



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

FACULTY OF ARTS

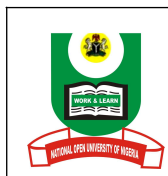
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSE CODE: CRS111

COURSE TITLE: OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

**COURSE
GUIDE****CRS111
OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY**

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Contents	Page
Introduction	1
Course Aims	1
Course Objectives	2
Working Through This Course	2
Course Materials.....	3
Study Units	3 - 4
References/Further Readings.....	4
Assignment File	4
Presentation Schedule	4
Assessment	4- 5
Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA).....	5
Final Examination and Grading.....	5
Course Marking Scheme	5
Course Overview.....	6
How to Get the Best from This Course	7-8
Tutors and Tutorials	8-9
Summary.....	9-10

Introduction

CRS111: Old Testament Survey is a one-semester 2 - credit unit course. It will be available toward the award of a diploma in Christian Theology.

This course consists of 14 units, and it introduces you to major historical epochs from the creation to the formation of the Israelite nation to the exile and the return from the exile. It ends with the return of the Israelites from exile, and the rebuilding of the temple.

There is no compulsory prerequisite for this course. The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through the materials. It also emphasizes the need for Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs). Detailed information on TMAs is found in a separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to this course.

Course Aims

The overall aim of this course is to lead you to have an overview of the history of the Jews as it is written in the Hebrew Scriptures. You will learn about the patriarchs as well as the development of prophecy in Israel. You will also learn about the development of monarchy in Israel's history to the point when they went on exile, and their return from exile. The course gives you an understanding of the history of the Jews as it forms a major foundation to Christianity. These aims will be achieved by:

Introducing you to the history of the Old Testament

Exposing you to the history of the creation and the patriarchs Giving

you a view of the period of the judges in Israel's history Leading

you to read about the development of prophets and prophecy

Exposing you to the monarchical period in the history of Israel.

Giving you an understanding of the events that led to the exile

Giving you an overview of events leading to the return from exile and the return from exile.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims set out above, there are set overall objectives. In addition to these, each unit has its specific objectives. The unit objectives would be included in the beginning of each 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 the completion of the unit. In this way you can be sure that you have done what is required of you in the unit.

Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you will have achieved the aims of the course as a whole. On the successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Discuss the history of creation;
- Discuss the history of the patriarchs of Israel;
- Examine the events surrounding the period of the judges;
- Discuss factors that led to the demand for a king;
- Discuss development of prophets and prophecy;
- Compare and contrast the reigns of Saul and David;
- Evaluate the ministry of the writing prophets;
- Appreciate the effects of the exile of the Jews; and
- Identify the factors that led to the return from the exile.

Working through this Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, and the other materials provided by the National Open University (NOUN). Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at points during the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course there is a final examination. Below you will find listed all the components of the course and what you have to do.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments File
5. Presentation Schedule

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

Study Units

There are three modules and fourteen study units in this course. They are listed as follows:

Module 1

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | From Creation to the Judges |
| Unit 2 | Origins & Beginnings of Mankind and Israel's History |
| Unit 3 | The Worship of YHWH, Cultic Matters, The Wilderness Experience and the Kadesh-Barnea Delay |
| Unit 4 | The Promised Land |
| Unit 5 | The Period of the Judges |

Module 2

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Unit 1 | Introduction to the United Kingdom |
| Unit 2 | The Court History of David |
| Unit 3 | The Career of Solomon and the Divided Monarchy |
| Unit 4 | The Prophets and their Impact on the Religious Life in Israel |
| Unit 5 | The Period of Religious Reforms: Hezekiah and Josiah |

Module 3

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Unit 1 | The Fall of Jerusalem and the Exile |
| Unit 2 | Daniel and the Jews under Persian Rule |
| Unit 3 | The Return: Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah |
| Unit 4 | The Rebuilding of the Temple: The Role of Haggai and Malachi and its Impact on the Religious Life of the Israelites |

Each study unit contains a number of self-tests. In general, these self-tests question you on the material you have just covered or require you to apply the material in some ways, and thereby, help you to gauge your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with your tutor marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

References/Further Readings

Geisler, N. L. (1977) *Old Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Hill, A. E. & J. H. Walton, (2000). *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

House P. R. (1992). *Old Testament Survey*. Nashville: Broadman.

LaSor, W. S. (1996). *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

www.bible.org

www.religion-online.org

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 material gives you the important dates for the completion of your tutor marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against lagging behind in your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of this course. First are the tutor marked assignments; 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 formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. 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 two-hour examination. This will count for 70% of your total course mark.

Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)

There are fourteen tutor marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best three (that is, the three with the highest grades of the fifteen assignments) will be counted. The total mark of the best three will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignments 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 may wish to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor marked assignments 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 provided by your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course mark is broken down:

Assessment	Marks
Assignments 1 - 15	Three assignments, best three marks of the assignments counts for 30% of course marks.
Final examination	The final examination counts for 70% of overall marks.
Total	100% of course marks

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

Course Overview

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

Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)
	Course Guide	1	
1	From Creation to the Judges	1	Assignment 1
2	Origins & Beginnings of Mankind and Israel's History	2	Assignment 2
3	The worship of YHWH, Cultic Matters, the Wilderness Experience and Kadesh-Barnea Experience	3	Assignment 3
4	The Promised Land	4	Assignment 4
5	The Period of the Judges	5	Assignment 5
6	Introduction to the United Monarchy	6	Assignment 6
7	The Court History of David	7	Assignment 7
8	The Career of Solomon and the Divided Monarchy	8	Assignment 8
9	The Prophets and their Impact on the Religious Life in Israel	9	Assignment 9
10	The Period of Religious Reforms: Hezekiah & Josiah	10	Assignment 10
11	The Fall of Jerusalem & the Exile	11	Assignment 11
12	Daniel and the Jews under Persian Rule	12	Assignment 12
13	The Return: Zerubbabel, Ezra & Nehemiah	13	Assignment 13
14	The Rebuilding of the Temple: the Role of Haggai and Malachi and its impact on the Religious Life of the Israelites.	14	Assignment 14
15	Revision	15	
16	Revision	16	
17	Examination	17	
	Total	17 weeks	

Table 2: Course Overview

How to get the best from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of the distance learning system. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of the study units 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, your study units provide exercises 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 the course as a whole. Following this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable 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 assist you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read 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 choose to use, you should decide on it 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 lag behind in their course work.
4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study material. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' 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 material 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 assignments form and also those written on the assignment. 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 8 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 to 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 the circumstances in which you will 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, and

You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comment 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

CRS111 intends to introduce you to the background history and formation of the nation of Israel as well as the development until the exile and the return from exile. On the completion of this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

1. How many judges ministered in Israel?
2. What are the factors that led to the development of prophets?
3. What are the problems that Saul had to contend with as the first king?
4. Discuss the life and character of David as Israel's ideal king.
5. What are the factors that led to Solomon's fall?
6. What is the source of Solomon's wealth?
7. Discuss the stages of the destruction of Jerusalem
8. What role did Zerubbabel play in the return from exile?
9. Compare and contrast the religious reformations of Hezekiah and Josiah.
10. What are the roles of Haggai and Malachi in the rebuilding of the temple?

The questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. The Old Testament Survey is a course you will find very interesting as it touches on the history of the Jews and Judaism that forms the foundation for the Christian faith.

It is my pleasure to lead and guide you through this course and I hope you will enjoy the course.

<p>MAIN COURSE</p>

Course Code	CRS111
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TABLES OF CONTENT	PAGE
Module One.....	1
Unit 1 Form Creation to the Judges.....	1-14
Unit 2 Origins and Beginning of Mankind and Israel's History.....	15-27
Unit 3 The Worship of Yahweh, Cultic Matters; the Wilderness Experience and the Kadesh- Barnea Delay.....	28-36
Unit 4 The Promised Land.....	37-45
Unit 5 The Period of the Judges.....	46-54
Module Two.....	55
Unit 1 Introduction to the United Monarchy.....	55-64
Unit 2 The Court History of David.....	65-76
Unit 3 The Career of Solomon and the Divided Monarchy.....	77-88
Unit 4 The Prophets and Their Impact on the Religious Life in Israel.....	89-102
Unit 5 Period of Religious Reforms: Hezekiah and Josiah.....	103-111
Module Three.....	112
Unit 1 The Fall of Jerusalem and the Exile.....	112-118
Unit 2 Daniel and the Jews under Persian Rule.....	119-125
Unit 3 The Return: Zerubbabel Ezra and Nehemiah	126-134
Unit 4 The Rebuilding of the Temple: The Role of Haggai and Malachi and its Impact on the Religious Life of the Israelites.....	135-140

MODULE 1

Unit 1	Form Creation to the Judges
Unit 2	Origins and Beginning of Mankind and Israel's History
Unit 3	The Worship of Yahweh, Cultic Matters; the Wilderness Experience and the Kadesh-Barnea Delay
Unit 4	The Promised Land
Unit 5	The Period of the Judges

UNIT 1 FROM CREATION TO THE JUDGES

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	The Biblical World in Old Testament Times
3.1.1	Mesopotamia
3.1.2	Syria-Palestine
3.1.3	Egypt
3.1.4	The Geography of Palestine
3.2	Major Geographical Divisions
3.2.1	Coastal Plain
3.2.2	The Hill Country
3.2.3	The Jordan Valley/Rift
3.2.4	The Transjordan Plateau
3.3	The Nature, Origin and Content of the Hebrew Bible
3.3.1	The Nature of the Bible
3.3.2	The Origin and Early Transmission
3.4	The Content of the Hebrew Bible
3.5	History of Canonization
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This first unit will present to you a brief introduction to the so called “Bible Land” which is frequently referred to as the world in the Old Testament. It will examine its geography. It is also in this unit that the nature, origin and contents of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible will be discussed along with the history of the canonization of the Hebrew Bible. This unit is very important to you because it sets the pace

for other subsequent units of this course. The specific objectives and outline below are what you expect to learn from this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Give a vivid description of the Bible Land;
- Discuss the formation of the canon of the Hebrew Bible;
- Describe the nature of the Bible;
- Discuss the origin of the Bible; and
- Identify the contents of the Hebrew Bible.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Biblical World of the Old Testament Times

The biblical world is certainly not the same as we have it today. It is just a fraction of the world of today. It is called by many names, like the Mediterranean world because it includes the areas surrounding or around the Mediterranean Sea. It does not even include all the known Mediterranean world of today. It is also called the world of the Patriarchs (Palestine & Syria). This is because it was in the environment that the Hebrew Patriarchs lived all through their lives. It is also called the Fertile Crescent because it covers the fertile area covered by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates of Mesopotamia, River Orontes of Syria, River Jordan of Palestine and River Nile of Egypt. It is called a crescent because if you draw a line from the Persian Gulf to Egypt through those river valleys, it will produce a crescent shape.

Most people prefer to call it the biblical world because it covers all of the places mentioned in the Bible (in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament). It includes the areas around the Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the land to the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean, the islands and countries of the Mediterranean Sea, with all of Palestine and Egypt. The central portion of the expanse of land forms the Old Testament world. This consists of three major geographical areas namely: Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine and Egypt.

3.1.1 Mesopotamia

The name Mesopotamia means “The land between and around the two rivers”. The rivers referred to are the River Tigris and Euphrates. Therefore, the world Mesopotamia is neither the name of a country nor a political entity; it is purely a descriptive term for a geographical region. Before the time of the patriarchs, Mesopotamia included the kingdoms

of Sumer and Akkash. During the time of the patriarchs, Mesopotamia includes the kingdom of Elam, Mari, Padan-Haram and Aleppo. After the period of the patriarchs, Mesopotamia included the empires of the Assyrians, Mitanni, Babylonia, Medo-Persia and Persia.

Abraham grew up in the Ur of the Chaldees (Babylonias), on the shore of the Persian Gulf before the gulf receded. Terah, Abraham's father later moved his family to the North-West of Mesopotamia. He stayed in Northern Syria and settled in Haran. The sub-region or geographical land which we called Mesopotamia is today inhabited by four nations, namely: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

3.1.2 Syria-Palestine

The second major geographical area is Syria and Palestine. There are two major rivers in this region. The first one is the Orontes River which takes its source from the Lebanon Mountains and empties its waters into the Mediterranean Sea near Ugarit. It is the main river in Syria. The second and the bigger of the two rivers is the River Jordan which is located in Palestine. It flows directly from the North to the South and empties its waters into the Dead Sea. It takes its source from both Mount Hermon and the Lebanon Mountain.

Syria is also called Aram. In ancient times, the most popular kingdom in Syria was the kingdom of Aleppo, a city south of Carchemish and south west of Haran. Another great cultural and political center in Syria was Ugarit. Several clay tablets with inscription on them have been discovered through archaeological excavation in Ugarit. The Ugaritic tablets are religious in nature. They help us to recover knowledge on the Canaanite gods and goddess and their system of worship. Other important cities in ancient Syria include Arvad, Hamath and Alalakh. Midway between Syria and Palestine was Phoenicia. The principal cities were Tyre, Sidon, Berytus and Gebal.

Palestine is south of Phoenicia. It was also called Canaan and later known as the land of Israel. The seaports in biblical times were Acco, Dor, Joppa and Gaza. The great patriarchal centres in Canaan were Hebron, Mamre, Shechem and Beersheba. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in these places at one time or the other during their life time.

3.1.3 Egypt

Egypt was one of the oldest countries within the cradle of civilization. The Egyptian's invention of hieroglyphics date to about 3500 B. C. while the Sumerians invention of cuneiform date to about 4000 – 3500 B.C.

The main river in Egypt is River Nile with its source from Central Africa. It forms a delta at its estuary as it empties its waters into the Mediterranean Sea. Important cities in ancient Egypt included – Mamphis, Heracleopolis, Heropolis, Avaris and Thebes, Akhethaton. The Nile River was the life blood of ancient Egypt. Egyptians depended solely on the annual flooding of the Nile for irrigation. This is the source of the popular adage “No Nile, No Egypt.” Mesopotamia as a region and Egypt as both a region and a country developed the most advanced civilizations in the Fertile Crescent. Syria and Palestine provided a link between the two. For thousands of years, Egypt and Mesopotamia were the greatest world powers.

3.1.4 The Geography of Palestine

It is important to study the geography of Palestine for these reasons:

1. It gives us a better understanding of the peoples of Bible lands.
2. The Hebrew people were the first group to constantly emphasize ethical monotheism for thousands of years. We have 3 monotheistic religions in the world (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and they all arose from this area. So, it is important to study the features of the area.
3. Abraham who was acclaimed to be the father or ancestors of the Hebrews; the one whom the Christians, Muslim and Jews also called father of faith lived there.
4. Jesus Christ, the Anointed one of God and Savior of the whole world was born, raised, lived and died there.
5. The Christian faith traces its beginning to the land of Israel.
6. It is through the Jews or the Israelites and biblical revelation that we understand God’s progressive plan of salvation.
7. An understanding of the culture and total situation of Israel and Bible lands gives credibility to Bible narratives.
8. A study of cultures of Israel and the Bible Land (e.g. Egypt, Greek land, Palestine) creates for us a forum for comparative socio-cultural studies.
9. Geographical studies help us to appreciate the power of influence which Israel has had on the whole world. You cannot understand the

Old Testament fully without an understanding of the historical geography. Such appreciation of historical geographical understanding provides a solid background for understanding and interpreting Scripture.

10. Background studies helps us to understand the poetry which we sing as hymns, songs and choruses, mountains, rivers, valley and names of town and villages features prominently in all our singing.

Having now seen the reasons why you have to study the geography of Palestine, you will now go for a brief survey of the geography of the area. There is another course called “Bible Geography” which will expose you fully to that subject.

Palestine is located west east of the Jordan River. The Promised Land is that portion of Palestine which is West of Jordan River (Hebron to Beer-sheba). Israel as a kingdom and at the height of its power controlled 6,000 square miles of the area whereas the Philistine controlled about 10,000 square miles. The Israelite love to refer to their country with patriotic pride (I King 4:25; Judges 20:1). Therefore, Israel has wrought an influence which is far beyond her proportion in world affairs when you consider her small size.

Climatically, there is mild climate along the sea coast. Joppa has an annual temperature of 67⁰ F. This is made possible by the prevailing winds from the Mediterranean Sea. Jerusalem has an annual temperature of 66⁰ F because it is built on an altitude of 26,000 ft. above sea level. A warm tropical climate pervades the entire region during the summer months and the heat is intensive. In recent times day time temperature could be as high as 100 – 104⁰ F. Most of the rainfall comes in the winter with little rainfall in the summer. In other words, there are two seasons: a wet winter and a dry summer.

The climatic conditions in each locality depend on the altitude and or the pervading winds from the Mediterranean Sea. There is a terribly hot but occasional east wind which blows in late July. It is called the Sirroco. It is excessively dry, hot and violent and is therefore considered a major climatic curse for the region.

3.2 The Major Geographical Divisions

There are four major geographical divisions in the Bible land, and they are as follows:

3.2.1 The Coastal Plain

Unlike Phoenicia, Palestine did not have good natural harbor. Its coastline is almost unbroken and this is why sea-trade was poor in that era. The Coastal Plain itself can be subdivided as follows:

The Plain of Acco (Acre)

The coast is located on the small bay north of Mount Carmel. Though small the coast was very fertile and there was a great forest there in the Old Testament period. The Phoenicians who developed a great civilization in Acco did not make use of the fertile soil because they were mainly sea-faring people. Cedar was the most popular timber in the forest of Acco and this made Israel to trade with it especially during the time of David and Solomon who had Hiram, the king of Tyre as their friend and business partner. This Acco is also the one called Ptolemais in the New Testament period.

The Plain of Sharon: the plain stretched from Mount Carmel to Joppa. It is a well watered sub-region and was marshy in some points. This marshy tendency and the forest there was probably responsible for its sparse population. It was about twelve miles at the widest point.

The Plain of Palestine (Philistia)

This is the area between Joppa and the south. The Philistines who were the greatest threat for the survival of ancient Israel lived in this plain. They were so influential that the whole country adopted their name. The word “Palestine” means “Philistine land”. The plain was well watered and generally level with a few trees in that era. Its rich brown soil encouraged agriculture. Citrus plantations have been very successful there. Important towns in this sub-region included the Philistine Pentapolis – Gaza, Ekron, Gath, Ashdod and Ashelon.

3.2.2 The Hill Country

The hill country is rough and rocky forming a continuous range of hills that runs from the north to the south. It begins in Syria and extends through the land of Palestine until it ends in the desert of Judah. The mountain range is composed of soft, porous and eroded limestone throughout the sub-region. It can also be subdivided as follows:

Galilee

This is the northern portion of the hill country and is on an altitude of 4000ft above sea level. The important towns in this sub-region included Dan, Caesarea Philippi, Merom and Ramah. The southern part which is also known as the lower Galilee is hilly too. At this end are the valley of

Esdraelon and Jezreel. Important towns at lower Galilee include Jezreel and Megiddo while the mountains include Gilboa, Carmel, Moreh and Tabor. The valley of Megiddo offered an easy passage for travelers and troops through the hill country into the Jordan valley.

Samaria

The hills of Samaria form the geographical center of the hill country. The two most prominent mountains here are the Mount Ebal and Gerizim. On these mountains the curses and the blessings of Israel were recited annually. The two mountains therefore were of great religious significance to the Israelites. During the inter-testamental period, the Samaritans built their temple on Mount Gerizim. Important towns and cities in Samaria included Samaria, Shechem (where Dinah was raped) and Sychar.

Judah

The hills in Judah are not as high as those in Samaria. The hill north of Hebron is 3346ft above sea level while the one south of Hebron is 2296ft. the remaining hills of Judah are low in altitude when compared with those of Samaria. To the south of Judah was the wilderness of Judah, a wasteland with little or no moisture-a semi-desert. Population at that time was heavily concentrated mid-way between the east and the west of Judah, which is called the Shephelah, which means foothills or lowland hills.

The foothills form the most important part of Judah in Old Testament times. A lot of grains, especially barley were cultivated on the valley of the foothills. Vineyard and olive plants were grown on the hills. The area was very productive agriculturally. Fortified towns and cities included Lachish, Debar, Azekah, Libnah and Bethshemesh. To the south of the Shephelah was the Negev which lay between Beersheba and Kadesh-Barnea. In this semi-arid land, farmers depend solely on irrigation system and dry farming techniques to grow food crops. The important cities of Judah are: Jerusalem, Jericho, Bethel, Gibeah, Hebron and Beersheba.

3.2.3 The Jordan Valley/Rift

The Jordan valley is part of a great rift which starts in Northern Syria and goes south for several miles through Palestine to the Dead Sea and extending to Africa. The Jordan Valley has four distinct sections:

The area around Lake Hulah

This is an area which is agriculturally excellent. Although the lake does not exist any more today as a body of water because its water was constantly drained for irrigation, the bowl can still be recognized easily. From Dan to Hazor, this section of Palestine has always been useful raising food crops and other agricultural activities. This is the area called Semechonitis in the New Testament times.

The area around the Sea of Galilee

This sea has been called by different names such as Lake of Chinnereth and Tiberias (in the Gospel of John) after Emperor Tiberias of Rome. This area encourages extensive agriculture both in biblical times and now. Most of Jesus' ministry centred around the Sea of Galilee. Throughout the history of Palestine, the Sea of Galilee has been centre of productive fishing. Just as the biblical times, fishing boats and nets can be seen on the sea shore today. The oldest communal farm in Israel is located on the shores of the Sea and it is called Kibbutz Diganya.

The area the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea

In this section of the Jordan valley, the Jordan river gradually changes its nature from a quiet and clear stream to a noisy and muddy river until it empties its water into the Dead Sea. This change is caused by the many tributaries entering into the Jordan. Very little farming was done in this area during the biblical times.

The Dead Sea Valley

The Dead Sea is also called the Sea of Arabah or the Salt Sea. It has the highest concentrate of salt compared to any other body of water. It is 37% saline. As a result of the salty nature of the sea, salt, phosphate, sulphur and other related minerals are mined from and around the Dead Sea. The disadvantage of this high salt concentrate is the fact that no living thing exists inside it and that is why it is also called the Dead Sea. The area around the Dead Sea is not good for agriculture. It is the deepest spot in Palestine. It is 1290ft below sea level. The Sea of Galilee is 696ft below sea level while Lake Hulah is 129ft below sea level.

Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, Admah and Zeboiim were cities situated in the Dead Sea valley. Sometimes between 2000 and 1800 BC, during the time of Abraham, a great catastrophe occurred which destroyed these cities.

3.2.4 The Transjordan Plateau

The plateau is naturally divided into five sections by five main streams: Yarmuk, Jabbok, Arnon and Zered. The following are the subsections:

Bashan

The region of Bashan starts from the southern boundary of Syria near river Pharphar and ends with River Yarmuk. Bashan provided good meadow for grazing. The best cattle in Old Testament times were raised in Bashan.

Gilead

Beginning from River Yarmuk down to River Jabbok and a little south of Jabbok is Gilead. Gilead is the biggest of the five Transjordan regions. The Israelites in Gilead were noted for raising cattle, sheep and goat. They were also popular for natural medicine for the art of healing.

Ammon

The kingdom of Ammon was between River Jabbok and River Arnon. It was a well-watered region. Mount Nebo which is 3750ft above sea level is within this region. Mount Pisgah is probably the highest peak in the Nebo escarpment.

Moab

The kingdom of Moab begins with the Arnon River and continues south to the Zered River. It was also a well-watered region in biblical times. Moab is a descendant of Lot and the land of Moab will remind you of Ruth and Naomi.

Edom

Edom is south east of the Dead Sea. The descendants of Esau lived in this area. Mount Seir is within this region. To the east of the Transjordan plateau lays a wide and waste portion of land known as the Arabian Desert.

3.3 The Nature, Origin and Content of the Hebrew Bible

3.3.1 The Nature of the Bible

The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word *biblion* or *biblia*, which mean little books. The Bible is divided into three major divisions: the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha and the New Testament. The Christian Bible contains 66 books without the apocrypha and 81 with the apocrypha. It has to be noted that the Hebrew Bible did not include the apocrypha. However, the Septuagint (that is, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) includes them. The Roman Catholic Bible has always included them too. It is only recently that the Protestants are including the apocrypha in some of the editions of the Bibles.

The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. All of the 66 books were written by about 40 authors who lived and wrote in different times and cultures. All kinds of literary forms and styles are present in the Bible. Yet, the Bible has essential unity with regards to its theme, point of view and emphasis. This is strong evidence that the Bible is 'one book'.

In the Bible, you can see God's progressive revelation. This means that God unfolded or revealed his plan of salvation in a progressive manner. He first revealed it to the Patriarchs of ancient Israel and then through the prophets and the sages of Israel and then finally in Jesus Christ. The Christ-event is the focus of the biblical revelation.

3.3.2 The Origin and Early Transmission

Each of the three main divisions of the biblical literature has its own unique history. The chronology of the books in any of the divisions is difficult to determine. The books of the Hebrew Bible contain songs, poems, proverbs, sayings, legends and riddles among others. These literary forms were very ancient and were not put down in a written form until a long time after the event.

The beginning of the Hebrew alphabet dates back to the 15th century BC. The oldest pieces of written literature in Hebrew which have survived to date are "the song of Deborah" in Judges 5 and the "song of Moses" in Exodus 15. Both poems date back to the 12th century. The latest books to be written in the Hebrew Bible were written after the exile, between the 4th and 3rd centuries. The apocrypha books date between 200 and 100 BC while the New Testament books were written between AD 50 and AD 150.

Hebrew is the original language in which most of the Hebrew Bible was written. However, a large portion of Daniel and a little part of Ezra-Nehemiah was written in Aramaic. Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible include Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:8-16; 9:6-26 and Jeremiah 10:11.

3.4 The Contents of the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible which the Christians call the Old Testament is the main focus of this course hence you will be limited from now to the discussion on the Old Testament. It has to be noted that to the ancient Israelites as well as the present day Jews, the Hebrew Bible is their complete revelation of God. The Hebrew Bible contains 24 books, but Jewish scholars prefer to call it 22 so as to agree with the number of consonants in the Hebrew alphabet. The Hebrew Bible is divided into three major sections.

The Torah

The word 'torah' actually means 'instruction'. In this context however, Torah means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible which are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It is also called Pentateuch, which is derived from the Greek language and it means "five books". It is also called "the Law" an English term derived from the English meaning of the Hebrew 'torah'.

Navi'im (Prophets)

This section in the Hebrew Bible is divided into two parts.

- i. The Earlier or Former Prophets which are Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. In Hebrew they are called Naviim Risonim.
- ii. The Later Prophets which are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the book of the Twelve. In Hebrew they are called Naviim Acharonim.

Kethubim (Hagiographa or Writings)

The books of the Writings include Wisdom literature of the ancient Israel, the poetic books and the apocalyptic literature. Individually they are: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastics, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles and Ester.

3.5 The History of Canonization

The word canon is derived from a Hebrew and Greek word denoting a reed or cane. Hence it means something straight or something to keep straight; and hence also a rule or something ruled or measured. It came to be applied to the Scriptures, to denote that they contained the authoritative rule of faith and practice, the standard of doctrine and duty. A book is said to be of canonical authority when it has a right to take a place with the other books which contain a revelation of the Divine will.

By its very history and nature, the Torah was the first portion of the Hebrew Scripture to be accepted as divinely inspired. As soon as Moses received the Decalogue and all the legislative materials, they were already regarded as authoritative. In 621 BC Hilkiah the High Priest discovered a book of the Law during the renovation of the Temple. This is usually identified as the nucleus of our present Deuteronomy. It was immediately recognized as the authoritative Word of God by all the people including the King. It was also solemnly celebrated as the basis of a renewed covenant with Yahweh (II Kings 22:3-23:3).

During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (400-397 BC), Ezra presented the book of the Law to the Jewish community. It made such a great impression on the people that they wept when they heard the readings of the Law (Nehemiah 8:9-18). A third development of the history of the Torah's full acceptance is the existence of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Historically, John Hycarnus destroyed the Samaritan Temple in 128 BC. Josephus, the notable Jewish historian claimed that the Temple has existed for 200 years before its destruction. If this is true, it means that the Samaritan schism took place in the middle of the 4th Century BC (350 BC). For the Samaritan Pentateuch to have existed then, it means that the Torah must have been completed as we know it today and recognized as inspired and authoritative scripture since the first half of the 4th Century BC.

The next set of books to be recognized was the Prophets. The earlier prophets were well recognized by the Jews of the post-exilic period. Their close connection with the Torah made them to be held as inspired and authoritative. Apart from the history of the nation of Israel which these books contain, they include sufficient materials on prophets and prophecies to give credence to the idea that they are books of the earlier prophets.

The books of the latter prophets were written from late 9th century BC into the 8th century BC and onwards. The fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC vindicated the truth of their prophetic utterances. The intense nationalism of the prophets sometimes reflected hostility towards foreign nations but it always included promises of God for Israel. This tendency increased the veneration that the people had for the prophetic literature. Ben Sirach who wrote around 180 BC demonstrated in Ecclesiasticus that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve were already recognized as authoritative scripture. This is an indication that as at that time the Hebrew canon would have been completed.

The next set was of course the Writings. In the prologue of Ecclesiasticus written by the grandson of Ben Sirach, you will have the

impression the three divisions of the Hebrew Scripture was already in existence. By the beginning of the Christian era, all the books in the third division of the canon (the Writings) were already recognized.

It used to be generally accepted that the canon of the Hebrew Bible was finally fixed at the Council of Jamnia in AD 90 and AD 118 respectively. In reality, the Council made up of Jewish scholars did not fix the canon. Public opinion had already been determined in regards to the books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). What the Rabbis did was to combat erroneous teachings found in the works of Jewish apocalypses. They made a list of books which all orthodox Jews should recognize as authoritative scripture. Their main task was to prevent questionable books from entering into the canon.

It has to be noted that the inspiration and authority of some of these books was questioned even after the Jamnia Councils. These included Ester, Song of Songs and Ecclesiasticus. The earliest complete list of the books in the Hebrew Bible as we know it today is found in *Baba Bathra* – a treatise in the Mishnah written around AD 200.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have been exposed to the geographical situation of the Bible Land and the reasons for the necessity of such a study of geography in biblical studies. After this, the origin and the development of the Hebrew Bible as well as the history of its canon and the contents of the Hebrew Bible were opened up to you.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The Biblical World consists of three major areas: Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine and Egypt.

The land has four major geographical divisions: The Coastal Plain, the Hill Country, the Jordan Valley and the Transjordan Plateau.

The Hebrew Bible was written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic.

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections: The Torah, The Naviim and the Kethubim.

The Torah was the first section to be canonized. It was followed by the Prophetic books. The last portion of the Hebrew Bible to be canonized was the Writings.

The Council of Jamnia only helped to exclude heretical books from gaining entrance to the list of Hebrew recognized books, thereby closing the Old Testament canon in AD 118.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Why is it necessary for a bible student to study the geography?
2. Trace the development of the canonization of the Hebrew Bible.

7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 ORIGINS AND BEGINNING OF MANKIND AND ISRAEL'S HISTORY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to the Torah
 - 3.1.1 Authorship
 - 3.1.2 The Principal Sources
 - 3.2 Introduction to Genesis
 - 3.2.1 Primeval History
 - 3.2.2 Creation and Fall
 - 3.2.3 The Flood
 - 3.2.4 The Patriarchal Narrative
 - 3.3 Introduction to Exodus
 - 3.3.1 Moses
 - 3.3.2 The Passover
 - 3.3.3 Dating the Exodus
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you were exposed to the geographical situation of the Bible land, the reasons why a student of the Bible has to study the geography of the area. Following this, you were introduced to a brief history of the origin and the formation of the Hebrew Bible and the process of its canonization. In this unit, you will be taught the history of the formation of the Pentateuch and then a survey of Genesis and Exodus. This will include the summary of the narration of creation, the fall, the beginning of Israel as a nation and the ministry of Moses and the exodus of the nation of Israel from Egypt.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the formation of the Pentateuch and the sources;
- Narrate the story of creation and the fall;
- Discuss the call of Abraham and the covenant he had with God;

Describe how the Israelites got to Egypt;
Summarize the Moses story; and
Narrate the events that led to the Exodus.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Torah

The Torah is regarded by the Jews as the greatest gift of God to humankind. It is therefore esteemed above all other books and portions of the Hebrew Bible.

3.1.1 Authorship

For many centuries it was generally accepted by Jews and Christians alike that Moses was the sole author of the Torah. It was this assumption that made the King James' Version of the Bible to name the first five books after Moses. However, beginning with Wellhausen in AD 1600 many scholars and Bible readers have changed their minds on sole Mosaic authorship. The first person to question Mosaic authorship was Jean Astruc, a personal physician of King Louis XIV of France. He was actually reading the Bible to learn more about the cure for skin diseases in Old Testament times. He then discovered that there were two different names used to describe God in Genesis and Exodus, namely Yahweh and Elohim. Other scholars started to discover similar related problems in regard to the authorship of the Torah. The argument continued until Wellhausen in AD 1600 proposed what is known as the Documentary Hypotheses.

This hypothesis recognized four principal sources in the composition of the Torah. Rather than seeing the Torah as composite work of one man, it can be described as coming from different sources of oral narratives transmitted through many centuries. These were finally collected and compiled into what we have now. The Torah is therefore a fusing together of these oral sources. Other scholars who have questioned Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch besides Wellhausen include Ibn Ezra, a Jewish scholar who worked between 1088 and 1116; A. P. Hobbs; Spinoza; Richard Simon; Jean Astruc who published his work in 1763 and Eichron who published his work in 1782.

Some of the questions raised against Mosaic authorship are as follows:

- a. In Genesis 12: 12-20 and 20:1-18 Abraham told the same lie twice, calling Sarah his sister. Could the same author write two similar stories as one?

- b. In Genesis 26:6-11, Isaac told the same lie in Gerar, calling Rebecca his sister. Could it be the same lie his father has told or a different story?
- c. The Joseph narrative in Genesis 37 left the readers confused as to who actually bought Joseph between the Midianites and the Ishmaelites.
- d. Deuteronomy 34 records the death of Moses. Could Moses have written the account of his own death?

3.1.2 The Principal Sources

Since Wellhausen, Bible scholars have come to accept that the Torah as a composite work of many sources. Scholars' research since Wellhausen have identified four major sources called the JEPD.

J is an abbreviation for "Judean" or "Yahwistic". It is a narrative of the 10th Century BC written around 950 BC in Judea. It used the covenant name YHWH for God, hence the name Yahwistic. He used the narrative and pastoral style and employ anthropomorphic expressions to describe the activities of God. He also included the details of human interactions which makes the narratives of the Torah very interesting and unforgettable. These materials are found mostly in Genesis and the early part of Exodus.

E is a narrative of the 8th century BC written around 750 BC. It was presumed written by a prophet or group of prophets in Ephraim. It used the name "Elohim" for God until Exodus 3 when the name YHWH was revealed to Moses. From Exodus 3 onwards, the Elohist combined both names for God, that is, he started using the LORD God (YHWH Elohim). The narrative began from Genesis 15 and presented God in a sublime and majestic way. He is less anthropomorphic than the J source. The E source puts more emphasis on secondary means of revelation like dreams and angelic appearances. He also appears to be more concerned with moral issues than the author of J. The source continues to the end of Genesis and also appeared in some points in Exodus. It has to be noted that the J and E are similar in style and spirit and that after Exodus 3, it became difficult to distinguish between the two.

D stands for Deuteronomy. The D source is the material used for the book of Deuteronomy. This same source is also responsible for some sections of Joshua. It is believed that much of Deuteronomy was written before 621 BC probably during the reign of Manasseh or a little earlier.

P stands for the Priestly source. A group of priests composed the legal sections as well as the historical documents in the Torah around 500 BC. This style is very easy to recognize. It is abstract, repetitious, precise and formal especially in the descriptions of God. On priestly matters, more attention is given to minute details especially as it relates to objects and methods of sacrifice and all the rituals of the tabernacle. Most of the materials which are neither J nor E in the Torah are likely to come from P. P is the latest to be written of all the four sources and it is most likely that the Pentateuch in its present form is compiled by P.

You have to note that all of the above is not meant to deny Mosaic authorship, but rather to explain that Moses alone could not have written the entire Torah. No serious scholar has ever doubted that Moses wrote several important materials on clay tablets. It is possible that Joshua also had written some materials. The extensive oral materials as well as the fragments of written materials were not compiled until reign of David and Solomon as well as in the later years. The final editing took place during and after the exile.

3.2 Introduction to Genesis

Genesis is the book of origin and beginnings. This is why it is so named both in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. The Hebrew title is *b^ereshith* meaning “in beginning”. The Greek title is *genesis* meaning “origin” or “beginning”. Genesis serves as an introduction to the entire literature of the Bible.

3.2.1 Primeval History (Genesis 1-11)

This division is the record of oral tradition passed from one generation to another over a long period of time. Scholars have described the materials here as “aetiological narratives”. Such narratives attempt to answer age long questions about the origin of the world and all that is in it. They also include the fall of man and its consequences, the flood and its effects.

3.2.2 Creation and the fall

The use of the indefinite time for the beginning makes it clear that the only one God created, owns and sustains the world. It also shows that the eternal God is not the God of the Hebrew alone, but God of all humankind. You should note that the Bible does not begin with an argument about the existence of God. Rather it directly confronts us with his existence and the fact that he created the whole world. Genesis 1 and 2 present two different but united account of creation. The P account is found in Genesis 1:2-4a while the J is found in Genesis

2:4b-3:26. The latter includes the fall of man. Genesis 4 recounts the story of Cain and Abel which reflects a continued picture of the fall and also the age-long rivalry between farmers and shepherds.

3.2.3 The Flood (Genesis 6-9)

Though we cannot know all the questions surrounding the flood and therefore cannot know all the answers, it is very clear that the flood did not cover the entire universe. It can be said with confidence that Noah's flood covered the entire Mesopotamia valley which was probably the world that Noah knew. An example to buttress this point is the example of Egypt. Since civilization around the Nile valley, Egypt has not known any destructive flood as it prays annually for a flood which is the basis of cultivation in the Nile valley. After the flood, God gave seven promises and one warning to Noah:

- a. Never again will I curse the ground because of man (Genesis 8:21).
- b. Never again will I destroy all living creatures (Genesis 8:21b)
- c. As long as the earth endures, the seasons and times will not miss their cycle (Genesis 8:22).
- d. All of animal kingdom will fear man (Genesis 9:2).
- e. Everything that lives and moves will be food for man (Genesis 9:3).
- f. Blood is sacred and mankind should keep it so because it is the symbol of life which only God can give (Genesis 9:4-6).
- g. The covenant of God is now made with Noah and all mankind as well as other living creatures (Genesis 9:8-11).
- h. The rainbow is the sign of the covenant between God and mankind. God promised that at the appearance of the rainbow he has automatically remember his everlasting covenant (Genesis 9:12-16).

3.2.4 The Patriarchal Narrative (Genesis 11:27-50:26)

The patriarchal narratives give biographical information on the ancestors of Israel. The narrative begins with the call of Abraham and continues to the choice of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. After a brief data on Lot, Ishmael and Esau, they fade away from the narrative.

Abraham

Abraham is popularly known as the father of faith, father of the faithful and the friend of God. A look at Abraham's career will reveal many sterling qualities which made Abraham merit these descriptions.

- a. He was a shining example of faith in God. He never doubted the God who called him. The crown of his example as faith personified is reflected in the sacrifice of Isaac.
- b. He was a man of unshaken hope. God promised him land and a seed and his hope in God which never shook despite the circumstances was rewarded after he attained 100 years of age.
- c. He was a man of deep humility with a generous heart. This is reflected in the way he treated Lot during their quarrel over land and the way he treated his allies after the war described in Genesis 14.
- d. He was a man of patience and deep wisdom. He handled difficult situations with godly wisdom and tact. This is reflected in the way he handled the problem between Sarah and Hagar.
- e. He believed in doing that which is right and proper. He left no stone unturned in matter of procedure and protocol. This is reflected in the way he handled the purchase of land for his wife's burial. This act is also a demonstration of his foresight.
- f. He was given to hospitality. This enabled him and Sarah to entertain angels unawares.
- g. He was dedicated to God in worship and prayer. Every time he moved his tent to a new location, he erected an altar for the worship of his God.

Isaac

The faith of Abraham is strongly demonstrated in the life of Isaac. Many people today, especially, Jewish preachers see Isaac as a weak man. They see him as a mere connecting link between Abraham and Jacob. A close study of the scripture reveals however that this is not so.

- a. Isaac was a man of faith as demonstrated in experience of being sacrificed in Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). The Talmud explains that Isaac was 18 years old at that time.
- b. Isaac was a man of hope. His faith and hope are clearly demonstrated in the re-digging of the wells which belonged to his

father thereby succinctly claiming his father's spiritual and material heritage (Genesis 26).

- c. Isaac was a man of prayers. When his wife and the company which brought her from Padan-Aram arrived in Canaan, they met him meditating in the field (Genesis 24:62-67). Secondly, when Rebecca was barren, he prayed to God for her and God answered him (Genesis 25:21-26).
- d. Isaac was a man of peace. This was his greatest quality that has been misunderstood for weakness. He did not believe in shedding blood. Though he had enough soldiers to fight at any given time, he would rather settle disagreements and enmity at a round table conference (Genesis 26:23-31).

Esau

Esau was a very good man in character. He came out in bad light in the scriptures because he was not what he ought to be spiritually. He did not show enough interest in the covenant of the God of his fathers. His character sketch in Genesis 25:29-34 is better understood in the light of Hebrews 12:12-17. To his credit, Esau had a giant quality in forgiveness as he forgave his brother Jacob. He represents the highest example of forgiveness in the Old Testament (Genesis 33:4-11). Esau therefore was a man of secular mind who did not have ample space for God in his heart.

Jacob

This name means "supplanter" or "heel grabber". Jacob was a deceitful person perhaps because of the influence of his name. He did not wait for God's plan for him because God had directed that his brother will serve and he need not cut the corners he did. Many people wondered why a man like Jacob will be chosen and acceptable to God. Despite all his weakness however, Jacob was spiritually sensitive while Esau was not. He continued to search for the God of his fathers. He was an example of genuine repentance at strategic points in his life. Examples of his deep encounters with God include the following:

- a. His dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:10-22).
- b. The name he gave to his children reflected his faith in God. For example, Judah means praise; Zebulun means "honour" and Joseph means "May God add another son".
- c. God revealed himself to Jacob several times

- d. He has an encounter with the angels of God (Genesis 32:1-2).
- e. He wrestled with an angel of God at the bank of River Yabbok (Genesis 32:2-32).
- f. He built an altar to God whereby God revealed himself to him as his personal God.
- g. His death bed blessings on his children contain prophetic utterances about their future (Genesis 48: 8-49:33).

Joseph

Joseph seems to be our best example of a statesman or a politician who is a committed believer in God. The Joseph narratives present a well polished story which raises some problems in textual criticism. The Bible did not give us any negative side of Joseph. This however does not in anyway reduce the validity of the narratives. That the story is well polished demonstrates a didactic objective.

Joseph is the fourth patriarch and the beloved son of his father. The long robe with sleeves or the coat of many colours which his father made for him is strong evidence that Jacob had already assigned to him a position higher than that of his older brothers. Such robe was usually worn by princes or heir-apparent.

In his encounter with Potiphar's wife, his master did not doubt his integrity. Throwing him to the prison was evidence that his master gave him the benefit of the doubt. The only right punishment would have been execution. By God's providence or fore-ordination Joseph became a divine instrument of salvation from famine for Egypt and surrounding nations on the one hand and his extended family on the other hand. Jacob rewarded Joseph by adopting his two sons as if they were his. That is at Jacob's death, there are now 13 sons of Israel and consequently 13 tribes. The tribes of Israel had been consistently put at 12 because the tribe of Levi was scattered among the remaining twelve tribes to minister as priests after their arrival in the Promised Land.

3.3 Introduction to Exodus

Exodus is the beginning of Israel's salvation history. It is so central to the life and development of Israel that you can say without fear or self contradiction that if there is no exodus there would have been no Israel. The Genesis account ends with Jacob's family settling down in Egypt comfortably under Joseph's umbrella. If the oppression and consequent exodus of the Israelites did not take place, the Israelites would have lost

their identity, and would probably have become Egyptians in Egypt. The entire family of Jacob who migrated to Egypt numbered 70. They all died in Egypt and their descendants increased by leaps and bounds (Exodus 1:7).

In Exodus 1:8, the Bible introduces a new saga to you. It says that a new king arose in Egypt. This actually means that an entirely new dynasty. In other words, times and circumstances have changed. Joseph came into Egypt during the reign of the Hyksos who were Asiatics. It is known in the Egyptian history as the period of foreign rule and disintegration. After 150 years on the throne, the Hyksos rulers were driven out of Egypt. The new dynasty then ascended the throne. It was called the period of native rule and consolidation. The era started a new philosophy empire building and a new foreign policy. It was the new foreign policy that led to the decision of the new Pharaoh to put all foreigners living within the Egyptian borders into slavery. This makes it clear that it was not only Israel that was affected but Israel was the main focus of the Bible writers. It was during this period that Moses was born.

3.3.1 Moses

God used every experience and circumstance which Moses had gone through to prepare him for leading Israel out of Egypt. His birth from humble parents and especially from the tribe of Levi (a tribe which has been ordained by God for the priesthood) is significant pointer to his call. His upbringing in the palace was also a great asset to the leadership role which he will occupy later. His forty years in Egypt which included participation in supervising task masters over his own people was also an important preparation. His experience as a shepherd for forty years in Median taught him patience, endurance and long suffering. There are two complimentary versions of his call, but the more comprehensive one is in Exodus 3:1-4:17.

When God called Moses at first, Moses raised objections because he felt inadequate for the task. God however replied and gave solution to every objection.

- a. When he said “who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring out the Israelites?” God replied, “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12).
- b. When he said they will ask me for your identity, God replied “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14-15).
- c. When he said they will not believe me or listen to my voice, God gave him the sign of the rod and the hand (Exodus 4:2-5).
- d. When he said he was not eloquent, God replied that he will be with his mouth and teach him what to say (Exodus 4:11).

- e. When he asked God to send another person, God replied that he would send Aaron to assist him (Exodus 4:14-17).

In the final analysis, it took God's intervention through plagues to let Israel to go. The plagues are miracles and evidences of God's unlimited power. It is important to recognize that every one of the ten plagues was used by the Almighty God to claim supremacy and victory over the major gods and goddesses of Egypt.

Plague	The Deity against whom the Plague was directed
Nile turned to blood	Khnum – creator of water and life or Hapi the Nile god or Osiris who is believed to use the Nile as his blood stream.
Frogs	Heket – goddess of childbirth whose symbol was the frog.
Lice/Gnats	No known deity
Flies	No known deity
Pestilence on cattle	Hathor – mother and sky goddess whose symbol was cow or Apis the bull god
Boils	No known deity
Hailstorm	Seth – the god of wind and storm
Locusts	Isis – goddess of life or Min – goddess of fertility and vegetation and protector of crops
Darkness	Amon-ke, Atom and Homs – the sun deities
Death of firstborns	Osiris – judge of the dead and patron deity of the Pharaohs

3.3.2 The Passover

The Passover which was later combined with the feast of the Unleavened Bread became the festival celebrating the Exodus. Before the final plague on Egypt God asked the Hebrews to kill a lamb and smear their doorpost with the blood of the lamb. The sight of the blood of the lamb on the side and top frame of the doorpost will make the angel of death PASS OVER the house of the Israelites; but strike dead the first born of every Egyptian family. The Unleavened Bread is a reminder that God is Holy and that there is no room for corruption or decay or rust in him. The blood of the lamb is evidence of redemption and cleansing which will be understood better in later centuries in the blood of the eternal Lamb of God. After this final miracle, Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to go out of Egypt.

3.3.3 Dating the Exodus

The Exodus is usually dated around 1290 BC. If you put the historical and archaeological evidences together you can see strong evidence for the dates accepted by modern scholars:

- a. The building of the two strong cities: Pithom and Ramses mentioned in Exodus 1, most likely occurred during the reigns of Pharaoh Seti I (1304-1290 BC) and Pharaoh Ramses II (1290-1224 BC).
- b. The archaeological evidence of the violent overthrow of certain cities in Palestine between 1300-1200 BC.
- c. The record of Pharaoh Merneptah (1224-1211 BC) in which he boasted of defeating Israel in Palestine. This is the first non-biblical to Israel as a people as far as we know.

The Exodus is therefore dated around 1290 BC. The Pharaoh of oppression is Seti I, while Ramses II is the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have been exposed to the authorship controversy of the Pentateuch and the reasons why the sole authorship of Moses have been questioned by scholars. The history of the development of the nation of Israel from the call of Abraham and the other patriarchs is also traced. The coming of Israel as a people to Egypt from Canaan as a result of famine along with the change of dynasty that led to the enslavement of all foreigners including Israel was also covered. Finally, you have studied the Passover and the final exodus from Egypt.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The four principal sources for the formation of Pentateuch tagged the JEPD.

The Primeval history includes creation and the fall of man.

The seven promises and the warning of God after the flood to Noah.

The patriarchal narratives from Abraham to Joseph.

The narrative of Moses.

The call of Moses.

The Passover and the Exodus

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the plague as a target of YHWH against the local Egyptian gods and goddesses.
2. The Joseph narratives has been said to be polished. Discuss the significance of the polishing of the story.

7.0 REFERENCES FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 THE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH, CULTIC MATTERS, THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE AND THE KADESH-BARNEA DELAY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to Leviticus
 - 3.1.1 Worship of Yahweh
 - 3.1.2 Animal Sacrifices
 - 3.1.3 Sacrifices without Blood
 - 3.2 Introduction to Numbers
 - 3.2.1 The Murmuring
 - 3.2.2 The Rebellion of Korah, Dothan and Abiram
 - 3.2.3 The Water from the Rock
 - 3.2.4 The Brazen Snake
 - 3.2.5 Balak and Balaam
 - 3.3 Introduction to Deuteronomy
 - 3.3.1 The Opportunity to Choose between Blessing and Curses
 - 3.3.2 The Transition From Moses to Joshua
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 Further reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied the beginning of the history of Israel as a nation. You learnt about the patriarchs from Abraham to Joseph and how the descendants of Joseph left Canaan for Egypt and became dwellers in the land. After the change of dynasty in Egypt, the Israelites were enslaved and remained there till the birth of Moses who eventually led them out of Egypt in the exodus. In this unit, you will learn about the different sacrifices that the worship of YHWH called for. They are in two categories, the blood and the bloodless sacrifices. You will also study the various important events that took place during the wilderness sufferings.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Trace the development of worship of Yahweh;
- Discuss and pinpoint the significance of the sacrifices;
- Narrate the incidents that occurred during the wilderness travels;
- Discuss why the delay at Kadesh-Barnea was necessary; and
- Relate the significance of the book of Deuteronomy.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to Leviticus

This book is named after the tribe of Levi, the tribe from which all the priests originate. It is the tribe of Moses, Aaron and Miriam in addition to thousands of others. Only the male descendants of Aaron can have the privilege of becoming priest in their lifetime. However, all Levites are involved in ministering in the Temple institution in various and sundry ways. During the wilderness wandering, the Levites who were not the descendants of Aaron were in charge of moving every part of the tabernacle from one camp to the other (Numbers 1:47-57; 31:4-49). As far back as the time of King David and continuing into the post-exilic Judaism, the Levites formed the Temple choir.

The book of Leviticus is concerned with the cultic institution of Israel. This includes the polity and practice of its religion together with the rituals and ceremonies under guarding the whole system. Of pertinent importance is the holiness of God. Sinful humans must find a way to communicate and fellowship with the Holy God. This was done through sacrifices. The book of Leviticus spells out all the detailed instruction for the priest as well as the worshippers in this regard.

3.1.1 Worship of Yahweh

In order to be properly worshipped Yahweh spelt out in details his instruction on how to be worshipped. This is mainly through various sacrifices.

3.1.2 Animal Sacrifices

The Sin Offering

The emphasis of the sin offering is the wiping away or the cleansing of sins. Blood is therefore most central because without the shedding of blood, there is no cleansing or forgiveness of sin.

The Burnt Offering

In this kind of offering, the emphasis is total dedication to God. The body of the animal was burnt completely as a sign of commitment and complete surrender to God.

The Trespass Offering

The emphasis here is on restitution or payment of penalty for wrong doing. This originates from a strong belief that there are certain divine and human boundaries which one cannot cross with impunity. When the boundary is crossed, one needs to pay some penalty before he can be restored into fellowship with God and man.

The Peace Offering

The peace offering usually ends with a ceremonial meal. The emphasis is on fellowship between man and God. This is why most modern scholars call it the fellowship offering. These offerings were at the heart of all religious festivals. Certain portions of the animal offered were burnt on the altar. They are a pleasing odour to God. Other specific portions belong to the priest by right, while the remainder of the animal belongs to the offerer and his family.

All the above offerings involved blood and it has to be any one of the following:

- i. A one year old bull without defect or blemish
- ii. A one year old lamb without defect or blemish
- iii. A pair of pigeons or a pair of turtledoves.

3.1.2 Sacrifices without blood

There are other offerings which did not have to involve blood. They could be of materials, usually agricultural products.

The Thanks-offerings

This serves as an expression of the worshippers' gratitude to God for unmerited favour and blessing.

Devotion offering

This expresses one's feeling of obligation and indebtedness. It is often the payment of a vow to show one's joy upon the fulfilment of a divine promise.

The freewill offering

This is a voluntary and special offering expressing one's love and devotion to God.

The above three types of offerings could be made up of anything acceptable to God. They could be animals but do not have to be. The next two sacrifices are certainly not made of living creatures; they are specifically agricultural products.

The Meal Offering

This symbolizes the dedication of the sweat and the result of one's labour to the Almighty God. It usually consists of farm products like flour, grains, fruits and olive oil.

The Drink Offering

This is usually libation of wine or fruit juice. It usually accompanies some offerings

3.2 Introduction to Numbers

The English Bible titled this book "Numbers" following the Septuagint basically because of the numberings and the census exercise that took place in chapters 1 and 26. The Hebrew name for the book is **b^omidhbar**, meaning "in the wilderness". This title described the book far better than the English "Numbers". The book is a record of the experiences of Israel in the wilderness, especially the events which took place in the desert of Sinai and the 38 years of wandering in **Kadesh-Barnea**. Numbers forms a natural sequence to the book of Exodus. It is arranged in our canonical Bible to be after Leviticus because its early chapters continue the levitical code with discussion on the Tabernacle and the priesthood, but its natural place is after the book of Joshua.

3.2.1 The Murmurings

The section from Numbers 10:11-14:45 recounts the march from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, a period of time approximately one and a half to two months. Immediately on arrival, the people began to complain as they passed through the terrible wilderness of Paran. They angered the Lord at Taberah (Numbers 11:1-3) and also at Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11:4-35). After this, Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses' sole right to speak for God to the people, which resulted in temporary leprosy as punishment for Miriam. Through Moses' intercession, the two were forgiven (Numbers 12). Out of this event, however, came the remarkable description of Moses' relationship to God as a unique means of revelation (verses 6-8).

From Paran (Kadesh-barnea) Moses dispatched the spies to survey the land (chapter 13). Deuteronomy 1:22 suggests that the plan to spy out the land originated with the people, with Moses (at God's behest) acquiescing. At the end of 40 days, they returned. Only Caleb and Joshua urged the people to advance to the conquest; the other 10 spies spoke of foes too formidable for them to defeat. The people, greatly discouraged, attempted to stone Caleb and Joshua (Numbers 14:10), and were prevented from doing so only by the sudden appearance of the glory cloud at the tabernacle. God swore in his wrath (Numbers 14:21) that, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, none of that generation would enter the land of promise (Numbers 14:21-35). He then struck down the 10 unbelieving spies (verse 37). Presumptuously, and in spite of God's express command to the contrary (Deuteronomy 1:42), Israel attempted to advance on the land, leaving Moses and the Ark of the Covenant in the camp. They were challenged by the Amalekites and Canaanites. Israel remained in this general area with tribal families fanning out over the wilderness and settling around springs and oases (Deuteronomy 1:46). Numbers 15:1–21:20 relates the account of the 38 years of wilderness wandering. Much of this time was probably spent around Kadesh-barnea.

3.2.2 The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Korah challenged Aaron's high priesthood, while Dathan, Abiram, and on challenged Moses' leadership (verses 16:1-14). God, at Moses' word, opened up the earth and swallowed the offenders (Numbers 16:32; cf. Deuteronomy 9:6; Psalm 106:16-18). Korah is regarded in the NT (Jude 1:11) as a classic example of a rebellious malcontent. Numbers 26:11 states that Korah's young children did not perish with him. Perhaps they became the ancestors of the "sons of Korah," the sacred musicians of the temple who composed 12 Korahite psalms (Psalms 42–49, 84–85, 87–88). God then instructed the leaders of each tribe to bring rods, 12 in all, to write the names of the tribes upon them (with Aaron's name on

Levi's rod), and to deposit them in the tabernacle. The following day, Aaron's rod had sprouted with blossoms and ripe almonds, thus vindicating Aaron's special high-priestly status.

3.2.3 The Water from the Rock

With Israel once again at Kadesh on the southern border of the wilderness of Zin in the first month of the 40th year of wandering, Miriam died and was buried. According to the encampment list in chapter 33, 18 encampments may have occurred for Israel since the nation had last been at this site. At this time the nation complained once again because there was little water (20:2). Moses, at God's instruction, brought forth water from a rock, but because of a gross infraction by Moses and Aaron on this occasion, God announced that they would not be permitted to lead Israel in the conquest of the land. Aaron died at Mount Hor on the border of Edom in the fifth month of the 40th year of their departure from Egypt. Eleazar, Aaron's son, assumed the office of high priest.

3.2.4 The Brazen Snake

After a quick victory over Arad, Israel started south to encircle Edom. Becoming impatient with God and with Moses, the people expressed their disgust with God's provision of manna. The Lord sent poisonous snakes to the camp, causing many to die. But at God's command Moses fashioned a snake out of bronze and placed it atop a standard. All who looked to the bronze snake survived. The bronze snake was preserved and later was destroyed by Hezekiah, the symbol having become by his time an idol (2 Kings 18:4). Leaving that fateful place, Israel journeyed into and up the Arabah, crossed the Wadi Zered in an eastern swing around Moab, finally crossing the Arnon into Amorite territory. Journeying north, they camped at Pisgah (Numbers 21:10-20). At this point the conquest of the Transjordan begins. In quick succession Israel defeated Sihon of Heshbon and Og of Bashan and settled in the plains of Moab. This encampment was the scene for the remainder of the activities of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua 1-3. In a real sense, one can say the wilderness wanderings were now over.

3.2.5 Balak and Balaam

Balak, king of Moab, frightened by Israel's presence, joined with Midian to hire Balaam, a prophet, to curse Israel. For gain, Balaam agreed but God prevented him, causing him rather to bless Israel in his four oracular utterances (Numbers 23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9, 15-19) and to predict the destruction of Moab, Edom, Amalek, the Kenites, and Asshur. With that, Balak and Balaam separated. Balaam, in collusion

with Midian, agreed to counsel Israel to commit idolatry and immorality. And so, where Balak failed to turn the Lord against Israel, Balaam succeeded.

3.3 Introduction to Deuteronomy

As the name implies Deuteronomy means “second law”. It is from the Greek words *deuter* and *nomos*. Therefore Deuteronomy is a revision and expansion of Exodus. Although, Deuteronomy continued the historical narratives in Leviticus and Numbers, it is primarily a revision of the legal codes in Exodus as well as the instructions for practical living in Leviticus and Numbers. It seems certain that Moses did not write Deuteronomy in its final form but the materials which form the foundation date back to Moses and the wilderness experience. It is likely that Deuteronomy in its final form was written shortly before Josiah’s reign if it happens to be the book of Law discovered in the Temple during Josiah’s revival.

3.3.1 The Opportunity to Choose between Blessings and Curses

Moses set before the Israelites the alternatives of blessings or curses. Under Joshua they were to renew the covenant publicly. At Mount Ebal stones were to be erected for inscribing the law and an altar constructed for offering sacrifice. The curses were to be read from Mount Ebal and the blessings from Mount Gerizim. Conditional self-curses were read regarding offences against God and other human beings. Thus they acknowledged their accountability to God. Though their sins might be hidden from people, it was God to whom they were primarily and ultimately accountable. Blessings as a way of life and curses as a way of death were clearly set before the Israelites. Setting them in the perspective of history, Moses appealed to the new generation to take advantage of their present opportunity. Warning that, should they fail to love God, they would ultimately be subjected to dispersion; Moses admonished them to choose the way of life and good rather than the way of death and evil.

3.3.2 The Transition from Moses to Joshua

When the life and ministry of Moses were nearing completion, and transfer of leadership was near, Joshua had already been designated by God as Israel’s new leader. Moses assured the Israelites that God would be the same with Joshua in charge. The revelation given through Moses had been put in writing and now was committed to the priests, the custodians of the Book of the Law. Joshua, who had already distinguished himself in responsible leadership, was publicly confirmed

at the door of the tabernacle. The “Song of Moses” is the covenant’s document of witness. In it Moses spoke with prophetic understanding as he recounted Israel’s past experience. Reiterating the consequences of their attitude toward God, he assured the people of restoration if they failed again. He encouraged them to fix their hearts on what God had revealed to them and to impress it on their children. Keeping the covenant by maintaining a wholehearted love for God would be important for all future generations as well as for those then listening to Moses. After some brief, final instructions, Moses pronounced his blessings on the Israelites, whom he had led for 40 years. In his final blessing, also called the “Testament of Moses,” the greatness of God and his special relationship with Israel are delineated. Israel is unique among all the nations of the world. The book of Deuteronomy appropriately ends with an account of the death of Moses, the greatest prophet in Old Testament times.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have studied about the sacrifices that the worship of YHWH called for. There are the blood and the bloodless sacrifices. You have also studied the various important events that took place during the wilderness sufferings. It is important for you to note the various incidences of murmurings and leadership tussles. Finally you saw the role of the book of Deuteronomy which serves as both a reminder of the law and the transition record from the Mosaic leadership to the Joshua leadership.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The animal sacrifices like the sin offering, the burnt offering the trespass offering and the peace offering.

The bloodless offerings like the thanks-offering, the devotion offering, the freewill offering, the meal offering and the drink offering.

The murmuring of the people at the wilderness.

The rebellion of Miriam and Aaron against the leadership of Moses.

The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

The brazen snake and the transition of the leadership from Moses to Joshua.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the various negative events that happened in the wilderness and their significance.
2. Discuss the sacrifices with blood and their spiritual significance.

7.0 PREFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 THE PROMISED LAND

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to Joshua
 - 3.1.1 Crossing the Jordan
 - 3.1.2 The Conquest of Jericho
 - 3.1.3 The Tragedy of Ai and the Renewal of Covenant
 - 3.1.4 Israel and the Gibeonites
 - 3.2 Military Campaigns
 - 3.2.1 The Southern Military Campaigns
 - 3.2.2 The Northern Military Campaigns
 - 3.3 Division of the Land
 - 3.3.1 Division of the Transjordan
 - 3.3.2 The Division of Canaan according to the Tribes of Israel
 - 3.3.3 The Cities of Refuge
 - 3.3.4 The Final Addresses
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have studied the establishment of the cult of Yahweh and the involvement of the worship of Yahweh. After this you were exposed to the wilderness wanderings and the various incidences that took place there. These involved the murmurings, the rebellions of Miriam and Aaron on the one hand and that of Korah, Dothan and Abiram. The unit ended with your study of the death of Moses and the process of the takeover of the leadership by Joshua. In this unit, you will study the leadership of Joshua and how he led the children of Israel to possess the Promised Land.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyze the leadership of Joshua;
- Discuss the entrance of the Israelites to the Promised Land

Discuss how the Israelites took over the Promised Land;
 Highlight the significance of the cities designated as the cities of refuge; and
 Narrate the closing event of Joshua's ministry.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA

The book of Joshua is a historical book and appropriately belongs to the historical section of the Hebrew Scriptures. Although, the material and the event date back to Joshua, it is most likely that the book was compiled during the period of the monarchy. It has to be noted that some biblical scholars add Joshua to the Pentateuch and therefore call it Hexateuch.

3.1.1 Crossing the Jordan

After the mourning period for the death of Moses, Joshua took over the leadership fully and stamped his authority as a leader. He does this by reminding the Transjordan tribes to demonstrate loyalty to the command of Moses by joining with the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan. They submitted to Joshua's authority as to Moses' authority. He demonstrated his military leadership in sending the two spies to Jericho. His authority is accepted by priests and people as they cross the Jordan. The crossing of the Jordan marks the public recognition of Joshua as a leader like Moses. The account of the crossing marks an important transition from the era of the exodus and the wilderness to the era of the Conquest. On the one hand, the story of Rahab illustrates how the Canaanites had heard about the Lord's mighty acts and reacted with great fear. Rahab's expression of faith in Israel's God anticipates the inclusion of the Gentiles in the covenant community as promised to the patriarchs. By faith Rahab was included in the covenant and was richly rewarded by the inclusion of her name in the lineage of Jesus.

The Israelites crossed the Jordan with the knowledge that the fear of God had come on the Canaanites. However, they were also instructed to show their reverence for the Lord by keeping a safe distance between themselves and the Ark of the Covenant and by consecrating themselves. After the tribes had crossed the river, each leader of the 12 tribes took up a stone out of the dried-up riverbed and set up a memorial at Gilgal. Thus, Israel was to remember that the stones, taken from the place where the priests who carried the ark had stood, were reminders of the majestic presence of God. Future generations who were to hear this report were hereby encouraged because the fear of God would fall on all the peoples of the land.

The consecration before the conquest of Jericho is also symbolized by the act of circumcision and by the celebration of the Passover. Physical circumcision, neglected during the wilderness journey due to unbelief, was a sign of spiritual responsiveness. The responsive nation received the external sign of the covenant with the anticipation that the Lord of the covenant would bless his people in giving them victory and the fruit of the land. Their reproach was rolled away. The covenant continuity is also brought out in the brief mention of the Passover celebration. The newness is their eating the fruit of the land. With the taste of the food of Canaan, the manna stopped. The desert experience was over. A new era was ushered in with their presence in the Promised Land.

3.1.2 The Conquest of Jericho

The victory is the Lord's. This is the message with which the battle of Jericho begins. The holy God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush appeared to Joshua as the commander of the Lord's army with a message from the Lord. The city of Jericho will fall without a siege and ensuing battle. Israel's response to Jericho's preparedness for war was strange, but the presence of the ark and the blowing of the trumpets symbolized that the Lord would fight for Israel, even as he had promised. However, Israel could not take any of the spoil. Because Yahweh fought for Israel, everything was to be devoted to him. The Lord honoured the vow to Rahab, made by the spies, so that she and her family were kept alive, but they were temporarily placed outside the camp. The valuable metals were placed into the treasury, whereas everything else was burned by fire. Nothing was to be taken for personal gain; otherwise God's judgment would rest on Israel. In order to emphasize God's absolute ownership of Jericho, Joshua put a curse on anyone who would attempt to rebuild the city. The rumours of Jericho's destruction spread and the peoples of Canaan knew that the Lord was with Joshua.

3.1.3 The Tragedy of Ai and the Renewal of Covenant

The victory over Jericho was short-lived because Achan defied God's "ban," took some of the objects, hid them in the ground under his tent, and brought God's wrath on all of Israel. Israel was stunned by their defeat at Ai. Joshua and the elders responded to the disaster by fasting and lamenting. Only after the people had consecrated themselves and Achan was exposed and his memory removed could they renew the attack on Ai with the encouraging promise of God's presence and victory. Ai, too, was taken and the population execrated, but Israel enjoyed the spoils by direct permission from the Lord. The ruins of Ai, the pile of stones covering the body of Ai's king, and the heap of rocks

over Achan's body were sobering reminders to Israel that God's faithfulness requires absolute loyalty from his people.

Joshua led Israel in a ceremonial covenant renewal at Shechem, as Moses had instructed. Joshua took care in the proper preparation of the altar on which dedicatory and communal offerings were presented. He copied the law as a symbol of his royal leadership and his devotion to the Lord. All Israel (officers and people, aliens and native-born Israelites) together presented themselves for the reading of the blessings and the curses. The whole book of Deuteronomy was read in their presence. Half the tribes stood on Mount Gerizim and said "Amen" to the blessings, and the other six stood on Mount Ebal, saying "Amen" to the curses.

3.1.4 Israel and the Gibeonites

The rumours of God's mighty acts had brought fear on the Canaanite kings. The first defeat at Ai had given them a ray of hope that Israel could be put down. Rather than submit themselves to Israel and suffer from humiliation as servants of Israel, they joined forces against Joshua and Israel. The Hivites from Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim did not join with their fellow Canaanites. Instead, they developed an intricate plan to deceive Israel and to sue for full treaty status. The purpose of the treaty was that of friendship, promising each other to be of mutual assistance in case of attack. The concern was with the preservation of life. Their deception included a ruse about the great distance they had traveled and a false report of Israel's victories in Transjordan with no mention of their crossing the Jordan. The law permitted the submissive city to subject its population to a type of suzerainty treaty, in which Israel defined the terms and expected the subjugated populace to serve as its forced laborers. However, the treaty permitted the Hivites to maintain their way of life with the advantage of Israel's military protection.

3.2 The Military Campaigns

3.2.1 The Southern Campaigns

The king of Jerusalem, Adoni-zedek, led the cities of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon in an alliance against Gibeon as a military ploy to take a stand against Israel. The Gibeonites appealed to Israel for help based on their covenantal relationship. Joshua led Israel on a hike through the wilderness from Gilgal up to Gibeon during the night. The Israelite attack surprised the Canaanites, who were already frightened of the Israelites. The camp of the Canaanites was thrown into confusion, and the soldiers fled the hill country via the road of Beth-horon to

Azekah and Makkedah. But while running, they were tormented with large hailstones. Miraculously, Israel could push the Canaanites farther from the hill country because the sun and the moon stood still at Joshua's command. The marvel of this day was long remembered in the Book of Jashar, because on that day the Lord listened to a man, namely Joshua. The five kings hidden in a cave at Makkedah were discovered, killed, hanged on trees, and buried in the cave. Their foolish attempt to make war on Israel came to a quick end. Since the coalition of large cities had been put down, Joshua led Israel in a rapid campaign of the other southern cities. The region was taken in one campaign with the Lord's help. By the end of the southern campaign, the following cities have been defeated: Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Kadesh-barnea, Gaza, Goshen and Gibeon.

3.2.2 The Northern Campaigns

The northern campaigns started when the Israelites were again forced into battle, this time by the leadership of Jabin, king of Hazor. Jabin rallied the kings of the northern cities who assembled their troops and horses by the waters of Merom for battle against Israel. The similarity to the southern campaign is a literary way to demonstrate that the kings of the south and north initiated the war and were consequently defeated. So it was with the northern kings, who were routed as far as the region of Sidon in Phoenicia. Their horses were hamstrung and their chariots burned, as the Lord had instructed. Hazor, the great and ancient city, the center of Canaanite power in the north, was completely destroyed. The campaign narrative stresses again the absolute loyalty of Joshua to the Lord and to Moses, the servant of the Lord. By the end of the military campaign led by Joshua, almost all of the Promised Land has been conquered.

3.3 The Division of the Land

By the end of the Joshua-led military campaigns, there was still a large expanse of the land left to be conquered. The areas still to be occupied were: the region to the north of Galilee, Mt. Hermon, and the area occupied by the Philistines. But despite this, the Lord commanded that the land should be divided.

3.3.1 The Division of the Transjordan

In dividing the land, Joshua did not alter the Mosaic arrangement concerning the allotments to the tribes of Manasseh, Reuben, and Gad. Their territory also excluded certain regions still occupied by Canaanites. The clans of Reuben had received the territory from the Arnon River north to Heshbon. The clans of Gad had received the

territory of Gilead, south of the Jabbok River to Heshbon. Several clans of Manasseh received the region south of the Wadi Yarmuk to the Jabbok. The Levitical towns are not listed here, but a reference is made to them as not receiving a patrimony, because they were to live off the offerings and sacrifices made to the Lord.

3.3.2 The Division of Canaan according to the Tribes of Israel

Eleazar, the high priest, and Joshua together cast lots to determine the boundaries, size, and allocation for the remaining nine and a half tribes. Again, the exclusion of the tribe of Levi is mentioned. Another literary device is the special mention of the inheritance of Caleb in the beginning and of Joshua at the conclusion. These two were the only ones who had left Egypt as adults, had been faithful spies, and had entered into the Promised Land.

Judah

The boundaries of Judah extended from the Dead Sea westward to the Mediterranean. The cities of Judah are listed in its four regions: 29 in the Negev, 42 cities in the Shephelah and coastal plains, 38 cities in the hill country, and 6 cities in the desert. Judah was unable to take Jerusalem until David made it his capital.

Ephraim and Manasseh

These two tribes were the children of Joseph whom Jacob adopted as his and had obtained prominence among the tribes. They received one allotment as “the allotment for Joseph”. Part of Manasseh had already received a patrimony east of the Jordan. The limits for Ephraim and the west half of Manasseh were from Bethel to Mt. Gilboa in the north and from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. Ephraim received the smaller portion in the south but was unable to drive the Canaanites out of Gezer. The clans of Manasseh are given, including Zelophehad, in order to clearly distinguish them from the clans of Manasseh in Transjordan. The region of west Manasseh extended from Shechem to Mt. Gilboa; but Manasseh, also, was incapable of driving out the Canaanites completely. Though they had received the largest portion of the land (more than a third), the tribes of Joseph complained. They knew that the Lord had blessed them, and they expected to get more cultivable land. But Joshua urged them to use the available land by cutting down the forests. When they expressed realistic concern about Canaanite military power, Joshua called on them to do their share in occupying the land.

The territory of Benjamin was between Judah and Ephraim. Simeon’s allotment was in southern Judah, resulting in its absorption into Judah.

Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali received a portion north of Manasseh in the region of Galilee. Dan received the seventh lot and suffered subsequently, when it could not maintain the allotted territory because of the pressure of Judah on the east and the Philistines to the west. They migrated northward and found the sources of the Jordan to be a fruitful region.

The conclusion is symmetric with the beginning in that Joshua also received a gift. Again, mention is made that all divisions were in the presence of the Lord, witnessed to, and executed by the high priest Eleazar, and Joshua.

3.3.3 The Cities of Refuge

According to the instructions of Moses, six Levitical cities were set apart, three on each side of the Jordan, as cities of refuge. The purpose was to provide “refuge” (asylum) for those who were guilty of manslaughter but had not intentionally killed someone. This practice was not to provide a way out for someone who was guilty, but to allow for the legal process to be completed and prevent unwarranted vengeance. The Levites received by clan a total of 48 cities, six of which also served as cities of refuge. The Levites could not cultivate the soil because they were dependent on the tithes of the people, but they were permitted to have land for grazing. A special allocation is made to the descendants of Aaron, because they served as priests and their 13 cities were in the Judah-Simeon region, in proximity to the Jerusalem temple of the Solomonic era. With the allocation of the Levitical cities, the division of the land is concluded. The promise of the land is fulfilled.

3.3.4 The Final Addresses

Joshua first addressed the leaders of Israel. In his address, he reviewed what the Lord had done for Israel in giving the land to the tribes. He had demonstrated his loyalty. And he will continue to be with his people so that no enemy can stand against them. He will fulfill every outstanding promise, even as he had already fulfilled the ones they could see. However, they must persevere in their loyalty to the Lord. Loyalty to the Lord is not apart from loyalty to the Law of Moses. Apostasy will be severely punished, first by leaving the nations to ensnare Israel, and then by consuming them in his wrath.

Joshua had the final address with the whole people which ended with a covenant renewal at Shechem. In the ancient Near East it was common when making a treaty to give a brief historical summary of the relationship of the parties involved. Joshua reviewed Israel’s history

from the patriarchs to their generation: patriarchs, exodus, and conquest. The goodness, presence, and loyalty of Yahweh was evident to them. Yahweh also expected “faithfulness” from his people in the form of whole allegiance, without any form of idolatry. As the head of his family, Joshua vowed to be loyal. The people responded by giving reasons for being loyal to the Lord. But Joshua pushed them to a deeper commitment by challenging their profession, then recording their vow and setting up a stone of witness against them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

By now you should have been familiar with how Joshua led the children of Israel to inhabit the Promised Land after the death of Moses. He remarkably kept to what Moses had done before him in the allotment of the land, which is a sign of political continuity. He ensured that the allotment of the land was done in the presence of the Lord by lots. An important aspect is Joshua’s final charges both to the leaders of the people and the people of Israel.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

Joshua after taking over the leadership from Moses led the Israelites to cross River Jordan in preparation to take over the land.

After the Jordan had been crossed, the people attacked and sacked Jericho.

Though Ai was much smaller, because of sin in the camp, Israel was at first defeated by Ai and Ai was only destroyed after the people rededicated themselves.

Joshua’s military campaigns both in the North and South were at the instigation of the enemies, but were largely successful.

During the division of the land, some cities were set aside as cities of refuge for those who committed manslaughter so that justice should take place.

After the military campaigns, the land though not yet fully conquered was allotted to the people in the presence of the Lord by lots.

Joshua in his closing days addressed both the leaders and the people in general.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the importance of the cities of refuge as set up by Joshua.
2. Evaluate the leadership of Joshua vis-à-vis the allotment of the Promised Land.

7.0 PREFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Geisler, N. L. (1977) Old Testament Survey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

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UNIT 5 THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to the book of the Judges
 - 3.2 Judges of Period I & II
 - 3.3 Judges of Period III & IV
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have studied the ministry of Joshua and his major task of leading the people of Israel into the Promised Land and dividing the land among the tribes of Israel. You have also learnt that towards the end of his ministry it became clear that the whole of the land had not been possessed because the original inhabitants had not been conquered but the land was divided all the same. In this unit however, you will be focusing on another important period in the history of Israel: the period of the judges. You will also be able to discern the pattern of religious apostasy in Israel as at this time, and also the ministry of each of the judges.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Comment on the cyclic pattern of religious apostasy during the period of the judges;
- Discuss the reign of any given judge;
- Comment on the general environment during the era of the judges;
- and
- List the nations that the Lord used to discipline Israel during the era.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Book of the Judges

The Hebrew word translated “judges” is *sopherim*. It can also be translated ‘deliverer’ or ‘savior’. The first two chapters of the book provide a link between the book of Joshua and the book of Judges. The book of Judges therefore continues the history of Israel from after the death of Joshua and the elders who succeeded him. Judges cover the period in Israel’s history between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel, approximately from 1220 – 1050 BC. It was a period of transition when the scattered tribes of Israel were held together only by their common faith in YHWH. This period was one of the most difficult periods in Israel’s history. They were already in the Promised Land, but were yet to control it. In other words, they have not completely possessed the land. They have won victory in a wave of military conquests, but their enemies were still around and strong. In other words, the Israelites had room to live in the Promised Land but do not yet have room for territorial expansion.

A major and most disastrous temptation which confronted Israel was the continuous attraction of the Ba’al worship of the Canaanite tribes. Ba’al was the supreme Canaanite god who was known in each local community by the personal titles ascribed to him. It was therefore a great threat to the worship of YHWH. It came to a point that the average Israelite did not see anything wrong in claiming YHWH as his tribal and national deity while at the same time paying allegiance to Ba’al in the local community shrine.

The judges of Israel were charismatic leaders whom God raised up in times of dire need. They were both military and political leaders. Very few of them performed the functions of a religious leader in addition to the military and political roles, an example of which is Deborah. It is also certain that the judges did not rule consecutively. This is because if you add the tenures of all the judges as recorded in the Bible together, it will total 410 years. This figure would then become contradictory as I Kings 6:1 declares that there were 480 years from the Exodus to the 4th year of Solomon’s reign. The exodus took place between 1300-1290 BC. Solomon started to reign around 961 BC. The only apparent solution to the problem of chronology is to understand that some of the judges ruled concurrently. This is more probable as no particular judge ruled over all the tribes of Israel. The period of the judges did not last more than a maximum of 200 years.

An easily discernible pattern in the book of judges is as follows:

1. Sin: a falling away from God or an outright apostasy.

2. Punishment: a resultant experience of oppression by the enemy which brings suffering.
3. Repentance: which is usually described as “crying unto the Lord,” that is a change of heart and return to YHWH.
4. Deliverance: God raises up a deliverer or judge for them.

Unfortunately, the same cycle happened again and again. The different judges were of varying personalities, character traits and piety. However, they shared one thing in common: each and every one of them was chosen because God had endowed him with the qualities needed for leadership.

Twice during the period of the judges, some of the tribes of Israel attempted to have an organized government like the Canaanite tribes. They wanted a king. The two attempts failed. The first was during the career of Gideon who refused to be king for theological reasons. The second was during the brief and turbulent career of Abimelech, son of Gideon, who wanted to be king. This also failed because of his selfish ambition and pride.

The entire period of the judges was characterized by chaos and anarchy. It is best described in the very words of the scriptures: “in those days there was no king in Israel, everybody did what was right in his own sight” (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Tribal jealousies, clannish sentiments and inter-tribal wars made it impossible for the twelve tribes of Israel to unite during this period. It was not until the time of Samuel who was the last judge, but primarily, a priest and the first prophet that unity was achieved among the twelve tribes. It was also Samuel who anointed and installed the first king. The period of the judges can be divided into four, and this will be followed in studying the judges.

3.2 Judges of Period I & II

Othniel

Othniel, whose name means “lion of God” was the first of the judges. His wife was Achsah the daughter of Caleb. He gained her hand as a reward for his bravery in leading a successful expedition against Debir. Some thirty years after the death of Joshua, the Israelites fell under the subjection of Chushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia. He oppressed them for full eight years, when they “cried” unto Jehovah, and Othniel was raised up to be their deliverer. He was the younger brother of Caleb. He is the only judge mentioned connected with the tribe of Judah. Under him the land had rest forty years. He was a transitional figure in the history of Israel. He did most of his work between the Conquest and the period of the judges.

Ehud

His name means “union”. He was the son of Gera of the tribe of Benjamin. After Israel fell into sin again, the Lord allowed the Moabites to deal with them. The Moabites, who joined forces with the Ammonites and Amalekites, attacked Israel from the east and oppressed them for eighteen years. Ehud was a judge who led the mission to bring money to the Moabite King Eglon at his palace, which was probably located in Jericho. Ehud was uniquely gifted for this mission. He was left-handed and this allowed him to use his double-edged sword to stab the king in a surprise attack. Ehud’s success was the result of careful plotting and the element of surprise. He paid the tribute and left, but he then returned saying he had received an oracle from the gods. King Eglon fell for this trick, and he was murdered. Because the king was dead, it took a long time for the Moabite leaders to organize themselves. This allowed the Israelite army to gather their forces by the Jordan River and prepare their attack. In the battle that followed, no Moabite escaped alive. Ehud’s success was complete, and Israel enjoyed peace for eighty years.

Shamgar

Shamgar was raised up to fight against the Philistines. The Philistines from the maritime plain had made incursions into the Hebrew upland for the purposes of plunder, when Shamgar, the son of Anath, otherwise unknown, headed a rising for the purpose of freeing the land from this oppression. Even though Shamgar had a non-Israelite name, he was probably an Israelite by birth. Shamgar fought the Philistines with a strange weapon. He used an ox goad, which was usually used to whip cattle that were pulling a plow. The goad was a formidable sharp-pointed instrument, sometimes ten feet long. He used this weapon to kill 600 men. Shamgar’s name is also mentioned in the song of Deborah showing that he was probably contemporary for a time with Deborah and Barak.

Deborah

After Shamgar defeated the Philistines, the Israelites were invaded by Jabin, the king of Hazor, and Sisera, who was the king of Harosheth-haggoyim. By this time, the ruins of Hazor had been rebuilt. King Jabin had regained his military power and he had an army of nine hundred iron chariots. He oppressed Israel for twenty years. God had a prophetess named Deborah (whose name means a bee) in Israel who led his people during this dark time. She gave out judgments under a palm tree in southern Ephraim. Deborah also called on Barak to gather together the armies of Naphtali and Zebulun, which were the two main tribes affected by King Jabin’s oppression. Deborah instructed Barak to

organize a surprise attack against King Sisera by the Kishon River. Barak was hesitant to carry out these instructions, and he asked Deborah to accompany him on his mission. Because of his unwillingness to follow Deborah's instructions, Barak did not have the honour of killing King Sisera, the commander of the Canaanite forces. However, just as God had promised, the surprise attack from Mount Tabor was successful. Because they were trapped in the swamps of the Jezreel Valley, the Canaanites were not able to use their chariots. King Sisera was eventually killed by Jael, a Kenite woman. Jael tricked King Sisera by offering him a place to stay because her family had friendly relations with the Canaanites. She heroically killed King Sisera by pounding a tent stake through his head. After this, the Israelites gained freedom from King Jabin. Then they destroyed his power completely. The song of Deborah, in chapter 5 of the book of Judges, celebrates Israel's victory over Jabin. It is one of the oldest poems in the Bible. It praises the God of Israel as the King who comes to protect his people.

Gideon

After conquering King Jabin and King Sisera, Israel had forty years of peace. Eventually this peace was disturbed when the Midianites and the Amalekites attacked Israel from the east. They destroyed the economy by invading Israel at harvest time. When the Israelites cried out to God, he sent a prophet to deliver a message of hope to them. After this, an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and called him to lead the people into battle. God assured Gideon of his presence by giving him a sign. Gideon knew that he had been visited by God himself, so he built an altar in Ophrah that he called "The LORD Is Peace". Gideon also destroyed the altars at Ophrah that were dedicated to the false gods, Baal and Asherah. He commanded the people to worship God at the new altar. Because of this, Gideon was also known as Jerubbaal, which means, "let Baal contend with him."

After this, Gideon gathered an army of 32,000 men from Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. In order to be absolutely sure that God was with him, Gideon asked for another sign, which involved a piece of fleece. To many people, it may seem like Gideon was asking God for a lot of reassurance, but we have to remember that Gideon lived in an area where the wonders of God had been scarce for many years. Gideon, like Moses, needed reassurance that God was with him, and God responded to Gideon's growing faith. Gideon finally attacked the Midianites with only 300 men. Of his original army, 22,000 had left because they were afraid. Another 9,700 were sent home, even though they were brave men. God used the small army in a marvelous way to confound the Midianites. The 300, strangely armed with torches and pitchers and trumpets, rushed in from three different points on the camp of Midian at

midnight, in the valley to the north of Moreh, with the terrible war-cry, "For the Lord and for Gideon". Terror-stricken, the Midianites were put into dire confusion and in the darkness slew one another, so that only fifteen thousand out of the great army of one hundred and twenty thousand escaped alive. God gave Israel victory over the Midianite leaders Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, and Zalmunna and he chased the Midianites deep into the Transjordan area. Gideon also eventually punished the leaders of Succoth and Penuel, who refused to help him.

Gideon's glorious victory caused the Israelites to be very interested in having a king. The men of Israel wanted to establish Gideon's family as the royal dynasty. Gideon refused to become king. Instead, he wrongly set up an ephod, which was a garment made from the gold they had taken in battle. The ephod was probably used for religious practices and for trying to tell the future. Gideon's era eventually came to an end. He was God's instrument, and he helped Israel have rest for forty years. He fathered seventy sons and died in old age.

Abimelech

The meaning of this name is "my father is king" or "father of a king". He is Gideon's son. After Gideon's era, he attempted to become king of Israel by naming himself king in Shechem. With the support of his relatives in Shechem, Abimelech had all of his brothers seventy in number, killed "on one stone," at Ophrah except Jotham. After Abimelech's coronation, Jotham voiced his opposition to his brother and went into hiding. He was an unprincipled, ambitious ruler, often engaged in war with his own subjects. Three years later, Abimelech's evil schemes entrapped him when the citizens of Shechem rebelled against him. He furiously attacked the city and destroyed it. A short time later, however, he was wounded at Thebez when a woman dropped a millstone on top of him from a tower. Abimelech asked his servant to kill him and the servant did so. This episode in Israel's history shows how bad an evil king could be.

Tola

Tola actually refers to a scarlet worm. He was a minor judge from Issachar who judged Israel for twenty-three years. After his death he was buried in Shamir. The Bible has no more information on him than this.

Jair

Jair is a name that means “enlightener”. He was a minor judge from Gilead who judged Israel for twenty-two years. His opulence is described in Judges 10:3-5. He had thirty sons, each riding on "ass colts." They had possession of thirty of the sixty cities which formed the ancient Havoth-jair.

3.3 Judges of Period III and IV

Jephthah

The name actually means “he whom God sets free”, or “the breaker through”, a "mighty man of valour" who delivered Israel from the oppression of the Ammonites and judged Israel six years. He has been described as "a wild, daring, Gilead mountaineer, and sort of warrior Elijah." When the Israelites were being attacked by the Ammonites, the elders of Gilead in their distress the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob, to which he had fled when driven out wrongfully by his brothers from his father's inheritance Jephthah promised to help them if he would remain as their leader even after the war was over. At a solemn ceremony he became their “head” at Mizpah. After this ceremony, Jephthah began corresponding with the king of the Ammonites. In this correspondence, Jephthah argued for Israel’s rights based on the fact that God had given the land to them. Instead of going out immediately to war, Jephthah hoped that “the LORD, who is judge” would settle the dispute. However, the Ammonite king was not impressed with Jephthah’s argument. When the Spirit of God came over him, Jephthah led Israel into battle, but only after making a rash vow to God. He was victorious but found out that his vow-to sacrifice to God the first thing he saw when he returned home-required him to sacrifice his daughter.

The men of Ephraim regarded themselves as insulted in not having been called by Jephthah to go with him to war against Ammon. This led to a war between the men of Gilead and Ephraim. In this war, 42,000 Ephraimites were killed. After this war, Jephthah ruled for only six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Ibzan

Ibzan was a minor judge from Bethlehem who ruled Israel for seven years. There is no much information on him in the Scriptures.

Elon

Elon is a name meaning “oak”. Elon was a minor judge from Zebulun. He held office for ten years. He is called the Zebulonite.

Abdon

Abdon means “servile”. He is the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, the location of which is uncertain. He is probably the Bedan of mentioned in 1Sa 12:11. He ruled for eight years.

Samson

Samson is a name meaning “of the sun”. He is the son of Manoah, born at Zorah. The narrative of his life is given in Jud 13-16. He was a "Nazarite unto God" from his birth, and in fact the first Nazarite mentioned in Scripture. The first recorded event of his life was his marriage with a Philistine woman of Timnath. Such a marriage was not forbidden by the Law of Moses, as the Philistines did not form one of the seven doomed Canaanite nations. It was, however, an ill-assorted and unblessed marriage. His wife was soon taken from him and given to his companion. For this Samson took revenge by burning the standing corn of the Philistines, who, in their turn, in revenge burnt her and her father with fire. Her death he terribly avenged. During the twenty years following this he judged Israel; but we have no record of his life. Probably these twenty years may have been simultaneous with the last twenty years of Eli's life. After this we have an account of his exploits at Gaza and of his infatuation for Delilah, her treachery and then of his melancholy death. He died when the temple to the idol, Dagon, collapsed knocked down by Samson himself. He was buried in his father's tomb in the territory of Dan.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have been exposed to the life and the ministry of the judges of Israel and the situation within which they ministered. It has also been made clear to you that they could not have reigned consecutively but simultaneously. There are thirteen judges in all and they ruled for various numbers of years. It was a period of anarchy that the scriptures have this to say about: in those days there are no kings in Israel and everybody did what seems right in his face.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The judges were charismatic leaders that God raised up to deliver his people from crisis.

The spiritual life of the Israelites at this period was following an evil vicious circle of sin-repentance-deliverance.

There are eleven judges in all in Israel that reigned simultaneously and not consecutively.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the ministry of Deborah as a judge in Israel.
2. How successful will you say that the ministry of Samson is?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Geisler, N. L. (1977) Old Testament Survey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

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MODULE 2

Unit 1	Introduction to the United Monarchy
Unit 2	The Court History of David
Unit 3	The Career of Solomon and the Divided Monarchy
Unit 4	The Prophets and Their Impact on the Religious Life in Israel
Unit 5	Period of Religious Reforms: Hezekiah and Josiah

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED MONARCHY

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Introduction to I Samuel
3.1	Introduction to 1 Samuel
3.1.1	Date
3.1.2	The Purpose of the Book
3.2	Samuel – Judge, Prophet and Seer
3.2.1	Personal History of Samuel
3.2.2	The Character of Samuel
3.3	The Beginning of the Monarchy
3.3.1	Saul the Man
3.3.2	Saul the Soldier
3.3.3	Saul the King
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-marked Assignment
7.0	Preference/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Module, you were introduced to the history of the creation of the world and that of the Israelite nation, beginning from the patriarchal history to the period the Israelites got to the Promised Land. You also learned about the events that went on throughout the entire period of the Judges. In this Module, focus is on the establishment of the period of monarchy beginning from the ministry of Samuel who led the nation to the era of kings. In this unit, emphasis will be on Samuel and the selection of Saul as the first king of Israel. Most of the story here is recorded in I Samuel; hence it will be of benefit if you will read the whole book of I Samuel.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Narrate the events leading to the call of Samuel;
- Tell the story of Samuel's ministry;
- Analyze the character traits of Samuel and how this helped his ministry;
- Discuss the events leading to selection of Saul as the first king of Israel;
- Evaluate the reign of Saul as the first king of Israel; and
- Analyze the character of Saul and how this affected his reign.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to I Samuel

First and Second Samuel derive their names from the individual whom God used to establish kingship in Israel. Samuel is the most prominent figure in the early narratives of 1 Samuel. His key role in leading the nation of Israel through the transition from the period of the judges to that of the monarchy warrants the use of his name as the title for the book.

These books, however, have not always been called I and II Samuel, neither was the material originally divided into two books. As far as it is known, the Septuagint translators were the first to separate the material of Samuel into two books and they made a similar division in the material of Kings. The Hebrew original of these books was written, as is characteristic of Hebrew, with symbols only for consonants and none for vowels. When translated into Greek, it was necessary to use symbols for both vowels and consonants, thus greatly lengthening the manuscript. Presumably the practical consideration of the length of the scroll was the cause for dividing the material of both Samuel and Kings into two books (scrolls) instead of retaining just one. The Septuagint translators, recognizing the continuity of content and emphasis in Samuel and Kings, designated what is now known as 1 and 2 Samuel as "The First and Second Books of Kingdoms" and then designated what now is known as 1 and 2 Kings as "The Third and Fourth Books of Kingdoms." The Latin Vulgate (the Latin translation of the Bible prepared by Jerome in the late fourth century AD) slightly modified the Septuagint titles to "First, Second, Third, and Fourth Kings." These titles were utilized all through the Middle Ages and were modified into our present titles by the Protestant Reformers in the 16th century AD in agreement with Jewish rabbinic tradition.

3.1.1 Authorship

Even though Samuel is prominent in the early part of the book, and the book bears his name in our English versions, it is clear that he is not the author of the entirety of 1 and 2 Samuel. Samuel's death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25:1 prior to the time of the accession of David to the throne in place of Saul. Who wrote the material of 1 and 2 Samuel if it was not Samuel? On the basis of the statement in 1 Chronicles 29:29, it has been suggested by some that Samuel composed the early narratives of the book and that his work was later supplemented by the writings of the prophets Nathan and Gad. Others have suggested one of David's contemporaries, such as Ahimaaz, Hushai, or Zabud. Presumably, these men would have had access to the writings of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, as well as to other sources pertaining to the life and reigns of Saul and David. Who the real author was, however, cannot be determined from available evidence. Whoever it was, it is clear that he lived after the death of Solomon, and the division of the kingdom in 930 BC since the accounts of the book has a reflection of this incidence.

3.1.2 Date

The argument concerning the authorship is actually closely connected with the date the books were written. For example, as it has been said above, because of the reference to some statements, the author of the book must have lived to see the end of the united Israelite kingdom. Two instances is the statement "Israel and Judah" in 1 Samuel 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Samuel 5:5; 24:1-9; and "kings of Judah" in 1 Samuel 27:6. These two phrases are indicators that the authors or editors were writing during the period that the kingdom has been divided. Thus, one can postulate that 1 and 2 Samuel was published in its final form sometime after 930 BC.

3.1.3 The Purpose of the Book

The theme binding together the narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel pertains to the relationship between kingship and the covenant. Kingship as requested by the people was a denial of the covenant; kingship as instituted by Samuel was compatible with the covenant; kingship as practiced by Saul failed to correspond to the covenantal idea; and kingship as practiced by David was an imperfect but true representation of the ideal of the covenantal king. It has often been pointed out that there is ambivalence in the description of the establishment of kingship in Israel (1 Samuel 8–12), because in some places it seems to be suggested that kingship is improper for Israel, while in other places it seems to be suggested that kingship was God's will for his people. Resolution to this tension is provided in 1 Samuel 12, when Samuel inaugurates Saul as Israel's first king in the context of a covenant renewal ceremony by which Israel renews its allegiance to the Lord.

Here it becomes clear that kingship in itself was not wrong for Israel; God desired Israel to have a king. But kingship of the type Israel desired ("like the other nations") and for the reasons she wanted a king (to give a sense of national security and lead her to victory in battle) involved a denial of the Lord as her ultimate sovereign.

Samuel defined the role of the king in Israel and presented Saul to the people in a ceremony in which they renewed their allegiance to the Lord. The monarchy in Israel was first established in a form that was compatible with the covenant. The king in Israel, as every other citizen of the nation, was to be subject to the law of the Lord and to the word of the prophet. From this perspective, the author depicts the reign of Saul as failing to correspond to the covenantal requirements, while the reign of David, although imperfect, reflected the covenantal ideal.

There are at least two other important themes recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel. The first of these is that David conquers and acquires the land promised to Abraham. It is in the time of David that Israel's borders are extended from Egypt to the Euphrates, as had been promised. A second event of major significance for the remainder of the Bible is David's selection of Jerusalem to be the political and religious centre of Israel.

3.2 Samuel – Judge, Priest, Prophet and Seer

The name Samuel actually means, "his name is El" or "name of God". Samuel was in a sense the last judge that ruled Israel before the establishment of the monarchy. He was however more than a judge as he functioned as a priest, prophet and seer.

3.2.1 Personal History of Samuel

Samuel's parents were committed to God and went every year to worship at the sanctuary at Shiloh. His father, Elkanah, was a Levite who lived in Ramah, a territory of Ephraim. His mother, Hannah, was unable to bear children early in their marriage. Elkanah had a second wife, Peninnah who had children and taunted Hannah continuously because of her inability to have children. On a visit to Shiloh, Hannah prayed in the sanctuary, promising that if the Lord gave her a son, she would dedicate him to God's service for life as a Nazirite. The Lord heard Hannah's prayer and granted her request. She had no other children until after she had fulfilled her vow to dedicate Samuel.

In accordance to his mother's vow Samuel was presented to Eli and began his service in the sanctuary. Three ingredients: a feeling of worth, a knowledge of his parents' love, and a sense of purpose-laid the foundation of his personality and his future accomplishments. First

Samuel 2 gives further proof of the value of Samuel's early training. Eli's sons were at that time following the ungodly practices of the false religions around them. Eli, now an old man, had allowed his sons to get away with too much and was now powerless to stop them. Samuel refused to follow Eli's sons in the path of evil, or to behave disrespectfully toward Eli. When God told Samuel that he had decided to judge Eli and Eli's family, Samuel responded with reverence and respect. His personal and spiritual growth indicated that he had been marked out as a future prophet of the Lord.

When the Philistines invaded the land, the Israelite army was defeated. They believed that the Ark of the Covenant would guarantee their success, and they sent away to Shiloh for it. The next day the Israelites were again defeated and the ark captured. When this news reached Eli, he fell from his stool and died. Twenty years go by before Samuel's name is mentioned again in 1 Samuel 7:2-3. It appears that he lived in Ramah during this time and went around the country preaching and warning the Israelites to turn from sin. Samuel probably also started the schools for the prophets during this period. Schools were started at Bethel, Gilgal, Ramah, among others as a natural result of Samuel's ministry. After a twenty-year ministry, Samuel thought the time was right to try to move Israel toward spiritual and national oneness. He called a meeting at Mizpah. There, the Israelites poured out water on the ground, fasted, and prayed to express deep humiliation and repentance. The Philistines did not understand what the Israelites were doing and decided to attack the defenceless worshipers, who begged Samuel to pray for them. He offered a sacrifice and the Lord sent a violent thunderstorm, frightening off the Philistine invaders. The Israelites pursued them and won an important victory at Ebenezer.

As Samuel grew older, Israel rejected his leadership and asked for a king. After earnest prayer, the Lord gave Samuel direction, and Samuel granted Israel's request for a king. Later he anointed Saul with oil and declared that Saul was prince over God's people. Samuel then summoned the Israelites to Mizpah, where God's choice was made official, and Saul was hailed as king. After Saul's victory over Nahash, Samuel confirmed Saul's kingship at Gilgal. Then Samuel retired to Ramah to train men to carry on his ministry. I Samuel 25 briefly tell of Samuel's death, when all Israel gathered together and mourned for him. He was buried in Ramah.

3.2.2 The Character of Samuel

Samuel overcame many problems through godliness, perseverance, and dedication to the service of the Lord. His concern was for the good of his people. Wise and courageous, he boldly criticized the king, elders, and other people when necessary, always from the certain ground of God's revealed will.

While Samuel served as judge and priest, he was first and foremost a prophet. Through his ministry, the spiritual life of the Israelites improved. He established regular services at Shiloh, where he built an altar; and at Ramah he gathered a company of young men around him and established a school of the prophets. The schools of the prophets, thus originated, and afterwards established also at Gibeah, Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho, exercised an important influence on the national character and history of the people in maintaining pure religion in the midst of growing corruption. They continued to the end of the Jewish commonwealth. He appointed gatekeepers to the tent of meeting, organized observance of the Passover so well that it was still spoken about in Josiah's day, wrote down the way that a king and his kingdom should be, and wrote "The Chronicles of Samuel the Seer".

3.3 The Beginning of the Monarchy

As had been said earlier, Israel demanded for a king for two reasons principally, the two of which was a denial of the sovereignty of YHWH over them. They demand for a king because (a) they wanted to be like the other nations and (b) they wanted a king who will be leading them to battle. Despite this, the Lord agreed that they should have a king. The Lord asked Samuel to crown Saul as the first king of Israel. The demand for a king was also heightened because of the failure of Samuel's children to take after their father.

3.3.1 Saul the Man

The writers of the Old Testament tell the story of Saul in a fascinating way. While some Old Testament characters remain shadowy figures, Saul stands out, with both strengths and weaknesses, as a fully human, three-dimensional figure. He was, in many ways, a great man, but with flaws that grew more and more visible in the later years of his life. Born to a wealthy father, Saul was described as being tall and handsome. His courage was immense, and part of his military success was rooted in his fearlessness. In his early years as king, Saul is portrayed as a man with strength and generosity. He was kind and loyal to his friends and did not easily carry a grudge or hatred toward those who opposed him. But the real strength of Saul, in his early days, was his relationship with God. For all his natural gifts and abilities, Saul became king as a result of divine appointment and because the "Spirit of the Lord" came upon him.

In his later life, a change came over Saul, transforming him into a tragic, pitiable person. Saul's troublesome relationship with the young David shows this transformation. Once a friend, later seen as an enemy, David became the victim of Saul's unreasonable suspicions and irrational jealousy. Saul's periods of sanity were broken up by periods of depression and paranoia that affected his ability to think reasonably. Instead of fighting against the invading Philistines, he put his energy into pursuing David. The biblical writers describe this change as "the departure of the Spirit of God from Saul" and "an evil spirit from the LORD tormenting him" (1 Samuel 16:14). Many modern writers have interpreted these problems as mental illnesses. But it is difficult to diagnose ancient people using modern psychology because the literary sources do not give us enough information to do so. The Bible instead uses the language of theology to describe the change in Saul: the Spirit of God had departed from him. From a simple human perspective, the man was not equal to the enormous tasks before him. Overcome by its complexity, and losing his faith in the God who had given him such awesome responsibilities, Saul ended his days in tragedy.

3.3.2 Saul the Soldier

Saul lived during an important period in the history of the Israelite tribes. Before he became king, the Israelite tribes were losing battles and losing land. The Philistines, who had a powerful army, were settled along the Mediterranean coast. They planned to move eastward and take control of all of Palestine. To do this, they had to destroy the Israelites, who were in the hill country on the west of the Jordan and also in Transjordan. Without a strong and permanent Israelite army, the Philistines were a grave threat to Israel's continued existence.

Israel, weakened by the Philistine defeat, was vulnerable to enemies on other borders. The nation of Ammon, east of the Israelites' land in Transjordan, attacked the town of Jabesh. Saul, summoning an army of volunteers, rescued the inhabitants of Jabesh and defeated the Ammonites. It was after this that Saul became king. He had already been anointed a prince or leader among the people by Samuel. After his military success at Jabesh, he was officially named king at the sanctuary in Gilgal.

The defeat of the Ammonites gave Israel hope, but it did not cancel out the danger that the Philistines created. Even the place where Saul was named king shows this: Gilgal was chosen partly because another, older shrine (the one in Shiloh) was held by the Philistines. Gilgal was in one of the few areas the Philistines did not control. If Saul's kingship was to mean anything, he had to take care of the Philistine problem

immediately; if he did not, there would be no Israel for him to rule. Saul acted immediately. Although the precise historical details are difficult to reconstruct, the Bible does give us a general view of Saul's war against the Philistines. He attacked army camps at Gibeah and at Micmash. He had great success at Micmash, thanks in part to the help of his son Jonathan. The Philistines were beaten, and they retreated from that part of the hill country. In Gibeah, his hometown, Saul established a military base and built a fortress there. After this initial victory, Saul was constantly involved in other military activities. He continued to fight enemies on his eastern borders, particularly Ammon and Moab, to the east of the Dead Sea. He fought large battles on the southern border with Israel's old enemies the Amalekites. In this, too, he was successful. Through all this, he had to keep a constant watch on Philistine activity on his western border.

The Philistines assembled a large army in the area of Aphek, but instead of attacking Saul's mountain territory directly, the army moved northward and invaded Israel at a weak point, in the vicinity of Jezreel. Saul tried to gather an army big enough to meet the Philistine threat, but he was unable to do so. With inadequate preparation and insufficient forces, he prepared for an impossible battle at Mount Gilboa. His sons were killed on the battlefield, and Saul, rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines, took his own life. From a military perspective, Saul became king at a time of crisis, averted disaster, and gained some respite for his country. But the battle in which he died was a disaster for Israel. The country he left behind at his death was in worse shape than it had been on his assumption of power.

3.3.3 Saul the King

If Saul had a difficult task as Israel's military commander, he had an even more difficult task as Israel's king. Before Saul, no human king had ruled Israel. Israel was a theocracy, and God, the one and only true King of Israel, reigned. Consequently, although there had been single, powerful rulers in Israel's earlier history, nobody had assumed the title of king. It was thought that such an act would undermine God's central position in the life of the nation.

The necessity for a king in Israel was created by the Philistine threat. Israel's judges, or other temporary rulers, could have dealt with a brief outside threat. But a permanent and serious threat to Israel's existence required more than temporary measures. If Israel was to survive as a nation, it needed a single, central military government whose power was recognized throughout the various tribes that made up the nation. For this reason the kingdom was established, and Saul became the first king. Since there had never been a kingdom before in Israel, there were no

understood rules and customs about kingship. What were Saul's responsibilities? Primarily, they were military, for that was why Saul had been made king. Saul was a successful military leader in the early years, but he faced other difficult tasks besides military ones. Some Israelites still opposed the very idea of a king. Furthermore, nobody had spelled out exactly what it was that the leader could and couldn't do. He was a soldier—that much was clear. But what role did he have to play in the religious life of Israel?

Though readers of the Bible are often tempted to judge Saul harshly, we must also remember the difficulty of the task he undertook. The military problems alone that Saul faced would have been enough to destroy many great men. Saul also had to create an entirely new role as king. Saul's leadership was often modest and praiseworthy. He was not obsessed with wealth or with showing-off. Unlike many Eastern kings, he had a small and modest court located in Gibeah. There is little evidence that it was especially rich or lavish. He did not have a standing army. He had only a few men close to him, in particular his son Jonathan and his general Abner. He also sought out young men who showed promise, like David.

Saul, as a national leader, had problems with Samuel, who had appointed him and led Israel before Saul's kingship. While Saul deserves most of the blame for these conflicts, Samuel himself does not appear to have been particularly supportive and helpful. Samuel once condemned Saul for taking on the priestly job of offering sacrifices when Samuel was absent at Gilgal. Saul deserved this criticism, but Saul's dilemma was clear: Did the king of Israel have a priestly role or not? The answer to this question was unclear to Saul and to Israel. Saul was in a state of crisis. He had waited seven days for Samuel to turn up, and as each day passed, more and more of his soldiers deserted him. So Saul acted. This incident shows the difficulty of ruling as a nation's first king. After the Amalekite war, Saul was again divinely condemned through Samuel.

Saul was Israel's first king but not its greatest. Yet no criticism of Saul's leadership should be so harsh as to ignore his strengths. He faced extraordinary difficulties and for a while was successful. Ultimately, he died in failure, yet his achievements might have been better remembered had he been followed by any leader other than David. David's gifts were so magnificent that Saul's achievements faded and only his failures are remembered.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have studied the transitional period from the era of the judges (Samuel been the last of them), to the era of the monarchy, when Israel started to have kings. You would have noticed that the presentation of this material to you was not entirely spiritual; this is because one wants you to have an unbiased and objective analysis of this important period in the life of the nation of Israel. You have been exposed also to all the problems that Saul faced as the first king of Israel as well as the role of Samuel as the transitional figure.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The authorship of the books of Samuel is not solely by Samuel but rather an editorial work.

Samuel was an important transitional figure in Israel, being a judge, priest, prophet and seer.

Samuel, in line with divine injunction anointed Saul as the first king of Israel.

Saul, as the first king has no model to follow – he had to map out his own path.

Saul's failure is due more to the complexity of the problems he had to face rather than the weaknesses he had as a man.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Comment on the view that Samuel was not the author of the book of I and II Samuel.
2. What are the factors that led to the failure as Saul as the king of Israel?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 THE COURT HISTORY OF DAVID

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to Chronicles
 - 3.1.1 Authorship
 - 3.1.2 Date
 - 3.1.3 Purpose
 - 3.2 The Preparation of David for Kingship
 - 3.2.1 David's Background
 - 3.2.2 David the Fugitive
 - 3.3 The Davidic Reign
 - 3.3.1 David's Enthronement
 - 3.3.2 David's Military Career
 - 3.3.3 David's Errors
 - 3.3.4 The Troubled Endings and the End
 - 3.3.5 David's Spiritual Career
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 Preferences/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied the career of Samuel as the great transitional figure who functioned as the last judge, priest, prophet and sees all in one. You learned how he was led by God to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. Apart from this you were also been exposed to the life and career of Saul, the complexity of the problems facing him and the factors that led to his failure as the king. In this unit, focus will be on the successor of Saul, the man David. David was the one who became the model of YHWH's concept of the kingship despite all his human weaknesses. He was called the man after God's own heart. This unit will cover the entire life and ministry of David as the king of Israel.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

Comment on the authorship of the Chronicles;
 Evaluate the reign of David and the factors that led to his success;
 and

Discuss the spiritual reformations that David made in Israel.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to Chronicles

Two books of the Old Testament discuss the life and the reign of David. The first of these books is II Samuel and the other is I Chronicles. However, because the background issues of the books of Samuel had been dealt with earlier, we will concentrate on the books of Chronicles at this point.

The books bore the title in the Massoretic Hebrew *Dibre hayyamim*, that is, "Acts of the Days." This title was rendered by Jerome in his Latin version "Chronicon," and hence "Chronicles." In the Septuagint version the book is divided into two, and bears the title *paraleipomena*, that is, "things omitted," or "supplements", because it contains many things omitted in the Books of Kings. The books of Chronicles are among the most neglected books in the Bible, partly because most of the materials can be found in Samuel, Kings, or elsewhere in the OT. The records in Chronicles, somewhat eclectic in nature and ignoring certain facets of national history while emphasizing others, deal with only a selected portion of the history of the Israelites. A good deal of the criticism that the work is historically unreliable has come from a lack of understanding of the book's character. Chronicles is not so much a history as a metaphysical interpretation of events in Israelite life in light of covenantal values. It was not sufficient for the Chronicler that kings rose and fell; the events were interpreted from a special religious standpoint.

3.1.1 Authorship

In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Chronicles form a single book. The Bible does not say who wrote that book or when it was written. According to the Jewish Talmud, Ezra wrote "his book and Chronicles—the order of all generations down to himself." Although many scholars defend the view that Ezra wrote Chronicles, there is still no general agreement about the date and authorship of the book. The author is usually called "the Chronicler," a title suggesting that he was a historian. It is possible that he was a scribe, priest, or Levite. Evidently, the writer had access to government and Temple archives, because repeated references are made to a number of official records of kings (1 Chronicles 9:1; 27:24; 2 Chronicles 16:11; 20:34; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 32:32; 33:18; 35:27; 36:8) and prophets (1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32; 33:19).

The evidence is suggestive, but not conclusive, that the author of Chronicles also wrote the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The last two

verses of Chronicles are almost the same as the first three verses of Ezra. The language and literary style of all three books are similar. The same theological concerns for the Temple and its worship and the same interest in lists and genealogies appear in all three books. In the Hebrew Bible, Ezra-Nehemiah is considered to be one book and comes before Chronicles. Chronicles is at the very end of the Hebrew Bible.

3.1.2 Date

It is not possible to determine precisely when the book of Chronicles was written. The book ends with a reference to the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, permitting the Jewish captives in Babylon to return to their homeland. Since Cyrus's decree is usually dated about 538 BC, Chronicles could not have been written before that date. But if Ezra-Nehemiah is a part of the same work as Chronicles, the materials could not have been written until Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in 444 BC. Genealogies in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah may shed some light on the dating of the books. In 1 Chronicles 3:10-24 the lineage of David and Solomon is traced through the sixth generation after the exile, which would make the date for Anani (the last person in the list) about 400 BC. The language of Chronicles is definitely that of postexilic Hebrew. The use of the Persian word *daric* in 1 Chronicles 29:7 and the lack of any Greek word places Chronicles in the Persian period (538–331 BC). Apart from this, the word *midrash* which means “exposition” appears in the Old Testament only in Chronicles (2 Chronicles 13:22; 24:27) but is very common in post-biblical Hebrew. Around 400 BC is probably the best estimate for the date of Chronicles, based on evidence now available.

3.1.3 Purpose

The Chronicler must have lived in Jerusalem and written for the Jewish community there. He refers to Jerusalem about 240 times and to Judah more than 225 times. A negative feeling toward the northern kingdom of Israel can be seen in the almost total lack of references to any northern king.

Compiled in the postexilic period, Chronicles was meant to emphasize the significance of the theocracy seen in light of earlier history. The theocracy was a social configuration God planned for postexilic Judah, a religious rather than secular community. Instead of a king, the Jews had a priesthood of which the Lord approved. The postexilic Judeans were to live as a holy nation, not as people with political and nationalistic ambitions. Therefore, the Chronicler demanded implicit obedience to the Mosaic covenant so that the returning Jews could find prosperity, divine blessing, and grace. The Jews were still the chosen people, purged by

the experience of exile, with a new opportunity to fulfil the Sinai covenant.

The Chronicler gave great weight to divine retribution and was insistent that all action be guided by specific moral principles, to reflect God's character clearly in his people. Because the writer saw God's hand in all history, punishing the apostate and being gracious to the penitent, he saw in the chastened remnant of the exile the true spiritual heirs of the house of David. He insisted that the postexilic community adhere rigorously to the morality of Sinai, guarding against pre-exilic apostasy and ensuring divine blessing.

The writer wanted the Jews to know God's power. He also wanted them to believe in the Lord so that they would be established. If they believed God's messengers, they would succeed. He also wanted the people to know that Jerusalem was God's chosen place of worship, and that the Temple, priests, singers, Levites, and gatekeepers had been divinely appointed. The Temple was meant to be a place where all their needs could be met.

3.2 The Preparation of David for Kingship

The Davidic narrative, especially the one concerned about his background, in the book of I Samuel, as we have said earlier can be attributed to an editor later than Samuel. This is reflected in the fact that the story about how David got to the palace seem to be two different accounts. The account in I Samuel 16 seems to infer that David was taken to the palace in order to be playing music to soothe Saul's sickness and Saul requested that David should remain in his service. The account in I Samuel 17, which talks about the David and Goliath encounter, seems to suggest that Saul was seeing David for the first time as he required knowing whose son he was in I Samuel 17:55-56. Though many people want to gloss over this discrepancy and unite the story, it is really not easy to do so.

3.2.1 David's Background

David though loved by his father was the eighth and youngest son. His father was Jesse, a citizen of Bethlehem. His father seems to have been a man in humble life. His mother's name is not recorded. Some think she was the Nahash mentioned in II Samuel 17:25. As to his personal appearance, we only know that he was red-haired, with beautiful eyes and a fair face as recorded in I Samuel 16:12 and 17:42. His early occupation was that of tending his father's sheep on the uplands of Judah. From what we know of his after history, doubtless he frequently beguiled his time, when thus engaged, with his shepherd's flute, while he

drank in the many lessons taught him by the varied scenes spread around him. His first recorded exploits were his encounters with the wild beasts of the field. He mentions that with his own bare hands he slew a lion and also a bear, when they came out against his flock, beating them to death in open conflict with his club. This background of David as a shepherd undoubtedly prepared him for the kingship because he technically became the shepherd of the people of Israel. Apart from this, his experience with the lion and the bear gave him the courage to actually face Goliath without fear. Just as he said, if God could save him from the lion and the bear, the same God will save him from the hands of Goliath.

While David, in the freshness of ruddy youth, was thus engaged with tendering his fathers' flocks, Samuel paid an unexpected visit to Bethlehem, having been guided there by divine direction. There he offered up sacrifice, and called the elders of Israel and Jesse's family to the sacrificial meal. Among all who appeared before him he failed to discover the one he sought. David was sent for, and the prophet immediately recognized him as the chosen of God, chosen to succeed Saul, who was now departing from the ways of God, on the throne of the kingdom. He accordingly, in anticipation, poured on his head the anointing oil. David went back again to his shepherd life. After this event the scriptures recorded that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward," and "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul". Not long after this David was sent for to soothe with his harp the troubled spirit of Saul, who suffered from a strange melancholic dejection. He played before the king so skillfully that Saul was greatly cheered, and began to entertain great affection for the young shepherd. After this he went home to Bethlehem. But he soon again came into prominence during the battle between the armies of the Philistines and of Israel that were in battle array in the valley of Elah.

David was sent by his father with provisions for his three brothers, who were then fighting on the side of Israel. On his arrival in the camp of Israel, David who will probably be about twenty years of age was made aware of the state of matters when the champion of the Philistines, Goliath of Gath, came to defy Israel. David took the challenge that none of the soldiers of Israel had the guts to take. Despite all entreaties not to face Goliath, David took his sling, and with a well-trained aim threw a stone out of the five he had taken out of the brook. The stone struck the giant's forehead, so that he fell senseless to the ground. David then ran and slew him, and cut off his head with his own sword. The result was a great victory to the Israelites, who pursued the Philistines to the gates of Gath and Ekron. David's popularity consequent on this heroic exploit awakened Saul's jealousy which he showed in various ways. He conceived a bitter hatred toward him and by various stratagems sought

his death 1Sa 18-30. The deep-laid plots of the enraged king, who could not fail to observe that David "prospered exceedingly," all proved futile, and only endeared the young hero the more to the people, and very specially to Jonathan, Saul's son, between whom and David a life-long warm friendship was formed.

3.2.2 David the Fugitive

To escape from the vengeance of Saul, David fled to Ramah to Samuel, who received him, and he dwelt among the sons of the prophets, who were there under Samuel's training. It is supposed by some that the sixth, seventh, and eleventh Psalms were composed by David at this time. This place was only few distance from the residence of Saul, who soon discovered where David had gone, and tried ineffectually to bring him back. Jonathan made a fruitless effort to bring his father to a better state of mind toward David who, being made aware of the fact, saw no hope of safety but in flight to a distance.

We accordingly find him first at Nob where he took bread and the sword of Goliath that has been kept there from the Priest from there he went to Gath, the chief city of the Philistines. The king of the Philistines would not admit him into his service, as he expected that he would, and David accordingly now went to the stronghold of Adullam. Here in a short time 400 men gathered around him and acknowledged him as their leader. It was at this time that David, amid the harassment and perils of his position, cried, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem;" when three of his heroes broke through the lines of the Philistines and brought him the water for which he longed but which he would not drink. When Saul got to know through Doeg that David had been assisted by the priest in Nob, in his rage at the failure of all his efforts to seize David, Saul gave orders for the massacre of the entire priestly family at Nob, all persons who wore a linen ephod, to the number of eighty-five persons, who were put to death by Doeg the Edomite. The sad tidings of the massacre were brought to David by Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, the only one who escaped. Hearing that Keilah, a town on the western frontier, was harassed by the Philistines, David with his men relieved it and then, for fear of Saul, he fled to the strongholds in the "hill country" of Judah. While encamped there, in the forest in the district of Ziph, he was visited by Jonathan, who spoke to him words of encouragement. The two now parted never to meet again. Saul continued his pursuit of David, who narrowly escaped from him at this time, and fled to the crags and ravines of Engedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Here Saul, who still pursued him with his army, narrowly escaped, through the generous forbearance of David, and was greatly affected by what David had done for him. He returned home from pursuing him, and David left for Maon, where, with his 600 men,

he maintained himself by contributions gathered from the district. Here occurred the incident connected with Nabal and his wife Abigail, whom David married after Nabal's death. Saul again went forth in pursuit of David, who had hid himself in the hill Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, in the wilderness of Ziph, and was a second time spared through his forbearance. He returned home, professing shame and penitence for the way in which he had treated David, and predicting his elevation to the throne.

Harassed by the necessity of moving from place to place through fear of Saul, David once more sought refuge among the Philistines. He was welcomed by the king, who assigned him Ziklag as his residence. Here David lived among his followers for some time as an independent chief engaged in frequent war with the Amalekites and other tribes on the south of Judah. Achish summoned David with his men to join his army against Saul; but the lords of the Philistines were suspicious of David's loyalty, and therefore he was sent back to Ziklag, which he found to his dismay may had been pillaged and burnt during his brief absence. David pursued after the raiders, the Amalekites, and completely routed them. On his return to Ziklag tidings reached him of Saul's death. An Amalekite brought Saul's crown and bracelet and laid them at his feet. David and his men rent their clothes and mourned for Saul, who had been defeated in battle near Mount Gilboa. David composed a beautiful elegy, the most beautiful of all extant Hebrew odes, a "lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son" which is recorded in II Samuel 1:18-27. It bore the title of "The Bow," and was to be taught to the children, that the memory of Saul and Jonathan might be preserved among them.

3.3 The Davidic Reign

Despite the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, the road to the throne was not still easy for David. In fact, he had to be crowned twice. The first time he was crowned by the house of Judah and the second time he was crowned over the whole house of Israel.

3.3.1 David's Enthronement

David and his men now set out for Hebron under divine direction (2Sa 2:1-4). There, they were cordially welcomed, and he was at once anointed as king. He was now about thirty years of age. But his title to the throne was not undisputed. Abner took Ish-bosheth, Saul's only remaining son, over the Jordan to Mahanaim, and there crowned him as king. Then began a civil war began in Israel. The first encounter between the two opposing armies, led on the one side by Abner, and on the other by Joab, took place at the pool of Gibeon. It resulted in the defeat of Abner. Other encounters, however, between Israel and Judah

followed, but still success was on the side of David. For the space of seven and a half years David reigned in Hebron. Abner now sided with David, and sought to promote his advancement; but was treacherously put to death by Joab in revenge for his having slain his brother Asahel at Gibeon. This was greatly to David's regret. He mourned for the death of Abner. Shortly after this Ish-bosheth was also treacherously put to death by two Canaanites of Beeroth; and there being now no rival, David was anointed king over all Israel.

The elders of Israel now repaired to Hebron and offered allegiance to David in name of all the people, among whom the greatest enthusiasm prevailed. He was anointed king over all Israel, and sought out a new seat of government, more suitable than Hebron, as the capital of his empire. At this time there was a Jebusite fortress, "the stronghold", on the hill of Zion, called also Jebus. This David took from the Jebusites, and made it Israel's capital, and established here his residence, and afterwards built for himself a palace by the aid of Tyrian tradesmen. The Philistines, who had for some time observed a kind of truce, now made war against David; but were defeated in battle at a place afterwards called, in remembrance of the victory, Baal-perazim. Again they invaded the land, and were a second time routed by him. He thus delivered Israel from their enemies. David now resolved to bring up the Ark of the Covenant to his new capital. It had been in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim, not very far away from Jerusalem, where it had been for many years, from the time when the Philistines had sent it home. In consequence of the death of Uzzah (for it was a divine ordinance that only the Levites should handle the ark,) who had put forth his hand to steady the ark when the cart in which it was being conveyed shook by reason of the roughness of the road, David stayed the procession, and conveyed the ark into the house of Obed-edom, a Philistine from Gath. After three months David brought the ark from the house of Obed-edom up to Jerusalem seeing that Obed-edom was blessed greatly as a result of the presence of the Ark. On getting to Jerusalem, the Ark was placed in a new tent or tabernacle which David erected for the purpose. About seventy years had passed since it had stood in the tabernacle at Shiloh. The old tabernacle was now at Gibeah, at which Zadok ministered. David now carefully set in order all the ritual of divine worship at Jerusalem, along with Abiathar the high priest. A new religious era began. The service of praise was for the first time introduced into public worship. Zion became henceforth "God's holy hill."

When his kingdom was fully established, David had the following officers:

Joab the commander of the army
Jehoshaphat reorder

Zadok	Priest
Ahimelech	Priest
Sereiah	Secretary
Benaiah	in charge of the Cherethites and the Pelethites

3.3.2 David's Military Career

David now entered on a series of conquests which greatly extended and strengthened his kingdom. In a few years the whole territory from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt, and from Gaza on the west to Thapsacus on the east, was under his sway. In his many wars, he fought against Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zoba where he captured 12,000 foot-soldiers and 1700 horsemen. He fought against the Arameans of Damascus and killed 22,000 of them and another 18,000 in another battle in the Valley of Salt. He also subdued the Edomites and the Ammonites.

After the successful termination of all his wars, David formed the idea of building a temple for the ark of God. This he was not permitted to carry into execution, because he had been a man of war. God, however, sent Nathan to him with a gracious message. On receiving it he went into the sanctuary, the tent where the ark was, and sat before the Lord, and poured out his heart in words of devout thanksgiving. The building of the temple was reserved for his son Solomon, who would be a man of peace.

3.3.3 David's Errors

David had now reached the height of his glory. He ruled over a vast empire, and his capital was enriched with the spoils of many lands. But in the midst of all this success he fell, and his character became stained with the sin of adultery. It has been noted as characteristic of the Bible that while his military triumphs are recorded in a few verses, the sad story of his fall is given in detail, a story full of warning, and therefore recorded. This crime, in the attempt to conceal it, led to another. He was guilty of murder. Uriah, whom he had foully wronged, an officer of the Gibborim, the corps of heroes was, by his order, set in the front of the hottest battle at the siege of Rabbah, in order that he might be put to death. Nathan the prophet was sent by God to bring home his crimes to the conscience of the guilty monarch. He became a true penitent. He bitterly bewailed his sins before God. The thirty-second and fifty-first Psalms reveal the deep struggles of his soul, and his spiritual recovery. Bathsheba became his wife after Uriah's death. Her first-born son died, according to the word of the prophet. She gave birth to a second son, whom David called Solomon, and who ultimately succeeded him on the throne.

3.3.4 The Troubled Endings and the End

Hitherto, David's career had been one of great prosperity and success. However, towards the end of his reign, cloudy and dark days came. His eldest son Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel, was guilty of a great and shameful crime. He raped Tamar, his half-sister. This was the beginning of the disasters of his later years. After two years Absalom terribly avenged the crime against Tamar, and put Amnon to death. This brought sore trouble to David's heart. Absalom, afraid of the consequences of his guilt, fled to Geshur beyond Jordan, where he remained for three years, when he was brought back through the intrigue of Joab. After this there fell upon the land the calamity of three years' famine. This was soon after followed by a pestilence, brought upon the land as a punishment for David's sinful pride in numbering the people, in which no fewer than 70,000 perished in the space of three days.

This is followed by the rebellion of Absalom. The personal respect for David was sadly lowered by the incident of Bathsheba. There was a strong popular sentiment against the taking of the census, and the outburst of the plague in connection with it deepened the feeling of jealousy that had begun to manifest itself among some of the tribes against David. Absalom, taking full advantage of this state of things, gradually gained over the people, and at length openly rebelled against his father, and usurped the throne. Ahithophel was Absalom's chief counsellor. The revolt began in Hebron, the capital of Judah. Absalom was there proclaimed king. David was now in imminent danger, and he left Jerusalem and once more became a fugitive. It was a momentous day in Israel. The incidents of it are recorded with a fullness of detail greater than of any other day in Old Testament history. David fled with his followers to Mahanaim, on the east of Jordan. An unnatural civil war broke out. After a few weeks the rival armies were mustered and organized. They met in hostile array at the wood of Ephraim. Absalom's army was defeated, and himself put to death by the hand of Joab. The tidings of the death of his rebellious son filled the heart of David with the most poignant grief. He went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept giving utterance to the heart-broken cry, "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Peace was now restored, and David returned to Jerusalem and resumed the direction of affairs.

The exciting and laborious life he had spent, and the dangers and trials through which he had passed, had left David an enfeebled man, prematurely old. It became apparent that his life was now drawing to its close. A new palace conspiracy broke out as to who should be his successor. Joab favoured Adonijah. The chiefs of his party met at the Fuller's spring in the valley of Kidron, to proclaim Adonijah king; but

Nathan hastened on a decision on the part of David in favour of Solomon, and so the aim of Adonijah's party failed. Solomon was brought to Jerusalem, and was anointed king and seated on his father's throne. David's last words are a grand utterance, revealing his unfailing faith in God, and his joyful confidence in his gracious covenant promises. After a reign of forty years and six months David died at the age of seventy years, "and was buried in the city of David." His tomb is still pointed out on Mount Zion.

3.3.5 David's Spiritual Career

Both in his prophetic and in his regal character David was a type of the Messiah. One of the greatest legacies that David left for Israel was his revival of the temple worship and the inclusion of music. The book of Psalms commonly bears the title of the "Psalms of David", from the circumstance that he was the largest contributor (about eighty psalms) to the collection. He included praise-worship among the duties of the Levites and raised a huge choir with various instruments to sing the psalms. In fact David remained the greatest patron to cultic worship of Israel to date.

"The greatness of David was felt when he was gone. He had lived in harmony with both the priesthood and the prophets; a sure sign that the spirit of his government had been thoroughly loyal to the higher aims of the theocracy. The nation had not been oppressed by him, but had been left in the free enjoyment of its ancient liberties. As far as his power went he had striven to act justly to all. His weak indulgence to his sons, and his own great sin besides, had been bitterly atoned, and were forgotten at his death in the remembrance of his long-trying worth. He had reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem and seven and a half at Hebron. Israel at his accession had reached the lowest point of national depression; its new-born unity rudely dissolved; its territory assailed by the Philistines. But he had left it an imperial power, with dominions like those of Egypt or Assyria. The sceptre of Solomon was already, before his father's death, owned from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, and from the Orontes to the Red Sea.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have studied about the background to the books of Chronicles which forms one of the two major sources for the Davidic narratives. After this, you are exposed to the history of the whole reign of David in facets. You have seen the background of David, the preparation for the throne even from his days as a shepherd boy to the years he was running away from Saul and was in wilderness. You have also learnt how through his military campaigns David led Israel to the

attainment of the whole land that God promised the children of Israel. Your study of the period of David ends with his appointment of Solomon as his successor.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The book of Chronicles was written after the exile by the returning Jews

David grew from a humble background to become the king of Israel. Despite the anointing for years, it took David a long time to ascend the throne.

David, after ascending the throne, built the state of Israel and established it.

In his days, Israel had peace for long time from all her enemies.

David, though a type of Messiah in Israel is found to be imperfect as he had some failures.

In his later years, he had some rough times as a result of domestic problems.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss how the preparations that David received as a shepherd and as a fugitive shaped his career as king.
2. Discuss the failures of David and its consequences telling the implications of the failures.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE CAREER OF SOLOMON AND THE DIVIDED MONARCHY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Solomon: The Man
 - 3.1.1 Pre and Post-Enthronement Issues
 - 3.1.2 Solomon the Wise
 - 3.1.3 Solomon and the Queen of Sheba
 - 3.1.4 Matrimonial Alliances
 - 3.1.5 Solomon's Buildings
 - 3.2 Solomon: The Government
 - 3.2.1 Domestic Policy
 - 3.2.1 Foreign Policy
 - 3.2.2 Commercial Expansion
 - 3.2.3 The End of the Golden Era
 - 3.3 Rehoboam and the Divided Kingdom
 - 3.3.1 Ascension to the Throne
 - 3.3.2 The Division of the Kingdom
 - 3.3.3 Israel after the Division
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 Preferences/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learned about the kingdom of David and how towards the end of his life he has appointed Solomon to be king after him. You saw the strengths and the weaknesses of David as a king even though he was declared to be the man after God's own heart. In this unit, you will be exposed to the life and reign of Solomon, and also of Rehoboam his son and how the kingdom of Israel which had attained some level of unity under Saul; and the unity of which was strengthened under David and Solomon was lost during the reign of Rehoboam.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the significance of Solomon's foreign policy;
- Discuss the significance of Solomon's domestic policy;
- Narrate the events that show Solomon forth as a wise man;

- List and explain the sources of Solomon's wealth;

List the factors responsible for the division of the kingdom; and
Discuss the failure of Rehoboam's domestic policy.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Solomon: The Man

Our sources for the study of the life, reign, and character of Solomon are found in I Kings and II Chronicles. Since these books have been studied in the earlier units you only need to read the portions relevant to the Solomon's reign and Rehoboam's reign. The name Solomon actually takes its root from the Hebrew word which means 'peaceful'. He was also named Jedidiah by Nathan. Jedidah means 'beloved of Yahweh'. He was the second son of David by his wife Bathsheba, and he was acknowledged to be his father's favourite son. This may have been due partly to the fact that he, as a late offspring, considerably younger than David's other sons, was born in his father's old age, and partly to the intense love of David for Bathsheba and the wonderful qualities of Solomon himself. Solomon was not the logical heir to the throne, but David conferred it upon him instead of his older brothers. His successful reign of forty years speaks well for his intelligence, ability, and statesmanship. His reign offers a striking contrast to that of his father. It was almost entirely devoid of incident, and was marked by none of the vicissitudes of fortune which were so notable a feature in the career of David. Enjoying for the most part peaceful relations with foreign powers, and set free from the troubles that menaced him at home, Solomon was enabled to devote himself fully to the internal organization of his kingdom and the embellishment of his Court. In particular he gave much attention to the defence of the country (including the construction of fortresses), the administration of justice, the development of trade, and the erection of a national temple.

3.1.1 Pre and Post Enthronement Issues

Once David's sons Amnon and Absalom no longer fought for the throne, Solomon and Adonijah seemed the most likely of David's sons to be made king of Israel. But the kingship had been promised to Solomon. Near the end of David's life, Adonijah took steps to become king. With the help of Joab, a general in the army, and Abiathar the priest, Adonijah was proclaimed king. Solomon was not invited to the ceremony and neither were Nathan the prophet or Benaiah. Nathan told Bathsheba about Adonijah's plot, and Bathsheba asked David what his plans were. David ordered that Solomon be proclaimed king over Israel. He was anointed by Zadok as trumpets blew and the people shouted: 'Long live King Solomon'. Adonijah realized that his attempt to be made king had collapsed and asked for mercy, promising to be faithful to the new king.

Solomon worked quickly to ensure his power. When Adonijah asked to marry Abishag, the woman who had been David's companion in his old age, Solomon refused and ordered that Adonijah be put to death. Because Abiathar had joined with Adonijah, he was fired from his job as priest. Meanwhile, Joab - David's old army general who had joined with Adonijah - fled to the altar. There he grabbed hold of its horns and refused to let go. The king ordered Benaiah to kill Joab. Benaiah then became commander-in-chief of the armies. Shimei, who was part of Saul's family and also had a claim on the throne, was also executed.

One of Solomon's earliest recorded acts as king was to go to the high place at Gibeon, and sacrifice a thousand burnt offerings to God. On the following night, the Lord appeared to the king in a dream, asking Solomon what one thing he wanted most. Solomon asked for the wisdom to be a good ruler for Israel, and God was pleased with the request. Israel's king was given his wish, along with the gifts of long life, riches, and fame.

3.1.2 Solomon the Wise

Although Solomon was young, he soon became known for his wisdom. The first and most famous incident of his cleverness as a judge was when two women came to his court with a baby whom both women claimed as their own. Solomon threatened to split the baby in half. One woman was prepared to accept the decision, but the other begged the King to give the live baby to the other woman. Solomon then knew the second woman was the mother. Apart from this strange but interesting story of his wisdom, Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs and over a thousand songs. Most of the book of Proverbs is attributed to him, as well as Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Psalms 72 and 127. I Kings 11:41 particularly mentions his accomplishments as a writer. The queen of Sheba came to see and hear if the reports of Solomon's fame and wisdom were true. After viewing all he had in Jerusalem and hearing his wisdom, she blessed the Lord God of Israel for raising up such a wise person to sit upon such a magnificent throne.

3.1.3 Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Solomon's ships plied the Red Sea. His caravans penetrated far into Arabia. In his wide commercial outreach he must have been doing business with, and at the same time necessarily competing with, the famous Queen of Sheba. One of the most celebrated visits to Solomon was that of the Queen of Sheba, who came from southern Arabia. Historically, Arabia was a country rich in gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Solomon needed Sheba's products and trade routes; the queen of Sheba needed Solomon's cooperation in marketing her country's goods. The

queen came to Solomon with camels carrying spices, gold and precious stones. Her strenuous journey to Jerusalem by camel, traversing over twelve hundred miles of inhospitable terrain, almost certainly was dictated by business reasons as well as by the pleasure of seeing Solomon's splendor and hearing his wisdom. She asked him questions and riddles and was amazed at his wisdom.

3.1.4 Matrimonial Alliances

To secure the future peace and security of his realm, Solomon yielded to the custom of the times and made many domestic alliances with subject races and tribes by marrying their women. From the Amarna letters of the 14th century BC and numerous other sources, there is ample illustration of this practice of royal intermarriage for political and other reasons. Kings of Egypt, for example, gave their daughters in marriage to the kings of the Hittites and the princes of Mitanni in the 14th and 13th centuries BC. Ahab of the royal house of Omri married into the royal house of Tyre in the 9th century BC.

Instead of securing the kingdom, this led to spiritual decline and idolatry, and the eventual disruption of the nation. It was a disaster both nationally and personally. Of the many deities to which his foreign wives turned his heart, perhaps the best known in the ancient world was Ashtoreth, called "the Abomination of the Sidonians" in 1 Kings 11:5, 33. She was a fertility goddess, known as Astarte among the Greeks, and Ishtar in Babylon. Worshipping this goddess usually meant having sex with prostitutes in her temple. In addition to being a fertility deity, she was also a goddess of war in Babylon and Assyria. Her picture appears on a seal impression found at Bethel, where her name is given in hieroglyphic characters.

According to our present biblical data, Solomon went beyond any ancient monarch in the luxury of the harem. The enormous number of 700 wives and 300 concubines attributed to him must have been arrived at by counting all the female slaves of the palace among the concubines. Even then, the figure must be grossly exaggerated. Klostermann has wisely remarked that the two items are not in the right proportion, and he is inclined, and we think with good reason, to suspect that 70 wives and 300 concubines was the original statement of the sacred narrator.

3.1.5 Solomon's Buildings

Solomon was also renowned for his other building projects in which he used slave labour from the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and

Jebusites. He spent 13 years building his own palace, and also built a city wall, a citadel called the Millo, a palace for the daughter of Pharaoh (who was one of his wives) and facilities for foreign traders. He erected cities for chariots and horsemen and created storage cities. He extended Jerusalem to the north and fortified cities near the mountains of Judah and Jerusalem.

The building operations of Solomon were on a large scale and of a remarkable magnitude and splendour. Besides the erection of a magnificent temple he succeeded in emulating the great kings of Western Asia and Egypt by building for himself in the city of Jerusalem, palaces, houses, and gardens. In the erection of these, thirteen years were spent as well as a large sum of money, while thousands of labourers and craftsmen were employed. The royal residence embraced several distinct structures.

Archaeology has furnished testimony that Solomon's building and industrial activities were even more extensive than might be concluded from the vivid account in the Book of Kings. There is, however, evidence to substantiate the biblical notices that Israel's king drew heavily upon Phoenician skill not only in his maritime ventures, but particularly in the construction of the magnificent temple at Jerusalem and other buildings. Excavations by Albright at Gibeah (Tell el-Ful), the site of Saul's capital, have revealed the strength but extreme crudity of the royal buildings in comparison to the architectural skill displayed at Solomonic Megiddo and required by the temple and royal palace at Jerusalem.

The numerous archaeological finds have cast a lot of light on the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, although that temple itself has been utterly destroyed. It is now known that the plan of the edifice was characteristically Phoenician, as would be expected since it was built by an architect from Tyre (1 Kings 7:13-15). Similar ground plans of sanctuaries of the general period have been excavated in Northern Syria, especially Tell Tainat excavated by the University of Chicago in 1936. Findings have demonstrated that the specifications of the Solomonic structure outlined in 1 Kings 6-7 are pre-Greek and authentic for the tenth century BC and not to be denied historical genuineness or assigned to the period of the Hellenic influence after the sixth century BC, as some critics were accustomed to do.

The decorations of the temple, such as lillies, palmettes, and cherubim, were likewise characteristically Syro-Phoenician, the latter being a winged lion with human head, that is, a winged sphinx. This hybrid animal, however, was not a Solomonic innovation, but was inherited from the tabernacle and appears hundreds of times in the iconography of

Western Asia between 1800 and 600 BC. Many representations are found with a deity or king seated on a throne supported by two cherubim. In Israel, Yahweh and his throne, though they are both invisible, were similarly supported by symbolic cherubim.

3.2 Solomon: The Government

David had brought the twelve tribes of Israel together, but Solomon organized the entire state with the help of many officials. The entire country was divided into twelve major districts. Each district had to pay for the expenses of the king's court for one month each year. The system was fair and distributed the tax burden equally over the entire country.

3.2.1 Domestic Policy

Within his own realm, the Israelite monarch took important administrative steps both to further prosperity and to siphon a considerable portion of the vastly augmented national income into the royal treasury to finance his luxurious style of living and his ambitious building and commercial ventures. His division of the country into 12 districts, which to a large extent ignored the old tribal boundaries, is specifically mentioned and must have been only the skeleton of a highly efficient organization, presided over by important officials, two of whom were married to daughters of Solomon.

One of the main sources of the enormous revenue required to support Solomon's splendid reign was direct taxation in the form of money, goods, or unpaid labour furnished for his vast building projects. Weighed silver was the medium of exchange, if money was employed, since coins did not come into use until centuries later. But archaeological evidence points to the fact that money was not common and that the Israelite paid his taxes in staple produce of the land, such as wheat, wine and oil. Even as late as the ninth century BC, the tribute rendered to Israel by Mesha of Moab, of archaeological fame, whose stele was discovered in 1868, was paid in lambs and wool, products of a pastoral country. Besides taxes in money and produce, Solomon required large donations of free labour from the remnants of the original non-Israelite inhabitants of the land, whom he pressed into practical slavery. He also raised a special levy from all Israel apparently for the construction of the temple.

Solomon's internal policy was one of justice and concentration of power and authority. In the administration of justice, David's policy and reign of remissness and incoherence was improved upon by Solomon's stern administration and equanimity. He also took steps to make the royal authority stronger, more efficient and more far-reaching. We have a

longer list of ministers. David's government included a commander-in-chief, a captain of the mercenary guard, a superintendent of forced labour, a recorder, a scribe and priests, and a "king's friend". In addition to these, Solomon had a superintendent of prefects and a master of the household.

3.2.2 Foreign Policy

Solomon's foreign policy was one of international friendship and peace. His relation with the Pharaoh of Egypt has already been alluded to, and the same may be said of his relation with his other great neighbour, Hiram, King of Tyre, and lord of the Phoenician Riviera which lies between Lebanon and the sea. To him belonged the famous Cedar forests, and the no less famous artisans of Gabal were his subjects. Solomon formed with him a commercial treaty, surrendering certain towns on the northern frontier in exchange for floats of timber conveyed to Joppa and skilled workmen lent him for wood-carving, stone-fashioning, and bronze-casting. What Solomon gained by the alliance was knowledge of the Phoenician manner of trading. As ruler of Edom he had possession of the port of Eloth, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba. Here he built ships and sent his own servants, under Phoenician masters, to trade with Arabia. The profits went into the king's coffers. Whether the commerce of India reached him by this route is not certain. The list of products imported has sometimes been interpreted in this sense. But one or two obscure words in a comparatively late text can hardly establish the conclusion.

3.2.3 Commercial Expansion

Another important source of revenue for the royal treasury was from the king's remarkable expansion of industry. He is renowned as the first great commercial king of Israel. Taking full advantage of peculiarly favourable conditions which existed both by land and by sea, he expanded trade to a remarkable degree. The domestication of the Arabian camel from the twelfth century BC onward, as Albright has noted, brought with it a tremendous increase in nomadic mobility. Caravans could now travel through deserts whose sources of water might be two or three days apart. There is ample archaeological evidence that by Solomon's time caravan trade between the Fertile Crescent and south Arabia was already well-developed.

Solomon's control of the frontier districts of Zobah, Damascus, Hauran, Ammon, Moab and Edom meant that he monopolized the entire caravan trade between Arabia and Mesopotamia from the Red Sea to Palmyra, an oasis in northeast of Damascus, which he built as recorded in 1 Kings 9:18. By thus exercising control over virtually all the trade routes both to the east and the west of the Jordan, the Israelite monarch was able

substantially to increase the revenue flowing into the royal coffers by exacting tolls from the merchants passing through his territories. Solomon also traded in horses and chariots. This prosperous enterprise, developed by Israel's industrially minded monarch and made possible because of his control of the trade routes between Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, is recounted in what had been an enigmatic passage in 1 Kings 10:28-29:

Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue -- the royal merchants purchased them from Kue. They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.

This reading of the text would make Solomon the commercial middleman between Egypt and Asia Minor, having a complete monopoly on the horse and chariot trade, four Cilician horses being exchanged for one Egyptian chariot. Solomon is said to have built up a powerful standing army of chariots, which was stationed in a number of chariot cities, among which Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer are mentioned. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousands horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem.

Solomon's navy and his maritime trading projects in collaboration with Hiram of Tyre constitute another source of his proverbial prosperity. I Kings 9:26-28 says:

King Solomon also built ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea. And Hiram sent his men - sailors who knew the sea - to serve in the fleet with Solomon's men. They sailed to Ophir and brought back 420 talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

The king had a fleet of trading ships at sea along with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years it returned carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons.

Apart from this, Solomon also dealt in copper trade. There are important biblical references to copper smelting and casting activities in the Jordan Valley in I Kings 7:46, and it points to another prolific source of Solomon's wealth. As Glueck says, it was Solomon "who was the first one who placed the mining industry in the Wadi Arabah upon a really national scale." As a result, copper became the king's principal export and his merchants' main stock in trade. Putting out from Ezion-geber laden with smelted ore, his fleet brought back in exchange other

valuable goods obtainable in Arabian ports or from the nearby coasts of Africa.

3.2.4 The End of the Golden Era

Solomon's downfall came in his old age. He had taken many foreign wives, whom he allowed to worship other gods. He even built shrines for sacrifices to the gods of his foreign wives. Within Solomon's kingdom, he placed heavy taxation on the people, who became bitter. He also had the people work as soldiers, chief officers and commanders of his chariots and cavalry. He granted special privileges to the tribes of Judah and this alienated the northern tribes. The prophet Ahijah of Shiloh prophesied that Jeroboam son of Nebat would become king over ten of the 12 tribes, instead of one of Solomon's sons.

Outside Solomon's kingdom, Hadad, of the royal family of Edom, rose up as an adversary of Israel. Rezon son of Eliada, ruler of Aram also fought Solomon, and created tension between the two kingdoms that lingered on even after Solomon's reign ended. Solomon died in Jerusalem after 40 years as ruler of Israel. He was buried in the City of David.

3.3 Rehoboam and the Divided Kingdom

Rehoboam was the son of Solomon by Naamah the Ammonitess whose name ironically means "he enlarges the people". To be candid, Rehoboam inherited a kingdom on the brink of collapse. Solomon's administrative policy had fostered dangerous principles. His ambition for the magnificence and fame of his capital, Jerusalem, had led him to inaugurate a system of levies and taxes that proved burdensome and galling to his subjects. His attempt to form domestic alliances with his numerous neighbours filled his court with foreign customs and religions, and in later generations produced unfortunate results. Solomon's wisdom and power were not sufficient to prevent the rebellion of several of his border cities. Damascus under Rezon secured its independence from Solomon; and Jeroboam, a superintendent of works, his ambition stirred by the words of the prophet, fled to Egypt. Thus before the death of Solomon the apparently unified kingdom of David began to disintegrate. With Damascus' independence and a powerful man of Ephraim, the most prominent of the Ten Tribes, awaiting his opportunity, the future of Solomon's kingdom became dubious.

3.3.1 Ascension to the Throne

The assembly for the coronation Rehoboam, was called at Shechem, the one sacredly historic city within the territory of the Ten Tribes. The fact

that it met here was recognition of the prominence of those tribes in the government of Israel. According to I Kings 12: 2, 3, and 20, it seems that Jeroboam was either present at the assembly or was in close touch with the leaders. Before the coronation took place the assembly requested certain reforms in the policy followed by Solomon. Rehoboam who was forty-one years of age was not ready at once to modify a policy that had yielded him and his court associates such large privileges of luxury and ease. The reforms requested would materially reduce the royal exchequer and hence its power to continue the magnificence of Solomon's court.

3.3.2 The Division of the Kingdom

The elderly counselors, formerly of Solomon's kingship, advised that Rehoboam lower taxes to gain favor among the people, while the younger counselors who are the young kings colleagues, exhorted that he raise taxes to express his authority. He said to the people, "my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Under his taxation, the people revolted and the kingdom of Israel was split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The tribe of Judah, Rehoboam's own tribe, alone remained faithful to him. Benjamin was reckoned along with Judah, and these two tribes formed the southern kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital; while the northern ten tribes formed themselves into a separate kingdom with Samaria as its capital, choosing Jeroboam as their king. Rehoboam tried to win back the revolted ten tribes by making war against them, but he was prevented by the prophet Shemaiah.

3.3.3 Israel after the Division

The kingdom of Judah, under Rehoboam, sank more and more in moral and spiritual decay. "There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days." At length, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat from Ephraim became the first king of the ten tribes, over whom he reigned twenty-two years. He was the son of a widow of Zereda, and while still young was promoted by Solomon to be chief superintendent of the "burden", that is, of the bands of forced labourers. Influenced by the words of the prophet Ahijah, he began to form conspiracies with the view of becoming king of the ten tribes; but these having been discovered, he fled to Egypt where he remained for some time under the protection of Shishak I. On the death of Solomon, the ten tribes, having revolted, sent to invite him to become their king. The conduct of Rehoboam favoured the designs of Jeroboam, and he

was accordingly proclaimed “king of Israel”. He rebuilt and fortified Shechem as the capital of his kingdom. He at once adopted means to perpetuate the division thus made between the two parts of the kingdom, and erected at Dan and Bethel, the two extremities of his kingdom, “golden calves,” which he set up as symbols of Yahweh, enjoining the people not any more to go up to worship at Jerusalem, but to bring their offerings to the shrines he had erected. Thus he became distinguished as the man who made Israel to sin. This policy was followed by all the succeeding kings of Israel.

As a result of this, the moral and religious decline in Israel and Judah was so high, except that quite often Judah had some kings whose heart went after the Lord, God of their fathers, and they championed religious revivals. This situation led to the coming of the prophetic era in full.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learnt about the kingdom of Israel under the leadership of Solomon, son of David. You have seen the factors that contributed to the prosperity of Israel under the reign of Solomon. You have also learnt how Solomon’s tactical alliance with other nations through marriage brought peace to the kingdom but also brought idolatry to the kingdom. You were also taught that the kingdom of Israel was already at the brink of collapse before Rehoboam ascended the throne. The kingdom was torn into two during Rehoboam’s time and after the division of the kingdom Israel and Judah both got corrupted morally and religiously.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

Solomon was crowned king of Israel after David.

Solomon was acclaimed as the wisest and a very prolific writer. He collected proverbs and hymns.

Solomon had extensive building projects like his palace that took 13 years to build and the Temple took him 8 years to build.

Solomon had many trade and commercial outlets to make money and he utilized these in full.

The luxurious and expensive lifestyle he led needed a lot of money to maintain. Thus he ended taxing the people.

Towards the end of his reign, Solomon started to decline morally and religiously.

As at the time of his death, the nation was on the brink of collapse.

Rehoboam thus inherited a decayed nation.

The nation broke up under the leadership of Rehoboam.

Jeroboam became the king of Israel (now the 10 northern tribes) while Rehoboam held sway over Judah and Benjamin. After the division, the two kingdoms witnessed moral and religious decay.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the factors that made Solomon the wealthiest king of his time.
2. Would you put blame of the divided kingdom on Rehoboam? Give reasons for your answer.

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 THE PROPHETS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ISRAEL

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Terminology
 - 3.1.1 Ecstatic Prophecy
 - 3.1.2 Cultic Prophecy
 - 3.2 The Ministry of the Prophet
 - 3.2.1 The Functions of the Prophet
 - 3.2.2 The Methods of Communication
 - 3.2.3 Form of their Message
 - 3.2.4 Contents of their Message
 - 3.3 Overview of the Prophets of Israel
 - 3.3.1 Tenth Century Prophets
 - 3.3.2 Ninth Century Prophets
 - 3.3.3 Eighth Century Prophets
 - 3.3.4 Seventh Century Prophets
 - 3.3.5 Sixth Century Prophets
 - 3.3.6 Fifth Century Prophets
 - 3.3.7 The Place of the Prophets in Israel's Salvation History
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you studied the last of the Golden Age of Israel. It started with David and ended with Solomon. Much of the material in the above unit has to do with Solomon's reign. You also learnt about the reign of Rehoboam under whose tenure the kingdom was broken into two. After the breakage, none of the two factions move close to God's ideal anymore. They went into a period of moral and religious decay. It was this decay that led to the blossoming of the era of the prophets that you are going to learn in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Define the various terms used for the prophet.
- Distinguish the various stages of the development of prophets in Israel.
- Discuss the functions of the prophets.
- Analyze the impact of the prophets in Israel's Religious Life

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Terminology

The common Hebrew word for prophet is **navi** and it is used more than 300 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. The prophet is used to describe a wide variety of personalities. Some of them include Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and the writing prophets whose sermons are compiled as books in the Bible. In this generalized usage, the word 'prophet' means "one who has a close relationship with God".

The term "prophet" in the specific understanding of the Hebrew canon refers to the preacher of religion of Yahweh. In the New Testament, the term is used specifically to describe Old Testament prophets as well as travelling preachers of the New Testament churches. Jesus and John the baptizer were also called prophets in the New Testament. It then means that throughout the Bible, the term 'prophet' refers to one who has a special relationship with God and who preaches the word of God without fear or favour of anyone.

There are two other words which are related to **navi** but are never translated 'prophet'. They are the Hebrew word **ro'eh** and **hoseh**. The word **ro'eh**, translated is translated 'seer' and is used about seven times in the Hebrew Bible. The second word **hoseh** is translated 'visionary' and it is used about six times in the Old Testament. Both 'seer' and 'visionary' convey the idea of the one who sees into the future and therefore foretells the future. In contrast to these two related words, **navi** is used about 300 times. The only place in the Bible where we see a seemingly direct connection between 'seer' and 'prophet' is in I Samuel 9:9 where we see the change in terminology from **ro'eh** to **navi**. The noun **navi** comes from a verb root which means "to speak forth". Hence prophets are spokesmen for God. The verb is often used in a causative stem thereby meaning "to cause to speak". This means that a prophet is one whom God requires or compels to speak. In other words, a prophet cannot keep quiet but must deliver the message which God gives to him.

3.1.1 Ecstatic Prophecy

While the term “prophet” is used in the Old Testament to refer to various individuals, the beginning of the new era of prophecy among the Hebrews goes back to the time of Samuel. He was the last judge as well the first prophet. That is he had the privilege of closing the era of charismatic leaders called “judge” as well as opening a new era of prophecy in a dynamic. Samuel was the one responsible for developing Israelites prophecy as we later know it. He involved prophecy from the background of ecstatic prophecy which was common in the covenant religion.

I Samuel 9:1-10:16 relates Samuel’s efforts in beginning and shaping the course of prophecy in ancient Israel. In his attempt to locate his father’s asses, Saul and his servant consulted Samuel the “seer”. Samuel assured Saul of the safety of the asses but surprised him by anointing him a prince over Israel. To assure Saul of the validity of his appointment, Samuel told him in advance the things which will happen on his way back home. Everything happened precisely as Samuel described it. When Saul and his servant came to Gibeah, the spirit of God came mightily upon Saul as he met a band of prophets and he too prophesied among them. It therefore became a proverb “is Saul also among the prophets?” In I Samuel 19:18-24, the experience as well as the proverb on prophecy was repeated. This emphasizes the contagious nature of ecstatic prophecy. Saul was running after David who had found refuge with Samuel. The soldiers sent by Saul to capture David saw Samuel prophetic students prophesying with Samuel as the head. The soldiers also prophesied. Saul sent a second group of soldier and the same thing happened. Saul himself came, the same spirit fell on him and he prophesied.

Therefore from the two passages of scripture above and the succeeding events in the Samuel narratives we could deduce the following:

1. The ecstatic prophecy was the type of prophecy which Israel first knew.
2. Ecstatic prophecy which was practiced in the early days of Samuel had its background in religious ritual of the Canaanite tribe.
3. Ecstatic prophecy was very contagious.
4. Ecstatic prophecy did not continue for a long time in ancient Israel. It was improved upon and developed into what we later know as Hebrew prophecy. The new development consists of delivering God’s messages in oracle. Oracles are short sermon usually in poetic form. This is the type of prophecy which we see in the canonical prophet from Isaiah to Malachi.

5. Samuel was the 1st person to establish of school for training ministers for God's work. He gathered a group of young men around him which he trained in the art of prophecy. The institution was later revived by Elijah and named it "The School of the Sons of prophet". Elisha succeeded Elijah as head of the school. He moved from campuses which the school had in Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and Samaria (2 Sam. 2:1-6; 6:1; 9:1). After Elisha, the only other evidence of reviving the school was in the (8th BC during the time and ministry of Isaiah).

3.1.2 Cultic Prophecy

It is not known as to how many of the great prophets of ancient Israel belonged to the association of professional prophets. There is no doubt however, that such an association of prophets existed from time to time during the periods of the monarchy. This association known as "guild" or "cult" of prophets was usually related to the king's court and fulfilled certain professional functions. That is, just as the priests were institutionalized in the cult of the sanctuary, the prophets were also institutionalized and attached to either the court or the temple at various times. A good example in this connection is Amos 7:14. In denying that he is a prophet, Amos was rejecting any identification with the guild of prophets, especially as it existed in the Bethel sanctuary over which Amaziah presided.

The second important reference is I King 22:1-28. Although Micaiah, the son in Imlah belonged to the guild of prophets who were associated to the cult of Ahab King of Samaria, he still spoke the truth to Ahab. He knew that the truth might cost him his life, yet he spoke it. As a reaction to his bold pronouncement, the king imprisoned him and put him on survival diet. This illustrates how difficult it was for prophets who belong to the guild to speak forth for God court fear of favour.

3.2 The Ministry of the Prophet

The canonical prophets, whose books make up over a quarter of the Old Testament, were called by God to be organs and channels of revelation. They were men of God who stood in his council, knew his mind, and were enabled to declare it. God the Holy Spirit spoke in and through them. They knew he was doing so; hence they dared to start messages with "this is what the LORD says" or "an oracle of the LORD," and to present Yahweh himself as the speaker of what they were saying.

3.2.1 The Functions of the Prophet

It is sometimes said that prophets are not “foretellers” but “forthtellers.” As far as the Old Testament is concerned, however, the prophets are forthtellers—declaring the truth about God—by being foretellers—predicting what God will do. Prediction is not seen as an occasional or an unimportant activity in the Old Testament. It is the way the prophet went about his work. Deuteronomy 18:9-15 explains the function of the prophet in Israel. The surrounding nations are revealed as probing into the future by means of a variety of fortune-telling techniques. These things are forbidden to Israel on the ground of being detestable to the Lord. Israel’s uniqueness is maintained when the Lord gives Israel a prophet, while the nations look into the future by use of diviners. Elisha was surprised when he couldn’t see the future; Amos teaches that the Lord reveals his plans to the prophets. But prediction in Israel was totally unlike what other nations had. In no way was it motivated by a mere curiosity about the future.

First, biblical prediction arose out of the needs of the present. In Isaiah 39 faithless Hezekiah undertakes a military arrangement with Babylon for security. That prompts Isaiah to announce the future Babylonian captivity. Isaiah does not snatch the name Babylon out of thin air. It is given to him within the situation in which he was called to minister. Second, prediction aimed at giving knowledge of the future was to result in moral reformation in the present. The moral calls of the prophets find their explanation in what the Lord is about to do. Third, the predicted course of events was aimed at stabilizing the faith of the true believer in dark times. For example, various passages in Isaiah have the effect of shifting the focus from the immediate tragedy to coming glory.

3.2.2 The Methods of Communication

In considering communication in prophecy, two ways has to be discussed. The first is the way the prophet got his message and the second the way the prophet communicated the message to the people. There are two major ways by which the prophet gets his message from God. Dreams were a commonly recognized mode of inspiration throughout the ancient world, though they were more highly regarded in Greece than in ancient Israel. Dreams in the Bible fall into two major categories: dreams whose meaning is self-evident, and symbolic dreams that usually require the expertise of an interpreter.

In those dreams whose meaning is self-evident, normally a supernatural being (God or an angel) appears to the dreamer and speaks to him or her in a straightforward manner. More frequently, however, dreams have symbolic elements that require interpretation. The two great dream

interpreters of the Old Testament are Joseph and Daniel; the latter is clearly a prophet.

The other mode of prophetic inspiration was the vision. Prophets heard and saw the message during these visions. In Isaiah 1:1, the author describes his entire prophetic book as a vision: “These visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah son of Amoz during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—all kings of Judah.”

The other model is the prophet communicating his message. In foretelling, the prophets were forth-telling. They were proclaiming the wonderful works of God. For the most part, this proclamation was by direct word of mouth. Prophets and prophetesses were people of the word. Their words were like messengers sent by God. Sometimes that word was accompanied by a sign or symbolic action. Sometimes it was identified intimately with a person. Such things were like visual aids; the word would be made clearer to those present. But it would seem that the intention of the symbolic action, sometimes called an “acted oracle”, was not so much to make understanding easier. It was intended to give more power and effect to the word as it was sent like a messenger into that situation. This is the conclusion to be drawn from 2 Kings 13:14-19. The extent to which the king displayed the word in action determined the extent to which the word would prove effective in bringing events to pass.

The final collection of the words of the prophets is in the books that have been preserved. Jeremiah 36 may be taken as an object lesson. The prophets took the time and trouble to record their spoken messages in writing. There was stress on careful word-by-word dictation. But the actual literary form of the messages themselves tells the same tale. What we find in the books of the prophets cannot be the preached form of their words. Rather, it is the studied wording in which they preserved their sermons. It stands to reason that people who were conscious of communicating the very words of God would see to it that those words were not lost. We may take it for granted that the prophets preserved a written record of their ministries.

3.2.3 Form of their Message

We most commonly recognize prophecy in the Old Testament by the phrase “Thus says the Lord,” which occurs hundreds of times in prophetic contexts. This formula clearly implies that the pronouncement so introduced is not the word of the prophet but of the God of Israel who delivered his word to his prophet. The use of this formula also reiterates the prophet’s sense of divine commission. In oracles introduced in this manner, God speaks in the first person. In fact, virtually all Israelite

prophetic utterance is formulated as the direct speech of the God of Israel.

The prophets used many literary forms in which to express their oracles. Two of the more widely used forms of prophetic speech are the judgment speech and the oracle of salvation. The judgment speech is composed of at least two central elements: the speech of rebuke and the pronouncement of judgment. We might say this was the bad news. The second common prophetic speech form is the oracle of salvation. In contrast, this was the good news. Other fixed forms of prophetic speech include the prophecy of salvation (Isaiah 43:14-21), the proclamation of salvation (Isaiah 41:17-20) and the woe oracle (Isaiah 5:8-10).

3.2.4 Contents of their Message

Most of the prophetic speeches that have been preserved in the Old Testament were originally delivered as public proclamations or sermons. Most of these prophetic proclamations were evoked by the disobedience of Israel. Hosea and Jeremiah condemned Israel because she had broken the covenant (Jeremiah 11:2-3; Hosea 8:1). The following are examples of the contents of the prophecies:

- a. They were often concerned with social justice and social reform. An example is Amos who denounced the rich who afflicted the poor (Amos 2:6-8; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11; Amos 8:4-6). He railed against sexual immorality (Amos 2:6-8) and against those who take bribes (Amos 5:12).
- b. Prophets presented a balanced picture of God's wrath toward sin and his love toward the sinner. The world imagines a prophet as a messenger of "doom and gloom." On the contrary, prophets represent a God of love who hates to see his people bring consequences upon themselves through their own disobedience. God's judgment is always balanced and motivated by his love. The prophets were concerned not only with the transgressions of Israel and the historical judgment that would inevitably follow but also with the achievement of a final future time of bliss. The message of many of the prophets is thoroughly eschatological. One such eschatological concept is that of the Day of the Lord.
- c. Since the Israelites recognized "salvation" in the here and now, the contents of their message included such blessings as length of life, fruitfulness of the womb and field, peace and victory over one's enemies, the abundance of water, and so on. In harmony with this concept of salvation, the future age is viewed in precisely those terms, as in Amos 9:13-15.

3.3 Overview of the Prophets of Israel

The following is the list and brief description of the prophets of Israel as seen in the Scriptures. Note that the list would deal with the prophets from after Samuel.

3.3.1 Tenth Century Prophets

Nathan

Nathan was a prophet during the reigns of David and Solomon. He is first spoken of in connection with the arrangements David made for the building of the temple and next appears as the one who rebukes David on account of his sin with Bathsheba. He was charged with the education of Solomon at whose inauguration to the throne he took a prominent part. He last appears in assisting David in reorganizing the public worship. He seems to have written some memoirs on the life of David and of Solomon.

Ahijah

Ahijah was a prophet of Shiloh who informed Jeroboam, of the approaching revolt of the ten northern tribes. "The Prophecy of Ahijah from Shiloh" was probably a written source for Solomon's biography.

Man of God from Judah

Nothing was heard about this prophet except that God asked him to go to Israel to prophesy. He died on his way back because he had been disobedient to God.

Iddo

Iddo is a prophet and seer who recorded the events of Solomon's reign concerning Jeroboam, Nebat's son in a book of visions.

3.3.2 Ninth Century Prophets

Elijah

Elijah is a prophet called the Tishbite he ministered during the time of Ahab, king of Israel. He was the one that prayed that there should be no rain for three years. He is a subject to be studied separately.

Micaiah

Micaiah the son of Imlah is the prophet called by Ahab to forecast the result of projected battles against the Syrians. Ahab casts the prophet into prison as a kind of ransom, but the wicked ruler dies in battle, just as Micaiah predicted.

Elisha

Elisha was a student and successor of Elijah. He led the sons of the prophets after Elisha. He was the one that restored the son of the Shunemite woman to life.

Jehu

Jehu was the son of Hanani and a prophet of Judah. He pronounced God's sentence against Baasha the king of Israel.

Joel

Joel was the second of the twelve writing prophets. He was the son of Pethuel. His personal history is only known from his book.

Zechariah

Zechariah was son of Jehoiada and a prophet in the time of Joash. He rebuked Joash for disobeying the Lord and was killed at Joash's command.

3.3.3 Eighth Century Prophets

Jonah

Jonah was the son of Amittai and a prophet of Israel that he Lord sent to Nineveh.

Amos

Though Amos was from Judah, he actually ministered in Bethel, Israel. He was a prophet of social religion. He cried against injustice and inhumane treatment of the poor. He sees religion as what should be lived out in the society.

Hosea

Hosea was a prophet of Israel. Little is known of him outside the book he wrote. The circumstances surrounding the marriage of Hosea form the basis for his prophetic message. He was commanded by God to marry Gomer, who apparently was a harlot. His marriage provided an analogy with Israel, who was guilty of spiritual adultery.

Oded

Oded was a prophet in the time of Ahaz and Pekah kings of Israel.

Isaiah

Isaiah the son of Amoz was a prophet of Judah. He ministered during the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was also the author of the Bible book of Isaiah. Growing up in Jerusalem, Isaiah received the best education the capital of Judah could supply. He was deeply knowledgeable about people, and he became the political and religious conscience of the nation. He was able to communicate with the kings of Judah easily and may have been the official history-writer at the Judean court for several reigns.

Micah

Micah was also a prophet of Judah.

3.3.4 Seventh Century Prophets

After the destruction of Northern Israel in 720 BC, it was only Judah that has prophets.

Nahum

Nahum was a prophet of Judah. He wrote to encourage the people of Judah while they were being oppressed by the Assyrians. Other than his being the prophet who wrote the book of Nahum, nothing is known of him except that he came from the village of Elkosh.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah was one of the greater prophets of the Old Testament. He was the son of Hilkiah, a priest of Anathoth. He was called to the prophetic office when still young in the thirteenth year of Josiah. He left his native place, and went to reside in Jerusalem, where he greatly assisted Josiah in his work of reformation. His ministry continued into the 6th Century.

Zephaniah

Zephaniah was a prophet of Judah who authored the book of Zephaniah. Though little is known about Zephaniah, it is possible that his ancestor Hezekiah is the same person as the king by that name.

Huldah

Huldah was a prophetess of Judah and the wife of Shallum. She was consulted regarding the "book of the law" discovered by the high priest Hilkiah.

Habakkuk

Habakkuk was the eighth of the twelve writing prophets. Of his personal history we have no reliable information. He was probably a member of the Levitical choir. He was contemporary with Jeremiah and Zephaniah.

3.3.5 Sixth Century Prophets

Daniel

Daniel was a Jewish leader and prophet who lived in the court of the king of Babylon. The Old Testament book of Daniel tells his story. We know nothing about his parents or family, but he probably came from a long line of noble Jewish families.

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a priest and prophet during the time of Israel's exile in Babylon. Ezekiel came from the influential priestly family of Zadok and probably grew up in Jerusalem. He was familiar with the rituals of the temple, although it is unknown whether he served as a priest there. All that we know of his personal life comes from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel.

Haggai

Haggai was a prophet whose book is included in the Old Testament. We have no information concerning his family or social background. He is referred to merely as Haggai the prophet. According to Jewish tradition, he was known as a prophet in Babylon during the Exile. The major concern of his prophetic ministry was to encourage the people to rebuild the temple, which had been destroyed during the earlier years of the Exile.

Zachariah

Zachariah is a prophet of Judah, the eleventh of the twelve writing prophets. He was of priestly extraction. He describes himself as “the son of Berechiah.” He is called “the son of Iddo,” who was properly his grandfather. His prophetic career began in the second year of Darius about sixteen years after the return of the first company from exile. He was contemporary with Haggai.

3.3.6 Fifth Century Prophets

Malachi

Malachi was a prophet and author of the last book of the Old Testament. He lived about 500-460 BC. Apart from the book that bears his name, nothing else is known about him from the Bible.

3.3.7 The Place of the Prophets in Israel’s Salvation History

The prophetic movement has had a great influence on the salvation history of Israel. Beginning with the earliest canonical prophets of the (4th BC), the prophets have had a profound interest in, and therefore wielded a strong influence on the theology and religion of Israel. The influence of the prophetic movement completely overshadowed that of the priestly cult in the thought and life of the people. There were times when the prophets even had greater influence on the political orientation of the common men more than the kings themselves did.

The writing prophets have an even greater advantage over others whose sermon we do not have in prints. The 8th Century prophets will forever be remembered as the architects of ethical monotheism. Before then, Yahweh remained the tribal God of Israel. It is only when we come to the preaching of Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah of Yahweh is preached and taught as God of the whole universe apart from whom no other God exists. He is not just the only true God but also the God who demands high standard of ethics and morality from those who believe in him. The 6th and 7th Century prophets were pioneers of philosophical thinking in Israel’s salvation history. They raised questions which agreed with traditional theology thereby leading the people to the type of faith which remained firm in times of trouble. After the northern kingdom was destroyed in 722 BC which was followed by her southern sister in 587 BC, it was the preaching of the prophets which made possible a continued faith in Yahweh. It also gave Israel’s faith a new avenue of life.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have learnt about the coming of the era of prophets. You have learnt the definition of the term and the cognates: *ro'eh* and *hozeh*. You have also learnt how God communicates his message to the prophets and how the prophets communicate with the people along with the functions of the prophet and the form as well as contents of the prophetic message. This is followed by an overview of the prophets of the Hebrew Scripture.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

Navi is the most common used word for prophet and it occurred about 300 times in the Old Testament.

The prophets were spokesmen for God and not mainly foretellers but rather people who tell-forth the mind of God.

Prophecy started in Israel as ecstatic prophecy.

Samuel was the pioneer prophet and he started a school of prophets.

Later, the guild of prophets developed but these finds it difficult to speak the truth sometimes.

The prophets developed the concept of ethical monotheism.

It was through the ministry of the prophets that faith which can withstand problem was developed.

The prophets also made faith in YHWH possible during the exile.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the functions of prophets in ancient Israel?
2. Discuss the content and the form of prophetic discourses.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Geisler, N. L. (1977) Old Testament Survey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

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UNIT 5 PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS REFORMS: HEZEKIAH AND JOSIAH

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to the Book of Isaiah
 - 3.1.1 Authorship
 - 3.1.2 Date
 - 3.1.3 Purpose
 - 3.2 The Man Hezekiah
 - 3.2.1 Hezekiah's Religious Reforms
 - 3.2.2 Hezekiah and Senacherib
 - 3.2.3 The Final Days of Hezekiah
 - 3.3 Josiah's Religious Reforms
 - 3.3.1 The Man Josiah
 - 3.3.2 Josiah's Reforms
 - 3.3.3 The Death of Josiah
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you have learnt about the development of prophets and prophecy in Israel. You have also been given an insight into the functions of the prophets in ancient Israel. Furthermore, you have been exposed to the role that the prophets of Israel have played in the development of the worship of Yahweh. In this unit, which is the last unit of the second module, you will be focusing on the religious reforms in Judah (the two southern tribes) especially during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. The reforms of Hezekiah took place during the ministry of Isaiah the prophet and it is recorded in II Kings, II Chronicles and the book of Isaiah. The reforms of Josiah are only recorded in II Kings and II Chronicles.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

Discuss the authorship of the book of Isaiah;

Identify the role of Isaiah in the reforms of Hezekiah;
 Describe the history of Hezekiah;
 Highlight the factors that led to the fall of Hezekiah;
 Discuss the state of Israel before the reforms of Josiah; and
 Describe the spiritual factors that strengthened Josiah's reforms.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Book of Isaiah

In all the books of the Bible that recorded the stories of Hezekiah and Josiah, it is only the book of Isaiah that has not been exposed to you. As a result, you will have to start this unit by having a brief introduction to the book of Isaiah. You are also requested to read the chapters of the book concerned with the reign of Hezekiah.

3.1.1 Authorship

When the Septuagint was made, about B.C. 250, the entire contents of the book were ascribed to Isaiah, the son of Amoz. It is not called in question, moreover, that in the time of our Lord the book existed in the form in which we now have it. Universal and persistent tradition has ascribed the whole book to one author. Besides this, the internal evidence, the similarity in the language and style, in the thoughts and images and rhetorical ornaments, all points to the same conclusion; and its local colouring and allusions show that it is obviously of Palestinian origin. The theory therefore of a double authorship of the book, much less of a manifold authorship, cannot be maintained. The book, with all the diversity of its contents, is one, and is, the production of the great prophet whose name it bears.

3.1.2 Date

Since many of the events recorded in chapters 1–39 took place during the ministry of Isaiah, most of these chapters were probably written by about 700 BC or shortly thereafter. The destruction of the Assyrian army in 701 BC represents the climax of the first half of the book, fulfilling the prophecy of 10:16, 24-34 and 30:31-33. In 37:38 Isaiah refers to the death of King Sennacherib, which did not occur until 681 BC. This means that some of the earlier chapters, along with 40–66, were probably written later, during Isaiah's later years. A gap of several decades could help account for the change in subject matter that is found in the last half of the book. In these chapters Isaiah projects into the future as he addresses the Jews who would be in exile in Babylon about 550 BC.

3.1.3 Purpose

Isaiah is a book filled with rich theological truth.

The Sovereignty of God: Isaiah made it clear that Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, is the only real God. The whole earth is full of his glory. Idols are worthless things and the works of man's hands.

The Holiness of God: The holiness of God is strongly emphasized throughout the Isaiah literature. The holiness of God has been recognized as the theme of entire book. Yahweh's holiness is perfect moral purity combined with his transcendent exaltation.

Human Sin: The holiness of God must express itself in judgment upon human sin. Sin is uncleanness and it is rebellion against Yahweh. Sin spoils the whole of society and sacrifices are not enough remedy of sin. It is only Yahweh that can forgive sins.

Faith in God: The only remedy for the human problem of self-reliance is faith in Yahweh.

The Remnant: Like other prophets, Isaiah preached on the coming catastrophe as an end result of sin. Like others, he preached a doctrine of the remnant who would rebuild the community of faith.

The Messiah: No one who has read Isaiah or listened to a few sermons from Isaiah can forget his doctrine of the Messiah or his prophecies about the Messiah. The Immanuel oracles in chapters 7, 8 and 9 and 11:1-9 are messianic prophecies. His powerful prophecies about the Messiah as "The servant of the LORD" are found in 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11 and 52:13-53:12.

3.2 The Man Hezekiah

The name Hezekiah means "he whom Yahweh has strengthened". According to II Kings 18:2, Hezekiah rose to the throne of Judah (the southern kingdom of Israel), at age twenty-five and ruled for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abi also called Abijah, a daughter of Zechariah. The chronology of Hezekiah's reign is difficult to establish. The Bible says the Assyrian siege of Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, began in the fourth year of his reign and that Samaria fell in the sixth year, which would make his reign begin about 728 BC and end about 699 B.C. Assyrian king Sennacherib besieged the fortified Judean cities during Hezekiah's fourteenth year, which would

have been 714 B.C. Assyrian records, however, indicate that Sennacherib came to the Assyrian throne in 705 BC and that his Judean campaign took place in 701 B.C. The most generally accepted solution to the discrepancy is that Hezekiah came to the throne in 715 B.C., probably after having a period of co-regency with his father, Ahaz that began in 728 B.C. That solution harmonizes with the statement that Sennacherib's siege took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, or 701 B.C.

3.2.1 Hezekiah's Religious Reforms

Hezekiah came to the throne at a critical juncture in Judah's history. Sargon II had taken Samaria in 722 BC, and Judah was militarily weakened from wars and raids by surrounding nations during the reign of Ahaz. Perhaps motivated by warnings to the northern kingdom delivered by the prophets Amos and Hosea that punishment would come if Israel did not turn back to God, Hezekiah began his religious reforms soon after becoming king.

In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah opened the temple doors and repaired them. He brought the Levites together and ordered them to sanctify themselves and the temple and to reinstate the religious ceremonies that had long been neglected. Hezekiah brought sacrifices, and the priestly temple service was restored. Hezekiah then sent invitations throughout Judah and Israel for the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. The Passover was held a month later than the prescribed time because the priests and people could not be ready earlier. The Passover which was a feast commemorating the Hebrews' deliverance from their slavery in Egypt had not been celebrated for a long time because of the religious and moral degradation of the society under the kings before Hezekiah. It was hoped that religious unification would be a prelude to political reunification of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. However, most of the northern tribes mocked the Judean messengers who brought the invitations, and only a few persons from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun went to Jerusalem for the celebration.

After the Passover observance, the worshipers set about destroying the high places (places for worshiping idols) and unholy altars. They broke the pillars and cut down the Asherim (idols) throughout Judah and Benjamin, and also went into Ephraim and Manasseh. Hezekiah even smashed the bronze serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness because it had become an object of worship and was identified with a serpent deity, Nehushtan. Because of his sweeping reforms, later generations said of Hezekiah, "There was never another king like him in the land of Judah, either before or after his time".

3.2.2 Hezekiah and Sennacherib

Hezekiah knew that Assyria's growing international dominance was a serious threat to his kingdom, but following his father's policy of submission, Hezekiah did not attempt any resistance at first.

After the death of Sargon II of Assyria, his son Sennacherib came to the throne. This triggered widespread rebellion throughout the Assyrian provinces. Hezekiah withheld tribute from the new Assyrian ruler and, taking advantage of the confused international situation, made raids against the Philistines who had been long-time enemies of Judah.

After subduing rebellious elements in the East, Sennacherib began his campaign against the western countries in 701 BC. In preparation Hezekiah repaired Jerusalem's city wall, raised towers on it, built another wall outside it, and strengthened the Millo in the City of David. He also stockpiled abundant quantities of weapons and shields. Knowing the necessity of an adequate water supply for a city under siege, Hezekiah had a 1,777ft tunnel cut through solid rock from the spring of Gihon to the Siloam Pool to bring water into the city and to prevent the Assyrians from poisoning or cutting off the spring water outside the city and thus defeating the people inside. The Siloam inscription, carved inside the tunnel itself, records the completion of that remarkable conduit and is one of the oldest preserved examples of the Hebrew language.

The first attack on Jerusalem ended without conclusion. Shortly after the commencement of the siege Sennacherib received word of Babylon's revolt in his eastern provinces, so he departed at once without taking Jerusalem. Assyrian records do not claim that Jerusalem was taken but only say that Hezekiah was "shut up in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage." Judah's surrounding neighbours celebrated their deliverance and brought gifts of gratitude to Hezekiah.

Later, the Assyrian king heard that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, was advancing against him, so he sent another threatening message to Hezekiah, probably to warn him against making an alliance with Tirhakah. Hezekiah took the matter before the Lord and received word from Isaiah that the Assyrian king would return the same way he came and that Jerusalem would be untouched. Soon afterward, in a miraculous intervention by God, 185,000 Assyrian troops were killed, and the Assyrian monarch abandoned his plans to conquer Hezekiah. In 681 Sennacherib was killed by two of his sons as Isaiah had predicted.

3.2.3 The Final Days of Hezekiah

Sometime prior to 701, Hezekiah became seriously ill, and Isaiah told him to prepare for death. The king earnestly prayed for an extension of life, and God promised him fifteen more years as well as deliverance from the Assyrians. Hezekiah asked Isaiah for a sign that he would be healed, and a shadow cast by the sun moved backward ten steps contrary to its normal direction.

Sometime after his recovery Hezekiah received a delegation with presents from Merodach-baladan of Babylon, apparently to congratulate Hezekiah on his return to health. The real object of the visit was probably to enlist Hezekiah as an ally in a conspiracy being formed against Assyria. The king showed the Babylonian envoys all the gold, silver, and other valuables he possessed. This act brought a warning from Isaiah that the day would come when all those treasures would be carried away to Babylon. Hezekiah lived the remainder of his life in peace and prosperity. It may have been during this time that he encouraged literary efforts in Judah, which included copying some of Solomon's proverbs. On his death, he was buried in the "chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David".

3.3 Josiah's Religious Reforms

Josiah was the sixteenth king of the southern kingdom of Judah. He was Hezekiah's grandson. A godly man, he stood in marked contrast to his grandfather Manasseh and his father, Amon. In fact, Scripture declares there was no king either before or after him who was as obedient to the Law of Moses.

3.3.1 The Man Josiah

The name Josiah actually means "healed by Jehovah" or "Jehovah will support". He is the son of Amon, and his successor on the throne of Judah. He stands foremost among all the kings of the line of David for unswerving loyalty to Jehovah. He was the son of Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. He "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father." He ascended the throne at the early age of eight years, and it appears that not till eight years afterwards did he begin "to seek after the God of David his father." At that age he devoted himself to God. He ruled for just thirty-one years and was killed in Megiddo in battle with Pharaoh- Necho. His far reaching reforms were ably supported by Hilkiyah the High Priest, Shaphan the scribe and Huldah the prophetess among a host of others.

3.3.2 Josiah's Reforms

Josiah's reforms have been described as a far reaching effort to exterminate the worship of idol which had pervaded Israel's life for over seventy years. This revival began on the eighteenth years of his reign as the king of Judah. The following were the highlights of his religious reforms:

The revival started with a call to repair the Temple that had been in ruins due to neglect.

During the repair, a copy of the book of the Law was found and sent to Josiah. On reading it and seeing the dangers in what Judah and Israel had done, his spirit was stirred up in him to return Judah and Israel to YHWH.

He gathered all the people together so that they can renew their covenant with YHWH.

He destroyed all that burns incense to Ba'al, the sun, the moon, the stars and the so called 'host of heaven'.

He took the Asherah from the house of the LORD and he burnt it to dust and scattered the dust away.

He destroyed the houses of the Sodomites (that is, the male cult prostitutes) and sent away the women weaving hangings for Asherah.

He destroyed all the high places.

He destroyed the shrine of Molech.

He burnt the chariots dedicated to the sun by fire and released the horses of the chariots.

All the altars in the palace in the chambers of the kings before him were destroyed.

He destroyed all the shrines built by Solomon to Ashtoreth, Chemosh and Milcom.

He also got rid of all mediums and spiritists.

He destroyed all the altars set up at Bethel by Jeroboam.
He destroyed all the altars at Samaria.

Finally he killed all the priests of idols.

He called together the people for Passover. It happened to be the biggest for over a long time.

The religious revival turned out to go a long way as it was made to affect not only Judah but also the remnants of northern Israel as seen in his activities in Bethel and Samaria.

3.3.3 The Death of Josiah

During the progress of this great religious revolution, Jeremiah helped it on by his earnest exhortations. Soon after the religious reforms, Pharaoh-Necho II, king of Egypt, in an expedition against the king of Assyria, with the view of gaining possession of Carchemish, sought a passage through the territory of Judah for his army. This Josiah refused to permit. He had probably entered into some new alliance with the king of Assyria, and faithful to his word he sought to oppose the progress of Necho. The army of Judah went out and encountered that of Egypt at Megiddo, on the verge of the Plain of Esdraelon. Josiah went into the field in disguise, and was fatally wounded by a random arrow. His attendants conveyed him toward Jerusalem, but had only reached Hadadrimmon, a few miles south of Megiddo, when he died after a reign of thirty-one years. He was buried with the greatest honours in fulfilment of Huldah's prophecy comp. Jeremiah composed a funeral elegy on this the best of the kings of Israel. The outburst of national grief on account of his death became proverbial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have studied about the book of Isaiah and the significance of the book theologically. The relevance of this is the story of Hezekiah that was recorded in the book. Hezekiah led Israel to a religious revival after a long time. You have also learnt about the miraculous intervention of God and how Judah was saved from the hands of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. The last days of Hezekiah also serve as an important lesson for Christians of today. After this you have learnt about the revival of Josiah which had far reaching effects than that of Hezekiah.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

Isaiah the prophet would have probably been the author of the book of Isaiah.

The book of Isaiah would have been written about 700 BC.

The book of Isaiah has six great theological themes.

Hezekiah started a religious revival in Israel.

The Lord helped Hezekiah twice by preventing the Assyrians from capturing Judah.

Josiah, the grandson of Hezekiah has another far-reaching reform.

Josiah died on the battlefield at Megiddo.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the theological significance of the book of Isaiah.
2. Describe the religious revival of Josiah and what made it much more effective than that of Hezekiah.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Geisler, N. L. (1977) Old Testament Survey. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Hill, A. E. & Walton, J. H. (2000) A Survey of the Old Testament, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

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MODULE 3

Unit 1	The Fall of Jerusalem and the Exile
Unit 2	Daniel and the Jews under Persian Rule
Unit 3	The Return: Zerubbabel Ezra and Nehemiah
Unit 4	The Rebuilding of the Temple: The Role of Haggai and Malachi and its Impact on the Religious Life of the Israelites

UNIT 1 THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE EXILE

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Introduction to the book of Jeremiah
3.1.1	Authorship
3.1.2	The Man Jeremiah
3.1.3	Date
3.1.4	Purpose
3.2	Introduction to the book of Ezekiel
3.2.1	Authorship
3.2.2	The Man Ezekiel
3.2.3	Date
3.2.4	Purpose
3.3	The Fall of Jerusalem
3.3.1	Jeremiah and the Exile in Egypt
3.3.2	Ezekiel and the Exile in Babylon
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit which is the end of Module 2, you learned about the religious reforms that were made principally by Judah during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. They were attempts to return the people to the Lord. Despite this, the promise of the Lord that Judah will go into exile was finally fulfilled. This module will actually focus on the exile and the post exilic period. In this unit, which is the first unit of Module 3, you will be concerned with the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the exilic period.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- List the factors that led to the fall of Jerusalem; Narrate the events leading to the fall of Jerusalem;. Discuss the role of Jeremiah among the exiles at Egypt;
- Discuss the role of Ezekiel among the exiles at Babylon; and
- Discuss the state of the people during the period they are in exile.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah

Since the book of Jeremiah is actually concerned with the ministry of the prophet part of which took place in Egypt among the exiles, it is important to study the background of the book as you are about to do right now.

3.1.1 Authorship

Few doubt that Jeremiah, the prophet from Anathoth wrote the book of Jeremiah, yet questions persist concerning some parts, particularly chapter 52. The use of the third person however cannot be used to discredit Jeremiah's authorship, for Jeremiah used the first and third person, and even the second person, in the same context. For example, 32:6-7 reads: "Jeremiah said [third person], 'The word of the LORD came to me: [first person] . . . your uncle will come to you [second person]'" (RSV).

The problem of the passage of time provides the strongest argument against the Jeremiah authorship of chapter 52. Baruch served as the secretary for Jeremiah. The relationship between the two men apparently lasted many years; the prophet gave a word of encouragement as he blessed his helper (45:5). According to the custom of the people, it would have been legitimate for the scribe to write some of the prophet's messages in his own words. This would not deny inspiration.

3.1.2 The Man Jeremiah

The name Jeremiah means "Yahweh hurls". Jeremiah was born during the reign of Manasseh, the acclaimed wicked king of Judah around 650 BC. We know more about Jeremiah's life and ministry than we know about many of the prophets because Baruch, his secretary, kept a detailed account of his preaching and experiences.

Jeremiah comes from a priestly family in Anathoth, a little village about four miles north of Jerusalem. Hilkiah the priest was Jeremiah's father. Jeremiah is popularly but wrongly called the "weeping prophet". One reason for this wrong appellation is that he made extensive use of dirges or lamentation as a literary style in his messages. The second reason is that he is popularly thought of as the author of the book of Lamentations.

As a young man in his twenties, Jeremiah had a personal encounter with the Lord in a vision wherein he was called to be a prophet. God told him that he had called him from his mother's womb. He attempted to refuse the call but finally yielded himself to God. In his ministry, Jeremiah was exposed to the worst insult because the king and the noble men of his era did not like his messages. This is because his messages unlike the sycophants at the palace, Jeremiah would say the truth in his delivery of God's messages. He was disgraced by being locked up in the palace store-room. Men from his own hometown plotted against him. He was even forbidden from getting married. Because he had to minister to a hostile audience, he often had conflicts with his own mind.

3.1.3 Date

The book was written during Jeremiah's ministry probably around 627–586 BC.

3.1.4 Purpose

Three major things can be said to be the purpose of the book of Jeremiah. The first four parts of the commission required that Jeremiah, appointed as a "chief governor" over nations, should wreck the existing religious and social structures by his preaching against moral and spiritual sin. Jeremiah is consistent in his blasts at moral and religious wickedness, his call to submit to the punishment that God gives through Babylon, and his assurance that such submission will lead to blessing. Nevertheless, part of Jeremiah's purpose focuses on the most distant future when the new covenant will supplant the old, and a transformed people bent on obedience rather than sin will receive God's promised kingdom.

3.2 Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel

It is also important for you to know the background of the book of Ezekiel because Ezekiel also ministered to the exile of Babylon.

3.2.1 Authorship

The book is authored by Ezekiel the prophet himself.

3.2.2 The Man Ezekiel

The ministry of the prophet Ezekiel can be understood best against the backdrop of his time. Ezekiel was born during the rule of King Josiah of Judah around 640–609 BC. Josiah was the grandson of King Manasseh, whose sacrilegious acts had brought God’s judgment on the kingdom of Judah.

Though Judah’s political situation was perilous, Josiah led the nation in a radical reformation that began with the finding of the “Book of the Law”. In the year that Ezekiel was born around 621 BC. Idolatry was done away with and the people turned back to God, but God’s judgment on Judah was unchangeable. Josiah erred in trying to make Judah a kingdom with which other states had to reckon. He was threatened when the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho passed through Judah on his way to aid the weakened Assyrian kingdom. Josiah marched to meet the Egyptian forces, but his troops were unable to stand against the Egyptians, and he died in battle. Egypt took control of Judah, and Pharaoh Necho placed Jehoiakim in power over Jerusalem. Egyptian control did not last long, however, for in 605 BC Egypt and Assyria were defeated by Babylonia’s king Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish. The Babylonians then pushed south to Jerusalem, and the first deportation of Judean leaders (among them the prophet Daniel) took place.

Jehoiakim was permitted to continue ruling over Judah as a vassal king of Nebuchadnezzar. But his dealings with Egypt brought the emperor’s wrath down upon him. Before the Babylonians could address the Judean situation, Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin was crowned. When the Babylonian forces arrived at the gates of Jerusalem, Jehoiachin and thousands of the aristocracy were taken to Babylon. Among those deportees was Ezekiel, then about 25 years old.

Although the book says otherwise, many scholars think that Ezekiel lived and taught in Judah for the duration of the siege and the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC). They conclude this from Ezekiel’s familiarity with idolatry in the temple and his vivid descriptions of Jerusalem’s last days. Others believe that Ezekiel ministered both to the exiled community and to the Judeans living in Judah. Neither interpretation does full justice to the claims of the book itself. Ezekiel was exiled in 597 BC. He was called to bring God’s word to the deportees at Tel-abib; he was granted a vision of the horrible practices in the temple court; and he was familiar with Jerusalem and Judah from having lived there and from reports on affairs in Jerusalem coming to the exiles through messengers.

3.2.3 Date

The ministry of Ezekiel is likely to have covered the years 599-573 BC. The book may have been compiled into this state shortly after that time.

3.2.4 Purpose

Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, a member of a priestly family. It is unclear whether he actually served in the temple as a priest, but such was his training. His writings show that he knew the regulations for sacrifices, the rituals, and the people's expectations of a priest. In exile Ezekiel the priest spoke God's word about the future of the temple to his fellow exiles. Settled at Tel-abib, on the canal of Kebar, the thousands of deportees eked out a meager existence. They hoped for a speedy return to Judah and a change for the better in the international situation. Their hope was enflamed by the spirited preaching of false prophets, likened to jackals among the ruins. Much time had passed since visions of God's judgment had been given to the people, and nothing could be interpreted as a fulfilment of those visions. Ezekiel was called to serve his community by symbolic acts, visions, and verbal messages in order to convince the people that God's judgment was imminent.

3.3 The Fall of Jerusalem

Three separate occasions are mentioned on the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:28-30). The first was in the time of Jehoiachin in 597 BCE, when the temple of Jerusalem was partially despoiled, and a number of the leading citizens were removed. After eleven years (in the reign of Zedekiah) a fresh rising of the Judaeans occurred; the city was razed to the ground, and a further deportation ensued. Finally, five years later, Jeremiah records a third captivity.

The city was completely destroyed by Babylon in 588 BC. Fire engulfed the temple and Solomon's mighty palace; the city walls were demolished. The treasures in the temple were carried off and the residents of Jerusalem were forced out. Though when people talk today, they usually talk as if there was only one exile and refer to the Babylonian exile which happens to be the popular one. There is however two exiles: the Babylonian and the Egyptian exile.

3.3.1 Jeremiah and the Exile in Egypt

In the 6th century BC, Johanan, a Judean, thought he could escape from Nebuchadnezzar by fleeing to Egypt. Johanan forced Jeremiah and a group of other Jews to go with him. They settled at Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis. Nevertheless, the Babylonians pursued them and took control of Egypt. Many Jews were executed there (Jeremiah 43:5-44:30). Records of property ownership and an altar suggest that the few surviving exiles established permanent colonies in Egypt (Isaiah 19:18-19).

3.3.2 Ezekiel and the Exile in Babylon

The southern kingdom of Judah suffered exile to the east in Babylonia. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar captured Judeans in several journeys from 605 BC to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The first expedition to Babylon took Jerusalem's treasures from the temple and palace. That included all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, except the poorest people of the land. A year later a second expedition focused on the rebellious Jewish king Zedekiah and his sons. In the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Babylonia struck Judah again. This time the temple and the king's palace were destroyed, and the city's walls were broken down. All but the very poorest people were carried away captive.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have studied about the fall of Jerusalem that took place in three successive attacks by the Babylonians. The fall of Jerusalem led to the taking of the people in exile. While Ezekiel was with the exiles in Babylon and ministered to them during the period, Jeremiah was with the exiles in Egypt and ministered to them. The ministry of these two prophets stands out against the ministry of the fake prophets who were giving the people false hope of early return.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

- There are two different exiles recorded in the Bible for Judah.
- There was an exile to Babylon and also an exile to Egypt.
- Jeremiah was the prophet that ministered to the exiles in Egypt.
- Ezekiel was the prophet that ministered to the exiles in Babylon.
- There were also false prophets who were raising the hope of the people.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Narrate the events that led to the final destruction of Jerusalem.
2. Compare and contrast the ministry of Jeremiah and Ezekiel among the exiles.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 DANIEL AND THE JEWS UNDER PERSIAN RULE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to the Book of Daniel
 - 3.1.1 Authorship
 - 3.1.2 Date
 - 3.1.3 Purpose
 - 3.2 The Persian Domination
 - 3.2.1 The Jews and Cyrus
 - 3.2.2 The Jews and Darius
 - 3.3 The Experience of Daniel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you studied the exile of southern kingdom which started at the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. You also learned about the ministry of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the two prophets who ministered concurrently to the children of Israel in exile – one in Babylon and the other in Egypt. In this unit however, you will be studying about how the Jews fared under the Persians who took over the control of the Mediterranean world after Babylon. The unit will focus on Daniel, one of the greatest Jewish prophets who served as governor under some of the Persian kings.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the background of the book of Daniel;
- Narrate the events that befall Daniel as governor under the Persian kings;
- Examine the biography of Daniel; and
- Discuss the chronology of the Persian kings and how the Jews fared under each one.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Book of Daniel

The book of Daniel is the major source of all the information that can be learnt about Daniel. As a result, it will be necessary for you to read the book as well as have some background information on the book. The book of Daniel is ranked by the Jews in that division of their Bible called the Hagiographa or Khethubim in the Hebrew language. It consists of two distinct parts. The first part, consisting of the first six chapters, is chiefly historical; and the second part, consisting of the remaining six chapters, is chiefly prophetic.

3.1.1 Authorship

The historical part of the book treats of the period of the Captivity. Daniel is "the historian of the Captivity, the writer who alone furnishes any series of events for that dark and dismal period during which the harp of Israel hung on the trees that grew by the Euphrates. His narrative may be said in general to intervene between Kings and Chronicles on the one hand and Ezra on the other, or to fill out the sketch which the author of the Chronicles gives in a single verse in his last chapter: 'And them that had escaped from the sword carried he [i.e., Nebuchadnezzar] away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia'" (2Ch 36:20)

The prophetic part consists of three visions and one lengthened prophetic communication. The genuineness of this book has been much disputed, but the arguments in its favour fully establish its claims. (1.) We have the testimony of Christ (Mt 24:15 25:31 26:64) and his apostles (1Co 6:2 2Th 2:3) for its authority; and (2.) the important testimony of Ezekiel (Ez. 14:14, 20 28:3) (3.) The character and records of the book are also entirely in harmony with the times and circumstances in which the author lived. (4.) The linguistic character of the book is, moreover, just such as might be expected. Certain portions (Da 2:4 7:1) are written in the Chaldean language; and the portions written in Hebrew are in a style and form having a close affinity with the later books of the Old Testament, especially with that of Ezra. The writer is familiar both with the Hebrew and the Chaldee, passing from the one to the other just as his subject required. This is in strict accordance with the position of the author and of the people for whom his book was written. That Daniel is the writer of this book is also testified to in the book itself.

3.1.2 Date

If Daniel was the author of the book as asserted above, a date in the second half of the sixth century BC is likely. The conservative interpretation has usually been that the book was written in the sixth century BC.

3.1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the book of Daniel is not so easy to determine, since it is essentially a story, a partial biography of Daniel. It is not strictly a prophetic book, nor is it history in the modern sense. Nevertheless, the word “history” provides a clue to its purpose. Daniel seeks to provide theological understanding of history. The first six chapters tell about Daniel and his companions, not merely to satisfy historical curiosity but to teach the reader. Old Testament theology insisted that the God of Israel participated in human life and history. To read biblical history, therefore, is to discover God’s participation in human affairs and to learn how God and human beings relate to each other.

3.2 The Persian Domination

Persia is an ancient empire, extending from the Indus to Thrace and from the Caspian Sea to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Persians were originally a Medie tribe which settled in Persia, on the eastern side of the Persian Gulf. They were Aryans, their language belonging to the eastern division of the Indo-European group. One of their chiefs, Teispes, conquered Elam in the time of the decay of the Assyrian Empire, and established himself in the district of Anzan. His descendants branched off into two lines, one line ruling in Anzan, while the other remained in Persia. Cyrus II., king of Anzan, finally united the divided power, conquered Media, Lydia, and Babylonia, and carried his arms into the Far East. His son, Cambyses, added Egypt to the empire, which, however, fell to pieces after his death. It was re-conquered and thoroughly organized by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, whose dominions extended from India to the Danube.

3.2.1 The Jews and Cyrus

As indicated earlier, Cyrus is the powerful king of Persia who reigned possibly between 559-530 BC. He is usually called Cyrus the Great. It was he that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland in Jerusalem after he led the Persians to become the dominant nation in the ancient world. He is praised most highly in the Scriptures as “God’s shepherd” and his “anointed”. He first appeared in the Scriptures in connection with the release of Jewish captives when he proclaimed their return from captivity.

Cyrus was known in Persia as a wise and tolerant ruler. He was able to gain the goodwill of the varied ethnic and religious groups within his large empire which extended from India to the western edge of Asia Minor.

3.2.2 The Jews and Darius

The name Darius is a common name for about four kings of the Persian Empire. They are:

Darius I

Darius I also called Darius the Great. This is the ablest of all the Persian kings. He spent three years subduing rebellion in the large empire. After securing his power, he divided the empire into 29 provinces, each ruled by a Persian or Median noble. He made Susa his new capital and developed a code of law similar to that of Hammurabi. He developed trade, built a network of roads, established a postal system, standardized system of weights and measures and established building projects at Persepolis, Ecbantana and Babylon. In relation to the Jews, he continues the policy of Cyrus the Great of restoring the Jewish people to their homeland. In his second year as king, he allowed the Jews to continue the work on the Jerusalem Temple. Apart from this, as recorded in Ezra 6:1-12, he donated generously for the building of the Temple.

Darius II

Darius II is the son of Artaxerxes I and ruled during the ministry of Nehemiah. He is the one called Darius the Persian in Nehemiah 12:22. Darius III ruled Persia from 336-330 BC. He is probably the fourth king of Persia mentioned in Daniel 11:2 by Daniel the Prophet.

Darius the Mede

Darius the Mede was the successor of Belshazzar to the throne of Babylon. Daniel called him “the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes” in Daniel 9: 1. He was the one who made Daniel a ruler of several provinces. It was him who had Daniel thrown in the lions’ den and later proclaimed that the entire kingdom must worship the God of Daniel.

3.3 The Experience of Daniel

Daniel was a Jewish leader and prophet who lived in the court of the king of Babylon. The book of Daniel tells his story. We know nothing about his parents or family, but he probably came from a long line of noble Jewish families. Daniel and his three friends-Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah-were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel earned a reputation for intelligence and for total faithfulness to his God. After three years of instruction, he began a career in court that lasted nearly seventy years.

Early on, Daniel was asked to interpret one of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, in which a great image collapsed and disintegrated when struck by a stone. God revealed the meaning of this dream to Daniel, who explained it to the king. Nebuchadnezzar gratefully offered him a job as the governor of Babylonia, but Daniel asked that his three friends be given the job instead. Near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life, Daniel was able to interpret another dream. That dream suggested that the king would soon lose his sanity. Daniel urged the king to repent of his sins, but he did not and lost his mind for a period of time.

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 BC, Daniel dropped from public view and was given a lower position in the royal court. Although he received visions from God during the reign of the Babylonian king Belshazzar (555 and 553 BC), it was not until 539 BC that Daniel made another public appearance. During a banquet hosted by Belshazzar, the king profaned some sacred vessels stolen from the Jerusalem temple. A hand suddenly appeared in midair, and wrote on the palace wall these words: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin." The king and his court sent for Daniel to interpret the message. According to Daniel, the message meant that the end of Babylon's kingdom was near. That same night Belshazzar was killed by the Persians, who attacked and successfully overtook the capital city.

Under King Darius the Mede, Daniel became one of three rulers of the realm. Daniel's power angered his political enemies, and they persuaded Darius to pass a law forbidding the country from praying to any god or man but the king. Daniel, because of his faithfulness, broke this law, and was thrown into a den of lions as punishment. Miraculously, he was unharmed. King Darius quickly returned Daniel to his job. He "prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian," whom he probably greatly influenced in the matter of the decree which put an end to the Captivity (B.C. 536). He probably died at Susa, about eighty-five years of age. Ezekiel, with whom he was contemporary, mentions him as a pattern of righteousness and wisdom.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have learnt that Daniel is probably the author of the book of Daniel as the structure reveals and the fact that the linguistic format also shows the influence of the Chaldean language. You have also studied about the various events of Daniel's life under various Persian kings. You have learnt about the four kings using the name Dairus in the scriptures and how each of them treated the Jews.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points in this unit:

Daniel is the author of the book of Daniel.

Cyrus was the Persian king that issued the edict that the Jews can return to Jerusalem.

There are four different Persians kings that used the name Darius.

All these kings have some effects on the life of the Jews.

Daniel was carried away into exile from Babylon.

Daniel grew to become of the governors in exile.

Daniel was thrown into the lions' den but was miraculously saved by God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the role the Persian kings played in the history of the Jews.
2. Daniel was a prophet, historian, statesman and sage. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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**UNIT 3 THE RETURN: ZERUBBABEL, EZRA &
NEHEMIAH**

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to the book of Zechariah
 - 3.1.1 Authorship
 - 3.1.2 Date
 - 3.1.3 Purpose
 - 3.1.4 The Ministry of Zerubbabel
 - 3.2 Introduction to the book of Ezra
 - 3.2.1 Authorship
 - 3.2.2 Date
 - 3.2.3 Purpose
 - 3.2.4 The Ministry of Ezra
 - 3.3 Introduction to the book of Nehemiah
 - 3.3.1 Authorship
 - 3.3.2 Date
 - 3.3.3 Purpose
 - 3.3.4 The Ministry of Nehemiah
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you studied about the moral and spiritual degradation of Israel from the division of the kingdom into two to the exile of the southern kingdom of Judah. They were in exile for a long period of time, more than they could have ever imagined. In this unit, you will learn about the return of the Judahites from the exile and how they started the process of rebuilding the ruins of the exile. These took place under the ministry of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the person of Zerubbabel;
- Discuss the first return of the exiles under Zerubbabel;
- Discuss the second return of the exiles under Ezra;

Discuss the role of Ezra in the religious reforms of the post-exilic period; and

Discuss the role of Nehemiah in the socio-political reforms of the post-exilic period.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Book of Zechariah

The book of Zechariah is the major book that contains the story of Zerubbabel; hence it is important for you to read the book and also for you to have an insight into the background of the book.

3.1.1 Authorship

The name Zechariah probably means “the Lord remembers” or “the Lord is renowned.” Though there is a problem in trying to identify the prophet or his ancestry because of the commonality of the name Zechariah, it is better to see the author of this book as Zechariah the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo.

3.1.2 Date

The first part of the book of Zechariah (chapters 1–8) is easy to date. The first date is in the first verse, “the eighth month of the second year of Darius.” This was Darius, king of Persia (521–486 BC). The eighth month of Darius’s second year would be October 520 BC. This date seems to be the first time the “word of the Lord” came to Zechariah. The second date in Zechariah is in 1:7: “On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius”. This date would be February 15, 519 BC. The word of the Lord that came to Zechariah on this date seems to include the account of eight night visions, along with some oracles, from an angel who talked with him. The third date in Zechariah is in 7:1: “In the fourth year of King Darius . . . on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev”. This date would be the equivalent of December 7, 518 BC. There are no dates in Zechariah 9–14. Zechariah’s name is never mentioned, and neither is Darius or any king. A period of relative peace and stability gives place to war. The temple is standing (11:13; 14:20), and evidently Greek soldiers are present (9:13). Any attempt to assign specific dates to Zechariah 9–14 would be speculation.

3.1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the book is to reassure and encourage.

The restored Jewish community of 520 BC needed the assurance that the temple would be rebuilt.

God's people needed to know that ultimately the kingdom of God would come in its fullness.

There are three messages in the book of Zechariah: the need for repentance (1:1–5:11); the eight night visions (1:7–6:8) signifying that the temple would be rebuilt and God's glory would return to Jerusalem; and the coming kingdom of God (chapters 9–14).

3.1.4 The Ministry of Zerubbabel

The name Zerubbabel actually means “seed of Babylon,” and would have been a Jew who was born in Babylon. He returned to Palestine in 538 BC to serve as the governor of Jerusalem under the rule of the Persians. The exact identity of Zerubbabel's biological father is uncertain. All biblical references except one mention Shealtiel as his father (Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2; Nehemiah 12:1, Haggai 1:1, 12-14; Matthew 1:12-13 and Luke 3:27). This would make Zerubbabel the grandson of King Jehoiachin, and a descendant of King David. However, 1 Chronicles 3:19 says Pedaiah, the brother of Shealtiel, was Zerubbabel's father. Whether Shealtiel or Pedaiah was Zerubbabel's biological father, it is clear that Zerubbabel was a descendant of King David and he was viewed by the people of Israel as a possible candidate for leading them back to a position of power.

Following the edict of King Cyrus in 538 BC, Jews were permitted to return to Palestine and reclaim their homeland. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, he led the first band of Jews, numbering 42,360 (Ezr 2:64) exclusive of a large number of servants, who returned from captivity at the close of the seventy years. In the second year after the Return, he erected an altar and laid the foundation of the temple on the ruins of that which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Zerubbabel was appointed governor, and probably by 529 BC had started work on the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple. However, because of several discouraging events, little was accomplished until the year 520 B.C.

The writings of Haggai and Zechariah reveal much information about Zerubbabel's standing in the Israelite community. These two prophets evidently viewed Jeshua and Zerubbabel as the two men chosen by God for the task of rebuilding the temple. In many of their oracles, there is open support for one of these two men (Haggai 2:21-23, Zechariah 3:8, Zechariah 4:6-7 and Zechariah 6:12). The prophets thought Jeshua and Zerubbabel's work was similar to the work of a messiah. This is most clearly seen in the vision of Zechariah (Zechariah 4:11-14). In that vision, two olive branches, one on either side of the lampstand, are

identified as “the two anointed who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” As the context clearly shows, none other than Jeshua (Zechariah 3:1-9) and Zerubbabel (Zechariah 4:6-10) are meant by this reference. Because of his association with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel had been given a place of great honor in Jewish tradition.

3.2 Introduction to the Book of Ezra

The ministry of Ezra is told vividly in the book of Ezra hence it is important that you read the book and also be familiar with its background. In the Talmud tractate *Baba Bathra* 15a, the rabbis and scribes regarded Ezra and Nehemiah as one book. *Josephus* in *Apion* 1.8 also considered the two books to be one when the number of Old Testament books was given as 22. Some church fathers, such as Melito of Sardis and Jerome, thought of them as one book. The Septuagint also grouped the two books as one, referring to them as 2 Ezra to distinguish them from an apocryphal book known as 1 Ezra. The Latin Vulgate, however, called Ezra “1 Ezra” and Nehemiah “2 Ezra.”

3.2.1 Authorship

By tradition, the Jewish leader Ezra researched and put together the material that forms his book. Chapters 7–10 are written in the first person singular, and Ezra may have used the autobiographical passages as the core of this book, adding information from other sources. That the book contains portions written in Aramaic has been used as justification for assigning a date later than Ezra’s time. But the Aramaic of Ezra bears a remarkable similarity to fifth-century BC Aramaic papyri from the Jewish community at Elephantine in Egypt. The book is largely a compilation, using autobiography, official documents, edicts, and other material. The present book of Ezra contains four identifiable strata of source material.

3.2.2 Date

Traditionally, the Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:1 has been identified with Artaxerxes I Longimanus. Ezra’s arrival in Jerusalem would thus have been in 458 BC. Therefore, Ezra’s work at Jerusalem started before that of Nehemiah, who came in 445 BC. But the traditional dates are questioned from a number of sources. One alternative is to place Nehemiah during the reign of Artaxerxes I (464–424 BC) and Ezra at a later date, in the reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–359 BC). Such a suggestion creates a difficulty with Nehemiah 8:2, because there Ezra is named as Nehemiah’s contemporary and co worker.

In addition, the Elephantine papyri (407–400 BC) mention the high priest Johanan in Jerusalem, and Sanballat as governor of Samaria. Johanan is considered a grandson of Eliashib, but Nehemiah was a contemporary of Eliashib (Nehemiah 3:1, 20). The biblical material that speaks of Nehemiah going to Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1, 445 BC) and again during the 32d year (Nehemiah 13:6, 433 BC) refers to Eliashib's contemporary high priesthood with Ezra. The traditional position thus furnishes a reasonable date for the book of Ezra. If the scribe were placed during the reign of Artaxerxes II that is, around 397 BC, his ministry would be too late for the high priesthood of Johanan.

3.2.3 Purpose

The book of Ezra is a straightforward account of one of the most important events in Jewish history. From a priestly point of view, it is an account of the restoration of Jewish people to their homeland following the Babylonian dispersion. The record tells of two distinct returns, one under the leadership of Zerubbabel (chapters 1–6; 538 BC), and 80 years later, the second return led by Ezra (chapters 7–10; 458 BC). The book emphasizes Ezra's leadership and the reestablishment of the people on their land, both of which were to have important future consequences.

3.2.4 The Ministry of Ezra

Ezra is actually a reformer of Jewish religious worship during Israel's return from exile. Ezra's genealogy places him in the family line of Aaron-Zadok. He is called "priest", "scribe", and "priest and scribe". In the Old Testament the scribe was not a mere copyist, as in Christ's time, but a great student of God's laws and commandments. It was Ezra who began the traditional view of the scribe as a religious leader, a "bookman"; this view lasted until 200 BC. Scribes were qualified to teach and preach the Scriptures as well as interpret them, but by the first century AD, the scribe's function was more limited. After the city walls had been rebuilt, Ezra started a religious reformation in which the ancient Torah was made the rule for Jewish life. He also demanded that Jews who had married foreigners must divorce them to keep the Jewish purity that the Torah required. Ezra set an example of piety and dedication for his people by his prayer and fasting. He set the pattern for life in post-exile Jewish culture, making God's Word and worship central parts of life. There was a great religious awakening. For successive days they held solemn assemblies, confessing their sins and offering up solemn sacrifices. They kept also the feast of Tabernacles with great solemnity and joyous enthusiasm, and then renewed their national covenant to be the Lord's. Abuses were rectified, and

arrangements for the temple service completed. The date and place of Ezra's death are unknown.

3.3 Introduction to the Book of Nehemiah

Nehemiah's ministry is also described in the book of Nehemiah and so it is important that you study about the book and also read the accounts in the book.

3.3.1 Authorship

Nehemiah's personal memoirs form a considerable portion of the book that bears his name. These memoirs reveal a man of nobility and piety, who was compassionate, prudent, and patriotic. He is in all probability the author of the book.

3.3.2 Date

Since there are indications from the two books Ezra and Nehemiah that the two leaders overlap in their ministry, the book of Nehemiah might have been written about the same time that the book of Ezra was written, that is, 359 BC.

3.3.3 Purpose

When the exiles returned to Jerusalem, Judah had neither nationhood nor political status. Only one thing remained to them: their religion. They were the "remnant" of Yahweh's chosen people, from whom would rise the new and glorious Israel. It was this vision that explains Nehemiah's insistence that the Jewish people maintain the purity and exclusiveness of their religious faith and practice in order to rejuvenate their national life and rebuild the city walls, because this symbolized the racial and the religious purity of the people. He also insisted on separation from paganism, prohibition of marriage with non-Jews, and careful observance of the laws of the Sabbath.

It is, therefore, difficult to exaggerate the significance of the book of Nehemiah. Along with the book of Ezra, it furnishes the only consecutive Hebrew account of that period in Jewish history when the foundations of Judaism—with its inflexible segregation of the Jews and its passionate veneration of the Mosaic Law—were laid. Of course, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi also contribute to knowledge of the period, but Nehemiah (with Ezra) provides a progressive narrative of this epoch. The return of the expatriates from Babylon to Jerusalem constitutes a resumption of the saving purposes of God for his ancient people, leading to the advent of Jesus Christ.

The account of the return from Babylon under Nehemiah emphasizes the religious aspect of the community of repatriates in Jerusalem. But other, secondary factors should be noted: Nehemiah's preoccupation with Judah's political security and constitutional status to ensure its independence of Samaria; the rebuilding of the city walls; Nehemiah's resettlements of population; and his appointment to the governorship of the new province.

Judaism was the product of the restoration, which became both a protective barrier against, and a wall of separation from, the Gentiles. Religious institutions initiated during the Babylonian exile and transplanted to Jerusalem took deep and firm root: the synagogue where the Law and the Prophets were read and the prayers were offered; the scribes who worked with single-minded devotion; and the Sanhedrin that continued to serve the new theocracy.

The Jewish remnant of the fifth century BC parallels the modern Christian church in that both share the challenge of spiritual reconstruction and renewal essential to God's purposes.

3.3.4 The Ministry of Nehemiah

Nehemiah as portrayed in the book was a man of generosity and fidelity, political acumen, and religious zeal, of total dedication to God, outstanding organizational ability, and dynamic leadership. At the same time Nehemiah possessed a capacity for ruthlessness when confronting the sin and waywardness of his compatriots and the intrigues of powerful non-Jewish enemies. Not surprisingly, then, a dispirited and dejected people awoke from their lethargic and apathetic state and responded to Nehemiah's stringent approach to their situation.

Nehemiah pleaded to be sent to Judah to aid his fellow Jews in their difficulties and in particular to rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8). He was appointed governor of Judah for twelve years. After inspecting the walls upon his arrival, he realized that their repair was to be his prime task. This repair would guarantee the security of the city and could provide a focal point for the Jewish community scattered throughout Judah. That he was able to marshal support for this project and to complete it attests to his skills in management and administration. He also had a strong personal faith, as his prayers and conviction of divine guidance and help attest. He had to overcome hostility and intimidation from powerful authorities in neighbouring Samaria, Ammon, and Arabia. He also required economic justice. A few rich Jews were exploiting a food shortage by exacting high interest from their poorer brothers.

Included in Nehemiah's concern for Jerusalem was a strong interest in the maintenance of temple worship. He was involved in the production of a document in which the Jewish community pledged themselves to support the temple personnel and to provide offerings. Clearly, he realized that Judah needed at its heart a religious emphasis as well as political stability. These particular religious reforms are linked with those of his second period as governor. Other reforms of that period concerned the observance of the Sabbath and the problem of marriages to non-Jews. Nehemiah was a forceful leader who used his imperial powers to restore to the settlers a national and religious identity in a period of political and economic weakness.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have studied the story of the regaining the pride of Israel after the return from exile. This became possible through the ministry of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. The trio contributed in no small measure to the rebuilding of Israel's national pride. Each of the three personalities contributed to a part of the whole work. While Zerubbabel focused on the rebuilding of the Temple and Nehemiah focused on the political issues, both Ezra and Nehemiah stressed the religious rebuilding of the life of the returnees from exile.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the major points in the unit:

The first set of Jews to return from exile returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel focused on the rebuilding of the temple.

The second set returned under the leadership of Ezra, the scribe.

Nehemiah took permission to go and aid the returnees in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was made governor of Judah.

Nehemiah faced the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and other political issues.

He led the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the face of external hostility.

The trio contributed in no small measure to the emergence of Judaism as is known today.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What would you consider to be the achievement of Ezra's ministry?
2. What would you consider to be the achievement of Nehemiah's ministry?

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UNIT 4 THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE: THE ROLE OF HAGGAI AND MALACHI AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE ISRAELITES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Introduction to the book of Haggai
 - 3.1.1 Authorship
 - 3.1.2 Date
 - 3.1.3 Purpose
 - 3.1.4 The Ministry of Haggai
 - 3.2 Introduction to the book of Malachi
 - 3.2.1 Authorship
 - 3.2.2 Date
 - 3.2.3 Purpose
 - 3.2.4 The Ministry of Malachi
 - 3.3 The Rebuilding of the Temple
 - 3.3.1 Factors affecting the Rebuilding of the Temple
 - 3.3.2 Factors Promoting the Rebuilding of the Temple
 - 3.3.3 The Impact of the Completion of the Temple on the Religious Life of Israel
 - 3.3.4 Religious Life of Israel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you studied the return of the Jews from exile and the attempts made at the rebuilding of the Temple as well as religious revivals under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. You also learned about the socio-political dimension that was brought in by Nehemiah's ministry. In this unit which will be the last unit of this course, focus will be on the rebuilding of the Temple, the role of Haggai and Malachi and the impact of the completion of the building on the religious life of the post-exile Israelites.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the role of Haggai in the rebuilding of the temple after the return from exile;
- Discuss the role of Malachi in the restoration of the pure worship of Yahweh after the return from exile; and
- List the impact of the rebuilding of the temple on the religious life of the Israelites.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Introduction to the Book of Haggai

All the information about the ministry of Haggai is contained in the book of Haggai and so it is important that you read about the book as well as read the book itself.

3.1.1 Authorship

The book was probably written by Haggai the prophet himself. He was among the Jewish colonists at Jerusalem in the year 520 BC when his prophetic words were recorded. The four messages the Lord gave to Haggai were to be directed to specific individuals. The first was to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest. The second was to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant of the people. The third was a word to the priests. The final message was limited to Zerubbabel.

3.1.2 Date

The book was written about 520 BC during the period of the ministry of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

3.1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the book is to awaken the Judean leadership and people their spiritual responsibilities. Two different classes of Judeans had to be turned from their indifference. The true believers needed to be reminded that God was merciful. The situation could be remedied, even though they thought the sins committed by their fathers were unforgivable. The hypocrites among the Judeans had only sought the promised blessings. They had only exchanged one form of idolatry for another. When the blessings did not materialize, they were disappointed. Haggai's message was twofold: reproof and encouragement. The colonists needed to be

chastised for their indifference and consoled in the midst of their troubles.

3.1.4 The Ministry of Haggai

The name Haggai means festive. Scarcely anything is known of his personal history. He may have been one of the captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. He began his ministry about sixteen years after the Return. The work of rebuilding the temple had been put a stop to through the intrigues of the Samaritans. After having been suspended for fifteen years, the work was resumed through the efforts of Haggai and Zechariah who by their exhortations roused the people from their lethargy, and induced them to take advantage of the favourable opportunity that had arisen in a change in the policy of the Persian government.

3.2 Introduction to the Book of Malachi

All the information about the ministry of Malachi is contained in the book of Malachi and so it is important that you read about the book as well as read the book itself.

3.2.1 Authorship

The author of the book is probably the prophet Malachi, whose name the book bore. The name actually means messenger or angel. For this reason some are of the opinion that it might have been a symbolic name. There is reason, however, to conclude that Malachi was the ordinary name of the prophet. He was contemporary with Nehemiah. No allusion is made to him by Ezra, and he does not mention the restoration of the temple, and hence it is inferred that he prophesied after Haggai and Zechariah, and when the temple services were still in existence.

3.2.2 Date

Since Malachi had to deal with the same sins mentioned in Nehemiah 13, it is likely that the prophet ministered either during Nehemiah's second term as governor or in the years just before his return. The reference to "the governor" in Malachi 1:8 implies that someone other than Nehemiah was in office, so it may be best to place Malachi just after 433 BC, the year Nehemiah had returned to Persia.

3.2.3 Purpose

Malachi was written to shake the people of Judah from their spiritual lethargy and to warn them that judgment was coming unless they

repented. The people doubted God's love and justice and did not take his commands seriously. Yet God was "a great King" with a great name that was to be feared even beyond the border of Israel. Malachi repeatedly urged both the priests and the people to revere God and give him the honour he deserved. God was Israel's Father and Creator, but the nation showed contempt for his name. In response to this contempt, God would send his messenger to announce the Day of the Lord.

3.2.4 The Ministry of Malachi

Nothing is known of him beyond what is contained in his book of prophecies.

3.3 The Rebuilding of the Temple

As you have seen earlier, the Temple is one of the most exquisite buildings in ancient Israel. It had always been a place of attraction to Israel's enemies. For example, during the reign of Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt took away treasures from the temple. King Asa used the treasures in his time to buy an alliance. It was later desecrated by idolatrous kings and was only repaired during Josiah's reforms. Finally when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem in his first attack, he robbed the temple of all its treasures and gold. At the second attack, he looted, sacked and burnt the temple.

When Cyrus authorized the return of the Jews from exile, he returned all the temple vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had looted from the temple so that the returnees could erect another temple. The second temple, as it is popularly called was completed around 537 BC. This temple was smaller and less inferior to the magnificent Solomon's temple. Since the Ark was never recovered, the second temple (and the one Herod later built) had no Ark of covenant. In place of Solomon's ten golden lamp stands which were not also recovered was a one-seven branched candelabrum. The table of shewbread and an incense altar with the candelabrum were the only articles in the Holy Place. These were also taken away when Antiochus IV Epiphanes defiled the altar in 167 BC. It was later restored by the Maccabees in 164 BC.

3.3.1 Factors affecting the Rebuilding of the Temple

The first set of exiles that returned started the rebuilding the temple by erecting the altar and offering sacrifices. It was in their second year that the foundation proper was laid. The notable problems they have are two-pronged: political and economic.

The other people who were considered the enemies of the Jews gathered together to oppose the rebuilding of the temple. They included Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, Rehum the commander and Shishai the scribe. These people wrote to Artaxerxes who stopped the rebuilding of the temple and this went on till the reign of Darius king of Persia.

The other factor was that the economic condition of the people was very low. Hence when the political problem was discouraging them the economic one was frustrating them. These two factors kept the rebuilding work of the temple in a slow tempo.

3.3.2 Factors Promoting the Rebuilding of the Temple

The factors that promoted the rebuilding the temple was mainly religious. The Lord raised up prophets that encouraged the people and prophesized about the goodness of the lord upon them. These included Ezra himself, Hagai, Zechariah and Malachi.

3.3.3 The Impact of the Completion of the Temple on the Religious Life of Israel

The completion of the temple has boosted not just the morale of the returnees but also increased their faith in God. The temple as usual became the centre of political unity as well as religious unity. It was a place where their identity as the children of YHWH was rekindled.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this last unit you have learnt about the ministry of Haggai and also Malachi as prophets during the rebuilding of the temple after the return of the Jews from exile. You have also learnt about how the temple of Solomon that was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar was rebuilt following the orders of Cyrus. You have also learnt about those who hindered the work and how the work was finally completed.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Haggai was among the Jewish exiles that returned to Jerusalem. He ministered during the reign of Zerubbabel as governor and Joshua was High Priest. His ministry led to the continuation of work on the temple after 15 years of abandonment. Malachi was contemporary with Nehemiah and his ministry focused on faithfulness to YHWH.

For political and economic reasons the reconstruction of the temple was slow.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the factors that hindered the reconstruction of the temple.
2. Discuss the role Haggai played in the reconstruction of the temple.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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