

CHAPTER 4

‘YAHWEH’S PEOPLE’ IN THE ABRAHAMIC AND MOSAIC COVENANTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will examine some of the major scholarly viewpoints concerning the source of the name and cult of ‘Yahweh’. I will also discuss the concept of ‘Yahweh’s people’ in the perspective of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants as portrayed in the Pentateuch. The intention is to show that both Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants provide a framework through which every human being could embrace ‘Yahweh’, the God of Israel, as their God.

The Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants’ framework includes the function of Abraham as the father of a multitude of nations; circumcision; the blessing of other nations via Abraham and his descendants; food provision; Sabbath keeping; Passover celebration; equality of both the Israelites and the aliens before the law of Yahweh; intermarriage; sacrificial offering and cities of refuge. As a consequence, ‘Yahweh’s people’ from the viewpoints of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants include the Israelites and other people who embrace ‘Yahweh’, the God of Israel, as their God. The biological, genealogical, racial, economic, linguistic, nationalistic or geographical differences did not exclude other nations from embracing Yahweh through the Abrahamic/Mosaic covenants.

Theologically, there are a number of covenants that Yahweh had made with Israel directly or indirectly, namely, Abrahamic (cf Gn 15:1-21; 17:1-27), Mosaic (cf Ex 19:1-24:18), and Davidic (cf 2 Sm 7:1-29; Ps 89:1-52; 23:5) covenants, just to mention a few that will be considered in this investigation. These covenants, in my judgment, possess exclusive and inclusive points of view concerning the concept of 'Yahweh's people' and concerning other nations/foreigners. However, the focus in this chapter is not to describe all the various viewpoints of the above mentioned covenants. Rather, the focus is on describing an inclusive theological perspective of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants concerning the concept of 'Yahweh's people' and concerning other nations, foreigners and aliens.

There are two theological perspectives on the concept of 'Yahweh's people' in the Abrahamic and in the Mosaic covenants as portrayed in the Pentateuch. On the one hand, it appears from the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants that 'Yahweh' is exclusively linked with Israel as their God; thus, a surface reading of the Pentateuch could lead to a conclusion that Yahweh recognised Israel as his own people at the exclusion of all other nations, peoples, or ethnic groups.¹⁰³

On the other hand, a close reading of the Pentateuch reveals that there are some allusions to the inclusion of other nations, peoples, ethnic groups, or foreigners/aliens in the application or operation of the Abrahamic and the

¹⁰³ For example, cf Nicholson (1986:23-24) and Gn 17:7-8; Ex 3:6-10; 12:43, 45; 20:1-2; Dt 5:1-7; 6:1-25; 23:1-6; 1 Ki 8:33-34.

Mosaic covenants.¹⁰⁴ In other words, there are certain provisions in the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants for other nations or foreigners to embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel, as their God. Derivatively, other nations/foreigners therefore, could be regarded as ‘Yahweh’s people’ through this appropriate covenant means. This inclusive theological perspective of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants will therefore, be described in this chapter.

The discussion shall begin with some scholarly hypotheses concerning the *source* of the *name* and *cult* of ‘Yahweh’. The argument is not intended to establish the exact source of the name ‘Yahweh’ and his cult; rather it is to provide a general picture of the major scholarly hypothesis concerning this subject matter in order to enrich the background of the theme of this investigation. In other words, the objective is to offer a literary framework to the subject of ‘Yahweh’s people’ and other nations treated in this and the following chapters.

4.2 SOURCE OF THE NAME AND CULT OF ‘YAHWEH’

The importance of the name $\text{h}w" \text{h}y >$ in the Old Testament can best be illustrated by its numerous occurrences in the text of the Old Testament. The name appears at least 6,007 times¹⁰⁵ or possibly even as many as 6,823 times (cf Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone 2001:265; Lang 2002:206; Parke-

¹⁰⁴ Cf Gn 12:3; 17:4-5, 12-13, 16, 20, 23-27; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Ex 12:19; 20:10; 22:21; 23:9, 12; Lv 19:33-34; 24:22; Nm 15:14-16; 35:15; Dt 1:16; 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:10-14; 23:7-8; 27:19.

¹⁰⁵ According to the statistics derived from Bible Works Version 6.0.

Taylor 1975:5). Therefore, in what follows, main scholarly discourses concerning the source of the name 'Yahweh' and his cult will be examined in relation to what is portrayed in the Pentateuch. A few viewpoints shall be considered in this regard, namely, the Israelite, the non-Israelite and the Pentateuchal considerations concerning the source of the name and cult of 'Yahweh'.

4.2.1 Israelite origin

The original pronunciation of the name $hw"hy>$ appeared to have been lost by the Israelites due to certain religious scruples concerning the name during the Persian period (cf Rogerson, Moberly and Johnstone 2001:264-265). The pronunciation of the name 'Yahweh' was specifically prohibited in compliance to the regulation from Leviticus 24:16 which states that "Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death".¹⁰⁶

Lang (2002:206-207) explained that the use of the name was restricted to two core institutions that defined the Jewish identity. These institutions included the sacred scripture and the temple in Jerusalem. The priests were specifically allowed to use the name $hw"hy>$ during worship at the temple in

¹⁰⁶ New American Standard Bible 1995.

Jerusalem. But after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD by the Romans, the Jews ceased to call/speak or pronounce this name.

Consequently, the four consonants $\text{hw}^{\text{h}}\text{y}$ or YHWH (i.e. Tetragrammaton) had been given the vowels of $\text{y}^{\text{h}}\text{n}^{\text{h}}\text{I}^{\text{h}}\text{d}^{\text{h}}\text{o}^{\text{h}}\text{a}^{\text{h}}$ (*adonay* my Lord) by the Masoretes. The *hatef patah* of *adonay* becomes a mere vocal *shewa*, and we now have $\text{hw}^{\text{h}}\text{y}^{\text{h}}$ which is transliterated as ‘Yahweh’ (cf Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone 2001:264-265; Van der Toorn, Becking & Van der Horst 1999:910). But in the Jewish *Mishna*, the divine name is usually written by combining the vocal *shewa* with *qames*.

The name $\text{hw}^{\text{h}}\text{y}^{\text{h}}$ (Yahweh) is mostly identified with the official God of Israel, both in the Northern Kingdom and in Judah (cf Van der Toorn, Becking & Van der Horst 1999:911; De Moor 1997:10-11). This explains why the content of one of the earliest extra biblical texts has mentioned the name ‘Yahweh’, namely, the Victory ‘Stela’ or ‘Stele’ of Mesha and the ‘Khirbet el-Qom’ burial inscription (cf Lang 2002:207). The Victory ‘Stela’ text is claimed to have been written by Mesha, the king of the Moabites from the 9th century BC (cf Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone 2001:265; De Moor 1997:12-13). In it, the king claimed to have defeated the Israelites in war and had taken the “[r]ly” of Yahweh and dragged them in front of his god *Chemosh* (Van der Toorn, Becking & van der Horst 1999:911).

Other places, according to Rogerson, Moberly and Johnstone (2001:265; cf Vriezen 2001:45-80; De Moor 1997:11-12) where the name 'Yahweh' occurs include *Kuntillet 'Ajrud* (ninth-eighth century) and at *Arad* and *Lachish* ostraca (sixth century). It is evident from these inscriptional pieces that 'Yahweh' is associated with Israel and not with any other tribe or group of people. But Lang (2002:177-178) uses a similar *Kuntillet 'Ajrud's* inscription to argue that the inscription describes Yahweh to have come from Teman, apparently from the region of Edom. It is likely that Lang might have read a different inscription which is derived from the *Kuntillet 'Ajrud's* family.

The viewpoint of Bright (2000:148) is that Israel's God was Yahweh from the beginning. It was from the desert that Israel had brought their worship of Yahweh into Palestine. As a matter of fact, according to Bright, no trace of the cult of Yahweh could be found in Palestine prior to the arrival of the Israelites. Israel's religion was communicated to her in the desert by Moses. Israel believed that she was rescued from Egypt by Yahweh, her God; and through the covenant, Yahweh had made Israel his own people (cf Ex 6:7-8).

It has also been suggested that though Yahweh was a well-known deity in Israel before 1000 BC, he became a national God among the Israelites at the beginning of the monarchy (cf Van der Toorn et al 1999: 918-919; De Moor 1997:12, 263). Some of the events that contributed to the recognition of Yahweh as the patron deity during the monarchy included: first, king David brought the Ark of the covenant from Benjamin and set it up in Jerusalem (cf

2 Sm 6:1-23). King Solomon later brought the Ark and set it up in the temple which he had built for Yahweh (cf 1 Ki 8:1-21). Second, Solomon also dedicated the temple, its furnishing and the entire people of Israel to the service and honour of Yahweh (cf 1 Ki 8:22-66).

Meanwhile, De Moore (1997:14-33) has compiled a list of theophoric personal names from all the tribes of Israel beginning from as early as the second millennium BC up to the period of David. He discovered that there are 188 *Elohistic* names, 163 *Yahwistic* names and 47 other theophoric names (cf Tigay 1986; 1987). This led De Moor (1997:33, 39, 40) to conclude that the evidences suggest that the names of El and Yahweh were designations of the same God of Israel long before David made Zion the national center for the worship of Yahweh. De Moor (1997:33, 39-40) also reasoned that the presence of the theophoric toponyms during the period prior to the monarchy suggests that Israel did not take over the land of Canaan completely by force; rather, it was a gradual, non-violent take over. As a result, there was a limited desire to automatically change the names of certain existing Canaanite cities. But it is also possible that the Israelites were not yet such strict monotheists (cf Vriezen 2001:45-80; Dijkstra 2001:81-126).

Smith (1990:7-8 cf 2001:143) describes the relationship between El and Yahweh as a father and son nature. He argues that the original God of Israel was El. This is evidenced from the name: IsraEL, which bears an epithet (el) of their God. According to Smith (1990:7-8), the genesis that led to the acceptance of Yahweh as the God of Israel could be inferred from

Deuteronomy 32:8-9¹⁰⁷. In this passage, El had assigned each nation or group of people as a portion to his respective sons. Israel was therefore assigned to Yahweh as his people. Smith also pointed out that there is no biblical polemics against El. This could better be explained on the basis of the fact that Israel assimilated El in their worship of Yahweh.

Unfortunately, Smith has failed to account for the other sons of El. He has also failed to tell which nations were assigned to the unidentified sons of El. Smith (1990:8) cited Joshua 22:22¹⁰⁸ to support his theory but the passage appears to undermine his viewpoint on the father-son relationship between El and Yahweh. If Yahweh was the son of El, this passage should have said 'El is the god of gods because he is the father to all the other gods'. But the passage says that the 'God of gods is Yahweh'. Therefore, Yahweh takes precedence over the rest of the existing gods according to Joshua 22:22. As a result, Yahweh can no longer be conceived as a son to El or to another god as presupposed by Smith (1990:7-8).

The viewpoint of De Moor (1997:323-324) concerning the relationship between El and Yahweh is more convincing. De Moor (1997:333) dismisses the viewpoint that Yahweh was a foreign god who merged with El in Canaan.

¹⁰⁷ ⁸ "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. ⁹ "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance" (New American Standard Bible from Bible Works Version 6.0).

¹⁰⁸ "The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If *it* was in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the LORD do not save us this day!" (New American Standard Bible from Bible Works Version 6.0).

He suggests that El and Yahweh were two names used interchangeably to designate the same God by the Israelite right from the beginning (cf Mondriaan 2004:588-592). But evidences that connect storm god to Yahweh also abound in scripture which could render this argument inconclusive.

4.2.2 Non-Israelite origin

A non-Israelite origin of the name 'Yahweh' and his cult is that Yahweh may have been worshipped or at least known by the Edomites, Midianites, Kenites or other related South-Western Semitic tribes before extending to Judah and later on to the Northern Kingdom of Israel.¹⁰⁹ There are two Egyptian texts from the 14th and 13th Century BC that have connected the worship of Yahweh to the Edomites and to the Midianites (cf Van der Toorn et al 1999: 911-913). It is argued that the two texts speak about "Yahu in the land of the Shosu beduins" and "Seir", which could be located between the regions of the Midianites and the Edomites. These texts also assert that Yahweh was worshipped by nomads who were from Edom and from Midian before the cult reached Israel (contra De Moor 1997:124-125).

The above mentioned hypothesis appears to converge with the Old Testament tradition which suggests that Yahweh came from similar places such as Edom and Seir (cf Jdg 5:4; Ps 68:7/8), Sinai, Seir and Mount Paran (cf Dt 33:2), and Teman and Mount Paran (cf Hab 3:3). Lang (2002:177-178) points out that some biblical passages (cf Gn 25:1-34; 27:1-28:9; Dt 23:7) suggest that Edom descended from Esau. Since Esau was the brother of

¹⁰⁹ Cf Mondriaan (2004:583-587); Lang (2002:177-178); Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone (2001:266); Day (2000:429); Van der Toorn et al (1999: 911-913) and Hyatt (1980:78).

Jacob/Israel, it is likely that the cult of Yahweh may have originated from the Edomites. This means that the Israelites may have learned about Yahweh from their brother nation, the Edomites (Esau).

Another theory of the origin of the name 'Yahweh' and his cult which is similar to the above mentioned theory is suggested by Hyatt (1980:80). He argues that the name and cult of 'Yahweh' probably originated from the Amorites but later on in history, Yahweh became a patron deity to one of the ancestors of Moses; from there, Yahweh became the patron deity of the clan of Moses and finally, through the mediation of Moses himself, Yahweh became the God of the Hebrews or Israelites as a whole during their migration from Egypt to the land of Canaan.

The above theory concerning the Amorite origin of the cult of Yahweh is unlikely to have been true. This is because the Israelites were already prohibited from having any ties with the Canaanites tribes, including the Amorites (cf Ex 34:11-16). If the cult of Yahweh had originated from the Amorites, there would have been no reason to prohibit the Israelites from having any relationship with them. The Exodus passage presupposes that the Amorites were worshipping other deities, not Yahweh, the God of Israel (cf Smith 1990:xx). Therefore, it is inconceivable to suggest that the source of the cult of Yahweh was derived from the Amorites.

Two major viewpoints concerning the source of the name and cult of 'Yahweh' have emerged from the above discussion. One is that the name and

cult of 'Yahweh' originated from Israel. The other viewpoint is that the name 'Yahweh' and his cult originated from other nations who surrounded Israel prior to their settlement in the land of Canaan.

How did the cult of Yahweh gain credence in Israel if the source of the name and cult of Yahweh originated elsewhere rather than in Israel? To answer this question, it has been suggested that some nomadic people from the Kenite tribe introduced the cult to the Israelites via Moses (cf Van der Toorn et al 1999: 911-913). Another version of this Kenite theory assumes that Hobab or Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, a Midianite priest, was a worshipper of Yahweh among the Kenite tribe. He happened to introduce the cult of 'Yahweh' to Moses. Then Moses established the cult in Israel¹¹⁰ (cf Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone 2001:266; Hyatt 1980:78; Parke-Taylor 1975:21).

However, there is doubt about the Midianite-Kenite theory of the origin of the cult of 'Yahweh' because of reasons put forward by Hyatt (1980:78-79; see Mondriaan 2004:585-587). According to him, the argument that Jethro is referred to as a priest of Midian can be countered with the simple fact that Jethro was never referred to as a priest of Yahweh. The Old Testament has never indicated that Yahweh was the deity of the Midianites or the Kenites. It is also doubtful whether the Israelites would have followed Moses out of Egypt if he had introduced to them a complete foreign god of whom they had never heard about. Furthermore, there is no indication in the context of

¹¹⁰ Cf Jdg 1:16; 14:11; Nm 10: 29; Ex 2:16; 3:1; 18:1, 10-12.

Exodus 18:12 to regard it as a ceremony whereby the Israelites were inducted into the worship of Yahweh.

As a matter of fact, in my opinion, Jethro appeared to have been very surprised at his realization that Yahweh could deliver the Israelites from Egypt with such a powerful hand. This realization prompted Jethro to say: "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people" (Ex 18:11). Therefore, this ceremony and Jethro's exclamation of surprise here, suggest that Jethro also might have learned about Yahweh via Moses not the other way round (cf De Moor 1997:311; Brueggeman 1994:825; Fretheim 1991:196-197).

4.2.3 Pentateuchal perspectives on Yahweh and his cult

There are several contesting viewpoints on the source of the name and cult of 'Yahweh' from the Pentateuch (cf Dijkstra 2001:81-89). For example, Genesis 4:26 suggests that the source of the cult of 'Yahweh' is traced concurrently or immediately following the birth of Enosh, the son of Seth¹¹¹. But prior to this identification, the name 'Yahweh' has appeared several times in Genesis 2:4-4:16. If the depiction of the order of events that had taken place during the primeval history in Genesis is to be taken literally, then how should these earlier references (cf Gn 2:4-4:25) to the name and cult of 'Yahweh' be understood in light of the later suggestion that men began to call upon the name of 'Yahweh' immediately following the birth of Enosh (cf Gn 4:26)?

¹¹¹ "And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gn 4:26).

Furthermore, to complicate this matter, there is another viewpoint in Exodus, which suggests that Moses was the first person to have been introduced to the name and cult of 'Yahweh'. This claim is portrayed in the story of Yahweh's conversation with Moses in Exodus 3:14-16¹¹² and 6:2-5.¹¹³ What seems to be one of the major problems about these passages is that, if Moses was the first person to have been introduced to the name 'Yahweh', as these two above source traditions (the *Elohists* and the *Priestly* respectively) seem to have presupposed, why then would Yahweh's name appear prior to the time of Moses?

The above differing viewpoints lead this investigation to pose the following questions:

- First, what is the source of the name and cult of Yahweh according to the Pentateuch?
- Second, does the source of the name and cult of Yahweh predate the birth of Enosh (cf Gn 2:4-4:16)?

¹¹² "14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations."¹⁶ "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt".

¹¹³ "2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD; ³ and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them."⁴ "I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned."⁵ "Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant".

- Third, should the source of the name and cult of Yahweh be situated at the period immediately following the birth of Enosh (cf Gn 4:26)?
- Finally, should the source of the name and cult of Yahweh be associated with the period of Moses as Exodus 3:13-15 and 6:2-5 seem to presuppose?

Few solutions have been offered by scholars (cf Dijkstra 2001:81-89) but I will discuss the documentary solution in what follows. Other solutions will be discussed separately (see section 4.2.3.1 & 4.2.3.2 for alternative solutions).

- The documentary solution

The documentary hypothesis (JEDP) has attempted to identify and classify the various documents that were used to form the Pentateuch (cf Dillard and Longman 1994:40-48). This effort provides an alternative solution concerning the above questions. The solution, though, is still contested (cf Enns 2000:104-106). The hypothesis suggests that the name 'Yahweh' and his cult appear to have come from Yahweh, the J source tradition of the Pentateuch (cf Bright 2000:97; Matthew 1996:293-294; Hayes 1979:15-20; Vogels 1979:18-19). The first appearance of this name from the Hebrew Bible occurs in Genesis 2:4, which is also credited to the J source tradition (cf Enns 2000:104; Dillard and Longman 1994:41). Therefore, the pre-Mosaic worship of Yahweh belonged to this oldest layer of the Pentateuch (cf Dijkstra 2001:84).

The Yahwist tradition has been revised and extended by the *Elohist* redactor at a later stage in history (cf Dijkstra 2001:84). This *Elohist* redactor inserted Exodus 3:7-15 in his revised version to introduce and explain the name 'Yahweh' to Moses and Israel. Dijkstra (2001:86) argues that the reasons for the JE redactor were twofold:

- He/she wanted to explain the name 'Yahweh' to his/her audience; and
- To establish a uniform pronunciation and an official centralized liturgical usage of the name Yahweh.

The final redactor- P (Priestly), combined all the documents of the Pentateuch together and also attempted to harmonize the J and E versions of the revelation of the name and cult of Yahweh by inserting his version in Exodus 6:2-3 (cf Dijkstra (2001:87). This final redactor was influenced by the ideas which were being developed from Babylon and Persia concerning the neglect of the true worship of Yahweh (cf Jos 24:14; Ezk 20:5-7). In response to this negligence, the final Pentateuchal redactor acknowledges that the Patriarchs were not devoid of the knowledge of Yahweh. Though, they were not yet familiar with the name 'Yahweh'. Yahweh had appeared to them in the form of *El Shadday* (God Almighty cf Gn 17:1; 35:11; 48:3). Therefore, this final redactor endeavoured to harmonize the two versions of the source of the name and cult of Yahweh. The one tradition claims that Yahweh was known to the Patriarchs; while the other tradition claims that Yahweh was revealed exclusively to Moses.

Therefore, the solution of the documentary hypothesis to the questions raised from above is that each of the three to four source traditions provides their theory of the source of the name and cult of Yahweh in a distinctive manner. The differing viewpoints concerning the source of the name 'Yahweh' and his cult in the Pentateuch is explained on the presupposition that their source traditions differ from one another. This means that the J source tradition bases its account concerning the source of the name and cult of Yahweh on Genesis 4:26; the *Elohists* source tradition bases its account on the same subject on Exodus 3:13-15; while, the *Priestly* source tradition bases its account on the source of the name and cult of 'Yahweh' on Exodus 6:2-5.

Following from the above conclusion, a charge of inconsistency for labelling the documents according to the divine names is placed against the documentary hypothesis (cf Matthew 1996:293; Moberly 1992:43) because the name 'Yahweh' and the origin of the cult of Yahweh have also been found in the documents that have been ascribed to the *Elohists* and *Priestly* source traditions rather than the designated J source tradition.

A question that comes to mind is: why use the divine names to classify the sources of the Pentateuchal documents if this usage could not be demonstrated clearly and could not be applied consistently in the Pentateuch? In other words, if the divine names are used in order to classify the various source traditions of the Pentateuchal documents, this principle should have been followed in a consistent manner by those who proposed

and advanced the JEDP theory. In this case, whenever someone comes across a particular divine name, the person could quickly identify the source of a passage with that divine name. But since this consistency is not reflected in the explanation given by the documentary theory, it is unfortunately misleading to adopt its viewpoint wholly concerning the source of the name and cult of 'Yahweh'. The JEDP method for identifying the various source traditions of the Pentateuch is therefore not convincing (cf Dillard and Longman 1994:44-48). The solution provided by the JEDP hypothesis concerning the source of the cult and name of Yahweh is not compelling because of its practical incoherency/inconsistency (cf Wenham 1987:56-57).

Meanwhile, several scholars¹¹⁴ have also attempted to provide other solutions to the questions raised by the revelation of the divine name. But each solution is not devoid of problems; yet, I shall discuss a few of the suggested solutions which include the Pre-Mosaic source tradition and the celebrated Mosaic source tradition (cf Ex 3:13-15; 6:2-3).

4.2.3.1 Pre-Mosaic source tradition

Evidence from the book of Genesis¹¹⁵ suggests that the source of the name and cult of 'Yahweh' predated the period of Moses. According to De Moor (1997:325), it is already an established fact from both biblical and extra-

¹¹⁴ Cf Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone (2001:264-272); Enns (2000:101-108, 173-175); Matthews (1996:293-294); Moberly (1992); Fretheim (1991:62-66); Durham (1987:39-41, 76-77).

¹¹⁵ Gn. 2:4, 7, 15, 18, 21; 3:1, 8, 13, 21; 4:1, 4, 6, 9, 13, 15, 26; 5:29; 6:3, 5; 7:1, 5, 16; 8:21; 9:26; 10:9; 11:5, 8; 12:1, 4, 7, 17; 13:4, 10; 14:22; 15:1, 4, 7, 18; 16:2, 5, 7, 9, 13; 17:1; 18:1, 13, 19, 22, 26, 33; 19:13, 16, 24, 27; 20:18; 21:1, 33; 22:11, 14; 24:7, 12, 21, 27, 31, 40, 42, 44, 48, 51; 25:21; 26:2, 12, 22, 24, 28; 27:7, 20, 27; 28:13, 16, 21; 29:31, 35; 30:24, 27, 30; 31:3, 49; 32:10; 38:7, 10; 39:2, 5, 21, 23; 49:18.

biblical evidence that Yahwism was older than Moses. Part of these evidences linked the origin of the name and cult of 'Yahweh' to the period immediately following the birth of Enosh (cf Gn 4:26; Moberly 1992:53). The name 'Yahweh' had also appeared in the period prior to the second story of the creation of Adam and Eve (cf Gn 2:4, 5). The appearance of the name 'Yahweh' prior to the birth of Enosh could simply be explained as editorial insertion (cf Matthew 1996:293-294). The main problem here is the apparent conflicting claims from Genesis 4:26 and Exodus 3:13-15; 6:2-5 concerning the origin of the name and cult of 'Yahweh'. To which period is the origin of the name and cult of 'Yahweh' attributed? In other words, is it before the emergence of Moses or during his period? In what follows, the hypothesis that the name and cult of Yahweh predated Moses will be examined.

Westermann (1984:339-344) has attempted to provide a distinction between the two periods (that is, the period of Enosh and that of Moses), but his explanation is not devoid of certain difficulties and therefore, not persuasive. The distinction made by Westermann between the calling upon the name of Yahweh in the primeval period and the revelation of the name to Moses is not clear. For example, Westermann (1984:339-340) argues that there is no contradiction between the two passages (cf Gn 4:26 and Ex 3:13-15); and that the J source tradition in Exodus 3 is not talking about the beginning of the worship of Yahweh. Rather, J is concerned with the beginning of the history of the people of Israel in Exodus while in Genesis J is making a primeval statement that has nothing to do with Exodus. According to him, Genesis

4:26 is saying that the general cult of Yahweh began in the primeval period. As a result, J was able to express this in the words “Man began to call on the name of Yahweh.” Therefore, J did not mean a very definite Yahweh cult began, but a general Yahweh cult had begun.

Where the problem lies, in the viewpoint of Westermann, is in this: the practice of the cult of Yahweh during the period of Enosh is understood by Westermann (1984:339-340) as religion in general (cf Wenham 1987:116; Von Rad 1972:113); while Exodus 3 and 6 is about God’s history in Israel and Yahweh religion specific. Accordingly, “J wants to say: the period before the meeting between God and his people... was not simply a time bereft of God. It is not as if people cried out into the void and God never answered or acted. Here too it is a question of Yahweh, the one God” (Westermann 1984:340).

Few things therefore, could be noted from Westermann’s viewpoint. First, Westermann appears to ignore the fact that both passages (Gn 4:26; Ex 3:13-15; 6:2-5) are concerned with the ‘name’ and ‘cult’ of Yahweh, whether as a central focus or as a subsidiary subject. Second, the religion and history distinction supposedly created by Westermann concerning the two passages is not convincing. This is because Genesis 4:26 is concerned with the beginning of Yahweh religion just as Exodus 3 and 6 are concerned, whether directly or indirectly. Both passages are historical narratives, though, with a theological motive(s). The author(s)/editor(s) of both passages are attempting

to provide a historical perspective concerning the source and the significance of the name and cult of Yahweh.

Therefore, the major problem between the above passages is whether the revelation of the name and cult of Yahweh predated the historical Moses as suggested by Genesis 4:26 or originated with Moses as supposed by Exodus 3 and 6? Enns (2000: 101-108, 173-175) provides a more compelling explanation to these apparently contradictory claims concerning the origin of the name and cult of Yahweh. It is to his explanation that this discussion shall turn in the next paragraph.

Enns (2000:106) argues that the account from Exodus 3:14-15 is intended to underscore the precise identity of the God who is now communicating with Moses. This account is not purposed to introduce a new name to Moses (cf Matthew 1996:294). The name of Yahweh predated Moses.¹¹⁶ De Moor (1997:268-269, 325) also argues in support of the idea that Moses is not the first person to have been introduced to the name and cult of Yahweh. However, Moses was responsible for the introduction of a strict monotheistic

¹¹⁶ But this viewpoint has been objected to by Moberly (1992:65-67) who argues that there is no difference between the meaning of the name 'Yahweh' from Genesis and its meaning in Exodus. It cannot be said that the patriarchs only pronounced the name 'Yahweh' without having any notion of its significance; such a thing would be an alien practice among the Hebrew people. In my opinion, Moberly missed the major focus of this perspective. Enns (2000:105-106) and those who support his viewpoint are simply saying that the patriarchs and the Israelites already knew their God as Yahweh. However, the manner Yahweh had revealed himself to the patriarchs previously was not decisive and far reaching as in the event of the exodus. Therefore, it is through the event of the exodus that the Israelites would know their God fully. The centrality of the exodus is an indisputable fact in the history of the Israelites. The religious, political, social and historical identity of the Israelites is anchored substantially upon the events of the exodus.

Yahwism which was motivated by his burning bush experience (cf Ex 3:1-6; Dt 33:16). Similarly, Leupold (1942:228) argues that Yahweh worship began with Adam and Eve and developed into a public worship at the time of Enosh (cf also Speiser 1990:37).

Therefore, Enns (2000:106) reasoned that God is leaving no doubt in Moses' mind about who is speaking with him. God is saying to Moses that "I am Yahweh, the 'I AM', the God of the patriarchs. The one you have heard about is the one speaking with you now". There are several reasons that have been put forward by Enns (2000:105-106) to support his above mentioned viewpoint.

First, if Moses was attempting to establish his credibility before the Israelites, a new name would not help him in this matter. Furthermore, as it has been suggested by Hyatt (1980:78-79) it is doubtful whether the Israelites would have followed Moses out of Egypt if he had introduced to them a completely foreign god of whom they had never heard.

Second, God's association with the Patriarchs is not a novelty here. Therefore, the phrase: "this is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation" (Ex 3:15b) refers not only to the tetragrammaton (YHWH), but also to the entire preceding part of the verse: "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to

you”. If the phrase: “the God of your fathers” is not introduced here for the first time, neither the tetragrammaton (YHWH).

Third, the use of the name ‘Yahweh’ previously (Ex 3:2, 4, and 7) indicates that the term is not introduced in Exodus 3:14-15 for the first time. Furthermore, if there is variation on the use of the divine names (*Elohim* and *Yahweh*) both before and after Exodus 3:14-15, then from a literary perspective, the narrative cannot be understood as a new revelation of the name of God.

Fourth, the phrase “forever” (עַד־עַד) in Exodus 3:15 most likely refers to perpetuity through all time; that means, backwards and forwards. This means that ‘Yahweh’ has always been God’s name. Therefore, the force of verse 15 rests on the presupposition that ‘Yahweh’ is not a new name. The proper understanding of the verse is: “I am Yahweh, the God of the Patriarchs. This has always been my name and shall continue to be my name”.

Fifth, the fact that the name ‘Yahweh’ was not the focus of the first conversation between Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 4:29-31 underscores the viewpoint that the encounter between Moses and Yahweh did not focus on the revelation of the name ‘Yahweh’ for the first time.

Similarly, Exodus 6:2-3 has also been objected to by Enns (2000:174-175) as an account of the revelation of God’s name. Rather, it is an account about the significance of the name “Yahweh” which Moses and the Israelites will have

to understand through the redemptive activities of their God. The saving character of Yahweh is the central focus of this revelation. By being delivered from the Egyptian bondage, the Israelites will come to know Yahweh in a way that the Patriarchs did not know, that is, his extraordinary redemptive power. Consequently, this event results in the following:

- The Israelites will become the people of Yahweh;
- Yahweh will become their God; and
- The Israelites will know that Yahweh has delivered them.

Thus, the account of Exodus 3 and 6 is not intended to introduce an unknown name to the Israelites via Moses. Yahweh was already known and worshipped by the Patriarchs and subsequently by the Israelites. What was not known by the Israelites was the full meaning, implication or explication of the name 'Yahweh'. Yahweh introduced the full theological significance of his name to the Israelites via Moses in order to assure him and the Israelites about the certainty of his covenant promises to the Patriarchs. The events of the exodus will soon testify to Moses and to the Israelites the significance of the name 'Yahweh'.

4.2.3.2 Mosaic source tradition

Moberly (1992:5-104) has dedicated a substantial part of his book to addressing the problem of the Mosaic source of the name and cult of Yahweh and the use of the name 'Yahweh' from Genesis. He supports the hypothesis that Moses was the first person to have been introduced to the name

‘Yahweh’, as claimed by Exodus 3:13-16 and 6:2-5 (cf Moberly 1992:34-36). I will describe few details from this perspective in what follows.

Moberly (1992:24-25, 60) argues that Exodus 3:13-15 has attempted to portray the name, the meaning of ‘Yahweh’ and the nature of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel mediated through a prophetic human agency. The name ‘Yahweh’ was given by God to Israel via Moses. This name carries a unique significance and authority for Israel. Generally, the story also depicts a new beginning in the history of Israel which was different from what had happened during the period of the Patriarchs. This incident lays a foundation for a future terrain on which Yahweh’s relationship with Israel was to be construed. It creates the *nexus*: Yahweh-Sinai-Moses-Israel. The *nexus* can later be expanded in the following manner: Yahweh-Sinai-holiness-Moses-prophecy-Israel.

Furthermore, Moberly (1992:24, 25) suggested that the above passage also emphasizes the significance of and the perpetuity of the name ‘Yahweh’. Israel knew the God of their fathers (the Patriarchs), but they did not know him as ‘Yahweh’. Now, Israel will know their God as ‘Yahweh’ via Moses.¹¹⁷ He is the same God who related to Israel’s Patriarchs. But from this point forward, he shall be known as ‘Yahweh’. Moses and the subsequent prophets

¹¹⁷ The above perspective is similar to that of Bright (2000:970) who argues that all the patriarchs worshipped the same God but at different periods, he was known or called by various names such as El Shaddai (Gn 17:1; 43:14; Ex 6:3 etc), El ‘Elyon (Gn 14:18-24), El ‘Olam (Gn 21:33), El Ro’i (Gn 16:13; cf Yahweh *Yir’ eh*, Gn 22:14) and *el Bethel* (Gn 31:13; 35:7) with the exception of the name ‘Yahweh’ Therefore, the account from Exodus 3:14-16 and 6:2-5 is an attempt to link the God who appeared to Moses with the same God who was worshipped in the primeval history and in the patriarchal period.

shall be the medium by which Yahweh shall speak to Israel (cf Dt 5:22-33; 18:18-22).

Concerning Exodus 6:2-3, Moberly (1992:27) explained that the passage reaffirms the previous conversation between Yahweh and Moses concerning the new name (cf Ex 3:13-15). After the first conversation, Moses went to Egypt and talked to Pharaoh but Moses' request to the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, was rejected. Out of disappointment, Moses returned to Yahweh for a second time. Yahweh's response to Moses, this second time, was to reassure him that what Yahweh had promised previously was still in place. In other words, Yahweh's speech to Moses in Exodus 6:2-8 is an explication of his name which was revealed to Moses from their first encounter. Childs (1974:115) shares a similar viewpoint concerning the meaning of the name 'Yahweh' when he argues that the name 'Yahweh' relates to the essence of God's purposes with Israel. Such purposes included:

“First, there is the promise to deliver: ‘I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.’ Secondly, there is their adoption into the covenant as the people of God: ‘I will take you for my people, and I will be your God.’ Thirdly, there is the gift of the land which had been promised to the Fathers: ‘I will give it to you for an inheritance.’ The name of Yahweh functions as a guarantee that the reality of God stands behind the promise and will execute its fulfilment” (Childs 1974:115; cf Moberly 1992:28).

Moberly (1992:29) indicated that Moses has been given reasons from the past in order that he and the people of Israel could trust Yahweh in the present. As a result, the covenant which Yahweh had made with Abraham from Genesis 17:1-27 is brought to the fore in this second conversation

between Yahweh and Moses. The covenant between Yahweh and Abraham represents Yahweh's commitment which shall never be nullified by the Egyptian opposition.

“Thus, the purpose of Exodus 6:2-3 is related to the purpose of the divine speech as a whole—a reassurance to Moses rooted in God's covenant with the patriarchs, a reaffirmation of his commission, a reminder of the privileged knowledge of God he was given at the burning bush and of what this will mean for him and for Israel” (Moberly 1992:31).

The overall discussion can be summed up as pointing to the fact that the original source of the name 'Yahweh' can hardly be determined with certainty. However, there are certain indications from Genesis (cf Gn 4:26; 8:20; 12:7; 13:4; 15:1-18; 17:1-27) that a certain form of Yahweh worship (whether private or public) had existed prior to the revelation of the monotheistic Yahwism at the time of Moses. Furthermore, it cannot be proven that there was absolutely no knowledge of the name and cult of Yahweh prior to Yahweh's revelation to Moses. Therefore, the perspective offered by Enns (2000: 101-108, 173-175) from the previous discussion demands much more recognition concerning the debate on the revelation of the name and cult of Yahweh during the primeval and Mosaic periods.

Enns (2000:106) argues that the account from Exodus 3:14-15 is intended to underscore the precise identity of the God who is now communicating with Moses. This account is not purposed to introduce a new name to Moses (cf Matthew 1996:294). The name of Yahweh predated Moses. De Moor (1997:268-269, 325) also argues in support of the idea that Moses is not the

first person to have been introduced to the name and cult of Yahweh. However, Moses was responsible for the introduction of a strict monotheistic Yahwism which was motivated by his burning bush experience (cf Ex 3:1-6; Dt 33:16). Similarly, Leupold (1942:228) asserts that Yahweh worship began with Adam and Eve and developed into a public worship at the time of Enosh (cf also Speiser 1990:37). This investigation therefore adopts the position that the name and cult of Yahweh predated Moses. The significance of the name 'Yahweh' was to be revealed to Israel in the redemptive episode.

4.3 'YAHWEH'S PEOPLE' IN THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

4.3.1 Introduction

The concept of 'Yahweh's people' is invariably intertwined with Yahweh's covenant with Abraham and subsequently with Israel via Moses.¹¹⁸ The nature of Yahweh's relationship with Abraham in which Yahweh shall become the God of Abraham and the God of his descendants has been understood as covenantal (cf Bright 2000:149; Gn 17:7-8). If Yahweh's covenant with Abraham and his descendants was to be nullified or discontinued, the relationship between Yahweh and Abraham as well as his descendants also could have been severed. Derivatively, Abraham and his descendants also could only be 'Yahweh's people' on the basis of this covenant. The moment the covenant would be nullified or cancelled, the entire structure of Yahweh's relationship with Abraham could fall apart.

¹¹⁸ See *Excursus* on the Old Testament use of the terms: $\sim [i ; hA 'hy > \sim [i ;$ and $yMi [i$; in chapter 4.6.

Thus, the institution of the covenant served as a vehicle or platform by which Abraham and his descendants could be regarded as 'Yahweh's people'. The covenant becomes a beacon on which that relationship could be sustained from one generation to the other. As a result, any other person who could be understood as 'Yahweh's people' would have to pass via the Abrahamic covenant. The Mosaic covenant provides a similar platform whereby Israel could be called Yahweh's people. It also provides a platform through which other nations, foreigners or aliens could participate in the religious life of the Israelites as Yahweh's people. Some aspects of the Abrahamic covenant whereby other people could be included in the covenant and be recognized as 'Yahweh's people' included the following.

4.3.2 Yahweh promises to become Abraham's God

The promise that Yahweh had made to become the God of Abraham and his descendants (Gn 17:7-8¹¹⁹) can be viewed as a significant platform by which Abraham and his descendants could invariably become 'Yahweh's people'. This is to argue that, if Yahweh becomes the God of Abraham and his descendants through this covenant promise, then Abraham and his descendants inevitably were to become 'Yahweh's people' by virtue of this same covenant. Other people who embrace the Abrahamic covenant could also be recognized as 'Yahweh's people' because the covenant was the

¹¹⁹ "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. ⁸ "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gn 17:7-8).

platform by which Yahweh's relationship with Abraham and his descendants was established.

4.3.3 Significance of the name 'Abraham'

The change of Abram's name to Abraham by Yahweh may also be viewed as an aspect relating to the concept of 'Yahweh's people' (cf Gn 17:5). It has already been noted that in the Ancient Near Eastern tradition, naming someone in certain instances symbolized ownership or power over someone (Walton & Matthews 1997:44; Fretheim 1991:64; cf Gn 1:28 and 2:19-20). As a consequence, the renaming of Abram to become Abraham suggests that Abraham is adopted by Yahweh as his own son. Also Abraham's descendants are derivatively adopted and owned by Yahweh as his own people by the token of that same covenant (cf Ex 4:22).

Abraham's name change therefore portrays his new relationship with Yahweh as well as his new relationship with other nations who embrace Yahweh as their God. This is to argue that the name change also related in a certain sense to the function of Abraham as the father of multitude of nations. This fatherhood of Abraham extends beyond the boundaries of his blood related descendants. Abraham's fatherhood covered other nations who might come and submit to Yahweh through Abraham and his descendants by means of the covenant (cf Gn 12:3; 17:4-5, 12-16; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4-5; 28:14). Corollary, other nations could also be considered as 'Yahweh's people' via Abrahamic covenant by virtue of his function implied by his name change.

4.3.4 Circumcision

The covenantal aspect of circumcision may also be understood as a means whereby Abraham and his descendants, as well as other nations, could become 'Yahweh's people' (cf Gn 17:10-14¹²⁰). Circumcision was an activity, distinguishing Abraham and his descendants from other nations and sealing Abraham and his descendants to Yahweh in a covenant relationship (cf Fretheim 1994:461; Wenham 1994:22-24). The covenant obligation of circumcision requires Abraham and his descendants to circumcise. In addition, all those who are under the auspices of Abraham are also required to be circumcised.¹²¹

Abraham adhered to the covenant obligation of circumcision (cf Gn 17:23-27). He circumcised every male in his household, including Ishmael and foreigners who were born in his house or who were bought elsewhere as slaves. As a consequence, this event obviously portrayed the covenant obligation of circumcision as one of the means by which Abraham, and his descendants as

¹²⁰ 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.12 "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a *servant* who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.13 "A *servant* who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant" (NASB).

¹²¹ "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. 13 A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant "(Gn 17:12-13; see New American Standard Bible 1995).

well as other nations or foreigners may be understood as ‘Yahweh’s people’ and might as a consequence participate in the religious and social life of Israel.¹²² When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, those who were born in the wilderness had to be circumcised by Joshua. This was done in order for them to be recognised by Yahweh as his people (cf Jos 5:2-9).

The negative side of the command to circumcise males is that Abraham and his descendants could lose their privileged relationship with Yahweh if they failed to circumcise males as stipulated in the covenant (cf Gn 17:14). Similarly, other nations could never be recognized as covenant members if they failed to circumcise males. The covenant obligation of circumcision therefore became one of the qualifications whereby Abraham and his descendants, as well as other nations, could be regarded as ‘Yahweh’s people’ or could lose this status based upon their obedience or disobedience.

4.3.5 Yahweh’s promise to other nations via Abraham

Another allusion for other nations or foreigners to embrace Yahweh as their God and thereby become ‘Yahweh’s people’ via Abrahamic covenant is couched in the blessing promise (cf Gn 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

God’s covenant promise entails a blessing to other nations (or other nations

¹²² Brueggemann (1982:155) argues that “circumcision announces that Israelites belong only to this community and only to this God.... Circumcision as a positive theological symbol functioned in Israel as a metaphor for serious, committed faith. Thus the tradition speaks of the circumcision of the heart (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Ezek. 44:7).” I suppose, the importance of circumcision should not be viewed as limited to the Israelites only; it applies to foreigners as well, specifically to those who also denounced their foreign gods and embraced the God of Israel. Such foreigners were regarded as members of the Israelite community (or proselytes) because they had embraced Yahweh, the God of Israel as their God (cf Cohn-Sherbok 2003:572-573).

to receive his blessings) through Abraham or his offspring/seed. This blessing promise could be considered as an inclusive aspect whereby Yahweh was to become the God of other nations. The covenantal promise of 'blessing' obviously links Yahweh to other nations via Abraham and his descendants. The presupposition is that there can be no other way for other nations to receive the covenantal blessing promised by Yahweh if those nations are totally separated from Abraham or his descendants.¹²³

In other words, Yahweh may become not only the God of Abraham and his descendants but also the God of other nations who receive Yahweh's blessing through Abraham. The function of Abraham as the bridge through which Yahweh's covenant blessing could reach other nations is immediately evident from the event in which Abraham and Lot welcomed strangers into their respective homes (cf Gn 18:1-8; 19:1-3). The implication of their hospitality is that Abraham and Lot practically began to apply the covenant obligation of being a channel of Yahweh's blessing to other nations (cf Gn 12:3-4). Therefore, the covenant promise of blessing other nations via Abraham became a hinge pin by which other nations could also be considered as 'Yahweh's people' in the Old Testament.

Regarding the Abrahamic covenant, this discussion has noted that there are several aspects of the covenant whereby Yahweh could regard Abraham and

¹²³ Fretheim (1994:424) argues that "God's choice of Abraham will lead to blessings for all the families of the earth...God's choice of Abram serves as an initially exclusive move for the sake of a maximally inclusive end. Election serves mission (in the broadest sense of the term)." Walton (2001:402) also contends that "In Abram, all nations of the earth were blessed as they were shown what God was like and as the means were provided for them to become justified, reconciled to God, and forgiven of their sins."

his descendants as well as other nations or foreigners as his own people. These covenant aspects include: Yahweh's promise to become the God of Abraham and his descendants; the significance of the name 'Abraham'; circumcision and Yahweh's promise to bless other nations or foreigners via Abraham. Therefore, other nations who embrace Yahweh through the Abrahamic covenant could also be regarded as 'Yahweh's people'.

The next discussion will focus on a similar inclusive perspective of the Mosaic covenant whereby Israel, including other nations who embrace Yahweh via the provisions of the Mosaic covenant, could be regarded as 'Yahweh's people'.

4.4 'YAHWEH'S PEOPLE' IN THE MOSAIC COVENANT

4.4.1 Introduction

This section discusses the concept of 'Yahweh's people' from the perspective of the Mosaic covenant. The rationale for examining the concept of 'Yahweh's people' from the perspective of the Abrahamic and of the Mosaic covenants has already been stated in the third and the fourth chapters. I will restate briefly the rationale for this section in order to clarify my point of interest.

First, Ezra and Nehemiah appealed to the Abrahamic and to the Mosaic covenants as the basis on which their far reaching religious and social reforms, during the early post-exilic period, were founded.¹²⁴ But, my argument here is that the Mosaic covenant contains two perspectives. The

¹²⁴ Cf Ezr 9:1-15; Neh 1:5-10; 9:7-25.

one is exclusive and the other is inclusive. Ezra and Nehemiah based their reforms on the exclusive perspective of the Abrahamic and of the Mosaic covenants. The inclusive point of view of the same covenants had been ignored. Therefore, this section is partly aimed at describing the inclusive perspective of the Mosaic covenant.

Second, the Abrahamic covenant formed a theological basis on which the Mosaic covenant was founded (cf McConville 1997:749).¹²⁵ This is the case because Abraham's descendants were not physically present at the initial covenant event between Yahweh and Abraham (cf Gn 15:1-21; 17:1-27). As a result, the Abrahamic covenant anticipated the Mosaic covenant theologically. The Mosaic covenant allowed Abraham's descendants to physically enter into the covenant. It therefore provides a platform for the inclusion of the descendants of Abraham in Yahweh's covenant with him.

In view of the above, this section will describe the concept of 'Yahweh's people' in the perspective of the Mosaic covenant. The discussion will show that the concept of 'Yahweh's people' includes Israel (the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and other nations or foreigners who embrace Yahweh as their God through the Mosaic covenant framework.

¹²⁵ Cf Gn15:13-21; 17:2-10; Ex 2:24; 3:16-17; 6:2-9; Dt 1:8; 6:10-12; 10:12-22; 30:19-20.

The covenant between Yahweh and Israel via Moses is described in Exodus 19:1 to 24:18 (cf McConville 1997:749).¹²⁶ But the event of the exodus is narrated within the context of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants.¹²⁷ As a result of this connection, my discussion will utilize certain passages from the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This is to argue that these four books describe the operation of Yahweh's covenant with Israel via Moses as they came out of Egypt to Sinai and subsequently to the verge of the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

4.4.2 Israel (and other nations): the people of Yahweh

There are several references whereby Yahweh has been quoted to have referred to himself as the 'God of Israel' or to have referred to Israel as his 'own people'¹²⁸. This concept of Israel as 'Yahweh's people' or Yahweh as the 'God of Israel' is also linked with the concept of Yahweh as the God of Israel's 'fathers' or 'Patriarchs' (i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)¹²⁹. Thus, the concept of 'Yahweh's people' is founded upon the covenant which Yahweh had made with the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as the covenant he had made with Israel via Moses. The Israelites can legitimately be regarded

¹²⁶ There are many scholars (cf De Moor 1997:208-210) who dispute the reliability of the events of exodus. But every scholar is entitled to their respective view points concerning the exodus. My aim here is not to argue for or against the reliability of the event of exodus. However, the biblical and some other extra-biblical witnesses supporting the event of exodus have given me a relative sense of certainty concerning the reliability of the events of exodus (cf De Moor 1997:211-245). Therefore, I will consider the stories concerning the establishment of the Mosaic covenant as factual rather than as folktale or fiction.

¹²⁷ Cf Gn 15:13-16; Ex 2:24-25; 3:6-10, 16-17; 6:3-8; 19:3-8; 32:11-16.

¹²⁸ Cf Ex 3:7, 10; 4:22-23; 5:1, 3; 6:7; 7:16; 8:1, 20-21; 9:1, 13; 10:3; 19:5-6; 20:2, 7.

¹²⁹ Cf Ex 2:24-25; 3:6, 15-16; 4:5; 6:3, 8; 32:13; 33:1.

as ‘Yahweh’s people’ based upon their acceptance of both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants.

The Mosaic covenant provided certain ways in which other nations, aliens or foreigners could be included in the covenant and thereby become Yahweh’s people¹³⁰. The following discussion will deal with some of these ways.

4.4.2.1 Food Provision

The Pentateuch suggests three ways to provide food for the widow, orphan, alien, and sometimes Levites. The Israelites were urged to provide some left-overs from their fields during the harvest period for these groups of people to scavenge (cf Lv 19:9-10; 23:22; Dt 24:19-21). In addition, every third year, a tithe of all produce was to be reserved for widows, orphans, sojourners and Levites (cf Dt 14:28-29; 26:12-15). Similarly, every seventh year, the land was to be left uncultivated. Anything that produced by itself from the uncultivated land was for the widows, orphans and sojourners (cf Ex 23:10-11; Lev 25:1-7). Obviously, aliens or foreigners might live in the land of Israel before they could have access to this food provisions.

My argument therefore is that aliens or foreigners were welcomed or included in the social and religious structures of Israel, the people of Yahweh. As a

¹³⁰ For example, when the Israelites came out of Egypt, there were other people who came out with them (Ex 12:38). These people were not pushed away from following the Israelites. It is most likely that these other people also may have entered the Promised Land and may have settled down with the native Israelites. Enns (2000:418) argues that the inclusion of aliens and servants in the Sabbath commandment presupposes that there were elements of aliens and foreigners among Israelites when they went out from Egypt. Moses specifically anticipated the presence of foreigners and aliens among the Israelites (cf Nm 15:14-15). As a result, he instructed that foreigners be allowed to sacrifice in the temple just like native Israelites (cf Davies 1995:153-154). The law did not discriminate against foreigners or aliens.

result, they were to be treated favourably by the native born Israelites. The food provision clearly reveals a number of things. First, the food provision presupposes that foreigners were accepted in Israelite community. They were part of the social and religious structures of the Israelite community. Second, since foreigners were accepted, a provision was made for them to receive good care just as the native Israelite widows, orphans and Levites. As a consequence, through the food provision, a foreigner together with a widow, an orphan, a Levite and an Israelite had shared Yahweh's food blessing together. There was no distinction because theologically, they are all 'Yahweh's people' (cf Ex 19:5; Ps 24:1-2).

4.4.2.2 Sabbath-keeping

Another covenant obligation was Sabbath-keeping (cf Ex 20:8-11; 23:12; Dt 5:12-15). God commanded Israel to keep the Sabbath day holy. They were to rest from their labour on that day. All Israelites had to observe the Sabbath law, including aliens, strangers and slaves who were in their midst. The keeping of the Sabbath day was a religious practice in Israel from one generation to the other. It was a day which Yahweh had consecrated for his own covenant people to rest from their labour and worship him.

The Sabbath day also reminded Yahweh's people about Yahweh's own rest after he had created the whole world (cf Gn 2:2-3). The inclusion of aliens or foreigners in the Sabbath observance suggests that these people were required to know Yahweh, embrace him and revere him as their creator just

as the Israelites did. In addition, these aliens or foreigners were also allowed to observe other sacred days or religious festivals that were stipulated to be observed by the native born Israelites (cf Ex 20:8-11; 23:12; Dt 5:12-15). Thus, aliens could worship Yahweh as their God, together with the native born Israelites, because both are ultimately 'Yahweh's people'.

4.4.2.3 Celebration of Passover, feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles

The celebration of the Passover, the feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles were other ways in which foreigners or aliens were incorporated into the religious life of the Israelite people (cf Ex 12:17-20, 48-49; Nm 9:14; Dt 16:10-14). It is evident from these passages that aliens were allowed to participate in the celebration of the above religious festivals together with the native-born Israelites. This was an instruction from Yahweh to the Israelites via Moses and Aaron. Aliens who were circumcised were to be allowed to participate in the celebration of these feasts together with the native Israelites (cf Ex 12:48).

The Passover was an event that reminded Yahweh's people, the Israelites, about their redemptive experience from Egypt. This event had derived its meaning from the redemption Yahweh had accomplished for his people, the Israelites. But why did Yahweh instruct Moses and Aaron to allow foreigners or aliens living among them to also celebrate the same redemption together with the native born Israelites? My opinion is that aliens or foreigners who had

embraced Yahweh, the God of Israel, inevitably became part of 'Yahweh's people'. The acceptance and the inclusion of Ruth, the Moabite woman, in the Israelite community illustrate my viewpoint here. The redemption of 'Yahweh's people' was therefore, by implication, conferred in retrospect upon the aliens or foreigners who embraced Yahweh as their God. Thus, through the celebration of the Passover, aliens and foreigners together with the native born Israelites commemorated their redemption as Yahweh's redeemed people.

Meanwhile, during the celebration of the feast of Weeks, both the Israelites and the aliens or foreigners living among the Israelites were required to present their freewill offering to Yahweh in proportion to the blessing they had received from Yahweh. This event was significant because both the Israelites and the aliens were blessed by Yahweh without discrimination. Both of them had obligations to acknowledge and thank Yahweh for his food provision.

The feast of Tabernacles was celebrated to commemorate Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan and a time when they were staying in tents and booths. It reminded them of Yahweh's protection during the wilderness period. So, the fact that aliens were allowed to celebrate this event also suggests that they were part of Yahweh's family. Some of them probably also came out of Egypt as redeemed people together with the native born Israelites (cf Ex 12:38; Nm 11:4; Jos 8:35).

From the above discussion, it is apparent that foreigners were among those who came up out of Egypt (cf Ex 12:38). The incident of the Israelites coming out of Egypt was a redemptive experience. Other people who had already abandoned their native land and embraced Yahweh during the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land could celebrate the Passover. In this context of the redemption of Yahweh's people, foreigners could also celebrate the redemptive festival. Foreigners therefore were incorporated as part of 'Yahweh's people' through the celebration of the Passover, feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles.

4.4.2.4 Equality before the Law of Yahweh

Foreigners and native-born Israelites were equal before the Law of Yahweh (cf Ex 12:49; Lv 24:22; Nm 9:14; 15:13-16, 29-30). The law of Yahweh, both ceremonial and ethical, had the same application to the native-born Israelites as well as to the alien. The things that these Laws prescribed for the native-born Israelite were also required from the alien or foreigner living among the Israelites. The Pentateuch therefore suggests that God could execute justice (including the death penalty) for the cause of widows, orphans, aliens and strangers (Ex 22:21-24¹³¹; 23:9; Dt 10:18).

If an alien, stranger, orphan, or widow is mistreated, the guilty person was never to go unpunished. The above cited references also show that aliens

¹³¹ Ex 22:21-24 says that, "And you shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless."

and foreigners existed in the Israelite community. The fact that a special plan was devised to care for the aliens and foreigners sustains the notion that they were not totally excluded from the midst of the Israelites. They were part of the religious and social structures of the Israelite community through appropriate covenant means. Thus, from this perspective, foreigners could be regarded as part of 'Yahweh's people'. Therefore, both the alien and the native Israelite were required to obey Yahweh's law.

4.4.2.5 Intermarriage

Intermarriage was another way in which foreigners were integrated into the Israelite community (cf Houten 1991:61). Though, it appears from Deuteronomy 7:3 that intermarriage was forbidden totally. Apparently, Deuteronomy 7:4 and the context of this passage suggest that intermarriage prohibition is not necessarily the focus of the passage. Verse 4 indicates that idol worship is the main focus of the passage. Israel is to desist from worshipping other gods. They must not worship the gods of the Canaanites nor any other gods except Yahweh (cf Ex 20:3-6; Dt 5:7-10). There is no question that the entire history of Israel is tainted with the temptation to worship other foreign gods¹³². This led to the prescription of a severe penalty for idolatry (cf Dt 13:6-11).

¹³² Cf Ex 23:24; 34:13-14; Dt 12:2-3; Jos 24:2, 14; 1 Ki 15:12-13; 16:13, 31-33; 2 Chr 33:3-9; 34:33; Ezk 20:7.

In view of the above prohibition against idolatry, Israel was forbidden to intermarry with other people (foreigners) because they might be tempted to worship other gods apart from Yahweh, who redeemed them from Egypt (cf Ex 23:33; Von Rad 1979:68). Implicitly, Israelites could intermarry with foreigners only when it was obvious that such women or men would totally denounce their foreign gods and embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel (cf Williamson 1985:130; Breneman 1993:149). The cases of Tamar (cf Gn 38:6-30; cf. Mt 1:3), Moses (Nm 12:1-2), Ruth (cf Rt 1:16-17; 4:13-22; Mt 1:5b), Rahab (cf Jos 6:22-23; Mt 1:5a) and Bathsheba (cf 2 Sm 11:3, 26-27; 12:24-25; cf. Mt 1:6b) are sufficient examples to warrant such a line of thought. Therefore, through intermarriage, foreigners, aliens, or people from other nations could become part of 'Yahweh's people' when they denounced their foreign gods and embraced Yahweh, the God of Israel as their God (cf Ezr 6:21).

4.4.2.6 Sacrificial offering

Yahweh is reported to have made a provision for aliens, sojourners, or foreigners who were living among the Israelites to offer sacrifices to him if they wished to do so (cf Nm 15:13-16¹³³; Lv 22:17-20, 25). The law prescribing the offering of various sacrifices to Yahweh was to be the same for the Israelites and foreigners or aliens. No one was to be discriminated

¹³³ ¹³ 'All who are native shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD. ¹⁴ 'If an alien sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he *wishes to* make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD, just as you do so he shall do. ¹⁵ 'As for the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the alien who sojourns *with you*, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the LORD. ¹⁶ 'There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you.'"

against on the basis of his race or nationality. However, both the Israelites and the aliens were prohibited from offering a defective animal to Yahweh. Since sacrificial offering was a significant aspect of Israel's religious relationship with Yahweh, the inclusion of foreigners in this cultic activity suggests the recognition of foreigners as part of Yahweh's people together with the native born Israelites.

4.4.2.7 Cities of refuge

The Israelites were instructed to set up six cities of refuge where a person who committed unintentional murder could run into and take refuge (cf Nm 35:14-15). Yahweh had instructed that aliens and foreigners who committed unintentional murder could also take refuge in these cities just like a native Israelite.¹³⁴

Furthermore, another provision was made by Yahweh to forgive unintentional community sins including those of the aliens and foreigners (cf Nm 15:26, 29). Moses is reported to have instructed the Israelites, including foreigners, to offer sacrifices to Yahweh for the unintentional sins the community might have committed. Accordingly, Yahweh shall forgive both the native-born Israelites and aliens/foreigners who had offered sacrifices for their unintentional sins.

¹³⁴ ¹⁴ 'You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.¹⁵ 'These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the alien and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.'

The above command also emphasizes that the same law applied to everyone who sinned unintentionally whether he/she was a native-born Israelite or an alien. Yahweh took the safety of both the native-born Israelites and foreigners/aliens seriously. This implicitly suggests that foreigners as well as the native-born Israelites were equally important in the sight of Yahweh. Therefore, foreigners were incorporated into the religious and social life of the Israelites through the appropriate covenant requirements because ultimately all of them who embraced Yahweh became part of 'Yahweh's people'.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In summation, it is obvious that there are certain provisions in both the Abrahamic and in the Mosaic covenants which indicate that Yahweh embraces the native-born Israelites together with other nations, aliens or foreigners as his own people. Other nations could embrace Yahweh as their God and therefore, could associate with the Israelites in religious and social life as part of 'Yahweh's people'. The Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants provided a framework for this inclusion. These covenants' framework included:

- Yahweh's promise to become the God of the Patriarchs as well as the God of Israel;
- The notion of Abraham as the father of a multitude of nations;
- Circumcision;
- The blessing of other nations via Abraham and his descendants;
- Food provision;
- Sabbath keeping;
- Celebration of Passover, feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles;
- Equality of both the Israelites and the aliens before the law of Yahweh;

- Intermarriage;
- Sacrificial offering and
- Cities of refuge.

The above covenant provisions for other nations (including Israel) to become part of 'Yahweh's people' support the argument in this chapter that both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants contained not only an exclusive viewpoint concerning the concept of 'Yahweh's people' and other nations; but also the above covenants provided an inclusive perspective concerning the concept of 'Yahweh's people' and concerning other nations, foreigners and aliens. Accordingly, all other nations, foreigners and aliens who embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel as their God could become part of 'Yahweh's people' together with the native-born Israelites. The events from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah will therefore be examined in chapter five. This inclusive perspective of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants concerning the concept of 'Yahweh's people' and concerning other nations, foreigners or aliens will be borne in mind.

4.6 EXCURSUS: Terms: • ~[; (people);
• hA'hY> ~[(people of Yahweh) ; ; and
• yMi [; (my people)

- ~[; : This term has been used more than 1,950 times in the Old Testament (cf Lipinski 2001:164). The term has also appeared in certain Semitic languages and ethnic groups such as the Amorites, Mesopotamians, Phoenicians, Punic, Ammonites, Moabites, North and South Arabic languages, and in the Aramaic language (cf Lipinski 2001:166-170). The term has several meanings in the Old Testament contexts. It could mean kinsman, fellow-tribesman, relative, tribe, nation, people, and persons (cf Fohrer 1973:205).

- When the term ~[; is combined with the word #r<a' (h' it could be understood as citizens with full rights or heathen nations. The term was used to refer to the Israelites during the monarchical period (cf 2 Ki 14:21; 23:30). But after the Babylonian exile, the term #r<a' (h' ~[; was used to describe those who had remained in Judah during the exile and had intermarried with other inhabitants of the surrounding regions (cf 2 Ki 24:14; Ezr 9:1-2, 11; 10:2, 11; Neh 10:29, 31-32; 13:23;).

Blenkinsopp (1989:108) explained that the term ‘peoples of the land’ used through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah refers to the inhabitants of either Judah or its neighboring provinces such as Samaria and Idumea et cetera. These people were not part of the returned exiles and were therefore by definition religiously suspect. According to Lipinski (2001:176-177), the term was also applied in this same period to the Samaritans (cf Ezr 4:4) and to the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine (cf Ezr 3:3; 9:1; Neh 9:30).

In the West Semitic languages, the word ~[; may refer both to individual and collective persons (cf Lipinski 2001:169-170). In the individual sense, in modern Arabic language, it may refer to an ancestor, a great grand father, a paternal uncle, or a father-in-law. Collectively, the word could mean a clan, a group of people, a multitude, or a religious assembly. Thus, the Old Testament appears to appropriate these various meanings in its literary account.

Brown, Driver and Briggs (1999:769) describe its various meanings to include: kinsman (on father's side), ancestor, and father's kinsmen. Certain passages where the term is used in relation to other terms have also been listed to include: Gn 25:8 wyM' [; -la, @sea'YEW: (of joining kinsmen in sheol); Gn 17:4 h'yM, [; me vp, N<h; ht'r>k.nIw> (severed from living kinsmen); Ex 31:14 h'yM, [; br, Q, mi, cf 30:33; 30:38; Lv 17:9; 21:14 hV'ai xQ; yI wyM' [; me; 2 Ki 4:13 yMi [; -!B, (son of my kinsman).

- hA'hy> ~[;: A combination of ~[;/yMi [; with hA'hy> in the Old Testament usually occurs in the context of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. For example, Yahweh is reported to have made a covenant promise that ~T, Pa;w> ~yhi_l{ale(~k, Pl' ytiyyIih'w> ~k, êk. AtåB. `yTik.L;h;t.hiw> ~['(l. yliî-Wyh.Ti (I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people Lv 26:12; cf Ex 6:7; Dt 26:17-18; 29:12-13; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezk 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8). Lipinski (2001:172) argues that the use of ~[;/yMi [; with hA'hy> in various passages from the Old Testament suggests that Yahweh and Israel would be understood henceforth as a family, blood relative or a newly established kinship relationship (cf 1 Sm 2:24; 2 Sm 1:12; 6:21; 2 Ki 9:6). There are also other phrases that describe a similar relationship between Yahweh and Israel. For example, \$m' [; 'your people' (cf Hab 3:13; Ps 3:8-9; 79:13) and AMå [; 'his people' (cf Ps 29:11; 78:71). But the expression hA'hy> ~[; in Judges 5:11, 13 refers to the 'army of Yahweh'. This is a unique expression from the covenant meaning discussed previously. Meanwhile, the cultic and religious gathering of Yahweh's faithful is also frequently regarded as the hw"hy> ~[;û 'people of Yahweh' (cf Nm 11:29) and ~yhi_l{a/h' ~[;ä the "people of God" (cf Jgs 20:2). The sense that the term hA'hy> ~[; ('people of Yahweh' or 'Yahweh's people') has been used in this research is in the context of Yahweh's covenant relationship with Israel including other nations and peoples who embrace Yahweh as their God.