

PhD Old Testament Studies

Re-reading Joshua 1 and 2: A postcolonial perspective

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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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Summary

The study re-reads Joshua 1 and 2 from a postcolonial point of view and argues that the writers of the book of Joshua were motivated by their life experiences. It seems clear that the writers were influenced by the imperialist and colonising forces' political, social, economic, and religious dimensions at the time. Joshua 1 and 2 reflect views and ideas about Israel's deity and broader concerns on the people's socio-political, economic, and religious developments. Amongst these ideologies is the idea of exclusivism (us versus them), that is, the other, also the idea of "chosenness" and "election," and the concept of a universal God and monotheism, which can be said to have developed fully after Israel's colonial experience in the hands of the Persians. The study engages with the historical context of Joshua's narrative, focusing on the empires of Egypt, Neo-Assyria, Neo-Babylonia and Persia and the resulting subjugations. Also discussed are the concepts of imperialism and colonialism, decolonialism and postcolonialism, which are critical to understanding how the period(s) under scrutiny functioned. Israel and Judah were part of the broader ANE, and studying their history in isolation leaves a very big. Therefore, a more comprehensive explication of the ANE and Joshua's significance is important to clarify Israel's national survival. The Book of Joshua is an attempt to write a national history of Israel. However, it is not history, as the subject has come to be defined in a modern context. It could be simply described as the historicization of myth or the mythologization of history. The narrative was purposely designed for the audience whose worldview and ideology were well suited for the work. Thus, the study presents an exegetical perspective on the worldview and ideology reflected in the narrative of Joshua 1 and 2.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Preliminary Remarks

A critical interpretation of the Joshua texts exposes the inherent vulnerability that remains part of human ambition, which is the conquest ambition. Said (1993:156) discusses the interrelatedness between texts and, culture and the political environment, collectively representing the contexts that gave birth to the texts. Furthermore, he observes that interpretations could have negative repercussions if the production context is not considered adequately. Fetalsana-Apura (2019:xii) highlights the fact that the Bible, having been used over the centuries to perpetuate and condone actions, activities and acts such as class, nationalism, ideology, personal interests, slavery, and legitimize women's oppression, qualifies to be subjected to such critical investigation. The Bible is a product of its cultural context, and as a result, the Israelites experienced slavery, colonization and imperialism. Notably, these practices were common and widely recorded in literature, and artefacts were left behind in the territories of the Ancient Near East.

The critical question this dissertation attempts to answer is what the narratives of Joshua 1 and 2 represent and their relational value to the geopolitics of the Ancient Near East. The text of Joshua cannot be judged to be completely different and unique compared to the other literary productions written in the ANE. Younger (1990:198) notes that the major difference between biblical accounts such as Joshua and the other ancient Near Eastern accounts is the use of direct speech. This feature is present in biblical writings such as Joshua and absent in the other ANE texts, such as the Assyrian texts. According to Younger, the fact that this is noticeable leads to obscuring "in some ways" with "the similarity in syntagmatic structure between the biblical and ancient Near Eastern material" (1990:198).

The literary effect from the application of such rhetorical devices in biblical literature, such as Joshua, leaves the impression that it has "...a more sophisticated surface to the narrative, but does not necessarily add significant information. Hence, there is, in

fact, an essential similarity of content between the ancient Near Eastern and biblical materials” (Younger 1990:198). The existence of this essential similarity allows one to argue for equal treatment of the material.¹ And, since the ANE materials are seen and received as political because they strongly project and reflect royal ideology mixed with political propaganda, few scholars have argued that biblical material such as Joshua should also receive similar treatment. Identifying both materials in this manner severely impacts how a person interprets these texts. Thus, it would not be abnormal to interpret biblical texts such as the Joshua narrative as literature since its comparative equivalent, the ANE literature, is treated as such. This would also allow for the texts to be critically examined for “... imperial power relations involved in the very settings, plots, and characters of canonical texts content, and the theology to be mined from our special texts” (Horsley 2014:13). In addition, it allows a critical interpreter to investigate “how religion must be understood insofar as imperial relations in various ways determine both the relations of production and reproduction and the conditions and possibility of cultural identity and religious expression” (Horsley 2014:14). This is closely related to the argument that “all religious practices” are “products of empire” (Horsley 2014:14).

1.2 Preliminary literature review

The preliminary literature review seeks to reflect on works done previously by other scholars on the book of Joshua. The researcher will attempt to identify works considered relevant to the present discussion. The researcher argues that there is a methodological overlap between postcolonial criticism and more traditional historical criticism since both are interested in the world behind the text. The very nature of the Old Testament narrative, which predominantly deals with issues of geography (land) on the one hand and on the other, power and control (the last two words collectively represent politics and relationships with others) conceives as an affirmation, the fact, that those who handed over the final texts had motives that had its origin (and was

¹ There is also a different angle to this argument. The Bible will always be treated differently simply because it has authority in certain faith communities. This argument also places the Bible as a cultural object.

driven) from a nationalistic agenda.² The narratives of the Old Testament could be argued to have originated from an imperialist, colonial, post-colonial and hybridized environment.³ It could be further argued that war conquest, which led to the partition and repartitioning of the Levant, was traditionally part of the constituency of their history.

Noth (1981) pioneered the idea of the existence of a Deuteronomistic history (Deut-2 Kg) that an anonymous Deuteronomistic historian compiled.⁴ Noth used the traditional-historical approach that recognized the influence of oral traditions in Old Testament narratives. Noth (1981:4) rejects certain parts of Wellhausen's work (1885), such as the idea of a Hexateuch, which argued that literary evidence suggests that an anonymous author had written most of the work that began from Joshua and ended in 2 Kings. He infers from the texts that the Deuteronomistic author had a distinctive style of writing. Both approaches (Wellhausen and Noth) could be labelled as historical criticism.

According to Creach (1989:5), "Joshua must be classified as the kind of history that was written in the ancient world to trace national origins and to support nationalist goals." He points out that the kind of history in question may "in some cases, report real events," but that most of these historical writings did not follow the modern rules of writing history where the writers were expected to state what happened. Nonetheless, the intention(s) of the writers was not to deceive readers, but they were concerned about creating identity and teaching values. He identifies oversimplification of the original account, creating portraits of heroic figures, which may also mean exaggeration as some of the characteristics of such history.

Boling (1992:3) observes that the nature of the book of Joshua could be explained from the perspective of its origin as a product of the long history of some 600 years

² Römer (2007:45-46) writes that the Deuteronomistic historians were most probably high officials in government that may have included the priests and the ministers who were preoccupied in preserving their political and ideological views. They were also concerned with keeping records of memorable events and composing propagandist materials.

³ Römer (2007:83) opines that "conquest accounts are quite common in the ancient Near East and play a key role in court ideology; such account can be found in Hittite, Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature." The existence of these stories serves as a reflection of the warring nature and situation of the people who occupied the region during the era that the Bible was put together.

⁴ Martin Noth's work *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* was first published in 1943.

subsequent to the career of Joshua. He added that these old stories, which were part of a tradition that was actively recounted by generations, received their present form when it was edited for the last time not long before or after the Babylonian invasions of 598 and 587 B.C.E.” According to Boling (1992:12), the:

conclusion that nearly one-fourth of the book of Joshua reflects the story-telling and liturgical re-enactment of ‘conquest’ at a Gilgal sanctuary, which continues to flourish (2 Kg. 2:1, 4-8) long after royal sanctuaries had taken over the legitimating role had taken over the legitimating role: Jerusalem in the S, Bethel and Dan in the N” is credible. He (1992:10) is of the view that most scholars accept that “Joshua is, in some sense, a Deuteronomistic book.

Römer’s (2007) work is relevant to this discourse because of the attention that was given to the relationship between the empires and the influence the dominance of these different empires had on the production of Joshua’s narratives. He (2007:43) discusses the political undertone embedded in Joshua’s narratives. He opines that the Joshua narratives may have been propaganda literature, put together during the reign of Josiah as part of the tool used to justify the reasoning behind the land acquisition and ownership, which had become an ideological concern (Römer 2007:134). Although Römer did not explicitly use postcolonial insights, these ideas still influenced him. Many historical critics are extremely “empire conscious” even if they are not post-colonial critics. For Römer (2007:134) the story of Rehab in Joshua 2 was a later non-Deuteronomistic addition.

McConville and Williams (2010:11) attempt to address the issues concerning the interpretation of the book of Joshua and its contemporary theological relevance. Their work observed the ethical and moral concerns pervading the Joshua narratives. Despite admitting that the book contained serious acts that amounted to human rights violations and triumphalist nationalism, they argued that the heinous acts, activities, and actions under the banner of a benevolent deity were not to be questioned. Likewise, Barrett (2015:14), notwithstanding his admittance that no physical evidence exists that corroborates the statements in the narrative of Jericho’s fall, says, “there is little doubt as to who fought the battle of Jericho. The Lord himself was the Commander-in-chief.” However, archaeological studies undermine Joshua’s account of the fall of the Jericho wall (Hawk 2005:570), with Hawk’s argument about

how the biblical account supposedly assigned the event, which was the transition from the late Bronze Age to the Iron Age (Hawk 2005: 570).

Butler (2014:18) observes that the modern conception of ethics leaves contemporary readers dismayed whenever they encounter Joshua's narrative. He mentions the forceful appropriation of land and wanton killings, which the text promotes as a substantial ethical and moral problem that burdens the narrative. As Pitkänen (2016:301) suggests,

...the book of Joshua really appears to be about the allotment and settlement of the land in a larger context and over a longer period of time. This is mostly achieved by war, but also relatively peacefully in parts (e.g., 17:12-13), and large swathes of land are still classified as unconquered (esp. 13:1-7)

More perplexing is the continuous application of such ideology in modern times, such as policies pursued in North America, South Africa, and the Middle East. In a primary sense (for example, the Rehab story), the narrative of Joshua depicts, affirms and "relates another episode in the ever-present "us" versus "them" of the Old Testament..." (Biddle and Jackson 2017:226). The Old Testament presents foreigners most unfavourably and tends to promote xenophobic discourse as well as make "literary use of otherness in order to highlight some aspects of "Israelite identity" and "self-conception" (Gillmayr-Bucher 2007:135). Rehab's inclusion in Joshua's narrative is a practical example of how foreigners are usually identified in Old Testament narratives.⁵

Nelson (1997:2) made similar observations about how modern readers may react to Joshua's narrative. He said, "Joshua is inevitably a product of its own age and culture, and this should not be denied or glossed over." He raised questions about issues of identity in relation to God and "the responsibilities of peoplehood?" For Nelson, the narrative simplifies the "question about the identity and unity of one people Israel;" and, on the other hand, "... the twelve-tribe schema is a highly simplified expression of a complex social and political reality" (Pressler 2008:11). Thus the above raises scores of questions about the divine as opposed to quotidian reality (Stek 2002:33).⁶ Hence, the narrative(s) is imbued with militarism that

⁵ For a more detailed engagement with the subject, see Elie Assis (2004:82-90).

⁶ Joshua 24:15.

attempts to incorporate both divine and temporal reality (Chambers 2015:145).⁷ This could be a paradoxical argument in which what resides in the divine may not necessarily be clinically separated from the ephemeral.

Dozeman (2015:43) identifies four important central themes in his summary of the literary analysis of the narratives of Joshua 1-12, namely: (1) the Plot of Holy war; (2) Procession of the Ark; (3) Wars against Kings and Royal cities; and, (4) Promise Land. He acknowledges that Joshua 1-12 represents Israel's quest for a national identity. The book of Joshua poses a historical question about when Israel's existence as a nation began. Rösel (2011:15) clarifies that those who wrote the book of Joshua were not "striving for historical precision," nor was that "the motor driving this historical development" because "the ideological impetus was much more important." Rösel maintained that "Historical research indicates that in the period within discourse, no united people called Israel, which could have conquered the land, existed. According to him, Israel emerged within its country, not before its country, as biblical authors believed" (2011:15).

Fetalsana-Apura (2019:2) contests how the book of Joshua has been interpreted previously as an "imperial blueprint in favour of the ideology of dominant groups." She opines, "Such interpretations take the religio-cultural and socio-political construction of the book of Joshua out of context." However, one cannot deny that the Bible is a product of its context. Yet, to neglect the ethical and moral issues that are embedded in Joshua's narratives is to do injustice to the transition that has taken place in the world of knowledge as time progresses. Dozeman (2015:90) observes,

The modern era demands a literal reading of the book of Joshua, but in the emerging postmodern setting, the historicity of Joshua no longer plays a role in evaluating the violence of the book; the postcolonial context leaves no room for the belief in manifest destiny; cultural pluralism cautions against the social appropriation of concepts such as "chosenness" with a narrow reading of genocide as a story of liberation; and the increasing violence in Western religions, punctuated by the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, underscores the urgency to scrutinize anew the religious meaning of war and genocide in Joshua through a literal reading of the book

Crowell (2013:2) notes:

⁷ Dennis J. McCarthy (1971:228-230) did an interesting study that appeared in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* on the individual words used in Joshua 2 to capture the theme of the holy war.

A major consideration of any analysis that applies a modern theoretical framework to an ancient literary corpus is the applicability of that framework. Modern postcolonial theorists suggest that reactions to imperial rule are similar, though not identical across time and space. Foreign domination for extended periods of time affects the psychology and worldview of those dominated. While the method of exploitation and control change over time, the desire of the oppressed groups for self-rule and independence from foreign domination are rather consistent.

A lot was done in the past on the book of Joshua from different perspectives that looked at it as part of the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and Enneateuch, and also at its narrative strategy, plot, rhetoric and structure. Yet, little has been done explicitly using the postcolonial approach that feeds on an African experience, except for a few scholars, such as Crowell (2018), who applied postcolonial criticism in their work. Of course, many historical critics are concerned with similar topics, such as identity, empire, violence, etc.

1.3 Research Problem

The text leaves an ethically conscious reader or interpreter situated in Africa with many questions. The fact that the final compiler(s) were comfortable with applying the name of their Yahweh in justifying what could be regarded as ethically and morally wrong may leave an African exegete whose experience is rooted in a postcolonial environment with doubts and sometimes revulsion about their true intentions. The issue of how to respond to those (for example, nationalist and religious extremists) who refer to biblical texts such as Joshua in carrying out their extremist actions in modern times problematized the study. Thus, the study is confronted with the desire to unearth the intricacies that underlie the Joshua text from a postcolonial reading. There may be burning questions about what to do with such texts or discard or re-read them for fresher insight(s). Therefore, if the text of Joshua was accepted as partly postexilic, what could be learned from the narrative that would be reinterpreted as an African experience in a hybridized environment iconizing Judean returnees' contemporariness?

1.4 Research Hypothesis

1. A modern interpreter of the book of Joshua, mindful of moral and ethical concerns, may approach the text both with a nuanced perspective acknowledging the historical context while grappling with the ethical implications of the conquest narrative, possibly seeking to reconcile or reinterpret specific passages to align with contemporary moral values.
2. A postcolonial rereading of Joshua chapters 1 and 2 will reveal nuanced power dynamics, cultural impositions and resistance strategies embedded in the biblical narrative, shedding light on the implications of colonial ideologies within the context of the Israelites' conquest of Canaan.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study re-reads Joshua I and II from a postcolonial perspective. The specific objectives are to:

1. understand the political reasons that guided the writers in producing Joshua's narratives through an application of historical criticism.
2. elucidate on postcolonialism, postcolonial criticism, and biblical criticism to expose their probable constructs and the relationship(s) they share in relation to the book of Joshua in general and chapters 1 and 2, in particular, as well as find out the postcolonial sources in the biblical text under study.
3. evaluate the methods and approaches of postcolonial criticism in the study and establish how their actions emanated from the worldviews and ideologies which were prevalent in the broader ANE, as well as how Israel's deity was presented and conceptualized as a political and cultural object used to achieve a particular interest.
4. ascertain the nature, characteristics and impact the empires had on Israel and Judah on a larger scale and their associated socio-political, economic and religious influence on the writing and production of the book of Joshua.
5. appreciate the reconstruction of biblical historical sources into contemporary postcolonial African enterprise by applying the exegesis method and approach.

1.6 Overview of Study

Chapter 2 reviews the subject of postcolonialism from a broader perspective of biblical studies as a backdrop for the conception of the theoretical framework of the subsequent chapter. Also, the chapter discusses and evaluates subjects such as empire, imperialism, colonialism, decoloniality, decolonialism, postcolonialism and postcoloniality.

Chapter 3 explores the historical context of the period in which Joshua's final text was believed to have been compiled. The aim is to reconstruct the socio-politico-religious context that influenced the writers of Joshua. The study begins with a discussion of Historical Criticism based on the tool of postcolonialism/postcolonial perspective applicable to the study. A discussion on the results of the historical-critical approach to the book of Joshua follows. The chapter reflects on the various historical periods that occurred during the Egyptian domination in the second Millennium period, Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods while examining the nature, characteristics and impact of the aforementioned empires on Israel and Judah.

Chapter 4 revolves around the philosophical appropriation of the 'being of God' to achieve political and cultural objectives. The study attempts to establish that their actions emanated from the worldviews and ideologies prevalent in the broader ANE period. The chapter attempts to conceptualize Israel's deity as presented by the writers of Joshua from a postcolonial perspective. The chapter argues that the deity in the story serves as a political and cultural object of national and human interest. The objectification of the deity motif, rather than as subject, was to disallow further rationalizing of imperialist and colonialist reading of the text of Joshua, which ostensibly builds on these thoughts.

Chapter 5 examines Joshua chapters 1 and 2 from an exegetical postcolonial point-of-view, reflecting on the dynamics of socio-politico-religious-economic issues that shaped the world of the text.

Chapter 6 concludes this study.

Chapter 2

2. Postcolonial criticism and biblical interpretation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss general terms such as empire, imperialism, colonialism, decolonialism, postcolonialism and postcolonial theory. The writer considers these terms to be critical to this endeavour because they feature prominently in postcolonial Bible criticism. In addition, the nature of the text of Joshua's narrative requires that the subject matter be approached from a postcolonial perspective. Primarily, if an interpreter takes into consideration how perpetrators of what is generally referred to as modern-day imperialism and colonialism have relied on the narrative as a justification for the implementation of their agenda and ideology, admittedly, opposing arguments may arise that applying such reasoning to an ancient text such as Joshua could be anachronistic. Such arguments would mostly be substantiated by the tendency in modern history to associate the terms empire, imperialism and colonialism, decolonialism and Postcolonialism with British expansionist agenda (and others); actions and activities resident in (what could be described as) modern memory and recent event in history. Ironically, biblical scholars prefer to refer to the period after exile as post-exilic, which I consider to be a very narrow expression. It could be argued that in stricter terms, the period being referred to is postcolonial. The argument is posited because the nations that dominated Israel are recognized as empires and the acts they perpetrated were not different from what was witnessed in the era of the so-called modern imperialism and colonialism. Römer (2005) discussed very extensively the activities of these empires. It is also important to note that some scholars disagree with some aspects of the exile narrative and believe that they are exaggerated. These are scholars such as Carroll (2001, 1997, 1992), Lemche (1997), and Davies (1997, 1998), who are generally referred to as minimalists and postmodernists. Berlin (2010:342) responded to some of their concerns, claiming that they are simply on a mission of trying to be politically correct. In other words, they are simply supporters of the

Palestinian cause. This debate is relevant to the study of Joshua's narrative. The question that arises regarding Joshua is who the owner of the land is. Admittedly, it is a complex issue to resolve, considering the hybridisation process over time.

The fact that these terms are consciously and purposely applied to the texts of Joshua by the writer of this thesis requires that these concepts be explained. The argument is that the core idea behind the terms imperialism and colonialism is the drive to conquer others and possess them, which remains part of human ambition. Further, the writer argues that the ideas and ideology that drive the concept of imperialism and colonialism are intertwined with that of national triumphalism and remain the same to this day. This chapter will assist in establishing the theoretical concept that would apply in the exegetical and hermeneutical studies in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

To achieve this objective, the writer will attempt to conduct an overview of works, positions and the different features that have guided some of the most notable postcolonial scholars and theorists such as Chinua Achebe, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, R.S Sugirtharajah, Fernando F Segovia, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others in their presentation of the subject.

2.2 Who is postcolonial?

This arguably is directly related to the question of the location of practitioners. Post-colonial criticism is practised in institutions and certain groups of people located all over the world. This includes those and institutions that are homed in the places that carried out and championed colonialism and imperialism, such as the USA, Britain, and France. Arguably, the fact that postcolonial criticism is practised and undertaken in these locations naturally attracts members of these societies who originally were not part of the colonized societies and communities. This development has led some to criticise the rationale behind the endeavour and to say that postcolonialism is an invention of the West. This problem is compounded by the fact that some early scholars involved with postcolonial criticism were based in universities in the imperial centres.

One can argue that such criticism is unfounded because of the dispersion that came with the exercise of colonialism. For example, the issue of slavery caused the dislocation of people from their natural habitat to other locations. These created communities of indigenous people in places where they were taken. There is also the presence of indigenous communities in some of these places before the advent of the colonizers. Additionally, it is another category of people who experienced colonization in their homeland, for example, the Irish nation that experienced some sort of colonization at the hands of Britain. Evidentially, such a group (and other similar groups) is qualified to be considered postcolonial.

It could be inferred from the discussion that the West is not a homogenous group and that among them are minorities who experienced colonization of some kind themselves. Dispersion can also be related to post-war migration that took place after the Second World War, which saw immigrants from the formerly colonized territories arriving in Britain and America in the 1940s and 1960s, respectively. Some of these immigrants ended up in the academic institutions of the West. In the course of their learning and interaction with the new culture, some of these newly arrived or their children who came from backgrounds of the liberation movement started asking questions about how Western knowledge was configured and taught, especially in cases where such knowledge is understood to be constructed in such a manner that is oppressive, racist, disenfranchising and disempowering. Characteristically, the resistance texts that these individuals wrote were postcolonial. Therefore, it implies that these individuals recognisably qualify as postcolonial. Irrespective of their being domiciled in places outside what could be traditionally referred to as a colony.

Postcolonial criticism also is not an exclusive reserve of the colonized. Historically, postcolonialism is grounded in the search for the right ethics and morals in relation to how the colonizers treated those they colonized. Fanon speaks about those he considers traitors who were willing tools used by the colonizers. Achebe also identified such individuals in his work. Similarly, there have always been individuals from the opposing side who sided with the colonized. Some of these individuals are also members of guilds, universities and other institutions and may find themselves working as postcolonial critics.

2.3 Postcolonialism or Post-colonialism

Whilst discussing the term decoloniality, it was explained that some scholars, writers, etc., separate decoloniality/decolonialism from what they regard as the simple anti-colonial movement. The present discussion will begin with a brief discourse on the probable differences and similarities between the terms decoloniality and Postcolonialism. This would be followed by an attempt to explain further the meaning of the word Postcolonialism; that is, what is postcolonialism/postcoloniality and, *secondly*, who is postcolonial. The discussion will be based on previous research by scholars, writers, etc., on the subject of postcolonialism. Important to note is that previously, in Chapter 1: Proposal, there was a discussion on the subject of Postcolonialism. Therefore, in order to avoid duplication, this discussion will attempt to avoid what has been said before about the subject.

2.3.1 Decolonialism versus Postcolonialism: Differences and Similarities

Any critical observer would notice the stark difference between the words decoloniality/decolonialism and postcoloniality/Postcolonialism lies in the De- and Post-prefixes. Therefore, the meanings of the words arguably are dependent on how these individual prefixes are qualified. Based on the preceding explanation, it would be argued that the De-; the prefix in Decoloniality/Decolonialism denotes undoing. Literally, it means an attempt to undo the effects of colonialism/coloniality. On the other hand, the Post-, the prefix of Postcoloniality/Postcolonialism, represents what happens after, that is, what happens after the period of actual colonialism. The “post” of postcolonialism “has the sense of simple succession, a diachronic sequence of periods *in which postcolonial period* is identifiable (italics mine) (Lyotard 1992:76).” Here, the postcolonial succeeds the colonial period. “The post indicates something like a conversion, a new direction from the previous one.” Furthermore, Lyotard (1992:76) argues that the

...idea of linear chronology is itself: a perfectly modern *development* (words in italics mine). It is at once part of Christianity, Cartesianism, and Jacobinism: since we are inaugurating something completely new, the hands of the clock should be put back to zero. The very idea of modernity is closely correlated with the principle that it is both

possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking.

The position taken follows how time is conceptualized in terms of the understanding of time as unilinear in regards to modernity (Mignolo 2014:21). Mignolo (2011:151) argues that the concept of time was hijacked by the Europeans when they began to categorize time on the bases of nature vs culture and modernity vs tradition during the eighteenth century period. He observes that the trend was already noticeable during the sixteenth-century period as the “idea of progress and the distinction between the ancient and the modern” began to emerge. The emergence of this trend resulted in “complicity between culture, time, and modernity and the dependent paradigm in which nature, tradition, and coloniality have been placed.” The chronological ordering of time brought about the classification of the others as living in the past and the Europeans as living in the present and was used as part of the justification and reason for the civilizing mission. In other words, time was used as “a conceptual and colonizing strategy” as well as “a fundamental concept of coloniality at large (2011:152).” And if it is assumed that time controls everything in the universe, it will then mean that even at this time of post-; European imperial time, the way it is configured and named universal time is structured to control what is going on in the universe. This is applicable to what postcolonial theorists think, write, talk, and argue (Mignolo 2014:22-23). In other words, the idea of universal time controls who the postcolonial are. The manner of the reason is affected by the perception of time, which is connected to the idea of universalism.

In other words, both concepts (Decolonialism and Postcolonialism) are bound to time and the understanding of time in relation to historical events. It is assumed that postcolonial theorists look back at events beginning from about 300 years ago. In contrast, those involved with decolonial criticism or decoloniality look at an event that goes back 500 years ago (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:491).⁸ The De-; distinguishes itself by adopting many temporalities, which includes the imperial dimension of a unilinear

⁸ In relation to this work the interpretation is concerned with matters that happened more than 500 years ago. So the work is looking back much further. The important thing to bear in mind is that life keeps on improving but on what is already there. But the basic principles remain in place. Imperialism has not ended. It only took another form. It could therefore be argued that what changes most of the time about phenomenon is form. Admittedly, this is a vast and complex issue that requires a separate treatment.

concept of time and the pluriversality of local time in its discussion (Mignolo 2014:21). There is also the argument that Postcolonialism is linked to the work of post-structuralism and post-modernity initiated by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault and later, was taken up by scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:491). Gandhi (1998: viii) also says “In the main, the intellectual history of postcolonial theory is marked by a dialectic between Marxism, on the one hand, and poststructuralism/postmodernism, on the other.”

On the other hand, the similarity is seen in the practice of both decolonialism and Postcolonialism in actuality. Both decoloniality and postcoloniality identify white humanism as their antagonist (Broeck & Junker 2014:10). This implies that there are lots of cross-overs in the divergent methods and approaches each of the concepts assumes, bearing in mind that their main focus is on defeating colonialism/coloniality or white humanism their chief antagonist.

2.3.2 What is postcolonialism/postcoloniality?

Postcolonial criticism is a very diverse field of study that attempts to incorporate several dimensions of people’s colonial and imperial experiences. Postcolonial criticism draws partly from the resources related to Marxism (Young 2016:59). It could be argued that the word postcolonial first appeared, identified and applied in common usage in Marxism. Hence, today, postcolonial criticism continues to be associated with Marxist theories. However, one could argue that one critical and distinctive feature of postcolonial criticism is that it draws primarily from experiences that emanate from non-western forms of Marxist epistemologies, such as the experiences of national liberation movements, migration, etc. (Young 2016:61).

This criticism is more at home with the formerly colonized people by its nature and essence. Today, Postcolonial criticism is practised in varied locations worldwide and targets and probes all aspects of human existence. Ashcroft, Gareth and Tiffin (2013:vii) observe that over time, “the subject” which “Postcolonial studies” deals with “has expanded and diversified in both its impact and its significance, in fields as varied as globalization, environmentalism, transnationalism, the sacred and even

economics, through the significance of the spread of neo-liberalism.” However, they (2013:vii) note,

The controversies in the field, particularly circulating around the term ‘postcolonial/postcolonial’ itself, continue unabated, but the relevance of neo-imperialism and the issues emerging from the engagements of postcolonized societies in a ‘glocal’ age have demonstrated the usefulness of postcolonial analysis.

Furthermore, they highlight the vital role played by “the humanities in general and postcolonial discourse in particular” in “developing a new language to address the problems of global culture and the relationships between local cultures and global forces (2013: vii).” Especially if viewed from the perspective of the state of the postcolonial studies today compared to the nineties. The increased participation by postcolonial studies in different subjects such as environment issues and globalization that haunts the world and the resultant positive effect that came with such participation (Gareth and Tiffin 2013:vii):

...occurred because the classical narratives of Modernity in which social theory was mired – dependency theory and centre–periphery models – were unable to explain the multi-directional flow of global exchanges, a flow that was most noticeable in cultural exchange. One significant example of this multi-directional flow is the phenomenon of the Black Atlantic, which reveals the amazing complexity and productivity of African cultures in the Atlantic. The history of such flows reveals that the multi-directional and transcultural nature of global culture is not a new phenomenon (2013: vii).

The above quotes highlight the fact that colonialism penetrated and affected every aspect of humanity. Postcolonial criticism interacts very closely with the idea of social justice, arguably the base of its existence. Those involved with postcolonial criticism aim to overthrow and end colonialism in whatever form or shape that it raises its head, be it economically, politically, intellectually, epistemologically, socially, culturally, etc.

The simplest definition that arguably captures the spirit and essence of post-colonialism would be the critical study of all the effects of imperialism and colonialism on the lives of the colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989:2). This general definition of the subject, as proposed, allows for the placement of the inception of postcolonial discourse not in the realm of academic but beyond in “the cultural discourse of the formerly colonized peoples, peoples whose work was and is

inextricably in the experience of colonization” where arguably it started (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 2002:196). This argument is closely related to the notion of “post” that gives the main idea: colonialism and life. Making contact with the natives or indigenes is broadly conceptualised to include the idea of conquest and occupation as it relates to such events occurring and being recorded both in orality and recorded human history. Therefore, primarily, the understanding goes beyond the post-independence era that some associate the word Postcolonialism with.

Postcolonialism deals with the concept of hybridity that arises from postcolonial culture (Young 2016:57). Bhabha (1994:37) argues that there is nothing like cultural purity within nations. He highlights that when the culture of the colonizer and the colonized interact with each other, they create a third space. The third space is where a new kind of culture emerges. This new culture can only originate from the effect of colonialism or postcolonialism in the process of interaction of the culture of the oppressed and the oppressor (Bhabha 1994:38). In other words, the new culture is born from the mixing of the culture of the colonizer and the colonised. He notes that “all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation.” He (1994:37) writes:

It is that third space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity and fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.

He (1994:38) believes that what results from the third space is not multiculturalism or cultural diversity but cultural hybridity.

Socio-historical and archaeological evidence shows that no culture survives encounters and interactions with one another. Generally, an interchange of some sort happens after the contact and interaction (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989:195). This implies that the moment colonial culture makes contact with the receiving culture (indigenous culture), it drastically affects the ethos and ideologies of the colonized. This condition persisted even after the colonies became independent. Colonialism leaves behind an irreversible process that is as a result of one culture

making contact with another. Hybridity plays into the “complex issue of the sacred (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2013: viii).”

Religion, the impact of missions and the nature and function of a ‘postcolonial sacred’ are becoming increasingly prevalent in what some refer to as a ‘post-secular age’. There can be no doubt that the aggressive articulation of religious dogma, the failure of dialogue and the increasingly polarized globe have offered unprecedented global dangers. But these realities also offer opportunities for an analysis of the kinds of complex hybridized developments of the sacred that have been revealed by postcolonial analysis (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2013: viii).

Some postcolonial scholars and theorists, such as Ngugi wa Thiong (1995:439), argue that postcolonial criticism should be employed as a vehicle for a complete severance with colonial culture. However, the attainability of such a position continues to be debated up to the present time. One can even argue that such a suggestion sounds more like a utopian idea that is practically unattainable. This position came from considering the extent of interaction that cultures have undergone over the past centuries.

Gandhi (1998) engages with the meaning of the prefix “post’ in Postcolonialism. She supposes that “post” represents the notion that it is possible for those who were formerly colonized to completely change from the manner of living and thinking associated with colonialism and probably return to their pre-colonial ways or a completely new way of thinking and living). Gandhi (1998:7) reminds us that, “Almost invariably, this sort of triumphant utopianism shapes its vision of the future out of the silences and ellipses of historical amnesia. It is informed by a mistaken belief in the immateriality and dispensability of the past.” She (1998:7) concludes that “the postcolonial dream of discontinuity is ultimately vulnerable to the infectious residue of its own unconsidered and unresolved past. Its convalescence is unnecessarily prolonged on account of its refusal to remember and recognise its continuity with the pernicious malaise of colonisation.”

Postcolonialism examines the power relationship between the colonizers and the formerly colonised people. This aspect of postcolonial studies focuses on how politics and political power become the coloniser's tool to maintain relevancy. One of the areas that imperialism and colonialism made markedly change in the globe is in

the use of their grossly imbalanced power relationship to create chaos in people's lives in the "concept of boundaries and borders" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2013: viii). The facts cannot be overstated nor understated that "The concept of boundaries and borders has been crucial in the imperial occupation and domination of indigenous space (2013: viii)." Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2013:vii) opine that

...the question of borders and borderlands has now become a pressing issue in an age of increasingly hysterical border protection. Cultural borders are becoming recognized as a critical region of colonial and neo-colonial domination, of cultural erosion and of class and economic marginalization..

In addition, it focuses on the power relationship among sexes, patriarchy, gender and homosexual issues, etc. Postcolonial criticism shares close affinity in areas that includes methodological approach and concerns, politics, contemporary writing and historical strategy etc. with other academic fields such as feminist and queer criticism. Gandhi (1998: viii) writes,

In the last decade postcolonialism has taken its place with theories such as poststructuralism, psychoanalysis and feminism as a major critical discourse in the humanities. As a consequence of its diverse and interdisciplinary usage, this body of thought has generated an enormous corpus of specialised academic writing.

What binds these fields together is that they are all dealing with issues of marginalization and rejection, which more or less is attributable to the effects of imperialism and colonialism on others. These critical endeavours go further in the present time to critically and wholistically examine the role of power relationships during pre-colonial times in different societies.

The above discussion leads us to the question of power/knowledge relationship and how this is appropriated by those who hold advantages over others in this relationship. The critical issue with knowledge as regards postcolonialism lies in the attempt by the West to totalize knowledge and claim that there is universal knowledge. Those who hold such a position and make such a claim attempt to substantiate it by posturing that their approach to every aspect of lives should be acceptable to all. In other words, they attempt to impose their ways and approach to doing things on others in the name of modernity and civilization. Postcolonial

criticism rejects such claims and argues that there is no uniformity when it comes to knowledge. Young (2016:65-66) postulates that:

This necessarily involves a decentring of the intellectual sovereignty and dominance of Europe, the critique of eurocentrism that is, challenging the limits of western ethnocentricity, and the assumption that the white male western point of view is the norm and the true. The dislocation and displacement of western knowledge includes academic knowledge, and involves reappraising its links to colonialism and racism, challenging the form of western historicist history as an ordered narrative that subsumes all other histories of the world, questioning the literary, historical, philosophical and sociological canons for their exclusions of writings that have not stemmed from the metropolitan centre, and developing contestatory dialogues between western and non-western cultures. Postcolonial criticism forms part of a critique of European civilization and culture from the perspective of the cultures of the tricontinental world. For the cultures seeking to extricate themselves from the history of imperial dominance, postcolonial theory involves utilizing, strengthening and developing the resources of their own histories and political and intellectual traditions ordered narrative that subsumes all other histories of the world, questioning the literary, historical, philosophical and sociological canons for their exclusions of writings that have not stemmed from the metropolitan centre, and developing contestatory what?

Postcoloniality concerns itself with textual politics. Here, what is being contested is the use of literature to construct others as inferior and to, subsequently, depict them as colonisable. Evidence abounds of the tremendous rise in the production of literature during the colonial period. There was this sudden fascination with the ways of life of the locals, which colonial writers attempted to reconstruct. The pictures which these works painted about indigenes were mostly derogatory (Janmohamed 1995:18-19). Most of the time, the writers use literature to express the power they wield over the indigenous, and subject matters are never adequately researched. Many of those who produced this literature were amateurs and lacked the necessary expertise needed to be able to do justice to the subjects that they were attempting to articulate. These literary works appeared in the form of “travelogues, letters, histories, novels, poems, epics, legal documents, records, memoirs, biographies, translations and censuses (Gandhi 1998).” This literature also assisted in bolstering the image and mission of the empire and the colonizers as divinely sanctioned. The colonizers were projected in this literature as humanist, truthful, strong, morally upright and civilized; everything perfect and of harbouring good intentions towards the colonized (Janmohamed 1995:18-19). This literature otherwise dexterously

concealed and hid their true mission and intention, which is economic exploitation. The Bible was the official literature that played a crucial, critical and important role at the beginning of the civilizing mission but was later replaced by emergent colonial literature. Postcolonial criticism wrestles with the contents of this literature and attempts to bring to the open the hidden agenda that these works represent. Ironically, postcolonial criticism is also using literature etc., as a tool to counter and nullify the wrong depiction of the colonised people by the colonizers.

Another aspect of textual politics which postcolonialism attempts to engage with that is worthwhile is pedagogy. Particularly, this concerns the use of colonial languages such as English in schools. Ngugi believes that the language of the colonizers, which they forced the colonized to adopt as their medium of learning and communication, “was the most important vehicle through which that power” that is, colonial power, “fascinated and held the soul” of the colonized “prisoner” (1995: 287). She proclaims, “The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation (1995: 287).” The other downside of the use of language of the colonizer is that it projects the image of dominance. This affects the manner in which the colonized begin to see their culture. In this regard, Ngugi (1995:290) writes:

Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world....

Postcolonial criticism studies the economic situation that resulted from colonialism. What could preferably be described in this discussion is the economic strangulation that people who formerly were subjects of colonialism experience, which is a result of the practice of the ideologies and practices linked with the exercise of colonialism. Postcoloniality is a term used commonly in the study of “economic material and cultural conditions” that colonialism created and within which postcolonial nations are expected and forced to operate (Young 2016:57). Perhaps, at this juncture, it is important to note that the use of the word ‘Postcoloniality’ arises out of the need to

counter and address “the controversy surrounding postcolonial vocabulary (Gandhi 1998:3).” The potential danger resulting from this controversy “underscores an urgent need to distinguish and clarify the relationship between the material and analytic cognates of postcolonial studies (Gandhi 1998:3).” This has led some theoreticians working in the field to refer to the theoretical aspect of the study as ‘Postcolonialism’; and “the condition it addresses is best conveyed through the notion of ‘postcoloniality’(Gandhi 1998:4).” This summarizes the use of the terms Postcoloniality and Postcolonialism in this instance.

Postcoloniality argues that these economic and cultural transactions, interactions, and dealings were constituted in such a manner that put the postcolonial nations at an economic disadvantage. Postcoloniality brings to light how the colonized resisted structural forces placed as barriers to their socio-economic progress. It could be argued that these barriers were purposely put in place; though appearing in latent, hidden and concealed states (Young 2016:57). In other words, the barriers were designed and meant to remain undetectable and to continue to uphold the demerits of colonization and the privileges that accrue to those benefiting from it. It shows that the postcolonial condition only exists because colonialism continues to interact with what is supposed to be local experience. It is important to note the belief that most postcolonial critics still hold that not all forms of colonialism is over. Young (2016:60) opines that, “The postcolonial era in its name pays tribute to the great historical achievements of resistance against colonial power, while, paradoxically, it also describes the conditions of existence that have followed in which many basic power structures have yet to change in any substantive way.” The concept, theories, ideas, and philosophies that undergird Neo-colonialism; is an example of a thought that found its origin in the belief system that believes colonialism still exists.

Postcolonial criticism has the tendency to go beyond ordinary criticism of the subject of colonialism and begins to play the role of a judge and thus getting as far as recommending remedies. This aspect of its endeavour has led many to accuse the practitioners of going back to live the original sins they are attempting to condemn and find a solution to, which is the imposition of knowledge.

2.4 Empires/Imperialism and Colonies/Colonialism

This segment aims to discuss the meaning, nature and characteristics of the above-mentioned terms. The inclusion of the terms “meaning,” “nature,” and “characteristic” in this discussion broadens the scope to include important facets and diverse perspectives of the concepts that are under study. What we are attempting to achieve here is to understand how the word imperialism and colonialism orientate those that impose the concept on others (colonized) and how it is viewed and received by both parties. The terms Empire and Colony will be discussed as the writer of this dissertation believes that any critical discussion concerning imperialism and colonialism should start by attempting to understand how empires and colonies operate. Therefore, an attempt will be made to engage with works previously undertaken where attempts were made to expound on the meanings, nature and characteristics of these words.

2.5 General characteristic of Empires

History is littered with evidence that shows the rise and fall, formation, reformation, and deformation of empires (Young 2015:7). This observation elicits curiosity from any critical observer to attempt to explore further the idea and ideology that is behind and undergirds the term ‘empire’ (Turchin 2006:10). A probable question which may arise in that regard is what does empire represent? In this instance, the writer prefers to use the word ‘represent’ instead of ‘mean’ because (observably and arguably), empires embody different acts, activities and philosophies, such as economic, religious, social, and political that impact their meaning.

Perdue (2015:1) writes that history records that empires began to be part of reality from the third millennium BCE and characteristically are “systems of international domination based on power, ideology, and control”. According to Dube (2000:47) “The term empire describes an ancient and persistent relationship of dominance and suppression between different nations, countries, races, and continents.” The history of the ANE is one that bears witness to human nature in relation to the question of empires; that is, the rise and fall of empires. McIntosh (2005:3) describes the

turbulent state of affairs of the region that was part and parcel of the characteristics which ensued from the constant tussle for dominance between the empires. The tussle between the various people groups of the ANE who fundamentally constitute the foundation of empires continues till this day. McIntosh (2005:3) observes,

The region is today the scene of strife and hostility among states and would-be states; in antiquity it was no less turbulent, fought over by local states but also frequently a battleground between the empires of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt, and beyond them Iran and Europe. At their greatest extent, the empires of Mesopotamia ruled not only the Levant and all the lands between but also Egypt itself. The Persians added this region to their empire, which already the lands from Thessaly to northern India; and Alexander the Great united these briefly with Greece and its dominions before the region was carved up by his successors.

Mudimbe (1988:10) writes, "In West Africa, Dahomey was a powerful commercial partner of European traders. The Ashanti Empire, expanded, dominating the Akans and the Oyo kingdom further to the east and increasing its power as it grew." Perdue (2015:1) highlights the fact that empires are products of tribal conflicts that are mostly limited to regional power play and may occasionally develop into larger entities that occupy a large transnational area. Activities and actions of empires are not limited to the past.

According to Said (1993:9) political and economic tyrannies form the core of the activity and actions of empires. Notably, empires operated from its capital known as a metropolis, from where they launched their expansionist agenda. Perdue (2015) opines that this happens when the empire (in this case, would-be empire) sees itself as economically and militarily strong. At that point, empires started to embark on the journey of increasing their suzerainty and influence through the invasion of others. These actions usually culminate in meddling in the internal politics of the conquered territories. Conquered territories become the source of economic gains to enhance and satisfy the needs of the empire. Empires usually compel the territories they conquered to exchange their culture and embrace and adopt the culture designed and imposed by the invaders. Carr (2011:305) notes that most of the time, empires employ indoctrination that leads to the colonization of the minds of those they conquer. They also recruited the services of some of the people they conquered,

mostly leaders, to assist them in furthering their ambition (Carr 2011:305, Perdue 2015:1).

Most empires came into being through the personal ambition and aspiration of individuals who glory in conquest (McIntosh 2005:179, Young 2015:8). However, in modern times empires such as Britain came into being through collective actions of the citizenry (Young 2015:9). Whatever may be the reason behind the rise of an empire (be it exploration, trade or sovereignty) what undergirds the ambition is generally similar and are glory, power and money. Dube (2000:47) observes that “from ancient to contemporary times, three main factors have repeatedly motivated and justified” the rise of empires, namely; “God, glory, and gold.” Furthermore, Dube (2000:47) notes that “Different terms are used to describe the same factors. Some identify them as power, moral responsibility, and economic interests.” Meanwhile, others speak of “spiritual, material, and power motivations.”

Young (2015:6) says that each time an empire ceases to exist, another takes its place. However, when European empires collapsed, there was a shift from the scenario that usually plays itself out; nation-states instead came into being. The reason for the collapse was power tussle within and without the empire as empires became bigger and internal instability ensued (McIntosh 2005:173). This also affects the boundaries that begin to experience volatility, weakening and destabilization, ending in complete collapse (Young 2015:8).

Young (2015:9) observes that most European empires were created by some members of the society leaving what could be arguably called their natural habitat, emigrating and settling in other people’s land. Important to note is that in certain instances, these were purposeful acts designed to get rid of unwanted members of European societies. Also, poverty and other economic reasons forced people into exploration and these activities contributed to the making of empires.

Young (2016:16) argues that the sixteenth-century advancement in navigational technology and shipbuilding led to much larger empires. This benefitted both Asian Empires and modern Europeans. The new advancement's advantage was that it enabled the imperialist to maintain contact with home/imperial centre. It made a huge

difference to how empires were constituted and configured because now they could maintain foreign territories that were no longer physically connected with the empire. This facilitated the acquisition of vast portions of land overseas by European empires.

Hobson (2005:17-22) says that traditionally, size is what qualifies a polity or political entity to be recognized as an empire. Most empires were focused on acquiring large spans of land from others and bringing the proceeds from such activities under their dominion (Hobson 2005: 17-22, McIntosh 2005:184). Arguably land is the most economically valuable material and human beings provide the necessary labour required for production (Hobson 2005:17-22). Empires are products of the long-term combination of different factors ranging from human influence and contributions to natural conditions, which give the conqueror an advantage (Oppenheim 1977:32-63). Conquest is an integral part of the ideology that led to the founding of empires, as no empire came into being without swallowing up other weaker entities (McIntosh 2005:4, Sugirtharajah 2005:2). Marriages are used as tools by empires to foster and promote peace. In a sense, these marriages are convenient marriages (Carr 2011:305). History records two or more empires existing simultaneously (Oppenheim 1977:72).

Sugirtharajah (2005:2) believes that in contemporary terms, empires as it was known traditionally to be have ceased to exist and have been replaced with the concept of nation-states. However, it would not be completely out of order to argue that other forms of empires emerged to replace the former. Globalization, neo-colonialism, and even capitalism are undergirded by ideas and ideologies that are essentially similar to those used to inform the existence of empires (Nkrumah 1965: ix-xi).

Oppenheim (1977: 93-94, 143-170) opines that empires usually have an individual or a person who exercises absolute dominion over the conquered territories at the helm of their affairs. In this form, exploitation of others and their land, which is the rationale behind the existence of empires are effectively executed. The two most common models empires use to govern their foreign subject are assimilation and indirect rule. Empires usually comprise people from diverse backgrounds; what could be

described in modern parlance as nation-states whose religions, languages, cultures and customs differ from each other. In other words, it is an amalgamation of different races (Somerville 2010:7-8).

The meaning of the word “empire” has shifted significantly in modern times placing emphasis on the aspect of the meaning of the word that is more concerned with economic achievements such as business empire (business entity) and persons (His or her empire). This observation significantly impacts on the general meaning of the word ‘empire’. This aspect of its meaning is not new in the actual sense of what the word means as it has always formed part of its wholistic meaning.

Perceptively, the word “empire” is received and interpreted (traditionally), in the present context as a concept and a theoretical-ideological-mythological construct. This implies that as a critical observer and interpreter who interprets from a postcolonial reality and space, the ideas and ideology perceptible from the word ‘empire’ elicit a feeling of resistance. One can argue that this feeling or perception is a counter-reaction to the notion of conquest, which confronts a person such as the writer whose experience and worldview is rooted in a postcolonial environment. The meaning of the word empire is therefore seen from the prism of vanquishing (People) and to conquer (Others) in other words, to possess and thus, benefit economically from the conquest. This happens irrespective of the fact that empires (in real terms) arguably ceased to exist long before the present context.

The existence that is spoken about in the preceding statement relates to empires as entities. However, it could be argued that in practical terms, the ideas and ideology that undergirded (what the writer of this dissertation would arguably refer to as) the founding of empires and sustained them while they existed continue to thrive. The same word to a different person, especially, to person(s) who is among the conquerors (The victor) may bring about the feeling of greatness and would cause the individual to perceive and interpret the word in a positive light. This is probably the purpose of a book such as Joshua. It creates a fictive empire of the past to evoke the feeling of greatness. This observation will be taken further in the exegetical and hermeneutical studies in Chapter 5. It could, therefore, be argued that the

interpretation of the word “empire” is subjective and sometimes, turns out to be biased towards the agenda of the weak nations who the conquerors see of not deserving to possess anything.

Another aspect of this argument relates to critically observing the word empire from the language and linguistic theory concept. And also how language and linguistics relate to ideology; how ideology influences the above-mentioned concepts or how ideology impacts language and linguistics.⁹ Already it has been noted that words evolve and that the process of evolution of words sometimes leads to contraction in the meaning of the word and other times expansion. Furthermore, it was argued previously that the term empire has evolved. Some of the terminologies that in a sense replaced the original term are words like state and nation. However, certain ideas and ideologies that constitute the original meaning of the word empire were retained in these other words. Let us also note and very importantly, that even these other words in a sense existed simultaneously with the word empire. It just happened that the usages and application of these other words in modern times have been amplified and are more present in popular culture. Nevertheless, their primary literary function and use still is to describe peoplehood. Young (2016:16) observes:

The term ‘empire’ has been widely used for many centuries without, however, necessarily signifying ‘imperialism’. Here a basic difference emerges between an empire that was bureaucratically controlled by a government from the centre, and which was developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, a structure that can be called imperialism, and an empire that was developed for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by a trading company, a structure that can be called colonial.

The term empire acquired a negative connotation in modern phraseology and common understanding of its meaning because of its role in history. Especially,

⁹ The definition of the word ideology can be quite broad and for that reason here the writer will just use the definition of the word as rendered by Carroll (1995:27) who explains that, “in neutral terms the word ideology may be said to refer to a system or network of ideas and to values in such a system which generates praxis.” In order to further clarify his understanding of the meaning of ideology, he further summarized the meaning of the definition into two segments. Firstly, he stated that ideology could either serve as a valuable or progressive factor, that is, when it is used in a “benign sense.” In this case, “to say that something is ideological is just to say that it belongs to a larger point of view or worldview involving general beliefs, outlooks, values and social practices.” Or Secondly, it could connote negativism, that is, when it tends to be “a bad thing.” Carroll (1995:27) explains that in this regards, “it remains for many people a term describing false beliefs as opposed to science and knowledge.” This position is mostly taken by those influenced by Marxists thoughts.(This work forms part of the writer’s Ma thesis that was submitted to the University of Pretoria in 31 October 2016)

viewed from the perspective of the word 'imperialism' that is used to designate the properties associated with the word empire arguably in modern settings. In their discourse, titled, "Rethinking Imperialism: A study of Capitalist Rule", Milos & Sotiropoulos (2009:1) analyse how the word 'imperialism' became "a key concept in left theory and politics, connoting both aggressiveness and overripe characteristic of modern capitalism, or at any rate of certain capitalist formations". According to Milos & Sotiropoulos (2009:1):

Recent debates on Political Economy have also placed emphasis on the notion of imperialism the reason for this being that many of political economy's central concerns have had to do with the regulation of the "global" economy, capitalism's recurrent tendencies towards crisis and the centrality of the logic of capital accumulations.

Furthermore, they acknowledge that "the term 'imperialism' has never denoted a single theoretical approach." In what could be regarded as its modern application, the term has been widely applied in social and political discourses, debates and theories by the left to derogate capitalism (Milos & Sotiropoulos 2009:1). In lieu of this reason; they argued that it had paid a heavy price because it has come to be regarded as, "inexplicit, superficial and often contradictory, used mainly in denunciation of "bad" imperialism, its 'plans' and the misery it inflicts on the world" (Milos and Sotiropoulous 2009:1).

Also, in terms of how the word is relatively perceived by the people whose lives were directly and indirectly touched by the activities of the empire in recent history. A good example can be seen in the following statement by Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (1989:3):

It can be argued that the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other, both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the unconscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antitheses and as the object of a reforming zeal.

Perhaps, it is important to note that despite the fact that the above quote may superficially appear to strongly relate to the use of the English language that proceeds from the activities of the British Empire in their former colonies. Yet, the most significant role player is the Empire, the principal actor and not the English

language, which plays a secondary role in the entire enterprise. Hence, some of the others, such as Ngugi (1972), called for the abolition of English Departments in countries that suffered from English Imperialism. The main centre of attraction is the British Empire and the call relates to the perceived wrongs it perpetrated in the cause of its imperialistic actions and activities on the others. What follows below is a discussion of the word imperialism.

2.6 Imperialism

In the preceding discussion, the word imperialism featured prominently in our attempt to explain our understanding of the word Empire. The writer believes this is because of the complexities and ambiguities of the words denoting the concepts in question. Sugirtharajah (2009:455) argues that:

One of the lessons of history is that empires rarely disappear completely. They rise and fall but often resurface in different forms. The current military interventions and territorial occupations in the name of democracy, humanitarianism and liberation are signs of a new form of imperialism.

Empire and imperialism are combined in the above quote to highlight what happens as humanity continues to re-invent social processes in the cause of its evolution or as it evolves. Lorimer (1999:7) observes that:

The term “imperialism” came into common usage in England in the 1890s as a development of the older term “empire” by the advocates of a major effort to extend the British Empire in opposition to the policy of concentrating on national economic development, the supporters of which the advocates of imperialism dismissed as “Little Englanders”. The term was rapidly taken into other languages to describe the contest between rival European states to secure colonies and spheres of influence in Africa and Asia, a contest that dominated international politics from the mid-1880s to 1914, and caused this period to be named the “age of imperialism”.

Arguably, the above quote, which presumably represents a short history of how the word “empire” developed in terms of its common usage in England to incorporate the term “imperialism” lays bare the fact that some sort of development took place in regards to its usage. Whether the progress in question is negative or positive will depend on the individual interpreting the word and his or her purpose for doing so.

The second aspect of the quote explains that the word was adopted rapidly into other languages and became a common feature of international politics. Perhaps, it is important to note that politics is undergirded by ideology. This implies that the word is ideological, thus, lending credence to the early arguments that the word represents ideas and ideologies that is associated with the interpreter's common experience. This also plays into the arena of how the word can be defined since each individual carries a unique baggage into his or her interpretative endeavour because of ideological leanings. Even further is the argument that in the course of time, the word was also embraced by other cultures outside its English origin and subjected to the rules of interpretation according to the prevailing cultural contexts.

It becomes complex and thus, a difficult task for anyone who is attempting to find a definition for the word that captures wholistically its being and essence. Hence, the caution that in general, definitions have conditional and relative value "which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its full development..." (Lenin 1999:92). The writer of this thesis will argue that the term "conditional" in relation to whatever word is being defined would mean that the meaning derived will be dependent on the particular time the word referred to is in circulation. "Relative" also means that the meaning of the particular word in question is connected to other quantities such as cultural experience and the wholistic life experience of the interpreter.

In other words, a definition is supposed to capture the essential parts of the word in question, as Huizinga (1963:9) explains in the following discourse about definition:

A good definition must be succinct, i.e. it must with the greatest possible conciseness of expression accurately and completely establish the concept. A definition delimits the meaning of a particular word which serves to indicate a particular phenomenon. In the definition the phenomenon as a whole must be included and comprehended. Should any essential parts lie outside of the definition, there is something wrong with it. On the other hand, a definition need give no account of details.

Hobson (2005:v), in his attempt to articulate the meaning of Imperialism in his widely quoted work, "Imperialism: A Study", writes,

Amid the welter of vague political abstractions to lay one's finger accurately upon any "ism" so as to pin it down and mark it out by definition seems impossible. Where meanings shift so quickly and so subtly, not only following changes of thoughts, but often

manipulated artificially by political practitioners so as to obscure, expands, or distort, it is idle to demand the same rigor as is expected in the exact science. A certain broad consistency in its relations to other kindred terms is the nearest approach to definition which such a term as Imperialism admits. Nationalism, internationalism, colonialism its three closest congeners, are equally elusive, equally shifty, and the changeful overlapping of all four demands the closest vigilance of students of modern politics.

In view of what the above quotes from Huizinga and Hobson espouse, the task which confronts us in this instance is to attempt to capture the essential part of the meaning of the word “imperialism”, without going into what we would like to describe as unnecessary details. Therefore, the study will attempt to focus on certain aspects of the nature and essence of the word.

Hobson (2005:v) proposes a definition for imperialism based on what he considers as the acceptable meaning of the word during the time of his writing. He writes, “... the theory and the practice of Imperialism regarded as a “mission of civilization,” in its effects upon “lower ” or alien peoples, and its political and moral reactions upon the conduct and character of the Western nations engaging in it.” Arguably, the definition comprises two parts; part one concerns the subjugated and part two relates directly to those who are the perpetrators of the act.

The first part is situated at the realm of intellectuality and the epistemological context, which represents, describes, and captures the essence and spirit of imperialism. The lower people of low intelligence as the others, were described. The profundity of the spirit plays out in the word “alien peoples”. Who are the aliens’ people and how are they represented? What do they represent? Any attempt to answer the questions in the preceding sentence would require attention to the place that felt the brunt of imperialism most: Africa, her environs, environment, her land and her people. This is not intended in any way to downplay or exclude the experience of the Asians and the Native Americans and the other natives and indigenous people that were equally disenfranchised by imperialism.¹⁰ Disenfranchisement, in the context that is applied here, is understood as imperialism's effect on the others' life in its totality. Spivak (1985:235) remarks:

¹⁰ Smith (2012:xi-xii), the use of different terminology to describe indigenous people; and listed the places where they can be found; China and are called ethnic groups, In India and are referred to as Tribals, In Latin America and are called peasants, and in South Asia were they are described as mountain people.

It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious "facts" continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. This itself attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms.

If these "facts" were remembered, not only in the study of British literature but in the study of the literatures of the European colonizing cultures of the great age of imperialism, we would produce a narrative, in literary history, of the "worlding" of what is now called "the Third World."

Spivak's main concern, as can be seen in the above quote, is the activities of the British during their romance with imperialism. Especially, how literature is used to influence people. This influence in regard to imperial literature also targets the national consciousness of the imperial nation. Literature, whether it is produced in written form or orally, serves as a medium to capture and preserve culture. One can even go further to say that literature is employed as a tool to indoctrinate the so-called general masses. Ideas considered to be of national importance are sometimes subtly weaved into literary production and dispensed as a purely innocent product. Perhaps, it is important to note that the question of innocence remains debatable. The argument is that most literary works are carried out consciously and aim to elicit, promote and stimulate national consciousness and followership.

Lee-Oliver (2019:23) highlights this fact by referencing the state of the nation address delivered by "Ulysses S. Grant, December 2, 1872, and recently, "Marco Rubio's, post-campaign Speech, February 21, 2016". Lee-Oliver (2019:23-24) observes, "Richly implicit, their remarks interlock Western hegemony, domestically and globally, with the principles of meritocracy, the divine right to territory, political authority and, above all, the safe pursuit of prosperity for some." Such speeches, whether heard in the form of a speech, that is, oral delivery, or read in the form of literature, are designed to one or the other way elicit some sort of national consciousness. In this instance, Lee-Oliver (2019:24) believes that it is there to cement and authenticate America's imperial ambition and the legacy of Western exceptionalism. The following discussion captures how the West interpreted certain works of art produced by native Africans when they initially made contact with them

during imperialism. Baselessly, they created images that needlessly debased, dehumanized and belittled the humanness of Africans.

Mudimbe (1988:1-16) explores the knowledge and images embedded in works of art and how these works were interpreted to reveal some of the identities that the Europeans constructed for Africans or otherwise, whoever forms part of the clan referred to as the alien peoples. Ironically, the attempt to define and understand the so-called “alien peoples” is conducted based on the knowledge obtained from arts produced by Africans themselves and the ones the Europeans produced that mostly came from images that were gleaned from the writings of the so-called travellers, explorers, adventurers, missionaries and statesmen who were opportune and privileged to set foot in Africa during the peak of imperialism. Classifying and defining the so-called “alien peoples” were also seen in the works emanating from other European intellectual and academic(s) disciplines such as botany, taxonomy, biology and even astronomy. The characterization, images and representation that resulted, imagined and were drawn from such understanding and representation of the alien people in question were; “Primitives”, “Savage Negro”, “Abnormally different”, “Ugly beings”, “Unintelligent beings”, “childish”, “Simple,” in other words, devoid of any sense of technological inventiveness and as such nonsensical”, “Exotic”, “Dangerous”, “backwardness”, “sexuality”, “Brutes”, and “Barbarism” etc. All of these were keywords, phrases and ideas adopted to serve the imperialist purpose. These fabrications were geared towards affirming as truth what is premised and prefaced on a wrong episteme and designed to justify the designation of others as aliens.¹¹ Hence, the success (but deceitful) that is observed from the act of christening imperialism; the mission of civilization. If one is to broaden the scope and elongate the idea more, it becomes the quest to civilize others, an activity which apparently finds its root in intellect and intellectualism. The implication of such reasoning translates into the understanding that civilization is hypothetically an intellectual activity.

The discussion above is based on the work of Mudimbe and arguably is an attempt to deal with the three facets of who, how, and what regarding the phrase, “alien

¹¹ In its modern usage “Alien” could denote “extraterrestrial.”

peoples". More specifically, the answers to the questions reside in the characterization of the Others/Africans/Alien peoples, as in the preceding paragraph. It is about what the people involved in this characterization had "learned" that they were unable to "unlearn" and that some in today's context are still struggling to unlearn (Spivak 1990:62).

The theme of morality and politics were highlighted in the second part of Mudimbe's discussion. This relates to the letter of the word imperialism; the writing philosophy and the philosophy undergirding the writings that lay the foundation for the physical execution of imperial projects (Bhabha 1994:70). For those involved, who participated physically, it amounts to a social and cultural project, exercise and activities. The present exercise requires a look at concrete facts and evidence in history as it will assist in bringing to light what imperialism means in reality (Hobson 2005:15).

History attests to the fact that from ancient times to modern times the main politics of imperialism revolves around the policy of expansionism by means of acquisition (Alien peoples and their Land) (Hobson 2005:15). This becomes evident in the more modern version of imperialism as undertaken by European nations such as Britain, France, Portugal, Spain and late and marginal participants/entrants such as Germany and America (Hobson 2005:15-27). The main characteristic of imperialism is demonstrated in the number of alien peoples and large tracts of land that empires lay claim to (Hobson 2005: 15-27). The British Empire for example, at the peak of their imperialistic endeavour, controlled enormous tracks of land that included territories in Asia, Africa and Europe (Hobson 2005:17). The political and diplomatic languages adopted, applied and used in drafting the agreements, treatise, pacts etc. that ceded these territories to the imperialists were constructed and presented in such a manner that the exercise got an air of moral exhortation and appeal. Additionally, these actions were also seen and received in the light of ethical correctness and meeting acceptable standards (Hobson 2005:15). To this regard, Hobson (2005:13) observes that,

...hinterland, Sphere of interest, Sphere of influence, Paramountcy, Suzerainty, Protectorate, veiled or open, leading up to acts of forcible seizure or annexation which

sometimes continue to be hidden under “lease,” “rectification of frontiers,” “Concession,” and the likes, was the invention and expression of this cynical spirit of imperialism.

Ngugi (1994:2) writes, “Imperialism is the rule of consolidated finance capital, and since 1884, this monopolistic parasitic capital has affected and continues to affect the lives even of the peasants in the remotest corners of our countries.” Furthermore, he adds, “Imperialism is total: it has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world today.” Dube (2000:47) opines that,

Imperialism is the process of building an empire through the imposition of political, economic, and social institutions of one nation over a foreign one. In the past it tended to lead to colonialism, that is, the geographical occupation and control of one nation by another. Geographical control within the history and imagination of the empire is, therefore, a central subject in the studies of imperialism.

A critical engagement with Ngugi’s and Dube’s definitions will expose the fact that the definition is heavily coloured with the subject of capitalism. Whether their approach is right or wrong is debatable and depends on the interpreter’s lived experience. The assumption here is that both writers derive their understanding of the word; ‘imperialism’ from their day-to-day interaction with the world they found themselves, albeit their lived and shared experiences. If one is to unpack the content of both submissions, it could be observed that a sense of common purpose is present in their vocabularies. The words and phrases that feature prominently in their explications are “rule of consolidated finance capital”, “monopolistic parasitic capital”, “the process of building an empire”, “through the imposition of”, and “geographical control”, “economic”, “political”, “military”, “culture”, “psychology”, “social”, “history”, and “imagination”. The writer of this dissertation, for the sake of brevity, prefers not to go into the laborious act and task of attempting to unpack the phrases and the words individually rather, will make a general comment.

All the arguments presented imply a common trait and attribute shared by the definitions; it is the narrative of the “oppressed” and their “oppressors”. This leads us to delineate the two most important themes that imperialism highlights and projects; people and economic imperialism. It is also important to note that the view that imperialism is about a mission of civilization diametrically contradicts its nature,

letter, essence and spirit and that “despite its avowed aim, *it had never been free of psychological terror, cultural arrogance, and even physical torture*” (Bhabha 2004: xi). Following all that have been proposed thus far concerning the word imperialism, the writer of this dissertation argues that in real terms, the other aspects that impregnate the word and wholistically give it its meaning are ceremonious and symbolic by nature, thus, they are subsumed in the themes of the oppressed and their oppressor. The two themes identified form the core idea and ideology that undergirds and propels the concept of imperialism, which is implemented through the activities of an empire. Subsequently, the discussion will move to colonialism, which this dissertation's writer considers closely related to the subjects of empire and imperialism.

2.7 Colonialism

In the last sentence of the preceding discussion, reference was made to imperialism and empire and how they are related to the subject of colonialism. The writer argues that colonialism is nothing but the pragmatic side of imperialism. The aim of this study is to discuss the meaning and characteristics of the term colonialism. In order to achieve the stated aim and for the sake of clarity as well as brevity, the discussion will address the meaning of the term by engaging with some of the works previously undertaken by scholars that dealt with the term directly or its related subjects.

Perhaps it is important to observe that in order to avoid some of the pitfalls that may occur when a person is engaged in a study of a word such as colonialism that represents and embraces a broad philosophical, anthropological, sociological, philology, history and epistemological concept; one needs to heed to the reminder that, “discourse in general and scientific discourse, in particular, is so complex a reality that we not only can but should approach it at different levels and with different methods” (Foucault 1973: xiv). Centred on the thoughts in the preceding statement, it would be presumed that “different levels” and “different methods” describe the relationship between the subject (person) and the subject (discourse); which is relative and conditional. Hence, the extent of engagement and focus of this discourse would be limited to excerpts from works of scholars, writers, ideas,

historical generalizations etc. that relate to colonialism and which is deemed relevant to this discourse.

Importantly, the word colonialism/colonization and coloniality would be used interchangeably in this discourse and thus be treated as equivalent. And that the study cannot be undertaken chronologically regarding years of publication of materials under study. This is because of the complexity involved in ideas such as colonialism, which represents the fluid nature of its beings and its existence. The mission here is to interrogate history, which can only be done in parts because history is seen or observed in parts.

According to Mudimbe (1988:1), "*Colonialism* and *colonization* basically means organization, arrangement. The two words derive from the Latin "colere," meaning to cultivate or design." He (1988:1) intimates that the words carry negative historical baggage that tends to define their meaning in today's contexts. Notwithstanding, the manner in which the colonialists (those exploiting a territory by dominating a local majority) and colonists (those settling a region) have applied the words, in the regions where they occupied and dealt with, amount to an exercise of organizing and transforming "non-European areas into fundamentally European construct" (1988:1). Mudimbe (1988:2) delineates three guiding principles which power the colonization project as, *firstly*, "the procedure of acquiring, distributing, and exploiting lands in colonies", *secondly*, "the policies of domesticating natives", and *lastly*, "the manner of managing ancient organizations and implementing new methods of production". Bringing more specificity to the subject of colonialism, he reduces the above-mentioned observations to what he refers to as "three complementary hypotheses and actions", namely: (1) "the domination of physical space", (2) "the reformation of native's minds" and (3) "the integration of local economic histories into Western perspectives" (1988:2). Mudimbe (1988:2) opines that the "structure" which he identifies,

clearly also indicates the projected metamorphosis envisioned, at great intellectual cost, by ideological and theoretical texts, which form the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1950s, have proposed programs, for "regenerating" the African space and its inhabitants.

Here, it could be observed that his main concern was with issues and matters that directly pertain to colonization in Africa, a more recent historical development and event. However, the writer of this dissertation would like to add that, historically, the methodology and approach that colonialists employ and apply tend to assume a similar format with slight variations and modifications to enable it to adapt particularly to the population and occasion in question. One can even argue that over time, there has been an increased resistance to colonialism, which previously got some kind of legitimation by works of Anthropology. Young (2003:2) observes,

Colonial and imperial rule was legitimized by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the peoples of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves (despite having done so perfectly well for millennia) and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests (today they are deemed to require 'development'). The basis of such anthropological theories was the concept of race.

Colonization is depicted as an abhorrent idea in today's world (Wiener 2013:1). This directly stands in opposition to certain period in history when colonization was painted and glorified as a saviour for the salvage indigenes and Africans. Today, these views are judged as flawed because that kind of historiography is based on empiricism and opinions promoted by people who harbour similar sentiments and mentality about colonization who are mostly of Western origin (Wiener 2013:2). In other words, they were one-sided opinions that are devoid of sound ethics and morals. When one looks at history, it could be observed that pre-imperial and pre-colonial histories are ominously silent. They are treated as non-existent and are not well catered for. This has led to the rejection of the colonial legacy. But, this rejection means a direct inversion of the history that casts the colonized in a better light (Wiener 2013:2). Whatever way a person decides to judge colonialism, one aspect that stands out of the discourse is that the condemnation of colonialism happens even within the ranks and communities of the colonial powers (Wiener 2013:2). The term colonialism and the legacy it bequeathed on the world, today, is received in highly negative term and mostly, is defined and appears majority of the time as pejorative.

Mudimbe (1988:4) in addition, says that colonization leads to “a dichotomizing system” from which;

a great numbers of current paradigmatic oppositional have developed: traditional versus modern, oral versus written and printed; agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization; subsistence economies versus highly productive economies

In other words, it gives birth to a binary system of “us” versus “them”, “we” versus “them” and “the civilized” versus “the uncivilized” races etc. and this in turn leads to marginality, social classification, racism etc. Lewis (2014:181), observes that,

Colonization is a persistent force, particularly when it is unrecognized by the colonizers. Nonindigenous people possess, and are possessed by, colonization. This possession (pun intended) occurs through various processes—amnesia, denialism, and colonial blindness, which create and maintain covert racism and cultural misunderstanding in society, and policy disconnection by governments and bureaucracies.

This way of understanding humans led to the creation of specific designations for the colonized. The extremity of this reasoning and view could be observed from the arbitrary designation of Africans as sub-human who are closer to animals than full beings (Mpembe 2001:1). Undoubtedly, the motive and aim behind such is to construct the humanness of the civilized being; that is, West as Demigod. Mpembe (2001:2) observes that, “It is now widely acknowledged that Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world.” The identified way of arbitrarily reducing Africans or the colonized to certain quantities was a function derived from the colonial model. The same colonial model established colonial sovereignty, which preyed and capitalized on certain weaknesses on human laws to deny the native rights to participate in their affairs. Perhaps, it is important to state that the ideological underpinning that powers and sustains the idea of colonial sovereignty is rooted in violence.

Finally, Mudimbe (1988:4) suggests that colonialism disjoints, affects, shifts, destroys, and disrupts the original and natural settings of the colonised's economic, social and cultural lives. The new “forms and formulations of the colonial culture and its aims” that emerge and replace the former and original ones of the colonized

become “means of trivializing the whole traditional mode of life” and the “spiritual framework” that existed prior to its advent. Grzanic (2014:132) describes how:

Colonialism and present forms of coloniality have not only dispossessed millions of lives and made them commodities but have also incarcerated their thoughts and discursivity. If Europe, that is, as a fortress Europe, the old Western world, is a provincial territory today, then the thoughts and the intellectual repertoire that it can produce are provincial as well.

The case in point is the destruction of people’s lives by attempting to forcefully recreate them. Thoughts and discourses are the two most essential parts of being; the moment those two are suppressed and silenced the individual is reduced to becoming a slave. The question of commoditizing the resultant individual becomes morally and ethically acceptable.

Pragmatism or realism should govern learning. Therefore, any attempt to learn and understand a concept, especially, one such as colonialism, which is under discussion here should focus on, its direct practical effect and impact on those concerned. Otherwise, it would remain in the spheres of theory. Franz Fanon’s (2004) work, “The wretched of the earth” relates to occasions, events and activities he observed first-hand happening pre-Algeria Independence, during the Algerian independence and post-independence war in Algeria. Another way of articulating this is to say that his work was formed from his direct experiences during colonialism, during the struggle for the liberation of a people from the grip of the jaws and hands of colonialism and what would be considered here as post-colonial period in Algeria. Though, it could be observed that the content of the work in question went beyond his immediate circumstance and generally reflected the concept of colonialism. His work mainly focuses on violence due to colonial practices perpetrated against the colonized people of Algeria and the resulting effect on the population. The second part of the sentence deals with what violence begets both in the life of the oppressed and the oppressor. The study applies to the other colonized groups as similar ideas and ideologies drive colonialism. In a similar vein, Bhabha (2004: ix) observes that,

Fanon’s two most influential texts, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* evoke concrete and contrasting worlds of colonial racism as experienced in metropolitan France in the 1950’s and during the anticolonial Algerian war of liberation a decade later.

One could argue that Fanon writes as “a colonized person”; who “constantly” is “aware of his image” and who “jealously” would “protect his position” (Bhabha 2004: ix). For this reason, “The defenses” of a colonized person, especially one with a high level of consciousness and awareness like Fanon turn on “like anxious antennae waiting to pick up the hostile signals of a racially divided world. In the process, the colonized acquire a peculiar visceral intelligence dedicated to the survival of body and spirit” (Bhabha 2004: xi).

According to Fanon (2004:3), colonialism creates two worlds within one. Characteristically, what Fanon (2004:3-6) refers to here is the two worlds seen in a colonial situation: the privileged world of the colonizers versus the underprivileged world of the colonized. This observation speaks directly to the notion of the classification of races. Whereby one race is seen as superior to the other. McCarthy (2009:1) writes, “...racism and imperialism have been features of the modern world order from the start.” Furthermore, he states that, “both words” that is, racism and imperialism “have always appeared together: colonial regimes were usually racially organized and racist beliefs and practices usually flourished in colonial contexts.” Race was a great determinant factor in how an individual participates in the colonies' social, economic and political activities. Implicitly and explicitly, measures were put in place as a deterrent to discourage the mixing of races in whatever form. This created the world of the masters and that of the servants. Physical evidence shows how education, health, and housing were dispensed during colonial era in the colonized territories.

Fanon (2004:6) is of the opinion that colonization creates a Manichean world. This implies that one half (the world of the colonizers) comprises light and, as such, good and the other is made up of darkness and evil (the world of the colonized). This analogy portrays the colonized people as “a kind of quintessence evil.” Describing the colonized in this manner legitimised and justified the so-called mission of civilization. This was done at the expense of denigrating, disparaging and condemning the morals, ethics, values, myths, customs, traditions, cultures and in totality, the lived world of the colonized as depraved and sinful. The nature of colonial exploitation that resulted from the invented Manichean world was totalitarian,

as the standard and norm of this world requires that evil is denied rights of whatever sort. Evil is either changed/transformed or completely annihilated from the earth's surface.

Fanon (2004:8-14) further observes that colonialism produces and creates a self-serving class of literate natives who collude with the Colonizers to directly or indirectly participate and perpetrate the acts of colonialism. The aim of the colonizers, usually in regard to this particular action, is to cement the reasoning and believe that their values are supreme and as such should replace the indigenous systems. This class of people poses a great danger to the struggle for the people's liberation. Even to the extent that some of the natives will begin to perceive them as traitors. What happens is that the people's liberation movement will end up facing two enemies (the enemy within and the enemy without).

Fanon (2004:9) says that, "For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity." This brings to the surface the main reason for the whole exercise of colonization and leads to the question of why land is so important. One would argue that land is intricately interwoven with many aspects of life such as social, political, economic, religious and even history. The essence of the existence of land is captured in its function as the provider of bread and the emphasis that is placed on the second function: dignity. The question of dignity, that is, self-worth, arguably exists/arises because colonialism denies people self-worth by usurping their land, which is a critical aspect and part of their space.

Another central thought in Fanon's (2004:14-15) discourse on colonialism is the question of truth in relation to colonialism. Characteristically, colonialism breeds distrust and dishonesty. The distrust emanates from the fact that the colonizers are perceived as outsiders who desire to wholistically take over the lives of the natives. And also because of the nature of exploitation that came with colonization. The distrust is what in the end leads to dishonesty. Especially on the part of the colonized who engage in such acts as a means of self-preservation and to safeguard their (one's) dignity. Fanon (2004:14-15) observes that the colonized believe they owe the

truth only to their fellow brothers and sisters, not the invaders. He states that “Truth is what protects the ‘natives’ and undoes the foreigner.” Any critical observation of the colonial period reveals the shallowness of colonialism. In actual fact, the local cultures always exist alongside the foreign ones that colonizers aim at using to replace the indigenous one and there is always that element of clash (of civilization) between the two.

Fanon (2004:18) describes the role of religion as an instrument and tool which the colonizers use as a pacifier to keep the colonized masses in check. Historically, religion is shown to have played a critical role in the quest of empires to subjugate others. Therefore, what was witnessed in modern colonization was simply a continuation of a tradition already there. In the case of modern colonization, missionaries travelled with administrators and the other individuals involved in the colonial project. The role of the missionaries was to convert the heathens and pagans to Christianity. The type of biblical teachings that were dished out to the natives was the kind that left them petrified and to acquiesce. This becomes an enabler for “the innovative dynamism of colonial mercantilism.” He (2004:14) writes,

The oppressor, ensconced in his sector, creates the spiral, the spiral of domination, exploitation and looting. In the other sector, the colonized subject lies coiled and robbed, and fuels as best he can the spiral which moves seamlessly from the shores of the colony to the palaces and docks of the metropolis.

Colonialism resorts to the use of psychological warfare (Fanon 2004:15). There is a concerted effort by the colonizers to colonize the minds, spirit, psyche, and being of the colonized through; propaganda, indoctrination, inculcating and stamping ideas such as: “We made the land” and that they are “the guarantor for its existence”; should in case “they leave, all will be lost” and their land will return to Dark Ages”. Fanon (2004:15) argues that,

The colonist makes history and he knows it. And because he refers constantly to the history of his metropolis, he plainly indicates that here he is the extension of this metropolis. The history he writes is therefore not the history of the country he is despoiling, but the history of his own nation's looting, raping, and starving to death (Fanon 2004: 15)

Fanon (2004:15-16) characterizes the colonial world as the world of status; he sees the colonized person as a person penned in; a world which excludes, yet, incites

envy. The result is the colonized always remain on guard, always confused and always presumed guilty by the colonizer. The question of presumption of guilt always creates tension because the colonized reject the idea of guilt and replaces it with the belief system that it is rather a curse. The colonized, deep down rejects the authority of the colonizers. "He is dominated but not domesticated." Even further is the fact that "The colonized subject is a persecuted man but who is forever dreaming of becoming the persecutor." He (2004:17) describes the relationship between colonists and the colonizer as "one of physical mass" where those who are less in number persecute those who form the majority. He (2004:17) calls the colonists an exhibitionist whose principal perturbation is to show that he is the master. According to Fanon (2004:23), "Colonization...is simply a power struggle."

Achebe (1995:2-3) discusses the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial sociopolitical and cultural settings of what arguably can be referred to as defined peoplehood (otherwise, known as a community). Interestingly, in the opening of the work, he captures the spirit and the being of the people as it were. Achebe's narration is dissimilar to how colonial literatures fondly attempt to depict the natives as indolent and brainless. The work clearly made a distinction between hard work and indolence. Within the frame of the narratives, one discovers clear rules, regulations and laws that guide the lives of the people in question.

Achebe's work captures the great extent to which colonialism intrudes in the life of the colonies. The inhabitants are given no option to choose. It redefines the moral and social values of the places colonizers occupy and invade. Achebe (1995:45-46) narrates how the population of a people's group were reduced to a shadow of their original population because they attempted to resist the intrusion of a foreign culture. The said resistance was countered with an insane level of force. Achebe uses the story to capture what becomes the fate of a certain community: Abame, who killed one of the colonizers. The said act, which brought wrath and subsequent punishment or revenge from the colonizers, was undertaken by the Abame people who were following their god's directive. Their action led to the colonizing force later descending on them and literally slaughtering them. This is an illustration of an imbalance of power relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. Thus, it

allows a person to argue that colonization is consciously designed to strike fear in the colonized. This clearly comes out in the following response of one of the characters found in the work: “But I am greatly afraid. We have had stories about white men who made powerful guns and strong drinks and took slaves away across the seas, but no one thought the stories were true” (Achebe 1995:46).

Achebe (1995:47) identifies Christianity as part of the enablers of colonialism. Colonialism relies on religion's probable impact and effect and employs such in its proclaimed mission of civilization. As Achebe narrates in his work the introduction of such foreign religion brings about a dichotomizing effect on the culture and social lives of the colonized. This is always accompanied by a clash of cultures as religion is rooted in people's culture and social life. Achebe's narratives recount the inception of tensions in family relationships and other traditions because of the introduction of Christianity. It could be argued that generally, missionaries embed themselves closely with the low people, which affords the missionaries greater leverage and more latitude to transmit and transplant Christian values intertwined with Western civilization into the existing local system (1995:47-53). Usually, the ultimate aim of the process is to displace the existing traditions and values of the others (1995:47-53).

Achebe (1995:58) also describes how colonization takes immense pleasure in its ability to engage in trade and other economic activities with the colonized. Such trade etc. is built on a system of trade that deliberately and consciously promotes trade imbalances. The importance and advantage of these kinds of trade lie in the fact that the colonised determined the prices and values of the goods (including labour) traded. Therefore, it is a one-sided affair that puts the colonized in a disadvantageous position of great magnitude.

As seen from Achebe's narratives, colonialism also reconfigures the political system to its advantage (1995:57). The local system of administration is replaced with that of the colonizing force. Achebe (1995:63) describes the new system:

...District Commissioner (*said*) to them later, "if only you agree to cooperate with us. We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall come to your rescue. But we will not allow you to

ill-treat others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own country under a great queen. I have brought you here because you joined together to molest others, to burn people's houses and their place of worship. That must not happen in the dominion of our queen, the most powerful ruler in the world. I have decided that you will pay a fine of two hundred bags of cowries. You will be released as soon as you agree to this and undertake to collect that fine from your people.

The above quote speaks about how colonialism leads to the replacement of the indigenous and local legal system with the ones from the colonizers. New political and legal systems are installed in place of that of the colonized. Such social and political reconfigurations are done with the aim to protect the commercial and other interests of the colonizers. Achebe (1995:57) remarks, "But apart from church, the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where District Commissioners judged cases in ignorance." This amounts to an attempt to wholly takeover the sociopolitical-economic life of the colonized.

Achebe implicitly and subtly refers to the fact that colonialism in all its senses is also a scientific project which appoints itself as the decider of how human beings are classified. The fulfilment, realization and actualization of this particular aspect of project colonialism could be observed in the discourses of anthropological science. Achebe describes the final exchange between the District Commissioner, the colonial representative of the imperial establishment. The exchange was centred on what the local customs prescribe in a situation where a community member commits suicide. Traditionally, it is not acceptable or tolerable behaviour. In this regard, Achebe (1995:68) vividly describes the District Commissioner's reaction when he was informed that the offender that he came to arrest committed suicide. He writes,

The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive customs. "Why can't you take him down yourselves?" he asked. "It is against our custom," said one of the men... The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learned a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting a hanged man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was

so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.

In the discursive exchange that appears above between the colonialist and the colonized, some sort of power/knowledge relationship crowns the exercise of colonialism. Other discursive elements are detectable in the above submission such as politics or political domination, history, anthropology etc. Nonetheless, what is important to note the use of literature to capture and showcase the ideological position of both sides: the colonizer and the colonized. Colonialism is an exercise in history. As Said (2003:xv) notes, "...history are made by man and woman, just like it can also be unmade and re-written, always with various silences and elisions , always with shapes imposed and disfigurement tolerated..."

Smith (2012:24) describes colonialism as "imperialism's outpost, the fort and the port of imperial outreach." Further, she (2012:24) states, "Whilst colonies may have started as a means to secure ports, access to raw materials and efficient transfer of commodities from the point of origin to the imperial centre, they also served other functions." She (2012:24) writes "It was not just indigenous populations who had to be subjugated. Europeans also needed to be controlled in service to the greater imperial enterprise." Even further is the argument that "Colonial outposts were also cultural sites which preserved an image or represented an image of what the West or 'civilization' stood for." However, "Colonies were not exact replicas of the imperial centre, culturally, economically or politically" (2012:24). She (2012:24) notes that, "Europeans resident in the colonies were not culturally homogeneous, so there were struggles within the colonizing community about its own identity. Wealth and class status created very powerful settler interests which came to dominate the politics of a colony." She (2012:12) opines that,

Colonialism was, in part, an image of imperialism, a particular realization of the imperial imagination. It was also, in part, an image of the future nation it would become. In this image lie images of the Other, stark contrasts and subtle nuances, of the ways in which the indigenous communities were perceived and dealt with, which make the stories of colonialism part of a grander narrative and yet part also of a very local, very specific experience.

Arguably, it can be deduced from the on-going discussion that historically, imperialism precedes colonialism and both are greatly intertwined. The argument can be extended to say that both concepts are inseparable. Young (2016:22) notes,

Colonization is often associated with notions of civilizing or missionary work but, aside from the Spanish and Portuguese expeditions to Central and South America, this cultural imperialism was really the later product of imperialism in its nineteenth century form. More important for the British was the question of population, and the need to export people on the grounds of economic and political stability. The role of population theory in colonization has been consistently underestimated, perhaps because population control, now of the 'third world', is still a major issue for the west today

Dube (2000:47) notes that,

In the past it (*Imperialism*) tended to lead to colonialism, that is, the geographical occupation and control of one nation by another. Geographical control within the history and imagination of the empire is, therefore, a central subject in the studies of imperialism.

The main driver of the subject is economic gains. To achieve that prospect, the imperialist/colonialist attempts to change and influence their targets culturally. It is either that those colonized voluntarily submit themselves to adhering to the new cultural requirements or face the might of the colonizing force. The colonizers sometimes get to the point of resorting to measures such as exterminating the entire population either as a means of creating fear among the few remnants, that is, applying the instruments derivable from psychological warfare; or a means of acquiring completely what naturally belongs to others by neutralizing whatever resistance that may arise in the cause of doing so.

2.8 Decoloniality/Decolonialism

Decoloniality or decolonialism is a vast topic that touches almost every aspect of the lives of the colonized as well as the colonizer. Therefore, one cannot exhaust every aspect of it in such a discussion. The primary concern and focus in this discussion is to attempt to understand its meaning by engaging with works previously done by other scholars and writers. To this regard, it is essential, therefore, that the writer of this dissertation should note that there have been attempts by some scholars writing on the subject of decoloniality to differentiate decoloniality from what some refer to as simple anti-colonial movement (Ndlovu-Gatsheni: 2015:488). This is because both the subject of decoloniality and the simple anti-colonial movement are interwoven and any attempt to separate the two does great injustice to the wholistic aim of liberation from the grip of colonialism.

What the proponents of such division are saying is that simply anti-colonial movements refer to the 20th century period that saw the rise of anti-colonial movements that eventually led to the majority of colonised people gaining independence and that it “was largely an elite-driven project in which elites mobilized peasants and workers as foot soldiers in a struggle to replace direct colonial administrators” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:488). However, the preference here is to treat the subject of decoloniality as a continuation of the struggle to dismantle colonialism. It could, therefore be argued that the difference between the two is that an anti-colonial movement stops the moment the people involved gain their independence. But the project of decolonization continues because the footprints, fingerprints and effect of colonialism is so deeply engrained in the life and psyche of the colonized that it is nearly impossible to uproot or eradicate from the system (Said 1989:207). In reality, decolonization is never achieved completely. Arguably, in course of the process of colonialism, hybridization occurs. A clear example is the bearing of children between the colonized and the colonizer, the child that comes out of such union will share the characteristic of both parents. Such a case can never be undone. Some people may see the example given as extreme, but it is the reality. The argument here is that there are cultural mixes that can never be undone or,

rather, will remain irreversible. Other effects of colonization will require a longer time to reverse. In the discussion that follows, decoloniality/decolonization will be treated as a single subject that deals wholistically with the liberation of physical space, being and mind of the colonized by the colonizers.

Decoloniality confronts the “racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies that were put in place or strengthened by European modernity as it colonized and enslaved populations through the planet” (Maldonado-Torres 2010:115). Articulated differently, it could refer to “the oppositions to the coloniality of power, knowledge and being” by the West (Maldonado-Torres 2010:115). Decoloniality attempts to create multi-plural voices and to “break with monologic modernity” (2010:115). In a similar vein, Mignolo & Walsh (2018: 2) speak about the interest of decoloniality as more broadly with, “... pluriversal decoloniality and decolonial pluriversality as they are being thought and constructed outside and in the borders and fissures of the North Atlantic Western world.” Decoloniality attempts to counteract the notion and idea that colonized people are incapable of engaging in intellectual production and thus, lack the ability to think and to categorize whatever intellectual production from the colonized as “culture or ideology” (Maldonado-Torres 2010:116). Decoloniality attempts to re-write and re-configure the

...imperial versions of history through its push for shifting of geography of reason from the West as the epistemic locale from which the ‘world is described, conceptualized and ranked’ to the ex-colonized epistemic sites as legitimate points of departure in describing the construction of the modern world order (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:488).

Mignolo & Walsh (2018:2) observe that decoloniality is “...the undoing of the Eurocentrism’s totalizing claim and frame, including the Eurocentric legacies incarnated in the US-centrism and perpetuated in the western geopolitics of knowledge.” Decoloniality aims to reduce but not eliminate in its entirety what could be considered the “North Atlantic abstract universal fiction.” Decoloniality is the attempt by those who lived or live the colonial experience to disentangle themselves from it. They (2018:3) note that decoloniality concerns itself primarily with the effort to “...interrupt the idea of dislocated, disembodied, and disengaged abstraction, and to destroy the universal signifier that is the rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality, and the West’s global model”. Essentially, decoloniality tries to resurrect

“local histories, subjectivities, knowledge, narratives and struggles” which “modern/colonial order and for otherwise” attempts to bury.

They (2018:3) opine that decoloniality does not necessarily translate into a complete rejection or negation of Western thoughts but is premised on the “non-acceptance of the West and North Atlantic fictions as the only way”. The idea of decoloniality cannot necessarily be equated to the common meaning of resistance in today’s parlance. The word that best captures the meaning the term decoloniality expresses is (Walsh & Mignolo 2018:3):

“re-existence” understood as “the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity.” It is the resurgence and insurgence of re-existence today that open and engage venues and paths of decolonial conviviality, venues and paths that take us beyond, while at the same time undoing, the singularity and linearity of the West.

Decoloniality is inseparable from the idea of modernity/coloniality. In this sense, it attempts to lay bare “how the colonial matrix of power (cmp, of which modernity/coloniality is a shorter expression) was constituted, managed, and transformed from its historical foundation in the sixteenth century to the present” (2018:4).¹² However, modernity is not directly linked to decoloniality, unlike coloniality that is. A further explanation of what is implied in the preceding statement is that “coloniality is constitutive, not derivative, of modernity” (2018:4). It implies that both modernity and coloniality are inseparable. They feed on each other. Part of the essence of decoloniality is to undo, disobey, and delimit the effect of coloniality and modernity on how knowledge has been constructed and dispensed. Especially on the practical effect of knowledge as constructed by the West on those who were colonized. The three concepts of decoloniality, coloniality and modernity are deeply interwoven, and the assumption is that bringing colonialism to an end will also mean the end of modernity which in totality would bring an end to project decolonialism.

Walsh & Mignolo (2018:5) observe that decoloniality wrestles with the fact that coloniality/modernity habitually and overtime; “negate, disavow, distort, and deny knowledge, subjectivities, world senses and vision.” The main argument in this

¹² It is important to note that postcolonial critics will also do the same thing as pointed here. This shows that there are similarities between the works of decolonial critics and those of postcolonial critics. This topic will be further discussed subsequently in the postcolonial section.

instance is that decoloniality attempts to re-establish, re-configure and re-establish “with respect to thinking, being, knowing, understanding, and living; encourage venues of re-existence, and build connection among regions, territories, and people.” It involves answering back to failed promises and hopes that were touted by the others as reasons behind project “modernity and the realities of coloniality.”

They (2015:1) note that decoloniality is not only the subject of the elite. It happens among the so-called masses through their practical involvement and engagement with the subject matter. Arguably, another way of articulating this point is to say that it is the “democratization” of postcolonial theory. It is not a new concept as it has been part of the history of colonialism and has unfolded at every point in history (Mignolo & Walsh 2015:8-11, Maldonado-Torres 2010:115). Decoloniality also attempts to keep pace with the shifts and mutations of colonial matrixes of power (2015:4). In other words, the changing rhetoric of modernity demands that decoloniality also adopts new methods and approaches in order to be able to confront it. Arguably, in time, resistance by conscious individuals who are aware of the ills associated with forms of colonialism never ceased to happen (Mignolo & Walsh 2015:6-8). Different responses have appeared in various places as a pushback to the different kinds of colonialism at different historical epochs (Mignolo & Walsh 2015:8-12).

Linda Tuhiwa Smith’s (2012) work “Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous people,” extensively discusses the subject of decoloniality or decolonialism. Important to note is that her specific focus lies on the world of research. In view of this, Smith (2012: ix) refers to her life experience, which came from “...the intersection between two worlds, the world of the indigenous people and the world of research”. Primarily, her life experiences were formed in these two worlds; her indigenous experience is rooted in a colonial environment and the world of the colonized, where she gained most of her academic experience.

According to Smith (2012:x) her concern is “not so much with the actual technique of selecting a method but much more with the context in which research problems are conceptualized and designed and with the implications of research for its participants

and their communities.” She (2012: x) further states that “It is also concerned with the institution of research, its claims, its values and practices, and its relationships to power.” She observes that the design of her work manages to challenge and disrupt some of the negative activities seen and embedded in research endeavours, making it a tool that helps actualise the goals of imperialism and power (2012: ix). Effectively, her work brings about discussion among stakeholders in and within the enterprise of knowledge and in regards “to knowledge claims of disciplines and approaches, about the content of knowledge, about absences, silences and invisibilities of other people, about practices and ethics, and about the implications for communities of research (2012: X).” She acknowledges that her work was received beyond academics by ordinary people who have applied it variously to find answers to their peculiar colonial questions.

She explains that indigenous people usually are objects of study, which excludes them from being participants. They are assumed or regarded as not possessing enough or any expert knowledge about themselves and their conditions. Hence, she writes (Smith 2012:x),

Decolonizing Methodologies primarily to disrupt relationships between researchers (mostly non-indigenous) and researched (indigenous), between a colonizing institution of knowledge and colonized peoples whose own knowledge was subjugated, between academic theories and academic values, between institutions and communities, and between and within indigenous communities themselves.

Additionally, she says (Smith 2012: x),

I wrote as someone who was engaged in research, who had struggled through the standard, academic research preparation, who had studied ‘research methods’, taken compulsory statistics, and who had questioned the relevance, politics, ethicality and practice of research.

She (2012: x) specifies that research is “a set of ideas, practices and privileges that were embedded in imperial expansionism and colonization and institutionalized in academic disciplines, schools, curricula, universities and power.” Partly, her work is an attempt to respond to the criticism that her community directs towards some of the unethical practices such as “telling half-truths or downright lies” that some researchers do when they engage in research works about them (2012: xi). This misrepresentation of the world of the others rewards researchers and literally

devolves authority and power, which under normal circumstances is supposed to remain in the hands of the indigenes to those involved in the research about them (2012: xi). She acknowledges the difficulty a person encounters in his or her bid to call out such inhumane practices that are happening in the arena of academic research.

It could be argued that she attempts to deconstruct the world of knowledge that has been generated and imposed on others through research. In other words, she is engaged in a decolonizing exercise within the academic environment and the world of intellectuality and knowledge at large. To this regard, she notes that the perception amongst indigenous people (colonized) is that “research has been a process that exploits indigenous peoples, their culture, their knowledge and their resources”. Even further is the fact that the world of knowledge and power which is in question somehow continues to be shielded, protected, thrive, flourish and upheld without it, taking cognisance of the fact that such an approach and methodology to research leads to the destruction of the wholistic life of the indigenous peoples, their values and their practices. On the contrary, the power(s) that be which support such method and approach to research blames “indigenous people, their values and practices as a political hindrance that get in the way of good research.”

A person would locate decoloniality between the world of the colonized and that of the colonizer. On the one hand, the world of the indigenes is greatly entangled with imperialism and colonialism (Smith 2012: xiii). From which he or she is attempting to disentangle himself or herself, like in the case of Smith (2012). The other world directly opposite to that of the colonized is that of the colonizer who consciously or unconsciously continues to mount resistance and attempt to maintain the status quo of being a full Being (2012: xii). The colonizer attempts to go about doing things in a manner that proclaims business as usual, like colonialism never happened in history, and that the attempt by the colonized to transform events of colonial history is needless (2012: xii). What emerges at the end is a hybridized world in which the colonized is forced to live between two cultures. One could even argue that neither the colonized nor the colonizer escapes entirely from the world of cultural hybridization. Smith (2012: xii) observes that,

The message of decolonization issuing from many writers in the field is that the process of decolonizing can be extremely 'messy', often leading to extreme violence; and that in a political sense it can fail miserably, replacing one corrupt elite with its mimics. The intellectual project of decolonizing has to set out ways to proceed through a colonizing world. It needs a radical compassion that reaches out, that seeks collaboration, and that is open to possibilities that can only be imagined as other things fall into place. Decolonizing Methodologies is not a method for revolution in a political sense but provokes some revolutionary thinking about the roles that knowledge, knowledge production, knowledge hierarchies and knowledge institutions play in decolonization and social transformation.

Mignolo (2011:xv-xvi) opines that decolonization also aims to dismantle the notion and myth that advocates that any knowledge that falls outside the sphere of the West conceptualization of God and reason is heathenish and inferior. This belief system attempts to create a world where knowledge is totalized and everyone is expected to be part of a single knowledge system. The outcome of such practice is what the writer would refer to here as a forced and arbitrary inclusion which does not give room for reciprocity. Such a world's construction is usually based on the claim of Western superiority and the notion that others are inferior. This is always a ploy used to control the economy, knowledge and authority, arguably part of colonial mentality. It is also important to note that in a world where knowledge is constructed following what were described, ills such as patriarchy, sexism, racism, etc., features.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the various theories, characteristic and terminologies such as empires, imperialism, colonies, colonialism, decolonialism, decoloniality, postcolonialism and postcolonial, which a person encounters when they engage with the subject of postcolonialism. The approach here was to engage with the works of scholars both within and without the field of biblical studies. The work will serve as part of the conceptual framework from which data will draw for Chapter 5.

Chapter 3

3. Historical context of the book of Joshua

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to critically examine the book of Joshua, with a significant focus on chapters 1 and 2, using the tool of postcolonialism. The chapter explores a multi-faceted approach to investigating the historical context of the book of Joshua.

The first part of the discussion will attempt to explain what the writer means by Historical Criticism from the lens of postcolonialism or from a postcolonial perspective. This would be followed by an attempt to explain the meaning of historical criticism as articulated by some scholars. The chapter discusses critical and relevant issues that patterned the different biblical historical periods, namely, the early history (Egyptian colonization of Canaan in the second millennium), the neo-Assyrian period, the neo-Babylonian period and the Persian period argued to be the time the book of Joshua was produced.

3.2 *Historical criticism through the lens of postcolonialism/postcolonial perspective: context and meaning as applied in this study*

The first question that comes to mind when a critical interpreter encounters the above heading is what historical criticism means from the lens of postcolonialism or postcolonial perspective. Simply put, this is to apply postcolonial theories and criticism in a historical study, especially that of the criticism of the book of Joshua. To understand what that means requires that, *firstly*, we give a brief overview of the history of Israel as captured by biblical writers.

The historical period in question covers the activities of Abraham in Genesis and stops at the time of Joshua, also in Joshua. Scholars affirm that there are various principles and ideologies that underlie the biblical text. These ideologies and principles may iconate with imperial laws and colonial tendencies. These tendencies aver that biblical texts were produced within the context of imperialism and colonialism. As stated by Fetalsana-Apura (2019:23):

Biblical literature need to be situated in the context of the imperial ancient Near East. The colonial experience is crucial to everything that happened in Israel and Judah... The Hebrew Bible is about a people's struggle and resistance, not the documenting of a people's faith for documentation's sake....

Situating biblical exegetical reading within the wider historical context of the Ancient Near East helps to avoid what may be referred to as the error or omission committed most of the time when scholars study the Bible in isolation, which tends to separate it from its proper historical and sociological contexts. This implies that "Israel's sociocultural construction must be linked with the external factors within which it is situated (Fetalsana-Apura 2019:24)."

The history of Israel began with the activities of Abraham and these activities spanned almost the entire Ancient Near East. The historical account given about his journey says that he left Ur of the Chaldeans and eventually got to Egypt (Gen. 12:1, 6) (Kaiser 1998:48-57). In the course of this journey, he ended up in other parts of the territory that make up the ANE. Literally speaking, Abraham, transverses a great portion of the land known as ANE. Abraham is credited to be the father of the Israelites because he was the one who originally was promised the land of Canaan; known and referred to as the Promised Land (Gen. 12:7). The history moves to the story of Joseph, which speaks about their sojourn in Egypt (Gen. 37-59) (Kaiser 1998:58-63). History continued to Moses' epoch, which covers the Exodus narrative and the law (Deuteronomy) (Kaiser 1998:65-95). The story of Moses became the defining moment in their history. The Moses epoch was described as the defining moment of their history because that was when the question of the actualization of the promise of land began to come into force.

The momentum that started in the era of Moses gained more prominence in the hands of Joshua, who was Moses' successor. Biblical writers claim that the promise was actualized during the time of Joshua. Therefore, the realization of the history that began with Abraham found its culmination in the activities of Joshua. The history that was recounted here had its main theme as land. God promised the Israelites land which was inhabited by the Canaanites (Denver 1992:49). Central to the activities of the nations was the issue of land, and to gain access to land required that the land must be conquered and dominated (Thompson 2014:x). To conquer the

land meant that the land's inhabitants must be conquered, dominated, and subdued. The conquered people were either exterminated or reduced to slaves. The ideology of inclusivity and exclusivity was also practised, which formed part of the activities at the time. Here, we are referring to the others who were excluded from others' social lives. For example, the laws of the Israelites prohibited them from marrying from the Canaanites (Dube 2000:77). In such cases, we are confronted with the case of exclusion. That is exclusivity. The case of Rehab in Joshua 2 is an example of how others are included (inclusivity) in the affairs of the others who originally were an exclusive group (Dube 2000:79). Stereotype, as seen in the case of Rehab was also part of the social conditioning during the time the literature of the Bible was put together.

Furthermore, from the biblical discourse, it could be seen that there was a social hierarchy. That is, society is comprised of social classes. It was a class society. In the case of Israel, there was the elite class that was made up of the king (though Joshua was not explicitly described as king of Israel, it could be argued that his activities characteristically appeared like that of a king. He was the defacto leader of Israel, who operated like a king, going by the content of the narrative.), the noble class, the scribes, the priestly class, and the military class. There are also the ordinary masses made up of farmers, traders, slaves, peasants, businessmen, and tradesmen (Thompson 2014:x). The other nations mentioned also followed similar way of life. The nations mentioned together with Israel existed in the same social milieu and, thus, shared a similar worldview.

The brief overview given in the preceding paragraph did not occur in a vacuum. It happened within a political, economic, and religious context of the ANE (Fetalsana-Apura 2019:23). In other words, the story happened within a particular historical context. Arguably, the context from which the story emerged was that of the broader ANE context. Significantly, the historical context from where the biblical literature emerged was plagued with wars between nations. And these wars were about conquest, subjugation, oppression, suppression, violence and dominance. The Bible itself mentions nations such as Egypt, the Canaan state, the land of Mesopotamia, Syria, Philistine, Moab, Hittites, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, etc. The important thing to

note here is that the relationship these nations had with Israel on different occasions could be subsumed under imperialism and colonialism. Fetalsana-Apura (2019:22) notes that: “Ancient Israel recognized and resisted imperial structures. The present hermeneutical community must be cognizant of the empire. Putting hermeneutics in the service of societies at the periphery will correct its past complicity with dominating powers.” Thus, the post-era as regards the above reveals that postcolonialism could be an experience that follows the era of imperialism and colonialism.

The social milieu also influenced the production of biblical literature (Fetalsana-Apura 2019:41). The social milieu relates directly to the worldview of those participating in the affairs and events of the period under discussion. In other words, the reference here is to the social condition that prevailed during the time in question. In the short historical overview narrated previously in this chapter, the names of certain individuals were mentioned. The account given focused mostly on key characters and players involved in the historical events. However, the discussion did not include others directly or indirectly involved and, therefore, played important and critical roles in shaping history wholly. Perhaps it is important to mention that these principal characters dealt with deities. Here, we are referring to the gods of the other nations that the patriarchs encountered in the course of their lives. That is, these deities participated in the historical events that took place. Therefore, from all sides, we have leaders whose activities were linked to national deities that participated in the affairs of history, albeit, human affairs. There are also the ordinary masses. The important thing to note here is that, on the one hand, we have the leaders, the people of Israel, and the God of Israel. On the other hand, we have the nations which comprises of their kings (leaders), the people, and their gods. Therefore, the history of Israel is shaped and influenced by all the categories of people mentioned who lived in the territories of the Ancient Near East.

Following the above discourse, in this thesis, applying historical criticism from the lens of postcolonialism means an attempt to situate the book of Joshua in its larger Ancient Near East context and beyond. It is important to note that beyond in this context means:

...The larger world of the different ancient empires that impinged upon that small strip of land known as ancient Israel in their conquest and colonial administration. In their different ways, these empires exerted major controls on both the socioeconomic conditions of all sectors of Israelite society, from the male and female peasantry up to the elite, and the cultural production of its public national myth, the Hebrew Bible (Yee 2010:208).

Additionally, historical criticism from the lens of postcolonialism attempts to study how the

...different stories of ancient Israel, such as its slavery, liberation, and subsequent conquest of Canaan, became paradigms legitimating Western expansion and conquest in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. It then attends to contemporary readers and readings of the biblical text and the ways in which they support, collude with, or resist the current global state of affairs, in which the West continues its domination of the Rest in its neocolonial economic exploitation of its natural and human resources and its cultural hegemony (Yee 2010:208-209)

It is also important to note that attempts are made to avoid not to only "...simply identify with Israel and its manifest destiny (Butler 2013:33)," rather, an attempt will be made to "look at the text from many angles and perspectives (Butler 2013:33)." This because "each narrative and each character stands somewhere on the axis running from colonizer to colonized (Butler 2013:33)." Also, "a close examination of the text may bring" a critical interpreter "to identify with and read the text as a very unexpected party-in-the-text (Butler 2013:33)."

3.3 The meaning of historical criticism

Hahn & Wiker (2013), observe that the dispute that accompanies historical criticism is its non-acceptance of dogma as truth. Historical criticism has drawn criticism from certain quarters of scholarship and lay people. These categories of people believe that the Bible is not just a book like any other; it is a spiritual book and, therefore, should be treated differently. The newer methods of biblical criticism widely rejected this position. According to Armerding (1983:16):

In its simplest form, historical criticism is little more than what the Reformers meant by grammatical historical exegesis. It constitutes inquiry into whatever local or historical factors may have shaped the biblical message. For many critics of the modern era, historical criticism also involves an application of historical criteria to various biblical texts in order to determine their age, sometimes from an understanding of history that is too rigidly evolutionary.

Historical criticism operates on the basis that accurate and objective interpretation of history is what assists the interpreter in arriving at biblical truth (Childs 1992:198-199). Historical criticism employs the tools in “Source criticism, textual criticism, biblical archaeology, traditions history, and even form criticism...to reconstruct the history and thought of ancient Israel... (Perdue 1994:19).” Historical criticism in its simplest form is the study of texts in an attempt to understand the social-political history of the period the text was produced (Collins 2005:4). This involves the gathering of evidence from sources. In biblical historical criticism, the source of gathering evidence(s) is either from the biblical text in question or, broadly, from the other books of the bible and from other sources. The other sources include literary materials from other ANE nations, anthropological evidence and archaeology. The fact that sources are used and consulted raises questions about the reliability of the sources. Thus, historical criticism is an attempt to subject the Bible through the same process of verification that secular texts undergo to ascertain its reliability. Source criticism is also applied in the study of secular sources, which normally are used as external evidence to collaborate and authenticate or otherwise the biblical narratives such as Joshua. There is also the question of the form and structure of the texts, which has resulted in form and structural criticism. This argument is closely related to what Collins (2005:4) describes as “the autonomy of the Historian.” This is simply about how modern reasoning differs from the notion held by people during the medieval era which subscribes to the idea of “morality of knowledge (Collins 2005:4). This is also concerned with the medieval position that demands that people should celebrate “belief as virtue,” and on the other hand, consider “doubt as sin (Collins 2005:4).” Modern critical writers rejected that position. Applied directly to the context of biblical criticism, autonomy of knowledge translates into freedom from “ecclesiastical authorities” control or control of whatever forms that hinders the test of the veracity of knowledge (Collins 2005:4). In other words, modernity relies greatly on rational reason as a means through which truth can be established.

Scholars such as Hahn & Wiker (2013:21) argue that the claims of historical criticism originate from the politicization of the Bible. The politicization of the Bible refers to “the complete subordination of the Church, theology, and Scripture to the secular

political order (Hahn & Wiker 2013:21).” Historical criticism is a project that is fuelled by the supposition that the supernatural should either be discarded in its entirety or be explained outside the framework of the biblical claim of its divine origin. Historical criticism serves as a tool that enables the interpreter to understand better the subject of history as it relates to a particular text. Understanding the history of the period or periods in which the text came into being equips the interpreter so that the person can make informed decisions about the book or text in question. Perhaps it is important to observe that because of the nature of the Bible and how the individual texts developed, the development of a biblical work such as Joshua may have occurred over different periods of historical time. This argument may also mean that the writers incorporated different worldviews in their writing because of varying experiences, thereby necessitating one to argue that there are different worldviews at play in the texts.

Barton (1998:11) observes that historical criticism concerns itself “with history in the straightforward sense of the term only the historical context of words and meanings or the historical development of the texts, but what happened in the past.” Barton (1998:9) identifies four important aspects of historical criticism that establish it firmly as a field of biblical criticism: (1) Historical criticism asks genetic questions about the texts and usually stops when they find answers. (2) Historical criticism tends to focus greatly on the history and prehistory of the texts. In other words, it looks for “the original meaning of the texts, what it means to its first readers and not what it might mean to a modern reader.” (3) Historical criticism concerns itself with “history in the straightforward sense of the term-not only the historical context of words and meaning, or the historical development of the texts, but what happened in the past.” This implies that it prefers a scientific approach and methods to establish historical facts. (4) Historical criticism pushes the idea that history and, as such, the interpreter of history should not be biased in his analysis and criticism of historical records and events. As much as possible, the analysis should avoid " prejudice and ask not what it meant for me but simply what it meant.” This approach came to loggerheads with modern approaches such as postcolonialism, arguing that objectivity in interpretation

is a myth. Relating to this argument is the question of presupposition and value-neutral or disinterested reader (Perdue 1994:19-21).

Barton (1998:14) argues that in its presentation, historical criticism deals mostly with literary analyses of the texts, which also remain the chief aim and primary focus of the newer methods. Any other formula which goes contrary to the idea of focusing on the literary study of the texts usually results in a historical reconstruction of the texts that leans heavily on theology. When such is the case, that is, when the interpreter does not “engage in, asking questions about the origins and development, the intentions of the author or authors of the texts, and its connection to other similar texts” what becomes noticeable from the end result is a history that is flawed and devoid of any sense of reality.

Another important criticism levelled against historical criticism is its inability to relate to contemporary issues, rather, its detractors believe that it remains “antiquarian” in its outlook and concerns. The merits of this argument are observed when works of ardent adherers of historical-critical methods; for example Wellhausen, are compared with those produced by scholars such as John Bright, who claims to practice traditional criticism (Barton 1998:16). The former tends to be “sharply focused and very critical” whereas, the latter, is prone to a “far more bland and accepting attitude towards the biblical materials” (Barton 1998:16).

The main focus of the next segment of the thesis would be an attempt to understand the historical background of the book of Joshua. As we saw above, this could be understood as one of the objectives of historical criticism, namely, understanding the historical context. The discussion will attempt to critically engage with the historical-political-sociological events during the Neo-Assyrian period to the Persian period. The discussion will centre on the era and characteristics of: The Neo-Assyrian Empire; The Neo-Babylonian Empire; The Persian Empire and how these historical periods influenced and impacted the Bible/Joshua. These are the periods in which most modern scholars such as Thomas Römer (2005:7), believe the final compilation of the book of Joshua was undertaken.

3.4 Historical criticism of the book of Joshua

Writing about Joshua, Fetalsana-Apura (2019:23) reminds us about the importance of placing biblical literature in its original socio-political-religious contexts of the Ancient Near East from which it emerged as the Bible is a product of its environment. This implies that interpreters should consider the colonial context of Israel and Judah, which forms part of their wholistic experience throughout their early existence in their interpretative exercise and endeavour. The Hebrew Bible represents an attempt by the people of Israel and Judah to capture their “struggle and resistance” against the various imperialist overlords who attempted to eradicate their culture. She (2019:23-24) argues that:

The “systems of meaning” embodied in Israel’s symbols primarily addressed imperial dominance and its effects on a community. Israel’s religion is not just about the narrow class, political, and religious interest within Israel. The actual experience and trauma of wars, of slavery, and subjugation and the threat of cultural annihilation by the death-dealing empires were the catalysts in the production of a worldview and identity that resists imperial powers.

Perhaps it is important to observe that history does not occur in a vacuum. History could be national history or other types of history, but the important thing to note is that they are stories about the life of a people or the life of a person or events related to their life. Joshua’s narrative deals with a people’s political, social, cultural and economic experiences. Israel is the subject of history because historical evidence and records show that she actually existed physically at a particular point in historical time. Thus, the people of Israel had historical experiences and encounters which shaped their socio-political and religious undertakings. There is historical evidence of events and activities found within and without the Bible, as seen in Joshua’s narrative and archaeology, which pattern Israel’s relationship with various nations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan, Persia and Rome. The presence of these nations in the Bible attests to the fact that they had been involved with the people of Israel in different ways throughout history. Therefore, Israel’s history is intertwined with the history of the places mentioned.

Following the discussion in the preceding paragraph, the literal questions that come to mind concern the reliability of the history in question. This is because there is the

assumption that the book was composed later than the time of the events. To this regard, Nelson (1998:30) writes,

When an interpreter reads one of the historical books, the notion of historical contexts work at two levels. Naturally, the reader needs to take into account the period described in the historiographic narrative. The first context is the period that is the topic of the work, its historical subject. At the same time the reader must bear in mind that the actual composition of the historiographic narrative generally took place at a later period. In fact, the process of writing and editing most likely stretched out over several generations. This means that the reader must be aware of two or more historical contexts at the same time.

He (1998:30) states, "All the historical books were composed and achieved their final form in periods considerably later than the events they portrayed." He (1998:31) argues, "The books that describe Israel's emergence in the land (Joshua and Judges)...first developed as written literature only in the period of the monarchy." And secondly, when did Israel become a nation? This question is related to the old debate around the historicity of the book of Joshua and the conquest and will be discussed in a separate segment in this chapter. However, this discussion would be centred on the observation that Israel first appeared "on the stage of verifiable history about 1210 BCE (Nelson 1998:31)." This is based on the fact that the "monument erected by the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah identifies Israel as a people living in the land of Canaan (Nelson 1998:31)." Therefore, an attempt will be made to focus mostly on the historical context starting from the historical period identified up to the Persian period.

Whitelam (1996:141-142) also recognizes the need to consider the role played by "the rise and fall of empires" and the place of Palestine in any discussion related to the history of ancient Israel. He (1996:142) believes that this play of "dynamic of world power" forms "an important backdrop to understanding the discrete history of Israel." He (1996:142) opines that in the region, with Israel as its part, there is historical evidence that attests to different imperial powers rising and falling. These include Pharaohs, Assyrian or Babylonian or Persian kings and Roman generals. He (1996:142) writes:

The history of Palestine reveals quite clearly that from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman period, one could say through to the present day, there has been a shifting dynamic of world power, which has seen economic and military superiority fluctuate from

region to region. The imperial episodes in Palestinian history need to be treated from a comparative perspective in order to reveal their similarities and dissimilarities.

Whitelam suggests that there is a need “to appreciate the dynamic of world power and its effect upon history of the region,” with Israel forming part of the region in question (1996:142) as failure to do so usually leads to writing history that could be argued to be incomplete or one-sided.

If one is to engage broadly with the Old Testament socio-political context, on the basis that Joshua’s narratives are intended to be part of the whole, it could be argued that the fact that Israel was strategically located “between the empires of Mesopotamia and northern Africa presented a recurring threat (Coomber 2014:12).” The context in which Israel found herself was one in which “these empires invaded the lands of ancient Israel for military and economic reasons...(Coomber 2014:12)” This prevailing context greatly influenced the manner in which

...the biblical authors and redactors received and transmitted these events into their religious narratives: foreign invasion was often perceived as divine punishment—with the notable exception of the Persians—and the defeat of foreign forces was perceived as a result of divine favor (Coomber 2014:12).

The above quote raises the question of the hybridization of Israel’s culture. The question of hybridization is important in regard to Joshua’s narrative, even to the broader Old Testament story.

Coomber (2014:13) notes that Israel had its own unique “Domestic Sociopolitical Contexts” that could be gleaned from its “domestic structures.” If one is to compare Israel with its “Palestine’s Mesopotamian neighbours”; it could be observed that Israel remained un-urbanised, as such un-developed and with a kind of rural economy. This “subsistence strategy” continued to thrive way into the Seventh century BCE. The political structure was organised around family units. The family units had “...territorial significance, as seen in tribal border lists of Joshua 13–19, and was responsible for dividing the land.”

Coomber (2014:13) observes that military arrangements were built around family units. The exact nature of the kingdoms, in reference to the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah is a source of debate amongst the minimalists and maximalists. Questions are

asked about their statehood. Whether at that stage it is correct to call these entities city-states. The debate is centred on the time Israel became a nation. The main question is anchored on when Israel started as a kingdom with a monarchical system of government. Whether this happened under Saul or commenced under David. It is also about the time which the united monarchy ended, which generally is assumed to have: "...spanned 1030 to 930 BCE, when King Rehoboam was rejected by the northern Israelites (1 Kgs.12:1-20; 2 Chron. 10:1-19), leading to the period of the divided monarchy, with Israel in the north and Judah in the south (Coomber 2014:13)."

Based on available evidence, "these two kingdoms existed side by side until Israel was destroyed by Assyria (734–721 BCE). Judah entered into Assyrian vassalage in the 720s and was destroyed by the Babylonians around 586 BCE (Coomber 2014:13)." Perhaps, it is also important to note that "those who give less credence to the biblical account take note that there is little extrabiblical evidence of a monarchy prior to King Omri, aside from the Tel Dan Stele, which refers to "the House of David," which may refer to a Davidic king (Coomber 2014:13)." Furthermore, it could be said that (Coomber 2014: 13):

While Israel's domestic organizational landscape played a major role in the development of biblical law and narrative, the biblical authors' interactions with surrounding peoples had profound effects on the stories they told. The main imperial influences, from the premonarchical period to the fall of the Hasmonean Dynasty, were Egypt, Philistine, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, and the Romans

Van Seters (1983:330) believes that the ancient history of Israel and Judah was greatly influenced by the activities of the empires that invaded them. He says that the writers "interpreted the tradition of the entrance into the arable land as a great military conquest along the lines of the frequent invasions that Israel and Judah had experienced at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians." He highlights that "...Israel and Judah had often been party to coalitions that sought to resist the invader, usually to no avail." This aspect of their history is reflected and portrayed in how the Dtr writer(s) attempts to replicate their experiences in the hands of the empires in the way they presented the narratives of Joshua's invasion and the defeat of the others. An example of the portrayal of their historical experience through their

dealing(s) with others could be observed from narratives such as how “the coalitions of the native inhabitants, both the southern and northern groups of kings,” were “defeated and the various cities destroyed,” thus embodying mimic representations of their experience in the hands of the empire.

In addition, Van Seters (1983:330) states that “...the Dtr narrative has a basic similarity to the accounts of such military campaigns in the Near Eastern inscriptions, particularly those of the Assyrian annals and the “letters to the god.” He (1983:330) writes that,

The latter often gives special attention to a few major battles or conquests of important cities while summarizing the overthrow of many others in a stereotyped series. They may also highlight at the outset of a campaign the overcoming of a special physical barrier, such as a river in flood or a mountain range. Before an important battle the king often receives an “oracle of salvation” from a deity who promises to deliver the enemy into his hand

Again, Van Seters (1983:330-331) highlights the fact that a similar literary strategy is seen in the other ANE writings. In his words:

Sometimes envoys come from a great distance to sue for peace and submit to terms of servitude in order to avoid destruction. It is also not unusual during the course of a campaign to consult or rely upon omens in order to predict the ultimate outcome of the war. General descriptions of sieges or military stratagems; summary treatments of attack and flight of the enemy and the burning of cities; enumerations of participants of coalitions, kings defeated, or cities taken; lists of causalities and the amount of booty; dedications of victory and of spoils to the god—all occur with great regularity. In the royal inscriptions of the Assyrians and Babylonians the native peoples of Syria-Palestine are all lumped together under the rubric of “Amorites” or “Hittites.” Also, the borders given in these inscriptions for the “land of the Amorites/Hittites” correspond closely to those in Josh. 1:4.31 Once we isolate the basic Dtr account of the conquest, without the stories of Rahab (chapter 2) or the sin of Achan (chapter 7) and the other additions of J and P (especially chapter 5), then it is remarkable how closely Dtr’s work has been made to correspond with the literary pattern of military campaigns in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. Even the “installation” of Joshua as the leader who succeeds Moses suggests that the conquest is the first victorious campaign of the new regime.

In order to give a clearer account of the historical context of the book of Joshua, which the writer of this dissertation considers an attempt by the writers to present a national history of Israel concerning its early stage of life or formative years, going forward, the writer would attempt to discuss the situation in Israel during the Late Bronze period to Iron Age. Perhaps it is important to note that there is disagreement

amongst scholars on the division of the period because some of the events, activities, and material evidence of the periods overlap (Mazar 2003:86).

The division followed here is that the first part of the 12th century represents the period Canaan was under Egyptian rule (Mazar 2003:86). Subsequently, the discussion will engage with the periods covering the late 12th century to early 10th century, which is generally regarded as Iron Age I (Mazar 2003:86). During the period in question, Canaan was occupied by diverse ethnic groups amongst which were found new settlers. Iron IIA period is the third period in reference to 1200 to 850 BCE, and it was characterized by the entry of new geo-geopolitical players (Mazar 2003:86). Available evidence obtained from excavated sites show that during this period, “significant changes” occurred “in many aspects of the material culture of Canaan (Mazar 2003:86).”

Finkelstein (2013:13) identifies three important sources from which evidence could be obtained regarding the Late Bronze period: First, textual evidence with the Amarna letters as the most important source. The second tool that may assist in establishing the events of the Late Bronze period as reliable is the petrographic investigation of the Amarna letters. Basically, this method and approach involve the attempt to establish the writer's location through the study of the structure and properties of the clay used in the communication process to distinguish them. The third approach is archaeology. This method's main focus in reference to the Late Bronze period is excavating the city centres in search of palaces temples, and relics from the places excavated. Generally, the evidence obtained from the Amarna letters tends to tally with that of archaeology. It is also important to observe that for a site to qualify for excavation, it must meet certain criteria based on population, agricultural activities, as well as workforce (Finkelstein 2013:16). Megiddo, Hazor, and Lachish, are examples of places that met the criteria mentioned above. The present study engages with the period from 1200 to 850 BCE as it relates to Joshua's narrative. This means the study goes beyond the Late Bronze period to include the Middle Bronze and early Iron Age.

3.5 A brief overview of the old debate around the historicity of the book of Joshua and the conquest

Scholars have debated the question of the emergence of Israel in Palestine and the authenticity of the biblical presentation of the conquest narratives without reaching a generally acceptable consensus about the issue.¹³ Perhaps it is important to note that most modern readers will argue that the Joshua narrative is mostly fictional. While attempting to identify the origin of Israel, scholars have drawn inferences from archaeological and other social science disciplines (Hess 1999:494). In this regard, Whitelam (1996:71) argues that the Israel spoken about in the Bible had its origin not during the so-called Patriarchal or Exodus period but in the Late Bronze-Iron period. He (1996:71) believes that Israel emerged during this period and that this was the time the conquest of Palestine, as expressed in the Bible, happened. He (1996:71) argues that the time of the emergence of Israel and the periods of David and Solomon represent a very important period in the history of Israel. He (1996:71) says that Israel's state matured during the David-Solomon era. During this period, an attempt was made to show the emerging state of Israel to be a major military player in the region. He (1996:71) notes that this period is critical to biblical studies as it represents what could be referred to as defining moments in the history of Israel and as such, Palestinian history wholistically.

Four schools of thought dominate the scholarly debate on Israel's settlement history. They are: 1) The Conquest Model, 2) The immigration or infiltration model. 3) The Revolt Model and 4) The Gradual Emergence Model. The study will briefly discuss each of the models as listed in the preceding sentence. It is also important to note that the discussion will only state the theories without considering the different criticisms against them.

¹³See discussion on the archaeology and the conquest of Jericho on the chapter on Postcolonial criticism and the text of Joshua chapter 1-2.

3.5.1 The Conquest Model

Firstly is the school of thought that subscribes to the view that “the description in the Pentateuch and in the Book of Joshua of Israel’s past largely agrees with historical past (Lemche 1985:1).” Generally, this group are referred to as the “Baltimore school” because of the strong support they receive from American archaeologists who claims that the archaeological evidence derived from the excavations done in Palestine and the near East substantiates the story of the Bible as rendered in Old Testament writings (Lemche 1985:1). W.F. Albright and John Bright did the dominant works that came from the group.

Gottwald (1979:192) explains that a cursory look at the Bible narratives may reveal that the conquest model is the means to understand “Israel’s sudden emergence in Canaan.” Primarily, the impression created by the narratives leaves a person to believe that the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan from the Transjordan towards the end of the thirteenth century B.C.E. According to the narratives, the invasion was undertaken jointly by the twelve tribes and led to the annihilation of the residents of the land. After the conquest, Israel took over the land and practised its culture and religion. The conquest happened within a very short period and was a continuation of Moses' activities and deeds. At the conclusion of the conquest, the land of Canaan, which accrued from the engagement, was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel. The climax of the story takes place in the book of Joshua.¹⁴ However, prior to the narrative of the book of Joshua, these events were alluded to in the other books of the Bible. The events were also spoken about in later biblical traditions. .

3.5.2 The Immigration or infiltration model

The second group is representative of what is generally regarded as “Alt-Noth-School.” Within this group, there existed two schools of thought. Two prominent scholars have come to define the position of the group, namely, Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth. This group's main argument is that the Old Testament story does not completely reflect the true history of Israel's settlement (Lemche 1985:1). They

¹⁴ See Joshua 10:40 for a summary statement that claims that Israelites conquered the whole land is cited as an evidence to substantiate the claim made by those who subscribe to the conquest model theory.

disagreed with the position of the first group mentioned on the interpretation of the archaeological evidence derived from Palestine excavations. One of their unique contributions to the settlement debate was their attempt to incorporate ideas from ethnology and sociology into ancient Near East studies. They maintained that unlike the picture that the Old Testament paints of how the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan, what took place, in reality, was “a gradual infiltration of nomads who originated outside of the country but who in the course of time became settled in Palestine (Lemche 1985:1-2).” The proposed model is generally known as the infiltration or immigration model. The core element of this theory is that:

Israel's origin is to be found in wandering semi-nomadic clans who peacefully entered the land... and settled in the hilly country which was unoccupied. Brought together into a loosely knit association by a group of Yahweh worshippers from the desert, and perhaps ultimately from Egypt, this group populated the hill country and eventually grew strong enough to band together and to gain dominance in the rest of the land, during the period of the Monarchy (Alt in Hess 1993:496).

As indicated above, a different school of thought exists within the second group. The thesis that they generally propose is that “within a short span of time these newly-arrived immigrants were consolidated into a tribal league,” a concept that they borrowed or adopted from the Greek analogy. Furthermore, they are of the view that “the traditions dealing with the Israelite patriarchs, Israel's sojourn in Egypt and her time of wandering in the desert were collected and formulated within amphictyonic circles (Lemche 1985:2).” In addition, they maintained that the concept of settlement as seen in Joshua's narrative should be read in the context of the Israelites quest to forge a national identity during the time of the judges (Alt in Lemche 1985:2).

Gottwald (1979:204) notes that at commencement, the interaction between Israelites and the Canaanites was peaceful if one considers the patriarchs' stories. He highlights that intermarriages and treaty-making episodes were recorded in separate units of tradition. He observes that the resident population and the Israelites co-existed harmoniously at the initial stage. The available record reveals that Judah entered into marriage with the Canaanites (Gen. 38). Therefore, the claim of the defeat of the Canaanites in Joshua, when juxtaposed with the number of assaults that reportedly were carried out, appears to be highly negligible. The initial number of

unconquered territories reported by the narrative was too numerous for a critical interpreter to support the claim that total conquest happened. There is also the possibility that the opposite was the case in the relationship between the Israelites and the Canaanites. The usual claim made by those who subscribe to the conquest model about the polarity between two races may have worked as a reversal. The whole biblical narrative about the annihilation of the Canaanites may have been propaganda designed to give a political impression, as there was never a time when all the people of Canaan were destroyed. They remained in the land, which resulted in rivalry and continued threat to the Israelites. The important thing to note from this discussion is that there may have been a peaceful relationship between the Israelites and the Canaanites initially. But later, this relationship degenerated into rivalry. Thus, this lends some sort of credence to the claim of peaceful immigration as posited by some. There have also been suggestions that because David annexed the Canaanites into his empire, a cultural and religious struggle was ensured between the occupants of his empire, mainly comprised of the Israelites and the Canaanites. This may have been more political than military and may have grown into an intense rivalry to establish superiority between the God of Israel (Yahweh) and the god of the Canaanites (Baal). The Israelites may have aimed to prevent syncretism in their kingdom. Finally, it is important to note that some of those who are proponents of this theory, like Noth, show great disregard for archaeological evidence that is contrary to their position. One way or the other, they tend to disparage and invade evidence that accrues from archaeology that opposes their theories.

The important thing to note about the two schools of thought is that both share a similar departure point, which is the position that Israel's occupation of the land of Palestine was a result of immigration. That is, the Israelites came from outside and settled in the land of Palestine. However, their disagreement lies with the model and approach used to achieve immigration into the land. It is based on external immigration that differs from the third settlement model, as discussed subsequently. The two aforementioned positions dominated scholarly debate until G. S Mendenhall (1962:66); he came up with a hypothesis called an "ideal model." Otherwise, it is referred to as the "revolt model."

3.5.3 The Revolt Model

Gottwald (1979:211) sums up the revolt model as follows:

The revolt model has two starting points: one is the decided and tenacious biblical core tradition about a group of slaves, delivered from Egypt and worshipping the god Yahweh, who eventually find their way securely into Canaan. The other starting point is the resistance of large segments of the ancient biblical traditions to simplistic inclusion within any conception that all Israel was composed of these former slaves from Egypt, on the one hand, or composed exclusively or even predominantly of diversly originated immigrants, on the other..

What follows below is an attempt to do an overview of the work of Mendenhall (1962), who laid down the theoretical conception from which the revolt model emerged in academic scholarship. In an article Mendenhall critiques the two existing dominant positions claiming that the conquest model was oversimplified and that the second model completely “disconnects the Hebrew "conquest" from archaeological evidence of destruction (1962:68).”

In the first part of his essay, Mendenhall discussed the idea of nomadism. He (1962:68-70) argues that nomadism does not necessarily mean that the person (or group) does not belong to any city or village. Nomads are members of a society, as seen in the story of Cain and Abel. In their case, one was a shepherd, and the other was a farmer, but the important point here is that they were brothers. Another example from the Bible that attests to this fact is the story of Jacob and his children. Jacob remained at home while his children were pastoralists. Nomads are part of a people’s group and not usually a free-roaming bunch that has no connection with real people. There is a close relationship between the nomad and the farmer. It is very rare to see a nomad with no roots or connection to society.

He (1962:70) also looked at the meaning of tribal society, that is, the concept of tribes versus urbanization and the words Hebrew and Habiru. Regarding tribal society, Mendenhall concludes that most unurbanized places operate as tribes. Part of his argument about tribal society is that not all of them necessarily began from a state of nomadism. Furthermore, he explained that a tribe is wider in scope than a village. The main contention of Mendenhall is that the Israelites were not nomads in the sense that some biblical scholars are portraying. Therefore, presenting them

without attempting to define what nomadism means in the context that it was applied in the Bible makes it appear like they came from outside Palestine, which was not necessary.

Mendenhall (1962:71) in addition, discussed the meaning of the words Hebrew and Habiru. In his study of these two words, he concluded that they literally represent the same idea (1962:71). He believes that the main idea behind the words concerns those who have rejected the authority of the state and have opted to withdraw from it which results in such a person becoming an outlaw (1962:71). Based on this argument, he rejects the notion that nomads were the ones who founded the nation of Israel. Following this argument, he postulates that the fact that the early Israelites were referred to as Habiru/Hebrews imply that they rebelled against a constituted authority.

Mendenhall, through his engagement with the concept of nomadism, tribes and the meaning of Hebrew/Habiru infers that there was no invasion as recorded in the book of Joshua. Rather, the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites was a result of

...the withdrawal, not physically and geographically, but politically and subjectively, of large population groups from any obligation to the existing political regimes, and therefore, the renunciation of any protection from those sources. In other words, there was no statistically important invasion of Palestine at the beginning of the twelve tribe system of Israel. There was no radical displacement of population, there was no genocide, there was no large scale driving out of population, only of royal administrators (of necessity!). In summary, there was no real conquest of Palestine at all; what happened instead may be termed, from the point of view of the secular historian interested only in socio-political processes, a peasant's revolt against the network of interlocking Canaanite city states (1962:73).

He (1962:73-75) believes that the revolution was motivated by religious reasons, which gained the support of the existing local social units. They joined forces and together formed a solidarity group that challenged, defeated and overthrew the existing different authorities that were in charge of the city-states that inhabited the land of Palestine and Syria during the later part of the Bronze Age. In essence, Mendenhall argument was that the Israelite conquest of Palestine was not done by newcomers but by those who were already residents of the land in question;

The value of events which actually happened to the groups in Transjordan and Palestine is thus the mainstream of biblical religion; but it was the events which constituted the

conquest, which became an historical necessity once entire groups had joined the religious community. Not even the "city invincible" could coerce an entire countryside into obedience. The subjection of individuals and groups to a non-human Overlord by covenant, the solidarity of the newly formed community meant that they could and did reject the religious, economic, and political obligations to the existing network of political organizations. By this process, they became "Hebrews." The religious community of early Israel created a contrast between the religious and the political aspects of human culture which had been inseparable in the idea of the "divine state" or the "divine kingship," for a complete identification of religious with political authority and obedience, so characteristic of ancient and modern paganism, became impossible. (1962:75)

Gottwald (1979:210) notes that the basic theory that undergirds the proposal is that the society which emerged from whatever was there included the indigenous Canaanite population that were inhabitants of the land. This indigenous population merged with those "who revolted against their overloads." Literally, what happened is that the two groups joined forces to give birth to a new society. The assumption is that those who joined forces with the native Canaanites were "a nuclear group of invaders and/or infiltrators from the desert" who were connected to the group associated with Moses. That is the escapees from Egypt.

He (1979:210) argues that a closer look at the revolt model reveals that it shares certain similarities with the conquest model and also the immigration model that preceded it. The similarity which it shares with the conquest model emanates from the fact that it speaks about "a group of outsiders who entered Canaan with enthusiastic adherence to the deliverer god Yahweh and who supplied a militant stimulant to revolution among the native Canaanite underclasses (1979:210)." On the other hand, the similarity which it shares with the immigration model arises from the fact that it does not clearly distinguish between "Canaanite and Israelite, or at any rate, does not make it in the way the conquest model does, i.e., in terms of bitter, open conflict from the start between two clearly demarcated ethnic bodies (1979:210)." The revolt model recognises that the emergent of Israel resulted from the amalgamation of different cultures with their own unique history and ethnicity. These groups of individuals contributed to the formation of the tradition that came to define ancient Israel.

The originality of the idea behind the revolt model lies in its ability to serve as

...a connecting link between the religious thrust of Yahwism and the socioeconomic and political realities of Canaan, a link which neither the conquest model nor the immigration model could offer other than in the most abstract ways. It proposes a way of accounting for the phenomenal rise of Yahwism, its indigenous roots and power Egyptians colonization of Canaan in the second millennium to adapt, its astonishing growth and integrating inclusiveness. It suggests that the socioeconomic and political conditions of Canaan were ripe for just such a movement as Yahwism and that Yahwism must be understood as a peculiar development addressed to the life circumstances of underclass or marginal Canaanites (Gottwald 1979:210-211).

3.5.4 The Gradual Emergence Model

The fourth model arguably is what most critical scholars tend to support. Collins (2014:197) notes that “no account of early Israel can reconcile the biblical account and the archaeological evidence.” Given the gradual emergence model, Collins opines that the early Israelites were Canaanites who developed a separate identity over a long period. He links the emergence to “the increase in the settlement of the central highlands.” He argues that those who orchestrated the change were immigrants who came to settle in the highlands from the lowlands. Collins admits that it is difficult to delineate the exact reason why this migration took place. However, he proposes that it may be because of the oppression they suffered in the hands of the “Canaanite city-states, as the revolt model suggests” or probably because of instability happening in the lowlands at the time because of “the invasion of the Sea Peoples who became the Philistines, and who emerged into history about the same time as the Israelites.” He highlights that the difference between this model and the revolt model is that the present model “does not assume that the Israelites were motivated by egalitarian ideals.” He argues that though the Bible is of the position that early Israel did not operate the kingship system like the other nations, this was not a matter of choice or ideology, instead, it was because of their “relative lack of political organization.” One could even argue that the nation of Israel was not as organized and developed as the other states. He (2014:197-198) opines that any critical engagement with the “emergence of Israel in Canaan that is guided by archaeological evidence” should be based on the assumption “that the highland settlers were people who withdrew from the Canaanite city-state, for whatever reason.”

3.5.5 Conclusion

The study discussed the four models that were listed in the beginning of this section; 1) The Conquest Model, 2) The immigration or Infiltration Model, 3) The Revolt Model and, 4) The Gradual Emergence Model. The conquest model proposes that there was a massive military invasion that led to a unified conquest of Canaan and its subsequent occupation by the Israelites. The second model, according to the other of appearance, the immigration or infiltration model, contends that the Israelites infiltrated the land of Canaan and that the act was undertaken peacefully. And led to the occupation of the place. The occupation resulted in population growth and led to the infiltrators reaching agreements or entering into treaties with some of the existing local populations. Third, is the revolt model. The proponents of this model are of the view that the Israelites were part of the Canaan population who revolted against the Canaan city-states because of their oppressive nature. This resulted in the establishment of a new socio-political-religious system. The proponents also believe that the Israelites were motivated by egalitarian ideals. The fourth model is the gradual emergence model, which shares many similarities with the revolt model. The main difference between the two is that those who take this position believe that Israel was not motivated by egalitarian ideals.

3.6 *Egyptian colonization of Canaan in the second millennium*

Palestine during the thirteenth century BCE was under the control of “The Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt (Sixteenth-fourteenth century B.C) (Boling 1982:80).” Finkelstein (2013:13) observes that:

Territorially, Canaan of the Late Bronze II was divided into a system of city-states that were dominated by an Egyptian administrative and military system. Each city-state consisted of a main city—the seat of the ruler—and a system of villages around it. The size of the hub-cities, the extent of the territories that they dominated, the number of villages in their hinterland, the volume of their populations, and their nature (for instance, sedentary versus pastoral)—all varied.

Boling (1982:80) argues that the period is recognised as exceptional in the history of the world, boasting great generals, administrators, artists, and architects. The Egyptian empire controlled vast areas of priced territories, including Lebanon and the greater part of Syria. The Egyptian political strategy allowed the local political system

of vassal city-states and conquered territories to maintain their individual political systems. The local kings of these various city-states were answerable to the Egyptian Pharaoh and did so through local Egyptian commissioners. The Egyptians made Gaza and Berth-Shan the seat of government where administrative and military functions are performed. During the period, coastal cities included Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Dor, Akko, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, and Byblos. Later in the fourteenth century, Lachish, Gezer, Shechem and Megiddo became major players in the hill country. Jerusalem and Hebron were relatively small places and were insignificant players in the region. Jericho did not exist in Jordan Valley yet at that time. Pella lay on the valley's eastern side, and the Sea of Galilee bordered its southern side. There were settlers in the Transjordan south of the Yarmuk, who predominantly were nomads. It could be argued that this group has no significant or direct involvement with the politics of the day or the general affairs taking place in the eastern part of Jordan. Significant to note is the presence of a temple in Amman in 1400 B.C. The importance of this temple is that it shared great commonality with the temple at Tananir. The Tananir's temple was located around Mount Gerizim, which was established two centuries before the temple at Amman. Therefore, the presence of these temples allows for a glimpse into the nature of life in the place from time immemorial. These temples acted as unifiers, bringing together the various tribes living in the vicinity or surrounding areas who were the temple's cult members.

Boling (1982:82) notes that in the west of Jordan, there was very little going on regarding the activities of the Egyptian Eighteenth dynasty. Palestine was less evolved than Ai during the third millennium. There was a beehive of religious activities in Ai, which could be compared to similar activities at Nippur in Iraq. The religious activities acted as a unifying factor that binds the city-states occupying the surrounding areas together. This differs from the unity seen amongst the Palestinian states, with the main source of their unity coming from the administrative activities of the Egyptians. Underneath the false unity lies a very high degree of uneasiness and instability caused by the Egyptian power play in the region. Evidently, the sole interest of the Egyptians was to acquire more territories in the region. In 1370 BCE, the Levant went through a turbulent period because of the conquest of "northern

Syria and the kingdom of Mitanni by the Hittite army” commanded by Shuppiluliumash; Hittite king. Important to note is that Egypt and Hatti managed to operate a relatively stable border in the north of modern Lebanon for a period of 150 years. There was relative peace as well along the “south eastward line below the great city-state of Hamath on the Orontes and north of Damascus.” Amarru, with its undefined territory, served as the border between Egypt and Hatti in the north. It is also important to note that the Amarna letters, recognized as critical historical evidence, came from Amarru. A considerable level of stability created a favourable atmosphere for the smaller city-states to thrive. The stability enjoyed by Egypt and Hatti favoured the smaller city-states as it gave them room to manoeuvre in their local politics and spurred economic growth. The battle of Kadesh on the Orontes remains the only known war fought between the Egyptians and Hittites. Ramesses II gave a well-written account of the events of the war. The war ended with no clear-cut victory for either side, and in due course, both parties signed a treaty. Israel was greatly influenced by the political machinations going on at the time. This experience will eventually play into their dealings with people of the region or other nations as time progresses. It is also important to observe that prior to becoming Israel’s “Promised Land”, “The land of Canaan” was part of Egyptian possession in Asia. Canaan was a well-defined territory. According to documents recovered from Ugarit, her citizens were referred to as foreigners in the northern city of Ugarit royal archives. Another critical source of information concerning the period is the Hittite vassal treaties. These were treaties the Hittite rulers entered into with conquered territories. The treaties revealed some kind of shared worldview between the Hittites and the Israelites. Especially, concerning the sphere of religion and in regards to the name and their understanding of God, which share great similarities.

Pitkänen (2010:41) says that Canaan during the Middle Bronze Age could be described as an urban area with urban areas and culture attracting a large number of people. Hence, lots of people came to settle in Canaan. The available archaeological evidence reveals fortified areas, showing the inhabitants were sophisticated. There was a form of centralized authority that lends credence to historians, etc., dealing with an advanced society. The Canaan city-states rivalled each other, as during the

period in question, Canaan had already developed into “a complex social set-up” with “a high level culture.” Available records point to the end of the Middle Bronze Age in the middle of the sixteenth century BCE, revealing a tumultuous end accompanied by a great degree of destruction. Most of the towns suffered destruction. However, not all the cities and towns experienced the same fate. Some of the towns continued to exist and became part of the Late Bronze period. Cities such as Hazor and Megiddo, which lie in the northern part, experienced minimal effect from the disturbances that occurred and were reconstructed. Important to observe is the fact that places of worship, like the temples in the cities that survived the impact caused by the sudden destruction, remained active and were used in the Late Bronze Era. Unlike the Middle Bronze period, the Late Bronze period recorded a number of people inhabiting the land of Palestine. It is believed that the exploitative economic activities of Egypt, who controlled Palestine in the fifteenth century BCE may have contributed to the development of this problem.¹⁵

Furthermore, Pitkänen (2010:42) notes that in documents discovered in the ruins of the ancient Ugarit that spans the period of 1400 to 1200 BC, evidence exists from which the historical background of the period could be gleaned. Important to note is the fact that Ugarit lies outside Canaan. Notwithstanding the question of location, the Ugaritic language, which most of the documents were written, shares striking similarity with biblical Hebrew. In addition, the literary style of Ugarit's poetic and mythological texts shares a close relationship with those found in the Bible of the same genre. Psalms share a lot of commonality with the poems found in the Ugarit documents. It is also important to observe that the names of the gods El and Baal were mentioned in the Ugaritic texts. These observations establish that serious similarities exist between the language and the worldview of the people of Israel and Ugarit as evidenced in their literature during the fourteenth-century period. The similarity does not stop only with Ugaritic and Israelites but goes beyond. The combination of evidence from the Ugaritic documents, the Amarna letters, and other archaeological sources brings to light the shared culture of the people who inhabited

¹⁵ The Amarna letters contains helpful information about the period and can be useful to a person who wants to explore the role of the Egyptians who were the dominating power of the day further. There are sources like Egyptian texts, monuments and inscriptions that attest to Egyptian dominance

the area. There was turmoil as well during the Late Bronze period. The Hittite empire, which was a dominant force in the century prior, collapsed in 1200 BC. People also moved in and around the region and farther afield. The Mycenaean world was going through a problematic period that eventually contributed to its demise. The Sea Peoples also migrated and settled in Cyprus and the Levant mostly during the Late Bronze period. Concerning this people group, some records show that the Egyptians fought against them, as attested in the famous reliefs Medinet Habu. Evidently, the Philistines who fought severally against the Israelites were members of the Sea Peoples group. They settled in the coastal area of Levant. The remains discovered in the Iron Age I sites attributable to them reveal that they occupied areas larger than those of the Israelites living in the highlands. In addition, other sites were discovered in Canaan, such as Megiddo, Beth Shan, Hazor and Aphek.

Pitkänen (2010:43) notes that Egypt's hold and influence over Canaan waned enormously during the period in question. Eventually, Egypt lost their dominance and control over the region in the middle of the twelfth century BC. It could be argued that the Late Bronze period Canaan experienced lesser growth in all ramifications. On the other hand, the Middle Bronze Age Canaan witnessed ascendancy in all aspects of its existence. During the Iron Age I, the era that replaced the Late Bronze period, Canaan returned to growth. There was an increase in settlement and as such, population growth. The increase was noticeable in the northern highlands, and these events were not restricted to Canaan but extended to the highlands of Transjordan. Arguably, the material culture in the places mentioned shared a great deal of similarities, which in a sense, confirms the idea of cross-cultural activities and cultural mix. There have been suggestions of a kind of population explosion taking place during the period of Iron Age I. A unique characteristic of the Iron Age I period was that a lot of new settlements sprang up in new sites. The buildings were of a form that could be described as uniform and were built in groups lacking the usual walled defences. It is also important to state that they were considerably rural in style and nature from the evidence uncovered. Essentially, there were differences in the architectural styles of the houses built in the highlands and those found on the sites

excavated in the lowlands. The latter retained the style seen from the Late Bronze settlements. There have been arguments and suggestions that something new occurred in the Canaan highlands during the Iron Age I period. The proponents of this idea and position attempt to justify their stand by referring to the mention of the word “Israel” by “an Egyptian pharaoh (Merneptah) around 1200 BC on a victory stele found at Thebes in 1896.” They argue that the Merneptah stele is a clear indication of the existence of Israel during the twelfth-century period, notwithstanding the fact that the stele did not elaborate on aspects of Israel’s existence, such as location or how the nation was configured. What is important to note is that it could be argued that the Merneptah stele represents the earliest mention of Israel in a source outside the Bible (Miller 2019:55).

McKenna (1996:205) discusses the decline of the Egyptian Empire that started with the end of the “powerful Eighteenth Dynasty” that was “located in Thebes” which “controlled Palestine and Syria and waged campaigns even to the Euphrates.” This dynasty was “weakened by the revolt of Amenophis I (Akhenaten; 1369-1352) against the Amon priesthood.” He (1996:206) opines that the revolt led to the “relocation of the capital at Akhenaten (Tel El Amarna)...” marking “the decline of the dynasty.” Ultimately, a military takeover in the late fourteenth century ended the dynasty. The Nineteenth Dynasty led by Seti I succeeded the previous dynasty. He started constructing a “capital at Avaris (Tanis) or Qantir 30km south in the eastern Delta.” The building of the capital continued on a grand scale under Ramesses II. However, during this period which is known as the Amarna period, “Egyptian control of Palestine begun to fade.” The Amarna letters evidently record the activities and events of this period. There was an unsuccessful attempt by Ramesses II to contain the expansion agenda of the Hittites “who were pushing down into Syria.” At the end, he was forced to sign a “treaty with Hattusilis III (ca. 1275-1250)...confirmed by a marriage alliance between Hattusilis’ daughter and Ramesses.” The agreement reached between the two nations defined “the Orontes River as the limit of Egypt’s northern influence.” This period of long struggle between the two entities weakened them. It culminated in the destruction of the Hittite capital and the empire's eventual fall to the sea people in ca. 1200. Egypt was not spared as its “power and influence

in Palestine faded and Nineteenth Dynasty fell ca. 1197.” Evidence shows that “the Assyrian Empire did not rise until ca. 1100.” “It was into this “power vacuum” in Palestine that the young nation of Israel began to flourish.” Grabbe (2023:90) notes that in regards to Assyria, “there was a 400-years ‘dark age’ from about 1750 to the beginning of the Middle Assyrian Kingdom (c. 1350-1050 BCE) during which time we have little information on Assyria.” He opines that during the period Assyria did not get the opportunity to expand. Rather the nation of Mitanni experienced growth and expansion. This led to the Assyrians losing their independence (c. 1450). Despite the record showing that Assyria was weak politically at that time, evidence shows that their king’s list continued to be updated. It is important to mention that in the year 1450 BCE (Grabbe 2023:90):,

the Mitannian king Shaushtatar made Assyria a vassal. But later the defeat of Mitanni by the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I (c. 1350 BCE) gave Assyria its chance to regain independence and begin to exert itself again.

After the Egyptian empire lost control of the Canaan and Palestinian area in the middle of the twelfth century BCE, the period that followed saw the individual city-states contesting for domination (Mckenna 1996:206). However, this period did not last long before other powerful empires emerged once more to impose their dominance on the region. In the discussion that follows, the writer will attempt to briefly engage with “Israel’s foreign sociopolitical context” after the demise of Egypt’s domination. The focus of the discussion would be on the age and characteristics of the Ancient Near East imperialism(s) that conquered Israel and Judea and the impact their individual cultures, worldviews and ideologies had on the wholistic life of the Israelites and Judah that arguably led to the emergence of the final copies of redacted Old Testament writings such as Joshua.

3.7 The Neo-Assyrian empire/imperialism: Historical overview and characteristics

Carr (2014:24) writes,

Sometime in the 700s BCE the nation of Israel was attacked and fell under the domination of the greatest superpower of its time, Assyria. The Assyrian empire was based in Mesopotamia, in what is now northern Iraq. Starting in the early 700s the Assyrians began conquering kingdoms to their west, gradually gaining control of the

plains and other country separating them from the Mediterranean and important trade routes.

This was also the period when Tiglath-Pileser III ascended the throne in Assyria. History records that Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) was a great king, a warrior and a successful commander and conqueror, also known as Pul (Bright 1972:270; Saggs 1965:20). He was also the “the first of an uninterrupted series of great soldiers on the throne of Assyria who quickly brought the Neo-Assyrian empire to the zenith of its power and created an empire in the ancient Orient which for the first time united almost the whole of ancient Orient under one strong ruler (Noth 1960:253). Liverani (2011:485) states that though Tiglath-Pileser III may have been a usurper, he certainly was a talented and energetic individual. Even from the very outset on the throne, he had faced internal and external challenges and problems, which he exceedingly and vigorously surmounted.

The extent of Neo-Assyrian (934-610 BCE) domination from the tenth century in geographical terms covered the area “from the Zagros Mountains in the east to the Levant (including Israel and Judah) and Egypt in the west (and perhaps Cyprus as well for a brief period), and from the Persian Gulf in the South to southeastern Anatolia in the north” (Berthelot 2021:33-34). It could be argued that the resurgence of power experienced during the Neo-Assyrian expansion was nothing other than a revival of the Middle Assyrian empire (c.1400-c.1050 BCE). The resurgence happened after the older empire experienced a period of decline in the eleventh and the beginning of the tenth century BCE (Berthelot 2021:34; Bedford 2009:30). Bedford (2009:41) states:

It is likely, then, that this first period should be viewed as an attempt to return to the political conditions of the MA period. From the Assyrian perspective, this might be considered not a new act of imperialism but rather the re-establishment of control over territories in rebellion against their long-standing overlord. They had tried to withdraw from the natural condition of belonging to Assyria. The significance of this is that it is possible to construe the Assyrian Empire as beginning in the fourteenth century (MA period), then experiencing a hiatus in the eleventh century, followed by recovery in the tenth century. Thus, the mechanisms of imperialism may in fact derive from a period earlier than the first millennium. That the NA kings saw themselves as standing in a tradition that reached back into the MA period is evidenced not only by the occasional reference by name to military exploits of MA kings but also by reference to the fact that “Assyrians” lived in these territories and had been displaced by Arameans and others.

The Assyrian king was seeking to return to political normalcy by reasserting Assyrian rule and returning Assyrians to towns and lands from which they had been displaced. So one motivation for the territorial expansion in this period, as well as in the next, was the correction of perceived political anomalies. Another motivation would seem to be economic, since the annals register the tribute exacted from these traditionally subjugated areas as well as the booty taken in one-off raids into territory (notably in Babylonia) that Assyrian kings recognized could not be retained. Also, in reconstituting "Assyria," polities abutting the territories under Assyrian control began to send gifts acknowledging Assyria's status.

Berthelot (2021:34) observes that prior to the ascension of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727) to the throne, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was made up of several tributary vassal states. During his reign, there was a noticeable change in policy and approach to the manner in which the conquered territories were governed. Tiglath-Pileser III introduced the system of provincialization of the conquered territories, an act that was more noticeable in the west. Bedford (2009: 45-46) observes that there is a fundamental difference between how the territories east and west of the Euphrates Bend were administered. The territories located in the east were incorporated into Assyria, while the ones in the west were not at the beginning. Historical evidence reveals that the Assyrians did not want to get involved wholly in the political affairs of the territories in the west. They were satisfied with these territories paying ransom and goods to them. These territories were accorded the privilege to remain under the rule of their various indigenous ruling families. This arrangement is referred to as clientship. What the Assyrians did was to use their military might to bully these nations into submission and, subsequently, to extort different kinds of payment from them.

Cogan (1993:412) says that even with this approach towards the administration of the provinces that lie in the west, the "Assyrian power and prestige" nonetheless, left enormous impact on the west. Interestingly, for the first time, the region that begins from "the Nile with Anatolia and the Zagros range" was unified by a single force. The deep changes that accompanied (Cogan 1993:412):

...the military and economic forces of the empire - the ceaseless movement of armies and merchants, the massive population exchanges, the flow of taxes, tribute, goods, and services-were followed by the unprecedented opening up of the Near East and precipitated a mixture of styles and fashions in all areas of life.

Furthermore, Cogan (1993:412) states that the Assyrians made it an official policy that inhabitants (or the newly admitted citizens) of the newly provincialized areas went through compulsory training and a period of learning to teach them “proper behaviour” (*inu*) as expected from an Assyrian citizen and befitting for an Assyrian citizen (a phase of socialization). Inferably, what actually made a massive difference at the end of it all “was a new cultural and technological koine, Assyro-Aramean in derivation, which ultimately dominated the entire region, wherever Assyria appeared. This koine insinuated itself into the very court of Nineveh (Cogan 1993:413).”¹⁶

“The development of provincialization marked a higher level of integration (Bedford 2009:42).” Bright (1972:271) states that the implementation of the harsh policy of deportation takes effect, especially at times “when rebellion occurred...” Tiglath-Pileser III “habitually deported the offenders and incorporated their lands as provinces of the empire, hoping in this way to quench all patriotic sentiment capable of nurturing resistance.” This policy of deportation was not new but was only revived by Tiglath-Pileser. However, those who reigned after him pursued the same policy. Similar to the other Syria-Palestine nations, Israel experienced first-hand the policy of deportation.

Liverani (2011:485) argues that the change in the system of government signifies a change in approach and method of governance. Here, the change in government is a reference to the fact that (Liverani 2011:485):

Their (*Israel*) ‘rebellion’ and subsequent punishment paved the way for the development of a new system, namely, their transformation into Assyrian provinces. Local dynasts were systematically replaced with Assyrian governors, and local palaces were reconstructed as Assyrian provincial palaces.

Parpola (2003:100) observes that:

There is, however, an essential difference between the Neo-Assyrian Empire and its predecessors that accounts for the 8th–7th-century expansion—namely, the strategy of systematic economic, cultural, and ethnic integration introduced by Tiglath-pileser III in 745 b.c.e. Until then, the Empire had only a relatively limited core area under direct control of the central government, with vassal states loosely tied to the center through treaties, loyalty oaths, and royal marriages. This political structure was by its nature unstable and required constant intervention on the part of the central government; over

¹⁶ The word “koiné” is applied here in a general terms and means “a common language used by speakers of different languages.”

time, it became not only impossible to expand the empire beyond certain limits, but also very difficult to maintain the areas already conquered, as demonstrated by the countless rebellions of the 9th century and the period of stagnation and shrinking in the early 8th century.

The new form of government denied some of the various conquered states the right to direct self-government without Assyrian supervision. It implies that in some cases, the Assyrians adopted the approach of a more centralized and unified form of government. The result was that some of the various vassal states were governed from the centre (Liverani 2011:485). This development could be attributed to the fact that the conquered states faltered in the agreement and loyalty oaths which they swore to the empire (Berthelot 2021:34). They defaulted in the payment of their tribute as of when due, and in most cases, these payments were left unpaid (Berthelot 2021:34). Liverani (2011:486) observes that "From an Assyrian point of view, the conquered states were all 'traitors', since they were previously tied to Assyria through relatively recent and more or less formal agreements." On the other hand, some of the conquered territories were governed by the Assyrians through indirect rule. Therefore, the Assyrians practised both direct and indirect systems of government. Bedford (2009:51) observes, "This mixed system of direct and indirect rule is consonant with many studies of modern imperialism, which include both direct and indirect rule within their definition of empire."

The new system was achieved through the enforcement of brutal and harsh policies that involved the displacement of a whole group of people or what could be regarded as forced massive deportation (Berthelot 2021:34). Oded (1979:41) explains that "The Assyrians used deportation as a punishment for the population of a state which, after recognizing Assyrian rule, rebelled against it." Parpola (2003:101), writes, "The drastic measures involved in the creation of new provinces were legitimized through vassal treaties that called for the total destruction of the vassal country in the event that it violated the provisions of the treaty." The deportation targeted mostly those in the upper echelon of society (the so-called elites, royals, priestly and intellectual class) who were believed to be the main people who designed and encouraged rebellion. Oded (1979:41) opines, "Deportation was one way of punishing a king and his people who broke their covenant with the king of Assyria." The Assyrians

believed that the enforcement of the deportation policy would enable them to break down “the political and cultural role of the local elite, and of repopulating and keeping up the production standards of the conquered territories” (Liverani 2011:487). Oded (1979:42) observes, “The use of deportation as a punishment, either for breach of treaty or for some other misdeed, was not only an Assyrian practice, but one that was common to all the peoples of the ancient Near East.”

Tiglath-Pileser III had his eyes set on conquering and possessing Syria-Palestine because of its strategic importance and location. Noth (1960:253) observes that one of the essential conditions for any Assyrian king to count his reign as successful was if the king possessed and controlled Syria-Palestine. Noth 1960:253 avers:

Syria-Palestine was not only a valuable object in itself because of its wealth in timber, which was so rare in the Orient, and its minerals, and its long coast line to the Mediterranean and its rich commerce, but at the same time it was the gateway to south-east Asia Minor on the one hand and to Egypt on the other.

Bedford (2009:44) argues that Tiglath-Pileser III’s main aim for conquering the western frontier was for economic reasons and not because he wanted to possess more land. At the time that he conquered the area, it could be argued that the Assyrian empire already had dominion through conquest over vast stretches of land, though conquering the west could not have made any major difference. However, it could be argued that generally, the undergirding factor that drove the Assyrian quest for expansion was economic gain (Bedford 2009:48). This was a case of the ruling class attempting (Bedford 2009:48):

to organize territory and people for its own economic benefit, to maximize agricultural output through a more efficient use of labor on newly opened cultivatable lands, to enhance the flow of luxury goods and raw materials to the center, and to keep the costs of running the empire as low as possible by lessening the threat of internal revolt.

Noth (1960:253) believes that, like the other kings before him, Tiglath-Pileser III, on ascending the throne, “took firm steps to incorporate substantial parts of Syria-Palestine in the Assyrian empire and to establish Assyrian sovereignty over the whole of Syria and Palestine.” By establishing actual dominion over Syria and Palestine, Tiglath-Pileser III surpassed what the Assyrian kings of the 9th century achieved. Formerly, the rulers were satisfied with “payment of tribute by Syrian and

Palestinian kings they conquered.” Tiglath-Pileser III entered from the north and conquered the northern part of Syria. Later, he conquered the southern part of Syria-Palestine. Before the southern and northern parts were defeated, Tiglath-Pileser III had already conquered central Palestine. These series of conquests fundamentally handed over the control of the land of Syria-Palestine to Tiglath-pileser. From that time onward, the course of the history of the land changed. Syria-Palestine would never be the same again as (Noth 1960:254):

...its history was henceforth determined very largely by the interplay of foreign powers, following one upon another, fighting among themselves and conquering one another. These powers were too overwhelming for serious resistance to their purpose to be feasible anywhere in Syria-Palestine for any length of time.

Bright (1972:267-268) notes that Israel was not exempted from this development as its fate is closely linked to that of the other nations that inhabit Syria-Palestine. Israel went through a tumultuous period after the death of Jeroboam II (746). What could be described in modern parlance as a leadership crisis (2 Kgs 15:8-28). In the year 743 BCE, Tiglath-Pileser began a series of campaigns into Syria. Initially, these campaigns faced resistance from a coalition headed by Azriau of Yaudi. Historians suggest that the individual is Azariah (Uzziah) king of Judah. However, because of the scarcity of information related to the subject, there have been suggestions as well that the king who was spoken about was the king of a small enclave that was part of the region in question. But no historical evidence attests to the fact that this small enclave existed. Therefore, there is the probability that Uzziah, though old at that stage and suffering from leprosy, saw the danger posed by the Assyrians and the need to avert such danger. This was after the death of Jeroboam. He opted to take over the mantle of leadership and thus, became the leader of the coalition that fought against the incursion of the Assyrians into their land. His actions were similar to Ahab's, which he had undertaken a century earlier.

He (1972:269) states that Israel had five kings in the space of 10 years after Jeroboam II. Three of the kings came to power by means of extreme violence. One of the victims of the succession battle was Jeroboam's son (746-745), Zechariah, who was killed after 6 months on the throne by Shallum ben Jabesh. He ruled Israel for a month and was subsequently murdered by Menahem ben Gadi. The reason

behind the battle of succession remains unknown. It could have been because of personal ambition, disagreement over policy or local rivalry (II Kgs. 15:16).

Liverani (2003:144) opines that Menahem (743-738 BCE) was the king of Israel when Tiglath-Pileser III arrived. The existing circumstance probably forced him to pay tribute to the advancing Assyrian king (2 Kgs 15:19-20). It is assumed that he surrendered to the Assyrian king too easily and quickly, hoping to gain assistance, support and protection from him. Menahem was facing internal crises during the period in question, besieged by enemies at the time. He was sitting on a shaky throne. The fact that he ceded the sovereignty of the nation to the invading Assyrians did not augur well with some of his compatriots. This development was seen as treacherous by many of his patriotic compatriots who felt that Menahem betrayed the nation and as such was a traitor. After his death, his son Pekahiah (738-737) succeeded him. He was murdered by one of his officers, Pekah ben Ramaliah (737-732), who became king. On ascension to the throne, Pekah joined an anti-Assyrian coalition which he led. He joined forces with the last king of Damascus, Rezin. This eventually led to war with Judah after he had waged war against Jerusalem. What followed was a period of national disaster for Israel, which arguably they never recovered from. The king of Judah, Ahaz (736-716) sought help from Tiglath-pileser and declared himself his servant. This resulted in conquering the northern part of Israel, allowing the Assyrian king to take possession of Galilee and Gilead (Liverani 2003:145).

Kaiser (1998:249) observes that Ahaz did not follow in the godly footsteps of his or grandfather. Ahaz reigned for twenty-eight years and was the head of the nation for sixteen years out of the total years that he was on the throne (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron. 28). The wife of Ahaz, who was also the mother of Hezekiah, was Abi the daughter of Zechariah (2 King 18:2). There is a high probability that Zechariah was once the king of Israel. The critical thing to observe here is that if it is correct, it will be the second time that the case of intermarriage between the southern and northern kingdoms is recorded. The fact that Ahaz was seen to be an idolater and his involvement with syncretism led to biblical writers' hostility in their presentation of the history of his reign. The demise of Ahaz could be attributed to the fact that he tried to

resist the coalition that was formed to resist the incursion of the Assyrians. His resistance resulted in multiple attacks by the kings of some of the nations that were part of the coalition. He (1998:250) says that prominent amongst these kings were Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Samaria. Their aim was either to force him to join the coalition or to replace him with an “unnamed son of *Tabee*” believed to be either the son or a relative of the king of Tyre who “was a strong advocate of the anti-Assyrian forces.” Eventually, the political machination of the time forced him to seek support from Tiglath-Pileser III. However, there are suggestions that even before the king of Assyria received the letter where Ahaz pleaded with him for support, his army was already marching towards the land of Syria-Palestine. Though the king of Assyria came to him, his coming did not bring relief. Instead, it caused him grief as his nation was subjected to a regime of heavy taxation and Assyrian domination.

Liverani (2003:145) notes that Tiglath-pileser did not conquer Samaria. But he succeeds in killing Pekah with Hoshea's assistance. He became king and reigned from 732-724. He served as an Assyrian vassal king, reigning over a reduced territory that comprised of Ephraim and Manasseh. The map of the remainder of the territory's left was redrawn. During this period, the king's annals reported that 13,520 Israelites were deported to Assyria. The reign of Hoshea continued for some years until he suspended paying tribute because the Egyptian Pharaoh by the name of So (2 Kgs 17:4) promised to support him. This promise never materialized because Shalmaneser V besieged Israel and took Hoshea prisoner. The same king went after Samaria, which fell in 721. Shalmaneser died not so long after the incidents and the great Sargon II, who succeeded him. Sargon claimed Shalmaneser's success as if the success took place during the first year of his reign.

Liverani (2011:487-488) argues that the survival of the conquered nation depended on their reaction to the conquest. However, they were mostly reduced to the barest minimum in the worst-case scenario and were never completely eliminated by Tiglath-pileser. During the same period, nations such as the Egyptians and the Arabs that were farther from Palestinian territories were on the rise. Historical evidence records that Egypt was busy instigating the nations located in the Southern Levant who was closest to them. Neo-Hittite kingdoms remained autonomous however, they

paid tributes to the Assyrians because of the defeat they previously suffered in their hands. Tiglath-Pileser III fought against the kingdoms of Urartu, Iran, Medes, and Babylon. He only had limited success. He never had a complete victory against the Babylonians, who remained a problem to Assyria. There were also the Chaldeans, who proved to be formidable and a brutal enemy because of the added advantage they had owning their location in the marshy southern lands that were almost impenetrable. Egypt was never completely subdued by the Assyrians. A series of rulers ruled Assyria after the death of Tiglath-Pileser. His direct successor was Shalmaneser V, whose reign lasted very briefly (726-722 BC). He brought to completion what his predecessor had begun in the land of Palestine by completely defeating them and thus forcing them to submit to Assyria. Israel was amongst the Palestinian states that were forced to submit completely to the authority of the Assyrians. Shalmaneser V was directly succeeded by Sargon II (Liverani 2011:491). Sargon II was succeeded by Sennacherib, his son, whom he chose to succeed him (Liverani 2011:491). Sennacherib's (704-681 BC) reign is well documented in the annals of history. The kings of Sidon and Judah were among those he fought. Both survived the siege he mounted against their territory.

Römer (2015:180) comments that prior to the Assyrians' siege on Jerusalem in 701, they had defeated Israel and carted the population away to exile. This led to the origin of the Jerusalem school's thought that the Judeans were indeed the true people of YHWH. The position that Jerusalem was the place where YHWH inhabited and that the people were the true people of YHWH was reinforced by the inability of the Assyrians to capture Jerusalem in 701. There was a noticeable shift in Jerusalem's demographics due to the events of 733 and 722. Archaeological evidence posits that the population of Jerusalem increased about fifteenfold during the period in question. Römer (2015:180) highlights that this development significantly impacted Judean administration "in the eighth century, and was progressively professionalized, reflecting the city's growing size." Hezekiah's reign began around this period. The exact date the reign of Hezekiah started is not known, but 728 may fit into the description of the beginning of his reign, based on the available evidence. It is believed that Hezekiah undertook extensive building projects

in Jerusalem during his reign. He (2015:181) observes that the biblical writers wrote favourably about Hezekiah, whom they compared to David and claims that no other king of Israel apart from David served YHWH the manner Hezekiah did (2 Kgs 18:3 and 5). The construction work undertaken by Hezekiah may have included the construction of a new Jerusalem wall or possibly repairing an existing one (2 Kgs 22:14). The Bible claims that “Hezekiah also constructed a tunnel 533 meters long to bring water from Guihôn to Jerusalem.” Perhaps, it is important to note the role played by Manasseh, who is believed to have been the king that started most of the construction that biblical writers attributed to Hezekiah. There is also the thought that most probably, the whole of the project attributed to Hezekiah was executed by Manasseh, who biblical writers greatly detested. Arguably, the hatred led to the attempt to expunge his records or attribute them to Hezekiah. Römer (2015:182) observes that the theory that attributes these achievements to Hezekiah instead of Manasseh gains ground “if Hezekiah did not in fact begin his reign until 715.” Römer (2015:181) says that the biblical writers spoke very favourably about Hezekiah because of his anti-Assyrian policies. It is recorded that Hezekiah revolted against the Assyrians (2 Kg 18:7). Though, the exact date that he carried out his revolt is unknown. There is the possibility that Hezekiah intended to revolt in 701. It is believed that Hezekiah may have had the intention “to join the rebellion organized by Ashdod” that Isaiah prophesied about. Römer (2015:183) opines that records show that:

In 701 Sennacherib undertook a campaign against Palestine that is very well documented archaeologically, especially at Lachish. There are even Assyrian reliefs at Nineveh that represent the siege and fall of Lachish. Further evidence is provided by the annals of Sennacherib, the oracles in the book of Isaiah, and two different narratives of the aborted siege of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 18–20 .

Furthermore, Römer (2015:187) notes that Judah suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Assyrians, notwithstanding that they did not capture Jerusalem. He believes that what was left of Judah after 701 was Jerusalem and some villages in its hinterland. Hezekiah is portrayed as a reformer who set the stage from which King Josiah continued. Hezekiah is somehow connected to Zion's theology. There is also the position that Hezekiah's reforms may have been born out of the political needs of

the time. It is thought that some of his actions were specifically carried out to rid Judah of the Egyptians' image, which was in line with the political development of the period. It was probably an answer to the geopolitical situation of the time. He says that this might in a way, be a reverse decision undertaken by Hezekiah to show his resubmission to Assyrian vassalage. This implies that he tried to show the Assyrians that he accepted their overlord and was no longer subject to the Egyptians.

Liverani (2011:491) observes that Sennacherib defeated the Chaldeans and the Elamites and finally crushed the Babylonians. Sennacherib chose his son Esarhaddon as his successor. In the process of establishing Esarhaddon as his successor, Sennacherib was killed by his other son, who was dissatisfied with his choice. This led to a family feud. Eventually, Esarhaddon (680-629 BC) prevailed, defeated the rebellious brother, and established himself on the throne. His policies were favourable to the Babylonians, his mother's place of birth/origin (Liverani 2011: 493).

About Esarhaddon, Liverani (2011:494-496) says that he defeated the Egyptians, but the Assyrians never gained complete control over Egypt. He died in his last military expedition to Egypt. Though, it is believed that he was already ill and died as a result of the illness. He selected his son Ashurbanipal as his successor before his death who became his successor. He also fought the Egyptians numerous times but never gained full control over Egypt like his father. Ultimately, he gave up on the attempt to gain control over Egypt. Under his command, the Assyrian army defeated Babylonia, which was then ruled by his brother Shamash-shum-ukin, who he described as an unfaithful brother. He appointed an Assyrian governor in the place of his brother, who was killed in the battle that resulted in the defeat of the Babylonians. He defeated Elam and Susa, and King Cyrus of Parsumash an ancestor of the great Cyrus II paid tribute to him. Thus pledging his loyalty to him. He defeated the Arabs but never took control of the lucrative commercial activities and routes in the Arabian Peninsula controlled by the Arabs. Under Ashurbanipal's command, the Assyrian army defeated many nations and fought against others without necessarily defeating them. However, at the time of his death, the other nations' defeats and subjugation did not guarantee lasting peace and tranquillity for the Assyrians. Nations such as

Egypt, the Iranian tribes, the Medes, Babylon etc., remained a threat to them. Historical evidence shows that the demise of the Assyrian Empire happened suddenly and is attributable to the rising threat from nations mentioned in the preceding sentence and others and old unresolved issues. The fact that the empire appeared to be at the peak of its glory did not stop it from sudden collapse.

Religion was, characteristically, of paramount importance to the Assyrians. Berthelot (2021:34) opines that their political and religious lives and activities were intertwined. Their wars were fought on the back of their religious belief and the view that their deity participated in their wars. The other Ancient Near East nations held the same view. The manner Assyrians crafted their treaties after defeating a nation as seen in the “succession (Vassal) Treaty of Esarhaddon (681-669) (EST or VTE)” demonstrates the fact that religion and politics go hand in hand (Berthelot 2021: 35). The defeated nation was compelled to swear an oath of allegiance and submission to the Assyrian deity Ashur and to the king of Assyria. “Acceptance of Ashur as one’s god was thus an aspect of the Neo-Assyrian ideology of rule...It does not mean that the cult of Ashur was actually imposed on the populations of the Neo-Assyrian empire (Berthelot 2021: 35).” Bedford (2009:53) notes that: “The earthly political reality was to mirror the cosmic political reality. If the oath was broken by nonpayment of tribute (= rebellion), the Assyrians were justified in undertaking drastic action against the perpetrators who had committed an offence against the gods.”

Parpola and Watanabe (1988:xxv) explain that the Assyrian treaty “performs several centrally important functions in Assyrian imperialistic policy.” These treaties were central to the wholistic enterprise of the imperial Assyria. They were employed in building the economy, securing military advantage over others, in trade, curbing rebellion among conquered nations, and subduing the other nations. The treaties also demonstrate the ability of the Assyrians to tap into the offerings of day-to-day politics shrewdly, other than only relying on brute and raw military power. In other words, it demonstrates the high level of intelligence that enabled them to become a respected and feared imperial power. These treaties were sophisticated and well-tested documents utilized strategically as a means to subdue the other nations. “In

short they were the very thing that made the Assyrian empire an empire (Parpola & Watanabe 1998: xxv).” Even in today’s world and context, the Assyrian method and approach to international diplomacy as a means for territorial expansion remain visibly present in the dealings of nations. The Assyrians apparently wrote the script for such an act for modernity.

The Assyrians left written evidence that serves as sources for historians and other interested parties, such as chronological texts, king lists, chronicles and eponyms list (year-names taken from the names of officials), and royal inscriptions such as annals, display inscriptions, votive inscriptions, letters to god (reports on military campaigns) (Berthelot 2021: 35; Bedford 2009:32). Important to note is the fact that the information available today emanates from the royal environment and were commissioned by the kings to document their exploits for the present and future (Berthelot 2021:35; Bedford 2009:32). However, it allows one to know about the activities of the kings (especially, their conquest ambition and how they accomplished it) and the ideology that undergirds such activities (Berthelot 2021: 35).

Berthelot (2021:35) states that stemming from the Neo-Assyrian ideology is the notion and claim that the king(s) establishes a universal empire. This claim can be seen from the royal titles taken by the kings such as “*sar kissiti*”, king of the whole (universe)). One can only conclude that the claim is ideological because there were other empires that existed alongside Neo-Assyria empires that are completely independent and strong as well. Neo-Assyrian imperialistic ideology cannot be judged to be unique or separate from that of the others that existed in the Ancient Near East. This could be observed from some of their belief system, such as the assumption that their deity Ashur rules the whole universe and is superior and that the will of Ashur must “be made manifest to the whole world” The manifestations of such belief are demonstrated in their war exploits and the manner they executed these wars. Simply, put, the wars were fought according to the will of the deity, and failure on the part of those conquered to submit to the Assyrians is seen as being disobedient to the will of their deity. The Neo-Assyrian kings were generously depicted in inscriptions, where they are lavishly praised and recognised as: good,

wise, perfect, guardians of justice, keepers of law and order etc. Arguably, the king commissioned the inscriptions to present himself to his people, his other subjects and even future generations as an upright and just person. Holloway (2002:90) highlights this position when he observes that “All modern critical synthesis of the political and military history of the Neo-Assyrian Empire rely massively on the “official” narratives texts and virtual sources created to immortalize the reigns of individual monarchs.”

Berthelot (2021:36) notes that the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions were objects of royal propaganda designed to present the kings as emissaries of gods on earth. She observes that scholars have debated whether the Assyrian kings equated themselves to gods or not or whether they were merely seen as “representatives/administrators” of the “gods” on earth or “something intermediate.” However, no existing evidence can be used to justify the claim that they equated themselves to gods or were worshipped as one. Bedford (2009:35) notes, “While the king was the supreme human being in Assyrian thought, he was a mortal all the same, and Assyrians resisted the deification of their ruler, which had been known in Sumer and early Babylonia.” What is important to note is that a common feature found amongst ancient empires is the notion that the king of these empires was the “rightful judge” and “that the empires were given a divine mandate to bring peace, order and law-and even civilization-to a world that is otherwise chaotic (Berthelot 2021:36).” Assyrian kings “...enjoyed absolute power over the state and had responsibility for good governance which included the care and feeding of gods and the maintenance of their shrines. He was the supreme and sole legislator and chief justice (Bedford 2009:35).”

Parpola & Watanabe (1988: xxii) opines that despite the claim made by the ancient empires, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was known for her brutality and merciless destruction and crushing of the king’s enemies Holloway (2002:194) says that the practice of religious imperialism by the Neo-Assyrians occurs only when the circumstance warrants that such measure should be applied. Usually, such moves were initiated as a response to rebelliousness by a conquered nation (Holloway 2002:195). In such a circumstance, they employ the use of violence, “plundering and

destruction of foreign temples, and the capture of their sacred images.” Thus, they visit such cities with calamities. Berthelot (2021:36) highlights the fact that these events are depicted in their inscriptions and reliefs. These inscriptions and reliefs portray the images and scenes of how the king’s enemies are tortured, mutilated, impaled, or buried alive. She argues that the “Assyrian imperial ideology was characterized by militaristic, violent and crudely expansionist language and visual representation.”

Bedford (2009:47) states that the final demise of the Assyrian Empire may have resulted from the privileges they accorded to the Babylonians, who ultimately brought them down. However, even with the demise of the Assyrian Empire, certain aspects of their political ideology remained in place and were “inherited by the Babylonians who continued to use it successfully, as did the Achaemenid Persians later.” One of the good things that emerged from the Assyrian system was the manner in which political power transited with the territories remaining intact. In simple terms, there was some sort of continuity. This implies that, in actuality, the empire did not cease to exist. He comments that what actually happened was that “the center shifted from upper Tigris south to Babylon, arguably continuing under the Persians with its center shifted again further east.”

3.7.1 The impact of Assyrian imperialism on Judah/Israel

Berthelot (2021:38) opines that historical evidence attests to the Assyrians' destruction of the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722-720 BCE. The capital, Samaria was destroyed, torn down and broken up, and Israel was reduced to a province of Assyria. Contrariwise, Judah did not suffer complete destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. Rather, it became a vassal state, which allowed her to enjoy a certain level of autonomy. Judah was not fully provincialized, unlike Israel, who suffered such fate at the hands of the Assyrians (Berthelot 2021:36; Parpola 2003:103). Thus, with the situation both territories found themselves in, they were definitely bound to experience the effect and impact of the Assyrian imperialism. Especially if one is to consider the nature of rule that the empire offered during that period of history in question. Noth (1960:254) observes,

In fact, the whole of the ancient Orient was affected by it and it soon proved to be not a mere passing storm but a historical turning-point of lasting significance. Along with other states of Syria-Palestine Israel now came to know the meaning of world history-within its own limited horizons- and all it could do was to endure the pressure. But this very endurance was instrumental in giving Israel an experience of the nature of world history

Hence, what would be affected or targeted for dilution by the Assyrians would be their culture, worldview and even tradition.

The discussion will proceed by attempting to establish Assyrian imperialism's impact on the culture, worldview, tradition, etc. of Israel and Judah. The discussion will attempt to engage with Assyrian influence on the elites, on the sphere of religion, literature production etc., as the writer believes that these are critical aspects, components and elements of culture, worldview, tradition, etc.

3.7.2 The Elites

Concerning the elites, it could be argued that in any nation, the elites, which comprise most of the ruling class, the wealthy and the well-educated class, exert great influence on the affairs of the state. This naturally makes them a target in the event of conquest as the observation was applicable both in the ancient period and what could be referred to as the modern period, as the writer has attempted to show through some of his arguments in the section of this dissertation that dealt with the topic of imperialism and colonisation. One of the important features of Assyrian rule was the use of treaties to subjugate the vassal states, and as of that period in history, few people could read and write (Liverani 2003:101). These people were mostly located at the upper echelon of society or were found mostly among the elites (Liverani 2003:101). This group of people were arguably the ones who could understand the Assyrian treaties very well. Therefore, they were the ones who possessed the ability to interpret it for the others.

Parpola (2003:102) notes that usually, the elites who were rulers of these nations faced constant threats and attacks from those amongst their subjects who had their eyes on the throne. This implies that they needed some sort of protection from the individuals who wanted to get rid of them to usurp their throne. What happened in this case was that with the Assyrian invasion, the elites, who were constantly

threatened by those who disagreed with the fact that they were rulers, resorted to asking the invaders for protection. Therefore, the invaders ended up as a type of saviour who rescued them from those keen on overthrowing them. For the Assyrians to render these services to the elites, they demanded that the elites concerned provide them with assistance to enable them to carry out the process of assimilation, which usually was their aim and goal in the first place. Some of the elites were willing agents, and others were coerced to consent. The Assyrians had the philosophy and culture of lavishly and elaborately entertaining the visiting delegates and dignitaries from the conquered territories as a means of placating them, and this form of treatment also assisted in softening the stance of these foreign delegates. The Assyrians also ensured that the exiled princes and aristocrats who were taken to Assyria through deportation got “thorough education in Assyrian literature, science and ways of life in general (Parpola 2003:101-102).” Perhaps it is important to note that the aim and goal of these activities were to see to it that these foreign elites were well grounded in the Assyrian way of life and properly integrated into the Assyrian system (Berthelot 2021:37). It is believed that the Assyrians mandated the elites to spread the Assyrian ideology amongst their own population as they are the ones who understand very well the wordings of the treaties (Cogan 1974:42-60; Parpola 2003:104). This implies that the elites served as a tool through which the Assyrians achieved their overall aim of integrating the entire population (Berthelot 2021:37).

On a closer observation, one could argue that the Assyrians employed two tactics in their bid to subjugate the conquered territories: *firstly*, the use of its military that used crude, ruthless and barbaric methods to create fear amongst the conquered population and *secondly*, “the benefits it offered to those who chose to cooperate”, especially, the elites (Parpola 2003:102). Historical evidence shows that the Assyrian kings “preferred expansion by treaties to expansion by aggression Parpola & Watanabe 1998: xxii).” They understood very well that “waging war was costly and time-consuming, and wasted the resources of both Assyrians and the target country Parpola & Watanabe 1998: xxii).” They were also cognisant of the fact that “By

contrast, the advantages of acquiring vassals and allies by diplomacy were self-evident (Parpola & Watanabe 1998: xxii).”

Following the above discussion, it is important to note that the Assyrians employed different means and tactics to subjugate the nations they conquered. However, the natives played an important role in the Assyrian imperial mission. As observed in the section that discussed imperialism, the collaboration arguably contributed greatly to the success of the Assyrian mission. However, one should also consider the question of the military might of the perpetrators of imperialism, in this case the Assyrians. Arguably, those who became collaborators were in a sense forced to do so. They either join or disobey the Assyrians, who would generally meet such resistance with extreme cruelty. The Assyrians are known for punishing severely those who resist their domination.

3.7.3 Language

The Assyrians also attempted to assimilate the local population linguistically (Liverani 2003:151). Parpola (2003:100-101) observes that the Assyrians opted for “a single *lingua franca*, Aramaic.” They encouraged (allowed) the use of Aramaic, a language that was arguably predominant in “the empire and in particular in the regions (Babylonia, Syria) where the majority of the deportees came from (Liverani 2003:151).” Aramaic was also widely used in Assyria during the eighth to seventh centuries in the sphere of administration as well as a spoken language alongside the Assyrian language. Important to observe is that the attempt by the Assyrians to achieve ethnic mixing through the policy of “multidimensional deportation does not appear to have favoured the spread of the Assyrian language, but rather that of the Aramaic, which was the language of the majority of the deportees (Liverani 2017:232).”

3.7.4 Religion

Cogan (1974:56) states that the Assyrians were not keen on assimilating the local population completely on matters of religion. Apart from obliging the locals to observe certain Assyrian religious ceremonies, they were generally left to pilot their

own religious affairs. However, during the historical period in question, a lot of acculturation occurred because of Assyrian imperialism. This factor can be seen in how the writer of 2 Kings 17:24-41 depicted the development of the Samarian cultus (Cogan 1993:413). Perhaps it is important to note that the story of 2 Kings 17:24-41 portrays a serious degree of bias in the presentation, signifying the antipathies, resentments, dislike, hatred, and bitterness that came to be the case between Israelites and Samaritans early in their relationship. However, one can argue that wholistically, the manner the story was presented in regards to the activities of (Cogan 1993:413)

Assyrian administration in a kingdom annexed as an Assyrian province is sound. The foreigners resettled in Samaria were free to adopt the local Israelite cult of YHWH; their private worship of a panoply of gods - of native gods brought with them from abroad and of the local god -was unencumbered by any public homage that may have been paid to the "weapon of Ashur" set up in the provincial capital.

In other words, the biblical writer's presentation gave a fair representation of the situation during the period in question.

Cogan (1993:413) notes that the Assyrian policy allowed foreigners "resettled in Samaria" freedom of choice in their religious affairs; the decision on the path of religion to follow was left in the hands of the individual concerned. Some of the foreigners chose "to adopt the local Israelite cult of YHWH..." The fact that they worshipped an array of gods (both the local god and the ones they brought from their places of origin or elsewhere) did not disturb them from also paying homage to the Assyrian god ("weapon of Ashur" set up in the provincial capital). Ashur whenever it is necessary or demanded. It is believed that even "the Assyrian masters aided the settlers in their search for the correct cultic form in which to worship YHWH (v. 27)." Judah did not stay away from matters of religion. Even though Judah lost most of its territory throughout the existence of the Assyrian empire, her influence on matters of politics was greatly reduced. Judah did not escape the process of religious assimilation even with the situation mentioned above in place. The society of Judah was rife with or boasted of the presence of foreign gods such as (Cogan 1993:413):

The Aramean design imported from Damascus, horses dedicated to the sun god as was common in Assyrian ritual, child immolation popular in Phoenician circles-all these items and more bear witness to the cultural wave that inundated Judah from all sides.

This development affected those in Judah who believed in the exclusive nature of YHWH as taught “in prophetic and Deuteronomistic circles....” However, their major concern lies with their own people who practised syncretism. The exclusivists harboured the opinion that these natives were the real threat to the survival of the Israelite tradition. They believed that the locals involved in syncretism were the ones most likely to cause the collapse of Israel’s culture and religion. They believed the main problem lies in the “adoption of foreign ways in a conscious fostering of new gods and new cults when the old one seemed to fail.”

Liverani (2003:151) notes that the mixing of the population from different origins created:

a widespread and variegated syncretism among several cults imported by the new arrivals: the persistence of the ‘Canaanite’ cults, and a modification of the Yahwism that some considered as the strongest element of self-identity and also of a link with the surviving kingdom of Judah.

The above development did not go down well with some of the orthodox Yahwists of the south (2 Kgs 17:29-34). This elicited some sort of resistance from this school of religionists. To counter the development, especially the situation that arose in the north, this group comprised of southern players, “took their religion in a more and more precise and exclusive direction” (Liverani 2003:152).

Kaiser (1998:252-255) states that Hezekiah's reign (729-686 B.C.E) started off as a coregency with his father, which lasted for thirteen years. The total number of years he was on the throne was forty-two (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron. 29-32). At the time of the commencement of the coregency with his father Ahaz, he was only eleven years of age. The king of Israel, Hosea, was in his third year of reign (2 Kings 18:1). Hezekiah was twenty-five years of age when he became a full monarch (715 B.C). Before he began his sole reign during the time of his father, he did not make any impact on the religious scene. However, he had sufficient experience during that period to decide what to do when he assumed full leadership. The knowledge he had, coupled with the decisions he made during the time of his father’s rule about religion, prompted him to initiate reforms when he took charge of the throne completely. Some of the things he did were reopening the temples his father closed

and abolishing the idol worshipping centres created by his father to appease his Assyrian lords, restoring the Jewish calendar and reinaugurated the celebration of the Passover celebration. Hezekiah's ambition when he restored the celebration of Passover was to restore unity amongst the children of Israel (2 Chron. 30:1-9). He also made an attempt to restore the supremacy of the Law of Moses in all religious activities.

Thompson (2013:193) notes that during this period of political turmoil in Judah, Hezekiah tried to assimilate the new arrivals and to reform the existing religion to reflect the "new political religion" in accordance with the "Assyrian principles of treaty and covenant." This resulted in the attack and destruction of the Phoenician-Canaanite religious establishments. Along the line, Sennacherib attacked Judah in 701 B.C.E and destroyed it (Josh 15:20-63). Judah was beseeched and this led to the deportation of a lot of Judeans, increased the amount of tribute that he was collecting and took many hostages. It is also important to note that there are doubts about the accuracy of the account given by the Deuteronomistic historian concerning the history of this period. He selectively excluded from his reports events that are related to the Assyrians.

Thompson (2013:193-194) argues that the Deuteronomic historian, who probably was Judean, harboured some sort of resentment towards the Assyrians and, as expected, was favourable to the cult of YHWH. For example, the Deuteronomistic historian deliberately did not speak about the struggle between Shalmaneser III and a coalition of Syria, which included Ahab and Adad-Idri of Damascus. In the place of this battle, the Deuteronomistic history chose to speak about a battle between Israel and Damascus.

Berthelot (2021:36) observes that the Bible and archaeology contain considerable records that attest to Assyrian political and cultural influence in Judah that dates to the time of Manasseh (692-638). This evidence could be seen in local objects such as seals and cult objects recovered from excavated areas. It is also important to observe that biblical records from Israel and Judah about the Neo-Assyrian period count as the most comprehensive source that presents the perspective of

subjugated persons. This is also the case with Roman imperialism, apart from the Greeks, who equally left documented accounts of their experience with Roman imperialism. Furthermore, it could be argued that portions of the Bible (Is 1-39, Am and Dt) bear the mark of the influence of Assyrian literary traditions.

3.7.5 The development of the concept of a universal God

Scholars argue that the Israelites and Judeans developed the idea and notion of a universal God from Neo-Assyrian religious ideology (Berthelot 2021:37; Levine 2005:411). Scholars who subscribe to this position believe that the idea is reflected in biblical writings such as Deuteronomy, First Isaiah, Amos and Micah (Berthelot 2021:37). And that the idea emanated from the Israelites and Judeans observing the manner the Assyrians conceptualized the being of their deity and their king through their interaction politically and theologically. Carr (2014:35) argues that Hosea modelled his understanding of YHWH on the Assyrian King. He (2014:35) opines that Hosea, "...redescribed Israel's God, Yahweh, as a (partial) reflection of the world-dominating, subordination-demanding Assyrian emperor..." Parpola (2003:104-105) cites Deuteronomy 13 as a clear case of the writer replacing the image of the Assyrian king, who is greatly feared, with the image of God of Israel. He (2003:105) argues that "the Deuteronomic concept of God, which according to current scholarly consensus evolved in the late 7th or early 6th century B.C.E. and is basic to all later Judaism, is heavily indebted to Assyrian religion and royal ideology."

Levine (2005:411) argues that the approach taken by the Israelites and Judeans or to be more precise, the Deuteronomist historian in his presentation of the history of Israel serves as a counter-reaction to the threat the Assyrians posed to the survival of the nation of Israel and Judah which includes their religion. Considering the context at the time of the Assyrian imperial domination, the Israelites needed to find a way to preserve their national identity, which was under attack from the Assyrians (Berthelot 2021:38). This led to the invention of the polemic of an Israelite God that was in charge universally (Berthelot 2021:38). This became a kind of answer to the Assyrian idea and claim that their Ashur was in charge of the universe, hence, their countless defeat and victory over other nations. The Assyrian worldview assumed

that the deity communicates with human beings directly, especially, the king (Bedford 2009:35). What is important to observe here is that, as a whole, the concept of the divine as both parties attempted to project it has to do with the role the divine plays in people's lives as individual (personal) and as a collective (state). In a different sense, one can argue that this amounted to the personalization and politicization of the deity. In his work, "Mythic, thematic, and socio-political approaches to Israelite monotheism" Levine discusses the necessity of differentiating between "the divine in creation" and "the divine in history (2005:411)." He opines that, "If we are to achieve greater clarity as to the true character of Israelite monotheism, it will be necessary to liberate ourselves from the dominance of certain methodologies that have held sway." He (2005:411) argues that,

One often encounters the view that the roots of monotheism go back far in human experience, to very ancient notions of a unified cosmos under the rule of a supreme, creator god. This essentially mythological approach has much to contribute to our understanding of monotheism, to be sure, but it can also be misleading.

Referring to the work of H.W.F Saggs (1978:30-92); he opines that the moment a person takes this particular approach in his understanding of the concept of the divine, the person fails to distinguish between "the divine in creation" and "the divine in history (Levine 2005:411)." To further clarify this argument, Levine (2005:411) adds "The notion of the "cosmos as a state" (a phrase that was originally used by Thorkild Jacobsen 1946, and cf. Jacobsen 1963) plays a critical role in understanding how the divine was conceptualized by the people of Mesopotamia and later Israel. He (2005:411) explains that "cosmos as a state"

...is a dynamic projection of human existence on earth. It expands in rhythm with the broadening of human social and political horizons – from a celestial city-state, governed by a divine council, to a kingdom of deities, to a cosmic empire. Innovations in configuring the god-idea did not originate in such mythic projections, however. They are rather a function of the "divine in history", where we find that political entities and leadership roles are projected onto or reflected in the god-idea, ultimately of a world empire ruled over by an imperial king.

Levine (2005:411) states:

In considering such developments, we must bear in mind that long periods of time elapsed until the cosmic, celestial horizon, already experienced by humans at an early period, was translated into a socio-political awareness of interconnected human societies, inhabiting far-flung regions of the known world. In fact, such a global horizon is

a feature of the Neo-Assyrian period, exemplified by the many lands that are encompassed by the "Sargon Geography", a *mappa mundi* recently re-edited and discussed by Wayne Horowitz (1998: 67-95). The implications of its measured distances and relative locations have been discussed by Mario Liverani (2001). It was the very expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire that broadened the horizon of identification of many peoples of the ancient Near East, the Israelites among them.

Levine (2005:412) says that literally, they equated the authority of a human king to their perception of what a divine king should be like. Ideologically, they created an earthly king with the attributes of a perfect king and developed a concept of divine king and temporal king from such idealisation. Israel was not immune from such thought. From available historical evidence, it could be argued that Israel modelled their God after the Assyrian king. However, many biblical scholars will prefer to reject this position because of its theological implications. However, a critical analysis of Isaiah 9:5-6 and 11:1-10 reveals the theme of an ideal king that is similar to that of the Assyrians. The story could be reinterpreted to mean that Yahweh was the ideal king. Yahweh is the one who endows the earthly king with his personal attributes. To demonstrate the close affinity between the Assyrian and Israelite religions, Levine cites an Assyrian prophecy given to the Crown Prince Assurbanipal where kings from other places came to seek his wise counsel and arbitration of their dispute. This prophecy is comparable to the "vision of world peace in Isaiah 2/Micah 4 (Levine 2005:412; Parpola 1997:38, 11. 8-13)."

Levine (2005:411) believes that the Israelites reversed the discourse of the Assyrians and created a different meaning from it. The type of meaning that changed what seemed to be hopelessness to hope. Israel's deity became the lord of history who determined the fate of all humankind, including the Assyrians. Even the Israelites' defeats at the Assyrians' hands were interpreted as a deed sanctioned by the God of Israel. The Israelites made a bold claim that their deity was superior to that of the Assyrians. And since the Assyrians were like superpowers of that age, this claim implicitly implies that the God of Israel is superior to every other deity in the universe. This idea was core to the development of Israel's monotheism. This could also be regarded as an imitation of the original Assyrian religious idea about their Assur. Viewed from the perspective of imperialism, it could be argued that the Israelites responded to the situation they found themselves. One of the ways in

which they could mount resistance to the imperialistic situation was to create an ideology of hope. Otto (2013:342) explains that Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History writers intentionally copied from Assyrian texts. He believes that what makes the Israel version different from those of the Assyrians was that the Jewish scribes intentionally intended to create a subversive text from what was there. He (2013:342) writes

This kind of reception was meant to reject the political and religious claims of the hegemonic powers, in this way defining and strengthening the Judean religious identity. The Assyrians did not launch wars, which the Assyrian king had to wage annually, in order to spread their religion. But these wars had, all the same, a religious foundation, which was a challenge to Judean intellectuals in the priestly circles in Jerusalem.

This same ideological culture persists throughout the Old Testament and later in the New Testament (Levine 2005:411):

In such terms, universal monotheism is to be seen as a religious response to empire, an enduring world-view founded on the proposition that all power exercised by humans, no matter how grandiose, is transient, and ultimately subservient to a divine plan for the whole earth, for all nations.

One needs to recognise that both nations' lives are technically intertwined, considering that they existed in the same environment. However, it could be argued that the Assyrians operated a more advanced society, going by what is recorded in history. Therefore, even their religion was more clearly defined. That is, if one is to operate from the point of view that the more advanced a society is, the clearer and better defined its religion usually is. Parpola (1997: xiii-cviii) is of the view that Israel's monotheism, which is a concept that is closely related to the idea of henotheism, has its origin in the manner the Assyrians conceptualized the worship of their gods. Perhaps what should be highlighted is the complexity surrounding the supposed role of Ashur, who was considered the supreme deity (national) of the Assyrians in their national religious life. The same complexity arguably surrounds the existence of Israel's supreme deity.

3.7.6 The Neo-Assyrian loyalty treaty as a model used in the development of Israelite thought on God's covenant with Israelites

Berthelot (2021:40) observes that in 1955, the vassal treaty, which Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, made with nine eastern vassal kings in 672 BCE was discovered in the temple of Nabu at Nimrod. The treaty is also referred to as Esarhaddon's succession treaty because of its content. The basic nature of the treaty is a loyalty oath sworn by the vassal states to honour the ambition of Esarhaddon. The essence of the loyalty oath is to assure that his son Assurbanipal becomes his successor as Assyrian king in the case of his death (Berthelot 2021:40; Levinson 2010:342; Weinfeld 1972:116). Frankena (1965:129) highlights the fact that:

In the 32 paragraphs of the treaty stipulations Esarhaddon tries to be exhaustive in mentioning the possibilities of rebellion after his death, because he will certainly spare his son of the trouble he had seen himself after the death of his father Sennacherib. There is no doubt that most stipulations draw upon real events and that a great amount of human experience lies behind the clause.

The nature of the content of the treaty attracts enormous attention because of its striking similarity with some portions of the book of Deuteronomy. This similarity could be observed clearly in Deuteronomy 13 and 28.

In view of Deuteronomy 28, Frankena (1965:145) observes that "If we take into account that a Judean scribe had to omit all the polytheism of an Assyrian text in adapting it to a Hebrew context, we may discover curse texts, similar to the vassal treaties, behind the text of Deut. xxviii." He opines (1984:145) that

The correspondence between the texts...are more than accidental parallels caused by the use of the same sources, in some instances the resemblance is so close that the phrasing of some curses of Deut. xxviii may be supposed to be an elaboration of an Assyrian 'Vorlage', whereas the curse sequence of Deut. xxviii follows roughly the Assyrian text

Levinson 2010:342 argues that:

The loyalty oath imposed by Neo-Assyrian monarchs on their vassals and citizens provided the model for much of the material in Deuteronomy 13 (especially vv. 2-6, 7-12). The model's prohibitions against incitement and warnings against disloyalty in the political sphere were reworked by Deuteronomy's authors into laws addressing disloyalty to Yahweh as the "Overlord" of Judah: that is, to prohibit apostasy. In the process of reworking VTE for its own legal and literary purposes, Deuteronomy also subverted its source by replacing Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal with Yahweh as the object of the demand for exclusive loyalty. The instrument of Neo-Assyrian imperialism, as transformed by the Judean authors of Deuteronomy, thereby supported an attempt at

liberation from imperial rule; the literary reworking came in the service of a bid for political and cultural autonomy.

Another copy similar to the first treaty (*ade*) was discovered at Tell Tynat in an unidentified temple on the border of Southern Turkey (Levinson 2010:340; Berthelot 2021:40). The new discovery led to the confirmation of the idea that the Assyrians imposed a similar treaty on the eastern vassal nations (Levinson 2010:340; Berthelot 2021:40). Since, the first treaty was discovered in the east and dealt specifically with political issues patterning the region. Interestingly, the first treaty never made mention of the deities associated with the west. The fact that this particular piece of vital information was not included led to a scholarly argument that revolves around the reason behind the omission (Levinson 2010:340). One explanation for the omission is that it is probably because of the damage caused by the long existence of the work. Another probable reason for the non-inclusion is that the first treaty is specifically designed for the eastern vassal nations (Berthelot 2021:40).

Berthelot (2021:40) notes that these treaties were discovered in temples where they were on display, which led to the argument that a copy of the treaty may have also been on display in the Jerusalem temple. This implies that the scribes and the elites in general, knew about its existence and probably had extensive knowledge about the nature of the content. The importance of this discovery lies in the fact that on critical examination, it was discovered that the Esarhaddon succession treaty shares a lot in common with Deuteronomy 28 and others. Similarly, Rintje Frankena (1965:148) opines, "It is not only possible to discover behind the words of Deut. xxviii 28–34 the phrasing of the Assyrian parallels, but an analysis of these curses even tells us something about the working method of the Judaeen compiler." Deuteronomy 28 speaks about curses as a form of retribution that God will impose on Israel if they happen to be unfaithful to his covenant. This form of writing is not present anywhere in the Bible, and therefore, there are no biblical parallels that would explain the order (Berthelot 2021:40). The only exception is found in Leviticus, where it appeared in the form of a direct speech instead of an indirect speech (Berthelot 2021:40). However, this rhetoric style is widely attested in the Vassal Treaty Esarhaddon. Both Deuteronomy 28 and the Vassal treaty of Esarhaddon

contained words like annihilation, sterility, pestilence, drought, blindness, sickness and starvation (Weinfeld 1972:120; Levinson 2010:339). And phrases like subjection of an enemy, corpse left unburied, skin diseases, lack of saviour or intercessor and deprivation of property and everything held dear. What is important to note is that these curses follow the same order of presentation in their appearance in Deuteronomy and the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon (Weinfeld 1972:120; Levinson 2010:339).

Levinson (2010:340) notes that there are also opinions that oppose “the idea of direct literary dependence in the case of Deuteronomy and VTE.” This implies that “The idea that Judean scribes might have had training in cuneiform in the Neo-Assyrian period has been challenged.” This argument is seen as a possibility considering the fact that (Levinson 2010:340):

The ability of Syro-Palestinian scribes to work in cuneiform is evident in the eighth-century bilingual inscription from Tell Fekherye in north-east Syria, with Neo-Assyrian on the front and Aramaic on the back. A scribal school was established by the Neo-Assyrian Empire in Syro-Palestine, at Huzirina, not far from Harran.

Levinson (2010:341) notes that Neo-Assyrian influence on Israelites is attested by Ahaz (735-715 BCE) becoming a vassal to the Assyrians. This action came about because he needed to gain Assyrian support during the Syro-Ephraimite war. This policy was maintained by Hezekiah (715-687) during his kingship. It could be argued that a vassal arrangement was already in place in the eighth century BCE. Therefore, as of that stage, the Assyrians had imposed their loyalty oath on Ahaz and his people. The loyalty oath was part of the Assyrians' administrative and political strategy. He (2010:342) observes that Josiah's reform was fundamentally a continuation of Hezekiah's policy and is believed to be a reaction to a perceived historical crisis. It could be said to be an essential bid to preserve Judean's “cultural, political, and religious autonomy” and to preserve their “cultural and religious integrity.”

Following the discussion, it could be said that there are strong possibilities that Jewish scribes copied the model of Neo-Assyrian loyalty texts to develop further the texts of Deuteronomy 28 and 13 and others. This implies that the Israelites, like the

other ANE nations, had already worked with similar ideas in their literary endeavours. However, those who were involved in the redaction of Deuteronomy took advantage of the knowledge they possessed about Assyrian literature production. They selectively appropriated and transformed part of the ideological language of their Assyrian lords. They adapted the knowledge and made it part of Israel's tradition. This was not unusual considering the fact that an imperial relationship existed between them. Usually, the colonized consciously or unconsciously borrow from the culture of their imperialistic overlord (Römer 2015:197).

3.7.7 Concluding remarks

In this section, we discussed some of the characteristics of the Neo-Assyrian Empire/imperialism as it concerns Israel. We discussed the political situation in ANE during the time of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the impact it had on Israel and Judah. One of the key subjects that the discussion engaged with is the events that unfolded during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (700 BCE) and the fall of Jerusalem (701 BCE), which was accompanied by the exile of the inhabitants of Israel. The discussion included Neo-Assyrian domination's impact on Israel's language and religion. We also discussed the development of the concept of the universal God during the Neo-Assyrian period. Furthermore, we discussed the concept of the Neo-Assyrian loyalty treaty as a model used in the development of Jewish thoughts on God's covenant with the Israelites. It is important to note here that their interaction on different levels led to a cultural mix. In other words, there was hybridization of culture. Subsequently, the discussion will move to the characteristics of the Neo-Babylonian Empire/imperialism.

3.8 *The Neo-Babylonian empire/imperialism: historical overview and characteristic*

Ahlstrom (1993:46) opines that after the death of Nabopolassar, his son Nebuchadnezzar (also spelled Nebuchadrezzar), who participated in his military campaigns, became the king of Babylon. Berthelot (2021:46) believes that the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire happened following the Neo-Assyrian Empire's gradual

collapse. The collapse created room for Nebuchadnezzar (626-605 BCE), who reportedly founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BCE) to fill up the leadership vacuum left behind by the demise of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. He took over most of the places conquered by the Assyrians. The places he inherited from the Assyrians include the “western provinces that bordered the Mediterranean sea and Neo-Babylonian hegemony would eventually extend from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and Iranian plateau with Babylon as its capital.” Babylon became the de facto political capital of the Ancient Near East from the sixth century onward. History records that Babylon remained as capital for less than a century before disappearing, a time frame considered short by many historians. However, many unofficial written materials and sources left behind in the short period attest to its activities and history. Perhaps it is important to note that the sources they left behind were not official state sources like those found in the Assyrian archives. Most of the “texts come from temple and private archives (Dandamayev 1991:252).” This makes it difficult to ascertain how the state was organized. However, there is an indication that the Babylonians maintained “The dual system of provinces under direct rule and vassal states paying tribute (Berthelot 2021:46).” Dandamayev (2006:374) opines that:

Along with the autochthonous population of Babylonia, there were in the country about 30 ethnic groups, some of which had their own area under the jurisdiction of their prefects, who were overseers of landholders of these groups. For instance, an "assembly of Egyptian elders" functioned in Babylon that made decisions concerning lands belonging to individuals of Egyptian extraction (Camb. 85). Also known are "the elders of Judah" (Ezekiel 8:1), that is, chiefs of Judahite settlements in Babylonia who decided problems related to the internal administration of these communities (a prototype of the Hellenistic *politeumata*)

It is also important to note that some also dispute this position, with scholars not reaching a consensus about the subject. Perhaps, it is important to observe that (Dandamayev 1991:252):

...the citizens of Babylonian cities were exempt from military conscription and corvee. A characteristic feature of these cities was self-rule by free and legally equal members of society united in a popular assembly (*pabru*) around the principal temple of the city.

Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians in 609 BCE and continued with the campaign to consolidate the gains of the Neo-Babylonian Empire without ceasing.

Ahlstrom (1993:781) discusses the event that followed the death of Nabopolassar. He (1993:781) observes that:

The political constellation changed in 605 BCE. In the following year Nebuchadrezzar, who in September of 605 had succeeded his father on the throne, marched with his army through Syria-Palestine (*yatti*) down to the Philistine coast without any military opposition.

This event took place after the conquest of Egypt. He (1993:781) argues that the defeat of the mighty Egyptian army at the battle of Carchemish, who were at the time the dominant force and imperialist lord of most of the nation-cities found in Syria-Palestine created enormous fear and disillusion among “the petty rulers of Syria-Palestine.” These rulers had “no choice other than to accept Babylon’s rule.” Following the development, “All the kings of *Hattu* came into his presence, and he received their vast tribute’. It is possible that the tribute was presented to Nebuchadrezzar in *Riblah*. Jehoiakim of Judah was most probably one of those kings.

Nebuchadnezzar reconquered the land of the Syrian-Palestine, which previously was under the control of the Neo-Assyrians. However, as of the time of the conquest of Syrian-Palestine, the Assyrians were no longer in control. Noth (1960:279) observes that the Babylonians “obtained possession of Syria-Palestine as a result of its victory over Egypt.” Egypt seized control of the land of Syria-Palestine after the fall of Assyria and ruled it for a very short while to be replaced by the Babylonians. Furthermore, Noth mentions that Nebuchadnezzar slew the king of Egypt, Pharaoh Necho. As of the time the incident took place, Nebuchadnezzar was not yet a king; he was a crowned prince and was handed sovereign powers by his ailing father to oversee the affairs of the state. Perhaps it is important to mention the fact that Pharaoh Necho killed King Josiah.¹⁷ Römer (2015:208) explains that “The biblical authors are terse about the end of their favourite king, which seems to have been rather less than glorious...” Biblical account records that Josiah was killed at Megiddo. Concerning the circumstances surrounding his death, Römer opines (Romer 2015:208):

¹⁷ See 2 Kings 23:29–30.

It is not clear whether Josiah wanted to challenge the Egyptian king, which is one possibility, given that Megiddo was part of the territory controlled by Egypt, or whether he had been summoned by Necho, who thought he was an unreliable vassal.

Furthermore, Römer (2015:209) also referenced the account given in 2 Chronicle 35 concerning the killing of Josiah by Necho. He observes that, “According to this version Josiah died because he did not listen to the words of the pharaoh, Necho, which were inspired by Yhwh.” In addition, the Chronicler states that he did not die at Megiddo, but in Jerusalem.

Ahlstrom (1993:782) opines that Nebuchadnezzar made further gains when he conquered Ashkelon in December of 604 BCE, capturing their king, Aga (Hab. 1:5-10). This probably made King Jehoiakim panic, knowing fully well that he had no chance against the rampaging force of Nebuchadnezzar. Seeing that his kingdom was in danger, he quickly switched allegiance to Babylon, effectively ditching the Egyptians. His action culminated in the payment of yearly tribute to Babylon that lasted until 600 BCE when he rebelled (2 Kgs 24:1). There have been suggestions by historians that the Ashkelon rebellion happened because of the defeat that the Babylonian army suffered at the hands of the Egyptians in 601/600. About this incident, the Babylonian text states that there was a clash between the two armies and the Babylonian army withdrew or pulled back. However, the withdrawal could only be attributed to the defeat they suffered at the hands of the Egyptians. The Egyptians did not relent following their victory. Rather, they went on to reconquer the southern coast, effectually retaking Gaza (cf. Jer. 47.1). The resurgence of the Egyptian army warranted that Jehoiakim reposition himself to align with the unfolding events. The probable reason for his rebellion against the Assyrians may have been to avoid getting punished by the Egyptians for breaking his oath of allegiance with them and terminating the vassal relationship between the two states. Because the Babylonians withdrew their forces from Judah, the Egyptians regained control of southern Palestine. He (1993:783) notes that this series of events led Nebuchadnezzar to retreat to Babylon, his home ground, to regroup and rebuild his army. On the other hand, it allowed the Egyptians to strengthen their army in readiness for future confrontation. One of the significant accomplishments of Necho, the Egyptian king at that period, was to increase his military presence in the sea.

This entailed that he formed a relationship with the Greeks, who were masters of the sea. Necho also tried to build some sort of coalition at home and build back his reputation as a formidable leader amongst his own people.

Liverani (2003:184) observes that with the above situation in place, there was a power vacuum, which Jehoiakim took advantage of to rebel against the Babylonians. As of the time of the rebellion, Jehoiakim had already been a tributary of the Babylonians for three years. At this juncture, it is essential to mention Tyre's part in the unfolding event. They were also rebellious against the authority of the Babylonians. The King of Tyre and Jehoiakim capitalised on the existing power vacuum to attempt to follow "policies of autonomous development that could not be fulfilled without at least an attempt to resistance." The Babylonians led a siege on Jerusalem and Tyre to crush the resistance. The year that Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon was 598, the same year that he died. He was replaced by his son, Jehoiachin, who was 18 years old. The new king's resistance to the Babylonian siege did not last for long. He surrendered to the Babylonians, who deported him, along with his family, members of the ruling class, and specialized craftsmen. The Babylonians carted away the temple treasures and carried precious wares from the palaces, including Solomon's original golden furnishings. However, the quantity and amount of removed wares cannot be ascertained definitively because, on different occasions previously, tributes were paid or the invading army carted away precious objects. Zedekiah, the third of Josiah's sons and the uncle of Jehoiachin, was appointed vassal king by the Babylonians. On the other hand, Tyre resisted the Babylonian siege for 13 years (598-585). The main reason why it lasted for so long was its location. Tyre was an island state, making it difficult for the Babylonians to apply their usual siege strategy. Eventually, Tyre capitulated. The defeat of Tyre was received with manifest satisfaction by the Judean prophets and celebrated by the other members of the Ancient Near East who had seen Tyre grow economically to their detriment (Liverani 2003:185).

The Babylonians attempted to present their method and approach to battles as less brutal and more humane. However, the picture that could be gleaned from the writings found in Habakkuk 1:6-10 about the battle between Babylon and the Syria-

Palestine nations was one of gruesomeness. It also speaks about a local population terrified by the acts of the Babylonians. Liverani (2003:183) believes this was a question of the communication strategy each prefers to adopt. He (2003:183-184) observes that the Assyrians,

...in their celebrative inscriptions, as well as palace reliefs” *preferred* to portray a “real strategy of terror, while the Chaldeans tried to promote an image of benevolence and devotion to the care of the temples, even omitting military deeds from their celebrative inscriptions. When they do mention them, they point to the liberation of the people and the cultic use of their resources, virtually without mention of the cruelties of war.

Liverani (2003:184) attributes the above development to the fact that by the time the Babylonians emerged as the leader of the Ancient Near East, the greater population of the region were tired of the Assyrian destruction and wanted freedom from such brutality. People wanted a different kind of freedom from the type the Assyrians offered. So, the Babylonians were reacting to the demands of time. Wiseman (1991:239) regarding Nebuchadnezzar’s character, observes that “The Daniel tradition stresses his interest in the Babylonian scribal and priestly arts, susceptible to religious influences yet dominant over his court officials.” Furthermore, he (1991:239) states that:

The portrayal of the king in a unique propaganda document as “king of justice” shows him to have been a reformer on the classical lines familiar from the days of Urukagina and the better Hebrew kings. He claims to have taken the side of the weak, poor, crippled, widowed against oppressors, enabling them to win a just hearing of their cases. He suppressed bribery and ceaselessly worked to please the great lord god Marduk and for the betterment of all peoples and the settling of the land of Babylonia

However, Liverani (2003:184) opines that, in actuality, nothing really changed in terms of the manner the Babylonians prosecuted their battles. Evidently, they continued with the level of brutality as seen in the Assyrian warfare, “combining the effectiveness of the battle and siege warfare (similar to the Assyrians) with the mobility of the raider, a feature of their tribal origin.”

Berthelot (2021:47) argues that there are observable differences in the approach and method Babylonians used to project their image compared to that of the Assyrians. Unlike the Assyrians, with a well-organised administrative system that collected taxes and revenue from vassal states, the Babylonians depended on war spoils and

tributes from client kings. The Babylonians rarely used the system of deportation as a means of subduing opponents. However, there are instances, like in the case of Judah, where they applied such measures. They avoided policies that promote population mix as a means “to erase ethnic self-definition.” The Babylonians allowed communities to organise themselves along ethnic lines. They also avoided emphasizing divine appointment to universal rule through conquest. Perhaps it is important to note that there were occasions when the royal inscriptions contained a perspective of universal rule that was backed by the notion of divine appointment, like in the case of Nebuchadnezzar. Ideologically, the Babylonian kings attempted to project the image of them being (as) “the shepherd of the people” and “teachers of wisdom (Berthelot 2021:48).” One can argue that they were more religious conscious than their Assyrian opposite. Dandamaev (1991:253) observes that:

What is remarkable, however, is that the numerous inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian kings tell only of the erection of new temples and repairs to old ones, and of pious gifts to various sanctuaries, while the many successful military campaigns are hardly ever mentioned. This points to the fact that the rulers were obliged to take account above all of the clergy, who played an important part in the people’s assemblies and represented their interest.

This practice by the Babylonian kings continued even after they ceased to exist; the scribal elites monopolized them. Worthy to note is that “in Judah a parallel evolution took place (Berthelot 2021:48).”

3.8.1 The impact of Neo-Babylonian imperialism on Judah

Berthelot (2021:48) observes that the kingdom of Judah became a vassal state under the rule of the Babylonian empire. Prior, they were conquered by the Neo-Assyrians, who subjected them to imperialist rule. In 587 or 586 BCE, the Judeans were punished severely after the Babylonians suspected that they were plotting a revolt. The incident was greeted by the deportation and exile of several Judeans, including members of the royals and elites. Another punishment the Babylonians handed out to them was the demolition of the Jerusalem Temple. Babylonian records paint the picture that King Jehoiachin was served food ration as a prisoner of the Babylonians. The others who were deported and subsequently remained in exile were mentioned in a different context. Their exile experience greatly impacted their

worldview and ways of life generally. This experience affected their social, political and religious life. More specifically, their interaction with the Babylonians, which happened in the sphere of culture and at the state level, resulted in great integration. The consequences of these actions had an enduring effect on their life as a whole. Some of the cases in the Bible where arguably the effect of the integration could be observed are in (Berthelot 2021:48):

The redaction of the stories of Genesis inspired by *Mesopotamian* mythology, the development of a theology of Zion, together with the notion of *golah*, or diaspora, were likely products of this period. The exile experience may also have contributed to the emergence of monotheism in response to the delocalization of the Judean national deity, who was now left without a temple.

Berthelot (2021:49) believes that concerning the ideological impact which arguably came from Neo-Babylonian domination, there are questions over the extent of such impact. There is the argument that some of the influences attributed to Neo-Babylonian rule were actually not exclusively from them but were part of an already existing prophetic tradition. Some biblical writings, such as Habakkuk 1-2, arguably were formulated as resistance texts to counter the ideological effect of Neo-Babylonian interaction and occupation. The complex nature of this argument is worsened by the fact that most of the best-documented evidence about the “ideological resistance to Neo-Babylonian power” comes from Judah. In effect, they served as a form of response to “the new context and echoing particular Neo-Babylonian ideological elements, such as the affirmation of Marduk’s universal sovereignty in the *akītu* festival.” Below, an attempt will be made to concisely discuss the probable Neo-Babylonian influence on Judean’s concept of monotheism. Arguably, the origin of monotheism is one of the areas that was probably directly influenced by the Neo-Babylonian state and culture. The other aspects will not be discussed here because they are not relevant to the larger discussion.

3.8.2 The influence of Neo-Babylonians religious culture on the origin of Judean monotheism

Berthelot (2021:49) argues that, the discussion on the origin of monotheism in Judaism is not limited to the impact of Neo-Babylonian imperialism on the

development. Monotheism is also discussed as part of the legacy of Neo-Assyrian imperialism on Judaism. Hence, the argument that the concept of monotheism is not something that is completely new in the Ancient Near East. As noted previously in this paper, the idea developed from a prophetic tradition already in Israel. The idea was further developed during the Neo-Babylonian period. The argument that the Judean scribes modelled the idea of monotheism from a similar idea found in Neo-Babylonian culture, ideology and religion could be substantiated by some passages that are found in Deuteronomy and Isaiah. However, the passages in Deuteronomy and Isaiah that are relevant to the argument about Neo-Babylonian monotheism are different from the ones applied for the same purpose in Neo-Assyrian contexts. Arguably, the scribes' primary focus and concern were most probably to address whether the Babylonian god defeated Israel's deity. The question arose following the circumstance that arose from their defeat by the Babylonians and, subsequently, their exile experience. This type of worldview was commonly found among the nations of the ANE and the ancient world and was used to explain military defeat. The main bone of contention was whose god was superior to the other. Arguably, the writers of Deuteronomy reversed Babylonian narratives and gave it a new meaning. The Jewish scribes claimed that Israel's deity "used the Babylonians to punish his people and that he was in full control of history." Furthermore, it could be argued that this belief "prepared the way for the 'monotheistic' statements in the parts of the Deuteronomistic history that were revised and retouched last of all, in the middle of the Persian period."

Machinist (2003:237-252) argues that Isaiah 40-55 (especially Isa 44:9–20) is a relevant source from which one can gain considerable knowledge about the Neo-Babylonian influence on the development of the idea of monotheism in Judaism. Berthelot (2021:49) believes that one of the areas where such impact could be noticed very strongly is in "the concept of deity, and with it the concomitant characterization of foreign gods as idols." The main theme of this portion of Isaiah characterizes foreign gods as idols, which resembles what seemingly is found in some later Babylonian texts "such as the Prayer of Nabonidus from Qumran (4Q242)." Machinist (2003:237-252) thinks that they were products of redactional

activities by active scribes during the Neo-Babylonian period. Isaiah 46:1-2, which forms part of what is generally referred to as Deutero-Isaiah. Berthelot (2021:49) says that it was most probably written as “criticism of idols is a reaction to the policy of displacing the statues of Neo-Babylonian gods under Nabonidus, who favoured Sin over Marduk and his son Nabū.” To some degree, the scribes who worked on the texts borrowed ideas from the Babylonian religious culture and used it as a model from which important Jewish religious thoughts were shaped. The redactional activities of the scribe most probably continued to the time of the Persian conquest at “the hands of Cyrus in 539 BCE.” This implies that the scribes were active during the Neo-Babylonian period and later, during the Persian period, further developed the text. The religious influence that came with their interaction with the Babylonians was arguably very soft and subtle, but it was there. The argument here is that the Babylonians did not compel or coerce the Judeans into adopting their religious thoughts. The fact that the Babylonians and Judeans interacted in different spheres of life during the period in question attests to the existence of such influence, which probably came from their daily experience through their interactions.

The origin of monotheism in Judaism remains a very complex discussion from which different conclusions could be drawn. Yet, available sources and materials could show traces of Neo-Babylonian influence.

3.8.3 Concluding remarks

It is important to note that the Neo-Babylonian period lasted less than a century, which is considered a very short time in history. Regarding records about their activities, most of the things that are known about their time in history come from unofficial sources. This differs from the official state records that are available regarding the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The Neo-Babylonian Empire continued with some of the policies of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. However, there are noticeable modifications in their approach in some of the areas of governance. In the sphere of religion, it could be argued that they showed more concern than the Neo-Assyrians. In 587 or 586, the Babylonians deported the Judeans and demolished the Jerusalem

temple. The Babylonian exile experience greatly impacted their worldview and ways of life. In the next section, the discussion will focus on the Persian period.

3.9 Persian Period

Previously, we discussed the era and characteristics of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires. The discussion focused on the socio-political-religion and economic context of the various entities. Here, the aim is to discuss the general history of the Persian Empire. The discussion will attempt to unravel its existence's political, social, economic, and religious aspects. This discussion will also serve as the theoretical framework for the ensuing discussion on the texts of Joshua 1 and 2, which is the main focus of this dissertation. However, because of the vastness and broad scope of the history of the Persian period, attempts will be made to recount aspects considered relevant to this dissertation, presumably the early Persian period.

To give the discussion form and substance, the first port of call will be on the question of Judah's historical background and context during this period. The assumption here is that understanding the situation or the state of affairs, political, socio-cultural, and religious, will reveal some of the essential and critical elements and conditions that shaped and guided the thoughts of the interpreters from whom Joshua's final form emerged. Furthermore, Gerstenberger (2011:45) opines that since modern interpreters view these events from a "contemporary perspective" it would be "helpful first to mark the larger framework in which the small Judaic community was formed and lived." Perhaps it is also critical to observe that those whose lives were described in biblical narratives themselves recognized the fact that their community was shaped through "the interplay with major powers" such as Persia. One can argue that the emergence of the Bible that we have today was some sort of reaction to counter the effect of imperialism and colonialism that resulted from the activities of the empires. Any attempt to understand this "reactive factor" could be achieved by studying "the contours of the organization of the state that the Persians brought about." And it entails that one critically examines "the infrastructure and the ideology" of the empires such as "Persia and its rulers."

Briant (2002:31) observes that information concerning the beginning of the Persian Empire is scarce. However, the writings of Herodotus and Ctesias (via Nicolaus of Damascus and a few isolated passages in Diodorus and Justin) can serve as sources. What is important to note is that the type of history contained in these writings is a mixture of history and legend. Yet, some aspects of the writings can be passed as reliable. Another important source is the works of Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (556/5-539) who kept records about Medo-Persian hostilities. Cyrus defeated the great armies of Umman-Manda Wittu and captured Astyages, king of the Medes, who he kept captive in his country. A second “Babylonian text, the Nabonidus Chronicle (II. 1-4),” also refers directly to Cyrus’ victory. Arguably, the aforementioned texts help throw more light and corroborate the works of the classical authors. Whether the wars were staged as part of the strategy to create a unified empire of a kind in the ANE is the question that confronts interpreters. This is especially so because of the nature of the materials from where the information is derived. Perhaps, it is important to note that, as a general rule the subject of history cannot be decided by destiny and fortune. Notwithstanding the circumstances that led to his ascension to the throne, it is clear that Cyrus became king of Persia after subduing the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 539 BCE (Kaiser 1998:286). And he died in 530 BCE from the injury he sustained far north. Below is a table that shows the succession of Persian kings (Kaiser 1998:286):

Cyrus II	559-530 BCE
Cambyses II	530-522
Gaumata	522
Darius Hystaspes	522-486
Xerxes	486-465
Artaxerxes I	464-424
Darius II	423-404
Artaxerxes I	404-358

3.9.1 Political Situation in the Persian Period

Stern (2008:70) opines that the beginning of Persian domination can be traced to the fall of Babylon to Cyrus, the Achaemenid king of Persia, in 559-530 BCE. This supremacy saw Persia dominate the ancient Near East, making them a recognisable world power. There was a marked difference between Cyrus' approach and method of leadership compared to that of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings who previously controlled the region. Cyrus dropped the policy of deportation and the use of fear as a tool of subjugation. He embraced leniency, which led to the return and resettling of those who were sent to exile during the reign of the Assyrians and Babylonians in their homeland. He also allowed the returnees to embark on the reconstruction of their temples. Thus, his policies led others to have the perception that he was a liberator rather than a brutal and merciless conqueror. This earned him goodwill amongst the people of the whole ancient world.

The Jewish people benefitted from this development as Cyrus permitted them to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Eph'al (1988:153) notes:

Darius and Artaxerxes I went even further, commanding that the expenses involved in building the Temple and maintaining its cult be defrayed from 'the resources of the king derived from the taxes of the province of Beyond the River'; the Temple personnel would be exempt from payment of the taxes (tribute, poll tax and land tax) to which all citizens of the province were liable; sacrifices would be offered up in the Temple to 'the God of Heaven' and prayers uttered for the life of the king and his sons (Ezra 6:8—12; 7:20—4)

The evidence available shows that Sheshbazzar led the first wave of Jewish returnees, the prince of Judah, who is believed to be Shenazzar, the son of Jehoiachin, the former king of Judah. Dandamayev (1999:273) notes:

As to Judah, for a short time during the reign of Cyrus Sheshbazzar was its governor, and then this post was taken by Zerubbabel. Gradually, this province began to enjoy great independence in domestic affairs. In the fifth and fourth centuries its rulers were also appointed from among the local individuals

Further evidence shows that the attempt to restore the national and religious centres in the Jewish homeland did not go without resistance from the left-behind population (Ahlstrom 1984:824). Those responsible for the resistance were the small community

of the הארץ עם (Amhaarez; the descendants of the poor) who remained in the desolate land after the destruction of the first temple (Stern 2008:70).

Ahlstrom (1983:822) believes biblical writers such as Ezra and Nehemiah were “primarily concerned with the problems of Judah and the restoration of the new Jewish community.” He points out that the “Other groups of people come into the picture only as disturbing elements, who really should not have been there.” He (1993:822) states that:

Not even the Judahites who had never been in Babylonia are accepted by the writers of these books. Thus, historical reality is not the purpose of these books. They are rather concerned with what should have happened. Ideology has steered the composition.

Apart from the remnants, there were also the Samaritans, Ashdodites, Edomites and Arabs who connived to see to it that they thwarted the move of the returnees and, in the end, succeeded in stopping the quest to rebuild Jerusalem. The main issue behind the resistance was that these groups of people perceived the returnees as a threat to their existence and were determined to preserve their existence and identity (Ahlstrom 1993:824).

Stern (2008:70) highlights that Cyrus died in a battle in 530 BCE to secure the new empire's borders in the area around the Caspian Sea. His son Cambyses II (530-522 BCE) succeeded him. Cambyses went on to conquer Egypt and annex it as part of the Persian empire in 525 BCE, a feat considered to be his greatest achievement. He (2008:71) says that he died in 522 BCE to quell a rebellion in Persia. His death did not affect the condition of the Judeans. Cambyses' death was greeted by a series of revolts and power tussles in Persia that lasted for a while before Darius I (522-486 BCE) arrested the situation and took control of the Persian throne.

Stern (2008:71) states that Darius I was a member of the Achaemenid royal family. His ascension to the throne resulted in many rebellions throughout the vast empire he successfully brought under control. Amongst those who rebelled were the Elamites and the Babylonians, who were under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar III, the son of Nabonidus, the last of the Babylonian kings. Darius managed to contain all the rebellion by 519 BCE and to establish a firm hold over his dominion. He extended his empire to include places that were never conquered before by either

the Assyrians or Babylonians. He annexed parts of Indian Territory and Eastern Europe. He also fought against Anatolia and Greece and, in 512 BCE, crossed the Bosphorus and conquered Thrace. Historical records from the ancient historian Herodotus show that Darius I fought against the Scythians, and the battle occurred at River Danube's mouth. Historical evidence shows that in 499 BCE, the cities of Anatolia and Cyprus started a rebellion which Darius brutally quashed. The manner in which Darius quashed the rebellion later led to a major confrontation between the Persians and Athenians. This lasted for a very long time, with the Persians suffering a resounding defeat at the hands of the Athenians in the battle of Marathon in 490 BCE. Herodotus also narrated that Darius died in 486 BCE whilst preparing for war against the Egyptians, who were staging a rebellion against Persia under the leadership of Khabasha.

Persia attained its peak during the reign of Darius and gained the most extensive area in the Near East unlike any other empire before it in the region (Berthelot 2021:52). Darius successfully undertook administrative reforms in the area of law, tax and developed a new and sophisticated road and postal system (Stern 2008:71). In addition, Stern (2008:72) notes that Darius was also accredited with the introduction of Daric; a “new imperial system of coinage.” He carried out the building of palaces and other building projects. There was a great influx of returnees from Babylonian exile into Palestine under his rule. However, some historians attribute the movement of people from exile to the situation in Babylon in 522 BCE during the revolts of Nebuchadnezzar III and Nebuchadnezzar IV. They believe that the reason behind the meagre return was the economic crisis that accompanied the revolt, which was ruthlessly brought under control by Darius. Another reason given by some historians for the return is that it was encouraged by Darius’ new imperial organization, which allowed Judah to be an independent state for a while under the leadership of Zerubbabel whom Darius appointed governor.

Grabbe (2004:132) observes that during the period, Yehud operated under the context of Persian “imperial policy and institutions.” At that time, Judah had ceased to be an independent nation and was a province that formed part of “larger empire”. However, because of the nature of the political system that the Persian Empire

practised, Judah “still retained some features that we associate with a sovereign state. Contextually, they were not an isolated entity; they were under “the organization and administration of the Persian empire and the Persian economy but also the physical and human geography of Palestine and the region.” The Persians operated a model of administration that divided the land into large provinces known as “satrapies”.

Eph'al (1988:153) writes:

The title 'Governor...of Babylonia and Beyond the River' as applied in Babylonian legal documents from the years 535—486..., indicates that in the early days of Persian rule Syria- Palestine were subsumed together with Babylonia under one administrative authority. 'Tattenai, governor of Beyond the River', who is known from the first half of Darius' reign, was subordinate, therefore, to the 'governor of Babylonia and Beyond the River'.

Three major political entities constituted the satrapy Beyond the River (Eph'al 1988:156). This categorization is based on the political and administrative status each entity enjoyed in relation to Persian authority. The entities were the Phoenician city-states (Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Aradus) (Eph'al 1988:156) and the provinces. This covers the bulk part of the satrapy Beyond the River. Judah and Samaria are mentioned in the literary and epigraphic sources as part of the region. Apart from these two, the names Ashdod and Gaza were seen, but their status remains debatable (Eph'al 1988:158). Lastly, the 'Arabs,' who mainly consisted of nomadic tribes and tribal alliances, inhabited the area between Egypt and the Euphrates. They were not a uniform political-administrative entity) (Eph'al 1988:161).

Ahlstrom (1983:823) writes:

No source material gives a clear picture of the Persian administration of the land. The borders between the different districts may have been about the same as those of the former kingdoms. Because the Persians took over the Babylonian empire with all its holdings and did not need to campaign in all these territories, it may be concluded that the province division that was in existence continued as subprovinces in the satrapies.

Grabbe (2004:132) says that each of the provinces had a governor at its helm, who was usually a member of the royal family. The governors had enough power, and literally, they were running semi-independent states. He (2004:133) observes that this system of government was adopted because of the size of the empire, which

made it impossible for the Persians to operate a centralized government. This opened the empire up for occasional revolt from the rulers of the provinces. However, the emperor had manners and systems in place to check and counter-balance the activities of the governors. Spies and observers were sometimes stationed among the ruling officials who worked for the emperor. There was enormous compensation in the form of wealth for those loyal to the emperor.

Grabbe (2004:135) states that there is “no direct evidence from primary sources that Judah was a province, the Yehud seals suggest this, and the text confirms it (Ezra 5.8; cf. Neh.1.3; 7.6; 11.3).” What is known today about the area covered by Persian Yehud was derived from archaeology (especially seals and seal impressions) and indications in the literary texts (especially the lists in Ezra-Nehemiah). Perhaps it is important to note that information from the Bible often clashes with archaeology. However, concerning Yehud, a consensus among scholars favours “literary texts, especially the various lists in Ezra-Nehemiah.”

3.9.2 Socio-cultural context

Kuhrt (2010:469) opines that for a person to gain an insight into the ideologies that kept the Achaemenid Empire together, the person has to give attention to whatever evidence is still there “in the absence of Persian treatise on kingship and power.” These extremely diverse sources of visual and written materials offer significant insights into how the Persian king perceived the world and, on the other hand, how the world perceived him. She (2010:469) states that

... many, indeed a majority, of the verbal imperial statements are embedded in royal monuments and sculptures. This means that image and text have to be read in conjunction..., and it explains why this chapter contains almost as many figures as texts. Many motifs recur, reinforcing certain messages that the authority in the imperial centre wished to project.

She (2010:469) notes that apart from Darius 1, who left an account of how he successfully seized the throne, there were no other materials left behind that will give a person an insight into the character of the other kings who reigned after him. However, Darius 1 left a standard and norm that the other rulers who came after him followed. Darius 1's vision for Achaemenid was captured and established through

the use of verbal and visual communication. Though it can be argued that some changes occurred later, these changes were so insignificant that they were barely noticeable. There is no clear-cut evidence of how the small changes in ideology affected the inhabitants, including those living at the centre and those at the periphery. One of the major themes found in the evidence is how the king visualized the world, which can be seen in the images of an imperial ruler on the coins discovered at the great apadana at Persepolis. In the image, the king sits at the centre of the world, and his powers are felt all through the globe's south, north, west and east. The image gives the impression that everything that goes on in the universe is attributable to the work of Ahuramazda. The deity is perceived as the wise Lord who single-handedly brought everything in the universe to being. The imperial ruler of the Persian Empire created an image of a ruler who dominated the entire universe and cemented this image through the construction of huge imperial palaces and what could be called megacities going by the standards of the time (Kuhrt 2010:470). The idea of Persian imperial domination could be seen from the images that are linked to the construction of the cities where people were depicted as coming from all corners of the globe/empire to work on the construction sites (Kuhrt 2010:471). This action was perceived as paying homage to the great empire and its imperial ruler.

Grabbe (2004:152) highlights that characteristically, the Persian Empire, the dominant entity during the Second Temple period, was made up of different nation groups, resulting in a multi-lingual situation. This arrangement played into its bureaucracy, which operated in multi-lingual mode. Aramaic was the principal language spoken and used in the empire's official business. Elamite was another important language that existed in the empire and was used to write and produce texts. Akkadian (in the form of Neo-Babylonian) remained in use and was used in the production and writing of texts as it was used for millions of years before. Scribes were very critical to the Persian Empire and served as the backbone. This was a traditional and normal occurrence in ANE, even before Persia. Scribes formed the intellectual class during the period. There is evidence that during the Persian period, Levites were called upon to perform scribal duties for the state and the temple. There

are records that some of them were engaged in literary activities, and these few were also advisors to kings. Grabbe (2004:152) states that:

The temple personnel were the ones who had the education and leisure for intellectual pursuits and thus constituted the bulk of the educated and those who read, wrote, and commented on religious literature. They were also the primary teachers in religious matters. Thus, not only the cult but also a large portion of the religious activity of other sorts, including teaching and development of the tradition, took place in the temple context.

Berquist (2010:3) aptly asks critical questions about the production of literature during the Persian period. He questions “the interplay of history as the subject of these texts and history as the context for the texts’ writing?” “How are these books works of historiography, and what are the historiographic tasks in reading them? Responding to these questions, he (2010:6) proposes that the probability exists that a Persian scribe (scribes) may have written the Deuteronomistic history. He argues that considering the enormous requirement for writing such a long composition, it could have been the work of Persian scribe(s) as they were better placed to undertake such a production as of the time in question. He opines that the exiled community does not seem to possess such leverage and privilege, considering their probable condition at the time of the exile.

Berquist (2010:6-7) believes that there were enough motives for the Persian ruling class to sanction and commission such a project. Yee (2010:196) argues that, we are dealing with how power was constructed between the Persian authority and the Judeans/Israelites. The Persians, as the dominant power, “constructed a literary and cultural universe divided between” them and the Judeans. What is important to note here is that there is usually a recognisable “binary opposition between colonizer and colonized.” This relationship is constituted in an “asymmetrical” form, “with official power residing in the hands of the” colonizer. What comes out from such an arrangement where power distribution favours the colonizer is assigning all the “positive attributes of racial, moral, intellectual, cultural, and technological superiority to the” colonizer “and all the deficits in these areas to the” colonized. One of the features of imperialism is “to constructs racist stereotypes in order to justify its conquest and rule,” Yee (2010:198) highlights, “The colonizer attempts to create a

colonial object that is completely different from itself, with respect to intelligence, moral superiority and so forth, yet remains still “knowable” and recognizable (Yee 2010:198).” Yee (2010:199) says that most of the time, this results in the creation of “educated class amongst the colonized who...to assists them in their dominance over the people.” This process aims to reform the colonized to do the bidding of the colonizer without necessarily being exactly the same as the imperialists. The coloniser always seeks to maintain some difference that supposedly allows the colonized to remain inferior. The goal of the imperialist/coloniser is to make sure that their subject remains inferior to avoid losing their superiority over the inferior Others. However, the same approach adopted by the imperialists ironically has served as a tool used by the colonised in a reverse manner to resist imperialism.

Mitchell (2010:93) reminds us that history writing, at its very beginning, tended to present the story in light of conflict between one group and the Other. She highlights the fact that the work of Herodotus, believed to be “The very first work of ‘history’ penned in the Western tradition”, arguably was “an account of the formation of Greek identity in relation to the Other.” She opines that such “...tendency may also be found in the annals and royal inscriptions of the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian and eastern Mediterranean cultures that preceded the creation of historiography in the Persian period.” She states that this tendency may also be the case in the biblical narratives of Kings and Ezra-Nehemiah.” She claims that the same tendency is observable in the books of Chronicles. Building on the above argument, she made the assertion that “Otherness was an integral part of the construction of the genre of historiography in the ancient world in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.”

Furthermore, oppositional identity is well recognized in biblical writings such as Ezra, Judges, King, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Chronicles and Nehemiah. Joshua also uses the same rhetoric strategy in building its narratives. Arguably, “The identity of the Judean community” in some of the narratives of the books mentioned in the preceding sentence and the one before it “is created by separation of that group from other groups, and by the definite Othering of the excluded groups (Mitchell 2010:102).” She opines that if “the Other is a generic feature of ancient

historiography” then there is a need to interpret the books in that light (Mitchell 2010:103).

The above discussion is closely related to how Judeans were identified and designated during the Second Temple period, including the Persian period. Here, we are referring to the question of identity. Grabbe (2004:168) observes that during the Persian period, the inhabitants of Judah were referred to as “Jews/Judaeans,” and natives of Judah were called Yehudi or Yehudini (plural). The term Jews/Judaeans was also used to describe those who originated from Judah but resided somewhere else. This same term applies to communities who initially are from Judah but have long been living outside the homeland. In other words, it could be applied to the diaspora communities “such as the Jewish community in Elephantine.” As time progressed, the term developed further to acquire a religious element. And the new meaning existed in conjunction with “the ethnic element of Jewishness.” This observation is related to the argument that all religion is by nature ethnic. Judaism, like the other ancient religions, is an ethnic religion. It is also important to note that at a very late stage, there was a debate about who qualifies to be seen or regarded as a pure Jew. One can even argue that the discussion came into play because those who were not Jews by birth at some point began to acquire Jewish citizenship through their association with Jews.

Similarly, Berquist (2006:53) observes that the term Yehud poses a problem in terms of how scholars employ it in regard to the Persian period and more. He says that on certain occasions, the term is used to define a geographic region; in other cases, the term is used to define a political entity. He argues that the problem is that the term's exact meaning is missed in both usages. He ascribes the difficulty in determining the exact meaning of the term to the fact that scholars often fail to ascertain “the geographical and political...extent and shape of Judah.” He believes that when scholars “argue over Judah's population and demography” they fail to recognize the fact that sometimes their discernment of “the limits of such a Judah” is fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, he states, “The term Judean is just as problematic, if not more so. In our scholarship, we use the term, not as an adjective, but as a noun to indicate certain persons who, we assume, have something to do with “Judah” during “the

Achaemenid period." He asks, "Who, then, counts as a Judean? What criteria can we use to ascertain? Who is a Judean, and who is not? What are the limits of this group, and what kind of group would they be?"

Berquist (2006:54), in his attempt to untangle the question of identity in Achaemenid Yehud, sketches five different modes of scholarly usage of the term, which he believes may help understand the issue. He states that these modes are not strict and exact answers to the problem. Rather, they "reflect five different and continuing trends within scholarship."

The first mode which he identified is when identity is used to mean ethnicity. He (2006:54) writes,

Judeans would therefore be members of an extended family, sharing lineage and descent, and measurable by genealogy. Such identity is objective; it is innate from birth. A person is Judean not because of anything she or he does but because of his/her parents. This ethnic identity is inherited, not enacted. Genealogy alone suffices to prove membership within the Judean populace, because every Judean is related to every other Judean through a family relationship that is precisely definable (in theory if not in actuality). This position has been the classic assumption of early and modern biblical scholarship

Secondly, he (2006:56) says that identity is considered in terms of nationality. In this light, identity is seen as a geographical concern. It implies that people living in a particular designated area are considered Judeans. Here, we are dealing with the case where Judean identity is treated as "a matter of nationality or of connection to some other political organisation." What is important to note is that this has to do with a political entity that shares certain commonalities in an administrative sphere or has a jurisdictional relationship. In this form, one can arguably distinguish between the Persians and Judeans in their shared political relationship. It is important to note that during the Persian period, Judah existed within the political borders and geographical boundaries of the Persian Empire. This implies that being a Judean at the period was subordinate to being a Persian Judean. However, to view the question of claim to Judean identity from this perspective may tend to contradict the fact that Judeans living outside the frame of the designated geographic border of Judah were also recognized as Judeans. The reference here is to the diasporic community that resides outside the area of Jerusalem.

Thirdly, Berquist (2006:57) observes that identity is viewed as a religious marker or symbol. In relation to Persian Yehud, it implies that those who participated in the Yahwist cult considered themselves Judeans. This strongly manifested in the diasporic communities that based their self-understanding on the autonomy of a distinctive religion. This position becomes complicated when one views it from the point of view of who is a true adherent of the Jewish faith, which is also a bone of contention in some of the biblical writings. This notion is further compounded by archaeological findings showing that there were other forms of religious practices apart from those associated with Yahwism that existed in Judah and that Yahwistic practices were found in places in Babylon and Egypt. It is important to note that the view that being a Judean is deeply rooted in one's participation in Yahwism as generally perceived in the scholarly community and popular culture is that reasoning is greatly related to the understanding that during the Persian period, "identity shifted from national to religious definitions." There is also the argument that the loss of their political-national identity due to displacement and exile greatly altered their reality and resulted in the shift that gave rise to religion being the source through which they could ascertain their identity.

Furthermore, Berquist (2006:57) notes that biblical writings such as Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah, arguably products of the Persian period, present identity resulting from religion and nationalism. This theory manifests itself in the manner these works presented "Judeans as a people with two rulers, one secular (or national-political) and one religious (or priestly)." It could also be argued that most Judeans had the perception that their social organization was strewn together in the manner as seen in the preceding statement. Whether the representation that these biblical writers attempt to achieve is purely about identity or polity remains debatable. However, based on how they presented the subject matter, one could argue that it is a combination of both. It could also be observed that there are recognizable problems concerning how identity is perceived. He (2006:58) opines that whether the concept of identity is seen as having its roots in nationality or religion, there are notable signs that show that it is beyond geography or politics. This implies that adhering to the theory that it derives its being from either nationalism or politics may

result in reductionism and distorted views. One would, therefore, argue that it is important to “recognize that identity operates simultaneously as external, observable reality as well as internal, personal reality.”

Fourthly, he (2006:58) speaks about identity as a role: He writes, “Sociologists developed role theory as a description of how individual people take on distinct roles in society, integrating functions and self-understandings.” The role leaders played in “Israel and Judah, such as priests, prophets, sages, and diviners” could assist in revealing how the society understands the concept of identity. The role this category of individuals played in society during the Achaemenid period has “obvious implications for the question of identity in Persian Yehud.” The use of role theory to define and determine identity could be very complex and complicated or even near impossible feat to achieve. Berquist (2006:59) notes that it is because there are multiple roles. The fact that multiple roles exist in a society opens up the theory to several weaknesses. Therefore, any “social reconstruction that takes role theory seriously must account for the interaction of the various social roles. For the theory to work, all observed social behaviour needs to be accounted for is actually the theory’s weakness and this factor “complicates the search of identity.” Arguably, “Roles are scripts, not performance, potentialities, not actualities (Berquist 2006:58).” The identified problem does not mean that scholars should desist from trying to determine identity through role theory. Instead, it calls for broadening their study’s scope to include both formal and informal roles people perform in society. That is, defined roles in the case of Judean society, such as artisan, merchant and farmer, as well as less-defined roles, such as a person who dedicates himself or herself to following the law and those who are singers of psalms, should be studied.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to say that role does not define everything about life. In other words, “Roles only describe partial identity (Berquist 2006:60).” It is just a part of the whole essence of living. In addition, fundamentally, life in a particular society functions beyond “the sum total of the additive roles undertaken by its participants (Berquist 2006:59).” There are also macro-forces of imperialism that greatly impact role theory as a means of defining identity (Berquist 2006:59). This impact is connected to the process of “the medium-scale constructions of secondary state

formation to the public roles of individuals, much less private roles (Berquist 2006:59)” Imperialism, in other words, affects everything and reshapes people’s approach to doing things. In most cases, the imperialists introduce their own methods and approaches to carrying out or performing functions.

Lastly, Berquist (2006:60) suggests that identity can be defined from a postmodern perspective. Postmodernism views the society or the systems that exist within it as inherently unstable. It proffers to the notion or assumption that societies exists in fragility and, therefore, can disintegrate, thus requiring the use of power to hold it together. Postmodernism equally teaches that one person cannot only perform multiple roles but that there are ordinarily multiple roles that every society requires to function. “In this sense, the postmodern view of society is one of chaos, nonlinearity, and unpredictability.” Despite the chaotic nature of things regarding system and society, one can still delineate or observe patterns of events or activities taking place in a society as they develop in a society or within a system. This observation becomes relevant when one is unable to discern particulars. Here, particulars are in reference to “actual persons in history who performed specific actions in particular ways at definable moments and the observable effects of such actions on other persons over time)...” Patterns should also be differentiated from “categories into which we could place different types of societies or social situations (Berquist 2006:61).” It could be further explained that “Patterns are themselves patterns of force, and the forces are vital to understanding the patterns (Berquist 2006:61).”

Berquist (2006:62-63) says that in specific reference to the formation of identity in Persian Judah, it is important to recognize the effect of the different processes of imperialization and decolonization. What could arguably be regarded as (or termed) the process of imperialization, which, in actual fact, tends to define people’s identity to a great extent? In this regard, aspects of their social life, such as language, marriage, and religion, came under the direct influence of the different imperializing forces. This resulted in the Judeans resorting to mounting some sort of resistance to check this foreign influence in their life. Hence, the Judeans continuously pushed for greater autonomy from Persian imperialism. It must be noted that there was an existing autonomy before the imperializing force began imposing its ways on society.

This understanding of imperializing and decolonizing identity formation has great bearing upon the identity of Judeans in the Achaemenid Period. Simply put, the categorizing of identity as religious, national, or ethnic is a response to the wrong question. Identity refers to the pattern that multiple forces produce. Each point is fluid and changing, as a complex product of imperialization and decolonization. Religion, nationality, and ethnicity are all components of identity and all of them are simultaneously both imperializing and decolonizing. Religion teaches people a place in the universe that supports the imperial status quo but also teaches the revolution of the status quo into a decolonized rejection of worldly imperial powers. National identity is both Persian and Yehudite; what this combination means to each individual is highly fluid and always a product of internal conflict. Ethnicity participates with pluralization as one element, and identity operates within a shifting complex consisting of family identity, clan identity, geographical identity, and imperial identity (Berquist 2006:62)

So, the result from the imposition could only be transformative. However, the presence of factors of imperialization and decolonization and the combination of the various effects that these processes yielded created a hybridized society, which on the other hand, played a great role in shaping their identities. This arguably happens in the process of secondary state formation, which is reflected in the content of the quote above.

The argument concerning identity is also related to the term Israelites. Historically, Israel, at some point, was a separate entity from Judah. This resulted in the case of two states, Judah and Israel. Furthermore, Grabbe (2004:168) observes that the term Israelite appeared initially only in biblical sources. No evidence points to it being used "in primary sources of the ancient Near East." On the other hand, " Bit-Humri " was used during pre-Persian period in Assyrian inscriptions to refer to Northern Kingdom. "Israel" or "Israelite" did not appear "in the primary sources of ancient Near East." As noted previously, the term first occurred in the Merneptah stela in 1200 BCE. Another early appearance is in an inscription of Shalmaneser III referring to "Ahab the Israelite."

Furthermore, the society during the Second Temple period could be described as a class society (Grabbe 2004:172, 195). From available writings, the social classification comprises of farm workers: itinerant workers, day labourers and hired farmhands. There are also the landowners. Other groups that were identified were the priestly class and the nobles (Grabbe 2004:194). Perhaps it is important to

observe that during the Second Temple period, the priestly class was not necessarily noble but enjoyed a particular class among the citizenry (Grabbe 2004:172).

In terms of economic structure during the Persian Empire, it is a well-documented fact that empires were prone to maximizing tax and tributes from their colonies (Grabbe 2004:191). Sometimes, gifts are given instead of tribute, which is dependent on the relationship a colony shares with the Persian King, who, most of the time possesses the discretion to determine the relationship's nature.

What could be gleaned from the economic structure during the Persian Empire was that it was a continuation of what was left behind by the neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires (Schaper 1995:534-535). However, there was a slight variation in the operational method and approaches enforceable where applicable or where there is a need to do so regarding taxation, etc. Judah's economy was agrarian. There is also evidence that some trading activities took place and that some were engaged in pottery. Dandamayev (1999:276) notes that in some of "the countries, the royal administration carried out important projects of cultivating new or long abandoned lands and constructing new canals or improving the existing irrigation systems." He (1999:276) states that "there was no economic stagnation in the countries of the empire and the Achaemenid administration stimulated agriculture, industry and commerce throughout the state."

Younger, Jr. (1988:97) highlights the fact that in all fairness, the government of Persia did more than just collect monies from her subjects. Available evidence shows that the Persian state was involved and played an important "role of stimulating agriculture, industry, trade, and commerce throughout the empire." Arguably, the decision by the state to make such an intervention in the economy may not have been consciously designed to appropriate the gains that accrued from operating a common market at that time in the Persian Empire. One can argue that available evidence shows that the Persian government were clearly concerned about the "economic health of the realm." He argues, "Agriculture provided the foundations of the empire's wealth." During the Persian period, land was distributed so that most of it remained in "the hands of the native people." However, the Persians owned

large estates and land found in the empire's length and breadth. Perhaps it is important to note that the extent of government involvement in land ownership is not properly defined. Evidence shows that government officials and functionaries owned large estates and land. Whether these individuals held some of this land on the government's behalf is unclear. Most times, these landed properties were looked after by agents on behalf of the officials. There is a great possibility that some of the lands were state-owned. Some texts uncovered attest to the fact that the Persian government distributed grains to farmers.

Briant (2002:422) discusses the discovery at Persepolis of two lots of tablets known as the Fortification tablets (PFT) and Treasury tablets (FIT) between 1934 and 1938. The latter was published in 1948, and further editorial work was carried out on it until 1957-1963. The documents “date between year 30 of Darius (492) and year 7 of Artaxerxes (458). An Akkadian tablet written in December 502 (PT 85) was also found. The Fortification tablets, dating to years 13 through 18 of Darius (509-494), are much more numerous.” Some documents were written in Aramaic, Elamite, Akkadian, Greek and Phrygian (probably). Mortars and pestles were among the discoveries. These documents were not narratives, treaties, or stories about military accomplishments or related to dynastic history. The primary concern of the documents was “the collection, warehousing, and distribution of foodstuffs.” Those listed as beneficiaries were (Briant 2002:422):

...the king and the royal family, high officials in administration, priests (or religious attendants), cattle, and especially groups of workers (*kurtas*) in the chancelleries, rural establishments, workshops, and construction sites of Persepolis. An especially complete category (Category Q) records the distribution of food rations to persons and groups traveling from place to place within the Empire. The subjects reappear in three other series: letters, journals, and warehouse accounts. The Treasury tablets, on the other hand, primarily record the distribution of rations to the craftsmen who worked on the construction sites of Persepolis under Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I. Some of the rations were disbursed (or valued) in silver, instead of only food products, beginning in 493/2.

Wiesehöfer (2009:78) opines that Greek records speak about the enormous wealth of the Achaemenid kings, the indigenous people and the elites. The Greek records refer to this condition “in terms of effeminate *tryphe* (“luxury”).” He highlights the fact that during Alexander the Great's invasion, he discovered that most of the rich

treasures were located at the royal court and the central part of the empire. He says there was the belief that what is generally known as “the proverbial royal gold” assisted in keeping enemies of the empire, such as the Greeks, who were one of their arch enemies, at a distance. He (2009:78-79) notes that as part of the characteristic that was listed in the Achaemenid inscriptions as well as Greek sources, a good ruler is supposed to display the ability to punish those who were rebellious and lawbreakers on the one hand and on the other hand to reward those who were loyal and that contributes toward the wellbeing of the empire. The names of those who benefitted from the king's good deeds “were listed at court with their achievements and privileges.” The recipients received several types of rewards such as land gifts, tax exemption, the opportunity to interact very closely with the king, horses with golden bridles, were invited to royal ceremonies, and were given valuable objects. These honoured individuals appeared on the Achaemenid reliefs and in other important records, and there is a belief that public ceremonies were held to commemorate such achievements. Those who were initially honoured but later committed acts considered dishonourable were most of the time disgraced publicly, and their honour was taken away from them. In some instances, they were tortured and executed. Generally, the king was expected to be generous, magnanimous, open-hearted, and forgiving. Different categories of people inhabited the empire, such as landowners, political officials, the business class, and temple workers. Wholistically, in the sphere of economy, the Persian Near East continues with the policies of “the preceding Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires, but—for Babylonia—with special developments in land tenure, business practices, and legal instruments.” Babylon played a vital role politically and agriculturally, which was of benefit to the king. He (2009:80) notes that the king controlled the canal systems and irrigation networks, forming part of the essential and critical “Tigris and Euphrates river valley.” The king used the land to obtain loyalty from the Babylonians and others. These Babylonian land owners with some amongst them having Iranian names benefitted directly from (Wiesehöfer 2009:80):

the taxes and services of their “dependents” formed a type of local “landed gentry,” which was subordinate to the Persian aristocrats, the “Friends of the King,” and the male and

female members of the royal house in terms of political importance, prestige, and economic power.

Wiesehöfer (2009:80) notes that the Babylonians received the privilege so long as they were loyal to the king. They lose the privilege when they fall out of favour with the king. In addition, those who provided military services were granted land gifts. There is another category of people who received a land gift from the king: artisans, administrative officers and what we be referred to here as peasant agriculturists. Land was held corporately by the group “was not alienable, but could be inherited, passed on in dowries, or use as pledge in exchange for a loan.” There was always a good reason behind the king’s land gift. Usually, it was “not merely a reward for special loyalty.” The officials were given land in their “capacity as officials”; family members were given land, and those who were close politically received land. The land grants also served as “a means of monitoring and controlling potential political rivals, such as the satrap of Babylonia.” The important thing to note here is that the land policy adopted and practised by the king assisted in creating a healthy economy and provided a means for the empire to have a ceaseless supply of men who performed military services. During the reign of Xerxes, the empire attained a high level of maturity and was stable; he ceased questing for expansion and resorted to consolidating the empire. He levied the wealthy landowners “a silver tax in lieu of performing military service.” A close economic relationship between the state, the temple and the entrepreneur class was mutually beneficial to all.

Dandamayev (1999:278) observes that the trading activities and various commercial interests that nations held resulted in competition. The Phoenicians, for example, competed with the Ionians “for the markets of the Near East.” During the Persian period, people accepted each other not based on ethnic or racial background but on merit and honour. People could rise and occupy high positions “at the royal court and in the state administration.” The Achaemenid Empire employed people from the different nations that were part of the empire to work in the state department. A process of hybridization occurred in the empire. Achaemenid kings assembled experts to work for the state irrespective of the ethnic origin of the person. Arguably, ethnicity was alien to the culture of the time. Members of the society also interacted

on the level of intellectualism. Ordinary people intermingled in their day-to-day lives and activities and related cordially on different levels.

Schaper (1995:528) highlights the fact that “there are few passages in post-exilic biblical texts which give us an insight into the Jerusalem Temple as an instrument of the Persian administration...” Therefore, for one to get a more critical understanding of what went on in the various temples during the Persian period, it is important to first; “devote some attention to data relating to temple administration and tax collection in a better-documented area of the Achaemenid Empire, viz. Babylonia.” He notes that the Persian Empire inherited some of the systems left behind by the Neo-Babylonian Empire. This could be observed in the areas relating to temple administration and tax collection.

The evidence shows that records of activities, particularly those that pattern finances, were adequately kept in Neo-Babylonian Temples. The collection of levies and taxes or ten per cent tithes that were already in existence continued to be mandatory during the Persian period (Schaper 1995:528). Schaper (1995:328-529) notes that the Persian overlords strictly enforced administrative matters, unlike religious and social customs. The ten per cent tithes could be paid either in the form of precious metals or in kind. The latter includes farm produce or products, clothing or even livestock. The Persian king had a representative, the royal commissioner in the temple, who received the king’s portion of the temple’s income. Portions of this temple income were regularly diverted into the king’s chest by the temple administration. The king appointed a trusted official to supervise what went on with the King’s chest. This check and balance system was already well-established during the reign of Nabonidus. Through his temple appointees, the king exercised control over temple finances and how they were distributed. “The temple administration therefore acted both as a self-governing religious body and as a branch of the central government’s fiscal administration.”

The same type of administrative activities was undertaken in the other temples found in the areas controlled by the Persian Empire, which includes the Jerusalem temple (Schaper 1995: 329, 530). Important to note is the role played by an individual who

was a temple official responsible for melting silver collected on behalf of the king by the temple officials (Schaper 1995:530). He was in charge “of the temple foundry and also acted as an assayer of precious metal (Schaper 1995:534).” This individual in ranking was “a minor official of the temple,” whose function is below that of the temple commissioner. His function is derived from the interpretation of the term “yoser” in Zechariah 11:13 and other occurrences of the same word found in non-biblical sources (Schaper 1995:530-534). Schaper (1995:534) says that later, when the use of “coin money” was introduced, “he acted as the temple mint.” The two aforementioned individuals acted as “fiscal agents of the central government” in the temple “who collaborated with the satraps and the governors” in the empire. It is important to note here that the Persian administration strengthened and improved upon the system they inherited from the Babylonians. In a sense, they perfected the system. This shows the extent to which the Persian lords took tax generation seriously in their kingdom. Schaper (1995:535) infers that as of the time in question, the Neo-Babylonian Empire and Achaemenids have begun to centralize and bureaucratize “their system of government.” He contends that the famed religious tolerance of the Achaemenid Empire was championed on the back of revenue derivation, which substantially comes from temple activities. The system's success may have been possible due to genuine “religious motives.” However, these could be considered minor or secondary activities and involve a very limited populace. The Jerusalem temple arguably played a role in the economy. He writes that the various temples “were responsible for collecting the taxes according to the targets set by the central government.” He mentions three categories of taxes that were collected: (1) Tribute tax, which was paid to the king personally, (2) Poll tax and (3) land tax. The temple was used to some extent to collect taxes. However, the extent of its involvement is not clearly defined according to the available information. Schaper (1995:536) observes the following based on materials which he admits came from non-biblical sources written at “a considerably later period than that of the Achaemenids.” He opines that the source “can safely be adduced because the taxation system described had its roots in the Persian period; it was not a Hellenistic innovation.” He writes:

...the Jerusalem temple administration acted as the interface between the tax-paying population of Judah and the Persian government. It had to organize the transfer of taxes from Judah to the central authorities. Of course, it also profited from this situation: since the Persians were interested in a well-organized political and fiscal administration, it was in their interest to provide for the temple hierarchy. The priests and Levites seem to have been given a regular stipend-paid in kind, presumably through participation in the tax income of the temple. The collaboration between the central authorities and the temple hierarchy seems to have been smooth and efficient; the needs of both partners were duly catered for.

On the other hand, Kuhrt (2010:669) believes that it is not easy to piece together how the Achaemenid system of taxation and management worked. This is due to the nature of the available information and evidence. This has led to different scholars and interpreters arriving at different conclusions. Especially because terms used to describe “various dues, charges and duties are difficult to understand. She notes that numerous facets connected to income overlap with larger questions “of land management, economy, production and control.” She points out that a Hellenistic text discovered earlier gives useful economic information. From the text, it could be gleaned that there was a difference in how the royal, satrapal, urban and private economies operated. The text gave insight into the different sources from which the provinces earned and generated revenue and income. This includes “levies on trade, flocks, arable farming, products specific to a particular region and individuals.” The income derived goes into the royal purse, from where it is decided on how it is distributed and disbursed. It is believed that this means of collecting income and revenues existed before Darius 1; however, it is most likely that he improved on the system during his reign. This observation is strengthened by evidence seen in Babylonian writings and the work of Herodotus.

Dandamayev (1988:269) writes that the first millennium BCE witnessed “the rise, decline, fall of great empires.” Before the third and second millennia, other empires existed. These empires, at some stage in their existence, failed and were replaced. They were replaced by the Neo-Assyria, Neo-Babylon and Persian Empires that practised and operated a different economic system, arguably more formidable and generating more revenue. The bulk of the empires that rose during the first millennium derived tax income from private households, and the king used the money from taxation to maintain the officials and the army.

On the other hand, earlier empires took a taxation approach “based on enormous state or state-temple economies.” He argues that the reason for (what could be regarded as) the underdeveloped economy in place in the second and third millennia was the market economy system in operation. He notes that the degree of international trade was paltry or even nonexistent. This made it difficult for the empires to access raw materials and hire labour freely; elements were critical for economies to boom.

At its beginning, the Persian Empire ran a primitive economy compared to the Assyrians, whose economy was better organized and more advanced. Dandamayev (1999:270) notes that the economy of the Neo-Babylonian Empire was similar to that of the early Persian Empire. The Persians inherited the system that was there and later improved on it. Persia was not a monolithic state. The enormity of its size and the diversity that existed within the polity made such practice almost impracticable. Different nations maintained their “local socio-economic structure, their legal system and institutions within the empire.” Though the Persian empire operated a rural economy and was backward, nations such as Egypt, Babylon, regions of Asia Minor, Elam, Syria, and Phoenicia had developed economies. Other more primitive societies that ran rural economies fell under the jurisdiction of Persian rule. During their ascendancy to power, the Persians had little government experience. They settled for an indirect system of government. The system adopted by the Persians made it possible for nations with an advanced form of self-government for one thousand years or more to have a significant say in their political-religious-social affairs. The Persians opted to play the role of direct heirs to the cultural traditions of these nations and the keepers of these long-time socio-political traditions.

Dandamayev (1999:271) observes that there was a diverse system of tax collection systems. And they depended on what was already in existence in the various nations. This implies that “each province remained an independent socio-economic unit with its own social institutions, internal structure, old local laws, customs, and traditions, system of weights and measures and monetary systems.” Dandamayev (1999:272) notes that Persia allowed for the continuation of the different systems of governments, such as monarchy, democracy, aristocracy and theocracy, practised

by the nations that became part of its dominion. In a few instances, the retention of these systems created political dissatisfaction amongst some local communities, such as the Greek citizens in Ionia. They saw such an approach as aiding and abetting the oppressive government that was in place. To them, it means that the Persian leadership was itself a tyranny. This led such groups to rebel against Persian imperialism. Perhaps it is essential to observe that the Persian leadership eventually removed the authoritarian government and replaced it with democracy.

There is also evidence that Persian rulers were very considerate regarding taxation issues and obtaining tributes and gifts from their colonial subjects (Grabbe 2004:197). Dandamayev (1999:276) opines that the nations seemingly accepted the taxes and levies imposed on them by their Persian masters. This accounted for the relative peace that existed amongst the nations in that regard. What became a problem was the method and approach used in the tax collection process. Later, during the Persian period, the officials began to employ arbitrary means to discharge their duties. This eventually led to rebelliousness amongst some nations' people.

3.9.3 Religion

Grabbe (2004:2) argues that the "...major changes and developments in Judaism and the Jewish people were seminal to the Persian period, not Alexander's conquest as so often alleged." He (2004:2) opines that "... the Persian period is the single most important period for the development of Jewish thought and practice from antiquity to the present." He believes that "...major developments and changes took place in the first part of the 'post-exilic period' which had great significance for the development of Judaic religion, the biblical and other Jewish literature, and the people of Judah (2004:2). He (2004:2) writes:

...the changes and developments that took place during the period of Persian rule were the key to the direction taken by Judaism ever since. The most important elements of modern Judaism were already extant or in process by the end of the Persian period, whether or not they existed in the pre-exilic kingdom of Judah. An understanding of Judaism in the Second Temple, especially, but also subsequently requires an understanding of the forces and dynamics affecting the Jews in Judah and elsewhere in the Achaemenid empire.

Arguably, most of the religious interaction between the Persian rulers and their colonies, such as Judah, was usually initiated by the colonized, the weaker partners in the relationship. The prevailing circumstances obliged them to do so to gain the confidence and trust of their Persian overlords. The likelihood that the Persians will be interested in the Judean religion is minimal. The assumption here is that imperialists would always believe that their God is superior to those of the people they conquered.

Dandamayev (1999:273) observes the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah created unity amongst the Jerusalem community. This unity was forged around the temple, and the high priest headed the community. At some stage during the Persian period, the high priests of Jerusalem became the governors of the province, collected taxes on behalf of the Persian king and were responsible for the minting of silver coins. There is no substantial evidence that the Persian kings took a special liking for the Jewish religion. Instead, available evidence shows that the Persian kings had a liberal approach to people's faith and accorded similar privileges and support to the religions of the subjugated nations. The Persian kings tried to maintain the existing policies that governed the individual temples and dealt with each according to the rules and regulations they adhered to before their conquest.

Baumgarten (1999:37) notes that "the basic principle" behind Persia's "policy is autonomy." He (1999:37) observes that the Persian empire "controlled foreign and military matters and collected taxes, local affairs were in the hands of native officials, recognized by the imperial regime and empowered to rule the Jews in its name." He highlights the fact that "The king's law for governing the Jews was Jewish law as interpreted by Jewish religious authority (Ezra 17~25-26) (1999:37)." He explains: "In effect, the Temple personnel in Jerusalem became imperial officials. As such, they were entitled to compensation, which they duly received indirectly in the form of exemption from taxes (Ezra 7:24) (1999:37)." He (1999:38) observes:

As a complement to these arrangements, the Jews proved their loyalty to the king by offering a daily sacrifice for his welfare (Ezra 6:9-10); 7:17). This sacrifice was funded by the king; hence it was not a financial burden on the Jews. Offering it on the altar, however, was an act of great symbolic meaning, as it was an acknowledgement of fealty.

Available evidence shows that some freedom of religion was granted to the colonies by the Persian authorities. It is also recognizable that there is disputation over the claim's authenticity in modern literature, namely that Persian authorities supported cults and other religions. Blenkinsopp (1991:23) observes:

A great deal of information has been available for some time and is constantly being augmented on the social and economic impact of temples on the regions in which they functioned. Many of the larger temples throughout the Achaemenid empire were wealthy institutions with their own land holdings and work force, their own capital in specie and produce from which they advanced loans, serving more or less the same function as banks and credit unions today. Stimulation of the regional economies by temples serving as storage and redistribution centres, to the evident advantage of the imperial exchequer, helps to explain why they were supported by successive Achaemenid rulers. The priesthoods servicing these temples were under the supervision of imperial officers (in Mesopotamia *paqdu* or *res sarr*) whose chief function was to ensure payment of tribute and, in some cases, the service of temple slaves;... and we note that Nehemiah as local representative of the imperial government also took measures to control the economic resources of the Jerusalem temple (Neh. 13.13)

Gerstenberger (2011:1) writes:

Israel or, more precisely, nascent Judaism, the two centuries in which the ancient world, positioned between Egypt and India, was under the hegemony of Persian emperors (539–331 b.c.e.), were decisive in many ways.” During this era the Judeans, in their native country and in the Diaspora both in Babylon and in Egypt were drawn to new communal forms. From the Torah and some parallel writings they shaped a sacred canon for themselves, and in Jerusalem and its rebuilt temple they gained a geographic and symbolic focal point. As a tiny minority in a multinational empire, that is to say under aggravated circumstances of incessant pressure to adapt and the never-waning quest for autonomy, they developed their own convictions of faith into the final form that is found in most parts of the Old Testament today.

It is also important to note that the possibility exists that the arguments that support these accounts of the Persians granting the nations under their jurisdiction unbridled and unrestrained religious freedom are mostly exaggerated. Similarly, Kuhrt (2020:36) opines that the account given in the Old Testament that portrays the “Persian kings as the restorers of the Jerusalem temple and supporters of Yhwh cult” are the primary sources of influence, which makes interpreters subscribe to the “mistaken notion of the unique policy of Achaemenid religious tolerance.” These also have to do with information that is obtainable from the Persian writings and documents, which arguably are exaggerated themselves (Grabbe 2004:215; Kuhrt

2020:36). The Persian Empire, like the others before it, continued with the practice of elevating and declaring their deity as superior to the others (Grabbe 2004:215). It could, therefore, be argued that the so-called religious freedom lasted as long as it was favourable and did not go contrary to the interest of the Persian Empire.

Grabbe (2004:361-362) says that despite the difficulties that scholars or non-experts encounter in accessing Iranian scholarship, considerable knowledge has been gained from the writings of Iranian scholars and others who are well acquainted with Persian and Judaic scholarship. What has come out from such scholarship sometimes affirms the view that Persian Kings such as Darius 1 and Cyrus were already Zoroastrian adherents from the beginning. Nevertheless, some scholars also preferred to take a more cautious approach in affirming such a position. But whatever the case, it does not discount the fact that, arguably, there has been an alleged influence of Persian religion on Judaism (Grabbe 2004:363). The areas which arguably were affected and influenced are (1) the concept of dualism, that is, the belief in good and evil; (2) the image of the deity; and (3) eschatology, which includes the concepts of resurrection and judgement (Grabbe 2004:364). However, these claims are difficult to prove because of the unreliability of the sources (Grabbe 2004:364).

Dandamayev (1999:379) argues that during the Achaemenid period, Zoroastrianism was still in its nascent and formative years. At that time, Persians were associated with a pantheon of deities. Later, the religion metamorphosed “to become a dogmatic religion with firmly fixed norms” and “various modifications of this religious teaching” emerged within the same period. Ultimately, This religion’s revolution brought about the king’s adoption of Ahuramazda as the official god. Important to note is that at the beginning, Persians did not accord any particular place to Ahuramazda and were not obliged to worship it.

3.9.4 The impact of Persian imperialism on Judah

Shaked (1984:308) writes, “...in the latter part of the Second Temple period, Judaism was undergoing far-reaching changes and developing new aspects, trends, themes and ideas, which were to be retained in part as belonging to the permanent

stock of Jewish life and thought...” He observes that the aspect of Jewish life where these changes was very obvious:

was in the use of language - the structure, syntax, morphology and lexicon of the later writings in Hebrew display differences which put them apart from the earlier books and a new language was added to the range of sacred expression, which figures already in some of the later biblical books. These outward changes reflect some of the adjustments made necessary by the new situation of the world: the creation of the world empire of the Persians, their adoption of Aramaic as an official language for purposes of international communication, and the fact that both Hebrew and Aramaic absorbed a great number of Persian words and coined certain expressions under the influence of Persian, as they also did subsequently under that of Greek. Many of these words and expressions were, naturally, in the field of government and administrative practice, but this was by no means the only field in which this linguistic impact was present. We have some words belonging to general civilian life, as well as some which became part of the Jewish religious terminology, although they were not exclusively of religious significance in their original linguistic background...

He (1984:309) notes that there are two prominent positions in the debate on the Persian influence on Judaism; namely, first, a position that

...emphatically denies the actual existence of the possibility of Persian influence on Judaism as a factor affecting Jewish thought in the period under consideration (and even goes so far as to suggest exclusive influence in the opposite direction)...

The second position is “the one which would explain almost everything in the development of post-biblical Judaism as stemming directly from Iran.” Again, there is the need to engage with available evidence to understand the issues better critically. Engaging critically with functional materials and resources would assist in defining some of the relationships that thrived between Jews and the Iranians and assist in bringing some clarity to the subject. There is also a historical question “raised about the effect of Persian influence on Judaism being noticeable, not in the period of Persian domination over Palestine, but in the subsequent period, when Palestine was under Greek and Roman rule.” The complex nature of the problem hinders one from arriving at a firm conclusion. Perhaps it is important to add that new insights have been gained and inferred from ongoing studies that are being conducted on “the latest books of the Bible and the literature of the Apocrypha and of the Dead Sea sect...” Here, the reference is to works discovered in what could be considered more recent times. These discoveries have raised the plausibility that “the development of certain trends” in Jewish writings was not necessarily new. These

trends of thoughts were already inherently part of “earlier Jewish writings...” which subsequent generations took and developed further. The development or growth that Judaism experienced during the period in question was “probably stimulated by internal factors and prepared for by a set of indigenous ideas, no less than by the effect of pressure from without...” Therefore, it could be said that the direction that Judaism took, from where it got its present character, did not happen by “mere accident, but as a result of the fact that the Iranian pattern was at hand and quite well known.” Thus, no compelling evidence would necessitate a person to argue that the new trends resulted from “foreign intervention” or influence. What should be borne in mind is that whenever two cultures or more come in contact, some exchange of ideas and learning will occur. This impact happens both ways. In other words, both cultures are impacted. He recognizes the fact that though there were contacts made between Iranian culture and its Jewish equivalent and that the contact contributed to the development of new ideas that were incorporated into Judaism over time, this does not necessarily mean that there was suddenly inclusion of “set of concepts entirely alien to the Jewish thought...”

Silverman (2011:133), in his work “Iranian-Judaeen Interaction in the Achaemenid Period” explains that “Social interaction can happen on a variety of levels, either in the course of official business and administration or in the course of daily economic and social activities.” He believes that in broad terms, “interaction...encompasses a variety of types of intercourse, from superficial to significant, and represents the social-situational phenomenon of the meetings of cultures as well as the “intellectual” side.” He (2011:134) states that the “...intellectual side of interaction is generally referred to as influence or dialogue, but these terms are inconsistently used. He believes there are two basic types of influence, each with their own variations.” He identifies the first type as “the conscious imitation or borrowing of elements from another tradition.” He says, “This can be either positive (i.e., accepting ideas that are accepted in another tradition) or negative (i.e., rejecting ideas that are rejected in another tradition).” He states, “The second type of influence is the conscious rejection of another tradition.” Hinnells in Silverman (2011:134) writes,

The rejection of another tradition, however, can still affect the rejector's own tradition in two ways. It can result in the rejection of aspects of the held tradition that are seen to conform too closely to the rejected one. It can also result in the adoption of the modes of discourse of the rejected tradition in order to combat or argue with it.

Furthermore, Hinnells in Silverman (2011:134) notes that:

...borrowing or imitation will often occur consciously while rejection will often occur subconsciously, although either can simultaneously function consciously and subconsciously. Both of these types of influence are possible—even likely—even in situations without external coercion (such as a state-mandated reform program).

The argument is that the two cultures have always interacted with each other. Iranian patterns were known to the Jewish people and could have found their way into indigenous ideas. One way or the other, the Judeans borrowed ideas from them to strengthen and augment their religious thoughts that were already there. Silverman (2011:135) argues “many opportunities” existed “for Judaeans and other Yahwists to come in contact with Persians and other Iranian peoples, both within the land of Palestine and in the diaspora.” He opines that “The exact locations where Judaeans might have been influenced by Persian ideas cannot be proved—indeed they were probably absorbed over time and in a variety of locations—but opportunities for absorption can be amply demonstrated.” Important to observe is that in today's context, lots of evidence is available to those working on the subject. There is evidence that shows that “the entirety of the Yahwistic world lived under Achaemenid rule for roughly two hundred years.” And one could argue that this long duration left “too many scenarios” from which meanings about the period could be reached or drawn from. One could further argue that “These locations can then offer more concrete suggestions for the kind and type of interaction which occurred.” Shaked (1994:310) argues that much of this evidence came from writings considered to be recent. Especially from the body of literature that belongs to the “beginning of the Common Era (Shaked 1994:310).” Shaked (1994:310) states that most of the writings belonging to corresponding period and before, sadly are lost. The available evidence arguably are “sadly deficient” because they depend to “a large extent on hypothesis, reconstruction and reading back from a body of literature belonging to a much later period” and are subjective (Shaked 1994:310). There are records that these bodies of evidence from time to time have been “used in a manner which

cannot arouse confidence (Shaked 1994:310).” For these reasons, researchers dealing with the subject continue to mistrust the outcomes of such studies.

The extent of Zoroastrian or Iranian influence on Judaism has been debated since the nineteenth century (Berthelot 2021:59, Shaked 1994:310). The fact that there exists the problem of a lack of reliable and concrete historical evidence to collaborate with the available works dating from the Persian Empire has not deterred those who are interested in the subject and field from attempting to reconstruct the history of that period (Berthelot 2021:60). The main problem that plagues the studies is the question of date. Römer (2015:227) writes that “..., there is a problem in dating Zoroaster, and in discovering where he lived and what his original “message” was.” He (2015:227) opines that “The oldest manuscript of the Avesta, the sacred book of Mazdeism and of the Zoroastrianism that succeeded it, dates from the thirteenth century AD, and the difficulties surrounding the composition of this text recall in several respects the difficulties confronting interpreters of the Hebrew Bible. He (2015:227) highlights the fact that “At present it seems unlikely that there was a corpus of Mazdean writings at the time of the Achaemenids, although most scholars seem confident that we can trace the Gathas (the sayings of Zoroaster) back to the beginning of the first millennium.”

Perhaps one should note that current scholarship questions the reliability of the Sassanian context of the Babylonian Talmud (Berthelot 2021:60). Scholars have managed to work with the available evidence and from them have reconstructed “certain elements of the earlier faith, even though they are not explicitly present in the Avesta (Shaked 1994:310).” Thus, “ It is...only by making judicious use of information gained from the diverse sources at our disposal that certain points can be elucidated, but some central problems in the religious history of Iran are still unresolved (Shaked 1994:313).”

In recent times, most of the studies that are being conducted on the subject tend to focus more on the “impact of Persian culture, including “Mazdean” or “Iranian” “Zoroastrian”—religion, on Deutero-and Trito-Isaiah, as well as Ezra and Nehemiah (Berthelot 2021:60).” There has also been a shift in how “some of the scholars now

tend to date the last redaction of these books to Hellenistic period and the later prophets... (Berthelot 2021:61).” There has also been an increase in the:

studies of the Persian context of (parts of) Daniel, Tobit, and Esther, of the role that Persian religious culture played in the development of apocalypticism and the apocalyptic genre among the Jews, and of the influence of Persian dualism on the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the sectarian scrolls. (Berthelot 2021:61-62)

The important thing to note here is that there was prolonged contact as well as interaction between the Judaeans and the Achaemenid cultures. Similarly, Berthelot (2021:61) observes that it has been long established that the Judeans had contact with the “Persian imperial ideology.” Perhaps, at this juncture, it is important to note that “no biblical text is openly hostile to the Persians (Römer 2015:228, Berthelot 2021:59).” On the contrary, biblical passages such as Isaiah 44:28; Ezra 1:1–4; 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 spoke very highly of Cyrus “for his benevolent role in Israel history... (Berthelot 2021:59).” This directly or indirectly implies that Persians got some approval from the Judeans.

It is essential to observe that language is one of the areas impacted by Persian culture. Studies have been conducted on “linguistic issues” with a focus on “the adoption of Persian loan words into Hebrew and Aramaic (Berthelot 2021:61). The impact was not limited or restricted to the Judeans. It was also felt in the linguistic expression of the other non-Jewish societies that formed part of Persia. According to Wilson-Wright (2015: 153), “...the Persian administration employed a large number of translators, interpreters, and ‘cultural experts’” to bridge the communication gap that existed in the empire due to the different languages spoken by the various conquered nations that made up the empire. Wilson-Wright (2015:153) highlights the fact that there was “an increase in both general mobility and long-distance travel. Royal highways stretched across the Near East, conveying people and goods from one corner of the empire to another.” He (2015:153) argues that “The multilingual nature of Achaemenid administration, coupled with increased mobility, fostered language contact on a grand scale.” He (2015:153) believes that “the Old Persian loanwords and calques in the Hebrew Bible resulted from increased Persian military and administrative presence in the province of Yehud under Artaxerxes I and his successors and not, as previously thought, from an Aramaic intermediary.” He

(2015:153) opines that “Bilingual translators, who facilitated communication between the Judeans and the Persians, were the most likely agents of contact; bilingual scribes may have played a part as well.” Following these arguments, it could be said that the Judeans came under the influence of the Achaemenid propaganda (Berthelot 2021:61). And that the sphere of influence extended both to the ordinary people and the elites if the nature of interaction between the two is taken into consideration (Berthelot 2021:61). The contact and interaction hugely impacted on the lives of the inhabitants of Persian Empire wholistically. The religious life and thoughts of nations such as the Judeans were impacted. In today’s context, it would be argued that a hybridisation process occurred.

Persian impact and influence on the Jewish religious life and thoughts during the period in question continue to be debated. The question remains prominent whether the Jewish religion as we have it today “were not at least partly moulded and fashioned as a result of contacts between Jewish and Persian cultures (Shaked 1994:309).” Berthelot (2021:61) argues that:

...the theory of the succession of four empires or monarchies associated with different ages of the world, and identification of the four ages with four metals—a theory found in the book of Daniel—has been shown to have Persian origins, even if it took its final and most well-known shape in a Hellenistic context.

Furthermore, available historical evidence attests to the fact that:

...copies of the texts of the Achaemenid inscriptions were circulated in Aramaic.” The text of Darius’ Behistun inscription, for instance, was copied on clay and parchment for distribution throughout the empire, and an Aramaic version (DB Aram) has been found in Elephantine, where a Jewish military colony was established (Berthelot 2021:61)

Berthelot (2021:62) says that some sceptics resist “the idea that Judean monotheism was a reaction to ‘Zoroastrianism,’ or Mazdean religion at large.” They argue that passages such as the one found in Isaiah 45:7 are limited to more recent traditions in the Bible and are not found in older scripts. They say that it “probably do reflect a rejection Persian Mazdean dualism.” In this regard, it is essential to observe that “In the Achaemenid inscriptions and reliefs, Ahura Mazda is associated exclusively with light, not with darkness.” In addition, evidence that could be gleaned from biblical books such as Job shows that theodicy was a subject of debate amongst the Jews

during the Persian period. One also should recognise the difficulty associated with dating the Book of Job. Furthermore, it could be argued that even though passages such as Isaiah 45:7 could read as a “rejection of dualism at the level of the deity itself, the development of angelology and demonology in Jewish texts from the Persian period onward shows that the question of the origin of evil was far from settled for all that.” This is linked to the idea of “the appearance of the figure of Satan in biblical literature.” Admittedly, it “is difficult to date precisely” when this idea originated. However, even with difficulty, one could argue that the concept is as a result of the “consequence of the *further* development of monotheism in a Persian context.”

What is important to note is that most of the issues discussed above stem from a period of imperialism and colonialism. The language and ideology of the imperialists, as well as religion, assume a position of dominance in the ensuing relationship between them and the colonized. The relationship is such that the colonized is obliged and mandated by circumstances to obey. Every aspect of the interaction between the imperialist and the colonized is designed by the former (imperialist) to project might and power over the latter (colonized). Arguably, embedded in the notion of military conquest is language and religion. It implies that their language and religion are also conquered when people are conquered. Subsequently, we will attempt to look at Persian influence and contributions to the ideas of monotheism. Other areas of suspected influence include dualism, creator God, human kingship, eschatology and ethics. These are vast subjects, but because of the focus of this dissertation, they will not be discussed.

As such, an attempt would be made to present a concise account of monotheism in the light of Persian interest. There is no general consensus amongst scholars about the period in which monotheism became central to Yahwism and, eventually, Judaism. Rather, scholars disagree about the period in which Judaism practised monotheism in its strict sense. There are two sides to the argument regarding the period that witnessed the inclusion of the idea of monotheism into Judaism. The first position postulates that “monotheism *sensu stricto* arose in the Persian context... (Berthelot 2021:61)” The second position states that the idea came into play

“immediately after the destruction of the First Temple, during the Neo-Babylonian period (Berthelot 2021:61).” Berthelot (2021:61) argues that monotheism is “The explicit claim that YHWH is the only god and that other gods do not exist.” She highlights the fact that the claim “is found in only a few biblical texts....” According to Smith (2001:10):

Monotheism appears clearly in biblical texts dating to the sixth century, and it is possible to push back this date by a century depending on how the point is argued; in either case, monotheism seems to represent an inner-Israelite development over hundreds of years, not a feature known from Israel's inception.

Smith (2001:10) opines that

Polytheism, in contrast, is represented by many different bodies of texts from ancient Mesopotamian cities such as Assur and Babylon; many sites in Syria including the Bronze Age cities of Ebla, Ugarit, Mari, and Emar; and finally, early Israel itself as well as its Iron Age neighbours.

He (2001:10) states that:

The timing of the emergence of Israelite monotheism in the late Iron Age fits what has been called the “Axial Age” by the philosopher Karl Jaspers and his followers, a period in world history (ca. 800–200) that “witnessed the emergence of revolutionary new understandings of human understanding,” including the awareness of “the separation between transcendent and mundane spheres of reality.

The preceding quote reflects the social conditions that Israel faced at the time, both within and without. Smith (2001:163-164) believes that there is very scant evidence regarding Israel's ancient religion, which makes it a daunting task for an interpreter to piece together a clear picture of the state of Israel's religion during the sixth and seventh centuries. However, he (2001:164) suggests that the information that is available concerning “Judah's social structure and historical circumstance” is enough to assist an interpreter to build an image of “the emergence of monotheistic statement” during the sixth and seventh centuries. He identifies the changing social dynamics of the time, which resulted in an increase in theological intelligibility as the first factor. The rise in intelligibility led to the further reduction of the understanding of the deity as a council of deities to a deity as a single person. This was in contrast to what was seen previously in their religion, where the deity is represented as a “polytheistic family.” He believes that this manner of conceptualizing the deity may be linked to the change in perception of how lineage was conceived from the eighth

to the sixth century. The main factors that contributed to this change were the harmful effects that emanated from the introduction of the monarchy system on the traditional family system, the emergence of a wealthy middle class that bought farmland land, and the effect of war on rural areas. He opines that at that stage, “Israelite monotheism was denuded of the divine family, perhaps reflecting Israel’s weakening family lineages and patrimonies.” In other words, this represents the rise of individualism, which replaced the communal system during the pre-exilic period. The new trend began later in the pre-exilic period and continued in the exile period. It was cemented during the post-exilic period. The theme of monotheism is more clearly expressed in texts that are considered post-exilic, such as Ezekiel 14:12-23, Jeremiah 31:29-30, and Ezekiel 18, 33:12-20 and Deuteronomy 24:16. These texts proclaim that individuals would be held accountable for their sins and promote the fact that “an individual deity *is* accountable for the cosmos.”

Smith (2001:65) observes that the second factor that led to the rise of monotheism during the sixth and seventh centuries BCE is the effect of imperialism on their reasoning generally. They were faced with a situation where the victorious Assyrian and Babylonian army attributed their victories over the other nations, including Israel, to the deeds of their gods. The fact that they found themselves at the bottom of the political ladder made them devise a means of elevating their own deity to the position of a universal god. Essentially, what they ended up doing to close the gap between their god and the god of others was to invent political propaganda to suit their dreams and desires. Arguably, this was some utopian reasoning or an inversion of reality. Their god, who used to be a national god, was re-clothed in universalism. “Yahweh became an “empire-god,” the god of all the nations... (Smith 2002:202). Davies (2016:26) captures a similar idea when he argues that “the political development from national to imperial monarchy is the major cause of the religious developments leading to monotheism.” He (2016:28-29) highlights the fact

that certain teachings can become popular and established only when they cohere with current cultural assumptions or aspirations, there is a connection between a universal empire, a universal emperor, and a universal god...The idea of a single imperial god responsible for a unified world political system, represented in various divine names and figures, is as natural a conception as the idea of the national royal god had been in the days of smaller kingdoms. Monarchic theism becomes imperial theism.

Davies (2016:24) notes a general acknowledgement that Judah/Yehud played a central role in the development of monotheism. He observes that the fact that the root of Western monotheism is traceable to the activities of Judaism and the Jewish scriptures “does not mean that monotheism begins here, that the idea springs originally from within the history of Palestinian religion.” He argues that many scholars have abandoned the idea that monotheism originated during the mosaic time. However, conservative scholars still subscribe to the idea of mosaic origin. He opines that there is a conflict of opinion over the actual time monotheism was introduced into Judaism, with some scholars settling for “the monarchic period (more specifically, the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah), the “exilic” period (among Judean deportees, specifically in Second Isaiah [Isaiah 40–55]), and the cult of the so-called “Second Temple” in Jerusalem from the 5th century BCE.” He believes that the belief that monotheism happened at once in Sinai, during a particular moment of religious reform, or from experience gained from deportation is erroneous and a misconception of the idea. He says that the idea of a once-off coming to being of monotheism emerged from the notion of divine self-revelation and the assumption that the earliest form of monotheism birthed from Judaism. He argues that such a major religious development could not have happened except if the right cultural conditions were in place to undergird it. Also important to mention is the view that monotheism as regards Judaism was a kind of reaction of the Israelite people against the cultural and political trend seen in Canaanite and other polytheistic cultures. He opines that this position no longer holds ground because of archaeological evidence that shows traces of polytheism in the Israel and Judean religion during the time of monarchy.

And on the other hand, there are traces of monotheism in the Assyrian religion imperialism (8th-7th centuries BCE) and Babylonian multiculturalism (6th century BCE). What is important to note here is that any consideration regarding the emergence of monotheism in Judaism should be done regarding time. The argument here is that monotheism developed over time. Following this assertion, it could be said that archaeological evidence emanating from the fifth-century period points to the fact that monotheism in Judah began during the Persian period. The rise could

be attributed to the fact that Persian official religion itself is naturally monotheistic. This observation implies that Judaic monotheism, contrary to the notion that it is a novel invention or came out from a kind of reaction, is a case of Judaism being forced by circumstance to adapt culturally. In other words, it is a form of cultural adaptation. The argument here is that the emergence of monotheism in Judaism was more of a cultural-political-sociological event than what the biblical ideology attempts to project it to be.

Furthermore, Davies (2016:25) argues that the political origin of the idea of monotheism connects it to the idea of one supreme ruler. He argues that the idea of monotheism is related to the concept of an earthly king who is supreme. The idea is exported to incorporate a deity who is supreme over all other heavenly beings and creatures. Thus, it is tied to monarch or dynasty ideology. He highlights that monotheism is usually a concept found in the state's official religion. When viewed as a state official religion, monotheism is best described as “monarchic theism.” It serves as an ideology that supports the idea of a single divine ruler. Important to note is the fact the ideology that undergirds the relationship was inverted “with the kingship on earth *reflecting* the kingship in heaven and not the other way round (word denoted in italic mine).” The royal gods dwelled in temple palaces and were attended to by the servant priests (Davies 2016:27).

Monotheism is seen to share a close relationship with intolerance. The idea of intolerance cannot be separated from the concept of exclusivism. Smith (2001:154) believes that when monotheism is presented as rhetoric, “it reinforces Israel’s exclusive relationship with its deity.” Thus, it becomes (Smith 2001:154):

a kind of inner community discourse establishing a distance from outsiders: it uses the language of Yahweh’s exceptional divine status beyond and in all reality (“there are no other deities but the Lord”) to absolutize Yahweh’s claim on Israel and to express Israel’s ultimate fidelity to Yahweh.

Smith (2001:154), therefore, sees monotheism as “not a new cultural step” but as the idea that “expresses Israel’s relationship with Yahweh.” In other words, monotheistic statements do not herald a new age of religion but explain Yahwistic monolatry in absolute terms. What should be considered here is their experience during exile,

which resulted in a shift in their manner of reasoning. It is believed that it was a case of a few minorities who understood the concept of Yahwism in a monotheistic form and tried to persuade the majority from their polytheistic ways of worship. Lang (1983:20) writes:

During the four and a half centuries of Israelite monarchy (ca. 1020-586 B.C.), the dominant religion is polytheistic and undifferentiated from that of his neighbours. The religion of the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Tyrians, etc., are local variants of the common Syro-Palestinian pattern which is not transcended by their individual traits and distinctive features. The original religion of Israel belong to this group of West-Semitic cults.

Perhaps, it should be argued that monotheism did not completely eradicate the belief in polytheism.

Römer (2015:216) argues that the core idea of monotheism in Judaism developed from the writings of the Deuteronomistic school. He (2015:216) believes that the members of the Deuteronomistic school “are the descendants of scribes and other officials of the Judean court— that is, of the very people who supported or even initiated the reforms of Josiah,” The idea of monotheism in Judaism, thus, is connected to Josiah’s reform. He (2015:216) writes,

This group is obsessed by the end of the monarchy and the deportation of the elites of Judah, and it seeks to explain the exile by constructing a history of Yhwh and his people, from the beginning under Moses up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the aristocracy.

The main idea that undergirds the concept of monotheism originates from the explanation offered by the DH about the crisis of 597 and 587 that culminated in massive deportation and exile of the people of Israel and Judea (Römer 2015:217). The idea is linked to the claim that YHWH is the God who controls the whole universe. Therefore, the kings of Assyria and Babylon were instruments used by YHWH to carry out his mandate. Israel’s defeat at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians was mere fulfilment of YHWH’s punishment for their disobedience of his laws on idolatry. The law in question strictly prohibits the Israelites from following other gods, which the DH claimed that the Israelites and Judeans failed to adhere to (Römer 2015:218). They were to dedicate their being and essence to YHWH only. In a nutshell, they broke their covenant with YHWH and were punished through the

activities of the Assyrians and Babylonians. This perspective in many texts of Deuteronomy “is clearly one of monolatry, exclusive worship of one god: it is no way denied that other gods exist, but Israelites were simply prohibited from following them (Römer 2015:218).” Römer identifies the accompanying expression “following them” as probably referring “to participation in processions, during the course of which the statues of these gods were exhibited (2015:218).”

Römer (2015:219) believes that the idea of monotheism found in the second part of Isaiah (chapters 40-55); known as Deutero-Isaiah, represents the further development of the concept later in the Persian period. He (2015:219) qualifies the corpus as “The most highly developed set of monotheistic speculations in the Hebrew Bible...” He (2015:219) states that this group of writings most probably were inspired by “the “Cyrus cylinder”, on which the Persian king has himself celebrated (by the priests of Marduk) as having been chosen by Marduk to govern the nations and restore peace.” Here, we found the god Marduk electing the Persian king to govern all the nations. One can argue for a case of universality, which implies that Marduk is a god who directs the affairs of all nations. Similarly, the same idea of universality is also associated with YHWH.¹⁸ He writes, “The author of this text exhibits a very robust universalism in presenting Cyrus as the Messiah of Yhwh, despite taking his inspiration from the propaganda of the Persian king, which was itself a reworking of the Assyro- Babylonian royal ideology (Römer 2015:218).” The idea became part of some of the “texts added to Deuteronomistic history during the Persian era,” that insists that “there is by contrast an insistence that Yhwh is the only god, and that no others exist apart from or beside him (Römer 2015:218).”¹⁹ Römer argues that the Deuteronomists took a step closer to monotheism by practising monolatry. But they were not monotheistic.

Römer (2015:219) believes that texts of Isaiah 46:6, 44:15, and 44:9-10 “go even further by proposing a “theoretical demonstration” of monotheism; this is virtually the only place in the Hebrew Bible where such a thing can be found.” The manner in which the writer of these various passages argued about “the uniqueness of YHWH,

¹⁸ The arguments that are discussed here come mostly from the texts of Isaiah 45:3, 1, 2, and 28.

¹⁹ See Deuteronomy 4:39.

whom texts in Deutero-Isaiah often identify with El” appears “as a kind of theological revolution (Römer 2015:220).” Moreover, “The manifestation of Yhwh as the only god of all the peoples of the earth and of the entire universe amounts to a new revelation... (Römer 2015:220).” Deutero-Isaiah makes evident the unique character of Yahweh who the “texts often identify with El” is seen “as a kind of theological revolution.” It is also important to add that “at any rate the view expressed in Isaiah 40–55, tries also to resolve two major problems to which the assertion of a unique god gives rise: the question of the “feminine” aspects of the divine and the question of the origin of evil (Römer 2015:221).”

Important also to mention is the idea of inclusive monotheism, a concept whose origin can be attributed to the work of the Priests (Römer 2013:225). This thought could be said to be a later development that is traceable to the Persian period and bears the mark of response to a crisis. Römer (2015:225) explains,

This attitude does in fact correspond very well to that exhibited in what is traditionally called the “priestly document” in the Bible. This priestly work includes texts that today are part of the Pentateuch, that is, sections found in Genesis, Exodus, and the first part of Leviticus. These texts were drawn up by a group of priests or persons very close to priestly circles either in Babylon or Jerusalem at the beginning of the Persian era.

It was developed as a response to the conquest situation which the people of Israel and Judea found themselves during Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian imperialism. Perhaps, it is critical to say that what could be described as the original priestly writings concerned itself with explaining “the time of origins (the origin of the world, the time of the Patriarchs and Moses) (Römer 2015:225).”

The first edition of this priestly text, which was later augmented, probably concluded with the account of the ritual of Yom Kippur (“Day of Atonement”), which is now to be found in Leviticus 16. In this account, great emphasis is placed on the need for the high priest to purify the sanctuary and the community regularly. In contrast to Deuteronomistic conceptions, which insist on a strict separation between the people of Yhwh and other peoples, the members of these priestly circles put forward an inclusive monotheism, which tries to define the place and role of Israel and of Yhwh among all the peoples and their respective gods. To this end, the priests used a theory of the divine names to develop a system of “three circles” or three stages of the revelation of Yhwh (Römer 2015:225).

Furthermore, it is important to note that the term *’ēlōhîm* is believed to be firstly used by the Priestly writers and in a sense, bears the quality of inclusiveness. Arguably,

the Priests believed that “the name *’ēlōhîm*” which “is at the same time both a singular and a plural,” connotes that “in a sense all gods can be seen as manifestations of the one God (Römer 2015:226).” Following the discussion thus far, it could be argued that new meanings were infused into the understanding of YHWH and his relationship with the Israelites and Judeans during the Persian period. Going forward, the discussion will attempt to focus on the possible Persian influence on how the god of Israel, YHWH, was given a new interpretation in a monotheistic sense.

Previously, in this discussion, the writer noted the “difficulty to form a clear idea of the religious system adopted by the Achaemenid kings (Römer 2015:227).” In addition, the writer highlights the problems encountered by interpreters in their attempt to ascertain the date, the place of residence and the original message of Zoroaster. Interpreters are also confronted with this problem:

The oldest manuscript of the Avesta, the sacred book of Mazdeism and of the Zoroastrianism that succeeded it dates from the thirteenth century AD, and the difficulties surrounding the composition of this text recall in several aspects the difficulties confronting interpreters of the Hebrew Bible (Römer 2015:227).

Furthermore, there is no clear evidence uncovered so far that supports the existence of “a corpus of Mazdean writings at the time of the Achaemenids, although most scholars seem confident that we can trace the Gathas (the sayings of Zoroaster) back to the beginning of the first millennium (Römer 2015:227).”

Having laid out some of the critical problems confronting an interpreter working on the Iranian religion, the writer would attempt to discuss some of the evidence that has been uncovered and is considered helpful in the bid to resolve some of the issues. Firstly, is the “traditional view that Zoroaster lived 258 years before Alexander (Römer 2015:227).” A view held by those who subscribe to a minimalist position is adopted. The important thing to note here is that this view does not contradict the fact that “some kind of Mazdeism” existed during the Achaemenid period (Römer 2015:227). This argument is supported by the fact that during the time of Darius (521-486), Mazdeism is recorded to be part of the official religion. Darius’ attempt to legitimize his right to the throne is clearly attested for “in the famous

inscription in Behistun” where he made “reference to the will and support of Ahura-Mazda (Römer 2015:227).” In addition, Darius calls Ahura-Mazda in the inscription of Elvend, “the great god, who created this earth, who created yonder heaven, who created men, who created happiness for man (Römer 2015:227).” The Elvend inscription additionally mentions the existence of other gods. The acceptance of the existence of other gods can also be deduced from how the “Persian overlords” allowed their subjects to worship other gods (Römer 2015:228). This arrangement has led to the question of whether the Persian approach to religion qualifies to be called monotheism. Alternatively, one can argue that “the Mazdeism of the Persians was a kind of syncretistic or inclusive monotheism in which a variety of other gods were taken to be merely local manifestations of Ahura- Mazda (Römer 2015:228).”

On the other side of this discussion lies the Bible. The discussion already stated that the Bible's Judean writers were prone to saying favourable things about their Persian overlord. It could be argued that this was probably because of their relationship with the Persians. Here, the reference is to the imperial relationship that governed their interaction. Arguably, the Persians possess enormous power over the Judeans in the relationship. As discussed previously in this dissertation, in the chapter dealing with imperialism, colonization, etc. it could be argued, based on the evidence presented, that the Judeans played a subordinate role in the relationship between the two. They were bound by the circumstances of the time to obey the whims and caprices of their imperial masters. Hence, there is a favourable presentation of narratives that pattern and relate to the Persian. Some places where the Persian influence could be identified are in the works of biblical authors such as Ezra and Nehemiah. The authors of the works identified “put great emphasis on the strong and positive connection between the Persian Empire and the eponymous protagonists of these two books: the governor Nehemiah, and the scribe and priest Ezra (Römer 2015:228).” Boyce (1984:298) comments that the rhetorical strategies adopted by the identified authors come across as designed to correspond with the strategy of the Persian king. This factor is attributable to the fact that Jewish community members in Babylon and Mesopotamia served in high-ranking positions in the Achaemenids government. For example, Nehemiah was a close confidant of

Artaxerxes 1, whom he served as a cupbearer. The evidence available shows that (Boyce 1984:298):

...the Achaemenids maintained good relations with the Jews in Mesopotamia, in particular with the 'Yahweh-alone' group among them, to which Second Isaiah, Nehemiah and Ezra all belonged. This being so, the possibility undoubtedly exists of some influence having been exerted by the faith of these benevolent kings, with all their might and majesty, on this group among their subjects, who had good cause to be grateful to them, and so receptive.

The fact that Nehemiah was permitted by the royal authority to serve as the king's cupbearer meant that he was well acquainted with the Zoroastrian purity laws of the Achaemenids (Boyce 1984:298).

Römer (2015:228) believes that the nature of these works arguably promotes the ideology of conquest and remains that way whether the work is treated as “fiction” or “historical.” One may even argue that these texts “symbolize in one way or another, the idea of close collaboration between Judean and Persian authorities.” This implies that “the proto-Judaism of the Persian period accepted the idea of a *translatio imperii* (as it would be called in the Middle Ages), interpreting it in favour of the Achaemenid kings.” Mazdeism influence could also be argued to be present in Psalms 89:6 and 103:20. Whether these influences were direct is hard to determine based on the evidence available to current scholarship. However, the way these psalms characterize YHWH resembles the image the Persians gave their kings (the only true king who dominates kings of other nations) and their gods (Ahura-Mazda), who remain above all other pantheon gods.

3.9.5 Concluding remarks

The discussion in this section focused on the Persian period. Firstly, it attempted to present a brief historical context of the period. A table showing the important kings' names and reign dates appeared above. The discussion then moved to the political contexts during the Persian period. The policy of Cyrus, considered a very important figure in the political history of Persia was discussed. The discussion moved to Darius, under whose reign it is considered that Persia reached its peak of glory as an

empire. The socio-cultural context followed this. Here, the issue of language, literature and their use was discussed.

Additionally, the subject of Judean identity during Second Temple period was raised. The economic structure of the empire was also spoken about. A discussion on religion and the impact of imperialism on Judah followed this. Here, some of the related issues and problems were given. The final part of the section discussed the idea of monotheism in Judaism in the light of Persian influence. The discussion focused on the origin of monotheism and where the idea came from.

2.10 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to look at the history of the period that led to the final compilation of the book of Joshua. The discussion started with an introduction to the topic. The discussion then moved to “Historical Criticism through the lens of Postcolonialism/ Postcolonial Perspective: Context and Meaning as applied in this study. The discussion then attempted to look at “The meaning of Historical Criticism.” This was followed by the “Historical Criticism of the book of Joshua.” This led to a brief overview of the old debate on the historicity of the book of Joshua and the conquest narrative. A discussion on the Egyptian colonization of the land of Canaan followed this. The discussion then attempted to engage with the characteristics of the Neo-Assyrian period, the Neo-Babylonian period, and the Persian period. Arguably, what could be inferred from this discussion is that imperialism and colonialism result in hybridization. The effect is felt both by the colonizers and the colonized. This results from years of interaction extending to the sphere of culture, religion, social, political and economic activities.

The subsequent chapter will examine the deity as a political and cultural object in the Joshua narrative.

Chapter 4

4. Deity: A political and cultural object in the Joshua narrative

4.1 Introduction

This study will be conducted through postcolonial criticism and the application of other critical methods to discuss how the writers of Joshua perceptively turned their deity into objects for achieving political and cultural objectives. An action which arguably was undertaken consciously to answer to a particular political and cultural need. Arguably, it was actually an answer to an existential threat caused by the activities of the other nations who presumably were stronger. This includes historical criticism, which shares close ties and affinities with postcolonial criticism. While admitting that Postcolonial criticism is like any other critical practice, Sugirtharajah (2012:2) added that there are observable differences between historical and postcolonial criticism. Historical criticism arguably focuses on “the history, theology and the religious world of the text”. In contrast, postcolonial criticism investigates issues around “politics, culture, and economics of the colonial milieu out of which the texts emerged” (Sugirtharajah 2012:2).

The adaptation of the texts to a particular context is critical to interpretation. Scholars such as Dozeman (2010: xi) recognize the fact that “Newer Methods” are changing the landscape of biblical interpretation. Biblical interpretation has become globalized, and more concern is shown towards understanding the “world in front of the text...” (2010: xi). Since the main goal of this study is to critically examine “the conflicted unequal relations between the colonizer and colonized that are the focus of postcolonial studies as an academic endeavour” (Yee 2010:193), applying the postcolonial method here will allow the discussion to critically interpret “the world in front of the text” which historical criticism tends to overlook.

4.2 Critical observations about the subject matter

The writer purposely designed the use of “object” here instead of “subject” to highlight the feeling of rejection emanating from his experience as a person

interpreting from a postcolonial perspective. The term 'object' is used in a neutral sense to leave open the "dynamic of the relationship" between Yahweh (deity) and Israel (Brueggemann 1997: 409). It would be erroneous to dismiss the fact that the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites, which biblical narratives such as Joshua attempt to present as a partnership, does "decisively impinge and affect the overall image of Yahweh (deity)" (Brueggemann 1997:409). This has always acted as the centre of disputation and contestation around understanding what the deity represents. Whether the deity behaviourally is what it has been projected to represent or if it is just a mere fictional device invented by the writers. Therefore, in the present context, the writer would rather apply a reverse interpretation, which leads to making Yahweh (deity) the object of the relationship rather than the Israelites.

This implies that in the interaction between Yahweh and the Israelites, "all the active force and initiative" becomes the deeds of the Israelites (Brueggemann 1997:409). For example, "Yahweh commands" is reversed to mean "Israel commands," and "Yahweh leads" is reversed to mean "Israel leads". The understanding here is that the Bible should be studied like any other human subject matter. Therefore, an attempt should be made to avoid myth and dogma dominating such endeavour, over and against the domination of rational empirical inquiry (Gottwald 1979:8). To embrace such method and approach would produce an intellectually and culturally liberating experience (1979:8). And it is also in following with "postcolonial reading practices" that "reconsiders the biblical narratives, not as a series of divinely guided incidents or reports about divine-human encounters, but as emanating from colonial contacts" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 251).

Any critical attempt to map Joshua's narrative(s) would first yield the image of the deity and its resultant ideology that upholds the events witnessed in the entire narrative. This image is a vital force that permeates the whole narrative. It is this image that gives form and stability to the entire narrative. Those who conceptualize the work as a collective successfully made Yahweh (deity) a political and cultural object. These two subjects (politics and culture) form part of the dominant issues on subjects of imperialism and colonialism.

4.3 Deity: A Political Object

As a political object, Joshua's narrative(s) presents the deity as the supreme political head and commander who dictates, orders, and champions the actions and activities of the Israelites. Williams (2010:95) remarks, "When we open the book of Joshua, we meet a people poised to go to war to take land. It is so positioned not only in God's name and with God's permission but by God's command." The narrative(s) appeals to an existing ideology that finds a wide range of applications in the governance sphere of the Ancient Near East. The writer(s) of the book of Joshua follow(s) the tradition commonly seen in the other ANE literary production that promotes and embraces the ideology of politicization and militarization of the image of the deity.²⁰ Consciously and deliberately, images were conjured of a deity informed by his involvement in political, cultural, social, and military activities. A deity who fully participates and functions in human affairs and arena. This participation was always about the political god existing to protect the political interest of those who purport and claim to be the deity's followers.

The rhetorical strategy employed was designed to present those activities as legitimate actions. The rhetorical effect leaves an uncritical reader with the impression that their conduct was right and just. On the other hand, a postcolonial critical reading of the texts generates a feeling of uneasiness that invokes important ethical questions.²¹ Amongst these questions would be the basis on which these actions were justified, ethically and morally.

Said (1993:78) highlights the following:

Underlying social space are territories, lands, geographical domains, the actual geographical underpinnings of the imperial, and also the cultural contest. To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or to depopulate them all of this occurs on,

²⁰ For further reading, see, K. Lawson (1990:230-237).

²¹ Interestingly, the former American President; Jefferson (1775), who was himself a slaveholder, in one of his works, attempted to separate the miracles and the supernatural events that were included in the life and work of Jesus Christ. His supposed aim was to bring to light the rich moral and ethical events which the supernatural aspects tend to overshadow. We will suppose that what he attempted to do was to separate myth from historically related event. It could be argued that he took a rationalistic approach in his interpretation. Calvin (1949:97,163-164) struggled to come to terms with the ethical and moral issues that are embedded in the book of Joshua. Though, arguably, at the end he tried to play down this issue saying that because it is Yahweh's command, it is acceptable. And it is exactly such interpretation that postcolonial interpretation attempts to confront.

about, or because of land. The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about.

If a sweeping view is taken of the histories of the Ancient Near East, it could be observed that these factors and elements which Said identified were forcefully at play in the region. And, in direct relation to the narrative of Joshua, a critical interpretation of the motive behind the narratives exposes the fact that the ambition of the writers was closely related to the ideals that the above quote attempts to espouse. More pointedly, Joshua's narrative(s) celebrates the usurping of the right to ownership of land from the non-Israelite population and arbitrarily transferring such to the Israelites. According to Williams (2010:154), "The God of whom we read in the book of Joshua gives land, commands slaughter, forbids idolatry, and enters into covenant relationship with his people." There is the conjecture that the deity simply sanctioned the events and actions. The fact that the deity sanctioned them, as the narrators claim, is supposed to make the events and actions justifiable, acceptable and legal.

A postcolonial critical reading of the Joshua texts uncovers an agenda that points to imperialism and colonialism. According to Sugirtharajah (2004:248), the concern of postcolonial criticism is partly to "expose colonial control and domination, with a view to gaining eventual independence and liberation." The question of "colonial control and domination" is applicable to the conduct and behaviour of the Israelites based by the nature of the Joshua narrative. Therefore, the Israelites in this context are understood as playing the role of the imperialist and colonisers. The second part of the submission that deals with "gaining eventual independence and liberation" applies to the experience of the others represented in the texts. It also includes others, such as Africans, who subsequently became victims of the ideas and ideology that the narratives of Joshua incorporate.²² The Joshua narrative is built on the foundation that presents the Israelites as the powerful and the others; as the weak. The accounts present a scenario that guarantees the Israelites an unfettered right to control and dominate the others. The rhetorical device employed projected

²² Chinua Achebe's (1995) work, "Things fall Apart" is a damning condemnation of such activities which arguably is drawn from the ideas present in Joshua and more. It is arguably the use of literature to counter another literature.

the Israel deity as superior to that of the others. To further bolster this point, the narrators kept the voices of the other deities silent. Throughout the ordeal and the encounter, the actions and activities of the deities of the others were represented as insignificant. The fact that the voices of the deities of the others were silenced in the Joshua texts automatically renders them (the victims; vanquished) silent. More clearly, the idea of silence is represented in the ideology of differences, “their God/our God” that finds its climax in “them” and “us.”

Also, fundamentally, it reflects the ideology of dominance and conquest which persists in modern times. Whitlam (2011:200) writes that “...the historicity of the patriarchal, exodus or settlement/conquest traditions” still lingers in the thoughts and, activities and events happening in modernity. There is no denying of the fact that the “images” accruing from the ideology present in biblical narratives such as Joshua “...are deeply-seated in the popular and political imagination” of modernity”. These images “...continue to exert a profound hold on modern notions of identity and are central to a view of the past that is almost resistant to challenge.” In other words, it could be argued that the past never dies completely. Rather, the past is etched in history. For example, President Clinton revealed that he read Joshua's work the night before his 14 September 1993 meeting with Arafat and Rabin. The fact that such a powerful and important political figure resorted to reading such material and relied on the “historical evidence” from it for such an important meeting demonstrates the extent of the vision of the past; in this instance, relating to the Joshua narratives is so powerfully ingrained on the western consciousness till this day.

In the preceding discussion, Israel was presented as the oppressor; here, Israel appears as the oppressed. Like the previous discussion, Israel uses its deity to achieve certain political objectives. The narrator's warning about the need to obey the law creates an impression of resistance in the mind of a critical interpreter. Indirectly, they are pointing out the need to resist the temptation to worship the God of their oppressors. This is a form of mixing religion and politics, a common feature of the ANE worldview. Israel lived and interacted with others throughout its existence in ancient times. On various occasions, this interaction happened in the form of imperialism and colonialism. Israel mainly was at the receiving end. Nations such as

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia conquered Israel and put them under their rule. Israel paid a heavy price in the process. They went through physical and mental torture and eventually, on different occasions, were sent into exile. The imperializing nation uses this method and approach to secure submission and control over the colonized. The natural outcome of the effect of such a treatment is that it leads to resistance. Hence, the birth of literature such as the Joshua narrative is characteristically a resistance literature. Portier-Young (2011:xxii) argues that:

Empire claimed the power to order the world. It exercised this power through force, but also through propaganda and ideology. Empire manipulated and co-opted hegemonic social institutions to express and reinforce its values and cosmology. Resisting imperial domination required challenging not only the physical means of coercion, but also empires claims about knowledge and the world.

Fetalsana-Apura (2019:91) notes that:

Texts coming from the underside that empower the weak, though not openly oppositional, may be considered a form of resistance. As propaganda works in subtle ways, subversion of the established order in the face of repressive power must be coded and refined, especially in literature, and so is the case of the Hebrew Bible as national literature.

The form of resistance that is seen in the literature of Joshua is centred on their interaction with their deity, the God of their fathers (past) and the living (present). They resisted dominance and suppression, which was orchestrated by imperialism and colonialism perpetrated against them by stronger nations (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia Empires). The use of their deity as the central rallying point for resistance allows for the participation of all Israel in the quest for liberation. This is because religion is a common denominator amongst them, as seen in the period's history. Both the rich and the poor participate in religious affairs. In other words, the deity is reduced to a political object on which bases the idea of resistance is conceptualized and actualized. What is important to note here is that the people of Israel hid under the notion of religion to carry out their desire and intention of resisting imperial domination. In the resistance struggle, the colonized people always resorted to means and ways available to them. Harlow (1987:7) explains that the historical struggle against imperialism and colonialism is undertaken in the form of armed struggle and "at the same time as a struggle over the historical and cultural

record.” It must be understood that struggle happens on both sides of the divide, that is, on the side of the colonizer and the other hand, on the side of the colonized. When one looks at the history of the ANE, both sides produced literature to justify their activities. This signifies that both the colonizer and the colonized take “the struggle over... historical record... as no less crucial as the armed struggle.” The Israelites use the book of Joshua as “cultural terrain” where their disputes with the imperialist nations are disputed and resolved.

In some cases, the resolution reached is imaginary and one-sided. Hence, works like the Book of Joshua are considered utopian literature. They hide their true intention in such literary works by using it as a subtle way of telling truth to power. That is to say that such literature can be deceptive in nature. The deceptiveness comes from the fact that such literature can pose a problem for the colonized as their content may not go well with the imperialist. Scott (1990:1) highlights the fact that the expression "Speak truth to power" can be characterized as having “an utopian ring to it, even in modern democracies, this is surely because, it is so rarely practiced.” Arguably, in the real sense of things, it is very rare for a person to be courageous enough to speak truth to power openly. The same applies to resistance literature such as Joshua.

Scot (1990:80) also speaks about “hidden transcripts” in connection with the resistance of the oppressed against domination. What should be borne in mind here is that a lot goes on behind the scenes in the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor. Most times, the oppressed, out of fear of reprisal, will hide his true intentions whilst dealing with the oppressor. In certain situations, the oppressed adopt a cunning attitude in their dealings with the oppressor. Bhabha (1994:93-101) describes this form of behaviour by the oppressed as “sly civility.” This is a form of deceptive attitude which the oppressed adopts to counter the dominance of the oppressor. The native is forced to lie or pretend as a cover-up for his true intention because of the action of the oppressor. This is usually carried out in a very subtle and hidden manner to avoid the wrath of the oppressor, who would usually interpret such behaviour as a form of revolt. Bhabha (1994:98) uses a discussion between a missionary and a native about knowledge of God as an example of such behaviour.

In the discussion, the missionary asked the native: “What do you want?” and the native response was: “Whatever you give I will take.” Another example cited by Bhabha (1994:122) as evidence of the behaviour identified as “sly civility” is found in the report given by a missionary who describes the disdain the natives show for the Bible. The writer explains that the natives will gladly ask for the Bible out of curiosity or deliberating to sell it for a token or, use it as a waste paper or to barter it in the market for other things which probably the native considered as more important and valuable. The missionary came to the conclusion that the indiscriminate distribution of the Bible to the natives who say that they want it is a waste of time or an exercise in futility. The writers of Joshua exhibited similar behaviour by hiding their true intentions from their imperial masters. Probably, that portion of the book was compiled during exile when they were still under the rule of a foreign power. And it is only logical to assume that they dare not offend their imperial and colonial masters. As (Scott 1990:2) implies, the historical account usually presented in the work put together by the oppressed is filled with prudence and “misleading deference...” It was easy for the Israelites to understand the meaning because, as the primary audience, they were well acquainted with the narrator's language, which is supposed to be the language of the day. As they all shared the same experience, their national discourse at the time would have revolved around the same issues.

4.4 Deity: A Cultural Object

In the preceding discussion, the notion of objectifying the deity in a political and military sense in the ANE and particularly in Israel with focus on the narratives of Joshua was discussed. The discussion includes politicizing “differences” that were sanctioned by a deity (Deist 2000:82). Attention now turns to the deity as a cultural object. The first critical observation concerning the subject is that culture realistically is human by nature. Therefore, the inclusion of deities in cultural affairs is an assumed position by those who subscribe to the idea that deities are equally physical entities. This forms part of an existing interpretation and worldview, which reduces the deity to a person and, thus, ascribes personalities to its existence. When this image is created, the deity becomes a cultural figure, amongst its other assumed

or perceived physical forms. Crudely understood as a cultural figure, the Yahweh of Joshua is a physical being that exists in the form of a man who is cultural by nature. This successfully gives the deity an identity. As with the ideology that undergirds most biblical narratives, Joshua's deity is given a masculine image and identity.²³ The ideology of the deity having a physical presence that enables him to participate in cultural affairs is manifested more clearly in the royal ideology. Davies (2016:27) believes this ideology resulted from the states becoming better organized and having a more centralized form of monarchical administration. The emergence of such centralized monarchical government “encouraged the concept of an organized and thus monarchic divine realm which formed the basis of the royal or dynastic cult.” He (2016:27) observes that:

The king reigned by the authority and will of the gods, who had given the king his throne and in some cases adopted him as a son... Royal gods inhabited palaces (temples) and were attended by their priestly servants: worshippers “saw the face of the god” just as they “saw the face of the king”. The patron deity cared for his people and fought for them. But all this activity was conducted through the agency of the earthly monarch; the people were not subjects of the god but of the king.

Following the above discussion, identity, an important aspect of the imperial and colonial enterprise, becomes the main focus here. The importance of the term identity in a post-colonial setting cannot be played down. Deist (2000: 80) comments that “Even though political colonization had already collapsed in the early 1960s, the painful experience of colonial times would not easily be erased.” The important thing to note here is that some of the experiences are changing. There has been a great leap forward. And tremendous effort is being made by some of the people who directly or indirectly benefitted from imperialism and colonialism to level the playing ground for all. Yet, it is undeniable that some of the residues from colonialism still pollute the earth. Irrespective of whatever it is that is going on, “Handled with the necessary care and respect, through the concept of cultural identity and the honest search for 'the other' in the pages and original environment of the Bible may

²³ In essence the identity that is being referred to here is equivalent to the phrase “cultural identity.” According to Cambridge Online dictionary the word “cultural” relates “to the habits, traditions, and beliefs of a society” and “identity” refers “to a person’s name and other facts about who they are.”

considerably enhance, and perhaps fundamentally change, our understanding of biblical literature and of ourselves” (Deist 2000: 82).

The issue and concept of identity have a far-reaching and thoroughgoing effect on the nature of the Joshua narrative. The rhetorical strategy employed by the narrators presents the deity as a male figure who bestows certain privileges to a particular race that qualifies them as chosen. In other words, the male deity presented in the Joshua narratives divides and classifies people (narrowly) based on cultural leanings. The question at this point would be: what created the cultural world that gave birth to the idea and ideology that reduced a deity to a cultural object? This leads to a second question: why is identity so important to those who compiled the texts of Joshua? And this extends to the entire story that begins in Genesis and ends in 2 Kings.

4.5 The cultural world of the Joshua narratives: Exilic and Post-exilic periods

Part of the discussion in the preceding chapter is the story that began from Genesis to 2 Kings. Somewhere between Genesis and 2 Kings, one finds the narratives of Joshua. This is important because a critical reading of what has been referred to as the brief story shows that immense efforts were made to merge the individual stories as continuous stories that link one to the other. Another important observation that arguably emerges is that the stories took place at different times. And no historical period is similar; each is endowed with its own cultural uniqueness. It could even be argued that culture keeps on evolving as time progresses. This implies that what we have in our hands today comprises the narratives contained in the work of Genesis to 2 Kings, which represents diverse cultural settings covering different epochs that the final compilers attempted to present as homogenous. In other words, the cultural world of the Joshua narratives comprises individual cultures practised at various historical epochs or times, which were fused together to arrive at the one seen in the work of Joshua.

From this cultural world (in its totality), the collective identity emerges that shapes the stories. In a general and loose term, identity will be discussed as happening in three

different levels that are at the same time inseparable: (1) Individual identity (2) Collective identity and (3) Meta-Identity. The first level is the individual identity, such as the stories about the person of Joshua. Similarly Gottwald (1979: 242) observes that,

In many instances "the people" are distinguished from the leaders, such as Moses and the Aaronite priests, or Joshua, or Saul and Jonathan, but the leaders characteristically secure the consent of the people for their actions or serve as mediators or presiding officers at deliberations or actions of the whole people. On occasion, the people act on their own initiative against the decision of a leader

From the above quote, it can be seen that there is interrelatedness between the individual and the collective/ society. The different individual identities merge to form the collective identity that is, in actual fact, the society, seen here as the second level of identity. This is an essential form of identity as it is also closely related to the ideology that identifies Yahweh as an integral part of their identity. In the Hebrew Bible, Israel is often designated simply as "the people" (Gottwald 1979:242). This idea and ideology are fundamental to their existence. The notion of Israel's cultural identity as "the people of Yahweh" and its correlative obverse "Yahweh, the God of Israel" is ideologically connected (1979:242). This cultural identity which gives birth to the religious ideology, is strongly manifested in sayings such as; ""his people," "your people," and "my people," wherein the subject of the possessive pronoun is Yahweh" (1979:242).²⁴ The term "the people" observably may represent ""the people" as the entire community, or that portion assembled, acting in agreement and with authority, especially in making a covenant and in deciding for war (...Josh. 24: 16, 21, 24)" (1979:242). Even further is the fact that "... "the people" throughout many historical contexts has a strong military colouring, accenting the community in arms (often alternating with... "men of Israel" or "Israelite citizens in arms") and could be paraphrased as "the militia" or "citizen levy" (1979:242). Again, in the sense that Gottwald (1979) explains the idea and ideology that permeates the phrase "the people"; a critical mind is awakened to inquire about what lies behind the denotation. In the same sense that Pui-Lan (2006: 46) argues that:

²⁴ Already in page 7, it is argued that due to reversal of thought the subject of the possessive pronoun is seen as the people. So it means that the people are the ones who are ideologically claiming ownership of Yahweh.

...postcolonial critics scrutinize the colonial entanglements in the texts, highlighting the impact of empire and colonization in shaping the collective memory of the Jewish people, the literary production and redaction of biblical texts, and the process of the formation of the canon. The cultural production and literary imagination of the Hebrew people and early Christians were invariably shaped by the social and political domination of successive empires: in Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

What could be deduced from Joshua's narrative is the existence of a strong military culture. This culture is not limited to the people of Israel but was widely spread and acceptable in the then ANE. It was customary for the inhabitants of the ANE to go to war because of the scarcity of resources. Whether they were fighting for land or water or acquiring slaves, war was part of their life. Even more is the fact that these individual nations were also seeking cultural-social-political domination over the others.

In whatever manner a person chooses to interpret the work of Joshua, one thing that becomes clear at the end and should be kept in mind is that it was customary to go to war. And that the wars were fuelled by the need to acquire and possess resources such as land, water, slaves, etc. On the other hand, and arguably so, customs originate from collective identity. That is, customs are what have become acceptable as norms by the society; for example, the institution of marriage and slavery. Therefore, institutions, usually an important feature of a society, are governed by collective identity. In a subsistent level of existence like the society described in Joshua, custom plays an important role in ordering the society. It would, therefore, imply that collective identity directly relates to the notion of social organization. Deist (2000:233) observes that the survival of every society (especially the sort recorded in the work of Joshua, which operates as a subsistence economy) is dependent on how fully the individual members participate in the affairs of the society. This requires that members organize themselves in a form and fashion that produces favourable and acceptable results. Some of the critical ingredients that make such an organization function effectively and properly are (1) the setting of clear collective goals (2) collectively acceptable mechanism (custom) for achieving those goals, (3) decision on structures of authority (for effective decision making) and etc. (Deist 2000:233). Central to goal-achieving (whatever type or form of goal set) is having a reliable custom in place. Deist (2000: 235) writes that "The place where goal-achieving

mechanisms meet is custom.” Deist (2000: 235) further explains that, “Custom is not decided upon” and that “customs just happen.” The important thing that is worthy of note here is that custom is not just a phenomenon that develops overnight or instantaneously. It is something that happens over time. It usually comes out of routine, eventually becoming acceptable to society (2000; 235). For example, the idea and ideology of a deity participating in human affairs may have originated from an individual but, over time, become an acceptable way of life for the collective. Thus, it moves from being a case found in the individual identity to that of a collective. When this happens, the idea and ideology behind the occurrence would acquire recognition and become an acceptable norm. In other words, it is accepted as part of custom.

But beyond the second level lies a third, a form of identity that is more complex. In the present context, the identified identity would be designated the meta-identity. The meta-identity transcends the immediate circle of tribe, lineage, clan and ethnicity. It exists without boundary, which includes the identities of the others. Admittedly, the terms (tribe, lineage, clan and ethnicity) listed are very complex to define. This observation relates to how it applies to the social structure that existed in an ancient society such as Israel (Gottwald 1979:237). In most cases, these terms tend to overlap in meaning. This difficulty and complexity associated with the clear understanding of the meaning and application of these terms could be argued to be a result of a lack of clear, reliable and sufficient data to assist researchers in establishing a definitive and reliable pattern and form of representation (1979:237). The question is always about the definite functional roles that each of the terms above represents and performs in the social configuration of the then-Israel society and the rest of the ANE. Lemche (1985:260) arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the use of the terms listed in the traditional literature of the OT. He opines that, “...OT employs a very loose terminology to describe the lower levels of the society, since “house” and “father’s house” are used indiscriminately of the nuclear, family, the extended family, and also of the higher kinship group, the lineage.” In a later argument, he uses the Achan narrative (Jos. 7:17) as an example

that distinguishes a clan from a tribe following the lot-casting procedure that was employed (1985:260).

The Israelites can also be seen in the light of meta-identity, and this is usually the case when a person or people happen to be outside the frame where they are in control. This could be seen from the light of being a foreigner or a stranger. Like in the instances when the Israelites were living in exile or under Egyptian domination. In the Joshua narrative, the spies that met with Rehab were given the identity of outsiders. This also brings to light the fluid nature of identity. The fluid nature of identity is linked to the concept of power. In the Hebrew Bible, the type of identity that the world of the Bible constructs for womanhood, for example, is only possible because men were dominant and, therefore, were in control. And this is attributable to the nature of things at that time. Dominant activities such as wars and agriculture were of physical kinds and required a great amount of physical strength, which men were in a more advantageous position to offer and provide. Deist (2000:247) discusses the practices of patrilocation and matrilocation as part of the factors that form the presupposed Society of the Hebrew Bible. He concedes that this system (cultural practice) presents the male members of the society with undue privileges, such as being in charge of the political establishments. On the other hand, this weakens the position of women as it leaves them mostly with playing subordinate roles. The idea and ideology of a male figure deity could also be argued to be a dominant cultural practice because of the position of men in society. This implies that where power and authority reside at a particular time plays a significant role in deciding how identity is understood. In the case of the Joshua narrative, it would include those who were not accepted as part of the Israelites. This meta-identity and the collective identity of the Israelites created the cultural world, which is seen in the narratives of Joshua.

4.6 *Identity in the world of the Israelites/ANE*

In the preceding discussion, an attempt was made to establish the cultural world of the OT. Identity was identified as a strong element that fed into the cultural world of the OT. It is also important to note that identity breeds ideology. For example, the possession of land identified as the main driver in the extended work of Genesis to 2 Kings could be argued to be a part of (religious) ideology (Römer 2007:134). This ideology forms part of the Israelite identity. The other ANE inhabitants subscribe to a similar ideology. Römer (2007:134) refers to Joshua's narrative about the river crossing with the river miraculously drying. These narratives were common literary topics in the ANE, as seen in Assurbanipal's crossing of the Tigris River. The common ideology seen in the tales is that the deity of each nation was supposed to be the person who brought the deed into being. It is essential to note that nations are made up or consist of people and that we cannot speak about people without speaking about identity. The two are inseparable. Also, we cannot speak about identity and forget the ensuing ideologies that originate from identity. In a pretty general term, therefore, it could be argued that ideologies drive a nation.

When we critically interpret the text of Joshua, the prominent theme that stands out is land. Again, let us note that the world of Joshua cannot be divorced from that of the OT, especially from the world constructed from Genesis to 2 Kings. And even from that of the entire ANE region. The intention here is not to say that the works done by other scholars who have studied the books from different perspectives are irrelevant. It is relevant because each gives us a different perspective on how to approach the works. However, as an African, I am more conversant with the narrative approach in dealing with literary materials. Moreover, the Hebrew Bible is presented in the form of narratives. Except in places where laws intrude (Wellhausen 2014:4-9). They are mostly presented in codified forms, which are technical by nature.²⁵ Barstad (2008:14) highlights the fact that "The present status of history, as

²⁵ An important question would be whether the laws were enacted at the same time as the stories were being told or which came before the other; narratives before the laws or laws before narratives. What is important to note is that narratives are guided by rules, regulations, laws, limits etc. There should be rules even before a person starts telling his or her story. The argument is that laws have always been there. The same argument can also apply to narratives. Each of the two is part of a whole..

well as the fact that the historiography of the Hebrew Bible is pre-modern and narrative, make, in fact, excellent starting points for a new orientation also in biblical and in ancient Israelite/Palestinian historiography.” Further, he states, “The circumstance that the Hebrew Bible is narrative and pre-modern must have some consequences for the ways we work with it in relation to historiography.” He argues that the Western European approach and method to biblical interpretation are not at the end the best to be used in the attempt to unlock biblical texts. He opines that it is his “firm belief that the future definitely belongs to narrative history. It will take a long time for us to learn to respect and understand that narrative truth fully is a different truth from conventional history, but that it is not a lesser truth.” Barstad's advocacy bears a lot of truth; however, we cannot close ourselves up to one approach or method. The nature of biblical texts allows us to apply different methods and approaches and demands that we do so. Multiple approaches and methods enable the interpreter to approach the texts from different dimensions.

The first identifiable reason is that the OT writers were highly conscious of identity and profoundly highlighted it in their discourse. Joshua contains numerous names of nations apart from mentioning the names of people. The exchange between the Israelite spies and Rehab quickly establishes the players' identity and defines every participant's role. This was also applied to each of the nations mentioned. At the beginning of the narratives, emphasis was placed on establishing the identity of Yahweh, Moses and Joshua, and the people of Israel, as well as the identity of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the tribe of Manasseh. One can argue that they had clear goals, ways of achieving their goals, and a structure of authority (Deist 2000:233). What was their goal? How did they plan to achieve it? Finally, did they have the authority to lead them to achieving their goal?

Joshua 1 speaks about the law and, at the same time, talks about land ownership. The two aspects identified in the preceding sentence loom very large over the issue of determining the main goal of the Israelites, as can be inferred from the Joshua narratives. However, a critical interpreter can argue that the texts' rhetoric structure, strategy, and style present a deity that encouraged the people to war. Their principal mandate was to win the war and take the land. Therefore, this sets the deity in a

position where it becomes subordinate to the quest for land ownership and acquisition. A postcolonial interpreter, informed by “taking a long historical look at both old and new forms of domination,” and whose “insight lies in understanding how the past informs the present” (Sugirtharajah 2006:7); would argue based on rhetoric evidence present in chapter one (arguably the prologue) that land ownership was the main goal.

The rhetoric strategy heavily supports the land ideology as the main goal of the presentation. Even Joshua 24 applies the same formula: a mixture of narrative and presentation of the law.²⁶ The people were gathered in the land of Shechem. At that stage, they were presented as a victorious nation after having amassed a great portion of land after conquests. Once again, a very clear effort was made to give the identity of those present. This time, the presentation was more elaborate but also specific; for example, Judges were mentioned specifically, with special emphasis on their role highlighted. So also were the tribal heads and the officers. The deity and his role were clearly presented. Even the identities of other gods were given. Egyptians, the people of Jericho, the Perrizites, and the Amorites were all described in detail to reveal their identities. Already, within the list, it could be noticed that the description was either about the Israelites, that is, the notorious designation of “us” and “others”; “us” and “them”. Also, the gods were not spared of this categorization; their god and the god of Israel/ our God were clearly defined terms and positions. In a similar vein, Younger (1990:233) observes the following: (1) what is striking about how the text of Joshua presents the idea of the enemy is that it shares many commonalities with that of the other ANE accounts, such as Assyria and Egypt. (2) The accounts given about the enemies present the same unitary ideology of enmity. (3) It is always about a negative vs. a positive, hence binary relationship. (4) These are people who are seen as seeking Israel's destruction and are, therefore, a threat to their wellbeing. (5) The most important aspect of this ideology is that these individuals are opposed to Yahweh and all his ways. Let us also add that in relation

²⁶Here, the interpretation of the chapter is done from a postcolonial perspective that focuses on the political and sociological aspects of the text. Chapter 4 will attempt to engage with the literary issues concerning the text.

to economic affairs. It could be seen that the possession of the others was taken or acquired by the Israelites, who were the dominant race in the account.

Having argued that the OT writers were highly conscious of identity and profoundly highlighted it in their discourse, let us now turn to what we have described previously as a progression from identity, namely ideology. The central ideology found in the book of Joshua is land ideology. However, the complex nature of the issue, that is, the fact that in the quest to get the land, they also took from the others other forms of possessions, requires that the scope of understanding of the subject be broadened.

Perhaps it is important to note that the question of Israel's identity is complicated because of the questions that surround its origin. In the preceding chapter, the writer attempted to discuss the theories of the settlement debate. The issue of identity was raised in the same chapter. It can also be observed that in the ongoing discussion, there have been instances where the question of identity was raised and discussed. Therefore, the discussion below is to augment the various things that have already been said about the subject of Israel and Judean identity in this thesis. The general understanding here is that "When we speak of ethnicity, we bring into view a particular kind of sentiment about group identity wherein groups of individuals view themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry (Sparks 1998:1)." This implies that here, identity is based on blood relationship and filiation. Having said this, it is also important to recognise that conquest, domination, and exile greatly impacted the Judean and Israelite identity. These factors led to hybridity. Because of this argument, one of the ways to approach the question of identity in Israel and Judah is to engage with it from the angle of historical periods. This allows for identity to be looked at from a broader perspective. Sparks (1998:23) observes that approaching the question of identity from a historical perspective allows the interpreter to broaden the scope of literature from where to gather data and information to include other ANE literature. He notes that the historical period before the exiles returned to Palestine in 538 BCE is critical to the question of identity. Sparks (1998:4) also identifies another approach which can be used to attempt to construct Israel's identity as the use of:

data from Hebrew Bible, that is, from the idea of kinship, when it serves as: (1) a concept of sociocultural integration (“we are the children of Abraham”); (2) as a tool of sociocultural delimitation (“they are not the children of Abraham”); (3) as a model of explaining the origins of other people (“they are the children of Lot”).

Sparks (1998: 26-29) observes that the Neo-Assyrian documents available show that the question of identity was not prominent in their agenda. However, they tried to construct an ethnic identity based on political and religious factors. The Assyrians attempted to create an image portraying their expansionist agenda as right, thus discouraging those they conquered from mounting resistance. The Assyrians always distinguished those they considered part of the mainstream citizens from those seen as part of the peripheral. That is, those outside the mainstream population. Most times, geography was not used as a criterion for inclusion or exclusion of people from being part of the mainstream population. It could be suggested that what led to the disregard of geography as a basis of determining identity is because of the policy of the Assyrian people that were always moving populations and settling them and resettling them in different locations. However, the origin of a particular population plays a role in determining whether they are Assyrians or not.

Sparks (1988:30-51), in addition, discussed identity during the period 721-705 when Samaria succumbed to Assyrian imperialism, and the land of Palestine was under serious pressure from the Assyrians. He notes that the Assyrians still had a stereotypical mentality about foreigners during this period. Available historical evidence shows that during the period, Assyrian scholars had an interest in the customs, practices and traditions of the Assyrian imperial subjects. The evidence suggests that it is possible that ethnographic materials existed in Neo-Assyrian libraries as of the period. In one of their inscriptions, the Assyrians described the entire Western Asian population as Hittites. This description portrays the Western nations as homogenous, not how the people viewed themselves. They were separate nations. The inscription also refers to these people as wicked. It is important to note that the Judeans were also regarded as Hittites. The stereotypical mentality towards foreigners did not change with time but was fortified even more during later years of Assyrian imperialism, as can be gleaned from evidence from later records. Important to note is that the ambition of the Assyrians was to unify the

world and make the people speak in one mouth. Implicitly, their ambition entailed the concept of universalism, which is similar to the image Israel attempted to project about their God in their later days after exile. In general terms, it could be argued that ethnic sentiments played an important role in the construction of identity during the neo-Assyrian period.

As mentioned, the identity of the Israelites and Judeans after the exiled returned is critical to forming a picture of their life during the ANE period. Considerable information about this period can be obtained from biblical books like Ezra, Nehemiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Sparks (1998:287) observes that:

...the conflict between the Judean remnant and the exilic community began after 597 B.C.E. and was a topic of dispute even in Palestine itself. Jeremiah, and no doubt some others in Judah, viewed the exilic community as the true heir of Israel's future. Ezekiel, like his prophetic predecessor, previewed for his audience the coming destruction that awaited the evil Judean remnant

From the above quote, it could be seen that there was a dispute between the returnees and what was termed remnants about who were the true Judeans and who were not. The first question that comes to the mind of a critical interpreter is who was responsible in labelling the groups as such? From the way the story was arranged, it could be argued that the writers themselves were returnees and as such, naturally sided with their fellow exiled returnees. Furthermore, it could be argued that the returnees were more literate, which gave them the advantage of writing the history of the events that unfolded. They took advantage of the fact that they were the ones who wrote the events down and gave themselves the advantage by portraying themselves as the rightful claimant to Judean identity. Another question that is considered important in this discussion is who among the two groups was fewer in number. It could be argued that the returnees were fewer in numbers. However, they were more powerful because of the elitist nature of those deported and exiled. Those who were referred to as the remnants were mostly the peasant class who were not taken into exile. We noted that Israel's society was divided according to class based on royalty, peasants, nobles, and elites. It is believed that this notion of class influenced the production of literature, such as the one that classified the people into returnees and remnants. The fact that Ezra and Nehemiah showed little regard for

those who remained behind gives a possible glimpse into how the exiled community viewed those left behind. Even before the fall of the Jerusalem temple, the rift between the exiled community and those who remained at home was already in existence. The exilic community and those who supported them back home viewed themselves as Israel. Sparks (1998:288) opined that the act witnessed here began the transformation of the Deuteronomy inclusive understanding of ethnic relationships among Israelites and Judeans. Ezekiel, on the other hand, employs ethnic sentiments and brother love contrary to the manner the Deuteronomist used it to promote an agenda of exclusiveness. Ezekiel believed that the future of Israel lay with the exiled and not the remnant. “After the fall of Jerusalem, the debating factions continued their ideological struggle. One of the more interesting claims of the Judean faction was recorded in Ezekiel 33:23–24 (Sparks 1998: 289).”

4.7 Conclusion

The chapter attempted to discuss the subject of Deity as a cultural and political object. The first section is an “Introduction” of the topic. The discussion then proceeded to “Deity as a Political Object.” Here, an attempt was made to show the politicization of the deity as a tool to enable the Israelites to achieve their political aim. The discussion then engaged with the idea of the deity as a cultural object. The argument here is that the deity was given a human identity. Thus, it enabled the Israelites to apply the concept of the deity both in their internal and external affairs and engagements. The cultural world of Joshua during the exilic and post-exilic periods was discussed. Here, the customs and cultural practices were briefly discussed. The final part of the discussion was on identity in the world of the Israelites/ANE. Here, information from the Bible was used, and those from external sources were equally engaged with it. What came out of the discussion is the fact that Israel was impacted greatly by the conquest, domination and exile experience. In the process, their deity became an important tool in their struggle and resistance to external forces.

Chapter 5

5. Postcolonial criticism and the text of Joshua chapter 1-2

5.1 Introduction

The range of anthropological and sociological materials in the study so far will serve as a general conceptual framework from which data will be drawn for this present work. Murphy (2002:1) opines that, “Concepts are a kind of mental glue, then, in that they tie our past experiences to our present interactions with the world, and because the concepts themselves are connected to our larger knowledge structures.” Furthermore, Murphy (2002:1) writes, “Our concepts embody much of our knowledge of the world, telling us what things there are and what properties they have.” On the other hand, “Theories are bodies of information (or, as psychologists and linguists sometimes say, bodies of knowledge) about a particular domain (internet Encyclopaedia of philosophy: no date).”

Drawing from what could be inferred from the definitions above, theoretical conception is simply used here to denote the concepts and categorizations that could be deduced from the Joshua narratives, in particular, from Chapters 1 and 2 of the narratives and “themselves are connected to our larger knowledge structures” (“our larger knowledge structures” refer to knowledge from the different concepts and categories that were discussed in Chapter 3). It is also important to note that the word ‘categorization’ was added to the explanation of the meaning of ‘concept’ to enable the writer to broaden the scope of its meaning. Generally speaking, concepts “talk about mental representations of classes of things,” whereas categories “talk about the classes themselves (Murphy 2002:5).” This implies that, the “two go together” and that “whatever my concept is there is a category of things that would be described by it. Thus, when talking about one, I am usually implying a corresponding statement about the other (Murphy 2002:5).”

This chapter will attempt to present the exegesis of Joshua 1-2 from a postcolonial perspective. Tate (1997:xix) defines Exegesis as “the process of examining a text to ascertain what its first readers would have understood it to mean.” He says that

exegesis is “The varied set of activities which the hermeneut performs upon a text in order to make meaningful inferences...” To bring further clarity to the subject matter, Tate illumines;

Interpretation is the task of explaining or drawing out the implications of that understanding for contemporary readers and hearers. Thus, the transformation of these inferences into application or significance for the hermeneut's world is interpretation. Combine exegesis and interpretation with an examination of the hermeneut's presuppositional repertoire and we may speak of hermeneutics. The terms hermeneutics and interpretation, however, are often used interchangeably to refer to the process of determining the meaning and significance of a text. Through usage the term interpretation has become a comprehensive one. Not only does it refer to the applications inferred from exegesis, but it also refers to the entire process and poetics of hermeneutics. Since words mean what they mean through common usage, I use the terms hermeneutics and interpretation interchangeably, just as I do the two terms hermeneut and interpreter (1997:xix).

Applying the above explication to the present discourse, the objective here involves the critical analysis and evaluation of the texts, keywords and passages contained in Joshua 1 and 2, which is the main focus of this dissertation. In addition, borrowing from the above quote, terms such as hermeneutics and interpretation and equally hermeneut and interpreter will be treated as equivalent and therefore used interchangeably in the course of the engagement.

Perhaps it is important to observe that the entire exercise that would be undertaken in this section of the dissertation is premised on the foundation that author(s) “uses language in text formulation” (Tate 1997:13). This observation implies that on every occasion that “the interpreter” engages with the text “attention” must be given to the “identification and description of details such as... morphology (word forms), lexicology (word meanings), and syntax (word relationships) (Tate 1997:13).” The importance of this observation lies in the fact that

Literature is the linguistic expression of a culture's entire symbolic world. The symbolic world refers to the infinite maze of interrelated customs, ideologies, religious expressions, and social relationships, within which a people finds its identity, its self-understanding, and its ultimate reason for being. We may reasonably assume, then, that if a culture's literature is the linguistic expression of this symbolic world, or at least the linguistic attempt to interpret the symbolic world, a study of that culture's linguistic expression—language in its many facets—should be an integral part of hermeneutics. We might also include more formal literary structures (such as genre, poetic sub forms, and narrative subgenres) within this context, but these pertain more to the world

projected by the text... Our primary interest here is with the grammatical elements of the language of the text. This is a primary level of hermeneutics, incomplete within itself, but an absolutely necessary precondition for the other contexts which we consider (1997:13).

In relation to the question of Postcolonial criticism, the above quote captures the spirit and essence of applying Postcolonial criticism to texts such as Joshua 1 and 2 and, generally, to Old Testament texts. Postcolonial criticism attempts to re-examine the symbolic world as described in the quote critically. Thus, this makes it important to reiterate and re-emphasize briefly what postcolonial criticism is and why it is important to this work. Purposely, re-emphasising was used here because whatever would be highlighted in this instance is already said elsewhere in this discourse. It implies that what is happening here is just a recapitulation of what has been said before. The working definition for postcolonial criticism, which this study summarily embraces and adopts, is:

...postcolonial criticism highlight the question of geopolitics—the realm of the political at the translocal or global level, with specific reference to the phenomenon of imperial-colonial formations. Postcolonial criticism highlights, therefore, the relationship between centre and periphery, metropolis and margins—in effect, the imperial and the colonial (Segovia 2005:23).

Based on the above definition, the argument would therefore be that the purpose of applying postcolonial criticism in biblical studies or particularly this study is; *firstly*, to critically examine the texts; we need to acknowledge that Israel as the main subject of the Bible existed in the midst of imperialism and colonialism as a result of the different empires that were active during the supposed period that Biblical writings cover. *Second*, is the issue of the reception history of the Bible and how the Bible became an object and tool in the hands of more recent imperialists and colonizers. *Thirdly*, will be to deconstruct how the West and other commentators read the texts and how they applied it variously in their understanding of themselves/others and the treatment of others.

The study will follow the outline and form listed below:

Joshua 1:1-9: Divine Commission: Notes and comments

Joshua 1:10-18 Joshua's commencement address to the Israelites: Notes and comments

Joshua 2:1-24: Rehab and the spies: Notes and comments

Summary of the exegetical chapter

5.2 Chapter 1

5.2.1 Joshua 1:1-9: Divine Commission: Observations and comments

Verse 1:

1 וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון מִשְׁרַת מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר:

The English Translations

NKJV: after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses assistance saying

NRSV: after the death of Moses, the servant of the lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses assistance saying

Observations and comments

The writers purposely designed verse 1 to present the work as a continuation of the story that began from Genesis-Deuteronomy. The Hebrew phrase translated as “after the death of Moses” is employed to connect the story with Deuteronomy and other books which precede Joshua (Woudstra 1981:56). “The same phrase in the notice of Joshua’s death (Judg.1:1) ties the book of Joshua to the subsequent book of Judges (Dozeman 2015:190).” Kiel & Delitzsch (1869:27) describe the phrase as an “imperfect with vav consec., the standing mode of expressing a continued action or train of thought, “simply attaches itself by the conjunction “and” to a completed action which has either been mentioned before, or is supposed to be well known”.

Deuteronomy records the death of Moses in Chapter 34. Numbers 27:15-23 presents Joshua as Moses’s successor. Deuteronomy 3:21-22 and 31:1-8 also designate Joshua as Moses’s successor. Joshua was tasked with completing “Moses unfinished mission and lead Israel into the Promised Land” (Woudstra 1981:56). From the following passages, it could be inferred that the narrators consciously made an effort to show that “the continuity of leadership was assured”

(Woudstra 1981: 56). Butler (2014:1525) observes that the death of Moses divides the history of ancient Israel into two; the era of Moses leadership which represents “the exodus/wilderness with a stubborn people lacking faith and Joshua’s leadership in the conquest/occupation of the land with an obedient people.”

If one is to argue that the final compiler of this work is the DH, it could be said that he uses the introductory phrase, “after the death of Moses” to signify “the transition to new leadership” (Nelson 1997:29). The DH uses a similar rhetoric strategy in the commencement of his other works as seen in Judges 1:1, Samuel 1:1, and 2 Kings 1:1. This manner of presenting a work allows the writer to put in perspective what transpired historically in the life of those concerned and to capture events of the past. For example, Judges 1:1 links the book of Joshua to Judges. The writers make a conscious effort to ensure that the introductory part of Joshua to 2 Kings impresses a sense of the linear progression of Israel’s history on the interpreter. Arguably, the aim of the DH is to afford those concerned the opportunity to reflect theologically on their dealings with Yahweh.

From a literary standpoint such speeches give an author the chance to address readers directly in order to provide motivations for the characters and to frame the issue at stake. By fading behind the speeches of authoritative characters, an author gains the appearance of greater objectivity. DH used this technique to guide readers into adopting a particular theological interpretation of Israel’s history in the land (Nelson 1997:29).

Hess (2009:198) writes,

In both ancient and modern times a transition of leadership is one of the most precarious times in the security of the state. More than any other time, this can become a period of potential revolts and civil wars. Of all such transitional periods, the most dangerous are those where transition is not dynamic but involves the enthronement of a ruler unrelated to his or her predecessor.

Verse 1 could be said to have been written by an official who was part of the ruling class or an administrative official. The linguistic style chosen by the writer whereby he refers to Moses as the servant of Yahweh (עבד) and Joshua as Moses’ assistant (official, apprentice or minister) (משרת) attests to the fact that the person is well acquainted and conversant with the official business of government. Butler (2014:1525) notes that this is a contrast between the position or role of Moses and that of Joshua.

Dozeman (2015:190) discusses the translation of the Hebrew word for assistant (Piel participle of שרת). He (2015:190) opines that the word denotes an assistant in a variety of places where it was used, such as “civil service to the kings (1 Ch. 27:1) and more commonly religious services.” He lists some of the passages where it appeared in connection with religious services (Exod. 28:35; 43, 43:29; 35:19; 39:41; Num. 1:50; Deut. 10:8; 18:5; 21:5; and 1:38; 1 Kgs 19:21 and 2 Kgs 4:43; 6:15). He (2015:191) believes that its use in relation to religious services, especially, when it describes “a personal assistant to another in a more senior or authoritative position” is what has influenced its translation as Moses assistant by some biblical translators as found in the text of NRSV. He argues that:

The alternative translation “apprentice” would accentuate both the religious nature of Joshua’s service and his status as a novice to Moses, where the latter term defines a person who has entered a religious order but has not yet taken final vows (Dozeman 2015:191)

Dozeman (2015:191) adds that the meaning of the term also indicates succession, as seen in its usage in the relationship between Elijah and Elisha. When viewed from that perspective, the word allows for the relationship between the assistant and the master to be laid bare. The resultant meaning shows that the assistant works under the supervision of the master. He is usually a novice who is being trained to succeed the master eventually. This way, one becomes cognizant of the fact that the relationship between the master and the assistant, like the case of Moses and Joshua, is not one of the two being partners. Important to note is that this aspect of the meaning of the term “reinforces the religious nature of the term... (Dozeman 2015: 191)”

The use of the word servant to describe the relationship between a person and a deity is not limited to the writings of the Old Testament. This has also been found to feature in other ancient Near Eastern literature works. Mostly, it is used in writings that pattern and relate to leadership issues. Hess (2009:202-203) notes that the title “servant of the Lord” is found in other Near Eastern literature. He identifies such use in the Amarna letters and also points out that the title was first applied to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:5 at the end of his life. Furthermore, he (2009:202-203) observes that Joshua was the second person to receive the title, and this also happened only

at the end of his life (Josh. 24:29). He (2009:202) writes, “This title is a common form of many personal names found in the ancient Near Eastern West Semitic world of the fifteenth to twelfth centuries B.C.E., and not as frequently earlier or later.”

In conclusion, it could be argued that the linguistic style and rhetoric strategy of verse 1 are closely related to the other ancient Near Eastern literature that were produced during the same period. Hence, the argument is that the final form of Joshua was either compiled by Judean scribes who were part of the royal establishment or by a local who was trained in Babylon during exile and was a returnee. These arguments also support the fact that Joshua is a political text written to serve a historical-political purpose. This argument is made more credible by the content of the subsequent verses in Joshua.

Verse 2:

2 מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי מֵת וְעַתָּה קוּם עֲבֹר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה אַתָּה וְכָל־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָהֶם לְבְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

The English Translations

NKJV: Moses my servant is dead, now therefore, arise, go over the Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them the children of Israel.

NRSV: My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites.

Observations and Comments

Again, the speaker addresses Moses as my servant. He does so in an authoritative manner. The tone establishes that Moses was a bondservant (Fausset 1984: 656). In the then ancient Near East, a slave was expected to be completely submissive to his master. They had no say and, thus, were subject to the master’s whims and caprices. The statement was constructed in such a manner that it clearly stands as a reminder and a notice to Joshua. In other words, the speaker’s aim is to remind and notify Joshua about the situation. This statement could be argued to mark a turning point in the history of Israel. Hamlin (1983:4) suggests that the turning point may be linked to the seventh century BCE when Assyrian dominance over Israel had

passed. This was at the time of the death of Ashurbanipal, and the twenty-year-old Josiah was the king of Judah. He saw a possibility that this may be related to the events of 628 BCE. At this time, Josiah took a decisive step and began his reform that culminated in purging the land of Judah and Jerusalem, which he perceived as foreign gods (Asherim; the graven; molten image).

Nelson (1997:32) writes, “Yahweh’s speech equips Joshua with instructions, as well as motivations and resources for carrying them out.” Hence, what follows is a command to Joshua to proceed and cross the Jordan, as could be observed from the phrase, “arise, and cross” (Qal, active, imperative). Likewise, Nelson (1997:32) observes that “There are imperatives to action” in Joshua 1:1-9; such as seen in verse 2: “get up, cross.” Woudstra (1981:69) writes, “This death becomes the occasion...for the Lord’s command to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan. These are two of the leitmotifs of the book of Joshua...” Hubbard (2009: 345) comments that “Literarily, the commissioning speech sounds like a king issuing battle plans to his field general, and its language compares with other biblical passages (Deut. 11: 24-25; 31:6; 8’ 1 Chron. 28:30)”

Important is the inclusion of the river Jordan, which arguably has a spiritual undertone. In this regard, Dozeman (2015: 191) observes that the Hebrew *yarden* may mean “descent” from the Hebrew *yamad*. But interpreters have suggested additional etymologies, including “the water of judgement” from the Hebrew *dan*, “judge.” Dozeman (2015: 191) states:

The Jordan occurs fifty-four times in the book of Joshua where it functions in two contexts, both of which, as noted by D. Jobling, carry ideological meaning as illustrations of religious geography (1986): (1) in the opening chapters of the book, the Jordan River has symbolic meaning as a rite of passage into the promised land (esp. Josh)...

Woudstra (1981:69) discusses the physical qualities of the river Jordan. He highlights how difficult and complex it would be considering the nature of the river, especially at that time of the year, for any sane individual or person to attempt to cross it. He (1981:69) writes, “Thus the miracle of the Lord’s giving of the land is anticipated effectively by the writer’s recalling of the Lord’s command.” Dozeman (2015:191)) argues that “The demonstrative pronoun *hazzah* likely reflects the

nearness of the Jordan to the speaker.” He (2015:191) refers to other places, such as Genesis 32:10 and Deuteronomy 3:27; 31:2, where emphasis is laid on the near proximity of the speaker to the Jordan as evidence which can be used to support the position articulated in the preceding sentence.

The phrase “you and your people” is of immense significance to the manner in which the social life of the people of Israel was configured. This is not separate from what was obtainable then in the ancient Near East, which has remained to this day, as observed in the segment of this dissertation that dealt with the question of imperialism and colonialism above (ch. 4). The writer consciously tried to distinguish the leader; Joshua, from the people, otherwise known as the common masses or the ruler and the ruled. This is also about power. Yahweh gave Joshua the authority to lead the people. Therefore, the text also is about the power relationship between the parties involved. The text places supreme authority on the person of Yahweh. Previously, in this thesis, we discussed the notion of humanizing the deity. Thus, the deity is made to be a participant in human affairs. It also highlights the existing class society that was there. The rhetorical strategy in Joshua’s narrative presents a deity who rarely transacts with the lower class. Mainly, the deity interacts with the upper class, the ruling class, the elite, and the privileged, who are found in the priestly class.

The last part of the verse introduces what could be regarded as the main theme of Joshua’s narrative, which is the land issue. Blaut (1993:25) notes that ultimately, the aim and purpose of all the fictional tales, stories, and narratives that imperialist and colonialist generate in their conquest enterprise is geared towards the primary aim of possessing the land of others. Similarly, Nelson (1997:31) observes that, “Joshua’s central theme is the gift of land.” He (1997:31) notes that “The verb *ntn* “give” appears in this context eighth times in chapter 1, with Yahweh and Moses (once) as subject.” He (1997:31) says that the phrase “To give the land” “represents fundamental confessional language throughout the book (2:9; 14; 24; 5:6; 8:1; 9:24; 18:3; 22:4; 23:13; 15; 16; 24:13).”

The text specifically mentions the Israelites as the recipients of the land. Butler (2014:1543) believes that “Central to the book of Joshua is the land given by God, inherited by Israel and conquered by Joshua.” Butler (2014:1544) writes, “The gift of the land is an early and important motif in this chapter, but the central issue is Joshua’s leadership after Moses, not divine gift.” This position goes against Mitchell’s (1993:27), who argues, “The major theme in Ch. 1 concerns the land which the Lord is giving to the people of Israel.” Mitchell (1993:27) believes that land “is part of a theological framework in which YHWH, land and people are interrelated.” Arguably, the nature of Joshua’s narrative does not permit that any of the subjects identified in the preceding sentence should be looked at separately. However, land forms the basis of the narrative upon which the others are brought into being. In other words, the narrative of Joshua is built on the idea of land acquisition/grab achieved through the means of holy war. Yee & Brenner (2013:2) opine that:

Land can be acquired by war and hostile invasion and by more peaceful means, such as slow infiltration, social integration, acculturation, and shared economic interests. Evidence from the new biblical archaeology points to the more sedentary and longer process of settlement by the newcomers in the land that even they called the land of Canaan; the biblical text too bears enough traces of that, in reports of economic transactions and intermarriage, for instance, not to mention the much-touted intermingling of religious beliefs and cultural norms. Had it not been like that, the biblical conflict of nativeness and Otherness, of transcending boundaries while also establishing them and working to acquire a distinct group identity, would not have been that pronounced

Yahweh’s sanctioned invasion is a concept that has continued in the Ancient Near East in modern times.

If any subject remains prominent in the political life and struggle of the ancient Near East, it is the question of land. Biblical writers described the Promised Land as the land that is flowing with milk and honey, which in a sense was a form of exaggeration (Exod. 3:8; Num. 14:8; Deut. 31:20; Ezek. 20:15). Dube (2000:62) highlights the fact that “The land to be entered and taken is either embellished or tarnished.” Butler (2014:1545) observes that the Israelites have not claimed that the land has belonged to them from time immemorial. The land previously was occupied by the Canaanites (Gen. 11:31; 12:5; Deut. 1:7; etc.) or by long lists of other inhabitants (e.g., Exod. 3:17). He (2014:1545) proclaims, “Israel claimed the land only because Yahweh

chose to punish the original inhabitants (Gen. 15:16, Deut. 9:4-5) and to promise the land to Abraham.” He (2014:1546) says,

The motif of the promise of land to the patriarchs may rest on tradition preserved by nomadic shepherds connected to divine direction during the regular change of pasture land. It has been applied specifically to the land of Canaan as early as the settlement.

The same idea found its way into modern thinking, reasoning and application in the concept of manifest destiny. This idea has been applied to justify ethically and morally stealing land from others. The Israelites were part of the struggle in the past and still are today. The warring parties always make it seem like wars have supernatural origins. Fetalsana-Apura (2019:111) refers to Joshua as “...Moses’s assistant, the first of the divinely inspired liberators.” The use of the word liberator in this instance is debatable because, going by the motif of Joshua’s narrative, Joshua is best seen as a conqueror. Liverani (2021:79) writes that “In the kingdoms – and especially in the so-called ‘empires’ – of the Ancient Near East, extending the boundaries is a constant and expected ideological motif.” Mostly, the land that arguably is part of the proceeds from extending the boundaries was gotten through wars. Israel was exposed to the same vagaries as the others. The wars were fought under political guise and auspices but with religious undertones and inclinations. The wars were seen as a test to determine whose deity was superior. Archaeological evidence shows that people settled down, and later moved or relocated because of natural factors such as famine caused by draught or were expelled forcefully due to military activities. Finkelstein (1998:349) observes that

demographic and socio-political processes that took place in the highland of Canaan-Cis and Transjordan alike- in the Iron Age 1 mark a revolutionary transformation in the history of the Southern Levant. They sealed two millennia of Bronze Age cultures, which were characterized by cyclic settlement oscillations, the rise and fall of urban societies and ups and downs in Egyptian sovereignty. These processes opened the way to the rise of the territorial-national states of the Iron Age II.

He (1996:349) notes that the above event led to an unparalleled rise in population that culminated in reclaiming the area that makes up the highlands (ca. tenth-to-seventh centuries BCE). The former smaller nations died in the process and never came back into existence. They were replaced by Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires in the eighth to sixth centuries BCE. This development is seen as “the

second great transformation in the history of the region in historical times” and this led to two millennia of imperial domination of the region.

Verse 3:

כָּל־מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תֵּדְרֹךְ בְּרַגְלֶיךָ בּוֹ לָכֶם נָתַתִּיו בְּאֶשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֶל־מֹשֶׁה

The English Translation

NKJV: Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

NRSV: Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses.

Observations and Comments

At the very outset, it is important to note the tendency of some commentators to sweep aside the moral side of this story. What the writer of this dissertation will refer to as an uncritical approach to interpreting the texts. The problem with this kind of commentator, as observed by Fetalsana-Apura (2019:129) is that they presume

...the moral superiority of Israel.. Israel becomes the powerful center, and God is portrayed to be an imperial character who grants land, has the prerogative of taking it back, and exterminates the inhabitants if the gifts are abused. Extermination is justified on religious ground.

Dube (2000:69) highlights that the writers are advocating a “strategy of depopulation by annihilation in order to weaken and control.” This rhetorical strategy of the would-be colonizers promotes the idea of cultural purity through ethnic cleansing. She (2000:69) opines that the would-be colonizers' “claim of maintaining rigid boundaries of purity *are*, in fact, nothing but the rhetoric of power. Just as colonized victims borrow from their colonizers, colonizing powers borrow cultural ideas, artefacts, and practices from their victims (word denoted in *italic mine*).” She observes that the colonizers usually live with the colonized population despite the fact that they will claim or try to pretend that they do not want anything to do with the indigenous population. The types of claims the colonizers usually make are nothing but a ploy they employ to maintain power. Needless to say, this is evident in the book of

Joshua as the book will later expose the fact that some indigenous populations, like Rehab's family, remained in the land.

At this stage, it should be borne in mind that the Israelites are still not fully the colonizers. However, they have taken control of the land across the Jordan, which makes them partially colonizers. That is, if one is to consider the fact that they have not yet gotten to the land, which represents the core objective of their mission. However, the fact that they have invaded a land that belongs to others and usurped it means that they have already started implementing colonizing tendencies and ideologies. In other words, they have already achieved what Fanon (2004:5-6) describes as the total and complete destruction of the others by means of extreme violence.

The verse refers to the promise given to Moses. It brings to the fore "the specific commission given Joshua by Moses... (Butler 1983:12)" This command only featured in Deuteronomy and not in the Tetrach... (Butler 1983: 12)" The appearance here may be to emphasize the role of Moses as a prophet in line with early tradition (Butler 1983:12). In addition, this verse also elicits the image of Moses's occupation prior to the time biblical writers started portraying him as a representative of the deity. In ancient times, Moses was engaged in sheep rearing (a shepherd) that mostly involved nomad activities.

Here, one can argue that the writers drew from images attributable to the activity of nomads (Butler 1983:12). Therefore, one could argue that the linguistic style of verse 3 bears the mark of nomadism. Fetalsana-Apura (2019;42) writes:

Located in the narrow strip of land connecting the cradles of the world's great civilizations, the Israelites traced their roots to Mesopotamia and Egypt. Israel confessed its humble beginnings as wanderers and slaves (Deut. 6:21; 26:5). Most of the Israelites were shepherds and farmers, former slaves, captives as well as *apirus*, *shosus*, Medianites, and/or *Kenites* from the desert.

Nomadism is an ancient profession practised in the ANE (Lemche 1985:84). The practice has endured to this day. Gottwald (1979:437) describes pastoral nomadism, which he differentiated from nomadism proper as

a socioeconomic mode of life based on intensive domestication of livestock which requires a regular movement of the animals and their breeders (a movement which is

neither aimless nor boundless) in a seasonal cycle dictated by the need for pasturage and water.

He (1979:439) explains, "Nomadism is to be understood as a regular movement in necessary conjunction with a particular socioeconomic mode of life that is often culturally reinforced." Gottwald goes further to discuss the difference between nomadic life and migration to avoid the misconception and misunderstanding of individual concepts. This is because there were people in the ANE during the period in question who were itinerants but were not nomads because of the nature of their profession, like Tinkers.

Migration is to be understood as any irregular or occasional movement of a group necessitated by natural or historical factors external to the intrinsic socioeconomic mode of life. Peoples are *nomadic* when they move about in the normal and regular exercise of their mode of production, this movement sometimes being reinforced by a cultural tradition that makes a virtue of their margination in relation to settled peoples. Peoples are *migratory* when wars or political unrest and oppression, or when change of climate or disease, force them to leave one region and go to another, quite apart from what their mode of production or cultural traditions may be. As a result of migratory uprooting, peoples may make adaptations from a nomadic to a sedentary or from a sedentary to a nomadic socioeconomic and cultural existence. Thus, in spite of superficial resemblances between nomadism and migration, both in principle and in practice the distinction between the two is completely clear.

It is important to note that the Old Testament differentiated between the two categories discussed in the above quote in its presentations. Furthermore, he links the activities of the nomads to sedentary life in the sense that nomadic life is not only about wandering. They are also part of a settled society. In fact, he claims a symbiotic relationship existed between the farmer and the nomads (pastoralists). He claims that most of the time, nomads shared close relationships with farmers.

Lemche (1985:84) differs from some of Gottwald's position on nomads. The most important criticism he levels against Gottwald's position is that he draws his inferences and conclusions from modern ideas of nomadism. He (1985:88) believes that how the Old Testament characterized nomadism reflects the truth about it. He points out that there is a problem with Gottwald's explanation of the relationship that existed between the agriculturists and the nomad. He opines that the oriental society was dualistic, with the nomads strictly performing their role and the farmers staying on their own path. He rejects the argument that their functions were joined in

practicality. He notes that nomads were too few in number to be able to orchestrate the king of cultural change, which scholars usually attribute to them in relation to Israel's settlement history.

What cannot be disputed is that life in the ANE is different from what we obtain today. Obviously, there has been some sort of modification and improvement in how people do things. This includes the practice of nomadism. However, it could be argued that certain elements of their practice, such as wandering, remain.

Verse 4:

מִהַמִּדְבָּר וְהַלְבָנוֹן הַזֶּה וְעַד הַנָּהָר הַגָּדוֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת כָּל אֶרֶץ הַחִיִּתִּים וְעַד־הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל מִבּוֹא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ יְהִיָּה
גְבוּלְכֶם

English Translations

NKJV: From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the great Sea towards the going down of the sun, shall be your territory

NRSV: From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory

Observations and comments

In verse 4, the writer uses the phrase “your territory.” The focus here is the word “your,” which arguably, in essence, defines the verse. The rhetorical strategy employed by the writers here makes the usurping of the land of the others appear like a morally justifiable action. The narrative presents a scenario that justifies the usurping of the land of the land of Canaan as right because their God made a promise to them that he would give them the land. Important to note is that the God spoken about and who does the giving is the God of Israel. The narrative strategy adopted gives him such right. However, the narrative did not explicitly declare that. The phrase “shall be your territory” implicitly signifies that. Said (1993: xviii) observes that narratives are critical to a nation’s survival. Its narrative defines nations.

Furthermore, he (1993: xviii) states that “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming or emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.” He (1993:xviii) states, “Most important the grand narratives of emancipations and enlightenment mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial subjections...” Bearing in mind that the Israelites were colonised as well and were supposed to be heading towards liberation, when this observation is applied to this verse in relation to the phrase “shall be your territory” it could be argued that the phrase serves as a rallying call for the nation to arise. They were called to rise and go to war against the Canaanites to take their land. It signifies the opposite, from being the colonized to being the colonisers. Fanon (2004:5) propagates the idea when he speaks about the dream of every colonised person to take the place of the colonisers. The rhetoric strategy here is built upon a God sovereign over the whole universe. This type of rhetoric bears the mark of propaganda and is enough to stir up the hearts of the Israelites in this instance. Invoking the name of God was a standard propaganda tool amongst the ANE's people.

There is also the subject of geography which is related to the notion and ideology of the Promised Land. Wazana (2013:1) believes that

The idea of the Promised Land is not an abstract or random notion—a mere ‘heavenly place’ or ‘matter of the heart.’ It is a concrete concept grounded in physical reality—space and time—whether a historical entity that truly existed in the past or an idealized location of the imagination.

In the book of Joshua, the notion of the Promised Land is tied to covenant (Dozeman 2015: 75). He (2015:75) argues that “The central content of covenant is the divine promise of land to Israel. The notion of covenant is related to the claim of chosenness. The idea of Israel’s peculiarity is based on God's covenant with them. The claim over the Promised Land is rooted in the covenant. There is a relationship between the two themes. The theme of obedience to the Torah governs both themes. The others lose their land rights because of the covenantal relationship between the Israelites and God. Here. It is essential to observe that because this idea was not fully realised, the school of thought deems the narrative as emanating from utopian reasoning. This group believes that the writers of the narrative created

an ideal situation of an Israel nation that should be. Those who subscribe to it as an offshoot of utopianism do so based on the features they discern from the narratives. Dozeman (2015:75) thinks:

Several features of utopian literature in the ancient world are important for interpreting the theme of the Promised Land in the book of Joshua. Utopian literature describes the ideal within human history (the “good place,” *eu topia*), often with fantastic imagery (“no place” *ou topia*).

Important to note is that the writers had a good knowledge of the territory's layout, nature and climatic conditions. Butler (1983:11) opines that “Israel has two sets of borders, that in which her own people live and that which is the land of promise.” The first part stretches from Dan to Beersheba and includes land beyond the Jordan. On the other hand, the Promised Land begins from “...the Brook of Egypt to the Euphrates and from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean... (1983:11).” He (1983:11) states that the writers of Joshua's narrative had the knowledge of the existence of the two types of borders. However, the conquest reported in the book of Joshua covered only part 1, even though the actual promise laid out by the narrators includes more. Furthermore, Butler (1983:11) notes that each area mentioned as part of the Promised Land represents a particular historical reality. The assumption here is that the historical reality that is being referred to is their experience that came from the hands of the nations that conquered them. In other words, the conquest story is rooted in their past experiences, which they expressed as their wish for how things were supposed to be ideally. Wong (2012:29) believes that “the mention of the Hittite country in 1:4 is not a reference to the ancient Hittite empire centred in modern Turkey in the second millennium BC. Rather, it is a reference to Syria, “the land of the Hatti,” also mentioned in the first millennium BC.” Similarly, Bratcher & Newman (1983:13) note that the territory referenced forms part of northern Syria, which used to be part of the Hittite Empire

Dozeman (2015:192) describes the literary style used by the writers in this verse to show the length and breadth of the land Israel was to receive as “literary merism.” This is in reference to when “a pair of terms is used to express totality or completeness (Dozeman 2015:192).” According to Wazana (2013:58-60) literary merism frequently appears in the extremities formula, which is used to describe the

exact geography of the land, such as in Judges 20:1. She observes that spatial merisms may comprise of more than two members to indicate wholeness as seen in the example of Joshua 1:4.

Dozeman (2015:192) highlights the fact that the relationship which the land of the Hittites shares with the other places mentioned in the verse is ambiguous. Bratcher & Newman (1983:13) observe that the phrase “all the land of the Hittites” does not appear in the Greek Old Testament and is believed to be a later addition by some scholars. The same phrase is not in the description of the promised land as appeared in Deuteronomy 11:24 (Bratcher & Newman 1983:13; Miller & Tucker 1974:23). Much of this portion of the country was only occupied by the Israelites during the time of David and Solomon. Miller and Tucker (1974:23) believe that the ideal border of the Promised Land appeared more comprehensively in Joshua 1:4, unlike the simpler and doubtlessly older version that was preserved in Genesis 15:18. They also note that the appearance of Lebanon as a boundary point in the present context is strange and that the expression “all the country of the Hittites” as well poses a problem. In what might appear as a slight difference to the opinion referenced earlier about the country of the Hittites, they write, “The phrase probably refers to the territory in Syria, certainly not to the ancient kingdom of the Hittites in Ancient minor (1974:23).”

Furthermore, they (1974:23) argue that there was never a time in history when Israel occupied the whole of the area mentioned. He suggests that the only time they came close to achieving such a feat was during the time of David. Many commentators and scholars have questioned this position. Perhaps it is important to mention that the borders did not correspond with what is listed as the territory divided among the tribes in Chapters 13-15 and as such, may pass as “a somewhat vague outline of the ideal boundaries, one which draws upon several old traditions (Miller & Tucker 1974:23).” Soggin (1972: 30) argues that it is not essential to assume that the expression all the land of the Hittites was a later gloss and that the writers had in mind to portray an image of an ideal border. He (1972:30) believes that:

...the expression is quite plausible in the first half of the first millennium B.C, and is found in the contemporary terminology of the Assyrian annals, and during the first period of the

neo-Babylonian kingdom, whereas half a millennium later it may have seemed unsuitable for the LXX translators and for that reason was suppressed in the text

Soggin (1972:30) also speaks about Josiah's restoration ambition, who attempted to conquer the north after the fall of the Assyrian Empire. He notes that ultimately, the aim of Josiah and the Dtr, as well as restoration prophets like Ezekiel, was to restore the borders to what they were during the time of David and Solomon. He suggests that in consideration of these developments, a person can presumably speak about ideal borders, as many scholars do. This idealism may have originated from some utopian reasoning connected to Israel's response to Assyrian domination (Dozeman 2015:216). This could be a form of propaganda designed as a counter to Assyrian imperialism that led to the usurpation and occupation of vast areas of land, especially the land of Israel (Dozeman 2015:216). There is also the possibility that the broad boundary was invented to accommodate the diasporic communities during the Neo-Babylonian era (Dozeman 2015:216).

Steele (2000:12) postulates that the use of the phrase "This Lebanon" like "This Jordan (v. 2)" signifies something very important to the people of Israel. According to Steele (2000:12-13) "The eastern spur, called Anti Lebanon, terminate on the South in Mount Hermon and was visible from Shittim." He (2000:13) believes that it may have served as a "definite landmark" because it is noticeable from a very far distance. In regards to "The Hittites or "the children of Heth," he (2000:13) writes, "A tribe of Canaanites living in Abraham's time in Hebron and its vicinity, in the southern part of the Land of Promise." Furthermore, he highlights:

As they had been an especial terror to the twelve spies or to the craven ten, whose report disheartened the people, they are here mentioned by name, and put for the whole body of the Canaanites –Ye shall possess the land of even the dreaded Hittites. This designation of Canaan as "the land of the Hittites" occurs in the Bible only in this passage, though frequently used in the Egyptian records of Ramesses II in which Cheta or Chita appears to denote the whole country of lower and middle Syria (Steele 2000:13).

Dozeman (2015:195) writes:

Historical geographers have identified the Hittites as a people who entered Anatolia sometime before 2000 BCE and established an empire throughout the second millennium that extended into northern Syria until its collapse around 1200 BCE. Yet it continued into the Iron Age as the smaller Neo-Hittite kingdoms of northern Syria until

Sargon II conquered it in the late eighth century BCE. In Neo-Assyrian literature, *māt Hatti* designates the region of Syria.

Van Seters (1972:66) suggests that how the texts are applied reflects what could be observed from Neo-Assyrian texts during the time of Sennacherib. In the period in question, the Syria-Palestine region was designated as “the land of the Hittites.” Dozeman (2015:195) opines that “The scattered references to the Hittites in the Hebrew Bible make it difficult to determine whether the geographical terminology of Neo-Assyria in the eighth century BCE was influencing the biblical author in the postexilic period.” Dozeman (2015:195) continues, “Hittites are associated with a range of geographical locations in the Hebrew Bible, including the northern territory of Lebanon (Josh 1:4), the Negeb (the cave of Machpelah, Gen 23; 25; 49; 50), the highland (Num 13:29, Josh 11:3), and the city of Luz (Judg 1:26).” According to Dozeman (2015:196), there were both positives and negatives from Israel’s interactions with the Hittites. The positives include “peaceful negotiation for land, mercenary stories about the hero Uriah” and “larger allegiances,” whereas, the negatives include “the need for Israelite ethnic purity, which is threatened through intermarriage with Hittites” and “the residency of the Hittites in the Promised Land (the list of indigenous nations to be exterminated in Joshua 1:4 and twenty-three additional occurrences).” He (2015:196) observes that:

The portrait of the Hittites in the book of Joshua is limited to this final point: They are an indigenous nation, whose presence in the Promised Land threatens the purity of the Israelite people and thus requires their extermination.

In light of the above statements, one could argue that the writer(s) at one time or the other may have traversed the places mentioned or may have lived there. It may also be that they wrote based on stories told by other members of their society that had good knowledge of the nature of the place. The writers had some sort of relationship with the land and places that they described in the text.

Verse 5:

לֹא־יִתְיַצֵּב אִישׁ לְפָנַי כָּל יְמֵי תַיִיד כַּאֲשֶׁר הָיִיתִי עִם־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ לֹא אֶרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא אֶעֱזָבֶךָ:

English Translations

NJKV: No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you I will not leave you all forsake you.

NRSV: No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

Observations and comments

Here, the deity is seen giving assurances to Joshua that he will defeat his enemies. The statement makes it clear that the assurance given to Joshua is at play throughout his life. Arguably, what can be inferred from the statement is that there never ceases to be a war going on in the lives of the people of ANE. They are always at war with each other, a trend that remains to this day. The statement also shows that Moses was involved in wars throughout his life. The deity was also with Moses all the days of his life as he fought his enemies. Suffice to say that war was an integral part of their culture. The fact that the deity sanctioned these wars give them a religious undertone. The wars aimed to conquer and subjugate the others conceived as inferior and not civilized enough. Thus, the erroneous perception that the others need to be uplifted from their uncivilized state. However, a critical examination of these issues reveals what Mazrui (1990:30) refers to as “The triple ambition of God, gold and glory.” He (1990:30) explains that God stands for “The pursuit of religious fulfilment”; gold represents “economic gain;” and lastly, glory refers to “political ambition.” What is seen in this text is the drive to fulfil this interest, ambition and mission. Though the manner of presentation on this occasion is very subtle but, yet, it is detectable if an interpreter pays critical attention. Especially for those who are engaging the texts from a postcolonial perspective. Their god, who used to be a national god, was re-clothed in universalism. “Yahweh became an “empire-god,” the god of all the nations” whose mandate extended to include being in control of the socio-cultural-political-religious life of others (Smith 2002:202).

Here, one can argue that rulers in ANE widely used and employed a similar rhetoric style. Pitkänen (2010:304) writes, "...while it is true that Deuteronomic ideology is prominent in the chapter, such ideology is also tied to broader ancient Near Eastern ideologies." He (2010:304) believes that the writing(s) found in the Zakkur stele is comparable to what is seen in Joshua 1:5-6. The expression represents the notion that national deities played a role in wars. Ordinarily, one would categorize it as part of a widespread belief system in the region. However, it could also be argued that it serves as a form of motivational speech or motivation for the king, who employs it as part of military tool in wars.

Butler (1983:12) suggests that the motif of divine presence frames verse 5. He (1983:12) opines that the root of the motif could be found "in the nomadic lives of the patriarch, particularly, in the Isaac, Jacob and Joseph narratives." Furthermore, he (1983:12) states that "The motif expresses the divine promise to accompany the patriarchs on a fearful journey." He (1983:12) observes that "The formula is taken up into the holy war ideology of Israel..." He (1983:12) says that, "The law corpus of Deuteronomy uses the theme only in the laws for battle..., while the Deuteronomistic framework of the book uses the theme in reference to guidance through the wilderness... and in Joshua's preparation for conquest..." He (1983:12) writes, "The motif thus expresses one of the basic roots of Israelite faith, the belief that Yahweh is the God of Israel who accompanies leads, protects, fights and goes with the man he has chosen for his work..." Steele (2000:14) observes that "Joshua needed these strong and cheering assurances..." He (2000:14), asserts that the reason why Joshua needs such assurances is because "They have advanced to the border of the Promised Land, and found it bristling with armed foes." He (2000:14) writes, "Years of peril, warfare and suffering were awaiting them." Woudstra (1981:61) believes that the verse is a reflection of "assurances given in Deut. 7:24." He (1981:61) writes, "The Lord's words implies future opposition, but this opposition will come to naught." Furthermore, it could be said that such speeches were part of psychological warfare. Moses is characterized as a war leader in his appearance in the Pentateuch. Likewise, in the places where he was featured prior, Joshua also shares the same war characteristics as Moses.

Verse 6:

6 חֲזַק וְאַמֵץ בְּי אֲתָה תִנְחִיל אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם לָתֵת לָהֶם:

English Translations

NKJV: Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them

NRSV: Be strong and courageous, for you shall lead this people to possess the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them

Observations and comments

The critical thing to note here is how the deity is seen as a cultural object. The worldview of the people of the ANE was such that it did not separate the activities of the deity from that of humans. The deity was a member of the community. Hence, on this occasion, we see the deity instructing a community leader on the right approach to achieve his will. The idea embedded in the text is that the land belongs to God, who promised their fathers that he would give it to them. According to Said (1993:7), “At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others.” Furthermore, he adds, “For all kinds of reasons it attracts people and often involves untold misery for others” (Said 1993:7). Simply put, Said’s definition of imperialism is premised on the idea of usurpation of land that belongs to others. In the manner that this act is undertaken, it amounts to a complete take-over of the affected people’s lives since land is everything.

Said (1993:7) refers to imperialism’s actual act, action and activities as “a contest over land and land’s people”. The writer of this dissertation finds the application of the word “contests” problematic in the preceding sentence because any critical analysis of what happens in regards to imperialism exposes the fact that at inception, it is always a one-sided event initiated by the conqueror who always is the one holding advantage in terms of strength, power and authority. It is always more about invasion than contestation. However, it would be naïve for one to underestimate human nature and how it is connected to the whole enterprise of imperialism. Human

nature is what arguably makes a person not to exist “outside or beyond geography” and also not to be “completely free from the struggle over geography” (Said 1993:7). Human nature is what makes the struggle over geography “complex and interesting”, considering the fact that “it is not only about soldiers and canons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings”. Finally, Said (1993:7) observes that imperialism never ended, as many would believe or attempt to affirm. Its effects and residual still lingers in different forms up to this day and age.

Woudstra (1981:61) highlights the fact that Joshua will be the one to bring to fruition the promise solemnly made to the forefathers.” He (1981:61) writes, “This is one of the main themes of the entire book. It patterns to both the first and second part of Joshua, to the conquest as well as the allotment.” He (1981:61) opines that the word ‘inherit’ used to describe the future possession of the land is of rich theological significance.” Likewise, Boling (1982:123) observed that the verb ‘to inherit’ presupposes both the warfare...and the land distribution...” It could be argued that apart from theological significance, the idea behind the inheritance is equally of political and military significance. It is even more political and military than it is theological. Boling (1982:123) made two important observations in his analysis of “The verb *nhl* and its cognate noun.” Firstly, he (1982:123) observes that in the sentence, the Hebrew uses the technical term (תְּנַחֲלֶיךָ) for military compensation that is implicit in the promise of land by Yahweh in verse 2 (words denoted in italic mine).” In addition, he highlights the fact that at “Mari,” they “were regularly used to denote the sovereign’s grant of a plot of ground in return for the warrior’s promise of military service.”

This idea is rooted in culture and represents a particular religious worldview. Their deity promised their ancestors the land. The generation addressed in the text would inherit the land promised to their ancestors at the time of writing. In other words, the others who were the previous owners of the land will be disinherited. The literary context of Joshua anchors the meaning of narratives in its cultural and sociopolitical setting. Its nature and content hint at its interpretation. In the book, Israel’s history is constructed from an idealized historical past that projects unity and a common identity.

Verse 7:

7 רַק חֹזֶק וְאַמֵץ מְאֹד לְשֹׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֶל־תִּסּוּר מִמֶּנּוּ יְמִין וּשְׂמֹאל לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכַּל בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ:

English Translations

NKJV: Only be strong and very courageous that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you, do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left that you may prosper wherever you go

NRSV: Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left so that you may be successful wherever you go

Observations and comments

The first question that comes to the mind of a critical interpreter is, which law has been spoken about here? The law being referred to here is the Law of Moses, which was given to him by his God. If one is to critically examine the application of this law in the present circumstance and context, it could be said that it served an oppressive purpose. In other words, it was used to oppress the Canaanites. This conclusion was reached because no place in the text mentioned that the Canaanites were consulted. The narrators literally imposed what they considered morally and ethically right based on their standard and belief system on the Canaanites. It is important to note here that the imperialists, normally the invaders, tend to elevate their gods as superior to the others. This phenomenon is commonly found in the texts of the invading forces of the empires of the ANE. The same idea is also seen in more recent cases of imperialism and colonialism. For example, in the case of colonization of the Shona people in present-day Zimbabwe, Mbuwayesango (2006: 259) explains how “Local Divine Powers were Suppressed...” by the colonisers. Mbuwayesango (259-262) discusses how the colonizers usurped the local name Mwari, which was used by the Shonas to designate their God as a suppression tool. He (2006: 262) opines, “The adoption of the Shona name Mwari for the biblical God was, in reality, the religious usurpation of the Shona. The missionaries took the Shonas captive by

colonizing the Shonas Supreme Being.” This particular act, which the writer of this dissertation believes was unjust, was undertaken by the colonisers because of their quest to present their deity as superior to the others.

Here, the phrase “be strong and very courageous” is reused as a rhetorical strategy. The theme of law was introduced to complete the statement. Moses’s name was invoked to give the command more credence. Moses is also the giver of the law. He is shown in the text to rely on the deity who provided the law. He enjoys a unique and special relationship with the deity. Boling (1982:124) discusses the effects of the “simultaneous discovery made in the early 1950s by Klaus Baltzer in Germany and G.E Mendenhall in the United States finding the origin of biblical covenant forms and covenant-semantics in international diplomacy...” concerning the meaning of the word Torah. He argues that the English equivalent for ‘Tora’ where the root meaning “teaching” is assigned to it says too little and the later theological development of “law” sounds too much. He (1982:124) opines that “What the word signifies for the ancient historian is best seen in the reaction to the rediscovery in 2 Kgs 22:11-13.” He (1982:124) believes that the closest rendering of the word “Torah” in the English language will be “Treaty-Teaching”. He (1982:124) explains that the name of Moses is used in relation to this Treaty-Teaching and that the idea has been linked to the concept of the Deuteronomic code in some scholars' works, such as Wright. It is critical to mention at this junction that arguably, it was the discovery of the Torah that led to Josiah’s reform (Butler 1983:12). Butler (1983:12) opines that “the final motif which underlines Joshua 1 is Torah, specifically, the Torah commanded by Moses.”

Important to note is that, arguably, we find a case of historicization of myth or mythologization of history. The writers’ religious belief system, part of their worldview, is incorporated into rational reasoning. It is also important to mention the economic benefit promised to the people if they obeyed the laws of Moses. There are differences among scholars on the correct translation of the phrase ‘to prosper’ from which the writer of this dissertation drew his inference regarding his view about economic benefits. Dozeman (2015:198) discusses broadly the relevance of the word to prosper in the context that it was applied in this verse. He believes the phrase “to prosper” does not adequately capture the idea the writers intend to

communicate. He suggests that to ‘have insight’ is more appropriate in this circumstance if one considers that the teaching probably came from wisdom tradition. He (2015:198) opines, “The close relationship between wisdom and successful living has prompted the translation “to prosper” or “to be successful”..., which in English does not convey the background in the Wisdom tradition that is implied in the use of the term.” The writer of this dissertation argues that the broad context of Joshua 1 favours the translation “to prosper.” This is because the inheritance of land, the major theme in Joshua, is related to prospering or prosperity. Thus, here, the writer sees their relationship with Yahweh as transactional.

Verse 8:

לֹא יִמּוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בוּ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה לְמַעַן תִּשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַכְּתוּב בּוּ כִי־אָז תִּצְלִיחַ
אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ וְאָז תִּשְׁכִּיל

English Translations

NKJV: This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success.

NRSV: The book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

Observations and comments

In this instance, the emphasis is on the law. The writer explains that strict observance and obedience to the law will be rewarded with economic benefits (Soggin 1972:32). In other words, extrinsic motivation, which is a common feature that appears in religious and political texts in the ANE, is used as a means of procuring obedience from the citizens. Soggin (1972:32) believes that the idea found in the verse shows “the course taken by post-exilic Judaism, leading from the word of God to the identification of this word with the book, and then with the very letter of

the book.” It could be argued that the post-exilic atmosphere was one where the people tried to re-establish their identity after their exile experience.

The mentioning of the Torah here leads to the debate on the use of the material from the Pentateuch in Joshua. The question here is when the Torah began to play an important role in the lives of the Israelites. Was this the case during the preexilic period or was it a postexilic development? Specifically, the argument regards the time the Torah began to serve as a prescriptive law in the life of Israelites. This is related to the question about the role played by the Deuteronomistic historian and Josiah reforms in what could be regarded as the final compilation of Joshua’s narrative. Blenkinsopp (1995:84) observes that the word Torah, which is generally translated as law “more properly, ” stands for teaching or instruction. In Old Testament usage, one speaks of the *torah* of a parent, priest, teacher, or anyone qualified to instruct others.” There is no doubt that the Torah appeared more prominently in the places in Joshua, which are believed to be the work of the Deuteronomistic historian.

Collins (2012:455) opines that the discovery of the Dead Sea scroll provides us with important information about “the centrality of the Torah in late Second Temple Judaism.” The Scrolls showed that the notion of correct interpretation of the Torah was a concern for the sect and the other Israelites. The fact that the separation of the sect from the rest of Judaism happened because of the disagreement they had with the Pharisees supports the view that there was a kind of tussle going on in the society about the correct interpretation of the Torah and the role it is supposed to play in their lives (2012:455-456).

He (2012:456) observes that the Aramaic documents found in the Dead Sea scrolls show a lack of Halakic interest. There is a general belief that these texts were presectarian. This does not mean those who wrote the scripts lacked knowledge of the Torah. Most likely, they had a different understanding of the importance and use of the Torah. Arguably, they used the Torah “as a source of wisdom, but not of legal rulings (2012:456).” This same observation applies to the narrative of Enoch 1, which did not emphasise the Torah's supremacy as the law that supposedly guided the

nation in its legal affairs (Nickelsburg 2007:81-94). This is because the narrative is considered to have been written during the prediluvian period, “but there is a notable contrast with the Hebrew *Book of Jubilees*, which has no inhibition about reading the provisions of the Torah into the primaevial history (Collins 2012:456).” However, there seems to be an increase “in interest in Halakic issues in the Hasmonean period, and they assume much greater prominence in the literature of that time (Collins 2012:458).”

From the discussion, it can be seen that initially, the Torah was not a prescriptive law as it was used in its appearance in this verse. In other words, they were not the basis for law. This was not only the case in ancient Israel but was also generally obtained throughout the ANE. Collins (2012:458) opines that the law codes in the ANE were “viewed as literary exercises, royal apologia or juridical treatises.” He (2012:458) says that the Torah, which stood as the Israel law code, was used for “didactic purposes, or be used for ritual reading...” This does not mean that they were not utilized for law practices. When Israelites started having monarchies, the king's words were the final authority instead of the written law. Collins (2017:22) highlights the fact that:

In the first half of the first millennium B.C.E., Israel and Judah were kingdoms. Their inhabitants were largely defined by their allegiance to these kingdoms and by their distinctive, though by no means exclusive, devotion to the god YHWH. They had their distinctive customs and practices, largely centering on the cult, but these were not codified in the form of a law until late in the monarchic period.

The existing laws were not used in precisely the same manner that we have them today, where they serve as standard prescriptions for law and order in a society.

Evidence shows that at some point in Israel's history, there was a transformation in how the law was understood and used. The people of Israel began to understand the law in a prescriptive sense when the change occurred. Blenkinsopp (1995:84) explains that Torah acquired a new meaning over time. It came to represent “the entire legal heritage of Judaism (1995:84).” He (1995:84) writes:

According to the traditional Jewish view, this includes not only the law written and delivered at Sinai but also enactments transmitted orally from Moses through various intermediaries to the rabbinic leadership. With the passing of time this oral law, inevitably, came to be written down, and the result was the Mishnah, a substantial corpus

of legal material, attributed to Judah the Patriarch, which was compiled towards the end of the second century CE. The process did not, however, stop there, since the Mishnah continued to be expanded and commented on, the final product being the Talmud. In its shorter Palestinian and longer Babylonian versions this immense collection of legal and narrative material was essentially complete by the fifth century CE. While the word *torah* continued to be used of Pentateuchal law, and of the Pentateuch as a whole, it can also refer in Judaism to the entire corpus of written and (originally) oral law.

There is disagreement among scholars about the period when this change occurred. Collins (2012:458) observes that there are three periods in history when it is believed that this change may have probably occurred. The first period, in which the shift in how the Israelites perceived the Torah may have taken place is during Josiah's reform; the second period, it is suspected that there was the transformation in how they perceived the law occurred during Ezra's reform; and lastly, is during the Hellenistic period. Here, we will discuss the transformation that arguably took place during the time of Josiah. Arguably, Josiah's reformation is believed to have a relationship with the appearance of the law in this verse.

Scholars such as Dale (1985:200) believe there was a noticeable transformation in how the people of Israel understood the Torah during Josiah's reform. Arguably, "Josiah's reform did involve the first instantiation of Torah as a legal document that shaped the Israelite community (Carr 2007:47)." This change could be noticed in the literature attributable to the Deuteronomistic school, which was used to sustain the wave of change that came with Josiah's reform (Dale 1985:200; Carr 2007:47). The core idea promoted by this literature was the need for the people of Israel to observe the teachings of the Torah. In addition, the people were extolled for obeying the Torah and making its teachings supreme in their lives.

It is also important to note Josiah's reaction when he apparently made initial contact with the words of the book of the law. Josiah did not spring to action immediately. Rather, he consulted with the prophetess Huldah, who inquired from God. Arguably, this exposes the level of authority that was accorded to the Torah at that stage in the life of the Israelites. It could be argued that at the stage, the Torah did not represent the final authority when it came to matters of law. The king's authority supersedes that of the Torah in matters of law.

Carr (2007:47) questions the reliability of the position seen in 2 Kings, because whatever gains were made during the reign of Josiah were not sustained. This is because the kings who came after him did not follow his footsteps. The writings of the Deuteronomistic Historian(s) attest to this fact. They praised the kings who were before Josiah and Josiah but were critical of the faithfulness of the kings who came after Josiah. He opines that what Judaism ended up accepting as the Torah of Moses surpasses Josiah's law book. This included various traditions, including the "Covenant code on which parts of Deuteronomy depended, narrative traditions of various sorts, and Priestly materials." He argues that if what the Bible says about the kings who ruled after Josiah is reliable, it means that the time that Josiah's reform took place was very short. He highlights that the scribes who worked with Josiah were later marginalized and that the law they promoted was ignored. Despite all the problems which accompanied the reform after Josiah, it could be argued that yet:

...the reform grew in the collective memory, as reflected in the expansive coverage of him in 2 Kings 22–23, and in the parallel made between him and Ezra in 1 Esdras. Whatever Josiah's reform once was, it later became cause to understand the postexilic installation of a broader Torah as a *restoration* of a former state of things, rather than as an innovation. (Carr 2007:47)

From the above discussion, the writer of this dissertation believes that the exhortation that Joshua should adhere to the teachings of the law was a later addition to the text by the Deuteronomistic historians who were linked to Josiah's reform. Similarly, Van der Meer (2004:212) observes that "More than any of the other MT pluses in Joshua 1, this plus has implications for the redaction history of this first chapter of the book, since it conveys the central theme of the nomistic (DtrN) redaction of the whole segment 1: 7 -8..." He also suggests that verses 7 and 8 should be considered a unit. However, he recognises that verse 7 has no parallel in Joshua and the context of the whole of Genesis to 2 Kings narratives. Dozeman (2011:194) believes that the differences between verses 7 and 8 are due to further editing of verse 7. He notes that in verse 8, the law was further referred to as "The book of Law." He (2011:194) explains that:

Such a nomistic reinterpretation of a previously unconditional promise indicates an intentional change to Joshua 1, which in turn suggests the work of a separate author or

editor in the composition of Joshua 1. But this in itself does not represent the “final form” of Joshua 1.

However, one may ask if this introduction of the law in this context was essential. The question emanates from the fact that God was communicating directly with Joshua according to the narrative of Joshua 1. Van der Meer (2004:213) highlights the fact that the closest parallel to this verse is found in Deuteronomy 17:18-19 where the king was exhorted to acquaint himself with the Torah by studying it throughout his life. He (2004:214) suggests that the addition reflects the development “in Early Judaism in which the study of the Torah became 'democratized'.”

Verse 9:

הָלוֹא צוֹיִתִּידָּךְ חֶזֶק וְאַמֶּץ אֱלֹהֵי־תַעֲרִץ וְאֱלֹהֵי־תַחַת כִּי עִמָּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ

English Translations

NKJV: Have not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the lord your God is with you wherever you go

NRSV: I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go

Observations and Comments

This is a continuation of the rhetoric of survival employed by the writers. Literally, the narrative is set around their liberation from the hands of the Egyptian state, where they were enslaved. They needed to devise a mechanism of survival. They lived amid stronger nations who never hesitated to oppress them to achieve their national objectives. The survival they seek involves different aspects of their existence, including their identity and national leadership. This type of behaviour is not peculiar to the Israelites. It is commonly found among minority groups, who, one way or the other, were faced with situations similar to the one that confronted Israel during the ANE period. Smith-Christopher (1989:73) looked at resistance literature produced by other groups who suffered oppression comparable to that of the Judeans. Perhaps it is important to note at this juncture that the resistance mounted by “the Judeans who

successfully maintained their identity was responsible for the biblical text we are concerned with. This is, therefore, not the only social reality, but it is the social reality reflected in the texts (1989:73).” He (1989:73) discovers from his review that “four behaviour patterns” or what he calls “mechanism for survival” was “prominent among the common features of the case.” That is, from cases he examined that included the plights of South African blacks during apartheid, the case of Japanese living in America during World War 2; the fate of black slaves in America and the people from Marshal Island. He names them as “(1) Structural adaptation, (2) leadership patterns, (3) ritual patterns of resistance, and (4) the emergence of folk tales as an expression of social existence and the creation of “resistance literature.” The four behavioural patterns listed in the preceding sentence are delineable from Joshua's text.

Using what could be called a rhetorical question, the writers repeated the motivational speech they had introduced earlier. Repetition is a rhetorical strategy widely practised in the ANE. The ending part of the statement, “for the lord your God is with you wherever you go”, is characteristically an ANE political-religious ideology.(Liverani 2021:79-95) The phrase wherever you go appears in other instances in the Old Testament such as in the story of Ruth and Naomi where it indicates territory (Ruth 1:16); it is also applied in Yahweh's address to the people in their wilderness experience where similarly it denotes territory (Deut. 1:31); it also appears in Jeremiah (1:7) where it represents the scope of his commission and in the story of David where it is used in the sense of divine presence (2 Sam. 8:6) (Dozeman 2015:220). In Joshua, if the theme in verse 9 is read in conjunction with verse 6, it could be argued that the meaning leans towards divine presence, whereas if the same theme in verse 9 is read together with verses 3 and 4, its meaning will tilt towards divine presence over a territory (Dozeman 2015:220). The important thing to note is that on this occasion, the phrase is intertwined with the theme of the Promised Land. Therefore, one can argue that the speaker had in mind the larger territories mentioned in verses 3 and 4 that were in question.

What is important to note here is the fact that the people's socio-political-religious-economic life is intertwined with the deity. What could be seen and described as

religious imperialism headed by a god whose nature is depicted as an imperial lord capable of rewarding whoever obeys his commandment.

5.2.2 Joshua 1:10-18 Joshua's commencement address to the Israelites:
Observations and comments

Verse 10:

10 וַיִּצַו יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת-שָׂרֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר:

English Translations

NKJV: Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people saying:

NRSV: Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people:

Observations and comments

It is important to note the military speech formula that was used. According to Nelson (1997:34), "The impact of Yahweh's speech results in two directives by Joshua in (vv. 10-11 and 12-15). First, he instructs the entire nation by means of the officers to prepare for the campaign." He highlights the fact that "These officers have already been introduced by Deut. 1:15, where they also have a military function." He opines that "Their employment here roughly follows the divine war procedures of Deut. Verse 20:5-9." This observation is related to the debate about the formation of the nation of Israel. The important question related to the argument is whether Israel existed as a nation, as inferred from the narrative. And if they were, what kind of nation were they? In a narrower sense, the question is, when were these texts compiled?

The two categories of people addressed in the statement were the officers (officials) and the people. Butler (1983:16) observes that the Hebrew word שָׂרִים "officials" reflects the tradition of Exodus 18:24-25, Numbers 1:16, and Deuteronomy 1:15, wherein Moses appointed tribal officials to assume part of the responsibilities which had become burdensome for him." He (1983:16) observes that the tradition which is observable here bears the mark of "the reorganization of the military and legal system by Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 19:5-11...)." He (1983:16) opines that the Chronicler

believes that the term is closely connected to the legal responsibilities of the Levites. On the other hand, Deuteronomy accepts the Tetrateuchal tradition of civil government founded by Moses and believes that their duties share a close relationship with the military (Deut. 20:5-9) in addition to their legal responsibilities. Furthermore, he states that prior it stood in place of the position of some political powers in wisdom literature where it appeared once (Prov. 6:7). He (1983;17) highlights the fact that Deuteronomy used the term in a generalized manner to describe matters and issues of administration before the emergence of the monarchy (Deut. 1:15; 29:9; 31:28; Josh 8:33; 23:2; 24:1). He (1983; 17) adds that possibility exists that the monarchical system later adopted the terminology which they applied to the notion of tribal organisation. Finally, he conceded that “the details remain unclear.” Dozeman (2015:220) follows in the tradition of the LXX to translate the Hebrew word שטרִים as “scribes”. He (2015:220) observes that in verses 10 and 11, the scribes were assigned a leadership role. He (2015:220) states that the Hebrew word “scribes,” “has a range of meanings in the Hebrew Bible, including a foreman over work (e.g., Exod. 5:10-19), a military leader who musters the troops (e.g., Deut. 20:5; 2 Chr. 26:11), and the recorder or writer in judicial proceedings (Deut. 16:18).”

What is important to note here is the role played by this group of individuals in the life of the nation. Especially how they were involved in a task that can be described simply as war. The fact that the writers did not expressly differentiate the officials as separate from the people in regards to the military activities brings up the question of the nature of the army as well as their level of advancement as a state. Specifically, if one considers the type of nation that was in existence at the time the book of Joshua was composed,

Verse 11:

עָבְרוּ בְקָרֵב הַמַּחֲנֶה וַצִּוּ אֶת־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הִכִּינוּ לָכֶם צִדָּה כִּי בְעוֹד שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים עֹבְרִים אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה
לְבוֹא לָרֶשֶׁת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם נָתַן לָכֶם לְרֶשֶׁתָּהּ

English Translations

NKJV: Pass through the camp and command the people saying, prepare provision for yourselves for within three days you will cross over this Jordan to go to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.

NRSV: Pass through the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for in three days you are to cross over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.

Observations and comments

The idea here is one that concerns war. The writers paint an image of a war situation. Important to note that "Joshua allows three days preparation prior to the Jordan crossing from the east, the locale of Moses's death at Nebo at the conclusion of Deuteronomy (1:10-11) (Faley 2011:13)." Similarly, Nelson (1997:34) explains that "Verse 11 provides a three-day timetable for events to follow, and these same officers will reappear "at the end of three days" to give further instructions (3:2). After this they fade into the role of a passive audience (8:33; 23:2; 24:1).

Dozeman (2015:221) observes, "The war setting is underscored by the repeated use of the verb 'ābar, "to cross," to describe the action of the scribes in the camp and the march of the Israelites over the Jordan River in verse 11. He (2015:221) highlights the fact that "The imagery of war continues with the repetition of the verb yāraš, "to possess" verse 11. The officers were told to pass through the camp. The impression here is that they were on the move. Though not specifically mentioned, the narrative here is connected to the Exodus narrative. Supposedly, it represents their march towards freedom. Ultimately, they were going to possess the Promised Land. The narrative cast the people of Israel in the light of oppressed people who were about to be free from their predicament. However, to do so requires that they will dispossess others. The officers were to issue a command to the people. Generally, the word command has military connotations. In this instance, it could be argued that the people were expected to obey and not rebel. Arguably, what undergirds such an idea is the ideology that encourages the belief in a deity who takes a militaristic approach in his dealings with the people.

The provision spoken about in the present context arguably refers to what could be categorised as their immediate needs, such as food and water. Important to note is that the writers used the term provision in a general term or sense. Woudstra (1981:65) opines that the writers did not say what these provisions would be. He suggests that at the time that this was written, manna may have stopped falling from heaven. He refers to prior narratives in Deuteronomy 2:6 to justify his position on the rescission of manna from heaven at the time that is being referred to in the text. The texts that he was referring to give an account of their journey through Edom (Deut. 2:6; cf. also Exod. 16:35; Josh 5:12). He notes that the condition of the manner makes it impossible for it to be kept for more than a period of one day. (Exod. 16:19). He believes that, at this point, the account is not concerned to enter into the martial aspects of what lies ahead for the people. All that is to be done is to *cross* and take *possession*.” He observes that “The language is reminiscent of Deut. 3:18 4:5, 14. The author is only concerned to indicate that Israel is now about to convert ownership by promise into actual possession...” He highlights the fact that “Another recurring feature is the emphasis on the fact that the land will be God’s gift...” What could be inferred from Woudstra’s arguments is that the writers were guided by national interest. Hence, this prompted the writer of this thesis to suggest that the notion of ultranationalism undergirds the texts.²⁷

The concept of ultranationalism as promoted by the Joshua narratives has influenced what Dozeman refers to as a modern literal reading of the text. He writes that

A more complex literal reading of Joshua as both the account of an historical event and as authoritative Scripture also emerges, in which the conquest in Joshua is interpreted within an evolutionary view of historical process, conceived as a form of manifest destiny.

Arguably, the idea and the ideology that supports it have been applied on different occasions to justify conquest and subsequent occupation of land that belongs to others. Fetalsana-Apura (2019:109) observes that “The book of Joshua, particularly Josh 1:1-9, has been employed to justify imperial expansion by the modern state of

²⁷ Dictionary.com defines “ultranationalism as extreme devotion to or advocacy of the interests of a nation, especially regardless of the effect on any other nations. In this instance the people of Israel focused only on getting the land without minding the effect their said actions will have on the other people who inhabited the land they were converting to usurp.

Israel and the Christian West.” In other words, the ideology which developed from the narrative of Joshua has been applied as justification for imperialism, colonialism, dispossession and subjugation. Ultrationalism embraces the concepts listed in the preceding statement and more.²⁸

Verse 12:

וְלִרְאוּבֵנִי וְלִגָּדִי וְלַחֲצִי שֵׁבֶט הַמְּנַשֶּׁה אָמַר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר

English Translations

NKJV: And to the Reubenites and Gadites, and half of the Manasseh Joshua spoke saying

NRSV: But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said

Observations and comments

According to the narrator, Joshua, who at that stage has become the leader of the people, addressed the three tribes mentioned. Boling (1982:126) explains that “the disjunctive syntax of waw + none-verb” “And to” that was used to introduce the verse “marks the beginning of the second large unit in the chapter, a special introduction to the Transjordan tribes.” Nelson (1997:35) observes that the “Disjunctive word order foregrounds the eastern tribes as a new topic.” Dozeman (2015:198) notes that the interpretation of the Hebrew waw as disjunctive “accentuates the contrast between the tribes east of the Jordan River and those west of it.” He (2015:221) observes that the fact that the three tribes mentioned were resident:

on the eastern side of the Jordan River makes them liminal characters in the book of Joshua, which raises the question of whether they are part of the Israelite people, since they do not share the land that Yahweh promised to the ancestors (v. 5). As a result, the connection between the eastern tribes and the Israelite nation west of the Jordan River is restricted to their shared experience of the leadership and words of Moses, now codified in Torah

²⁸ In modern time, O’Sullivan, J.I (1845:6) first used the word manifest destiny to justify the activities of colonialists in the Americas. Also see the work of D. H. Akenson (1992:72-77,319-22) where he explains the application of the idea and ideology that undergirds concept of manifest destiny in other places such as South Africa and Palestine.

Nelson (1997:35) observes that “viewing these two–and–a–half tribes as a distinct entity accords with Deuteronomistic convention, but raises disturbing questions for the reader about their place in the national history.” He (1997:35) writes,

Although an integral part of the idealized tribal system and of the united and northern monarchies, their territory was not “Canaan” in the traditional sense reflected in either Egyptian texts (Amarna Letters; also ANET 254, 478) or the Hebrew Bible (Num 34:2, 10-12; Deut 32:49).

Also connected to the ongoing discussion is the use of the names Reubenites and Gadites and half of Manasseh in this verse. In view of this observation, Boling (1982:126) explains, “Gentilic formations are used here, in contrast to the more characteristic form of tribal names (Bene Reuben, Bene Gad, etc.), as in 4:12 and elsewhere. Referring to the epic sources as seen in Numbers 32, Bene Reuben and Bene Gad negotiated with Moses to be given their own portion of land in the territory east of the Jordan (Num 32:1-27). Their request was granted to them by Moses, who gave the order “according to Eleazar the priest and Joshua ben Nun (mentioned in that order, as in Josh 21:1) contingent upon the pledge of military service west of the Jordan (Num 32:28-32)(Boling 1982:126).”

Furthermore, Boling (1982:126) explains that the half-tribe of Manasseh only appeared for the first time in Numbers 32:33. In other words, they were not included in the story that appeared formally in the two important paragraphs of Numbers 32:1-27 and 32:28-32. Numbers 32:39-42 and Deuteronomy 3:12-20 are important to note in connection to the story of the half-tribe of Manasseh because in these passages, it was explained “why they too are included in this special Transjordan settlement: the Bene Machir (who were a branch of Bene Manasseh) “went to Gilead and took it...” Remarkable enough, “these three Transjordan tribes of Reuben, Gad and eastern Manasseh are the only ones of the familiar twelve ever to be mentioned by name in the warfare section of the book (Boling 1982:126).”

What is critical to observe here is that the verse introduces the theme of national unity, the “unity of Israel” in the chapter (Pitkänen 2010). Woudstra (1981:65) likewise picks up the theme of the unity of Israel. He (1981:65) writes, “In keeping with his concern to stress the participation of a united Israel, the writer now reports

Joshua's word to the tribes who had already obtained their land from Moses on the east of Jordan (cf. Num. 32; Deut 3: 18-20)." Soggin (1972:33) also broached the topic of unity when he wrote, "With regards to the tribes who had already obtained territories east of Jordan..., it is confirmed that they will have to take part in the common enterprise..." The theme will grow in verse 13. However, it is essential to note that the whole idea is built on Moses's activities before the period referred to here.

Verse 13:

13 זְכוֹר אֶת־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם מֹשֶׁה עַבְד־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מְנַיֵחַ לָכֶם וְנָתַן לָכֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
הַזֹּאת:

English Translations

NKJV: Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you saying the Lord your God is giving you rest and is giving you this Land.

NRSV: Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, "The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land."

Observations and comments

This is a progression from verse 12. In his address, Joshua reminded them of their past dealings where they had an agreement with Moses. It is critical to observe that in the Old Testament, such agreements are generally cemented with an oath. Boling (1982:127) argues concerning the Hebrew word "remember", "In contrast to the commissioning speech of Yahweh (vv. 2-9) and the first order issued by Joshua (vv. 10-11), which used the imperative form repeatedly, here the command is expressed in the form of infinitive absolute which has most emphatic force (1982:127)." In other words, the importance of the command is heightened more on this occasion when compared to its previous appearances. Later, in the subsequent verse, the "imperative force is then continued by imperfects ("Your wives...shall remain...but you shall cross") and converted perfects ("and help them...and they too shall take possession") (Boling 1982:127)." Therefore, there is a sharp stylistic contrast

between verses 1-11 and verses 13-14 (Boling 1982::127). Nelson (1997:35) observes that Joshua's listeners and also interpreters were "urged to remember the events reported in Deut. 3:12-22 and an extensive reuse of language from there reinforces the connection." Dozeman (2015:221) believes that the writer(s) uses the phrase "Remember the word of Moses" to remind the listeners that:

The Torah of Moses, rather than the promise of land, binds the eastern tribes with the Israelites who dwell in Canaan. The specific word from Moses that Joshua brings to the memory of the eastern tribes is that their land east of the Jordan River is also a divine gift.

Arguably, the position seen in the above quote is affirmed by the statement, "Yahweh your God is giving you rest and he will give you this land." The concept of rest appeared variously in the Old Testament, and it occupies a very important place in "the religious thought of Israel (Von Rad 1966:96)." He (1966:94) believes that the concept of rest is intertwined with the idea of redemption, which in turn is inseparable from the gift of land or Promised Land. He shows how the concept of rest was applied in the book of Deuteronomy, which differs considerably from the idea espoused by the latter prophets, who linked it to eschatological expectations. He opines that the chronicler who also uses the term rest most probably borrowed heavily from the work of the Deuteronomist. Von Rad (1966:95) states:

We must not spiritualise any of this: this "rest" (מנוחה) is not peace of mind, but the altogether tangible peace granted to a nation plagued by enemies and weary of wandering. It is also a direct gift from the hand of God. Deuteronomy therefore has no eschatological expectation of the kind known to the prophets. The state of salvation has been established by God by means of the covenant, and the characteristic message of Deuteronomy is that it still continues undiminished. The life of the chosen people in the "pleasant land", at rest from all enemies round about, the people owning their love for God and God blessing his people—this is the epitome of the state of the redeemed nation as Deuteronomy sees it.

It is also critical to note that the actual time the people of Israel achieved the rest spoken about is not well defined (Von Rad 1966:96). In some of its appearance, it was spoken about as it has already happened in the past. In the book of Deuteronomy, it is spoken about as a present reality. "On one occasion, it begins at

the time of Joshua... (Von Rad 1966:96)²⁹ And in what could be referred to here as a third usage, it is tied to eschatological events. In the last sense, it is futuristic.

As it could be said that “Moses provides the guarantee for these tribes as the one who mediated Yahweh’s promise and gave them their land (Nelson 1997:35).” Pitkänen (2010:117) points out that:

In line with one of the main themes of the book of Joshua, the unity of Israel, it is very important that the Transjordanians who have already received their share of land on the east side of the Jordan (see Num. 32) are fulfilling their obligation to take part in the conquest of the land west of the Jordan, together with the rest of the Israelites

It could be argued that the Hebrew words rest and land is central to the theme of unity. Nelson (1997:35) notes that “The theme of “rest” (Your present rest, your kinsfolk’s imminent rest) holds the section together and points forward 21:44; 22:4; 23:1.” He states that “Giving rest (*nwh hiphil*) is defined as giving a homeland (vv. 13, 15).” Boling (1982:127) explains, “Grant you rest” Hebrew *meniah*, the causative particle used as a noun. He adds, “Repeated in verse 15, this verb is a key term.” It is also critical to note that some translations, such as the NEB, use “Grant security.” Miller and Tucker (1974:24) note, “security: the word often is translated ‘rest’ or ‘peace’ (cp. Deut. 25:19; Judg. 3:11, 30).” They (1974:24) believe that “security captures a meaning which is basic in the Deuteronomistic history of Israel.” They (1974:24) opine, “It does not refer so much to peace of mind or spiritual calm as to the external conditions of national security and peace which prevail when Israel is obedient to the law.” Boling (1982:127) believes that the explanation Miller and Tucker gave at the beginning captures “an important point but says too much, for it prematurely resolves an ambiguity.” The main argument here is that, their explanation about the meaning of the word “rest” essentially overlooks the essence of the word as applied in the context. He (1982:127) argues, “That Yahweh’s activity in granting *rest* involves peace from surrounding enemies is clear.” In other words, it refers to granting of peace of mind to the Israelites.

Arguably, the overarching theme is Yahweh, who participates in human affairs. The writer(s) attempts to project the idea that even in human affairs, the deity is in charge

²⁹ See Joshua 21:43-45

and dictates what happens. This includes the political-religious-economic activities of the Israelites and the others. Therefore, Yahweh has the power to grant rest and land to the people of Israel.

Verse 14:

14 נְשִׁיכֶם טַפְּכֶם וּמִקְנֵיכֶם יֵשְׁבוּ בָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָכֶם מֹשֶׁה בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן וְאַתֶּם תַּעֲבְרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים לִפְנֵי
אֶחָיֶכֶם כָּל גְּבוּרֵי הַחַיִל וְעֹזְרֵתֶם אוֹתָם:

English Translations

NKJV: Your wives, your little ones, your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valour and help them

NRSV: Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan. But all the warriors among you shall cross over armed before your kindred and shall help them

Observations and comments

Verse 14 “uses repeated references to military preparation (Butler 1983:21).” Woudstra (1981:66) critically observes that the Transjordanian tribes were commanded “to cross in front of their brothers” and “to do so in formation a word which suggests preparedness for war.” He (1981:66) highlights the fact that “Those who must do so are designated valiant men, a word which sometimes means “men of strength” “men of efficiency.” He (1981:66) opines, “Here it stands for the fighting men whose number, according to 4:13, was forty thousand (cf. Num. 26:7, 18, 34).”

A point of great significance in this verse is that:

The tribes settled in Transjordan and never occupied “the land of Canaan” properly so called (Deut 3:12-20). However, their legitimate status as part of Israel is repeatedly brought to the fore in underscoring the part they played in the occupation. They were not excused from military duty in bringing the Canaanites into subjection (Faley 2011:15)

Soggin (1972:33) writes,

Whereas in vv. 10ff. the conquest was presented as a peaceful process to be carried out as it were on a liturgical pattern, it now clearly appears as a military enterprise, and the whole people, both those of the land east of Jordan and the future inhabitants of Palestine west of the Jordan, have to appear in the line of battle...

The question of women and children remaining at home could be considered part of the rules of engagement that reasonable people follow in promulgating wars. The general practice and, perhaps, tradition require that women and children are protected or shielded from direct danger, and this includes direct danger from war activities. On the other hand, able-bodied men enlist or are conscripted into the fighting force of a nation. They form a greater number of national army members and, as such, are more likely to go to war. From the speech, it could be deduced that the particular group mentioned were well-established warriors known for their gallantry. Hence, the command given to them to be at the forefront and lead what could be regarded as a military adventure or expedition. This is also a call to obedience, which will manifest further in the succeeding verse.

Verse 15:

עַד אֲשֶׁר־יָנִיחַ יְהוָה לְאַחֵיכֶם כְּכֹם וַיְרִשׁוּ גַם־הֶמָּה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם נָתַן לָהֶם וְשָׁבְתֶם לְאָרֶץ
יְרֻשְׁתְּכֶם וַיְרֻשְׁתֶּם אוֹתָהּ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָכֶם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזְרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ

English Translations

NKJV: Until your Lord has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise.

NRSV: Until the Lord gives rest to your kindred as well as to you, and they also take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land and take possession of it, the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan to the east.”

Observations and comments

Here we see “another technical Deuteronomic term, ‘to give rest’ which in this context we can translate as ‘settle’ (cf. Deut. 12:9; 25:19; Josh. 21:4ff; 1 Kgs. 8:56) (Soggin 1972:33).”³⁰ Boling (1982:128) also suggests that “by this time” the word

³⁰ See the previous explanation of this term in verse 13.

“rest” has a military connotation which signifies “leave, furlough,” or even “honorable discharge from active duty,” that is, “retirement.” This may be the case, considering that the verse's writer(s) specifically addressed the valiant men of the two-and-a-half tribes who were supposed to play a military role.

From the tone of the speech, it could be inferred that an agreement was reached between the tribes, with Moses as the mediator between the people and the deity. Arguably, in the context of the ANE, such agreements were rendered as an oath. One of the general features of such an agreement is the condition that accompanies it. For the promise to be fulfilled, the parties involved are expected to meet certain obligations, requirements and conditions. The criteria given for it to be fulfilled in this instance is that the other tribes will settle in their own part of the Promised Land before the three tribes return to enjoy their allotted portion (Woudstra 1981:66). One could argue that the speaker is calling or demanding for cooperation and obedience from the three tribes who he was addressing. In the subsequent verse, the speaker's strategy will emerge more clearly.

It is important to note that the speaker also showed that he possesses great knowledge of the physical conditions and terrain of the land in question. The writer specifically referred to the Jordan and buttressed his point further by describing in detail the part the three tribes occupied, as well as the one that is located towards the sunrise. This implies that the writer and his audience were not strangers in the land. This is an important argument that is worthy of consideration when one is discussing the settlement issue.

Verse 16:

וַיֵּעֲנוּ אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתָנוּ נַעֲשֶׂה וְאֵל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁלַחֵנוּ נֵלֵךְ

English Translations

NKJV: So they answered Joshua saying, all that you command us we will do and wherever you send us we will go.

NRSV: They answered Joshua, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.

Observations and comments

The tribes responded to the speech by pledging their allegiance to the cause. Dozeman (2015:222) draws attention to “The response of the eastern tribes to Joshua in vv. 16-18 lacks a subject, but the reference to the past commands of Moses indicates that the tribes are the speakers and not the entire Israelite nation...” He (2015:222) highlights, “The response of the eastern tribes is expansive in scope, socially inclusive of the western tribes, and fanatical in tone.” He points out that the eastern tribes used the Hebrew word *kol* (כָּל) ‘all’ “five times” “to signify their absolute allegiance to Joshua.” The first appearance of the five being referred to is in this verse; “all that you command” “לְאָמַר כָּל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתָנוּ נַעֲשֶׂה”.

Coote (1998:586-587) aptly observes:

That the third exchange which equals the first in length addresses head on the closest thing to an internal division that the book of Joshua admits: the two and a half tribes who hold land to the east rather than to the west of the Jordan. The theme of this exchange is the obedience of the two and a half tribes. The ones whose loyalty might most be in question, since they already possess their lands and are separated by the Jordan, show themselves to be model of followers of Joshua, to the point of avowing the death penalty for disobedience.

It could be deduced from the speech that they accepted to be in complete obedience. Arguably, they are under the obligation of an oath. However, in the discourse, that there was an oath binding the people in their dealings with the deity is more or less implicitly expressed. Soggin hints at this fact when he writes about how the Deuteronomist conceptualizes human authority and the force behind obeying such. He writes, “Finally,[16-18] we have an interesting account of the Deuteronomist conception of human authority: the necessary condition for obedience to be accorded to it is that Yahweh should be with the person who exercises authority.” It could be argued that the implication of having Yahweh involved in how humans conceptualise authority is that any act of disobedience or rebellion will be treated as treacherous and appropriate punishment. Hence, the call for the death sentence in verse 18 for anyone who disobeys the leader’s command by the members of the two and a half tribes.

Verse 17:

כָּבַל אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַעְנוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּנִשְׁמַע אֵלָיִךְ רַק יְהִי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עִמָּךְ כַּאֲשֶׁר הָיָה עִם-מֹשֶׁה

English Translations

NKJV: Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you, Only the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses

NRSV: Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses

Observations and comments

Again, reference is made to Moses, the revered leader selected by the deity. Important to note is that at this stage, the authority of Joshua, who was selected to replace Moses, was still under some kind of probation. He has yet to establish himself fully as the same kind of leader as Moses. The conduct of the two and a half tribes, in a sense, boosted Joshua's image as a leader. Arguably, the whole essence of the exchange in verses 16 and 17 is there to portray the behaviour of the Transjordanians as exemplary (Pitkänen 2010:117). At the same time, it served the purpose of affirming the leadership of Joshua as one likeable to that of Moses.

Arguably, verses 16-17 form the concluding part of what could be regarded as the introductory communication exchange between the deity, Joshua and the people of Israel. Observably, the conclusion came to a climax with the speech of the eastern tribes. Nelson (1997:35) believes that the response of the two-and-a-half tribes in this instance, resembles "a sort of Greek chorus speaking the mind of the whole people." The manner in which they responded also indicates "an absolute willingness to follow Joshua, backing up their consent with reference to the standard of their past obedience to Moses and with a call for the death penalty for any recalcitrant (Compare Deut. 13:11 [10E]; 17:12) (Nelson 1997:35)."

It is critical to note the importance of the Hebrew word *raq* (רק) translated as "only" in this verse as well as in verse 18. Nelson (1997:36) observes that the use here "potentially restricts their enthusiasm and introduces some tension into the plot." He

(1997:36) writes, “This particle implies that the second statement introduced by *raq* is more foundational and important than the first statement, although both are true. He (1997:36) opines, “The syntax asserts: “A is true, but B is even more important.” He (1997:36) state, “The first use of *raq* (v.17) emphasizes their wish that Yahweh be with Joshua just as promised in v. 5, but also inserts a subtle note of contingency into their pledge of obedience.” He (1997:36) notes, “Once again Moses serves as the yardstick by which Joshua’s measured.”

Verse 18:

כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִמְרָה אֶת-פִּיךָ וְלֹא-יִשְׁמַע אֶת-דְּבָרֶיךָ לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-תִּצְוֶנּוּ יוֹמָת רַק חֹזֵק וְאַמֵּץ

English Translations

NKJV: Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage.

NRSV: Whoever rebels against your orders and disobeys your words, whatever you command, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.

Observations and comments

In the preceding verse, the use of the Hebrew word *raq* was discussed and it was noted that the same word appeared here. The use of the word significantly had an effect literarily and rhetorically on the writers’ presentation in both verses. However, as already explained in verse 17, there is a notable difference in how the word was applied and its effect on both occasions. Nelson (1997:36) explains that:

The second use of *raq* (v.18) is both a wish and an echo of Yahweh’s command (vv. 6, 7), but again sounds an element of reservation. The first caveat, that of Yahweh’s presence with Joshua, returns in 3:7 and 6:27, where his success resolves any uncertainty. The second issue, courage, is raised again after the Ai debacle (8: 1) and will be broadened into a challenge to the whole community in 10:25. The rhetorical strategy is powerful. Raising slight questions about Yahweh’s presence and Joshua’s courage makes the subsequent demonstration of these realities all the more convincing.

Important to note is that even at the very beginning, Joshua enjoyed the support of the deity. Previously, it was mentioned that in the social hierarchy that was operated and practised, the deity sat on top, and then there was the leader and the people. Firstly, society is a class society. The second part of the statement was a reminder to

Joshua to be strong and to have courage. These are attributes that a leader is expected to exhibit in times of conflict and war. Similarly, Dozeman (2015:222) comments that “The eastern tribes conclude their response in v. 18 by encouraging Joshua with the repetition of the divine command from vv. 6 and 7: ‘Be courageous and strong.’” He (2015:222) notes that the clause laden with military imagery is used to demand courage in the face of threatening opposition.³¹ Dozeman (2015:222) believes that:

The statement in v. 18 is likely tied to the military background of the clause in its original setting in Josh 1, but it now takes on the full range of military and instructional encouragement with the addition of vv. 7–9. Thus, Joshua is encouraged to lead the people in war and in the study of the Torah.

Also, the military nature of the texts could be observed from the strong desire of the tribes to follow Joshua and do whatever he commands them to do. They were willing and prepared to stake or lose their life in case of disobedience. In this vein, Woudstra observes that “The readiness of the tribes to follow Joshua is so great that those who may want to disobey him are threatened with death. Furthermore, he states “The word used for this act of disobedience is “rebel,” a word employed often for disobedience towards the Lord’s commandment (Deut. 1:26, 43; 9:23; 1 Sam. 12:14).” He highlights the fact that, “This use underscores the seriousness of the rebellion contemplated and explains the harshness of the penalty to be applied.” Pitkänen (2010:118)

In a military context in times of war, it is normal that those who do not follow the leadership are put to death. This is a simple and effective way of controlling other people. Leadership is sometimes simply based on power and on forcing people to do what is expected, even though losing the respect of the people can prove very problematic (cf. 1 Kgs 12, even if Yahweh is here portrayed as the ultimate force on which everything depends). As for the later Israelites, this verse reminds them of the high authority that Joshua had as Yahweh’s representative and as the leader of the Israelites.

³¹ See previous appearances in verse 6 and 7. In verse 7 it is linked to the study of Torah.

5.3 Conclusion

As already noted, chapter 1 is designed to serve as an introduction to Joshua's narrative. It sets the tone for the entire book of Joshua. This assumption is supported by the fact that all the major themes in Joshua, such as the promise of land, the law, obedience, us versus them, covenant and election, were directly or indirectly mentioned in the chapter. The core message of the chapter is for the Israelites to prepare to cross the Jordan to take over the land their deity had promised to give them through Abraham.

5.4 Chapter 2

5.4.1 Joshua 2:1-24: Rehab and the spies: observations and comments

Verse 1:

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי-נֹון מִן-הַשְּׁטִים שְׁנַיִם-אֲנָשִׁים מִרְגָּלִים חָרַשׁ לְאֹמֶר לְכוּ רְאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-יְרִיחוֹ וַיֵּלְכוּ
וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית-אִשָּׁה זֹנָה וְשָׁמָּה רָחַב וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ-שָׁמָּה

English Translations

NKJV: Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Groove to spy secretly, saying go view the land, especially Jericho. So they went and came to the house of a harlot named Rehab, and lodged there

NRSV: Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies saying, 'Go view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rehab and spent the night there

Observations and comments

Verse 1 begins with Joshua, the son of Nun, sending two men from Acacia Groove on a secret spy mission to view Jericho's land.

Unlike the story of Moses, Joshua told them only to view the land; there was no detailed briefing. Whereas, Moses' spies were important leaders, these spies were chosen from among common people (Sheldon 2007: 45)

There are two important things to note about the statement. *Firstly*, is the fact that Joshua was referred to as Joshua son of Nun in this instance, which is a more thorough description than what appeared previously in the first chapter. Boling (1982:143) observes that using the longer version of Joshua's name indicates a new beginning (and not simply as Joshua as seen in the intervening verses). It is also significant to observe the relevance of the appearance of the place name 'Shittim,' which was previously not referenced in any Deuteronomic wilderness experience (Boling 1982:143). According to Boling (1982:144), "In Num. 33:49, the camp is described as extending from beth-yeshimoth as far as Abel-Shittim in the plains of Moab." He (1982:144) notes, "The latter is clearly a place name, and scholars have thought the most likely site identification to be Tell el-Hammam." Given the name's appearance in this verse and the story of Rehab, Boling (1982:144) explains that "the name has a definite article and might be translated literally, "The Acacias," reminding the reader of the harsh desert terrain and climate at the southern end of the Jordan valley, roughly 0.4 km below sea level."

Furthermore, he (1982:144) says that "for the bulk of the year, the shade of these beautiful trees is a welcome relief, and it is not surprising that they should have given their name to a small region. He (1982:144) comments, "This opening also sets the tone of adventure and risk. In such a desert terrain, getting from "The Acacias" to Jericho means crossing not only the river, but a lot of open countries (1982:144)."

Soggin (1972:40) briefly discussed the use of the word "Shittim" in his commentary. He (1972:40) explains that Shittim, which is translated as Acacias and is believed to be the present-day *tell el-khamman*, or else with *tell el-kefren*..., both of which are approximately 11-12 km east of the Jordan and 1-2 km apart." He (1972:40) opines that "The remains of the Jericho of the conclusion of the Bronze Age are to be found on the present Tell Es-Sultan about 2 km from present-day Jericho (*er-riha*,...),..." He (1972:40) observes:

The Mountain of vv.16ff. is probably the "Mountain of the Forty" (*jebel qarantal*)... which is full of natural caves and outcrops; but it is not impossible that it refers to the eastern ramparts of the south-central hill country which are more or less at the same latitude as Jericho and Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Dozeman (2015:227) explains that:

The literary use of Shittim is limited in the Hebrew Bible; it is associated with the end of the wilderness journey and the crossing of the Jordan River (Num 25:1; 33:49; Josh 2:1; 3:1). Numbers 33:48–49 locates the site on the east side of the Jordan, within the land of Moab as one of the final itinerary stops of the wilderness journey. Shittim is the location where Israelite men have sex with Moabite women and thus become yoked to the Baal of Peor in Num 25:1. Shittim and Gilgal mark the boundaries for the crossing of the Jordan from east to west in Mic 6:5. The location also takes on an eschatological meaning in Joel 4:18, when the Wadi Shittim flows with water from the sanctuary of Yahweh, indicating the paradisiacal fertility of the Promised Land east of the Jordan on the final Day of Yahweh.

It could be argued from the above information presented by the different studies that Shittim plays both physical and spiritual roles and is significant in the lives of the Israelites. Important to note is its connection to the Promised Land. There is also an aspect of it that has to do with the paradise teaching of the Bible. In other words, it relates to the theme of rest, which forms the core of Joshua's narratives.

Also critical to highlight is the Hebrew word *bo* (בוא), translated here as entered (came to). Boling (1982:144) notes the importance of this verb "which is used exactly seven times in rapid succession at the outset (vv 1-4), then not again until late in the unit, when it occurs another three times (vv 18, 22, and 23)." Dozeman (2015:229) believes that "The Hebrew *bo* (*transliteration*); "to enter" is a leitmotif in the opening verses of the story..." He (2015:229) suggests that "The phrase may connote sexual imagery, as it does in a variety of narratives, including those of Abraham and Hagar (Gen 6:2), Jacob and Bilhah (Gen. 30:3), Onan and Dinah (Gen 38:8) and Judith (Jdt.12:9) as well as biblical law (Deut 22:13)." He (2015:229) notes that the LXX translation omitted the sexual imagery but includes "that the men entered during the night... which conflicts with the speech of Rehab in v. 5."

Any critical observer will ask: what was the motive behind Joshua's decision to send the spies to Jericho? This is because the writers of Joshua claimed that God had given the land of Canaan to the Israelites. Similarly, Dozeman (2015:240) observes, "The episode begins by noting the secret nature of Joshua's mission to spy out the land and Jericho." Based on this observation, Dozeman (2015:240) then says, "The

question arises: From whom is the mission intended to be a secret—the Canaanites, the Israelites or God?”

Firstly, the answer to the question could not be the Canaanites because “Secrecy towards the Canaanites is redundant since spying is secret... (Dozeman 2015:240).” This answer eliminates the possibility of Joshua’s action being directed to the Canaanites. According to Dozeman’s statement, the second proposition is whether Joshua’s action was directed at the Israelites. To determine whether the action is directed to the Israelites, a critical interpreter should revisit what happened when the Israelites undertook a similar secret mission, as recorded in Numbers 13-14 and Deuteronomy 9:1-26. The mission’s outcome could be judged as catastrophic and, as such, a failure. Following the argument, a critical interpreter can conclude, “The secrecy may not be about the clandestine nature of the spies’ mission at all, but rather the action and motive of Joshua (Dozeman 2015:240).” In other words, it was Joshua’s personal decision to send the spies to Jericho. The implication is that Yahweh was not directly involved in the decision that led to the sending of the spies. A similar position could be seen from the work of Calvin (1949:43), who opines that:

Are we to approve of his [Joshua’s] prudence? Or are we to condemn him for excessive anxiety, especially as he seems to have trusted more than was right to his own prudence, when, without consulting God, he was so careful in taking precautions against danger?”.

From the above quote, it could be seen that “Calvin gives Joshua the benefit of the doubt and assumes that he had consulted God before undertaking the mission. But this information is absent from the text (Dozeman 2015:240).” This is a question of smuggling into the texts what is not there. Calvin, like any other interpreter who has a genuine and sincere interest in the question of ethics, struggled with the text of Joshua.

Here, one sees what could be considered the beginning of the plan’s actualisation that forms the story’s backbone. What should be borne in mind is that their mission could only be considered successful if they possess the land. Already, the writers have asked Joshua to be strong and courageous. And here, we see the narrative of spying. In fulfilment of what is required of him as a leader and as the commander of

the army, Joshua sent out spies to gather critical information about the land. Joshua specifically mentions the land of Jericho. The assumption here will be that Jericho is of critical importance to his mission. Nelson (1997:47) observes, “The phrase ‘the land, especially Jericho’ implies that Jericho is the key to Canaan, both strategically and in the plot of the chapters to follow (note 8:2; 9::3; and 10:1).” He (1997:47) notes, “Verse 1 and vv. 23b-24 form an outer narrative frame that connects this story to the larger plot.” He (1997:47) opines, “although some have interpreted Joshua’s act of sending spies immediately after hearing Yahweh’s promise as disbelieving or weak behaviour, the texts itself provides no hint of this.” The spies ended up in the house of a lady by the name of Rehab. It is critical to observe that, “In the Hebrew Bible, spying precedes conquest almost as a matter of course. Moses himself did the same thing immediately after receiving Yahweh’s promise (Deut. 1:21-23) (1997:47).”

The text clearly portrays Rehab as a harlot (a prostitute). The Hebrew word (זנה) is translated as a harlot here (BDB 2010:275). Sheldon (2007:46) contends that “In later Hebrew usage, the word *zonab* means harlot, but some authorities have suggested that it is derived from the verb *zan*, which means to feed or to provide with victuals, and thus connected with innkeeping.” Dozeman (2015:228) believes that the term describes a woman who occasionally or professionally commits fornication. It is also critical to observe that other accounts, such as the one seen in Mesopotamian literature, suggest that some women engaged in similar occupations. Nelson (1997:48) writes, “Mesopotamian parallels suggest that Rehab could be thought of as operating an inn in the city gate, where she could keep track of comings and goings, perhaps with an obligation to report suspicious strangers.” He (1997:48) contends that it is also possible that “strangers may not be conspicuous at Rehab’s house and could pick up the latest news there.” In a similar vein, Pitkänen (2010:146) says that,

Entering the house of a prostitute would seem natural, as many people would come and go through such a place, and, judging from modern parallels, most people would not want others to know that they have visited a brothel. One could thus remain as anonymous as possible in such a place.

Nelson (1997:48) notes that “In the end, her occupation will turn out to be essential to their survival.” In other words, the spies, who Joshua sent survived because of her assistance. Furthermore, he (1997:48) observes, “For Rehab, at least, being a prostitute meant having economic and social independence.”

Dozeman (2015:238) opines that the text characteristically portrays Rehab as a marginal character, “self-reliant and an agent of change.” He (2015:238) states, “Her primary identification in the story is sexual; she is a prostitute whose house is located in the wall of the city. The location of her home signifies her marginal status in the city of Jericho.” It is also important to note that in the ancient world, prostitution signifies degradation, debasement and corruption (Davies 1995:225). The same thought seen in the preceding sentence is upheld as truth in the Hebrew Bible, where socially, a prostitute is seen or regarded as “an outcast, though not an outlaw, a tolerated, but dishonoured member of society (Bird 1999: 99).”

It is significant to note that the writers nowhere gave the impression that the spies were lost and had no idea of the place. Therefore, it could be assumed that they knew their way to the house of the harlot. It paints an image of life in ANE. It may have been that prostitution was an acceptable way of life since there was no ilk of condemnation going by how the writers treated the subject. There is also another aspect of this verse which should not be neglected. And that is how women were portrayed in most of the places where they appeared in the Hebrew Bible, such as the verse under consideration. It is important to note that feminist scholars and even non-feminist scholars continually discuss this aspect of the Hebrew Bible. What is important to note here is that the Bible has been described as an ideological literature that embodies the worldviews of its producers. It is important, therefore, that when we interpret, we should not focus “exclusively on its monotheistic ideology, ignoring completely its patriarchal ideology (Fuchs 1999:127).”

Dube (2000:77) notes that in the Joshua narrative, “Rehab represents a land to be colonized.” Dube alleges that “Rehab is the only land” the spies entered and spied on in the story. Here, Dube uses the person of Rehab as a metaphor for the land. The fact that the spies began and ended their mission in the house of a prostitute

raises a kind of suspicion in the mind of a critical interpreter. The worst is that “as a representative of her land, she is characterized as a prostitute.” The image that comes out of this is that of inferiority. The story becomes more intriguing when a person views the incident from the perspective that the Israelites were not supposed to have anything to do with the natives. The warning places even greater emphasis on having anything to do with a native woman. How come that, on this occasion, they were not bothered about the consequences based on the warning associated with the covenant? When a person engages with the narrative from a postcolonial perspective, it could be seen that it has a colonial undertone and is filled with colonizing ideologies and tendencies. In the story, Rehab is a reflection of the colonizer's desire to domesticate the land of Canaan the same way they domesticated her. As can be seen from the story, any man can enter her and take possession of her. In the same way, any man can enter the land of Canaan and take possession of it. In other words, domesticate the land of Canaan. In the story, Rehab is portrayed as a person of inferior character and, as such, needs those with superior morals to help bring her out of what this writer will term darkness.

Verse 2:

2 וַיֹּאמֶר לְמֶלֶךְ יִרְיָחוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה אָנֹכִים בָּאוּ הַלַּיְלָה מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְחַפֵּר אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

English Translations

NKJV: And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.”

NRSV: The king of Jericho was told, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.

Observations and comments

Some questions confront a critical reader concerning this verse. And these questions are important because spying on another nation is not a regular activity. There is an enormous amount of risk involved in such activity. Hence, such activity is treated with utmost secrecy. Soggin (1972:38) notes that any critical interpreter who encounters the work of Joshua will observe a problem in the “relationship between

ch. 2 and the narrative of ch. 1 and 3-6.” He (1972:38) states that “ch. 2 is substantially independent of ch. 1, because an exploration of this nature is normally a preparation for an act of force carried out by a ruse.” The main argument here is from the manner in which the whole story is structured and put into consideration the other actions that were later recorded in verse 18 (if one is going to follow the interpretation of LXX) and in chapter 24:11 (where it was recorded explicitly that the inhabitants of Jericho fought against the invaders)(Soggin 1972:38).

It could be inferred that the mission, as portrayed wholistically in relation to the places mentioned, actually involved some sort of combat between the invaders and the inhabitants. This assumption is premised on the event between Rehab and the spies, where she was asked to keep the spy mission secret. Implicitly, this implies that the spies shared part of the invasion plan with her (Soggin 1972:38). Moreover, the extent that Israelites went in their preparation for the invasion would not have been necessary if the occupation was achieved through a miraculous means (Soggin 1972:38). Therefore, this puts the narrative of chapters 1 to 6 that otherwise portrays what happened as a miraculous handing over of the land to the invaders by their deity to question. What is important to note is that the mission the book of Joshua attempts to record in chapter 2 gives the impression of a military-styled invasion, seemingly different from the miraculous deed seen in chapter 6. In other words, the accounts of chapters 2 and 6 are parallel and substantially different. It has been suggested that “the version of events given in ch. 2 seems older, and more historically probable, than that attested in ch. 6, which is simply a liturgical and cultic transfiguration of the events, retold as history at a later period (Soggin 1972:38).” Most modern interpreter will disagree with this statement. Arguably, the text of Joshua 2 is a myth that is spiced up with glimpses of history. The writer believes that the Deuteronomistic historian adopted the existing story and added what he believes should be into the story. This historical venture resulted in what is seen in Joshua 2; a kind of history narrative based on idealism.

One prominent theme that permeates the narrative, as could be observed in this verse, is the question of otherness. In this verse, the Israelites are the others. The spies were foreigners as well as strangers who invaded the sacred space of the

Canaanites. Their presence in the midst of the owner of the land was quickly detected and transmitted to the king. In other words, the attention of the king was drawn to that fact. But on the reverse side, a critical interpreter ought to recognize the fact that every literary work has a didactic purpose. In this case, the target audience in its initial conception was the Israelites. If one is to argue that the didactic purpose of the text (writers who edited the work and handed us the final copy as we have it today) was to reverse the effect of the imperialism that they suffered at the hands of the empires, particularly, the Persian empire; it could be said that “there was a self-conscious methodological principle at work” designed to impress on their minds the ideology of superiority.³² The narrators are telling the people that they are writing to them because they need to know these things for the sake of the nascent nation.³³ Arguably, from how the narrative was presented, the writers wanted to make their idea of nationalism “clear and reasonable” to their immediate audience (Said 2003:125). Therefore, the writers’ didactic purpose is to display the work to their audience, “whose role it is to receive what is given to them in the form of carefully selected and arranged” instruction (Said 2003:125).

Verse 3:

וַיִּשְׁלַח מֶלֶךְ יִרְיָחוֹ אֶל־רֵחָב לֵאמֹר הֲוָצִיֵּא הָאֲנָשִׁים הַבָּאִים אֵלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ לְבֵיתְךָ כִּי לְחַפְרָאֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ

בָּאוּ

English Translations

NKJV: So the king of Jericho sent to Rehab saying, bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.

³² To gain further insight on the subject of nationalism as conceptualized by this writer see the work of Edward Said (1977:2). In his work titled, “Orientalism” Said vividly described how the Europeans conceptualized the orientals. And used the image they conjured about the Orient to define themselves. Throughout, in the story of Joshua, the writers (Israelites) showed that their main goal was to define themselves (nation). Arguably, the core idea behind nationalism is about self-definition.

³³ See Edward Said (1977) for further reading.

NRSV: Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rehab, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come to search out the whole land.

Observations and comments

Here, the phrase, “Bring out the men” (הוֹצִיאֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים) is the main thrust of the verse. Undoubtedly, the king spoke with an authoritative voice or tone. The most likely scenario which would have unfolded if Rehab brought out the men and handed them over to the King could have been arrest, interrogation and execution. Yadin (1970:155) states that “processes of interrogation are known from sources such as a description of the Battle of Qadesh between forces of Egypt and Hatti, where ‘the extortion of information from prisoners was, of course, carried out in the usual manner.’” The assumption here is that the phrase “usual manner” represents what could be described as a military procedure that is no longer permissible in handling prisoners of war. The world has in place today the Geneva Convention that bars torture as a weapon of war.

Nevertheless, the practice still illegally persists. For example, in the case of America used torture as a means to extract information from detainees of Guantanamo Bay. This applies to the treatment most nations will meet to spies if caught in the process of carrying out acts of espionage in their territory. The argument here is that the practice has not been completely abandoned.

The king confronts Rehab about the information he got that concerns the spies who came on a reconnaissance mission. According to Dozeman (2015:242), verses 2-3 were introduced abruptly by the writers who intentionally painted the image of a failed mission, as the spies were “identified immediately by the citizens of the city and reported to the king.” He (2015:242) says, “The king, in turn, demands that Rahab turn over the Israelite men, repeating the sexual motif “entered” from v. 1, while also relating the motif to the act of spying...” Stek (2002:38) writes,

The mission of the spies, it seems, is almost immediately compromised by some means of which we know nothing. Before the sun sets on the very day of their arrival, word of their presence in the city comes to the king of Jericho so that he *sends* (Josh. 3:2) men to capture the men *sent* (Josh. 2:1) by Joshua. Consequently, representatives of two

kingdoms come knocking on Rahab's door that day—men sent by King Yahweh's agent Joshua and men sent by the king of Jericho.

The question becomes who was responsible for leaking such a sensitive mission. This is because the mission is supposed to be kept secret. Arguably, leakage endangered the lives of the spies and may lead to the loss of their lives. There are no definite answers to the question that was raised. However, a high level of animosity probably exists between the inhabitants of the nations involved. As a result, any visitor (or visitors) from either side entering the territory of the other is treated with great suspicion. This assumption is related to the question of otherness, which forms the core idea behind Joshua's story.

A critical observer will notice that the reader's interest is heightened to a climax upon encountering the narrative at this juncture. This is attributable to the rhetorical strategy employed by the writers. Nelson (1997:48) explains that in verse 2, the writers introduced the narrative problem. He opines that introducing the problem creates tension that rises rapidly. He further notes that the fact that the mission's secret was betrayed gave rise to the whole development. At this juncture, the picture portrayed by the text shows that the lives of Rehab's guests were in danger. Arguably, the high animosity and hostility between the competing sides worsened the situation. He (1997:48) highlights the fact that there are similarities between the rhetorical movement in this story and those seen in the stories of the angels in Sodom or the Levites at Gibeon and that of Sisera hiding out in the tent of Jael. Nelson (1997:48) writes,

Rahab herself is confronted both by the king's men (v. 3) and by a personal crisis. They tell her that her guests are spies. They demand she hand them over, using language similar to that employed to pressure Lot and the old Ephraimite of Gibeon into betraying their guests (Gen. 19:5; Judg. 19:22).

Verse 4:

4 וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה אֶת־שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וַתְּצַפְנֵנּוּ וַתֹּאמֶר | כִּן בָּאוּ אֵלַי הָאֲנָשִׁים וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי מֵאֵן הָמָּה:

English Translations

NKJV: Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, Yes the men came to me but I did not know where they were from

NRSV: But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, “True the men came to me but I did not know where they came from

Observations and comments

Instead of yielding to the king’s demand, the woman decided to do otherwise. Firstly, she admitted that the men came to her place. However, she claimed that she was not aware of their nationality. These actions were undertaken after she had hidden the men. In other words, she made sure that the men were safe from the hand of the king. And in the course of doing so, she lied “about the presence of the spies in her house (Dozeman 2015:224).” Nelson (1997:50) observes, “Repeating the delegation’s sexual implications (“came into/to”), she uses her prostitution as protective colouring to claim innocence and, repeatedly, ignorance.” He (1997:50) states, “From a professional standpoint, she can hardly be expected to care where these customers came from or where they went.” Notwithstanding her motives that prompted her to act in that particular manner, it can still be argued that her actions were treacherous. She betrayed her nation and sided with foreigners. Important to mention here is the idea of foreigners embedded in the text. This idea represents the ever-present “us” versus “them” ideology that colours the book of Joshua and by extension, the Old Testament. Similarly, Biddle & Jackson (2017:226) note,

Situating as part of the introduction to the so-called Conquest Narrative, this story relates another episode in the ever-present “us” versus “them” of the Old Testament: Israelite versus Canaanite; as the descriptor indicates, the Israelites understand themselves to be the conquerors.

The question that confronts a critical interpreter here is the reason behind Rehab’s electing to deceive the king, which culminated in treachery against her nation. However, one cannot say why she chose to do what she did. But what is obvious, going by the story is that she crossed the boundary by choosing to side with the enemy rather than her own people. Her choice had led some commentators to describe her as a change agent. Dozeman (2015:239) comments:

Rahab also functions as an agent of change for the Israelite spies, the citizens of Jericho, and her family. As a prostitute, she crosses boundaries through sex. In fact, in her role as a prostitute Rahab is the only point of contact between the citizens of Jericho and the Israelites in the story. She also symbolizes change within her own character,

when she undergoes a transformation from urban to rural life in devising her family's rescue from Jericho.

What is perplexing about the story is that the king's approach to the unfolding event could be judged as very soft. Considering that the matter in question was very serious, the nation faced a grave situation. His attitude appears to be one carried out with great understanding and trust. Two things come to mind in this instance. The first is whether the whole Rehab story was designed as a pun. Or if this treatment is connected in any way to the possibility of Rehab being a priestess of a Canaanite cult, as some commentators have tried to argue previously. Soggin (1972:39) observes that some interpreters have often times related Rehab's profession to Canaanite fertility cults where she plays the role of a priestess and a sacred prostitute. Those who subscribe to this view try to justify their position by arguing that "the sanctuary where she exercised her ministry would have been that of Astarte, or that of the moon (cf. the name of the town)." However, Contrariwise, Noth in Soggin (1972:39) highlights the fact that:

there is no trace in the whole story of any kind of priesthood exercised by Rehab or her family, while the term *zonah*, in contrast to the term *qedesa*, which is semantically similar but is used exclusively to refer to sacred prostitution in the fertility cults, does not make it possible to say whether Rehab's profession was sacred or secular.

In summary, one can argue that by hiding under the guise of her profession, she successfully shielded the men who came to her from the wrath of the king and the nation.

Verse 5:

וַיְהִי הַשַּׁעַר לְסָגוֹר בַּחֹשֶׁךְ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים יֵצְאוּ לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אַנְהָה הָלְכוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים רָדְפוּ מֵהָר אַחֲרֵיהֶם כִּי תִשְׁיָגוּם

English Translations

NKJV: And it happened that as the gate was being shut, when it was dark that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly for you may overtake them.

NRSV: And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them.

Observations and comments

Here, the writers began with the notice of the city gate closing. Nelson (1997:49) made an important remark when he said, “So far, so good, but the gate's closing (vv. 5, 7) sounds an ominous note for the alert reader.” One can argue that the rhetorical strategy here connotes a heightened tension in the story. This is a continuation of the previous event seen in the preceding verse. To protect the strangers, she lies and deceives the king. It is important to note that “The spies remain passive as Rahab orchestrates their rescue (Dozeman 2015:242).” Pitkänen (2010:146) states that “From a narrative perspective, the tension and excitement of the prospect of capture already starts to be released. Overall, at this stage, the men are at the mercy of Rahab.” Arguably, the clause “אָנָה הֵלְכוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים רָדְפוּ מֵהָר אַחֲרֵיהֶם כִּי תִשְׁיֹגוּם” “Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly for you may overtake them” forms a critical part of the verse. This is the culmination of the deception orchestrated by Rehab. The adverb “מֵהָר” translated here as “quickly” is used in the sentence to demonstrate the urgency of the matter at hand (BDB 2010:555). Nelson (1997:49) observes, “She urges the king's men to chase her false lead. In other words, she persuaded them to do so. A critical observer will notice the hint of irony in her tone or rather, in the narration. Hence, Nelson (1997:49) notes that “The narrator indulges in irony here.” And he (1997:49) writes, “The supposition of the King's men is stated as though it were fact: “the men pursued them.””

It is important to mention that the writers referred to the closing of the city gate when it was dark. The gate is a very critical component of the story of the fall of Jericho. The act of closing the gate gives the sense that the city dwellers were security conscious and took measures to avert what could be referred to as imminent danger. They were aware of the possibility of an invasion. What is important to note from the findings of archaeology about the Wall of Jericho or even the conquest account, in general, is that there is no clear archaeological evidence to support the conquest claim articulated by those who put together the Book of Joshua. The conquest narrative is believed by most modern critical scholars to have been part of the activities that resulted from Josiah's reform. The argument is that the book was compiled during the time of Josiah, but this kind of conquest did not occur then.

Josiah and his supporters promote a policy of “ethnic” cleansing based on the idea that “Canaanites”—that is, opponents in both Judah and the north headed by landowners and urban elite with commercial affiliations and their families, a large group under the Assyrian and Egyptian empires in Palestine—deserved to be murdered and all their property destroyed by the monarchy. As a “nationality,” the category “Canaanite,” like that of “Israelite,” was a social construction, not an unchangeable historical reality. In the world of the Bible, there were no such nations as we understand the term.”! Like virtually all distinctions of race, ethnic identity, and nationality, as well as the very definitions of such concepts, categories like “Canaan” and “Israel” were not natural but cultural (Coote 1998:575)

Finkelstein (2007:54) says that “the overall outline of the conquest narrative reflects late monarchical realities.” He (2007:54) writes “Central to Deuteronomistic thinking was the idea that all Israelite territories and people should be ruled by a Davidic king and that all Israelite cults should be centralized in the Temple in Jerusalem.” He (2007:54) opines:

This ideology probably emerged after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, but could not have been fulfilled as long as Assyria dominated the region. When the Assyrians pulled out around 630 b.c.e., it seemed possible to accomplish. Thus, at the time when possession of the Land was of great concern, the book of Joshua offered an unforgettable epic with a clear lesson—creating a vivid, unified narrative and demonstrating that when the people of Israel did follow the covenant with their God, no victory could be denied to them. That point was narrated against a highly familiar seventh century background and played out in places of the greatest concern to the Deuteronomistic ideology.

Römer (2007:133-137) highlights the fact that the Deuteronomistic historians were active during the neo-Babylonian period after the exit of the Assyrians. During this period, the land became more and more of an ideological concern. The primary concern was to establish the fact that the Israelites were the legitimate owners of the land since Yahweh handed it over to them. He believes that “the Rehab story in Josh 2. is a later non-Deuteronomistic addition.”

Verse 6:

וְהִיא הֵעֲלֵתָם הַגָּגָה וְתַטְמְנֵם בְּפִשְׁתֵּי הָעֵץ הָעֲרֻכּוֹת לָהּ עַל-הַגָּג

English Translations

NKJV: But she has brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalk of flaks, which she has laid in order on the roof

NRSV: She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof

Observations and comments

Here, the writers describe how she hid the men in the roof area. The important thing to note is that she made sure that the spies were safe. It could be argued that even from the beginning, she had an idea why the men were there. Most probably, the men confided in her. What is important to note at this stage that the narrative has reached some sort of climax. And the essence of the story was beginning to unfold. Nelson (1997:49) aptly observes that “The disjunctive syntax of vv. 6-8 has a retarding effect on the action.” He (1997:49) suggests that “It is best to take v. 6 as retrospective and thus contemporary to v. 4. The delay in revealing just how she has hidden the spies creates narrative tension during her long reply.”

Important to note here is the manner that which the writers structured the interaction between the king, the king’s men and the prostitute (vv. 4-6). The interchange between the parties was designed to create some sort of suspense as well as tension in the mind of the interpreter. Verse 4 introduced the idea of hiding the spies without including any detail of how it was done. Dozeman (2015:243) notes that “The initial concealment in v. 4a provides the background for interpreting Rahab’s response to the king of Jericho as a lie.” However, in the context of the unit, the story is found in verses 4-6, but the writers left an incomplete account. Thus, the reader is left hanging without full knowledge and to anticipate the eventual fate of the spies, that is, whether they were indeed safe or will be found and punished. Verse 5 serves as an embellishment that raises the reader’s curiosity to a fervent height. Verse 6 solves the problem. It explained what happened to the spies, thereby calming the tension created in verse 4. Their fate was established. Dozeman (2015:243) states, “The second account of the concealment in v. 6 adds more detail concerning the manner by which Rahab hid the spies under stalks of flax on the roof.” Nelson (1997:49) writes, “With this delayed exposition, the narrator has saved the negative aspects of the spies’ situation until v. 6, revealing to the anxious reader the uncomfortable facts of just where and how she has hidden them.” Nelson (1997:49)

highlights the fact that the spies were “passive and helpless, submerged under a mound of flax.” He notes the fact that “Their assignment had been to “dig up” (vv. 2, 3 *hpr*); instead they are “buried” (*tmn*).” He (1997:49) believes that

Probably there is some humour intended in their situation. Two men from a military expedition find themselves deeply enmeshed in the domestic textile domain of womanhood. Nor is her roof a particularly good hiding place, if one considers what happened to Bathsheba and David's wives (2 Sam. 11:2;16:22). Rahab has hidden the spies in a place of dubious safety and undignified discomfort.

The Hebrew word ערך, translated “arrange or set in order” is critical to understanding the text of verse 6. Williams in Dozeman (2015:229) observes that “The passive participle *hā’ārūkôt*, “הַעֲרוֹכוֹת” with the preposition *lāh*, “עַל” indicates agency (BDB 2010: 789,748).” The woman here became the agency of providence for both the spies and the king. She had the power to decide who between the two succeeded. In the end, she made the choice of giving the spies a chance to succeed. But not before impressing upon them the fact that she was in control. Whether her actions were conscious or unconscious is difficult to determine. Conscious, as used here, designates human action (secular related), whereas unconscious signifies the involvement of the deity who directed her action (according to commentators who spiritualize the text).

Verse 7:

וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רָדְפוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם דֶּרֶךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן עַל הַמַּעְבְּרוֹת וְהַשַּׁעַר סָגְרוּ אַחֲרָי כַּאֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ הָרֹדְפִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם

English Translation

NKJV: Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out they shut the gate.

NRSV: So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

Observations and comments

The writers opened the verse with the phrase “...the men pursued them...” “דֶּרֶךְ” “וְהָאֲנָשִׁים רָדְפוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם”. The Hebrew word איש translated man is a common noun. Boling (1982:146) argues that the men being referred to here were probably not

commoners. This is because the men mentioned represent the king. Elsewhere, where a similar word appeared, such as in the Shechem Valley Covenant in chapter 24:11 and Judges 9:2, 3, 4, has a connotation of elitism. Arguably, the word is linked to oligarchy rule. There are also elements of militarism, economic power, and social privilege associated with the word.

The writers describe the events that unfolded in the attempt by the inhabitants of Jericho to stop the intruders from completing their mission. Butler (1983:31) observes that:

The king's intelligence system is so thorough it knows when strange men enter a prostitute's house, but so ignorant that it follows the advice of the prostitute without even searching the house or watching the window to discover the spies, who dangle tantalizingly within reach for such a long time (vv. 15-21).

Once more, the role of the gate in the overall security arrangement of the place is highlighted. Nelson (1997:49) observes that the shutting of the gate made the spies appear more desperate. He (1997:49) notes that with the gate shut by the king's men, the spies are cut off from going back to Joshua. He (1997:49) highlights the fact that given the situation, "Rahab has both saved them and trapped them, to her ultimate advantage. Their supposed "deliverance" by Rahab has left them vulnerable and helpless."

Verse 8:

וְהָמָּה טָרָם יִשְׁכַּטְבוּן וְהִיא עֲלֵתָה עֲלֵיהֶם עַל־הַגֹּג

English Translations

NKJV: Now before they lay down she came up to them on the roof,

NRSV: Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof

Observations and comments

The statement signifies that the spies remained hidden inside the flax kept in the roof area even after the search party left to look for them. However, it is not clear from the statement when they climbed onto the roof area. That is if it was before the king and his men came looking for them or after they were there. It is important to note that

the decision to hide them in the roof area was taken as a precaution to safeguard their lives. The prostitute must have considered the place as the safest place in her place to hide the men. Rehab's place most likely attracted lots of visitors considering the nature of her profession. She undertook the visitation during the night because she felt that it was safe to do so at that time.

Similarly, Butler (1983:31) observes, "When the lady of the house finally has time to come to the men in their beds, her bedtime story for them is just what is expected in such an establishment: a confession of religious faith, an act of religious conversion." Obviously, Butler is being sarcastic on this occasion. Most likely, the narrators prefer not to detail what could have transpired. They focused on what could be considered essential to them.

Arguably, the writers' intention throughout the story was to create the impression that the Israelite deity was superior to that of the Canaanites. It also implies that the writers believed that the people of Israel were superior to the Canaanites. This is a case of us versus them that undergirds the story of Joshua. What should be borne in mind here is that, historically, invaders always assume they are better than those they set out to conquer. Historical evidence shows that invaders use cultural and religious superiority to invade others. But a critical look at the reason will reveal the economic side of the story. The same applies to the story of Joshua.

Important to observe is that throughout the exchange, the writers elevated the voice of the woman. Nelson (1997:49) also reminds us that at this stage, the spies were "still passive" in the story and that "they are about to lie down again... but Rehab remains in charge of the situation." It is important to note the "discrepancy between v. 11, where the scouts lie down or go to sleep, and v. 8, which reports they had not done so yet." However, in totality, the narrative presents her as a person who lived in the margin (1997:49). This is even though she is the hero in the story. One can argue that this image reflects how biblical writers characterize women in their presentations. This brings us to the Hebrew phrase translated here as "lay down" in the story of Rehab, which was used repeatedly. There is this belief in some quarters or among some commentators that the phrase actually alludes to sex. Nelson

(1997:43) highlights the fact that: “Rahab's story is saturated by an atmosphere of sexuality.” He (1997:43) notes that “This undercurrent of ambiguous sexual innuendo begins with the spies' act of "lying down." He posits the question, “Is this intercourse (Gen. 19:33, 35) or perhaps just preparing for sleep (2 Kings 4: 11)? He (1997:43) says, “Both the king and Rahab also use the similarly ambiguous language of "going in to" her (vv. 3, 4; Gen. 6:4, Judg. 16:1 and often). Perhaps Rahab's name itself ("wide") may harshly hint at her profession.” The Hebrew word Rehab can also be translated as “broad” or “spread out.” It is also important to note the “mythological background, in which Rahab represents the chaos dragon in Job 26:12 or Ps 9:11 (Knauf in Dozeman 2015:229).” Though the text does not explicitly speak about sex, there are enough indications in the story to suggest that such an act occurred.

Butler (1983:31) makes important remarks concerning the incidents involving the prostitute. He (1983:31) writes,

The present narrative is dominated by ironic humor. The setting in the house of prostitution lends itself to such a humor. Repeatedly, the spies do just what one expects in such a house they bed down. But each time the lady of the house has other business.

The fact that the mighty men sent by Joshua are now at the mercy of a mere prostitute is ironic. As observed previously in this paper, the success of their mission rests in the hands of the woman. Likewise, the success of the king of Jericho is in her hands. The fact that the name of the king of Jericho remains anonymous is also worthy of note. One can argue that the writers deliberately kept the king's identity away from the story to give the impression that he was an insignificant king who ruled over an inferior kingdom.

Verse 9:

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאֲנָשִׁים יְדַעְתִּי כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה לָכֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִי־נָפְלָה אִימַתְכֶם עָלֵינוּ וְכִי נִמְגְּו כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ
מִפְּנֵיכֶם

English Translations

NKJV: and said to the men I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.

NRSV: And said to the men, “I know that the Lord has given you the land and that dread of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you.

Observations and comments

As observed in the preceding verse, the writers intentionally highlighted the voice of the woman to legitimize their purpose. What follows here is the use of her voice to affirm the idea of the land as a gift from the Lord. Nelson (1997:49-50) notes:

In the preamble to her proposal (vv. 9-11), Rahab starts with prudent fear and moves to a positive faith in Yahweh. The Rahab of this speech is not distant from the cunning woman of the earlier folktale, for her eyes are open to the evidence of coming reality. More perceptive than Jericho's king, she discerns the deeper truth behind current events.

This is a case of an insider working with outsiders. What is important to note here is the fact that colonizers and imperialists do not work alone. They need an insider, who is usually referred to as a native informant, to assist them in achieving their goal. Here in the story, the insider is Rehab, and the outsiders are the men from Joshua, the new leader of Israel sent to spy on the land. Dube (2000:78) observes that:

Through her actions, Rahab is portrayed as one who totally believes in the superiority of the colonizer; one who totally wants the rule of the colonizer over her own people and land; and one who does not believe in the strength of her own people. With her words, she must proclaim their superiority and their beliefs;

Butler (1983:31) writes that looking at the appearance of verses 9 and 10, the rhetoric style, it is “clear that the Deuteronomist has introduced his own theological conception into the mouth of Rehab....” He (1983:31) observes, “The tradition of the fear of the nations, the drying up of the waters..., the two kings of the Amorites, and the divine title (12b) all bears Deuteronomic stamp.” He (1983:31) believes that here we have a case of “pre-Deuteronomic literature given a Deuteronomic stamp.”

Similarly, Nelson (1997:50) observes that the language employed by Rehab in her speech here resembles “the creedal language of Deuteronomy.” He (1997:50) writes,

Yet her words, for all their deuteronomistic flavor, remain appropriate to the ancestor of a group who would remain outside Israel's camp (6:23). Yahweh remains "your God." She is not the Gentile convert that later tradition would make of her, but rather one of those

foreigners in the Hebrew Bible whose acknowledgment that Yahweh is God underscores the self-evident power and glory of Yahweh (Balaam, Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius).

The important thing to note from the above quote is the tradition of biblical writers to borrow from the events of the past to support their stories. Arguably, the writers of Joshua did the same. Soggin's (1972:41) commentary on verses 8-14 captures the idea of borrowing from stories from antiquity. He (1972:41) writes, "This first speech is full of elements borrowed from an ancient confession of faith which an Israelite might put into the mouth of a stranger whom he was trying to describe as sympathetic to his compatriots." He (1972:41) asserts, "It is composed of Deuteronomic fragments and comments by the ancient 'compiler' (Noth), the purpose of which is to explain why the woman accepted the point of view of the invader; as we have seen, the original explanation had disappeared."³⁴ Commentators such as Römer (2007:133-137) believe that the book of Joshua as we have it today was compiled during the Babylonian period. The writers borrowed from events and stories from the past, some of which came from oral tradition. Hence, the work is attributed to the hand of the Deuteronomists as proposed by Noth.

Verse 10:

כִּי שָׁמַעְנוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר-הוֹבִישׁ יְהוָה אֶת-מִי יַם-סוּף מִפְּנֵיכֶם בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם וְאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם לְשֵׁנֵי מֶלֶכִי
הָאֳמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן לְסִיחֹן וְלֹעֹג אֲשֶׁר הִתְרַמְּתֶם אוֹתָם

English Translations

NKJV: For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og whom you utterly destroyed.

NRSV: For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

³⁴ The story of Rehab is seen by some scholars such as Coogan (2009:162-164) as an etiology introduced to explain why the family of Rehab came to be part of Israel.

Observations and comments

Here, the writers continued with the use of the voice of an insider to promote the deeds of the deity of the outsiders. From the nature of the speech, it could be argued that at that stage, the impressive imperial and colonial ideologies that “include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination is at play here (Said 1993:9).” One can even argue that what is seen here is a reversed propaganda text. There is also a hint of monotheism in her speech. This is highlighted by the recognition that Rehab accorded the God of Israel. Her speech could be judged as deferential to the sovereign authority of the Israel deity. Similarly, Butler (1983:33) observes that “This monotheistic confession occurs also in Deut. 4:39, with quite similar language in 1 Kings 8:23.” He (1983:33) attributes the speech to the work of the Deuteronomist and observes that the two passages mentioned bear the characteristic of the Deuteronomist as well. He (1983:33) believes that the goal of the Deuteronomistic editor here, like in the other passages that it reworked, was “to emphasise the unique authority of Yahweh when compared to the other gods.”

Butler (1983:33) notes, “Israel’s neighbours had high gods with functions in the heavens and other gods whose chief functions were on earth.” This is in contrast to the belief of the Israelites that recognizes the notion of “one God, who exercised authority over all spheres of existence (1983:33).” This claim of monotheism that the Deuteronomist highly promoted was vital to the survival of the Israelites during the exilic period. Even during their sojourn as exiled in Egypt, the Israelites rallied on this belief. They held onto the belief that “Yahweh had proved himself more powerful than any other claimants to deity (1983:33).” To this regard, Butler (1983:33) argues that the fact Israel’s enemies recognised this relationship that they had with Yahweh and that the people of Israel did not, makes the situation ironical.

On this occasion, the speech is probably designed to instil fear in others. The specific mention of the destruction of the two kings most likely was to create fear in the mind of the king of Jordan, who the text portrays as their next opponent. K. Lawson Younger jr. (1999:200) observes:

The function of the submission of the *Enemy' (usually denoted M) is a common feature of the ancient Near Eastern historical texts. Often this submission follows on the heels of a recognition of the 'splendor', 'valor', or Tieroic deeds* of the victorious monarch and his army (or, as in some cases, the deity).

The act of drying up the sea for them could also be in line with the general practice in the then ANE. What is being referred to here is the belief that deities of nations were involved in the military affairs of the people. The strength of the deity of a nation is believed to be the determinant factor of whether the people lose or win a war.

The opening statement of the verse, “for we have heard”, leaves a critical interpreter with the question of where they got the information. That is, the source of the news of both the crossing of the Red Sea and the utter defeat of the two kings, as the writers claim. The first answer that comes to mind is that the region's inhabitants stayed virtually in the same location and that there were different levels of interactions between them. Historical study reveals that these interactions occurred in areas of culture, literary production, religion, etc. Dozeman (2015:243) identifies “Rehab’s address to the spies (vv.9-11)” as “her second speech in the narrative...” He (2015:243) notes that “it begins with a statement of knowledge, “I know,” providing contrast to her previous speech to the king of Jericho, where she twice falsely denied knowledge: “I do not know” (vv. 4b–5).”

Three important aspects of Israel’s history are covered in Rehab’s statement in verse 10. First is the exodus; second, the conquest narrative in relation to the role of the deity; third, the ban חרם, that is, the utter destruction of some of their enemies. Verse 10 is framed by verses 9 and 11. Verse 9 speaks about the gift of land, and verse 11 speaks about the superiority of Yahweh, the lord of the whole universe. Verse 11, in other words, is a declaration of Yahweh's sovereign power over all creation, including the subjects of the other nations. Verse 10, in the middle of verses 9 and 11, gives substances to land and the deity narratives. Dozeman (2015:243) writes

The present form of the speech is structured into two statements, one in vv. 9–10 and the other in v. 11, which work together to form a confession of faith about the power of Yahweh. Verses 9–10 include a confession (v. 9), followed by the experiences that support it (v. 10): Rahab knows (yāda’) that Yahweh is giving the land to Israel (v. 9), based (kī) on the reports of Yahweh drying up the Red Sea (v. 10a) and the success of the ban in the Israelite war against Sihon and Og (v. 10b). Verse 11 repeats the two parts of vv. 9–10, but in reverse order. In this speech Rahab first describes what she has

experienced, namely, the fear of the Canaanites (v. 11a), which provides the basis for her confession about the power of Yahweh in the following *kî* clause (v. 11b): “Yahweh . . . is God in heaven above and on earth below.” The result of this inverted design is that the speech of Rahab in vv. 9–11 is framed by a single confession, which includes a statement of faith (v. 9a) with reason for belief (v. 11b): “And she said to the men, ‘I know that Yahweh has given you the land [v. 9a] . . . because Yahweh your God, he is God in heaven above and on the earth below’ [v. 11b].” The middle portion of the speech in vv. 9b–11a fills out the confession by recounting the central events of salvation as further support for Rahab’s confession in vv. 9a and 11b.

Arguably, verses 9-11 capture the essence of the story of Rehab. They represent the core idea behind the story of Joshua. Here, it is essential to emphasise that the core idea behind Joshua’s narrative is land ownership. The land is the centre of politics in Joshua’s narratives and the Ancient Near East activities and affairs. One can further argue that politics in the then Ancient Near East is not separate from economics and religion. They all go hand in hand. Jericho (Tell el-Sultan) is one of the places in contention in Joshua’s narrative. The place incorporates the broad plain of the Jordan Valley and is a very fertile plain artificially irrigated by the spring of Ain es-Sultan (Holland 1992: 4298). The “topographical features” make “Jericho a very fertile and ideal place for settlement (Holland 1992: 4298).” It is important to observe that upon the spies’ return to Joshua in verse 24, the report they brought back to him was about the land and not the city (Dozeman 2015:228). This observation highlights the importance which they placed on the land. Historically, it is referred to as the land of milk and honey.

As observed, the Rehab statement here includes the exodus events. One of the main miracles during the exodus was Yahweh’s miraculous drying up of the Red Sea. In her confession, Rehab recounted the event as part of the reasons that made the people believe in the superiority of Yahweh, the God of Israel and his ability to deliver victory to them. Similarly, Dozeman (2015:245) writes, “Two related themes characterize the exodus in the speech of Rahab: the divine leading out of Egypt and the drying up of the Red Sea.” What is critical to note is that the statement “leading out of Egypt” is “a standard confessional formula” that arguably is part of the “Exodus motif” and that the statement is always infused with “stereotyped language (Wijngaards in Dozeman 2015:245).” The clause characterises the statement, “Yahweh brought us out of Egypt.” Another important feature of the statement is its

use of “the causative form of the verb “to go out” ..., with Yahweh as the subject and Israel as the object (Dozeman 2015:245).” When the verb is used in this form, it expresses “release from prison giving the motif overtones of liberation from social oppression (Preuss in Dozeman 2015: 245).” On the other hand, when the verb is used in a noncausative form, it becomes “a technical term for the going out of a slave (Preuss in Dozeman 2015:245).”

Dozeman (2015:245) notes that the theme of leading out, which Rehab’s speech contains, is directly linked to the character of Yahweh as seen in Exodus 20:1 and in addition, to the Red Sea miracle in the book of Exodus 14:16, 22, 29; 15:19. He (2015:245) states that this allusion establishes the fact that the book of Joshua is not only dependent on Deuteronomy but on the whole Pentateuch. He (2015:245-246) observes, “The motif of Yahweh drying up the Red Sea, however, is absent from the book of Deuteronomy.” He (2015:246) highlights the fact that “It is confined to Exodus in the Pentateuch, and it will return in the book of Joshua in the account of the crossing of the Jordan River (Josh 3-4).”

Rehab also introduces the theme of the Ban in her speech here. Similarly, Nelson (1997:46) opines that Rehab “...also first introduces the theme of *hērem* (devotion to destruction, v. 10) that helps to hold together chapters 6, 7, 10, and 11, and illustrates Israel's obedience to Deuteronomy.” The Hebrew root word חרם is translated here as “utterly destroy (BDB 2010:355).” She uses the word as a reference to what happened to the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and their subjects. In general terms, Rehab refers to the religious practice of totally destroying everything with breath and even the belongings of the people who are affected by the ban. Arguably, this could be interpreted as the practitioners importing the religious belief system into secular affairs. Dozeman (2015:246) opines that in the book of Joshua, the idea of “ban” is interpreted as an act of holy war. He (2015:246) writes, “The ban is an absolute law in the Hebrew Bible... Thus, when Rahab, the Canaanite, seeks asylum from the absolute demands of the ban, she challenges a central theme in the book of Joshua.” Butler (1983:33) comments, “Israel’s hope lay on the divinely caused חרם “ban” (10b).” The assumption here is that the hope referred to here is their ability to defeat their enemies, in this instance, the

Canaanites. This may even be connected to their liberation from the hands of the Assyrians, who were actually their imperial masters during the time. It is believed that the book of Joshua was compiled as we have it today. Arguably, the term “ban” “is central to the Deuteronomistic theory of holy war (Lohfink in Butler 1983:33).”

Butler (1983:33) observes:

Such war was permitted only for the cities in the Promised Land (Deut. 20:15-28) and explained for the Deuteronomists how Yahweh had fulfilled his promises to the patriarchs and why many peoples of the lists of nations no longer existed.

As previously noted, the text of Joshua 2 descriptively is ironic. The fact that “a foreign harlot knows the Israelites' law and reacts accordingly” lays credence to this fact. The knowledge that the foreign harlot possesses about the ways of the people of Israel enabled her to cleverly exempt herself from the consequences of “the Israelite law (1983:33).” Her action, especially the part that has to do with “her exceptional status” plays back into how later generations understood Israelites identity. Butler (1983:33) highlights the fact that those Israelites who lived in later years obviously observed that their population comprised a “mixed multitude” of people (Exod. 12:38). He (1983:33) states that “The introduction to the conquest narrative explains this part of Israel’s population.” This included members from the Canaanite population who assisted them in conquering the land. Perhaps it is important to note that the actions of such people did not make them socially equal to those considered to be part of the original tribes of Israel. Butler (1983:34) observes, “Even such Canaanites could not appeal to their great social status. They were descended from a prostitute.” The explanation given here about the story of Rehab used as an avenue to explain the presence of other people amongst the people of Israel is believed by some scholars to be aetiological. Nelson (1997:44), in his consideration of a probable “system of meanings” derivable from the story, suggests:

Thus within the first system of meaning, working as an independent tale, the story is an etiology for the continued presence of the “house of Rahab” as a foreign group living in Israel's territory. The pivotal role of Rahab's astute, decisive scheme and the large amount of time spent describing negotiations are consequences of this etiological focus. Her scheme explains this group's survival, and the negotiations provide the foundation for their legal status as protected foreigners.

Verse 11:

11 וַנִּשְׁמַע וַיִּמָּס לְבַבֵּנוּ וְלֹא-קָמָה עוֹד רוּחַ בְּאִישׁ מִפְּנֵיכֶם כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמֶּעַל
וְעַל-הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת:

English Translations

NKJV: And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

NRSV: As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below.

Observations and comments

This is a continuation of the speech rendered by the writers using the voice of an insider. The rhetorical strategy used here is similar to the one used in the verse that precedes it and was probably employed by the writers as a means to authenticate their story. The voice of an insider is employed to promote the mighty deeds of the deity of the invading force. The question of their heart-melting is arguably linked to what they heard that happened to others. That is the cultural bomb that Israel unleashed on the tribes across the Jordan. According to Wa Thiongo (1987:3), “The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.” The image that the writers painted here is one of a deity superior to the others. One can argue that this is a confession that includes a report. Auld (1999:125) notes the similarity between the encounter of Solomon and the foreign queen of Sheba, who was “so amazed at Solomon in my Book of Two Houses, copied in both Kings and Chronicles that ‘there was no spirit in her’ that the foreign Rahab could apply the same words to her people's reaction to Israel's reputation.”

Here, Rehab says “as soon as we heard these things.” This can only mean that there is a flow of information between the nations. Again, this should not be a surprise

considering the fact that they all lived in the same region. And as observed previously, the different groups of people interacted with each other on different levels. The Hebrew root word סמ translated as “melt,” is critical to the meaning of this verse (BDB 2010: 587). Woudstra (1981:72) links the report given by Rehab, where she alleged that the hearts of the people of Jericho melted or dissolved to Israel’s defeat of Sihon and Og, who were referred to as the kings of Amorites. He (1981:72) calls it a recent event. He (1981:72) notes, “Rehab speaks of the dismay which has befallen her people in Canaan.” Nelson (1997:50) writes, “Her emphasis on fear echoes the divine warrior tradition (cf. v. 9 with Exod. 15:15b-16a)...” What is important to note here is the “series of holy war motifs in the speech of Rahab, including the dread (*’êṁâ*) and the despair (*môg*) of the nations (v. 9), and the melting (the verb *māsas*) of their hearts (v. 11) (2015:246).” Dozeman (2015:246) opines that “When read together, these motifs highlight an inner-biblical connection to the war poem of Moses at the Red Sea, when he describes the reaction of the nations to divine warfare in Exod 15:15b, 16a with similar language...” He (2015:246) notes that “The terror of the nations is an important motif in the tradition of Yahweh as a divine warrior, illustrated most clearly by Yahweh’s speech to Moses in Exod 23:27...”

Furthermore, Rehab confessed to the spies that the people of Jericho had lost courage. The Hebrew root word נח here is translated as courage (BDB 2010:925). It is critical to note how the words “melt” and “courage” were applied and their effects, resulting in the statement sounding more like propaganda. The use of propaganda in propagating war in the Ancient Near East was not uncommon. If one goes back to the initial engagement between Rehab and the king of Jericho, one can argue that the king’s reaction did not appear like a person whose heart was melted or who lost courage. He wasted no time in going after the spies. One can even argue that he sprang into action and behaved like a person who was not afraid. His immediate reaction and response exude confidence. The rhetorical strategy applied here by the writers throughout their presentation of the situation or in their bid to say what transpired impresses upon a critical mind that their account of the events was exaggerated.

On this occasion, the writers most likely aimed to present Yahweh as the sovereign God. This follows the Ancient Near East war report tradition, usually embellished with propaganda. Such reports mostly lay claim to the superiority of the deity in question over others. In other words, it is a form of power tussle between deities but promoted by human beings. This argument is supported by the statement that comes after when Rehab praises Yahweh. Firstly, she says their dismay was a result of the activities of the people of Israel. Secondly, she attributed what the Israelites have achieved to the help they got from their God, describing him as “God in heaven above and on earth beneath” “אֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמְּעַל מִתְּהַת”. This is a very critical aspect of Rehab’s confession. In her statement, she declares the universality of the God of the Israelites, and the statement bears witness to monotheism. It would be more appropriate to say henotheism because they do not deny the existence of other gods.

Rehab’s declaration of Yahweh as a universal God opens the door for inclusivity. According to Dozeman (2015:244):

The emphasis on inclusivity in the confession of Yahweh as the “God in heaven” (*e’lōhīm baššāmayim*) broadens the context for the interpretation of Josh 2:11b to include a range of postexilic texts that also describe Yahweh as the “God of heaven” to underscore the inclusivity of Yahwism.

He (2015:244) explains that the:

Title appears nine times in the Aramaic correspondence from Elephantine (“God of heaven,” *e’lāh še’mayyā’*; CAP 30:2, 28; 31:[2], 27; 32:4; 38:[2], 3, 5; 40:1) and an additional twenty-one times in postexilic biblical texts in Hebrew and in Aramaic: The Hebrew *e’lōhē haššāmayim* occurs eight times (Gen 24:3, 7; Jonah 1:9; Ezra 1:2; Neh 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20), *el haššāmayim* once (Ps 136:26), and the Aramaic *e’lāh še’mayyā’* an additional twelve times (Ezra 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23 [twice]; Dan 2:18, 19, 37, 44). Joshua 2:11 differs from these texts in using the preposition “in” (be~), “God in heaven,” rather than the definite article in Hebrew or the definite suffix in Aramaic: “God of heaven.” Yet the inclusive content of Josh 2:11a overlaps with these texts. The phrase “God in heaven” appears in the Aramaic of Dan 2:28 (*e’lāh bišmayyā’*). This strengthens the argument that the confession of Rahab dates from the Persian period.

What is important to observe from the above quotes is “the influence Persian religion and politics” had “on postexilic Jews, where the god Ahura Mazda functioned as the deity or high god (Andrews in Dozeman 2015:244).” Arguably, the fact that postexilic Jewish literature uses the designation “God of heavens” attests to the fact that the

Jewish communities accepted aspects of the teaching of the Persian religions by the Jewish communities (Andrews in Dozeman 2015:244). Specifically, the acceptance connects that aspect of Persian religion, which declares that Ahura Mazda operates as a universal God to the religion of Israel. There is also the suggestion that despite the fact the Persian authority took a liberal approach to religious affairs by tolerating the religion of others, the possibility exists that they “favored those cults which reflected the celestial emphasis of Ahura Mazda (Andrews in Dozeman 2015:244).” It is also important to note that the title appeared mainly in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel narratives that were arguably written during the postexilic period (Andrew in Dozeman 2015:244-245). Perhaps it would be more suitable to say that these works appeared as a result of the Jewish interaction with the Persian authority. It was also used in the book of Jonah, and the usage was in connection to Jonah’s address to foreign sailors (Jonah 1:9). The important thing to observe about how it was used in these places is the fact that foreign elements were involved in the interactions. One exception to this fact is its appearance in Genesis 24:3, 7. The closest parallel to the way it was applied in Joshua 2:11 is in its use

to idealize Persian kings, as foreign emperors who recognize Yahweh, in the edict of Cyrus (2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:2) or in the correspondence of Darius (Ezra 6:9,10) and Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12, 21, 23). The similarity, however, allows for an important contrast that provides insight into the antimonarchic outlook of the author of Joshua: The idealized foreigner who recognizes Yahweh is not a monarch, but the prostitute Rahab, whose antimonarchic point of view is evident by her lies to the king of Jericho (Dozeman 2015:245).

The question of monotheism concerning Rehab is critical to interpreting this verse and the entire Joshua narrative. The theme of monotheism directly impacts the dating of the book of Joshua. It also has a direct bearing on the question of authorship of the book. There are suggestions by some scholars, such as Dozeman (2015:244), that the theme of monotheism gained prominence amongst the Jewish people during the Persian period. Dozeman (2015:244) believes that,

Rahab’s confession that Yahweh is “God in heaven above and on the earth below” is an inner-biblical quotation of Deut 4:39, where the same confession appears in a speech of Moses to the Israelites (see also the speech of Solomon in 1 Kgs 8:23).

The use of such expression is a late tradition in Deuteronomy that involves “the affirmation of the unique power of Yahweh, ” similar to what is seen in the writings of second Isaiah 43-45 (Mayes in Dozeman 2015:244). Critical to note is that at a later stage in the book of Deuteronomy, there was a change in tone of the writers from monolatry (e.g., 6:14, 8:19, 11:24, 13:3) to monotheism (Deut. 4). This change could be argued to have occurred “in the postexilic period, during the time of Persian rule (2015:244).”

Furthermore, Dozeman (2015:244) argues that the Persian rule provides “the social milieu for the composition of Rahab’s confession, which suggests that the exploration of the universal power of Yahweh in Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Joshua occurs during the” same period. He (2015:244) argues that the points of view of the writers on the theme differ considerably in Deuteronomy (4:39) and in Joshua (2:11). He (2015:244) states that:

Deuteronomy 4:32–40 is exclusive in focus; it is intended to affirm the universal power of Yahweh to underscore the uniqueness of Israel’s election. Joshua 2:11b moves in the other direction; it is a confession by the Canaanite Rahab that probes the religious inclusivity of Yahweh’s universal rule within the literary setting of a book that is extreme in its exclusive ideology.

Verse 12:

וְעַתָּה הַשְּׁבַעוּנִי לִי בַיְהוָה כִּי־עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד וְעִשְׂתֶּם גַּם־אֵתָם עִמ־בֵּית אָבִי חֶסֶד וְנָתַתֶּם לִי אוֹת

אָמֵן

English Translations

NKJV: Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness that you will also show kindness to my father’s house and give me a true token.

NRSV: Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith

Observations and comments

Here, the oath, an essential component of the ANE culture, is supposedly introduced to seal the agreement reached by the parties. The fact that she relied on the power and function of Yahweh to seal the agreement she had with the spies could only mean that she recognised the sovereign power of Yahweh. Similarly, Faley (201:16) says, "It is in recognition of YHWH's power and might that she asks for her own deliverance." This is a clear sign that she has confidence in the God of the strangers. It also indicates that she accepts to be a subject of or subjected to the authority of the foreign God. Important to note is that the invaders were to do so in the name of their deity. One could argue that during the period in question, people accepted the notion of a plurality of deities. Probably, this was a case of religious tolerance or mere acceptance of defeat.

Rehab asked the spies to swear by their God. The Hebrew root word עתה is translated "now" in this instance (BDB 2010:800). Bratcher and Newman (1992:30) write that "The Hebrew particle translated 'Now' is used to strengthen the urgency of Rehab's request; it is not a temporal marker." They (1992:30) comment that the phrase "Now swear by him (Lord/Yahweh)" may be rendered "Now make me a solemn promise in the name of your Lord." Rehab designed this speech to get "the spies to promise that she and her family will be spared when the Israelites destroy Jericho (1992:30)." Boling (1982:147) argues that "The only way apparently to avoid the ban is to make a covenant." The critical thing to observe here is that Rehab made her request for a covenant openly compared to the Gibeonites, whose style, method and approach involved subterfuge (Boling 1982:147). Both of these stories are believed to be older stories that were later incorporated into the book of Joshua during its final compilation by the Deuteronomist historian. That is, "these traditions must be pre-Deuteronomistic in origin (Boling 1982:147)." It is critical to note that despite the two stories sharing characteristic similarities, they still have some differences. Boling (1982:147) states, "the Gibeon treaty was clearly regarded as an exception for which some explanation had to be found in the first Dtr-edition." He (1982:147) argues that this was not the same with Chapter 2, "which tells the story with a high sense of humour and lets Rehab be the one to recite the saving history." He (1982:147) writes, "It is very difficult to see how these stories of negotiations at

Jericho and Gibeon could belong to the same history-writing enterprise.” He (1982:147) opines that “they make good sense as independently redacted stories.” He (1982:147) suggests that “the Rehab story was only incorporated into the final edition of the book.” On the other hand, “the Gibeon story in the first edition was also expanded in such a way as to reflect a sense of humor (1982:147).” Here, we will argue that the nature of both stories bears the characteristic of folklorism.³⁵ Both stories came from the story-telling tradition that existed among the nomads that later metamorphosed into the history of the kingdom of Israel, as seen in the Joshua narratives and other Old Testament books.

Rehab also requested/demanded that her family and she be shown kindness because of the fact that she extended the hand of kindness to the spies. The Hebrew root word *חסד* is translated as kindness in this instance. Bratcher and Newman (1992:30) comment that, more often, the word means:

...goodness, love, loyalty; it is a word particularly appropriate in the context of an agreement, a pact, a covenant, and it characterizes the spirit of faithfulness and loyalty with which each party of the covenant will follow its stipulation.

Dozeman (2015:247) believes there is a legal angle to the demand of kindness by Rehab from the spies. He (2015:247) observes that:

The request for an oath (with the Niphal form of *šāba'*) is a judicial expression..., indicating that the trickster story of Rahab evolves into a legal narrative about the redemption of the clan of Rahab from the law of *hērem*. The story is problematic because Yahweh requires the extermination of all indigenous people of the Promised Land without exception. No criteria for exemption from the ban exist in the Pentateuch. The story of Rahab and her exemption from the absolute requirement of the ban represent a qualification of the teaching of Torah and makes her story a legal precedent.

It is important to note that Rehab successfully overturned the requirement of the divine law guiding the concept of “ban” because she showed kindness to the spies. The powerful effect that is associated with the idea of kindness can be seen in the dealings of Moses with the deity when the people of Israel sinned against Yahweh, as seen in Exodus 32:10 and 34: 6-9. The deity only changed his mind and forgave them out of the kindness of his heart. The Israelites had already forfeited all their

³⁵ What we mean by folklorism here is the conscious attempt by the Deuteronomistic historians to revive the tradition of Israelites in postexilic period by adopting folklores from the their past and using them to support their religion positions.

legal rights because of the sin they committed (Glueck in Dozeman 2015:247). This same measure is applied to the circumstance of Rehab because of the kindness she showed to the spies. Even though the spies had no legal right to forgive her, they did that spontaneously (Sakenfeld in Dozeman 2015:247). The virtue of kindness is arguably powerful and can affect even the worst situation, as can be observed from the incident already referred to in Exodus. Characteristically, “it is one virtue that is able to change divine commands in Pentateuch (Dozeman 2015:247).” One can argue that Rehab's request for the spies to show kindness to her and to the rest of her family follows a natural inclination for a person to expect kindness from those whom he or she afforded the same measure.

It is also important to discuss briefly the Hebrew phrase *בֵּית אָבִי* translated “my father’s house.” Coote (1998:594) explains that following the Septuagint’s translation of the same word that appeared in verse 13, the phrase refers to “the social unit responsible for covering family debts, instead of the MT’s “my father” at the head lists of individuals.” Likewise, Bratcher and Newman (1992:30) observe that “My family” is a better translation for the Hebrew phrase “the house of my father.” In other words, the idea encapsulated in the phrase “my family” captures wholistically the idea that the writers arguably intend to communicate when they say “the house of my father.” The fact that it refers to a social unit extends the meaning of the phrase to include the father, the mother, the siblings, the relatives and even their material belongings. Woudstra (1981:74) captures the essence of the phrase when he explains, “This oath, once taken, will serve as a sure sign that she and her entire family-father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them will be saved alive at the time of the attack upon Jericho which both she and the spies assume will be made.” Furthermore, he (1981:74) states, “Rehab thinks in terms of family and clan. This is in keeping with the thought pattern of the ancient Near East.” Subsequently, verse 13 will throw more light on the meaning of my family.

Verse 13:

וְהִחַיְתֶם אֶת־אָבִי וְאֶת־אִמִּי וְאֶת־אֶחָיו וְאֶת־אֲחֹתָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם וְהַצַּלְתֶּם אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵינוּ מִמּוֹת

English Translations

NKJV: And spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

NRSV: That you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death.”

Observations and comments

This is also a continuation of the speech that showcases a plea for mercy from those who Rehab assumes will invade her land. Bratcher and Newman (1992:30) highlight the fact that “The request of the previous verse is repeated and includes all the immediate members of Rehab’s family (father, mother, brothers, sisters) and their families.” They observe that “Verse 12-13 maybe combined by relating the sign to the content of the promise in verse 13...” What is important to note here is that the demand for the spies to swear an oath is to guarantee her family's safety in the event of war, which, at that stage, according to the progression of the narrative, was very immanent. One can even argue that freedom was bartered for by an act of betrayal of one’s nation. Here, the activity of the woman is considered as treacherous. She betrayed her nation in exchange for her freedom and that of her family. Pitkänen (2010:124) aptly infers that “Rahab saves the messengers while the men of Jericho are in control, and the messengers are to save Rahab later once the Israelites are in control.”

Verse 14:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ הָאֲנָשִׁים נִפְשָׁנוּ תַחְתִּיכֶם לְמוֹת אִם לֹא תִגִּידוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵנוּ זֶה וְהָיָה בְּתַת־יְהוָה לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

וְעָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת

English Translations

NKJV: So the men answered her, our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be when the Lord has given us the land that we will deal kindly and truly with you.

NRSV: The men said to her, “Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the Lord gives us the land.

Observations and comments

The agreement is sealed with an oath. There is also the element of life/blood that crowns or is used to seal the oath. Usually, oaths in the then ANE are accompanied by conditions. This is also the case in this instance. It is also important to note that the agreement becomes a reality only when the land becomes their possession. Bratcher and Newman (1992:30) observe, “The answer the Israelites give to Rehab’s request is difficult to understand.” They (1992:30) argue that “In Hebrew it is literally “Our lives for yours (plural) to death.” This translation expands the meaning to include “death.” Any critical interpreter would question the necessity of applying such extreme conditions to oneself. In this regard, Nelson (1997:50) reminds us that as of that stage, the spies were still under the mercy of Rehab. He (1997:50) notes, “The shut gate, patrols on the Jordan road, and their position buried under flax on the roof play an implied but unquestionable role in coercing their agreement to her terms.” The point that they were still under her mercy implies that she can give them up if she wishes or fails to extract from them what is reasonable in terms of guaranteeing her safety. The fact that they included death as the punishment they would receive if they failed to deliver on their promise of safety for her and her family makes their transaction with her serious. The seriousness of the matter is seen in “their open-ended and unconditioned (in the earliest recoverable text) promise (v. 14)” which “begins with a plea that recognizes their continuing danger: save our lives and we will save yours (1997:50).” A critical observer at this stage will notice that their response reflects what is contained in her previous speeches in verses 9, 12 and 13. It was a sort of reciprocal action. Moreover, it could be argued that at that stage, they did not have any other option to do otherwise if they wanted to live. Their lives were in her hands. She was still in control of the situation at that stage. Arguably, at a later

stage, when they have regained their freedom and were in control, they referred to the covenant which they entered with her as “your oath (vv. 17, 20; cf. gen. 24:8).” Soggin (1972:41-42) identifies the reply of the two men “as a self-cursing formula which guarantees the promise that they give.” Nelson (1997:51) writes, “Their obligation of covenant loyalty is to Rahab herself (v. 14b, second person singular), but the lives of her family are drawn into the balanced equation of the Israelites' oath of self-cursing (v. 14a, second person plural).”

Verse 15:

וַתֹּרְדֵם בְּחַבְלֵי בָעֵד הַחֲלוּץ כִּי בֵיתָהּ בְּקִיר הַחוֹמָה וּבַחוּמָה הִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת

English Translations

NKJV: Then she let them down by a rope through the window for her house was on the city wall, she dwelt on the wall.

NRSV: Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself.

Observations and comments

The writers highlight the manner through which the spies left without being caught. Here, we see Rehab doing everything possible to ensure she keeps her would-be lords and masters safe. On the other hand, when one looks at the story critically, the individual begins to realize that there are gaps in the narratives. For example, this story was only told by the Israelites. So, there is no other way to confirm whether it happened. However, archaeology, which could have assisted in throwing more light into the events if they existed, made us understand that the narrative is questionable. So, the great lesson and idea derived from the story by an African who approaches the texts from a postcolonial perspective is that the story shares a lot of commonalities with the stories of Christian missions to Africa, though this does not seem so. The first point of contact between the two is that the narrative language derides the Canaanite gods, the same way some religious scholars argue that the African gods are derided by Christian belief. But what is important to note is that Christian missions in Africa are theologically relevant and contemporary with the

enculturation of African belief systems and thought and worship into Christian modes and forms of communion. For example, in Africa, there seems to be the growth and rise of indigenous Christian sects and Charismatic missions that acculturate liturgy and sermon, thereby breaking the dichotomies and tensions probably thought had existed by some researchers. Secondly is the language that reduces the religion of the Canaanites to the state of evil and elevates and characterises the Israel religion as good (Mudimbe 1988:44-97). This is similar to the representation of African pagan religion by the Europeans versus the godly Christian religion. The third point of contact is the extolling of the virtue of the religion of Israel, as seen in Rehab's confessional statement (Mudimbe 1988:44-77). The religion of the Israelites represents a sacred cultural model that comes with a divine seal. The Canaanite religion is present in a mould that is contrary to that of the Israelites; it represents everything wrong. The same applies to the case of Christianity versus the African religion. Fourthly, there is the assumption that the only truth is found in the Israel religion and that Canaan must accept the Israelite belief system to experience real success in life (Mudimbe 1988:44-77). The same mentality was displayed by the missionaries who came to evangelise Africa. This entire idea can be summed up to mean that the imperialists, who are not different from the colonialists and the missionaries, are motivated by the belief that they are of superior culture and are mandated divinely to go and civilize those of inferior culture. In this specific case, we find the Israelites versus the Canaanites.

Important to note is the position of the house going by the narration. According to the story, the house was at the city wall. Remembering that the gate is closed at this stage for security reasons is critical. And this poses a problem to the spies because their escape route was jeopardised. The situation led to them being lowered down through the window. This brings us to the question of the window and its significance to the entire episode.

Dozeman (2015:248) explains that “the image of a woman in the window” has a sexual connotation and connects the story to the initial image of “Rehab as a prostitute.” The sexual aspect of the narrative is kept alive by the inclusion of window imagery. In addition, the window may have an undertone of eroticism if one is to

consider the fact that often women “are restricted to the domestic sphere of the home (Winter in Dozeman 2015:248).” Therefore, the window is used metaphorically to disguise the story's true intention, Rehab’s link to the world outside her place of abode. What is important to note here “about the function of the window” is the “erotic motif” which appears commonly:

...in the biblical and extra-biblical literature.” In this instance “the author makes use of an erotic motif well known in the biblical and extra-biblical literature: a woman grants a man—this case two men—exceptional access or exit. Underlying this is the risqué relationship between them: the woman may be a virgin or a princess; here, however, she is a prostitute (Rösel in Dozeman 2015:248).

Dozeman (2015:248) also highlights the window's second function, which is connected to her “liminal status as a resident of Jericho who will survive the ban.” This function is linked to the two conditions in verses 16-21, where they stated what would make them renege on their promise to her. The first is their demand for secrecy, which is a test of her character (2015:248). Arguably, because of her profession, many will assume that her character is flawed. This inference came from how she was portrayed in the text. The initial presentation (going by the voice and probably the narrators' rhetorical intention, device and strategy) depicts her as a deceitful individual. Even the location of her house was peripheral. She exists as an outsider, even as a citizen of Jericho, where she was legitimately supposed to be an insider. The second condition is for her to tie a red ribbon/thread on her window to distinguish it from the other windows, and only those members of her family who remain in the house that is so distinguished will be safe (v.19). What is important to note here is the close resemblance of the red thread on the window to

...the ritual of Passover during the exodus (Exod 12:21–23), where the blood on the doorpost is apotropaic, since it was able to turn away the destroyer from entering the house and only those who remained in their houses during the night would be spared from death. Survival from the night of death, however, did not transform or purify the Israelites in any way. It simply spared them from the divine act of destruction. The same is true for Rahab and her family Dozeman 2015:248).

Their lives were still in danger at that stage. Arguably, Rehab was still in control at that phase of the event. Rehab sits between the spies who represent Israel and the inhabitants of Jericho (liminal/liminality). She exercises power on both at that

moment. Though, the power is temporary. At that stage, the spies listen to her. Nelson (1997:51) observes that,

Since the men have agreed to her terms, Rahab next... handily solves the problem of the closed gate and their exposed position. Lowering people through windows seems to have been a standard narrative motif (1 Sam. 19:12; Acts 9:25). Scenes of women up in windows or on walls conversing with men below may reflect another stereotypical narrative situation (2 Sam. 20:16-21; 2 Kings 9:30-31). Once more the men are the passive beneficiaries of her actions.

The Hebrew phrase, “**וַתוֹרֶדֶם**” “She let them down (she had lowered them)” poses a problem to a critical interpreter when read together with verse 16. This inference is drawn from the assumption that going by the situation they were in, it would be too risky for her to speak with the spies when they were on the rope or already on the ground. Thus, this leaves a critical interpreter with the question of the stage at which the conversation in verse 16 happened. Whether the conversation occurred before she let them down through the window, it was highly improbable that she would risk talking to them whilst they were hanging on the rope or the ground, considering their interaction context. This difficulty has led critical interpreters to look for better interpretations of the phrase identified. There has been a suggestion that the verse suffers from chronological disorder due to textual corruption (Soggin 1972:42). This has prompted some scholars to re-arrange the exchange by putting verses 17-21 before verse 15 (Tucker 1972:76). Moran in Soggin (1972:42) notes, “we have here a case of prolepsis in which the text anticipates an important element by placing it earlier than its logical position in the context.” The writers applied the rhetorical device that enables the characters/speakers to anticipate and answer objections in advance. Boling (1982:148) argues, “As in v 4, the only clues to the tense of the verb must be wrestled from the context.” There is the suggestion that “the converted causative imperfect *wattoridem* is inchoative (so-called *futuram instans*)... (McCarthy in Boling 1982:148)” In other words, the sentence represents the inception of an action which will find its completion in the future.

An alternative solution could be sought from the function of the waw-consecutive in verses 15-16; characteristically, the story could be seen as a flashback (Martin in Nelson 1997:51, Martin in Boling 1982:148). It is possible that “In the Rehab

story...the brief flashback continues into verse 16 (Boling 1982:148). The main argument here is that “The situation, the sleeping city, the silence of the dead night, makes it evident that Rehab’s instruction must have preceded the descent from the wall (Boling 1982:148).” Dozeman (2015:247) observes that there is a “problem” with “the extensive conversation between Rehab and the spies during the act of escape” as it “lacks verisimilitude.” In other words, the story does not appear to be true. He (2015:247) believes that effectively the writers intended “to emphasize the location of the house in the wall.”

From the story, it could be argued that the spies stopped their mission at the woman’s house which was located at the city wall. The spies performed little or no spy duty. Miller and Tucker (1974:30) observe that:

The point of the story is clear in the result of the expedition. It is not intended to show Joshua’s cunning or military skills. The only information which the spies gathered was the intelligence that the inhabitants of the land stand in terror before Israel...This formula is used over and over in the accounts of Israel’s holy war. Such a war cannot begin without the assurance that the Lord is with the people to give them victory. Given the idea of the holy, the spy story is placed here to show that the conquest did not begin until the will of the Lord had been determined.

The little spying activity has to do with the revelation from their host about how the city is gripped with fear and how the citizens melted with fear and lost courage following the stories they heard about the miracle of the Red Sea and the war activities of the Israelites. However, the woman volunteered the information without any form of coercion. In totality, the story gives the impression of a spying mission gone wrong.

The statement “for her house was on the city wall, she dwelt on the wall” is also crucial to understanding the nature of settlement during the time the book of Joshua probably was compiled. The Hebrew root word for the wall in its first appearance in the sentence “town wall” is “קוֹר” (BDB 2010:885). And later, when it was referred to only as “the wall”; it was denoted as “חומה” (BDB 2010:299). The critical thing to observe here is the double appearance of the Hebrew word “wall” in the sentence. Boling (1982:148) argues that what this means literally is “between the double wall,” that is, “in the wall of the wall.” He (1982:148) explains that “The expression seems

to refer to defensive fortification of the casement type, in which walls are divided by cross-walls into chambers which may rubble-filled for added strength or be used for residence and storage.” It is important to note that from the time of “the Early Bronze Age in the third millennium,” residents built casements which served as “an integral part of the fortifications in the Near East and constituted an efficient protection from the battering-ham (Yadin in Boling 1982:148).”

Furthermore, “The supposed “double wall” found at Tell el-Sultan and dated by the Garstang expedition to the Late Bronze Age is composed, in part, of successive Early Bronze Age walls (Drawing in Boling 1982:148).” Primarily, such additions served as a further means of securing the city. It reminds us that the towns were most times at war with each other. It could be argued that such wars were not only fought for the sake of dominance but also for control of resources such as land for agricultural purposes, control of trade routes and taking citizens to serve the victors as slaves, that is, forced labour. Victories usually were attributed to the activities of local deities.

It is important to note that archaeology disputes the existence of a wall during the Late Bronze Age; instead, the existence of a wall is attributable to the Middle Bronze Age.³⁶ However, following the archaeological evidence uncovered by the scholars mentioned in the preceding statement, Pitkänen (2010) concludes:

As for the question of a possible wall, it should be noted that Joshua 2:15 seems to indicate that Rahab's house was part of the wall (see comments on 2:15). Perhaps this suggests that there was no substantial wall, as there was during the Middle Bronze Age, but houses primarily formed a perimeter around the town and acted as a wall by being connected together, with any gaps between houses perhaps patched up as a kind of wall.

³⁶ For further reading on this subject see the works of Kenyon (1960), Kenyon and Holland (1981, 1982, 1983) and Bienkowski (1986: 122-125).

Verse 16:

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הִהָרָה לָּכֹּה פְּנִיפְגְּעוּ בְּכֶם הַרְדְּדִפִּים וְנִחַבְתֶּם שָׁמָּה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים עַד שׁוּב הַרְדְּפִים וְאַחַר תֵּלַ

לְדַרְכְּכֶם

English Translations

NKJV: And she said to them; Get to the mountain lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way.

NRSV: She said to them, "Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuer will not come upon you. Hide yourself there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way.

Observations and comments

Dube (2000:50) observes that most of the time, in the course of the interaction between the colonized and the colonizer, the colonized are forced by their colonizers to "begin to advance the agendas of the oppressor and to proclaim their superiority by choice or by the mere fact of living under the ruling institutions of the colonizer." This happens throughout the time that both parties relate in the sense of master and servants. In this instance, it is difficult to determine whether Rehab's conduct was by choice because this narrative is from the oppressor. What Rehab says is precisely what her oppressors want to hear from her; usually, those things must bring glory to her supposed masters.

The woman is shown to have a vast knowledge of what is happening. She gave the spies a tip on the best way to invade those searching for them. One can even argue that the information she possesses is precise. Pitkänen (2010:124) writes, "Rahab then suggests a fair ruse: the Israelites are to go to the hills rather than back towards the river." In addition, she advised them to hide in the hills for three days. Pitkänen notes, "Three days of hiding will be enough to frustrate the efforts of the pursuers." Bratcher and Newman (1992:33) note that the hill country would be the region on the west side of Jordan River." Woudstra (1981:74) explains that it may have been possible that the woman is referring to "Jebel Qarantal, a prominent mountain top

northwest of Jericho... This area is full of crevices and caves, and would thus provide a likely hiding place.” Nelson (1997:51) argues that even at that stage, the spies were still “passive beneficiaries of her action.” He (1997:51) notes that “Even when they are outside (v. 16), Rahab remains very much in charge, giving these inept secret agents detailed instructions on how to avoid capture.” He (1997:51) writes, “She dictates their route and schedule. By doing this, she also effectively prevents them from carrying out their original assignment as spies.” What is important to note here is that Rehab is in control as of that stage.

Perhaps it is important to observe that the nature of her work afforded her the privilege of meeting different people. She gets the opportunity to interact with these people more intimately. Through this kind of association, she was able to gather information.

Verse 17:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ הָאֲנָשִׁים נְקִיִּם אֲנַחְנוּ מִשְׁבַּעְתְּךָ הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁבַּעְתָּנוּ

English Translations

NKJV: So the men said to her, we will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear

NRSV: The men said to her, “We will be released from this oath that you have made us swear to you

Observations and comments

At this stage, the spies have regained their voice. Perhaps it is critical to note that they were still trapped in the land of Jericho but no longer in the woman’s house.

Nelson (1997:51) says:

The gate problem is solved, the problem of the pursuit is solved, but what about their uncomfortably open-ended oath? It is only when they are out of the trap in which Rahab had entangled them that the spies can seize the conversational initiative (vv. 17-20). Now they are in a position to hedge their oath with conditions and details. The repetition of "absolved from your oath" (by which they mean the self-cursing oath of v. 14) encloses their words in an envelope of self-protection (vv. 17a, 20b).

Now that the spies had regained some sort of freedom, they spoke. All along, their voice was silenced. The turn of events oppressed them. Woudstra (1981:74) comments that “Before taking leave, the two spies state more precisely than they had previously, the condition under which the oath of v. 14 will be binding on them.” He (1981:74-75) notes, “The declaration beginning *we will be free of this oath* is not brought to its grammatical conclusion ...but is followed by the condition the men now impose on Rehab and her family.”

The writers mentioned that the men will not be blamed if they do not keep the oath; in other words, there is room for the abandonment of the oath. On this occasion, the writers also highlighted the fact that the oath was the idea of the lady in question. She initiated the oath. However, they consented to the demands of the oath through their action. The fact that they swore to it made them a party to the agreement. They share in the obligation that comes with the oath.

Verse 18:

הָגָה אֲנַחְנוּ בְּאִים בְּאַרְץ אֶת־תְּקֻנֹת חוּט הַשָּׁנִי הַזֶּה תִּקְשְׁרִי בַחֲלוֹן אֲשֶׁר הוֹרְדָתֵנוּ בּוֹ וְאֶת־אֲבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ
וְאֶת־אֲחִיךָ וְאֶת כָּל־בֵּית אָבִיךָ תֹאסֹפִי אֲלֶיךָ הַבַּיִתָּה

English Translations

NKJV: Unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers and all your father’s household to your home.

NRSV: If we invade the land and you do not tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down and you do not gather into your house, your father and mother, your brothers and all your family.

Observations and comments

Here, the men gave their own conditions for obedience or sticking to the terms of the agreement of the oath. At this stage, the spies have regained their voice. As Butler (1983:34) observes, the table is turned. Woudstra (1981:75) comments, “The whole conversation reflects the expectation that the city will be taken by force, that

breaches will be made and houses destroyed and taken in combat.” Their speech has a serious hint of confidence: “when we come to the land...” One can argue that the tone of their speech shows a return of confidence.

The complex verbal formulation, the identifying sign of the crimson thread, and the careful restriction of her family to the confines of her house are all intended to protect the spies from bloodguilt and to reduce the reader's disquiet (Nelson 1997:51).

In addition, it could be observed that they were not out of danger yet. But they have regained control of the situation to some extent. The woman was to meet certain expectations and standards for the spies to fulfil the requirement prescribed by the oath. Most important is the line of scarlet to be tied to the window from where they escaped. This will assist the spies in identifying the particular house that belongs to the woman. Concerning the line of scarlet to be tied on the window, Nelson (1997:51-52) writes:

Although "this crimson thread" (v. 18) sounds as though they are providing her with it (as a gift of a bit of feminine finery?), this seems awkward from the standpoint of staging. Perhaps the reader is meant to suppose that Rahab has just lowered them by her (perhaps very feminine and sexy) crimson thread, presumably intended as a touch of humor...This understanding could explain the MT's strengthening gloss "cord of" (note u). Another possibility is that a red thread was already hanging out her window as a conventional sign for a house of prostitution...

Pitkänen (2010:124) believes that it is “A sign of the oath (*sebu`ah*), even a covenant (the word *Writ* is not used, however),” and “is to be hung in the window through which the men were let down.” He opines, “The crimson cord to be tied in the window does not seem, and neither does it need, to be the same as the rope by which the spies were let out.” He notes that the Hebrew words for the cord and the rope are different. He opines that “cord is to be a symbolic sign acting as a reminder of the event of the visit of the spies. Rahab's house will then act as a kind of sacred space. Anything in it is outside destruction (*hērem*),” According to Dozeman (2015:248), “During Yahweh’s attack on the walls of Jericho, the red thread in the window of Rahab’s house serves a function similar to that of the blood on the doorpost of the Israelite homes in Egypt.” He (2015:248) writes:

Like the blood of the Passover, the red thread wards off death from the collapse of the walls; it guards the inner space of Rahab’s house; and it allows the family members of Rahab who remain in her house to survive the execution of the ban on the city of Jericho.

They do not become members of the Israelite community by being spared destruction. The conditions stated by the spies in vv. 17–20 do not reflect negative motives, as argued by Hawk (1991:69), as if they were “looking for a way out of the oath” or “denying responsibility for the oath.” Rather, the conditions are the legal means by which the divine law of the ban on the indigenous population of the Promised Land might be suspended

Similarly, Coote (1998:594) observes:

...the red cord hung out by Rahab to protect her family from the impending slaughter is intentionally reminiscent of the blood of the paschal lamb, which protected the Israelite debt Slaves at Passover (Exod 12:7, 13). Even this quasi-liturgical motif could have played a role in the original folk narrative, if conceived in terms of the Passover feast as a family rite rather than the state rite it becomes in deuteronomistic legislation.

Important to note is the fact that the spies charged her to take responsibility for her family's safety (Butler 1983:34). The term “all your father's household” may go as far as including the livestock and slaves.

Verse 19:

וְהָיָה כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-יֵצֵא מִדִּלְתֵי בֵיתְךָ | הַחוּצָה דָמוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְאִנְחָנוּ נִקִּים וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה אִתְּךָ בַּבַּיִת דָּמוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ
אִם-יָד תִּהְיֶה-בּוֹ:

English Translations

NKJV: So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him.

NRSV: If any of you go out of the doors of your house into the streets, they shall be responsible for their own death, and we shall be innocent, but if a hand is laid upon any who are with you in the house, we shall bear responsibility of their death.

Observations and comments

The men will not be held liable if the woman or any of her family members fails to adhere to the condition for fulfilling the oath. On the contrary, if they follow the agreement, whatever happens to any member of her family will be the responsibility of the spies. Boling (1982:149) identifies the phrase “whosoever goes outside the doors of your house” Hebrew “מִדִּלְתֵי בֵיתְךָ” as comparable to Jephthah's tragic vow in Judges 11:31. He (1982:149) highlights the fact that “There is clearly a relationship

between these stories as they now stand." The common thread that appears in both stories is the theme of harlotry. Firstly, Boling (1982:149) states that in Joshua 2:19, "the Yahwist pledge themselves to an enterprising pagan harlot, and later keep the word for a happy ending." However, in the story of Jephthah, "the one Israelite, who was otherwise remembered as the greatest negotiator of his era, and son of a harlot, becomes a tragic figure who sacrificed his virgin daughter in fulfilment of an anxious vow."

The expression "his blood shall be on our head" forms part of the end of the sentence and is important to the discourse. This expression simply means that the spies will be "responsible for that person's death" if the person is killed whilst in Rehab's house, as they said to her (Bratcher and Newman 1992:34). However, anyone who ventures outside the house will be killed. In other words, the ban applies to everyone "except the person found in Rehab's house (Bratcher and Newman 1992:34)." Likewise, Nelson (1997:52) opines:

The "bloodguilt" formula of v. 19 (literally "blood upon one's head," here translated "bears the blame for one's death") belongs to the juridical sphere. It simultaneously fixes blame on one party and exculpates the other, while declaring the judgment of death (2 Sam. 1: 16; 1 Kings 2:37).

Verse 20:

וְאִם־תִּגְדֹּי אֶת־דְּבָרֵנוּ זֶה וְהָיִינוּ נְקִיִּים מִשְׁבַּעְתְּךָ אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁבַּעְתָּנוּ :

English Translations

NKJV: And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear.

NRSV: But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be released from this oath that you made us swear to you.

Observations and comments

Here, we find the third condition. Bratcher and Newman (1992; 34) observe that "The third condition is that Rehab must say nothing about what we have been doing (Literally, "this matter of ours"). Secrecy was part of the condition given by the men for the fulfilment of their agreement with the woman. The woman was not allowed to

tell anyone about their business. This condition focuses on Rehab's character and it repeats the original condition from verse 14 (Dozeman 2015:248) One cannot say precisely what is meant by the statement. This is because the king and his subjects already know their mission. One can only speculate that they revealed more information about their mission to the woman, which the writers probably omitted from the story.

Particularly noteworthy is that for the second time, the writers referred to the oath that they entered into with her as "your oath." The first time they did so was in verse 17. Boling (1982:149) writes, "The two occurrences form an inclusio." Furthermore, he (1982:149) observes that "This anticipates the contrasting situation in the story of Jephthah's negotiation with the elders of Gilead (Judges 11:4-11)." Again, the speaker highlights the fact that the oath was the brainchild of the woman. What is important to note that from the way the writers structured the texts, one could argue that the woman is seen as belonging to an inferior class. Inferiority, here, represents the question of nationality. The fact that she is a Canaanite makes her inferior to the Israelites. Therefore, her only chance of survival was to acquiesce to a higher authority, which is to submit herself to Israel's deity.

Verse 21:

וְתֹאמַר כְּדַבְרֵיכֶם כִּי־הוּא וְתִשְׁלַחֶם וְיִלְכוּ וְתִקְשֶׁר אֶת־תְּקוּת הַשָּׁנִי בַחֲלוֹן

English Translations

NKJV: Then she said, According to your words so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

NRSV: She said, "According to your words, so be it." She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied the crimson cord on the window.

Observations and comments

Verse 21 brings to a conclusion "the exchange between Rehab and the spies" and "with Rahab agreeing to the conditions and securing the safety of her home with the red thread (Dozeman 2015:248)." Dube (2000:78) observes that

Rahab's voice is notably one with the colonizer. As a literary creation of the colonizer's pen, she is the mouthpiece of their agendas. The colonizer's ideal dream is that the colonized will proclaim the colonizer's superiority, pledge absolute loyalty, and surrender all their rights voluntarily...

The result is that Rahab and those members of her family who remained in her home survive the destruction of Jericho and live "outside the camp of Israel to (Dozeman 2015: 248-249)." In other words, the woman agreed to all the conditions given by the men. Nelson (1997:52) refers to the exchange as Rehab agreeing "to their modified terms with a laconic couple of words, perhaps demonstrating a wise person's skill in balancing speech and silence." He (1997:52) notes that even as of that point, "she retains the initiative and sends them off." "The critical part of Nelson's statement is pointing out that the spies modified the initial agreement term. And their action could only be attributed to the fact that they have regained partial freedom as of that stage. Though Rehab still enjoys a level of control over the situation, the circumstances in which the men found themselves have improved considerably.

According to the writers, she bound the scarlet cord to the window. The impression given by the writer is that she performed the task of bounding the cord to the window immediately. This indicates that the invasion took place not so long after their departure.

Verse 22:

וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ הַהָרָה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים עַד־שְׁנֵי הַרְדִּיפִים וַיִּבְקְשׂוּ הַרְדִּיפִים בְּכָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ

English Translations

NKJV: They departed and went to the mountain and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way but did not find them.

NRSV: They departed and went into the hill country and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers have searched all along the way and found nothing.

Observations and comments

The men heeded the advice of the woman, who may be called their co-conspirator at this stage and went to the mountain to hide. Here, the writers repeated the language used in verse 16: “Go to the mountain and hide for three days.” They went to the mountain and stayed for three days according to her advice. The “Repeated language (vv. 16 and 22; “there for three days until the pursuers return”) shows how carefully they follow her directions (Nelson 1997:52).”

The king of Jericho’s men searched for the spies for three days and did not find them. They returned to Jericho after three days. A critical interpreter would ask how Rehab knew that the search would last for three days? Is this a case of having inside information? These questions will remain unanswered because the text revealed nothing about them. One can only infer from the story that she connived with foreigners to fight against her people. She is what has been referred to as a native informant by postcolonial writers. The invaders end up recruiting collaborators from among the so-called natives.

Verse 23:

וּישְׁבוּ שְׁנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּרְדוּ מִהַר וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון וַיְסַפְּרוּ־לּוֹ אֵת כָּל־הַמְּצָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר

English Translations

NKJV: So the two men returned, descended from the mountain and crossed over, and crossed over and they came to Joshua the son of Nun and told him all that have befallen them.

NRSV: Then the two men came down again from the hill country. They crossed over, came to Joshua son of Nun, and told him all that had happened.

Observations and comments

Following the instructions and advice of the women, the men returned safely to their land. On getting home, they briefed Joshua, their leader, on what took place. Again, here we see an inclusio. Similarly, Boling (1982:149) observes that “The introduction of the name “Joshua the Nun” forms an inclusio with v 1, closing all the old story of reconnaissance across the Jordan.” He (1982:149) believes that there may be the possibility of a non-Jericho Rehab story.” He (1982:149) notes that “The later editor

was able to use her story with very little adaptation other than to make Rehab a resident of Jericho, but also a prophet like Moses.”

The word occurred may signify that they had hitches in the cause of carrying out their mission. How the term was used here bears some negative connotation. In the story, the spies are portrayed as trapped and at the mercy of Rehab. However, she responded very kindly to them. In other words, she showed them kindness. Boling (1982:149) notes that “Rehab was their only informant, but she had told them all that they needed to know.” He (1982:149) says, “The young men had stumbled onto the truth.”

Verse 24:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיַדְנוּ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְגַם־נִמְגְּוּ כָּל־יְשִׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ

English Translations

NKJV: And they said to Joshua, Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.

NRSV: They said to Joshua, “Truly, the Lord has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us.

Observations and comments

Here, we find the report the spies gave Joshua, their leader, about their mission upon their return. The spies reported that their deity had given them victory over their enemy. In other words, the others were defeated before the invasion began. The idea that the colonizers harbour to showcase themselves as superior to others climaxes in this verse. It is also surprising that Joshua, who was charged to abide by the stipulation of the covenant, agreed with the fact that his men had such a close association with the Canaanite woman (Dube 2000:77). It can only be assumed that the demand of the law was muted at that stage because the outcome of the mission favours the Israelites.

Dozeman (2015:249) describes the statement as “a concluding confessional summary: “Yahweh has given the entire land into our hand.” However, he opines that

the “report is ironic... since there is no reason to believe that the spies completed their mission of reconnoitring the land...” He (2015:249) highlights the fact that “their report to Joshua is a repetition of the confession of Rahab in v. 9a: “I know that Yahweh has given you the land.” He (2015:249) adds, “The addition to the report in v. 24b, “all the inhabitants of the land even pale in despair before us,” also repeats Rahab’s confession from v.9b. Dozeman (2015:249) says,

The limitation of their report so that it is a repetition of Rahab's confession in vv. 9–11 may be intended as an idealization of Rahab; or it may indicate the failure of the spies' mission, since they are capable of conveying only Rahab's interpretation of the events, rather than providing any independent evaluation.

The vital thing to note here is that their report to Joshua indicates that “the situation is favorable for an attack (Soggin 1972:42).” The Land, which is the main reason for their invasion, had become theirs even before the fight began. Important to note is how the writers portrayed their opponent as fainthearted and emphasised the theme of land, thus giving the others the image of a people defeated. The whole story is centred on power play. It is about the deity who is more powerful than the other. Soggin (1972:42) argues that the nature of the final statement, which assumes the speech of Rehab characteristically appears to have been “written at a late period; it now forms a link between ch.2, which the logical conclusion has no doubt disappeared, and ch. 6.”

5.5 Conclusion

Joshua chapter 2 was designed to serve as a continuation of Joshua 1’s narrative. The narration opened with the recounting of how Joshua, who assumed the position of the leader of the people in the introductory chapter, sent spies on a reconnaissance mission to the land of Canaan. The spies ended up in the house of a female prostitute named Rehab. Thus, the story's tone was set around the spies' exploits with the prostitute.

Chapter 6

6. General Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The title of this study is “Re-reading the texts of Joshua 1-2: A postcolonial perspective.” The research had the following objectives:

1. To understand the political reasons that guided the writers in the production of Joshua’s narratives through the critical application of historical criticism.
2. To engage some of the proponents of postcolonialism criticism within and without the field of biblical criticism to gain broader insight on the subject and the probable relationship it shares with the text of Joshua in general and chapters 1 and 2 in particular.
3. To apply postcolonial insights to the ancient text of Joshua 1 and 2.

In summary, one can argue that the objective of this dissertation is to attempt to apply the methods and approaches of postcolonial criticism in my interpretation of Joshua chapters 1 and 2 and the book of Joshua in its broader perspective.

Following the objectives, the literature review attempted to unravel the nature of Joshua's narrative and situate it in a postcolonial context. It allowed the writer to have a glimpse of the heart of the book. Firstly, it was established that the book was designed to serve as some national history. However, it was seen that the book is not history in the modern sense. That is, it is not an objective history. Arguably, it is a kind of history that is mixed with myth. What would be generally referred to as historization of myth or mythologization of history. Secondly, the review reveals that the narration of Joshua has a political undertone and may have been a propaganda text put together during the reign of Josiah as part of the tool used to justify the reasoning behind the land acquisition and ownership, which had become an ideological concern. Thirdly, the review shows that the book contains severe acts of human rights violations and lends credibility to triumphalist nationalism. This aspect

of the narrative leaves contemporary readers dismayed whenever they encounter Joshua's narrative.

Having established all that was mentioned above, the study proceeded to Chapter 2, focusing on the historical context of the book of Joshua. The first part of the study concentrated on the different approaches the writer considered relevant to the historical inquiry related to this study and their meanings. In the opening paragraph of this chapter, it was stated that the study will take a multi-faceted approach to understand the historical context. However, the primary objective is to study the book critically from a postcolonial perspective. The first part of the discussion attempted to explain the meaning of historical criticism from the lens of postcolonialism. It was argued that this is to apply postcolonial theories and criticism in the historical study of the book of Joshua. This led to a very brief recounting of the story of the Old Testament that began from Abraham to Joshua. The aim of recounting the short story was to understand Israel's socio-cultural history and situate it in its broader ANE context. The study revealed that Israel, like the other ANE nations, was interested in land acquisition—one of the core reasons why the member states of ANE were constantly at war with each other.

Furthermore, the study revealed that Israel was a class society and also supported the ideology of inclusivity and exclusivity. The view mentioned above also impacts on how they perceive their God. Arguably, in extension, this endorses the ideology of imperialism and colonialism. The study then discussed the meaning of historical criticism based on previous views of scholars. Historical criticism, in its simplest form, is the study of texts in an attempt to understand the social-political history of the period in which the text was produced. An overview of the outcome of a historical-critical study of the book of Joshua followed this. The first part of this section was an overview of the old debate around the historicity of the book of Joshua and the conquest. The topics were 1) The Conquest Model, 2) The Immigration or Infiltration Model, 3) The Revolt Model, and 4) The Gradual Emergence Model. The study reveals that none of the models can be argued to be supported by archaeology in a strict sense of things, except for the Gradual Emergence Model. This was followed by a discussion of the different historical

periods that includes 1) The Egyptian colonisation of Canaan in the Second Millennium BCE, 2) The Neo-Assyrian Empire, 3) The Neo-Babylonian Empire and 4) The Persian Empire. Different topics concerning these periods, such as the impact of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian imperialism on various aspects of Judah/Israel, were discussed. These aspects included religion, the elites and the language, and the development of the concepts of universalism and monotheism. The discussion revealed that imperialism resulted in serious interaction between Israel/Judah and the colonizing forces. This interaction greatly impacted almost all spheres of their lives, which extends to religion and social, political, and economic activities. Importantly, it was observed that this led to hybridization. The effect is felt both by the colonizers and the colonized.

Chapter 3 discussed the subject of Deity as a cultural and political object. The discussion started with the “Deity as a Political Object.” Here, an attempt was made to show the politisation of the deity as a tool to enable the Israelites to achieve their political aim. Consciously and deliberately, images of a deity informed by his involvement in political, cultural, social and military activities were created. A deity who fully participates and functions in human affairs, and this participation was always about the political god existing to protect the political interest of those who purport and claim to be the deity’s followers. The discussion then engaged with the idea of the deity as a cultural object. The argument here is that the deity was given a human identity. This forms part of an existing interpretation and worldview, which reduces the deity to a person and, thus, ascribes personalities to its existence. The moment this image is created, the deity becomes a cultural figure amongst its other assumed or perceived physical forms. Crudely understood as a cultural figure, the Yahweh of Joshua is a physical being that exists in the form of a man who is cultural by nature. This successfully gives the deity an identity. Thus, it enabled the Israelites to apply the concept of the deity both in their internal and external affairs and engagements. The cultural world of Joshua during the exilic and post-exilic periods was discussed. Here, the customs and cultural practices were briefly discussed. The final part of the discussion was on identity in the world of the Israelites/ANE. Here, information from the Bible was used, and those from external sources were equally

engaged with it. What came out of the discussion is the fact that the conquest, domination and exile experience significantly impacted Israel. In the process, their deity became an important tool in their struggle and resistance to external forces.

Chapter 4 discussed the various theories, characteristics and terminologies such as empires, imperialism, colonies, colonialism, decolonialism, decoloniality, post-coloniality and postcolonialism, which a person encounters when they engage with the subject of postcolonialism. The approach here was to engage with the works of scholars both within and without the field of biblical studies. Partly, this study was an overview of works, positions, and the different features that have guided some of the most notable postcolonial scholars such as Chinua Achebe, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, R.S Sugirtharajah, Spivak, and others in their presentation of the subject. What is important to note is that over time, god, glory, and gold motivated the rise of empires. Another form of saying this is that the founding of empires was motivated by power, moral responsibility, and economic interest. It is also essential to observe that the meaning of “empire” has shifted significantly in its modern use. Now, it is more related to economic achievements. However, as a person in a postcolonial context, the word is perceived in terms of conquest, eliciting resistance. It is also important to note that the writer of this dissertation believes that the concept of imperialism persists to this day but in different forms. Empire represents the state, and imperialism, on the other hand, means the acts, activities and exploits they undertake when they invade and occupy other people’s territories. The writer believes that colonialism is nothing but the pragmatic side of imperialism. Colonialism can be described as “imperialism outpost, the fort and the ports of imperial outreach.” The discussion also noted the difference between decoloniality and what some refer to as anti-colonial movements that eventually led to the majority of colonized people gaining independence. The latter was essentially an elite-driven movement whereby they mobilized the peasants and the workers to fight against colonialism and ended in independence. However, the project of decolonization continues because the footprints, fingerprints and effects of colonization are so deeply ingrained in the lives of those who were formerly subjects of colonialism. Essentially, decoloniality tries to resurrect “local histories, subjective, knowledge,

narratives, struggle” which “modern/colonial order and for otherwise” attempts to bury. It is also important to note that differences exist between decolonialism and postcolonialism.

Simply put, decolonialism is the direct undoing of the effects of colonialism, whereas postcolonialism denotes a period that succeeds the colonial period. Yet, in practice, there are a lot of similarities between the two. The simplest definition that captures the spirit and essence of postcolonialism would be the critical study of the effects of imperialism and colonialism on the lives of the colonized.

Chapter 5 discusses postcolonial criticism and the text of Joshua 1 and 2. The study reveals that Chapter 1 is designed to serve as an introduction to Joshua’s narrative, what is generally known as the prologue. It sets the tone for the entire book of Joshua. This assumption is supported by the fact that all the major themes seen in Joshua, such as the promised land, the law, obedience, us versus them, covenant and election, were all directly or indirectly mentioned in the chapter. The core message of the chapter is for the Israelites to prepare to cross Jordan to take over the land that their deity had promised them through Abraham. The chapter is written in such a manner that the early tradition of patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible is reflected through the inclusion of Moses. The land-covenant-narrative is continued through the inclusion and the subsequent involvement of the person of Joshua, who is presented as the new leader who replaced Moses. The chapter’s overarching theme is Israel nationalism, which is championed by their deity. A theme that I believe was necessary after their imperial and colonial experience in the hands of the stronger nations. The writers made an attempt to keep the theme of their nationalism alive through their narration. They built their story around the Canaanites, whom they perceived to be their enemies. The idea and ideology that controlled the narrative is that for Israel nation to exist, the Canaanites must cease to exist.

Joshua 2 was designed to serve as a continuation of Joshua 1. The narration opened with the recounting of how Joshua, who assumed the position of the leader of the people in the introductory chapter, sent spies on a reconnaissance mission to the land of Canaan. The spies ended up in the house of a female prostitute named

Rehab. Thus, the story's tone is set around the spies' exploits with the prostitute. Again, the writers continued with the theme of nationalism that encompasses the other sub-themes such as us versus them, the promised land, the covenant, obedience, chosenness, universalism and election. It is important to note that writers highlighted the idea and ideology of a deity and people who are superior to others. This theme usually features very prominently in the discourse of imperialism and colonialism. One of the core characteristics of the literature of the oppressor is, Arguably, this is borne out of their experience of being a subject of imperialism in the hands of the stronger nations. However, there is no way to confirm if this narratives are true life experience. Archaeology, which could have assisted in throwing more light into the events if they existed, made us understand that the narrative is questionable. So, the great lesson and idea derived from the story by an African who approaches the texts from a postcolonial perspective is that the story shares a lot of commonalities with the stories of Christian missions to Africa. The first point of contact between the two is that the language of narrative derides the Canaanite gods. In the same way, the African gods are derided by Christian belief. Secondly is the language that reduces the religion of the Canaanites to the state of evil and elevates and characterises the Israel religion as good. This is similar to the designation of what the Europeans call the African pagan religion versus the godly Christian religion.

6.2 Findings and Recommendations

1. The study of the Bible in isolation is a great disservice (exclusivism). The Bible should be studied in its broader ANE context to gain a better and more robust understanding of its purpose and meaning.
2. The study reveals that Israel suffered imperialism and colonialism at the hands of stronger nations, which led to hybridization. This implies that Israel's culture, religion, literature and socio-political-economic life interacted greatly with the others. So it would be wrong to speak of purity in terms of the aforementioned subjects.

3. The study did not cover the subject of hybridity at length. Therefore, it is suggested that the subject of hybridity requires further research with a focus on the book of Joshua. The question which needs to be researched is the impact of hybridity directly on Joshua's narrative.

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