**INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE**

Bible is an English word from two geek words called Vestock meaning the bible. But since the bible contains several books, it is a library of books collected under one cover.

It is divided into two testaments

1. Old testament
2. New testament

The Old Testament consists of 39 books and the first is genesis. The bible records God’s activities and man’s response towards God. It explains why God stands as a major creator in bible (Old Testament)

It is believed that all testaments might have been recorded by different authors in different sentences to give spiritual understanding of man.

It was originally in Hebrew language then later translated into Greek and other languages including Luganda, Runyoro but maintaining the originality.

It should be noted that the order in which books are written differs.

Books were written without the names of authors . For example,. For example, Jeremiah was recorded by scribes, the name of Baal but today as one reads the books thinks that he was the one who ordered books to be written.

**LAW BOOKS**

They are mainly five books in the bible and they include;

* Genesis
* Exodus
* Leviticus
* Numbers
* Deuteronomy

The law books are believed to have been written by Moses to the people of Israel as a guide in their lives. It was the set of laws that binded the Israelites together with God.

**THE MAJOR THEMES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

1. The theme of the promise

Throughout the Old Testament God is portrayed as making promises to individuals and to the nation of Israel at large. For instance, he promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and many others all these were fulfilled.

1. The theme of election

Through Old Testament, God elects some people and uses them as agents of salvation for example Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel and Amos. He also elected Israel as a nation.

1. The theme of salvation

God is shown as a friend of mankind from the time of the creation. He placed him in the Garden of Eden which was like paradise (heaven) since it lacked nothing.

When man ate the forbidden fruit he did not die even, though God had told him that he would on same die if he ate the fruit (Gen 2:17)

He also saved Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19)

He saved Noah from the flood (Gen 6-9)

He saved the whole rest of Israel from Egyptian slavery.

1. The theme of man’s sinfulness

The book of gen 3 indicates that though God provided different food stuffs to mankind to eat while living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve plus serpent went ahead, disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit.

Similarly when the Israelites reached the promised land of Canaan, they became more sinful and worshipped idols.

1. The theme of God’s love

Though man had disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit God did not pass on direct punishment and he had pronounced instead he chased him out of the garden of Eden and even made animal skins for naked mankind to put on (Gen 3:21)

1. The theme of God’s covenant

In a bid for God to continue monitoring/mastering his children and also show his sovereignty he made various covenants with mankind. He made a covenant with Noah (Gen 9:1-28), Abraham the father of the believers (Gen 12:15, 17), God’s covenant with Israelites at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:1ff).

1. The theme of mosaic law and its obligations

In the book of Exodus 20:21,22 we note Moses gives out/teaches various laws to the Israelites and how they were to observe them in order to be in good terms with God.

1. The theme of suffering being a result of sin

The book of genesis 3:23 indicates the beginning of suffering for Adam and Eve after eating the forbidden fruit, similarly Cain was sent to become a homeless wanderer on earth (Gen 4:12) and even soils wouldn’t produce anything for Cain.

The family of Eli was stopped from serving or priests because his children (Hophine and Phinehas) mishandled God’s sacrifices and even ad sexual intercourse with girls who worked at the entrance of the lord’s temple.

1. The theme of judgment to sinful people

The book of prophet Amos shows that God told him to begin his prophecy by condemning Israel’s neighbours like Syria, Philistia, Edom, Ammon and Moab because they were sinful and misleading Israelites. Even prophet Hosea acted as a prophet of judgment to sinful people of Israel who worshipped idols.

1. The theme of holiness of the temple

Prophet Jeremiah temple sermon (Jer7) shows that the temple had to be kept holy. Even the Israelites sacrifices offered only at the temple teaches the temple was a holy place.

1. The theme of rewards to the righteous

The book of Deuteronomy indicates that God was always ready to rewards with blessings, the Israelites who would obey his commands (Deut 28:1ff)

1. The theme of suffering for doing right/being good

Yes the book of Job clearly teaches that Job was a faithful man of God loved by many people but finally he suffered so terribly in his family and to himself personally.

Job developed sores allover his body and sat by the dust bin, scratched himself with broken pottery, Job lost his children who were hit by wind that blew the house where they were feasting from Job’s animals were also stolen by Sabeans.

1. The theme of offering sacrifices

Usually Israelites offered sacrifices to God for various reasons like for repentance of sins and thanks giving or looking for victory in war. Examples of such sacrifices were burnt sacrifice, grain offering, fellowship offering and repayment offering.

1. The theme of the faithful remnants to survive God’s anger

In the book of prophet Isaiah indicates that though God was to punish sinful mankind, those who will repent would be restored.

1. The theme of the day of the Lord

The book of prophet Amos 5:18ff clearly teaches the Israelites how the day of the lord would be far different from what they expected it to be like.

1. The theme of kingship in Israel

From 1 Samuel 8 we note the Israelites demanding Prophet Samuel to appoint for them a king to be like other nations. So the first king was Saul, David, Solomon plus other kings followed.

1. The theme of the coming destruction

The various visions that prophet Amos received simply implied the kind of destruction that was to befall the Israelites due to their disobedience.

1. The theme of hope and future restoration of Israel

Prophet Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (37:1-47) teaches a message of hope and future restoration of Israelites after understanding their lord God.

1. The theme of God’s holiness

In the story of the burning bush, God’s holiness was manifested when he told Moses to remove his sandals because where he was standing was a holy place (Exodus 3:5-6)

1. The theme of priesthood and priestly duties

The Old Testament teaches that it was only the tribe of the Leviticus to serve as priests in Israel. Priests like Moses, Samuel, and Eli did for various works like offering sacrifices. God on behalf of the offerers, leading people in prayers like during droughts or thanks giving.

**THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

The name Genesis means **“origin”.**The book of Genesis tells about the creation of the universe, records the origin of human race, the beginning of sin and suffering in the world, and talks about God’s ways of dealing with humanity. The book can be divided into twomain parts: **(a)** the creation of the world and the early history o the human race including the accounts of: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the floods and the tower of Babel (Babylon), **(b)** the history of the early ancestors of the Israelites beginning with Abraham the father of the faithful, his son Isaac and grandson Jacob from whom the nation of Israel developed. It was written by an Israelite and purposely forIsrael.

It was written several years before modern scientific and technological discoveries were made. Thus it was written for religious believers but not for scientists, politicians or historians. Therefore, the creation stories in Genesis are not in competition with the scientific evolution and others.

**The PentaTEuch**

This means the five scrolls and its originated from the two Hebrew words Bilos which means the five volume books. It is used in our study of Old Testament. The Greeks referred to this as the Torah which means the law books.

They are law books because of several laws given to Israelites through the meditation of Moses.

Being so important they have been studied for quite along time through theologians and critical scholars. One of the aim of scholars has been exactly to know who wrote the law books.

**Views of critical scholars about the authorship of these law books**

* Moses was not the author of the law because it was written at the time where Islam was still in this primitive stage yet literally still in law books he is so advanced and point out that it was written at a later stage.
* He did not exist at the time of creation yet the Torah took place in his absence or before his birth.
* It records the death and burial of Moses Deutronomy34. How comes that he wrote about his death in advance.
* There are so many repetition within the law books and this would not have been the same f the writer was the same i.e. the two creation story. The ten commandments (Exodus 20, Deut 5-20)
* The holy mountain of God in Exodus is given two names Horeb and Sinai in Exodus 19 and also God is known by two different names in the Torah for example Yahweh and Elohini. Therefore critical scholars ask why he gave two different proper nouns to the mountain and God.
* Moses died before reaching the land of Canaan yet some stories in the law books present the political life and urban life of Canaan where Moses never reached.
* Some scholars say that the formula which the writer used to write the Torah indicates that he wrote the Torah yet he died during that period.

**WHO THEN WROTE THE TORAH IF IT IS NOT MOSES?**

They argue different writers wrote about events of Israelites history but from different places and with different interest.

* Yahwehist tradition (CJ). These reveal and wrote from thousand regions in Jerusalem. They wrote during king Solomon’s regime which was peaceful and prosperous and referred to God as Yahweh and the holy mountain Sinai.
* Elohistic tradition (E). They wrote down the whole information of their traditional between………..

They wrote at the time when the united Israel had split into two. They lived and wrote in Northern kingdoms at the time when prophet Amos was on his mission. They used the name Elohini and contributed about God’s communication.

* The Deuteronomist (D). They lived in south and their views are recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.
* The priestly. They wrote between 650 – 450BC during the period of exile in Babylon and after they were released. They are believed to have been eye witnesses to creation story.

**MOSES AS A WRITER OF PENTATEUCH**

* Conservative scholars, the Jewish and Christianity believed that it was Moses who wrote law because al events written in law books associated with Moses’ life and Moses is referred to be a higher witness.
* Moses enjoyed a closely, friendly and friendship with God for example God used to appear in various ways to him through visions therefore he was inspired by God as the writer of the Pentateuch.
* Evidence from the bible shows that Moses grew up in place of Pharaoh and received the better education (Exodus 2:10) this confirmed that he is the writer of the Pentateuch.
* Exodus 24:14 Moses seemed to have written down all the laws of Jews through God.
* Even the New Testament confirms that Moses was the writer i.e. John 5:46 Jesus said “if you had believed in Moses you would have believed in him because he wrote about him”.
* Moses wrote about the recreation and other stories about economics, political and agricultural live in Cana therefore scholars say that it was that spirit of God which made him put the events etc.

**THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD IN GENESIS 1-3**

Genesis 1-3 is sometimes referred to as a summary of the Old Testament or an introduction to the old and New Testament. This is because the teachings of Genesis 1-3 about the nature of God, man, sin, marriage and many others are reflected in the rest of the bible. The following are the teachings about the nature of God:

* God is translucent meaning that he has no beginning and end. He existed before all creatures he is eternal. In other words he is the alpha and omega.
* God created the universe and everything in it hence he is the creator. He is the soul source and giver of life to man and other creatures.
* God is omnipotent meaning that he is all powerful and almighty.
* God is holy meaning that he is completely good and stainless. He has absolute purity and expects man whom he created in his own image to also be holy.
* Genesis 1:1ff tells us that the world was formless and the spirit of God moved on its surface. This shows that god is spiritual.
* God is one but he exists in trinity i.e. god the father, the son and the Holy Spirit. This is evidenced by the expression, “…..let us………….” (Gen 1:26)
* God is omniscience which means that God is all wise and all knowing. That is why he created a well planned, orderly, perfect and artistic world.
* God is omnipresent which means that he has no specific place he stays. He lives and his present everywhere.
* God is the provider; he created all creatures and provided food to each. He created in such a way that each creature is food for another.
* God is the controller of history, from the beginning to the end of the creation it is God who is in charge. He follows up the lives of creatures he has created, corrects their mistakes punishes them a bit.
* God is loving and saving. It was for the love of man that God created him in his own image, he also made him a master of all other creatures.
* In addition man did not immediately die when he ate the forbidden fruit as God had told him.
* God is a judge and this is portrayed in Genesis 3 when man disobeyed him he passed judgment onto him, the woman and the snake.

**THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF MAN IN GENESIS 1-3**

* Man is a work (Gen 2:15)
* Man is unique
* Man is a worker because he was commanded by God to take care of the garden.
* Man is co-creator because God told him to take control of other creatures, multiply and subdue the earth.
* Man is a sinner whereby he ate the fruit that God refused him to eat (Genesis 3)
* Man failed to take responsibility of his sin when he blamed the woman and the woman blamed the serpent after eating the forbidden fruit.
* Man and woman are equal before God because they were all created in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27)
* Man was made from soil, that is he is mortal he can die.
* Man is unique, that is he was made from the image of God unlike other creatures.
* By nature man is unique from other creatures and is superior to them. This is because among all other creatures he is the only one created in God’s image. (Gen 1:26-27)
* By nature man was created in the image of God and likeness.
* Man is a co-creator with God meaning he was to put in an unfinished world which he was to beautify and improve by using the available resources and the intelligence that God gave him.
* By nature man is a sinner or wrong or wrong doer or rebellious.
* Man by nature needs a companion t be peaceful, happy and to become full man. Man became happy after a woman was created for him (Gen 1:23)
* By nature man and woman are equal in value, right and dignity and this is portrayed by both being created in God’s image and by woman being created out of the man’s rib.
* Man by nature is responsible for the sufferings he goes through in this world.
* God did not create misery for man, it was through his sin that he became truly misery, lost and separated for both God and fellow man.
* By nature man is not ready and willing to accept responsibility for evil deeds. That is why Adam blamed Eve and then Eve blamed the snake.
* Genesis teaches that man by nature needs leisure time.
* Throughout the Old Testament man observes and exploits fellow man, ignore the poor, the strangers and many others

**THE CREATION OF MAN IN GOD’S IMAGE AND LIKENESS (Gen 1:26-27)**

(Meaning of creating man in God’s image)

* It does not mean that God looks like man physically but may share some qualities of God which animals and other creatures do not have.
* It means that even though man has God’s image in him he cannot become God and when he tries to he only brings disaster upon himself just like Adam and Eve did in Gen 3.
* It also means that man is in this world to play a central role. In other words he is to act as God’s representative on earth.
* Man has been given a privileged position and this makes him the only creature that has the share of God’s intelligence.
* It also meant that among all the creatures man was to worship God through singing, praising and preaching his word to expand his kingdom.
* It also means that man is the most beloved creature of God.
* It means that human beings have a free will. They are not robots but persons. Therefore they can either obey or disobey, find true happiness and fulfillment in God.
* It also means that human beings have power to co-create, pro-create and ensure the continuity of life. He has responsibility to use the available resources to create change in the world.
* It implies that man and woman are equal. Both share the image of God and so a man should not subject a woman to torture.
* It also means that man has an infinity value which can enable him fight for peace and justice in the world. In other words he is supposed to deal and justify with fellow man.
* It also means that man shares in the wisdom of god which enables him to be creative, to think, innovate and improve on his surroundings to make the world a better place to live in.
* The creation of man in God’s image meant that man shares God’s immorality.
* He was created to live forever even though death came after sin (Gen 3)

To what extent has man lived to the image of God?

* Man has lived to the image of God though fulfilling what he was told to do by God in genesis 1:28 whereby God said “have many children”. This has been fulfilled though marriage.
* Sabbath, when God finished creating the universe he rested on the seventh day and made it holy so today people honour the Sabbath by going to church although some have failed to live to the expectation that is instead of going to church they go to bars.
* Marriage, in Genesis God created one man and woman so today in marriage a woman gets married to a man but not woman to a woman or man to man although some have failed to live to the expectation whereby some practice polygamy and lesbianism.
* Man has lived to the image of God through being kind and caning just like God. In Genesis 3 when man eat the forbidden fruit he had to die but instead God helped him however although some have lived to that others have not whereby some people are not caring and kind especially to the needy, orphans who need their help.

**THE TEACHING OF GENESIS 1 AND 2 ABOUT MARRIAGE**

* According to Genesis 1:28 marriage is meant for pro-creation. In other words the married couple is supposed to produce children.
* According to Genesis 1 and 2 marriage is meant to be monogamous because God created one man and woman.
* According to Genesis 2 marriage is supposed to bring happiness among the married couples that is why man became happy when a woman was created for him.
* Marriage is supposed to be between a man and woman because God created male and female.
* According to Genesis 1 and 2 sex in marriage is a right.
* According to Genesis 1 and 2 marriage is supposed to be permanent (Gen 2:24)
* According to genesis 2 married couples should not divorce because when a man leaves his mother and father and aunties with the wife they became one and anything that God put together should never be separated.
* According to Genesis 2 a man has more authority over the woman because the woman was got from the man’s rib.
* According to genesis 2:28 in marriage children are a blessing from God so they should not be treated badly.
* Marriage is a union between a man and a woman in a life long relationship. It is divine in the sense that it was ordained.
* The bone God used to create a woman came from a man’s rib which points out a number of ideas;
* She was not created out of the bone of the leg for a man to step on her.
* She was not created out of the bone of the head for a man to topple her.
* But she was created out of the rib to live by the side of a man.
* Therefore from the rib it means that they are equal in value and dignity.
* In marriage there should be total unity of the body, the soul and the heart 9the two will become one)
* A man should love his marriage pattern even more than his parents. This is implied in the statement “a man shall leave his mother and father and be united to his wife…”

**THE TWO CREATION STORIES IN GENESIS 1 AND 2**

* According to Genesis 1 God was distant from his creatures. He would just use the word, “let there be…….” And there was.
* On the other hand, in genesis 2 God was very close to his creation whereby he is presented molding man and other creatures from soil.
* In the first creation account God created light first and human beings last. While in the second creation story man was created first and other creatures followed and the woman last.
* In the second creation account the creator is referred to as the “Lord God “i.e. Yahweh which contrasts with the first creation story in which the creator is simply referred to as God.
* In the priestly account both a man and woman were created at the same time (Genesis 1:26-27) while in the second creation story (Yahwehstic) account a man was created first and the woman last.
* In genesis 1 it is put clear that human beings were created in the image of God genesis 1:26-27 while in genesis 2 man was created from soil and a woman from a man’s rib.
* The first creation story is poetic while the second one is symbolic. In the first account there are different symbolizes like
* Soil stands for nothingness.
* Eden symbolizes paradise
* The tree of life symbolizes an ending life
* The rib symbolizes companionship
* The first creation story was planned process which took place in six phrases known as days.
* On the other hand in the second creation story there was no order that God followed and it does not present how long the creation took.
* In the first creation story God rested after his wonderful creative work while in the second creation story there is no mention made about God’s resting.
* In the first account man was given a right to subdue the earth and use all things that were created for his own happiness. However in the second creation story man was prohibited from eating the fruits from the tree of life in the middle of the garden.
* According to genesis 1 God is presented as spiritual and invisible while in Genesis 2 God is presented as if he has a physical make up, he touches, molds, breathes and many others
* The second creation story shows that both man and woman were naked but had no shame (Genesis 2:25 while nothing is mentioned about their nakedness in genesis 1.
* In the second creation account man is presented naming the birds and animals that God created including the woman (genesis 2:28) while in genesis 1 man did not name any creature.
* According to Genesis 1 God is presented in the trinity that is the father, son and the holy spirit by the words like “.let us….” While in the second creation story the Lord God was singular, “I will make for him a suitable companion to help him……” (Genesis 2:18)

**REASONS TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCES**

(Why are the two creation stories different?)

* There were different traditions in Israel and each one had its own version of the creation story i.e. genesis 1:1, 2:4(a) was written by the priestly tradition while genesis 2:4(b) to 25 was written by the Yahwehstic tradition (J).
* The priestly writers intended to convey a statement of faith in one powerful God because some had started worshipping idols.
* The priestly writer also intended to teach the Israelites that they were the masters of all created things and they were God’s representatives.
* The Yahwehstic writers intended to give a background to man’s sin in Genesis 3, Gen 2:4-25 presents a picture of happiness God intended for man.
* The priestly writer by showing that man and woman were created at the same time and in God’s image wanted to show total equality of all persons regardless of sex.
* On the other hand the writers of Genesis too wanted to trace the origins of women’s inferiority to man.
* The priestly writer was also responding to the questions of young generations that they were asking, like where does God live, how he created. In response the priestly writer informed them that God is spiritual, cannot be seen, proved or disapproved.
* The writers of the two creation stories lived at different periods of time and wrote from different locations. Yahwehstic writers wrote earlier starting during the reign of Solomon while the priestly writers wrote almost 400 years later during the exilic period.
* The Yahwehstic writer wrote t the time when there was peace in Israel. King Solomon had worked hard and Israel was prosperous so the writers were showing God as hard worker and people were to imitate him.
* On the other hand the priestly writers show that God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day and this was to highlight the value of the seventh day.

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN GENESIS 1 AND 2**

* In both human beings are the most important creatures just as Genesis 1:26-27 shows that man and woman are equal, even Gen 2:18-25 shows that man needs a woman for companionship.
* In both monogamy is emphasized that is why in both stories God created one man for one woman.
* In both God is the creator. He created everything and therefore he is the source of life.
* In both God created with wisdom, order and harmony.
* In both its God to be worshipped the starts, plants and animals must not be worshipped.
* In both human beings were highly blessed. In the first account man was created in God’s image and in two he was given the Garden of Eden.
* In both God is eternal while the world is temporal i.e. God existed before the world and he has no beginning and no end while the world has a beginning.

**THE CREATION OF A WOMAN FROM A MAN’S RIB (Gen 2:21-25)**

The meaning

* It meant that
* Man and woman were to live in harmony
* Equality
* Companionship
* Man was to offer protection to a woman
* Respect as a source of happiness
* Love for one another
* Monogamy (1 rib 1 woman)
* No discrimination based on sex
* It did not mean that a woman was to be a subject of man
* The man should love his wife more than his parents.

**How has it been a source of inequality?**

* It gives man a highest position.
* Women are seen as inferior and men superior.
* Women are taken to be weak because they are created from the weak part of a man’s body.
* Man look at themselves as heads and women as subject.
* Men were created first and women last which has made men to under look women (Gen 2)

Other causes of inequality today

* Genesis 3 which presents women as source of sin patriarch (ATS). Women were looked by men to an extent that women were not supposed to come out in the public.
* Some women discriminate their fellow women in favour of men.
* Women also see men as heads and them as subjects.
* Religion like Christianity, Judaism and Islam where women are denied participation.
* Some policies in organizations where certain positions, jobs are taken to be for men.
* Most women want to depend on men for everything.
* Throughout the bible women are presented as sources of trouble, misfortunes and many others

**GENESIS 3 THE FALL OF MAN**

* Genesis 3 presents a turning point in God’s relationship with mankind.
* The joyful, peaceful and loving relationship which man had enjoyed with God suddenly came to an end.
* Therefore fall of man means a fall in the dignity man had, a fall in man’s integrity, a fall of the image of God in man.
* The story in Genesis 3:1-2 should not be taken literary. We should not aim at knowing what exact fruit dam and Eve ate. But we should aim at the message which the writer intended at putting across.

The Garden of Eden

* Symbolizes the kind of good and happy life which God had intended for mankind.
* It symbolizes paradise on earth a life so peaceful without conflicts and enemies.

The tree of life and knowledge

* It stands for God’s commandment which should be obeyed God’s justice authority, loves wisdom.
* It also symbolizes an ending life. When man trusts God he carries himself eternal life with him.
* It stands for God himself who is a true source of wisdom. Obeying God enables man to have a true knowledge of what is good and what is evil.
* The fruits, symbolizes the attractive nature of sin.
* The serpent, symbolizes the presence of Satan which means that man is always at war with evil spirits.
* The women, she symbolizes man who is constantly faced with ethical tests i.e. to choose what is right and live what is wrong.
* Nakedness, this symbolizes guilty consciousness, loss of the glory and the innocence that man originally had.
* Clothing, God’s covering of man’s nakedness symbolizes God’s undying love for mankind.
* Man’s offspring to crush the head of the serpent, (Gen 3:15) was a prediction about the future coming of Jesus who would overcome evil and lead man into salvation.

**WHAT SIN DID ADAM AND EVE COMMIT?**

* Both Adam and Eve disobeyed God whereby they ate the fruit that God forbidden them.
* Both Adam and Eve wanted to equate themselves to God. Since the serpent told them if they eat the fruit they would as wise as God.
* It was a sign of rejecting God’s will for them. They attempted to act independently without putting into account what God considers to be good and evil.
* It was a sign of rebellion against God’s commandments since he had told them not to eat a fruit from the tree of life.
* It was a sign of pride because they desired to become as wise s God.
* It was a sign of abusing God’s image in them because they choose to do evil which was against God’s image.
* It was a sign of greed and materialism because man and woman were unsatisfied with all that God had given them.
* They committed a sin of serving or worshipping something else other than their creator.
* Listening to the words of the serpent meant that man was giving a respectable position to the serpent than God hence a sin.
* It was a sign of refusal to subdue other creators. Instead of man controlling other creatures, he acted irresponsibly to an extent that the serpent controlled him.
* At that time God as their father and their parent so they committed a sin of disrespecting their parents.
* It was a sin of stealing, Go had commanded them “do not eat the fruits of the tee in the middle of the garden…” but they did it illegally hence a sin.
* God told them that if they ate the fruit they would die on the same day. Despite that they went ahead and ate the fruit which shows they wanted to commit suicide hence a sin.
* They committed adultery throughout the Old Testament worshipping other gods is compared to the sin of adultery.
* Sin of desire to live independent.
* They also committed a sin of self pride. In this case man showed that he can act without the guidance of God which made them to eat the forbidden fruit.
* Man committed a sin of trying to live independent from God yet all these made out of God’s image were entirely to depend on God.
* Committed a sin of worshiping other creatures i.e. Adam and Eve listening to the serpent meant that they wanted to substitute God with the serpent.
* Committed a sin of lack of appreciation of what God has given them i.e. they were to take control of everything with exception of the forbidden fruit that was meant for God but still they went ahead to have a hand on what was meant for God.
* Lack of faith, trust and confidence in God which partly explains why they choose to act in reverse direction.
* Committed a sin of abusing his masterdom over other creatures. For example, man had been given authority over other creatures including the serpent therefore instead of serpent following man, man followed the serpent.

**THE NATURE OF SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

* By nature is attractive, persuasive and treasure i.e. Eve ate the fruit because she believed that they were fresh and could give her expanded knowledge (Gen 3:5)
* By nature sin is corrupt or catches i.e. it moves from Eve to Adam (Gen 3:7) man can therefore lead his fellow men into sinning.
* It leads to loss of human dignity i.e. after sinning man and woman felt ashamed before God and that’s why they started hiding from him (Gen 3:7).
* By nature sin destroys the relationship between man and God and between man and fellow man i.e. instead of talking in harmony as they usually did God started accusing them and they too started accusing one another (Gen 3:10-12)
* Sin by nature causes suffering i.e. man and woman were expelled from the Garden of Eden and faced a miserable life as a result of sinning.
* Sin results into death “you were made from soil and you will become soil again” (gen 3:19)
* Sin does not mark an end of God’s love to man. Even after sinning God’s care for man and woman continued he looked for them out of their hiding places, made skin clothing for them.
* Sin does not originate in the external evil act instead it originates from man’s heart and mind. The heart and mind of Eve corrupted first and the external evil act of eating the fruit followed.
* Sin is as a result of deprived morally debased or corrupted heart.
* Sin will not triumph, forever in Genesis 3:15 God promised to destroy sin through an offspring of a woman. This promised points to the future coming of Jesus Christ hence it refers to as the total evangelism (the first of the good news).
* By nature sin destroys man’s moral defense he becomes helpless, hides and wishes to do things secrets away from God’s presence.
* Sin makes man to deny the truth about him he refuses to accept that he had sinned and blames the woman for his sins, in turn the woman too also denies her responsibility for having sinned and shifts the blame to the snake.
* Man lost the original image of God in him i.e. the perfect and holy nature he originally shared with God was removed and remained with a duplicate that’s why up to now he has failed to lie up to God’s image.
* The original equality between man and woman faded and as a replacement there comes man’s superiority over a woman.
* The original peace and harmony between man and other creatures was lost, the serpent became an enemy of human beings and other wild animals.
* Pro-creation which was originally a source of blessing became a curse.
* Work that had been given to man as a blessing also became a painful exercise.
* Man was to toil all throughout his life and was put under a curse.
* Other creatures were also cursed . For example, land was put under a curse and a snake was cursed to crawl and eat dust.

**THE TOWER OF BABEL**

1. What sins did the people who built the tower of Babel commit?

* It was a sign of trying to upset God’s power trying to reach God’s heavenly chambers.
* It was a sign of pride because they wanted to stay in God’s chambers.
* It was a sign of materialism i.e. human beings were materialistic but not spiritual.
* It was a sign of trusting their own wisdom.
* It was a sign of neglecting the duty of co-creating with God i.e. they were trying to run away from the world they were supposed to control.
* While building they did not control the Sabbath. They just worked on that day hence a sin.
* It was a sin of abusing God’s image in them.

**ABRAHAM THE FATHER OF FAITHFUL**

Abraham is a greatest patriarch (great grandfather) of the nationalists. It is from him that the Israelites trace their origin. As a race and chosen nation.

To Israelites Abraham was a great religious and nationalistic figure he was son of Terah and had brothers Noah and Haran. At first they lived in Uriah of Babylon but later shifted to Haran under the leadership of his father Terah and it was at Haran that Noah received a call from God.

**THE SITUATION OF ABRAHAM BEFORE ABRAHAM’S CALL**

* His name was Abram the change of his name came later during the course of his relationship with God.
* He had a beautiful but barren wife called Sarai later she was renamed Sarah by God.
* Abram and Sarai had childless marriage but Abraham remained faithful to Sarai; hence a true monogamist.
* Abraham was fairly rich with a number of domestic animal and slaves, he had relatives.
* He was a worshipper of many gods (polytheists). This is evidenced in Joshua 24:2-3 in which his father is referred to as a moon worshipper so Abraham being a son of Terah must have been a moon worshiper too.

**FOR WHAT PURPOSE DID GOD CALL ABRAHAM?**

* God wanted to fulfill the promise he had made to mankind in Gen 3:15.
* He heard that an offspring of a woman would crush the devil.
* The call of Abraham was an important step in the fulfillment hence Abraham was called to be an instrument to God’s salvation to man.
* Abraham was called to be means through which God would reconcile with mankind. Man’s continual sinning (Gen 3:11) had only created a gap between himself and God, this gap was a disadvantage to man and by calling Abraham, God wanted to bridge this gap.
* As a result of sin, God’s image in man faded and man’s dignity was fallen so God called Abraham to be a means of restoring in man and restoring man’s fallen dignity with other creatures.
* Abraham was called to be a father of monotheism. Man was created to worship one God the creator unfortunately man had started worshipping God’s creatures instead of worshipping God.
* God called Abraham to restore the joy, peace and harmony he had intended for man, all these had been lost due to sin and had been replaced with suffering guilt and shame. Through Abraham God intended to restore man’s paradise situation to him.
* Through Abraham God wanted to extend salvation to all nations of the world

(Gen 2:3)

* God wanted to use Abraham as a role model for faith, trust and obedience. All of which had became lost as a result of man’s continued sinning. Through Abraham God wanted to teach mankind what it really means to have faith, trust and obedience to God.
* To create a model nation God wanted to create a new and unique relationship with a given race/nation of the Israelites. God’s earlier attempts to deal with mankind in general had become futile (Gen 3:11) so he wanted to concentrate in a small nation on the descendants of Abraham and he later used them to extend salvation benefits to all humanity.
* God wanted to show his love and care for the sinners who had built the tower of Babel and those who ate the forbidden fruit,. He called Abraham to show that God does not leave a sinner to fall down completely i.e. he lifts him up and gives him a second chance to repent.
* God wanted to show that his call does not depend on a person’s background but on his or her willingness and readiness to obey i.e. Abraham was a sinner like his contemporaries but still God called him to transform him.
* God wanted to make a covenant with Abraham for his own God and for the God of all mankind. This covenant to be a land mark in salvation history would be in connection with the Sinaic and Davidic covenant and could finally reach a climax in Jesus Christ.
* God called Abraham to teach him true worship i.e. he wanted to teach him why and how to offer sacrifices .This purpose s justified by the fact that Abraham’s way of worship was initiated by all his descendants for many years ahead.
* God called Abraham so as to give him the land of Canaan. This is clear in “ I will give you land” (Gen 12;1, 15:7). This was the land of Canaan in equivalent to Eden or paradise which man had lost due to sin.
* God called Abraham to give him many descendants as many as starts (Gen 12:1, 15:5)
* God wanted to save Abraham from the sinful environment in which he was living that’s why he told him to leave move out of his motherland a land infested with immorality and corruption of the city life Ura and Haran and the sarber.
* God wanted to save Abraham from being childless and to reward him for his faithfulness to his wife God wanted to give.
* God wanted to give protection and personal greatness to Abraham, at is call, he was promised to a great name and continued protection as well as blessing to him and his descendants (gen 12:2-3)

**THE MAIN FEATURES OF ABRAHAM’S CALL IN BRIEF**

* Abraham was called at an old age. At his call he was 75 years (gen 12:4)
* Abraham was called out of god’s will and grace. Abraham wasn’t chose because he was tall o rich but God chose him freely out of his love and initiative.
* Abraham’s call was characterized by movement i.e. at once he was ordered to leave his mother country and move to the land which God was to show him.
* Abraham’s call was characterized by faith i.e. when he was called he responded positively with immediate faith, trust and obedience and started moving to a place he didn’t know.
* His call was also characterized by self denial and sacrifice i.e. Abraham had to leave his relatives, friends and the environment too was used too and goes to strange land.
* His call was purposeful. It was meant to be a great step in carrying out God’s salvation hence Abraham’s personal sacrifice wasn’t foolish adventure.
* His call was characterized by promises made by God to him i.e. the promise of land descendants and protection.
* His call was accompanied by a covenant which confirmed God’s omnipresence and initiation to fulfill in all promises made by him to Abraham (Gen 15)

**HOW DID ABRAHAM COME TO BE THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL**

* God told Abraham to go to the unknown land and he went without question hence a man of faith.
* Through an old an (75 years) Abraham moved long distances without an excuse and endured all the hazards along the way hence a faithful man.
* He abandoned the gods of his ancestors whom he had worshipped for the past 75 years, he did not nurse a fear that his gods were going to harm them, abandon them as most people could fear. More so the gods he abandoned were visible.
* He put his trust and confidence in a new invisible but powerful and creative God. He surrendered his whole future onto hands of a God he didn’t before. What a man of faith!
* He left his land behind, most of his friends and riches. He accepted to venture into a field of spiritual riches and spiritual friendship.
* He built altars for worshipping his new God in places like Shechem, Bethel and Al (Gen 12:6-8) hence a man of faith.
* Abraham offered several sacrifices to God and he made sure that he sacrificed the best animal to God.
* Even when there occurred a great famine that drove him out of Canaan to Egypt, Abraham never lost faith and confidence in God (gen 112:10)
* Abraham’s faith was severally tested when his darling wife risked being taken up by the Pharaoh forever (Gen 12:10-20) even then, Abraham never abandoned his God.
* God made a number of promises to Abraham that looked impossible to fulfill but Abraham waited patiently and faithfully for God to fulfill those promises.
* When later God told him to circumcise himself and his descendants, Abraham obeyed though it was a painful experience due to his old and rough skin (Gen 17)
* When God tested Abraham’s faith by asking him to offer as a sacrifice. Abraham did not hesitate. He know that all life belonged to God and was ready to offer his only rightful son Isaac in good faith (gen 22)

Note: that for Abraham, Isaac was already dead as in his heart he had already given him up to the Lord.

* It was due to the faith Abraham demonstrated that promises were made to him and again it was due to his faithfulness that all promises made to him were faithful.
* The promise of land to Abraham seemed to be in Jeopardy (great danger) when the herdsmen of the Lord and Abraham quarreled over land. But due to faith in spiritual riches from God rather than material things, Abraham humbly allowed his nephew Lot to choose the best part of land he desired and they separated in peace. Imagine allowing Lot to choose which part he desired out of Abraham’s land of promise. That was faith beyond measure (Gen 13:1-14)
* Shortly afterwards when Lot was taken as a slave, Abraham organized his men and they rescued him Gen 14:13-16. His great faith in God enabled Abraham to defect big and strong armies.
* On one accession when Abraham was a Momre, three unknown visitors came to see him and one of them was god (Gen 18:1-15). By God visiting Abraham in his tent, it was a confirmation that God was really a friend of Abraham and he wouldn’t have been friendly if Abraham wasn’t a man of faith.
* Due to Abraham’s faith God couldn’t hide his plans of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah from him (Gen 18:17-18). Abraham, aware of his own faith pleased with God to spare the two cities if there was any man of faith as that which he himself had.
* Abraham organized for marriage of his son Isaac to Rebecca (Gen 24). He was therefore a faithful father to his son and most especially he wanted to ensure that God’s salvation plan goes on through a well planned monogamous marriage.

**ABRAHAMIC COVENANT (Genesis 15, 17)**

A covenant can be defined as a binding pack to show an agreement that is reached on between two parties and never it was made between God and Abraham while in the land of Canaan.

In the Old Testament there are two types of agreements (covenants) i.e. the party covenant and sovereign covenant.

The sovereign covenant means an agreement between two unequal parties therefore Abraham’s covenant was a sovereign covenant. The party covenant means an agreement between two equal parties.

**FEATURES OF ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

Examine the features of Abrahamic covenant.

* In the Abrahamic covenant a number of promises were made. For example, Abraham was just a recipient i.e. he would receive orders from God and his work was just to respond positively.
* The covenant was also made directly between God and Abraham himself. Therefore he did not involve third party like the one party of Moses with God (Sinatic covenant).
* Abrahamic covenant, God’s presence was also manifested. For example, he first appeared in form of fire flaming touch. These of to be interpreted theologically the fire meaning the bitter experience. The descendants of Abraham would go through while in the plain land while flaming.
* Abraham’s covenant also involved the change of names. For example, from Abram to Abraham and Sari to Sarah implying a great father and mother of the nation.
* Abraham’s covenant also involved under taking circumcision and same was to be applied to his mute family members. This was served as an external mark of those living under the covenant as God’s people.
* Abraham’s covenant also demanded faithfulness and obedience on his part towards God for him to live. This was also to be applied on his descendants and failure to do so we call for punishment.

**COMPARISON BETWEEN ABRAHAMIC AND SINAITIC COVENANT**

Sinatic covenant is also at times called mosaic. It was the agreement that was made between the children of Israel and God under the mediation of Moses. This took place at mountain Sinai after a period of three months since their departure from Egypt the land of slavery.

This covenant when compared with Abrahamic covenant, there are points of conversion as well as diversion as may be noted below:

* In both covenants, promises were made. For example, Abraham was promised to have so many descendants from his own son likewise Sinatic covenant God promised the children of Israel to serve as priestly state.
* In both, sacrifices were made involving goats, lamb and calves that were to be used in sealing or cutting the covenant.
* In both covenants, God’s presence was manifested. For example, in Abrahamic setting, God appeared in fire and flaming touch the same was true with the Sinatic when God appeared in form of thunder lightening and thick clouds on the top of the mountain (Exodus 19:16)
* In both covenants, were made between two unequal parties. For example, in both cases God was sovereign and the Israelites together with Abraham were ordinary men. God was only binding himself to them.
* In both cases, God was the initiator of the covenants in an attempt to save man from sin . For example, he took a step to follow Abraham and the agreement was made. The same also happened with Moses’ call.
* In both there was shading of blood from the sacrifices that helped sealing the covenant made.
* In both covenants were made as demonstration of God’s love . For example, for his people. It was out of his concern that man was to be brought back from sinful state to God.

**Differences**

* In terms of time, Abrahamic covenant is noted to have been taken a short time probably less than a week while sinatic covenant took along time for about 40 years.
* In Abrahamic covenant, God communicated to Abraham directly while in the Sinaticcovenant there was a mediation i.e. Moses who would link up God with the people of Israel.
* In Sinatic covenant, there was sprinkling of blood upon the Israelites which wasn’t the case with Abraham.
* In Sinatic covenant, there was purification required by the Israelites. For example, by bathing as well as abstaining from sex as a preparation of meeting God which wasn’t a case with Abraham.
* Abrahamic covenant involved undertaking circumcision by Abraham himself and his members which was not a case with the Sinatic covenant.
* In Abrahamic covenant, he was required to have names changed. For example, Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah which is not shown in Sinatic covenant.
* In Sinatic covenant, a demarcation was made at the foot of mountain Sinai beyond which one Israel was to cross the failure to comply was to die which was not the case with Abrahamic.
* In Sinatic covenant God appearance was strength in form of thunder and lightning that shock the mountain therefore living most of the Israelites shaking or trembling which is not shown with the Abrahamic covenant.

**IMPORTANCES OF ABRAHAM TO JEWS/HEBREWS OR ISRAELITES**

The call of Abraham had profound the significance on the life of the Israelites and this can be seen in the following ways;

* The call of Abraham resulted into the creation of the Jewish society. Through Abraham the Jewish society came into existence, a society which served as God’s priestly family.
* The call of Abraham introduced the idea of monotheism not only to the Israelites but the entire world. It was Abraham who developed the aspect of believing in one God.
* Through Abraham the Israelites were given unaccountable blessings from God. Such blessings included protection and providence from God.
* Through Abraham’s call the Israelites were settled into Canaan a place which was promised onto their ancestor Abraham.
* Abraham helped the Israelites to develop a new a clear relationship with God the almighty. Being their ancestor Abraham started a theocratic culture which was extended further by other leaders of Israel.
* Through Abraham a new concept of faith found its way in Israel in particular and the world at large. The Israelites started being judged as righteous people using the new doctrine of faith introduced by Abraham.
* God later made a covenant with Abraham which had religious and social significance to the society of Israel.
* Through Abraham the Israelites were given peace, happiness, joy and freedom which were lost during the fall of man in gen 3.
* The Israelites gained more assurance from God that he would protect them and defend them in all situations but all these became possible because of Abraham.
* The Jewish culture of building altars and later worshipping centres traced its origin from Abraham and so Abraham remained a central figure in their society.
* Through Abraham the Israelites learnt that God is a lovely being and that he needs absolute faith and trust from all people.
* They still came to realize that God can call upon anybody regardless of one’s status and background. Therefore they needed to be ready for this divine call.
* The Israelites still leant that God willingly gives and takes away so it was important for the Israelites to commit themselves to this God so as to induce him into giving them many good things.

**LESSONS CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM ABRAHAM’S CALL**

The Christians learn the following lessons from Abraham’s call;

* Christians should respond positively to god’s call likewise Abraham responded positively by living his home land to unknown land.
* Christians should have faith in God likewise Abraham had a lot of faith in God. That is why he was referred to as the grandfather of the faithful.
* Christians should be patient especially when they are praying to God likewise Abraham prayed to God with a lot of patience that’s why he was granted everything he prayed for.
* Christians should have external signs to distinguish themselves from the non Christians for example bibles, rosaries, medals and many others likewise Abraham had to undergo circumcision as an external sign to prove that he was a believer in the almighty God and also it acted as a seal of the covenant he made with God.
* The Christians should always worship God likewise Abraham abandoned the pagan gods (moon) and began worshipping God the almighty.
* Christians should have confidence in God and trust likewise Abraham had trust and confidence in God.
* Christians should pay for God’s blessings. Abraham was blessed by God and through him all nations were blessed.
* Christians should be ready to undergo suffering for God’s sake likewise Abraham underwent circumcision which was painful.
* Christians should contribute towards the construction of worshipping places o they would construct worshiping places where possible likewise Abraham constructed altars and worshipped God in Canaan.
* Christians should believe in God’s promises likewise Abraham believed in God’s promises.
* Christians should seek for Go’s guidance. Abraham was guided by God. That is why he was in position to live according to god’s expectations.
* Christians should be ready to change when they are called upon by God likewise Abraham changed and turned to God.

**THE NATURE OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE CALL OF ABRAHAM**

God is described in the following ways;

* He is a loving God. Out of his love he called Abraham, he gave him the land of Canaan and he promised him a son Isaac.
* He is a caring God. Because of his care, Abraham moved all the way to the land of Canaan safely.
* He is a forgiving God. The call of Abraham revealed that God had forgiven mankind who had sinned against him in genesis 3.
* God can call upon any one regardless of the background therefore he doesn’t discriminate . For example, Abraham was the moon worshipper but he was called by God.
* He is an invisible God that is to say he cannot be seen compared to the pagan gods who are visible.
* He is omnipotent that is to say he is powerful, because of his powers Abraham accepted to leave his homeland and also to abandon the visible gods.
* He restores the broken relationship. When God called Abraham the relationship between him and mankind was restored.
* He is a spirit. He doesn’t possess a physical body therefore he never appeared to Abraham physically.
* He is a source of providence. He proved this when he provided Abraham with the land of Canaan which he occupied together with his descendants.
* He demands sacrifices . For example, he told Abraham to sacrifice to him which he did on many occasions.
* He is a jealous God, he doesn’t tolerate rivals therefore he expects absolute monotheism.
* He is a God of promises; like he promised the land of Canaan, many descendants to be the grandfather of the faithful.
* He is a source of protection. He protected Abraham all the way to the Promised Land.
* He is omnipresent that is to say he is found everywhere that is why he was in position to go to Babylon Abraham’s home country and later moved all they way from Babylon to Canaan together with Abraham.
* He is omniscient that is to say he is all knowing . For example, he was aware of Abraham’s problem that is why he promised him a son during the call.
* He is a faithful God that is why he was in position to give Abraham the land of Canaan and to fulfill all the promises he made to him.
* He is a holy God. Hi holiness was revealed when he asked Abraham to worship him alone and abandon the pagan gods which means that he doesn’t associate with unknown people.

**GOD’S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM**

Abraham was required by God to leave his ancestral land for a new place which God would show him. In the process, God made the following promises to his servant Abraham;

* God promised Abraham many blessing that he would even bless whoever blessed Abraham (Gen 2:-3)
* Abraham was promised a son through whom the great nation would be got gen 15:4 Abraham was to get a child out of his official wife Sarah to inherit his property.
* Abraham was further promised the land of Canaan which is described the land flowing with honey (Gen 12)
* He was promised to be the grandfather of the great nation that is to say the nation of Israel. It was Abraham to be traced as the following ancestor of Israel.
* Because of the good cooperation and attitude he had with God, Abraham was promised to have a peaceful and honorable death (Gen 15:5)
* Abraham was promised very many descendants as many as stars in the sky (Gen 15:5)
* Abraham was to involve into a peaceful nation.
* Braham was promised that his descendants would go to a strange land where they would suffer from slavery, but after 400 years they would come out with a lot of treasures (gen 15:13)
* Abraham was promised that his name would be made great and famous and he will be a blessing to all.
* Abraham was promised to stay for along time, he was to live up to a ripe age. This was because of his generous faith in God.
* God promised Abraham to curse whoever would curse him and this was realized later on.

**HOW THE PROMISES WERE FULFILLED**

* The promise of having a son and many descendants came to pass. Abraham at an old age got a child whom he named Isaac (Gen 21:1-4)
* The promise of having very many descendants as starts in the sky also came to pass. Out of Isaac there was Jacob out of whom the 12 sons who involved into nation of Israel.
* The promise of living for a long time and having a honourable death was fulfilled. Abraham died when he was an old man at the age of 175 years and had a honourable burial in a special field. (Gen 25:7-8)
* The promise of exiling his descendants for 400 years was fulfilled. The Israelites went in Egypt where they stayed for 430 years and left the place which many treasures (Exodus 12:40)
* Abraham was promised that his descendants would possess the land of can. This was fulfilled to Abraham and then to the children of Israel as a nation.
* The promise of blessing all nations was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ who was a descendant of Abraham. By living in him all the people all over the world are blessed.
* The promise of blessing whoever blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him also came true. Many nations tried to fight against the descendants of Abraham were punished for instance Amalekites who fought them during the Exodus event were destroyed later on (1 Sam 15)
* The promise of having a great nation also came true. The descendants of Abraham multiplied and turned out to be great hence a nation of Israel.
* The promise of making Abraham a grandfather of the great nation was fulfilled. Abraham came to be recognized as the ancestor of the Israelites.
* The promise of making Abraham’s name great and famous was fulfilled. Abraham is known in the whole world as the ancestor of the believers.

**HOW WERE GOD’S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM FULFILLED?**

Effects of Abraham’s response to God’s call

* Abraham’s response to God’s call pleased God and this made God to praise Abraham’s faith.
* God approved Abraham’s righteousness and it is in that this that all the descendants of Abraham had to reflect on Abraham’s life because of his righteousness.
* Consequently God console the promises he had earlier made to Abraham i.e. God was going to fulfill those promises.
* Abraham was Promised Land and it is the same land that is currently occupied by the Jews and it has become the bases of conflicts between the Jews in Israel and Arabs in Palestine.
* Abraham was promised a son and this son came to be born as Isaac and later Jesus in the New Testament his Abraham’s biological son and believers became sons of Abraham by faith.
* Abraham was promised a heir, Isaac came to inherit Abraham’s kingdom and all people of faith became the heirs of his kingdom.
* Abraham was promised blessing and this benefited descendants from the time of his response Abraham’s life was blessed and the Israel later on came to enjoy the blessings.
* Abraham was promised descendants, these descendants became as many as starts in the sky i.e. the Jews are the direct mentioned in this text.
* Abraham at his encounter with God he was promised to become a great man and it could be through him that all the nations across the world would be blessed.
* God also promised protection to Abraham whereby he was to be protected together with his descendants. This was all to be extended to the whole nation not believers.
* Abraham was also to live longer i.e. Abraham lived for 170 years in the acknowledgment of the good works he did for God.
* God also promised Abraham to have an honourable death and descent burial when he dies of which it came to be fulfilled.
* Abraham was also promised a great nation which also came to be fulfilled with the emergency of Israel as a nation being feared up to date.

**THE UNIVERSAL NATURE OF ABRAHAM’S PROMISES**

* God’s promises to Abraham were fulfilled in his life time while the rest were fulfilled during the time of his descendants and some the promises have been carried on in the life of the present Christians. For example, protection.
* Abraham was promised the land of Canaan. This was fulfilled to him and his descendants while the Christians today have been promised the heaven as a place of their last destination and many of them have hopes in it.
* God promised Abraham as many descendants as stars in the sky. This promise was also fulfilled because Jacob’s children evolved into a great nation while the present Christians are counted as Abraham’s descendants.
* Abraham was promised by God that his name would become a great and famous name. Indeed the spread of faith had made his name great and famous because he is considered as the ancestor of believers in the world.
* God promised to change and so did change Abraham’s name from Abram to Abraham. This is a direct reflection of his descendants’ change of names at baptism today.
* Abraham was promised a peaceful and honourable death. Likewise many faithful Christians are assured of descent death and burial.
* He was promised to be the grandfather of all believers. So he became the grandfather of all the Israelites and all the Christian population today give honour to him.
* Abraham was promised a son who was fulfilled through birth of Isaac and the Christians today put much honour to Christ who is a direct descendant of Abraham.
* God promised Abraham that his descendants would suffer from Egypt but would be delivered. In the same way Christians today suffer because of Satan’s influence but those who believe in God are able to survive hard times in life . For example, facing persecution.
* The promise of having a great nation of Abraham was fulfilled and the world wide Christians today are believed to have come out of Abraham because of God’s blessings. Thus Abraham’s promises being universal.
* God promised that his covenant with Abraham was to be an everlasting covenant and in the New Testament Jesus who was Abraham’s descendant established an everlasting covenant which brought christens into communion with God.

**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RELIGION FOLLOWED BY ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS**

The following are the characteristics/nature of the religion which Abraham and his descendants followed;

* The religion emphasized monotheism practices. Abraham and his descendants were expected to worship only one true god Yahweh or the almighty.
* It was characterized by offering sacrifices. Abraham offered some sacrifices to God on many occasions like he was commanded to sacrifice a dove, pigeon each three years old. Even his descendants the Israelites kept on offering sacrifices to God in their life time as noted in the book of Leviticus.
* The religion practiced by Abraham and his descendants was based on faith. For example, Abraham showed his faithfulness to God when he accepted to undergo circumcision at the age of 99 years even talking to an invisible God.
* It was characterized by covenant making. For example, God made a covenant with Abraham and also made a covenant with the Israelites (Sinatic covenant)
* It was characterized by building of altars. For example, when Abraham reached Canaan he built altars and worshipped God and also the Israelites did the same.
* It was characterized by promises. For example, God promised to give Abraham many descendants and also the Israelites at one time promised to abide by the Sinatic covenant.
* It was characterized by circumcision. For example,Abraham and all his male descendants were circumcised.
* It was characterized by change of names. For example,Abram changed to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah.
* Prayers were important among the Israelites and their ancestor Abraham. Through prayers they communicated to God.
* It was characterized by blessings to the people. God promised to bless all the people and indeed they were blessed especially those who lived according to God’s expectation.
* The prophets were acting as God’s messengers who used to deliver God’s message to the people. They also used to emerge during the period of covenant betrayal.
* The priests were also important among the Israelites because of the roles they played for example sacrificing to God, praying to God and many others
* Holiness was also emphasized where people were supposed to be holy and approach God in holiness.
* Abraham and the Israelites were expected to be obedient as required by their religion.
* Repentance was compulsory as long as they sinned against God if at all they were to be forgiven.
* Laws and commandments were part of their religion. For example, they were given laws concerning treatment of slaves, food regulations, Decalogue.
* It was characterized by celebration of festivals. For example, the Passover festival which was supposed to be celebrated yearly by the Israelites in remembrance of their liberation from slavery.
* The judges were also important because they were chosen by God and they acted as religious leaders and they ensured that people lived according to the covenant faith.

**THE BOOK OF EXODUS**

The term Exodus means that the departure and in the context of the subject CRE 245/1. It refers to the departure/movement of Israelites from Egypt where they had been subjected to slavery for a long time and then moved to the promised land of Canaan.

In Egypt they were in bondage for over 430 years till when God sent Moses who liberated them.

**THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS BEFORE TO LIBERATION**

Biblically history has it that God blessed Abraham with a son called Isaac. Then Isaac gave birth to a son called Jacob and Jacob produced 12 sons who eventually evolved into the 12 tribes of Israel.

Among the 12 sons of Jacob was a boy called Joseph who was very much loved by his father but his brothers hated him so much until when they conspired against him and was sold into Egypt.

Sometime later, famine broke out in Joseph’s home land which resulted into his brothers being invited to stay in Egypt for care. Their number went on multiplying and the new king of Egypt Pharaoh ended up putting them to forced labour then later God decided to send Moses to liberate them as he had earlier promised through Abraham that his descendants would be in slavery in long time but would be liberated.

**PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT**

The following problems faced by the Israelites while in Egypt;

* They were subjected to forced labour under harsh conditions for instance they had their baby boys thrown into the Nile river so that their numbers could decrease.
* The population size was reduced by the king of Egypt because as they had baby boys thrown into the Nile river so that their numbers could decrease.
* They were subjected to forced labour under harsh conditions for instance they had to make bricks and burn them using reeds.
* The Israelites were compelled to construct cities within a short spell of time.
* The Hebrew woman and children were also subjected to hard labour such as making bricks, cutting reeds and many threshing water.
* The Hebrew girls were forced to get married to the Egyptians men not of own choice.
* As slaves, the Israelites were denied food i.e. their food was locked in stores until they had finished their tasks.
* The Jews were publically declared slaves and this had a lot of psychological and emotional problems to them.
* They were jailed after accusing them falsely. For example, Joseph who was allied that he had raped his masters wife (Gen 39)
* The Jews were forced to take on the new belief of the Egyptians and so they abandoned their God.
* Many Israelites became poorer and poorer even though they were in position to do well.

**THE BIRTH OF MOSES**

Moses was born at the period when the Israelites were being persecuted in Egypt. However the more they mistreated them the more they increased in Egypt.

When Moses was born, his mother tried to hide him for some weeks because the Pharaoh had instructed that all male baby Jews should be put to death.

Therefore when he attained three months of age, his mother could not hide him any longer and so he had to hide the boy at the banks of the Nile River. However Moses happened to be blessed that he was picked by Pharaoh’s daughter who came to draw water and took him to the palace for nursing (Ex 2:1ff).

**THE CALL OF MOSES (THE BURNING BUSH INCIDENT)**

1. Comment on God’s encounter with Moses in form of burning bush.
2. Give an account of God’s call to Moses as noted in Exodus 3.

* One day as Moses was looking after the sheep and goats of Jethro his father in law around Mt. Sinai the lord appeared to him. God appeared in form of the flame in the middle of the bush and never burned up.
* As Moses drew closer to the burning bush god called out his name “Moses, Moses……..” and he instructed Moses not to go any closer but to put off his sandals because he was standing on the holy ground (Exodus 3:5)
* God identified himself as God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When Moses heard that it was God he got frightened and covered his face.
* God informed Moses as he had seen how badly the Egyptians were treating his people and so he wanted to liberate them from that cruel environment and take them to the land of Canaan.
* God therefore sent Moses to the king of Egypt so that he could lead his people out of that country.
* However, Moses refused responsibility saying that he was o body to confront the king and lead the Israelites.
* God assured him of his presence and protection but Moses still demanded to know the name of the God so that he would introduce it to the Israelites and God respond that “I am who I am” as his name (Exodus 3:13).
* After knowing God’s name still hesitated and feared that people may not believe him and whatever he said.
* At this moment, God changed Moses’ stick into a snake and later a stick again. And also Moses’ hand was diseased and became clean again. This was to show God’s miraculous power.
* Still Moses refused to go to Egypt and gave an excuse that he was not a good speaker.
* Then the lord gave him his brother Aaron to speak on his behalf. At the moment, Moses allowed to go to Egypt.
* God assured Moses of all his assistance that all the people will listen to what he would tell them even the Egyptians.

**REASONS WHY MOSES DEMANDED TO KNOW THE NAME OF GOD (WHY AT FIRST HE HESITATED TO TAKE ON GOD’S CALL)**

The burning bush incident reflects Moses at first taking a negative response (hesitating) to take on the divine mission that God was sending him for.

The following are the reasons why Moses demanded to know the name of God. In other words why he at first hesitated to take on God’s call;

* The burning bush manifested God as a mysterious and complicated being to understand something which could have compelled Moses to find out his name.
* Moses’ refusal was because he saw himself as nobody to confront the king of Egypt who was in charge of the exiles that is the Israelites in slavery.
* Moses hesitated at first because he didn’t know the God who was calling him. But later when he got to know he took on the mission.
* Moses could have been shy. This can be indicated when God told him that he was standing on a holy ground, he even covered his face.
* Moses did not have any answer that he would give to the Israelites in case they wanted to know the God who wanted to rescue them. This could have forced Moses also to refuse taking up the initiative.
* Further still Moses’ hesitation to God’s call was because he was a poor orator who could not easily express himself in public.
* This being the first experience of Moses to receive God’s vision and general nature of God, Moses was struck with fear of looking at God and serving him hence his refusal of the assignment.
* Moses’ recent history in Egypt could have worked against his wishes and so he had to pull out of this office.That is why he refused to take the call. According to Exodus 2; 12Moses had killed an Egyptian and he was noticed and so feared to go back for he would be charged of murder.
* Moses also stood down just because he was a mere shepherd who could not effectively do this work. He knew people could not listen to him having been known as a shepherd.
* Moses being used to a number of gods could have made him hesitate/doubt the call of God. He also doubted the God who called him his capacity to protect him against the Egyptian leaders.
* Moses hesitated to know God’s call because he was not all that popular before the Israelites it would be very hard for him to convince them about God whom he had just known.
* Moses lacked faith in God. It is proved that before he saw miracles like God turning his walking stick into a snake and them back to a walking stick, he thought he could not have the power to convince the king of Egypt to let the Israelites leave Egypt.
* However after learning more about god, them Moses developed faith, received power to perform miracles, God revealed his name to him and was given a spokesman Aaron, then he accepted to take on God’s call.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BURNING BUSH TO THE ISRAELITES, HEBREWS OR JEWS

The burning bush incident was important in the history of the Israelites in the following ways;

* The burning bush incident changed Moses’ life from being a shepherd or a commoner to a status of a leader of the Israelites. From then onwards god empowered Moses and he became a leader of the Israelites political, religiously and a liberator.
* The incident showed the divine election of the Israelites became a chosen nation of God since then. He said to Moses “I have seen how cruel my children of Israel are being treated….”
* The incident increased the Jewish and Moses’ awareness of God. From this experience Moses got to know God as the god of his great ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and so he had to respect him.
* The burning bush marked the end of the Israelites slavery. As God appeared to Moses he instructed him to go and deliver his people from Egyptian slavery.
* It was a way through which the Israelites started experiencing God’s love. The incident assured them of God’s love and commitment to protect them against any problem.
* The burning bush also established the idea of monotheism among the Israelites. The Israelites were compelled to start believing in one God their liberator.
* Out of this incident the Israelites leant that God required steady first love and commitment to his message and so they were required to keep obeying his words in order to receive protection from him.
* The Israelites learnt that God is all knowing that is to say he can monitor everything that takes place everywhere, every time and so it was their demand to worship him.
* The incident of the burning bush taught Moses and the other Israelites that God was a just God. He saw the suffering of his people and so he had to liberate them consequently punished their oppressor that is the Egyptians.
* The incident manifested God’s willingness to call upon anybody irrespective of his or her background. God often call upon different people to carry his divine duties irrespective of their evil background like the way he did to Moses who was a murder in Egypt.
* The event also instilled courage and determination among the Israelites. This was because God assured them of his involvement in their social – religious fears of life.
* The burning bush incident stimulated the idea of oneness among the Israelites who before Moses was sent to them were divided along tribal and other grounds so unity was brought or promoted among the Israelites.
* The burning bush gave rising to the idea of theocracy among the Israelites. That is to say absolute dependence on God for all their social, religious, political and psychological needs.

JUSTIFY THE VIEW THAT MOSES’ BACKGROUND WAS A PREPARATION FOR HIS FUTURE LEADERSHIP

* Moses was once a shepherd across the desert. This made him understand the Mt. Sinai where a covenant with God was conduct and he was confirmed by God as the leader of the Israelites.
* Moses grew up from the king’s palace where he got the best education of the time. This made him learn administrative laws cheaply and later God decided to use him as the future leader of the Israelites.
* T the king’s palace where he grew up from he learnt political ideas and tactics which he used to guide the Israelites in the latter period of his leadership hence acting as a better judge in Israel at the time.
* Moses killed an Egyptian put his body in the sand and run for his safety. This pushed him nearer to a place of God’s call at Mt. Sinai. He acted as a nationalist who loved to see freedom within his fellow Israelites. This is why later God used him as a political leader when he wanted to liberate the Israelites.
* At Jethro’s home in median, Moses learnt the work of priesthood because jethro was a highly religious man. When God sent him in Egypt he also worked as a priest for the Israelites even through their journey because he had studied priestly roles from jethro his father-in-law.
* In his call, Moses’ stick turned into a snake due to the Lord’s miraculous power. This deepened his faith as a military leader and the people he led from bondage and victory in war with Amelikites (Exodus 17:8)
* God gave Moses an orator that is Aaron because Moses was a great stammerer this strengthened his priesthood authority.
* The revelation as “I AM WHO I AM” prepared Moses as a man to do the service of Yahweh. It also made him strong because he realized he was with the almighty God. Therefore in his leadership he always consulted Yahweh first.
* Moses was a shepherd he learnt all forms of hardships and even got used to the desert conditions. This enabled him later when God called him to be able to lead te Israelites across the harsh wilderness. It seems he even knew some of the routes in the deserts because he had ever been there.
* Moses was born in a Levite family i.e. a blessed family where all leaders of Israelites descended from. Thus he had high opportunities of becoming a leader of the Israelites.
* Moses’ biological mother played a big role to prepare for future leadership. She told him what was happening in the field towards the fellow Israelites. This could have increased his desires of fighting for fellow Jews which he started with when he killed an Egyptian.
* The act of receiving the Ten Commandments also prepared Moses for future leadership. God had instructed his command through Moses to be taught to the Israelites. Hence indicating Moses being chosen as a leader.

WHAT DO MODERN POLITICAL LEADERS LEARN FROM MOSES’ LEADERSHIP?

Below are some of the lessons modern political leaders learn from Moses’ leadership;

* Modern political leaders need to let justice prevail in their administration just as Moses promoted justice among the Israelites basing on the Ten Commandments given to them.
* Political leaders today should pray to God to bless our enemies and let us have victory during times of attacks just like Moses used to pray on behalf of the Israelites asking God for protection, victory against their enemies like the Gersites, Amelikitesand many others
* Political leaders should cooperate with religious leaders in building the kingdom of God.
* Political leaders should promote monotheism i.e. worshipping of only one god Yahweh just like Moses taught the Israelites as their religious leader to worship only one God who liberated them out of Egyptian slavery.
* There is a need for modern political leaders to ask for wisdom and grace from God just like Moses interceded for Israelites during times of political crisis and asked for wisdom from God.
* Modern political leaders are called upon to practice the act of Herem that is total destruction of God’s enemies and their property just as Moses was commanded to do with the Israelites as they were occupying the Promised Land.
* Modern political leaders should forgive those who oppose them instead of retaliating at them. Moses on several occasions was opposed by his people like when they demanded for food and water but remained calm and asked God for provision.
* Modern political leaders ought to repent sins and even call upon their subjects to do the same so as to live in good harmony with God copying the example of Moses.
* The modern political leaders are called upon to emphasis love of God and love of neighbours like Moses stressed it to the Israelites and the new covenant demands for the same.
* Political leaders today should use their authority peacefully to expand God’s kingdom on earth just like Moses used peaceful means to emphasis the word of god to the Israelites.
* Modern political leaders should be prepared for the second coming of Jesus Christ (parausia) and also should teach it to their followers.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE CALL OF MOSES AND ABRAHAM

The following are the similarities between the call of Abraham and Moses;

* Both calls were initiated by the almighty God. It was God the almighty who saw the need of saving mankind and so called Abraham and Moses for this purpose.
* In both calls of Abraham and Moses there was no mediator. God called them directly without going through a third party.
* Both Abraham and Moses received God’s call for the first time. They had never been called by God before.
* Both Abraham and Moses’ call were between God the superior party and mankind the inferior party who were even sinners and needed repentance.
* Both personalities responded positively to God’s call eventually. Even though Moses at first hesitated, he eventually took up the mission given to him by God as Abraham had done.
* Both Abraham and Moses’ call reflected God’s love and concern for mankind. They were called to save man from suffering which had began with genesis 3 disobedience of man.
* Both Abraham and Moses’ call were aimed at establishing the kingdom of God on earth.
* Both Abraham and Moses were called by God to commit themselves in the covenant. God was yet to enter into with them and the people they represented.
* In both Abraham and Moses’ call god’s omnipresence was revealed . For example, at Mt. Sinai God’s presence was manifested.
* The two calls of Abraham and Moses revealed God’s omnipotence. It was because of God’s power that Abraham was convinced to live his homeland Ura and go to an unknown promised land. In the call of Moses God’s omnipotence (power) was revealed in the burning bush which was not consumed by fire.

The following are some of the differences between the call of Abraham and Moses;

* Abraham was called when he was indeed an old man (75 years) with his barren wife Sarai while Moses was relatively a young man but with a child called Gershom.
* Abraham was commanded by God to go to a place he couldn’t know that is Canaan but Moses on the other hand was required to go to Egypt a place he knew very well.
* Abraham looked to be more faithful during his call whole Moses on the other hand was not. This is proved when he doubted God who called him until he was told the name of god.
* Abraham received his call when he was in his home land Ura unlike Moses who received his call while he was in a foreign land median.
* In Abraham’s call he spoke by himself when communicating to God whereas Moses asked for a spokesman because he was a stammerer and he was given Aaron his brother who spoke on his behalf.
* In Abraham’s call he heard a voice from the Lord while in Moses’ call God appeared to him in form of a burning bush.
* Abraham was to be used as a basic of Israel’s nation (the father of believers) while Moses was called out of Egyptian slavery.
* At the call of Abraham he never asked for any power of miracle from God but simply kept his faith. However in Moses’ cal he requested for powers to perform miracles.
* At the call of Abraham he did not ask for many questions from god to prove his nature to him but in Moses’ call he requested to know the true nature of God who was sending him. So God told him that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
* In the call of Abraham he responded positively without any hesitation right from the beginning however Moses he first hesitated to deliver God’s message.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST BETWEEN MOSES AND JESUS

Similarities between the two personalities

Jesus sometimes is referred to as the new Moses because of the unique roles the two personalities played which include the following that act as their similarities;

* Both Moses and Jesus were born at a time of political crisis which involved infant massacre/killing that is to say killing of young boys. During Moses’ time the Egyptian king had ordered that baby boys should be killed as noted in Exodus 1:16 which is similar to the time when Jesus was born that king herod had ordered the killing of baby boys (Matt 1:16)
* Both Moses and Jesus prepared religious celebrations. The Passover started with Moses during deliverance of Israelites from Egyptian to Canaan just as Jesus also initiated the Lord’s Supper in which Christians today remember their liberation from the sin and evil.
* Both Moses and Jesus issued out God’s laws to the people. Moses gave the Ten Commandments to guide the Israelites (Exodus 20). In the same way Jesus gave out the greatest commandment saying “love one another as you love yourself...” (John 13:34)
* Both Moses and Jesus were considered to be prophets. In Deut 32:10 and john 4:13 Moses and Jesus respectively are seen as God’s messengers (prophets)
* They both intercede on behalf of the people when they sin towards God. Moses pleaded for the Israelites when they wanted food and water which they got (Exodus 16). Jesus also did the same for his followers by dying for their sins.
* Both Moses and Jesus performed miracles in which people of their time were saved. In Exodus 16:1-27 Moses was able to get food in form of manna and quails and in mark 6:30-24 Jesus performed a miracle of feeding five thousand people.
* Both Moses and Jesus identified themselves with suffering mankind. Moses identified himself with the suffering Israelites in Egypt while Jesus showed pity to the outcasts and other vulnerable groups like lepers.
* Both Moses and Jews were descendants of Abraham who is recognized in the bible as the grandfather of the Israelites.
* Moses and Jesus were all leading their followers to a destination chosen by God. Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage to Canaan while Jesus led his followers to heaven.
* Both Moses and Jesus promoted monotheism. They ensued that people worshiped only one God Yahweh the creator of heaven and earth and liberator of the Israelites.

Differences

* By the time Moses was called, he was a sinner who had committed murder in Egypt while Jesus lived in a sinless life style though he accepted to go for baptism in river Jordan.
* Moses’ birth had no connection with Yahweh and even his true mother and father’s name are not mentioned but to Jesus he was born as a son of God and his true parents were Joseph and Mary.
* Moses was unable to fulfill God’s task that he was unable to reach the intended destination Canaan but Jesus was successful in his task.
* Moses was purposely sent to liberate the Israelites who were suffering in Egypt while Jesus was sent as a universal savior of all God’s people on earth whether Jews or gentiles.
* In all circumstances Moses was seen as a human being although he got powers from God to perform some miracles whereas Jesus was at times seen or called a son of God (John 1:29)
* Moses had only human characters while Jesus had both human and divine characters that is to say he had earthly parents but at the same time he was called a son of God.
* Although Moses is said to have gone in heaven his resurrection is not mentioned anywhere in the bible but for Jesus it is clearly written about in books like mark’s gospel that he resurrected after three days of his death, even Christians today celebrate Easter in remembrance of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE CALL OF MOSES AND EZEKIEL

* Both and Moses were called to find means and ways of restoring peace in the Promised Land or among the Israelites.
* They were both sent to people who were suffering of slavery Moses was sent to the Israelites in Egypt and Ezekiel was sent to the Jews in Babylon captivity.
* Both Moses and Ezekiel were given difficult tasks to accomplish. Moses was to challenge pharaoh to let the Israelites go as Ezekiel was to prophecy to the rebellious house of the Israelites.
* In the calling of Moses and Ezekiel God gave them powers and assurance of his constant support and protection as they carry out their duties.
* God appeared to both Ezekiel and Moses before they bean their prophetic ministry.
* Difference
* Moses was sent to the slaves who were suffering in Egypt while Ezekiel was sent to the rebellious people of Judah who were even in Babylonian captivity.
* In their calls Moses was addressed by his real name and Ezekiel was addressed by the title of son of man.
* Moses was told to remove his shoes because he was standing on a holy ground during the burning bush incident but for Ezekiel, he was given such a command to remove his shoes.
* In the call of Moses he was given a stick to enable him perform miracles before pharaoh whereas in the call of Ezekiel God gave him a scroll to eat which was to give him strength in doing his work.
* Moses was given an assistant (spokesman) that is his brother Aaron because he was a stammerer but Ezekiel wasn’t given any spokesman so had to speak by himself.
* Moses was instructed to tell the people who were ignorant of God that is the Israelites however for Ezekiel he was sent to people who were already aware of God but simply rebelled against his command.
* Moses’ vision/call involved the burning bush yet Ezekiel’s vision involved seeing his majesty the God of Israel seated on his magnificent throne.
* In Moses’ call when God appeared to him he got scared but just remained standing although he covered his face. However with Ezekiel’s experience he fell down as a dead man.

How was Moses’ response to his call different from that of the disciples of Jesus in the New Testament

The following are some of the differences or contrasts that existed between the call of Moses and the call of the 12 disciples of Jesus;

* Moses when he was called he first hesitated God’s order while Jesus’ disciples left their net and followed him instantly.
* Moses questioned Yahweh so much he was called like the real name of God who was sending him while the disciples developed blind faith in Jesus Christ and never asked questions when he called them.
* Moses first resisted liberating God’s people while Jesus’ disciples followed him in the expectations of being made “fishers of men”.
* In Moses’ call it appears as if Yahweh forced him to take up the task while the disciples of Jesus voluntarily accepted.
* Moses objected that he was no body when God was sending him to liberate Hebrews from Egyptians bondage while the disciples had nothing to worry out.
* God told Moses not to come close to the burning bush and had to first remove his sandals because he was standing on a holy ground. And for Jesus came close to his disciples yet they were all sinners.
* Moses kept on moving with Aaron almost u to the time of his death but for many disciples of Jesus, they deserted him at the time of his unification.
* The Israelites were simply guided to the Promised Land where Moses near reached while for the disciples of Jesus they were called to be taught and often addressed him as a teacher.
* When Moses was called he was to liberate the people and settle them down unlike disciples when after being called had great personal and materialistic expectation.

THE TEN PLAGUES/ CALAMITIES GOD SENT TO EGYPT (EXODUS 8:1FF)

Analyse the plagues that God sent to Egypt though Moses

* Because of the stubborn of the pharaoh, God still sent various plague to Egypt in order to threaten him and allow his children go.
* At first God commanded Moses to meet the king early in the morning as he was going to the Nile and strike his walking stick to the Nile water which would turn into blood. This would be a warning to the king to let the Israelites go. Moses sis as he was told but the king remained stubborn and the Lord had to send another disaster.
* The lord sends frogs after seven days passed the Lord sent Moses back to the king to tell him to let his people go and worship him. Still when Moses told the king he did not allow the people go. So the Lord sent frogs that covered the land of Egypt in the pools, rivers and canal. The king used his magicians to silence the frogs and even requested Moses to pray for them. He prayed and the frogs died but the king could not listen to Moses and Aaron.
* Due to the king’s stubbornness to let the Israelites go the lord sent another plague the gnats. Aaron struck the ground with his stick and all the dust in Egypt was covered with gnats which covered the people and animals.

The magicians tried to make them disappear but they failed.

* The pharaoh continued being stubborn and through Moses the Lord sent flies which covered up the houses of the Egyptians and the ground. But the region of Goshen was spared because that’s where the Lord’s people stayed. At this point the king looked to be threatened and called upon Moses and Aaron to go and offer sacrifices to their God and ten Moses promised to pray to the lord to take away the flies which he did but against the king refused to let the Israelites go.
* Afterwards the lord sent Moses back to the king to tell him that the God of Hebrew wanted his people let free before a terrible disease could be sent. Moses did as God had told him but the king continued being stubborn until when the lord sent a disease that killed the donkeys, horses, goats, sheep, cattle, camels.
* The Lord sent yet another plague of boils. Moses and Aaron were told to take a few handful of ashes from a furnace and throw it into the air in front of the king afterwards the dust would produce boils that would become sores on people and animals. Magicians of the king inclusive were affected by the boils.
* The stubbornness of the king continued by not letting the Israelites go out of Egypt so the Lord through Moses and Aaron sent a hail storm. Moses was told to raise his hand towards the sky and a heavy hail fell over the whole land of Egypt with lightening striking the ground causing great destruction and death but the king continued paying deaf ear towards God’s actions.
* Another time the lord sent Moses to see the king and warn that the lord was going to be attacked by a swarm of locusts if people were not let to go indeed the locusts came and ate up all the green plants causing famine but the long continued being stubborn.
* The lord sent Moses to declare total darkness in Egypt. Moses was told to raise his hand towards the sky and darkness thick enough covered up the land of Egypt accept the Israelites who had light where they were living. The lord made the king stubborn and would not let the people go.
* Finally Moses announced the death of the first born males animals and people. Moses told the king that the lord said at about midnight he was to move through the land of Egypt and kill every first born son in Egypt from the king’s son who was to be the heir to the throne to the son of the slave woman who grinds grain and the first bon of all cattle and there would be loud crying all over Egypt.
* When all this happened the king was finally defeated called for Moses and let the Hebrews go. However after as while on their journey the king sent soldiers to bring them back where drowned in the red sea.

THE PASSOVER EVENT IN THE LIFE OF THE ISRAELITES (Exodus 12)

The Passover refers to the time when God’s angel of death passed over the houses of the Israelites who were enslaved in Egypt and killed the Egyptians and animals.

The Passover followed the plagues that were sent by God to the Egyptians because of their failure to realize God’s people from then the Passover became so important in the life of the Israelites and had to be celebrated annually.

THE PASSOVER CELEBRATIONS

How were the Israelites supposed to celebrate the Passover meal?

The following are some of the ways how the Israelites celebrated their first Passover;

God instructed Moses to order the Israelites to kill a lamb or a goat and smear its blood on their door posts. This was to enable the angel of death to identify the houses of Egyptians from the Israelites. In brief the event was celebrated in the following ways;

* The Israelites were requested to celebrate the Passover on a 14th day which was to mark the first month of the year of the Jewish calendar.
* On the tenth day of that month each family head was to choose a lamb or a goat. If a family was t small to eat the whole animal, they were free to share it with their neighbours and this was to ensure that nothing remains (Exodus 12:4)
* The animal was not to have physical defects to ensure this therefore, it was chosen four days before the Passover day. It was supposed to be a one year old lamb without any defects.
* On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month the animals were and its blood smeared on the door post (Exodus 12:7).
* The Passover meat was supposed to be roasted but not row or boiled.
* The meat was to be eaten on the same day and nothing was to remain in case it remained it was to be burnt into ashes.
* They were to eat in a hurry with fully dressed for travel with their walking stick in their hand and their sandals on their feet (Exodus 12:11)
* No body was supposed to move out of the house that Passover night until the following morning. Anyone who defiled these instruction was to be killed.
* The Passover meat was accompanied by unleavening bread that is to say bread without yeast so no Jew was required to keep yeast in his house that night.
* The Passover meal was accompanied by bitter herbs. This was to show the bitter experience of slavery they experienced in Egypt.
* No bone of the Passover animals was supposed to be broken.
* It had to be celebrated every year and by only members of the Jewish community. It was to remind them of their deliverance in Egypt.

THE IMPORTANCE/RELEVANCE OF THE PASSOVER TO THE ISRAELITES/JEWS/HEBREWS

The Jews put a lot of significances/importances to the Passover and this was analysed in the following ways;

* Through the Passover monotheism was promoted among the Israelites. The Israelite began worshipping one God of their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and abandoned the Egyptians powerless gods.
* The arrogance of the Egyptian pharaoh who had refused to set the Israelites was broken. It was this Passover which forced the Egyptian king to send them away as soon as his first born was killed as noted in Exodus 12:21.
* The Passover showed the Israelites that faith and obedience in God pays. After obeying God’s instructions of putting blood on their door post, the angel of death saved them but killed the first born of the Egyptians.
* The Passover taught the Israelites that God I a liberator. It was solely out of God’s divine love and intervention that the Israelites were liberated from the bondage of slavery.
* It led to the divine election of Israel as a nation of God. Many Egyptians were killed on the night of the Passover but had saved the Israelites as his chosen nation.
* It showed to the Israelites that God fights for his people. Therefore it became an assurance that God would continue protecting them from any oppression.
* The Passover confirmed to the Israelites that God is faithful and trust worthy. This is because all the promises that were promised to Abraham . For example, he promised to deliver his descendants from slavery.
* It showed God’s divine love for the children of Israel. God loved them so much that is why he punished the Egyptians with their king and saved the Israelites.
* The event prepared the Israelites to meet God at Mt. Sinai. On their journey led by Moses they met God at Mt. Sinai and they were given the Ten Commandments to follow.
* The Passover brought in peace, joy and happiness among the Israelites. They were relieved from the suffering and oppression they faced in the land of the Egyptians the event brought the Jews and Egyptians the characters of God. He was seen as a kind, patient but sometimes a violent God. This is shown when he killed the first born male of animals and people.
* The Passover stimulated the element of unity among the Israelites. Previously they were divided along tribal lines but in celebration of the Passover and on their movement Israelites moved as a family.
* The Passover led to the birth of religious festivals in the Jewish society such festivals included the Passover festivals and the day of unleavened bread which became more pronounced in the Jewish society.
* The sovereignty of God was made known to the Israelites. The Israelites were made to understand that God is almighty and so should be worshipped.
* The Passover revealed the omniscience of God. The angel of death was able to know the houses of Israelites and those of the Egyptians. Then he killed the first borns of the Egyptians.
* The Israelites came to understand that Yahweh their God punishes wrong doers. This was revealed when God punished the Egyptians with death of their first male borns.
* The Passover revealed the omnipotence of God to the Israelites. Out of his powers the angel of God killed the Egyptian first borns.

THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PASSOVER TODAY

How do Christians today understand or celebrate the Passover?

The following are some of the ways how Christians today understand the Passover;

* Many Christians believe that the Passover is a moment during which Jesus died on the cross to save mankind from the worldly sins.
* Among Christians the Passover is celebrated on Good Friday. This is the day on which Jesus was killed and thereafter resurrected on Easter Sunday.
* In the real Christian life the Passover has been transferred into the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion. Whenever people meet and celebrate it they are remembering Christ’s death for our sins just as the Israelites on the Passover day remembered their deliverance from slavery.
* Christians today believe that Jesus became the Passover lamb by shedding his blood in order to redeem mankind. This blood signifies the blood of the animal that was smeared on the door posts of the Israelites’ houses during the Passover festival.
* On the day of Easter Christians recall how Jesus suffered pain and was crucified in order to bring salvation to mankind.
* In the Christian community whenever believers meet and share the cup and body of Jesus, they tend to remember Jesus’ death until went he will come back to judge the living and the dead.
* In the celebration of the Passover/holy communion, Christians are in joyful gathering and they tend to show more love to one another at this occasion.
* Christians believe that with Christ’s death a new covenant was established between mankind and God therefore they believed by having faith in Jesus people will be saved from sin.
* To the Christians today the Lord’s Supper has to be prepared for (repentance is observed) so to go to the altar and receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE/RELEVANCE OF THE HOLY COMMUNION TO THE CHRISTIAN TODAY

The following are the significances of the Holy Communion to Christians today;

* The Holy Communion reminds the Christians of Jesus’ life here on earth. He said to the followers “ do this in remembrance of me…” (1 Cor 11:24, Mark 14:22-26) therefore whenever Christians come together they remember Jesus as one who is present with them.
* The communion renews man’s relationship with God and so it should be practiced regularly.
* The holy communion reminds believers of Jesus about his death which death brought about life after death to many believers (1 Cor 11:26)
* It also reminds Christians about the second coming of Jesus Christ. He said he would never again drink the wine until the day he enters the kingdom of God. Therefore Christians are required to remain pure by practicing the Holy Communion until Jesus comes back.
* The Holy Communion enables Christians today to increase their faith in Christ Jesus. Whenever they participate in the celebrate believers feel more touched to the words of Jesus who said “this is mu blood which is poured out for many…….” (Mark 14”24)
* The Holy Communion promotes a spirit of unity among Christians. Therefore the Holy Communion should be encouraged.
* It enhances love and cooperation among believers. This is because Christ castigated, inaugurated fellowship with love when he broke the pieces of bread took a prayer of thanks and also took a cup of wine and thanked God then gave it to his disciples to take.
* It is one of the ways Christians transmit the good news to those who had not yet received it.
* Through celebrating the Holy Communion Christians today are stimulated to believe in one God that is God the almighty the savior of human kind.
* The Holy Communion reminds believers to repent for their sins. It also makes the mass colourful and more joyous and in the end many people may be won into the church.
* It is one way of adding humour and moral to believers because Christ initiated sharing the bread and blood. So by celebrating this people are assured of entering the kingdom of God.

COMPARE THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS AND MODERN CHRISTIANS EASTER

There are a lot of similarities between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter which include the following;

* In both events, there is movement or change bondage of slavery to freedom, there was movement of Israelites from Egyptian slavery into the Promised Land a Canaan, likewise the Christian Easter involves movement from slavery of sin to freedom of salvation brought by Jesus.
* In both events there is God’s power. God showed his power at the night when the Israelites were saved by the angel of death just as in the Christian Easter God showed his power through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
* The Passover festival commemorates suffering in Egypt by Israelites and victory over the Egyptian pharaoh. Likewise the Christian Easter commemorates the suffering of Jesus and his victory through the death and resurrection.
* Both festivals of annual celebrations i.e. the Israelites celebrated the Passover every year just as the modern Christians celebrate Easter every year.
* Both events are fundamental points of belief and worship of the two religions namely Judaism and Christianity. With at the Passover event Judaism would be in ruin as well without Easter of Christian faith would also be in vain.
* The idea of sacrifices is paramount in both events. The lamb as a sacrifice was central in the Passover and Jesus is an everlasting sacrifice when celebrating Christian Easter.
* In both the Passover and Christian Easter festival, God used individuals to act on his behalf in the case of the Passover, he used Moses as his mediator while in the Christian Easter, and he used Jesus as a mediator.
* Both events are important historical/ religious festivals. The Passover had great influence in the life of the Jews to make them understand God. Likewise Easter had made a great impact on the history of the world.
* In both, there are shading of blood. Just or the Passover event blood was shed through killing the first born males and the lambs, likewise the blood of Jesus was shed for many.
* The two events involved sacrifices that were without blemish or defects. As we see the lamb of the Jewish Passover was without blame, also the Easter sacrifice was without blemish hence pure.
* In both events no bones of the sacrifices were broken in the Jewish Passover the bones of the lambs were unbroken, likewise Jesus’ limbs were not broken.

However the two events differ in some ways as below;

* The main character of the Jewish Passover was Moses hence human figure whereas in the Christian Easter the main character is Jesus Christ a divine figure.
* While the Jesus in Passover commemorate from bondage of suffering in Egypt Christians on the hand had commemorate of resurrection of Jesus Christ.
* The Jewish Passover was only limited to the Jews where as the Christian Easter is open to all people in the world.
* Whereas Christian Easter marked a spiritual victory or defeat of sin and death by Jesus Christ, Jewish Passover on the other hand was a physical victory or defeat over the Egyptian slavery.
* Today’s Christian Easter is celebrated without involving sacrifices whereas the Jewish Passover involved the suffering of sacrifices.

EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARK OF THE COVENANT IN THE LIFE OF THE JEWS.

* The Ark of the Covenant contained the tablets on which the laws were written. Therefore Israelites were to observe the usefulness of the covenant box.
* It’s the Ark of the Covenant box where the Ten Commandments were kept. The Israelites were reminded of the Decalogue by use of the Ark of the Covenant.
* The presence o God among people is symbolically another importance of the Ark of the Covenant. This is because whenever the Israelites wanted to worship God, they would use the Ark of the Covenant to pay their respect to him.
* The Ark of the Covenant reflected Yahweh’s powers and one who touched it would die. In the 2 Samuel 6:7 at once the Lord God became angry with Uzziah and killed him.
* The Ark of the Covenant reflected curses it abused. That’s why Michal i.e. David’s wife was cursed with barrenness when she rebuked David’s action. David dances and jumped in the sacred dance, and she was disgusted with him.
* It was a source of God’s blessings. That’s why David feared taking the covenant box with him and instead decided to keep it at Obed Edom’s house for three months.
* The Ark of the Covenant meant a constitution of Israel because the law was kept in the box, hence abusing it showed abusing Israel’s ways of life.
* It reflected the holiness of God and the faith to which the Israelites were expected to show to God. That’s why it was kept in a state of holiness.
* The Ark of the Covenant signified Israel as a special elect of God. See how Israel was the only nation where God dedicated the Ark of the Covenant and what it contained.
* The Ark of the Covenant signified Israel as a theocratic nation (God guided nation). This was because the box contained the Ten Commandments which were written by God to act as a guide to the Jews.
* The symbol of Israel’s unity is also identified in the Ark of the Covenant. At least every year people/Israelites made pilgrimages due to the ark.
* The Israelites regarded it as a symbol of God’s oneness and the idea of monotheism is spelt out in the Ark of the Covenant. That’s why the Israelites were respected and hour it.
* By the Ark of the Covenant, Israelites regarded themselves as a special nation of God with divine election. Its only Israel among others that was given the ark of the covenant.
* The love of God to the Jews is another importance of the Ark of the Covenant.
* It also symbolizes Israel’s superiority.

ASSESS THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS IN THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS TODAY

* The religious symbols are marks.
* The religious symbols are marks of identification for instance the priest put on white collars to show their posts in the church.
* They portray certain divine relationships . For example, the symbol of the mass which clearly trinity.
* They used to show the anointed ones i.e. special representatives of God’s service on earth for instance the priests, bishops, reverends put on religious attire.
* The religious symbols are for psychological satisfaction like the Cain representing blood of Jesus Christ and one feels contented to eat Eucharistic bread signifying the body of Jesus.
* Religious symbols are used in religious instructions, for instance the symbol of the rosary in the Catholic Church.
* For purposes of memory for example the portal of Jesus Christ is aimed at remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was hanged on the cross and 3 days after his burial, he resurrected to heaven.
* The religious symbols signify the power of the holy spirit to the people he is leading like the portrait of Jesus.
* They are of remembrance purposes for example in remembrance of the Lord’s Supper, Christians in the church drink wine and eat bread signifying the blood and body of Jesus Christ respectively.
* They are for respect. In some cases like the Catholic Church, the portrait the Virgin Mary symbolizes great to God.
* The holiness and expressions of love and contained in the religious symbols, the portrait of angels in most churches shows how God is holy. To Christians therefore should love God with their hearts and soul.

However, some religious symbols found in most religious places portray negative significances such as;

* Some of the religious symbols are worshipped as God . For example, some Catholics worship the portrait of the virgin Mary.
* Some are taken as idols and change people’s faith to paganism yet they are only needed in context of respecting God and observing monotheism.
* Some of the religious symbols are used by most Christians to show pride instead of glorifying God. Take an example of some church leaders who are proud of their position in church.
* Some of the religious symbols are just possessed and people who put them on do not know their significance. Due to that, they end up abusing them into unpurposeful roles.
* There are some religious symbols that signify curses that befall other people in the same religion.
* Finally some religious symbols signify hatred over other yet the institution of love if what is needed of any Christian.

EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TWO STONE TABLETS TO THE LIFE OF THE JEWS

* It was on the stone tablets that the Ten Commandments were written. To the Jews therefore were expected to respect the words that were written on these stones tablets . For example, “love your neighbour as you love yourself” and many others
* They reflected the holiness of God. Yahweh pronounced his holy name “the Lord” when he was giving the second set of the stone tablets (Exodus 34:5)
* The stone tablets signified the institution of monotheism as a requirement to have God’s blessings Moses bowed down to the ground and worshipped God when he was going to receive the stone tablets.
* They showed how Israel was a divine elected community of God. Among all the nations on earth, it was only Israel to where the stone tablets were given.
* The stone tablets signified God’s love to the Jews see the Lord’s word “I the Lord am a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered and who shows great love” God said the above words when he was giving Moses the stone tablets.
* The idea of the chosen nation is rooted in the stone tablets. To the Israelites therefore identified themselves as a special elect of God who received the commandments direct from God.
* They were symbols of curses and punishments because much as God gave the stone tablets to the Jews what was expected of them was their total dedication to God Yahweh also pronounced it clearly that he would continue punishing the generations because of the sins of their parents.
* The two stone tablets signified Israel as theocratic nation i.e. God guided nation. That’s why God gave them the commandments to keep on their heart.
* They reflected the power of God in Israel. God showed himself to his servant (Moses) in a powerful cloud and went on to describe himself as “the Lord “. This showed his power not only to Moses but to the Jews.
* They also signified the superiority of the nation Israel nation over other nations. It was only Israel where the stone tablets were dedicated for the future service of the Lord.

DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TORAN (LAW) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

* the summary of the law indicated in Deuteronomy i.e. the law of love was quoted by Jesus when he gave the main important commandment “the love of God”
* in the new testament, the mosaic law of respect of man to man and the last seven commandments given to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai were summarized by Jesus as love of neighbor as one loves himself.
* Jesus in the new testament did not come to do away with the law but to make the teaching of the laws come to true (Mathew) 5:17)
* Many people of the Jewish community in the time of Jesus had lost sight of great prince and they claimed to be very proud to know all the laws but Jesus reminded them that they were lacking the law of love.
* St. Paul taught in his letter to Galatians and Romans that the law is important but that does not bring salvation. Its faith in Jesus that brings salvation and that Christ had come to replace the law.
* In Mark 7:1-23, Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees of the matter of the ritual uncleaniliness and the way his disciples were breaking the law f eating before washing the hands, Jesus however taught that what makes a person ritually unclean was the evil.
* Even Jesus in the New Testament categorically states that he had come to fulfill the Mosaic Law.
* Jesus Christ in the New Testament was intended to bring harmony and there the new Moses who gives the law of love.
* Since a Jewish law necessitated giving sacrifices to Yahweh, Jesus is a new high priest who offered a perfect sacrifice once and for all to take the sins of mankind as a way of fulfilling the requirements of the law.
* The New Testament shifts the law which was for the laws and note it a universal law.
* In the New Testament Jesus had come to correct the errors in the Mosaic Law. That’s why he emphasized that the law was made for man but not man for the law.
* Jesus’ response to the Sabbath controversy, he noted that Sabbath was for the good of man but not man made for the Sabbath.

DISCUSS THE NATURE OF THE SINAITIC COVENANT

Comment on the covenant God made with Israel on Mt. Sinai.

* God made a covenant with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai these were Abraham (descendants), it ought to be recalled that the sinaitic covenant was multilateral meaning that it was between God and many people.
* God talked to Moses and he referred to what he had done for the Israelites in the making an agreement with the Israelites. He had earlier on the call of Moses promised that the liberated people would meet him on the same mountain.
* There was Yahweh’s revelation at the mountain i.e. theopany in form of thunder/earth quake a very strong winds and a loud voice which was heard at the mountain.
* By this it proved that God was powerful and his majesty and sovereignty can be evidenced in the presence of powerful wind/earthquake.
* There was purification i.e. cleaning. The Israelites were to wash their clothes as a way of purifying themselves i.e. sin they had committed. No body was to get involved in sexual ritual since they were moving towards something important i.e. meeting their God.
* The above clearly signify that Israel was to be firmly called a nation i.e. Israel’s holy nationality as born at Mt. Siani, that’s why purification was part and parcel of entering a new Israel.
* A boundary was made accord he mountain so that Israelites were to cross to the holy mountain. This signified the holiness of God and to reach God one has to be in a state of purity.
* A central feature was the giving of the law. God gave the Israelites commandments to govern their life. The first 3 commanded a vertical relationship and the rest indicated a horizontal relationship.
* By giving law, it signified the idea of divine election. Israel became a theocratic nation (God guided nation) seen from how the nation was given rules, obligations to follow.
* The covenant was sealed with a ceremony on altar was set up with 12 stones. The 12 stones represented the 12 tribes of Israel.
* Yahweh promised his constant protections and assured them of his constant assistance in the new land they were going to occupy. This actually signified God’s constant love with them that’s so because they were so many other people in slavery but are wonder why God decided to make a covenant with these.
* The covenant also reflected sacrifices cattle was sacrificed as burnt offering and fellowship offering (Exodus 24:5). This inaugurated unity among the Israelites since sacrifices signified unifying factor in Israel.
* Blood was collected and put in the bowls, some blood was poured on the altar for God. By this it clearly indicated a new relationship, life and love of God since God is life to a person.
* The Sinai covenant was between unequal parties, i.e. God and mankind (Israelites). The covenant was however multilateral in nature i.e. it was a multitude of Abraham’s descendants and Yahweh.
* The Sinai covenant was meditated by Moses i.e. he acted as a go between the Israelites and Yahweh.
* The covenant happened from every place where Moses had been called from.
* The covenant was conditional in nature i.e. he (God) asked the people if they would accept to be God’s people and the people accepted (Exodus 9:5). If they obeyed this law, he was to be their God and they were to be his people.

THE ISRAELITES MET GOD AT MOUNT SINAI (Exodus 19:10-24)

After moving for sometime the Israelites reached Mt. Sinai and camped there waiting for God’s voice.

The Lord had told Moses to inform the Israelites to do the following before meeting him and after three days he would come at the foot o the mountain.

* The Israelites were commanded by God through Moses to clean themselves by washing their clothes.
* The Israelites had to abstain from sexual intercourse so as to appear to God on the third day when they were holy.
* The lord commanded Moses to mark a boundary around the foot of Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:11) and non of the Israelites was allowed to cross it.
* Anyone who attempted to cross the boundary let it be a priest or animals was to be killed (Exodus 19:12)
* The Israelites had to remain patient as they waited for Moses to come down from up the mountain to speak with God.
* On the third day God appeared to the Israelites in form of thunder and lightening. The some covered Mt. Sinai and there was a lot of thunder and lightening as God was speaking to Moses.
* The people trembled with fear when the lord appeared to them and at this very moment the Israelites entered into a covenant with God i.e. the sinaitic/mosaic covenant.

FACTORS THAT NECESSITATED THE MAKING OF THE COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND THE ISRAELITES AT MT. SINAI

Account for the making of the covenant between God and the Israelites at Mt. Siani.

The making of the covenant was due to the following reasons;

* God wanted to keep the holiness of the Israelites. The Israelites had been set apart as God’s special nations since their deliverance from Egyptian slavery.
* God wanted to promote the moral righteousness of the Israelites. As a unique nation Israel was expected to posses good behaviours different from other states through following the Decalogue.
* God wanted to make Israelites master his divine attributes. The Jews were expected to know their God and from this moment they would eventually be helped to have a descent living.
* The covenant was aimed at creating Israel as God’s special nation. At Mt. Sinai all Israelites met God together and they were expected to remain united as people who belonged to the same God.
* God wanted to institute and encourage the element of monotheism to the Israelites. Apostasy was too high among the Israelites and so the covenant aimed at stopping such religious beliefs.
* God wanted to encourage love in him and such love was to be manifested in their faith in God.
* The covenant was to serve a standard measure of Israel’s life. The covenant was used to tell those who obeyed God’s law, what they could achieve and to warn those who disobeyed the law how they would suffer.
* Through the covenant, love between one another could easily be promoted. Such a covenant enabled the Israelites to express in their daily lives the spirit of togetherness.
* God also wanted to bring about social cohesion that is unity and peace in the Israelites society. The Israelites were expected to respect one another and this would be possible with the help of the covenant.
* God made the covenant in order to bring about guiding principles for his messengers such as priests and prophets were to bee guided by the covenant and this would make their life easier.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE SINAITIC COVENANT

The sinaitic covenant was characterized by the following;

* There was a ritual of purification whereby the Israelites washed their clothes and abstained from sex for three days.
* God’s presence was manifested in form of thunder and lightening and the smoke which covered the mountain and at another time he appeared in form of dazzling light.
* Moses acted as a mediator whereby he received messages from God which he delivered to the people and then people’s response back to God.
* It was characterized by fear and trembling when thunder and lightening appeared all the people trembled until when Moses moved up to the mountain to meet god.
* It involved the giving of the Ten Commandments (Decalogue) which the Israelites were expected to follow and abide by.
* There was sprinkling of blood. After slaughtering the animals blood was collected in a bowl and Moses sprinkled it on the altar and on the people (Exodus 24;1ff)
* A number of promises were made for example to be with the Israelites and they also promised to worship him and abide by the laws.
* The covenant was vassal in nature, that’s to say it was God who was superior and the Israelites who were inferior.
* It involved a vow of loyalty. In case the Israelites promised never to break the covenant.
* A boundary was made around the mountain which wasn’t supposed to be crossed by the people.
* The covenant was initiated by God and the Israelites had only one duty which was obedience.
* The covenant was multilateral. It was between God and the whole nation of Israel.
* The sinaitic covenant was conditional whereby the Israelites were to observe God’s laws.

THE OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE JEWS AS OUTLINED IN THE SINAITIC COVENANT

What were the Israelites required to do or follow as indicated in the sinatic covenant?

The sinaitic covenant which was between God and the Israelites outline the responsibilities and obligations of the Israelites as follows;

* The Israelites were expected to be obedient and loyal to Yahweh their God if at all they wanted him to be on their side like protecting them against their enemies.
* The Israelites had follow all the ten commandments and other laws given to them by God through Moses. This is because to God none of these laws was greater than the other.
* The Israelites were required to remain holy so as to receive God’s blessings, cleaning themselves and abstaining from sex before meeting God was a sign to show that God required the Israelites always to be holy.
* The Israelites were supposed to love one another as special people of God and live as brothers and sisters who belonged to the same father.
* The Israelites had a duty to teach the covenant faith (ten commandments)to their children so that in future they would not go stray and get punished.
* They were to be socially, religiously and politically influenced by the Sinai covenant. If anyone failed to live according to this covenant, he would be punished by God sometimes by death.
* The Israelites were supposed to have faith in one God he almighty creator of heaven and earth and their liberator from Egyptian bondage.
* The Israelites were also expected to live as God’s servants. Therefore they were supposed to completely serve and depend on God for their survival.
* It was the duty of the Israelites to ensure that the covenant faith was known among other people and nations since their God was universal.
* They were required to remain united as members of one family. Therefore though they had over 12 tribes but were not to show their tribal differences before God.
* It was a responsibility of the Israelites especially through their tribal leaders to administer justice to one another as the covenant required but not carrying out mob justice.
* The Israelites had a duty to disassociate themselves from the pagan influences which could lead tem to God’s punishment. The book of Deuteronomy clearly shows this.
* The Israelites were required to uphold monotheism by worshipping one God. They also had to ensure that all the people turned to God the almighty because he doesn’t tolerate rivals.
* It was a responsibility of the Israelites to take care of the orphans, widows and the needy just as God had taken care of them by being rescued from Egyptian slavery.
* The Israelites were obliged to live an exemplary life as God’s chosen people. This could attract even more followers to Christianity.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (THE DECALOGUE)

How did the Ten Commandments guide the relationship among the people of Israel?

The book of Exodus 20:1-17 presents the Decalogue which were given to the Israelites at mountain Sinai. The Decalogue guided the life of the Israelites in the following ways;

* The first commandment stated “worship no god but me”. This commandment advocated for complete monotheism among the Israelites.
* The second commandment stated “do not take God’s name in vain”. This commandment advocated the Christians for respect of God’s name and was not supposed to misuse it anywhere for at any point.
* In the third commandment the Israelites were called upon to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. This implied that the Israelites were expected to work for six days and rest on the seventh day taking it as holy for worshipping God the almighty.
* God commanded the Israelites to honour their fathers and mothers (parents). These were taken to be God’s representatives on earth and so by respecting them it could give even blessings to the children.
* In the fourth commandment the Lord commanded the Israelites not to commit murder. This taught the Israelites to have respect towards one another’s life and no one was supposed to destroy it since God is the giver and taker of life.
* More so the lord passed another command to guide the Israelites which stated “do not commit adultery”. The Israelites were compelled or forced to respect sex since it was a gift from god to the married people. It also promoted faithfulness towards one another especially the married.
* Do not steal was yet another command given by God to Moses. This guided the Israelites to relate with one another by working hard for self sustenance and praying to God put not thinking of stealing.
* The lord passed another commandment to the Israelites and this stated “do not bear false witness against your neighbor. This enabled the Israelites always to tell the truth and it promoted harmony among the people.
* God prohibited the Israelites from admiring one another’s property. This commandment guided good relationship among the people of Israel in a way that people worked hard and avoided admiring their neighbour’s property.
* The Israelites were given a commandment stating “do not admire another man’s wife. This commandment promoted good relationship among the Israelites whereby people tried to respect other people’s wives and also the Israelites were expected to appreciate the gift of marriage God ordained.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIALOGUE TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

Analyse the importance of the Decalogue to the Christians in Uganda today.

Christians today learn the following lessons from the Decalogue;

* Christians should worship only one true God just as the first Decalogue states observation of monotheism.
* Modern Christians are called upon to respect and use God’s name in the right ay. God is holy and therefore his name has to be respected by not swearing falsely through it.
* Christians today should have respect and honour to the Sabbath day because God rested on this day and even preserved it as a day f worshipping him.
* Modern Christians basically the children are called upon to respect their parents and other people in authority. This is because according to the fourth commandment these are taken to be god’s representatives on earth.
* Christians today should respect human life basing on God’s commandment given to the Israelites which prohibited them from committing murder.
* Married Christian patterns ought to be faithful in marriage. This is in accordance to the sixth commandment in which the Israelites were commanded to only practice sex in marriage.
* Christians today are called upon to have respect for sex. It is a gift from god to the married people only.
* Modern Christians should work hard in order to get all what they desire in life without stealing or practicing corruption. This will sow respect to the seventh Decalogue as noted in the book of Exodus 20.
* Christians are called upon to only offer witness that right. This will show a sign of love even towards our neighbours.
* Christians should live exemplary lives to ensure that other people copy their behavior.
* Christians are called upon to call to God whenever they sin in order to be pardoned.
* Modern Christians are expected to appreciate rather than admiring one’s property which leads to another sin of safety.
* Christians are called upon to live a righteous life since god does not associate with unrighteous people.
* From the Decalogue Christians learn to seek for guidance from god in order to avoid any evil.
* Christians are called upon to have respect towards people’s wives by not seducing tem into sexual relations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAW TO THE ISRAELITES

Discuss the significance of the law to the Israelites.

The following was the importance of the law among the Israelites;

* The law assisted the Israelites to learn about the importance of leisure. They were required to work hard for 6 days and rest on the seventh day which was set aside for worshiping god and regaining the lost energy.
* The law declared Israelites a chosen nation of God. Therefore it forced them to live a humble way following the covenant demands.
* The law promoted unity among the Israelites. It prohibited them from making witness against their neighbours, hence promoting unity.
* The law assisted the Israelites to have love for one another as acts like murder, adultery safety were highly prohibited.
* The law assisted the Israelites to live according to god’s will. It was because of the existence of the law that the Israelites abandoned evil acts like murder, stealing and lived a righteous life.
* The law promoted stability among the Israelites since it laid down God’s requirements and whatever was not required by god like monotheism and murder respectively.
* To the Israelites the law was a means of reconciliation of the sinful man with God i.e. Adam and Eve had disobeyed god in genesis 3 but in the sinaic covenant God tried to reconcile with sinful man.
* Because of the law, the Israelites began respecting human life as the fifth commandment prohibited them from committing murder.
* The law was important to the Israelites in a way that it taught them to repent whenever they sinned against the Lord so as to be punished heavy.
* The law enabled the Israelites to limit tendencies of sexual immorality and respect to marriage vows.
* The law promoted faithfulness among the Israelites. They were faithful t God and therefore they abandoned all the pagan gods they used to worship in Egypt.
* The law taught the Israelites to have respect to their parents and people in authority. This was clearly shown in the Decalogue number four.

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ABOUT THE LAW

The New Testament teaches the following about the law;

* Jesus called upon the entire community of believers t obey god because obedience is more important than the sacrifices they were offering.
* Jesus said that he was a reformer of the mosaic law which segregated the Jews from the gentiles because Jews always associated with the Gentiles( sinners, non- Israelites).
* He also said that “love your neighbor as you love yourself” as the second commandments.
* Jesus castigated some elements of the Mosaic Law for example an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and he called for reconciliation.
* Jesus called upon his listeners to common themselves to food and total love, total faith in him other than being loyal to the law.
* St. Paul says that it is faith of a believer that reconciles him with God but not observance of the law.
* In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he calls upon his readers to love one another and he says that whoever has love for his neighbor would have respected the whole set of the laws given by God.

THE ROLES PLAYED BY MOSES AMONG THE ISRAELITES

Moses played the following roles;

* He acted a political leader. Whenever the Israelites were disturbed by their enemies, Moses used his position to guide them on what to do. Also as a political leader, he led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land.
* Moses acted as a mediator. He linked god and the Israelites. He used to receive messages from God which he delivered to Israelites and responses from the Israelites back to god.
* Moses acted as a religious leader. He interpreted God’s message and led people towards the covenant way of life.
* Moses acted as a miracle performer for example while in the desert he prayed t God and the Israelites received food and water from heaven and the rock respectively.
* Moses acted as a writer. He is believed to have written in the first five books of old testament(the pentatea)
* Moses acted as a military leader. He rescued the Israelites from slavery and from the groups of people who were determined to kill them.
* Moses acted as a law giver. At Mt. Sinai he received the Ten Commandments and other laws which read to the Israelites.
* He acted as a liberator. He liberated the Israelites from Egyptian suffering.
* He acted as an intercessor. On many occasions he pleaded to God on behalf of the Israelites whenever God wanted to punish them.
* Moses acted as a prophet. He was a messenger of god and whatever he prophesied came true.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EXODUS EVENT TO THE ISRAELITES

* The event introduced the idea of monotheism among the Israelites. While in Egypt, the Israelites were worshipping the Egyptian gods but the exodus event introduced them to God the almighty whom they began worshipping.
* The event marked the end of the Israelites suffering in the land of Egypt where they lived under oppression and mistreatment.
* The event resulted into the birth of the nation of Israel. In Egypt, the Israelites did not have any identity but during the exodus event they were identified as God’s special people or special nation (Israel).
* The event assisted the Israelites to get the land of Canaan which had been promised to their ancestor Abraham.
* Through the exodus event, very many rituals were received for example circumcision.
* The event made the Israelites to realize the promises God had made to Abraham for example they received God’s protection, they were rescued from the land of slavery, they received God’s blessings.
* The event transformed the Israelites into special people. This was witnessed at Mt. Sinai when God made covenant with them and promised to make their nation holy.
* The event showed that the salvation of man was from God because the Israelites were saved suffering by the God the almighty.
* The events showed God’s love to the Israelites. It was out of love that they were rescued from slavery given food, water and many others
* The event showed that God was the source of providence . For example, provided the Israelites with when they were hungry and water when they were thirsty.
* It made the Israelites to know that God was the sole controller of the universe. This was because of the various wonders they were able to witness.
* The Israelites learnt that God hates injustices and he expects people to live in harmony, for example he punished the Egyptians who mistreated the Israelites and also the Amelikites were punished.
* It became the basis of the Israelites way of life. It gave birth to many festivals for example the Passover which was emphasized and had to be celebrated year after year.
* It showed the omnipotent of God. Because of God’s powers, the Israelites were in position to cross the red sea, they received food from heaven (manna) and many others
* It showed the omnipresence of God that is to say he is found everywhere, he was with the Israelites as they were moving from Egypt to the promised land.
* The event revealed the nature of God as a holy God and that’s why he requested the Israelites to purify themselves to make a boundary around Mt. Sinai because they were preparing to meet a holy God who does not associate with unholy people.
* The event led to the birth of the prophetic institution because Moses was the first prophet appointed by God.
* The event led to the construction of the altars among the Israelites. Wherever the people wanted to pray to God and to sacrifice to him, they would construct altars and worship him.
* The event led the making of the sinaic covenant. When they left Egypt they went straight to Mt. Sinai where they made a covenant with God.
* Sacrifices were revived during the exodus event. At Mt. Sinai Moses organized many sacrifices which were offered to God (Exodus 24:1ff)
* Prayers and repentance were also revived during the exodus event. The Israelites began praying to God and sacrificing to him during the exodus event.
* The institution of priesthood was introduced during the exodus event and Moses acted as the first priest.
* Note: basing on the above discussion and the importance of the exodus, it was that basis of the Israelites way of life.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE EXODUS EVENT TO THE CHRISTIANS TODAY

* Christians should have confidence in God. His is because he was in position to save the Israelites.
* Christians should strive to show love to others because God loved the Israelites by liberating them from slavery.
* The Christians should use their positions to save other people who are suffering for no good reason taking Moses’ example who rescued the Israelites from slavery.
* The Christians should be patient especially when they are praying to God because God takes long time to answer people’s payers unlike the Israelites who became impatient and decided to make a golden bull that they worshipped.
* They should live a righteous life likewise Moses lived a righteous life after his call and he promoted righteousness among the Israelites.
* The Christians should be willing to serve as God’s messengers likewise Moses accepted to serve as God’s messengers.
* The Christians should be willing to change whenever they are called upon by God likewise Moses changed from a criminal to a priest and God’s servant.
* The Christians should have faith in God since the exodus event reflects God as a custodian of justice and faithful God.
* The Christians should abide by God’s law, for example the Ten Commandments which were given to the Israelites during the exodus event.
* The Christians should worship one God and promote monotheism in society which was promoted by Moses among the Israelites.
* The Christians should repent whenever they sin against God likewise Moses encouraged and organized the Israelites for national repentance wherever they sinned against God.

THE LAW CONCERNING THE TREATMENT OF SLAVES (Exodus 21:1-11)

The following guidelines were given to the master regarding the treatment of slaves;

* The slaves were supposed to work for only six years and in the seventh year they would be set free.
* On releasing slaves, the masters were required to give them some property to make them begin new life. This was to show appreciation for the good work done by the slaves.
* If one was unmarried when he became a slave, he wasn’t supposed to go with his wife after serving for six years. Therefore the wife was supposed to be retained by the master.
* In case the slave and his wife got children the slave was supposed to leave the children with the master if at all he got the wife while serving the master.
* If one was married when he became a slave he was free to leave with his wife and children after serving six years.
* If the slave never wanted to leave his master’s home after serving for 6 years, he was supposed to be taken to a place of worship and his ear would be pierced from the door way. This meant that he was to be a slave for life.
* Female slaves had to be treated justly by the masters. Therefore if a man bought a slave girl for his son and the son happened not to like her as his wife, the father was supposed to sell her back to her father.
* No one was supposed to sell a slave girl to a foreigner after failing to marry her, if he did so, he would have treated her unfairly.
* Is a man buys a female slave to give to his son he was to treat her like a daughter.
* If a man takes a second wife he must continue giving his first wife the same amount of food, clothing and she must continue enjoying the same rights she had before.
* In case the master beat up his slave and he got injured r he died the master was supposed to be punished.
* In case the slave wasn’t injured the master wasn’t supposed to be punished.
* The Hebrews weren’t supposed to be sold to foreigners as slaves but only to their fellow Hebrews.

SAMPLES QUESTIONS

1. *(a) Explain the main features of Moses’ call.*
2. *What was the importance of Moses’ call to Israel?*
3. *(a) Explain how Israelites were to celebrate the Passover meal.*
4. *Examine the meaning of the Passover as instituted by Moses.*
5. *(a) Discuss the Jewish law concerning the treatment of slaves.*
6. *Assess the importance of the exodus to the modern Christians.*
7. *(a) How did the Ten Commandments guide the relationship among the people of Israel?*
8. *Analyse the relevance of the Ten Commandments to Christians in Uganda today.*
9. *(a) Why was the deliverance from Egypt such an important event in the life of the Israelites?*
10. *How is the theme of deliverance used and developed in the New Testament?*
11. *(a) Justify the view that exodus is the beginning of Israel as nation.*
12. *Of what importance is the exodus to the present Christians?*
13. *To what extent did the Israelites lie according to the sinaic covenant?*
14. *(a) Examine Moses’ response to God’s call in exodus 3 and 4.*
15. *Compare Moses and Jesus*

LEVITICUS

The book of Leviticus contains regulation of worship and religious ceremonies in Israel.

SACRIFICES IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

A sacrifice is an offertory. The Israelites used to sacrifice to God different items .For example, animals, birds and grain for different reasons. However, these sacrifices were supposed to be presented to God. Though the priests from the tribe of Levi and the sacrifices had to bear no defect.

TYPES OF SACRIFICES

The following were the type of sacrifices offered by the Israelites in their daily life for different purposes.

1. Burnt sacrifices/holocaust. According to levi 1:1 this form of sacrifice was given to God as a taken of appreciation. The whole animal was burnt and nothing was left for the people to eat but only to produce a good scent to God.
2. The grain sacrifice noted in Levi 2 was a form of sacrifice offered in terms of crops. The whole sacrifice had to be eaten by the priest. It was intended to thank God for the good harvest attained at the end of the season.
3. The sin offering. This was intended to do away with the sin of the priests and the entire community. In this case the meat of the sacrificial animals was eaten by the priest alone.
4. Peace offerings were given by the Israelites as a way of looking for peace from God. This was shared by all people present.
5. In Leviticus 3 the fellowship offering were sacrifices given by the Israelites to promote togetherness and communion. All parts of the animal were eaten by people apart from the fatty parts which belonged to God alone.
6. The incense sacrifice was offered with an aim of providing a sweet or pleasant smell to God. Its objective was to restore the relationship between man and God.
7. There was liberation sacrifice. This was sacrifice offered by the Hebrews in form of liquid such as wine and milk. It was given to God to make him be part of the worshippers who happened to be enjoying a given descent drink.

THE PURPOSES OF SACRIFICES AMONG THE ISRAELITES

The sacrifice was central in the Israelite life. Therefore their purposes included the following;

* Sacrifices were meant for the removal of people’s sins and evil among the Israelites. Whenever people sinned they had to sacrifice to God and seek for forgiveness.
* Sacrifices were essentially made for the promotion of peace in the community. Whenever the Israelites predicted dangers they sacrificed to God in order to avert danger.
* The sacrifices were a means of expressing people’s gratitude to God for whatever. He would have done for them that is to say they were for thanks giving.
* They were made to remind Israelites about their liberation from Egypt (slavery). Every year the Israelites were expected to celebrate the Passover during which they had to offer sacrifices to God.
* The sacrifices strengthened the relationship between the Israelites and their God. This always reminded them of the covenant their ancestors had entered into with their God at Mt. Sinai.
* Sacrifices were meant for fellowship among the Israelites. Whenever they shared the meat, they entered into communion with one another which led to unity.
* Sacrificing was another method of worshipping God. Therefore at different intervals, they sacrificed to their God during worship.
* The sacrifices were made during the dedication of certain places for example the worshipping places.
* He sacrifices were made for the up keep of the priests. The priests depended on sacrifices for survival.
* The sacrifices were instrumental during certain ceremonies, such as the enthronement of king, priests and many others
* They were offered to win God’s favour. Whenever they were going to fight, they had to sacrifice to God in order to solicit for favour and victory from God.
* Sacrifices were offered for purification. Whenever some one from any skin disease, after menstruation and many others, they were expected to purify themselves by offering sacrifices.
* Sacrifices were made to thank for the various wonders he could have done for them for example feeding tem, success in wars, protecting them against enemies and many others

THE PURPOSES OF SACRIFICES IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

In African traditional society the sacrifices were ritual because of the roles they played including the following;

* Sacrifices were given as means of asking the gods or the spirits to bless the activities of the people especially during planting and harvesting.
* Sacrifices were offered during the times of crisis. In this case, spirit specialists were approached to offer sacrifices to the spirits, asking for their assistance in times of crisis.
* Sacrifices were made as an expression of sharing good things with ancestors/gods. For example before drinking beer the people used to pour some on the ground for the ancestors to enjoy (giving libate).
* Sacrifices were made to thank the gods for the good harvest, children, long life and many others
* Sacrifices were for the purpose of purification. people believed that they would be purified/cleansed by the blood of the sacrificial/animals.
* Some Africans sacrificed aa means of calling upon the departed to some and have fellowship with them.
* Some sacrifices were made to appease the gods that at times the spirits were annoyed therefore sacrifices had to be made to appease them.
* Sacrifices were made to drive away certain problems and sickness. In most cases the infected person was required to present an animal or a bird as prescribed by the spirits.

CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH SACRIFICES WERE NOT ACCEPTED AMONG THE ISRAELITES

Sacrifices did not serve their role or they did not fulfill their purpose therefore not accepted by God under the following circumstances;

* In case they were offered by ritually unclean people for example when the person sacrificing has a skin disease, touched an unclean animal, sinned against God.
* In case they were not offered by the right people such as the priests chosen by God who were meant to officiate the sacrifices.
* Incase sacrifices were offered by people who used to sacrifice to pagan gods like Baal, such sacrifices would be rejected.
* When the sacrifices were offered from wrong places which were not chosen by God. scarifies were supposed to be offered from holy places chosen by God.
* If the sacrifices were not offered whole heartedly as expected by Yahweh they would not be accepted because some people offered with a double heart.
* In case sacrifices were a mere outward show since some people had a tendency of showing of their wealth through wealth therefore such sacrifices would not be accepted by God.
* Incase the sacrifices were offered by unrepentant people, they would not be accepted by God.
* In case they were offered by disobedient people they would be rejected by God. Yahweh preferred love and obedience than animal sacrifices.

CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH SACRIFICES WERE ACCEPTED

In the old testament there were regulation concerning sacrifices and in case they were observed by the people then the sacrifices would fulfill their purpose hence would be accepted by God.

* In case they were offered by repentant people.
* Incase they were clean that is to say with out any defect.
* In case they were offered by faithful people.
* If they were offered whole heartedly.
* If they were offered to God alone but not to the pagan gods.
* When the sacrifices offered were genuine.
* When they were offered from the right places chosen by God.
* In case they were offered by people who had love for ne another.

THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF SACRIFICES (Why Christians do not offer animal sacrifices today)

Today Christians don’t sacrifices animals because of the following reasons/arguments/belief;

* Christians argue that sacrifices are no longer useful ever since Christ came into the world. This is because Jesus Christ himself condemned people who sinned intentionally hoping to sacrifice in order to be forgiven by God.
* This attitude too was criticized by prophets like Amos and Hosea who said that God required love and obedience not animal sacrifices.
* they believe that sacrificial system of the old testament was super needed by the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus is the living expression of God’s will therefore there is no greater sacrifice than that of Christ.
* They believe that the Old Testament sacrifices were temporary and subjected to constant repenting. However Jesus’ sacrifice is unique and everlasting.
* They believe that Jesus’ blood was used for bringing about salvation of mankind. Therefore, such a sacrifice can’t be compared to the Old Testament sacrifices which were of animal blood.

ROLES OF PRIESTS TODAY

What role do priests play to Christians today?

* They officiate prayers.
* They preach the word of God to the congregation.
* They carry out baptism sprinkling of water and immersion method.
* They conduct confirmation.
* They officiate marriage.
* They conduct the Lord’s Supper/ Eucharist.
* They conduct professional duties like counseling teaching.
* They perform miracles of healing the sick.
* They help the needy i.e. orphan, widows.
* They encourage sinners to repent their sins.
* They encourage people to fast.
* They encourage people to live a holy and moral life.
* They carry out missionary journeys.

THE FIRST SACRIFICE AARON OFFERED LEV 9:18

Examine the very first sacrifice Aaron offered to God in Leviticus 9.

Comment on the first sacrifice that Aaron offered.

* God commanded Moses to instruct Aaron to offer sacrifices on his own behalf and on behalf of the Israelites.
* Aaron was to offer these sacrifices after he had just been ordained.
* Moses was presided over the sacrifices. He made sure that Aaron offered his first sacrifice smoothly.
* Moses instructed Aaron to take with him a young bull and a ram without any defects to signify God’s holiness.
* Aaron was to present these sacrifices as sin offering and the ram was to be burnt offering.
* The sons of Aaron and Israelites were to be present to witness these sacrifices.
* The Israelites were required to take a male goat for sin offering, a one year calf and a bull and a ram for a fellowship offering.
* The Israelites were to present their sacrifices to the Lord with grain offering mixed with oil.
* The Israelites were required to offer these sacrifices on the altar to remove his own sins and the sins of the people.
* After having slaughtered the young bull, his sons got the blood, smeared it on all the corners of the altar and poured the rest of the base of the altar.
* The fatty parts were to be burnt completely even the kidney and the best parts of the liver were also burnt, the meat and the skin of the bull were later taken and burnt outside the camp.
* The priest ate some of the sacrificial meat like the breast and the right hind leg.
* Aaron presented the people’s offering taking a handful of flour and burning it on the altar after mixing it with olive oil.
* Aaron blessed the people and stepped down on the altar and this was after finishing offering the sacrifice.
* Together with Moses, Aaron went into the tent of the Lord’s presence.
* Later on Aaron and Moses blessed the people again after coming out of the tent in the Lord’s presence.
* A flame of the fire from heaven consumed the burnt offering including the fat that had gathered on the altar.

SIGNIFICANCE/ IMPORTANCE OF THE SACRIFICE THAT AARON GAVE IN LEV 9

Discuss the significance of the sacrifice that Aaron gave in Lev 9.

* It signified Aaron’s faithfulness because he accepted to offer the sacrifice.
* It proved God’s mighty power/ nature through the dazzling light.
* It showed the power of God through consumption.
* It proved the holiness of God through the sacrifice of animals without defects.
* It showed that God can appear to anybody anytime.
* It was calling upon God to bless the Israelites.
* It was telling them that they should share with God.
* It showed the unity amongst the Israelites.
* It showed that Aaron and his sons had repented to their sins.
* It showed that God had accepted their sacrifices.
* It made people to go and worship God.
* It helped in the cleansing of the altar.

JESUS AS A HIGH PRIEST

* He brought the good news of salvation into the world and its through Him that everyone would be saved.
* He served in the heavenly God made temple which is greater and more perfect than the man made temple.
* He was a universal priest. He served all human kind irrespective of their different background.
* He had a direct relationship with God his Father and himself was God while Aaron was simply a mediator.
* He was sent directly by God himself to save the entire humanity from bondage of sins.
* He was more concerned with the spiritual lives of his people.
* Jesus’ followers had to feed on his body and blood for their own salvation.
* He had power to perform miracles like changing water into wine.
* He closely associated with the sinners while with Aaron. Sinners had to be kept away from the rest of the community.
* He had power to forgive people’s sins like the woman caught in adultery.
* He offered himself as a perfect sacrifice on the cross while Aaron offered animals on the altar.
* He could cleanse both the body and the spirit while Aaron cleansed only the body.
* He used his own blood to purify the lives of his followers so that they are set free from the bondage of their sins

DIETARY/ PROHIBITION/LEGAL/PURITY CLEAN AND UNCLEAN FOODS (Lev 11:1ff)

These were laws that concerned the holiness of God and his people. Under these laws, some birds, animals and insects were fit for human consumption while others were not to be eaten at all.

WHAT KIND OF ANIMALS, BIRDS AND INSECTS WERE THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ALLOWED OR NOT ALLOWED TO EAT (Lev 11:1-47)

1. Comment on the regulations concerning food prohibitions in the book of Leviticus.

* Animals with divided hooves and could chew the cud were fit to be eaten. However animals without divided hooves but could chew cud were not meant to be eaten . For example, camels, pigs, rabbits.
* All aquatic animals having fins and scales were fit for human consumption like Tilapia. However, anything living in water without fins and scales were not to be eaten . For example, frogs, toads, snakes and many others
* Birds like chicken, pigeon were fit for human consumption. However birds like eagles, owls, bats, hawks were not meant to be eaten because they fed on human flesh.
* All winged insects with three body parts, were clean for human consumption like locusts, grasshoppers ants.
* All other small things that had wings with four body parts were not to be eaten.
* Animals like rats, mice and lizards were considered unclean and were not to be eaten.
* Animals which had natural death were not fit for human consumption. This was because they could have died without their blood pouring out.

JESUS’ TEACHING ABOUT THE DIET LAWS (Mark 7:14)

1. What was Jesus’ teaching about prohibitions?
2. Give Jesus’ teaching on the diet laws.
3. Analyse Jesus’ teaching about food prohibition/ about what makes a person ritually unclean.
4. Explain the teaching about food prohibitions in the New Testament.

* He observed that nothing that goes into a person from outside can make him ritually unclean.
* He emphasized that what goes into a person from the outside goes into the stomach after which it comes out of the body.
* He was of the view that its from the person’s heart that comes evil ideas that can lead him into doing immoral things.
* He emphasized that its from the person’s heart comes evil ideas that can lead him into doing immoral things.
* He declared all types of food fit for human consumption.
* He went ahead to challenge his disciples for their failure to understand and holding the same views like the Pharisees.
* He observed that eating food has got nothing to do with one’s spiritual life.
* He emphasized that what matters in the spiritual growth of a person is faith but not following the law.
* He observed that the ritual cleansing cannot purify the defilement of the heart.
* Paul’s teaches about the freedom of human conscience and allows all types of food to be eaten (1 Cor 8:13)
* Paul declared that food offered to idols has no harm on an individual for he noted that an idol is non existent.
* However, Paul gives a warning if consumption of such food would make an individual weak in faith then an individual should stay away from it.
* Peter advised that there is nothing unclean to be eaten as long as God declared.

CONDITIONS WHICH DEFILED ONE’S HOLINESS IN ISRAEL

* Eating birds that could feed on human flesh.
* Eating of any water creature without fins and scales.
* Eating of the animals that cold not chew cud.
* Touching of any insect which have more than 3 pairs of legs and wings and body parts.
* Eating of any animal/ insect which could crawl on its body.
* Experiencing monthly periods.
* Giving birth by women (Lev 12:1ff)
* Body discharge from men (wet dreams)
* Marrying foreigners or non Jews.
* Worshipping idols.
* Having sexual intercourse during women menstruation.
* Bestiality
* Having incest
* Homosexuality

THE PURIFICATION PROCESS OF THE LEPERS (Lev 14:1ff)

* Discuss the steps the Israelites could take to be cleansed of leprosy.
* On the day the leper was to be declared clean, he would be taken to the priest for close examination.
* The leper could only be restored back into the community after being declared clean by the priest.
* The priest could take the leper outside the camp where he would examine him.
* After being declared clean, the priest would require the leper to bring ritually two clean birds, cedar wood, a red cord and a sprig of hyssop.
* The priest would give an order for one of the birds to be slaughtered over a clay bowl containing fresh spring water.
* The leper would take the other bird and dip it into the mixture of blood and water.
* The priest would sprinkle the blood seven times on the person who was to be purified from his skin disease after which he would be declared clean.
* The priest would let them live bird to fly away over upon fields to show that the individual was being set free from evils that had caused the disease.
* The person would then be required to wash all his clothes and shave off all his hair and to have a bath so that he could be ritually clean.
* However, on the seventh day, the person was required to shave his head, beards, eye brows and the rest of the hair on the body and to wash clothes and have a bath again.
* The leper was required to bring 3 kiliograms of flour mixed with olive oil.
* He was required to bring two male lambs and one female lamb both of which were to be one year old, without any defect to signify Israel being the first born sons of God and God’s holiness.
* The priest would take the person and his offering to the entrance of the tent of the Lord’s presence.
* After presenting the person’s offering, the priest would declare him clean and would allow him to join the rest of the society.

JESUS’ ATTITUDE TOWARDS PHYSICAL IMPURITY AND CLEANLINESS (Mark 1:40ff)

What was Jesus’ attitude towards physical uncleanliness?

How did Jesus deal with the people who were considered to be ritually unclean?

* Jesus treated the leper with pity and mercy for he felt that the man was over suffering and was hopeless about his situation.
* He showed love and compassion to the leper thus showing to the Jews that such people needed care.
* He had no fear of the leper as he closely associated with him by allowing the man to move nearer to him.
* He went ahead ad cured the leper by a mere command for the leper to be clean.
* Jesus instructed the leper not to tell anyone about what happened but go straight and present himself to the priest for examination.
* Jesus emphasized that people having such a disease needed more comfort and it was therefore useless to be isolated.
* He maintained that a skin disease was a mere sickness which had no connection with one’s sinful nature.
* He observed that the physical impurity of the skin of an individual had nothing to do with one’s spiritual life.
* He showed that what was needed for one to be purified was a belief and acceptance of the word of God.
* He observed that is where the sick who needed doctors and not the health ones.
* He went ahead and associated closely with the sinners like a woman caught in adultery.
* He advised his followers to help sinners to get back to God, indicating that his coming was to set sinners free from bondage.
* He emphasized that evil forces had no place in the heavenly kingdom.

THE SACREDNESS/ SANCTITY OF BLOOD IN ISRAEL (Lev 17:1ff)

Examine the importance/ significance of blood among the people of Israel.

* Blood symbolized love; the Israelites looked at God as he loved them by making them the chosen people.
* It signified salvation for the people of Israel i.e. being set free from their suffering.
* It was used to seal a covenant relationship between Israel and God like during the Sinai covenant.
* It symbolized protection; it meant that God had given himself to protect people like during the Passover.
* It symbolized the relationship between man and God this is why eating of meat containing blood was completely prohibited
* The Israelites regarded blood to be holy and it had to be respected by everyone.
* It symbolized life and therefore anyone without it was considered a dead person.
* There was a ban on drinking blood in Israel which law everyone was expected to respect.
* It was for atonement purpose i.e. re-paying for one’s sin like Aaron who offered sacrifices for his own sins and sins of the people.
* He created a bond between man and man and between man and God.
* To the Israelites, drinking blood meant interference with God’s rights over human life.

SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS’ BLOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

* Jesus’ blood acted as atonement for the sins of humanity i.e. to save mankind.
* Christians drink wine as a way of renewing the covenant which Jesus sealed with his own blood.
* He (Jesus) is presented as a new sacrificial lamb who takes away he sin of man.
* During the last supper, Jesus referred to his blood as wine which had to be taken by his followers for the sake of their salvation.
* Jesus’ signified salvation for human beings i.e. his blood saved mankind from all troubles.
* It sealed a new and everlasting covenant between man and God and this is the basis upon which the church exists.
* Jesus’ blood signified forgiveness of the sins of humanity i.e. His blood cleanses man and makes them holy.
* By shedding his blood, Jesus reconciled God with the sinful man.
* By shedding his blood, Jesus created a new relationship between a sinful man and God.
* By his death on the cross, Jesus brought protection to all those who believe in him i.e. blood is a sign of protection to all believers.
* It signified God’s love for mankind for it was because of God’s love that gave his only son to die for the sins of humanity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BLOOD IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

* Blood was a means of seeking for blessing from God and their spiritual being.
* To keep in touch with the spiritual world i.e. the spirits were involved in the affairs of the world through the blood.
* It was used for purification purposes i.e. an offender could be cleansed of his sins by the blood of an animal.
* It was a preventive measure for future misfortune especially when people expected punishment of any form.
* It was used for human meal in some places
* It was used to appease God and other spiritual beings like the ancestors.
* It was used for reconciliation in the events of conflicts among members of the community through offering sacrifices
* It was used as a sign of commitment in human relationship like blood pacts.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

The following are the main themes we shall look at;

1. The commandment of love (Deuteronomy 6:1-9)
2. Act of Herem (total destruction of Israel’s enemies by God’s command)
3. Israel’s responsibilities and obligations according to God’s will (Deut 10)
4. Offerings of the first fruit (Deut 26)
5. Blessings and curses (Deut 28)
6. Religious syncretism (the disobedience of the Israelites)

THE THEME OF LOVE

1. Discuss the commandment of love as noted in the book of Deuteronomy 6.

* Moses observed that the law of love was the greatest commandment that the people were supposed to observe as he said, “Love you God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind”.
* Moses also showed that it was out of God’s love that he chose the Israelites to be his own children even before they were born.
* Moses reminded the Israelites to love and worship only one true God, Yahweh their creator such that they could even get more blessings in life.
* Moses again taught the Israelites that their love should include following God’s commandment day and night and repeat them when they are working.
* Moses urged the Israelites to demonstrate their love for God by loving one another in their community.
* Moses also stressed that the commandment of love was in line with the Sinaitic covenant and the Ten Commandments in particular which God gave them at mount Sinai.
* The Israelites were also reminded to tie the laws on their arms and wear them on their foreheads as a reminder. They were to write them on the door posts of their houses and on their gates.
* Moses observed that the promises God made to the Israelites ancestors like Abraham were because of love that God had for them.
* Moses also taught the Israelites that God had demonstrated his love for Israel by rescuing them from their slavery in Egypt.
* He also encouraged the people of Israel to fulfill their obligations as contained in the Sinai covenant in showing their love for God.
* Moses encouraged the Israelites to live as commandment of love so that they could prosper in the Promised Land.
* By observing the commandment of love, according to Moses Israel would be able to take possession of the fertile land they had been promised.
* Moses stressed that the Lord would keep his constant love for Israel for thousand generations only if they would keep his commandment.
* However still, the book of Deuteronomy through Moses confirms that the Lord would not hesitate to punish those hating him and that will also be a sign of love.
* The book of Deuteronomy thorough Moses taught that the Israelites were supposed to extend their love to the under privileged and foreigners.
* The book of Deuteronomy also teaches that Israelites love had to take the concern of orphans and widows.
* Moses urged the Israelites to reflect God’s love for them through good actions i.e. living a morally upright life.
* Moses reminded the Israelites to always remember what God does for them like protecting them against their enemies. Then they were to praise him as a sign of love.

DISCUSS HOSEA’S TEACHING ON THE THEME OF LOVE (Hosea 2:14-23)

* Hosea presents God as a loving father to the Israelites just like Hosea as a husband continued loving his wife Gomer who had become a prostitute.
* Hosea indicates that God’s love is limitless, it is so intense no matter whether people are sinful or not.
* Hosea continues o say that it was because of God’s love that he taught the Israelites how to walk because they were his children.
* Hosea also noticed that it was out of God’s love that he delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and he continued to display his loving character and patience to the Israelites even when they did not appreciate him.
* Prophet Hosea continues to display the character of God as a father who had great love for his rebellious child. The way Hosea pleaded to his wife Gomer to do away with prostitution was in line with God’s love who pleaded to the Israelites to stop practicing religious syncretism.
* Hosea taught that God continued showing affection to Israel despite their syncretism of worshipping idols. The love he displays surpasses human imagination.
* Hosea sends his children to plead before their mother to come back home. To God’s love this is demonstrated in sending advice to Israelites to turn to their God.
* Hosea shows that Yahweh does not abandon his people. He has such a strong feeling for them. Therefore the complete destruction of Israel is out of question as he said “How can I give you up Israel?”
* According to Hosea God spent out punishments for Israel but not in anger indicating that he still loved them. Such punishments were basically for reformation not injury.
* Hosea indicates that God does not give up his people but looks forward to their return. He says a day would come when Israelites would call God’s name again and they would never be able to speak the name of Baal again.
* With God’s love according to Hosea Israel’s protection was assured. Hosea says God would make a covenant with wild animals and birds not to harm his people.
* Hosea represents God’s love to the Israelites when he says that God would withdraw swords, arrows and all other weapons of war warriors so as to keep peace with the Israelites.
* According to Hosea 3:2-3, He was going to pay a heavy bride wealth to Gomer of 150kg of barley and 15 shekels of silver just as God reconciled with sinful people of Israel by paying a heavy price of sacrificing his own son Jesus Christ to die for human sins.
* In the new marriage arrangement of Hosea and Gomer, it would be characterized as joy and happiness in the same way, the new covenant relationship between God and his people would be based on joy and happiness.
* Gomer was to love her husband Hosea and such love was never going to end. In the same way, the Israelites were to enjoy God’s love forever after reconciling with him.
* Hosea shows that Israel would prosper again when they turn their love to God just as Hosea’s marriage would have total love when Gomer becomes a totally changed wife.
* The names of the children of Hosea were changed signifying a new relationship being forged between God and the Israelites i.e. the name Jezreel changed to prosperity, unloved changed to loved and not my people changed to my people. All this indicated God’s love.

THE THEME OF LOVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Comment on the New Testament/ Jesus’ teaching on the theme of love.
2. How is the theme of love developed and used in the New Testament?

* The New Testament says that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die for the sins of humanity. This is clearly indicated in all the four gospel books of the New Testament.
* Jesus calls upon the believers to love their God with all their heart, souls and mind when he was teaching or answering people’s questions of what is the greatest commandment.
* In the same way, according to the gospel of Mark 12 Jesus emphasizes to the people that the second greatest commandment was; for one to love his neighbor as he loves himself.
* The New Testament teaches through Jesus’ words that whoever fulfills the law of love would attain salvation and would be great in the heavenly kingdom.
* Jesus asserted that the greatest gift a person can give a friend is a gift of love.
* Jesus emphasized that; because God loved the believers so they were to love him too as he has a good plan for them.
* Jesus also taught that it was more important to love one another than to give sacrifices to God as he had already come as our sacrificial lamb.
* Jesus calls upon his followers to extend love not only to their neighbours but even their enemies instead of showing them hatred. This is clearly indicated in the book of Matthew 5:23.
* In the New Testament still Paul adds that love is unique and has no strings attached to it. In this sense he taught that love has no conditions, love is patient and kind, love has no envy, love is not arrogant or rude and many others (1 Corinthians 13)
* Paul in the book of 1 Corinthians 13 observes that love eternal i.e. it lasts forever and stands that tests of all times.
* Paul also teaches that a believer cannot bee separated from the love of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Therefore the union between a believer and Jesus should be permanent.
* St. Paul still adds that love is a divine victory which all believers ought to reflect in their daily activities. This Paul said t mean people should bear one another’s burden if they have love.
* Jesus performed a number of miracles i.e. healing the sick, blind, deaf, raising the dead like Lazarus, feeding the hungry . For example, the 5000 and many others Such things Jesus did also indicated the great spirit of love for the suffering human being.

THE ACT OF HEREM (Deuteronomy 7:1-6)

The act of Herem meant God’s instruction given to the Israelites whereby they were totally to destroy all the Israelites enemies including their property. The common enemies of the Israelites were; the Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites and Canaanites.

Questions

1. Analyze the concept of the act of Herem in ancient Israel.
2. Comment on the act of Herem practiced by the Israelites.
3. How was the act of Herem put into practice by the Israelites?

* The Israelites were required to destroy all their enemies without having mercy on any person or property.
* According to God’s instructions to Moses, even innocent children had to be destroyed completely without mercy provided they belonged to the enemies’ side like Canaanites, and Jebusites.
* The act of Herem required the Israelites to go ahead and destroy even those people who would give them a warm and positive welcome.
* Moses was instructed to carryout this act with the Israelites through destroying the people’s property including whatever animals and plants they got across.
* The act of Herem still required the Israelites to tear down the enemies’ altars, break their sacred stone pillars to pieces, cut down the symbols of the goddess, Asherah and to burn the idols of their enemies.
* By following God’s commandment, the Israelites would be showing their total obedience to God and maintaining the covenant relationship.
* By carrying out the act of Herem, the people of Israel were expressing their faith in Yahweh who had loved them so much.
* By destroying the enemies, the Israelites would be able to survive the negative influence of the enemies like worshiping idols.
* Moses told the Israelites that by following this command, it would be in line with the divine election of Israel as God’s chosen people.
* Destroying the enemies of Israel also signified the supremacy and greatness of God over other gods.
* The act of cleansing i.e. destroying Israelites’ enemies also meant that Canaan land had become pure and free from pagan practices.
* When the Israelites carried out the act of Herem successfully it would also bring blessings to them from God, but if they spared some enemies and their property it would bring curses upon them.
* By following this command, God would keep the covenant he had made with the Israelites and He would show his constant love to them thousands of generations.
* If the act of Herem was fully carried out, it would also protect the Israelites from any kind of trouble including bodily sickness.
* The power the Israelites used to destroy the enemies plus their property like animals and plants signified the universal nature of God and the supremacy of Yahweh over other gods.
* Moses showed that God was wiling and ready to punish anyone especially those hating them. This is why he commanded his children to destroy the enemies and their property without mercy.
* Moses promised the Israelites that God would be with them at all times if they could follow this commandment.

THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ACT OF HEREM

1. What is the Christian attitude towards the act of Herem?
2. To what extent do Christians participate in the act of Herem?

* The Christians believe that the act of killing enemies is outdated and against God’s will of conserving nature.
* A Christian may destroy idols belonging to people who are willing to be converted to Christian faith.
* A Christian may find it necessary to destroy pagan shrines or altars especially if the owners are willing to believe in the risen Christ.
* It may be necessary for a Christian to destroy pornographic materials like blue movies because destroy the idols of pagan nations.
* Some Christians believe that killing enemies causes suffering to the innocent children. So they do not believe in total destruction of everybody during the war like the Israelites were commanded to do.
* A Christian can go to war in order to fight dictatorship i.e. a government full of murder and arbitrary arrests.
* Many Christians find it difficult to destroy their enemies and property during a liberation war but spare the children. So they end up also doing like the Israelites by destroying everything.
* Many Christians believe that each and every human being has the right to live. Therefore the act of Herem to them is against the human rights.
* Christians are called upon to tolerate and patient with their enemies. So that they change their minds to positive living. This means they have a negative attitude towards the act of Herem.
* Many other Christians also do not believe in the act of Herem because they teach about forgiving our enemies instead of revenge.
* Christianity emphasizes praying for our enemies other than destroying them. They say it is our enemies other than destroying them. They say it is only God who has the power to terminate life since he is the giver of life.
* Christians are called upon to love their enemies following the example of Jesus who forgave those who crucified him.
* Christians are advised to be humble like Jesus Christ was who humbled himself during his arrest and trial.
* Christians should realize that they are also sinners and that they have all fallen short of God’s glory.
* Christians are called upon to forgive their enemies like Jesus forgave all those who persecuted.
* Christianity teaches about preserving human life, not killing like the act of Herem stated this would be fulfilling God’s command/ plan of pro-creation.
* Many Christians have continued to be good to those who hate them, copying the example of Jesus Christ who accepted to give in his life for the sins of mankind.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACT OF HEREM

Discuss the relevance/ meaning of the act of Herem.

* It also meant God’s absolute ban on compromise with the pagan religion which would influence people to practice pagan acts like worshipping idols.
* It aimed at avoiding future apostasy /mixing up Christianity with pagan which would contaminate their religious life.
* The act of Herem aimed at encouraging the Israelites to worship and believe in one God the almighty.
* It also aimed at making the Israelites love only one God i.e. Yahweh the God of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
* The act of Herem was the form of punishment by God to the pagan nations like the Jebusites, Hitittes, Hivites for having practiced pagan worship.
* It was intended to reveal the commitment of the Israelites and their obedience to their God by carrying out his orders without fail.
* It intended to do away with paganism. God’s people would be influenced into worshipping pagan gods and thus the act of Herem would bring anHerem to that.
* It meant that the Israelites were not to have any mercy towards their enemies because they were doing God’s will.
* The Israelites were to show absolute faithfulness to God by carrying out the act of Herem.
* It aimed at preventing the Israelites from pagan influence . For example, idolatry, sacrificing to smaller gods.
* It implied that the Israelites were divinely elected by God to defeat the pagan nations.
* Obedience to the act of Herem implied the Israelites would earn God’s blessings and disobedience would deny hem God’s blessings.
* It was to prove that Yahweh was the overall controller of each and everything including life even among the pagan people. This is why God was able to kill the pagans with his power without reacting back.

THE THEME OF DIVINE ELECTION (Deuteronomy 11)

1. Comment on the concept or theme of the Israelites election as delivered from Deuteronomy 11.
2. How were the Israelites expected to behave as divinely elected children of God?

Deuteronomy 11 shows the greatness of God and the greatness of the Israelites as God’s chosen people. This theme deals with the duty given by God to commit themselves to the Sinai covenant.

Therefore the following were some of the requirements of the Israelites as divine nation;

* The Israelites were required to be fully committed to the Sinai covenant and preserve the laws contained in it.
* Israel as a divinely elected nation had a choice to make i.e. either to obey God or reject his laws. But the latter would bring adverse consequences on themselves, so they were warned not to disobey. (Deut 8:11-20)
* As a divinely elected nation of God Israel was given special consideration and blessings. This made them unique from other people.
* By their divine election, the Israelites were required to love the Lord their God with all their heart and obey his laws in order to avoid provoking God’s anger.
* As a divine nation of God the Israelites were to witness what God would do for them in their lives which proved their divine status.
* As God’s special people, the Israelites were to be protected against their enemies and indeed would enter the Promised Land that is Canaan.
* As God’s elect, Israel was to worship only one God, the God of their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but not any other god.
* It was so stated that in case the elected people worshipped other gods, they would be punished. Yahweh would take away all his blessings from them.
* Moses observed that the Israelites would live for long in the land they were going to occupy if they obeyed God’s commands, so he urged them to take care of the land.
* The divine election of the Israelites involved special blessings and prosperity like rain would fall into their gardens and they would have plenty of harvest of corn and wine.
* The Israelites were required to be morally upright i.e. to serve as example to other nations.
* As a divinely elected community, Israel was expected to discard all unholy alliances and influences from their pagan neighbours.
* As a special nation chosen by God, they were also mandated to serve as a kingdom of priest.
* Moses informed the fellow Israelites that it was God their father and protector who even brought them out of Egypt where they suffered from slavery.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE THEME OF ELECTION TO MODERN CHRISTIANS

The theme of the election is relevant to Christians in the following ways;

* Christians are called upon to prepare for the parausia i.e. should pray to prepare themselves for the judgment day.
* There is need for Christians to respect and show their love to each other as children of God.
* Christians should serve God faithfully and obey his laws so that they may live in harmony.
* The Christians are called upon to proclaim the good news and make God’s will be felt in all the areas of the world.
* Christians should live exemplary kind of life like the Israelites were called upon to do as God’s chosen people. This will help to attract many other people into Christianity.
* Christians are called upon to repent their sins in order to be forgiven and maintain their spiritual relations with God as divinely elected children.
* Christians are called upon to care for one another as God cared for the Israelites as his chosen children.
* Christians are called upon to be morally upright as God expected the Israelites to do the same.
* Christians ought to turn to Jesus Christ as their savior especially in times of trouble or need just as the Israelites as God’s chosen people were to depend on God as their provider.
* Christians should profess Jesus Christ as their savior because they share a special relationship with him as his elects.
* Christians should stick to the teachings of Jesus Christ and his acts like healing the blind and lame in order to benefit from his mission as believers.
* Christians are called upon to exercise the sacrament of baptism because it is one of the main elements which qualify a person to be called a divinely elected child of God.
* Christians ought to realize that their bodies are temples of the holy spirit which should be kept holy (1 Corinthians 6)

Qn.“In the book of Deuteronomy Israel was given the choice of life and death” comment.

* Any Israelite who worshipped God alone i.e. observed monotheism was deemed to have chosen life. But those who worshipped other gods would have chosen death.
* The choice of life came along with God’s favours and blessings. So Moses commanded the people to look for the right choices. Any wrong choice would mean loss of God’s favours and blessings.
* By obeying God one would choose the right way of life and this signified the love and respect expected from the chosen nation.
* In order to have life, the Israelites were urged to be obedient to the law. For any disobedience, destruction by death would occur.
* Those that chose life hoped to get happiness and joy as God’s blessings. This meant that the choice of life came along with God’s favours and the reverse is true.
* Moses still taught the Israelites that their action for hope, better life had to do with their goodness and avoidance of evil.
* The choice of life according to Moses the leader of the Israelites meant fear and respect to God. Otherwise any sign of disrespect to God resulted into death.
* The Israelites’ choice of life meant to be faithful to the covenant law and to do what is pleasant in the sight of God. Anything to do without that indicated choice of death.
* Living a morally upright life like practicing monogamy would be a choice of life. But those who practiced immoral evils like sexual intercourse with pagan nations would have violated the covenant and would be a choice of death.
* In the same way Moses puts it clear that those who practiced love among themselves as God commanded them to live would have chosen life. However those who practiced discrimination would be destroyed.
* Moses puts it clear that those who practiced syncretism would make their women barren and thus a sign of death. This would come along with punishments like famine and drought.
* Moses also warned the Israelites who carried on apostasy and said they would suffer from the second exile which is death.
* Moses called upon the Israelites to choose the will of God so as to have life and avoid to perish.

Discuss the lessons Christians learn from the above quotation

* There is need for Christians to be faithful to God. By doing this, they will have made the right choice of life.
* Christians should respect God’s laws especially the Ten Commandments. In this way, they would have chosen life.
* Christians are called upon to obey God and fulfill all the commands from God as a basic way of choosing life.
* Christians need to pray to God to give them the right decision of making choices which is for their own good. In this way, they would have made the choice of life.
* A Christian should choose what is good and ignore what is bad in case they want to attain eternal life.
* A Christian needs to promote relationship in society through love of God and the neighbours as a way of choosing life.
* There is a need for Christians to humble themselves towards God and other elders in the society like the church leaders other than being arrogant and proud which can lead them to destruction.
* Christians are called upon to keep their position of theocracy (being chosen by God) since through Jesus Christ mankind becomes a God’s child as a way of choice of life.
* Christians ought to live holy lives through what they speak and do if they want to choose life.
* Christians need to honour God for the wonderful things he does for us like saving us from sickness or dodging accidents. In this way we would be choosing what is right and proper.
* Christians need to put their trust in God as he occupies a special position on earth. By trusting God blessing, power and protection will be granted hence a proper choice of life.
* Christians should also submit their will to God as a sign of choosing life.

Discuss the meaning of the Israelites as God’s chosen/ special people/ nation.

* Israelites had been a wondering group of people but not Mt. Sinai became a group separate from all nations when they signed a covenant with God. It therefore meant that they had entered a special communion with God.
* It meant that the Israelites had become God’s special people. This is indicated in the way he protected them against their enemies like the Jebusites, Hitittes, and Amorites and gave them the power of victory.
* The Israelites were to show responsibilities and duties assigned to them by covenant. Moses demanded from Israelites a fully committed attachment to the Sinai covenant by observing the laws of God.
* As the chose children of God, this meant that the Israelites were o enjoy some privileges. Of all the people God extended all his love and blessings to the Israelites as a sign of their divine election.
* It meant that God was fulfilling what he had promised to Abraham’s descendants i.e. he promised a great nation out of them. Therefore the promise of the land, for instance is the motive for fulfilling the earlier Promised Land to their fore father.
* The Israelites being called special nation of God meant that God had set them apart and identified tem as his priests. The Israelites, doing the service of God was a must because they were an elect of God.
* Israelites being called God’s special nation signified that they could reach Yahweh through worship to show adoration and communion. As a symbol of divine election, worshipping Yahweh was an obligation of every elected individual of God.
* As God’s elect, it implied that the Israelites were to offer sacrifices to God. God had already offered his sacrifice to them by saving them from Egyptian bondage and defeating their oppressors. Therefore to the Israelites as God’s people sacrificing to Yahweh was to be part and partial of their lives.
* Israel being called a special nation meant that they were to observe monotheism i.e. they were to worship one God and ignore the worship of other gods of the pagan nations.
* It meant that they could now be identified as the nation with a constitution to which God had provided when they meant at Mt. Sinai.
* Israel was expected to observe the needs of the constitution because it was their guide towards God.
* The choice of the Israelites as God’s special people implied that they were to act as examples to the rest of the world especially in their actions.
* It meant that they had been chosen by divine will before they were born. This is because so many nations were suffering in exile but it was specifically the Israelites who were chosen and elected from the rest.
* The Israelites being called God’s special people meant that Israel was given a chance to choose between curses and blessings i.e. to decide if they wanted God’s blessings or sufferings as a form of curses. But as God’s chosen ones, Moses urged them to look for blessings.
* It showed that the Israelites were to obey all the laws given by God through Moses as a way of provoking God for blessings.
* As God’s chosen nation, Moses specified that they were to act in light of guidance by God and by doing this, they would consequently prosper and experience fortunes.

How did the Israelites fail to live up to their call as chosen nation when they reached the Promised Land?

* They became syncretic yet they knew they were God’s people. Israel practiced syncretism by dividing up their loyalties in faith where by they could only turn to Yahweh in case there were war threats.
* They turned to Baal for material wealth and fertility. Israel totally lost faith, confidence and trust in God as they decided to fix their attention to foreign gods like the goddess of Asherah. In short Israel relied on confined to a new evilish god instead of confining their minds to Yahweh their liberator.
* The religious worship of the Israelites became outward and their worshipping places, became centres of transguration i.e. their worship was insincere.
* The Israelites became disobedient to God i.e. they became prodigal sons. They for instance practiced apostasy which was a blind imitation of what was fallen of them.
* They went on and defiled the land of Canaan that was given to them by God through engaging in temple prostitution which was a form of worship among the Canaanites. There was sex play as a ritual during worship intended to call upon Baal to bless their fertility and yields.
* The Israelites lost knowledge of the covenant and its obligations. They abused the Sinai covenant and violated all its requirements yet they had vowed to remain faithful to Yahweh and made an oath of allegiance as noted in the book of Exodus 19:8.
* Some Israelites got involved in offering human sacrifices which was so ungodly an act . For example, King Manasseh offered his son as a burnt sacrifice to please Yahweh. But this was a Canaanite practice (2 Kings 21)
* The Israelites disobeyed God’s law by asking him to choose for them a king so as to live like other nations. This was a clear manifestation of total disobedience of God’s chosen nation (1 Samuel 8)
* Some Israelites’ parents children after Baal like Gideon was named Jerusbaal.
* The Israelites and their kings annoyed God by making unnecessary foreign alliances; economic political and religious transactions they carried out were scandalous in the site of God. This was common with king Solomon (1 kings 9:10-14)
* Some Israelites leaders such as Solomon became disobedient to God when he sold part of the Israelites’ land to foreigners yet the land belonged to Yahweh. Similarly king Ahab also misbehaved by grabbing the vineyard of Nabboth (1 kings 21)
* Some Israelites shed blood of innocent people and enslaved others . For example, king Ahab killed Nabboth and king David king Uriah the husband of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11)
* The Israelites started building altars for worshipping both Yahweh and the pagan gods including Baal. This was common during the regime of King Ahab.
* The Israelites forgot the mighty acts of Yahweh that he had performed for them. They ceased to care and love one hatred and injustices characterized their lives and that’s why prophets like Amos were condemning these evils.
* Israelites started insulting and abusing God’s messengers by despising, harassing and beating them . For example,prophet Elijah was harassed by king Ahab (1 kings 20) and prophet Jeremiah was also beaten because of condemning the evils of the priests and kings of the time.
* The Israelites followed the Canaanite calendar especially in the agricultural year. This implied that they had turned away from God.

Discuss the criteria governing kingship in Israel as reflected in Deuteronomy 17:14-20

God knew that at one time his people would demand for a king like other nations after they had taken possession of the land he had promised them i.e. Canaan. As such, instructions concerning a king were given on the following basis;

* The king was expected to be from the Israelites’ race. The Israelites were to make a choice of a king one of whom the Lord had chosen i.e. from the divinely elected community.
* The Israelites were warned against choosing foreigners to rule over them. According to Deut 17:15 Israel as a special nation of God had to bear a king coming from themselves.
* The Israelites were also informed that foreigners would introduce bad cultures into Israel. So to avoid this, the king would only be expected to come from the race of the Israelites.
* The Israelites king was not expected to be materialistic. The king was not to have a larger number of horses especially for the army. This signified that it was only through God that protection would be guaranteed.
* The king of the Israelites would never make the people go back to Egypt where they were enslaved for quite a long period of time and God chose to bring them out of bondage.
* The king of the Israelites was not allowed to marry many wives. This signified that it was only monogamy which was legalized as the basic form of marriage expected from an Israelite king.
* The king of Israel was required to keep to the law and to write a copy of this law on his heart for his use. The king was also expected to read from this law book for the rest of his life.
* He was supposed to serve God sincerely at all times. Since the king was a representative of God’s leadership on earth, total service was expected from him as he acted on behalf of God.
* The king was expected to remain consistent in his leadership and to maintain theocracy since Israel was a God guided nation. Observing this would guarantee Israel God’s blessings.
* Honouring the Lord and obeying him faithfully was expected of a king in Israel. This would equally keep him from thinking that he is better than his fellow Israelites and from disobeying the Lord’s commands in any way.
* The king was not to subject the Israelites into slavery. The Israelites received God’s election the day when he saved them from Egyptian bondage. Therefore a king in Israel was not to emulate the example of kingship in Egypt.
* He was not allowed to make any alliance like military assistance with pagan nations. This could contaminate God’s chosen people.
* By following all the commandments, the king would live for longer and would reign for several years. The king’s descendants would too rule Israel for many generations.

Discuss the nature of government under the leadership of judges in Israel.

* Israel settled down in Canaan on tribal basis i.e. each had a special geographical area of settlement.
* The land distribution was made by Joshua who carried off from Moses as a religious and political leader.
* They were led under a tribal confederancy, loose administration in which each tribe enjoyed autonomy i.e. self rule from each other.
* The sense of unity in Israel during the time of judges was only witnessed when they came together to worship. Otherwise, the confederation was characterized by lack of unity.
* At the time of judges there were a lot of conflicts between the 12 tribes of Israel basically fighting for land among themselves.
* In times of war, the judges did not mobilize well able bodied men and women to fight and defend the nation. In other words there was no standing army for the defense of the nation of Israel like the case was during Moses’ time.
* The nature of government in Israel at the time of judges like Joshua was that they carried out the role of military mobilization acted as military leaders, religious leaders and political leaders.
* In Israel the office of judges was not hereditary but was appointed by God. For example,Judge Joshua, Samuel, Deborah were Godly appointed and they had charismatic characteristics.
* Some of the judges in Israel like Gideon, Samson and Samuel’s sons plus Eli’s sons were sinful and un exemplary serving only for political pride and religious benefit (1 Samuel 2:12-26)
* The tribal confederation in Israel i.e. people governing themselves basing on different races or tribes had no uniform laws. Something that made the whole nation disunited.
* There was no systematic means of collecting taxes for the development of Israel as in some tribes they would refuse to follow/ obey the commands of tax collectors.
* The judges in Israel failed to put up a uniform judicial system among the 12 tribes.
* There was no central leader of the caliber of Moses and Joshua his successor.

OFFERING OF THE FIRST FRUITS/ HARVEST (Deuteronomy 26:1ff)

1. Analyze the significance of the offering of the first fruits to God in Deuteronomy 26.
2. Comment on the offering of the first fruit harvest in the history of Israel.
3. Analyze the concept of offering the first fruit in Israel.

After having settled in Canaan, the Israelites were required to offer their first harvest to God and this would be done in the following ways;

* No one was expected to have a share of his first harvest before presenting it to the Lord. This was an acknowledgement for what God had done to the Israelites in the past like saving them from Egyptian slavery and providing them with food like manna and quails.
* Each person was to take a basket of his/ her first fruit and present it to the priest as offering to Yahweh. It indicated that God was the giver of everything as such God is to be rewarded and thanked for what they produced especially in their fields.
* Offering of the first fruit was an act of respect to Yahweh as Israel’s only God thus observing monotheism.
* By offering their first fruit harvest to Yahweh Israel would acknowledge that they had entered and occupied the land promised to them through their ancestor Abraham.
* Offering of the first fruit harvest signified Israelites had made self denial and sacrifice i.e. Israelites were willing to be under God’s control and so even surrendered their valuable fruits to God.
* It was a sign or re-affirming the divine election of Israel and they were the only ones to be involved in such an act.
* It indicated that God was the supporter of their comfort that was derived from their food stuffs so the Israelites were sure of more harvest even after offering in the first harvest.
* Offering the first fruits would be an act of Israelite’s disobedience to the Lord.
* It also indicated the holiness of God and the holiness of his people as they were required to confess when offering the first fruit.
* It would be a statement indicating the Israelite’s faith to God as the chosen people right from Egyptian slavery.
* By [offering the first harvest, it would reflect Yahweh’s acceptance of his people. He would be their God and they would be his people in the new land.
* The act would cater for the disadvantaged foreigners, widows and orphans who needed something to eat.
* The act would mean that the people of Israel were determined to make their living in Canaan permanent.
* Offering the first fruit would signify or imply that Israel were indeed the first born sons of God. Each Israelite was to place in a basket the first part of each crop that one harvests as a symbol of their position to God.
* It implied that Israelites would receive more blessings from the Lord if they followed God’s command.
* It was one way of demonstrating the utmost love of Israelites to Yahweh and therefore their sincerity to him was reflected through offering the first yields of their crops.

Discuss the New Testament teaching/ understanding of sacrifices

* The coming of Jesus Christ rendered sacrifices useless. When he accepted to be crucified on the cross, he became the final and universal sacrifice for the sins of mankind.
* The sacrifice of Jesus according to the New Testament teaching removed all sins of mankind and this gave us confidence to approach God in prayers without sacrifices but with any other kind of offering.
* Jesus’ blood which was shed on the cross was greater than the animal blood that was usually shed in the Old Testament as noted in books like Leviticus.
* The sacrifice of Jesus is the living sacrifice for mankind and therefore sacrificing a lamb would be wasting time, energy and resources.
* According to the New Testament teaching today sacrifices demand that one offers himself to God directly. The whole person should be involved and not necessarily anymore sacrifices.
* During Jesus’ time of preaching he condemned the hypocrisy that was involved in the sacrifices of the Old Testament i.e. He noted that some people offered sacrifices not with sincerity at heart and God would not appreciate them.
* To Jesus there was no connection between people’s inner possessions and sacrifices. People could sin intentionally knowing that they could offer sacrifices and they would be forgiven.
* Therefore it is fitting to say that today here is no need of offering sacrifices because Jesus is the final sacrifice for the Christians.

RELEVANCE OF OFFERING THE FIRST FRUITS TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

How relevant is the command to Christians today?

* Christians should appreciate God for his provisions in their lives just like the Israelites offered the first fruits to appreciate Yahweh for what He did for them in their like liberating them from their bondage, feeding them with food like manna in the desert and protecting them against their enemies like Philistines.
* Christians are called upon to assist the needy people in their society like the widows and orphans. The first fruit offering of the Israelites was partly to assist such category of people.
* Christians ought to remain faithful in serving God just as the Israelites were called upon to be.
* Christians should deny themselves the pleasures of the world and focus to the pleasures of the kingdom of God.
* There is need for Christians to prepare themselves to inherit the heavenly kingdom. This they could by following God’s commands like the Israelites followed the command of offering the first fruit harvest.
* Christians are called upon to ask God to provide them with necessities of life through prayer. This could be emulating the Israelites who prayed to the Lord through offering their first fruit harvest.
* Christians ought t serve God in holiness as Moses requested the Israelites to repent their sins and be clean before God.
* The Christians should extend the spirit of love towards one another beyond a fellow Christian .This could be copied from the Israelites who offered the first fruit even to cater for foreigners.
* Like the Israelites offered the first fruit to show their obedience to Yahweh, the Christians are also called upon to give in offertory to the church especially In form of tithe.

MOSES’ TEACHING ON BLESSINGS AND CURSES AS REFLECTED IN DEUTERONOMY 28

Obedience to the Lord would mean blessings to the people of Israel in the land they were about to occupy. However curses would befall the people of Israel as a result of their disobedience and failing to keep the commandments of God.

Discuss the blessings and curses on the children of Israel in Deut 28.

The following were Moses’ teaching to the Israelites about God’s blessings;

* Moses stressed that God would protect the Israelites in whatever she would do.
* Moses showed that obedience to the law of God would please God. So whoever obeyed God’s laws could receive God’s blessings.
* Moses said that the Israelites’ faithfulness to the covenant law would win for them many blessings such as defeating their enemies and having abundant wealth in form of animals . For example, sheep and goat.
* He said that Israel would be governed by the principle of monotheism. Whoever followed the principle of monotheism would receive God’s blessings.
* He said that if they obeyed God, he would make Israel honoured and respected among her neighbours.
* Moses also told the Israelites that if they obeyed God’s commands, they would receive blessings of enough rain in season in, season out.
* Moses promised the Israelites that God would bless them with many children abundant crops and many cattle once they obeyed him.
* Moses observed that the people would be blessed with victory over their enemies if they obeyed God’s commands.
* Moses said that God would bless their undertakings (businesses) and fill their bans with grain.
* He also said that if they obeyed God and strictly followed his commands, Israel would be declared God’s children.
* He added that if the Israelites obeyed the Lord’s instructions, God would make them rulers of other nations in the world but not followers of others.
* Moses stressed that the people would be placed with better health i.e. they would live longer.
* He also said God would make them successful in the new land they were about to take possession if they remained obedient.

However, in case the Israelites became disobedient they would be cursed in the following ways;

* Moses said that if the Israelites disobeyed God, he would curse their towns and fields. Thus they would be reduced to the level of savages.
* The Israelites would be cursed and produce few children, would have few cattle and sheep and many others
* Moses said that God would curse their undertakings, their crops and animals incase they disobeyed Yahweh.
* He also put it clear that if the Israelites rejected God, disaster would befall them and be completely destroyed.
* Moses stressed that if Israelites abandoned God, he would send a drought in their land and scotching wind would destroy their crops.
* He also stated to the Israelites that if they rejected the law of God i.e. the covenant obligations, they would be cursed and they would not receive rain at the right season. Therefore their land would become as hard as iron.
* Moses said that as long as the Israelites remained disobedient, foreigners would gain control over them i.e. they would be ruled by foreigners.
* He said that once they disobeyed God, their riches would be enjoyed by some other people i.e. the pagans.
* Moses taught the Israelites that because of their wickedness God would take them pin a foreign land where they would worship pagan gods.
* Moses notified the Israelites that their disobedience would cause death everywhere.
* He also observed that their sons and daughters would be taken away and made slaves to the other nations where they would be defiled before their parents.
* He said that if they forsake God, their wars would live many of them dead and their dead bodies would be eaten by wild birds and animals.
* Moses said to fellow Israelites that because of rebelling, instead of rain they would receive sand stones which would leave majority of them dead.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES AS UNDERSTOOD IN THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

The following are some of the ways the African traditionalists understand blessings and curses;

* They believed blessings come from the spiritual world and were deeply connected to the ancestors. This meant that for one to have blessings in life he/she had to be in good terms with the ancestors.
* They believed the elderly people had a right to bless/curse a person depending on the behavior of an individual.
* In African tradition blessings are a direct reward to good deeds and behavior i.e. following the customs and norms of the society . For example, carrying out circumcision among the Sebei, avoiding incest and many others
* In ATS, blessings could be evoked from the spiritual world through offering sacrifices like animals.
* In ATS belief, blessings are believed to come to a person as a result of being in good terms with other members of the community.
* Having good relationship with the ancestors and the departed members of the family could as well ensure blessings to the family or person.
* Blessings could come from one’s respect and obedience to authority.

However, in ATS curses are believed to come from the following ways;

* Disrespect to authority commonly practiced by the youth towards the elders would bring a curse to them and a punishment would come from the spiritual world or from the elders themselves.
* In ATS curses were directly linked to disrespect of spiritual beings especially talking ill of them like abusing your late parent.
* In ATS curses could be prevented by appeasing the spiritual beings through offering them sacrifices especially in form of animals.
* Curses were related to breaking blood pacts which was taken to be lack of commitment to one’s life.
* Disrespecting sacred places and objects like shrines as beads could also cause a curse to somebody.
* Indecent burial of a family member especially a grand father, mother could bring about a curse to the living persons.
* Having sexual relations with one another’s relative (practicing incest) could bring curses for it could annoy he ancestors.

How the New Testament changed the Deuteronomy teaching on blessings and curses.

To what extent did Jesus change the Deuteronomy teaching on blessings and curses?

To a larger extent, Jesus changed Moses’ interpretation concerning blessings and curses in the following ways;

* He emphasized that those who repented their sins were to be forgiven.
* He emphasized that he had come to remove the curses of the law. This was more stressed in Paul’s letter to the Galatians (Gal 3)
* Jesus also taught that Christians today are saved by having faith in him not by following Moses’ laws. By this he meant that all those who have faith in him would be blessed.
* In his teachings, Christ stressed that a person who sinned is the one to be punished but not the community guilt as it was stressed in Ezekiel 18.
* Jesus taught that God is a loving father who gives time of grace. This is why Christ could also forgive people known to be sinners . For example, the adulterous woman (John 8)
* According to Jesus, suffering for disobedience is not only for the children of Israel but for all the disobedient people i.e. Jews and Gentiles.
* In the New Testament, Jesus emphasized that God will never punish the children for the sins committed by their parents. In other words Christ wanted to mean that God no longer punished or cursed a person because of their parents’ sins.
* Jesus taught that the holiness is not only received through obedience to the law but having faith in him.
* However to a smaller extent Jesus agreed with the Deuteronomy teaching about blessings and curses as seen below;
* He taught that sin is still punished by suffering and death.
* He also taught that disobedience to the law brings about calamity.
* Jesus still emphasized that sinners will suffer external condemnation.
* He also taught that curses many times come as a result of disobedience of God’s laws.
* He still emphasized that many cities and villages would be blessed because of their fear to the Lord.
* Christ encouraged people to be obedient to the Ten Commandments so as to receive more blessings from his father.

DISCUSS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOOK OF EXODUS AND DEUTERONOMY

* The central character is Moses i.e. Moses is seen as God’s messenger in both books. In Exodus, Moses is still seen directing God’s people and in Deuteronomy Moses is still seen instructing the same people (Israelites) before entering the Promised Land.
* Central to the book of Exodus and Deuteronomy are God’s laws. God gave the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus 20 and are then summarized in the book of Deuteronomy with emphasis on love of God with Israelite neighbours.
* The character of God remains the same in the book of Exodus as it is in the book of Deuteronomy. God is caring, loving and concerned with readiness to protect his people on the journey to Canaan.
* The promises that God makes are continue to be emphasized in the book of Deuteronomy. In Exodus God promises blessings of fertility and prosperity to the Israelites and in Deuteronomy Israelites were heading for the Promised Land.
* The central core of the book of Exodus is the liberation of God’s people from the wilderness and bondage. And this is extended in the book of Deuteronomy as the Israelites were heading to eternal liberation.
* The aspects of obedience to the laws of God are common in both books. Indeed the Israelites are reminded in the book of Deuteronomy to remain obedient to God’s commands if they were to have life.
* The idea of divine election of Israel is emphasized in the two books i.e. the theocratic nature of Israel is stressed more in both books.
* In the two books great emphasis is put on the monotheism nature of God. The Israelites are reminded to worship only one true God Yahweh the father of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
* The two books i.e. Exodus and Deuteronomy narrate the Israelites’ historical life i.e. their slavery in Egypt and their journey through the desert to Canaan showing what God things God did for them.
* The two books of Deuteronomy and Exodus reveal the weaknesses of the Israelites to their worship of God i.e. they show how the Israelites worshipped the golden calf in Exodus and likewise in Deuteronomy the Israelites continued disobeying God by worshipping idols.
* The two books emphasized the importance of the Sinai covenant and so Moses continues to remind the Israelites to keep observing the requirements of this new covenant.
* The land to which the Israelites were heading for in the exodus journey is clearly mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses reminds the Israelites on how god the land would be to occupy unfortunately he did not reach there.
* The two concepts i.e. blessings for being obedient and curses for being disobedient are common to Exodus and Deuteronomy.
* The theme of love expected of the Israelites is extended from the book of Exodus to Deuteronomy. The Israelites are reminded of love of God in both books as a basis of their being.
* The two books also have in common the theme dedication and sacrifices. The Israelites were to offer every first born male animal to the Lord (Exodus 13).
* In Deuteronomy, the Israelites were to offer the first fruits of their harvest to the Lord (Deuteronomy 26)

ANALYZE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE BOOK OF EXODUS AND THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

* The book of Exodus reflects the life of Moses and the people of Israel whereas the book of Deuteronomy reflects the death of Moses.
* There was leadership by kings in the book of Deuteronomy. For instance when the Israelites reached the Promised Land they were led by kings while in Exodus Moses was the leader of the Israelites.
* The book of Exodus shows all the commandments of God which were given to Moses while in the book of Deuteronomy the commandments are summarized.
* The book of Deuteronomy emphasizes the commandment of love whereas in the book of Exodus love is only shown by God and talked about in the Ten Commandments.
* The book of Exodus exposes the liberation of Israelites from the Egyptian bondage whereas in the book of Deuteronomy there is settlement and life of the Israelites in the Promised Land.
* The book of Deuteronomy was a fulfillment of God’s promises to the Israelites as seen in Exodus that is to say God promised his people land which was Canaan as shown in Deuteronomy.
* The book of Deuteronomy talks more about the blessings and curses and emphasizes them compared to the book of Exodus which only throws light on blessings and curses.
* The book of Exodus presents the laws the Israelites were to follow on their journey to the Promised Land while in Deuteronomy it shows how people were to follow and live in the laws.

EXAMINE THE RELEVANCE OF THE BOOKS OF EXODUS AND DEUTERONOMY TO CHRISTIANS TODAY.

* Christians should love God and also love their neighbours because as God’s elect they are bound to behave like so.
* There is a need for Christians to show respect to the laws especially God’s laws like the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 as they are the basis of life on earth.
* Christians need to practice monotheism to avoid annoying God. To those people who practice idolatry should be ready for bitter consequences in their life.
* Christians should make the rightful choices in life. This could bring to them God’s blessings, favours, eternal life and many others
* Christians need to do the service of God as his special representatives on earth. Thus Moses acted as the best example who guided the Israelites to almost entering the Promised Land although himself, he never entered Canaan.
* Self sacrifice and self denial is what every Christian needs to do in accordance to the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy.
* Christians need to observe the Sabbath day for I Exodus and Deuteronomy worshipping God alone was a duty and obligation expected of every Israelite.
* There is need for Christians to promote good relationship in their societies. This could be done through pardoning sinners not like the Israelites who were commanded to destroy all their enemies including the innocent children.
* Christians should put their trust, faith and confidence in God for God is the source of everything and also curses.
* Christians should participate in holy Eucharist i.e. entering a new covenant relationship and for them to work for unity.
* There is need for Christians to work for heavenly glory like the Israelites struggled to enter the land of Canaan.
* Christians are called upon to understand that Jesus is the new Moses. Therefore Christians need to respect the son of God.
* Christians need to carry forward the institution of liberation and salvation especially those who are not ready to work for heavenly success and glory.
* There is need for Christians to respect the new and everlasting covenant which involved the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ such that mankind could be saved.
* In the name of God Christians need to kill their enemies just like the Israelites were commanded by God in Deuteronomy 7.

THE CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT OF THE ISRAELITES IN THE LAND OF CANAAN

After Moses’ death, the one who had began the military expeditions for conquering the land of Canaan, Joshua was made his successor. Therefore the Israelites reached the Promised Land under the direction of Joshua and other leaders.

Conquering the land of Canaan was not easy as it involved challenges of fighting the native nations which resulted into death of many Israelites.

Even the strongest Canaanite city Jerusalem had not been conquered not until king David’s time in the 10th century.

Reasons why the Israelites were successful in their conquest of Canaan

* The presence of some relatives of Israelites in Canaan helped them to overcome their enemies. Some of these Israelites in Canaan acted as their spies.
* The Israelites were under the great leadership of Joshua who was able to organize the people into fighting force.
* They used surprise attacks on their neighbours thus finding them unaware and disorganized.
* The victory of the Israelites over the Canaanite tribes could have been due to the fact that they had a strong feeling of nationalism thus fighting as one people.
* It was God’s will that made the Israelites successful in their conquest. God promised the Israelites to protect them from any military confrontation (Joshua 1:5)
* The Israelites were successful due to their good preparation for any military encounter and had experience for having fought many wars like against the Egyptians and Amelikites.
* They were assisted by some collaborators in Canaan . For example, Rehab who rescued the spies sent by Joshua to Jericho when the king wanted them killed (Joshua 2:1ff)
* Some Canaanites naturally feared them and surrendered. They called the Israelites an invisible group of people.
* The Israelites had much determination to win their battle so as t live a settled life for they were tired of moving up and down.
* The success of the Israelites is also attributed to the disunity that existed among the Canaanite tribes. They used to fight on tribal basis and could not withstand the one force of the Israelites.
* The Israelites had a strong desire to occupy the land promised to them through their ancestors like Abraham.

THE ROLE OF JOSHUA

Examine the role of played by Joshua in the conquest of the promised land of Canaan.

* Joshua helped to maintain the covenant relationship the Israelites had with their God . For example, he organized the covenant renewal at shechem (Joshua 24:1ff)
* He distributed the conquered land equally among the twelve tribes of Israel hence promoting unity.
* He helped to settle various disputes among the Israelites thus promoting and maintain justice.
* He was a military commander and led them successful . For example, the capture of Jeride.
* He kept on emphasizing morality among the Israelites so as God could be on their side.
* He tried to rule the Israelites with no signs of discrimination or favouritism of his tribe mates hence promoting unity among the twelve tribes of Israel.
* He mobilized the Israelites pinto a strong united military force that helped to keep law and order and also conquer the land of Canaan.
* He maintained religious purity i.e. promoting monotheism like when called or organized the covenant renewal at Shechem (Joshua 24)

THE COVENANT RENEWAL AT SHECHEM

Before his death, Joshua called for a meeting at Shechem. All the Israelites converged together and listened to Joshua whose intention was to renew covenant relationship with God.

Give an account of the covenant renewal at Shechem

* The meeting came shortly after the Israelites had settled in Canaan and it was in line with divine election of Israel and the Sinai covenant.
* Joshua gathered all the twelve tribes and called upon all the leaders of these tribes, the judges and other officers to come and meet the Lord.
* He reminded the Israelites about their history, how their ancestors lived there long age and worshipped other gods but Yahweh was not happy with it.
* He then reminded the Israelites how God took Abraham from his original land and gave him the land of Canaan plus many descendants . For example, Isaac and Jacob (Joshua 24:3-4)
* He also showed the Israelites’ elders how their ancestors like Jacob and his children went down to Egypt during the time they were affected by famine and narrated how they suffered a lot.
* Joshua notified the people gathered at Shechem that God loved them so much just like he loved the Israelites whom he sent Moses to deliver them from Egyptian bondage (Joshua 24:6-7)
* He also narrated the story to them of how God brought out the Israelites through the wilderness and gave them victory over their enemies until they entered Canaan m(Joshua 24:7-8)
* Joshua reminded the people that it was God’s [love that he gave them the land of Canaan which they had never cultivated and the cities they never built.
* He showed the people that they were living in the land and eating grapes from the wines they did not plant and olives from the trees they did not plant. So he wanted to remind them to always praise the Lord for such providence.
* At this same meeting, Joshua called upon the Israelites to honour the Lord, serve him sincerely and faithfully (Joshua 24:1ff)
* Joshua still called upon the gathering to get rid of the gods they worshipped in Egypt and observe monotheism (Joshua 24:14-15)
* Joshua also noted that the Israelites had to make a choice between serving God and the gods of their ancestors (Joshua 24:16)
* He reminded the Israelites how God had been keeping them safe whenever at war so needed always to be at his side.
* The Israelites at Shechem confirmed to Joshua that they would remain faithful to God and never serve other gods (Joshua 24:16-17)
* At this same meeting Joshua reminded the Israelites that their God was holy and they were not to be forgiven incase they rebelled against him (Joshua 24:19-20)
* He pointed towards the character of God by reminding them that God would never tolerate a rival i.e. belief in other gods (Joshua 24:22-24)
* He also observed that the Israelites were witnesses to being a chosen nation so had to keep this relationship well with God (Joshua 24:22)
* Joshua went ahead and gave the Israelites laws and rules to follow in the relation to the first covenant they made with God at Mt. Sinai.
* He also wrote these words in the book of the law of God, he took a great stone and set it up and there under the oak in the sanctuary of the law (Joshua 26)
* He finally gave his last warning to the people to keep away from rebelling against their God.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COVENANT RENEWAL TO THE ISRAELITES

Examine the relevance/ implication of the covenant renewal of the Israelites at Shechem.

* The covenant renewal at Shechem enabled the new generation of the Israelites to enter into personal relationship with God.
* It showed the Israelites the immoral nature of the land of Canaan and this is why he reminded them (the people) to avoid engaging in evil acts.
* It signified the theocratic nature of Israel i.e. God was their leader and still willing to keep guiding them if they followed Joshua’s words.
* It was a warning for the Israelites to avid backsliding and turn to other gods like their ancestors did for this could earn them God’s anger and punishment.
* This moment indicated that Yahweh was still the protector of the Israelites as Joshua said that he protected them right from Egyptian bondage through the desert up to where they are.
* It revealed God’s character to the Israelites .e. as a jealousy God who would not tolerate his rivals (Joshua24:19-20)
* It was a call upon the Israelites to respect and honour their God (Joshua 24:14)
* The covenant renewal at Shechem was used as a moment of warning the Israelites to avoid rebelling about against their God thus had to be obedient and maintained the covenant relationship..
* The renewal at Shechem indicated the holiness of God and thus the Israelites were to serve him with holiness too l(Joshua 24:19)
* It confirmed Israel as the chosen nation of God for Joshua reminded them to be witnesses of themselves for what God had done for them (Joshua 24:22)
* The Israelites came to know their history when Joshua told them that the land they had settled on was promised to them through their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Joshua 24:34)
* The renewal of the covenant at Shechem reminded the Israelites to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations as contained in the Sinai covenant basically being obedient to God’s laws.
* The event indicated to the Israelites the omnipresence of God as Joshua called the leaders and everybody to the presence of the Lord although they did not see him physically.
* Joshua’s words meant the Israelites had to remain united as a family of God i.e. as God’s chosen people.
* It was a call for the observance of monotheism as Joshua warned the people about the consequences of serving other gods.

LESSONS CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM THE COVENANT RENEWAL AT SHECHEM

How significant/ relevant was the covenant renewal at Shechem to the Christians?

* Christians should confirm their faith in God like the Israelites who confessed that they had seen what the Lord had done in their lives.
* Christians are called upon to worship only one true God like Joshua reminded the Israelites to maintain monotheism in order to avoid God’s harm to them (Joshua 20)
* Christians should trust in God’s protection like Joshua showed the people of Israel how God protected them from their enemies right from Egypt through the desert to Canaan (Joshua 24:12)
* Christians are called upon to serve God faithfully and sincerely just like Joshua called upon the Israelites to fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity ad faithfulness (Joshua 24:14)
* A Christian needs to serve God with holiness because he is a holy God basing on the words of Joshua noted in chapter 24:19.
* Christians ought to be united at all times because they are God’s elect just like the Israelites were.
* Christians are called upon to respect and honour the Lord as Joshua called upon the Israelites to respect and honour God.
* A Christian should always pray to God for whatever he/she wants. This could enable him or her experience the presence/ power of the Lord.
* A Christian should at all times listen to the advice given to him or her by the religious leaders. This would be in line with the Israelites who paid attention to Joshua at Shechem when he delivered the word of God to them.
* Christians are called upon to keep and fulfill their promises like the Israelites who were reminded that the land they had settled in was promised to the long time ago through their ancestors like Abraham.
* Christians should acknowledge the presence of God among them like the Israelites were called for the Lord’s presence in a humble way (Joshua 24:1)
* A Christian should depend on God’s provision for Joshua showed the Israelites how God had provided for them in life like being liberated from Egyptian bondage.

THE ROLE OF JUDGES IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

What role did the judges play in the history of Israel?

* They commanded the Israelites into battle fields . For example, Joshua commanded the Israelites and they conquered the city of Jericho.
* Judges like Samuel acted as God’s representatives i.e. spokesmen. Samuel took on God’s message to priest Eli which was a massage of destruction.
* The judges ensured that people practiced monotheism. This is one reason as to why Joshua organized a covenant renewal at Shechem.
* The judges led the Israelites into national repentance. Whenever people sinned against God, the judges would organize them for repentance such that their sins would be forgiven . For example, Samuel organized a national repentance day at Mizpah.
* They led people into prayers. It was their duty to ensure that people prayed to God the almighty by leading the prayers themselves . For example, Samuel was both a judge and a priest.
* They acted as seers. This meant that they used to predict/ foretell the future and people planned accordingly.
* Some composed hymns . For example, judge Debora composed a song which praised Yahweh for his greatness and omnipresence.
* Some judges acted as prophets like Deborah prophesies the defeat of Sisera one of the military commanders of Israel’s enemies and was indeed defeated by the Israelites army.
* They provided counseling services to the Israelites. Incase people had problems, they would go to the judges like Joshua or Samuel for counseling and guidance.
* The judges distributed land equally among the twelve tribes of Israel thus reducing land disputes . For example,judge Joshua distributed the land after taking over from Moses.
* They acted as king makers . For example, first king of Israel Saul was anointed by Samuel and when he was rejected by God Samuel anointed David as his successor (1 Samuel 11-12)
* The judges were instruments of harmony and co-operation among the Israelites. They used to move from place to place settling disputes among the Israelites . For example, Samuel used to move from Bethel to Gilgal and Mizpah and in these places he would settle people’s disputes (1 Samuel 1:15)
* The offered sacrifices t God on behalf of the Israelites. Whenever people wanted to sacrifice they did so through the judge or priest.
* They acted as priests of God. They ensured that people lived accordingly to the covenant laws (1 Samuel 2:12-36)
* They encouraged Israelites to cultivate crops after reaching Canaan so as to have enough food to eat.
* They were instrumental in responding the Israelites’ request e.. when the Israelites demanded for a king, he (Samuel) approached God and gave him a way forward to anoint Saul as their king (1 Samuel 8,9,10)

THE ISRAELITES’ BETRAYAL OF YAHWEH IN CANAAN

Examine the ways in which the Israelites betrayed God after they settled in Canaan

* The Israelites disappointed God in different ways in the promised land and they did this in the following ways;
* They worshiped the pagan gods like Baal, Asherah. Therefore practicing polytheism which was against the covenant way of life.
* They made illegal sacrifices i.e. some people including kings carried out human sacrifices a habit of the Canaanites but against God’s expectations . For example, king Manasseh sacrifices his son (2 Kings 4)
* They violated the act of Herem. On reaching Canaan, they were supposed to destroy the Canaanites with all their property but some Israelites did not do as instructed and spared the people and their property . For example, king Saul spared king Agag and some animals (1 Samuel 15:9)
* The Israelites neglected the covenant faith and put their trust in other gods and wealth hence disappointing God.
* The Israelites’ leaders were not exemplary. Instead of showing a good example to the Israelites by guiding them towards the covenant faith, they misguided them instead . For example,king Ahab married a foreign woman Jezebel and even introduced worship of Baal gods.
* They forgot the mighty acts of God, rejected him and began showing no signs of appreciation but turning to pagan gods for assistance.
* The Israelites’ demand for an earthly king was a clear indicator that they had turned away from God ( 1 Samuel 8)
* The Israelites began enslaving fellow country men which was against the covenant way of life.
* Some Israelites kings started making alliances with pagan nations which was denied of them according to Deuteronomy 7 for example king David made an alliance with Hiram the king of Tyre.
* The people of Israel disappointed God through refusing to listen to God’s prophets and at times conflicted with them . For example, prophet Amos conflicted with priest Amaziah (Amos 7:10ff)
* Some Israelites’ kings sold God’s land . For example,king Solomon gave out 20 towns of Israel to the Egyptian king as a payment to the debt he incurred during the construction of the Jerusalem temple and the place.
* The Israelites betrayed God by building worshipping places for pagan gods on God’s land. . For example, in1 kings 11:1ff Solomon is noted to have built worshipping places for the pagan gods of his wives.
* In addition Solomon betrayed God when he married a number of pagan women yet the Lord did not allow them to do so ( 1 kings 11:1-13)
* The Israelites especially in the Northern region began appointing priests by themselves which was a disrespect of God’s command where the Levites were the chosen people to serve God as priests (1 kings 12:32-33)
* The Israelites disappointed God in Canaan through practicing religious syncretism. They began worshipping pagan gods alongside Yahweh which was a disappointment.
* They involved in power struggle like king Saul tried to kill David after he realized that the Lord had rejected him and favoured David (1 Samuel 18:6-16)
* They involved in sexual immorality . For example, the two sons of Eli used to have sexual intercourse with the women serving at the temple 91 Samuel 2:12ff)

REASONS WHY ISRAELITES DISAPPOINTED GOD

Account for the Israelites’ disappointment of God in Canaan.

* The Israelites expected to find Canaan with flow of milk and honey as earlier promised to them through their ancestors but it was unfortunate to find a dry piece of land.
* They were over attacked by the pagan nations like the Amorites, Jebusites and many others but the Lord did not show his protection to them thus they decided to demand for an earthly king to be like the other nations around.
* The invisible nature of the Israelites’ God partly made them to disappoint him. They found it easy to adopt the Canaanite religion which had visible gods that would be consulted directly and they answered people’s prayers . For example, Baal and the goddess of Asherah.
* The Israelites were tired of God punishing them for even minor mistakes committed because of following the law of co-operate guilt for sin i.e. God used to punish them as a community even when a few committed the sin.
* The Israelites were ever being fought and defeated by their neighbours in war like the Philistines and Amorites. This made them to demand for an earthly king who would lead them in battle but this was a sign of disobedience.
* God used to take long time to answer the people’s prayers and yet they were operating in a crisis i.e. they always need his voice.
* Instead of receiving blessings that God promised to the Israelites, they were receiving curses like many diseases attacking them thus this made them to rebel against God.
* The change of environment and change of economic activity caused the disobedience of the Israelites to God. Israelites were pastoralists yet Canaanites were agriculturalists whom they witnessed acquiring a lot of wealth through asking blessings from Baal.
* The existence of various gods in Canaan who promoted people’s standards of living made the Israelites also think these gods would make them prosperous.

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM IN ISRAEL

Syncretism reefers to mixing of the true religion with false religion. In the case of the Israelites they were mixing their true Jewish religion with the Canaanite religion i.e. they believed in God the almighty ad at the same time they believed in the Canaanite gods.

Discuss the factors/ reasons which led the Israelites into practicing syncretism

The following factors led the Israelites into practicing syncretism;

* The absence or rareness of Yahweh’s visions towards the Israelites after settling in Canaan made them to worship the Canaanite gods thinking that Yahweh had forgotten them.
* The poor leadership among the Israelites led the people into syncretism; such leaders like priest Eli and his sons were weak and not interested in the spiritual development of the people.
* The change of the Israelites’ mode of work caused practice of syncretism. On reaching Canaan, they changed from pastoralism to agriculture and were convinced by the Canaanites that they had to worship the god of fertility who had power over land unlike Yahweh whom the Israelites worshipped.
* The Israelites had greed for material gains and this compelled them into syncretism. They were convinced that if they were to get a lot of wealth, they had to worship the Canaanite gods hence leading to syncretism.
* The Israelites lacked faith to Yahweh. Many Israelites lost ultimate faith in God the almighty. They resorted to double standards i.e. believing in God the almighty and the Canaanite gods.
* The search for physical gods led to syncretism. The Israelites were demoralized by the invisible nature of Yahweh and they started looking for the visible Canaanite gods.
* The presence of the young generation at the time of entering Canaan led to syncretism. The young people did not know the greatness of Yahweh therefore they were easily convinced by the Canaanite and they turned to syncretism.
* The intermarriages that took place contributed to the rise of religious syncretism. Many Israelites intermarried with the Canaanites which made them to succumb to the culture of their partners.
* The Israelites found God’s demands too difficult to fulfill yet when they compared with the demands of the pagan gods, they were a bit light and therefore they resorted to syncretism.
* Lack of biological knowledge led to the Israelites into syncretism. They were convinced by the Canaanites that they had to worship the gods of fertility incase they were to produce children.
* There was generally moral decay among the Israelites. The religious leaders by then did not live exemplary lie neither did they bother to call upon people for repentance of their sins.
* The Israelites were led into syncretism because of the presence were the false prophets. These prophets misguided God’s people and influenced them into paganism alongside true worship of God’s . For example, prophet Hannaniah.
* The failure of the Israelites to obey the act of Herem led to syncretism.
* If they had completely destroyed all the Canaanites, there would be nobody to befriend them into practicing syncretism.
* The prosperity and military strength of pagan nations led the Israelites into syncretism. They were convinced that once they followed the pagan gods, they would be strong.
* The two religions had some similarities and the Israelites looked at them as more or less the same. For example, the nature of worship through offering sacrifices was common to both religions.
* The Israelites took God for granted and continued sinning against thinking that they could not be punished because of their chosen status.

THE NATURE OF MANIFESTATIONS/ FORMS OF RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM IN ISRAEL

The following are the forms of syncretism that existed among he Israelites;

* The Israelites worshipped God the almighty and at the same time they worshipped the Canaanite gods.
* The Israelites were sacrificing to Yahweh and at the same time they sacrificed to pagan gods who at times demanded for human sacrifices. This is why King Manasseh reached to the point of sacrificing his son.
* The Israelites were having Jewish names and at the same time they were having Canaanite names . For example,Ishbaal.
* The Israelites used to celebrate the festival of the Passover and the Day of Atonement and at he same time they would celebrate Canaanite festivals like the appearing of the new moon.
* They used to consult the true prophets of God and at the same time they consulted the false prophets . For example, king Ahab consulted prophet Micah the true prophet of God and also Zedekiah (1 kings 22:1ff)
* The Israelites constructed worshipping places for God the almighty and at the same time constructed worshipping places for the pagan gods . For example, king Solomon (1 kings 6:1ff) and chapter 11:7-8)
* They used to perform miracles using God’s powers and at the same time they believed in the powers of magic that they could even use to challenge God.
* The Israelites trusted and had confidence in God the almighty but at the same time they trusted and had confidence in the gods and even prayed through them.
* In times of trouble, the Israelites used to seek for protection from Yahweh and at the same time they sought for protection from the pagan gods.
* They believed in God the almighty and had faith in him at the same time they believed in pagan gods and had faith in them.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ISRAELITES’ DISOBEDIENCE/ RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM/ BETRAYAL OF GOD

Discuss the consequences or results or impact of the Israelites’ betrayal for their nation

* God withdrew his protection and the Israelites were constantly attacked and defeated by their enemies including the philistines.
* Death became come in Israel and murdering one another was no longer feared . For example, plotted for the death of Uriah one of his army men even King Ahab killed Nabboth.
* The Israelites suffered from strange and sometimes incurable diseases like boils.
* The Israelites suffered from disasters like famine and drought due to their disobedience of God . For example, at the time of Prophet Elijah a drought occurred for a period of 2-3 years.
* The Israelites became more disunited and the climax being the division of the kingdom into two i.e. the Southerners ruled by Rehoboam the son of Solomon and the Northerners ruled by Jeroboam (1 kings 12)
* With time Israelites were taken into exile in Babylon where again they were subjected to slavery like the case was in Egypt.
* There was power struggle in Israel like king Saul tried to kill David after he realized that the Lord had rejected him and now his favours were to David to to be the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 18:6-16)
* Religious syncretism in Israel led to active prophetic institutions being planted by God in Israel. The Lord started sending his spokesmen to warn the people against their continued misconduct . For example, God sent Prophet Samuel, Amos, Ezekiel, Hosea and many others
* The Jerusalem temple was later destroyed and this resulted into the loss of the book of law.
* There emerged class differences in Israel where the rich lived in urban centres and the poor stayed in rural areas. This was exemplified during the time of prophet Amos.
* False prophets emerged in Israel in big numbers . For example, prophet Hannaniah who prophesied hope for the people.
* Israel was constantly attacked by neighbouring pagan nations like the philistines who made the life of the people unstable.

FORMS OF SYNCRETISM TODAY

How do Christians today practice religious syncretism?

* Some Christians worship God the almighty and at the same time they worship the pagan gods . For example,Mukasa, Muwanga, Kiwanuka, Musoke, Ddungu common among the Baganda.
* Some people have Christian names and at the same time have names belonging to the gods . For example, John Mukasa, Ddungu Joseph, Kiwanuka Simon, Musoke Douglas.
* Some people sacrifice to God by giving the tithe in the church and at the same time they sacrifice to the pagan gods by giving in “Bigali”.
* Some people consult God’s prophets i.e. the religious leaders and at the same time they consult the spirit mediums like fortune tellers and witch doctors.
* Some people seek protection from God the almighty and at the same time they seek protection from watch men, dogs and they believe that without such they can’t survive.
* Some people construct worship places for God the almighty and even contribute a lot in church projects but at the same time they build shrines at other homes where they worship the pagan gods.
* Some people bear external signs to prove that they are Christians . For example, moving with bibles, medles, rosary but at the same time possess sticks, bangles, banners of certain colours but are linked with their gods.
* Some people pray to God before eating or drinking anything and at the same time give lebation to the ancestors to enjoy i.e. pouring some drink or eat on the flour for ancestors. This is so commonly practiced during the introduction ceremonies in Buganda.
* Some people accept sacraments like baptism and confirmation and at the same time get involved in funeral rights, rituals of twins which involve pagan practices.
* Some people believe in God’s miraculous powers and at the same time believe in magical powers.
* Some people have body cuttings where charms are fixed at the same time they believe in God the almighty.
* Some people dedicate their children and house to God the almighty and at the same time they dedicate the same things to pagan gods.

How do Christians today disappoint God?

* Some Christians disappoint God by giving sacrifice to the pagan gods. The sacrifice is given in “Bigali”.
* Some Christians disappoint God by believing in magical powers. This is a disappointment to God because they know that God can do miracles.
* Some Christians disappoint God by involving themselves in corruption. For instance the government officers who embezzle government funds which are meant to do developmental work in the country.
* Some Christians disappoint God by worshipping pagan gods yet He is God almighty. Pagan gods like Mukasa, Musoke among others among the Baganda.
* Some Christians practice divisionism yet God emphasized togetherness. They divide themselves according to tribe, colour, religion and wealth which is total disappointment to God.
* Some Christians are selfish. This is a disappointment to God because he loves and cares for everyone.
* Some Christians name their children names belonging to the gods like Mukasa Andrew, Namusoke Christine as an addition to the Christian names. This shows disappointment to God.
* Some people involve in pagan practices. That is to say rituals of twins, funeral rights instead of involving in the sacraments like baptism. Thus disappointing God.
* Some people disappoint God through seeking protection from witches, dogs forgetting that God is the only protector.
* Some Christian leaders disappoint God by serving two masters at ago. For instance they construct worshipping places at the same time build shrines in their homes where they worship the pagan gods.

THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM TODAY

Examine the impact of religious syncretism to Christians today.

The following are some of the negative impacts of religious syncretism today;

* There are a number of fake prophets raising up among Christians . For example,prophet Muwanguzi Kiwedde.
* Some people have lost their lives through human sacrifice offered to the gods . For example, Joseph Kasirye murdered as a sacrifice to the gods in Masaka.
* Some Christians are evading God because of the misguidance offered to them by the traditional doctors.
* Some Christians have gone ahead to do without medicine when they get sick and only seek for treatment from the tradition medicine men and women.
* Some families have broken because the husband and wife reach to misunderstanding when one is noted to engage in the use of magic powers.
* Witch craftism is on an increase and even some church leaders are being accused of involving themselves in such activities . For example, Pastor Yiga who claims he sends the devils back to the bewitcher Pastor Kakande.
* There is hatred and envy among the Christians because some are noted practicing religious syncretism i.e. they have shrines at home but also go to churches.
* Some church activities have been commercialized as church leaders demand donations from Christians.
* There is increased level of hypocrisy among Christians i.e. they preach what they are not willing to follow.
* Believers are being manipulated by some church leaders who may even be devil worshippers.

The following are some of the positive effects of religious syncretism today;

* It has awakened the church leaders to be more serious in teaching Godly values and alerting the followers not to be misguided by those who practice religious syncretism.
* There is an increase in the number of churches built to meet the overgrowing people’s demands.
* The church leaders have formed a number of organizations like the Uganda Joint Christian Council which joins different church leaders to work together in fighting religious syncretism.
* Religious education is being encouraged in various ways like Sunday schools, catechism classes and even at school. This enables children to grow up in a morally upright way.
* Prayers and seminars are always being organized by different church leaders so as to fight and pray for those who are taken up by religious syncretism.

THE COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE ISRAELITES AND THE CANAANITE RELIGION

Compare the Israelites’ religion with the Canaanite religion.

The following are some of the similarities between the Israelite and Canaanite religion;

* Both religions involved sacrificing. The pagans offered sacrifices to the Canaanite gods as the Israelites also offered sacrifices to God the almighty (Yahweh).
* In both religions forgivingness was expected from God the almighty and Canaanite gods incase one repented.
* In both the Israelite and Canaanite religion disobedience would bring punishments and curses from God that is to the Israelites and gods to the Canaanites.
* In the Canaanite and Israelite religion obedience to the law would bring blessings to the people.
* In the Canaanite religion people were expected to repent for the sins committed and ask for forgiveness from God just like the case was in the Canaanite religion that repentance of sins was highly recommended.
* Both the Canaanite and Israelites’ religion had prophets. The Israelites’ religion had true prophets of God like Amos, Hosea and Ezekiel and the Canaanite religion had false prophets like Hannaniah.
* Both religions worshipped a super natural being and this to the Israelites was called Yahweh and to the Canaanites was called Eli.
* In both the Canaanite and Israelites religion much emphasis was put on prayers i.e. they both prayed to God the almighty and Canaanite gods respectively.
* In both religions, festivals were common and emphasized . For example, the Israelites celebrated the Passover festival and the Canaanites had different festivals like the appearance of the new moon.
* The following are some of the differences between the Israelites and Canaanite religion;
* The Israelites’ religion emphasized monotheism i.e. worship of one God while the Canaanite religion involved worship of many gods.
* The God of the Israelites was divine and not easily manipulated but the Canaanite gods would easily be manipulated because they depended on one’s offers.
* The Canaanite gods were visible i.e. existed in form of human beings and even would marry and have children while the Israelites’ God was invisible and spiritual in nature.
* The God of the Israelites was historical and had an origin . For example, is the God who appeared to Abraham and so even the Israelites’ religion had an origin but the Canaanite religion had no origin.
* The Israelites’ religion emphasized faith in God the almighty while the Canaanite religion emphasized physical needs.
* The Israelites’ religion was associated with many strange miracles which revealed God’s powers while the Canaanite gods had no strange miracles performed though they used some magic to perform miracles.
* The Israelites’ God was associated with the making of covenants with his children . For example, the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenant but there were no covenants made between the Canaanite gods and the people they served.
* The Canaanite religion demanded sacrifices to be made from anywhere like under the shades of big trees near mountains or hills while the Israelites’ religion demanded sacrifices to be made from the holy places like the Jerusalem temple chosen by God.
* The Canaanite religion was syclinic in nature i.e. Canaanites followed seasons while worshipping their gods . For example, during the sunny seasons, they would worship the god of the sun and at times worship the god of fertility if they needed children or good harvest but in the Israelites’ religion it was one God serving for all purposes.
* The leaders of the Canaanites were above the law and even had power over human life. They would feel free to kill anybody and grab his property while among the Israelites, no one was above the law of God.
* Among the Israelites, the religious leaders were chosen by God . For example, the priests and prophets but in the Canaanite religion the religious leaders were self appointed.

THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS BY ISRAELITES IN THE LAND OF CANAAN

The Israelites faced the following problems in the land of Canaan;

* They failed to get organized leadership or exemplary leaders . For example, he sons of Eli who acted as judges were wicked.
* The Israelites were not united as members of one family. Their union would only happen during fighting an enemy and after fighting they would be disunited again.
* Many Israelites were misguided by their leaders and turned to the pagan gods . For example, king Ahab who married Jezebel and came with high influence of pagan worship in Israel.
* The Israelites found God’ demands to difficult to abide by . For example, worshipping one God and marrying only fellow Israelites. This they broke and started worshipping the Canaanite gods and marrying their women.
* The Israelites were often attacked by foreigners who kept them on a run . For example, philistines and Amelkites. This made them demand for an earthly king who could lead them in battle.
* Many Israelites lost their lives as a result of fighting the Philistines, Amelikites.
* On reaching the Promised Land the Israelites experienced serious drought which resulted into famine.
* Immorality set in where by many Israelites be came immoral by involving in temple prostitution while praying to God even the Israelite priests like Eli’s sons used to practice cult prostitution.
* The Canaanites influenced the Israelites to carryout child sacrifice which was against the Mosaic Law.
* The Israelites married foreign women which was against the law of Moses because no Israelite was expected to associate or marry a Canaanite.
* The Israelites lacked faith in God the almighty and resorted to the Canaanite gods whom they worshipped.
* The Israelites rejected theocracy i.e. God’s leadership yet they were supposed to be led by God the almighty. They thought could be more powerful than Yahweh.
* They appointed their own priest which was against the covenant way of life because the priests were supposed to be appointed by God.
* The Israelites started consulting the false prophets instead of consulting the prophets of God. According to Mosaic Law, they were not expected to associate with false prophets.
* The Israelites started dedicating their children and property to pagan gods which was against the covenant way of life.
* God the almighty used to take long to answer their prayers. They felt abandoned, became impatient and turned to pagan gods who seemed to respond very fast to people’s problems.

SAMUEL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ISRAELITE MONARCHY

Discuss the circumstances that led to the birth of Samuel.

Samuel was a sacrifice of Elkannah and Hannah from the tribe of Ephraim in the town of Ramah. He was last greatest judge in Israel.

The following are the circumstances that led to the birth of Samuel;

* The judges who were supposed to offer military guidance to the Israelites had forgotten their roles. Thus the Lord decided to call Samuel through birth to carry on their duties.
* The birth of Samuel was due to Hannah’s faith in God. Hannah believed that God would provide her with a child and that is why she prayed to him desperately and later the Lord granted her prayers.
* Priest Eli’s blessings to Samuel’s birth. When Hannah told Eli that she wasn’t drunk but she was only pouring her problems onto God, Eli blessed her and said “…..may the God of Israel give you that you have asked for” (1 Samuel 1:17)
* Hannah’s prayer to God led to Samuel’s birth. While at Shiloh she cried to God bitterly and Eli thought she was drunk yet she was only desperate. This made God to grant her prayer.
* The need for a military commander led to Samuel’s birth. The Israelites were always under constant attacks by the Philistines and Amelikites. Therefore Samuel was born to act as a military commander to lead Israelites into wars.
* There was no righteous leader. The sons of Eli Hophin and Phinehas were judges by then but practicing sexual immorality at Shiloh.
* The situation in Elkanah’s family led to Samuel’s birth. Peninah used to prove her co-wife Hannah who cried all the time because she had no child. Therefore Samuel was born to bring comfort to Hannah.
* The need t pave way for a monarchy to the birth of Samuel. Samuel was responsible for anointing the first king of Israel Saul.
* There was need for someone in Israel to settle people’s disputes honestly. He was born to act as a fair judge, priest and prophet who settled people’s disputes better then the sons of Eli who were interested in making money.
* There was a need for God’s servant to take on the massage to the people. The sons of Eli who were meant to be God’s servants were wicked. Samuel was born to replace them.
* God’s visions were scarce which led to birth of Samuel. God would no longer talk to Eli and his sons because they had disrespected him (became unholy) and so Samuel was born to carry on that duty.
* Samuel was born to provide a solution to Hannah’s problem of bareness. Hannah was childless and miserable. Therefore God decided to bring an end to Hannah’s misery by getting her a son.
* The Israelites had disregarded the covenant faith. According to judges 17:6 it says “there was no king in Israel at that time, all people did as they pleased.
* During that time the false prophets were common who misled God’s people. Therefore Samuel was born at the right time to guide the Israelites well as God’s prophets.
* Samuel was born partly due to Hannah’s promise to Samuel’s birth. She had promised that if God gave her a son, she would dedicate him to Yahweh. So God wanted to test her faith.
* There was no recognized leader in Israel. Therefore Samuel was born to replace the sons of Eli who had failed to live exemplary. Samuel was to act as a leader of the Israelites who would re-organize the administration in Israel.

HANNAH’S PRAYER WHEN DEDICATING SAMUEL AT SHILOH (1 Samuel 2:1-11)

1. Comment on Hannah’s prayer when dedicating Samuel to God.
2. Examine the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-11

* In her prayer Hannah acknowledged the Lord of having filled her heart with joy for she noted that the Lord listened to her prayer and gave her a son.
* She also acknowledged the holiness of the Lord and observed that there was none as holy like him.
* Hannah laughed at her enemies to stop their loud boasting and to silence their proud words. She said “Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth such arrogance……” (1 Samuel 2:3)
* Hannah acknowledged the Lord as God who was all knowing. He knew her problems and responded to it positively.
* She also acknowledged the Lord’s love in providing for the needy people for she observed that the hungry were hungry no more (1 Samuel 2:5)
* She thanked the Lord as the giver of life and the same person who brings death (1 Samuel 2:6)
* In her prayer Hannah also stated that the Lord makes some people poor and some rich and humbles others (1 Samuel 2:7)
* She observed that the Lord has the power to raise the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from their misery (1 Samuel 2:8)
* Hannah acknowledged that the Lord was the one who made people companions or princes and that he would be able to place them in places of honour 2:8.
* Hannah observed that the foundations of the earth belong to the Lord upon them he has set the world. 2:8.
* She acknowledged the Lord as being the protector of the lives of his faithful people. This indicated that the Lord had protected to the point of producing a child because she was faithful.
* In 1 Samuel 2:9, Hannah also noted that although the Lord is the protector but he is the same person who makes the wicked to disappear in darkness . 9.
* She also noted that the Lord’s enemies would be destroyed by thunder from heaven. 2:10.
* She still mentioned that the Lord would judge the whole world when time comes . 10.
* Hannah observed that it’s the Lord ho gives his kings strength and that he would make his children be victorious kings on earth 10.

LESSONS FROM HANNAH’S PRAYER TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

Discuss the relevance of Hannah’s prayer of dedicating Samuel to modern Christians.

* There is need for Christians to praise and worship God like Hannah did especially when he does good to us.
* Christians should depend on God for their protection for he is the giver and protector of life.
* Christians should have faith in God that he can save them at the last moment just like he saved Hannah from being tormented by her co-wife Peninnah who had children and Hannah did not.
* A Christian should live a repentant life style so as God could forgive her of the sins he/she committed.
* Christians are called upon to live a prayerful life just like Hannah who continued praying to God and was saved from her barrenness situation.
* Christians are called upon to thank God for whenever he does good in their lives like Hannah thanked him when she produced Samuel.
* A Christian should have the spirit of giving offerings in the church and also if possible dedicate at least one of his children to the service of God like Hannah dedicated Samuel to be a priest at Shiloh.
* Christians learn to have a spirit of helping the needy not just despising them like Peninnah used to undermine her co-wife Hannah because she had not produced any son to their husband Elkannah.
* The Christian religious leaders should be ready to assist their followers in times of trouble like priest Eli who prayed for Hannah’s success in achieving a child.
* Christians ought to acknowledge the holiness of God copying he example of Hannah who said there is no one as holy like the Lord.
* Christians should acknowledge the omnipotence of God. Hannah indicated God’s power in her prayer when she said the Lord brings death and makes others alive.
* Christians are called upon to acknowledge God as the creator of the universe basing on Hannah’s words in her prayer who said that the foundation of the earth is designed by the Lord.

THE REJECTION OF ELI AND HIS SONS FROM PRIESTHOOD (1 Samuel 2:12ff)

1. Discuss the circumstances that led to the rejection of Eli’s family from priesthood.
2. Account for God’s rejection of Eli and is sons as the priests of Israel.
3. Justify the prophesy against Eli’s family.

When Eli grew old, he appointed his sons to at as judges meaning that he had made judgeship hereditary yet the judges of Israel were supposed to be appointed by God.

As if the above was not enough error made the sons of Eli were wicked and therefore failed to follow their father’s example so as the Lord rejected them due to the following reasons;

* Eli’s sons violated the regulations governing God’s sacrifices as they were laid down in the book of Leviticus. They would get their share of the sacrifice before God which was not the right procedure.
* The sons of Eli were greedy. They ate the fatty parts which were meant for God (1 Samuel 2:15ff)
* They treated God’s sacrifice with disrespect. They used to take the meat by force before fats meant for God would be burnt (1 Samuel 2:17)
* The sons of Eli and their father were rejected as priest at Shiloh because they treated the worshippers badly. They were so arrogant and rude to the people. They sent servants to grab the meat by fore from worshippers.
* Eli’s family was rejected because the children practiced sexual immorality at Shiloh. They had sexual intercourse with the women who worked at the entrance to the tent of the Lord’s presence (1 Samuel 2:22)
* The sons of Eli did not respect their father. They did not listen to his advice however much he talked to them about their wickedness. Hence leading to the rejection of Eli’s family (1 Samuel 2:25)
* The Lord rejected the family of Eli because Eli did not stop his sons from speaking evil things against Yahweh as noted in 1 Samuel 3:13.
* Eli honoured his sons more than God. That is why he even let them fatten themselves on God’s sacrifices whereas Eli was supposed to honour God alone (1 Samuel 2:29)
* Eli’s rejection was partly because when Eli grew old, he appointed his sons as judges making judgeship hereditary yet the judges were supposed to be appointed by God.
* Eli as a father failed to control his family. He did not rebuke his sons in strong terms as expected. Thus calling for his God’s rejection of his family.
* The sons of Eli annoyed the Lord for failing to uphold the covenant law. They had no respect for the worshipping place and that is why they had sexual intercourse from the Lord’s presence.
* God’s rejection of Eli’s family was due to the fact that the family had failed to listen to God’s prophets. God sent prophets to warn the whole family of Eli but they did not change.
* The sons of Eli caused God’s destruction of their family because they were unrepentant in addition to being wicked. They did not repent and ask for forgiveness from God at all even when they saw they had committed sins and annoyed God.
* The sons of Eli showed a bad example to the people. Being judges, they were expected to be exemplary but instead continued to be wicked and sinful.
* Eli’s family was rejected partly because the sons were corrupt. As judges they were expected to be honest but instead they were interested in making money in other words they asked for bribes.
* Eli’s sons were impatient with the worshippers. They could begin eating the sacrificial meal before the fatty parts were taken away for boiling.
* The sons of Eli were discriminative. They favoured worshippers who could come with fatty animals and discriminated those who came with small birds or animals like pigeon as sacrifice. Thus annoying God to the point of rejecting the family.

LESSONS CHRISTIANS RELIGIOUS LEADERS LEARN FROM THE REJECTION OF ELI’S FAMILY.

What should modern religious leaders learn from the rejection of Eli’s family?

The religious leaders learn the following from the rejection of Eli’s family;

* Religious leaders should honour the Lord’s sacrifices of offerings unlike the sons of Eli Hophni and Phinehas who treated God’s sacrifice with disrespect.
* The modern religious leaders are called upon to respect the holy places of worship unlike the sons of Eli who disrespected God’s worshipping place by involving in sexual intercourse with the women who worked at the entrance of the Lod’s temple.
* Modern religious leaders are called upon to have total faith in God unlike the sons of Eli who were unfaithful to God.
* The religious leaders today ought to have total trust in God unlike Eli’s sons who were not trusting God.
* They should be exemplary to their followers not like Eli’s sons who showed a bad example to the Israelites by grabbing even the parts of the sacrifice meant to be offered to God i.e. fatty parts.
* Modern religious leaders should have respect to the elders unlike the sons of Eli who disrespected their father and failed to take up his advice.
* Religious leaders today should continue guiding the followers even when they go astray so as to enable them change their minds unlike Eli who seemed to have given up his children when they continued sinning.
* The modern religious leaders should repent when they sin against God because he s ready to forgive them unlike Eli’s sons who acted as priests when their father was aged but failed to repent although they knew their mistakes.
* They should promote justice and fairness unlike Eli’s sons who were dishonest while judging cases and even were corrupt.
* Modern religious leaders ought to be obedient to the Lord’s commands unlike Eli’s sons who were disobedient to the laws governing the Lord’s sacrifice as stipulated in the book of Leviticus.
* They should seek for God’s guidance in their leadership not to be like Eli’s sons who were not mindful to be guided by God by God but they were guided by their own works.
* Modern religious leaders are called upon to be contented with what they have unlike the sons of Eli who were so greedy and envious that in addition to what they could take as priest they grabbed even the Lord’s sacrificial parts.

CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH RELIGIOUS LEADERS SHOULD BE REJECTED TODAY

* The religious leaders would be rejected under the following circumstances;
* In case they become immoral and commit evils like homosexuality, adultery, fornication which do not glorify God’s name, then they should be rejected.
* If they just appoint their favorites like family members/ relatives to serve as God’s messengers without considering merit, rejection of a religious leader.
* Rejection of a religious leader can base on swindling church funds for their personal interests which are not in line with God’s expectations. For instance some use church collections t build up magnificent homes.
* If the religious leader uses his/her position to divide up the followers which may cause chaos in the church then people will give up with him/her.
* Rejecting a religious leader may depend on one using the church to cheat people. In other words, the church is their personal business where they demand special fees to pray for the people.
* When they become corrupt and ask for money in exchange for their services which are supposed to be free or voluntary, the followers may reject a religious leader.
* If they breach their vocational goal i.e. the catholic priests marry when it is against their faith.
* If they become money minded instead of assisting people to know God, they should be rejected.
* In case one begins misguiding God’s people from the right way that is towards the covenant obligations . For example, pastor Kiwedde.

THE CALL OF SAMUEL (1 Samuel 3:1ff)

1. Comment on the call of Samuel to be a prophet of Israel.

3. Give an account of Samuel’s call.

* In those days when Samuel was serving the Lord under the direction of priest Eli, there were very few messages and visions from God.
* On one night Eli and Samuel were sleeping in the sanctuary where the covenant box was kept and then Samuel received a call in form of a vision from God.
* The Lord called [Samuel and he answered “Yes sir” and ran to Eli and said you called me and hear I am sir. But Eli told him to go back to bed because he had not called him.
* Samuel slept and again he heard the voice calling him and ran to Eli the chief priest. But still Eli told him to go back and sleep.
* After a while, Samuel had a similar voice calling him gain went back to Eli who told him that if he hears the voice again he should speak in these words “ Speak Lord your servant is listening” so Samuel went back t bed.
* The Lord came again and called “Samuel, Samuel!” Samuel responded that “Speak Lord your servant is listening.
* The Lord told him that some day he was going to do something terrible to the people of Israel that everyone who hears about it would be stunned.
* The Lord promised Samuel that he was to carryout all his threats against Eli’s family from the beginning to the end.
* He told Samuel he had already told Eli that he was going to punish his family forever because his sons had spoken evil things against Him.
* Again the Lord told Samuel that Eli knew what his sons were doing but he never stopped them.
* God declared to the family of Eli that no sacrifice of offering would ever be able to remove the consequences of their terrible sin.
* After that Samuel slept again. The following day he was scared of delivering the massage to Eli.
* On waking up, Eli asked Samuel what the Lord had told him but Samuel was hesitant to deliver the massage to Eli.
* Eli scared him that God would punish him if he kept anything.
* So on that note, Samuel told Eli everything the Lord had sent him to deliver.
* In response Eli said “He is the Lord he will do whatever seems best to him”.

Examine the message which God gave to Samuel when he approached him at night

The following was the massage that the Lord gave to Samuel;

* The Lord told Samuel that some day He was going to do something terrible to the house of Eli and Israel. This signified that God has authority over his people.
* Everyone who would hear about what God was going to do was going to be stunned. This signified that Yahweh was about to bring a big shock to the nation of Israel.
* The Lord noted to Samuel that on that day he was going to carryout his threats against Eli’s family from the beginning to the end. This meant that Yahweh was not happy with Eli’s sons.
* Yahweh told Samuel that he had already notified Eli that he was going to punish his family forever. He noted that Eli’s sons had spoken evil things against him. This signified that they were blasphemous before God.
* Yahweh told Samuel that Eli knew what his sons were doing but did not stop them. This indicated that Eli was responsible for the mistakes that went on for along time since he did not control them.
* The Lord noted that when the Israelites hear the massage they would have their ears tingle. This signified the fourth coming disaster God was about to bring to his people especially on Eli’s family.
* Yahweh solemnly declared to Eli’s family through Samuel that no sacrifice was going to be given to Him to remove the consequences of sin. This meant that Yahweh was now completely tired of Eli’s family.
* The massage of judgment on the priestly family of Eli was due to God’s anger for they had failed to live exemplary to the rest of the Israelites.
* The massage was good news to Samuel because it elevated him to the priesthood institution.
* After receiving the massage Samuel stayed in the bed until morning. Very early in the morning Eli asked him what God had communicated.
* At first Samuel concealed the massage since it contained bad news for Eli but Eli threatened Samuel that the Lord would kill him if he kept quiet.
* Samuel finally released the massage to Eli and held nothing back/ everything.
* Eli then acknowledged the massage and in response he said “He is the Lord, He will do whatever seems bests to Him”.
* As Samuel grew up at Shiloh, the Lord was with him all the time and he made everything he had said come true.
* The Lord continued to reveal himself at Shiloh where he had appeared to Samuel. This signified Yahweh had resurrected his relationship with the Israelites.

Account for Samuel’s response when Eli demanded to know the content of the massage

At first when morning came, Samuel had feared to deliver God’s massage to Eli and this was due to the following ways;

* It might have been because the massage involved bad news for Israel. The Lord had told Samuel that whoever would hear the massage was going to be stunned and his/her ears would tingle.
* It was because the massage implied Samuel was the one to succeed Eli to serve as Israel’s new priest yet Samuel feared to annoy Eli.
* Samuel had grown under the care of Eli and respected him and he knew it was impossible for God to destroy his family although he had mentioned it.
* Samuel was a human being. So just like any other human being, God’s massage to Eli also shocked him to the point of fearing to deliver it.
* Samuel feared Eli’s sons Hophine and Phinehas who were ruthless and would have killed him incase it was revealed openly.
* Samuel responded negatively/ slowly because he could not predict what Eli had in his heart. He had to take caution by first undertaking the mood of the old man. But when Eli said “He is the Lord, He will do whatever seems best for Him” then Samuel felt comfortable for having delivered the massage.
* Samuel could have suspected that Eli and his sons were likely to chase him out of the sanctuary where he had grown learning priestly roles.
* However when Eli threatened Samuel that the Lord would kill him if he kept anything quiet. Samuel then told everything that God said due to Eli’s threats.
* Samuel responded to Eli’s demand to know the content of the massage because he was threatened of death if he kept hiding the massage from Eli.
* Samuel responded by giving Eli the massage because God had already told him to deliver the massage to Eli. So Samuel could not resist God’s instructions.

How were God’s messengers called in African traditional society?

God’s messengers in ATS were chosen or called in the following ways;

* A messenger would be called by choice of God. God would choose a person . For example, among the Baganda a medicine man who would later also choose his children to help him in administration of medicine.
* Some used to get revelations from God and he would commission him to perform religious tasks . For example, the so called “abalubaale” in Buganda who acted as religious leaders.
* Sometimes God would directly give special powers to a person. For instance a person could be given the power by God to heal others and to foretell the future (fortune tellers).
* God called His messengers sometimes through night dreams. Then He could deliver message to the people through this person.
* The messenger of God could be called through possessing spirits . For example, spirits would make a person act kin an extra-ordinary way like speaking in the accent of the dead person.
* Some people went through traditional training . For example, in Western Uganda among the people of Kisoro a person would be trained to be a traditional healer or even a fortune teller.
* Inheritance of property was another method how God’s messengers were called in ATS. A person who was chosen to inherit the father was believed also to possess the power of God.
* Some people would be born in extra0ordinary ways indicating they had God’s call . For example, producing twins; if they were mistreated one could be burnt.
* Some people in ATS were gifted from birth and one would be born with special features on the body to indicate he/she had God’s mercy . For example, in Ankole a person born with a spear like feature on the body indicated that he would be a future leader.

To what extent were Eli’s sons responsible for their father’s rejection from priestly service?

To a larger extent Eli’s sons were responsible for their father’s rejection from priestly service as noted below;

* Eli’s sons violated the regulations concerning sacrifices as read in the book of Leviticus. They misused them such that those who had brought them were left confused whether they reached Yahweh or not (1 Samuel 2:12-16)
* They were indisciplined, unexemplary and unworthy of serving the Lord and the people. In other words were scandalous and their acts were not fit to be seen in the society hence leading to their father’s rejection from priestly service (1 Samuel 2:12).
* Eli’s sons were greedy and often grabbed fatty parts of the sacrifices before they would be prayed for thus annoying God leading to the rejection of the family.
* The sons of Eli led to his rejection from priestly service because they ate the very parts of the sacrifices that were meant for Yahweh and they could not allow anybody to burn such parts. Such gross indiscipline of the sons was shown even when the worshippers were still around and children would come with long folks and grabbed the fatty parts meant for God (1 Samuel 2:13 or a Samuel 2:29)
* Eli was rejected from priestly service because his sons were blasphemous i.e. abused God’s holiness, name and integrity in the presence of worshippers (1 Samuel 2:25)
* Eli was rejected from priesthood because his sons to act made judgeship heredity when he appointed his sons to act as judges yet the judges of Israel were to be appointed by God (1 Samuel 12-15)
* Eli’s sons were responsible for their father’s rejection from priestly service because they used to speak evil things against Yahweh and their father did not stop them ( 1 Samuel 2:25)
* The sons of Eli led to his rejection from priestly service because they failed to uphold the covenant law. They had no respect for the worshipping places hence they used to have sexual intercourse from the Lord’s presence.
* Eli’s sons were discriminative. They favoured the worshippers who could come with fatty animals and discriminated those with small birds like animals and sacrifice. This made them to be responsible for their father’s rejection from priestly service (1 Samuel 2:13-14)
* Eli was rejected from priestly service because his sons were corrupt. As judges they were expected to be honest but they accepted bribes. This is because they were more interested in money 91 Samuel 8:1-3)
* The sons of Eli led to his rejection from the priestly service because they showed a bad example to the people. As judges, they were expected to be exemplary but instead continued to be wicked and sinful ( 1 Samuel 8:3)
* Eli’s sons caused rejection to their father from priestly service because they were not repentant. They did not repent and ask for forgiveness from God however much they sinned and annoyed God ( 1 Samuel 2:25)
* They did not listen to their father’s advice however much he talked to them about their wickedness. Thus this led to the rejection of Eli from priestly service.
* The sons of Eli caused rejection to their father because he honoured his sons more than God. This is why he even let them to fatten themselves on God’s service whereas Eli was supposed to honour God alone.
* Eli was rejected from priestly service because of his failure to rebuke his sons in strong terms as expected. This made him to fail to control his family.
* Eli’s sons practiced sexual immorality at Shiloh. They had sexual intercourse with the women who worked at the entrance of the tent of the presence of the Lord hence this led to the rejection of Eli from priestly service ( 1 Samuel 2:22)
* The sons of Eli caused rejection to their father from priest service at Shiloh because they treated worshippers badly. They were so arrogant and rude towards the people. They even reached an extent of sending servants to grab the meat by force from the worshippers ( 1 Samuel 2:13-16)

“The revelation of God to Samuel was a turning point in the history of Israel” discuss.

To a larger extent God’s revelation to Samuel created a big change in the life of Israelites as noted below;

* The inefficient administration of Eli and his sons was changed with Samuel’s refreshment i.e. Samuel became the new holy priest of Israel.
* God’s revelation to Samuel was realized when Eli’s sons died in war against Philistines which brought relief to the Israelites.
* The Ark of the Covenant was captured and taken in the war between Israelites and Philistines. This meant that Israel had to stay without religious symbols and almost their God was taken ( 1 Samuel 4:1-11)
* The errors in worship which were there during Eli’s time and his children like taking the fatty parts that were meant to be sacrificed to God were corrected. 1 Samuel 2:29-30 Samuel the new priest purified Shiloh by making worshipping orderly.
* Once Eli’s sons were removed, the nation started experiencing prosperity under the charismatic leadership of Samuel (1 Samuel 7)
* Corruption which was at Shiloh where the sons of Eli, Hophine and Phinehas used to take bribes from the worshippers stopped and justice was availed to the worshippers ( 1 Samuel 8:3)
* The worshippers became satisfied once again that their sacrifices reached Yahweh since Samuel presided over them in a holy way.
* There was change in people’s religious feelings as Samuel the new priest encouraged religious feelings as Samuel the new priest encouraged repentance and monotheistic worship (1 Samuel 7)
* Israel became militarily stronger than she was in Eli’s time due to Samuel’s good leadership (1 Samuel 7)
* God’s revelation to Israel started being common as Samuel was doing good work.
* Through Samuel God started communicating to the people once again unlike in Eli’s days when his sons failed to become mediators of the people.
* At time passed by, Israel under Samuel’s leadership changed to kingship from Saul, David, Solomon (1 Samuel 8:1ff)
* However to a smaller extent some evils remained in Israel even when Samuel was appointed to be their religious leader.
* Some people persisted with their polytheistic tendencies.
* Some people continued practicing religious syncretism.
* As Samuel grew old some of his children behaved like Eli’s sons.
* Samuel’s sons also abused the rituals of sacrifice like the sons of Eli which was scandalous.
* Samuels’s sons too became immoral just like it was before his rise.
* The sons of Samuel who succeeded him were also corrupt like Eli’s sons.
* Samuel blundered by appointing his sons to succeed him in the priestly service whch was not his role but God’s duty.
* Because of the bad trends of events in Israel by then, the elders stormed Samuel’s residence at Ramah demanding for a king. He also consulted God about it and ended up choosing Samuel as their first king.

Lessons Christians learn from the call of Samuel

Christians learn the following lessons from Samuel’s call;

* Christians should respond positively to God’s call just like Samuel responded positively to God’s call when he said “ Speak Lord your servant is listening”.
* Christians are called upon to be obedient just as Samuel was obedient to God’s instructions and delivered the massage to priest Eli.
* The Christians should condemn evils in their society or in the church just as God pronounced to Samuel his condemnation against Eli’s family.
* They should live exemplary lives likewise Samuel showed a good example when he carried out God’s missions.
* They should live a righteous life likewise Samuel was righteous that is why God appeared to him during the call.
* The Christians should deliver God’s massage without fear or favour unlike Samuel who had feared to deliver God’s massage to priest Eli.
* They should live a holy life likewise Samuel lived a holy life and that’s why God revealed himself to him knowing he could bring back morality in Israel.
* Christians should listen to Eli’s advice and the elders just as Samuel listened to Eli’s advice and delivered all the massage without keeping anything back.
* A Christian is called upon to be humble especially when called upon when serving God just as Samuel responded with humility when he had the voice calling him.
* Just like Samuel respected the Lord’s sanctuary Christians should have respect for God’s house like avoiding acts like practicing sexual immorality there.

Comparison between the call of Samuel and the call of Moses

The following are some of the similarities between the call of Samuel and Moses;

* Both Samuel and Moses were to act as God’s spokesmen. In other words, they were to speak on God’s behalf.
* Both Samuel and Moses showed sins of faithfulness to God’s call. This was indicated in delivering God’s massage to the respective people i.e. Moses delivered the massage to Pharaoh and then liberated the Israelites and Samuel delivered the massage to priest Eli about stopping him from serving priestly roles.
* They both received calls directly from God. God appeared to Samuel directly without using a mediator just as he appeared to Moses directly.
* Both Samuel and Moses received their calls while in foreign places. Moses was in Midia while Samuel as a foreigner in Eli’s family/ Shiloh.
* By the time of their call, both Samuel and Moses had already received some knowledge of priesthood. Moses had gained the skills from priest Jethro in Midia and also Samuel had gained the skills from priest Eli.
* Both calls were between a superior partly and an inferior partly i.e. Samuel and Moses were inferior and God was the superior partly.
* Both calls were initiated by God the almighty. Therefore it was out of God’s initiative that both Moses and Samuel were called.
* Both Samuel and Moses were addressed by their names at the time of the call. In the burning bush, God called Moses over two times, “Moses! Moses!” (Exodus 3:4) and while Samuel was sleeping God called him also two times i.e. “Samuel! Samuel!” (1 Samuel 3:10)
* Both Moses and Samuel never experienced God’s call before. Therefore it was their first time that is why they had not realized God’s call.
* Both Moses and Samuel were hesitant to deliver God’s massage. Samuel was afraid to deliver the massage to Eli and also Moses was afraid to deliver the Israelites from slavery.
* In both calls Moses and Samuel were in holy places. Moses received the call from the holy mountain of God while Samuel received the call from the sanctuary at Shiloh.
* Both Samuel and Moses directly had God’s voice. Moses had the voice from the burning bush calling him and also Samuel had the voice calling him when he was sleeping at Shiloh.
* Both Samuel and Moses were Yahweh’s own choice and their vocations started before they were born. At the birth of Moses Pharaoh of Egypt was killing the male sons of the Jews but Moses survived miraculously, likewise Samuel was born miraculously by his mother Hannah who had been barren for some long time and was tormented by her co-wife Peninnah.
* Both carried prophetic vocations i.e. Samuel prophesied on the dangers to befall upon Eli’s family, likewise Moses also prophesied on the plagues to befall Pharaoh’s nation Egypt.
* The two also acted as judges. Moses impartially judged the cases between Israelites in the Exodus and likewise Samuel also judged a number of cases among the Israelites at places like Gilgal, Bethel and Mizpah.

However, Moses and Samuel had some differences in their calls as noted below;

* Samuel was called during the night when he was sleeping at the Lord’s sanctuary at Shiloh while Moses was called during day time when he was taking care of Jethro’s flock i.e. his father-in-law.
* Samuel never asked for God’s name because he knew that it was God speaking to him having been directed by Eli the chief priest while Moses asked for God’s name which God revealed later and said “I am who I am”
* Moses covered his face because he feared to look at God, Exodus 3:6 while Samuel remained as he was because he knew he was chosen.
* Moses was told to remove his scandals because he was standing on a holy [ground at the time of his call. This clearly showed that God does not associate with unholy people (Exodus 3:5) while Samuel remained the way he was because he was holy given the fact that he was already serving at Shiloh.
* When Samuel was called he did not doubt God’s word neither did he ask for any particular miracle to be performed by Yahweh to prove his power but Moses was given power to perform miracles because at first he hesitated to carry on God’s duty.
* Samuel just heard God’s voice calling his name “Samuel! Samuel!” (1 Samuel 3:10) whereas Moses received his call in form of a burning bush which was not being consumed by fire (Exodus 3:1ff)
* During Moses’ call, God described his background to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:6) while during the call of Samuel he did not describe himself because Samuel did not ask many questions.
* Moses was mature by the time he received his call and even married to one of the daughter of priest Jethro plus having some children. But Samuel was called when he was a young boy serving God under Eli’s direction/ guidance.
* Samuel was holy and righteous without any sin noted in his life at the time he was called while Moses was not clean by the time God called him because he had committed earlier on murder while he was in Egypt ( Exodus 2:12)
* Samuel received his call when he was in the sanctuary i.e. at Shiloh already serving the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1-21) while Moses received his call when he was at Mt. Sinai the holy mountain of God while looking after the flock of his father-in-law Jethro (Exodus 3:1ff)
* Samuel received his call when he was already working as a young priest (God’s servant under Eli’s direction, 1 Samuel 3:1-10 but Moses received his call when he was acting as a shepherd taking care of the flock of his father-in-law (Exodus 3:1)
* Samuel was to speak God’s massage by himself to Eli while Moses asked for a spokesman claiming he was a stamerer and was given his brother Aaron (Exodus 4:14)
* Moses was sent to Egypt to save the Israelites who were suffering bondage of slavery while Samuel was sent to deliver a massage of destruction and rejection to the family of Eli.

THE IMPORTANCE/ROLE PLAYED BY SAMUEL IN THE ISRAELITES’ HISTORY

1. Assess the influence of Samuel on Israel’s life.
2. Discuss the role of Samuel in the history of Israel.
3. To what extent was Samuel a reformer in the political, social and religious life of the people of Israel.

* Samuel was a very important figure in the history of the Israelites in the following ways
* Samuel acted as a prophet. He used to foretell and whatever he prophesied would some true. Therefore he was a true prophet of God.
* Samuel acted as a priest. He served the people of Israel, prayed to God and led the people of Israel into prayers ( 1 Samuel 8:6, 7:5)
* Samuel sacrificed to God on behalf of the people of Israel. Whenever people wanted to sacrifice, they would present their sacrifices to Samuel who would offer them later to God.
* Samuel acted as the judge of the Israelites. According to 1 Samuel 7:16-17, he used to settle people’s disputes by moving from his homeland Ramah to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah settling disputes.
* Samuel acted as a ruler of Israel. He ruled Israel for many years and in fact as long as he lived, Israel was at peace ( 1samuel 7:15)
* Samuel organized Israelites for national repentance. Whenever people sinned against God, he would convey them and lead them into national repentance )1 Samuel 7:1ff)
* Samuel acted as a military leader of the Israelites. He tried to fight and defeated the enemies of the Israelites basically the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:13)
* He acted as a mediator between God and the Israelites . For example, when the Israelites demanded for a king, Samuel presented their request to God and later he delivered God’s response to the people (1 Samuel 8)
* Samuel acted as a king maker. When the Israelites demanded for a king, Samuel anointed king Saul as the first king and when Saul was rejected by God, Samuel went on to anoint David as his successor ( 1 Samuel 10, 16)
* Samuel acted as a counselor. Many people used to approach him whenever they had problems and guided them on how to overcome the problems by providing counseling services.
* He guided the people towards the covenant faith. He ensured that the Israelites followed the the commandments and other laws i.e. he ensured hat they lived according to God’s expectations stated in Exodus 20.
* Samuel promoted monotheism in Israel. It was his duty to ensure that people worshipped one God and abandoned any pagan worship that annoyed Yahweh( 1 Samuel 7:3-4)
* He acted as a seer. He used to predict the future like he said that kings were not good for the Israelites to be demanded because they mistreat people and this came true for kings like Solomon who carried out over taxation. He also predicted to Saul about the last donkeys that had already been found (1 Samuel 10:2)
* He acted as spokesman of God. In this he delivered the massage about the rejection of Eli’s family as instructed by God ( 1 Samuel 3:17-21)
* Samuel acted as an intercessor. Whenever God wanted to punish the Israelites, Samuel would plead for them through prayers.

However, Samuel was remembered with regrets or had some negative roles or weaknesses he displayed as noted below;

* Samuel identified the covenant box which had been captured by the Philistines but he never endevoured to bring it back to Israel (1 Samuel 4,5)
* Samuel used to delay in his work of sacrifice to the Lord. This is why Saul became impatient and took on the priestly role of offering the sacrifice when they were going to war with Philistines although it was against God’s expectation (1 Samuel 13)
* He led people into sin. According to 1 Samuel 13 Saul committed a sin of sacrificing to God because Samuel delayed to arrive to officiate the sacrifice as they had agreed.
* Samuel made the office of judgeship hereditary. According to 1 Samuel 8:1ff he appointed his sons Joel and Abijah to act as judges yet the judges were supposed to be appointed by God.
* Samuel was power hungry. When the Israelites demanded for a king, he was displeased because he had appointed his sons as judges and the demand for the king meant that the Israelites were rejecting his sons to be the next judges (1 Samuel 8ff)
* Samuel was uncompromising in character (not forgiving). When king Saul disobeyed God he asked Samuel to pray for him such that he would be forgiven by God but Samuel refused ( 1 Samuel 15:24ff)
* Samuel failed to discipline his children. His sons Joel and Abijah were as bad as Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas that is why they were rejected by the Israelites to serve them as the new judges and later demanded for a king ( 1 Samuel 8:3)

THE RISE OF KINGSHIP IN ISRAEL (1 Samuel 8)

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons Joel and Abijah to act as judges. Unfortunately they did not follow their father’s example as they were corrupt and did not decide cases honestly.

On this note therefore, the elderly leaders of Israel went to Samuel demanding for a human king whom they said “look your getting old and your sons don’t follow your example, so then appoint a king to rule over us…” (1 Samuel 8:1-6GNB)

ACCOUNT FOR THE ISRAELITES’ DEMAND FOR A KING

The Israelites demanded for a king because of the following reasons;

* Samuel had become too old to effectively mobilize and organize the people of Israel who had no trust in his children thus demanding for a king to replace Samuel (1 Samuel 8:4-5)
* The sons of Samuel were too corrupt, asking for bribes from the people of Beersheba. Therefore they were not exemplary to the people which forced them to demand for a king who would replace the wicked sons of Samuel ( 1 Samuel 8:2-3)
* The Israelites noted that Yahweh was slower when it came to providing solutions to the people’s problems so the leaders of Israel who went to Samuel wanted a human king whom they thought that they would be quicker in reacting to their problems.
* People were tired of the hereditary leadership. Samuel had appointed his sons Joel and Abijah to inherit him as judges they way priest Eli did. But before they were also inefficient like Eli’s sons, people wanted a change.
* The people wanted a king they would talk to directly without using a mediator like Samuel was doing incase they were to talk to God, they had to use a mediator Samuel which was a long process.
* The people of Israel were tired of theocracy i.e. God’s leadership. God was claiming to be their king. Therefore they wanted somebody to replace Him because He took long to answer their request.
* The people of Israel wanted a visible king, one they would see and discuss with. Yahweh who was their king was invisible.
* The Israelites wanted a king who would restore their religious righteousness since the sons of Samuel Abijah and Joel had failed because they were equally immoral.
* The Israelites wanted a king who would create national unity of Israel. Since they were disunited under God’s leadership. They thought a king would unite them as one people.
* They wanted a king who would build a stronger nation of Israel. They seemed to be weaker militarily as they were constantly attacked and defeated by enemies like Philistines and Amorites.
* Economically the neighbouring states were moving steadily at the expense of the Israelites. So the demand for a king was to assist them also develop economically.
* The Israelites wanted a king who would mobilize and instill courage to them during their wars just as the pagan kings were doing.
* The neighbouring states such as Philistia used to attack the Israelites and were always registering victory as note in 1 Samuel 4:1-11. This forced them to demand for a king so as to join military superiority.
* The capture of God’s Ark of covenant by the Philistines placed Israel in a weaker position that needed to be strengthened trough getting their own king that could lead them in battles after their covenant box ( 1 Samuel 4)
* The Israelites wanted to be like other neighbouring nations which had kings such nations included Philistia, Tyre and Egypt whose kings acted as military commanders.
* The God of the Israelites seemed to be unfair when He decided cases. According to the Israelites one man’s sin would lead to punishment of the whole community or society which seemed to be unfair. So they wanted a king who would pass fair judgment.
* The leaders of Israel who demanded for a king might have based on the fact that Samuel was not only old but had too much work still to be done. Therefore he needed someone to assist him in doing his work.

SAMUEL’S REACTION TO THE PEOPLE’S DEMAND FOR A KING

Why was Samuel displeased with people’s demand for a king?

Samuel was unhappy/discontented with people’s demand for a king because of the following reasons;

* The demand for a king meant that the Israelites were rejecting Samuel as a judge which annoyed him because he was still interested in serving them.
* The demand for a king meant that the Israelites were rejecting Samuel’s sons. He had appointed Joel and Abijah to act as judges when he grew old but they were rejected by the people which also annoyed Samuel (1 Samuel 8:1-2)
* The people’s demands for a king displeased Samuel because he was still enjoying the officer of judgeship and the privileges attached to it.
* Samuel was displeased because he had already introduced a hereditary system of leadership by making his sons to serve as judges. Therefore he never wanted to lose out this opportunity from his family.
* The demand for a king equally displeased Samuel because the Israelites did not consult him before to find out his opinion but they went to him demanding directly for a king ( 1 Samuel 8:5-7)
* Samuel’s worry was that demanding for a king by the Israelites was a sign of prematurity. According to him it was not the right time for them to get a king as God would have already appointed one before their demand.
* The demand for a king meant that the Israelites were rejecting God’s leadership (theocracy) God was supposed to continue being their king forever.
* Samuel was displeased because the Israelites were trying to copy the pagan way of life. Pagan states had human things but the order of the Israelites was that they were not supposed to copy the pagan way of life as instructed in the book of Deuteronomy 7.
* Samuel’s dissatisfaction was because the Israelites’ demand for a king were trying to show that Samuel was now a weaker leader who needed a replacement.
* Demanding for a king who would fight was meant that the Israelites doubted God could fight wars and protect them as well which annoyed Samuel.
* Samuel felt unhappy for the people’s demand for a king because according to him it implied the great work that the people of Israel were not appreciative of the great work he had done for them as a judge, military, commander, priest and many others
* Samuel was not welcomed to the demand of a king reason being it had exposed the weakness of Samuel’s sons and therefore his weaknesses as a parent.

Samuel was displeased because he predicted the following about how kings were going to treat the Israelites;

* He predicted that the kings were going to mistreat God’s people . For example, they would make their children servants and soldiers.
* He also feared that Kings they wanted would grab people’s vineyards, olive groves, the best fields and give them to their officials which also annoyed Samuel.
* He foresaw the Israelites being exploited oppressed and over taxed the way the pagan people were being treated by their kings.

What would be the consequences of the Israelites according to Samuel (1 Samuel 8:10-22)

The Israelites were to face the following reparcations/impacts after attaining a king;

* The king would make their sons his soldiers some would serve in his war chariots and others in his cavalry and others would run before his chariots.
* Samuel noted that the king would also make their sons officers in charge of a thousand men while others would be in charge of 50 men.
* Samuel told the Israelites that the kings they demanded for would still make the sons of the people they rule to plough their fields, harvest the crops, and make weapons and equipments needed for the king’s chariots.
* He showed that the daughters of the people would be taken by the king to make perfume for him and work as his cooks and his bakers.
* Samuel also noted to the Israelites that the king would take their best fields, vineyards and olive groves and give them to his officials.
* He said that the king would take many as his servants, take away their cattle, donkeys and make them work for him.
* He also notified the people that after getting the king that he would take a tenth of their flour to his palace.
* Samuel notified the people that after getting the king many of them would become his slaves.
* He also informed them that when that time comes they would complain bitterly because of his mistreatment to them.
* Samuel told them that although they would complain, the Lord would not listen to their complaints.
* People aid no attention to Samuel but continued demanding Samuel to give them a king to be like other nations. Fortunately whatever he told them later came to pass.
* The king would also lead the Israelites into worship of other gods especially from the pagan nations.
* Samuel noted that Israel would be defeated in their wars with their neighbouring enemies because of the mistakes of the king.
* The king would not wish to respect God’s servants like the priests and prophets.

HOW KINGSHIP IN ISRAEL JUSTIFIED SAMUEL’S EARLIER FEARS

* King Saul disobeyed God’s instructions when he spared king Agag’s life because of corruption as Samuel had earlier predicted how kings would behave (1 Samuel 15:7-9)
* King David behaved as earlier as Samuel had predicted when he killed Uriah one his soldiers and took his wife Bathsheba which indicated grabbing people’s wife (2 Samuel 11:1-27)
* David and Solomon discriminated God’s people when they were kings. They favoured people from the Southern region and put the Northerners to forced labour which led to the division of the kingdom into two parts (1 kings 12, 10:14-29)
* Samuel feared that the kings would mislead God’s people which was fulfilled by Saul who forced people to eat meat with blood which was against the covenant way of life (1 Samuel 13)
* In the same way kings would disrespect religious people like priests. Saul disobeyed when he decided to carry on a duty of sacrificing to the Lord when they were going to war with the Philistines which was a duty of Samuel (1 Samuel 13:9ff)
* Kings like Solomon sold God’s land which justified Samuel’s fear that the kings would sell God’s land which was against God’s expectations (1 kings 9:10-14)
* Kings like Solomon and Ahab married foreign women which Samuel had feared and predicted. These women came with their pagan gods and contaminated Israel with pagan worship (1kings 11:1-3,18)
* King Ahab grabbed Naboth’s vineyard which fulfilled Samuel’s predictions about kingship that the kings would grab their subjects’ property (1 kings 21)
* King Solomon conducted forced labour, over taxation and exploitation to the people of Israel especially the Northern tribes. This was in line with Samuel’s fears that kings would oppress and exploit the people.
* Nabboth was killed by King Ahab on false charges just as King David killed Uriah. This proved Samuel’s fears since he had predicted that the kings would shed innocent blood (1 kings 19)
* Jezebel, Ahab’s wife brought Baal worship into Israel land they numbered to over 800 false Baal prophets. This was in line with Solomon who brought various gods into Israel after marrying a number of pagan women (1 kings 18)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ISRAELITES’ KINGS

An ideal king of Israel was expected to be with the following characteristics;

* They were to be appointed by God’s will. Therefore no one would become a king without God’s approval.
* A king of Israel was expected to respect the Law of Moses with all the commandments which God gave to the Israelites (Exodus 20). Therefore the kings were not above the law.
* The Israelites’ king was supposed to be a citizen of Israel. Therefore no foreigner was supposed to lead the Israelites as a king. Incase it so happened God would not be on their side.
* The king of Israel was also supposed to possess God’s spirit to guide him in his work. For example when Samuel anointed Saul the spirit of the Lord took control of him and even when Saul was rejected the spirit of the Lord went onto David.
* An Israelite king was supposed to be exemplary to his subject i.e. he was expected to show a good example to the people he led being righteous and promoting monotheism.
* Incase of disputes or any other problems that arose among the Israelites, the king was expected to judge honestly incase they were consulted. For example king Solomon acted as a good king when settled a difficult dispute between prostitutes (1 kings 3:16ff)
* The Israelites’ kings were supposed to treat all people equally. Therefore tendencies of discrimination among the tribes like David and Solomon who discriminated the Northerners were not expected leading to the division of the kingdom.
* The Israelites’ kings were supposed to be committed to God’s work. They were always to work hand in hand with God’s prophets whom they had to consult . For example, king David tried to work well with prophet Nathan as noted in 2 Samuel 12:1-15.
* The king of Israel was expected to be monotheistic and promote worship of one God i.e. they had to ensure that they worshipped God alone not any other god.
* The Israelites’ kings were supposed to accept their mistakes and repent whenever they sinned against God since no one was above the law. King David tried to do this as noted in 2 Samuel 12:13.
* They were also supposed to lead people into war and fight with them whenever there was need. King Saul led the Israelites in battle with the Philistines 1 Samuel 13 not like David who was supposed to be at battle but remained at home and ended up even committing adultery with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife (2 Samuel 11)
* The Israelites’ kings were not supposed to marry any foreign woman or even associate with pagan people. Therefore marrying them like king Ahab did was against God’s expectations (1 kings 11, 16:29ff)
* The Israelites’ kings were not expected to make an alliance with pagan states, they were to depend on God alone. Unfortunately, kings like Solomon made an alliance with king Hiram of Tyre to exchange with him cedar and pine wood for some pieces of towns of the Israelites (1 kings 9:10-14)
* He Israelites’ kings were supposed to show equal love to all the Israelites’ tribes since all people were from God’s image. They were to be loved equally by their king who also liberated them from Egyptian slavery.
* The Israelites’ kings had to ensure that there was democracy in Israel. They were expected to listen to people’s complaints and views and later offer solutions to them. In other words the Israelites’ kings were supposed to serve the people but not to act as dictators.
* The Israelites’ kings were supposed to have respect for their office. They were supposed to use their office not to exploit the people, grab their property and take away their wives as some of them did like King Ahab and David.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PAGAN KINGS

The pagan kings were the rulers of the pagan states like Philistia, Ammon, Tyre, Moab and many others They were having the following same characteristics;

* The pagan kings were entitled to forced labour i.e. they were free to take their people to work on their building programmes, homes, farms and many others without payment.
* In the pagan nations all their subjects were under and answerable to the king alone unlike in the Israelites’ life where people were answerable to God and the kings. Therefore at any time in the pagan nations people would become slaves of the king.
* Among the pagan people, kingship was hereditary i.e. it could be passed on from father to son without consulting God.
* The pagan kings were above the law. They did not respect the law of God as given to Moses on Mt. Sinai and that is why on many occasions they destroyed human life through killing.
* The pagan kings used to perform duties of priests . For example, they would officiate the offering of sacrifices to God and conduct prayers.
* All property in the pagan nations belonged to a king. Incase a king admired any property like a beautiful girl even if married, were free to grab her since everything belonged to the king.
* The king’s palace was a source of authority. Before any decision would be made by the various judges in the kingdom, the king had to be consulted. Generally the king was the final decision maker.
* The pagan kings had freedom to make alliances with neighbouring states since they depended on these alliances for protection.
* The pagan kings were free to marry from neighbouring states hence promoting intermarriages and polygamy at the same time.
* The pagan kings used to consult false prophets and they believed in their prophecies.
* The pagan kings used to practice polytheism which was also promoted among the people. They worshipped many gods and they also ensured that the people worshipped these gods.

KING SAUL (1 Samuel 9:1ff and 10)

THE CHOICE AND ANOINTMENT OF SAUL AS THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL

Examine the circumstances that led to the choice and anointment of Saul as the king of Israel.

Saul was the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin. He is said to have been a very handsome man in the prime of his life and he was ahead taller than anyone else in Israel.

THE CHOICE OF SAUL

* While Saul and the servant were looking for the lost donkeys of his father Kish, Samuel was also looking for him to anoint hi as the first king of Israel.
* Saul and the other servant searched for the donkeys in different regions and reached in the region off Zuph. Saul then suggested to the servant that they should go back home because his father would stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about them.
* However, the servant suggested to Saul that they should go and consult a holy man who lived in the town. The holy man was a prophet 9samuel) commonly known as a seer because whatever he predicted came true.
* Again Saul was worried that they had nothing for the prophesy. The servant suggested that they would give him a silver coin he had (1 Samuel 9:6)
* Saul replied, “a good idea! Lets go” so they went to the town where the holy man lived.
* As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women who were coming up to draw water. They asked these women whether the seer was in town and they answered “Yes he is and in fact he is just ahead of you. If you hurry you will catch up with him”.
* Saul and the servant went to the town and as they were going in , they saw Samuel coming out towards them on his way to the place of worship (1 Samuel 9:14)
* Samuel’s meeting Saul was planned by God because the previous day God had told Samuel that “tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the tribe of Benjamin, anoint him as the ruler of my people of Israel and he will rescue them from Philistines” (1 Samuel 9:16)
* Saul went to Samuel and asked him where the seer lived. Samuel told him that he was the seer Samuel also instructed Saul to go ahead of him to the place of worship together with the servant both were to eat with Samuel that dy.
* Saul accepted and they were led by Samuel. Samuel told them that has for the donkeys that were lost three days ago had already been found at home.
* Then Samuel led Saul and his servant into a large room and gave them a place at the head of the table where guest about 30 of them were seated. Samuel ordered the cook to bring the piece of the meat that he had told the cook o set aside.
* The cook brought the piece of meat of the leg and placed it before Saul and Samuel told Saul to eat the piece of meat because it was reserved for him.
* After the meal they went down from the place of worship to the town, they made up a bed for Saul on the roof and they slept there.

THE ANOINTMENT OF SAUL AS A RULER OF ISRAEL (1 Samuel 10)

* The following day in the morning at dawn when Samuel woke up he also woke up Saul such that he could send him on his way back home. This signified that God was determined to fulfill the promise earlier made in the book of Deuteronomy 17:14-20.
* Saul got up and together with Samuel went out into the streets.
* As soon as they reached at the edge of the town Samuel requested Saul to tell the servant to go ahead of them. The servant left and Saul stayed behind for a while. This signified that there was some secret massage from God that Samuel wanted to communicate to Saul.
* Samuel told Saul to stay there for a minute and he would tell him what the Lord had for him.
* Then Samuel took a jar of olive oil and poured it on Saul’s head, kissed him and said “the Lord anoints you as ruler of his people of Israel, you will rule his people and protect them from all their enemies”. This act of kissing signified God’s blessing to Saul.
* Samuel told Saul that the Lord had anointed him as a ruler of the people of Israel. This signified that the choice of Saul was from Yahweh and therefore he was supposed to act as his representative.
* Samuel told Saul that he was to be a ruler of all the people and protect them from all their enemies. This signified that God is a protector, supporter and through Saul’s support and protection was to be extended to the masses 9israelites).
* Again Samuel told Saul that he would leave him behind and he would meet two men near Rachael’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin. These were to confirm to Saul the discovery of his father’s donkeys. This signified that Samuel was a prophet and a seer.
* Samuel then told Saul that he then was to meet a group of prophets down dancing immediately the spirit of the Lord was to take control of Saul. This meant that Israel was to glorify the glory of the Lord as a symbol of their election (1 Samuel 10:5-7)
* From there at the amp, Samuel told Saul hat he was to proceed and go to Gilgal where he would meet him and they offer fellowship sacrifices. But this was to happen after seven days when Saul was waiting for Samuel at Gilgal (1 Samuel 10:7-8)
* When Saul turned to live Samuel, God gave Saul a new nature and everything happened that day. For instance when Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him and suddenly the spirit of God took control of him, he joined in there dancing and shouting.
* When people saw Saul dancing with the prophets, they asked themselves, “Has Saul become one of the prophet?. This is how the saying originated among the Israelites “has even Saul become a prophet”. (1 Samuel 10:2)
* After dancing and shouting, Saul went to the altar o the hill.
* Then later Saul’s uncle saw him with the servant and asked where they had bee. Saul answered they went to see Samuel after failing to see the donkeys. But Saul didn’t tell the uncle what Samuel had told him about his becoming a king.

FAILURES OF SAUL

THE WAR AGAINST THE PHILISTINES (1 Samuel 13:1ff)

* After Saul had been anointed and crowned as a king of Israel, he staged a war against the Philistines. During this war, Saul failed to abide by God’s instructions as far as sacrifice were concerned.
* Saul had an appointment with Samuel to meet within 7 days but Samuel didn’t appear to officiate the sacrifice in order to win God’s favour.
* Since the Philistines were ready o attack Israel and Saul’s men had started deserting him, he decided to offer the burnt sacrifice which was against God’s expectations.
* As soon as he finished sacrificing Samuel appeared and blamed him for what he had done. The sacrifices were supposed to be presented to God by only his chosen priest.

Saul’s foolish act of sacrificing on Samuel’s behalf was against the covenant way of life because it had the following implication;

* By officiating sacrifice, Saul was trying to copy the pagan way of life. It was very common for the pagan kings to officiate sacrifices.
* Saul lacked patience. He failed to wait for Samuel to come and officiate the sacrifice. As soon as he finished sacrificing, Samuel arrived. Had he been patient a little he wouldn’t have sinned against God.
* Saul was unrepentant. After acting foolishly, by sinning against God, he didn’t ask for forgiveness but instead e was blaming Samuel for having delayed. By sacrificing, it meant that Saul disrespected the priestly office which he tried to assume.
* Saul wasn’t exemplary. He showed a bad example to his subjects because they knew that the law didn’t allow non-priests to officiate sacrifices.
* When he was threatened by the Philistines he didn’t consult God on what to do in Samuel’s absence but instead he officiated the sacrifice which was wrong.
* Sacrificing showed that Saul was a coward. He feared that the Philistines would attack him before winning God’s favour and also his people were deserting him that’s why he sacrificed yet as a king he was supposed to remain brave and firm.

THE WAR AGAINST THE AMELIKITES (1 Samuel 16:14)

* When the Israelites were moving to the Promised Land, the Amalekites tried to stop them from passing through their land which greatly annoyed God.
* Samuel told Saul that God was going to punish them. Saul was to carryout the act of Herem. He was supposed to destroy all the Amalekites, young and old and all their property. Everything was to be completely destroyed.
* When they went t fight, Saul spared king Agag’s life (the king of Amalekites) and best animals. He only destroyed the worthless ones. This annoyed God who regretted for having made Saul king of Israel.

Saul’s act had the following implications

* It was a sign of disobedience. This was a holy war where Saul was supposed to destroy all the Amalekites and their property as commanded by God, unfortunately he disobeyed God’s instructions.
* Saul proved to be materialistic; instead of doing what the Lord commanded him to do he was interested in amassing material wealth which was against God’s expectations.
* Saul feared and respected his soldiers more than God. He allowed them to spare the best animals instead of obeying God’s command. He was only supposed to have respect for God and fear him alone.
* Saul was greedy that is why he spared the animals for himself. This implied that he was not contented with what he was having.
* Saul failed to show a good example to his subjects . For example, showing greed, and accepting to be bribed by Agaga were bad examples to the people.
* Saul was a liar. When Samuel met him, he told him that he had obeyed the Lord’s command yet it was not the case, he had disobeyed instead.
* Saul’s act showed that he was corrupt. He spared Agag’s life hoping that a ransom which was a sign of corruption and against the covenant way of life.
* Saul spared Agag’s life yet he was supposed to destroy all the people i.e. all people were supposed to receive equal punishment i.e. complete destruction.
* Saul was arrogant when Samuel talked to him. He behaved as if he had not committed any sin (as if he fulfilled God’s will)
* Saul was interested in personal prestige. After sinning against the Lord and God’s rejection, he wanted to continue moving with Samuel in order to maintain his status before the people (1 Samuel 15:25)

OTHER FAILURES OF SAUL

* Saul starved the Israelites and refused them to eat, they became so weak with hunger the whole day (1 Samuel 14:24ff).
* Saul was inhuman. At one time he had the Israelites to eat meat with blood which was against the covenant way of life (1 Samuel 14:37)
* Saul became jealousy of David. The women were praising David after killing Goliath which never pleased Saul.
* Saul wanted to kill David on many occasions. When Saul was possessed by an evil spirit he wanted to pierce David who was playing for him the harp (1 Samuel 18:11)
* Saul killed the priests of Nob. When he was searching for David, he got to know that priest Ahimelech consulted the Lord for David and also gave him food to eat. Therefore as a punishment all the priests were killed (1 Samuel 22:1ff)
* Saul consulted Baal which was against the covenant way of life cause the Israelites wee supposed to consult God’s prophets only (1 Samuel 28:3ff)
* Saul committed suicide which was against the covenant way of life. “Saul was wounded….so he took his own sword and threw himself on it…” (1 Samuel 31:3ff)
* Saul was the first king. Therefore he had no point of reference hence God would have forgiven him.
* Saul sacrificed on Samuel’s behalf because he was trying to save the situation remember the Philistines were threatening the Israelites.
* If Saul repented after failing to carryout the act of Herem. God would have forgive him and given him a second chance.
* Saul was a human being liable to making mistakes. Therefore it didn’t serve him right t be rejected as king a king.
* Basing on the achievements of Saul like having a strong army and loving his country it was not right to reject him.
* Samuel was responsible for Saul’s failures . For example, He delayed to appear to offer the sacrifice and Saul became impatient and sacrificed on his behalf. Had he come in time Saul wouldn’t have sacrificed.
* Samuel used to put Saul under a lot of pressure. In most cases when one is working under pressure, he is liable to making mistakes.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF KING SAUL

* When he became a king of Israel he fought against all his enemies every where and he was victorious . For example, he fought Moab, Ammon and the Philistines.
* He saved the Israelites from any attack. He fought all the states that had become a threat to Israel . For example, he defeated the Amalekites and the Philistines.
* He had a strong army, he used to fight fiercely against the enemies f Israel. Whenever he fought he found a man who was strong or brave, he would enlist him in his army. (1 Samuel 14:52)
* Saul was a repentant king which was in line with God’s expectations . For example, when he failed to carryout the act of Herem during the war against the Amalekites. God was not happy with him, but he was in position o realize his sin and to ask forgiveness (1 Samuel 15:24-25)
* Saul made military services voluntary i.e. he did not force anyone to join the army.
* Saul had love for his country. This was further portrayed when he died at the battle field defending his country.
* Saul tried to treat all the Israelites equally. He never discriminated the Israelites the way Solomon and David did.
* Saul was a brave and good soldier who used to lead his people into war without fear . For example, he attacked the Philistines all the time and the Amalekites.
* The Philistines and the Amalekites who were a threat to Israel were weakened during the reign of King Saul.
* Saul was a fair administrator. Therefore he wasn’t a dictator because he gave his people chance to decide on so many issues.
* King Saul was a good king during his early years of kingship. He worshipped God followed Samuel, respected the Mosaic Law teachings and the kings code of conduct.
* Saul tried to unite the Israelites and they followed him whenever he called them upon. They fought together and lived together unlike during the reign of judges. The Israelites were in position to realize that they were one people.
* Saul died at the battle field in defense of his country. Therefore, he died as a hero irrespective of the way he met his death.
* Saul introduced the monarchy system of leadership. He was the first king of Israel. Before his leadership, the Israelites were led by judges who were assisting God. Therefore the leadership of Israel was theocratic.
* Saul taxed the Israelites fairly. He taxed them according to their ability to pay. He didn’t over tax them like Solomon did.
* Saul did not live an extravagant life as compared to other kings especially King Solomon. He was a simple king who lived a simple life.

THE LESSONS POLITICAL LEADERS LEARN FROM SAUL’S REIGN

The lessons political leaders learn from Saul’s reign are as follows;

* Political leaders should have love for their country likewise Saul had too much love for his country that’s why he even died while fighting for his country.
* Political leaders should be fair since also Saul was known for being a fair administrator.
* Political leaders should be exemplary unlike Saul who failed/ disobeyed God’s instructions and failed to carryout the act of Herem.
* They should seek for God’s guidance unlike Saul who was not guided by God and ended up sinning against him.
* They should have faith in God unlike Saul who lost faith in God and believed sacrifices were more important than faith.
* They should be repentant likewise Saul repented after realizing his sin (1 Samuel 15:1ff)
* They should consult God’s prophets unlike Saul who consulted a medium which was against God’s expectations.
* They should be contented unlike Saul who acted with a lot of greed towards the best animals of the Amalekites.
* Political leaders should make military services voluntary likewise Saul did not force people to join the army.
* Political leaders should respect other people’s offices unlike Saul who abused the priestly office and sacrificed on Samuel’s behalf.

Sample questions

1. Examine the circumstances which led to the anointment of Saul to kingship.
2. What lessons can present political leaders draw from Saul’s administration?
3. “King Saul contributed nothing to the devil of Israel.” discuss.
4. Justify Samuel’s reaction to Saul’s act of sparing king Agag.
5. What lessons do modern Christian leaders draw from this incident?
6. “That was a foolish thing to do” Samuel answer 13:13. Examine the ways in which Saul reflected foolishness.

KING DAVID THE IDEAL/ MODEL KING OF ISRAEL (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Background

David was a young shepherd and a son of Jesse coming from Bethlehem. He was anointed by the aging Samuel when Saul was still a king but the spirit of the Lord had gone out of him. David took over kingship in Israel from Saul who had been rejected by God from his various mistakes he committed like breaking the act of Herem as noted in.

David became a new king of Israel when he had already entered the service of Saul as a soldier and a musician who played the lyres in the palace to calm down the evil spirit that was disturbing Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-23)

David was a great friend of Saul’s son Jonathan who even saved him from his father who wanted to murder avid (1 Samuel 19:1-13)

It is unfortunate to note that later David married Saul’s daughter Michal.

David is said to have become a king at the age of 30 years succeeding Saul and was a model king of the Israelites.

FACTORS THAT FAVOURED THE RISE OF DAVID TO KINGSHIP

Discuss the factors that enabled David to rise to power in Israel.

To what extent was David’s rise to power due to his own ability?

The factors for David’s rise to power were both his won ability and outside his ability. Below are some of the factors that led to David’s rise to power out of his own ability;

* David was a military generous man in his early days of infancy. He joined Saul’s army and demonstrated his military ability by killing the Philistine military commander Goliath (1 Samuel 17:41ff)
* He was a humble person. Right from his childhood to adulthood, he offered himself to be a man of low status in his family, like he was in charge of the flock while his brothers were relaxing at home. (1 Samuel 16:11-13). Even when Prophet Nathan came to him after committing adultery and murder he humbled himself.
* David was a brave man. He had no fear in him when Samuel told him that the Lord had chosen him to offer protection to his people and be their next king (1 Samuel 23 and 2 Samuel 8)
* David was a courageous man which enabled the Lord to choose him as a king. He managed to kill Goliath the Philistine giant who was making all the Israelites to tremble.
* David had a tolerant character which worn him kingship. He remained calm and composed even when king Saul wanted to kill him on several occasions (1 Samuel 18, 19 and 21)
* He was a God fearing man. He loved God wholeheartedly and that is why he composed various songs and psalms of praises which prompted God to be on his side.
* He was a talented musician. This talent made him enters the palace of Saul and played the lyres whenever the evil spirits disturbed. This enabled him even learn leadership skills at the palace (1 Samuel 16:14ff)
* David was a hard working man. He used to take care of his father’s flock at a tender age. This prepared him to be a future leader in Israel.
* He had a strong respect of the Sinaic covenant right from the youthful days. This could have made God chose him to be a king due to the respect of his laws.
* David rose to power in Israel partly because he had ability to keep secrets. He was able to keep the secret of anointing him as the next king of Israel until when Saul died (1 Samuel 16:1ff)
* He was patient in character. He was able to wait until the death of king Saul before taking over the kingdom (1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 2:2)
* David was favoured to be the next king because he had the heart of forgiveness. He forgave King Saul on several occasions when he knew that the king wanted him killed.
* David’s friendship with various people especially king Saul’s son Jonathan enabled him rise to power. Jonathan concessionary informed David to escape when Saul planned to kill him at the palace.
* However David’s rise to power in Israel was due to factors outside his ability noted below;
* David was an experienced shepherd as it is noted that he used to look after the sheep of his father Jesse. This prepared him to face different challenges in administration and how to deal with people.
* David had great support from Yahweh the God of the Israelites to become a king. When God sent Samuel to anoint him, it was a confirmation that he had favoured him to succeed King Saul.
* David’s initial stay in Saul’s palace gave him some administrative and political ambitions and skills of leadership.
* David’s strategic move to marry Saul’s daughter Michal, introduced him to the royal family hence paving way for David’s future leadership.
* There was political vacuum created in Israel after the rejection of king Saul. At that moment the only capable leader next to kingship was seen as David.
* The political insecurity created by the threats from the Philistines under the leadership of Goliath favoured king David to power. When David courageously came up and defeated the Philistines. Many Israelites jubilated by singing; David has killed thousands but David tens of thousands.
* Majority of the Israelites supported David to be the next king. This increased his popularity among the people.

THE ANOINTMENT OF DAVID (1 Samuel 6:1ff)

Give an account of David’s anointment to kingship.

* When Saul was rejected by God, Samuel kept on grieving over him. God told Samuel to stop mourning because Saul had been rejected as king of Israel.
* Then God told Samuel to anoint David the son of Jesse as the new king of Israel.
* The mission of anointing David was dangerous because Saul would kill Samuel if not David if he heard about it.
* God told Samuel to pretend as if he was at Jesse’s home just to offer a sacrifice t the Lord. But Samuel had to invite Jesse to the sacrifice.
* Samuel did as the Lord told him to do and he went to Bethel where the city leaders came trembling to meet him for the sacrifice. However they asked Samuel whether he was there for a peaceful visit (1 Samuel 16:4)
* Samuel responded to the people’s question that he was there for peace as he said, “I have to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, purify your selves and come to me”.
* Samuel also requested Jesse and his sons to purify themselves and come for the sacrifice. When the sons of Jesse arrived, Samuel saw Jesse’s Eliab and said to himself “This man standing here in the Lord’s presence is surely the one he has chosen.”
* But the Lord instructed Samuel not to judge basing on the tallness of handsomeness but looking at the heart.
* Samuel then asked Jesse whether he had any other son and Jesse said there was the youngest that was taking care of the sheep.
* Samuel commanded Jesse to bring him forward else the sacrifice could not be carried out before he arrived (1 Samuel 6:11)
* David was brought and he looked a handsome, healthy young man with sparkling eyes.
* The Lord said to Samuel that he was the one to be anointed king. So Samuel took the olive oil and poured it on David’s head and anointed him in front of his brothers (1 Samuel 6:13)
* Immediately the spirit of God took control of David and was with him from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah (1 Samuel 6:13)

NB: However, David was not supposed to take over kingship immediately not until Saul’s death.

QUALITIES WHICH MADE DAVID A GOOD KING

Account for David’s success

The following helped David to be a good successful king;

* David was a shepherd who took care of the flock of his father Jesse. Since he had experienced many hardships in the grazing ground like wild animals, he was in position to lead the people and find solutions to their problems.
* David won God’s favour, God was always with him and that is why he was always successful like when he brought the covenant box back to Jerusalem.
* David was anointed by Samuel after his appointment by God. This assisted him to become an ideal king.
* David was a god king because he had ability to expand Israel. In fact he expanded it in all directions and he was also able to capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites.
* David was a good administrator which termed him a good king. Using the administrative skills, acquired from the palace, he was in position to distribute power among very many people.
* David had a quality of humbleness. Right from childhood he was a humble boy. This is seen when he accepted to look after the flock while his elder brothers were relaxing at home.
* David was termed a good king because he was courageous. He managed to kill Goliath the Philistine giant who was making all the Israelites to tremble.
* David had ability to attract people which character earned him a good king in Israel. That is why when Saul died, all the Israelites went to him requesting him to become their king (2 Samuel 5:1-16)
* David was a religious man and for this reason he became a good king. He brought back the covenant box (2 Samuel 6:1ff), wanted to construct God’s temple, encouraged monotheism and composed various psalms.
* David had a character of forgiveness that also made him a good king in Israel. He forgave Saul who wanted to kill him (1 Samuel 24:1ff)
* David became a good king due to his musical talent that helped him to enter the palace to play a harp to Saul whenever he was disturbed by an evil spirit. In this palace he gained leadership skills.
* David was a military commander and a great soldier. He was in position to attack Philistines and kill Goliath and this earned him great praises from the people (1 Samuel 17:41ff)
* David was a repentant man which also made him a good king. Whenever he sinned against God, he repented and God forgave him. This reduced on God’s anger upon the king (2 Samuel 12:12-14)
* David was a God fearing man who loved God wholeheartedly that is why he composed songs and psalms of praises which prompted God to be on his side.
* David had a character of patience which also enabled him to be a good king. After his anointment as noted in 1 Samuel 16, he never assumed power until when Saul died.

THE TRANSFER OF THE COVENANT BOX TO JERUSALEM (2 Samuel 6:1ff)

During the reign of Judges Eli’s sons and the Israelites went to fight the Philistines but the covenant box was captured from the Israelites and even Eli’s two sons Hophni and Phinehas were killed in the battle. Eli collapsed when he had the news (1 Samuel 4:1-8)

When David established himself asking of Israel, he set up Jerusalem city to become a religious centre. Therefore he made a plan to pick the covenant box from where it was to bring it to Jerusalem.

Give an account of David’s transfer of the covenant box to Jerusalem.

* David organized 30,000 men/ soldiers and led them to Baalah in Judah at Abinadab’s home where the covenant box was being kept.
* When they reached Abinadab’s home, the covenant box was placed on a new cart which was pulled by an Oxen. Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab were guiding the cart with Ahio walking in front and Uzzah at the back.
* Then David and all the Israelites were following the covenant box while dancing and singing with all their mighty to honour he Lord (2 Samuel 6:5). At the same time the Israelites were playing harps, lyres, drums, rattles and cymbals.
* As they came to the threshing place of Nacon the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out and took hold of the covenant box.
* At once the Lord became angry with Uzzah and killed him there and then because of his irrelevance i.e. Uzzah was not supposed to carry the covenant box.
* Then David was afraid of the song and said could not continue taking the covenant box to Jerusalem and so kept it at Obed Edom’s home and a native of the city of Gath.
* The covenant box stayed at Obed Edom’s home for three months and his family was blessed by the Lord.
* When King David heard of Obed Edom’s family blessings he made another plan to pick the covenant box to take it to Jerusalem with great celebration.
* After the men carrying the covenant box and had gone six steps, David made them to stop and made a sacrifice to the Lord of a bull and a fattened calf (2 Samuel 6:13)
* After sacrificing David and the Israelites continued on their way to Jerusalem while dancing with their might honouring and praising the Lord.
* David was wearing only a linen cloth round his waist dancing with all his might.
* The covenant box was taken to Jerusalem with shouts of joy and the sound of trumpets (2 Samuel 6:15)
* As the box was being brought into the city Michal Saul’s daughter and wife of king David looked out in the window and saw king David dancing and jumping around in the sacred dance and she was disgusted with him.
* After the box was put in the tent prepared then David offered a sacrifice and fellowship offering to the Lord.
* When the king finished offering the sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of God the almighty distributed food to them i.e. a loaf of bread and piece of roasted meat to them and some raisins and then everyone went home.
* When David went home to greet his family; his wife, Michal undermined him when she said “The king of Israel….exposed himself a fool in the sight of the servant women of his officials.” (2 Samuel 6:20)
* But David defended himself by he was dancing to honour the Lord who chose him as king and ignored Saul.
* Michal Saul’s daughter from that moment never had any children because of God’s anger.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANSFER OF THE COVENANT BOX TO THE ISRAELITES

Examine the relevance of the transfer of the covenant box to Jerusalem to the Israelites/ Jews/ Hebrews.

The following were the implications of the transfer of the covenant box to the Israelites;

* The event showed that David was a religious person. He put God amidst his administration by bringing the covenant box to Jerusalem.
* The event showed that the Israelites had to worship God with all their might. King David danced with all his might to honour the Lord. (1 Samuel 16:14)
* The transfer of the covenant box showed the Israelites that God is holy by name. therefore he is supposed to be approached in holiness that is why Uzzah who was unholy was struck dead.
* It showed the Israelites that God is the source of blessings. He placed Obed Edom’s family for keeping the covenant box for three months (2 Samuel 6:12)
* The event showed the Israelites that God can be worshipped in various ways like dancing, singing and offering sacrifices as their king did.
* The transfer of the covenant box indicated to the Israelites that God is omnipresent. The Lord was with the Israelites right from Baalah, Obed Edom’s home up to Jerusalem.
* The Israelites came to understand that regardless of one’s status, God has to e worshipped. For example David was a king but he danced to the Lord.
* It showed the Israelites that Yahweh is a punishing God. He punished Uzzah who was unholy for touching the covenant box (2 Samuel 6:7)
* The event taught the Israelites that holy duties are supposed to be carried out by holy people chosen by God like priests. This is why Uzzah was struck dead after touching the covenant box.
* The transfer of the covenant box to Jerusalem revealed to the Israelites God is a spirit. He did not manifest himself physically anywhere.
* It helped Jerusalem to be established as a religious centre of the Israelites from where special annual prayers were taken/ recited.
* The transfer of the covenant box to Jerusalem centralized worship in Israel. After placing the covenant box in the tent in Jerusalem, all the Israelites gathered together and worshipped God a central place.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENT TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

How relevant is the transfer of the covenant box to modern Christians.

Christians should learn to/ ought to;

* Respect God’s laws unlike Uzzah who failed to respect God’s laws and touched the covenant box.
* Find the causes of problems before taking further steps like David did.
* Pray for God’s guidance unlike Uzzah who wasn’t guided by God.
* Pray for God’s blessings like Obed Edom’s family.
* Only do their work and respect the work of religious unlike Uzzah.
* Live a holy life since God is holy unlike Uzzah.
* Live a righteous life to avoid God’s punishment unlike Uzzah who was unrighteous.
* Live exemplary lives just as David.
* Sacrifice to God just as David.
* Seek for God’s guidance to avoid evil like David and the Israelites who were guided by God on their war to Jerusalem.
* Have faith in God the almighty just as David.

CHARACTERISTICS/NATURE OF GOD IN RELATION TO TE ABOVE EVENT

* God is spirit.
* God is almighty
* God is omnipotent
* God is omnipresent
* God is the source of blessings
* Yahweh is a punishing God.
* God can be worshipped in different ways like dancing, singing and sacrificing.
* God accepts sacrifices.
* Yahweh is a holy God.
* Yahweh is a source of joy/happiness
* God is supposed to be worshipped irrespective of one’s status.

DAVID’S NOBLE BUILDING GOD’S TEMPLE (2 Samuel 7)

NATHAN’S MASSAGE TO DAVID CONCERNING BUILDING OF THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE

Examine the prophecies that were delivered by Prophet Nathan to King David when he wanted to build a temple for God? (2 Samuel 17:1-17)

Having established himself on the throne and living in a cedar house, David realized that it was inappropriate for ark to be in a mere tent.

When David told Nathan his idea, Nathan told him to do what was in his mind. However that night God’s word came to Prophet Nathan who delivered the following prophesy to King David;

* Nathan told David that God said that he was not the one to build a temple for him to live in (2 Samuel 7:5)
* Nathan still delivered the massage of God when he said that ever since God rescued the Israelites from Egypt till that time, the Lord had never lived in a temple (2 Samuel 7:6)
* More so through prophet Nathan God said that he had travelled round in a tent but never complained to the Israelites his children.
* More so prophet Nathan told David that during God’s travel with the Israelites, he never asked any of the leaders appointed by him to built him a temple made of cedar. (2 Samuel 7:7)
* Nathan also reminded David that God took him from looking after sheep fields and made him the ruler of his people Israel.
* Prophet Nathan still told David that God had been with him wherever he had gone and had defeated all his enemies as he advanced (2 Samuel 7:9)
* God through Prophet Nathan prophesied to make David as the greatest leaders in the world.
* In Nathan’s prophesy to David, God told that he had chosen a place for his people Israel and had settled them there where they would live without being oppressed any more.
* In this same prophesy God promised that the Israelites would never be attacked again (2 Samuel 7:11)
* God promised to keep David stay from all his enemies and give them descendants.
* Nathan also told David God’s massage that when he dies God would keep one of his sons king and he could keep his kingdom strong and continue forever (2 Samuel 7:12)
* In the same prophesy Nathan told David that God promised David’s successor will be the one to build a temple for him and his dynasty will continue forever (1 Samuel 7:13)
* In the prophesy Nathan delivered to David that God promised to treat David’s successor the way a father treats a son. He promised to punish him where he would do wrong the way a father punishes a son.
* Similarly God promised never to withdraw his support from David’s successor as he did to Saul.
* God promised David that he would always have descendants and his kingdom would last forever and the dynasty would never end.

HOW NATHAN’S PROPHESIES ABOUT THE TEMPLE WERE FULFILLED

How did God fulfill is prophesies through Nathan to David?

* David became famous/ideal/greatest leader in the world as God promised him through Nathan.
* For some good time Israelites settled in the promised land of Canaan and were not disturbed by enemies as God promised to David (2 Samuel 7:11)
* David was buried with his ancestors and one of his sons became king after his death.
* God gave David many descendants and was kept safe from all his enemies as promised to him.
* Solomon’s kingdom remained strong and his dynasty continued for more than 400 years until 887BC all because David was a faithful servant of God.
* As earlier promised through Nathan, God treated David’s son Solomon like a son. He punished him whenever he sinned the way a father punishes a son who is in wrong.
* David’s kingdom lasted forever and his dynasty did not come to an end.
* God did not withdraw his support from Solomon however much he sinned against him the way he did to Saul because he had promised it to David.
* David was referred to as an ideal king in the whole of Israel.
* David lived to see his son Solomon take over the throne from him(1 kings 1:11ff and 2:1-9)

WHY DID GOD REJECTED DAVID’S NOBLE IDEA OF BUILDING THE TEMPLE

Account for God’s rejection of David’s idea of building the temple in Jerusalem

God rejected David’s idea of building the temple because of the following reasons;

* Already God had someone in mind who was to construct for him a temple and that was David’s son and successor who came to be known as Solomon.
* God appeared to be comfortable in a tent as he says that through his traveling with the people of Israel, he never asked one of the leaders to build for him a temple of cedar (2 Samuel 7:7)
* According to God it was David to build for him a temple that is why his idea was rejected.
* It was because God never asked anyone of blamed for having not built for him a temple.
* David’s noble idea was rejected by God because he never wanted to be confined in one place. Being Omni-present and a spirit, God wanted to continue moving with David.
* God rejected the constructions of the temple by David because he never wanted David to be proud and boast about the temple as his own achievement.
* Probably David would turn the temple into possession and do away with the main purpose of the temple i.e. as a place of worship.
* It was probably because David had shed innocent blood during the various wars like with the Philistines and Amalekites therefore may be God never wanted his temple t be built by bloody hands.
* David’s noble idea of building the temple was rejected may be because Nathan and David had not consulted God about it.
* Probably God wanted to save David from any human acts like over taxation and forced labour which would come with the construction of the temple and he would create him many enemies.
* The noble idea of David was rejected by God because he had many other plans to fulfill before embarking on the temple construction.
* Probably David was influenced by the pagan temples so God never wanted to be associated with paganism in any way.
* God rejected David’s noble idea because to God he had already achieved a lot. So probably God wanted this to be an achievement of David’s successor.

DAVID’S PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (2 Samuel 17:18-29)

Analyse David’s prayer of thanksgiving to God as noted in 2 Samuel 7:18-29.

* David went to the temple of the Lord and prayed that he wasn’t worthy of what God had already done for him not even his family.
* He acknowledged the promises of the Lord about the descendants he would have in the years to come.
* David prayed that it was God’s will and purpose that he was stopped from building the temple.
* In his prayer David accepted that he was stopped from building the temple as one way of receiving directions from God.
* David also acknowledged that there is no any other nation on earth like Israel which God rescued from slavery because they are his own people.
* In David’s prayer of thanksgiving he acknowledged God and thanked him for the great things he did for Israel and for David who was made famous in the world.
* David also acknowledged the greatness of God as he said there is non equal to him and there is no any other nation on earth like Israel that God loved (2 Samuel 7:24)
* David prayed to the Lord to fulfill the promised made t him and his descendants.
* In this prayer, David praised the name of God and promised that the Israelites will forever way

“The Lord almighty is God over Israel……” (7:26)

* David prayed to Go to continue directing Israel and protecting them against al their problems and that his people will also praise him for that.
* In this prayer David stated that he had the courage to pray to God because he had revealed all what he promised to him, his servants and descendants.
* According to 7:29 David asked the Lord to bless his descendants so that they would continue to enjoy the Lord’s favour.
* David prayed to the Lord to fulfill the promises made to him and his descendants.

DAVID’S SIN WITH BATHSHEBA (2 Samuel 11:1ff)

1. Analyse the circumstances that led to Uriah’s death
2. “Uriah the Hittite died because of his faith”. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

* While the Israelites were out fighting in war led by Joab, David woke up from a nap and went to the balcony of his house.
* As he was standing at the balcony, he saw a beautiful woman bathing and admired her.
* So he sent a messenger to find out who she was and learnt that she was Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite.
* According to chapter 11:4, David sent messengers to fand many othersh her and she was brought he made love with her but she had just finished her menstruation period.
* Afterwards the woman discovered that she was pregnant and sent a messenger to David to tell him.
* Being scared of the pregnancy, David sent a messenger to Joab a military commander to first withdraw and come back home because he wanted Uriah to sleep with the wife so as o pretend as if it is Uriah who impregnated the wife.
* Unfortunately being a faithful servant of God i.e. that no sex had to be played during war, Uriah did not even go home to enjoy with his wife but instead he slept at the palace gate with the king’s guard (11:9)
* When David heard that he had not gone home, he asked why he had not done so when he was away from home for along time. But Uriah answered that he couldn’t do so because fellow Israelites were at war.
* So David commanded Uriah to stay at the palace that day till following day when he would be sent back at the battle.
* At supper time, David invited Uriah and made him drunk but again that night did not go home instead he slept on his blanket in the palace guardroom.
* The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it but Uriah did not read the massage in it. The letter instructed Joab to put Uriah on the front line purposely to be killed in the battle.
* Joab received the letter and put Uriah on the front line as he was commanded. So when the enemy troops advanced, some of David’s troops were killed and so was Uriah.
* After Uriah’s death Joab sent a massage so David telling him about the battle and how Uriah was killed.
* When David received the massage he wasn’t shocked but instead said to the messenger to encourage Joab not to be upset since anyone can die in battle.
* When Bathsheba heard about the husband’s death, she mourned for him, after her mourning David sent for her to come to the palace to bore the son but God was not pleased with what David had done and the son died.

WHAT EVILS DID DAVID COMMIT WHEN HE SLEPT WITH BATHSHEBA URIAH’S WIFE?

By having sexual intercourse with Bathsheba and adultery David was guilty of the following sins;

* David was not faithful to his marriage partners. He had many wives but decided to cheat on them by having sexual intercourse with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife.
* David committed an evil of murder. After learning of the pregnancy of Bathsheba, he made plans with Joab the army commander and killed Uriah.
* David was guilty of admiring another man’s wife who was Bathsheba. This was against the teaching in the book of Exodus 19:17 which stated “Do not admire another man’s wife”.
* David showed a bad example to his subjects. The messenger he sent to fand many othersh Bathsheba and even the command he gave Joab to kill Uriah showed him a bad leader.
* By committing adultery, David also violated the law regarding the covenant box. He had sexual intercourse with Bathsheba when the covenant box was at war front yet the law forbids it.
* David’s act of adultery showed he had high sexual desires 9lust) which he failed to control to the extent of having sexual intercourse with Uriah’s wife.
* David committed an evil of misuse of leisure. Instead of using it constructively like planning for his people, he decided to have sexual intercourse.
* David was guilty of breaking the kingship code. The Israelite kings were supposed to fight with the subjects but David had remained at home resting.
* David was guilty of leading his subjects into sin. He instructed Joab through a letter sent to him to put Uriah at the war front with the intention of being killed. Secondly he ordered his messengers to bring him Bathsheba with whom they had sexual intercourse.
* David did not respect human life. He organized for Uriah’s death which was against the covenant way of life.
* David was guilty of betraying Uriah. He wrote a letter given to Uriah himself sent to Joab instructing Joab to tacticfully put Uriah at the battle front with the purpose of being killed.

LESSONS POLITICAL LEADERS LEARN FROM DAVID’S SIN

What lessons do modern political/ religious leaders learn from David’s sin?

* Political leaders today learn the following lessons from David’s sin of adultery and murder;
* Political leaders should learn to/ ought to/ are called upon
* Obey the constitution and have respect for it unlike king David who violated the holy war by having sex.
* Repentant or apologize for their mistakes unlike David who tried to hide his evil and even ended up committing more sins like murder.
* Guide their subjects in the best direction instead of suing them in dubious activities which David did by asking Joab to have Uriah killed.
* Use their power to protect their lives other than destroying them like David who planned for the death of Uriah.
* Use their leisure time constructively unlike David who misused his leisure time by having sex with Uriah’s wife.
* Be exemplary to their subjects unlike David who showed a bad example to his subjects.
* Be faithful to their marriage partners unlike David who was unfaithful to the many wives he had.
* Have self control in all situations unlike David who failed to control his high sexual desires to the extent of having sexual intercourse with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife.
* Appreciate without coveting what belongs to others unlike David who failed to appreciate Bathsheba’s beauty and covet with her.
* Love their subjects unlike David who failed to show love to Uriah and decided to have him executed.

NATHAN’S RESPONSE TO DAVID’S SIN OF ADULTERY (2 Samuel 12”1-15)

Analyse the massage/ prophesy of Prophet Nathan to King David concerning his double sin of adultery and murder.

The following is Nathan’s response to David’s double sin;

* Nathan confronted David and told him a story in form of a parable. Prophet Nathan told David that there were two men who lived in the same town, one was rich with many cattle and sheep and the other was poor having only one lamb which he loved so much.
* Nathan told David that one day a rich man received a visitor but he never wanted to slaughter anyone of his animals to the visitor.
* Therefore the rich man went to the poor man’s home and got his only lamb and slaughtered it preparing a meal for his guest.
* When David was told the story he became very angry with the rich man and said that the rich man by the name of the living Lord deserved death for having committed such a cruel thing and even deserved paying back 4 times as much as he took (2 Samuel 12;6)
* Nathan was open to David and said too “You are that man” (2 Samuel 12:7)
* Prophet Nathan went ahead and told David that God had said he made him a king of Israel and rescued him from Saul but disobeyed him.
* Nathan still told David who God had given him the kingdom of Israel and Judah and even the wives of Saul and could add him if he wanted.
* God asked David why he had committed such an evil of killing Uriah and taking his wife.
* Nathan said that God swore he was to cause someone from David’s family bring trouble to him and even his wives would be taken away.
* Prophet Nathan emphasized to David that when he loses his wives they will be given to another man who was to have sexual intercourse with them in broad day light.
* He said that David had sinned in secret but God would punish him in broad day light for all Israel to see (2 Samuel 12:12)
* On realizing his mistake, David repented when he said “I have sinned against the Lord”.
* Nathan replied to him that the Lord forgives him and would not die.
* Nathan told David that because he had humbled himself it would be his son to die than Nathan went back home.

THE FULFILLMENT OF NATHAN’S PROPHESIES

To prove that Nathan was a true prophet of God, his prophesies to David were fulfilled in the following ways;

* Absalom David’s true son had sexual intercourse with his father’s concubine in bode day light when everybody was watching (2 Samuel 6:22)
* The prophesy of having Bathsheba’s child dead was fulfilled as the son became sick and died later (2 Samuel 12:15)
* David was greatly disgraced when his son Amnon raped his half sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-14)
* Chaos took place in David’s house when his son Absalom rebelled against the father and he wanted to declare himself kingship ( 2 Samuel 15:1-12)
* Nathan’s prophesies were also fulfilled when his sons were murdered one after another. For example Absalom killed his brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13:23-29), Absalom was also killed (2 Samuel 18) also Solomon murdered his brother Adonijah (1 kings 2;25)
* Coups were also organized against David at withdrawing him from power although they were unsuccessful. For example Absalom planned a rebellion against the father.
* David’s old age was full of agony and misery. For example David lost his son Absalom who he cried for in sorrow and even wished he had died in his place (2 Samuel 18:13)

THE LESSONS RELIGIOUS LEADERS LEARN FROM NATHAN’S PROPHESIES CONCERNING DAVID’S SIN OF ADULTERY AND MURDER.

How applicable is Nathan’s response to David’s sin/ prophesy to modern Christians.

Modern leaders learn the following lessons from Nathan’s response;

Modern religious leaders should learn to/ are called upon to/ ought to;

* Deliver God’s massage without fear of favour like Nathan delivered God’s massage to King David without fear or favour.
* Prophesy a true massage for the right situation as Prophet Nathan prophesied a true massage to King David concerning his evils related with adultery.
* Commend evil openly like Nathan commended David’s wickedness when he had sexual intercourses with Bathsheba and killed Uriah.
* To promote justice and commend injustices likewise Nathan commended David for being unjust to Uriah and Bathsheba.
* Carryout God’s missions faithfully like Nathan who delivered God’s massage to king David without hesitation.
* Seek for God’s guidance likewise Nathan was guided by God that is why he was in position to deliver his massage in form of a parable.
* Encourage sinners to repent like Nathan’s prophesies that encouraged David to repent and asked for God’s forgiveness.
* They should encourage people to be righteous just like Nathan’s prophesies t David. He called upon David to be righteous.
* Forgive sinners likewise Nathan prayed to God and David was forgiven (2 Samuel 12;13)
* They should live exemplary just like Nathan showed a good example throughout his life.

FACTORS WHICH LEAD TO URIAH’S DEATH

Account for the death of Uriah the Hittite.

To what extent did Uriah die because of his faith?

The factors/ reasons which led to Uriah’s death include the following;

* David’s misusing of leisure time led to Uriah’s death instead of enjoying his leisure constructively like planning developments in the kingdom, he decided to abuse sex with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife.
* David had high sexual libido which he failed to control. Had he controlled his sexual desires, he wouldn’t have had sexual intercourse with Bathsheba leading to pregnancy resulting into death of Uriah to take away evidence.
* Uriah died because his wife Bathsheba bathed from an open place. It was after David sighting the woman bathing from an open place that he admired her leading to pregnancy.
* David’s admiring of Bathsheba led to Uriah’s death. If he had only appreciated her beauty, he wouldn’t have had sex with her and Uriah would have survived.
* The presence of the messengers who David sent to look for the lady and found her paved way for the death of Uriah. After Bathsheba was brought to the palace, David had sex with her and David feared the husband to know it.
* Bathsheba’s beauty led to Uriah’s death. If she was ugly David wouldn’t have admired her causing pregnancy ending into death of Uriah.
* Bathsheba contributed to the death of the husband Uriah because she lacked principles. She would have insisted not to have sex with David if really she was loyal to the husband.
* Bathsheba’s pregnancy led to Uriah’s death. Had she not conceived David wouldn’t have bothered to send for Uriah from the battle field and wouldn’t have killed him.
* The war situation led to Uriah’s death. David used the prevailing circumstances at war where the battle was heavy and instructed Joab to put him on the front where he died from.
* Joab’s faithfulness/ obedience to his master’s commands caused Uriah’s death. Joab did as David told him and put Uriah where the battle was heaviest and ended up dying.
* Uriah’s faithfulness to the law of God led to his death. He observed the law which forbade the Israelites from having sex when the covenant box was in the battle field. But David disobeyed this law.
* The presence of the law of the holy war led to Uriah’s death. If the law wasn’t in place nothing would have hindered Uriah from going home to enjoy with his wife.
* Uriah died because David was trying to cover up the sin he had committed but had failed to hide Bathsheba’s pregnancy from Uriah.

WHAT LESSONS DO MODERN CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM URIAH’S DEATH?

Modern Christians should;

* be faithful to God in all situations just as Uriah was to the governing of the covenant box.
* Keep themselves busy during their leisure time like visiting the sick unlike David who was idle at home which caused him into sexual immorality.
* Always pray for political peace other than being the supporters of the war like David did.
* Have control especially on sexual matters like Uriah was.
* be ready to suffer for their faith in God instead of breaking God’s law.
* be submissive to authority whether oppressive of democratic just as Uriah died because he submitted to David’s commands.
* be careful with their actions because they are capable of putting man into temptations.
* Always reflect on God’s laws like Uriah did so as to maintain their good relationship with God.
* Married couples should stick to their marriage vows like Uriah was unlike David who practiced adultery with Bathsheba.
* be ready to protect the poor against injustice in society just as Uriah died trying to protect his nation from enemies.
* Respect their subjects’ rights to have good things unlike David grabbed his army commander’s wife Bathsheba and even killed Uriah.
* Repent for their evil activities like David repented after murdering Uriah.
* be exemplary before their subjects so as to copy or emulate them.

DAVID’S ACHIEVEMENTS

David made a number of achievements in his leadership as noted below;

* David was in position to kill Goliath even before he came to the throne and was still a young boy (1 Samuel 17: 41-54)
* David expanded the boundaries of Israel in all directions. He did this by defending the people of Ammon, Edom and Moab (2 Samuel 10)
* David captured the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and later he established it as a religious centre.
* David was credited for uniting all the 12 tribes of Israel. Therefore creating a sense of nationalism among the Israelites (2 Samuel 19:40-43)
* David reduced the internal conflicts in Israel. This was done when he killed, he did this when he killed almost all Saul’s family members who were a great obstacle to his administration (2 Samuel 21)
* David was a religious man. This is reflected when he brought back the covenant box to Jerusalem and even wanted to build a temple of God (2 Samuel 6)
* David was a repentant king. Unlike his predecessors whenever David realized his mistakes he asked for forgiveness from God (1 Samuel 16:14-23)
* David brought about religious sanity in Israel. Many people turned to God and began worshipping him especially when the covenant box was brought to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6)
* David’s dynasty lasted forever that is why he was recognized as the greatest king of Israel. This is evidenced when Solomon his son inherited the throne and even Jesus came from the line of King David.
* David was an exemplary leader. He showed a good example to the people when he repented after sinning against God (2 Samuel 12:13)
* David promoted good leadership between Israel and her neighbours hence ensuring peace in the country. He did this by signing peace treaties with kings like Hiram of Tyre.
* David was a popular king among the Israelites. That is why when Saul died the Israelites went to David and asked him to be their king (1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 5)

THE FAILURES OF KING DAVID

King David committed the following evils/failures;

* David committed adultery with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife which was against the covenant way of life (2 Samuel 11)
* David committed murder after instructing Joab to put Uriah on the battle front where the battle was heavy and he was killed (2 Samuel 11:14-17)
* He became unpopular, dictatorial, autocratic and despotic during his old age which contributed to the division of the kingdom later ( 1 Samuel 21 and 2 Samuel 24 and 1 kings 1)
* David discriminated the people of Israel by favoring mostly the Southerners and neglecting Northern region. This later led to the division of the kingdom (2 Samuel 2:1ff)
* David carried out illegal cense. This led to death of many Israelites about 70,000 in number who died of epidemic. By law no Israelites was supposed to count God’s people (2 Samuel 24:1ff)
* David violated the law regarding the covenant box which forbade Israelites to have sexual intercourse during the war for him he had sex with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife.
* David had high sexual desires (lust). This is why he failed to control the extent of having sexual intercourse with Uriah’s wife.
* David took Uriah’s wife as his wife after having killed the husband Uriah was against the covenant way of life i.e. (Deut 20:17) stated that no man should admire another man’s wife.
* David failed to control his family. That is why there was a lot of chaos in the family like Amnon raped Tamar (2 Samuel 13) and Solomon killed the brother Adonijah (2 kings 2:25)
* David never had a good successor. This is because even his successor son Solomon sinned against God more than all his predecessors (1 kings 11)
* David led people into sin. He led Bathsheba into adultery and Joab his army commander who plotted Uriah’s death.
* David shed a lot of blood because he fought many wars and many people died, more so the death of Uriah (2 Samuel 10)
* David established diplomatic relationship with neighbouring pagan states like the state of Tyre yet Israelites were not supposed to associate with pagan people as noted.
* King David coveted Uriah’s wife yet according to Exodus 19:17, no man is allowed to marry another man’s wife.
* David became unpopular towards the end of reign because of being unpopular and was cursed by Shemei (2 Samuel 16:1-13)

REASONS FOR DAVID’S SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

Account for David’s success and failures as king of Israel.

David was in position to be successful because of the following reasons;

* David’s marriage to Saul’s daughter Michal led to the success. She fed David with alt of information especially about Saul’s plans (1 Samuel 19:11-17)
* David was repentant whenever he sinned against God. For example when he had sexual intercourse with Bathsheba he was forgiven when he repented (2 Samuel 12:1-15)
* David was successful because he was a humble man. When he was condemned by Prophet Nathan he responded with humility and repented as he said “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:13). This made God to forgive him.
* The success of David depended on his courage. This was seen when he killed Goliath a Philistine giant and many Israelites feared him (1 Samuel 17:1ff)
* King David was attractive. When king Saul died the Israelites went to him to become their king (2 Samuel 5)
* The success of David depended on God’s sight which guided him throughout his reign. He received God’s spirit soon after his anointment which protected him throughout his reign (1 Samuel 16:13)
* He was a religious man which enabled him to be with God’s mercy. This was reflected by his act of bringing back the covenant box which had been captured by the Philistines during the reign of judges (2 Samuel 6)
* David was a brave man. This is why he managed to kill Goliath and the wild animals which used to attack his father’s flock.
* David was a good soldier who was in position to win most of the internal and external attacks in Israel. (2 Samuel 5:17-25 and 2 Samuel 8 & 10).
* David was successful because he was social. He managed to sign peace treaties with neighbouring states like Tyre. This enabled him to have some relative peace with the neighbours.
* David was successful because he had the support of the elders which assisted him to undertake projects which resulted into his success.

However David failed to achieve many things because of the following reasons;

* David disrespected the law concerning the holy war of not having sexual intercourse during war. This resulted hi into committing adultery at a wrong time (2 Samuel 11)
* David lacked self control which led him into having sexual intercourse with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife.
* David was not contented which led him to fail in his leadership. He had many wives but ended up admiring the only wife of Uriah Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11)
* David discriminated the people of Israel most especially the Northerners and favoured the Southerners. This is why Northerners were biased and rebelled against his dynasty later. (1 Samuel 19:40-43, 1 kings 12)
* David was disobedient to God’s commands in some ways. He did not respect the command of not having sex during the war when the covenant box was at war front. Instead he had sex with Bathsheba.
* David was a failure because he used to plan murder of innocent people. For example he plotted the killing of Uriah the Hittite.
* David had high sexual desires which he failed to control. This led him into adultery with Bathsheba hence a failure on his side.
* David is called a failure because he did not control his family well. For instance Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom killed Amnon and Solomon killed Adonijah.

THE RELEVANCE OF DAVID’S REGIME TO MODERN POLITICAL LEADERS AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS

* Modern political leaders are called upon to be exemplary just as David was when he brought back the covenant box to Jerusalem from Baalah.
* Christian leaders are called upon to worship God wholeheartedly just as David worshipped God wholeheartedly when he offered the sacrifices.
* Christian leaders are called upon to follow God’s laws unlike David who had sexual intercourse with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife when the covenant box was at war.
* Christian leaders ought to repent whenever they sin against God just as David repented to God when he had intercourse with Bathsheba Uriah’s wife.
* Political leaders are called upon to guide their subjects in the right direction unlike David who commanded Joab to kill Uriah Bathsheba’s husband.
* Modern political leaders are called upon to treat all people equally unlike David who discriminated the Israelites whereby he favoured the Southerners and discriminated the Northerners.
* Modern political leaders ought to be contented with what they have unlike David who was not contented with the many wives he had to the extent of admiring Uriah’s wife Bathsheba.
* Modern Christian leaders are called upon to discipline their children unlike David who failed to discipline his children for example when Amnon raped his half sister Tamar.
* Modern political leaders ought to use their leisure time constructively unlike David who had sexual intercourse with Bathsheba during his leisure time.

COMMENT ON THE FACTORS GOD WOULD LOOK FOR IN A GOOD LEADER

God would look for the following characteristics in a good leader;

* A leader who has love for his people.
* An exemplary leader.
* A leader who is hard working.
* A leader who is approachable.
* A leader who sets up a good worshipping environment.
* A leader who has good relationships with his neighbours.
* A leader who repents and encourages his followers to repent.
* Seeks for God’s guidance.
* Observes the constitution of the country.
* Creates a transformation system of power from one person to another.

KING SOLOMON

Solomon was a son of David and Bathsheba a former wife of Uriah the Hittite. When Bathsheba bore Solomon, he was loved by God who instructed Nathan to name him Jedidiah because he was loved by God.

David promised Bathsheba Solomon’s mother that her son would be king after him.

HOW SOLOMON BECAUSE A KING (1 KINGS 1:5FF)

* However, when King David became old, one of his sons Adonijah wanted to become the king. Therefore he got chariots, horses and an escort of 50 men, Joab and priest Abiatha.
* Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet plus Solomon weren’t invited when Adonijah offered a sacrifice to the Lord.
* After sacrificing, Nathan went to Bathsheba who was Solomon’s mother and asked her whether she had heard what had happened (Adonijah had made himself the king of Israel).
* Nathan advised Bathsheba to go to King David and ask him about the promise he had made before (that her son Solomon would become the king).
* Bathsheba did as she was told. She also asked David that, how come Adonijah had become the king.
* When Bathsheba was still speaking, Prophet Nathan came in to confirm what she had just said.
* When David hard from Nathan, he sent for Bathsheba to come in again. When she came, she stood before the king who promised by the living God that Solomon would succeed him and therefore he would keep his promise he had made to Bathsheba.
* Bathsheba bowed low and said “May my Lord the king live forever” (1 kings 1:31)
* David sent for Zadok the priest and Benaiah when they came in, he instructed them to take his court officials and also to get Solomon ride on his own mule. He told them to escort Solomon to the spring where h was supposed to be anointed king of Israel.
* David told them that after anointing him, blow the trumpets and shout long live king Solomon.
* He told them that after they were to follow him back to the palace. In the palace he was supposed to sit on David’s throne.
* Nathan and the priest did as they had been instructed. Solomon was anointed as king of Israel.
* People were filled with joy and they shouted and made a lot of noise which was in position to shake the ground.

DAVID’S LAST INSTRUCTIONS TO SOLOMON (1 KINGS 2:1-8)

When David was about to die, he called Solomon his successor and give him his last instructions which were as follows:

* He told him to be confident and determined to do whatever the Lord would tell him to do.
* He told him to obey the laws and commandments as written in the book of Moses so that he would prosper everything he would do.
* He told him to kill two people i.e. Shemei the son of Gera who cursed him bitterly where he went to Mahanians. He also told him to kill Joab ho shed innocent blood in time and peace by killing the two army commanders.
* Shortly after that, David died and was buried David’s city.

FACTORS WHICH LED SOLOMON TO RISE TO POWER

* King David’s promise to Bathsheba. David had promised his wife Bathsheba that her own son would succeed him on the throne.
* David’s love for Solomon was at the extreme. When Solomon was born, he instructed Nathan to name him Jedidiah because God loved him (2 Samuel 12:24-25).
* David’s faithfulness to the promise he had made being a faithful servant of God, he had to remain faithful and fulfill the promise he had made to his wife Bathsheba (1 kings 1:29-30GNB)
* It was God’s plan that Solomon became a king because while in power he built a temple for God fulfilling Nathan’s prophesy which came from God that David’s son and successor would build a temple for God (2 Samuel 7:12-13)
* God’s support helped Solomon to rise to power. If God wasn’t supporting Solomon, he couldn’t have become a king. The fact that already God had a plan for him (building the temple) it meant that God supported Solomon’s rise to power.
* Solomon “stood out” in the whole family. He was unique from the rest of his brothers who caused chaos and disgrace to David’s family . For example,Amnon raped Tamar, Adonijah wanted to overthrow his father likewise Absolom.
* Solomon was popular because prophet Nathan and priest Zadok also supported him that is why they intervened to fight for him to become the king when his brother Adonijah wanted to get to the throne (1 kings 1:1ff)
* Solomon won David’s support because if he never supported Solomon, Adonijah would have become the king.
* Bathsheba’s intervention also helped Solomon to rise to power. If she sat back and never went t confirm with king David about her son’s succession, Adonijah would have become king (1 king 1:18ff)

KING SOLOMON’S BUILDING PROGRAMME

* When Solomon became a king of Israel, he embarked on the building programme. Before, his father David had a plan of building God’s temple but he was stopped by God through prophet Nathan who prophesized that David’s successor would build God’s temple (2 Samuel 7:12-13)
* When he settled, he thought about constructing God’s temple himself therefore fulfilling David’s plan.
* He prepared himself, exploited David’s friendship with Hiram and got all the building materials and man power from Tyre.
* During the fourth year of Solomon‘s reign over Israel in the second month of Zir, Solomon begun on constructing the temple. It took Solomon seven years to build the magnificent temple of God.
* The temple was greatest building that ever existed at that time and it is said that even up to date, it would have been beyond compared if it had not been destroyed by the Babylonians.
* After constructing the temple, the covenant box was transferred from the tent to the temple and many sacrifices were offered to God (1 kings 8:1ff)
* Because of the temple in Jerusalem the city became a religious centre.

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE AND SOLOMON’S PRAYER (1 KINGS 8:22FF)

* After constructing the temple, Solomon transferred the covenant box from the tent to the temple before a crowd of people.
* Then a great sacrifice was made to God comprising of 22,000 heard of cattle and 120,000 sheep as fellowship offerings. This was during the dedications of the temple.
* Solomon addressed the people and made a lengthy dedication prayer. He presented many issues to Yahweh as the people humbled themselves in adoration.
* He thanked God for his love for the people of Israel and in a special way for the family of David.
* Solomon praised God for helping him accomplish the construction of the temple.
* Then he prayed that the temple would be a source of blessings. Whenever the people would run to the temple seeking for forgiveness and blessings he prayed that God should grant their prayers.
* Then, he turned to the people and challenged them always to maintain the expected holiness and at the same time he reminded God of the covenant he had made with David.
* Solomon appreciated that there is no god who was like Yahweh because God fulfills his promises.
* He prayed that God should continue fulfilling his promises that at every time there would be a descendant of David ruling Israel.
* He prayed that God would always watch over the temple and protect it.
* He further prayed that God always hear his prayers when he prays in the temple.
* Solomon also prayed that God would always punish wrong doers and bless those who are upright especially those who come to pray in the temple.
* He also prayed that when people sin and get defeated at war as a punishment God should forgive them if they come to the temple and repent.
* He asked God to always listen to the people’s needs and problems whenever they prayed within the temple.
* Solomon asked God to grant victory to the people of Israel whenever they would pray to him in the temple and whenever they would pray facing in the direction of the temple.
* He requested God for forgiveness in case people sinned against him and he decided to take them into exile.
* He also prayed that God should never abandon his people but always be with them. He even turned to the people and asked them to be faithful to God so as to survive His wrath.

THE RELEVANCE OF SOLOMON’S DEDICATION PRAYER TO THE MODERN CHRISTIANS

Solomon’s dedication prayer is relevant to modern Christians in the following ways;

* Modern Christians should always remember to thank God for everything in their lives just as Solomon did in his prayer.
* Modern Christians should praise their creator during their prayers just as Solomon began his prayer by praising God as the only one above gods and the most faithful.
* They should sacrifice in anyway possible be it financially, physical effort, materials articles and many others just as Solomon made a great sacrifice during the dedication of the temple.
* They should always present their needs to God through prayers just as Solomon asked God to solve various needs in the lives of the Israelites and asked God to forgive the Israelites when they repent.
* Christians should be holy especially when they want to approach God in the temple since he does not associate with unholiness.
* They should always go to worshiping places to pray to their creator. Just as Solomon asked the Israelites to make their prayers within the temple.
* Christians should pray for people in trouble within their countries and outside just as Solomon prayed for the Israelites and the foreigners.
* The ones leading prayers should humbly and faithfully present people’s needs into God’s hands as Solomon decided the Israelites.
* Modern Christians should always repent whenever they sin against God just as Solomon encouraged the Israelites to repent and seek for forgiveness from God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEMPLE TO THE ISRAELITES (PURPOSES OF THE TEMPLE)

The temple constructed by Solomon was significant or important in the following;

* It was a place of worship, wherever the Israelites wanted to worship God, they would go to the temple.
* It was a place where disputes were settled in case of misunderstanding, people would go to the temple where the disputes would be solved.
* It was a place where people went whenever they wanted to repent the sins committed against God such that they would be forgiven.
* It was a place where people received God’s blessings in case one wanted to be blessed, he would go to the temple.
* It was a place where people were reminded about the covenant obligations and the Mosaic teachings which they had to even teach to their children.
* It was a place where God’s servants lived. The priests were supposed to be accommodated in the temple.
* It was a holy place for offering sacrifices to God whenever people had sacrifices to present, they would go to the temple . For example, the fellowship, sin offering and many others
* It acted as a uniting factor. The Israelites gathered in the temple as one family and prayed to God.
* It was a vital place for purification . For example, in case someone had healed from any impurity . For example, leprosy, menstruation and many others They had to go to the temple for cleansing.
* It was a place where the covenant box was kept. After constructing the temple, Solomon transferred the covenant box from the tent to the temple.
* It was a place where religious festivals were celebrated . For example, the Passover festival, the Day of Atonement, the day of unleavened bread and many others
* The first born children were dedicated in the temple.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH TODAY

After looking at the purposes of the temple to the Israelites, this is an outline of the purpose of the church to the Christians today because they are more less the same;

* It is a place where Christians receive God’s blessings from.
* It is where people are healed and cleansed.
* Repentance takes place in church where people’s sins are forgiven.
* It acts as a meeting place for different religious groups . For example, “Legion of Mary”, “EggyelyaYudaTadeo”, members of the charismatic and many others
* It is used for fellowship by different groups.
* It is where people sacrifice to God . For example, giving tithe and other forms of sacrifices.
* It is where people are reminded of the Decalogue and other laws.
* It is used for worshiping God the Almighty.
* It is where Christians are taught about bible study and religious life in order to be firm in Christianity.
* It is where people receive sacraments from . For example, Holy Communion, baptism, holy matrimony and many others
* It is a uniting factor since Christians converge in the church for prayers, they get united as brothers and sisters in Christ.
* There is a provision for God’s servants i.e. the priests especially the Catholics stay around the church.
* It is a symbol of the Christian faith.
* Moral talks/ counseling to the youth and married people take place.

IMPACT OF THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE TO THE ISRAELITES

The building of the temple had both positive and negative effects. Therefore the construction of the temple was both an asset and a liability at the same time.

The positive effects were as follows;

* The temple became a centre of unity. It brought all the people of Israel together from the North and the South to worship their God in Jerusalem.
* It became a place where difficult cases/disputes, misunderstandings could be settled by the priest.
* It transformed Jerusalem into a religious centre and generally made Israel a holy nation.
* The Israelites were educated about the laws and God’s commandments in the temple.
* The temple became a place for the people who dedicated their lives to God’s services . For example, the priests of the Nazarites.
* The temple promoted monotheism among the Israelites, since it was encouraging them to feel free to worship Yahweh for all the Israelites from various places for various reasons.
* It brought God near to His people. Wherever they went to the temple, they felt God’s presence dwelling in the temple.
* Religious festivals . For example, the Passover, Sabbath, Day of Atonement could all be celebrated in the temple.
* It acted as a reminding place to the Israelites about their obligations and responsibilities.
* In the temple, the covenant box was kept. Solomon transferred it from the tent to the temple immediately after construction.
* The temple added to the beauty of Jerusalem and Israel at large.
* Many visitors/tourists were attracted to Israel by the Jerusalem temple. Many went to visit Jerusalem to see for themselves the magnificent temple of God.
* The Israelites got a place where they conducted their sacrifices to the creator.
* It also became a place where they/people would take their fist born children for dedication.
* It became a place where people’s sins were forgiven after repenting before the Almighty God.

Negative effects were as follows;

* The temple brought about over taxation to the people. The king was forced to make people pay high taxes in order to accumulate all the funds he needed to construct the temple yet the Israelites were supposed to be taxed according to their income.
* The temple led to forced labour. Many people were forced to work as slaves on the temple without payment.
* It led to regional imbalance since it was in the southern region it developed very fast as compared to the Northern region.
* It brought about pagan influence in Israel. Most of imported man power were pagans, therefore while furnishing the temple they decorated it like the pagan places of worship.
* It increased the national debt of Israel. Solomon accumulated a debt which he failed to pay. Then he gave away 20 towns of Israel in payment for the debt which was against the covenant way of life.
* It forced Solomon to make political alliances with Hiram the king of Tyre and the Egyptian king. These helped him with building materials and man power. Political alliances were against God’s expectations.
* It encouraged Solomon to continue with the building pragrammes. For example, he built his palace after constructing the temple. He also constructed other cities . For example, Megiddo as the Israelites continued suffering from over taxation, oppression and many others
* The dedication of the temple was very extravagant where Solomon sacrificed 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep which would have been used for other purposes.
* It brought about famine. Solomon gave out food to the men of Tyre in exchange for the building services and as a consequence the Israelites lacked what to eat therefore they suffered from famine.
* It should be noted that the construction took so long (7 years) which created worries and anxiety.
* Solomon’s temple stayed for only 400 years before it was demolished by the Babylonians which was a loss to Israel.
* People begun misusing the temple they worshipped the temple instead of worshiping God the Almighty. This called for the prophet’s condemnation of the temple. (Jeremiah 7:1-15, 26:1ff).
* The building of the temple unleashed a lot of untold suffering to the people of Israel. It left many incapacitated and others unable to have meaningful life because of slavery it introduced.
* It promoted pagan practices in Israel since most of the builders came from pagan countries like Tyre.
* With time the temple lost its sanity and it was turned into a meeting place for prostitutes.
* It increased political tension in Israel. The North became more willing to break away from the Southern rule because of tribalism and segregation.
* It diverted Solomon’s reforming zeal and fear of God. He became proud. He turned out to be a glory seeker.
* It was later equated to the pagan sanctuaries because it was abused and became a den of thieves and robbers.
* It gave a final blow to the once united kingdom of Israel.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF SOLOMON AND HIS WISDOM

When Solomon became a king, he continued offering sacrifices to God. One night, God appeared to him and asked him what he wanted him to do for him.

Solomon answered that “…….so give me the wisdom I need to rule your people with justice and to know the difference between the good and evil…..” (1 kings 3:6-9 GNB)

So God granted Solomon the wisdom which he used to become successful or to achieve the following:

* Solomon used the wisdom he received to serve as a good judge. He judged the case of two prostitutes. (1 kings 3:16-28 GNB).
* Solomon’s wisdom excelled more than that of the wise men from the east, he became an admirable model of the time.
* Using the wisdom, Solomon constructed a great temple of God in Jerusalem and he became so famous because of his project.
* Using the wisdom, Solomon constructed many cities in Israel like Hozar, Megiddo and Geber.
* The wisdom turned him into a great merchant king who got a lot of wealth for Israel out of trade.
* He exploited the copper deposits of Edom for the benefits of Israel.
* He developed the port of Eziongeber where he established copper refineries.
* He built a fleet of merchant ships at Eziongeber at the gulf of Agaba to promote his trading activities.
* Using the great wisdom, Solomon strengthened political and diplomatic ties with his neighbouring states such as Tyre where he made a peace treaty with Hiram and then he married a daughter of the king of Egypt.
* He reorganized the international administration of Israel. By doing so, he ensured that there were different department to deal with different issues.
* He used the wisdom from God to compose 300 proverbs and more than 1000 songs which are still relevant up to today. The book of proverbs and the Song of Songs are attributed to Solomon as the author.
* His wisdom enabled him to organize a colorful feast of dedicating the temple of God after transferring the covenant box from the tent to the temple (1 kings 8:1ff\_
* Using the wisdom, Solomon was able to develop Israel in all spheres of life, something which attracted visitors who brought tribute and gifts to Solomon.
* He organized the system of taxation whereby everyone had to pay tax. In this case a lot of revenue was collected which was used to carryout developmental programmes.
* He had a gift of welcoming visitors (hospitality). He was in position to receive many visitors who brought wealth in form of gifts into Israel . For example, the queen of Sheba was welcomed into Solomon’s palace (1 kings 10:1ff)
* King Solomon had a strong professional army which defended Israel. And because of this army, there was always peace in Israel.
* Solomon accumulated a lot of wealth during his reign, it is said that there was no king who would compete with Solomon as far as wealth was concerned. (1 kings 10:4ff).
* Solomon transferred the covenant box from the tent to the temple. After constructing the temple, he organized and the Ark was transferred to the temple.
* He established trade with other states in this way, he was in position to get items like timber and this trade led to economic development in Israel.

FAILURES OF SOLOMON

Solomon was met with many failures because of misusing his wisdom and the following are among his failures:

* He introduced forced labour especially during the construction of the temple. Though he did not use his fellow Israelites as slaves, but many people were forced to work as laves without payment.
* He worshipped pagan gods especially the gods that were brought by his wives which was against the covenant way of life (1 kings 11:1-10)
* Solomon constructed worshipping places for the pagan gods which was against the mosaic law (1 kings 11:7)
* He overtaxed the people of Israel which was against God’s expectations. The Israelites were supposed to be taxed according to their income.
* He sold God’s land which was against the Mosaic Law. When he failed to pay a debt he had incurred he decided to give away 20 towns of Israel as the payment.
* He was extravagant and a lot of revenue was spent on worthless parties and ceremonies while other Israelites were suffering. During the dedication of the temple he offered lots of sacrifices (1 kings 8:62ff)
* He promoted regional imbalance. The Southern region developed faster than the Northern region since a lot of wealth was accumulated in the Southern region which wasn’t distributed equally to balance the two regions.
* Solomon made alliances with the pagan state yet the Israelites weren’t supposed to associate with the pagan states/ people. He made an alliance with Egypt and Tyre.
* He led to famine in Israel. He gave out Israel’s food to the men of Tyre in exchange for the legs which led to famine in the long run.
* He had less love for his people. They complained because of the burdens of over taxation, exploitation but Solomon did not listen to their complaints.
* Solomon married many pagan women which was against the covenant way of life . For example, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. He married from Egypt, married Hittite women from Moab, Edom, Sidon and many others
* He spent more time building his palace than the temple which took him 7 years only. This means that he devoted a lot of time (13 years) on his palace than on God’s temple.
* During Solomon’s reign, there was a lot of nepotism whereby positions of great influence were given to people from the Southern region who were related to Solomon.
* Solomon lost faith in God the Almighty and trusted the pagan gods. He even reached an extent of sacrificing to these gods hence turning away from God the Almighty.
* Solomon contributed to the division of the kingdom of Israel. When he turned away from God. God promised to take away the kingdom from him though not during his lie time (1 kings 11:11-13).
* Solomon lived a luxurious life at the expense of the poor . For example, most of his utensils were made out of gold.

THE LESSONS POLITICAL LEADERS LEARN FROM SOLOMON’S REIGN

The political leaders learn the following lessons from Solomon’s reign;

* They should have faith in God the Almighty unlike Solomon who lost faith towards the end of his reign.
* They should construct worshipping places for God just like Solomon who built a temple for God which was used for worshipping.
* They should pray to God for wisdom and guidance just like Solomon who prayed for God’s wisdom
* The political leaders should promote equality unlike Solomon who was promoting inequality among the Israelites.
* They should organize their administration like Solomon who had an organized administration.
* They should unite people in the by distributing resources equally unlike Solomon who contributed to the division of the kingdom in different ways.
* They should establish diplomatic relationships with the neighbouring states to promote peace and stability like Solomon who established diplomatic relationships with the neighbouring states.
* They should be hospitable like Solomon who welcomed visitors who brought a lot of wealth into Israel.
* They should settle or solve disputes among the people in order to promote peace just like Solomon who settled disputes between the two prostitutes.
* They should embark on developmental programmes in their countries likewise Solomon developed Israel in all spheres.
* They should be exemplary just like Solomon who showed a good example to the people by praying to God and sacrificing

DAVID’S CONTRIBUTION TO SOLOMON’S REIGN

Because of David’s contribution to Solomon’s reign it is said that Solomon became famous because of his father David and also it was the origin of the common saying that “Solomon reaped where he didn’t sow”. Therefore David contributed to Solomon’s reign in the following ways:

* King David captured so many states and they became part of Israel. Therefore Solomon never waged wars of conquest but he only received tributes from the states which his father David conquered.
* Solomon exploited friendship with king Hiram of Tyre in order to get building materials like timber. If it wasn’t for the peace treaty signed between Hiram and David, Solomon wouldn’t have built the temple and his palace.
* King Saul’s family which would have been a threat to King Solomon was greatly weakened by his father David. Therefore there were no civil wars among the Israelites during Solomon’s reign.
* It was King David who united the people of Israel during his reign. By doing so, he tried to make it easier for Solomon to organize the kingdom and in the end he was in position to get a lot of revenue.
* Solomon transferred the covenant box from the tent to the temple. If the father David hadn’t brought back the covenant box, probably Solomon would have failed to bring it back the way others had failed and he wouldn’t have transferred it to the temple.
* Solomon became a king as a result of David’s faithfulness if David hadn’t been faithful to the promise he had made to Bathsheba, Solomon wouldn’t have become the king because his brother Adonijah wanted to become the king of Israel.
* The only threat to Solomon was the kingdom of Tyre but David had already signed a peace treaty with king Hiram of Tyre. Therefore there was peace in Israel during Solomon’s reign.
* King David had conquered Jerusalem from Jebusites and this is where Solomon constructed the temple and the palace.
* King David weakened the Philistines especially when he killed Goliath the Philistine soldier. Therefore when Solomon became a king David had already destroyed and weakened the philistines hence they were no longer a threat.
* It was David who had a plan of constructing the temple of God though he was stopped by God through Prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 7:5) therefore by constructing the temple, Solomon was fulfilling David’s plan.
* The proverbs and the songs written by Solomon were a result of the talent he inherited from his father David who was a good musician.
* Solomon ruled the Israelites without power changing hands because God had promised David’s rule would continue forever.
* Solomon used the man power from the conquered states for his building programmes and other developmental activities which states were conquered by his father David.
* David had expanded Israel in all directions. Solomon was in position to have a large tax base which contributed to his wealth.
* When David was about to die, he advised Solomon on how o be a good leader, obedient to God’s laws determined and confident and also to do away with Shemei and Joab who would have disorganized him (1 kings 2:1-9)
* David had a strong army in place. Therefore Solomon only had to train them and made them professional who maintained stability and peace in Israel by defending it.

Revision questions

1. (a) Comment on the circumstances which led to Solomon’s assumptions to the throne.
2. How did Solomon display the wisdom he received from God?
3. (a) Assess that impact of the building of the temple in Jerusalem to the people of Israel.
4. Examine the impact of building churches to Christians today
5. Comment on Solomon’s foreign policy to the people of Israel.
6. (a)Examine the view that Solomon organized for his own failures.
7. What can political leaders learn from the failures of King Solomon?
8. (a)Give an account of Solomon’s dedication prayer.
9. (b) Examine the relevance of Solomon’s dedication prayer to modern Christians.
10. To what extent did Solomon misuse the wisdom he received from God?
11. (a) “Solomon’s plural marriage led to his downfall” how far true is the statement?
12. Examine the lessons political leaders learn from Solomon’s reign.
13. To what extent is the claim that Solomon became famous because of his father David correct?
14. “Solomon reaped where he did not sow” discuss.
15. To what extent did the Israelites kings live according to their concept?

THE REIGN OF REHOBOAM AND THE DIVISION OF THE ISRAEL KINGDOM (1 KINGS 12:1FF)

* When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became the next king of Israel and was coronated at Shechem.

Rehoboam became more of a dictator than his father Solomon basing on the words he said when the officials from the North approached him and said, “My father placed heavy burdens on you, I will make them heavier”

* The above response of Rehoboam marked the beginning of the eventual division of the kingdom into two parts. The Northern part remained being called Israel sharing the ten tribes with its capital city at Samaria.
* The southern part became known as the kingdom of Judah with its capital city at Jerusalem.
* Rehoboam came to power at a time when the Northern people had already threatened to break away if their demands were not going to be fulfilled like reducing on over taxation and forced labour which king David and Solomon had practiced towards them.
* As soon as Rehoboam took over power a delegation came from the North and visited him requesting for reduction of the heavy burdens the father used to put upon them and then they would remain loyal to him.
* Rehoboam answered the delegation that he would have the reply in 3 days to come.
* Then king Rehoboam consulted the older men who had served as his father’s advisors.
* They advised Rehoboam that if he wished to serve the people well, then he had to give them a fair answer and so they would also be loyal to him.
* Unfortunately, Rehoboam ignored the advise of the older man and instead went to the young men who had grown up with him but misadvised him. They told him to reply in these words “My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist…….” He beat you with a whip and I will flog you with a horse whip.”
* After the 3 days elapsed, Jeroboam and his other men from the North returned to king Rehoboam as he had instructed. He gave them the exact advise of the young men i.e. placing the heavy burdens towards the northerners.
* When the people of the North saw that the king wouldn’t listen to them, they shouted, “Down with David and his family! What have they ever done for us…..let Rehoboam rule out for himself”
* When king Rehoboam sent Adoniram who was in charge of the forced labour to go to the northerners (Israel, the stoned him to death.
* Later Rehoboam waged war through mobilizing a force of 180,000 soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to fight back the northerners who were headed by Jeroboam but in war pain.

THE REASONS FOR THE DIVISION OF ISRAEL KINGDOM

The collapse of the once divided kingdom of Israel didn’t begin wit the reign of Rehoboam but was a gradual process. It started way back during the regime of King David and later Solomon his son.

However, to a larger extent, Rehoboam is blamed because of his many mistakes committed that eventually led to the division of the kingdom. More so his poor response towards the request of the elders from the North concerning reducing the heavy burden they suffered in the regime

The contribution of king Rehoboam to the division of Israel kingdom

Revision Questions

1. *“Rehoboam was largely responsible for the collapse of the kingdom of Israel” discuss.*
2. *“Rehoboam was solely responsible for the division of the kingdom of Israel” discuss.*
3. *Discuss the causes of the division of the kingdom of Israel and its outcomes.*

THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE DIVISION

Rehoboam was responsible for the division of the kingdom in the following ways;

* Rehoboam failed to reduce on the overwhelming harshness, exploitation and oppression which was imposed on the people from the Northern region previously by his predecessors i.e. his father Solomon and his grand father David.
* Rehoboam promised tougher treatment to the Northern people. He promised to be worse than his father Solomon when he said “My father placed heavy burdens on you I will make them even heavier……” (1 kings 12:14GNB)
* Rehoboam under estimated and ignored the elders advise which would have saved the division of Israel.

They told him that “if you want to serve the people well, give a favourable answer to their request, and they will always serve you loyally.” But he ignored (1 kings 12:7)

* Rehoboam lacked proper strategies as a king. For instance he sent Adoniram who was unpopular to the Northerners to silence them from revolting but they reacted by stoning him to death (1 kings 12:18)
* Rehoboam did not pay attention to the people when he failed to listen to their request. They left him as a king of the people of the Northern region.
* He was rude in his response to the requests of the Northern tribes. This is indicated when he decided to send them away and only promised to answer them after 3 days.
* He over favoured the Southern people in administration and decision making which made him unpopular among the Northerners. Thus planning a rebellion.

The roles played by Jeroboam in the division of the kingdoms are as follows;

* Jeroboam accepted the ten pieces of the robe which were given to him by Prophet Ahijah. This implied that he was ready to rule the Northern region leading to its split from the Southern (1 kings 11:29-31)
* Jeroboam’s coming back from exile led to the division of the kingdom. When he came back he instigated a rebellion against Rehoboam (1 kings 11:26-40)
* Jeroboam’s readiness and acceptance to become the king of the Northern region paved way for the division of the kingdom. (1 kings 12:20)

THE LONG TERM (UNDERLYING) CAUSES OF THE DIVISION

King David was responsible for the division of the kingdom of Israel in the following ways;

* He ruled Israel for 7 years before he was fully accepted by the Northerners to be their king. Although he was later confirmed, many Northerners did not like his reign (2 Samuel 5:1-16)
* Towards the end of David’s regime, he turned to be autocratic (dictator) and unjust to his people most especially the Northerners. This paved way for the later division of the kingdom.
* The illegal census which King David carried out led many people into suffering and death most especially the Northerners. This sparked off a rebellion later (2 Samuel 24:1ff)
* David’s scandal with Bathsheba noted in (2 Samuel 11:1ff) which resulted into Uriah’s death also alienated the Northern people from David’s rule.
* The idea of over taxation and forced labour which the delegation from the North went to Rehoboam to be reduced was started by David and later developed by his son Solomon.
* David favoured people from the Southern region and many of the administrative posts were given to them while the Northerners felt rejected. Therefore when given chance they rebelled against David’s rule.
* The monopoly rule of the Southern led to the division of the kingdom. For a long time David, Solomon and Rehoboam who were inheriting power from one another came from the Southern reign which the northerners rebelled against.

Solomon also contributed to the division of the kingdom in the following ways;

* Solomon promoted apostasy and idolatry in Israel when he built shrines for the goods of his wives and even worshipped these gods. This angered God and promised to take away the kingdom from him (1 kings 11:1)
* Solomon lived a luxurious and extravagant life at the expense of his subjects who were living in absolute poverty especially the Northerners. This partly made them to rebel against his son’s regime ( 1kings 4:20-28)
* He over exploited the Israelites through heavy taxation and forced labour. This affected so much the people of the Northern region who were tired of Solomon’s exploitative rule (1 kings 5:13ff)
* Solomon mismanaged and misallocated resources of the Israelites to the extent of selling away 20 towns of Israel to another kingdom and payment for the debt he had incurred during the construction of the temple. (1 kings 9:10-14). This mainly affected the Northern people.
* He was so autocratic and harsh t the Northern people. He promised to place heavy burdens on them and beat them with horse whips.
* Solomon practiced nepotism where by he discriminated people of the Northern region. Posts of administration were usually given to the Southerners especially his relatives. This also annoyed the Northerners to the point of revolting.
* Solomon refused to change from idolatry even tough God appeared to him several times and told him to change. This caused the division because God promised to take away the kingdom from him as it is noted in 1 kings 11:9-12.

God was also responsible for the division of the kingdom in the following ways;

* God showed his determination to break Israel into two. When Solomon turned away from him and give it to one of his officials. This is noted in 1 kings 11:11-13.
* Through prophet Ahijah, God dramatized how Israel would break into two. He sent prophet Ahijah who tore his robe into pieces and gave 10 pieces to Jeroboam meaning that he was to rule over 10 tribes and Solomon was to keep two tribes for the sake of David (1 kings 11:29ff)
* Through prophet Shemaiah, God stopped Rehoboam from going to the North to attack his brothers because the revolt was influenced by God himself (1 kings 12:22-24)
* It was God’s will that Rehoboam spoke to the Israelites harshly and made a wrong decision in order to fulfill Ahijah’sprophesy. According to 1 kings 12:15, it was the will of the Lord to bring what he had spoken to Jeroboam of Nebat through prophet Ahijah come true.

Note;The division of the kingdom of Israel left Rehoboam as the king of only Judah i.e. Southern region and Jeroboam became the king of Israel i.e. the Northern region.

The effects/consequences of the division of the kingdom

Guiding question

1. (a) Comment on the outcomes of the division of the kingdom of Israel.
2. What consequences did the breakup of the kingdom have on the nation of Israel?

The following were the impacts/ effects of the division of the kingdom of Israel;

* The kingdom of Israel divided into two kingdoms and got 2 kings at ago. The Southern region comprising of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin was ruled by Rehoboam while the Northern region comprising of 10 tribes was rued by Jeroboam.
* Enmity developed between Israel and Judah. On many occasions, Israel would attack Judah and Judah would also attack Israel leading to great death and more divisionism.
* There developed power struggle especially in the Northern kingdom. Assassination of kings became so common to the extent that some kings would not rule for more than 2 years (1 kings 16)
* God lost confidence in human kings and resorted to calling back the people to the covenant faith. This he did through sending some prophets to remind the people about their covenant obligations . For example, prophet Elijah and Elisha (1 kings 17ff)
* Baal worship was introduced into Israel especially during the reign of King Ahab. He married Jezebel who was a promoter of Baal worship with her false prophets (1 kings 18)
* The institution of priesthood was abused. For instance in the Northern region, priests were chosen from any tribe yet they were supposed to be from the tribe of Levi and worse still the appointment was made by the kings (1 kings 13, 12:25-31)
* Israel lost political independence. Judah specifically became weak and was attacked by the Egyptians, Assyrians and many others who demanded a lot of tributes from Judah (2 kings 6:23-33)
* The Northern region got Samaria as their capital city while Jerusalem was retained as the capital of Judah.
* Jerusalem remained being recognized as the religious centre of Judah while the Northern people got different religious centres Dan, Bethel and Gilgal (1 kings 12:28-31)
* The Northern kingdom developed faster than the counter parts from the South just because the Northern kingdom was strategically placed and goods for trade passed through that region.
* Foreign countries started regaining their lost territories to Israel and also got their independence . For example, Shisha of Egypt.
* The Northern kingdom became more sinful than before. They built temples for worshiping pagan gods and had a number of false prophets plus appointing their own priests who were very many (1 kings 12:26-33, 13ff)
* God rejected the sacrifices of the Northern people because of their sinful nature which was against the covenant ay of life.
* The Northern people were relaxed of the overwhelming burdens of taxation and forced labour which the former kings used to impose over them.
* The Mosaic Law was rejected especially in the Northern region. People put more trust in apostasy, idolatry and syncretism which were against the covenant way of life.
* Many false prophets came up especially in the Northern region. This was during the reign of King Ahab who married Jezebel who came with over 850 false prophets in the land of Israel.
* God finally sent his rue prophets to rectify the situation in Israel. Such prophets included Amos, Hosea, Elijah, and Jeremiah.But they faced various resistances from the kings. For example Elijah conflicted with King Ahab and his wife Jezebel over Baal worship (1 kings 21:1ff) and Amos conflicted with priest Amaziah.
* On a sad note the two kingdoms were destroyed by their enemies beginning with Israel in 721 BC and later Judah in 587 BC by Assyrians and Babylonians respectively.

THE LESSONS CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

* Modern Christians are advised to remain united under their master Jesus Christ because as Christians united we stand divided we fall.
* Political leaders should promote unity in their administration so as to have or receive loyalty from their subjects unlike Rehoboam who mistreated the Northerners leading to the division of the kingdom.
* Modern Christians are called upon to develop their nation on a basis of balanced regional development in order to avoid conflicts. The reign of King David, Solomon and Rehoboam discriminated the Northerners leading to the division of Israel.
* Modern Christian leaders should be social not like Rehoboam who led to the division of the kingdom due to his dictatorial rule towards the Northerners.
* Modern Christian leaders have a sense of apologizing for the mistakes they commit like in terms of speech not to be like Rehoboam who had no sense of apology to the elders of the Northern tribes which resulted into the division of the kingdom.
* Christian leaders should be ready to adjust their policies when they find out that they are hard towards the people and can cause a problem in their rule unlike Rehoboam who was not able to change his policies.
* Modern Christian parents are called upon to teach their young ones in good behaviours in terms of words and discipline. If Solomon had properly educated his son Rehoboam, he wouldn’t have responded to the request of Northerners proudly.
* Christians in positions of Christianity should be very careful with words they utter out in public. In other words they need to control their tongue.
* Christians learn what God has decided is hard to reverse. Rehoboam was punished by God by letting him loose control of 10 tribes out of 12 because of his arrogance.

THE REIGN OF KING JEROBOAM 1 IN ISRAEL

ASSESS THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM I IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

Jeroboam was the son of Nebat and he was the first king of the Northern kingdom Israel.

To a smaller extent he was successful in his leadership as seen below;

* He was a hard working young man who helped to develop the Northern kingdom economically by developing or promoting trade.
* He initiated policies that were totally different from those of Southerners . For example, he established a new worshipping place at Bethel and made Samaria the capital city of the Northern kingdom (1 kings 12:32-3…)
* Jeroboam is credited for having created a state of Israel comprising of 10 tribes which never existed before.
* He was a militarily genius ruler. He used to lead the Israelites in wars of expansion and defense.
* He decided to cut of relations with the Southerners so as to strengthen his rule which he did. In addition he encouraged his people to work hard and be self sustaining.

However, to a greater extent Jeroboam was a failure as noted below;

* He made idols for himself and for the people of Israel in form of 2 golden bulls. One he put in Bethel and another in Dan (1 kings 12:29)
* He built Baal temples in the land of Yahweh and in so doing he encouraged the worship of foreign gods at the expense of Yahweh (1Kings 12:32-33)
* He was involved in religious syncretism. This influenced many of the Northerners to backslide.

DISCUSS THE FEATURES IN THE REIGN OF KING JEROBOAM I

* Jeroboam decided to cut off the relations with the people of the South. He did this to ensure that the Northern tribes do not pay allegiance to Rehoboam son of Solomon the leader of the Southern kingdom.
* Jeroboam I built temples for Baal worship and for that matter he was responsible highly for leading the people of the North into disobedience of the Yahweh.
* Syncretism characterized the nation during his reign therefore he plunged the nation into backsliding and violation of the covenant law.
* The nation of Israel became polytheistic since Jeroboam I was in favour of foreign gods.
* Jeroboam I developed stiff enmity with Rehoboam the ruler of the Southerners to the extent that at times they were at war. This was alienating the Israelites from the covenant governance.
* He even changed religious festivals to coincide with his day f coronation and this itself was an offense against God because it altered the religious calendar of the Israelites.
* However, Jeroboam I should be credited for having developed the kingdom faster by making use of the trade routes and minerals there in.
* The Northern kingdom was not strong militarily as it reduced in size and God’s favour was not on their side. That is why other states carried out attacks on the Northern kingdom and defeated them.
* Jeroboam I promoted idolatry as he made golden bulls for the people to worship at Bethel and Dan. This was a violation of the first law in which the Israelites had been forbidden from worshiping idols or other gods.
* Because of Jeroboam’s misdeeds, Ahijah prophesized against his regime by the power of God. God rejected through prophet Ahijah why he had given him leadership of the North.

DISCUSS THE LESSONS PRESENT POLITICAL LEADERS LEARN FROM JEROBOAM’S REIGN

* Modern political leaders need to work for the unity of the universe and all what it contains. In other words they should resist and ignore conflicting situations which result into wars which were common in the Northern kingdom.
* There is need for modern political leaders to encourage monotheism and let oneness of God prevail in their regime unlike Jeroboam I who promoted polytheism.
* Modern political leaders need to respect God’s commandments such that punishments are not directed to their families and their areas of control.
* There is need for modern political leaders to lead a stable and better administration not like Jeroboam regime which had poor foundation and continued to have constant civil wars.
* Modern political leaders need to pray and seek glory from God unlike Jeroboam who instead decided to promote Baal worship in the land of God.
* Modern political leaders should stand a life of faith and respect to Yahweh by seeking faith and respecting Yahweh they stand better chances of God’s protection which Jeroboam failed to do.
* Modern leaders need to listen to their subjects more so God’s messengers. This would enable them to have victory in wars and success in their leadership.
* They should be nationalistic and develop feelings of patriotism among their subjects. Jeroboam tried to be so but failed to respect God who had given him the authority to rule the North.
* Modern political leaders need to develop areas of great concern like building infrastructures instead of turning away from their worshipping places for the people of the North which was against God’s will.
* Tolerance is what every modern political leader needs to develop so as to carry on proper administration. They should ignore bad examples like those done by king Jeroboam I who had no qualities of a tolerant person.
* Modern political leaders should develop qualities of determination especially in the army so as to defend their nation. Unfortunately Jeroboam’s regime had a very weak military and that is why on many occasions he was defeated.

THE IMPACT OF KINGSHIP ON THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAEL

Kingship had both positive and negative impact as noted below;

The positive effects of kingship on the development of Israel are the following;

* God’s temple was constructed in Jerusalem. The plan was initiated by King David but his son Solomon who succeeded did the work of building the temple in Jerusalem.
* The nation of Israel was expanded. It was mainly done by King David during his regime for he captures various states like Jerusalem from the Jebusites.
* The covenant box was brought back to Jerusalem. It was brought again by king David who organized 30 thousand of his best soldiers who went to Baalah in Judah and transferred the covenant box to Jerusalem then placed it in the tent he had prepared.
* Kingship led to formation of a strong army that defended Israel against his enemies. King Saul and David had formed a strong army which later king Solomon professionalized through training.
* Kingship led to making of alliances with neighbouring states. This was basically done by King David and Solomon and it enabled Israel to carry out trade and accumulate a lot of wealth. Even there was peace in Israel because of the alliances.
* Because of kingship, monotheism was promoted among the Israelites. This was done by David who was a religious man, worshipped God and when he brought back the covenant box from Baalah, the Israelites started worshipping God in the tent.
* Kingship promoted faith within the people of Israel . For example, David and his son Solomon helped the people to develop faith when the covenant box was brought to Jerusalem and when the temple was constructed.
* God began guiding the people during the reign of the kings . For example,king Solomon prayed for God’s wisdom which he received and it assisted them to lead the people towards the covenant way of life (1 kings 3).
* The kings showed a good example to the Israelites in terms of religion . For example, king David repented after sinning to the Lord (2 Samuel 12:13)

The negative effects of kingship in Israel were the following;

* Due to kingship, the Israelites were over taxed and exploited . For example,king Solomon over taxed the people during the construction of the temple and others were put to forced labour (1 kings 5:13-18).
* Kingship made people become wicked . For example, during Ahab’s reign people practiced temple prostitution and other evils like idol worship which his wife Jezebel had introduced in Israel (1 kings 18ff)
* Many false prophets emerged in Israel . For example, during Ahab’s reign, Jezebel brought 850 false prophets into Israel and even her husband allowed her to build worshipping places for these prophets (1 kings 18:1ff)
* Kingship was partly associated with power struggle. For example when David became too old, his son Adonijah was trying to claim the throne forcefully but Bathsheba intervened on behalf of her son Solomon (1 kings 1:5-10)
* Because of kingship, many people lost their lives. This was noted during the reign of King Saul who killed jealously over 50 priests of Nob. (1kings 22:1ff). Even king Ahab killed God’s prophets under he influence of his wife Jezebel.
* Corruption was promoted among the Israelites during kingship period. Many people accepted bribes especially in the courts of law. King Saul spared the Philistine king Saul spared the Philistine king Agag because he was promised a ransom (1 Samuel 13:1ff)
* During kingship, God’s sacrifices were abused or some unrightful kings offered sacrifices like king Saul sacrificed on Samuel’s behalf (1 Samuel 13:7-12)
* Kingship brought about nepotism in Israel . For example,king David and king Solomon used to favour people from the Southern region as far as positions of responsibility were concerned. This favouritism later led to the division of the kingdom.
* Kingship led to selling of God’s land which was illegal. This was done by Solomon who sold 20 towns of Israel to a foreign king in payment for the debt he had failed to pay.
* Forced labour was introduced in Israel. This was common during Solomon’s reign when he was constructing the temple and his palace.
* Kingship brought about marriage of pagan women which was also a sign of turning away from God’s command in Deuteronomy 7 . For example,king Solomon married women from Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom and Sidon (1 kings 11) and also king Ahab married Jezebel from Sidon. They promoted their pagan religion in Israel.

Revision questions

1. *“The division of the kingdom of Israel into two entirely was on Solomon’s soldiers.” To what extent is the statement true?*
2. *(a) Examine the effects of the division of Israel*

*(b) What lessons do modern Christians learn from the division of Israel?*

1. *“The division of Israel kingdom was a result of the weakness of monarchy.” Discuss.*
2. *Examine the impact of kingship on the social, economic, political and religious development of Israel.*

THE PROPHETIC REGIME IN ISRAEL

KING AHAB VERSUS PROPHET ELIJJAH

THE REIGN OF KING AHAB AND THE PROPHETIC WORK OF ELIJJAH (1 kings 16:29-34)

Ahab was a son of king Omri who reigned over Israel in Samaria for 22 years. Ahab became a king when Israel had faced a lot of political conflicts that resulted into its division into two i.e. The Northern region with ten tribes taking the name Israel and the Southern tribe taking the name Judah.

The Northern part Israel was ruled by many kings after the division i.e. Jeroboam, Nadab, Boasha, Ela, Zimri and Omri the father of King Ahab.

According to 1 kings 16:30, its noted that king Ahab committed so many evils in the sight of the Lord more than all his predecessors as noted below.

THE EVILS, SINS/FAILURES OF KING AHAB

* He married Jezebel the daughter of Ethibaal the king of Sidon as noted in 1 kings 16:31. This was against the covenant way of life because the Israelites weren’t expected to marry pagan people.
* Ahab promoted Baal worship among the Israelites since Jezebel was the promoter of Baal worship. He allowed her to introduce Baal worship in the land of Israel 1 kings 16:31. This was also against the covenant way of life because the Israelites were expected to worship Yahweh alone.
* Ahab went ahead to build a temple for Baal in Samaria, a land of God. He even made altars for Baal which were placed in the temple as noted in 1 kings 16:32.
* Ahab looked un repentant whenever the Israelites sinned against God, they were expected to repent but king Ahab didn’t do so at any single moment When he was warned by the man of God, prophet Elijah.
* King Ahab was blood thirsty. during his regime many prophets of God were killed and even went ahead to kill Nabboth who refused to sell his vineyard to him (1 kings 21:1ff)
* King Ahab is blamed for having led to Naboth’s death. Nabboth was killed through lies and false accusations created by Ahab’s wife Jezebel. Murder is a sin against God’s expectation, so as a king, he was expected to have respect for human life (1 kings 21:1ff)
* King Ahab consulted false prophets which were against the covenant way of life. According to 1Kings 22:6-12, when Ahab was going to fight with the people of Syria, instead of consulting God’s prophets, he consulted false prophets.
* King Ahab never listened to the advice of God’s prophets. When prophet Micah advised him not to go to fight the people of Syria, he didn’t listen to his advise which later led to his death that is noted in the book of 1 kings 22:1ff.
* Prophet Elijah was critical of king Ahab because he showed a bad example to his subjects yet he was supposed to show or live a morally upright life . For example, consulting false prophets partly led to the defeat of the Israelites in the Syrian army and his death.
* Prophet Elijah criticized King Ahab’s wickedness for he had allowed his wife to bring false prophets into Israel and these were numbering to 850 who tried to blow away people from God.
* Ahab committed an evil of stopping the people from the Northern region from going to Jerusalem to worship God. Jerusalem being the central worshipping place, Israelites were expected to visit it at least once a year.
* Ahab’s wickedness is also indicated in his greed for material wealth and his failure to observe God’s covenant relationship. Naboth had refused to sell his vineyard not because he was too rich but because he kept God’s command of no Israelite to sell any part of the land.
* King Ahab committed an evil by breaking the act of Herem. According to 1 kings 20:1ff, Ahab was commanded by God to attack Syria and kill king Benhadad unfortunately Ahab spared his life and treated him like a brother which was against the covenant way of life.

LESSONS POLITICAL LEADERS LEARN FROM AHAB’S WICKEDNESS

What lessons do political leaders learn from Ahab’s wickedness?

* Modern political leaders should be exemplary to their subjects unlike King Ahab who was unexemplary. For example, he led to Naboth’s death and never listened to God’s prophets like Micah.
* Political leaders should respect people’s lives unlike Ahab who stopped the people of the Northern region from going to Jerusalem to worship God.
* They were called upon to reserve lives of their subjects and avoid murder unlike Ahab and his wife Jezebel who organized for the death of Nabboth (1 kings 21)
* Christian political leaders should consult God’s prophets who have the right message unlike King Ahab who consulted false prophets many times who even misled him and was killed in the battle of the Syrians.
* Christian political leaders should listen to the advice of God’s true prophets unlike Ahab who didn’t listen to God’s prophet Micah and decided to listen to the advice of the false prophets as noted in 1Kings 22:1ff.
* They should practice monotheism meaning worship of one God unlike Ahab who practiced syncretism which reached its climax during his reign (1 kings 16:29-34)
* The modern political leaders are called upon to repent whenever they sin against God unlike Ahab who never repented however much he sinned against God and was warned by Prophet Elijah thus causing suffering to the Israelites.
* Political leaders should be contented with what they have unlike Ahab who took Naboth’s vineyard yet he had enough land (1 kings 21)
* Modern Christian leaders are called upon to prepare offertory to God alone unlike King Ahab who due to the influence of his wife Jezebel offered sacrifices to Baal and other pagan gods which was against the mosaic law.
* Modern Christian political leaders should lead people according to God’s expectations i.e. following the covenant obligations unlike King Ahab who misled people by drawing them away from God and leaning towards Baal worship.
* Political leaders should have faith in God at all times who can enable them overcome their challenges of leadership unlike Ahab who believed in Baal and the false prophets as his consultants.

ELIJAH AND THE DROUGHT IN ISRAEL (1 kings 17:1ff)

Comment on Elijah’s life in the wilderness after pronouncing the drought.

* Prophet Elijah from Tishbe was sent to King Ahab to show him how God was annoyed with his sins. He said “In the name of the Lord, the living God of Israel whom I serve, I tell you that there will be no dew or rain for the next 2 or 3 years until I say so”.
* After announcing the drought, the Lord said to Elijah, “Leave this place and go east of the Jordan near the brook of Cherith and so Elijah did.
* He was assured by the Lord that brook would supply him with water to drink and the Lord would send ravens to bring him food to eat. This was to be in form of bread and meat. That is the morning and the evening.
* After a while, the brook dried up because of the lack of rain as he had declared a period of 2-3 years drought.
* Then the Lord said to Elijah to leave the place, move to the town of Zarephath near Sidon where the Lord had commanded a widow (Phoenicia woman) to feed Elijah.
* So Elijah went to Zarephath and as he came to the gate of the town, he saw a woman gathering firewood whom he requested to bring him a drink of Water and bread to eat.
* The woman answered Elijah’s request by saying “By the living Lord your God I swear that I haven’t got any bread. All I have is a handful of flour in a bowl and a drop of olive oil in the jar.”
* The woman claimed that, she had come to gather some firewood to take back home and prepare for the little that was remaining to feed the son and herself. And that would be their last meal, then they would starve to death.
* Elijah assured her not to worry and requested the woman to go ahead and prepare him a small amount from what she had. And would have more flour and oil in her jar. This signified that the Lord through Prophet Elijah was ready to perform a miracle of multiplying the flour and olive oil.
* Indeed the woman believed the prophet’s words and did as she was requested. As the Lord had promised through Elijah, the bowl didn’t run out of flour and the jar didn’t out of oil (1 kings 17:16)
* Unfortunately, sometime later as Elijah was still staying at the woman’s home, her son got sick and died. So she blamed Elijah for causing the death. As a man of God, Elijah prayed for the boy and brought back his life.
* The woman was very thankful and said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and the Lord really speaks through you”
* After sometime in the 3rd year of the drought king Ahab decided to divide up his men into groups to search for water and pasture to feed his horses and mules.
* As Obadiah was searching for the pasture and water he met Prophet Elijah, recognized him and bowed low before him, asked whether it was really Elijah himself, then Elijah answered, he was the one.
* Elijah sent Obadiah to tell Ahab that he wanted to meet him. However, Obadiah was worried on how he could approach the king who had searched for Elijah in the surrounding towns but in no vain (not found).
* In the same way, Obadiah told Elijah how he had hid some of the Lord’s prophets in caves of two groups, 50 in each. And so even feared to tell the king thinking that Elijah would disappear again and the king would get annoyed and kill Obadiah for lying.
* Fortunately when Obadiah took the message back to king Ahab, Ahab was ready to meet Elijah and Elijah had also swore that, “by the living God whom I serve, I promise that I will present myself to the king today”
* When Ahab saw Elijah he said, “So, there you’re, the worst trouble maker in Israel!” But Elijah responded by saying, I am not a trouble maker. Then they made agreements to meet at Mt. Carmel for a religious competition with Baal prophets.

THE CONTEST BETWEEN ELIJAH AND THE BAAL PROPHETS (1 kings 18:1ff)

* After sometime in the 3rd year of the drought the Lord said to Elijah, ‘Go and present yourself to King Ahab and I will send rain.” And so Elijah did.
* The famine in Samaria by then was at its worst and there was no water or food. As Obadiah was looking for water, he met Elijah who told him to inform Ahab about his presence in the area.
* At first Obadiah was scared that the Lord would take away Elijah before he meets Ahab and could be like or lie to the king.
* But Elijah had promised by the living Lord, he wanted to meet the king. When they met, Ahab first condemned the prophet as a trouble maker but Elijah defended himself that he wasn’t a trouble maker a trouble maker but Ahab caused the suffering of the people due to the disobedience of the Lord’s commands and worshipped the prophets of Baal.
* Elijah then told Ahab to mobilize the Israelites to meet him at mount Carmel together with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 900 prophets of goddess Asherah who were supported by Jezebel (1 kings 18:19)
* Ahab did as he was instructed; he mobilized the people and the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel with prophet Elijah.
* When they assembled at Mt. Carmel, Elijah first questioned the people and said, “How much longer will it take you to make up your minds?, if the Lord is God, worship Him, but if Baal is god worship him!” (1 kings 18:21)
* Elijah asked prophets of Baal to prove the righteousness of their god by organizing a sacrifice of 2 bulls, one for him and the other one for them. This was supposed to be consumed by divine fire sent by Baal not by natural lighting of fire.
* Elijah gave the prophets of Baal the first chance to organize their sacrifice, they prayed to Baal but he failed to send divine fire implying that Baal was weak and dead.
* Again Elijah made fun of the Baal prophets and told them to pray louder may be their god was day dreaming or in a long journey. They performed all their rituals but Baal didn’t answer their prayers. This proved that Baal was too weak to assist them in their problem.
* Elijah then came to the front and challenged the Baal prophets, organized his sacrifice, drug a trench around it that could contain 14 litres of water, instructed the people to put water on the sacrifice 3 times and then prayed. Divine fire burnt up the sacrifice and even the water dried up. This confirmed that Yahweh was a living God and stronger than the false prophets.
* When the sacrifice was consumed, all the Israelites fell on the ground and said that the Lord is God. This meant that he was the only worthful God to worship.
* When the Israelites rose up, Elijah ordered them to seize all the false prophets of Baal. These were massacred in River .Kishon.
* After a short while, it started raining, bringing an end to the drought proving that God was more powerful and s the provider/source of rain and the controller of the climate.

HOW GOD DEMONSTRATED HIS POWER THROUGH ELIJAH DURING THE MT. CARMEL CONTEST

The following are the ways through which God’s power was demonstrated through Elijah in the Mt. Carmel contest.

* The Lord showed his power through Elijah by sending fire that burnt up the sacrifice and dried up the water in the trench.
* The people of Israel were able to confess and returned to monotheism by praising the Lord as the only God after noticing Elijah’s performance. This reflected a change in their hearts since most of them had turned to Baal worship (1 kings 18:39)
* The power of God was indicated through Elijah when he alone was able to kill the 450 Baal prophets killed in R. Kishon (1 kings 18:40)
* Elijah with courage and power from God was able to organize the contest with the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel courageously even not knowing the results of the contest.
* God’s power was demonstrated through Elijah when he courageously controlled King Ahab who had long been looking for him because of pronouncing the drought of 2-3 years in Israel. (1 kings 18:16-19)
* After the contest at Mt. Carmel, the power of God again exhibited through prophet Elijah when the drought he had pronounced came to an end (1 kings 18:45-46)
* Prophet Elijah down played the advise of Obadiah and preceded to meet king Ahab at Mt. Carmel even when he was told that his life was to be in danger. This shows that God had given him the power to take such a hard decision.
* After the contest and due to fearing of Jezebel of persecution the power of God enabled Elijah to run into the wilderness up to Mt. Horeb (Sinai) where he safely stayed.
* In the wilderness the angel of the Lord fed Elijah with bread and water. This also indicated that God’s power was on his side.
* After the Mt. Carmel contest as Elijah was in the wilderness, the Lord instructed him to anoint Elijah to succeed him as a prophet of Israel

.REASONS FOR CARRYING OUT THE MT. CARMEL CONTEST

The Mt. Carmel contest between Prophet Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal was intended for the following reasons;

* It was intended to challenge the prophets of Baal that were not strong as Prophet Elijah the true prophet of God was.
* God wanted to demonstrate his love to the Israelites through Elijah. This he did by saving the Israelites out of the long drought that had caused great suffering to the side of the Israelites.
* Elijah was showing much concern for the people he had looked after right during the Egyptian bondage/ slavery but were now turning away from their father.
* The contest aimed at showing the Israelites the omnipresence of their God who they had started loosing trust to.
* Elijah wanted to dispose Baal and show the Israelites that Baal was dead and useless. This was proved when Baal failed to respond to the prayers of the false prophets.
* The Mt. Carmel contest intended to save the Israelites from destruction that was about to occur to them because of Ahab’s apostasy (believing in Baal /gods)
* Elijah wanted to show that God is the source of all good things. He proved this when he sent rain after people had suffered for 3 years without rain.
* Elijah organized the contest at Mt. Carmel because he wanted to prove that sin is punishable by God. This was proved when the 450 prophets (false) were punished by death through the efforts of Elijah at R. Kishon.
* It was an attempt to accuse Ahab and his wife Jezebel. In fact Elijah accused them for being the trouble maker i.e. being responsible for people’s suffering of the 3 years drought.
* Elijah wanted to prove God’s holiness to know that God doesn’t associate with unholiness and that’s why the false prophets were killed.
* Elijah wanted to do away with prophets of Baal at the end of the contest in River Kishon.
* In the contest, of Elijah wanted to prove that he was a true messenger of God. He proved this when God responded to his prayers.
* The Mt. Carmel contest between Elijah and the 450 Baal prophets was also intended to promote or revive monotheism in Israel which had been dying out. This is why even the Israelites had at once said “The Lord is God.”
* The contest of Elijah also aims in the revealing the omnipotence of God of the Israelites. Elijah showed the power of God against the Baal prophets when he was able to pray and God sent divine fire which consumed he sacrifices.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTEST TO THE ISRAELITES

How significance of the contest to the Israelites?

The significance of the contest to the Israelites was as follows;

* It showed God’s might over Baal. When God sent divine fire, that consumed he sacrifice all the Israelites believed that Yahweh was the Almighty they said, “The Lord is God, the Lord alone is God” (1 kings 18:39)
* It revealed God’s omnipotence (power) over Baal. It was because of God’s power that divine fire from heaven consumed the sacrifice. The Israelites got to know God is always willing to answer people’s prayers. When Elijah prayed to Him, he responded by sending divine fire which consumed the sacrifice.
* The contest showed to the Israelites the omnipresence of God. He proved this by responding to Elijah’s prayers at Mt. Carmel.
* The event indicated to the Israelites that God is a spirit at Mt. Carmel. He did not appear physically but his presence was manifested in the actions of Elijah like being able to kill the 450 Baal prophets.
* The contest proved to Elijah as a true prophet of God. He prayed to God, his prayers were answered through God sending divine fire which consumed the sacrifice and also the drought came to an end.
* The contest showed to the Israelites learnt Yahweh punishes the sinners. The false prophets were seized and killed by Elijah because of being sinful or misleading God’s people.
* The event proved to the Israelites that the Lord Yahweh was a true and living God not a sleeping one like Elijah prayed his prayers were responded to immediately.
* The contest signified to the Israelites God’s superiority over Baal. The superiority of God was proved over Baal when he was able to send divine fire which the false prophets failed.
* The contest brought about religious sanity since Baal was destroyed and done away with. When the Baal prophets were killed in R. Kishon, there was religious purity again in Israel.
* The contest helped the Israelites to remember their covenant vows and also to practice monotheism. When God sent divine fire that consumed Elijah’s sacrifice all the people fell down and worshipped God again.

DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE MT. CARMEL CONTEST

God can be described in the following ways;

* He is a holy God who doesn’t associate with unholiness. Because of being holy, He instructed Elijah to kill all the false prophets who were unholy in the land of Israel.
* He is a miraculous God. He gave Elijah the powers to perform miracles . For example, Elijah prayed to God and his sacrifice was consumed by divine God.
* He is a punishing God. Because he doesn’t tolerate evil. He punished the 450 Baal prophets who were misleading his people through killing them in R. Kishon.
* God is a spirit by nature. He doesn’t posses a physical body and that’s why his presence was manifested at the mountain through the acts of Elijah defeating the Baal prophets although God did appear physically.
* God is living. When Elijah’s prayers were answered by sending divine fire that consumed the sacrifice and the water in the trench, it indicated God was living unlike Baal who failed to answer the prayers of the false prophets indicating that he was dead.
* God is a source of all good things. After the contest, the God of the Israelites sent rain and the drought which had lasted for 3 years came to an end.
* He is omnipresent i.e. He is found everywhere. The presence of God was manifested at Mt. Carmel. He was able to answer the prayers of Elijah and ever enabling him to kill the false prophets.
* He is omnipotent. This indicates God is powerful and because of his power, he was in position to send divine fire that consumed the sacrifice of Elijah and the water in the trench.
* God is Almighty. He proved this when all the Israelites bowed down and worshipped him and accepted that he was greater than Baal.
* God is superior over Baal. Prophet Elijah proved to the Israelites at the Mt. Carmel contest that God he worshipped was above Baal because he was in position to send divine fire that consumed the sacrifice and the water in the trench.

THE RELEVANCE/LESSONS/SIGNIFICANCE RELIGIOUS LEADERS LEARN FROM ELIJAH’S EXPERIENCE

Religious leaders learn the following lessons from Elijah’s experience;

* Religious leaders should seek for God’s guidance when faced with challenges just as Elijah was guided by God’s spirit.
* Religious leaders should be ready to serve God in hard situations just as Elijah continued with God’s mission even when Jezebel had vowed to kill him. (1 kings 19:2).
* Religious leaders are called upon to spread God’s word however bitter it may seem to be to the listeners likewise Elijah continued prophesizing though people were not willing to listen to the prophesies.
* Religious leaders should follow the Lord’s commandments or else they risk destruction like the Baal prophets who were destroyed by Elijah in R. Kishon.
* Religious leaders are called upon always to point out the evils in the society even if they’re committed by political leaders just like Elijah pointed out Ahab’s evils and confronted him whenever he went wrong.
* Religious leaders should consult God through prayers just as Elijah did especially when he feared for his life after announcing the 3 years drought and then hid in the wilderness.
* Religious leaders should have complete trust in God the Almighty the way Elijah trusted in God and faced king Ahab at Mt. Carmel hoping God would be on his side.
* They should depend on God because He is the most powerful God. He proved to be dependable when he answered Elijah’s prayer through sending divine fire upon his sacrifice.
* Christian leaders should put all their life in God’s control just like Elijah put his life in God’s control and was saved from Ahab and Jezebel’s threats.
* Christians should offer sacrifices to God with one heart copying the example of Elijah who offered bull sacrifice to God and his prayers were answered.
* Religious leaders should encourage their followers who go astray to repent just like Elijah who encouraged Ahab to repent after Naboth’s death as God is ready to forgive us.
* They’re called upon to endure the suffering and remain patient when faced with persecutions like Elijah was persecuted by Ahab and Jezebel but endured.
* They should be exemplary just as Elijah showed a good example to his audience i.e. Israelites by leading them back to the covenant faith

ELIJAH AT MT. HOREB (SINAI) (1 kings 19:1ff)

Give an account of Elijah’s experience on his second journey in the wilderness.

* After the contest at Mt. Carmel, Elijah went ahead to kill all the prophets of Baal in R. Kishon in the presence of King Ahab.
* When Ahab went back home and told his wife Jezebel, she was bitter and sent a message of threat to Elijah with the following words; “May the gods strike me dead if by this time tomorrow I don’t do the same thing to you that you did to the prophets” (1 kings 19:2)
* On receiving the message, Elijah was afraid and fled for his life taking with him his servant and went to Beersheba in Judah (wilderness)
* Elijah left the servant in Judah and walked the whole day in the wilderness, then got tired and sat down in the shed of the tree and wished he would die saying these words, “Its too much, Lord, he prayed, take away my life, I might as well be dead!”
* He laid down under the tree and fell asleep suddenly, an angel touched him and looked around, saw a loaf of bread and jar of water near his head which he ate and drunk.
* Elijah slept again but the Lord’s angel woke him the second time and gave him food to eat which gave Elijah more strength to walk 40 days to Sinai where he spent 40 nights in a cave.
* Suddenly, the Lord spoke to Elijah again asking him what he was doing there. That is in the cave.
* He answered the Lord that he served him so well but the people of Israel broke the covenant, torn down the altars and killed al the prophets of God and him only was surviving.
* The Lord instructed Elijah again to go on the top of the mountain where he saw the nature of God appearing in furious wind that split the hills and shattered the rocks but the Lord wasn’t in the wind.
* An earthquake followed up, then there was fire but still the Lord wasn’t there.
* Later, there was a soft whisper of the voice which made Elijah cover his face with a cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cause.
* A voice again asked Elijah what he was doing there and explained in the same way as the first version.
* The Lord than commanded Elijah to go near Damascus and anoint Hazael as king of Syria, anoint Jehu as king of Israel and anoint Elisha to succeed him as a prophet.
* The Lord told him that anyone who escapes being put to death by Hazael would be killed by Jehu and anyone who escaped Jehu would be killed by Elisha.
* But the Lord promised to leave 7000 people alive in Israel that had remained loyal to him and had not bowed to Baal or kissed the idols of Baal.
* After words, Elijah went and found Elisha ploughing with a team of oven which were 11 teams ahead of him. Elijah took off his cloak and put it on Elisha to confirm he was his successor.

ACCOUNT FOR ELIJAH’S HIDING IN THE CAVE AT MT. HOREB AFTER THE MT. CARMEL CONTEST

Elijah went into hiding in the cave of Mt. Horeb because of the following reasons;

* It was because Elijah had succeeded over the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel Elijah’s prayers were answered by God while Baal failed to respond to the prayers of the false prophets.
* Elijah had received a lot of support and applauding which scared Jezebel. When God sent divine fire which consumed the sacrifice of Elijah, al the Israelites believed he was the only prophet of God and started worshipping Yahweh again.
* Elijah had killed the 450 prophets of Baal which reduced the religion of Jezebel in Israel because the main promoters of Baal worship had been destroyed. So the furiousness of Jezebel made Elijah run for his life.
* Jezebel and her supporters had been humiliated and embarrassed by Elijah at Mt. Carmel when they failed to prove that their god was living.
* Elijah hid in the cave because Jezebel had sent a message to him expressing her disappointment about killing the Baal prophets and promised to kill Elijah too (1 kings 19:2)
* Jezebel had declared to have Elijah killed by a certain time the following day which made Elijah hide into the cave. She said, “May the gods strike me dead if by this time tomorrow I don’t do the same thing to you as you did to me” (1 kings 19:2)
* Ahab and Jezebel had killed all God’s prophets that Elijah feared that he would be the next one since was the only one remaining (1 kings 18:22)
* Elijah went into hiding because Obadiah had told him that he was the hunted man as he said, “……..the king has made search for you in every country in the world…..” (1 kings 18:10)
* Elijah hid in cave because he was blamed for having caused the long drought of 3 years in Israel which took 3 years. When Ahab saw him, he said, “ so you are the worst trouble maker in Israel!” (1 kings 18:17)
* Ahab was living under the influence of his wife. So, instead of showing protection to Elijah, he was against him. Therefore, the prophet also decided to hide away into the cave.
* Elijah’s hiding at Mt. Horeb was intended to remind the Israelites that they had broken the covenant laws which they received from God under Moses in the same place.
* Elijah had proved that Yahweh was the only true God. Therefore, He was the living God while Baal was dead and useless which annoyed Jezebel 91 kings 18:27-29)
* Elijah’s hiding in the cave could have been that he had gone to communicate to his God. While in hiding, still God appeared to him and talked to him.
* Elijah wanted God to provide a solution to the prevailing circumstances. He was suffering fearing for his life but never knew what to do. Therefore expected to get an answer from Yahweh.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ELIJAH’S HIDING IN THE CAVE AT MT. HOREB

How relevant was Elijah’s hiding at Mt. Horeb significant to Israelites and Elijah himself?

* It was to call the Israelites to come back to the worship of one God (monotheism). This was because they had received the commandments in the same place.
* It signified God’s holiness. Mt. Sinai was a holy place from which God had given the commandments to the ancestors of the Israelites and so also Elijah went there in the holy way.
* It showed God’s omnipotence. The powerfulness of God was indicated in the furious wind that split the hills and shattered the rocks (1 kings 19:11)
* It also showed God’s omnipresence to Elijah. The Lord revealed himself in form of fire and a soft whisper of the voice (1 kings 19:12)
* The incident of hiding at Horeb signified the idea of the remnants in Israel i.e. God promised Elijah that at least 7000 people would remain unkilled (1 kings 19:18)
* Elijah received God’s revelation at this mountain through a whispering voice. This enabled him to have courage to carryon his duties with God’s protection.
* By hiding in a cave at mountain Horeb, it was a way of Elijah trying to call the Israelites to turn back to their covenant which Elijah complained they had violated.
* It also proved the humanity of Prophet Elijah. As a human being, he showed signs of fearing to be killed by Jezebel.
* It implied to the Israelites that Elijah was a faithful servant of God. This is seen in his complaint saying, “I have served you alone” (1 kings 19:10)
* It was a call to the Israelites to embrace theocracy which they had done before (being controlled by God)
* Elijah was commanded by God to go and anoint Hazeal as king of Syria, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel and anoint Elisha as his successor in prophetic work. This taught him and the Israelites God’s authority over other nations 91 kings 19:15)
* Elijah received a call from God to anoint Elisha to succeed him as the prophet of God because he was now tired.
* This signified that Yahweh was still willing to save his people by sending them prophets.
* At this place Mt. Horeb, Elijah was able to call upon the Israelites to repent so that they could once again be called God’s children. Those who did so were among the 7000 whom the Lord promised to leave for being loyal to Him and not bowing to Baal.

THE MAIN WAYS HOW GOD MANIFESTED HIS POWER THOUGH ELIJAH

Examine the ways in which God manifested his power through Prophet Elijah.

* Elijah was in position to pronounce the drought which lasted for 3 years. Many people died because there was no rain or dew but this was manifestation of God’s power through Elijah (1 kings 17:1ff)
* God manifested his power through Elijah when he announced the drought and he disappeared for 3 years. Ahab tried to search for him but failed to find him because he was taken into hiding by God (1 kings 17:2)
* While in the wilderness, Elijah was fed by ravens. They were sent by God and they brought for him food while he was hiding from Ahab and Jezebel.
* He restored the widow’s son to life. When the boy died, he prayed to God and the boy came back to life manifesting God’s power through Elijah (1 kings 17:17ff)
* Elijah was in position to get water from the brook of Cherith where he hid in his first wilderness experience after announcing the drought. This implies God was protecting him (1 kings 17:6)
* God’s power was indicated through Elijah when he made the widows bowl and jar not to run out of flour and oil respectively. She prepared a meal for Elijah as instructed and had enough food as long as the drought lasted (1 kings 17:11)
* Elijah was promoter of monotheism. He ensured that people worshipped one God and that’s why, he condemned Baal worship and syncretism.
* Because God was on his side, Elijah condemned Ahab and his wife without fear or favour whenever he sinned against God . For example, he confronted Ahab when he was about to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard (1 kings 21:1ff)
* Elijah together with Elisha were in position to cross River Jordan on a dry ground and then Elijah took off his cloak rolled it up and struck the water with it and the water divided then they crossed on the dry ground (2 kings 2:8)
* Elijah was taken to heaven alive. When he was walking with Elisha, a chariot of fire pulled by horses came between them and Elijah was taken to heaven a whirl wind (2 kings 2:11)
* God’s power was manifested in Elijah when his prophesies came true . For example, when Jezebel died, her body was eaten by dogs in the territory of Jezreel (2 kings 9:30-37)
* Elijah proved to the Israelites that God was more powerful than Baal. When God sent divine fire, it consumed his sacrifice and the water in the trench dried up. 91 kings 18:38-40)
* Elijah was in position to kill the false prophets of Baal because the power of the Lord was upon him. According to 1Kings 18:40, after defeating the Baal prophets, Elijah ordered the people to seize all the prophets of Baal whom he killed in River Kishon.
* God manifests his power through Elijah when he was in position to run faster than Ahab’s chariot. When I was about to rain, Elijah told Ahab to go back home but he was in position to run after him after tightening his clothes tight around his waist (1 kings 18:46).

THE CHOICE AND ANOINTMENT OF ELISHA (1 KINGS 19:19-21), (2 KINGS 2:1FF)

* Elisha received his call from God through Elisha the prophet of Yahweh during the reign of King Ahab.
* Elisha’s choice and anointment by Elijah to succeed him in the parenthood duties was in accordance with the prevailing circumstances of the time particularly the sinfulness of the people of Israel who were practicing idol worship.
* Elijah went to Elisha to anoint him and found Elisha ploughing with a team of oxen, there were 11 teams ahead of him and he was ploughing with the last one (1 kings 19:19). This signified that Elisha was a hardworking man.
* Elijah then informed Elisha that the lord had chosen him to be his servant. This meant that the lord choose anyone irrespective of one’s background.
* Elijah then put off his cloak and put it on Elisha after Elisha welcoming him. This signified that Elisha was ready to take on God’s work from Elijah.
* However, before Elisha could go with Elijah, he requested him to first kiss his father and mother goodbye which Elijah granted to him (1 kings 19:20). This also signified the lord required quick response when he called you.
* Then Elisha went to his team of oxen, killed them and cooked the meat. Using the yoke as for the fire. This signified Elisha’s determination to devote himself to the service of the lord.
* After preparation, he gave the meat to the people which they ate and then went and followed Elijah as his helper.
* Elijah and Elisha went together at Gulag where they started walking together. This signified that Elisha was chosen as a true successor of Elijah.
* After on Elijah asked Elisha to stay behind in Gilgal and wanted to go alone to Bethel and meet God. However Elisha refused to be left behind and answered “I swear by my loyalty to the living lord and to you that I will not leave you”. So they went to Bethel. This signified that Elisha was willing to serve God at all times. (2 kings 2:2)
* As they reached Bethel, a group of prophets who lived there went to Elisha and asked him whether he knew that the lord was going to tae away his master that day. Elisha confirmed he knew about it but never wanted to talk about the issue.
* Again Elisha requested Elijah to stay in bethel as he was proceeding to Jericho. Still Elisha refused to stay behind and went with Elijah. This signified complete dedication of Elisha to the service of the lord.
* Similarly as the were in Jericho, a group of prophets living there
* Elijah again wanted to leave Elisha in Jericho as he proceeded to River Jordan but Elisha swore in that by the loyalty of the living lord, he wasn’t wiling to stay behind.
* When Elijah reached river Jordan, they met 50 prophets, Elijah took off his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it which created a dry ground for them to cross to the other side of the dry land.
* After crossing, Elijah asked Elisha what exactly he wanted him to do for him before he could be taken away. Then Elisha requested the share to Elijah’s power which was promised to him as Elijah is taken away.
* The two kept talking as they walked on and suddenly a chariot of fire pulled by horses came between them and then Elijah was taken u to heaven by a whirl wind. This all signified God’s omnipresence/ power.
* Elisha then cried out to Elijah “my father my father/ mighty defender of Israel you are gone! Elisha never saw Elijah again.
* In grief, Elisha tore his cloak in two then picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of R. Jordan. He struck the water with Elijah’s cloak and said “where is the lord, the lord of Elijah” and later walked over to the other side. (2 kings 2;16)
* The 50 prophets from Jericho saw Elisha in grief and promised that they would go and look for his master Elijah but had already gone to heaven.

*Question*

*Give an account of Elijah’s choice and anointment and show its significance.*

ELISHA AS A TRUE SUCCESSOR OF ELIJAH

Discuss the importance /role/prophetic activities of Elisha in the history of Israel.

Elisha was a true successor of Elisha because he received a share of Elijah’s powers when he saw him being taken to heaven alive. As a true successor of Elijah he was in position to do the following;

* Elisha received an axe head from R. Jordan by doing so, he proved that Yahweh is a God who sees every where and who cannot be defeated (2 kings 6:1ff)
* Elisha saved the people of Samaria from famine. They got enough food to eat and even there were leftovers (2 kings 4:42ff)
* He foretold that the rich woman from Shunem would give birth to a son which was later fulfilled as noted in 2 kings 4;8ff.
* Elijah assisted the Israelites to have water men they were at war with the kingdom of Edom. Therefore they were saved from dying of thirst.
* Elisha assisted the widow from having her sons taken as slaves in repayment for her late husband’s debt. She used a small (jar of olive oil to fill as many jars as possible and she sold the oil then paid all the debts. (2 kings 4:17).
* Elisha also cursed Gehazi and was attacked by a skin disease which had attacked Namaan and his skin became as white as skin. (2 kings 5:20-27).
* Elisha prayed to God and the son of the rich woman from Shunem who had died came back to live. (2 kings 4:18ff).
* Elisha prayed to God and Namaan recovered from the dreaded skin disease that had attacked him. His death was restored and he was cured completely and his flash became as that of a child. (2 kings 5:1ff)
* Elisha prayed to God and the soldiers from Syria became blind. They were trapped and defeated by the Israelites. (2 kings 6:18ff).
* Elisha cursed the 42 boys who were making up of him. They said get out of here boldly. Elisha glared of them and cursed them in the name of the lord then two bears came out of the woods and tore 42 of them into pieces. (2 kings 2:23-24).
* When Elijah was taken to heaven alive, Elisha took up his cloak, struck the water of R. Jordan then it divided up and he was able to cross on dry ground. (2 kings 2:14ff).
* Elisha as a prophet of God was in position to purify the waters which used to cause miscarriages to women. From then onwards the water became clear. (2 kings 2:19-22).
* Elisha played a role of assisting the Israelites to purify the food which was poisoned. One man picked gourds from a wild vine which poisoned the food but Elisha cleansed it..
* Elisha played a role of organizing for the anointment of Jehu who made many reforms/ revolutions in Israel. He is the one who told a young prophet to go with olive oil, take Jehu into a private room and pour oil on his head and say “the lord proclaims/ anoints you king of my people Israel”. (2 kings 9:6)
* Elisha encouraged King Jehu to kill the minister of Baal and all the promoters of Baal worship in Israel. By doing so monotheism was promoted. (2 kings 9:30ff and 10:18ff).
* He proved that a believer doesn’t die forever. For example a man’s body was thrown into Elisha’s grave and when it fell into contact with Elisha’s bones, the man came back to life. (2 kings 13:20).

WHAT LESSONS DO CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM THE CALL OF ELISHA

Christians learn the following from Elisha’s call;

* Christians should have total faith in one God just like Elisha showed total commitment to Yahweh by following Elijah whenever he moved to until his departure to heaven.
* Christians are called upon to work well with God’s servants sent to us just as Elisha co-operated with Prophet Elijah ever since he was anointed to become Elijah’s successor.
* Christians are called upon to be ready to meet God’s call and respond positively just as Elisha responded to Elijah’s call when he approached him while ploughing in the garden with oxen.
* Christians should always offer sacrifices to the lord as thanksgiving as a way of calling God’s integration in our missions just as Elisha offered his oxen as sacrifices to the lord.
* Christians ought to show willingness when it it comes to the service of God taking the example of Elisha who decided to leave his garden work and follow Elijah.
* When he called upon to serve God’ Christians should respect their parents by giving them farewell just as Elijah who requested Elijah to say goodbye to his parents when he was going to serve God.
* Apart from parents, Christians should always seek for permission from their elders like Elisha did whenever they want to move out.
* Christians need to be devoted in the service of God as Elisha indicated his devotion to God when he swore to Elijah that by the loyalty to the living lord, he would not leave Elijah go alone to bethel (2 kings 2;2)
* A Christian is called upon to exercise God’s power in a rightful way as Elisha used a cloak that had fallen from Elijah when the whirl wind took him to heaven and he was able to get a production on R. Jordan.
* Christians should seek for advice from the elders as Elisha constantly sought for advice prophet Elijah he was still living.
* Christians are called upon to observe monotheism and ever cry for God’s help when trouble came their way just as Elisha cried out that “where is Yahweh the God of Elijah”. (2 kings 2;14)
* Christians should be able to defend the people they lead as Elisha did to defend Israelites as Elijah had done. For example in the war between Israel and Moab. (2 kings 3)
* Modern Christians are called upon to live in company of each other seeking for advice as Elisha and Elijah moved together and others.

THE DEATH OF NABOTH AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO HIS DEATH (1 KINGS 21:1FF)

Give an account of Naboth’s death as noted in the book of 1kings 21.

Nabboth was a God fearing man who had a vineyard near Ahab’s palace in Jazreel

* King Ahab admired Nabboth’s vineyard for his vegetable garden. Therefore he proposed to exchange it for a better vineyard or to pay Naboth a fair price. Naboth refused to sell the vineyard to King Ahab because he had inherited it from his ancestors and the Lord forbade selling any part of Israel land because it belonged to him.
* Naboth’s refusal to sell the vineyard annoyed King Ahab. He went back home depressed, faced the wall while sleeping and refused to eat.
* Ahab’s wife Jezebel then demanded to know why the husband was behaving in a weird manner. Then Ahab told the whole story that Nabboth had failed to sell his vineyard or even have a better vineyard for exchange.
* Naboth’s wife had refused because he had faith to the covenant laws regarding the land of Israel to which he pointed out that it belonged to Yahweh and the law forbade them from selling it.
* Jezebel then decided to take the law in her own hands and promised the husband Ahab to get him the vineyard in anyway possible.
* Then Jezebel wrote letters, signed them with Ahab’s name sealed them with seal and sent them because officials and leading citizens of Israel.
* In the letters, Jezebel requested the officials to proclaim a day of fasting, call all the people together and give Naboth a place of honour.
* In the same way, Jezebel requested the leading citizens and the officials to get law scoundrel to accuse Naboth that he cursed God and the king. Afterwards, he would be taken out of the city and be stoned to death which they did.
* The day of fasting was proclaimed and all the people met together, Naboth was given a place of honour, the two scoundrels accused him of cursing God and the king of later was stoned to death.
* Then a message was sent to Jezebel that Naboth had been put to death. She also informed the husband about and then told him (Ahab) to go and take possession of the vineyard. But before he did so the lord sent Elijah to condemn Ahab for killing of Naboth innocently.

ACCOUNT FOR NABOTH’S DEATH

The following are the reasons that led to Naboth’s death;

* Lack of respect for human life caused Naboth’s death. Ahab and Jezebel had no respect for human for human life that is why they found it very easy to have Naboth killed.
* Naboth died because of possessing a fertile vineyard moreover near the king’s palace. This made Ahab admired it and when Naboth refused to sell it death was posed over to him.
* Ahab’s marriage to a pagan woman Jezebel also led to Naboth’s death. According to the pagan tradition the king had powers over his people their property. This is why Jezebel influenced the husband to do the same towards Naboth.
* Naboth’s death was due to Ahab’s greed material wealth. As a king, he had enough land but was not contented.
* The nearness of Naboth’s vineyard to Ahab’s palace. It was strategically located and this is why it made the king wanted it to establish his vegetable garden.
* The false accusations over Naboth led to his death. Jezebel planned false accusation that Naboth had cursed God and the king which all people believed. This was blasphemy and prison as a punishment for the crimes was made.
* Naboth’s faithfulness to God’s laws led to his death. He observed the law concerning no Israelite was supposed to sell his land because it belonged to their ancestors.
* The presence of the law concerning land led to his death. If there wasn’t any law prohibiting the Israelites from selling their land to others, may be Naboth would have sold the vineyard to the king Ahab and saved his life.
* Ahab’s failure to live by God’s law led to Naboth’s death. Ahab disrespected God’s command in Exodus 20:17 which denied anyone to admire another person’s property.
* Naboth died because of moral decay in Israel. If there was morality, there would not be such a day of fasting that was organized by Jezebel where the two scoundrels accused Naboth falsely.
* The weakness of Ahab’s administration led to Naboth’s death. He allowed the wife to write letters in his name and sign them in Ahab’s name including the seals were for the king.
* Naboth died because corruption was at its peak. The scoundrels were promised a ransom that is why they accused innocent Naboth falsely.
* Ahab’s failure to control his emotion led to Naboth’s death. When Naboth refused to sell him the vineyard he went home and slept facing the wall and even refused to eat which made his wife get concerned until when she solved his problem.

ACCOUNT FOR NABOTH’S REFUSAL TO SELL THE VINEYARD TO KING AHAB

* The Israelites had been given the law prohibiting them from selling God’s land. Therefore selling the vineyard to Ahab would imply violating God’s law in Deuteronomy 7.
* Naboth refused because he was so faithful to the lord. The Israelites were expected always to put their faith in God just Naboth.
* Naboth refused because of the presence of law concerning land use. If there was no law concerning vineyard to King Ahab.
* He refused to sell the vineyard because he was like a squatter on that land. This meant that Naboth never had full rights over the land ownership as it belonged to his ancestors and also descendants.
* Naboth refused to sell the land because the Israelites were only allowed to use the land given to them by God but not to sell it to anyone.
* Naboth refused to sell the land to King Ahab because the land belonged to the whole family. It belongs to the present, past and future generation.
* Naboth refused to sell the land to King Ahab because he was like a foreigner on that land. Therefore he was only allowed to use it but not to sell it to anyone.
* Naboth did not sell the land to King Ahab because the land belonged to God and he was the only one with the right to distribute it but not mankind. That is why Naboth refused to temper with God’s land.
* Naboth did not sell the land to Ahab because the land was for his family inheritance. The Israelites were told by Moses that incase one died, the son was supposed to inherit the land. Even Naboth had inherited it from his ancestors.

GOD’S MESSAGE THROUGH ELIJAH AFTER NABOTH’S DEATH (1 KINGS 21:17FF)

Give an account of God’s response to King Ahab after killing Naboth.

* After killing Naboth a message was sent to Ahab to go and take possession of the vineyard which he longed for.
* At once Ahab went to the vineyard under the influence of Jezebel, but as he took possession of it, the Lord’s prophet Elijah landed in Samaria with the lord’s message.
* When Elijah reached Samaria, he began by asking Ahab a question that after murdering the man, are you taking over his property as well 1 kings 21:19)
* Elijah went on and accused Ahab for continuous sinning against the law when he said to him; “You have devoted yourself completely to doing what is wrong in the lord’s sight.” (1 kings 21:20)
* King Ahab indeed had no genuine response to put across to the words of Prophet Elijah who looked to be so annoyed.
* Elijah then pronounced upon Ahab’s family disaster. He said that the lord said “I will bring disaster on you. I will do away with you and get rid of everyman in your family young and old alive your family will become like the family of king Jeroboam”.
* Elijah also told Ahab hat God was determined to destroy him because he had annoyed God by stirring up his anger when he led the Israelites into sin. ( 1 kings 21:22)
* Elijah said to King Ahab that the lord says God would eat up her body in the city of Jezebel.
* Again Elijah told Ahab that any of his relative who would die in the city would be eaten by dogs.
* More still, Elijah told Ahab that any of his relatives who would die in the open country would be eaten by vultures.
* The prophet accused King Ahab of the continuous worshipping of idols the pagan nations like Ammonites more than any other king had over done.
* King Ahab was also blamed for living under the influence of his wife Jezebel who was also a pagan worshipper.
* When Elijah finished speaking Ahab tore his clothes, took them off and put on suck clothes. He refused to eat and slept in the suck cloth, remained gloomy and in a depressed way. This indicates repentance and the lord forgave him to to cause the problems immediately but to bring them during his son’s life time.

AHAB’S SINS IN THE STORY OF NABOTH’S DEATH

* Ahab showed greediness. He had a lot of land and property but went ahead to grab for his subject’s land.
* Ahab committed a sin of murder. Although he did not take active participation in the plot to kill he must have been aware of the plans of his wife.
* He accepted to live under the influence of his pagan wife Jezebel. Hence being misadvised to kill an innocent man of God Naboth.
* He made false accusations with the wife that resulted into the death of Naboth. They planned the audience who falsely accused Naboth that he had undermined the powers of the king and also accused God which was not right. But this resulted into his massacre.
* King Ahab violated the covenant laws by disrespecting God’s command of land ownership in Israel. He knew that the land of Israel was in God’s control and no one was supposed to sell any piece of its but weren’t ahead to admire Naboth’s vineyard.
* King Ahab acted as a thief. By killing Naboth innocently and taking away his vineyard, Ahab acted like somebody (thief) using force to take one’s property.
* King Ahab showed signs of jealousness. He admired Naboth’s vineyard, being near his palace and decided to act jealously by shading innocent blood to take the vineyard.
* Ahab exploited his subjects, a culture of pagan kings but not of the Israelite kings.
* He misused his authority as a king of Israel. By allowing his wife to forge letters in his name and seals, Ahab showed a big weakness.
* He was a selfish man. His behaviours of admiring and later using force can also be taken as selfishness.
* King Ahab manipulated Israel law of observing the land given to them by God as being a holy land when even innocent blood wasn’t supposed to be shed.

LESSONS MODERN CHRISTIAN LEADERS LEARN FROM NABOTH’S DEATH

* Christian leaders should be contented with what they have unlike King Ahab who had much but went ahead to confiscate/ grab Naboth’s vineyard because to being near his palace.
* Political Christians should follow and defend the laws governing them both in the church and in the society so as to live moral lives.
* Christian political leaders should have love for their subjects unlike Ahab and Jezebel who never had love for their subjects. If they loved Naboth, they would not have organized for his death.
* Political leaders should respect religious days unlike Jezebel and Ahab who misused the day of fasting to have Naboth killed.
* Political leaders should be trustful unlike Ahab and Jezebel who were behind Naboth’s false accusations.
* Political leaders should respect human life Ahab and Jezebel who organized for Naboth’s death which was a sign of disrespect to human life.
* Christians are called upon to remain strong in their faith even when facing persecution just as Naboth did.
* Christian political leaders should humble themselves when they sin and ask for God’s forgiveness just as Ahab humbled himself before the lord and his punishment did not take immediate action.
* Political leaders should lead their subjects according to God’s expectations unlike Ahab who failed to lead people according to God’s expectations.
* Christian leaders should act exemplary to their subjects unlike Ahab who even falsely accused his subject Naboth.
* Political leaders should seek for God’s guidance unlike Ahab wasn’t guided by God.
* Political Christian leaders are called upon to emulate the example of Naboth who lived a holy life.
* Christians are advised to pray to God when seeking for more wealth not to use false means like Ahab did and took away Naboth’s vineyard.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO KING AHAB’S DEATH

Analyze the circumstances that led to the death of King Ahab.

Discuss the circumstances which made King Ahab to consult prophet Micah.

* At one time king Jehoshaphat of Judah visited Ahab of Israel and both decided to fight Syria in order to get back Ramoth Gilead.
* Ahab requested Jehoshaphat to go with him to attack Syria and Jehoshaphat was willing to give him full support but on condition that they consulted God first.
* Ahab then sent for 400 false prophets and asked them if it was okay for him and Jehoshaphat to go and attack Ramoth to regain it.
* When the prophets were consulted they all told him to go and attack Ramoth and promised victory on their side. However they were giving him false prophecies.
* Jehoshaphat wasn’t convinced with the response of 400 false prophets and so he asked Ahab. “Isn’t there another prophet through whom we can consult the lord”. (1 kings 22:7).
* Ahab responded that there was Micaiah but he hated him because he never prophesized anything good for him, implying Micaiah was a true prophet of God whose aim was not to please the audience but to give true message for the right situation.
* King Jehoshaphat insisted and Ahab sent for Micaiah at once. When he came he first gave a false message similar to that given by the 400 false prophets.
* However, later Micaiah gave a true message and stopped Ahab from attacking Ramoth because he was going to be defeated. He said he saw the arm of the Israelites scattered allover the hillside like a sheep without a shepherd implying their defeat. (1 kings 22:17)
* Prophet Micaiah even told Ahab that God sent an evil spirit to make his prophets tell lies that he would succeed in the war. (1 kings 22:20-22)
* On hearing this message, Zedekiah son of Kenaanan went up and slapped Micaiah in the face and wondered since when did the lord’s spirit leave him and spoke thorough Micaiah. (1 kings 22:24)
* At this moment, Ahab ordered for taking Micaiah to Ammon the ruler of city and Jehoshaphat to be imprisoned. Micaiah was fed only on bread and water.
* After this point Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to attack the city of Ramoth in Gilead.
* While they were fighting the Syrian soldier shot an arrow which struck King Ahab between the joints of his armor. He told his chariot driver to pull out of the battle because he was wounded.
* Al day long the battle progressed but the blood from the wound of the king ran down and covered the bottom of the chariot and that evening Ahab died.
* At sunset a cry spread throughout the army and soldiers were commanded to go back to their respective towns. The king’s body was brought to Samaria and buried him there.
* The chariot was washed at the pod in Samaria where prostitutes used to bathe and the dogs licked up his blood as the word of the lord had declared.

THE ANOINTMENT OF KING JEHU OF ISRAEL (2 KINGS 9:1FF)

Discuss the circumstances which led to the anointment of Jehu as a king of Israel.

* The anointment of Jehu was in response to God’s command to Elijah when he told him to go and anoint Jehu king of Israel according to 1 kings 19:16.
* Due to the fact that Elijah was now away, it is his successor Elisha who took on his role to anoint Jehu.
* Elisha called a young prophet and told him to go to Ramoth Gilead. He told him to go to Ramoth Gilead. He told him to go with a jar of olive oil and look for Jehu.
* On seeing him, i.e. the young prophet seeing Jehu, he had to take Jehu into a private room and anoint him as the king of Israel. (2 kings 2:2).
* The young prophet went to Ramoth where he found the army officers in a conference.
* He then told Jehu that he had a message for him. The two went into a private room.
* While indoor, the young prophet poured olive oil on Jehu’s head and declared “I anoint you king over the lord’s people Israel”. (2 kings 9:6).
* The young prophet also told Jehu that he was to kill his master king i.e. son of Ahab as a punishment to Jezebel for having murdered God’s prophets.
* Similarly Jehu was told he was to bring an end to Ahab’s family and all his descendants were to die whether slaves or free. (9:8-9).
* The young prophet also told Jehu that Ahab’s family was to be treated the way Jeroboam, son of Naboth and the heir of Baasha son of Abijah were treated by God. (9:9)
* The prophet said that Jezebel was to be destroyed by Jehu and dogs would eat up her body i.e. no one would burry her but being eaten in the territory of Jezebel.
* After the young prophet saying all that, he fled opening the door and run away. The Jehu went back to meet his fellow officers.
* When Jehu went back to his fellow officers, one of them asked him whether everything was right and they asked what the crazy fellow wanted with him. (9:11)
* Jehu told them that the young prophet said “the lord proclaims I anoint you king of Israel”. (19:12)
* On hearing that Jehu’s fellow officers hurried, took their cloak on the top of steps for Jehu to stand on blue trumpets and shouted, “Jehu as king”.
* So, from this point Jehu was declared the true successor of Ahab anointed by the God’s prophets.

THE REFORMS CARRIED OUT BY KING JEHU (2 KINGS 9:14)

Examine the reforms/ revolutions carried out by Jehu.

Assess the reforms of King Jehu.

* He began by plotting against king Joram. He shot an arrow that struck Joram in the back and pierced his heart; Joram fell dead in his chariot. 92 kings 9:24)
* He killed Ahaziah the king of Judah who was a friend to Joram. His men were ordered to kill him and they wounded him. When he reached the city of Megiddo, he died. (2 kings 9:27-28)
* King Jehu killed Jezebel and her body was abandoned in the territory of Jezebel where, it was eaten by dogs. (2 kings 9:30-37)
* He organized for the killing of Ahab’s descendants who were living in Samaria. They were killed by the leaders of Samaria under Jehu’s instructions and were two in number. (2 kings 1-10)
* After the death of the two relatives of Ahab, Jehu killed all the other relatives of Ahab living in Jazreel and all his officers, close friends and his priests. (2 kings 10:11)
* He also killed the relatives of King Ahaziah who were going to pay their respects to the children of Jezebel and to the rest of the royal family. (2 kings 10:12-14)
* King Jehu killed all the worshippers of Baal by organizing a day of worship where all the sympathizers/ supporters of Baal met and they were killed. (2 kings 10:18-25)
* King Jehu wiped out of Israel Baal worship and promoted monotheism among the Israelites and even called upon people to repent their sins.
* King Jehu listened to the Lord’s command therefore was an obedient king following God’s command.
* Due to Jehu’s obedience and trust in Yahweh, the Lord promised him a dynasty for over four generations. (2 kings 10:30)
* He destroyed the sacred pillars and the temple where Baal was worshipped. The temple turned into a latrine. (2 kings 20:26-27)
* He called for a covenant renewal by asking the Israelites to remember the covenant they had made with Yahweh their God.

THE WEAKNESS OF KING JEHU

However to a smaller extent, King Jehu had some weaknesses/ failures that are noted below;

* It is noted that he started following Jeroboam’s example by worshipping golden bull calves that he set up in Bethel and Dan hence misleading the Israelites into sin.
* He stopped obeying the laws of God with his heart as he was stressing them to the people.
* He led the people of Israel astray, by making them get involved in syncretism. Through putting a place of the golden bulls which people started worshipping.
* He became unrepentant and this annoyed Yahweh who responded by punishing the whole nation of Israel through suffering, famine and defeats in wars.
* He promoted polytheism towards the end of his reign which was an insult to the obligations of the covenant.
* There was economic unrest in Israel because he concentrated mostly on the army and other sectors were left poorly attended to like agriculture. Thus resulting into famine.
* His reign witnessed a reduction in the size of Israel territory as he allowed Hazel of Syria to conquer all the territories in the eastern part of Judah.

THE RELEVANCE, APPLICABILITY, LESSONS OF KING JEHU’S RULE OF POLITICAL LEADERS TODAY

How relevant is Jehu’s regime important to political leaders today?

* Political leaders should acknowledge that leadership comes from God as so should serve him alone not like Jehu who practiced religious syncretism.
* Political leaders should understand that God chooses anybody into leadership without basing on one’s background, tribe, economic status or height.
* Political leaders are called upon to lead the people in righteousness and promote justice in the nation unlike Jehu whose regime involved a lot of injustice behavior.
* Christian political leaders are called upon to promote monotheism knowing that their leadership comes from God unlike Jehu who reached the extent of practicing polytheism.
* Modern political leaders should respect the constitution governing their nations and avoid becoming dictators like Jehu had become.
* Christian leaders are called upon to trust and seek God’s guidance whenever they face challenges since their leadership is blessed by God.
* Political leaders today are reminded to listen and accept the advice and critism coming from other people because they might be beneficial in their leadership.
* Political leaders today are called upon to realize the mistakes of the predecessors and try to be better than them unlike Jehu who almost reversed the system to Baal worship as Ahab used to do.
* Political leaders today should be involved in religious rallies so as to promote morality within the people unlike Jehu who instead built Bethel and Dan as worshipping places of Baal.
* Christian political leaders should relay on God for all their strength and achievement unlike Jehu who relied on both God and Baal gods.

PROPHET HOSEA

Hosea was a son of Berri who prophesied in the Northern region (Israel) after prophet Amos.

He is called a prophet of love because he focused much on preaching God’s love to Israel which he demonstrated using his personal experience of a marriage relationship with his wife Gomer a prostitute. In this way God wanted to illustrate the relationship between him and the Israelites using Hosea’s marriage experience.

HOSEA’S MARRIAGE EXPERIENCE AND HIS PROPHETIC MASSAGE

Hosea illustrates the relationship between God and Israelites using his marriage experience. He compared the relationship of a loving father with his children with God’s relationship and the children of Israel.

Hosea shows that the Israelites had rejected God’s love like his wife who was unfaithful and had rejected God’s love.

Hosea illustrates this when he says this “I loved him and called him out of Egypt as my son, the more I called him the more he turned away from me.”

What Hosea describes about his wife and children applies to the Israelites and what he says about himself applies to God.

The following illustrates how Hosea’s marriage experience reflects God’s experience wit his people of Israel;

* Hosea’s marriage to Gomer who was a prostitute symbolizes a permanent covenant relationship which God established with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai.
* Although Gomer was a prostitute therefore unexpected to be a wife of a prophet, Hosea accepted her as his wife likewise God chose Israelites to be his special people not because they were righteous but because they deserved special attention from God.
* Gomer’s unfaithfulness which took place after marriage symbolizes the unfaithfulness of Israelites to the covenant faith just as Gomer wasn’t committed to her husband’s love and ended up committing adultery, Israel too carried out syncretism and other sins.
* Hosea’s appeal to Gomer to abandon her unfaithfulness and go back to him symbolizes God’s appeal to Israel to abandon Baal worship and other gods and worship only Him.
* Hosea’s punishment to his unrepentant wife by evicting her from his house with nothing covering her symbolizes what would happen to unrepentant Israelites who would be sent into exile as a punishment from where they would suffer a lot of humiliation.
* Gomer was going out to other lovers for material prosperity and she opted to find comfort, clothing and many others also the Israelites went to Baal hoping to get material prosperity. They had been influenced by the pagans to believe that Baal was responsible for people’s fertility and material prosperity.
* Gomer’s search for better comfort and prosperity from other lovers showed her ungratefulness to the generosity of Hosea likewise by looking for prosperity from Baal the Israelites had forgotten all God’s favours and providence.
* Hosea punished Gomer with an intention of making her realize that he was the true source of prosperity. During her exile period she lived under restriction of walls and she said “ I am going to my first husband 2:7” likewise Israel’s experience while in exile and her suffering aimed at making them realize that God was their source of happiness to material prosperity and not Baal who was useless.
* Hosea’s punishment to Gomer was intended to make her hate her lovers and bring an end to her adultery likewise the Israelites were punished with an intention of the purification that would lead the Israelites to reject Baal and turn to God.
* Hosea remained faithful to Gomer and continued looking for her but Gomer stubbornly refused to return to her husband in the same way God remained faithful to the promise of being true God of Israel and always called them to turn to him but they stubbornly refused to listen to the prophets.
* Just as Hosea loved Gomer despite her unfaithfulness, God loved the Israelites despite the fact that they were sinful.
* Hosea said his children were going to be as sinful as their mother just as the future generation of Israel proved to be unfaithful to God and the covenant law.
* Hosea asked his children to go and plead with their mother so that she could stop her prostitution. This symbolized the prophets who were sent by God to go and prophesy among Israelites and make them repent.
* The names of Hosea’s children had symbolic meanings . For example, Jezreel was the name of the first born which meant destruction and symbolized the punishments that would befall onto Israelites.
* The second child was a girl and her name was “unloved” meaning that God was going to withdraw his love from Israelites therefore they were to be unloved.
* The third child was a boy and he was named “Not my people” which signified that the Israelites had ceased to be people of God because they had failed to live according to the covenant faith.
* After punishing Gomer, Hosea forgave her and won her back to himself and restored her marriage to him likewise the punishing of Israelites in exile would be followed by forgiveness and later would go back to God and to their land of Canaan.
* The names of Hosea’s children would be changed which signified the relationship between God and Israelites.
* Jezreel would be to prosperity which meant that the Israelites were going to experience growth and prosperity after exile.
* Unloved would be loved which meant that God was going to show love to Israelites.
* Not my people would be my people implying that the Israelites would be called God’s people again.
* In the new resorted marriage relationship between Hosea and Gomer love and unfaithfulness would be experienced likewise the renewal covenant relationship between God and Israelites would be characterized by faithfulness and love.
* In the new marriage Hosea was required to pay high price for restoring Gomer as his wife this symbolized God’s love and initiative to restore the broken relationship and his people.
* Hosea was to show a lot of love to his wife but before they would resume marital duties he was required to pay a price likewise God paid highly when he let his only begotten son die on the cross to bring about salvation of mankind.
* Hosea and Gomer were not to resume to marital duties to live for sometimes and in the same way Israelites were going to live for sometime without leaders, sacrifices when God would fully accept them.

Revision Questions

1. *Examine Hosea’s interpretation of the sinatic covenant in relation to God’s relationship with Israel.*
2. *How did Hosea use his personal and family tragedy to illustrate the religious situations at his time?*
3. *“The prophesy of Hosea is a dramatization of the Sinatic covenant.” Discuss.*

THE RELEVANCE OF HOSEA’S MARRIAGE EXPERIENCE TO MODERN CHRISTIANS

* Unlike Gomer who was unfaithful to Hosea, Christians ought to be faithful to their partners.
* They should show love to one another unlike Gomer who didn’t show love to Hosea.
* They ought to promote permanence in marriage and therefore discouraged divorce just as Gomer and Hosea didn’t divorce forever.
* Christians today should treat each other equally with a lot of respect.
* They are encouraged to be contented with what they have not like Gomer who went out for other lovers for wealth.
* Christians today should tolerate unfaithfulness and other weaknesses found in marriage.
* They should be willing to change likewise Gomer changed and turned to her husband.
* Christians ought to be exemplary just as Hosea showed a good example by remaining faithful despite the fact that his wife was adulterous.
* They should be ready and willing to be corrected incase of any wrong.
* They should follow God’s instructions likewise Hosea followed God’s instructions to remain faithful to Gomer.
* The Christians today should seek for God’s guidance just as Hosea was guided by God.
* They should live a righteous life just as Hosea who was righteous and committed to Gomer.
* They should ask for forgiveness just like Gomer repented and went back to her husband.
* Christians learn to take their bodies as temples of God not to practice prostitution.
* It challenges modern and social leaders to play and fulfill their leadership roles properly.
* Christians learn the purpose of punishment that it should be administered to reform not to destroy.

WHY HOSEA WAS AGAINST THE SACRIFICES OF THE ISRAELITES

Hosea was against the Israelites of the Israelites because of the following reasons;

* The Israelites were offering unclean sacrifices some of the sacrifices were lame, blind.
* Some of the sacrifices were offered by unclean people. Some people who officiated the sacrifices were sinners . For example, they were guilty of murder, sex abuse.
* Some of the sacrifices were treated with disrespect . For example, some of the priests at God’s chosen parts hence failing to respect God’s sacrifices.
* Some sacrifices were a mere outward show i.e. people sacrificed with an intention of showing off.
* Some sacrifices were offered by unrepentant people. The Israelites expected to repent their sins t be forgiven by God after sacrificing.
* Some of the sacrifices aimed at bribing God yet he is not a human being so he can’t be bribed.
* Some people offered sacrifices yet their hearts were far away from God. They believed even in the pagan gods.
* Some of the sacrifices were offered by internal sinners. They sacrificed hoping to be forgiven by God and later they committed the same sin.
* They sacrificed with a double mind i.e. to God and at the same time they felt like withdrawing the sacrifices yet they were expected to sacrifice to God whole heartedly.
* Some people used to offer sacrifices to God and at the same time they offered to their pagan gods. This meant that they were syncretic which was against the covenant way of life.
* They grabbed sacrifices from their poor Israelites. Therefore Hosea had to condemn the sacrifices offered by the rich which they had acquired through illegal ways.
* Some people sacrificed to God yet they lacked faith. God the almighty was interested in people’s faith other than animal sacrifices.

Revision Questions

1. *Why was Hosea against the sacrifices offered by the Israelites?*
2. *“I want your constant love but not your sacrifices.” What prompted Hosea to make that statement?*
3. *If Hosea came to Uganda today why would he the sacrifices offered by the people?*

HOSEA’S ACCUSATION TO THE PRIESTS OF ISRAEL

* Most of them failed to repent despite the fact that they had sinned against the Lord. Incase one sinned they were expected to ask for forgiveness from God.
* They failed to respect God’s temple some of them had sexual intercourse from the temple which was a sign of disrespect yet the temple was supposed to be respected.
* Some of the priests hunted God’s prophets and they stopped them from prophesying . For example, priest Passhur who hunted prophet Jeremiah.
* They failed to respect God as their liberator yet at Mt. Sinai they had promised to respect and worship him alone.
* Some of them were practicing adultery which was against the covenant way of life. The Israelites were only expected to worship God but not idols.
* Some of the priests were giving empty sacrifices yet they were expected to sacrifice with a lot of faith. The empty sacrifices offered by the priests were rejected by God.
* They failed to provide lasting justice to their followers . For example, while judging cases they were dishonest.
* They ignored their duty as messengers of God instead of leading people towards the covenant faith they mislead tem.
* They rejected God’s teachings and instructions instead of following the Mosaic Law they resorted to committing evil.
* Some of the priests were drinking a lot of wine which was against the covenant way of life because many of them became evil as the influence of alcohol.
* They had become so rich out of sacrifices received from the evil people. Therefore they were interested in people’s sins because the more the people sinned the more sacrifices they brought.

Revision Questions

1. *Why did Hosea condemn or accuse the priests of Israel?*
2. *Under what circumstances would the priests of today be condemned?*
3. *Why would the priests today be condemned?*

THE EVILS CONDEMNED BY PROPHET HOSEA

* The Israelites lacked love for their God and that’s why they were unfaithful yet the covenant love was expected to be steadfast.
* They were hypocrites especially in their religious practices . For example, they expressed repentance which was insincere and shallow.
* The Israelites had broken the promises they had made with God . For example, they had promised to abide by the laws of Moses and also to live a righteous life but instead they became wicked.
* Some Israelites worshipped idols which were against the covenant way of life because they were only expected to love God the almighty.
* The religious leaders were interested in people’s sacrifices. Therefore promoted evil because the more the people sinned the more sacrifices hey got because they were entitled to a share of these sacrifices.
* The judges failed to judge with justice by doing so they neglected Moses’ teachings because the judges were expected to promote justice.
* They practiced temple prostitution and some turned religious festivals into pagan festivals.
* They were dishonest especially those in business they used to cheat their customers in many ways.
* They made alliances with pagan states yet they were supposed to depend on God.
* The political leaders exploited and oppressed the Israelites which was against the covenant way of life . For example, they killed them, over taxed them, grabbed their property.
* They were never loyal to the kings and they betrayed them on many occasions where by they joined the enemies and attacked Israel.
* The prophets who were meant to be God’s servants were hated by people and instead of listening to their massage they were stopped from prophesying.
* Telling lies was the order of the day yet they were expected to promote truthfulness.
* The people used to sacrifice to pagan gods and had a lot of faith in them which was against the covenant teachings.
* Intermarriages

Revision Questions

1. *Examine the evils which were condemned by prophet Hosea.*
2. *If Hosea came today what would be condemned?*
3. *Why would Hosea condemn Uganda? Under what circumstances would Hosea condemn Ugandans?*

HOSEA’S MASSAGE OF JUDGMENT

* Prophet Hosea said that God was going to bring destruction on Israel, their land would dry up, birds and animals were to die therefore making it difficult for the people to survive because of the famine.
* Hosea said that because the priests were eating God’s sacrifices they would be punished. He said that however much they ate the sacrifices they would still remain hungry.
* He said that those who carried out temple prostitution would be sent into exile where they would face humiliation.
* He prophesied doom to the Israelites using the name of his first son Jezreel which meant destruction and punishment to the Israelites.
* The Israelites would be humiliated by the enemies and Israel’s military power would be weakened.
* Hosea said that the prophets and the priests who neglected their duties would be destroyed together with the rest of the Israelites.
* To the priests and their members of royal family who judge cases dishonesty and Hosea said that they were to be punished and no one would survive.
* They would die a violent death and their honour would turn into disgrace.
* Those who worshiped idols their sacrifices would not be accepted by God and also God would allow the enemy to destroy their land.
* And those who have been making alliances with pagan states would be destroyed and some of them taken to exile and while in exile they would try to seek for assistance from the king of Assyria but wouldn’t get any hope.
* Those who used to worship idols in order to make their land fertile, their prayers couldn’t be answered because their idols could be smashed for their crops wouldn’t be productive.
* The idol worshippers wouldn’t have children and those who got them would end up loosing them because they would be taken to exile where they would be killed.
* God promised never to listen to the prayers of Israelites and never to accept their sacrifices because there was no love among them.
* God would stop calling Israelites his own people because of their wickedness this was reflected in Hosea’s child “Not my people”
* He said that Israelites wouldn’t be loved by God anymore as far as the name of Hosea’s child concerned “unloved”.
* God would send disastrous wind which washes away people’s crops and later people would die of hunger.
* God was to break down the altars of Israel, their worshipping places and all the idols they used to worship.
* The kings would be taken away from their land and the people will have no leaders despite the fact that they demanded for a king.
* Hosea pronounced judgment upon the people of Judah for attacking and stealing their land. He said that God was going to destroy them and was going to pour punishment on them like a flood.

Revision Question

Examine Hosea’s massage of judgment upon the Israelites.

HOSEA’S MASSAGE ABOUT GOD’S LOVE FOR THE REBELLIOUS PEOPLE AND THE MASSAGE OF HOPE 11

* Hosea shows that even when the Israelites were unfaithful to God he didn’t abandon them which was a sign of love.
* He said that God had too much love for the Israelites therefore he couldn’t destroy them. This is reflected when he says “How can I give up Israel” How can I abandon you how could I destroy you.
* He says that God promised never to punish Israel in anger and never to destroy Israel again.
* Hosea says that because of God’s love, he went ahead and chose the Israelites as his special people despite their wickedness.
* He says that because of God’s love he made a covenant with the unfaithful Israelites (Sinatic covenant)
* Hosea shows that out of God’s love Israelites were released from suffering in the Egyptian slavery.
* Hosea predicted that time would come when the Israelites would no longer be called “unloved” but “loved”.
* They will no longer be called “Not my people but instead “my people”.
* Hosea foresaw the Israelites experiencing growth and prosperity after having Jezreel changing to growth and prosperity.
* During the time of restoration, Hosea said that the Israelites would be under God’s care and protection which showed total love and faithfulness.
* Hosea foretold that time would come when the Israelites would live in peace and stop suffering under their enemies.
* God would protect the Israelites from external enemies and therefore remove all the harmful weapons and give the Israelites peace because they wouldn’t be attacked by their enemies anymore.
* Hosea’s act of sending his children to plead with their mother symbolized God’s love for his people which was equivalent to prophets who were sent by God to prophesy among the person which was a sign of love.
* Hosea’s willingness to remarry his wife symbolized God’s love for his people. Even after the Israelites had sinned against God he forgave them and accepted them as his own people.
* He prophesied that time would come when the Israelites would respect Yahweh as their God and out his love he would give them new hearts.
* God’s love is reflected on a high price Hosea paid in order to restore his wife back just as God had to pay highly for the Israelites to come back to him.
* He foretold that exile and would be restored back in their land after exile and would receive God’s favours and blessings as a sign of hope.
* Hosea foresaw the Israelites rebuilding their cities after exile enjoying good life in the land.
* God promised to answer the prayers and to take care of them as long as they had nothing to do with idols.
* He said that the Israelites would be protected by their God and he would show them a lot of love.
* That the Israelites would become famous as the wine of Lebanon after exile.

COMPARISON BETWEEN HOSEA’S MARRIAGE AND ATS

Similarities

* In both love, was a key component like. Hosea had too much love for his wife despite her unfaithfulness and also in ATS was emphasized. Permanence was emphasized in both marriages . For example, Hosea could not divorce his wife despite her unfaithfulness and in the ATS divorce was not allowed.
* In ATS the choice of marriage partner was done by the elders likewise in Hosea’s case the choice was done by God.
* In ATS sex misuse was condemned and punishable likewise Hosea condemned the unfaithfulness of his wife and punished her with an intention of stopping her unfaithfulness.
* In ATS the approval of a marriage partner was done by the elders of a family likewise in Hosea’s marriage was approved by God because he instructed Hosea to marry Gomer.
* In both cases the husband is regarded as the head of the family. In ATS husbands were heading their families and also in Hosea’s case he was the head of the family.
* In both cases marriage was considered a religious institution ordained by God. In Hosea’s case marriage was ordained by God and in ATS it was ordained by super natural beings.
* In both, children are of value i.e. in ATS they were considered of value/importance and also Hosea had children who were considered a blessing from God.

Differences

* In ATS polygamy was practiced due to different reasons while in Hosea’s case monogamy was maintained despite the wife’s unfaithfulness.
* In ATS women were considered to be inferior while in Hosea’s marriage the issue of subordinates was not emphasized therefore both Hosea and Gomer were equal.
* In ATS marriage was between two families, societies while in Honea’s case it was a contraction between two people.
* In ATS divorce was allowed under certain circumstances . For example, witchcraft unlike Hosea’s case where divorce was impossible.
* In ATS in case a partner wronged the other was supposed to pay a fine while in Hosea’s case it was Hosea who paid highly yet it was the wife in wrong.
* In ATS marriage was commented by bride wealth while in Hosea’s case he didn’t pay bride price when he was marrying Gomer.

Qn. Examine the nature of man and God according to the book of Hosea.

Nature of God

* Faithful
* Loving
* Omnipotent
* Almighty
* Forgiving
* Provider
* He is a God of covenant
* Omniscient
* Caring
* Spirit by nature
* Omnipresent
* He is holy
* Warns by punishing
* Patient

Nature of man

* Never contented
* Unfaithful
* Impatient
* Sinful
* Unrepentant
* Man is evil
* Dishonest
* Not appreciative
* Loving
* Forgiving
* Punishes
* Significance of Hosea’s family experience
* God’s love towards Israelites.
* God was ready to do anything to win his people.
* God’s forgiving character.
* God never leaves his people.
* Jezreel signifies God’s destruction to Israel.
* Unloved signifies that God had lost his love to the Israelites.
* Not my people signifies that God had rejected the Israelites.
* God punishes his.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS HOSEA A PROPHET OF DOOM THAN HOPE

To a larger extent Hosea is a prophet of doom than hope as it is shown below;

* He prophesies to the Israelites the name of his first son Jezreel which meant destruction and punishment of Israel.
* He says hat the prophets and the priests who neglected their duties would be destroyed together with the rest of the Israelites.
* Hosea says that those who worshipped idols their sacrifices would not be accepted by God and also God would allow the enemy to destroy their land.
* Hosea also says that the idol worshippers wouldn’t have children and those who get them would end up loosing because they would be taken to exile where they would be killed.
* He says that God promised never to listen to the prayers of Israelites and never to accept their sacrifices because there was no love for them.
* He says that the Israelites would not be loved by God anymore as far as the name of Hosea’s child is concerned “unloved”.
* He prophesied that God was to breakdown the altars of Israel, their worshipping places and all the idols they used to worship.
* He says that the king would be taken away from their land and the people will have no leaders despite the fact that they demanded for a king.
* Hosea says that those who have working alliances with pagan states would be destroyed and some of them taken to exile and while in exile they would try to seek for assistance from the king of Assyria but would not get any hope.

However to a smaller extent, Hosea was a prophet of hope as follows;

* Hosea says that even the Israelites were unfaithful to God, He didn’t abandon them which was a sign of love.
* Hosea says that God had too much love for the Israelites therefore he couldn’t destroy them. This is seen when he says “ How can I give up on Israel”, How can I abandon you and How can I destroy you.
* Hosea says that because of God’s love, he went ahead to choose the Israelites as his special people despite their wickedness.
* Hosea says that because of God’s love he made a covenant with the Israelites who was unfaithful.

IN WHAT WAYS DID HOSEA’S CHILDREN PORTRAY GOD’S MASSAGE?

* It also showed that God was angry to them and would destroy them to their sins.
* The name unloved showed that God no longer had love for Israel.
* The name also showed that the Israelites had lost God’s protection due to violation of the covenant.
* The name not my people showed that Israelites had forsaken God and were no longer his people.
* Hosea’s child named Jezreel meant that God was going to destroy Israel.
* The names of Hosea’s children also signified that Israelites were to be destroyed because God had sent several warnings but they had failed to repent and turn to God.
* Hosea sent his children to their mother to plead to her to come out of prostitution. This portrayed how God had sent prophets to the Israelites to convince them to change their ways but resisted.
* The change of names of Hosea’s children reflected the change in God’s attitude towards Israel after she had under gone punishment.
* Jezreel would be changed to prosperity that Israel would be blessed with prosperity.
* Hosea’s child not loved would change to loved portraying God’s love again to the Israelites after their repentance.
* Not my people would turn to my people signifying that the Israelites would become or receive God’s protection.

COMMENT ON WHAT HOSEA SAID ABOUT ISRAEL’S LOVE FOR GOD

* According to Hosea Israel’s love for God was superficial i.e. it was insincere and not deep enough.
* He said that people pretended to repent but their repentance was shallow and had no results.
* The prophet said that Israel’s love for God was like a morning cloud like dew that goes away early. Therefore it was not permanent.
* The Israelites were sacrificing to God while their hearts were evil hence they had no love for their God.
* Hosea said that Israel had never had love for their God because they had broken the covenant they had made on Mt. Sinai.
* Prophet Hosea still mentioned that the priests of Israel were like a gang of robbers, an indication that they lacked love for God.
* Hosea mentioned that on the road to the worshipping places Israelites committed sins like theft hence no love for God.
* The Israelites had no love for God as the prophet says they were doing evil deliberately . For example, stealing and later ran to the temple for repentance.
* The people mentioned Israelites showed lack of love for God when they went on to worship idols.
* Hosea said Israelites failed to love God because they could not follow up their words with good actions.

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES HOSEA CHAMPION THE THEME OF GOD’S LOVE AND MERCY?

To a larger extent Hosea is a champion of God’s love and mercy and this can be seen in the following ways;

* Hosea’s marriage to Gomer reflects the kind of love God had for the people of Israel than any other nation (Hosea 11:1-4)
* Hosea shows that God cannot abandon his people Israel and can’t destroy them despite their sinfulness. (Hosea 11:8)
* Hosea’s willingness to remarry after her unfaithfulness God’s love for his people.
* The punishment of the Assyrians was changed and this gives meaning of God’s love.
* Hosea says God would purify Israel because he loves them and wants to go back to him.
* He indicates Israel would stop being called not my people to being God’s people. This also indicates Hosea as a champion of God.
* The prophet says that not loved as his child’s name would become loved which shows God’s forgiveness and love for Israelites.
* As a champion of God’s love and mercy Hosea prophesied that the name Jezreel would turn to prosperity of the Israelites.
* He foretold the time when Israel would not suffer under her enemies, restore their harmful weapons and war give them peace and safety. Hosea 2:18, thus indicating Hosea as a champion of love.
* Hosea’s sending of his children to plead with their mother is symbolic sign of God’s love and mercy.
* Love and mercy is shown when Hosea prophesied restoration of Israel back to their homeland (Hosea 14;4-8)
* God would answer people’s prayers and then they would live in plenty and prosperity hence indicating Hosea as a champion of love and mercy.
* Hosea predicted the time of rain which would cause the earth produce corn, grapes and olives and thirsty would no longer be there (Hosea 2:21-22)
* He prophesied hope when people would once again acknowledge Yahweh as their God and they would repent of their sins (Hosea 2;20)
* The prophet says due to God’s love Israelites would be given new hearts which would make them repent.
* God’s love and mercy is reflected in the high price he brought the woman from prostitution just as God was willing to sacrifice his dear son to redeem the sinful mankind.
* Hosea promised time was coming when Israel was under God’s care and protection and the Israelites would display total love and faithfulness to God.

To a smaller extent, Hosea does not reflect God’s love and mercy due to the following ways;

* Hosea prophesies God’s destruction to unfaithful people (Hosea 4:3)
* Because prophets and priest rejected their duties Hosea says God would destroy them together with other people where they would eat their sacrifices but would remain hungry and childless.
* Adulterous, prostitutes were to be sent in exile (Hosea 4:19)
* Hosea prophesies that priests and royal family who prevented justice were to face violent deaths (Hosea 4:4-10)
* Hosea says even Judah would be destroyed for stealing the land of Israel (Isaiah 5:10)
* Hosea says the political alliances would not help Israel or Judah but instead would go to exile (Hosea 5:12-15)
* To the idol worshippers the golden idol would be smashed to pieces and their crops would be made unproductive (Hosea 8)
* Hosea assured the Israelites that the kings whom they demanded would be taken away from them.
* According to Hosea 15:1-16 as a prophet of no God’s love and mercy he said the people’s altars would be broken down, would occur when God sends destructive winds.
* Prophet Hosea said that God promised never to listen to the prayers of people and never to accept their sacrifices because they lacked love in their hearts.

PROPHET AMOS

Amos was a prophet who prophesied in the Northern region i.e. Israel, and by occupation he was both a trader and a shepherd.

THE CALL OF AMOS

Amos’s call is traced in the visions which God revealed to him showing how he was going to punish the Israelites using the destructive visions.

The visions were as follows;

The vision of locusts

* In this vision Amos saw God create a swarm of locusts just after the king’s share of the bay had been cut and the grass was starting to grow again.
* In the vision Amos saw the locusts eat up every green thing in the land.
* The vision symbolized disaster which was to befall the Israelites in terms of famine leading to death of many people.
* On seeing the vision, Amos pleaded he said, sovereign Lord, forgive your people, how can they survive? They are so small and weak.
* The Lord changed his mind and said “What you saw will not take place”. This means that he withdrew the punishment.

The vision of fire (Amos 7:4-6)

* Amos saw God preparing to punish his people with fire. The fire burnt up the great ocean under the earth and started to burn the land.
* The vision symbolizes a prolonged drought which would dry up all the water bodies and the land as a sign of destruction to all the Israelites.
* When Amos saw this vision, he pleaded to God and said, “Stop, sovereign Lord. How can your people survive? They are still so small.”
* The Lord changed his mind again and said, “This will not take place either”.

The vision of a plumbline (Amos 7:7-9)

* In the vision Amos saw God standing besides a wall that had been built with the help of plumbline in His hand.
* He asked Amos that, “Amos what do you see?” Amos said that “A plumbline,” then God that He was using it to show that His people are like a wall that is out of line/ crooked wall/ the Israelites had failed to line according to the covenant way of life.
* When Amos saw this vision, he didn’t plead to God as he had done in the first two visions and God wasn’t willing to change His mind about punishing the Israelites because they were like a crooked wall fit for destruction.
* In the vision, God promised to destroy the worshipping places and to bring the dynasty of king Jeroboam to an end.

The vision of a basket of fruit (Amos 8:1-4)

* In the vision Amos saw God standing besides a wall that had been built with the help of a plant line and
* Amos saw a basket of fruit at the end of the king’s harvest.
* It meant that the end had come for the people of Israel and God wasn’t going to change his mind.
* The vision symbolized that people’s sins were beyond limit and it also meant that it was the right time for God to punish them.
* Because of the destruction, the songs in the palace would become cries of mourning.
* There would be dead bodies every where and the city would be filled with wailing because the dead bodies would be many.

The vision of the destroyed altar (Amos 9)

* Amos saw God standing besides the altar. He commanded him to strike the tops of the temple columns so hard that the whole porch will shake. He told him to break them off and let them fall on the head of the people.
* God promised to kill the rest of the people in war and no ne would survive or escape. To emphasize this God said that “Even if they dig their way down to the world of the dead, I will catch them. Even if they climb up to heaven, I will search them down, if they hide on the top of Mt. Carmel, I will search for them and catch them. If they hide from me at the bottom of the sea, I will command the monsters to bite them. If they are taken away into captivity by their enemies, I will order them to be put to death (Amos 9:2-4)
* The vision symbolized the destruction of the temple and all the worshippers.
* Because of people’s sins and their failure to change the temple would no longer be God’s dwelling place.

AMOS’ CONDEMNATION TO THE ISRAELITES

Amos condemned the Israelites due to the following religious evils;

* The Israelites were consulting false prophets. According to the Mosaic Law, they were only expected to consult the true prophets of God.
* They had forgotten God. The Israelites had started worshipping pagan gods which was against the mosaic teachings.
* The religious days especially the Sabbath were considered to be a burden. According to the Mosaic Law, the Sabbath was dedicated to God, therefore, the Israelites were expected to worship God on this day and they also had to respect it.
* There was blasphemy among the Israelites. They used abusive language against God’s name . For example, they would say that God is unfair not caring and many others
* The priests were misguiding God’s people. Instead of guiding the Israelites towards the covenant faith, they did the opposite.
* There was a lot of religious pretence. Many Israelites pretended to be religious yet their actions didn’t prove so . For example, they were involved in sex abuse, they were conflicting injustices.
* The prophets were prevented from prophesying God’s massage. At one time, priest Amaziah stopped Amos from prophesying in the Northern region.
* Many people were unrepentant. The Israelites expected to report whenever they sinned against God.
* Many people used to offer unclean sacrifices, yet according to the Mosaic Law teachings, they were expected t offer only clean sacrifices.
* There was idol worship, instead of worshipping God people had turned to idolatry which was against the covenant way of life.
* There was religious formalism where by many Israelites used to do things formally . For example, worshipping God, sacrificing and many others
* There was a lot of hypocrisy among the Israelites yet this was agents the covenant way of life.
* The religious leaders (Nazarites) were forced to drink a lot of wine. The leaders were not expected to drink too much wine because incase they did so, they would loose their senses.
* Syncretism had reached its climax in the Northern region. Many people used to worship pagan gods alongside Yahweh.
* Apostasy was very common. Many Israelites used to worship in different ways.

Economically the people of Israel were guilty of the following;

* There was income inequality. Some people were very rich yet others were very poor. According to the Mosaic Law teachings resources were supposed to be shared equally.
* The rich were money hungry. They over charged their commodities and cheated their customers by mixing wheat with dust.
* The rich were lending at high interest rates and in case a poor failed to pay back, his property would be confiscated.
* The rich used dishonest weights and measures in business. They tampered with the weighing scales in order to cheat their customers.
* There was extravagance and a lot of luxury among the rich . For example, the poor would only afford meat on big days whereas the rich could eat choiced lambs each day. While the rich could afford both summer and winter houses, the poor couldn’t afford a mere tent.

Socially Israel was characterized by the following;

* The poor had no say in the courts of law . For example, a poor man could move all the way to Samaria to get justice but instead he would get injustice in the courts of law.
* Sex abuse was common. A father and a son would share one slave woman yet according to the mosaic teaching, children were expected to respect their parents.
* In case a poor person failed to pay back a small debt not worthy a pair of sandals, he would be sold into slavery yet according to the Law of Moses, all people belonged to God, and therefore no one was supposed to be sold into slavery.
* Silencing the poor was common. The poor weren’t supposed to be heard but were only expected to be seen which a form of injustice was.
* The wives of the rich were demanding too much from their husbands and their husbands ended up oppressing and cheating the poor in order to please them.
* Anybody who spoke the truth in Israel was hated. In fact almost all the people were liars.
* On many occasions, offerings to God were acquired by grabbing from the poor. This was especially done by the rich among the Israelites, especially the rich, idleness, drunkardness and unnecessary luxuries were very common. Yet according to the Mosaic Law, the people were supposed to live equal life but in this case the poor were living in absolute poverty.
* The mansions of the rich were full of stolen property from the poor. According to the Mosaic Law, stealing was forbidden.

Politically the Israelites were guilty of the following;

* Over taxation of the poor as very common, according to the Mosaic Law, the Israelites were expected to be taxed according to their income.
* Forced labour was common. The political leaders used to force people to work for them without any payment.
* The political leaders used their positions to grab people’s property. The leaders believed that they were above the law and therefore had the right to possess whatever they wanted.
* Political leaders made alliances with the pagan states. According to the Mosaic Law, the Israelites were only expected to depend on God. Therefore associating with pagan states wasn’t allowed.

LESSONS CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM AMOS’ PROPHESY

The Christians learn the following lessons from Amos’ prophesy;

* Christians should respect God’s name unlike the Israelites who were blasphemous i.e. talking ill about God’s name.
* Christians should have respect for people’s property unlike the Israelites who used to grab property from the poor.
* Christians should be exemplary unlike the Israelites who used to worship pagan gods alongside Yahweh.
* Christians should repent whenever they sin against God unlike the Israelites who were unrepentant.
* Christians should have faith in the Almighty God unlike the Israelites who lacked faith.
* Christians should pay their workers (employees) unlike the Israelites who failed to pay their workers.
* Christians should promote justice unlike the Israelites who inflicted injustices especially onto the poor or the weak.
* Christians should seek for God’s guidance unlike the Israelites who weren’t guided by God and ended up committing evil against God.
* Christians should be obedient to the law and commandments unlike the Israelites who were disobedient.
* Christians should have respect for sex since it is supposed to be sacred unlike the Israelites who used to abuse sex.
* Christians should have respect for sex since it is supposed to be sacred unlike the Israelites who used to abuse sex.
* Christians should have respect for the Sabbath and other religious days and celebrations unlike the Israelites who looked at the Sabbath as a burden.
* Christians should be true to themselves and others unlike the Israelites who were great liars and dishonest.
* Christians especially religious leaders should guide people towards the covenant faith unlike the Israelites religious leaders who were misguiding God’s people.

AMOS’ MASSAGE OF DOOM/JUDGMENT

Because of the wickedness of the Israelites and the pagan people, Amos never had any kind words for them. He prophesied a massage of doom or judgment and his massage was as follows;

* He began by condemning the pagan states like the states of Moab, Syria, Tyre, Philistia and many others. He said because of their wickedness, they were to suffer from God’s punishment.
* He said that the day of the Lord is going to be characterized by wickedness but not light and joy as the pope were expecting.
* Amos said that the wives of the rich people were going to be dragged into exile fish on hooks.
* He said that the rich people were doomed because they choiced lambs and drunk wine in expensive cups. They used expensive perfumes. Therefore they would no longer enjoy the nice music and the good life but instead their songs would turn into funeral songs and they would also be taken into exile.
* Amos condemned those who were betraying the covenant laws and exploiting the poor. He said that they were going to be crushed even the bravest boldness was going to be judged. The judgment would be so terrible that no one would escape it.
* Amos reminded the Israelites about the punishment God had sent before . For example, failed to repent, wars and he said that since they had failed to repent, a worse disaster would befall them.
* He said that everyone was to die and a few people were to survive.
* He emphasized this by giving an example of a shepherd who can only receive two keys and ear when a lion has attacked his flock.
* He said that no one would escape the death even if they climbed mountains, hide under trees they would still be destroyed.
* He saw the destructive visions which God was going to use to punish the Israelites. They included the vision of locusts, the vision of the basket full of fruits, the vision of plumbline.
* He pronounced judgment upon the priest “Amaziah” because he said that his wife was to become a prostitute, his children were going to die and Amaziah was going to die in exile, and the land of Israelites was going to be divided.
* Amos sang a funeral song to illustrate the future of Israel. The song clearly showed that there was no hope to put it out.
* He said that God was going to send fire to the people of Bethel and no one would be in position to put it out.
* He said that there would be many dead bodies and no one would burry them because of fearing God’s punishments.
* He said that there would be famine to the extent of people beginning to eat one another.
* Because of cheating the poor, the Lord was going to send earthquakes and everybody was going to be destroyed.
* He said that Israel would be like sheep eaten up by a lion which implied that the Israelites would not survive God’s punishments.
* Because of God’s anger, Amos said that people’s sacrifices would be accepted.
* He went ahead and said that however much they prayed to God, he would not respond or even accept their sacrifices.
* He said that the Lord was going to carry out his judgment which was going to be so terrible that no one would escape it.
* It would be like someone running away from a lion and meets a bear of someone who goes home, puts the hand on the wall, only to be bitten by a snake.
* He said that those who became rich through injustices and exploitation would not enjoy their beautiful houses.
* He said that religious leaders were going t be destroyed because of drinking too much wine.
* He said God was going to send an enemy to surround the land of the Israelites.

AMOS’ MASSAGE OF HOPE

Despite the fact that Amos was a prophet of doom, there are some features of hope in his prophesy which include the following;

* The mere fact that Amos was sent by God to warn the people against their wickedness and the forth coming punishment shows a sign of hope because it was intended to make them become good people.
* By sending Amos to prophesy in the Northern region a clear indicator that God never wanted to see his people perish but to see them change and live.
* He said that the Lord was going to resolve Israel after exile which was a sign of hope.
* In his massage, Amos said that the Lord was going to give chance to rebuild Israel. To emphasize this, he gave an example of the shepherd who recovers 2 legs and ear when his flock has been attacked by a lion.
* Amos said that the Israelites were going to be taken into exile as a punishment from God which was out of his love because he wanted them to change. Therefore God was going to punish them to the way a father punishes his child.
* When Amos saw the vision of 5 and locusts he pleaded to God and God changed his mind by withdrawing the punishment, showing that there was a chance of forgiveness.
* Amos said that the day of the Lord would forgive those who have repented.
* He said that time would come when God would listen to people’s prayers, receive and accept their sacrifices.
* He foresaw the Israelites harvesting a lot from the field after exile and there would be n famine anymore.
* He said that the Israelites would be re-established in their citizens after exile and never to be disturbed by foreign armies.
* Amos said that the cities and the towns would be rebuilt after exile and therefore, these would be prosperity once again.
* He said that the Israelites would enjoy the fruits of their work after planting and therefore eating what they would have planted.
* He said that though God was going to destroy Israel, the descendants of Jacob would survive.
* Amos foresaw mountains dripping with sweet wine, which was a sign of hope.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PRIEST AMAZIAH AND PROPHET AMOS (Amos 7:10-17)

* When Amos was prophesying in the Northern region, he was attacked and stopped by priest Amaziah from prophesying especially because of attacking the place of worship and king.
* Because of Amos’ prophesies, a conflict developed between him and Amaziah and the following caused the conflict;
* According to Amaziah, Amos was blasphemous. When Amos attacked the places of worship by saying that they blasphemy which was against the covenant life.
* When Amos attacked Jeroboam the king said that he was guilty of treason.
* Amos wasn’t born a prophet which made Amaziah not to believe in his prophesies. This annoyed Amos because his prophesies were undermined.
* Amos was stopped by Amaziah from prophesying God’s massage. He advised him to go back to Judah and carryout his prophesies there.
* Amaziah reduced his people’s status by referring to his as a money hungry prophet which was a characteristic of the false prophets yet he was a true prophet.
* Amos pronounced judgment upon Amaziah’s wife. He said that she would become a prostitute on the street which annoyed Amaziah hence a conflict.
* Amos said that Amaziah would be taken into exile and he would die in leather country.
* When Amos said that Amaziah’s children would be killed in war, a conflict developed between the two.
* When Amos said that Amaziah’s land would be divided up and given to others. They disagreed because Amaziah would not believe that.
* When Amos said that the people of Israel would be taken from their own land into exile he conflicted with Amaziah.
* Amaziah and Amos conflicted because Amaziah doubted Amos’ prophesies. He did not believe whatever he prophesied.

THE DAY OF THE LORD (Amos 5:18)

The people of Israel were longing for the day of the Lord. However much they sinned, they expected the day of the Lord to be characterized by the following;

* They expected God to show his power over the pagan states. In other words, they believed that God would not allow the pagan states o defeat the.
* They expected to begin living in material prosperity and accumulate a lot of wealth.
* They expected that the day of the Lord would be a day of victory and glory in battle for Israel i.e. they expected to defeat all their enemies.
* They expected to receive God’s blessings especially the blessings he had promised through Abraham their ancestor to receive God’s blessings.
* They expected their vineyards and olive gardens to produce in plenty. They also expected corn to grow faster than it would be harvested.
* On this day, they expected the God would send rain at the right time such that people could plant and harvest enough food.
* They expected God to forgive their sins and begin living in harmony with them.
* The Israelites expected to increase in number together with their domestic animals.
* They expected trade to boom such that they would make a lot of profits on the day of the Lord.
* They expected to live in peace and never to be disturbed by their enemies.

THE PROPHETS’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

Amos and other prophets attacked and rejected views of the Israelites about the day of the Lord.

* Amos said that the day of the Lord was coming but it was going to be characterized with doom and disaster. To emphasize this, an example was given of a man who runs away from a lion and meets a bear or someone who goes home and puts the hands on the wall only to be bitten by a snake. Amos and other prophets attacked and rejected the view of the Israelites about the day of the Lord. The following was said;
* Amos and other prophets said that on this day people’s feasts would turn into mourning and the songs of joy would turn on that into funeral songs.
* Amos said that on that day all the idols which were being worshipped by people would be destroyed such that religious sanity would be created.
* On that day, people would suffer from hunger, they would starve to death. They would not come out of their houses to look for food because of fearing God’s punishment. Therefore they would begin eating one another.
* On that day, both human pride and arrogance would be destroyed and all the people would fear to mention or say a word or order not to annoy God.
* On that day, Samaria would be attacked by a foreign army which would again control over it.
* On that day, people would cry and wail because the dead bodies would be many in the cities and along the sounds.
* Amos said that on that day God was going to pass judgment upon all the Israelites. And because of their evils it was not going to be a day of light but of darkness.
* Amos said that the day of Lord was going to be of misery, agony and mourning. The dead bodies were to be so many and no one would burry them.

THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

The Christians have the following views about the day of the Lord;

* They believe that this day is going to be Jesus; second coming which all people are longing for.
* Christians believe that when the trumpet is sounded announcing the second coming of Jesus, the dead shall have to rise.
* The Christians believe that this day will mark the end of the world. Therefore on this day, the universe will come to an end.
* The Christians believe that this day will mark the end of the world. Therefore on this day, the universe will come to an end.
* The Christians believe that on that day, the righteous shall be separated from the unrighteous. This would be like separating the sheep from wolves.
* It is believed that the righteous will go to heaven and sit at the right hand of God whereas the wicked or sinners would serve their everlasting punishment.
* Christians believe that on that day, Jesus will take control over the whole universe. He will show his powers as the king and the Lord. The Christians believe that on that day strange miracles shall happen. For example the dead will rise,the sun will go down at noon and many others.
* The Christians are expected to respect as they prepare for the second coming of Jesus. Therefore all people are expected to be ready for this day.
* The Christians believe that the day will come abruptly like a thief. It is believed that no one knows the day even the hour.

AMOS’ CONDEMNATION OF THE VARIOUS STATES

(Reasons why Amos began by condemning other nations)

* Amos wanted to show that Yahweh was a universal God. Therefore he had the right to pronounce judgment upon the states because he was God of all the people but not only the Israelites.
* Amos wanted to show Yahweh was the master of the whole universe. He had the right to judge all the people since there was God above him.
* Amos wanted to give the Israelites a chance to respect and ask for forgiveness. He believed that in case the Israelites heard about his prophesies they would repent.
* It was a technique of getting an audience from the Israelites. Amos thought that if the Israelites had heard about his prophesies, they would be willing to listen to him in case he began prophesying to them.
* Amos wanted to show the Israelites that they had sinned against the Lord more than others i.e. they had committed terrible sins against the Lord. Therefore, all the people were expected to respect God’s law.
* Amos wanted to get attention from his own people. (The people of Judah). After condemning the pagan states, Amos prophesied among the people of Judah.
* Amos wanted to show that salvation was for all people. Therefore he wanted the Israelite people of a new nation to prepare for salvation.
* He wanted to show that salvation was for all people. Therefore he wanted the Israelites and people of other nations to prepare for salvation.
* He wanted to show that being omnipotent; God had the power to punish all the sinners. That is why he pronounced judgment upon the Israelites and other nations.
* Since he is omnipotent, Yahweh wanted to show that he was closely following all the nations and therefore expected all people to change.
* Amos wanted to show that sin is punishment everywhere it occurs. Even the pagan nations were liable to punishments. Therefore he wanted them to get prepared for God’s punishment.
* Amos began by condemning the pagan states because of the evils they had committed and the massage of destruction. He wanted to pronounce upon the pagan states and Judah.
* Amos wanted to condemn Syria for continuous sinning and to pronounce God’s punishment upon them. Because of mistreating people of Gilead, God was going to send fire upon the palace built by king Hazeal and he was going to burn the fortresses. He promised to remove he rulers of the cities which Ashdad and Ashkolon. And all the Philistines who were left will die.
* Amos condemned the people of Edom for hunting down their relatives, the Israelites and failure to show them mercy. God was to send fire upon the city of Teman and burn down fortresses of Bozral.
* Amos condemned Ammon for continuous sinning. They raped open pregnant women in Gilead. God was to send fire upon the city walls of Rabbah and burn down the fortresses.
* The king and his officers would go into exile.
* Amos condemned the Moabites for dishonoring the bones of the king of Edom by burning them to ashes.
* God was to send fire upon the land of Moab and burn the fortresses of Keuroth. The Moabites were to die in battles, their ruler and all the leader of the land.
* Amos condemned Judah for continuous sinning for despising God’s teachings and not keeping his command and following the false gods.
* God promised to send fire upon Judah and burn down the fortresses of Jerusalem.

Revision questions

1. *Discuss Amos’ prophesy on the forms of worship.*
2. *Analyse the forms of worship or Israel during the times of the minor colonial prophets.*
3. *If Amos came to Uganda what would he condemn. Account for Amos’ condemnation of rich people of Israel during his time.*
4. *Comment on the way in which the rich today can help to build the society.*
5. *Examine Amos’ judgment upon the Israelites.*
6. *Was there any hope for the Israelites? Give reasons for your answer.*
7. *“Amos is a prophet of doom and hope”. Discuss.*
8. *To what extent was the Israelites understanding of the day of the Lord different from the pre-exile prophets.*
9. *What views do Christians have about the second coming of Jesus Christ?*

“JEREMIAH WAS A PROPHET OF JUDGMENT AND HOPE” DISCUSS.

* Largely the message of Jeremiah was full of doom as mainly noted in chapter 7.
* Jeremiah had a vision of Almond tree at his call. This signified that Yahweh was watching over the sins of the Israelites and now was ready to cause disaster to Judah at any time (Jeremiah 1:11-12)
* Jeremiah saw a vision of a boiling pot coming from the north towards the south in Judah. This signified destruction would boil over them from the north to all who live in the land of Judah (Jeremiah 1: 13-15)
* Jeremiah prophesized a message of doom in his temple sermon when he said that the place of robbers was to be destroyed just as the holy shrine at Shiloh was earlier on destroyed because of people’s wickedness (Jeremiah 7:1ff)
* The prophet was convinced in many of his words that the people were doomed and had to be punished seriously because of their sins (Jeremiah 7:29=34).
* The prophet pronounced a message of doom when he said that the sacrifices paid or offered by the people were no longer worthful to the Lord because they even offered sacrifices to Baal (Jeremiah 7:8-15)
* Jeremiah was a prophet of doom basing on the way he was commanded by God to live. He was told not to marry or have any children and not to attend feasts. This indicated that the time of jubilation for the Israelites was over.
* Jeremiah performed a symbolic act of breaking a jar and this he told the elders who had accompanied him that Judah was completely to be destroyed to the point of no repair just like the jar (Jeremiah 19:1-15)
* Jeremiah was told by the Lord to buy a linen short and put it around his waist but no water was to let it be touched. This signified that the Israelites could no longer fulfill God’s commands and that when disaster strikes them there would be many dead bodies and it would be difficult to find burying places for all of them.
* Jeremiah’s prophecy was full of doom as he gave priest Passhur a symbolic name “terror” everywhere” (Jeremiah 20:3). This name implied that there would be so much fear and terrible sins when disaster strikes the people.
* He made a visit to the potter’s place which had symbolic meaning indicating doom to Israel. He saw that the ports which were made had failed to reach the required standards symbolizing Israel’s failure to listen to God’s commands and demanded punishment (Jeremiah 18)
* Jeremiah preached that the people of Judah failed to listen to God’s commands and so were going to be taken into captivity that is in Babylon.
* The prophet prophesized doom to the loyal house of Judah by saying the Lord was going to send fire on the palace and burn down everything around it (Jeremiah 21:12)
* Jeremiah prophesized doom to King Zedekiah when he consulted him at Jerusalem. The prophet told the king that Judah/ Jerusalem would befall under siege and people had to surrender if they wanted to save their lives (Jeremiah 21”1-10)
* Jeremiah received a vision which had a message of doom. The Lord showed him two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple, the first basket contained good figs to eat and the second contained bad figs to eat. The basket of bad figs to eat. The basket of bad figs indicated disaster that was to occur to the people of their rebelliousness (Jeremiah 24).
* Jeremiah presented the priests and prophets of Judah during his ministry as a burden to God . For example, priest Pashhur and prophet Hannaniah the Lord indicates that he was ready to do away with such people hence a message of doom.

However Jeremiah can be referred to a smaller extent as a prophet of hope in the following reasons;

* He prophesized that the Lord would make a new covenant with his people i.e. those who would have repented.
* In the prophet’s temple sermon, part of his message was a call for repentance indicating a message of hope to the people. He said in chapter 7:5 “change the way your living and stop doing the things your doing. Be fair in your treatment for one another.
* He also had hopes to the suffering people because he even wrote a letter to comfort those in exile (Jeremiah 51:59ff and chapter 29.
* Jeremiah was a prophet of hope as he even brought a piece of land reflecting God’s love to the Israelites. This implied that some of God’s people would have somewhere to stay after Babylonian exile.
* The prophet in much of his words called upon people for faithfulness and even showed signs of sorrow (Jeremiah 8:18-22)
* In his message, the prophet promised to make Judah a prosperous area to live in after their return from exile.
* He also supported King Josiah to destroy the worshiping places and images of Baal which previous kings like Manasseh had introduced in Judah.
* Jeremiah promised Jerusalem to be a source of joy, honour and peace once again when people turned to God.
* The prophet said that, time would come once again when people would recognize God and swear by his name after returning from exile (Jeremiah 10:14-15).
* As a prophet of hope, he said that abundant peace and security would prevail over again in the land when the Lord destroys the Israelites enemies like Moab and Ammon (Jeremiah 48, 49)
* Jeremiah promised that a new king, righteous descendant of David would be enthroned in Israel (Jeremiah 32:36ff, 33:1ff)
* As a prophet of hope, he prophesized that the Lord would increase the number of the Israelites when they return from exile.
* The prophet prophesized that, time was coming when the Lord would no longer punish his people again.
* When Jeremiah received the vision of the basket of figs, the first basket contained good figs, this indicated that some of his God’s people were still righteous.
* In the same way when Jeremiah visited the potter’s house, he saw the potter trying to perfect the clay into rightful pottery. This message indicates that the Lord was always ready to change or accept people who had repented.

THE USE OF PROPHETIC SYMBOLS/ SIGNS IN JEREMIAH’S MINISTRY

1. Discuss the symbolic actions shown by Jeremiah to show the incoming destruction of Judah.
2. Explain the significance of Jeremiah’s prophetic symbols/ signs.
3. Comment on the use of symbols/ signs in the book of Jeremiah.

The following were some of the prophetic visions or symbols Jeremiah received and their significance;

* Jeremiah saw an Almond tree without leaves but waiting to bloom again. Tree without leaves but waiting to grow again. This meant that the Lord was watching over to see his words being fulfilled or not the Israelites were going to be destructed (Jeremiah 1:12)
* Jeremiah once again was shown a boiling pot in the north and it was about to tip over to Judah where it was facing. This indicated that the Lord was going to send an army from the north (Babylonians) and attack Judah and put them into captivity (Jeremiah 1:13-15)
* God again commanded Jeremiah to buy linen shorts and put them on. The new shorts represented a new Israel that had a new relationship with God but after sometime God told the prophet to hide his shorts near a river and checking upon the shorts, Jeremiah found they had been destroyed and not fit to use. This meant Judah had become sinful to God and would be destroyed.
* According to Jeremiah 16:13, God commanded him to stay single without a wife and children. This indicated time had come too close that no more blessing for Judah would be availed to them and that God was going to send a terrible disease that would kill children and women and so it was useless for one to marry and have children.
* Jeremiah was told to stay away from any house where there was mourning that wasn’t to feel any sorrow for people. This meant that the Lord would no longer have mercy for the people of Judah and so would all be put to death.
* The prophet was also refused by God to attend feasts of joy. This implied that all Israelites celebrations were no longer useful to God.
* Jeremiah saw a barren land which was wasted, there was no light on it and mountains were shaking. It signified dark edges that Judah would find herself into where people would tremble with fear especially in exile.
* To prove that God was ready to pass judgment to Judah, He instructed Jeremiah to visit a potter’s house (Jeremiah 15:1-12). He saw the potter making things out of clay but several times what the potter intended to make became imperfect and then would destroy it and make something else.
* Similarly, it sowed that the people of Judah who were in God’s hands would be destroyed because they had become imperfect by not observing his laws.
* Jeremiah received a sign of God’s command to him to go and buy a clay jar (Jeremiah 19:1ff), together with the priests and some elders they moved to the valley of Hinnon, he was told to break the jar into pieces before the people. This meant the teaching to the elders around that they had misled the Lord’s people who were going to be destroyed like the jar.
* According to Jeremiah 24, he received a vision of two baskets of figs that were placed in front of good people who were in Babylon and had learnt a lesson while the basket of rotten figs indicated the rebellious Israelites.
* Jeremiah symbolically was commanded to put on an ox yoke Jeremiah 27 around his neck. This meant that the people of Judah would experience difficult time and would be treated as slaves in Babylon.
* The Lord again commanded Jeremiah to buy a piece of land and acquire a land title, give it to Baruch his secretary for further use. This act symbolized a sign of hope for God’s people and exile life would end.
* The prophet was taken to a dry well where he was tied up and given nothing to eat but left to die although he was later released. This symbolized that the Israelites in Judah would be restored if they repented their sins (Jeremiah 38:1-13)

FROM THE STUDY OF PROPHETIC INSTITUTION OF ISRAEL, EXAMINE THE MASSAGE PROCLAIMED BY THE ORAL TYPE OF PROPHETS IN THIS LAND.

Oral prophets implied the true prophets of God. Therefore they proclaimed the following message of condemnation and judgment to the people of Israel;

* They condemned the existing religious and social mischiefs . For example, prophet Jeremiah in his temple sermon condemned the insincere religious sacrifices of the people of Judah.
* Oral prophets condemned religious apostasy in Israel . For example, prophet Ezekiel and Amos.
* They dramatized God’s message to their listeners . For example, Prophet Nathan’s message to King David about his act of adultery.
* Oral prophets condemned oppression of innocent people . For example,prophet Elijah condemned Ahab for killing the innocent man of God, Nabboth.
* They prophesized God’s message of judgment to the evil doers . For example, prophet Amos.
* Oral prophets performed miracles to demonstrate God’s power to the people . For example,prophet Elijah at the Mt. Camel contest.
* Oral prophets promoted the covenant faith among the Israelites . For example, prophet Amos.
* They indicated that God was a living God unlike Baal and others . For example,prophet Elijah during the competition with Baal prophets at Mt. Camel.
* The message of oral prophets challenged the priests and kings of the time . For example, prophet Jeremiah’s temple sermon which attacked priest Passhur and king Jehoiakim.
* The message of oral prophets aimed at transforming Israelites from pagan worship . For example, prophet Amos, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and many others
* The message of prophets of Israel challenged the work of false prophets . For example, Jeremiah conflicted with prophet Hannaniah.
* They condemned kings to destruction of their families . For example, Prophet Elijah prophesized the death of King Ahab and his family members.
* Oral prophets prayed to God to help the Israelites overcome problems . For example, prophet Amos, Samuel.

SHOW WHETHER THE ORAL PROPHETS WERE GOD’S PROPHETS

The oral prophets were God’s prophets as seen below;

* They were sent by God himself as his messengers which is indicated in their words i.e. “The Lord says”.
* They are called by God. Jeremiah 1 indicates that God chose him when he was still a child.
* Oral prophets used to get visions from God . For example, prophet Amos got visions like vision of fire, Jeremiah got visions like boiling pot.
* They used to get their message written n scrolls . For example, prophet Ezekiel.
* Oral prophets would get their words direct from God . For example, God touched Jeremiah’s lips and was given words and confidence to face the hostile people of Judah.
* Some oral prophets were empowered by God’s spirit . For example, prophet Ezekiel.
* Some prophets got God’s strength to preach though they were young at their calling . For example, Jeremiah.
* They helped the Israelites to understand God’s laws by condemning evil doings . For example, prophet Jeremiah.
* They performed miracles that showed God’s power and love . For example, Prophet Elijah and Elisha.
* They helped people to turn back to God after sinning . For example, prophet Hosea who turned his wife who was a prostitute.
* They reminded the Israelites to remain faithful to the covenant faith . For example,prophet Elijah.
* They were spokesmen of God to Israelites i.e. delivered God’s message or interceded for the sins of the Israelites . For example, Samuel.

EXAMINE THE MEANING OF JEREMIAH’S BROKEN JAR (Jeremiah 19:1ff)

Jeremiah’s sign of the broken jar meant the following;

* The broken jar was a prophetic sign for the destruction of Judah if they continued with their sinfulness.
* The jar represented Judah and Jeremiah represent God.
* Jeremiah brought the jar as God had brought the Israelites to be his own people.
* The elders whom God told Jeremiah to accompany him would act as witness to Judah’s destruction. As elders they had failed t guide the people in the rightful path.
* The priests who also accompanied Jeremiah to the potter and then to the alley represented the temple which was to be destroyed.
* The valley where the jar was broken would be the place for the destruction of Judah.
* Hinnon valley the slaughter place where innocent blood was shed to Baal gods would be the valley where the people would be slaughtered.
* The jar was smashed which signified the smashing of Jerusalem and Judah by their enemies or by God’s order.
* The sign indicated that the city of Jerusalem would become unholy city because of their continued sinning that annoyed God.
* The intensity of the jars destruction would be the same intensity used by God for the destruction of the people of Judah.
* The broken jar wouldn’t be put together again just as would be destroyed completely.
* Those who witnessed the destruction of the jar i.e. the elders and the priests got amazed just as those would witness the destruction of the kingdom of Judah would be.
* The jar did not resist the destruction as the people of Judah wouldn’t be able to resists the foreign attack from the north i.e. Babylonians.
* The pieces of the jar were left in the valley and this is where the dead would be buried too.

EXPLAIN THE RELEVANCE OF THE SIGN TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

The relevancies of the sign to Christians today can be viewed as follows;

* Christians should be loyal and obedient to God and take up his orders just like Jeremiah and by going to the potter.
* Christians should be faithful to God unlike the people of Judah who because of their unfaithfulness were destroyed by God.
* Christians should prepare for God’s judgment over them unlike the leaders and priests of Judah who received God’s judgment in a harsh way.
* Christians need to be witnesses to God’s wonders like healing the sick but not being witnesses to their suffering like the elders and priests of Judah who acted as witnesses to Judah’s future destruction.
* Christians are challenged to love God than material things which perish at any moment but God is there forever.
* Modern Christians are called upon to accept God’s plan on their lives just as Jeremiah accepted to take up God’s instructions.
* Christians are called upon to change their behaviours in order to escape God’s judgment like the people of Judah received because of their sins.
* Christians today are encouraged to put away with association with places or people who are regarded bad and polluted.
* Christians should use symbolism and signs to attract non believers to Christianity. This can be done through good acts like helping the needy.
* God’s command to Jeremiah not to marry meant that Jeremiah’s children and those of Judah were to die and there would be no body to burry them when destruction occurs because everybody would be dying.
* It meant parents and children would die and their dead bodies would pile on the streets later to become manure on the ground.
* The order of Jeremiah not to marry indicated that children and parents would be killed by an advancing enemy from Babylon in a very brutal way.
* The children of Judah would be slaughtered by the enemy and those who would escape death would be dragged in exile to mark the end of the family in Jerusalem hence Jeremiah’s marriage was to be useless.
* The command by God of Jeremiah not to marry and have children also symbolized that Judah was unproductive before God as a barren or childless marriage.
* The order of not marrying given to Jeremiah by God meant that the people of Judah were not to enjoy life but to wait for disaster.
* Jeremiah was commanded to remain a celibate and not to grieve for marriage in the same way he was not supposed to mourn for the dead because the future of Judah was also to be like that.
* The command signified the people of Judah and Jerusalem would be killed and their dead bodies would become food for the world birds and animals to enjoy.
* In the same way Jeremiah was t stay away from burial ceremonies because death was so common and no one would get time to burry the other not even the beloved ones.
* The order not to marry hat was given to Jeremiah signified that those children of Judah who would escape immediate death and exile would die of starvation when parents would almost turn to their own children for food.
* Jeremiah wasn’t supposed to enter the house where there was feasting, eating and drinking because all people were sinners waiting for their punishment.
* God’s command to Jeremiah not to marry and not to participate in ceremonies symbolized the mourning of Judah, Jerusalem.

EXAMINE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JEREMIAH’S VISIT AT THE POTTER’S HOUSE (Jeremiah 18:1-12)

After the people of Judah had refused to repent, God told Jeremiah to go to the potter’s house and this meant the following;

* In this sign, God was the potter and the clay were the people of Judah and Jerusalem.
* The pottery was an important person who made domestic utensils from clay as God’s creative work brought out the people of Judah as God’s products.
* As the clay was in the potter’s hand for control, so were the people of Judah in God’s control.
* As the potter molded the clay, he would find out that some items were not perfect and so he would change his mind about them either by reshaping or destroying them. In the same way God had tried to reshape the discipline of his children but when they disobeyed he sent them into exile.
* The potter would shape the clay into any object he wanted, in the same way God had brought out the people of Judah as he wanted them.
* In the potter’s hand, clay wouldn’t detect its shape. Similarly, the people of Judah had no option but to do what God wanted them to do.
* The potter expected and wanted perfect objectives just as God expected good, loyal and faithful people of Judah.
* As the potter would mould the wet clay and get perfect objects, he would be happy. This is the way God would spare people of Judah who would turn to him faithfully.
* According to Jeremiah, God would reshape the people of Judah and Jerusalem and make them perfect because they were his people as the potter also tried to reshape the clay to perfect objects.
* The purpose of this sign was to warn the people of Judah about the punishments that were approaching them so that they would change.

JEREMIAH’S PROPHECY ABOUT THE ATTACK OF JERUSALEM (Jeremiah 21:1-10)

Analyse the message of Jeremiah concerning attack of Jerusalem

* Jeremiah’s prophecy happened during the time Zedekiah was the king of Judah and when the Babylonians were preparing to attack them.
* On seeing that Jerusalem was already surrounded by Babylonians, King Zedekiah sent messengers to Jeremiah the prophet of God to ask God to intervene on their behalf and send them from Nebuchadnezzar’s forces.
* On God’s behalf Jeremiah said that God was soon registering victory against Zedekiah’s forces and God was determined to fight with all his might, anger, wrath and fury because Judah had deliberately refused to take up God’s message.
* Jeremiah added that God would kill everybody found in the city both people and animals using different ways such as diseases, famine and animals. This showed that it would be hard for the people to survive any of these.
* Jeremiah also stated that the officials of Judah and a few remnants would be captured by the Babylonians who would be eager to destroy them.
* The prophet added that God was extremely annoyed with the inhabitants of Judah and that He wasn’t going to spare any or even show mercy or pity to them.
* The above indicated that even when they repented for their ad ways of life at that time God wasn’t ready to change his mind.
* Jeremiah went to tell the officers that in order to save their life, it would be better for them to leave the city and surrender before the Babylonians therefore only those who would abandon the city and accept to be taken to exile would survive.
* The prophet noted that anybody who would hesitate to leave the city would surely be destroyed along with the temple and other property.
* King Zedekiah was challenged with the response of Jeremiah because he was given a duty of defending the sovereignty of Judah but failure to resist the Babylonians would mean sell of the land to the intruders.
* Then Zedekiah opted to resist other than seeing Jerusalem being taken over by Babylonians (Nebuchadnezzar). With the resistance, Jeremiah’s prophecy came to fulfillment as it led to the downfall of Jerusalem.
* Zedekiah was captured, witnessed the death of his two sons and Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah’s two eyes chained and exiled in Babylon.

JEREMIAH’S MASSAGE CONCERNING THE PROPHETS OF JUDAH

1. Account for Jeremiah’s attack to the prophets of Judah.
2. Comment on Jeremiah’s message concerning the prophets of Judah.

* Here Jeremiah was concerned with the issue of true and false prophet hood among the prophets of God in Judah. Jeremiah criticized the nature of prophet hood in Judah which was full of satanic influence.
* The prophets of Judah were wicked and failed to utilize their power and many were Godless i.e. having no personal knowledge therefore this made Jeremiah to attack them.
* Jeremiah attacked the prophets of Judah because they were fond of doing evil in God’s temple. This comprised of carrying out bribes, theft and denial of justice the poor.
* Jeremiah’s message to the prophets of Judah was against their actions because they worshipped Baal and left the people of God to go away from him.
* The prophet criticized the prophets of Judah because their actions and behaviours were not co-relating with any demands of Yahweh. They lived their own way of life which made no impact to the people they preached to . For example, in Jeremiah 23:12 prophets followed the path which was slippery and dark.
* The message of Jeremiah attacked the prophets of Judah because they were found of committing adultery and telling lies.
* The prophets were ill informing people about what God wants. They only imagined things on their own but not what God passed over to them to deliver to the people thus giving false hopes to the people.
* Jeremiah’s message attacked the prophets of Judah because most of them were not sent by God to speak for him. They were self proclaimed in this institution but wherever they went, they talked in God’s name.
* The prophets of Judah were fond of telling lies and claimed falsely that God had given them revelations in dreams which weren’t true. Hence making Jeremiah to attack them.
* They were accused of accepting payments from their oracles and promised peace and comfort instead of telling the people the challenging institution they lived in hence Jeremiah was bitter with the for that reason.

However according to Jeremiah’s message, it appeared that a true prophet is the one with the following qualities

* He was one who had a personal relationship with God in whatever he proclaims.
* A true prophet spoke with truth of God’s will . For example, Jeremiah’s temple sermon which was even different from what listeners expected to hear.
* Jeremiah’s message indicated true prophets were mediating between God and the people.
* The massage of Jeremiah showed that true prophets prophesized without fear, favour, bias or discrimination.
* Jeremiah’s message was a challenge to the listeners to give up their evil and live according to God’s will which indicates that he was a true prophet.

JEREMIAH AND THE FALSE PROPHETS (Jeremiah 28)

Comment on Jeremiah’s interaction or conflict with prophet Hannaniah.

* During the reign of Zedekiah the king of Judah, Jeremiah was publically challenged at the temple by one of the false prophets of Judah Hannaniah because he had prophesized doom to them.
* Before this happened, Jeremiah had been commanded by God to perform a sign of walking around the public with a wooden ox yoke across his shoulder. This signified that Judah would continue to be under Babylonian control.
* Hannaniah confronted Jeremiah because he said that if Judah agreed to submit to the Babylonian influence, the people would be treated with mercy but those who would resist would be put to death.
* According to Hannaniah, he had started alleging that Judah would soon be freed from Babylonian control and the exiles together with their treasures would be returned by 597 BC.
* In opposition to the above view of Hannaniah which resulted into conflict, Jeremiah reacted by saying that the Babylonians were God’s instrument of judgment to the people of Judah. Therefore their power to dominate other nations according to Jeremiah was directly coming from God.
* The massage of Jeremiah was not appealing in the ears of those who expected the eminate return from exile and the restoration of their treasures/ wealth.
* Hannaniah at the temple had said that within 2 years the exiles and the treasures taken from Jerusalem would be returned and this would mark the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign but this was a false assumption that even resulted into misunderstandings with Jeremiah.
* From what Hannaniah had said trying to comfort the exiles, Jeremiah was able to conclude that Hannaniah wasn’t a true prophet because he feared to prophesize disasters and prophesized peace where there was no peace to declare.
* Jeremiah challenged Hannaniah that only when his predictions of peace come true when he would be considered a true prophet of God.
* After Jeremiah’s attack on Hannaniah, then Hannaniah expressed his own words (showed anger) by taking off the ox yoke Jeremiah put on across his shoulders, broke it into pieces and said that it signified the breaking of the power of Nebuchadnezzar.
* By doing this, Hannaniah implied that what God had earlier said through other prophets like Isaiah wasn’t true that Babylon would attack Judah. However all this was misleading the people.
* When Hannaniah destroyed the ox yoke of Jeremiah, God promised that he would replace it with a metallic one. This was to mean that God would make all nations to serve Nebuchadnezzar.
* Jeremiah disapproved Hannaniah as he wasn’t a true prophet sent by God simply telling oracles from his own mind but not in the name of God thus misleading people.
* Jeremiah told Hannaniah that God was going to destroy him and this fulfilled in that very year.

WHAT LESSONS DO PRESENT RELIGIOUS LEADERS PICK FROM HANNANIAH?

* Present religious leaders should have confidence in what they preach especially if they believe that it comes from God as Jeremiah maintained his stand as a true prophet of God.
* Present religious leaders should always seek for God’s guidance and allow him to work in their mind for God’s Hannaniah who wasn’t using God and so he ended up telling lies.
* Present religious leaders should be faithful and preach oracles that would make the congregation have confidence in them not like Hannaniah who preached false oracles just to give people false confidence.
* They should promote unity of congregation by preaching a similar gospel to their people just as other religious leaders.
* Present religious leaders should pray to God until when he chooses them to serve him as messengers instead of imposing themselves in such offices like Hannaniah did in Judah.
* Present religious leaders should live to what they preach and so they need to live an exemplary kind of life to their followers.
* They should also be open minded and frank when it comes to delivering God’s message. In other words they should not withhold any message from God however destructive it may be to the public i.e. to be like Jeremiah who was open to the people of Israel including priests because of their evil dids.
* Present religious leaders should criticize fake and false priests who are just antagonizing the preaching of God’s message. Such self seekers should be ex-communicated from the work of being God’s preachers for examplePastor Kiwedde Muwanguzi.
* Present religious leaders are called upon always to answer back whenever they are attacked publically just like Jeremiah did to Hannaniah. This helps to clear the name of God and the individual’s name.

JEREMIAH AND THE OLD COVENANT (Jeremiah 11)

Analyse Jeremiah’s teaches concerning the old covenant.

Like the prophets, Jeremiah was called to remind other Israelites their obligations about the covenant they had made with God on Mt. Sinai. He therefore teaches the following about the Sinai covenant;

* The prophet said that this covenant was between God and the Israelites ancestors and had to be abiding agreement between God and the Israelites after their liberation from Egypt.
* Prophet Jeremiah said/ says that the old covenant meant the Israelites God’s elect that is to say God’s chosen nation (Jeremiah 11:17)
* Prophet Jeremiah taught that by the terms of the old covenant, the Israelites were given laws that they had to obey then God would continue being merciful and protected them if they remained obedient.
* The prophet teaches that the Sinai covenant was full of promises . For example, God promised Israelites the land of Canaan with flow of milk and honey. By then, the Israelites had already occupied it.
* According to Jeremiah, he said that the old covenant defined what was right and wrong and stipulated what Yahweh expected out of his people. He could give them rewards/ blessings or punishments basing on their behavior.
* When talking to the people of Judah, Jeremiah notified them that the people had broken the Sinai covenant by worshiping Baal and other gods in the towns of Judah and Jerusalem. So he Lord wasn’t happy with them breaking his covenant (Jeremiah 11:12-15)
* The prophet noted that people had ignored the covenant obligations and minded less about God’s warnings. God had sent disasters to warn the people of Judah but had failed to understand. Therefore they deserved punishment.
* The prophet noted that the old covenant had promoted hypocritical religion that is to say, people moved to the temple, offered sacrifices, fasted but their hearts were far away from God.
* Jeremiah noted that full scale punishment was coming upon the people of Judah due to their persistent opposition of the Sinai covenant. Actually they were going to be attacked and taken into exile in Babylon.
* Jeremiah stated to the people of Judah that God was determined to punish them and was no longer willing to answer people’s prayers because he was too much annoyed.
* Prophet Jeremiah also hinted out that the anger of God would not be calmed down by the false gods which people now worship.
* Indeed the prophet stated that Yahweh had instructed him to stop pleading for such stubborn people of Judah.

JEREMIAH’S TEACHING ABOUT THE NEW COVENANT

1. Analyse Jeremiah’s teaching about the new covenant.
2. Discuss the major characteristics/main ideas of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34.
3. How did the new covenant differ from the Sinai covenant?
4. “The time is coming declares the Lord when he will make the new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” Jeremiah 31:31-34. Examine the main characteristics of this covenant.

The young generation in exile who were with Jeremiah were crying out to God. “Our parents ate the grapes but it is the children who have got the bitter taste.”

The young felt they were suffering innocently that it was their grandparents who broke the covenant but now they were suffering on their behalf.

Jeremiah was ordered to assure them of a future restoration. In this restoration a new covenant was to be made between them and their God.

The teachings of prophet Jeremiah concerning the new covenant God promised to make with the Israelites were as follows;

* Jeremiah prophesized that God would make with them a new covenant that would supersede (cover up) the old mosaic covenant which had been broken by the people of Judah and Israel. The prophet said that the new covenant would last longer and God would maintain its purity form.
* Jeremiah added that unlike the old testament which was written on stone tablets, the new covenant would be written on people’s hearts it would stay forever (Jeremiah 31:33)
* In the new covenant, the prophet said, God and his people would be bond together in a new and better relationship than before.
* The prophet prophesized in the new covenant people would be given the true knowledge of God which would act as basis of God’s blessings and joy. Therefore the absence of his knowledge would result into unhappiness and disaster.
* He also said according to the new covenant, there would be no need for a prophet to teach others about the true character and will of God. People would be able to know God’s wants and what he hates.
* The new covenant, according to the prophet would be a universal one involving all people in the world unlike the old covenant which was centred to the Israelites only.
* Jeremiah said to the people of Judah that in the new covenant each individual would be entirely responsible and answerable to his his/her sins and guilt.
* The prophet made it clear to the people of Judah that the idea of corporate sin and guilt wouldn’t feature again. God had seen how many people suffered at the hands of a few sinners as the old covenant stated.
* Jeremiah mentioned in the new covenant, God would be seen as a forgiving and caring God and he would be in position not only to forgive but also forget their past experiences which wasn’t the case with the old covenant.
* In the new covenant which Jeremiah taught the people of Judah, he said it would be a personalized one, would be compelled into acknowledging God to become his child.
* The new covenant that Jeremiah prophesized would be an everlasting covenant. He said it wouldn’t be broken over again like it was for the old covenant.
* The prophet stated that the old covenant was sealed with animal blood but the new covenant would be sealed with human blood.
* The prophet confirmed to the people of Judah that in the covenant it would benefit all from the greatest to the least without respect or rank, sex or status.
* Jeremiah stated that in the new covenant there would be no need for a mediator like Moses was for the Israelites in the Old Testament. In this new covenant, God was to send the holy spirit directly in each individual’s heart to dwell there and guide the individual.
* The new covenant was fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ. He became the human being who sealed the covenant with God and initiated to bring man closer to him.

JESUS THE MESSIAH, COMING AS THE NEW COVENANT

According to prophet Jeremiah’s words, the personality and lifestyle of Jesus Christ clearly fits in the promises of the new covenant as indicated by below;

* Jesus inaugurated the new covenant by coming up as a universal savior for both Jews and non Jews.
* Jesus died on the cross and thus became the new lamb with which the new covenant was sealed i.e. when the blood of Jesus Christ was shade on the cross it brought salvation to many people.
* Jesus inaugurated the Lord’s Supper/ Holy Communion when he broke the bread and served wine to his disciples before his arrest and even commanded his disciples to keep breaking the bread and drinking wine in remembrance of his death and resurrection.
* Jesus’ dying on the cross is connected to the new covenant because it brought total forgiveness and salvation for all i.e. sinners became reconciled with God through the death of Jesus Christ.
* Under the new covenant i.e. he coming of Jesus Christ, the law of love was given much attention as Jesus commanded us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.
* Jesus’ coming on earth was indeed the new covenant God made with mankind because it was non segregative covering all categories of people, man and women, blacks and white, the rich and the poor and many others
* The new covenant brought by Jesus emphasized the words of Jeremiah because the law of love is written on each individual’s heart as prophesized, the Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian’s heart.
* Already as prophesized by Jeremiah that the new covenant would stress monotheism Jesus Christ emphasized believing in one God his father.
* Just as Jeremiah prophesized individual relationship with God under the new covenant. This is really true in Christianity where each believer suffers or enjoys life with God because of his personal behaviours.

JEREMIAH’S MESSAGE TO EXILES IN BABYLON

There were false hopes that exile would last for a very short time and the exile people would be restored to their former glory. There were also false prophets including Hannaniah who gave false hopes to the exilees that they would return in a short time.

Due to this false background, Jeremiah gave out the following advice;

* The prophet advised the people of Judah not to listen to any one who advises them not to listen to the king of Babylon. In other words the prophet advised the people to be submissive o the Babylonian king or else their suffering would be more.
* Jeremiah told them that their suffering was the will of God and so he said that they should accept it.
* He said to them that God is the one who had empowered the king of Babylon and enabled him to put the Israelites into captivity not that God had forgotten them because of their sins.
* The prophet reminded the Israelites in Babylon to be aware of the false prophets and the words they make to mislead people after dreaming or consulting spirits.
* He said to them that if they chose to disobey the Babylonian king, they would cause themselves destruction and more disaster.
* Jeremiah advised the exiles to settle down and do some work in the land of exile as required.
* Jeremiah advised the people in exile to be submissive to the Babylonian king such that they did not lose their remaining treasures of wealth.
* He said that the exiled people should not be misled to think that the traders treasures.
* He brought to them the knowledge that Hannaniah was giving false hopes to the children of Israel when he told them that at the end of two years and all the treasures they had would be brought back to Judah and Israel.
* He demonstrated this by wearing wooden ox yoke and then replacing it with a metallic one and after Hannaniah had destroyed the wooden one.

RELEVANCE OF JEREMIAH TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

* Jeremiah’s prophecy teaches Christians that suffering is part and partial of life and our role is to endure.
* Sometimes we suffer due to our own making therefore we should use the period of our suffering to collect ourselves and repent fully.
* The teaching of Jeremiah reminds Christians to stop blaming our suffering to our ancestors as the people of Judah claimed.
* Christians are called upon to be prayerful during moments of suffering. God is ready to excuse people like Jeremiah who called him for forgiveness.
* Christians ought to understand that sin is punishable and no body can fool God and that a person reaps exactly what he sowed.
* They ought to understand that God is a loving father who punishes to educate. He punished the people of Judah with an aim of reminding them about their covenant obligations.
* They should understand that they now live in the time of the new covenant and therefore they should take part in the enjoyment of the Eucharist as a clear testimony that we are part and partial of the new Israel.
* Christians should have hope in their suffering and also pray to God to have wisdom to identify false prophets in their communities like Hannaniah was among the people.
* Jeremiah warns us that there exists many false prophets in our societies . For example, in Uganda we have had priest KibwetereKatalibaho, NabbiBushara, Muwanguzi and many others so, as Christians we should not fear to come up and condemn their false preachings.
* God is never impressed by religious hypocrisy so Jeremiah reminds us that true religion is not what people do or say.
* Christian leaders are reminded by Jeremiah to make reforms in various sectors especially praise and worship the Lord as he preached in the temple sermon.

THE CALL OF ISAIAH (6:1-13)

Discuss the call of Isaiah to his prophetic mission

Comment on Isaiah’s call to be a prophet

* Isaiah received the call of his prophetic mission while in the temple ministering.
* He saw a vision of God sitting on his throne high and exalted and his robe filled the whole temple.
* He saw flaming creatures which were standing with six wings and were singing praises to God saying Holy Holy.
* He realized his hopelessness and his sinfulness plus the sinfulness of the people of Israel.
* One of the heavenly creatures came to Isaiah carrying a burning coal and touched Isaiah’s lips and his sins were forgiven. The above action showed purification and forgiveness of Isaiah’s sins.
* He had a voice calling “whom shall I send” who will be our messenger”
* Then Isaiah responded “I will go send me”
* Isaiah was then commissioned to go and speak for God to the sinful people of Israel.
* He was also told that his task was going to be difficult because people had gone far in their sins.
* Isaiah asked God how long he was going to reach to the people who could not hear.
* He was told to go on preaching until judgment fall on the land.
* Isaiah was told that after punishment there would be a remnant from whom a new beginning would be made.

ISAIAH’S RESPONSE TO HIS CALL

Comment on Isaiah’s response to his call.

Analyse Isaiah’s response to the call

* He responded by realizing his own sinful nature and the sinful nature of the Israelites.
* Isaiah realized that God’s blessings were followed by cleansing.
* He confessed his sins which were followed by cleansing with a burning coal.
* He accepted God’s mission as a messenger of God when he said “I will go send me”.
* He went on and condemned the people of Judah and their sins.
* He showed signs of despair and hesitation when he said for how long it will be like this.
* However he went on and called the people for repentance. He took on the Lord’s command by condemning the people and the city of Jerusalem for their sinning.
* He went on and performed prophetic signs to show his message that it came from God.
* He went with his son to King Ahaz to give the message from God he was instructed.
* He responded to God’s call by preaching to the people of Judah how Judah was to be destroyed by the Lord for their continued sinning.
* His response also contains a message of hope which he preached to repentant remnants.

ANALYSE THE IMPORTANCE OF ISAIAH’S VISION TO ISRAEL AS OUTLINED IN ISAIAH 6.

* The vision revealed that Israel’s God is absolutely God.
* It showed that those who worship God should do it with holiness.
* It reminds the Israelites that their God is omnipotent as indicated in the power he gave to Isaiah.
* He revealed to them that God is glorious over the nation of Israel basing on the flaming creatures that surrounded the Lord.
* The vision was a basis of Isaiah’s call to be a prophet.
* The vision manifested God’s justice and love towards sinful Israel.
* It opened the eyes of the prophet to remind the Israelites about the independency judgment that was to fall on them if they continued sinning.
* It showed the Israelites that God could call anyone irrespective of his/her sinful background.
* It enabled Isaiah to repent his sins and at the same time called upon the Israelites to repent.
* Isaiah’s confession meant salvation could come also to the Israelites.
* Teaching Isaiah’s lips with a burning coal implied purity which Israelites were called upon to be.
* The vision implied a call for the Israelites to seek for forgiveness from the call through repentance.
* The vision demonstrated that Israelites had been made a true prophet to the Israelites so they had to believe his words.
* The vision enabled the Israelites to know very well their evils through the prophet chosen.

LESSONS FROM ISAIAH’S CALL

* He understood his nature that he was a sinner together with the people of Israel and so he needed to be forgiven by God.
* He learnt the absolute goodness, holiness and power of God based on the flaming creatures with 6 wings each singing praises to God.
* He learnt that God is almighty the supreme judge and full of love to mankind.
* Isaiah’s eyes were opened up towards the evil and lack of faith people had when he cleansed the temple.
* He also became aware that he was not different from other people around him.
* He came to know certain truth about God which he did not know before he received the vision.
* From his call Isaiah indicated him that God can call anyone irrespective of his/her own weakness.
* Isaiah’s call enabled him to repent his sins followed by the cleansing of his mouth.
* He came to know that holiness can be God and derived from God who purifies and makes perfect prophets like Isaiah for greater task.
* Te vision exposed to Isaiah the difficulties prophets like him encounter to speak to people who are deaf and blind to God’s message.
* From the will, Isaiah got a strong insight and courage exposed people’s evil without fear or favour.
* He learnt that everyone who has faith in Yahweh has to live perfect like.
* He also came to learn that Yahweh is the Lord of all nations, Judah Israelites and others.
* He learnt that Yahweh is God of history and that he is the one who guided the past history of the Israelites.
* He also learnt that though many Israelites would be destroyed because of their sinful nature there would be some few remnants that would have failed the commands of the Lord.
* He learnt his ministry would be full of suffering as the prophet of hope.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF JUDAH/ EVILS OF JUDAH

Why did Isaiah pronounce judgment in the early chapters of his book and what did he say will happen?

Discuss the threats of judgment found in the early capture of Isaiah.

The people of Israel were guilty of rebelling against God and even when prophets went ahead to warn them their chaos continued in Jerusalem. This was characterized by the following;

* The money lenders were oppressors of the poor and the creditors were cheaters.
* Leaders were misleading the people.
* The rich people amassed wealthy by taking advantage of the poor.

The life of the women was characterized by;

* They walked with third noses in the air and always fritting.
* They took dainty little steps and the bracelets on the uncles jingled.
* They used to put on magic charms.
* They used expensive perfumes which did not please God at all.

The men committed evils in the following ways;

* Some were waking up early to spend the whole day drinking.
* Feasts were order of the day on their side.
* They were good at sourcing wealth at all costs.
* They constantly tested the Lord to see his true nature i.e. what they could do to them in case they wrong.
* They were guilty of calling right wrong and wrong right.
* They were proud of their so called wisdom.
* They were experts in mixing wine for drinking.
* They shed innocent blood.
* They accepted bribes and they were corrupt.

In general all people had the following evils;

* They loved associating with people like the thieves instead of God’s people.
* They lacked concern for the weak and orphans.
* There was no justice in courts of law.
* They worshiped idols and other natural objects like trees.
* Some people openly insulted God and his name.
* They observed pagan religious days other than the Lord’s special days.

Prophet Isaiah’s message towards the people’s evils

* He said that all the rebellious people were to be struck by disaster and destruction.
* He said God would be the only one to judge the sinful ones.
* He said drought and famine could befall and thirsty and hunger would come to the people.
* He said when the Lord’s anger turns on them, the pride women of Jerusalem would love all things that looked so dear to them including veils, bracelets, magic charms and many others
* He said the ones to whom they spent on their attention like magicians, fortune tellers, sports men, military men, civil leaders and seers would all be removed from society.
* The prophet also said it would be the young men with no administrative experience to take on leadership in Judah.
* He said the Lord was going to reject all the established customs and ways of life in Judah.
* He stated that there would be handing anyone willing to take on leadership in Judah because of the great fears.
* He pronounced that the people of Judah would be stripped naked, struck, wear ropes and put on rags to look ashamed.
* Isaiah said the leaders amongst them would even fail to get what to eat and would starve until they die.
* The prophet also lamented that there would be very few men and women to survive when Jerusalem would be attacked.
* He said the nations from far away would attack Jerusalem and plunder and destroy.
* He said their land would not be able to produce anything.
* He said from the attack of other nations the greatness of Jerusalem city would cease.
* Isaiah just like Amos pronounced serious doom on various categories of people for their sinfulness like the drunkards.

ISAIAH’S MESSAGE OF HOPE

* Despite Isaiah’s pronouncement of disaster to the sinful people of Judah he had some message.
* He said that time will come when peace would be established between nations and weapons would be reduced to garden equipments.
* He said that nations were to come to the temple of Jerusalem to get God’s word and wisdom so Jerusalem becoming the religious centre again.
* He said that there would be faithful few who would be used to rebuild a new kingdom of God.
* He said time was to come when everything in Jerusalem would be restored like vegetation would look large and beautiful again.
* He said the people of Judah were to be purified when time comes to remove the guiltiness.
* He added that God’s power would prevail and be there to protect Jerusalem.
* THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (SONG OF THE VINEYARD)

1. Analyse the meaning of the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah’s prophesy.
2. Comment on the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah and prophesy and show how it is developed by other canonical prophets.

Isaiah sang this song to call upon the attention of his dear lover who were feasting alot forgetting about the Lord their God.

* The people of Israel and Judah were compared to a vineyard which has been given utmost care, well sheltered, watered, manured but despite of his care and protection the vineyard produced sour grapes.
* The vineyard dresser expresses his anger and his readiness to destroy the vineyard indicating the lord was to punish the Israelites for their misbehaviors.
* it was adopted to indicate the relationship between people of Israel and Judah as God’s chosen people who had to remain united.
* It was to reflect and witness the nature of the relationship between Israel and Judah since time memorial.
* Isaiah posed as a singer in this case to expose the disappoint frustration of Yahweh the gardener and Israel and Judah his vineyard.
* In this parable the prophet implied the history of Israel and Judah which implied Yahweh’s love, mercy and utmost care. In times of crisis as a gardener looks at his vineyard like the Lord looks at the Israelites to have good harvest.
* The sour fruits in Isaiah’s prophesy were to warn both Israel and Judah that instead of God rewards they rewarded the gardener (Yahweh) with sour rewards.
* It was to appeal the leaders to stop unnecessary alliance with pagan nations but put all trust in Yahweh who delivered them from Egyptian bondage.
* The parable was a humble request for Israel and Judah to stop evil and do good.
* The good fruits would reflect obedience faithfulness a reflection of monotheism.
* Jeremiah taught that God had chosen Israel as a noble vine (mustard seeds) 2:12.
* He also indicated that when time comes the vineyard will be pruned (Jeremiah 6:7)
* Ezekiel 5:1-8 also compares Israel produced evils like apostasy like the sour grapes.
* Ezekiel 17:10 still noted that chosen people had become unfaithful and therefore had to be destroyed

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARABLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Examine the significance of this parable in the New Testament.

* It has a basis ground in Jesus’ teaching of the people’s sins like apostasy, disobedience and the consequences of this.
* In the New Testament these rebellious people are interpreted as those who tortured and frustrated the message of God.
* In the New Testament the vineyard look similar to those who killed Jesus Christ.
* In John 15:1-9 Jesus said that he was the true vine and whoever follows him would enter the kingdom of his father.

ANALYSE THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE IN ISAIAH’S PROPHESY

* The gardener is God.
* The vineyard was the people of Israel and Judah.
* The vine planted were the Israelites who settled in Canaan after being liberated from Egyptian slavery.
* The noble vines represented the chosen nation Israel that God promised.
* The Dear by the stoves meant desert and displacement of natives of Canaan.
* The gardener’s expectations symbolized God’s expectations from the Israelites.
* The gardeners care for the vineyard represented God’s care for the Israelites.
* The gardeners care for disappointment represents God’s disappointment with the misbehavior of the Israelites when they settled in the Promised Land in Canaan.
* The gardener was going to destroy the fence that protected the garden which meant God’s protection was going to be removed from the God’s people of Israel.
* The gardener would allow wild animals trample down the vineyard which meant God was to allow Jewish enemies invade their country and oppress the people.
* Weeds and wild plants would grow in the vine yard which meant the hostile Canaanites and Philistines would take over the hand and multiply in number.

DISCUSS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VINEYARD AS USED IN THE GOSPEL’S (John 15:8 and Mark 12:19)

* It was said by Jesus with an intention of exposing the hypocrisy of religious leaders and the Pharisees.
* They were pretending to be loyal to God as the commitment and their faith were far away from God.
* It presents vineyard as the sinful people who could not listen to their God.
* The servant presents in Mark’s gospel the people who were not paying attention to the word of God.
* The owner of the vineyard referred to as God the Lord of Israel.
* The vineyard shows the exile nature of the tenants/ men in the world who have no respect for God’s message.
* The killing of the only son of the gardener by the tenants pointed to Jesus’ death.
* In the parable the gardener tried to wait with hope that she would get his share which is referred to as God’s love for his people basically the Israelites.
* In John 16:16, Jesus shows himself as the true vine and God his father as the true gardener, then Jesus’ disciples were the true branches of the vine.
* The true branches would not stand alone with the truck so the disciples and the Christians are the helpers without God.

PROPHET EZEKIEL 1:FF

Just as his name Ezekiel he is the prophet of God’s omnipotence. He was 30 years old and a priest of God in exile with other Jews when God called him to be a priest.

He was at Chebar River when heaven opened and he saw a vision of God’s glory that dated his prophetic ministry after 593BC.

He was a married man but his wife died in exile. He was a prophet of great God’s hope to the exiles and a prophet of God’s judgment to Judah.

EZEKIEL’S FIRST VISION

* This was a vision that comprised on his call to be a prophet. He received it on the third day of the fourth month and fourth year of exile when heaven opened to him.
* He saw a great wind storm coming from the north surrounded by a huge dark cloud with lightening and flashiness and the skies around blowing.
* At the centre of the storm there looked like a throne and below this throne were creatures 9four) each creature having four faces.
* The face of a human, lion, a bull and an eagle in addition, to four human hands on each creature had a wing under each hand.
* The wings of one creature touched those of the other and those creatures moved forward in every direction because each direction had a face, two wings of the creature were spread upwards to touch the wings of the other and whenever they would stop moving they would cover their wings to their bodies.
* Whenever the spirit of God would go, the four living creatures would follow without turning because they would face all directions. In both their feet was thing rising like a torch.
* There were wheels on the ground besides each creature and these wheels were glittering as they moved in al directions with the creatures as they were full of eyes.
* Just above the heads of the living creatures was a platform of dazzling crystal at most sitting on the raised wings of the creatures.
* The sound of the wings when these creatures moved was like a roar of many waters/ like the sound of multitude of horses running.
* Up on the platform was a throne and on it there was a figure of a man representing the sovereign king.
* This vision was the likeness of Yahweh’s glory and to him this crossed Ezekiel’s mind he fell face down until when he heard the voice of God speaking while the strong hand of God and his spirit raised Ezekiel to his feet.
* God’s voice referred to Ezekiel as mortal man which Ezekiel heard for the first time coming to him from his greatest and first vision of God’s glory through which he was ordained a prophet.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EZEKIEL’S CALL/ FIRST VISION

Ezekiel’s first vision is famously known as the vision of the majesty of God. The vision of the glory of God and the vision of the chariot throne. This is a vision through which Ezekiel son of Buzi was called to be a prophet of God. The vision had the following significances;

* The dark cloud with flashing lightening surrounded by brilliant light signifies the greatness of God as cannot be compared. Since God’s glory and majesty are above human imagination.
* God’s omnipotence is experienced through the four living creatures which represent Cherubim and seraphim. At the same time the four major areas of created life by their faces man, lion, bull, eagle.
* The chariot throne was moving in any direction which signified God’s omnipresence and unlimitedness.
* The wheels of the chariot throne were full of eyes which signify God’s omniscience and how he was seeing the sins of Israel.
* The throne represented the sovereignty Lord because Ezekiel first interpreted in the image of Zedekiah, the king who had succeeded Joachim but later understood it as God’s presence.
* The north from which the strange great wing came was a very first direction which the Israelites entered Babylon and also shows that God was still on their side.
* Again the north was the very direction where the Babylonian gods always came from. This signifies of Babylonians since they couldn’t stop him going through their way.
* The four living creatures and the wheels were obediently moving in the direction of God’s spirit thereby challenging the Israelites to be obedient to God as for his expectations.
* The one on the throne who was God looked like a human being from west upwards signifying that man was created in God’s image.
* The lower part of the one on the throne was blowing and the fire signifies the spirit, punishment and theophany.
* The opening of the heavens signified God’s interaction in the lives of his people especially when they cry out for him.
* The wings of the heavenly creature as they touched those of others in a square enclose signifies God’s protection over his people and those who remained in Judah.
* Generally the whole vision signifies God’s love, holiness and graciousness and he remembered the obstinate stubborn and hard hearts of Israelites against themselves.

THE PROPHETIC SIGNS OF EZEKIEL AGAINST ISRAEL

* During his mission Ezekiel prophetically and barbarically should be right to refer to him as a prophet of sings due to the various prophetic signs which included those he acted upon the destruction of Israel.
* After the destruction of Samaria in 721 BC following Amos’ words, Jerusalem continued to survive but only for a while because in 587 BC he was also demolished and this demolition wasn’t accident.
* Ezekiel had acted various signs in prophesy account to what was going to happen in Jerusalem and these signs were fulfilled six years later.
* He was asked to draw a map of Jerusalem city and on it marked signs of great siege.
* He drew this map on day tablets which show the easy destruction of Jerusalem like breaking anything made of clay.
* Ezekiel himself represents God who was besieging Jerusalem through the Babylonians because of the sins of Judah.
* God asked Ezekiel to lie on his left hand side for 390 days and on the right side for forty days (40) to represent 390 years and 40 years of Israel and Judah in exile respectively.
* Ezekiel was to look at the representation of Jerusalem he had made and shake his fist as it signifies an approaching war while prophesying against the city.
* He was asked to measure very small quantities of grain to be used for bread and very little water to be taken at his meals which symbolically represented the guilt of Israel and Judah that famine was to siege in Jerusalem.
* He was told to do a horrible thing in a priest who always avoided any kind of impurity. God told him to make firewood out of dry human excrement and cook his meal.
* This meant that Israelites would be forced to do such things when in exile in order to survive.
* This is the only situation in Ezekiel’s book when he protested God’s requirements and God accepted him by cooking using cow dung.
* Ezekiel then cut off his hair by a sword and went ahead to destroy his hair in three different ways. One ratio was burnt with in the city, another was pursued with the sword striking it and the third was thrown and scattered in air. Very few strands of hair were to be reserved by the prophet in the folds of his garment.
* The sword was going to be very instruments in causing death of the people of Judah during the siege.
* Shaving of the hair signified mourning as the practice was in Israel which meant that Israelites were in trouble.
* The ratio of hair burnt signified famine and plague in Jerusalem when the siege comes.
* Some Israelites were to be pursued as the enemy world pursued them when trying to escape.
* Others were to run desperately and scatter all over talking for survival.
* The few strands reserved in folds of the prophet’s garments signified the few remnants that God was to protect.
* In addition to the signs against the destruction of Jerusalem, prophet Ezekiel acted so many other signs thus he was a prophet of signs.
* He disabled himself from speaking by holding his tongue to the roof of his mouth for 7 days. This signified how Israelites were unable to speak or complain during the days of exile.
* He locked himself up in a house for seven days to signify how Israelites would be confined and restricted in movement during their exile.
* Ezekiel steals from his own house. He left his house closed but returned like a thief, he dug a hole to enter into the house and picked items and escaped through the hole to show the Israelites that during the time of trouble they would hurriedly pick away their belongings and run like thieves in their own houses.
* Ezekiel does not mourn for the death of his wife he just continued with his daily life signifying that time would come when people wouldn’t mourn for their beloved ones because they too would be dying.
* He eats food hurriedly. He brought out food before the people and when it was still hot he began eating in a hurry which meant that people were about to stop enjoying their meals because of trouble.
* Ezekiel and the boiling pot. He put meat in the pot and cooked it until there was no physical meat signifying how God was to purify Israelites until when all sinners would no longer be living.
* The dancing sword. He threw his sword on the ground and as he would clap the sword would go on striking again and again which signified how the sword was to have an upper hand over the lives of the people of Judah.
* Ezekiel groans before the people like a person in agony of having been chucked by a lover just to represent the pain God was experiencing against the Israelites with other gods.
* Ezekiel and the trucks. This was a sign of good hope when he held and joined two sticks into one hand having written Israel on one stick and Judah on another to signify that on return from exile Israel and Judah would be together as one nation in unity.

COMPARING THE CALL OF EZEKIEL AND THAT OF MOSES

Similarities

* Both were called for difficult missions like Moses facing Pharaoh and the disgruntled Hebrews just as Ezekiel was to face the frustrated Israelites in exile (Babylon).
* Both were sent to people suffering in foreign hands like the Israelites under Pharaoh in Egypt for Moses and for Ezekiel Israelites under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
* Both were called to bring back hope o Israelites on returning to their home Canaan for Moses to bring Israelites from Egypt to Canaan and for Ezekiel from Babylon back home.
* None of them had been a prophet before his mission therefore each got his first call as his first experience with God.
* Both were empowered by God during their calls as Moses with miracle and Ezekiel was carried by God’s spirit on top of the scroll he was told to eat.
* Both expressed fear for God because Moses covered his face and Ezekiel fell face down words.
* Both were called through a vision of the burning bush for Moses and a Chariot throne for Ezekiel.
* Both were called as divine children of Abraham and again sent as the descendant of Abraham.
* To both the call was God’s initiative because no one had made an effort with God to be called.
* Both had some knowledge of priesthood since Moses had been staying with priest Jethro and Ezekiel was already serving as a priest.
* Both were already old men and married although Moses was older than Ezekiel at around 75 years against 30 – 34 years.
* They all responded positively to God’s call although Moses first hesitated but he later accepted.

Differences;

* Different geographical areas at the time of their call Moses in Midland while Ezekiel in Babylon.
* They were called at different period of time Moses was called as the very first prophet while Ezekiel’s call came as so many years after that of Moses.
* Moses hesitated God’s name for he was ignorant of the God of Abraham while Ezekiel was very much aware of God of Abraham thus not as king for God’s name.
* Moses was addressed by his name while Ezekiel was addressed as mortal man/ son of man.
* Moses was asked to remove his sandals while Ezekiel was only asked to eat the scroll.
* Moses was called through the vision of the burning bush while Ezekiel was called through the vision of God’s glory, majesty.
* Moses was a criminal of murder while Ezekiel was a free man and actually priest of God.
* Moses was sent to people without any knowledge of their God while Ezekiel was sent to people who knew God well.
* Moses was sent to Israel as whole while Ezekiel was sent to only Judah a small part of Israel.
* Moses was given an assistant as to help him to talk to Pharaoh i.e. Aaron while Ezekiel was not given any person to help him on his mission.
* Ezekiel saw God’s face i.e. a human being that sat in the chair of the throne while Moses just heard God’s voice from the burning bush.

THE VISION OF THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

* Ezekiel was at one moment carried by a powerful spirit of the lord into the valley of dry bones.
* When he reached there, God asked Ezekiel to prophesy to those bones which were supposed to listen to God in word so that they would have life again.
* As Ezekiel prophesized, the bones began receiving muscles, body and skin but remained lifeless.
* Then God asked Ezekiel to command the wind to come from all directions to fill those bones with a breathe of life.
* As Ezekiel prophesized to the winds they obeyed and filled the bodies with a breathe of life.
* The people who came out the dry bones were really many enough to make an army.
* Then God told Ezekiel that the people of Israel were as hopeless as the dry bones in their exile which was to them as good as a graveyard.
* God told Ezekiel that he was going to give the exiles a new life and restore them back to their homeland.
* This vision was a massage of hope that Ezekiel had to pass on the people of Judah.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISION

* It was a vision of hope that the people of Judah were approaching God’s forgiveness to be restored back into their homeland.
* It was showing that the people in exile would come back to their motherland in a normal life full of joy just by God’s mercy.
* The vision showed hope to the people in exile that God still loved them, cared about them and was ready to help them go back to their God.
* The vision was showing the Israelites that it was only their God who was the source of life who gives to those he loved.
* It showed God’s power over everything whether dead or alive and in all situations whether home or in exile.
* It showed the Jews that God keeps his promises as he had promised to rescue them and take them back to their motherland.
* It also showed that the restoration of Israel was to be a result of God’s help and power if at all the Israelites would listen like the dry bones and obey his word.
* This vision confirmed the omniscience of God with knowledge and intelligence to do unique things like giving life to once dead people.
* It showed that God was always concerned about his people and would never leave them to be totally destroyed in exile as he showed concern to the dry bones.
* The vision of dry bones was a call to people in exile and those still in Judah to repent and turn to God.
* Making the dry bones come back to life was God’s initiative thus saving Israelites from exile would again be God’s workmanship.
* This vision made the Israelites to understand that their very God who created man from soil in Genesis was the one who had come to rescue them from their suffering.
* The vision confirmed God as omnipotent that before him nothing is impossible since mere dry bones could become alive again.
* The vision signified the danger of sin which had made Israelites to look as hopeless as the dry bones.

EZEKIEL’S TEACHING ON INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIN

* When appointed to be God’s watchman, Ezekiel was given a duty to let Israelites withdraw from their own view of co-operate sinning and punishment because they used to think that one individual’s sin was punishable on the whole community thereby blaming their exile predicaments on their people than themselves.
* They were looking at God for being unfair to them punishing the innocent community for the sins they didn’t commit themselves.
* They had also began attacking each other by accusing those people thought to be criminals.
* They also looked back in Judah and blamed the community they had left thee of being sinful and responsible for the suffering of the innocent people now in exile.
* They looked at the sinful kings of Judah and concluded that God was being unfair because he was punishing them for the sins of their kings like Manasseh.
* Still they had a view that many of them were innocent but their fathers back in Judah alive and dead were the ones who had sinned against God.
* They included their patriarchs among the sinners who were responsible for their suffering thinking that the sins of Isaac, Abraham and Jacob had been transferred to the innocent Israelites.
* Further more they blamed God as an unfair judge who punishes the whole community for the sins of the person by looking at David’s illegal census when God punished the whole Israel.
* They also considered King Solomon’s sinfulness and disobedience which divided Israel so that Jews in Israel concluded as they were only victims of circumstances before innocent.
* They even looked at the history of Abraham pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah where God allowed him to find out the innocent ones for the whole city to be forgiven on their behalf though he was ready to punish innocent ones along of sinners.
* With the above among many other complaints they developed a popular saying that “our fathers ate the sour grapes and now the children have the bitter taste”.
* This was a famous proverb they repeatedly pronounced among themselves. They used to challenge the justice of God and hence provoked God to use his fairness by sending Ezekiel to teach them that everyone was responsible for his/her own sins.

EZEKIEL’S RESPONSE

* He said that, that popular proverb would never be said again because everyone was to be punished alone for his own sins not those of the ancestors.
* He said that there was nothing like co-operate sin because everyone was responsible for his wrath.
* He told them that the soul of the father and that of the son both belonged to God and only sinning soul was to be punished.
* He continued t tell them that the sins of the father couldn’t be punished on the son neither could the sins of the son be punished on his father but on the very sinner.
* Ezekiel said that the wicked person who would be and repent would be forgiven and al his sins would be forgotten once and for all.
* He warned the righteous ones to continue obeying and pleasing God because their righteousness would never be remembered incase of becoming sinners even if by a single sin.
* He continued to express God’s love for the people saying that God is never happy to see a sinner dying but to see them repenting and live.
* He continued to show them that everyone was to be judged as an individual account to what he does because God knows each and everyone in the society.
* He challenged the Israelites that they were not blameless but they were full of social injustice, apostasy and many other sins which had led them into punishment.
* He reminded them that God had given them a watchman responsible for warning them about more dangers to come if they would not listen and change.
* He called for genuine repentance in order to survive the punishment of their sins.
* He classified that the restoration of Israel at large would depend on everyone becoming repentance for all people.
* Ezekiel emphasized that only the sinners would continue suffering while the repentant and righteousness were to be forgiven and restored to their homelands.

EZEKIEL’S TEACHING ON SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL

* Ezekiel had a glimpse of the restored Israel in the metaphor of the shepherd.
* His prophesy looked at the years before the fall of Jerusalem about the Jews who had descended from David looking at kings from David to Joachim before exile.
* Ezekiel denounces the leaders who only fought for their only position, power and neglected their duties by following their kingdom to be enjoyed by others.
* On the other hand the common people of Israel were taken to be the sheep account to the metaphorical language of the shepherds and the sheep.
* God was ready to appoint and approve new shepherds or God himself to become the shepherd and an enemy to those unfaithful priests and kings.
* He told them that the shoulder of the father and of the son belonged to God and only the sinning should was to be punished.
* God declaring himself as a good shepherd was an assurance of his concern and care as a good shepherd who leads the sheep to the best pastures.

In general Ezekiel taught the following about the shepherds of Israel;

* He addressed the past leader of Israel referring to them as the bad shepherds in other words meaning that they were bad rulers.
* The leaders of Israel had failed to perform their duties which God had given them during the time when they demand for earthly leaders.
* According to Ezekiel, God was denouncing the bad shepherds because they were unworthy and couldn’t help his flock but those were leaders of Israel who were useless to God’s people.
* The Israel leaders had failed to defend the nation against foreign attacks which Ezekiel presents as the shepherds leading the sheep in trouble of wild animals thus Judah and Israel falling on the hands of Assyria and Babylon.
* The leaders of Israel were guilty of making treaties with the pagan nations, seeking for health from their enemies.
* The bad shepherds had failed to nurse the sick animal or heal those with diseases. They were only happy while the sheep were suffering the diseases.
* They were not taking any trouble to search and find those animals which would get lost.
* They never bothered about such animals but only cared for themselves hence they left the enemy to scatter God’s people thus taking Israel and Judah into exile which Ezekiel presents as leaving the sheep into the wild animals.
* These ineffective shepherds even in the wilderness couldn’t take trouble to mobilize to sheep but only left them to scatter the more which means that even in exile they never mobilized the people together.
* They were selfish in nature …………..the animals by looking for and denying the sheep a chance to express their suffering.
* They had no heart of taking the sheep to the best pastures apart from taking the best of the sheep for their own consumption.
* They used to run away in situations of trouble when beasts and other wild animals attack the flock.
* The bad shepherds were discriminative giving less care to some sheep especially the helpless, poor and more care to few sheep.
* Bad shepherds were being blamed for shedding innocent blood and mistreating the flock.
* The mistreatment of the flock could be humanly understood in form of forced labour, over taxation and many others.
* The leaders of Israel were further blamed for misusing God’s house and profaning God’s sacrifice.
* They are accused for practicing syncretism, adultery, believing in objects to be source of blessing instead of God.
* God was to judge the bad shepherd for their being irresponsible and therefore replace them with a better shepherd where God himself would be the shepherd of his sheep so that they would want no more.

THE EXPECTATIONS OF A GOOD SHEPHERD

* A good shepherd would take a good full charge of him flock collecting his sheep from wherever they would be scattered and bringing them back home.
* A good shepherd would look after his sheep because they were his and not anybody else so God would be a good shepherd.
* God said that he would be a good shepherd who would know his sheep and each sheep individually.
* God confirmed that as a good shepherd he would identify the sheep that are sick, hurt and wounded and he would give them care while bandaging their wounds.
* A good shepherd would identify the sheep that are dangerous and keep them out of the flock so that there would be peace and tranquility.
* A good shepherd would not run away when would beasts attack the flock but he would fight selflessly to save his flock.
* He could go ahead and deal with or even destroy those dangerous and harmful animals from the innocent ones.
* According to Ezekiel, a good shepherd would proved for all sheep the act of discriminating them, he would write all of them is one flock under one shepherd i.e. the united Israel and Judah.

EZEKIEL’S MESSAGE TO THE FLOCK ITSELF

God turned to the flock itself and expressed the following through Ezekiel;

* He blamed the unfaithfulness of the people to God by meandering away for fortunes in wrong places which is the sheep meandering for better pastures.
* People were sinning against God and showing no love for each other so God wasn’t going to spare them because they were stubborn.
* The strong sheep always harassed and mistreated the weak ones were the rich oppressing the poor, widows and orphans.
* The strong sheep didn’t want the weaker ones to drink good water or have better pastures cause after drinking they would middy the remaining water and trample over the grass by water ones would feed.
* The stronger ones (rich) couldn’t allow the weather ones to express themselves to the extent of silencing the freedom fighters (prophets).
* The stronger sheep could at times kill the weaker ones on top of discriminating them in everything at all levels.
* As a good shepherd, God was to separate the strong from the weak doing it as a good judge who separates goats from sheep.
* Here the goats were to represent the bad people and sheep to represent the good ones.
* God was to choose a new leader as good as David to be the shepherd of his flock. He would be full of justice, fair and caring.
* God himself was to be the shepherd collecting the sheep together and taking them back to the best pastures.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL

* As a good shepherd Jesus knows his sheep by name and they respond when he calls them while the bad shepherd of Israel never took time to know their sheep by name.
* Jesus enters the sheep fold by the gate and he is welcomed to the sheep while the bad shepherds of Israel were thieves who could enter from anywhere.
* Jesus follows his sheep as they enter and leave the fold while the bad shepherds would just neglect the sheep and wait for benefits like wool or slaughtering the finest.
* Jesus provides the ways through which the sheep enter and leave the fold while the bad shepherds would just mislead the sheep without providing a proper way.
* Jesus readily gives up his life because of the sheep while the bad shepherds of Israel would only run away incase of trouble of wild animals attacking the flock.
* Jesus the good shepherd readily searches for the wondering sheep and bring them altogether as one flock under one shepherd while the bad shepherds only looked at the available sheep.
* Jesus even follows a single sheep that gets lost to bring it back to the fold while the bad shepherds had no concern about the lost sheep.
* Jesus is always already to treat the sick and bondage the wounded sheep and also strengthen the weak while the bad shepherd had no care for the sick apart from them the strong ones mistreat the weak ones.
* Jesus the good shepherd builds confidence in his flock to love and follow him than following the stronger well as the bad shepherds would scare away the sheep to look for care from elsewhere.

EZEKIEL’S MESSAGE OF HOPE

God gave the message of hope to Israelites who were in exile and these who were remaining in Judah. Although the situation was threatening and making many people hopeless of ever returning home this massage in chapter 36, 37 goes as below;

* Ezekiel says that the nations which were humiliating Judah and Israel while in exile will be humiliated and insulted too.
* He told them that God was going to send a foreign nation to defeat and humiliate the exiling nations in the very way they had humiliated Israelites.
* Ezekiel assured them that the land, mountain and hills of Judah would be filled with healthy vegetation, trees bearing multitudes of fruits and green leaves everywhere.
* According to God, Israel and Judah were to return home from exile as one nation the one king as good as God’s servant David.
* God vowed to be on the side of his people as he had done for their ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt.
* The people of Israel were to have good fertile soils like those of Canaan at the time of their first settlement in order to have a lot of food making famine to legend.
* Their population would rise because many people would produce many kids with no diseases, calamities and famine to affect anyone.
* Jerusalem city, the magnificent temple and palaces would be rebuilt so that the kingdom would regain its previous glory.
* People would attain a lot of wealth; their cattle would rise in number so that Edomites and Babylonians would begin to feel jealousy of Israel’s property but nothing to do about it.
* There would be no nation to insult or make fun of Israel because God’s people would be better than all other nations.
* God was to save them from all kinds of shame and trouble for the sake of his own name and glory because his name had been disgraced in every country.
* God was to demonstrate to the nations the holiness of his name that he is above all gods and that his power goes beyond the power of the gods of the foreign nations.
* God would bless them the clean water and cleanse them from defilement of the pagan believers and idols which had influenced them.
* God was to rescue and bring the Israelites back to their homeland to show the Babylonians and Edomites that he was a great God of Israel.
* God was to make a new covenant with his people which would be an everlasting covenant written in their minds not to be forgotten by anyone.
* God himself was to be their king before choosing one of his servants from them to take charge over his people giving them security against any danger or serving like God’s servant.
* In addition to the two chapters n the message of hope, the valley of dry bones also represents how God’s omnipotent would rescue the Israelites from hopeless to hopefulness.
* The sign of joining Judah and Israel which Ezekiel added by joining two sticks having written Judah on one stick and Israel on the other pointing to the hope of future return from exile when two nations have become one.
* Ezekiel’s teaching on the shepherds of Israel where God himself refers to be the shepherd himself as good as David was another message of hope to Israelites in exile.
* Again prophesy of shepherds of Israel where God promises to make a new covenant of his sheep to take them out of trouble in another message of hope to Israelites in exile.
* Ezekiel’s teaching on individual responsibility for sin and punishment is also good news of letting people admit their sins, repent and get restored to their motherland.

THE BOOK OF JOB

The writer of the book of Job is not clearly identified but he is believed to have been a Jew. This book talks about a rich man who lost all of his wealth, his children and even serious afflictions against his health.

However, despite all the problems, he never lost hope in God.

Job’s suffering was different from Israelites understanding of the causes of suffering because they believed that people suffered due to their wickedness but Job was a righteous man who suffered seriously/severely.

Job 1 and 2 show how a good man, righteous and faithful suffered a lot when God was testing his faith.

It all started when heavenly creatures appealed before God and Satan came along. When God asked whether he had seen his servant Job who was honest and faith. Satan replied that Job loved God only because the almighty God had blessed him with a lot of wealth, but if he lost such wealth, Job would curse Him.

This kind of contest between God and Satan exposed Job to terrible suffering because God permitted Satan to bring disaster to Job’s life which ended up into the following forms of suffering

THE FORMS OF SUFFERING EXPERIENCED BY JOB

* Job experienced physical and psychological torture since he was struck by disasters which brought a lot of pain in his life.
* Job’s oxen donkeys were attacked by Serbians who killed all the servants who were attending to them before carrying all the animals away.
* Job lost all his sheep and all the shepherds who were taking care of them when lightening struck them dead.
* Gangs of the Chaldeans attacked and stole all the camels which belonged to Job after killing all the servants who were in charge.
* Job’s children were killed by a wind storm which blew from the desert and crushed a building over them during a party.
* Job was affected by a terrible disease of boils covering all his body and he had wounds all over the body.
* Job’s wife convinced him to curse God and die other than living in pain. In this case she became a bigger problem to him because she was tempting him to do what was wrong.
* The wife deserted him because he had lost wealth and his health was disappointing.
* Job’s pain increased so much all over the body, that flies began feasting on him (feasting on the wounds which attracted the flies)
* Job’s friends worsened his suffering when they began blaming him for being the cause of his suffering, thinking that he had seriously committed certain sins hence demanding from him to seek God’s forgiveness.
* Job lost his appearance and it became very difficult for people who knew him before to notice (recognize) him because of the terrible suffering e experienced.
* Since Job believed that he was innocent, the instance of his friends in forcing him to repent increased more pain.
* Job’s suffering went beyond imagination when he became useless and began seeing everyday as a burden because of too much pain.
* He became hopeless, helpless and miserable because he couldn’t even assist himself in anyway apart from scratching his body.
* Days and nights became longer than usual so that mere day seemed like a century of a glory.
* He got so exhausted seeing no meaning in life and existence. He had no time to rest and whenever he turned, he felt arrows of suffering/ pain piercing him.

THE NATURE OF MAN ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF JOB

* Man is God’s creature and under God’s care as he was created by God right away from Genesis.
* Man is very weak physically and spiritually and that is the reason why Job had no resistance and went ahead to complain.
* Man is faithful, Job had faith that is why he didn’t turn away from God despite the suffering.
* Man does not admit sin easily. Even if Job was innocent, his friends took him to be like the rest who don’t admit when they sin.
* Man is sometimes righteous. Job was righteous despite the suffering he went through which could happen to any other innocent person.
* Man is God’s servant, because God asked Satan whether he had seen his servant Job.
* Man who lives faithfully makes God happy. The reason why God sounded like boasting against Satan was because of the faith and honesty of Job.
* Man is supposed to worship God the almighty because this is what exactly Job did and maintained. This made Job win the war against Satan.
* Man is a source of temptations because Job’s friends and wife were tempting him to curse God.
* Man’s wisdom cannot be compared to God’s wisdom because neither Job nor his friends knew God’s programmes for Job.
* Human understanding is too inadequate to understand what God wants, that is why Job and his friends failed to understand what God wanted from him.
* Suffering is part of human life. It could be a means of proving man’s faith, that is why Job suffered and out of endurance God rewarded him.
* Man looses heart quickly. Job reached an extent of raising temper against God until when God’s response opened his eyes.

THE NATURE OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF JOB

God can be described in the following ways;

* God is the creator. He is the one who created the universe. He also told Job that he had no power as a creature to challenge his creator.
* God is omnipotent because it is trough Him that all Job’s wealth and health were destroyed and restored later.
* God is the source of blessings. He blessed Job with all the wealth and children which were destroyed and later restored in multiples by God’s grace.
* God is spirit. While responding to Job’s complains He did not appear physically because He does not possess a physical body.
* God humbles the proud. While rewarding Job, his friends were calmed down and Satan was put to shame.
* God is the source of life. He was responsible for putting life into all the creatures that Job owned and even the new ones he got.
* God is holy and righteous. At one time He criticized Job for having complained to a righteous God.
* God is caring and a concerned God. He showed concern when he did not completely abandon Job and He also rewarded him after suffering.
* God is the source of protection, however much Job was tortured by Satan. God protected him and did not permit Satan to kill him.
* He is a loving God. Because of his love. He intervened in Job’s suffering to show him the proper way of conduct.
* God is omnipresent. He was in heaven with the heavenly creatures and he was also on earth monitoring Job, Satan and Job’s friends.
* God is omniscient. He knew the reasons behind Job’s suffering. He knows what goes on under the sea, on earth and in heaven.

JOB’S COMPLAINT TO GOD AND HIS FRIENDS’ CHALLENGES

The friendsof Job challenged him as noted below;

* Job’s friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar visited him to comfort him about the suffering he was experiencing.
* On meeting Job, they wept and then kept quite for 7 days while mediating upon Job’s suffering.
* After making a number of complaint, his friends challenged his faith and trust in God by accusing him of sins he might have committed although he was claiming to be innocent.
* Eliphaz commended Job for being faithful and for trusting in God the almighty.
* Eliphaz asked Job whether he would remember a single case where a righteous man has ever met disaster.
* According to Eliphaz, and among all the Israelites, suffering was a result of wickedness. He was indirectly telling Job to understand and that he was being punished for the sins he committed.
* Eliphaz said that God alone is righteous and no man is blameless. This was confirming that Job’s suffering was not without a cause. He could have committed evil against God.
* Eliphaz was trying to convict Job by saying that God does not trust anybody, even if they are the heavenly servants, since God finds faults even with His angels.
* Basing on Eliphaz’s analysis of God, Job had no claim of being innocent, if also heavenly angels could be found guilty.
* Eliphaz went ahead and asked Job to turn to God. This meant that he wanted Job to admit that he was a sinner and therefore ask for forgiveness from God.
* Eliphaz continued to ask Job to turn to God, meaning that if admitted his sinfulness God would forgive him and end his suffering.
* According to Eliphaz, it is God only who sustains life by doing great things beyond man’s understanding. This means that Job had not mastered God’s nature properly.
* Eliphaz finally gives his view about Job’s suffering insisting that suffering is a punishment from God for wrong doing.
* Eliphaz also says that happy is the person whom God corrects, which stresses that Eliphaz was forcing Job to accept that he was a wrong doer.

Bildad also spoke out against Job’s suffering in the following ways;

* He challenged Job and said that God never twists justice and he never fails to do what is right.
* Bildad continued that if Job claims innocence, then at least his children might have sinned against God and were the cause of his troubles.
* Bildad stressed that because of Job’s wickedness, God had abandoned him.

Zophar reacted as follows;

* He said that Job was wicked and had full responsibility of his suffering
* Zophar advised Job to put his heart right with God. He also told him to put away evil and all wrong deeds from his home.
* Zophar continued to say that Job claimed to be pure, but if God asked him, he would not have an answer. In this way Zophar wanted to make Job confess for his evil deeds against God.
* Zophar believed that God’s mysterious powers had enabled him to see Job’s evil and therefore put him to punishment.
* Zophar advised Job to give up evil, face the world, be courageous, so as to have miseries solved.

JOB’S RESPONSE TO HIS FRIENDS’ CHALLENGE

* Job insisted that God whom he offered sacrifices to whom he thought he had known had disappeared from his life and was now shooting poisonous arrows towards him.
* Job cried to God to let him die saying that he had reached the end of his strength, so he wanted to rest forever.
* Job expressed his disappointment to those who claimed to be friends, because they were not showing him where he went wrong but only criticizing him.
* He compared his friends with the streams which dried up when people were desperately thirsty, because instead of consoling him, they just looked for ways and loopholes of making him suffer the more.
* Job challenged his friends to let him know in which ways he had wronged God, promising to render them audience if they would show him where he had committed any evil.
* He told them that mere mentioning that he was guilty of evil was leaving a lot to be devised, it was unjust and annoying.
* He insisted that he was righteous, confessing before them that he knows what is right and wrong.
* He responded to Bildad’s speech and said that no man can win his case against God and no one can argue with God and win a debate.
* Job stressed that he was innocent but he would not argue with God. He said that whether one is sick, innocent, guilty God would destroy them.
* Job told his friends that if he was guilty God would have given him the answer, but his friends were looking at things like human beings.
* He told his friends again who claimed to possess wisdom that their wisdom was earthly wisdom and they would die with it.
* He emphasized that he was suffering because of God’s will and because God had control over all the creatures including man.
* He compared himself with a tree that has been cut down, that even if he had been deprived everything, God would make him prosperous again.
* He asked his friends to stop tormenting him but give him words of encouragement and comfort.
* He had expected his friends to be supportive but instead they were blaming him, which proved that they were of no use to him during suffering.
* He surrendered his life to God as the only source of life, the only one who gives and takes away and the only comforter to those suffering because his friends had failed to support him.
* Job said that his friends had betrayed him by speaking badly about him.
* He expressed the terrible situation in which he was that all his relatives and friends despised him because of his appearance and his only trust was in God who would eventually come to his rescue.

GOD’S RESPONSE TO JOB’S COMPLAINT

* After Job’s complaint and his claim of innocence, the Lord spoke out to him and asked him several questions that, “who are you to question my wisdom with your ignorant empty words?” (Job 38:2)
* God asked Job to stand up like a man and answer the questions put before him.
* God asked Job whether he was there when he was creating the universe and deciding how large it would be and so many other questions.
* After admitting his foolishness for having challenged the Almighty God, Job was asked by God to repent.
* The Lord went ahead and challenged Job for having questioned his justice.
* God told Job that he was ashamed and Job accepted his shame for whatever he had said.
* The Lord turned to Job’s friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and expressed his anger against them for speaking ill against him.
* He told Job’s friends to get 7 bulls and 7 rams to be given as a sacrifice for their sinfulness. God told Job’s friends to bring the sacrifice to Job, who would present them to God and pray for them.
* After Job’s prayer for his friends. God restored Job to his original good health.
* The God made Job prosperous again, giving him more sheep, Carmel, servants, horses, cattle and children. He got 7 sons and 3 beautiful daughters.
* God also blessed Job’s last days and he let him live for another 140 years.

RELEVANCE OF JOB’S EXPERIENCE TO THE MODERN CHRISTIANS

The relevance of Job’s experiences is as follows;

* Christians should have faith in God just as Job had despite the suffering he experienced.
* Christians should praise God despite the suffering they may experience. On learning about the misfortunes that befell him, Job praised the Lord.
* Christians should remain humble and calm during suffering. Job did not question God during the time of suffering.
* Christians should live an exemplary life. Job showed a good example when he remained faithful during suffering.
* Christians should endure trials and temptations. Job endured despite the suffering he experienced.
* Christians should live a righteous life. Job lived a sinless life therefore he was righteous despite the suffering.
* Christians should be careful when passing judgment upon others. God was annoyed with Job’s friends who blamed Job for the suffering he was experiencing.
* Christians should visit those in suffering. Job’s friends visited him when they heard about his misery.
* Christians should show care, concern and comfort those suffering unlike Job’s friends who failed to comfort him but instead caused more suffering to him.
* Christians should praise and thank God for whatever they receive. Job thanked God and praised Him when he heard about the misfortunes that had come his way.
* Christians should pray for God’s blessings. Job’s last part of his life was blessed by God and he was given more than he lost.

How did Job respond to God during his suffering?

Job responded to God during his suffering in the following ways;

* Job admitted his mistakes and he accepted that he had spoken foolishly against God.
* Job went ahead and repented for having spoken foolishly against the Lord.
* He confessed that he had only known what others had told him.
* He remembered that the Lord asked him to answer his questions but he could not.
* He felt ashamed of all that he had said against the Lord and showed that he was not worthy to stand before God.
* Job recalled that the Lord had commanded him to listen to what he was speaking.
* Job confessed that he had talked about the thing he did not understand.
* Job confessed that the Lord was capable of doing everything he wanted.
* Job acknowledged the omnipotence of the Lord.
* Job promised the Lord that he would never speak again for he admitted that he had already spoken more than he could have said in his capacity.
* Job told the Lord that he was unable to answer him back and in doing so he realized that the Lord was sovereign.

“Even my friends laugh at me now, they laugh, although I am righteous and blameless.” Discuss.

Why did Job utter this statement?

* Job uttered this statement because he was faithful yet suffering.
* The Israelites used to believe that suffering came as a result of sin which meant Job was a sinner too but he knew he was innocent.
* Different friends of Job knew him as faithful and did not expect him to suffer like that.
* The suffering had seemed too hard for him to handle.
* He considered righteousness t be associated with good life but for him he was suffering of terrible sickness.
* The reaction of his friends like Zophar who said God cannot punish righteous people and so he deserved a heavier punishment.
* Because Job was surprised of the friends who behaved contrary to his expectations like Eliphaz who told him to remember moments in his like when he could have sinned.
* Because it was his first experience to undergo suffering.
* He thought that God had not appreciated his sacrifices to him and his conduct.
* Because of the unbearable pain he was undergoing i.e. the scars on his body.
* He might have been calling for God’s help.
* He had lost all his children seven sons and daughters.
* Because Job had lost most of his servants being killed by Chaldean raiders.
* Because he had lost all his live stock i.e. cattle, donkeys, sheep and Carmel.

How did Job demonstrate his faith to God?

* Job observed monotheism i.e. worshipped only one God of Israel throughout his suffering.
* Job lived exemplary life. He was a good man and very careful not do any evil towards God although he spoke with anger.
* Job demonstrated his faith to God by ignoring all the ill-advice of his wife who wanted him to curse God for having caused suffering to him.
* Job kept acknowledging God as the taker and giver of everything when he lost all his wealth and children.
* He used to offer sacrifices to God as a sign of his commitment or faith to God.
* He highly respected God and feared to insult him in anyway.
* Job demonstrated his faith to God by bringing up his children in a religious way. He taught them the importance and necessity of sacrificing to God.
* He obeyed the commands of God. God himself remarked that there was no one on earth as faithful and good as Job (2:3).
* Job also acknowledged God’s power, greatness and wisdom. He admitted shame and repented earnestly why showed his faith to God (40 and 42)
* When God flooded him with questions, he realized his insignificance and confessed his faith (Job 1:21)
* Job’s wife told him to curse God and die but Job rubbished her advice as nonsense showing his faith 9Job 2:9-10)
* Job became diseased with scars allover his body but never forsake his God.
* Job demonstrated his faith to God by deciding to keep quiet when the Lord challenged him whether he knew how the universe came to its present form (Job 38:1ff)
* Job felt ashamed for all he had said against God.

How does the author of the book of Job challenge the Deuteronomic view/understanding of suffering/sin?

How does the book of Job challenge the Deuteronomic teaching on rewards/punishments?

* Job lost all his wealth yet he was obedient and righteous yet he challenges.
* Job was exposed to a lot of suffering like developing scars on his body even when he was an innocent man as the book of Deuteronomy teaches that God only punished sinners.
* Job was a faithful man and therefore he could have been healthy according to teachings of the book of Deuteronomy but he suffered from a skin disease.
* According to Deuteronomy 28:27 and 35 boils and scars would infest the person for sinfulness but Job’s body was covered with scars allover yet he was innocent.
* The faithful people according to Deuteronomy would be victorious against enemies however job was being mocked he felt helpless before mockers.
* The Lord in the book of Deuteronomy promised the faithful with plenty of livestock and abundant crop yields. But to Job though he was faithful his livestock where raided by Chaldeans.
* According to the book of Deuteronomy God promised blessings of many children to the faithful. However Job was faithful but all his (10) ten children died in a storm.
* According to the book of Deuteronomy disaster, confusion and trouble would befall unfaithful but Job became confused and asked several miserable questions yet he had been faithful and obedient.
* Storms brought down the house of Job’s eldest son and all his children died there. But according to Deuteronomy 28:24, such a disaster would be a punishment to evil doers.
* Satan was involved in Job’s suffering through God’s order. Yet in the book of Deuteronomy such couldn’t be thought.
* In reality only God knew why Job was suffering even Job and his friends and wife did not know yet in Deuteronomic understanding a person could know why he was suffering.
* Job refused to curse God as advised by the wife yet he continued to suffer. One would have expected the woman to suffer not Job or God to punish her but did not.
* Job continued praising God even after losing his wealth and suffering more.
* In Job’s complaint he wondered why sinful men were prospering and happy yet the innocent was suffering which could not be expected in the teachings of Deuteronomy.
* Job’s friends told lies against God yet God did not punish them as it would be expected in the teachings of Deuteronomy.

*SAMPLE QUESTIONS*

1. *“I was born with nothing, I will die with nothing. The Lord gave and he has taken away”. (Job 1:21 GNB)*
2. *Account for Job’s utterances in the above statement*

*Interpretation*

*The question is calling for the reasons/ forms of suffering and disasters which befell Job that prompted him to utter the statement.*

1. *Show how a Christian should respond towards the loss of a loved one.*

*Interpretation*

*The question is calling for the reaction of a Christian towards the loss of a loved one.*

1. *(a) Why did Job curse the day he was born?*

*Interpretation*

*The question is calling for reasons (problems/ forms of suffering) that prompted Job to curse his birth day.*

1. *Why would a person in Uganda curse his birthday when the majority of people hold banquets on it?*

*Interpretation*

*The question is calling for the reasons (problems experienced that would force one to curse his birthday.*

1. *(a) Justify God’s judgment upon Job’s three friends*

*Interpretation*

*The question is calling for reasons supporting God’s judgment upon Job’s friends.*

1. *Examine the significance of Job’s suffering/ experience to Christians suffering with HIV/AIDs today?*

*Interpretation*

*The question is calling for lessons Christians suffering with HIV learn from Job’s experience.*

1. *Examine the nature of God and man according to the book of Job*

*Interpretation*

*The question requires one to describe God and man in relation to the book of Job*

1. *(a) Examine Job’s response to the kind of suffering he experienced.*
2. *How did God respond to Job’s complaint?*

**THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

The word psalm is derived from the Greek word “PSALMOI” meaning songs accompanied by musical instruments. That very word psalmoi is a Hebrew translation of the word “TEHILLIM” meaning “praises” therefore seen from the perspective, psalms were sacred songs with musical accompaniment. They were used in praising God.

Among the Jews it was a common phenomenon to express their love for God through music, dance and drama. They used to play harps, lyres, drums, rattles and cymbals perhaps similar instrument like those which were used by Africans in their different activities.

The most remarkable expression of this happiness by the Israelites to their God was seen in 2 Samuel 6:5. Here King David was extremely happy during the transfer of the covenant ark from Baalah to Jerusalem that he joined his people in dancing and singing in the honour of God.

In total there are 150 psalms in the bible which are said to have been written by various people. These include among others Solomon, David and prophets. The book of psalms explores full range of human experiences in a very personal and practical way of life.

Psalms runs from he creation through the patriarchal, theocratic period, monarchical exilic and post exilic periods. Psalms handle diverse topics such as jubilation, war, peace, worship, judgment, messianic prophecy, praises and lamentations.

Its believed that it took around 600 – 700 years writing the various psalms as they are in the bible.

**THE ROLE PLAYED BY PSALMS IN THE LIFE OF THE ISRAELITES**

Psalms played a great role among the Israelites which included the following;

* They were hymns used to praise their God during their daily situations. They were used to express God’s holiness, greatness and glory.
* They were used during annual festival such as Passover day, day of unleavened bread, atonement and many others.
* They were sung during the Jewish daily sacrifices. This was realized when the chief priest came up in most cases to spearhead the function of the sacrifices and the whole event was accompanied by these sacred songs.
* They were used for personal confessional repentance. For example psalm 51 was given as an expression of forgiveness by King David.
* Psalms were used to call upon God’s judgment onto Israel’s enemies or any wicked in their midst.
* Psalms were also used during the different social occasions like coronation of kings, marriages or death of their dear ones.
* During days of suffering psalms were used to give consolation to the affected people. They used to instill comfort and courage as God would soon come in to deliver them from such suffering.
* After a great national or individual loss often psalms were used during that moment of lamentation. They expressed the magnitude of suffering (Psalms 22)
* Some psalms were used for the expression of their joy to their God who would have enabled them attain either victory or success in their understandings (Psalm 21)
* They were used to express either national or individual gratitude to their God over various achievements in life.
* Psalms used to draw people into communion and fellowship with their God.
* Psalms were used as their prayers asking God to guide, protect and defend their country against their enemies (Psalm 28, 54 and 108)
* They were used to reflect God’s central contribution in the history of the Israelites right from Egypt up to Canaan.
* While others were used to depict the wickedness of man showing how they would meet their death (psalm 53)
* They expressed their faith and commitment to God.
* Royal psalms served as national anthems such as psalm 47. This was a song on the Jewish New Year.
* Others were just used to liturgical purposes. They added file and flavor to the Jewish worship of God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PSALMS TO CHRISTIANS TODAY

* Through psalms Christians are encouraged to endure hardships whenever they are faced with challenges in life. They are urged to use psalms because they provided solutions to our day today problems.
* Through psalms Christians learn to acknowledge the greatness of God’s kingdom. They should therefore spare time to glorify his name just as the Israelites used to do.
* With the help of psalms Christians are encouraged to stick to God the almighty. They need to stick to him because he is the source of help for mankind.
* Christians should use the psalms to develop trust in their God because he is willing to deliver his people out of suffering.
* Psalms are inspirational. They encourage Christians to become vigilant in the spreading of the good news. They should continue spreading the good news.
* Christians should use the psalms to promote the unity of the church. They should thus use the psalms to fellowship and praise their God.
* Psalms encourage Christians to have love for one another. They need to use these hymns to express their love for their fellow Christians.
* Through psalms Christians learn to show concern to people in problems like the sick, poor and orphans. Psalms can make such people have a sense of belonging.
* Christians are encouraged to use the psalms to identify themselves with God as members of his community.
* Christians should exalt God through psalms. They should sing and play their instruments as they are worshiping God.
* They are also called upon to use the psalms as they are celebrating religious festivals like Christmas and Easter.
* Psalms are rehabilitative, and so Christians should use them during the counseling of those people with problems.
* Psalms encourage Christians live a God fearing life because he is the source of success and protection.
* They should use the psalms to make the worship more humorous and edifying.

**PSALM 2 CORONATION PSALM OR MESSIANIC PSALM**

This psalm is a pre-exilic one which is believed to have been used during the coronation of a king descending from David. Kings in Israel were taken to be God’s sons and on coronation were given all the written instructions relating to their duties. Therefore the use of the son-father relationship by the psalmist is used to imply the close relationship that existed between God and the kings of Judah.

However as time went on, this psalm came to be understood as a messianic psalm looking forward to the rule of God in the world and the appointment of his messiah to act on his behalf. God is seen as the only true king who appoints his messiah to lead his people into the blessing promised to them.

Many New Testament writers point at psalm 2 as a messianic prophesy i.e. Acts 4:25 -26 refers to psalm 2:1-2 as a prayer of the first Christians in Jerusalem referring to Jesus as God’s servant and a messiah.

If deeply analyzed psalm 2 is divided into four main parts which include the following;

* The opposition and rebellious plots by the pagan nations
* God’s response to the rebellious attitudes of the pagans.
* The new king announces the divine decrees given to him by God.
* Warning and appeal to he pagan kings

Therefore psalm 2 can be analyzed in the following ways below;

* In this psalm the psalmist was surprised with the stupidity and evil nature of the nations which rejected God and threatened to attack God’s appointed the ruler of Judah.
* Their action is against God the ruler of the world because he is the one who had enthroned the Israelites king.
* In psalm 2:4-6, the psalmist shows that God looked at the pagan nations with contempt because of their stupidity.
* With excessive anger God warned them against the consequences of their plots against his anointed one.
* Pagan nations would be punished by God. Therefore this means that God alone controls the destiny of his people and their kings.
* Psalm 2:7-9, shows that the anointed king of God receiving laws given to him by God. The king became an adopted son of God on the day of his coronation.
* All nations of the world have been given to him and so any rebellion against him will be shattered like a clay pot.
* In psalm 2:10-12, the psalmist concludes by giving the pagan kings some words of wisdom. He requested them to serve Lord with fear, tremble and bow to him or else they will be punished by his wrath.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PSALM TO THE MODERN CHRISTIANS

* Through this psalm Christians learn to respond positively to God’s call. Failure to respond to his call may lead to destruction from God’s anger.
* Its through God’s will that we should respect authority. Rebelliousness to the authority is dangerous and may hinder God’s plan of saving the sinful man.
* Through this psalm Christians learn to cooperate with God’s leaders. They should thus avoid evil intentions which aimed at failing the good leadership of God.
* It further calls upon Christians to promote the ministry of Jesus because any attempt to resist him is a step towards doom.
* In order to find joy in life Christians strongly attend to God’s services or else God is ready to judge all those who challenge his ministry.
* The psalm calls upon to live holy lives. They should desist from satanic influence because Satan is unreliable.
* Christians are called upon to guard against evil men because they don’t wish anything good for Christians instead they are only interested in persecuting the church.
* Christians should cleanse themselves. They should work for God’s appointment because God protects his appointed servants.
* They should pray to God for authority because all powers come from him.
* Christians should call upon all those opposed to Jesus’ ministry to repent and serve him faithfully.
* There is need for all Christians to have love for one another instead of persecuting their opponents.

PSALM 20: A ROYAL PSALM ASKING FOR VICTORY IN WAR

* This psalm is attributed to King David the chief musician. It was a popular belief among the Israelites that God often led his people into battles against their enemies.
* In this psalm the psalmist gives the background information concerning the war where by a king had to pray for God’s help to protect him and give him victory over his enemies.
* He also gave the sacrifices and while praying to God so that they may be accepted by God and led him to success.
* The Israelites believed that God was always on their side whenever they were fighting, hence a slogan “if God is with us who can go against us?”
* In this psalm the worshippers and priests called upon the God of Jacob because he is a faithful God. Since he protected Jacob there was no way he could abandon the grand children because he promised them blessings and protection in all situations.
* The worshippers promised that if they succeed over their enemies, they would shout with joy and give praise to God in recognition of what God had done to them.
* The psalmist expressed his total commitment and confidence in God. He thus says, “While some trust in their war chariots and others in horses, but we trust in the power of Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7)
* He showed utmost faith in God and said that people who trust in chariots and horses will crumble and fall.
* The psalmist requested God to give him victory to the king and answer their plea.
* He believed that God would never let them down.

LESSONS CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM THE PSALM

* While faced with problems Christians should commit themselves to God because he gives divine care and protection to all his people.
* Christians should depend on only one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because he is a faithful God. He keeps his promises to all people of all generations.
* Christians should genuinely pray to God and sacrifice to him because God will surely answer their prayers. The God of Jacob does not disappoint hence the psalmist insistence to save him from his enemies.
* Through this psalm Christians are called upon to pray to their enemies so that they may change the evil intentions of their enemies like witchcraft, murder and theft.
* The psalm calls upon Christians to express their joy by celebrating if God grants their prayers. This can best be done by singing hymns of praise to God.
* The still calls upon Christians to absolutely trust God the almighty instead of the modern military weapons, wealth political positions or alliances.
* Christians should repent for their sins in order to allow God work for them. It is important to note that God will only answer their problems if they are holy.
* It also calls upon Christians to pray for their leaders and country at large so as to overcome problems. Political alliances or military strength alone may not be solutions to state crisis.
* They should always focus at God for assistance other than resisting to the satanic influences. Christians should set aside days of national repentance so that the country can overcome problems. His would also strengthen people’s relationship with God.

PSALM 22: A PSALM WHICH EXPRESSES PERSONAL SUFFERING

* In this psalm the psalmist shows an individual who disastrously suffers yet he is virtuous man. Because of his suffering he feels that God had deserted him, “my God my God why have you abandoned me?” (Psalm 22:1)
* The sufferer shows his desperate cry for help but the Lord seems not to care for him otherwise he would have answered. There was no response from God for his wailing.
* He calls upon God day and night but God could not answer. He however recognizes God’s holiness that he is one worshipped by Israel.
* The sufferer in the psalm expresses himself as an insignificant person equivalent to a worm. He is despised and seerned at by anyone.
* He shows that people laugh at him that he relied on God put the God he believed in so much has not helped him.
* People commented that if God loved him, why he doesn’t rescue him from suffering.
* However the sufferer expresses his total reliance on God from childhood and so he was not ready to abandon God because of the troubles he saved him.
* He showed that his enemies surrounded him like a herd of bulls and a pack of dogs. They all look at him and shared his garments.