacrifice and remit sins by virtue of this same sacrifice. It is a grace which is more for the benefit of others than for the recipient himself. This is why Teilhard de Chardin affirms that the priestly vocation means a total commitment to the salvation of the entire world: "Every Priest", because he is a priest, has dedicated his life to the work of universal salvation. If he is conscious of the dignity of his office, he should no longer live for himself but for the world, following the example of him whom he is appointed to represent."

The apostles therefore, were already a priest before Christ's Ascension. But in order to accomplish the whole of their mission in the world they were to receive a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a new strength to make them fit to be Christ's witnesses 'in Jerusalem and throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' It is therefore certain that the apostles received at Pentecost in additional grace qualifying them more immediately and more definitively for their mission which was to be continued by the priests. Christ's unique priesthood has threefold function. He is at once teacher, high priest and shepherd. These three functions of Christ unique mediation are continued in the Church. Hence the Church's threefold function are teaching or preaching, sanctifying and leading. These three functions are shared by the entire people of God: the laity exercises them in their own way through the grace of baptism and confirmation. The same three offices are linked to the ministerial priesthood and exercised in various degrees by bishops, presbyter and deacons.

These offices cannot be reduced to the cultic function exercised mostly in the offering of the Holy Mass; its prophetic and pastoral aspects are derived from the sacramental ordination presbyter shared in their own degree in the three functions attached to the ministry as helpers of the bishops. Their first duty is to preach the gospel to all man and to be the educator of the faith. Their prophetic function is oriented to their sanctifying role which finds their climaxes in the Eucharistic celebration, the centre of life of Christian community entrusted to them and thus build up the body of Christ which is the church.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. List the five books of Torah or Pentateuch and discuss them.
2. What are the three fold functions of Jewish Priest?
3. Give three importance of the Jewish temple.

4.0 SUMMARY

In our study of this unit, we discovered that the collection of books the first five books of the Old Testament known to Christians as the Pentateuch were written in Hebrew and were attributed to Moses. The books were written before the coming of Christ. They are sacred to the Jews and accepted by the church as indispensable and divinely inspired. The Jews originally recognized these books as the Torah (instructions or Law of Moses). These are the most important books of the Jews as they enjoy the prestige of being the expression of God's will in their regard. The books tell the stories of creation of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants of the Exodus from Egypt, of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and how God brought the people of Israel into the Promised Land. The Torah, law or Pentateuch is made up of the following books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

We also pointed out during the course of discussion that, the temple played significant role in the religious worship of the Jewish people. It was called by a variety of names such as "House of the Holy", "The sanctified House", "House of God", "Your House", and "Temple". Biblically, the Temple (Beyth Hanigdash), refers to "one of a series structures located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem. Historically two temples of the Jews stood at this location and functioned as the centre of Ancient Jewish worship. According to the Jewish classical belief, the temple acted as the figurative "foot stool" of God's presence and a third temple will be built in future. As regards the layout of the temple, there are basically three theories as to where the temple stood. First, the temple was located where the Dome of the Rock is now situated. Second, the temple was located a little to the north of the Dome of the Rock. And third, the temple was located little to the east of the Dome of the Rock. Other theories have the temple either located to the north to the south of the temple mount. Many scholars generally reject theories that claim the temple was located some place other than Jerusalem or even outside the land of Israel.

The Hebrew Bible reports that the first temple was built in 957 BCE by King Solomon (reigned C.970C-130 BCE). As the sole place sacrifice, the temples replace the portable sanctuary constructed in the Sinai Desert under the auspices of Moses, as well as local sanctuaries, and altars in the hills. The first temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 when they sacked the city. Construction of the Second Temple began in 538 BCE and it was dedicated 23 years later, in 515. According to the Book of |Ezra, rebuilding of the temple was authorized by Cyrus the Great and ratified desecration by Darius.

The Second temple suffered desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167BCE but was rededicated under Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BCE. The building was renovated by Herod the Great, and became known as Herod's Temple. The temple played important role in the Jewish religious life. It was the place where offerings were carried out, including daily morning and afternoon offerings and special offerings on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

We also saw in this unit that the idea of priesthood is common to all monotheistic religions of the Jewish people-Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Priesthood refers to the institution of consecrated or ordained ministers, especially chosen by God for special mission. As presbyters who share in ministerial priesthood of Christ (Sacredos), they participate in the sacrament of holy orders, in different degree and together create a sacrament of unity as people ordained into the church's ministerial priesthood. Through the sacrament of holy orders, the clerics are given a new function in the community of sacerdotium to perform the threefold functions of teaching or preaching, sanctifying and leading the people of God entrusted under their care. The priests share in the hierarchical orders of Episcopal

consecration, presbyter and Deaconate which confers or bestows upon them the powers known as “*Runus sanctificandi;*” “*Runus Decench;*” and “*Munus governandi;*” These are respectively, the jurisdiction, the power, office or charism of sanctifying, of teaching and of governing. These functions by their very nature can be exercised only and if only in hierarchical communion with the Head and members of the Episcopal College.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have seen that the Jewish religious institutions are veritable ingredients in shaping the socio-cultural and religio-political life of the people of Israel. For the Jews, law consists of immutable core (the Torah), surrounded by layers of interpretive applications, each of which becomes bonded to the original over time, expanding the whole Corpus. Thus, Jewish culture has come to look upon the Torah as instruments or law that they are bound to but not bounded by them. The Temple provides the immediately personal and interpersonal ritual-cum social functions demanded by the Jewish community prayer series such as the Shema, and the priestly blessings were performed in the temple as basis of traditional Jewish worship. In other religions such as Islam, and Christianity, the temple is served because of its prior holiness as its standing as home to the biblical prophets and kings David and Solomon, all of whom are served figures also in Islam. Jerusalem plays the same role for the Jews that Mecca has for Muslims. According to the New Testament, it was to the Temple Court that Jesus was brought as a child, to be presented at the Temple (Lk 2:22) and to attend festivals (Lk 2:41). The events of Pentecost, which are recorded in the Book of Acts, also took place at this location. Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers, chancing various commercial traders of doves necessary for the sacrificial rituals away from the sacred precincts (Mk 11:15; Mk 11).

He also predicts the destruction of the Second Temple (Mt. 24:2) and allegorically compares his body to a temple that will be torn down and raised up again in three days. This idea, of the temple as the body of Christ became a rich and multi-layered theme in patristic and medieval Christian thought (where temple/body can be the heavenly body of Christ, the ecclesial body of the church, and the Eucharistic body of on the altar. The priesthood in Jewish monotheistic religion has its origin from the ministerial priesthood of Christ (Sacerdos)-the sole priest. Its fulfillment and foundation is in Christ. He Himself, the eternal son of God, is the one who called the priesthood into existence. He alone is the founder of the New Testament priesthood. He has given it meaning and purpose, and placed it in the center of the supernatural organization established by Him for the salvation of mankind.

The uniqueness of this priesthood lies in the fact that Christ has come to fulfill the old priesthood. His priesthood surpasses every other priesthood reveals its character on the cross and it is the same priesthood which is shared by the new people of God and in a special manner by the ministerial priests. But not all are expected to do this in the same way or by the exercise of the same prerogatives. This same sacrifice of Christ is continued sacramentally by the church. It affects redemption, salvation, forgiveness, purification, sanctification and perfection. In this way the spiritual fatherhood of the children of mother Church is perpetuated. Therefore in regard to the institution of the Christian priesthood in Catholic theology we may rightly say with Lippert:

At any rate they have not developed as a natural product of the social evolution of mankind, if that were the case, they would have passed away as did the priesthood of the nature religions. Christian priests are the creation of a single man, of an omnipotent man who in His infinite power has towered above all the laws of nature; they are an institution created and established by Jesus Christ. However, the Catholic

priesthood is far from being just a later development of the priesthood of Aaron. Like Christ Himself, it entered the stream of evolution as something altogether new and positive, as something that made its appearance in the world of men from the world of God, and was never henceforth to disappear from this earth. Such, in truth, is the characteristic and unique feature in the phenomenon of the Catholic priesthood. It was not fashioned by the hand of man, but by the hand of God. And in it the works of redemption find a mystical and living continuation and operation that would endure until the end of time. It took over the direct mediation of salvation in the name and person of Christ. The priesthood then may appropriately be designated as the pulsating heart of the mystical body of Christ-the divine High Priest. In its divine and supernatural origin lie the sublimating and the inexhaustible power of this state. It is indeed in the world and for the world, but not of the world.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is Torah? Names the five books of Torah or Pentateuch.
2. What are the three theories of the location of the Jewish Temple?
3. List and discuss in detail the roles of the Jewish temple in religious life of Israelites.
4. Define priesthood and explain the threefold functions of the Jewish priest.

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Unit 2 The Jewish Feasts

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the first three units of module 3, you learnt the history of the religions of Israel. In the present unit, you will be exposed to the Jewish feasts and their significance in the religious and social life of the Israelites. Feasts provide social direction for the community which invariably touches the life of the whole Jewish people. Some of these feasts are communal ones, and are celebrated by the whole Jewish nation. Other feasts such as Passover, unleavened bread and Pentecost are celebrated to mark the presence of God with the chosen people of Israel, while the feasts of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, Tabernacles and Hanukkah are the four feasts fulfilled in Christ.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the major feasts of the Jewish people.
- Explain the four Jewish feasts fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Major Jewish Feasts

There are seven major feasts of Jewish people. These include: the feast of Passover, the feast of unleavened Bread, the feast of Pentecost, the feast of Tabernacle, the feast of Trumpets and the feast of Hanukkah, the last four feasts are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. They are: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Atonement, the feast of Tabernacle and the feast of Hanukkah.

3.1.1 The Feast Passover

Passover was the first feast celebrated by the Jewish people after their exodus from the land of Egypt. The origin of the word Passover is uncertain, but it is related in popular etymology to the passing over of God when he struck down the Egyptians and spared the Hebrews. Sometimes, the paschal refers to the lamb immolated for the feast (Ex 7:21; I Cor. 5:7). "Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed", and sometimes, the feast as a whole, with its recalling of the various elements of the exodus: the eating of the paschal, the passing over of God and the crossing of the Red Sea. Exodus 7, which belongs mainly to the priestly tradition, describes the celebration of the Passover with all the ritual details and prescriptions.

By God's command, the Israelites were to kill and eat the paschal lamb: On the tenth day of this month, they shall take every man a lamb for a household...your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a year old; you shall take it from the sheep or from the goats; and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs in the evening. Then, they shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat them. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted: with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it...In this manner, you shall eat in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt (Ex 7:3-13).

3.1.2 The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The feast of unleavened Bread was celebrated a day after Passover supper and it lasted for seven days. During this period of celebration, the Israelites ate bread without leaven (Lev. 23:6-11). The Israelites left Egypt in a hurry and had no time for leaven in bread. The unleavened bread symbolized the purging out of the sins of Egyptians (I Cor. 5:7-8), the beginning of the Exodus of the Jewish people out of Egypt and crucifixion of Jesus. The Hebrew people were to eat unleavened Bread and to eat the paschal lamb standing and dressed for their journey to indicate the atmosphere and haste of the departure. There are three main acts in the Passover celebration: (a) The slaying and eating of the Passover lamb (b) The sprinkling of the doorposts and lintels with the blood of the lamb (c) The eating of unleavened bread and bitter herbs with loins girded, shoes on the feet and staves in hand, as men ready for a journey. Emphasis on the sprinkling with the blood" and not upon the meal, gives us the reason for thinking that the act of "sprinkling" may have been the most ancient part of the celebration. It was done originally for the purpose of warding off evil spirits. It was now given a new significance and meal an act combative of the night in Egypt when the angel of death destroyed the first-born of Egypt and passed by the Israelites. The "eating of the lambs and kids" was a night festival which was celebrated at full moon and the meal had to be completed before the morning. That again was an ancient festival given a new significance. It came to be celebrated as a remainder of the slaying of Egypt's first-born and at the same time of the custom which grew up in Israel of redeeming the first-born of human beings since God did not demand then in sacrifice (Ex 13:11-13).

The "feast of unleavened bread" implies that this bread was eaten by the Israelites on their journey and not during Passover festival. It is a spring-time festival of agricultural people-therefore, a festival which the Israelites kept in Palestine where they were shepherds. It later came to be associated with the deliverance from Egypt when the people, leaving in haste, had to eat unleavened bread, with fitting symbolism; the feast was celebrated with loins girded, shoes on feet, and staves in hand. This feast was manifest act of God's care for his people and the power in delivering them from Egypt. At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt...And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where one was not dead. And he summoned Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Pise up, go forth from among my people...and go, serve the Lord (Ex 12:29-31). The description of this disaster, like those that have gone before, is a way of expressing the reality of God' omnipotent intervention to help his people God has set Israel free.

3.1.3 Pentecost

This feast of Pentecost took place fifty days after the feast of first fruits. Pentecost, which means fifty, was the feast all Jewish males were required to celebrate at the temple in Jerusalem. It celebrates the

giving of the Torah. Jewish born tradition teaches that King David was born and died on this day, and that Enoch was taken up to heaven on this day (Gen. 5:24).

3.2 The Feasts Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

There are four feasts fulfilled in Jesus Christ, namely: The feast of Trumpets, the feast of Atonement, the feast of Tabernacle and the feast of Hanukkah. These four feasts as discussed above are connected with Jesus Christ, our paschal lamb that was slain.

3.2.1 The Feast of Trumpets

This feast occurs on Tishri I in the fall (September to October). On this day the high priest blows the ram's horn (the shofar rp/v) announcing the beginning of the New Year. A Jewish tradition gives this day a fourfold meaning:

1. New year day
2. The day of remembrance
3. The day of Judgment
4. The day of blowing Shofar.

On this day Isaiah 60-61 is read in the synagogues to teach the lesson that eventually the Lord will be revealed as King and be accepted as the ruler of the world.

3.2.2 The Feast of Atonement

This occurs every fifty years in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25). On this day, Aaron, the high priest made atonement for Israel. On October, 1973 Israel was saved from annihilation when the Arabs overran their defenses in the Yom Kippur war. The Day of Atonement is also the possible date when Israel will mourn as they see their messiah whom they have pierced.

3.2.3 The Feast of Tabernacles

This feast was instituted by God at the end of the fruit harvest (September to October). During these seven days feast, the Jewish men were required to attend feast in Jerusalem and to live in booths in the wilderness for forty years (Lev. 23:33-34). On each day, they were to sacrifice fourteen lambs without blemish (Num. 29:15, 32). On the day of the feast of tabernacles Solomon's temple was dedicated (2 Chron 5:2-3; IKgs 8:1-2). Jesus Christ was also born on this feast Tishri 15 (Jn 1:4), crucified on the feast of unleavened Bread Nisan 15, and sent the Holy Spirit on the feast of Pentecost Sivan 6. Jesus was conceived on December 25 and His Millennium Rule begins on this day Tishri 15 (Zech. 14). During this reign of Jesus, all the nation of the earth will be required to come to Jerusalem and worship Him and celebrate the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-21). Those that do not will be punished by Jesus stopping the ruin over them. This will be celebrated by all men because this will be the day of Jesus return to deliver all men from a terrible holocaust brought over them.

On this day Zechariah 14:1-21 is read in all synagogues because it promises Israel's final messianic deliverance from the persecution and the beginning of the prophesied kingdom.

3.2.4 The Feast of Hannukkah

It is not one of the appointed feasts, but celebrated because it commemorates the cleansing and rededication of the second Temple in 165 BC. On the day before Hannukah Israel has witnessed four events:

1. In 520 BC, the foundation of the second Temple was laid.
2. In 165 BC the Temple was recaptured and cleansed
3. In 168 BC Antiochus stopped the Temple sacrifice.
4. In AD 1917 Jerusalem was freed from Turkish rule.
5. Possible date for the miraculous defeat of Russian invasion: Gog and Magog

3.1.5 The Feast of First Fruits

This is the third of the seven feasts of Israel which bring the first fruits of the harvest into God's house to acknowledge Him as their source (Ex. 23:19). Four historical events happened on this day:

1. Noah's Ark rested on Mount Ararat (Gen. 8:4), first fruits of a new beginning.
2. Israel miraculously crosses over the Red Sea (Ex 14:13-14), First fruits of a new nation reborn from the bondage of Egypt.
3. Israel eats the first fruits of the Promised Land (Josh 5:10-12). Nisan 16 last day God reined Manna. On Nisan 17 Israel ate the first fruits of the Promised Land. This is celebrated by Israel to this day.
4. Jesus Christ rose from the dead (1 Cor 15:20). Jesus was crucified on Nisan 15 and on Nisan 17 rose from the dead-resurrections.

3.1.6 The Feast of Mourning

There were four fasts of mourning Israel practices established to commemorate tragedies in connection with the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem when the Babylonian army conquered Israel in successive invasions from 606 BC to 587 BC. The fast of mourning on Tammuz 17 is a three week period of mourning leading to the fast of Tisha Be-av on Av 9 (July). Four spiritually significant events happened on Tammuz 17.

1. Moses broke the tablets of the Law when he sees Israel's idolatry.
2. Babylon breaks through the walls of Jerusalem and stops.
3. The final fall of the Jewish resistance at Massada in Nisan 15. 72 AD

3.1.7 The New Year

This is the feast of cleansing and the beginning of the New Year celebrated in our mid march. On this day:

- The tabernacle was dedicated during the Exodus second year after (Ex. 40:2, 33-34).
- The Temple was cleansed by Hezekiah (2 Chron 28:23).
- Ezra and the exile began their return to Jerusalem from Babylonian (Nisan 1, 457 BC, Ezra 7:9)..
- The decree is given to Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem by the Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus in Nisan 1, 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8).
- The Miillennial Temple will be cleansed on Nisan 1 (Ezekiel. 45:18)

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Name the major feasts of Jewish people and explain them.
2. List the Jewish feasts fulfilled by Jesus.
3. How was the feast of unleavened Bread celebrated by the Jewish people?
4. Why is a feast of Pentecost described as the feast of fifty days?
5. Give reasons why the feast of Hannukah is very important to the Jewish people?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have seen that feasts are veritable channels of cultural integration and moral building in the Jewish society. They help in refashioning the social and religious life of the people of Israelites.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the different types of feasts of the Jewish people and the once fulfilled by Christ as the basis of mourning the moral, religious and social life of the Jewish people. These feasts play various roles in the society to enhance the growth and development of Jewish culture, customs and traditions.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe how the feast of Passover was celebrated by the Jewish people
2. Why was the Day of first fruits very important to the Jewish people?
3. Why was the feast of Trumpets celebrated by the Jewish?

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Unit 3 Significance of Jewish Feasts

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learned about the feasts of Jewish people. You were presented with the feasts of Jewish people. In this last unit of module 3, you will examine the significance of feasts in the religious and social life of the Israelites.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the significance of the major feasts of the Jewish people.
- Differentiate between the major Jewish feasts and the feasts fulfilled by Jesus Christ.
- Identify the role played by Jewish feasts in the religious and social life of the people of Israelites.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1.1 The Feast of New Year.

It was celebrated on mid march and is for cleansing and the beginning of New Year. It is also meant to commemorate the dedication of the Tabernacle during the Exodus from Egypt, two years after (Ex. 40:2,

33-34), the cleansing of the Temple by Hezekiah (2 Chron 29:23), the beginning of Ezra and exiles as well as the attacks of the Temple Mount by Rome, forcing the priests to stop the daily sacrifices.

3.1.2 Passover Sanctification

It was celebrated to mark the followings:

- 1.1.1 The sanctification of the Passover Lamb during the Exodus (Ex. 12:3-6).
- 1.1.2 The Crossing of Jordan River and the entering of Israelites into the promised land, forty years later (Jos. 4:9).
- 1.1.3 The death of Jesus Christ on this day, Palm Sunday, by the priests and political system as well as crucifixion on Nisan 14 (Dan 9:26).
- 1.1.4 The Giving of vision of the millennial Temple to prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 40:1-2).

3.1.3 The Passover Supper

The Feast of Passover supper was to remember:

1. God's covenant with Abraham concerning the Promised Land on Nisan 14. And 430 years after this promise, Israelites left Egypt for the Promised Land.
2. The eaten of the Passover Supper in preparation for the Exodus (Ex. 12:14).
3. To renew the covenant-the first Passover (Gen. 17:10-11; Jos 5:3, 5:11-12).
4. The finding of the Book of the Law and its reaffirming under King Josiah (2 Chron 34:2-14). The first King he did as a result was to celebrate the Passover Feast on Nisan 14 in obedience to God.
5. The dedication of the Second Temple in Nisan 14, 515 BC and celebration of Passover (Ez. 6:16-19).
6. Jesus celebration of the last supper with His disciples and offers a new covenant (Lk 22:19-20).

3.1.4 The Feast of Trumpets

The Feast was meant to announce the beginning of the New Year. It was also New Year day, the day of remembrance, the day of Judgment and the day of blowing the Shofar. On the feast of trumpets, Isaiah 60-61 was read in the synagogues to teach the lesson that the Lord will be revealed as King and be accepted as the ruler of the world as stated earlier in this unit.

3.1.5 The Day of Atonement

It is the day to mark three important events in Jewish history, namely:

1. The making of the atonement for Israel by Aaron, the High Priest.

2. The saving of Israelites from annihilation when the Arabs overran their defenses in the Yom Kippur war on October, 1973.
3. The possible date when Israel will mourn as they see their messiah whom they have pierced.

3.1.6 The Feast of Unleavened Bread

1. This feast occurs the day after Passover Supper and lasts for seven days to commemorate the beginning of Israelites Exodus from the bondage in Egypt.
2. The crucifixion of Jesus-our Passover Lamb
3. The final fall of the Jewish resistance of Massala in Nisan 15, 72 AD.

3.1.7 The Feast of Tabernacle

The Tabernacles feast was instituted by God at the end of the fruit harvest (September to October) to remember:

1. The dedication of Solomon's Temple (2 Chron 5:2-3; IKgs 8:1-2).
2. The birth of Jesus Christ, His crucifixion, and the sending of Holy Spirit on the feast of Pentecost Sivan 6, Jesus was conceived on the date of December 25.
3. Jesus millennium rule also began on this day Tishri 15 (Zah 14).

3.1.8 The Feast of Mourning

It is three week period of mourning leading to the fast of Tisha Be-av on Av 9 (July). The fast of mourning commemorates:

1. The breaking of the tablets of the law by Moses when he sees Israel's idolatry.
2. Babylon breaks through the walls of Jerusalem and stops the daily sacrifices.

3.1.9 The Day of First Fruits

This is the day Israelites brings the first fruits of the harvest into God's house to acknowledge Him as their source (Ex. 23:19) to mark the followings:

1. The resting of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat (Gen. 8:4), First fruits of a new beginning.
2. Israelites miraculous crossing over of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:13-14). First fruits of a new nation reborn from the bondage of Egypt.
3. The eaten of the first fruits of the promised lay by the Israelites (Josh 5:10-12) Nisan 16, the last God reined Manna. On Nisan 17 Israel ate the first fruits of the Promised Land. This is celebrated by Israel to this day.

4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Cor 15:20). Jesus was crucified on Nisan 15 and on Nisan 17 rose from the dead-first fruit of all other.

3.1.10 The Feast of Hannukkah

Hannukkah was not one of the appointed feasts, but it was celebrated to commemorate the cleansing and rededication of the second Temple in 165 BC.

3.1.11 The Fast of Tisha Be-Av

The fast of Tisha Be-Av was the day of mourning and remembrance of Israelites loss of their first Temple. Eight disasters in the history of Israelites have occurred on this day:

1. The twelve spies returned with their report of the Promised Land, ten are negative. Israel loses faith and is condemned to die in the wilderness (Num. 14).
2. The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC (Jer. 52:5-14).
3. The Second Temple was destroyed by the soldiers of Rome in AD 70 (Dan. 19-26).
4. Jerusalem in AD 71 was plowed by the Roman Army and sated (Micah 3:12).
5. Simeon Bar Cochba's army is destroyed by Rome in AD. 135.
6. On July 18, 1290 England expelled all of the Jews from their country.
7. On August 12, 1492 Spain expelled all Jews and Christopher Columbus, part of Jews
8. Headed for America.
9. Russia in ww1 launched persecutions against the Jews.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

1. Mention two significance of the feast of New Year.
2. Discuss three significance of Passover sanctification.
3. Why the feast of unleavened Bread was celebrated a day after Passover?
4. Give three significance of the feast of Hannukkah.
5. Mention four significance of the feast of Pentecost.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit it clearly seen that the various feasts in Israel have vital roles to play in the development of the nation and reshaping of culture, norms and traditions.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the major Jewish feasts and their significance as the basis for studying the history and people of Israel. Seven Jewish feasts such as: the feast of Passover the feast of Tabernacles, the feast of Pentecost, the feast of Tisha Be-Av, the feast of Jewish New Year, the feast unleavened Bread, the feast of the Day of Atonement, the feast of Trumpets, the feast of first fruits, the feast of Hannukkah and the feast of mourning, were discussed extensively for better understanding of the history and people of the Israelites. Even the four feasts fulfilled in Christ Jesus, their roles are of vital importance to the Jewish society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Give four significance of the Passover Supper.
2. Explain the importance of the feast of Trumpets in the religious and social life of the Jews.
3. Narrate how the Day of first fruits was celebrated by the Jewish.
4. What is fast of mourning? List three of its significance.

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