



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: CTH 211**

**COURSE TITLE: Pentateuch**

## Course Guide

Course Code	CTH 211
Course Title	Pentateuch
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## **Introduction**

**CTH211:** Pentateuch is a one-semester 2 credits unit course. The course is offered as part of the requirement for the award of first degree in Christian Theology. The course material can also be useful for students in other levels of Christian Theology. Besides, those who wish to broaden their knowledge in Biblical studies, especially the five books of the Bible can find this course material beneficial.

The course is made up of 14 units where we shall study the set of books classified as Pentateuch in the Old Testament. The Pentateuch would be studied, exploring their importance and relevance in the liturgy and practices of the Jews and Christians. Individual books of the Pentateuch will be examined and their messages and contemporary relevance will be explored.

The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through the materials. It also emphasizes the need for Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs). Detail information on TMAs is found in a separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to this course.

## **What you will learn in this Course**

The overall aim of CTH211 is to draw your attention to the importance of the Pentateuch in Israelite historical development and worship. You will understand why the book is so central in Israel's history and religion. You will also find out why the Pentateuch is regarded as vital in the understanding of Israelite historical development.

## **Course Aims**

The aim of this course is to help you discover the importance of the Pentateuch among the ancient Israelites and also the contemporary relevance of its message.

This will be achieved by:

- Introducing you to the history and composition of the Pentateuch.
- Exposing you to the different theories on the composition of the Pentateuch.
- Giving you the distinctive features that distinguish the Pentateuch from other literature that emanated from the ancient Near East.
- Helping you to understand the origin of the world, origin, growth and the development of the nation of Israel.

- Giving you an overview of the processes involved in the development of Pentateuch criticism.
- Challenging you to further probe deeper into the messages of the Pentateuch and their contemporary relevance.

### **Course Objectives**

To achieve the aims set out above, there are set overall objectives. Besides, each unit has its specific objectives. The unit objectives would be included in the beginning of each unit. You should read them before you start working through the unit. It is advisable that you refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress. At the end of every unit, you should also revise the unit objectives. In this way you can be sure that you have done all you are expected to do in the unit.

Listed below are the broader objectives of this course. It is expected that by meeting these objectives, the overall aims of the course must have been achieved. At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Discuss the meaning and goal of the Pentateuch.
- Discuss the process of the composition of the Pentateuch
- Account for the factors that led to the divergent views on the authorship of the Pentateuch.
- Discuss the importance of Pentateuch in Israelite history and religion.
- Appreciate the message(s) of the Pentateuch
- Compare and contrast the content of the Pentateuch with other literature in the ancient Near East.
- Appreciate the relevance of the Pentateuch in contemporary socio- religious set-up.

### **Working through this Course**

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

## **Course Materials**

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments file
5. Presentation schedule

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

## **Study Units**

There are fifteen study units in this course. They are listed as follows:

- |         |                                                     |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1  | What is the Pentateuch?                             |
| Unit 2  | The Development of Pentateuchal Criticism           |
| Unit 3  | The Authorship of Pentateuch                        |
| Unit 4  | The Documentary Hypothesis of Pentateuch            |
| Unit 5  | The Book of Genesis                                 |
| Unit 6  | The Creation story in Genesis                       |
| Unit 7  | The Book of Exodus                                  |
| Unit 8  | Key Themes and Concepts in Exodus                   |
| Unit 9  | The Book of Leviticus                               |
| Unit 10 | The Levitical Offerings/Festivals in Leviticus      |
| Unit 11 | The Book of Numbers                                 |
| Unit 12 | Important Themes in Numbers                         |
| Unit 13 | The Book of Deuteronomy                             |
| Unit 14 | Contemporary Relevance of The Message of Pentateuch |

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

## **Set Textbooks**

These textbooks are recommended for your study in this course:

- Anderson, B.W. (1975) *Understanding the Old Testament*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Archer, G.L, Jr. (1974) *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Akao, J.O. (2000) *A History of Israel*. Lagos: Longmans Ltd.
- Barton, J. (1984) *Reading the Old Testament*. Philadelphia; Westminster.
- Crenshaw, J.H. (1992 ) *Old Testament Story and Faith: A Literary and Theological Introduction*. New York: Hendrikson Publishers.
- Ademiluka, S.O. *Genesis 1 – 3 in an African Setting* Ilorin: Mathadex Publisher.
- Dillard, R.B. & Longman, T. (1994) *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids; Zondervan Publishing House.
- Flander, Jr; H.J. et al. (1988) *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Oxford; OUP.
- Fuller, L. (1995) *Pentateuch*. Jos: ACTS.
- Harrison, K.K. (1990) *Introduction to the Old Testament*. New York: The Tyndale Press.
- Haures, C.E. & Young, W.A. (1986) *An Introduction to the Bible* New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Gottwald, N.K. (1988) *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-literary Introduction*; Philadelphia; Fortress Press.
- McCain, D. (2002) *Notes on Old Testament Introduction*. Jos: ACTS.
- Oduyoye, M. (1998) *The Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of Men: An Afro-Asiatic Interpretation of Genesis 1 – 11*. Ibadan, Sefer Books Ltd.

Good books on Pentateuch are not easy to come by these days. However you should visit the web to locate relevant materials. The following are some suggested sites:

[www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)

[www.religion-online.org](http://www.religion-online.org)

[www.biblestudies.org](http://www.biblestudies.org)

### **Assignment File**

In this file you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignment will be found in the assignment file itself and later in this Course Guide in the section on assessment.

### **Presentation Schedule**

The “presentation schedule” included in your course material gives you the important dates for the completion of your tutor marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignment as and when due.

### **Assessment**

There are two aspects to the assessment of this Course. First are the tutor-marked assignments; second, there is a written examination. While working on your assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment file.

The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course.

### **Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)**

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

Assignments for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment file. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

All completed assignments should be submitted to your tutor. Also, keep to the deadline set for the submission of assignment by your tutor. If you are unable to meet the deadline, contact your tutor to discuss the possibility of an extension.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The examination will consist of questions you will come across in tutor marked assignments. You are therefore advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination.

### **Course Marking Scheme**

The table below gives a breakdown of the course mark:

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Assignments 1 – 14	These assignments best three marks of the assignments counts for 30% of course marks.
Final examination	The final examination counts for 70% of overall marks
Total	100% of Course Marks

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

### **Course Overview**

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of Work</b>	<b>Week's Activity</b>	<b>Assessment (end of Unit)</b>
	Course Guide	1	
1	What is Pentateuch	1	Assignment 1
2	The Development of Pentateuchal Criticism	2	Assignment 2
3	The Authorship of Pentateuch	3	Assignment 3
4	The Documentary Hypothesis of Pentateuch	4	Assignment 4
5.	The Book of Genesis	5	Assignment 5
6.	The Creation Story in Genesis	6	Assignment 6
7.	The Book of Exodus	7	Assignment 7
8.	Key Themes and Concepts in Exodus	8	Assignment 8
9.	The Book of Leviticus	9	Assignment 9
10.	The Levitical Offerings/Festivals in Leviticus	10	Assignment 10
11.	The Book of Numbers	11	Assignment 11



12.	Important Themes in Numbers	12	Assignment 12
13.	The Book of Deuteronomy	13	Assignment 13
14.	Contemporary Relevance of the Message of the Pentateuch		
15.	Revision	15	Assignment 15
16.	Revision	16	
17.	Revision	17	
18.	Examination	18	

Table 2: Course Overview

### **How to get the best from this Course**

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of the distance learning system. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Following this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. The objectives should guide your study. After studying the units, you must cross check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you adhere strictly to this art of checking whether the objective is achieved or not, you will definitely improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a “Reading” section. Whenever you need help, don’t hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read through this Course Guide thoroughly.
2. Plan your study schedule. You should refer to the ‘Course Overview’ for more details. Find out the time you are expected to spend on each unit and when and how to turn in your assignments.
3. Stick to your study schedule. Don’t allow anything to get you distracted from your study schedule.
4. Turn to unit 1 and read the introduction and objectives for the unit.

5. Gather the study material you need. All you need for a unit is given in the “overview” at the beginning of each unit. The study unit you are working on and one of your set books should be on your desk at the same time.
- 6 Work through the units. The content of the unit has been arranged in a sequential order. Instructions would be given on where to read from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
- 7 Review the objective for each study unit to confirm you have achieved them.
- 8 Don't proceed to the next unit, until you are sure you have achieved the objectives of the unit you are working on.
9. Don't wait until your assignment is returned before working on the next unit. Keep to your schedule.
- 10 When you complete the last unit you can be preparing for exams. Be sure that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this course guide ).

### **Tutors and Tutorials**

There are 10 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. The dates, times and location of these tutorials together with the name and phone number of your tutor will be communicated to you. This will be done as you are allocated to a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be the circumstances in which you will find help necessary. Contact your tutor if;

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings.
- You have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises and

- You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comment on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to interact with your tutor by asking questions, which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To maximize the benefits of the course tutorials, it is advisable that you prepare a question list before attending them. When you participate in the discussions your intellectual life will be deeply enriched.

### **Summary**

CTH211 intends to expose you to the background history of the development of the Pentateuch. As well as explore the relevance of its message in contemporary socio-religious set-up. On successful completion of this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

1. What is the Pentateuch?
2. Who was the author of Pentateuch?
3. Who pioneered Pentateuchal criticism?
4. What is the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch?
5. Why Genesis is referred to as the book of beginnings?
6. What is the significance of the Exodus in Israelite history?
7. What led to the emergence of the Decalogue?
8. Discuss the different feasts and festivals in ancient Israel?
9. What made Israel unique among other nations?
10. Discuss the relevance of the message of Pentateuch in contemporary times?

The questions you will be able to answer should not be limited to the ones above. The Pentateuch is a course you will find interesting and stimulating. It is a course that introduces you to the whole Bible and Israelite history. I hope that as I lead you through this course you will find it a worthwhile experience.

Course Guide

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Course Title Pentateuch

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## **UNIT 1: WHAT IS THE PENTATEUCH?**

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Pentateuch?
  - 3.2 Books classified as Pentateuch
  - 3.3 Pentateuch in Israelite history
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

The Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Bible. It occupies a very important place in Judaism and even Christianity. The Pentateuch remains a principal text that served as a source of Israelite history, especially her early history. In this course we shall introduce you to the books classified as the Pentateuch and the reasons they were so classified. It is hoped that this would lay the foundation for the subsequent examination of the Pentateuch and all that relates to it. In this unit, you will understand why the Pentateuch remains a principal reference point in Israelite history and religion.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Define Pentateuch meaningfully
- Realize the place of Pentateuch in the understanding of Israelite religion and history.
- Explain why the Pentateuch is unique compared to other literature in the ancient Near East.

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 What is Pentateuch?

The word 'Pentateuch' is from the Greek word '*pentatikos*' which means five volumes. When used in relation to the Old Testament, it means the first five books. Origen, one of the early church fathers, was the first to use the term 'Pentateuch' in reference to these books. Among the Jews it is called *Torah*, which some translated to mean 'Law'. *Torah*, however could mean, principle, instruction or guideline. In essence therefore, the ancient Israelites see the Pentateuch as a guiding principle for their socio-religious activities. That is why we said the Pentateuch occupies a unique place in the life of the people.

#### 3.2 Books Classified as Pentateuch

The books classified as the Pentateuch are the following: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In the Hebrew bible, (you should remember that the Pentateuch was originally written in Hebrew language, the language spoken by the ancient Israelites) the first word of each book of the Pentateuch is the title. For example, Genesis is called "Bereshith" which means "in the beginning ". Exodus is called "Shemoth" which means, "these are the names". Leviticus is called "wayiqra" which means 'and he called'. Numbers is called "Bemidber" which means 'in the wilderness'. The books of Deuteronomy is called "Devarim" meaning 'words'. The English names for the books of Pentateuch were derived from the Septuagint (LXX). The English titles therefore have Greek background.

Genesis	=	'Beginning'
Exodus	=	'Way out'
Leviticus	=	'Pertaining to the Levites'
Numbers	=	'Numbering'
Deuteronomy	=	'second law'

#### *Self-Assessment Exercise 1*

Write out the names of the first five books of the Bible.



### **3.3 Pentateuch in Israelite History**

That the Israelite history is firmly rooted in addressing the destiny of humanity cannot be contested. It was however the Pentateuch that has helped us to better understand God's purpose for Israel especially in relation to the redemption of mankind. The Pentateuch begins with the creation of man, the subsequent fall and the attendant consequences and the process of restoration.

The historical framework of the Pentateuch consists of the formation of Israel, from the call of Abraham to the death of Moses. It spans a period of over 600 years that is from about 1900 BC to about 1250 BC. However it may be difficult to determine the precise dates the events recorded in the Pentateuch happened. The difficult part that cannot be easily dated is the early stage of the Israelite history, especially what is referred to as the patriarchal history (i.e. the history of the early ancestors of Israel).

The Pentateuch can be divided into two main sub-divisions. The first is about the story of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 12-50) and the second section relates the story of Moses and the formation of the nation of Israel (Exodus – Deuteronomy). Gen. 1-11 however serves as prologue to the Pentateuch; it connects the whole of humanity to God's purpose to be fulfilled through Israel.

#### ***Self-Assessment Exercise 2***

In what way has the Pentateuch reveal God's purpose for humanity?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit you have learnt the meaning of the Pentateuch. It has also been revealed that Pentateuch occupies a unique place in Israelite history and religion. You have also learned that the ancient Israelites see the Pentateuch as a guiding principle for their socio-religious activities. That is why they referred to it as *Torah*, that is, the law.

### **5.0 Summary**

Pentateuch refers to the first five books of the Bible. The Pentateuch remains a principal text that served as a veritable source of Israelite history and even the history of humanity as a whole. The books classified as Pentateuch are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Besides, Pentateuch was originally written in Hebrew language.

## **6.0 Tutor – Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. What is Pentateuch?
2. What is the place of Pentateuch in Israelite history?
3. What is the original language in which Pentateuch was written?
4. Why is Pentateuch different from other ancient Near Eastern literature?

## **7.0 References/Further Readings**

Anderson, B.W. (1975). *Understanding the Old Testament*. Prentice-Hall.

Archer, G.L. Jr. (1974). *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Craigie, P.C. (1986). *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*. Grand Rapids: Abingdon Press.

Dillard, R.B.: Longman, T. III (1994). *Old Testament Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.

Fuller, L. (2000). *Pentateuch*. Jos: ACTS.

## **UNIT 2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM**

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Biblical Criticism
  - 3.2 Critical Methods employed in studying Pentateuch
  - 3.3 Development of Pentateuchal Criticism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, you have studied the meaning of the Pentateuch and how it originated. In this unit, I intend to survey the beginning of Old Testament criticism, especially the Pentateuchal criticism and how it subsequently developed. We shall look into factors that encourage Pentateuchal criticism and how it subsequently developed. We shall also examine factors that encouraged Pentateuchal criticism and the pioneers in the field. To effectively do this we shall briefly discuss biblical criticism and the different critical tools and their application in Old Testament studies.

### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Describe how Old Testament criticism, especially that of the Pentateuch started.
- Explain the rationale behind Pentateuchal criticism.
- Discuss the historical development of the Pentateuchal criticism.
- Identify the different critical methods employed in the study of the Pentateuch.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 What is Biblical Criticism?**

For us to better appreciate what Pentateuchal criticism is all about, it is pertinent to know what is called Biblical criticism. As you are aware, criticism in our context connotes the negative idea of destruction and faultfinding. To criticize somebody or something in our society, it to highlight the weakness in order to destroy, either, the reputation or integrity of such persons or things.

However, criticism in Biblical scholarship is the evaluation of the claim of people about either a book or historical allusions in the light of archaeological, philological, historical, psychological, and scientific evidences. This is done with the orientation of further elucidating facts relayed in a book or historical allusion there.

Let me give you an example of criticism in relation to the Pentateuch. Moses was said to be the author of the Pentateuch, but in one of the books we read, “And Moses the servant of the LORD died, there in Moab, as the LORD had said” (Deut. 34:5). Can a dead person write his own obituary?

Raising question like this, amount to criticizing the suggestion that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. Since the dead don't write their obituaries, Moses probably did not write that part of the Pentateuch. It may be wrong therefore to ascribe the authorship of the whole Pentateuch to Moses.

The church down through the ages has always frowned at the critical study of the Bible. It is the opinion of some churchmen that Biblical criticism is out on a faultfinding mission, which inevitably will affect the faith of the believers. This has discouraged many from embarking on a critical study of the Bible. From the brief survey of the development of criticism of the development of criticism of the Pentateuch, the motivation for its development might be evident.

#### **3.2 Critical methods in Studying Pentateuch**

In the course of studying the Pentateuch, scholars down through the centuries, employed different critical methods. It is very necessary for you to be familiar with these critical tools. They may further give you insight into the goal of critical study of the Pentateuch. The following is a brief review of the critical methods/tools employed in the study of the Pentateuchal text.

## **Textual criticism**

This is the attempt by scholars to arrive at the original word of the scripture. Since the autographs (the original copies) of the Pentateuch are not available, manuscripts and translations are carefully compared in order to get closer to the original. In the long centuries of copying manually the manuscript of the Pentateuch, the possibility that variant might be noted in the available manuscripts is high. This may therefore make it difficult to know if the copies made out of the original are faithful to it or not.

However, with the discovery of some ancient manuscripts, scholars are able to compare the older manuscripts, in order to determine the variants. This comparison of older available manuscript is what is known as textual criticism. Note that a manuscript is a book written by hand before the invention of printing.

## **Linguistic Criticism**

There is a time gap between us and the writers of the scripture. In the light of this, scholars of Pentateuch aimed at finding out the real meaning of words and phrases. You should know that the Pentateuch was written mainly in Hebrew language and some part in Aramaic. It may be difficult for us to know what a word or phrase meant when they were originally used. However, linguistic critics of the Pentateuch are able to give closest meaning by comparing usage of similar words in other documents or cultures.

## **Form Criticism**

Form criticism deals with an earlier pre-literary phase of the story. You should be aware that much of narratives of the Pentateuch were circulating in oral form before they were finally written. Form criticism therefore identifies the genres or literary types of the Pentateuch, their structures, intentions, and settings in which they emerged. This is done in order to understand the oral stage of their development. At the early stage of Israelite history, the people made their confessional worship in a wide variety of fixed forms suited to oral communication; like blessings, oaths, hymns, legends, commandment and myth among others. These literary types enumerated above are found in the Pentateuch.

## **Literary Criticism**

Literary criticism dealt with units in the Pentateuch, and with the historical settings in which they occurred. Literary criticism also focuses upon the structure, style, forms and sources of the text. This method helps us to understand a text in terms of its literary unit, composition and purposes. You should remember that in

literary criticism, circumstances of the whole literature are analyzed. Issues like authority, date of composition, place of writing, audience, sources and purpose are made focus for literary searchlight.

### **Tradition Criticism**

This deals with the stages through which a piece of literature evolved and grew. It also seeks to know how traditions have been adopted and transmitted. Tradition is a process by which beliefs and practices are passed from one generation to the other. In the process of transmission, traditions are often modified. This is often done orally. It is evident that tradition was important in the development of the Bible, this can be seen in such texts as Deuteronomy 6:20-25. Here a father is instructed to pass on the Exodus tradition as an explanation to why it is important to keep the laws. The tradition critic looks for evidence of traditions, like that of the Exodus, they trace the development of these individual traditions, probing back as far as possible into the pre-literary stage. This is done in order to see how traditions have been expanded and the reasons for this.

### **Redaction Criticism**

This deals with the very last stages of the text in the written fixed form. This involves the study and identification of the editorial work done on a text and the purpose for it.

### **Canonical Criticism**

This examines how and why a book was regarded authoritative by the Israelite or Jewish communities. The historical process did not end when books were written, but they continued as they were selected and canonized.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Discuss the critical Methods Employed in the Study of Pentateuch

### **3.3 Development of Pentateuchal Criticism**

The criticism of the Pentateuch began at a very early date, with the activity of the guild of scribes. These scribes attempted to preserve the exact form of the original text of each book of the Old Testament. For your information, the scribes are the ancient Israelite writers and recorders. They are also known as the Massorettes. They were the custodians of the sacred text (i.e. the books of the Old Testament). Since the original Pentateuchal books were no longer in existence in their time, they tried to see how the manuscripts available can help them more closely to the

original. What they did was to compare the available manuscripts in order to discover the various inherent and how they probably occur. This method is called textual criticism (you should remember that we had earlier discussed this under critical methods in the study of the Pentateuch).

In the post-reformation era, objections were raised as to the authorship of the Pentateuch. For example, in the middle of the 16th Century, Masius, a Roman Catholic lawyer, opined that Ezra might have made certain interpolations in the Pentateuch. Likewise the Spanish Jesuit, Benedict Pereira (1535-1610) held that there were considerable additions made to the Pentateuch. Benedict Spinosa (1632-77) also denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, attributing it to a later compiler, most probably Ezra.

From the 18th Century A.D. Pentateuchal criticism assumed a new dimension. This period witnessed a great upsurge of critical Old Testament scholars. These scholars questioned Old claims and postulations about the historicity, genuineness and composition of the Old Testament. You should know that it was at this period that the popular documentary theory on the composition of the Pentateuch emerged.

The 18th Century in history is generally known as the ‘Age of Enlightenment’. It was a time when rationalism held sway in Europe. The Enlightenment was characterized by the enthronement of human reason, accompanied by a revolt against external authority. At this period, ancient secular literatures were subjected to a thorough rationalistic scrutiny. The critical scholars therefore opined that the Pentateuch too ought to be subjected to the same principles of careful scrutiny as those applied to secular writings. These scholars further agreed that the Pentateuch should be studied independently of ecclesiastical authority, religious dogma, or church traditions of any kind.

The scholar whose work can be regarded as pioneering modern critical studies of the Pentateuch is a German named, J.G. Eichorn (1752 – 1827). His work ‘Old Testament Introduction’, published between 1780 and 1783, earned him the title Father of ‘Old Testament Criticism’’: The work basically set out to address the problem relating to the authorship of the Pentateuch. This fact will be evident in subsequent units.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Trace the rise and development of Pentateuch Criticism?

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit we have traced the rise and development of Pentateuch criticism. You have also learnt the meaning of Biblical criticism. You have learned that the criticism of the Pentateuch started at a very early date. However it assumed a new dimension during the period classified as 'Age of Enlightenment'.

## **5.0 Summary**

Criticism in Biblical scholarship is the evaluation of the claim of people about either a book or an event alluded to in it; in the light of archaeological, philological, historical, psychological and scientific evidences. Pentateuchal criticism began at a very early date; this is evident in the works of the Massoretes who aimed at restoring original reading of the text. However, from the 18th Century A.D. Pentateuchal criticism assumed a new dimension. The pioneer of modern critical study of the Pentateuch is a German named, J.G. Eichorn.

## **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Describe how and when Pentateuchal criticism started.
2. Who are the Massoretes?
3. What has the Enlightenment got to do with emergence of modern criticism of the Pentateuch?
4. What can we say are the critical methods employed by scholars studying the Pentateuch from 1700?
5. Why was J.G. Eichorn regarded as the Father of Old Testament criticism?

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## **UNIT 3 THE AUTHORSHIP OF PENTATEUCH**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Authorship of the Pentateuch
  - 3.2 Arguments Against Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch
  - 3.3 Arguments for Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we have studied about the origin of the Pentateuchal criticism as well as the scholars involved in each stage of its development. In this unit, we will shift our focus to the issue of authorship. The issue of the authorship of the Pentateuch remains a contentious one in contemporary Old Testament scholarship. In this unit we will look into the composition of the Pentateuch. The argument of the authorship of the Pentateuch centers on Mosaic authorship. In view of this, the different arguments and evidences raised in order to support the fact that Moses was the author will be examined. Likewise the arguments against this position will also be examined.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After a through study of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the arguments for and against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
- Discuss the complexities involved in the authorship of the Pentateuch.
- Identify the author of the Pentateuch citing relevant examples.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Authorship of the Pentateuch**

The issue of who actually wrote the Pentateuch is a serious one in the field of Old Testament studies. The problem is compounded because Pentateuch is anonymously written. In other words, nowhere do these five books explicitly or

implicitly indicate the author. However, until the rise of modern Biblical criticism, the Jews and the Christians had always taken at face value the claim that the Pentateuch was written by the historic Moses of 15th Century B.C. This position that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch has been variously and seriously challenged. This for example, has led to the formation of the popular documentary hypothesis about the composition of the Pentateuch. We shall discuss in detail the documentary hypothesis in the next unit. However, before then we shall examine the arguments for and against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

### **3.1 Arguments against Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch**

1. Anachronisms in the Pentateuch did not support the fact that it was written by Moses. By anachronism, we mean making reference to a later development, or events in a time when those events and developments have not happened. For example, if I say “My great-great grandfather traveled in an aeroplane 2000 years ago”. This statement is anachronistic because aeroplane was invented over 100 years ago. In Gen. 36:31, we read “these were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned.” Someone who was aware that kings were already reigning in Israel would make this statement. On the basis of anachronistic texts like this in Pentateuch, Mosaic Authorship was rejected.
2. There are features, which suggest that these five books are not the product of a single author or of a single age. The same events are sometimes described more than once, with significance difference. On the other hand, plain contradictions occur with single stories, in such a way as to point to the interweaving of varying traditions or written records. For example, Gen. 1:1-2-3 gives a different account of creation from that contained in Gen. 2:4-25 (see also Gen. 6:19, Exodus 7:2ff).
3. There are also discrepancies that negate Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. One of the most significant discrepancies concerns the use of different terms for God. In Exodus 6:2ff we read, “And God appeared to Moses and said to him, I am Yahweh, and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob as Elshaddai, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known them”. But Genesis 4:1, 26 imply the use of the names Yahweh from very early times, and in Gen. 27:7 and 28:13 God says to Abraham and to Jacob ‘I am Yahweh’.
4. There are differences in vocabulary and style in various parts of both the narratives and laws in Pentateuch. These differences show that several authors must have written the Pentateuch. The variations of style and

vocabulary also correspond with other differences. This therefore strengthens the case for diversity of authorship.

5. In the time of Moses, the art of writing was said not be existence. In the light of this, the Pentateuch must have been written long after Moses.

### **3.3 Arguments for Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch**

1. There are internal evidences that support the fact that the Pentateuch must have been written by Moses. For example in several instances Moses was commanded to write what he heard and saw. For example, Exodus 17:14 “And Jehovah said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book” and “... and Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah ...” (Exodus 24:4).
2. References were made in other Old Testament books that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch (see Jos. 1:8; Ex. 20:25, I Kings 2:3).
3. Some of the artifacts and inscriptions discovered today by archaeologists attested to the fact that writing was in existence even before the time of Moses.
4. The New Testament acknowledges Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
5. The Pentateuch has internal evidence of being written by an eyewitness of the exodus:
  - a. He knows details, like how many wells and trees were at Elim, and the exact appearance and taste of manna (Ex. 15:22).
  - b. The author uses old names and example from Egypt to explain things in Pentateuch (Gen. 13:10, 23:2, Num. 13:22)
  - c. He uses a greater percentage of Egyptian words than elsewhere in the Old Testament.

From the argument against and for the authorship of the Pentateuch, it is evident that both positions are tenable. However, I will like to conclude here by saying that Moses could have written something. However, what he wrote must have been elaborated and expanded by subsequent generations. This may be done in order to accommodate prevailing sensibilities. Our present Pentateuch therefore, cannot be taken as the original work of Moses.

## **Self-Assessment Exercise**

Can Moses be regarded as the author of the Pentateuch?

### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learned about that the authorship of the Pentateuch. You have been taken through the different arguments and evidences for and against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch including anachronism, biblical features, different vocabulary and style and the history of writing.

### **5.0 Summary**

The authorship of the Pentateuch is a serious contention among Biblical scholars. There are arguments for and against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Moses must have written something, but it cannot be the Pentateuch in its present state. It must have been elaborated by subsequent generations.

### **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Who is Moses? What role did he play in Israel's religion?
2. Account for the arguments for and against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch
3. Was the author of the Pentateuch participant in the exodus from Egypt?

### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **UNIT 4 THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS OF THE PENTATEUCH**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch
  - 3.2 A Brief Description of the Sources
  - 3.3 A Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the last unit you will recall that we said that the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is in dispute. It was in the process of finding who the author of the Pentateuch was, that the documentary hypothesis was adumbrated. The hypothesis is one of the critical approaches in addressing the problem of Pentateuchal authorship.

### **2.0 Objective**

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

- Explain the documentary hypothesis.
- Identify the sources tagged J, E, P, D.
- Explain the weakness of documentary hypothesis
- Discuss the development of the documentary hypothesis

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch**

The documentary hypothesis is the theory that the Pentateuch was a compilation of selection from several different written documents composed at different places and times over a period of five centuries long after Moses.

The documentary hypothesis had its beginning with Jean Astruc a French Physician, who became interested in the literary analysis of Genesis. In his studies of Genesis, Astruc discovered that God was referred to only as “Elohim” in Genesis 1 and mostly as “Jehovah” (or Yahweh) in Genesis 2. He did not however deny Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He only tried to account for the occurrences of two different names in the two chapters. This led Astruc to the conclusion that Moses used two different written sources, which gave two different accounts of creation. Subsequently, scholars labeled these sources J. and E, based on the divine names Jehovah and Elohim.

The next stage came with J.G. Eichorn, who in one of his works published in 1783 divided the entire book of Genesis, plus the first two chapters of Exodus. He separated the materials that belonged to Yahwist and Elohist (J and E). This method was also employed by subsequent scholars who identified materials belonging to J and E in other parts of the Pentateuch. For now you should have in mind that two written sources have so far been identified as being behind the composition of the Pentateuch. These are sources J and E. You also remember that the occurrence of the divine nomenclature Jehovah (J) and Elohim (E) in different narratives of the same event accounted for the two sources.

The third stage came with the contribution of William M.L. De Wette. This concerns the book of Deuteronomy. He set forth the view that none of the Pentateuch came from a period earlier than the time of David. De Wette also believed that Deuteronomy bore all earmarks of being the book of law, which was found by the prophetess Huldah. This was during the reforms of Josiah in 622B.C (II Kings 22) when the king and the priests were united in the purpose to abolish all worship and sacrifice to Jehovah outside the capital city (Jerusalem). In view of this, De Wette came to the conclusion that the book purportedly found by the prophetess Huldah was a forgery. The book was concocted to serve the governmental campaign. This document was believed to lie behind the composition of our present Deuteronomy. It was called D because it was entirely separate in origin from J and E. De Wette came to this conclusion because he discovered that the life – situation or what we call plot, is not that of the time of Moses but long after the settlement in Canaan. Now three hypothetical written sources have been identified as being behind the composition of the Pentateuch: these are D.E.J.

In 1853 Herman Hupfeld, in his work, *The Sources of Genesis* subjected E to a thorough re-examination. In the process, he found two distinct sources. First one E<sup>2</sup> consisting of those rather considerable portions of the Elohist (E) that greatly resembled J in style, vocabulary, and subject matter. He called the other document E<sup>1</sup>. The E<sup>1</sup> document was what scholars later renamed P or the priestly code. This is because it contains cultic and ritual legislation. That is, it has to do with issues

like the sacrifice, priestly ordination, priestly conduct etc. We now have the fourth source P that was behind the composition of the Pentateuch.

After the works of Hupfeld, others also made one contribution or the other to the documentary hypothesis. However, the scholar who set the stage for the definitive formulation of the documentary hypothesis was Julius Wellhausen. Although Wellhausen contributed no innovations to speak of, he only restated the documentary theory with great skill and persuasiveness supporting the JEDP sequence. He was able to suggest when, where and how the different sources developed. He believed that source J was the first to be written. It was probably written around the tenth century B.C. This is followed by source E written probably after the division of the kingdom of Israel in 922B.C. Source D was written around the seventh Century B.C. while P was post-exilic in character, that is, it was written after exile.

According to the exponents of the documentary hypothesis, these sources were creatively weaved together by an editor in the post exilic period. Evidence to support this fact can be seen in the tensions noticeable in the text. The differences in style, vocabulary and perspectives are pointers to the fact that the materials that made up the Pentateuch emanated from different origins. Besides, the socio-political sensibilities of the areas where these sources emanated are indicated in the narratives.

### **3.2 A Brief Description of the Sources**

Y or J – the author of this source is called “Yahwist” because he preferred the name Yahweh as God’s personal name. The reason why J is used to designate this source is because the Germans were the leading exponents of this hypothesis. The German were the leading exponents of this hypothesis. The German spelling of “Yahweh” is “Jahweh”, that is how the latter J was used to describe the author and the narrative.

One of the characteristics of J is that the authors show particular interest in the Southern tribe of Judah. Heroes from Judah were stressed, and the leading position of Judah among the tribes of Israel was given a prime position.

E – the author of this source is probably from the Northern tribes of Israel (remember that Israel broke into two during the reign of Rehoboam, the Northern kingdom composed of 10 tribes were called Israel, while the Southern tribes 2 in number were called Judah). The writers of this source represent the perspectives of the Northern tribes, who never fully united with the southern tribes. This source is called ‘Elohistic’ because the name of God used is Elohim. The writer believed that the name predates the name Yahweh later revealed to Moses. However, after

the fall of the Northern kingdom in 722B.C a redactor (check for redaction criticism in unit 2) from the southern kingdom harmonized J and E.

D – This source basically relate to the composition of Deuteronomy. It can be traced to the book of law found by the prophetess Huldah (II Kings 22). The main goal of the document was to serve as the framework for the reforms of Josiah. It set out with the goal and agenda of centralization of the cult and reformation of Israel's religion.

P – The priestly source can be traced to a priestly narrator who supplemented the JE narrative with ritual and cultic materials. These materials are found primarily in the cultic legislation in Exodus 25 – 31, 35 – 40, and in the laws of sacrifices, festivals and ritual purity found throughout Leviticus. The development of the priestly code was borne out of the concern to make Israelite religion unique. When the people were taken into exile, the priests assumed leadership. This led to emphasis on rituals and cultic legislation.

### **3.3 A Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis**

It is important to note here that down through the centuries, the documentary hypothesis has been subjected to a serious criticism. There are those who vehemently disagreed with the premises and conclusions of the exponents of the hypothesis. In order to maintain a balance, it will be better to be exposed to some objections raised against the documentary hypothesis. These are:

1. The theory is hypothetical in character. That is the theory does not have valid historical evidences to support it. If it is true that there are written sources behind the composition of the Pentateuch, then where are the documents? If the written sources cannot be produced it will amount to nothing but a speculative exercise.
2. On the use of different names for God, critics of the documentary hypothesis believed that in most cultures and religions of the world, there are several names for God. A writer might use the divine names interchangeably. This may account for the occurrences of Yahweh and Elohim in the different parts of the Pentateuch.
3. The documentary hypothesis is subjective in its judgment. This must have accounted for the lack of uniformity as to what belongs to a source or the other. If the documentary hypothesis is based on valid historical evidences, there should be some element of unity.



4. It is very difficult based on the use of divine nomenclature, to categorize materials in Pentateuch as emanating either from the South or Northern Israel. The usage of Yahweh and Elohim is popular in both kingdoms and this is because they were one kingdom before the division.
5. It is also difficult to determine mainly on differences of style and vocabulary, how the Pentateuch was finally edited. The same person can decide to vary his style. Also the subject matter discussed determines ranges of vocabulary to be used.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learned that the documentary hypothesis emerged in the process of seeking to resolve the authorship of the Pentateuch. You have also learned that the different hypothetical sources behind the composition of Pentateuch are sources JEDP. Also, some have also raised different objections against the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The documentary hypothesis is the theory that the Pentateuch was a compilation of selections from several different written documents composed at different places and times over a period of five centuries, long after Moses. However, the one who is able to give the theory a definitive formulation is Julius Wellhausen who arranged the sources in the sequence of their development and age: J.E.D.P. there are however scholars who disagreed with this hypothesis; they have their reasons for doing so.

#### **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Trace the rise and development of the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch.
2. Do you agree with the positions of the documentary hypothesis?
3. Do you agree with the position that the documentary hypothesis undermined inspiration of scripture?
4. Do you agree with the position that the documentary hypothesis is hypothetical and subjective in character?

## **7.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **UNIT 5 THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Literary Types in Genesis
  - 3.2 Other ancient Near Eastern Literature similar to Genesis
  - 3.3 Genesis 1 – 11; Myth or Historical Reality
  - 3.4 Theology/Message of Genesis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

The Book of Genesis is the first among the books classified as Pentateuch. It is also generally regarded as a prologue to the whole Bible. The English title of the book 'Genesis' and its root in the Greek word that means, "beginning". This title came into the English translation through the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Genesis is a book of "beginnings". In the book we have the story of the beginning of the world, the beginning of family, marriage, human government, sin and the ancestors of Israel among others. This therefore makes the book an important one, especially among the Jews and the Christians. In this unit we will examine the literary genres available in Genesis and also see other similar literature in the ancient Near East. We shall also discuss the theology and Message of Genesis.

### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Discuss the literary genres found in Genesis.
- Identify other documents similar to Genesis in the ancient Near East.
- Distinguish myth from history
- Discuss the theology/message of Genesis

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Literary Types in genesis**

Some people have overemphasized the divine element in the composition of the Bible such that they see it as a literature that God himself wrote. However, we should not forget the fact that the writers of the Bible were humans, who lived in a literary context. That is, they do not produce literary works that are totally new, unrelated to anything that has been done of the things that were in vogue when they were writing.

In the book of Genesis, we encounter different genres of literature. In view of this some of them would be examined below:

##### **Myth**

Today when people hear the term “myth”, what comes to their mind, is fiction and something else. If we are to understand the myths in the book of Genesis we must set aside this notion. A myth is not fiction or stories that are unreal. Myths are stories about actions of divine beings. A good example is found in Gen. 6:1-4, where references were made to the “Sons of God” and the “Daughters of men”. One of the functions of myth is to answer knotty or hard questions about life and existence.

##### **Legend**

The difference between myth and legend is found in the fact that legends relate more of human activities (often with divine involvement). Some see legend as an historical account that cannot be verified. Legends at times involve one or many characters. Legends served different functions such as explaining why things are how they are. A good example of a legend in the book of Genesis is the story of Tower of Babel in Gen. 11. The objective of the legend is to explain the reasons for diversities in the human language (see also Gen. 10:8-12).

##### **Report**

A report is a brief self-contained narration, usually in third-person style, about a single event or situation in the past. It narrates what happened, presenting the facts in a style without literary embellishment. Occasionally, report serve an etiological purpose that is they explain how a certain place acquired its name (see for example Gen. 35:8).

## **Comedy**

To a modern reader, the term “comedy” brings to mind the images of comic television shows. In literature, however, a comedy is a narrative whose plot has a happy ending, in some cases through a dramatic reversal. It often aims to amuse. Typically, the following features play prominent roles in comedies: disguises, mistaken identity, providential coincidences, surprising turns-of-events, escapes from disaster and the conquest of obstacles. A good example of comedy in the book of Genesis is the story of Joseph (Gen. 37 – 50).

## **Farewell Speech**

The farewell speech is an address in the first-person voice reportedly given by someone shortly before his or her death. In it, the speaker refers to his or her old age or imminent death and exhorts the hearers to live along certain lines in the future. The speakers are usually leaders of such great importance that their speeches tend to mark momentous turning point in Israel’s national life. A good example of farewell speech in Genesis is that of Jacob in Genesis 49; where he purportedly issued out his future wishes for his children.

### **3.2 Other Ancient Near Eastern Literature Similar to Genesis**

The literature of Israel, like we had earlier observed cannot be understood in isolation of the wider ancient Near Eastern environment. In view of this, you should know that there are literatures in the ancient Near East that bore some striking resemblance with the book of Genesis. Popular among the other texts in ancient Near East that resembles Genesis is the famous Babylonian Genesis. This book is often linked with the Genesis account of creation. It was written late in the 2nd millennium BC to honour Marduk, god of Babylon. Another text that further bears comparison with Genesis is one Babylonian poem, the Atrakhasis Epic. This book is concerned with the development of man and the beginning of society and hints at the order of the world without describing its creation. It starts with the minor gods working to irrigate the land, then rebelling at their lot, from which they are relieved by the creation of man who is to do the work instead. Man is a satisfactory substitute until his noise causes disturbances and leads to his destruction in the flood (compare the flood stories in Genesis).

In spite of the similarities of other literature in ancient Near East with Genesis, it must be emphasized here that there is a world of difference between them. For example in the Genesis the view of history is linear. That is history is something that is moving towards a purposeful goal. And Yahweh is actively involved in the creation and sustenance of the universe. However, in the ancient Near Eastern literature, the view of history is cyclical and mythical in character. History has no

purpose, but its best expressed for them in the cycles of natural events – rain season and dry seasons without any clear-cut meaning.

### **3.3 Genesis 1-11: Myth or Historical Reality**

Some scholars because of the nature of stories in Genesis 1 – 11 have come to the conclusion that those sections should not be regarded as historical. This is because they said that their historicity have not been validated by archaeology or science. For example, where is the location of the Garden of Eden? Was Adam a black or white man? Or where is the relic of the tower of Babel? What further establishes the unhistorical nature of the materials in Genesis 1 – 11 is that they said parallels to the text are known in the mythological literature of the ancient Near East.

Which ever way viewed the historical value of Genesis 1 – 11 cannot be out rightly dismissed. The stories recorded in the section of the book in one way or the other reflected historical memories of the early stage of human development. Since those stories first circulated orally, they must have been embellished and expanded. Nevertheless, at the time they were converted to writing, they still maintain some elements of history. Besides, in the other parts of the Bible, inspired writers as historical unquestionably interpret the materials in these chapters.

### **3.4 Theology/Message of Genesis**

The book of Genesis was written with the pre-supposition that God exist. And He revealed Himself in words and in deed to Israel’s ancestors. The book assert that everything exist because of God. The subject matter of the theology of Genesis is ‘God’s work in establishing Israel as the means of blessing the families of the earth. Theocracy the rule of God over all creation discussed in the Pentateuch is introduced in Genesis. The book introduces the reader to the nature of God as the sovereign lord over the world and who move heaven and earth to establish His will. He seeks to bless mankind but does not tolerate disobedience and unbelief.

That everything that God created is good is further established in the book of Genesis. God takes delight in the created order. But he would not tolerate disobedience. The disobedience of Adam and Eve led to the subsequent troubles encountered by Man. In fact God also destroyed the world because of the disobedience.

The mercy of God and the fact that God would not abandon humanity in spite of their weakness is best exemplified in Genesis. After Man wanders away from Him, he set into motion the process to restore erring humanity. The call of Abraham and the promise of building a nation through him can be understood

within the ambit of God's attempt to restore Man's lost glory. The book of Genesis therefore serves a constant reminder to humanity that in spite of the crisis in the world today; God has not and will not abandon his handiwork.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learned that in the book of Genesis we have different literary genres. You have also learned that there are other ancient Near Eastern literatures that are similar to Genesis and that Genesis 1 – 11 is still historical character in spite the objections raised to the contrary.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The book of Genesis is made up of different literary types like, myth, legend, reports, and comedy and farewell speech. Also, there are similar literatures as Genesis in the ancient Near East; in fact some of them predates the book of Genesis. Genesis 1 – 11 is also to some extent historical in character. The message of Genesis centres on the revelation of God in words and deeds to Israel's ancestor in order to redeem humanity.

#### **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Account for the literary genres in Genesis
2. Are there literatures like Genesis in the ancient Near East?
3. What is the difference between Myth and history?
4. Why is Genesis 1-11 regarded as not historical?
6. What is the relevance of the message of Genesis for the contemporary world?

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## **UNIT 6 THE CREATION ACCOUNT OF GENESIS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The creation Account
  - 3.2 The Importance of the Seventh Day
  - 3.3 The Creation of Man
  - 3.4 The Fall of Man
  - 3.5 The Call of Abraham
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we focused on the book of Genesis and the literary types found within the book. In this unit, which is a continuation of the previous one, we will focus on the key themes of the book of Genesis.

Cosmogony is the study of the origin of the universe. Hence, there are different cosmogonies trying to explain the origin of the world. In Africa, most cultures too have their stories of creation of the world and human. In this unit, we shall examine the creation account of the book of Genesis. We shall highlight those aspects that made the Genesis account of creation unique, especially when compared with other cosmogonies. You will recall that in Unit 5, we said there are elements found in other literature in the ancient Near East, which are also found in Genesis. However, there are crucial points of departure between genesis and these other literature.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After thoroughly studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Narrate the creation accounts in Genesis
- Distinguish the creation of humanity from other aspects of creation.
- Discuss the disruption of creation and God's provision for restoration.

- Narrate the account of the fall of humanity.
- Enumerate the reasons for the call of Abraham.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Creation Accounts in Genesis**

One of the unique features of the Genesis account of creation is that it affirms from the beginning God as the sole creator of the universe. Unlike in other polytheistic faiths where the gods or the divinities are represented as responsible for an aspect of creation, God is solely responsible for the creation of the whole world.

The Genesis account of creation in Chapter 1 and 2 consist of a general account of the creation of the heaven and the earth, followed by a detail description of the creation of Man. It should be underscored here that the Genesis accounts of creation have several things in common with other cosmogonies. These are:

- Pre-existent deity
- Creation by divine command
- Human beings as the ultimate of God's creation and formed the dust of the earth.

The point of departure of the Genesis account of creation from other creation accounts is that God is distinct from creation. He is also above all aspect of creation and not subject to natural elements like some gods in the creation stories in some cultures.

Based on misunderstanding of the first two verses of Genesis 1, some have propounded what is called the gap theory. This is a story that says that after God created the world, it reverted into chaos. After the destruction of the chaotic mass, a new world was created. However, a careful reading of this text reveals that Gen. 1:2 is dependent on both verses 1 and 3. In other words, these verses refer to a single world not multiple. The creation account in Genesis can be understood in two ways:

- (a) As a symbolic description of transcendental reality.

(b) As a creative description of a chronological sequence of events.

Moreover, creation activities by God were carried out in six days.

Day 1	Separation of light from darkness
Day 2	Separation of waters above from waters below
Day 3	Separation of land and sea
Day 4	Light in the firmament i.e. separation of night and day; Sun for the day and Moon for the night.
Day 5	Living creatures in the water and birds of the sea
Day 6	Creation of animals including Man.

There has been contention on whether to take the days of creation as the literal 24 hours or not. The best way to resolve this is to understand the context of the usage of the word in Hebrew. The word translated day (*yom*) can either be used literally in references to the 24 hours or an epoch, era or ages. Some Christians who believed in the evolution theory opined that perhaps that the world evolved over a long period find support in the latter understanding of day in Hebrew.

### **3.2 The Importance of the Seventh Day**

According to the Genesis account of creation, God rested from His creative activities. Though some have wrongly taken this to mean that God has withdrawn from the universe, it is not to be taken as that. The Deists for example believed that God after creation withdrew from the world. He however, set into motion natural laws that govern the universe. They staked their claim on this verse in Genesis that says God rested on the seventh day.

For the fact that God rested in the seventh day, does not mean that He is no longer upholding and governing the created universe. But that He has ceased from His creative activities. God is still sustaining the created order, therein lies what we call His providence.

The importance of the seventh day is clearly evident in the fact that the seventh day is unending for there is absence of morning and evening. The day therefore reveals that eternal rest is the goal of creation. The seventh day is the foundation of Sabbath, which was subsequently instituted in the religion of Israel. The Sabbath was later to serve as a constant reminder to the Israelites that the goal of

creation the eternal rest instituted by God. Three important things happened on the seventh day:

1. God rested on the seventh day, that is after the heaven and the earth and the host of them were finished.
2. God blessed it.
3. God hallowed it

### **3.3 The Creation of Humanity**

The creation of man is totally different from other aspect of creations. For other creatures, God simply command and then it was so. But with the creation of Man (Gen. 1:26-27) we have a statement that shows the self-deliberation of God. Gen. 1:26 is a statement of intension of what God wanted to do with Man.

Some people argued that the statement “Let us make man in our own image” in Gen. 1:26 should be interpreted as God consulting or having counsel with divine beings; such as angels. This is not the case with God, because God is all-powerful and all sufficient.

Man is created in the image of God and after His likeness. The two words “image” and “likeness” reinforces each other, because there is no conjunction in between them! The two words express the same idea. For humanity to be created in the image of God is figurative, because God does not have human form. Therefore, for Man to be created in the image of God means he shares in the communicable attributes of God, that is, attributes of God that can be shared. These include wisdom, love, justice, holiness and righteousness among others. This sharing of some divine attributes, made it possible for man to communicate with God. Man is able to have fellowship and communicate with Him. Man also has freedom to choose.

The creation of Man in God’s image is for a purpose. Man is created in God’s image to:

1. Have dominion over all other creatures (see Gen. 1:25:28). Man is to rule and be in control over all other creation.
2. Represent God, as the representative of God, mankind is the king over the earth.

### **3.4 The Fall of Humanity (Gen. 3)**

The entrance of the serpent into Eden brought discord into the God's creation; which had hitherto been harmonious and good. Satan appeared in a form of serpent that was subtler than any other creatures. He tricked Eve, to eat the fruit by asking questions (Gen. 3:1). Both Adam and Eve ate the fruit and their disobedience marked the fall of humanity.

What does it mean to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Many suggestions have been offered, including acquiring total knowledge, moral knowledge and sexual experience. It is however, plausible to take the term "knowledge of good and evil" as expressing moral discernment, moral autonomy, and the ability to be self-legislating. Only God possesses ultimately knowledge of this character.

The effects and consequences of the fall of humanity are evident in the subsequent narratives ending with Gen. 11:1-9. The fall, the account of Cain and Abel, the episodes of the sons of God (6:1-4) and the flood, as well as the Babel narratives, all have common elements. Each of them deals with some divine confrontation, which attracts an appropriate punishment, some amelioration of that punishment, and then the imposition of punishment.

### **3.5 The Call of Abraham**

Genesis 12 changes the direction of the book. It describes vividly the call of Abraham by God. He was called from a pagan world and wonderful promises were given to him. Gen. 12:1-3 thus offers the divine counter to the effects of the fall.

Genesis 12 also reveals the faith of Abraham. It teaches that faith obeys God. At the time of his call, he was middle-aged, prosperous, settled and thoroughly pagan. The call of Abraham was to establish a new nation. Israel would learn that by this, her very existence was God's work through a man, who responded by faith and left for Canaan.

The story of the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 set the tone for the other narratives in the Pentateuch. The promise of the gift of the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham became the dominant motif in other books of the Pentateuch.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have learned what makes the creation accounts in Genesis different from other creation stories. You have also learned what makes the creation of humanity unique, the fall of humanity and its consequences and the attempt made by God in the call of Abraham to restore humanity's lost glory.

## **5.0 Summary**

The creation account is different from other creation stories elsewhere, because God is affirmed as the sole creator of the universe. The creation of humanity is also unique in the sense that, humanity was created in the image of God. However, in spite of the fall of humanity and the attendant consequences, God still made effort to restore humanity's lost glory, by calling Abraham. Through him a nation to be raised would be the source of God's restoration of humanity.

## **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. What are the differences between Genesis creation account and others?
2. In what ways was the creation of man different from other aspects of creation?
3. What are the consequences of the fall of Man?
4. Account for the role of Abraham in formation of Israel and salvation of humanity.

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## **UNIT 7 THE BOOK OF EXODUS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Call of Moses
  - 3.2 The Revelation of the name Yahweh
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we have studied the book of Genesis and its messages as well as its theology. In this unit, we will shift our focus to the book of Exodus. Exodus is a Greek word and it means “way out”. It is the book of redemption in the Old Testament. Exodus is a continuation of Genesis. This is evident especially with the use of the Hebrew conjunction “*w<sup>e</sup>*” which means ‘and’ or ‘but’ at the beginning of the book. As Exodus begins, Israel is enslaved, helpless, and weak. Exodus 1:1-22 serves as a transition between the story of the patriarchs and that of the children of Israel (Jacob).

The book of Exodus focuses on two most important events: the Israelite deliverance from slavery in Egypt through God’s mighty act of salvation at the sea of Reeds (1:1-18; 26), and the establishment of his lordship through the covenant of Mt. Sinai (19:1-40:38). “Exodus” often is used in a broad sense for the whole complex of events from deliverance to entry into the Promised Land (cf. 3:7-70). As such, it forms the high point of Old Testament redemptive history, as the means through which God constituted Israel as his vehicle for the redemption of all humanity.

### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Narrate the exodus event and identify its significance in Israelite history.
- Discuss the role of Moses in the development of Israelite religion.

- Explain the covenant of redemption
- Discuss the meaning of Yahweh, the name of Israel's God.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Call of Moses**

Moses was central in the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. In view of this, it is expedient to examine his call. The reason for the call of Moses is seen in Exodus 2:23-24. Exodus 3 is one of the most important chapters in the book. The call of Moses is explicitly described in this chapter.

Three hundred years after the death of Joseph, the one who moved the Israelites, to Egypt, another dynasty ascended the Egyptian throne. This new dynasty did not acknowledge neither recognizes the legacy of Joseph. The Israelites were perpetually subjected to servitude. It was in the midst of these sufferings that the people cried to the Lord. The Lord answered their prayers by raising Moses as the one to deliver them from their affliction and bondage in Egypt.

Moses was called and commissioned at Horeb (probably Sinai), the place where he will later receive the law. It was here God gave a fresh revelation of Himself as the all-sufficient God. It was on the strength of this revelation that he was able to confront Pharaoh.

The importance of the call of Moses can be seen in the fact that, 'call' became an essential element if one is to successfully operate as a prophet. In the extant Israelite prophetic tradition, the call narrative was built into the text in order to validate the genuineness of the call of a prophet. See for example, Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1:1-12 and Ezekiel 1:1-10. The call of Moses therefore became paradigmatic in the subsequent history of Israelite prophetism

#### **3.2 The Revelation of the Divine name 'Yahweh'**

Moses is generally believed to be the father of Israelite monotheism. This conclusion is perhaps based on the fact that the name Yahweh was revealed to him at the time of his call on Mount Horeb.

However, whether or not Yahweh was worshipped before, Moses especially among non-Israelites remains a serious contention among Old Testament scholars in recent times. This argument arose because there is evidences that point to the fact that Yahweh might have been worshipped outside Israel, before Moses. For



instance, certain theophanous names have been found outside Israel (e.g. Jaubidi from Hamath, Azrijau from Samel).

Various traditions in the Pentateuch however reflect differing views on the origins of Yahwism, which are not easily reconcilable. According to the Yahwist tradition (J), the worship of Yahweh can be traced to the cradle of humanity:

To Seth also a Son was born, and he called his name Enoch. At that time men began to call upon the name of Yahweh (Gen. 4:26).

The tradition of the Elohist (E), on the other hand associates the revelation of the divine name with the experience of Moses at the burning bush. The Priestly tradition (P) confirms this understanding of a Mosaic background for the declaration of the divine name.

We can vouchsafe the fact that Moses popularized the worship of Yahweh among the Israelites in Egypt. The Israelites in Egypt might have lost a personal knowledge of God of their ancestors, while in bondage in Egypt, because they were influenced socially, religiously, and politically. At that time they perhaps knew God only as Elohim, a generic name for God in the ancient Near East. The personal knowledge of God as Lord (Yahweh) was restored through the revelation to Moses at Horeb.

You will recall that we had earlier discussed that it was in response to the Israelites plight in Egypt that God revealed Himself to Moses as “Yahweh”, a four Hebrew letter consonantal word – popularly known as Tetragrammaton (YHWH). The phonetical value of this name is however lost. No one can determine the precise pronunciation of the name.

Down through the centuries however, attempts have been made to arrive at a satisfactory meaning and etymological origin for the Tetragrammaton. Yahweh has been considered as causative imperfect of “hawah” which could express “He who causes to be” – either as the creator or the life-giver, or “He who bring to pass” – the performer of the promises. Apart from these, different attempts have been made to derive the Tetragrammaton from other roots, some traced it Babylon and Assyria. However, it is pertinent to note here that all these attempts have been unsuccessful. All are just movements in the realms of conjectures and speculation.

All we do know is that Moses received a fresh revelation about the nature and ability to this God, Yahweh. This impelled him to lead the Israelite out of bondage in Egypt.

### **3.3 Theology/Message of Exodus**

The theology and message of the book of Exodus revolves around the deliverance of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The book therefore laid the foundation for the theology of God's revelation of his person, works, redemption law and worship in the entire Bible. The institution of the priesthood and the prophetic ministry in Israel are also given elaborate treatment in the book.

In the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, God reveals himself afresh to Moses, the chosen leader of the people (Ex. 3:14). God revealed Himself as who is ever-living, self-sustaining and dependable. This revelation of the personality of God gave the needed impetus to Moses to deliver the Israelites from the grip of Pharaoh the king of Egypt.

The redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt became a reference point for future salvation and deliverance of the people. The Passover event (Ex.12) further gives insight into the redemption acts of God. This perhaps prompted the Christians to believe that the death of Christ for the redemption of humanity was indeed foreshadowed in the Passover event, in the book of Exodus.

Exodus also gives direction on the expected conduct from the individual, and all that made up the society. The basis for biblical ethics and morality was also established in the giving of the Ten Commandments and other ordinances in the book of Exodus. The goal of God for humanity is a peaceful and harmonious society. This is however, achievable if the relationship between humanity and God and fellow human is cordial. The principles that can enhance right relationship between humanity and God and humanity and fellow human were enunciated in the different laws, commandments, and ordinances in the book of Exodus.

The book of Exodus concludes with an elaborate discussion of the significance, meaning and purpose of worship. The construction of the Tabernacle cost a lot in terms of money, time, energy and material, yet in its significance and function it pointed to the chief end of human beings: to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have been taken through the book of Exodus. We examined the call of Moses and its relevance in the subsequent history of Israel. You have also learned of the importance of the revelation of the name Yahweh and the different meanings given for the name. The theology and message of Exodus were also examined.

## **5.0 Summary**

The book of Exodus revolve around two most important events, the Israelite deliverance from slavery in Egypt through God's mighty act of salvation at the Sea of Reeds (1:1-18; 26) and the establishment of His Lordship through the covenant at Sinai (19:1-40:38). The call of Moses is central in the exodus event. The call of Moses also serves a paradigm for testing the genuineness of a prophet in the subsequent history of Israel.

Moses is also generally believed to be the father of Israelite monotheism. This conclusion is based on the fact that the full import divine name 'Yahweh' was perhaps first revealed to him.

## **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Why was the call of Moses vital for the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt?
2. Did the Israelite alone worship Yahweh?
3. Account for the title of the book of Exodus in the light of Israel's deliverance.
4. Discuss the theology and the message of Exodus and their contemporary relevance.

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## **UNIT 8      KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS IN EXODUS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Passover
  - 3.2 Covenant
  - 3.3 Tabernacle
  - 3.4 Decalogue
- 4.0 Conclusion
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- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 Introduction**

We started the study of the book of Exodus in the previous unit. In the book of Exodus, different themes and ideas are discussed in the process of the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. In view of this, in this unit we shall examine some of these themes and ideas and their importance in the course of Israel's socio-religious development.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Explain the origin of some key concepts in Israelite religion inherent in Exodus.
- Discuss for concepts like Passover and covenant.
- State the relevance of the Passover in the Israelite socio-religious set-up.
- Narrate the relevance of the Passover in Israelite socio-religious set-up.
- Explore the relevance of the covenant to the contemporary Nigeria socio-religious set-up.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Passover**

The Passover in Egypt was a special ceremony by which Israel was delivered from the plagues, which struck at Egypt. The exploration of the Passover is found in Exodus 12:27; The Lord “Passover” or “jumped over” the houses of the Israelite (For a detail description of the events that led to the Passover read Exodus 12:1-50).

As recognition of the significance of the Passover, the Israelites were admonished to celebrate the event yearly. The Passover also known as the feast of unleavened bread is the feast that celebrates God’s redemption of his people from Egypt. It began on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan; and it continues for a week (see Lev. 23:5-8). Attendance was required for all male Jews (Deut. 16:16). The Passover is the principal feast in the Jewish calendar at the time of the New Testament.

The significance of the Passover can be established in the fact that it anticipated the further redemption of God. It is Jesus who becomes the greater Passover Lamb (I Cor. 5:7; John 1:29). It was at the Passover meal that Jesus Christ identified himself as the Lamb (Matt. 22:17-30). The Passover therefore is a metaphor of the redemption of humanity accomplished in Christ.

#### **3.2 Covenant**

Covenant is a very important concept in the religion and history of Israel. It is a process through which God instituted a lasting relationship with the individual and the nation. This is done in order to fulfill his purpose for the human race through the people of Israel.

The Abrahamic covenant in Gen. 12:1-3 is the foundation to all covenants that God made with His people. The covenant is confirmed by unconditional promises to Israel and other nations (Gen. 13:14-17, Gen. 15:4-21; Gen. 17:4-16; Gen. 22:15-16). The Abrahamic covenant provides continuity between the old and the new covenants.

There are some similarities in the covenant with Abraham and other covenants. For instance, the Abrahamic and Noahic covenant are established (Gen. 9:9; 9:11). Both are eternal (Gen. 9:16, cf. 17:7, 13, 19). Both include descendants (Gen. 9:9, 12, 15,17; 7, 9:10). A sign accompanies each of the covenants. Circumcision is the sign of Abrahamic covenant (see Gen. 17:10-11). This is to remind God that He

must keep His promises. As for the covenant with Noah, rainbow is the sign (Gen. 9:12-13).

In the book of Exodus, the central event of revelation for the Israelite took place at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 – 24). It was there that God made a covenant with the people of Israel as a whole. This covenant is also known as the covenant of redemption. It was at Sinai that God adopted the nation of Israel as his own; setting out the terms by which they might receive the promise earlier made to their ancestors especially, Abraham. The covenant God instituted at Sinai revealed to the Israelite the way of life He desired for them.

As with God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, the Sinai tic covenant is a means to establish a relationship (not naturally existing) that is sanctioned by an oath sworn in a ceremony of ratification.

All the elements that make up a covenant are present at Sinai. However, the Sinaitic covenant relationship differs from Abrahamic covenant only in that the parties to the covenant bind themselves to obligations by oath. In Abrahamic covenant God places himself under oath, bound by irrevocable promises to Abraham and his posterity.

### **3.3 The Tabernacle (Exodus 26-27)**

The Tabernacle was a portable shrine, consisting of a square latticework frame of acacia wood covered by two large linen curtains. One of the curtains formed the main hall, the Holy place while the second covered the Holy of Holies (that is the "most holy places"), a smaller room at the back of the main hall and separated by a curtain. The holy place was 30 feet long by 15 feet wide by 15 feet high, while the Holy of Holies was 15 feet on each side. Inside the Holy of Holies was only the ark, a wooden chest containing the tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. In the holy place was the altar of incense, the lamp stand, and table with the bread of presence.

The purpose of God in the Tabernacle was to designate for Himself a place to dwell among the Israelites in order to meet their needs. The Tabernacle was the place where God came to meet man. It is the work of the priest to represent the people in the outer courts at the Holy place by making sacrifices. Only the high priest was allowed at the Holy of Holies once in a year on the days of atonement.

In the Christian tradition, it is believed that the tabernacle stood for the shadows of the person and work of Christ. Infact it was said that Christ is the fulfillment of the Tabernacle (see John 1:14).

### **3.4 The Decalogue (Exodus 20: 1-17)**

The Decalogue is the popular Ten Commandments. The Decalogue is not really a law code because each of the Commandments is not comprehensive enough, each deal with general principles, rather than with details.

The Commandments do not deal with individual acts and their punishment, but rather with general principles. They call for respect for and obedience to God and respect for neighbor's (life, property, good name, marriage bond, etc) on the other hand. The Ten Commandments were originally promulgated for Israel. They are expressed in the second person singular. This therefore indicates that they are addressed to the individual within the community.

Some scholars have however observed that the Ten Commandments (Decalogue) must have been adapted from the law of Hammurabi. Hammurabi was the sixth king of the Old Babylonian Dynasty who ruled from 1728 to 1686 BCE. At the beginning of his reign he promulgated laws aimed at ameliorating the position of the weak. His kingdom was made up of former independent states, in order to keep the people of these states together, especially the poor. The laws were promulgated to give the people a sense of belonging.

The resemblances between the laws of Hammurabi and the Decalogue and other aspects of Israelite laws cannot be accounted for on the basis of borrowing alone. Rather, it could also be viewed in the light of the common human condition underlying the Babylonian and Hebrew, cultures, as well as the larger near eastern background, which they share. Some of the laws may have a common tradition.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

There are key concepts and ideas that occupy important space in Israelite religion and history, found in Exodus. Some of these are briefly examined. These include: the Passover, covenant, Tabernacle and the Decalogue.

### **5.0 Summary**

Ideas and concepts like Passover, covenant, the Tabernacle and the Decalogue are Key to understanding the book of Exodus. The Passover in Egypt was a special ceremony by which Israel was delivered from the plagues, which struck at Egypt (Exodus 12:27).

Covenant is also a very important concept in the religion and history of Israel. In the book of Exodus, the central event of revelation for the Israelites took place at

Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-24). The covenant God instituted at Sinai, revealed to the Israelites the way of life He desired for them.

The Tabernacle was a portable shrine in the book of Exodus. The purpose of God in the Tabernacle was to designate for himself a place to dwell among the Israelites in order to meet their needs.

The Decalogue is the popular Ten Commandments, the Decalogue calls for respect for the respect for right relationship with God on the one hand, and respect for neighbor's (life, property, good name, marriage bond, etc) on the other hand.

### **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Explore the significance of the Passover for the Christian understanding of salvation.
2. What is covenant? What are the similarities between Abrahamic and Noahic covenant?
3. Account for the difference between Abrahamic covenant and the sinaitic covenant.
4. Was the Decalogue derived from the laws of Hammurabi?

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## **UNIT 9 THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS**

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Priesthood in Leviticus
  - 3.2 Sacrificial Offering in Leviticus
  - 3.3 Theology/Message of Leviticus
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we completed the study of the book of Exodus, the book that deals with the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt. In this unit we shall examine the third part of the Pentateuch – Leviticus. The concluding chapters of Exodus that focus on the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25 – 40) lead naturally to the opening of Leviticus, which describe the various sacrifices performed in the Holy place (Chapters 1 – 7).

The name Leviticus comes from the Septuagint the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture. Leviticus is not an account of historical event like Genesis and Exodus, but it is called the book of law. Since the Tabernacle has been erected, it was necessary that the correct manner in which to approach God should be enunciated. The priests were to understand not only the principles of sacrifice, and Tabernacle rituals, but also dietary principle, treatment of diseases, observance of feast and times fixed for them.

### **3.1 Priesthood in Leviticus**

The priests occupied important place in the cultic history of Israel. Some scholars however believe that the Israelites had priests in their wanderings in the wilderness is a backward projection of the second Temple (516 B.C) into the Time of Moses.

Though the origin of priesthood in ancient Israel is difficult to determine, however the contributions and activities of the priests are well known. The book of Leviticus has itemized five main functions of the priests in ancient Israel. These are:

1. Cultic functions: the priests officiated and administered sacrificial rites in the Tabernacle. Sacrifice is an important element of religions (see Exodus 9).
2. Oracular functions: the priest in ancient Israel was consulted in order to derive hidden information from God. The priests often used the Urim and the Thummim in order to inquire from the Lord vital hidden information (see Lev. 8:8; Ex. 28:30). However, no one can say precisely how they priests made use of the Urim and Thummim.
3. Therapeutic functions: Lev. 13 – 15 prescribes some medical role for the priests. They are to determine the type of disease and also confirm the healing of a victim of such disease. They are also to enforce the sanitary laws in order to prevent the spread of disease.
4. Instructional and Judicial functions: the priests were also expected to guide the people on the paths of truth and justice. Besides, they settle disputes among the people in the Tabernacle.
5. Administration functions: the priests were also expected to manage the business of the Tabernacle, this involved accounting, assessing the value of donations in various forms and maintaining the Tabernacles (See Lev. 22).

### **3.2 Sacrificial Offerings in Leviticus**

#### **Burnt Offering (Lev. 1:1-17; 1-13)**

It was the commonest of all the sacrifices. It was performed every morning and evening and more frequently on holy days. The Burnt sacrifice was to be a male lamb without blemish, and it was to be made voluntary. The blood of the animal is sprinkled against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of meeting (Lev. 1:15). The blood becomes the means of atonement. The surrendering of an innocent life to death becomes a medium of expiation. The total burning of the sacrificial animal represents a total giving of one's sacrifice to God. It also represents the total surrendering of the worshipper.

#### **Peace Offering (Lev. 3:7, 7:28-36)**

The peace offering was an optimal sacrifice. It presents a beautiful picture of reconciliation, making possible communion with God. Unlike other offerings, the one making the peace offering was allowed to take part of the animal. Some part of the animal was burnt, some eaten by the priest and the rest eaten by the

worshipper. It was a festive meal eaten in or over the sanctuary. The peace offering was one re-establishing fellowship between the offerer and God and or it could also be a thank-offering.

### **The Cereal or Grain offering (Lev. 2:6, 6:14-26)**

The meal offering was a gift by the worshipper to God. It followed the burnt offering, that is, after God had granted forgiveness of sins, through burnt offering, the worshipper responded by giving to God, some of the produce of his farm in meal offering.

Unlike burnt offering and peace offering, the meal offering was not an animal sacrifice, but cereal offering. It is bloodless. Only a handful of the sacrifice was burnt in the fire, the rest being given to the priest to eat. It was an act of dedication and consecration to God. It expresses thankfulness, obedience and willingness to keep the law.

### **Sin offering (Lev. 4; 5:1-13, 6:24-30)**

Sin is missing the mark of God's standard of righteousness. Sin offering therefore purifies the place of worship so that God may be present among His people.

Sin offering made atonement for the sinful nature of humanity. It was the first offering in the approach to God. Varieties of animals (male or female) were used. It depends on how rich the worshipper was and the degree of his sin. The most distinctive feature of this offering is the sprinkling of the blood on the altar or the veil. Having sprinkled some blood upon the altar, the rest of the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt offering.

Generally, sin offering was required for sins of ignorance, that is, sins committed unintentionally. Other occasion for sin offering include after childbirth (12:6) uncleanness from serious disease (14:19) bodily discharge (15:15) dedication of the priests (3:14).

### **Guilt Offering (Lev. 5:14-26, 6:7, 7:1-7)**

This is also known as trespass or reparation offering. It was an offering that emphasized guilt and restitution for sins. Only a ram or a male lamb could be offered as trespass offering (Lev. 5:14ff, 14:12ff). This choice of animal is the clear distinction between the sin and trespass or guilt offering. The ram brought by the worshipper must be unblemished just like in burnt offering. The blood was thrown against the altar. The fat and entrails of the ram were burned on the altar.

The priests were allowed to take home the flesh to cook and eat in a holy place in the Day of Atonement.

The guilt offering was prescribed for two main types of offences – trespass against holy things and trespass against God’s holy name by uttering false oaths in the court.

### **3.3 Theology and Message of Leviticus**

Leviticus is the book that insists on keeping the body as well as the soul holy. It teaches that the redeemed one must be holy, because their redeemer is holy (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2, 20:7, 26). The book places much emphasis upon personal and ceremonial holiness. The word ‘holy’ and derivatives occurs in the book about 131 times. The word clean and its derivatives occur about 186 times.

The book of Leviticus advocates a holistic purity. God requires that the Israelites present themselves open and holy in all aspects of their lives. Sin in any aspect of the body equally affects the other.

To some modern readers the book of Leviticus look like a strange book, because some see it as reflecting only an old set of ancient taboos. It should however be underscored here, that the book of Leviticus is a book describing ancient history of Israel. The events described in the book happened at a time that can be described as the primitive stage in Israelite development. If we use modern developments to judge events in the book, we conclude that it is strange and odd. Nevertheless, Leviticus still conveys timeless truth.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have been taken through the five functions of priests as enunciated in the book of Leviticus. Also the different sacrificial offerings listed in the book of Leviticus were also discussed: the burnt offering, the peace offering, the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering.

### **5.0 Summary**

The priests occupied important place in ancient Israelite religion. They functioned according to the book of Leviticus, as cultic officials, medical personnel, and administrative functions. Different sacrificial offerings are outlined in the book of Leviticus. These include: burnt offering, peace offering, cereal offering, sin offering, and guilt offering.

The message and theology centre on holistic purity. It teaches that the redeemed one must be holy, because their redeemer is holy.

## **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

- What are the functions of the priests in ancient Israel according to the book of Leviticus?
- List and discuss the different sacrificial offerings in Leviticus.
- What is the difference between burnt and guilt offering?
- Discuss holistic purity with particular reference to the book of Leviticus.
- Do you agree with the position that the book of Leviticus is a strange book?

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## **UNIT 10 FEAST AND FESTIVALS IN LEVITICUS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Feasts and Festivals in Leviticus
  - 3.2 The Importance of Feasts and Festivals
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we started the examination of the book of Leviticus by looking at the functions of the priests and the offerings listed in the book. In this unit we shall examine some of the feasts and festivals listed in the book of Leviticus, as well as their significance.

It is important to note that from very early times the great festivals punctuated the Jewish Year. Some of the feasts and festivals were timed to coincide with the changing seasons, reminding them of God's constant provision for them and providing an opportunity to return to God. Some token of all that He has given, others to commemorate the great events of Israel's history, especially occasions when God had miraculously intervened to deliver them.

### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Discuss the different feasts and festivals in ancient Israel
- Indicate the significance of the feasts and festivals.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Feasts and Festivals in Leviticus**

##### **Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:1-8)**

These two feasts, combining pastoral and agricultural elements, were observed together to commemorate Israel's departure from Egypt (see Ex. 11-12). The celebration of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread begins on the fourteenth day of the first month and lasted for a week.

##### **The Feast of Weeks (Harvest) (Lev. 23:15-21)**

This feast later became known as Pentecost. It was celebrated 50 days after the beginning of Passover. It was essentially an agricultural celebration at which the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God. The offering of first fruits was done as a token of appreciation for Yahweh's blessing on their labour.

##### **The Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacle) (Lev. 23:23-43)**

This is a festival that comes up at the end of the fruit harvest. While celebrating the feast of ingathering, the people lived in the wilderness for seven days in shelter made of branches. It is essentially an agricultural thanksgiving, but also a reminder of their Tent-Dwelling days in the wilderness.

##### **Sabbath**

On the seventh day all work was forbidden and the daily sacrifices were doubled. The observation of the Sabbath was connected with the completion of God's work of creation (Ex. 20:11), the deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15), and humanities' simple need for rest and refreshment (Ex. 23:13). After the exile, the Sabbath rules were elaborated and strictly enforced (Neh. 13:15-22) and their observance became one of the outstanding features of Judaism.

##### **New Moon**

This is often mentioned along with the Sabbath; special sacrifices (Num. 23:1-15), and the blowing of trumpets (Num. 10:10) were distinctive features of the new moon festival. There were also special meals and family sacrifices in early times (I Sam. 20:5, 24). On the new moon of the seventh month there was a special feast of Trumpets (Num. 29:1).

## **Sabbatical Year**

On every seventh year the land lay fallow (Lev. 25:1-7) and every fiftieth year was a Jubilee year (Lev. 25:8-34) when debts were forgiven and Israelite slaves were freed.

## **Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32)**

It was the most solemn observance during the entire year. On the tenth day of the seventh month there was a special annual ceremony of confession and atonement for sin. It was a day of national confession and mourning. The High Priest confessed the sins of the entire community. He also entered the most Holy Place with the blood of the offering to make atonement for the people.

## **3.2 The Importance of the feasts and Festivals**

The different feasts and festivals were instituted in ancient Israel for specific purposes. Their significance can therefore be deduced from their purposes. The feasts and festivals were conceived as an avenue to remember what the Lord has done for the people. For example, in the celebration of the Passover and feast of the Unleavened bread the people remembered the salvific acts of Yahweh. This therefore encourages them to further acknowledge Him as the only one capable of giving total deliverance.

The celebration of the feasts and festival served as a vehicle for the renewal of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites. The Day of Atonement for example, is one in which the people renew their covenant with Yahweh. This is done by acknowledging and atoning for the sins that may disrupt the covenantal relationship.

The feasts and festivals are also means of appreciating the provision and providence of Yahweh. The feast of weeks (Harvest) for example, celebrates and recognizes the year provision and blessings of the Lord on the labour of the people. This submission is justifiable on the basis that the ancient Israelite society was agrarian.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, we have gone through the feasts and festivals as listed in the book of Leviticus. The following feasts were examined: the Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread, the feast of weeks, the feast of ingathering, the Sabbath, the new moon, the sabbatical year, and the Day of Atonement. You have also learned



that these feasts and festival are very significant among the ancient Israelites as it serves as a reminder of the person of God and as a means of appreciating YHWH.

## **5.0 Summary**

In the book of Leviticus and other books of the Pentateuch, different feasts and festivals were prescribed for the Israelites. Different events inspired the celebration of these feasts and festivals.

The feasts and festivals are celebrated to remember God's goodness to the people. They are also celebrated as a means of renewing the covenantal relationship between God and the people and also, to acknowledge the provision and providence of God.

## **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Account for the event that occasioned the celebration of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread
2. What is the lesson God wanted the Israelites to draw from the celebration of the feast of ingathering?
3. Read Lev. 16:1-34, 23:26-32 and describe vividly how the Day of Atonement was marked in ancient Israelite.
4. Discuss the importance of the different feasts and festivals listed in the book of Leviticus.

## **7.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **UNIT 11 THE BOOK OF NUMBERS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The literary genres in Numbers
  - 3.2 The Theology/Message of Numbers
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the last unit, we concluded the study of the book of Leviticus with an examination of all feasts and festivals and their significance. In this unit we shall examine the different literary genres that made up the book of Numbers. Also, we shall explore the theology and the message of the book and their contemporary relevance.

The book of Numbers is also one of the books classified as Pentateuch. The book derived its name from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). Among the ancient Jews, two titles are used in reference to the book. These titles are drawn from the book's opening verse. Some called the book "in the wilderness", which is part of 1:1 describing its historical context. While others preferred a title focusing on its theological content, from the book as opening word (1:1); "and he (the Lord) spoke". This sums up what the Lord spoke and did for the Israelites in the wilderness.

### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Identify the different literary genres in the book of Numbers.
- Discuss the social context of the book of Numbers
- Explain the theology and message of the book of Numbers.
- Examine the contemporary relevance of the book of Numbers

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Literary Genres in the book of Numbers**

You will recall that we had earlier examined the different literary types found in the book of Genesis (see Unit 4). There we identified the different types of literary devices used by the writer of the book to pass across his message. The richness of the book of Numbers can perhaps be accounted for in the light of the fact that it is made of different literary genres. Scholars of the book over the years have identified a number of genres in the book with examples: narrative (4:1-3), poetry (21:17-18), prophesy (24:3-9), victory song (21, 27 – 30), prayer (12:13) Blessing (6:24-26), lampoon (22:22-35), diplomatic letter (21:14-19), civil law (27:1-11), cultic law (15:7-21), census list (26:1-51) and Temple archives (7:10-88).

#### **3.2 The Theology/Message of Numbers**

The theology of Numbers revolves around the expression of the ‘wrath of God on the disobedient’. The book of Numbers therefore set out to inspire faith and obedience in the subsequent descendants of the Israelites that had the wilderness experience. After the deliverance of these Israelites from Egypt, they rebelled against God through their disbelief in his power to deliver them. The price of their rebellion is the destruction of that generation in the wilderness. The wrath of God was not only displayed on his chosen people, it was equally extended on the enemy nations of Egypt and Canaan. Even Moses, the chosen leader of the people was not spared from God’s wrath because of disobedience.

However, the mercy of God is also given a vivid expression in the book. The rise of a new generation in the wilderness, best exemplified the mercy of God. It is this new generation that will inherit the land promised to their ancestors. The association of the Lord’s wrath and mercy, his anger and love is a common feature of this book as part of the law and the prophets.

The holiness of God is also an important motif that runs through the book of Numbers. The different narratives and laws in the book combine to demonstrate that Yahweh is holy. He therefore will not want his glory and allegiance to be shared with other gods (25:1-11). Yahweh could be approached with reverence; the people are therefore expected to be clean not only outwardly but also inwardly whenever they approached Him. The Tabernacle, the system of priests and Levites, the sacrifices and other ritual observances all served to preserve Yahweh’s holiness.

The triumph of good over the forces of evil is also aptly demonstrated in the book of Numbers. This is especially true considering the story of Balaam. Balaam was a well-known figure, with some supernatural endowments. He thought Yahweh was like any other deity he could easily manipulate by his magical arts. But the encounter he had with the Lord changed his perspective. Instead of cursing Israel as he has been paid to do by Balak, King of Moab, he rather blessed Israel and rained curses on the Moabites. It is the blessing of the Lord on Israel that makes the difference.

For us as Africans, the message of Numbers is very much relevant. The wrath of God is always exercised on idolatry. However, his enduring mercies should be a motivation for repentance and change in our nation – Nigeria.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have been exposed to the fact that the book of Numbers is made up of different literary genres. This therefore enriches the book. We also discuss the message and theology of the book of Numbers and their contemporary relevance.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The book of Numbers derived its name from the Septuagint. The richness of the book of Numbers can be accounted for in the light of the fact that it is made of different literary genres such as poetry, prophesy, prayer, song, diplomatic letter, civil and cultic laws, etc.

The theology/message of Numbers also revolves round the expression of the ‘wrath of God on the disobedient’. The mercy of God is also given a vivid expression in the book. The triumph of good over the forces of evil is also aptly demonstrated in the book especially in the Balaam narratives.

#### **6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. List the different literary genres found in Numbers.
2. In what ways was the wrath of God displayed in the book of Exodus?
3. Read the story of Balaam (Num. 22-24) and compare his activities to those of charlatans masquerading as prophets in our land.

## **7.0 Reference/Further Readings**

Bellinger, W. H. Jr. (2001). "Leviticus, Numbers" *New International Biblical Commentary* Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc.

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## UNIT 12 IMPORTANT THEMES IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Census figures in Numbers
  - 3.2 The Nazarite Vows
  - 3.3 The Nehushtan
  - 3.4 Balaam's Story in Numbers and other Extra biblical Sources
  - 3.5 Women's Rights: The Struggles of Zelophehad's Daughters
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

### **1.0. Introduction**

In the previous unit, we examined the message and purpose of the book of Numbers. However, in this unit, we shall examine some interesting themes in the book. Some of the issues at stake are controversial while some also give insight to the fact that in spite of the patriarchal structure of Israelite society; women still enjoying some rights. In this unit therefore we shall briefly examine the census figures in Numbers, the Nazarite Vows, the Nehushtan, Balaam's story and the struggles for the rights of women in ancient Israel as exemplified by the actions of Zelophehad's daughters.

### **2.0. Objectives**

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

- Explain the reason for the large population of the Israelites in the Wilderness
- Discuss the importance of the Nazarite vows in Israelite religion
- Relate and give contemporary relevance of the story of Balaam
- Highlight the courage exhibited by Zelophehad's daughters as a base for feminist and womanist theologians.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Census in the book of Numbers**

Census, which is the enumeration or counting of people for administrative or military purposes, is a common phenomenon in the ancient Near East. In the book of Numbers, we are introduced to the subject that gives the book its title: census. The Census we have in the book of Numbers just like the other ancient Near Eastern cultures served three basic functions. These are:

##### **To know the level of manpower, especially available for military purposes**

Since the book of Numbers was written in the context of Israelite trying to possess the Promised Land it is expedient that they know the number of men capable of prosecuting the holy war.

##### **To determine taxable populace**

Even in the wilderness some resources are needed to run the machinery of government in place. It would therefore not be out of place to know the number of taxable adults (see Ex. 30:11-16).

##### **To apportion task for people in the community**

For any society to progress holistically division of labour is a necessity. In the wilderness the Israelites had to perform different task to keep the community going. In view of this it is necessary to know the number of skilled and unskilled professionals available (Num. 3:4).

The first census was conducted in the second year after the exodus (Num. 1: 1). In this census the first generation of Israelite from the age of twenty and above were enumerated. This was perhaps done to identify the capacity and the manpower available for war. The second census, which is to also identify the number of males of fighting age, came in the fortieth year after the exodus. It was to determine the number of survivors among the second generation of the postexodus Israelites (Num. 20: 1, 22-29, 33:38).

The figure for the first census is 603, 550, while the second is 601,730. The difference between the two figures can be accounted for on the basis that some of the people lost their lives due to the harsh conditions of the wilderness and other forms of calamities resulting from their disobedience to the Lord's commandments.

Some critics have however raised serious objections against these figures. This is especially if we are to take these figures literally and the men of military age comprise approximately one-fourth of the population, then the whole population of the Israelites could approximately be between two to three million. According to these critics it will be difficult if not totally impossible for such number to survive with their animals in the wilderness.

Some suggestions have however been offered in order to address the problem raised above. Some scholars believed that the census total numbers are “misplaced” census list from the time of David. For some other scholars, the writer of the book of Numbers employed a literary style intended to emphasize the cumulative wholeness of Israel and also to demonstrate the magnitude of Yahweh’s miraculous deliverance, hence the reason for the inflated figures.

According to Bellinger (2001) the most widely accepted alternative approach contends that the Hebrew word for “thousand” has been mistranslated due to confusion arising from the lack of vowel markings in earlier Hebrew manuscripts. This means that the same cluster of consonants could read as “clan”, “tribe”, or “unit”. Hence, the census lists of Numbers record either military “units” of an unspecified number of warriors or individual (armed) fighters. Such accounting lowers the Israelite army to a figure somewhere between 18,000 and 100,000 men with the total Hebrew population numbering between 72,000 and 400,000 people.

### **3.2 The Nehushtan (Num. 21: 4-9)**

The story of the hanging of the bronze serpent in the book of Numbers, perhaps provide a kind of aetiology (explanation) for the Nehushtan. Nehushtan was the name given to the bronze serpent Moses made in the wilderness. The name was probably derived from the Hebrew name for Serpent and Bronze This bronze serpent was later put in a place in the Temple at Jerusalem. However, Hezekiah removed the Nehushtan from the Temple because the people had turned it to an idol, which they were worshipping (2kgs. 18:1-8).

According to Numbers (21: 5) the people complained bitterly against God and as a result of their disobedience and unbelief, snakes invaded the camp and many of them were killed. Moses however pleaded with God to forgive the people their sins. In response to Moses’ prayers God commanded him to construct a bronze serpent and hang it on a tree; whosoever that looked at it would be delivered. Moses did as he was instructed and many of the people were saved. This story therefore provided the background for the presence of the Nehushtan later in the Temple at Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:4). Reference was also made to this story in the



New Testament where Jesus was also described as being hanged on the tree like the bronze serpent in the wilderness (see Jn. 13: 14-15).

### **3.3 Balaam in the book of Numbers (22-24)**

Balaam must have gained a wider popularity in the land of Canaan, because an inscription on a plastered wall at Deir Alla in Jordan talks about a seer named Balaam who passed the message of the gods to a stubborn people. There have been disputes among scholars on whether the Balaam of Numbers is the same as the Balaam of the Deir Alla text. Though the Deir Alla text may be late it may still be regarded as a recollection in later times of the activities of Balaam of Numbers.

Besides, the story of Numbers is also insightful for our understanding of the fact that the prophetic ministry is not limited to Israel alone. It is a story in the Old Testament that shows that God speaks to people in other nations as he uses the ancient Israelite prophets to speak to the Israelites. However, when God uses a person as his mouthpiece such a person is expected to exhibit utmost character of integrity and responsibility. These characters were however lacking in Balaam. He sacrificed his divine endowments on the altar of pecuniary gains. He was rebuked by God for his detestable activities; however he persisted and even led the Israelites into idolatry (Num. 31:16). He later paid a fatal price for his greed. (31:8). This a lesson for us especially in the African context that divine endowments and charismatic gifts are to be exercised with utmost care and responsibility.

### **3.4 Struggle for the rights of Women: Zelophehad's Daughters' Example (Num.27: 1-11; 36:1-13)**

The campaign for the fundamental rights of women is not a phenomenon that began in the modern times; it dates back to the ancient world. The story of the daughters of Zelophehad best exemplified the contention for the rights of women in ancient Israel. What makes the story interesting is that it happened and was also recorded within the context of patriarchal structure that often denies women their basic rights.

Zelophehad had five daughters and after his death, they were denied their share of his inheritance. This denial was based on the fact that women were not entitled to inherit in ancient Israel. These women would not allow culture and tradition to deny them of their rights and privileges. They took their case to Moses, who ruled that they are entitled to share in the property of their late father, but they must marry within their own clan in order to sustain the memory and heritage of their late father.

We can also draw some lessons here for our situation especially in Africa where many women are still denied their basic rights. You should be reminded that women under no circumstance, culture, tradition and religion should be denied their fundamental rights. You should also create space for and fight for the rights of women in our daily activities.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learned the importance of Census in the book of Numbers and reason why the book is labeled Numbers. You have also realize the reason for the Nazarite vow and the story behind the Nehushtan.

The story of Balaam and its relevance in contemporary religious set-up has also been examined. While the struggle for the rights of women in ancient Israel as exemplified by the daughters of Zelophehad's daughters was also made a focus of our searchlight.

#### **5.0 Summary**

Census is an important ingredient for development, because it enhances effective planning which translate to communal growth and development. This is evident in the two census conducted in the book of Numbers. Besides, the reason for the large number of people recorded in the book of Numbers is due to the lack of vowel markings in the earlier Hebrew manuscripts, which has led to a mistranslation of the Hebrew word for "thousand".

The Nazarite vow in the book of Numbers was instituted to enhance the worship of Yahweh. The Nehushtan, which was popular in the time of King Hezekiah, had its origin in the wilderness experience of the Israelites.

Balaam was a popular diviner in the land of Canaan, his activities were vividly portrayed in the book of Numbers and there are reminiscences of his exploit in the Deir Alla texts of Jordan. In the book of Numbers also the struggle for the rights of Women were vigorously pursued by the daughters of Zelophehad , who through their actions created space for women's right to inheritance in ancient Israel.

#### **5.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment (TMA)**

1. Discuss the importance of census in the book of Numbers

2. In what ways can the large census figure in the book of Numbers be explained?
3. Was Balaam a Prophet or a Sorcerer?
4. Assess the activities of the daughters of Zelophehad are wrong in fighting for their rights?
5. In what ways can the story of the daughters of Zelophehad be insightful in justifying the fundamental rights of women?

## **7.0 References/ Further Reading**

Bellinger, W. H. Jr. (2001). "Leviticus, Numbers" *New International Biblical Commentary*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc.

Denver, G. W. (2003). *What The Writer Know and When Did They Know It: What Archaeology Can Tell Us About The Reality Of Ancient Israel* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House

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## **UNIT 13 THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Composition of Deuteronomy
  - 3.2 Message and Theology of Deuteronomy
  - 3.3 The influence of Deuteronomy in the subsequent History of Israel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References / Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we have concluded our study of the book of Numbers by looking at some major themes recorded therein. In this unit we shall examine the arguments raised concerning the composition of Deuteronomy. We would also look into the message and theology of the book vis-à-vis its influence on the subsequent history of Israel.

Deuteronomy is the last of the book that made up the Pentateuch. The book does not give second law as the name suggests, but rather provides an important summary of the wilderness period and organization of the legal material. Some scholars have opined that Deuteronomy should not be grouped along with the other four books of the Pentateuch, because its contents reflect more of the monarchical era and not the time of Moses.

### **2.0 Objectives**

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

- Explain the processes involved in the composition of the Pentateuch
- Relate the message of Deuteronomy to contemporary Nigerian situation
- Evaluate the role the book of Deuteronomy played in the subsequent history of Israel.

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 Composition of the book of Deuteronomy

For many centuries, the book of Deuteronomy is regarded as one of those authored by Moses. However, from the time of Enlightenment, which marked the birth of critical scholarship, this position has been seriously questioned. You will recall that in unit 4, where we discussed the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch, De Wette a German scholar said the document found in the Temple in 622 BC during Josiah's reformation (2kgs.22) was behind the composition of our present Deuteronomy. The people involved in the reformation later composed Deuteronomy based on the document found in the Temple, where words were put into the Mouth of Moses, in order to address the different problems confronting the nation.

Moreover, the fact that Deuteronomy also espoused centralization of the worship of Yahweh is also one of the reasons put forward to deny the Mosaic authorship of the book. Since the Israelites had not settled in the land of Canaan at the time of Moses, it would be difficult for him to suggest centralization of worship. Centralization of worship must have been a later development in the history of Israel when they were facing the challenges posed by the varied worship of Yahweh at different centers.

To some scholars Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy cannot be contested, because he adopted as a pattern for his message the Hittite type of suzerainty treaty. More than half of the fifty suzerainty treaties found in the ancient Near East from the Mid-third millennium to the mid-third millennium BC are from the archives of the Hittite empire of the mid-second millennium. It has therefore been argued that Deuteronomy follows the form of the mid-second millennium treaties as compared with those of other periods, thus establishing Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy.

An example of such treaty format and its match to the book of Deuteronomy as adapted from the Companion Bible is given below:

<b>Treaty Format</b>	<b>Intent</b>	<b>Deuteronomy Passage</b>
Historical Prologue	Defines relationship of Ruler to Subject	1:6-3:29
Basic stipulations	Defines general principles guiding behaviour	5: 1-11:32

Detailed Stipulations	List some specific rules to be followed	12:1-26: 19
Document Clause	Citizens to ratify constitution	27:1-26
Blessings	Lists benefits of relationship	28:1-14
Curses	Lists penalties for breaches of regulations	28:15-68
Regulation	Reviews and sum up of treaty	29: 1-30: 10

Just as we conclude while addressing the issue of the authorship of the Pentateuch, it would not be out of place to say that some parts of the book of Deuteronomy must have been revised and expanded to reflect contemporary sensibilities. The death of Moses recorded in Chapter 34 of the book is a clear attestation to this fact. At least it is impossible for the dead to record his obituary.

### **3.2 Messages and Theology of Deuteronomy**

The message and theology of Deuteronomy may be summed up in a three-member formula: one God, one people, and one cult. To this may be added one land, one king, and one prophet. God gave the message of Deuteronomy through Moses, as they were about to enter the Promised Land in form of a covenant renewal, where all the terms of Sinaitic covenant were rehashed. The new generation that are about to enter the land of Canaan was reminded of the covenant Yahweh instituted with their forbears and the need to sustain it. This covenant renewal became necessary because of the different socio-cultural challenges they will face in Canaan. The address of Moses in Deuteronomy can therefore be understood in the light of this background.

In fact some scholars see Deuteronomy as exposition of the Decalogue. The Decalogue (see unit 8) occupies an important position in the socio-political space of ancient Israel. The Decalogue was given in order to regulate the activities of the individual in the society and also highlight the responsibilities of the individual to God. As an exposition of the Decalogue, Deuteronomy envisages a society where peace, truth and justice shall reign based on the fear of God and strict adherence to his commandments and statutes.

The book of Deuteronomy emphasizes the oneness of God because of the influence the Israelites would encounter from the Canaanites (Deut.6: 4). It is the monotheistic conception of God that gave the ancient Israel her unique character among other cultures in the ancient Near East. The Canaanite elemental religions

are polytheistic in character, and the different gods are assigned different areas of operations. Some gods are in charge of fertility, some in charge of war, prosperity, etc. But for the Israelites, Moses reminds them that the oneness and holiness of God should be a constant emphasis in their day-to-day activities. The Israelites were also reminded that they are chosen people of God and therefore must be holy in all areas of their lives and also avoid idol worship (Deut. 7:1-11). They are also expected to keep the rules and terms of the Sinaitic covenant.

As the one and only God over all creation, Yahweh's name must be honoured by the Israelites (Deut.32: 3). Moreover they should also find the word of God sufficient for guidance and direction in all areas of their lives. In view of this, the Israelites were warned to turn away from divination, necromancy and other detestable practices of the elemental religion of Canaan. Rather, they should seek for guidance and direction from the Lord. The Lord Himself promised to raise a prophet like Moses who will give direction in all spheres areas of life. In this promise to raise a Prophet like Moses we see God instituting the prophetic ministry and the principle to regulate it (Deut. 18:14-22).

To prevent distortion and syncretism, Moses also instructed that the worship of Yahweh should be centralized. The centralization of the worship of Yahweh would help in regulating the activities of the worshipper and this would promote a standardized form of worship, which would ultimately prevent the people from slipping into idolatry. An unregulated worship is often a recipe for anarchy (Deut. 12:3, 11, 14, 18, 14:23-25, 15: 10, 11).

The Israelites were also reminded of the consequences of their actions and inactions regarding keeping to the terms of the covenant. If they faithfully serve their God and keep to His commandments, by upholding his holiness, truth and justice, they will live in abundant peace and prosperity. However if they fail to keep to the terms of the covenant then they would remain cursed and all their efforts and activities geared towards peace and prosperity would be futile and empty (Deut. 27-28).

### **3.3 The Influence of Deuteronomy on the Subsequent History of Israel**

In the opinion of some scholars the theology of Deuteronomy resonates in the subsequent records of Israelite history. The central theology of the book of Deuteronomy is that adherence to the commandments of God enhances peace and prosperity, while a breach of those commandments often results in catastrophe for the nation (Deut. 27-28). Subsequently, the people of Israel and their leaders were judged in the light of this principle.

In the book of Judges, the people of Israel suffered untold hardship in the hand of their Canaanite neighbours. The reason according to the writer of the book is that they neglect the commandments of the Lord as listed and expounded by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy and other sections of the Pentateuch. Whenever the Israelites followed after other gods the Lord delivered them to the hand of their enemies. But when they realized their faults and make the necessary amends the Lord raised for them a leader who would break the yoke of oppression cast on them. This is a recurring pattern in the book of Judges; this perhaps reinforces the Deuteronomic theology earlier enunciated

The other books that give account of the failures monarchical era and the dispersion to exile in Babylon in 587 BC also linked these events to the failure of the Kings and their subject to live by the Deuteronomic codes. Any King who lived by these codes and keeps the commandments of the Lord is often portrayed as successful. But a King that encourages idolatry, in spite of his military and political achievements is often portrayed as a failure. This perhaps was responsible for the labeling of the books from Joshua to II Chronicles as Deuteronomistic history, because they were written from the perspective of the theology and the basic socio-religious principles highlighted in Deuteronomy.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, you have learned that some objections were raised concerning Mosaic composition of the book of Deuteronomy, but we said the form of the book followed the Hittite treaty of the mid- second millennium which points to the fact that the book must have been written in the time of Moses. We also examined the message and theology of the book of Deuteronomy and also explore its influence on the subsequent history of Israel.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The fact that Moses was the author of the book of Deuteronomy was contested on the grounds that the document found in the Temple during the Josiah's reformation of 622 BC was behind the composition of our present Pentateuch. Also the command given by Moses that the worship of Yahweh should be centralized, was seen as a backward projection of a later development in Israelite history. It has however been argued that Moses adopted the Hittite treaty composition of the mid-second millennium this therefore places the composition of the book in the time of Moses. On the other hand the fact that the book of Deuteronomy has been edited cannot be ruled out. This is evident in the record of the obituary of Moses in chapter 34 of the book.



The message and theology of Deuteronomy may be summed up in a three-member formula: one God, one people, and one cult. In the book of Deuteronomy there is a covenant renewal in which the terms of the Sinaitic covenant were reiterated. The blessings of keeping to these terms and the curses to be incurred if they do otherwise are also the focal points of Deuteronomy.

The theology of Deuteronomy also bore its imprint on the subsequent records of Israelite history. Perhaps that is why in some quarters the books of Joshua to II Chronicles are Deuteronomistic history.

## **6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignments (TMA)**

1. Can Moses be regarded as the author of the book of Deuteronomy?
2. What are the similarities between the book of Deuteronomy and the Hittite treaty forms?
3. Account for the blessings and the curses listed in Deuteronomy 27-28.

## **7.0 Reference/ Further readings**

Dillard, R.B.: Longman, T. III (1994). *Old Testament Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.

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## **UNIT 14 CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE MESSAGE OF PENTATEUCH**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
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  - 3.3 Drawing vital lessons from the wilderness experience of Israelite for Nation building
- 4.0 Conclusion
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### **1.0 Introduction**

This is the last unit in this course material; it is therefore expedient for us to explore the contemporary relevance of the message of the book of Pentateuch. One of the main objectives of this Course is to help the student relate what they have learnt to their socio-political context. As they say in the field of education, learning has taken place if the student is able to use the acquired knowledge to solve a concrete problem.

In view of this we shall examine the relevance of the Pentateuch in contemporary socio-religious set-up; this would lead us to explore the Decalogue as a blueprint for building a society where justice and peace reign vis-à-vis drawing vital lessons for nation building in the wilderness experience of the Israelites.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit the student should be able to:

- Evaluate the contemporary relevance of the Bible
- Apply the message of the Pentateuch to your socio-political situation
- Evaluate the Decalogue as a medium for social change and transformation.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Relevance of The Pentateuch in Contemporary Socio-Religious Set-up**

You will recall that at the beginning of this Course material we said that the Pentateuch occupies an important place in the three principal Monotheistic faiths of the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These religions trace their origins to one story or the other in the Pentateuch. For example, Abraham is recognized as playing a significant role in the establishment of these living faiths. For the Jews, Abraham is an epitome of Judaic values and practices. To the Christians, Abraham is regarded as the father of faith. Since the concept of faith is central in the concept and practice of the Christian faith, Abraham therefore symbolizes the father of faith. For the Muslims, Abraham is the first person to practice Islam. Islam means submission; the concept of submission is best expressed in the surrendering of Ishmael according to the Islamic tradition, for sacrifice.

Since these three monotheistic faiths traced their ancestry to a common origin, this should offer an incentive for dialogue and interaction among them. Today in the world, adherents of these three monotheistic faiths are engaged in constant strife and acrimony which most of the time results in violence. In view of this, the study of the Pentateuch should be promoted as a means of promoting peace and harmony.

Besides, some studies have been carried out in Africa comparing some concepts and ideas discussed in Pentateuch with elements of African culture. For example, works have been done to see if the Nimrod of Gen. 11 is the same as Lamurudu in Yoruba traditions. The Yoruba are mainly found in Southwestern Nigeria. Besides, the Genesis cosmogony has also been compared with some African cosmogonies, and their areas of convergences and divergences. The most important contribution of the Pentateuch for the African therefore is not in introducing us to the Supreme Being, but establishing the fact that Man can indeed establish and maintain relationship with God. Herein lies the heritage of the Judeo-Christian concept of God, which had its root in the Pentateuchal narratives.

#### **3.2 The Decalogue as Blueprint for Peaceful and Prosperous Society**

You will recall that we said that Decalogue, which is popularly known as the Ten Commandments, was given in the course of Israelite Journey in the wilderness when the Lord instituted covenant with them. The purpose of the Decalogue was the promotion of peace and tranquility in the ancient Israelite society. The fact should be underscored here that the Decalogue is different from other form of

Laws we have in the Pentateuch. In the other Laws, we have the description of what constitute a crime and the penalty for such crime. These type of Laws are often identified with the use of “if” and “then”. For example: “if a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to member of the stranger’s clan... then after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him” (Lev. 26: 47-48).

But for the Decalogue the penalty for a crime was not stipulated neither was any crime given an elaborate description. What we have are a general principle or commandments describing lucidly the duty of human to God and human to fellow human. The Decalogue establishes the fact that if the relationship between human and the Divine were cordial, then human-to-human would also be cordial, thus enhancing a peaceful and prosperous society.

The Decalogue can serve as blueprint for a peaceful and prosperous society especially in the African context, where violence, hunger, disease and other debilitating conditions are results of humanities’ inhumanity to themselves. Much of the problems besetting Africa today can be traced to Godlessness that pervades every spectrum of the society. Though today Africans are said to be incurably religious, however it is just empty religiosity that does not acknowledge God. The Decalogue admonishes that we should not take the name of God in vain, but that is what goes on in our society today. As it is also highlighted in the Decalogue it is only the fear of the Lord that can engender and enhance positive interpersonal relationship. This is the foundation of the Decalogue.

In building a peaceful nation where truth, peace and justice shall reign, we should remember that it is only possible if we change our orientation, and work along the principles enunciated in the Decalogue. Today Nigeria ranked among the richest countries in the world in terms of human and material resources yet majority of the people are living below the poverty line. This is an indication that it is not the material riches that determines the well being of a nation, but the quality of people that inhabit it. Perhaps if the principles enunciated in the Decalogue are properly taught and internalized it may produce the quality men and women who will bring the much-needed social change and transformation in our land.

### **3.3 Drawing vital Lessons from the Wilderness Experience of the Israelite for Nation Building**

As earlier observed, our goal in this unit is to explore the contemporary relevance of the message of Pentateuch. It is in the light of this we hope to see if there are insightful lessons that can be derived from the wilderness experience of the Israelites described in the Pentateuch. One of the goals of the writer of the

Pentateuch is to furnish us with information on the origin and development of the nation of Israel. The writer has been able to demonstrate through his record of the formative years of Israelite history, especially their wilderness experience before final settlement in Canaan, that nation building is not an easy task.

In the contemporary time, the experience of the ancient Israelites in the wilderness could however be regarded as a metaphor of challenges to be confronted in the process of developing and building a nation. We can draw vital lessons from the conduct of the people and those of the leaders, especially Moses, which may help us, understand the leadership-followership relationship.

From the narrative in the Pentateuch about the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness, it is evident that leading people is a very difficult task. This is especially true if those people are from different ethnic and social backgrounds. The Israelites left Egypt with the twelve tribes and other ethnic groups referred to in the Pentateuchal narrative as the multitude (Ex. 12: 38). Managing such a diverse people in the wilderness constitute a very great challenge to the leadership. The people were unruly in their conduct and several times placed unnecessary demands on the leadership, which often brought friction between them and their leaders (see Ex. 17: 1-3; Num. 14: 1-4). Some of the people also challenged the authority of Moses claiming they have equal access to power to lead the people (Num. 16: 1- 15).

The responses of Moses to these myriads of challenges raised by the people can perhaps be a model for leadership in the African context. One of the first things Moses did to effectively reach the people was to decentralize his administration. Tribal and clan leaders were selected in order to take governance to the grassroots ( Num. 11: 16-30). From this action it is evident that Moses was not a dictator and power-drunk leader like most contemporary African leaders, who intentionally centralize and arrogate power in order to have a firm grip on the people and national resources. It is worthwhile to notice that the incentive to decentralize governance came via an advice from his father-in- law, Jethro (Ex. 18: 1-27). This therefore portrays Moses as a humble and responsible leader. In the recent history of our country we had a president who told his special advisers that he is not bound to take their advice. The performance of a president with such a mentality is best imagined than recounted.

Moses as a leader is also compassionate and responsive to the needs of the people. Anytime the people cried to him concerning one need or the other, he finds ways of meeting those needs. This is done at times at the detriment of his own comfort and needs. Besides, whenever, Yahweh opted to completely wipe out the people for their sins Moses often pleaded with God to temper justice with mercy; most of the time based on his intercession God has often rescinded his plans to punish the

people. Nigerian leaders at different levels can borrow a leaf from the character of Moses. Leadership is about meeting needs of the people. But the sad fact today is that our leaders are not compassionate, they care less for the welfare of the citizens as long as their own interest is not jeopardized.

The wilderness narrative in the Pentateuch has indeed reveal to us that it is not an easy task to lead people from diverse social, economic and ideological backgrounds. However, Moses has also shown that a responsive, compassionate and God- fearing leadership can creatively respond to the challenges posed by leadership in diverse contexts. This should therefore be a guiding principle for us in any leadership roles we found ourselves.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

You have learned that the message of the Pentateuch is still relevant in contemporary Nigerian and African socio-political context. Also that there are principles we may glean from the Pentateuch which may help to transform the perennial problems in Africa into positive developments.

#### **4.0 Summary**

The Pentateuch's relevance in contemporary Nigeria socio- political set-up is evident in the fact that the three Monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Islam and Christianity all trace their origin to the stories of Abraham and his descendants in the Pentateuch. This should therefore be an incentive to promote religious harmony and peaceful coexistence of the two dominant religions in Nigeria- Christianity and Islam.

The Decalogue also offers transformative possibilities for Nigeria in particular and Africa in general if its inherent principles are properly internalize it. The goal of the Decalogue among the ancient Israelites was to promote justice and a harmonious society if the Decalogue is strictly followed. The Decalogue encapsulates vital principles that can trigger social and political transformation in our land if we allowed it to permeate our consciousness.

The insights derived from a study of the wilderness narratives in the Pentateuch can also be applied in a developing nation like ours. The leaders and the followers in our nation can learn some lessons from the experiences of the people of Israel and the leadership qualities inherent in Moses.

## **6.0 Tutor- Marked Assignments (TMA)**

1. In what ways can the stories of the Patriarch in the Pentateuch offer incentive for peaceful coexistence among the dominant religions in Nigeria?
2. How can the Decalogue be utilized to bring about social transformation?
3. What are the leadership qualities in Moses that helped him led the Israelites effectively?
4. Will you say Nigerian leadership is responsive and compassionate?

## **7.0 References / Further Readings**

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