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THE RELIGION OF THE EXILES:
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO
THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY
(A LESSON FOR NIGERIA)

BY

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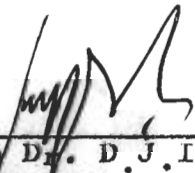
CERTIFICATION

Ikoreh, Felix Amadi (Rev.), a post-graduate student in the Department of Religion and with the Reg. No. PG/MA/91/12767 has satisfactorily completed the requirements for the course and Research Work for the degree of Master of Arts in Religion.

The work embodied in this project report is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other diploma or degree of this or any other University.



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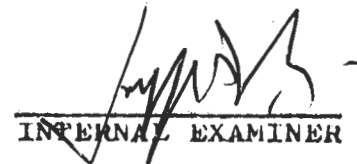
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DEAN OF THE FACULTY

DEDICATION

Especially to My Lord Jesus Christ,
And to my family - nuclear and extended.

PREFACE

The term 'Exile' which means a forcible removal of any 'undesirable' person or group of persons from all or part of the country, is applied as a punishment to criminals and political offenders since ancient times. It was common practice for conquering empires in the Middle East and the Orient - like Assyria and Babylon - to disperse entire populations, sometimes transporting the conquered peoples as slaves when they were thought to be a serious threat to the peace and stability of the empire.

The Jews were victims to such treatments in biblical times, first at the hands of the Assyrians, and, in particular, at the hands of the Babylonians. The Exile was one of the most severe tests that the Israelites were subjected to, and marked the great watershed of Israel's history. The exilic period was a period remarkable for its prophetic and literary activity, and all the contemporary prophets were in remarkable theological agreement on the importance for Judah and Israel of their experience and interpretation of divine activity in the calamity of defeat and exile. The event was to be understood not only as divine

retribution but more significantly as God's judgement which, if accepted by faith, would be a revelation of God's love and commitment forever (Is. 54:9-10; Jer. 31:2-3). A new covenant, born of divine judgement to bind the people to God is the role of servant and witness to the world, would issue out of this bitter experience (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26; Is. 43:10).

It was also at this period that a priestly school of writers and editors produced the document reappraising the Yahwistic cultus (Lev. 17-26; Ezek. 40-48). The document which came to be known as the Priestly writing (P), contained a collection of cultic laws and material relating to the history of the cult, and was aimed at ridding the cult of any element which might have evoked the divine judgement of the Exile. Thus, Judaism the contemporary Jewish religion of the first centuries was born out of the Exile. The Exile came to be at the heart of biblical understanding of divine judgement and revelation, the crucible for Israel's faith, and the foundation stone of any biblical understanding of the cross.

It is preponderantly in the light of this phenomenon that my interest in the exilic events was kindled, and as a pastor, the desire to discover the social consequences of religious belief and action led me into this research. The sociology of Religion aims at, not only a theoretical study of Religion but also the study of the relation between Religion and the social structure with a view to understanding the phenomenon of religion. In view of this, my research took a sociological approach in order to discover the influences and consequences of the exilic experience on the Israelites an event that brought about not only the emergence of the legalistic religion called Judaism, but also moulded a people so rigid and bigotic in their belief that, notwithstanding the persecutions that they underwent in their long history, they survived to continually influence the history of mankind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For the successful production of this work I drew invaluable and immeasurable aids from people too numerous to mention here. I pledge my indebtedness for those whom I could not mention here, while others must unavoidably be mentioned.

I must before any other, express my indebtedness to my Supervisor, Rev. Canon (Dr.) D.J.I. Ebo who, first and foremost, relentlessly strove and made possible my admission into the post-graduate school, when all hope of this was almost lost, and his persevering patience with me in my unsettled and punctuated period of research. May the good Lord reward his kindly efforts.

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CONTENTS

	Page
Title	i
Certification page	ii
Approval page	iii
Dedication	iv
Preface	v
Acknowledgement	viii
Contents	x
Abbreviations	xii
Abstract	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 A HISTORICAL PROLOGUE OF THE EXILE	5
(a) The Rise of the Babylonian Empire	7
(b) The Fall and Captivity of Judah	10
1.2 REFUGEE BEHAVIOUR AND ADJUSTMENT/ADAPTATION	16
NOTES	21
CHAPTER TWO: LEADERSHIP CONFLICT AND SCHISM: JEREMIAH'S CASE	23
2.1 CONFLICT WITH THE PRIESTS AND PROPHETS	23
(a) Jeremiah and the Priests	24
(b) Jeremiah and the Prophets	26
(c) Jeremiah and Hananiah	28
2.2 JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE EXILES	33

NOTES	42
CHAPTER THREE: STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT	44
3.1 THE RISE OF ELDERS	45
(a) History of the Institution	46
3.2 THE GREAT ASSEMBLY	50
3.3 THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD	53
NOTES	55
CHAPTER FOUR: BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE AND PURITY PRESERVATION	56
4.1 THE SYNAGOGUE	60
4.2 THE SABBATH OBSERVANCE	63
4.3 CIRCUMCISION RITE	66
4.4 RITUAL CLEANNES	68
NOTES	72
CHAPTER FIVE: BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE - IDENTITY AND SEPERATION	74
5.1 IDENTITY AND SEPERATION - THE WORKS OF NEHEMIAH AND EZRA	74
5.2 DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGES AND LINGUISTIC REFORMS	80
5.3 SOCIAL CONFLICTS AFTER THE RESTORATION	85
(a) The Jews and the Samaritans	85
(b) The Beginning of Anti-Semitism	88
NOTES	90
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	101

A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

B.C.	-	Before Christ
B.J.R.L.	-	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
cf.	-	confer, compare with.
chron.	-	chronicles
Co.	-	Company
Dt.	-	Deuteronomy
ed(s)	-	editor(s)
E.S.S.	-	Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences
et. al.	-	<u>et alii</u> = and other people
etc.	-	<u>et cetera</u> = and the rest
Ex.	-	Exodus
Ezek.	-	Ezekiel
Ezr.	-	Ezra
f, ff.	-	forward
FESTAC	-	Festival of Arts & Culture
Gen.	-	Genesis
Heb.	-	Hebrews
H.T.R.	-	Harvard Theological Review
ibid	-	<u>ibidem</u> = in the same place
I.E.S.S.	-	The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.
Inc.	-	Incorporated
Is.	-	Isaiah
J.B.L.	-	Journal of Biblical Literature

Jdg.	-	Judges
Jer.	-	Jeremiah
Josh.	-	Joshua
J.S.O.T.	-	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
J.Soc.Psy.	-	Journal of Social Psychology
J.T.S. (J.Th.St.)	-	Journal Theological Studies
Kgs.	-	Kings
Lev.	-	Leviticus
Lk.	-	Luke
Loc. cit.	-	<u>Loco citato</u> = in the place mentioned
Ltd.	-	Limited
Macc.	-	Maccabees
Mal.	-	Malachi
Mk.	-	Mark
Mt.	-	Matthew
Neh.	-	Nehemiah
Num.	-	Numbers
op. cit.	-	<u>opera citato</u> = in the work mentioned
p, pp.	-	page, pages
R.S.V.	-	Revised Standard Version.
Sam.	-	Samuel
S A P	-	Structural Adjustment Programme

S.J.O.T.	-	Scottish Journal of Theology
v, vs.	-	Verse, verses
Vol(s)	-	Volume(s)
V.T.	-	Vetus Testamentum
Zech.	-	Zechariah.

ABSTRACT

The date ^{ranges} between 597 and 582BC. The famed Solomon's Temple was burnt to the ground, and the land of Judah was ravaged. Thousands of its people were carried away into Babylonia by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. The anguish of that hour remains indelible in the Jewish memory and from year to year, from generation to generation, on the ninth day of Av¹, the descendants of the Jewish Exiles would recite the lamentations for the departed glory of their kingdom.

The Psalmist succinctly expressed the bitterness which the Jews felt by their exilic experience in the words of Psalm 137 which reads:

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down
and wept, when we remembered Zion.

On the willows there we hung up our lyres.
For there our captors required of us songs,
And our tormentors, mirth, saying,

"Sing one of the songs of Zion" (vs. 1-3, RSV).

The intensity of their humiliation and distress when they were torn from their native land, and made to feel their subjection in the streets and fields of Babylon can hardly be measured. They "wept when they remembered Zion". The very beauties of its situation (Ps. 48:2) as contrasted with the dreary plains of Babylon; the very fullness of its privileges, as contrasted with the privations to which they

were now submitting, filled their souls with grief. Commenting on the same reactions which the Jews had to the captivity because of "the shame that attended the destruction" of their land and "the psychological effect of deportation" into a strange land whose geographical characteristics were entirely the opposite, to which the Judeans had been accustomed throughout their lives, R.K. Harrison states:

To them the mountains of Judah had been the unquestioned assurance of security and support, and although they were probably familiar with the desert areas to the south and east, they could have had no concept whatever of the vastness that characterized the open space of Mesopotamia. For the hill-dwelling community to be transplanted forcibly into a land of enormous unending plains is a very serious matter, inviting the lurking terrors of agoraphobia as the least result of the ensuing psychological traumata ... the emotional and spiritual crisis that is thereby precipitated is immeasurably more acute (1970:257).

That the religion of Israel survived the exile at all is one of the most striking proofs of its vitality. Also that that faith itself equally survived the exile is largely the result of prophetic teaching. The prophetic predictions of disaster as Yahweh's chastisement of His people were vindicated by events that followed, so that the experience, shattering as it were, did not undermine but reinforced their belief in His power and purpose. The Exile in reality, therefore, enriched

what it might have been expected to destroy. It is a mark of the centrality of the prophetic tradition in Israel that "having thus prepared the way for the Exile, it reveals in its own subsequent developments some of the most important changes through which the religion of Israel was to pass" (Anderson, G.W., 1980:166).

The influence of the ethical and spiritual teachings of the prophets together with the personal suffering of the Exiles, inspired a search for new foundations for living. The prophets also created a new consciousness of the value of the 'individual' whose personal suffering and faith necessarily moved to the foreground, with the recession of the idea of the political community as the unit of salvation. Concerning the "individual responsibility" to the 'individual' as the centre of religion Jeremiah declares:

"In these days they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'. But every one shall die for his own sins; 'each man who eats sour grapes his teeth shall be set on edge ... And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and teach his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord"
 (Jer. 31:29-34).

In the same vein, Ezekiel who was also one of the several prophets who kept alive the hope of one day returning home for the Exiles, asserts the centrality of the individual thus:

And I will give them one heart,
 and put a new spirit within them;
 I will take the stony heart out
 of their flesh and give them a
 heart of flesh ... Behold, all
 souls are mine; the soul of the
 father as well as the soul of the
 son is mine: the soul that sins
 shall die (Ezek. 11:19; 18:4).

Thus, under, the influence of the hardships accompanying the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile, the prophets were compelled to reexamine the premises of their thinking and to take account

of new difficulties for faith. For instance, in the face of a threatened extermination both of the ^{Jewish} nation and its faith by their defeat and captivity, many questions bogged their minds. Was not this fate out of all proportion to Israel's sin? How could God choose and guide this nation through the tortuous course of history only to destroy it? How could the righteous be happy in Exile? How could they sing the song of the Lord in a foreign land?

The jeering demands of such questions stimulated the prophets of Exile to make creative reaffirmations of their faith. They reckoned with the meaning of national adversity in relation to the promises of the covenant God who was Israel's Saviour. In fact, one of the prophets came forth with one of the most powerful "ideas ever conceived by the mind of man: the idea that the terrible evil afflicting Israel was 'God's way of redeeming the world'" (Baab, O.J. 1931:236). In defiance of all canons of logic and the testimony of human experience the prophet boldly announced that the nation's suffering and misery had spiritual purpose - the healing of the nations (Baab, 1931:236; see also Is. 53:5,6,11).

With the Exile experience, momentuous changes came into Israel's thought and life. But the breakdown of the nation as a political entity required a process of adjustment to cope with the new situation. Such adjustment, for the Israelites, finally resulted in the emergence of a spiritual

community which replaced the former national community. They were thus able to maintain their national spirit as well as their religious identity, notwithstanding their great sufferings in the face of powerful cultural pressures in a foreign land. They lived on to play out impressive roles in every age, and in every land.

It is in the light of this phenomenon that the present study scrutinizes the complex nature of the Exilic and post-exilic materials from the perspective of a sociological analysis of refugee behaviour and adjustment processes and opines that the exilic and post-exilic community exhibited features of a minority group under stress, and equally points out^{that} the creative means by which that group responded^{was} through what may be called "mechanisms for survival". These include:

- i) Structural adjustment
- ii) Rise of, and conflict between new leaders
- iii) Social isolationism, and
- iv) Boundary maintenance.

NOTE

¹The word Av (אָב) is a Babylonian name of the fifth ecclesiastical and the eleventh civil month of the Jewish year. It was introduced after the Babylonian captivity (Unger, M.F., Unger's Bible Dictionary 1980:2).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Jewish story is the story of a small people with a large place in the destiny of mankind. There are, they say, about fourteen million Jews in the world, just a small fraction of the human family. They have never had much power or space or size; yet the history of civilization cannot be recounted without coming face to face with the Jews - with what they have thought and felt, and what they have written and done.

The Jews trace their history back 4,000 years to the time when their ancestor Abraham migrated into Canaan from the land between the two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates - "Ur of the Chaldeans" (Gen. 15:17). Generations later, their leader Moses took them out of Egypt where they had gone for food and pasture, out of servitude into the wilderness of Sinai. There they experienced the transcendent vision of a single God set above nature - a vision that rebelled sharply against the confused and chaotic superstitious pantheon of the surrounding pagan world. With this God, they entered into a covenant relationship which demanded their constant obedience and faithfulness (Abba Eban, 1984:3).

After a few centuries of settled national life in their own country, in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, their land

was conquered, and the people were exiled and dispersed.

From this time onwards, we find the Jews in every age, and to a greater or lesser degree, on every continent, sometimes pouring themselves into the ocean of other civilizations, sometimes secluded; always creating, suffering, resisting, and, above all, surviving in their own form and image. Thus, we might say of the Jews what a Greek historian said about the Greeks: "This people was (sic) born to have no rest itself, and to give none to others" (Abba Eban: 1984).
 Such history demands a careful study, which this project attempts to undertake, particularly as it relates to the historic Babylonian Exile. What, then, is the relevance of the study of the Babylonian Exile to us today? This question leads us to state the problem that the work intends to unravel.

a) The problem:

The whole of history has been powerfully agitated by the currents of the Jewish mind. From the story of their history and its constant drama, the Jews take the lesson that there is salvation and significance for them only when they stand straight and aim high within their authentic frame of values. By all logic, the Jews should now have sunk into oblivion. But since history does not always follow the voice of logic, the Jews did not disappear from history, although for the next

five centuries they roamed far and wide over the earth.

From all that has been said, the following questions call to mind: What were the values that enabled the Jews to stand straight and aim high in adversity, and what kind of people fashioned these values? Is it possible to trace them through the Exilic event? Why have the Jews not sunk into, or ^{disappeared} from history after all that they have suffered? Could it be that they might have learnt what no other people had ever learnt before, namely, how to maintain faith and identity away from home? If this was so, how was it possible and how did the Babylonian Exile help to firmly establish the basic elements of Jewish beliefs and Jewish law?

Again, how did the Jews cope with the challenge to adapt the practices and institutions of Judaism to their radically changed circumstances? How could a religion built around Jerusalem and the sacrificial cult withstand the loss of its holy Temple, its sacred Ark of the Covenant, and the city of David which had been, not just the political capital, but also the spiritual centre of the Jewish religion itself, and still survive the ordeal? What were the theological problems created by the exilic event, and how far were they handled, and through what medium? Moreover, what has enabled succeeding generations of Jews to endure and survive all the odds, the anti-Semitic feelings and attitudes, and their attendant holocausts throughout their long history? These are some of

the riddles demanding solution in this work. Finally, it is often claimed that since Judaism was the product of the Exile, therefore, the home of the orthodox religion of the Jews was Babylonia. How far this claim is true, is another problem requiring an answer.

In the light of such demanding questions, the proposed research seeks for their answers through a sociological review of the exilic and post-exilic materials with a view to finding possible reasons for the dynamic transformations that were made in the religion of Israel bringing to birth the legalistic religion called Judaism. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to a general historical survey of the events leading to the Exile as well as an examination of the behavioural patterns of refugees and the corresponding adjustments which the refugees make to adapt to a new environment, and then a comparison will be made with the situation of the Exiles. It is, therefore my opinion that the exilic and post-exilic community exhibited features of a minority group under stress, and the creative means by which they responded to this crisis of domination in a foreign environment are what I term "mechanisms for survival". What follows this introductory chapter is an analysis of these mechanisms.

1.1 A HISTORICAL PROLOGUE OF THE EXILE

The calamity that befell Judah between 597 and 582B.C can be traced back to the time of Josiah who succeeded Amon as the king of Judah at the age of eight in 640B.C. But prior to Josiah's accession Judah had found herself a free country when Assyria lost her grip on her empire. This freedom reared its head up, and became a reality under Josiah, though very briefly. This gave Josiah the opportunity to carry out his reform which he extended even to the Northern kingdom (2 Kgs. 22: 3-23:25; 2Chron. 34:1-35:19).

Besides the influence of the law-book found in the Temple and the resurgence of nationalism, other factors helped to influence his reforms. A historian described the spiritual atmosphere at this time thus:

All over the contemporary world a certain anxiety was in the air ... men were haunted by a premonition of doom and a gnawing insecurity, together with a nostalgic longing for the better days of long ago ... It was a dangerous time, a time when a man needed the help of his gods. Judah was not exempt. Side by side with the excitement of newly found independence and the optimism implicit in the official dynastic theology, there walked a profound unease ... that the nation's security lay in a return to ancient tradition (Bright, J., 1980: 319-20).

Neither were these the only factors that influenced reform at this time, but there was also the influence of the prophetic movement which entered upon a new 'floruit'. Such prophets like Zephaniah¹ and Jeremiah exercised their ministries at this time. By declaring that the nation was under the judgment and wrath of God if she did not repent they helped to prepare the ground for reform.

However, Josiah's reform was only superficial, for while not profoundly affecting the spiritual life of the nation, it engendered a false sense of peace that nothing could crack. But the dangers of Judah's position in the international political struggle were quite obvious. Harrison, sums up Judah's situation thus:

The Assyrian empire had disintegrated, and its place had been taken by a powerful Babylonian regime. Egypt was again asserting its claim to a voice in the affairs of the Near East ... and appeared certain to challenge Babylonian military power sooner or later. If Judah allied with Egypt, she would suffer severe consequences if an Egyptian defeat took place, or if the Babylonians occupied the country and used it as an advance base for attacking Egypt... (1970:240).

Meanwhile, it is proper at this point to examine how the rise of Babylon came about.

2a) THE RISE OF THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

The Assyrian empire collapsed with the death of Ashurbanipal (669-627 B.C.) who brought the prestige of Assyria to its zenith. Although he waged war with vigour, he was also renowned for his cultural interests, for he established a huge library in which was housed a lot of the historical, scientific, legal and religious literature of Babylonia and Assyria that his scribes collected.² Before his death he had consolidated the gains his father Esarhaddon had made in Syria and Egypt, and inflicted further defeat upon Egypt in 664 B.C., including Memphis and Thebes which he overthrew in 662 B.C.

But in 652 B.C., Assyrian power was shaken by a violent internal strife which was led by Samas-Sum-Ukin, the brother and vassal of Ashurbanipal in Babylon. This revolt was, however, crushed after four years of bitter strife, but it had disastrous consequences on the empire. Taking advantage of the situation, the Egyptians, Phoenicians and some of the Transjordan peoples revolted against Assyria. But because Judah did not join this coalition which was crushed in 648 B.C. when Babylon was subdued, she was not affected politically by the insurrection.

Assyrian power fell during the subsequent years when Ashurbanipal's sons - Assur-etil-ilani and Sin-sar-Iskun

succeeded him. At this time Babylon together with some Chaldean tribes under Nabopolassar asserted her independence in 626 B.C., while Assyria was threatened from the north by the Scythians, a warlike people who invaded that empire from the north. In 616 B.C. the Babylonians, still under Nabopolassar, allied with the Medes, began a systematic attack and reduction of Assyria's strongholds. Ashur and the empire's capital, Nineveh, fell in 614 and 612 B.C. respectively, and with the conquest of Haran in 610 B.C., all Assyrian resistance was crushed. The Tigris was used as a boundary for dividing up the empire between the two allied states, the Babylonians taking the territory to the west and south, while the Medes occupied the land to the north and east. The marriage of the daughter of the Medan king to Nebuchadnezzar II, son of Nabopolassar, completed the proceedings, and the New Babylonian empire (612-538 B.C.) arose.

At the sign of the long-awaited decline of Assyria, her vassal states, including Judah, began to stir for freedom. As stated before, Josiah, by degrees, succeeded in breaking away from Assyrian domination, for he not only initiated a thorough religious reform which saw to the removal of all religious importations that pointed to a complete revocation of the vassal relationship - but also probably stopped paying tribute to Assyria. However, his reign,

his revival programme, and his life were all terminated when he opposed Pharaoh Necho at Meggido (2 Kgs. 23: 29), while Necho was on his way to assist Assur-Uballit of Assyria.

The successor of Josiah was Jehoahaz who was deposed after three months and punished by Necho in favour of his elder brother Jehoiakim (Eliakim) whom Necho made his tributary, requiring him to pay one hundred talents of silver and one of gold (2 Kgs. 23:33). It is probable that Necho took this measure against Jehoahaz because the latter continued his father's policy. However, Egypt's brief rule in Palestine ended with the emergence of Babylonia, for in 605 B.C. a decisive battle was fought between Necho and Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish, and the Egyptians were routed and pursued as far back as the Egyptian border. Thus, Judah now fell within the territory of the New Babylonian empire, and when Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne in 605 B.C. on the death of his father, he consolidated his gains by compelling Judah to pay tribute to Babylon (2 Kgs. 24:1). But after three years of allegiance, Jehoiakim, who was a political opportunist, sought to evade the Babylonian sovereignty in a desperate bid for independence, despite the consequences which Jeremiah had predicted as an outcome of such policy (Jer. 22:18). Nebuchadnezzar sent troops from Babylon, Moab, Edom, and Amon against Judah, and in 598 B.C., Jerusalem came

under the seige of the Babylonian army, and its fall resulted in the captivity.

2b) The Fall and Captivity of Judah

The reprisal measures of Nebuchadnezzar did not, however, fall directly on Jehoiakim, for he died that same year, perhaps as a result of a court uprising, leaving the already precarious Judah to his son, Jehoiachin, otherwise known as Jeconiah or Coniah. The new king capitulated to the invading forces after only three months' rule, and was taken as a prisoner to Babylon along with the royal family, the court, the upper classes, and the artisans. The Temple and palace treasures were taken as booty to Babylon. In a word, the cream of the society was carried into exile to Babylon (2 Kgs. 24: 12-16).³ Jehoiachin lived long in Babylon as a deposed king, and appears to have been regarded by the exiles as the last and rightful king of Judah.

After the first deportation of Judah in 597B.C., Nebuchadnezzar installed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, as a puppet king over Judah, and changed his name to Zedekiah. However, Zedekiah's influence was weak, and he was unable to prevent political contact with Egypt, despite an oath of allegiance to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:13). Despite the most solemn warnings from Jeremiah (Jer. 37:6f; 38:14f), at the accession

of the Pharaoh Hophra who had political ambitions in Palestine, the new ruling class urged Zedekiah to ally with Egypt. The temptation and pressure was too much for the weak Zedekiah. When he, therefore, decided to rely on the Egyptian support by revolting against the Babylonian yoke the Chaldean armies swept down on Judah again in 587 B.C. with the determination to destroy her. This determination must have been aggravated by a rebellion that flared in Babylon in 595/4 B.C., which possibly involved elements of the army and which certain of the deported Jews, inflamed by their prophets with promises of speedy release, and incited to disorderly acts, seem to have been involved (Jer. 29: 7-9). This might have been the reason why certain of their prophets were executed by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 29: 21-23), possibly because of their seditious utterances. In another development also, after this insurrection was quelled, a group of ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon in 594/3 met in Jerusalem to plan for a revolt (Jer. 27:3). Even there, too, some prophets began to incite the people again, declaring that Yahweh had broken the Babylonian yoke, and that within a space of two years those on exile would return to Jerusalem (Jer. 28:2f). But Jeremiah vigorously denounced such talk as a lie spoken in the name of Yahweh and also wrote a letter to the exiles bidding them to forget their wild dreams

and settle for a long stay (Jer. 27-29) (Bright, 1980: 329).

As the Babylonian armies advanced towards Judah, the small Syrian states collapsed before them, and Nebuchadnezzar besieged Lachish and Azekah.⁴ When they fell, he attacked Jerusalem and a time of great hardship ensued (2 Kgs. 25:3). Despite Jeremiah's repeated urge to Zedekiah that he should submit to Nebuchadnezzar and so save Jerusalem from being burned with fire, his advice was not heeded to. His bid to escape from the city was seen as desertion to the enemy, and this earned him imprisonment, and though his life was spared by Zedekiah, he was incarcerated throughout the siege of Jerusalem. An Egyptian force marched to the relief of the city, and for a time, the beleaguered defenders entertained hopes of resisting the Babylonian invaders. But the city capitulated in 586 B.C., in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, and although the king tried to escape in the general confusion that followed, he was captured at Jericho, and brought before Nebuchadnezzar at his headquarters at Riblah in central Syria. No mercy was shown him. After witnessing the execution of his own sons, his eyes were gored out and he was taken in chains to Babylon where he died (2 Kgs. 25:6f; Jer. 52: 9-11). A month later, under Nebuzaradan, commander of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, the city

was put to the flames and its walls leveled. Then followed another execution of certain of the ecclesiastical, military, and civil officers, and leading citizens at Riblah (2 Kgs. 25: 18-21; Jer 52: 24-27) while another group of the population was carried into Babylon on exile. Thus, by ignoring the warnings of Prophet Jeremiah, Zedekiah brought disaster upon his people, a disaster which, M.A. Beek says, "could easily have been averted had nationalism been tampered with political realism" (Beek: 1953; 170)

Jeremiah's long predicted calamity had finally overtaken the kingdom of Judah. The impregnable fortress of Jerusalem had capitulated, the Temple had been destroyed, and the nation had been led away into shameful captivity. The Jews were to be subjected to their most severe test in their long and eventful history, and upon its outcome would hang the destiny of God's chosen people.

This, however, is not the end of the story. A brief postscript to the story yet remains as found in Jeremiah chapters 40 to 44 and 2 Kings 25:22-26. The event of 587 B.C. ended Judah's autonomy. Nebuchadnezzar organized her into a provincial system of his empire, thereby putting an end to the traditional Davidic dynasty. Having wrecked the land completely with the destruction of its cities, the ruination of its economy, the killing or deportation of its leading citizens, he appointed Gedaliah, a Judean noble as

vassal governor of Judah. This man's tenure in office did not last long, for he was assassinated by one Ishmael and a group of Judean officials who escaped to Ammon after their heinous crime. For fear of reprisal from Nebuchadnezzar, Gedaliah's friends, taking the unwilling Jeremiah along with them, decamped to Egypt. According to Bright,

A third deportation in 582 mentioned in Jer. 52:30 may have represented a belated(?) reprisal for these disorders. The province of Judah was probably abolished and at least the bulk of its territory incorporated into the neighbouring province of Samaria... (1980 : 331).⁵

This was the final sack of Judah in fulfilment of the Hebrew prophecy. But this fulfilment was a matter of little concern to the Babylonian conquerors who had other important considerations in view when they led Judah into captivity. These considerations according to Harrison were as follows:

First, they were anxious to ensure the reduction of Palestinian military opposition to the Babylonian regime, so that the empire could consolidate its western holdings in preparation for a further attack upon Egypt. In the second place, the captives provided Nebuchadnezzar with the gratuitous service of craftsmen and artisans for his ambitious building projects in Babylonia. By deporting potential leaders and skilled workmen alike, the Babylonians achieved at one blow the two main purposes of their conquests in Palestine (1970 : 255).

The evil that Jeremiah had predicted for so long had finally overtaken the kingdom of Judah, in the same way it had happened to the Northern kingdom who despised the warnings of the earlier prophets, particularly the eighth century prophets. Now, this was to be the most severe test to which the Israelites were to be subjected to in their long and eventful history, and upon its outcome would hinge the destiny of the chosen people. What follows here is the account of some of the measures they took in ensuring their survival in that 'strange' land, as well as in retaining and protecting their religious heritage. As we shall discover in the subsequent account, one of the steps that the captives took in realizing this great objective was the restructuring of their national and religious leadership. But this was not without some conflicts. Disenchanted at first with Yahweh's failure to safeguard His holy city and the great Temple built in His name wherein dwelt the Ark of the Covenant which was a symbol of His presence with His people, the people were bewildered. Their reaction undoubtedly was one of bitter hatred and resentment against Yahweh. Yet despite their feelings and reactions, the prophetic voice of Jeremiah continued to sound both at home in Jerusalem and abroad in the land of captivity. This brought him into constant conflicts with the religious leaders of thought both at home and even in Babylon. The rest of the work

recounts what followed. But whatever response was evoked at the spiritual level, it is certain that a fundamental reorientation of thought and outlook was demanded by the upheaval of captivity in Babylon. Doubtless, not a few people would "assert that the Exile provided the necessary stimulus for an immense reassessment of spiritual values among the Judean captives, commencing the period of transition and development that culminated in the religious patterns of subsequent ages" (Harrison, 1970 ; 258).

In consonance with the sociological approach employed in this work the next part of this chapter is devoted to the results of some few experiments so far carried out which were aimed at investigating refugee behavioural patterns and adjustments.

1.2 Refugee Behaviour And Adjustment/Adaptation

By behaviour it is meant, the aggregate of emotional responses and observable actions or activities of an individual or a group of people to internal or external stimuli.

Adjustment and ^{adaptation} have similar connotations.

Adjustment is an acquired character; it is a variation produced in an organism or a man during its/his life, but not transmittable to its progeny. It is also an act of adapting or adjusting to a need. Adaptation is an advantageous conformation of an organism to changes in its environment,

a slow modifying of a society's or an individual's behaviour to adjust to cultural conditions. Thus, refugee behaviour means the form of observable emotional responses that the refugee makes in his displaced situation. This behaviour may either be positive or negative, and constitute his adjustment or adaptation.

Commenting on the refugee problem of adjustment and assimilation Judith T. Shuval states:

The strain of prolonged displacement from their homes and communities, often combined with prolonged residence in temporary camps, serves to intensify the adjustment problems of refugees. The detachment and 'normlessness', as well as the physical deprivation which accompanies this status, often results in what has been called "DP apathy", namely, an initial attitude of passivity and lack of initiative (1968:373).

She went on to refer to Bakis (1955) as saying that observers have noted a certain detachment from the past and a feeling of lack of continuity resulting from constant interruption of stable patterns. Joseph V. Brady and Howard F. Hunt in "an experimental approach to the analysis of emotional behaviour" observe that:

Both clinical and experimental observation indicates that emotional disturbance can, as one of several possible effects, disrupt or interfere with an organisms ongoing behaviour (40 : 1955, 313).

Moving from one social system to another requires that the refugee be resocialized into a new set of groups and norms. Adjustment, in the long run, implies loss of group visibility as members become indistinguishable from members of the host society. This is accomplished through a process of increasing conformity to the latter's norms and cultural patterns. But the extent of the group's socialization depends also on the extent to which the host society demands complete conformity or tolerates differential cultural patterning, not just on the members of the refugee group. The Jewish Exiles encountered this adaptation problem. In the words of Harrison again:

The magnificent buildings and spacious cities of Mesopotamia made the Temple and the capital city of Jerusalem appear paltry and insignificant by comparison. The open plains and fertile soil stood in marked contrast to the rocky crags and indifferent arable land of Judah, while the general prosperity and opulence of contemporary Mesopotamia must have aroused many wistful recollections of the departed glory of Judah in the minds of the older captives (1970 : 258).

Social Psychologists have identified some behavioural patterns of social groups like the refugees. Judith Muraskin and Marvin A. Iverson identified one of such as "social distance" and concluded that "the greater the social distance of a particular group, the more the pattern of social

perceptions expected from this group concerning other groups would differ from one's own pattern of perceptions" (Muraskin & Iverson, 48: (1958), 14).
 Another is "prejudicial attitude" identified by Joseph B. Cooper (ibid, 15). Charles G. McClintock and James Davis identified the 'Stranger' feeling of refugees. They posited thus:

When a person enters a new culture, he is assigned the position of what Simmel called a "Stranger." The stranger soon discovers that (a) the members of the host country behave towards him differently than towards each other, and (b) that they relate to him in a manner different from that of his compatriots (McClintock and Davis: 48: (1958), 183).

They concluded that such profound changes in the social environment of an individual may affect him in various ways which they also listed out.⁶

Concerning predisposition to change, a certain measure of change is demanded of the refugee in the course of his adjustment process. His own predisposition to change plays a major role in conditioning this process. This implies a willingness to accept new roles for himself, often abandoning traditional ones. There is also a certain "time perspective" that enables the refugee to see beyond present difficulties of adjustment to future goals, accompanied by a relatively low level of resentment at the difficulties met along the way (Zubrzycki, 1956: 155). Again, refugees are less predisposed

to change than immigrants. The latter change their country of residence voluntarily. They, therefore, tend to identify more positively with the host society. But the former, in most cases are either deported or immigrate to the host country because it is the only, or one of the few, alternatives available for them. Their initial response may, therefore, be passive and lacking initiative.⁷ The Babylonian Exiles exhibited similar responses during the early stage of their captivity (Shuval, 1968 ; 375).

Another response by refugees is one of "relief in finally escaping the uncertainties and insecurities of refugee existence and a determination to rebuild one's life. This may result in a relatively positive predisposition to change" (Shuval) 1968; 375)*. Here again we find that most of the Jewish Diaspora, after sometime, discovered that they still had opportunity to rebuild their lives, having escaped the "uncertainties and insecurities of refugee experience", and as such settled down to make all necessary adjustments to ensure survival. Shuval equally maintained that the predisposition to change is also dependent on the extent to which the refugee 'perceives the host country as his permanent locus of settlement'. In some cases refugees, according to him, intend to use the host country only as a temporary refuge until they are able to return to their former country, or to migrate elsewhere. Such orientation results in a

"low predisposition to change" (Shoval; 1968:375). Prior to the letter that Jeremiah sent to the Exiles they exhibited the latter characteristic, but after the letter the former characteristic prevailed. (see Jer. 29).

Based on the foregoing analysis of refugee behaviour and adjustment, we shall now examine **how** each of them applies to the Jewish Exiles both in Babylon and elsewhere in the diaspora.

NOTES

¹ John Bright is of the opinion that Zephania must have prophesied before the reform, as most of the abuses that he attacked were those that the reform removed. Some scholars also believe that Jeremiah's ministry began late in Josiah's reign.

² This material was unearthed in 1853 at Nineveh by Rassam, and among the tablets were Assyrian copies of the Babylonian creation and Flood narratives, subsequently deciphered by George Smith of the British Museum in 1872. Magnificent bas-reliefs depicting hunting and other scenes in the royal life were also recovered from the palace, which in style represent the climax of art in Assyria.

³ Tablets excavated from a vaulted building near the Ishtar Gate of ancient Babylon afford independent confirmation of this "first captivity" of Judah. The texts which are dated between 595 and 570 B.C., were written in cuneiform, and contained memoranda of rations of barley and oil issued to the captive princes and artisans, including "Yaukin, king of the land of Yahud." This is a direct reference to Jehoiachin, and some of the tablets referred also to his five sons who accompanied him to Babylon. (see Harrison R.K. 1970, 247-48).

- ⁴The Palestinian Exploration Fund excavated Tell-Duweir (Lachish) under the leadership of James L. Starkey from 1933 to 1938 when the Lachish letters were found. These letters give glimpses into the drama of Judah's last days. About 21 inscribed pieces of pottery were found in the guard house at the city gate. These were addressed by subordinates at the military outposts to the commander at Lachish. Most of the ostraca consisted of correspondence involving a prophet. The mention of intelligence reports and signal communications has led some scholars to think of the letters as military correspondence, since Letter IV confirms the statement of Jeremiah 34:7 concerning the fortified cities of Judah (.1970: 250-253)
- ⁵There is hardly any information at all about the further course of events in Judah. Martin North conjectures that Judeans were probably still appointed as provincial administrative officials even after Gedalieh's death. Judah was probably never established as an autonomous province, but may have been incorporated into the province of Samaria, such that her administrative head was only a subordinate of the governor of Samaria, "a deputy governor with restricted rights" (1958:289).
- ⁶For the details of this experiment, especially the various ways by which changes in a social environment could affect an individual or a group, see Journal of Social Psychology, 48 (1958), 183-193.
- ⁷In an experiment conducted by Renato Tagiuri on "Differential Adjustment to Internment Camp life" on a group of Italian civilian internees deported from England to Canada in the first part of 1940 during the World War II, the result confirmed this report. For details, see J. Soc. Ps. 48 (1958) 103-9.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LEADERSHIP CONFLICT AND SCHISM: JEREMIAH'S CASE

The prophetic movement in the history and religion of Israel, is the most astonishing phenomenon that has no real parallel anywhere in human history. The Hebrew prophets "tower head and shoulder over their contemporaries both in ancient Israel and in the ancient Near East" (J. Muilenburg, 1962, 475).¹ Kings, priests, sages, and psalmists have their distinctive place in the life and religion of Israel, but none rise to the stature of the prophets or continue to exert so major an influence in subsequent history. But more relevant to our study are the prophets of exile, particularly Jeremiah who is counted as one of, if not the greatest prophet that ever lived. We are not concerned here with his work in general, but with the enduring conflicts he had with his co-leaders of thought, the priests and the prophets whose words and lifestyles were diametrically opposed to his. We shall survey how these conflicts almost degenerated into schism among the prophetic circle, and this, we may freely say, is a social problem.

2.1 Conflict With The Priests And Prophets:

Jeremiah had recognized, from an early period of his ministry, the disastrous influence of the two professional

religious orders in Jerusalem - the Prophets and the Priests. He realized also that the unholy alliance of these two classes was for selfish and venal ends which is the most disquieting symptom of the moral degeneracy of the people. He could not associate himself with such alliance. Rather, the distress which filled the prophet's mind at the sight of this profanation of the most sacred institutions of the national religion is powerfully expressed in the following words:

Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me, all my bones are shaken; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the Lord and because of his holy words.

For the land is full of adulterers ...

Their course is evil, and their might is not right.

Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their wickedness... (23:9-11; cf. 5: 30-31).

1(a) Jeremiah and the Priests:

The exercise of a ministry spent against a background of prophecies of doom was necessarily a difficult one. But the circumstances which obtained in Jeremiah's day tended to accentuate such difficulties. Jeremiah had earlier been personally attacked by one of his priests named Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer (20: 1-6) who after beating the prophet, put him in the stocks, but this could not silence Jeremiah. Again a plot was made even by

his own relatives - the men of Anathoth who, in all likelihood were priests, to assassinate him (11:18-23). Because of the supposed controversy between the priestly houses of Abiathar the priest ^{who was} ~~deposed~~ by Solomon (1 Kgs. 2:26f),² and Zadok with whom he was replaced (1 Kgs. 1:32f), John Paterson opined that:

It must have seemed a monstrous thing to the descendants of Abiathar that their ecclesiastical status should be reduced in favour of the sons of Zadok, and that one of their own kin should be consenting to such an act. That surely was 'the most unkindest cut of all' and it awakened fierce resentment... A man's foes may be those of his own household... (1962, 547).

On another occasion, an angry mob led by the priests and the prophets (26:7f) seized Jeremiah the prophet as he was prophesying in the Temple, with an intent on killing him saying:

You shall die! Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant'? And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the Lord (26:9).

This angry mob could have ended the life of this prophet, but for the timely intervention of the princes of Judah who, after hearing the case at the mouth of the priests, forbade his death because of the testimonies of

certain elders who cited similar cases in the past, and how they were treated. The final outcome was that Jeremiah was permitted to go free under the protection of Ahikam, father of Gedaliah and one of the deputation who waited upon Huldah the prophetess in the days of Josiah's reformation (2 Kgs. 22:14).

2.1(b) Jeremiah and the prophets:

The prophetic ministry demands a bit of charisma which Robert N. Bellah defines as "a quality of the individual that places him above normal expectations and endows him with the authority to utter new commandments". He went on to explain that it is a relational concept; that is, it comes into existence only when it is recognized by a group (1968:410). But charisma is not fanaticism, for while the former is 'a genius of an unusual kind, having the capacity to inspire devotion and enthusiasm', the latter is 'a violent, unreasoning enthusiasm'. Thus, prophecy can be viewed through both angles, depending on its relativity and the prophetic instrument. This brings us to what we often regard as true or false prophecy. In Israel, true and false prophets occasionally were contemporaries. This was, as it still is, the bane of that ministerial gift.

The opposition which Jeremiah received from the cult or nationalist prophets was much more serious than that of the priests. Unable to grasp the significance of contemporary

political events these prophets advocated a nationalism which was totally contrary to that of Jeremiah. In their endeavour to find favour in the eyes of a nationalist public they represented Yahweh's message as, 'It shall be well with you ... No evil shall come upon you' (23:17). This was characteristic of the prophets whom Jeremiah denounced and with whom he was engaged in constant conflict. For Jeremiah, Yahweh's assessment of them is: "The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them: they prophesy unto you a lying vision and divination and a thing of nought and deceit of their own heart" (14:14). They had not 'stood in the council of Yahweh to perceive and to hear his word' (23:18); therefore, their teaching is vain: 'they speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of Yahweh' (23:16), and other similar passages.

Thus, they were in large measure responsible for the blind optimism and indifference to moral issues which prevailed after the promulgation of Deuteronomy. Indeed 'from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone forth into all the land' (23:15). Interested only in the professional aspect of their office and wishing to maintain that office by lies and recklessness they were of not much value to the people (23:32). Not commissioned by Yahweh, they

lacked the originality of the true prophet and vied with one another as to the content of their message (23:30). Their falsehood came to the fore when they openly began to contradict Jeremiah's prophecy of doom (F.F. Whitley, 1957, 43-44). A particular case or two may suffice to illustrate this better.

(c) Jeremiah and Hananiah

These pseudo-prophets were for the most part a shadowy group in the background of the picture which Jeremiah painted when he declared:

Then I said; "Ah, Lord God, behold, the prophets say to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place'" (14:13).

One vigorous personality of this stamp appeared on the stage in Hananiah of Gibeon. His memorable encounter with Jeremiah in the fourth year of Zedekiah throws an instructive light on the opposition between the true prophet and the false. Here we have the first indication of schism in the ranks of the prophets in a dramatic scene similar to that of Micaiah son of Imlah who stood alone before Ahab and Jehoshaphat as a prophet of woe against Ahab's 400 prophets who assured the king success in his enterprise against the Syrians (1 Kgs. 22). The incident is typical of the whole

subsequent development of prophecy (J. Skinner, 1963, 186).

The appearance of Jeremiah with the yoke on his neck, and his prophecy of doom must have been an offence and 'provocation to the war-party', and this attitude of his aroused direct contradiction by Hananiah. Generally, the canonical prophets were a minority of chosen individuals who read the signs of the times with a clearer insight into the character of God and the principles of His government than their contemporaries. They perceived that it was God's purpose to bring Israel's national existence to an end, whereas, on the contrary, such signs that told of the coming judgment, only stirred their opponents to a fanatical enthusiasm for the national cause. Thus, as fanatics are always in a hurry, Hananiah was, and with great assurance he put a two-year limit on his prophecy. Jeremiah's reaction was not swift denial, and although he hoped Hananiah's prophecy would come true, he was convinced that the tradition of Yahweh's prophets had always been one of punishment and doom. Then Hananiah became so sure of his oracle that he confirmed it by breaking the yoke on Jeremiah's neck. His prophecy found great reception, while both men parted. In order that faith would not fall into fanaticism, Jeremiah 'cooled off' a bit and then returned with a condemnation for Hananiah and a judgment on all that he stood for. The result was that Hananiah died that same year according to Jeremiah's words,

barely two months after the encounter (Paterson, 1962: 554).

The most striking aspect of this conflict is the schismatic tendency it generated, together with the problem of how to distinguish the true prophet from the false, which it created. This problem is succinctly stated by Paterson in the following words:

Here we have one of the greatest interviews in Scripture and large questions are involved. Hananiah was no common impostor like Bishop Blougram. He was conscientious - but his conscience was not fully illumined. He thought too much of divine favour, too little of divine judgment, too much of Israel's privilege and too little of Israel's responsibility. He did not take all the facts into account... How may we distinguish between Hananiah and Jeremiah? how do we recognize the truth? We may not say that the seat of authority in religion is quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditur. The voice of the people is not the voice of God. The true prophet, like Jeremiah, may often find himself in a minority of one (cf. 1 Kgs. 22). Perhaps we may say that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, that the inspired speaker can only be discerned by the inspired hearer, and that the testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti will here be our guide (1962: 555).

Similarly, writing on the same issue John Skinner stated that the problem:

was thus an old one in Israel, and was beset by peculiar difficulties on the level of religious knowledge on which the mass of the people stood. In early times it had little or no ethical significance. A prophecy was true if it was verified by the event; and a true prophet was simply one whose vaticinations uniformly proved to be correct: his moral character was not in question... The question first became of religious importance when the destinies of the State were concerned; and especially when a succession of men appeared who consistently prophesied national disaster, while the bulk of the order flattered the hope of a brilliant future ... Now this question has a unique place in the thinking of Jeremiah. The canonical prophets before him had, so far as we know, met opposition in the strength of an immediate personal conviction of the truth of their own message, and an inward certainty of the fulfilment of their word, without attempting to explain the phenomenon of spurious inspiration. But to Jeremiah's introspective bent of mind a negative attitude was perhaps impossible... (1922: 187-8).

In the light of the two passages dealing with false prophecy in the Book of Deuteronomy (Chs. 13 and 18) Skinner went on to explain that in each case "an objective norm is set up by which the validity of a prophetic announcement