THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Torah (Law) and the Household in the Development of the Israelites

Dr. Abiola Ayodeji Olaniyi

Senior Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

Abstract:

Organization of indigenous sustainability of Israelite households, family and kinship in Old Testament involves different approaches of capturing developmental dynamics that feature between Genesis and 2 Kings. Ancient Israel in biblical texts begins with Aramean/Syrian background. Infiltration of the Arameans/Syrians into Canaan and their submission to Canaanite practices as subsistent people are recorded in Genesis. However, the Hebrews of Genesis become the Israelites in Exodus - 2 Kings. Consequently, this paper engages a combination of socio-literary approach and social anthropological method (sometimes considered as comparative sociology). It discovers how the use of Torah in sustaining Israelite households has created a change of status for people in ancient Israel. It identifies congregational or democratic system of administration as the acceptable pattern of leadership that Yahweh approves under Moses. The Hebrews later move from genealogical descent and ascribed givens (as dependent people) to become the Israelites with religious flexibility, individually conscious creativity and achieved goals (as an independent state).

Keywords: Israelites, Torah, household, ascribed givens and achieved goals

1. Introduction

Biblical narration of emergence and development of the Israelites in Old Testament sees Abraham, an Aramean/Syrian as its starting point. Abraham produces Isaac who also raises Jacob as an Aramean/Syrian in Genesis 11:10-12:1-10; 13:5-18; 14:13-24; 16:1-4; 17:23-27; 22:20-24; 24:10-67; 25:20; 28:1-5; 31:19-55. While giving attention to the final form of the Old Testament texts (Wenham, 1999:144)ⁱ, Moses a Levite turned prophet is set as Israelite's creator of charismatic and bureaucratic identities beyond the traditional or indigenous factors of Arameans/Syrians (Deuteronomy 1:1-25; 26:1-15). Thus "the witness of the Old Testament entails a transformative engagement with God that is as demanding as it is gracious, as corporate as it is individual, as strange as it is familiar..." in avoiding to fail in its task (Moberly, 1999:478).ⁱⁱ In this light, the Israelite household is regarded in biblical texts as "the basic unit of everyday social life in ancient Israel" by Joseph Blenkinsopp. In such a setting, "a woman was brought into a household from outside to bear children for the male heir, the choice of a bride and arrangements for the marriage, including the marriage price, being made by the 'ab, the patriarch and male head of the *bet'ab* (household)." However, the household is described as continually replenishing its labour force with the birth of male children who are considered economically advantageous. Consequently, the household is "not restricted to members of the same biological subgroup" though it is bound to ethnic ascription and interpretively perceived and categorized by the religious experience of the household leader (Blenkinsopp, 2005:169-183).ⁱⁱⁱ

Abiola Olaniyi avers that a mixed rabble joins the Israelites in their departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:29-41) while they accept into their company the Midianites (Exodus 2:15-22; 3:1; 18:1-12), Rahab's household of Jericho (Joshua 2:1-24; 6:17-25) and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:1-10:15). They carry with them their shared sense of collective interests in settling for the boundary between the river border of Egypt through Canaan and River Euphrates as the Promised Land in Genesis 15:13-21 (Abiola Olaniyi 2012:269-270).^{iv} As the Israelites move around the wilderness and enter the Promised Land, they forge their household identity of living under shared symbols of the Ark of the covenant and clan emblems in Numbers 1:44-54; 2:2,3,10,17,18,25,31&34; 10:14,18,22&25 (Abiola Olaniyi, 2020:29).^v The amalgamation of the various groups of peoples of the Ancient Near East (ANE) into the identity called the Israelites needs a uniting force and factor known as the Law of the Covenant for various reasons. The *Torah* is thus made to bind the different entities together as a united people under Yahweh. This *Torah* serves in the Old Testament as a documentation of the differentiation that is in the righteousness and mercy of Yahweh beyond and against the attributes of other gods. It foretells how a convergence of other gods in inclusivity will lead to a loss of the Promised Land (exile). It also provides a conditional possibility of attracting the righteousness and mercy of Yahweh in restoring a remnant of the people back to the land based on repentance of the Israelites in returning to the exclusive worship (differentiation) of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 4:1-15,16-28,29-49; 10:12-22; 29:18-29; 32:8-27 cf. Exodus 24:7; Joshua 8:3-35; Judges 3:5-4:3; 6:1-16; 10:6-18; 13:1-10). In this light, the book of Deuteronomy assumes the law book and constitution of the emerging Israelite nation with a salvation history of socio-ethics and justice.

2. Biblical Scholarship on Ancient Israel

Andrew Mayes regards the social and political contexts of the Israelites as a milieu of centralized worship, of exclusive Yahwism, of royal structures, of loss of independent statehood, of exile and of reduction of Israel to the status of a dependent people. Thus, in the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy) Ancient Israel is presented as a reflectively historical but universalistic community of economically and politically dependent people, of ascribed givens, of restricted status, of membership by genealogical descent and of purity or impurity as an impartially inherent quality of certain substances. Yet, in the Early Prophets (Joshua - 2 Kings) ancient Israel is painted as a theocratic but confessional community of subordinated monarchical arrangements of social and political structures, of achieved goals, of flexible status of success, of individually conscious creativity or commitment to beliefs and of sanctity as a consequence of personally religious consecration and intentions (Andrew D.H. Mayes, 2000: 478-480).^{vi} The foregoing agrees with Roger Brubaker saying ethnicity is an opinion, a mental reasoning, a perspective of individuals, or a way of seeing the world but not how the material element and constituent of the human world is really organized (Brubaker 2004:64-87; Brubaker, Loveman & Stamatov 2004:1-34).^{vii} So, the Israelites assume a group identity by attributions to engage their shared symbols and organize rituals to seal the communion among them as a society beyond kinship (Vlahos 2009:35).^{viii}

From the foregoing, Mark S. Smith avows that "the innovative centralization of national worship was also part of the process leading to monotheistic Yahwism, as it encouraged a single national deity and devalued local manifestations of deity" (Mark Smith, 2002:136).^{ix} Thus, "the origins of Israel outside the land, the giving of Law (Torah), and the creation of the covenantal relationship at Mount Sinai" beyond early Israelite polytheism and monolatry (worship of Yahweh amidst other deities) culminates in convergence (assimilation, incorporation, coexistence and identification of attributes, imagery, cult and powers of other deities with Yahweh), differentiation (outright rejection of other deities from the godhead) and monotheism in ancient Israel's national cult in the Old Testament. In this way, "the process of differentiation and the eventual displacement of Baal from Israel's national cult distinguished Israel's religion from the religions of its neighbours." More so, Israelite "apologetic claim of religious difference" and "Israelite insistence on a single deity eventually distinguished Israel from the surrounding cultures" of ANE (Mark Smith, 2002:143-145).^x So, Old Testament texts should thus be "taken as representations of the overlapping perspectives of various social factions, strata, and segments: so-called official versus popular; domestic versus public; elite versus peasant; male versus female" existing in ancient Israel. In this light, studying biblical texts on ancient Israel should be regarded as "dealing with literary vestiges of religious practices and worldviews" on the development of convergence and differentiation among the Israelites as a people and a community (Mark Smith, 2002:15&17).^{xi}

The ideological (beliefs, myths or thoughts) world of the literati that arrange the Old Testament into its final form reveals that ancient Israelites have certain experiences which are used in the Bible in constructing their socio - political history with religious interpretations. The literati arrange the Old Testament into a dyad of leadership-followership implications and consequences. The Israelite intelligentsias and literati biblically serve among polyphonic views of diverse socio - political and religious caucuses of power. Accordingly, the theological or religious interpretations of the polyphonic experiences of the Israelites are shaped into an anthology called the biblical texts (Abiola Olaniyi, 2020:136).^{xii} Ehud Ben Zvi opines the theological interpretations pattern out a trajectory of Israelite culture (customs, rituals, dogmas or ideologies) conveying a dyad of leadership-followership implications and add the consequences of exclusive commitment to policies of Yahweh for the ancient Israelites (socio-ethics and justice of assessing the implication, impact and influence of leadership position on the Israelite society).^{xiii} So, as asserted by Leo Perdue, the historical arrangement of the history of the Israelites (with schematic judgments and biased additions) in the Old Testament is a relationship between an admonition of Yahweh to the Israelites to be obedient to the law (the Torah theology from Deuteronomy) and a confirmation of the unity of ancient Israel as a nation that is confronted with a flourishing worship of foreign gods as a continuing threat. However, the rival systems of judging Israel in Judges (especially when charismatic people in the book of Judges do what is right in their own eyes) and the modernizing systems of monarchy in Samuels and Kings (that is meant to be a guarantor of self-defense for the nation) do not succeed in upholding the standard requirements of the imageless worship of "only Yahweh" in spite of the centralization of Israelite cult and the belief in Yahweh's kingship over Israel. The failure of judgeship and monarchy thus attracts the witness and intervention of God's leadership through prophetic pronouncements. Consequently, the history of the Israelites as a history of salvation assumes an etiology of the guilt of the Israelites and the acquittal of the one God Yahweh in the Old Testament (Leo Perdue, 2005:337-351).^{xiv}

2.1. The Torah

The indigenous approaches to organizing Israelite households, cultic images, household figurines, priesthood and prophecy revolve around the interpretation of the law (*Torah*) among the Israelites. The *Torah* is observed by Abraham and recommended to Isaac in Genesis 26:5. Tablets of stone containing the *Torah* and commandments are also given to Moses in Exodus 24:12. The words of the covenant of Yahweh with Israel are then regarded as instruction or teaching for direction and order, as well as Yahweh's standard of conduct for the Israelites. Peter Enns adds "throughout Deuteronomy and the deut. Literature, *tora*, along with various other titles, seems to refer to the book of Deuteronomy, or at least to the legal material contained therein. For example, Deut 4:44 introduces the Mosaic legislation of the remainder of the book as *hattora* (cf. 1:5 and 4:8)."^{xv} In this sense "the contents of *tora* pertains to wise, godly instruction aimed at encouraging wise conduct" (Peter Enns, 1997:895-896).^{xvi} Hence the *Torah* is a sacred phenomenon from Yahweh through the prophets to the Israelites or through parents to children in the book of Proverbs. The *Torah* comprises

- Cultic matters about proper way of offering sacrifices to Yahweh in Leviticus;
- Customary ceremonies and observance of feasts in Exodus and Leviticus cited by Nehemiah, Ezra and Ezekiel;

- Clean and unclean matters in maintaining Israelite separateness by differentiation from other nations and in excluding foreigners in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy cited by Jeremiah;
- Civil relations concerning social administration of day-to-day affairs, settling of disputes by judges and Levites, and communal laws;
- Social laws for justice cited by Isaiah, Habakkuk and Malachi; and
- Several historical accounts.

From the foregoing, "*tora* refers to an authority and standard that was recognized by the community as binding and at least generally of divine origin."^{xvii} This is because God's standard of conduct is meant to be taught to the Israelites and properly executed by the priests, scribes and prophets who in reality do not fulfill the *Torah* in 2Chronicles 15:3; Ezra 7:6&10; Nehemiah 8:7; 9:34; Isaiah 8:16&20; Jeremiah 8:8; 18:18; Ezekiel 7:26; 22:26; Hosea 4:6; Zephaniah 3:4; Malachi 2:4-9. By the consideration that "the law is an expression of God's love for and commitment to his people" the *Torah* assumes "a historical review of Israel's past, i.e., the narrative portions of the Pentateuch" employed as instructional or teaching material for contemporary challenges. Consequently, the *Torah* is regarded as historical accounts of the commitment and faithfulness of Yahweh to the Israelites "handed down from the fathers for successive generations" which later teachers and instructors employ using "past events and figures as a means to instruct" godly living as they maximize their moral content as object lessons for present ethical conduct in the households and official establishments (Peter Enns, 1997:893-900).^{xviii}

2.2. The Household

According to Carolyn S. Leeb, the *bet 'ab* as the household is regarded as the house of the father in which is "a shrine or temple or military encampment" where "the head of the house or camp served as their patron and surrogate father." Direct exercise of power in biblical households is "a masculine value" meant "to accomplish the master's goals, not one's own." In this sense, the direct power of any male servant in the households is a "responsibility to build up the house of his master, not of himself or his own father." Exercise of considerable influence as an "indirect power" is as such "feminized" and regarded as "the sort of power that women were able to exercise, and therefore less valued, less honorable than direct power, which is a masculine value" in the households (Carolyn Leeb, 2000:190-191).^{xix} The Israelites also have an administrative system of elders and household leaders congregating to determine issues concerning interpersonal and interethnic relationships while Levitical priesthood takes charge of worship and administration of rituals in Exodus 3:15-18; Numbers 1:1-8:26; Deuteronomy 1:1-32.

According to Joseph Blenkinsopp, the household is the essential social form of Israelite life in biblical texts giving its members economic and emotional security; family values; monopoly of status; and prestige or honour. It serves as a self-regulating unit to the people living communally under it. The household employs the crucial role of the economic factor in preserving the bond within the household. The *bet 'ab* as the paternal household, a patrimonial domain or father's house has extended kinship network known as *moledet* owing to economic interests of the household in the choice of or rationale for marriage in Old Testament. The union of a male and a female is thus dictated by the self-perpetuation need of the household for a male descent who is expected to become the male head of the household and guard the *nahala 'ahuzza* plot of land on which the economic survival of the household depends. This *nahala* land in the Bible days is inalienable as all Israelite real estates are considered as properties of the national deity in Leviticus 25:23. Such a belief later authenticates the authority of the state in encroaching into traditional Israelite way of life as the laws of inheritance are determined by the economic interests of the household that keep landed properties within the family by levirate law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. So, any irresolvable conflict within the household is brought before elders at city gates in Deuteronomy 21:18-21.

Every matter of religious practice is dealt primarily with within the public sphere that is considered as representing the people and acting according to or disobeying state or official religious ideas. For instance, cult practices representing ancestors as divine beings are referred to occasionally as '*elohim* in sacrifices to Baal Peor of the dead in 1 Samuel 28:7-4; cf. Numbers 25:2&3; Deuteronomy 14:1&2; Psalm 106:28; Isaiah 8:19. The *terapim* as familial deities in Genesis 31:19-35 are condemned by the imposition of the worship of Yahweh as the only national deity in the Deuteronomic law in Deuteronomy 18:9-14; 26:14. The centralization of sacrificial cult in the state sanctuary at Jerusalem where adult males present themselves thrice annually formalizes this in Deuteronomy 12:5-28; 16:16 (Joseph Blenkinsopp, 2005:169-185).^{xx}

2.3. The Official Establishments

However, the emerging Israelite nation afterwards transforms from the council of elders, the household system of administration and charismatic leadership of judges to monarchy in biblical accounts. Monarchy emerges as the institution expected to serve as the protector of Israelite state and the guarantor of social ethics and justice. But Israelite priesthood that has assumed prophetic charisma is not willing to submit to people's demand for a change of leadership style and give legitimacy to monarchy in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25; 1 Samuel 3:19-21; 8:1-22. Consequently, different perspectives emerge about the socially acceptable monarchy. In some quarters, monarchy is theocracy from Yahweh with polyphonic voices (Abiola Olaniyi, 2012:269-278).^{xxi} For instance, Moses, a Levite (Exodus 6:16-21; Numbers 26:57-60; 1 Chronicles 23:6-17) turned Israelite prophet per excellence gives hints about importance of the monarchy to the Israelites as a theocratic structure in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. However, Samuel, another Levite (1 Chronicles 6:19-33; 1 Samuel 3:19-21) turned Israelite prophet presents monarchy as an anti-theocratic system in 1 Samuel 8:1-22. Little wonder, Jeremiah 15:1 describes the futility of Levite turned prophet in addressing Israelite situation.

According to Philip Jenson, priestly functions (of standing firmly before God with rituals, intercessions and instructions from the holy sphere at the profane place) on behalf of one's family as a head of an Israelite family and among the tribal elders transform into an hierarchical office at the national shrine (later called the Tabernacle or Temple) occupied through initiation, ordination and anointing in Genesis 31:54; Deuteronomy 10:8; 33:8-10; 1 Samuel 7:1. Priesthood develops to exercise a teaching role of instructing the Israelites about God and about things that Yahweh requires from Israel as right behaviour of attracting the presence and blessings of God, to avoid calamity and in preserving the distinctive Israelite faith and practice in Leviticus 10:11; 15:31; Numbers 6:24-27; 2 Kings 17:24-28; Jeremiah 18:18; Ezekiel 7:26; Hosea 4:6; Malachi 2:6-7. Priests also officiate with the oracular instruments of *Urim* and *Thummim* pronouncing speeches, giving divine guidance and specific instruction through the knowledge of the *Torah* and manipulating rituals and sacrifices at the altar and during the wars of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 17:9; 20:2-4; 21:5; Joshua 6; 1 Samuel 23:9; 30:7-8. However, the priests frequently fail in their functions especially when prestige, mega numerical shrine capacity, social commendation and material prosperity assume indices of public acceptability and successful ministry in Exodus 32; Leviticus 10:1-11; Numbers 12; Judges 18:19-20; 1 Samuel 1:1-2:36; Ezekiel 22:26; Hosea 6:9. Eventually, kings who assume responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the temple (as religious entrepreneurs) also assume power to appoint and dismiss priests by political choices in 2 Samuel 19:11; 1 Kings 2:26-27&35. However, royal policies towards welfare of the priests become one of the criteria by which the kings of Israel and Judah are later to be assessed in 1 Kings 12:31; 2 Kings 10:19; 22:4-7, 12&13. Eventually, priests are no longer able to manipulate the *Urim* and the *Thummim* during post exilic period in Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65 (Philip Jenson, 1997:600-605).^{xxii} Suffice to say that "because of the centrality of the temple and the importance of access to the divine, priests had a significant political and economic role as well as a religious one" (Philip Jenson, 1997:1066).^{xxiii}

Similarly, in the opinion of Verhoef, the institution of the office of a prophet beyond mere acts of prophesying is arranged to follow Moses, the model and the paradigm of the prophetic office in Deuteronomy 5:23-33; 18:16-20. Yahweh is believed to be the initiating agent of prophecy by calling the *nabi*, *roeh*, *hozeh* or *qosem* to communicate the revealed word of God from intimate relationship with Yahweh. Initiative from the mediation of the revealed word is sometimes received by the prophets in prayer and supplication for the people. A prophet is thus considered as someone whose task is to keep watch over the people of Yahweh. Yet, prophecy is expected to arise on account of the concrete circumstances and conditions of the Israelites and of their neighbouring nations. It is also expected to contain revelations (about the past and the present and elements of future expectation) as warning in proclaiming God's judgment and in announcing God's salvation in 1 Kings 22:14. In this light, "the content of their messages as prophets could not be learned, but could only be received."

The prophetic office witnesses emergence of band of prophets living in discrete monastic societies in 1 Samuel 10:5-7; 19:18-24; 2 Kings 2:3-15; 4:38; 5:22; 6:1. The band of prophets is expected to be taught the history of how God has been revealing himself, the moral demands directed by the *Torah* and specialized training on pastoral care. Consequently, in the words of Verhoef, "kingship in Israel was intimately related to the prophetic legitimation." The themes of prophetic messages then embrace the revelation of God through his word and deed on "four spheres of life: the religious-ethical, the socio-economical, the political (both internal and external), and the eschatological." A prophet is assumed to be speaking on behalf of Yahweh as "a proclaimer of the word, called by God to warn, exhort, comfort, teach, and counsel, bound to God alone and thus enjoying a freedom that is unique." The discerning of the truth of a prophecy as coming from Yahweh is made to conform to the terms of the *Torah* in Deuteronomy 13:1-5. Prophecy is expected to expose sin in order to ward off captivity or to conceal sin in order to be viewed as false prophecy in Lamentation 2:14; 4:13. But the surrogate form of the prophetic institution in ancient Israel later creates dishonor for the mosaic prophetic institution in Hosea 4:4-6; Amos 7:12; Micah 3:5. So, Israelite prophets become irresponsible till the sin of Jerusalem is attributed to the treachery of Israelite officials, prophets, and priests according to Zephaniah 3:1-5 (Verhoef, 1997:1067-1078).^{xxiv}

The rationale for assuming official positions like the priest, the prophet or the king becomes questionable as the Israelites prefer the prestige, rewards and honour of the offices of power (the allocations of locations/seats of power). The religious symbol of Israel known as the Ark of the Covenant also has certain rituals that embodies it in Exodus 25:1-22; 30:6-10, 25&26 beyond the symbolic totems of Israelite ethnic constituents in Numbers 1:1-4, 7-8, 44&52; 2:2-3, 10, 17&18, 25, 31&34; 10:14, 18, 22, 25. The institution of bureaucratic offices for administering welfare policies and addressing new circumstances and challenges later complicates the growing complexity in Israelite system in Deuteronomy 1:9-46. However, Israelite officials continue to disrespect the rituals embodying the symbol as mere formality culminating in losing their spiritual sense and consciousness. The moral spirit of the *Torah* as the law of liberty, equity and justice between the privileged (land, material and property owners) and the subsistent or less privileged (the needy, widows, orphans, destitute, strangers, sojourners or divorced women) gets lost to the inflexibility of legalism in administering the law. Clashes of power, coercion and influence emerge among priests, prophets and kings who are regarded as royal politicians by the Israelites. Some prophetic messages representing sectarian movements call for a revitalization of the righteous and merciful beliefs in Yahweh in Hosea 4:6; 6:6; 11:7-12; Micah 6:8; 7:18-20; Zechariah 7:1-10; Malachi 2:7-9. The beliefs initially empower the rituals which the priests and the kings denigrate till Assyrian and Babylonian colonialisms overtake the Israelites in 2Kings 25:1-30.

Consequently, contradictory historiography of priests, prophets and kings emerges afterwards. 1 Kings 11:26-12:25 narrates how Yahweh raises adversaries and rebellions (like Jeroboam) against King Solomon for the sin of not advocating exclusive worship of Yahweh. 2Kings 17:21 on the other hand describes the Israelites making Jeroboam, son of Nebat the king of northern Israel when Yahweh divides northern Israel from southern Israel (Davidic household). These two biblical texts appear contradictory at first reading. Nonetheless, the picture painted by 1 Kings 11:1 - 14:20 reveals

that Israelite literati believe that the sin of the Israelites in allowing Solomon to celebrate, advocate and emphasize the worship of other gods as a king who is expected to promote exclusive worship of Yahweh leads to the rise of Jeroboam into leadership in Israel. In the same vein, the rebellion of followers in compelling leaders to act against the policies of Yahweh is as guilty and condemned as the error of leaders in influencing followers to obey administrative systems or structures that are against the policies of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 3:21-29. However, Deuteronomy 2:12&22; and 3:14 reveal that the book of Deuteronomy is written after the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan (not before entering the Promised Land). The above pattern of writing history exposes the focus of the Deuteronomistic Historical theology as comprising the consequences of obedience and the implications of rebellion of leadership-followership relationships in ancient Israel as a nation institutionalized on a dyad of theological identities and value judgment in Deuteronomy 1:19-46; 2:1&7, 14. The acceptable pattern of leadership which Yahweh approves through Moses for the newly formed nation of Israel to identify with is then a congregational or democratic system of administration in Deuteronomy 1:13-15, 20-25.

Andrew D.H. Mayes adds that "the social and ethical concerns of prophecy" in ancient Israel assumes a "radical cultic critique" in Jeremiah in confronting the significance of the Temple as the central sanctuary of cultic roles. Thus, the perception of Israel as a royal state under a king that is assumed to be the one to guarantee justice and order changes to a Yahwistic Israel where the whole nation is responsible for the welfare of all the Israelites in the divinely authorized social order (religiously political objectives). The new perspective seeks to safeguard individual Israelites as a person with certain "sphere of genuine autonomy" creating assumption of status in the society as an achieved given based on "commitment to belief, and not through genealogical descent" afterwards (Andrew Mayes, 2000:471-480).^{xxv}

3. Conclusion

This piece conjectures the development of ancient Israel from its traditional patriarchal setting to its recognition as a nation with territorial integrity. It interrogates ancient Israel from Abrahamic traditions to Mosaic institutionalization. The role of the *Torah* in cultic and social relationships exposes the initiatives that are involved in the development of indigenous approaches to sustaining and preserving the material and human resources of the nation. However, the interpretation of the *Torah* as the message of Yahweh from the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant from the periods of Israelite elders, Levites, priests, prophets through kings is found to be enmeshed in legalism. The initial spirit or intention of the *Torah* in the Old Testament is to ensure the equality of all the Israelites in social justice. The spirit of the *Torah* aims at defending the subsistent in the society especially people who belong to the periphery in the Promised Land. But, the rejection of knowledge of the spirit of the *Torah* in biblical text leads to maladministration of official roles in Israelite community and attracts the promotion of and dependence on foreign theological policies yielding foreign invasion and colonization.

4. References

- i. Blenkinsopp, J. "The Household in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism" in Leo G. Perdue, (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- ii. Brubaker, R. *Ethnicity without Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- iii. Brubaker, R., Loveman, M., and Stamatov, P. 'Ethnicity as Cognition', *Theory and Society*, vol. 33, 2004, 1-34.
- iv. Ehud Ben Zvi, Are There Any Bridges Out There? How Wide Was the Conceptual Gap between the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles? in Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau, (eds.), *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical And Comparative Perspectives*, USA: Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, 2009.
- v. Enns, P. "Torah, Law of God" in Willem A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.
- vi. Jenson, P. "kohen, priest and priesthood" in Willem A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 2, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.
- vii. Jenson, P. "Priest and Levites" in Willem A. VanGemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.
- viii. Leeb, C.S. *Away from the Father's House: The Social Location of naar and naarah in Ancient Israel*, England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2000.
- ix. Mayes, A.D.H. *Deuteronomistic Ideology and The Theology of the Old Testament*, in Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer & Jean- Daniel Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- x. Moberly, R.W.L. "Theology of the Old Testament" in David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, Michigan: Baer Books, 1999.
- xi. Olaniyi, A.A. The Gebira Role in the Ancient Israelite Royal Cult and Women Leadership in Ile-Ife Zone of Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, in *AFRICANA Journal of Boston University*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2012, 269-278.
- xii. Olaniyi, A.A.. "Evolving Identity in the History of Ancient Israel" in *Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2020, 29.
- xiii. Olaniyi, A.A. "Institutionalization of the Sacred in Israelite Deuteronomistic History of National Integrity and Development" in Y.O. Imam et al (eds), *Religion, Peace Building and National Integration*, Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, 2020.
- xiv. Perdue, L.G. (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005.
- xv. Smith, M.S. *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2002.

- xvi. Verhoef, P.A. "Prophecy" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.
 - xvii. Vlahos, M. *Fighting Identity: Sacred War and World Change*, Westport, USA: Praeger Security International, 2009.
 - xviii. Wenham, G.J. "Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm" in David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, Michigan: Baer Books, 1999.
-
- i. Gordon J. Wenham, "Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm" in David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, Michigan: Baer Books, 1999, 144.
 - ii. R. W. L. Moberly, "Theology of the Old Testament" in David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, Michigan: Baer Books, 1999, 478.
 - iii. Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Household in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism" in Leo G. Perdue, (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, 169-183.
 - iv. Abiola A. Olaniyi, The Gebira Role in the Ancient Israelite Royal Cult and Women Leadership in Ile-Ife Zone of Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, in *AFRICANA Journal of Boston University*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2012, 269-270.
 - v. Abiola A. Olaniyi, "Evolving Identity in the History of Ancient Israel" in *Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 14, No 3, 2020, 29.
 - vi. Andrew D.H. Mayes, *Deuteronomistic Ideology and The Theology of the Old Testament*, in Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer & Jean-Daniel Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, 478-480.
 - vii. Roger Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004, 64-87. See also Roger Brubaker, M. Loveman, and P. Stamatov, 'Ethnicity as Cognition', *Theory and Society*, vol. 33, 2004, 1-34.
 - viii. Michael Vlahos, *Fighting Identity: Sacred War and World Change*, Westport, USA: Praeger Security International, 2009, 35.
 - ix. Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2002, Epub file, 136.
 - x. Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2002, Epub file, 143-145.
 - xi. Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2002, Epub file, 15 & 17.
 - xii. Abiola A. Olaniyi, "Institutionalization of the Sacred in Israelite Deuteronomistic History of National Integrity and Development" in Y.O. Imam et al (eds), *Religion, Peace Building and National Integration*, Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, 2020, 136.
 - xiii. Ehud Ben Zvi, Are There Any Bridges Out There? How Wide Was the Conceptual Gap between the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles? in Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau, (eds.), *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical And Comparative Perspectives*, USA: Winona Lake, Indiana, Eisenbrauns, Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, 2009, 84-86.
 - xiv. Leo G. Perdue (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, 337-351.
 - xv. Peter Enns, "Torah, Law of God" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 895.
 - xvi. Peter Enns, "Torah, Law of God" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 896.
 - xvii. Peter Enns, "Torah, Law of God" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 896.
 - xviii. Peter Enns, "Torah, Law of God" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 893-900.
 - xix. Carolyn S. Leeb, *Away from the Father's House: The Social Location of naar and naarah in Ancient Israel*, England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2000, 190-191.
 - xx. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Household in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism* in Leo G. Perdue (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, 169-185.
 - xxi. Abiola A. Olaniyi, The Gebira Role in the Ancient Israelite Royal Cult and Women Leadership in Ile-Ife Zone of Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, in *AFRICANA Journal of Boston University*, vol. 6, no. 1, (2012), 269-278.
 - xxii. Philip Jenson, "kohen, priest and priesthood" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 2, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 600-605.
 - xxiii. Philip Jenson, "Priest and Levites" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 1066.
 - xxiv. P. A. Verhoef, "Prophecy" in Willem A. VanGemeran (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Volume 4, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, 1067-1078.
 - xxv. Andrew D.H. Mayes, *Deuteronomistic Ideology and The Theology of the Old Testament*, in Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer & Jean-Daniel Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, 471-480.