

## **Theological Perspectives on the Concept of 'Yahweh's People' in Ezra and Nehemiah during the Early Post-Exilic Period (539-350 BC) — Part II<sup>1</sup>**

**Emmanuel Usue (UP and BSU)**

### ***ABSTRACT***

*This article is divided into two major parts; each is published separately. Part I dealt with the conflict between the golah (exile) community and the am ha'arets (people of the land) regarding the exclusive religious, political and social reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. The author argued that the conception of 'Yahweh's people' lay behind the tension between the two above-named groups. Consequently, two theological perspectives emerged in Ezra and Nehemiah on the concept of 'Yahweh's people' and other nations. One is exclusive, the other is inclusive. What follows here is Part II. This part demonstrates that the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants provide a framework through which every other person could embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel as his/her God. Therefore, Yahweh cannot be confined to a single group of people, race or nation as presupposed by the leaders of the early post-exilic Jewish community in Ezra and Nehemiah.*

### **A INTRODUCTION**

In what follows, the conception of 'Yahweh's people' in the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant is discussed. This section demonstrates that the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants provide a framework through which every other person could embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel as his/her God<sup>2</sup>. These covenant provisions 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

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is a summary of a dissertation for the PhD degree at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, completed under the supervision of Prof D J Human in the Department of Old Testament Studies.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Gen12:3; 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; Lev 19:33-34; 24:22; Num 15:14-16; 35:15; Deut 1:16; 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:10-14; 23:7-8; 27:19; 1Ki 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32-33; Is 2:1-4; 49:6b; 60:1-3; 66:23; see Goldingay (2003:224-226); Allen (1999:497); Keil & Delitzch (1975:130) and Seow (1999:79).

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. Therefore, Yahweh cannot be confined to a single group of people, race or nation as presupposed by the leaders of the early post-exilic Jewish community in Ezra and Nehemiah.

## **B 'YAHWEH'S PEOPLE' IN THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

### **1 Introduction**

The concept of 'Yahweh's people' is invariably intertwined with Yahweh's covenant with Abraham and subsequently with Israel via Moses. 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; Gen 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.

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 Mosaic covenant was based on the Abrahamic covenant (cf Gen 15:13-21; 17:2-10; Ex 2:24-25; 3:6-18; 20:1-2; Deut 1:8, 10, 11; 6:3-12, 18). The Mosaic covenant therefore, 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'.

### **2 Yahweh promises to become Abraham's God**

The promise that Yahweh had made to become the God of Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:7-8) 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 platform by which Yahweh's relationship with Abraham and his descendants was established.

### **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 Gen 17:5). Among the Ancient Near Eastern tradition, naming someone in certain instances

symbolized ownership or power over the person (Walton & Matthews 1997:44; Fretheim 1991:64; cf Gen 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 Gen 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 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 Gen 17:10-14). Circumcision was an activity, distinguishing Abraham and his descendants from other nations and sealing Abraham and his descendants to Yahweh in a covenantal relationship (cf. Fretheim 1994:461; Wenham 1994:22-24). The covenant requires Abraham and his descendants to circumcise. In addition, all those who are under the auspices of Abraham are also required to be circumcised (cf Gen 17:12-13).

Abraham adhered to the covenant obligation of circumcision (cf Gen 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 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<sup>3</sup>. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, those who were born in the

---

<sup>3</sup> 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).

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 covenant obligation of circumcision therefore became one of the qualifications whereby Abraham and his descendants, as well as other nations, could become 'Yahweh's people'. They could lose this status if they did not circumcise.

## **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 Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). God's covenant promise entails a blessing to other nations (or other nations 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.

## **6 Conclusion**

This article has noted that there are several aspects of the covenant whereby Yahweh could regard Abraham and his descendants as well as other nations 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 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 become 'Yahweh's people'.

## **C 'YAHWEH'S PEOPLE' IN THE MOSAIC COVENANT**

### **1 Introduction**

This section will describe the concept of 'Yahweh's people' in the perspective of the Mosaic covenant. The covenant between Yahweh and Israel via Moses is described in Exodus 19:1 to 24:18 (cf McConville 1997:749)<sup>4</sup>. But the event of the exodus is narrated within the context of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic

---

<sup>4</sup> 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 his/her respective view points about 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 establishment of the Mosaic covenant as a factual event rather than as a fiction.

covenants<sup>5</sup>. 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.

## **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'<sup>6</sup>. 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)<sup>7</sup>. 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 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 people' (cf Ex 12:38; Nm 15:14-15; Enns 2000:418; Davies 1995:153-154). Some of these ways have been described in what follows.

### **a 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 leftovers from their fields during the harvest period for these groups of people to scavenge (cf Lv 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 24:19-21). In addition, every third year, a tithe of all produce was to be reserved for widows, orphans, sojourners and Levites (cf Deut 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 the food provisions.

My argument therefore is that foreigners were welcomed or included in the social and religious structures of Israel ('Yahweh's people'). As a 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

<sup>5</sup> Cf Gen15:13-16; Ex 2:24-25; 3:6-10, 16-17; 6:3-8; 19:3-8; 32:11-16.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Cf Ex 2:24-25; 3:6, 15-16; 4:5; 6:3, 8; 32:13; 33:1.

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).

### **b Sabbath-keeping**

Another covenant obligation was Sabbath-keeping (cf Ex 20:8-11; 23:12; Deut 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 worships him.

The Sabbath also reminded 'Yahweh's people' about his own rest after he had created the whole world (cf Gen 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 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; Deut 5:12-15). Thus, aliens could worship Yahweh as their God, together with the native-born Israelites, because both are ultimately 'Yahweh's people'.

### **c 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; Deut 16:10-14). 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. But why did Yahweh instruct Moses and Aaron to allow foreigners living among them to also celebrate the same redemption together with the native-born Israelites? My opinion is that 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 such foreigners who embraced

Yahweh as their God. Thus, through the celebration of the Passover, 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 foreigners living among them were required to present their freewill offering to Yahweh in proportion to the blessing they had received from him. This event was significant because both the Israelites and the aliens were blessed by Yahweh without discrimination. Therefore, 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).

Therefore, 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. Inevitably, foreigners were incorporated as part of 'Yahweh's people' through the celebration of the Passover, feasts of Weeks and Tabernacles.

#### **d 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 a 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 22:21-24; 23:9; Deut 10:18). If an alien, stranger, orphan, or widow is mistreated, the guilty person was never to go unpunished. These groups were included in the religious and social structures of the Israelite community through appropriate covenant means. Thus, from this perspective, foreigners could be regarded as 'Yahweh's people'.

#### **e Intermarriage**

Intermarriage was another way in which foreigners were integrated into the Israelite community (cf Houten 1991:61). Such foreigners could therefore

become 'Yahweh's people'. Though, it appears from Deuteronomy 7:3 that intermarriage was outlawed. 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; Deut 5:7-10). There is no question that the entire history of Israel is tainted with the temptation to worship other foreign gods<sup>8</sup>. This led to the prescription of a severe penalty for idolatry (cf Deut 13:6-11).

In view of the prohibition against idolatry, Israel was also 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 Gen 38:6-30), Moses (Nm 12:1-2), Ruth (cf Rt 1:16-17; 4:13-22), Rahab (cf Jos 6:22-23) and Bathsheba (cf 2 Sam 11:3, 26-27; 12:24-25) are sufficient examples to warrant such a line of thought. Therefore, through intermarriage, foreigners, aliens and 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).

#### **f 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 15:13-16; 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. No one was to be discriminated 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.

#### **g 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

---

<sup>8</sup> Cf Ex 23:24; 34:13-14; Deut 12:2-3; Jos 24:2, 14; 1 Ki 15:12-13; 16:13, 31-33; 2 Chr 33:3-9; 34:33; Ezek 20:7.

unintentional murder could also take refuge in these cities just like a native Israelite.

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.

The above 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'.

## D CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to restate the usefulness of the result of this investigation.

First, as it has already been pointed out in this article, the concept of 'Yahweh's people' appears to lie behind the tension that exists in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah during the early post-exilic period (539-350 BC). Unfortunately, scholarly investigations on the books have given limited attention to this factor. Therefore, this investigation has given some considerable attention to the subject. It is hoped that other scholars may take this stream of argument further in their future discussions on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. If this is done, the current academic gap on the above issue will eventually be narrowed down.

Second, the inquiry has shown that in my judgement, certain passages from the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants provided a covenantal framework through which many people from Israel and from other nations might be regarded as 'Yahweh's people'<sup>9</sup>. These covenant provisions 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;

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf Gen12:3; 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; Lev 19:33-34; 24:22; Num 15:14-16; 35:15; Deut 1:16; 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:10-14; 23:7-8; 27:19; 1Ki 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32-33; Is 2:1-4; 49:6b; 60:1-3; 66:23; see Goldingay (2003:224-226); Allen (1999:497); Keil & Delitzsch (1975:130) and Seow (1999:79).

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 covenant framework, if understood appropriately, could reduce the unhealthy Christian religious and communal divide that might exist today between different groups of people, races, tribes, languages and nations, et cetera. This could be achieved through appropriate Christian dialogue, knowing that as Christian religious groups, they are 'Yahweh's covenant people' and therefore, one family, irrespective of other presumed differences.

Third, the investigation reveals that the author(s)/editor(s) of Ezra and Nehemiah reinterpreted certain texts from the Pentateuch and from the deuteronomic-deuteronomistic history to support the exclusive religious and social reforms during the early post-exilic period (539-350 BC). This knowledge, it is hoped, might enable religious Christians and Jews alike to avoid similar re-interpretation and application of certain related or comparable biblical texts to support a current conflict situation. It is my conviction that if every human being is viewed as a legitimate person who is made in God's image and therefore deserves to be treated with trust, respect, love and dignity, several of the ills and conflicts in the world today and the pain that some people go through in some places could be reduced.

Therefore, the question "who are Yahweh's people?" is answered by this investigation. According to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, all other nations, foreigners and aliens who embrace Yahweh, the God of Israel as their God through appropriate covenant provisions are 'Yahweh's people' together with the covenant-believing Israelites. This is an inclusive theological perspective of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants.

As a consequence, the exclusive theological perspective that has driven the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah is a one-sided understanding of the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenant perspective on the conception of 'Yahweh's people' and other nations. A close reading of the two covenants has revealed the openness of Yahweh, the God of Israel (and the community of Yahweh) to all nations, languages, peoples, and ethnic groups, who embrace him as their God through appropriate covenant means. The early post-exilic Jewish community, in my judgement, did not have an exclusive right to worship Yahweh on the basis of the above-named covenants as presupposed in Ezra and Nehemiah. Yahweh cannot be confined to a single group of people. He cannot be localised!

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, L C 1999. *The New Interpreter's Bible Vol. III*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Breneman, M 1993. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman. (The New American Commentary 10.)
- Bright, J 2000. *A History of Israel* (with introduction by Brown, W P). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Brueggemann, W 1982. *A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Genesis*. Atlanta: John Knox Press (Interpretation.)
- Cohn-Sherbok, D 2003. *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, E W 1995. *Numbers*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. (New Century Bible Commentary.)
- De Moor, J C 1997. *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Enns, P 2000. *Exodus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. (The NIV Application Commentary.)
- Fretheim, T E 1994. 'The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,' in Keck, L E (ed.), *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 1*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Fretheim, T E 1991. *Exodus*. Louisville: John Knox Press (Interpretation.)
- Goldingay, J 2003. *Old Testament Theology Vol.1: Israel's Gospel*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Houten, C 1991. 'The Alien in Israelite Law' in Clines, D J A & Davies, P R (eds.), 1-200. Sheffield: JSOT Press. (JSOT Supplement Series 107.)
- Keil, C F & Delitzsch, F 1975. *Commentary on the Old Testament. Vol. 3: 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. Grand Rapids: W B Eerdmans.
- Kritzinger, J J 2001. *Research in the Faculty of Theology: Guidelines for Students*. Unpublished research guidelines from the Faculty of Theology. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- McConville, G J 1997. בְּרִית (*berit*), treaty, agreement, alliance, covenant", in VanGemeren, W A (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament and Exegesis, Vol. 1*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Seow, C L 1999. *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. III*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Von Rad, G 1979. *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*. London: SCM Press. (Old Testament Library.)
- Walton, J H & Matthews, V H 1997. *Genesis to Deuteronomy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press. (The IVP Bible Background Commentary.)
- Wenham, G J 1994. *Genesis Vol. 2, 16-50*. Dallas: Word Books Publisher. (Word Biblical Commentary.)
- Williamson, H G M 1985. *Ezra, Nehemiah*. Waco, Texas: Word Books. (Word Biblical Commentaries 16.)
- Dr. Emmanuel Usue, Research Associate, Department of Old Testament Science, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, 0002 Pretoria, South Africa. He works as a Lecturer in the Department of Religion and Philosophy, Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria. E-mail: [JoyceIusue@yahoo.com](mailto:JoyceIusue@yahoo.com)