THE *SEMAH SEDAQAH* OF JEREMIAH 33:15 AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CONGOLESE LEADERSHIP

By

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PIETERMARITZBURG
November 2009

DECLARATION

As required by University regulations, I hereby state unambiguously that this work has not been presented at any other University or any other institution of higher learning other than the University of KwaZulu-Natal, (Pietermaritzburg Campus) and that unless specifically indicated to the contrary within the text it is my original work.

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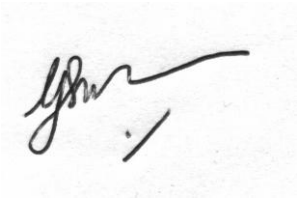
CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned declare that we have abided by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's policy on language editing. We also declare that earlier forms of the dissertation have been retained should they be required.



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November 20, 2009

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November 20 2009

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father Pierre Nzita Phezo and mother Géorgine Phuna Tsakala, through whose efforts and discipline I received both my education and satisfaction in life.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of a contextual reading of the texts of Jeremiah on *semah* (23:5-6; 33:14-16), together with the related texts in Isaiah (4:2; 11:1-2) and Zechariah (3:8; 6:12). The context I am reading from is the present political situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) and the leadership crisis since independence. I first approach the Masoretic Text (MT) in a synchronic way and I do not focus on a rigorous study of the texts in discussing their form, source and redaction criticism. To analyse the texts on 'branch' in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah, I pay particular attention to the literary context of texts. My synchronic approach seems to de-contextualise the texts under study from their socio-historical context. However, in chapters Three and Five I place these texts in the broad historical context of the Davidic kings from about the time of Jeremiah until Judah's return from Exile. The analysis of the current Congolese leadership situation is confined particularly to the governance of President Mobutu Sésé Seko. In particular, the focus is on the second period of his presidency, from 1975 to his dismissal on May 17, 1997. The social situation, during this period, had worsened immeasurably in the country.

This study demonstrates that the Judean kingship (leadership) turned the kingdom into an idolatrous community. The role of a Judean king would have been to promote justice and righteousness in society. But, such justice and righteousness in Judah that would characterise an egalitarian community with loyalty was lacking during the time of Jeremiah. This was due, first, to the external influence of the great empires of the time, which were conquering Judah for its strategic position in the Ancient Near East. Second, it was due to the attitude of the Judean kings themselves, who were relying on the most powerful empires to protect and maintain them in office. As a result, the Judean kings turned away from God's instructions by breaking down the covenant that Yahweh had made with his people.

In a similar way, the DR Congo and Mobutu became tools and victims of the international politics of the day, as well as pawns of the Cold War taking place between the West and East. The West managed to place their Mobutu as leader and maintain him to represent and maintain their own interests. In this respect, they ensured his security in office. In return, these Western powers drew benefit from the country's vast mineral resources. A stranglehold on the country's wealth has been maintained by the Congolese ruling class and Western powers. This behaviour, dating back to Mobutu's presidency, remains the root cause of wars, social destruction, poverty and so forth, in the DR Congo.

A close resemblance between the causes and effects of the Judean social devastation due to the rule of kings during the time of Jeremiah and those of the Congolese social destruction since the Mobutu regime is established in this study. My use of Justin Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics (with the two poles of biblical text and African context) takes into account Jonathan Draper's use of the third pole which plays a significant role in the appropriative process. The third pole is the reader who 'engages' the text and the context in order to dialogue. This defines a theoretical framework and method of this dissertation. My distinctive use of Ukpong's contextual reading considers the texts on *semah* in their contexts and the reader in her or his context as two 'partners' who 'converse.' In other words, the two poles, in their face-to-face relationship, are mirrored in each other. From this process, the current Congolese leadership receives insight for a state or church leadership standard. In other words, the texts on *semah* in their contexts will show to the Congolese leadership situation a new way of managing the state or church affairs. Through this study, we do not expect a 'quick fix' solution, but instead, ways of looking at life which will make possible better ways of acting. To conclude this study, a challenging suggestion is made to the Congolese ruling class as to how it could redress the disastrous social situation in the DR Congo. This challenge is a call for a trained, honest and loyal leadership for the DR Congo.

Key Terms: Africa; Bible; Belgium; Cold War; Congolese; Contextual Reading; Democratic Republic of Congo; Draper; Exile; Hermeneutics; Inculturation;

Independence; Isaiah; Jeremiah; Judah; Justice; Leadership; Mobutu; Oracle; *Semah*; Third Pole; Ukpong; Zechariah.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse est une lecture contextuelle sur les textes de Jérémie (23:5-6; 33:14-16) avec une considération des textes d'Esaie (4:2; 11:1-2) et de Zacharie (3:8; 6:12) au sujet de *semah.* La perspective du contexte par lequel j'entreprends ma lecture de ces textes bibliques est l'actuelle situation politique de la RD Congo et la crise du leadership depuis l'indépendance. J'analyse le Texte Masorétique de façon synchronique; c'est à dire je ne mets pas l'accent sur une étude rigoureuse de textes en faisant une critique de forme, de source and de rédaction. Pour analyser les textes sur *semah*, 'la souche', dans Jérémie, Esaie et Zacharie, j'accorde une attention particulière sur les contextes littéraires des textes. L'approche synchronique semble décontextualiser les textes de leurs contextes socio-historiques; cependant, dans les chapitres trois et cinq, je circonscris les textes de Jérémie dans un contexte historique général des rois davidiques du temps de ce prophète jusqu' au retour de l'exile. L'analyse de la situation actuelle du leadership congolais est faite telle que je l'ai limitée, particulièrement, pendant que Mobutu a dirigé le pays. J'ai ciblé, spécialement, sur la seconde période de sa présidence, de 1975 à sa destitution le 17 mai 1997. Ce choix est dû simplement au fait qu'à ce temps la situation sociale s'était empirée dans le pays.

Cette étude démontre que la royauté judéenne (leadership) avait désorienté le peuple de Dieu en un peuple idolâtre. Le rôle d'un roi judéen aurait été de promouvoir la justice et la droiture dans la société. Mais, la justice et la droiture qui auraient caractérisé une communauté égalitaire avec loyauté en Judée avait fait défaut au temps de Jérémie. Une telle situation était due, premièrement, aux influences externes de grands empires du moment qui étaient en train de conquérir Judée pour sa position stratégique dans l'Ancien Moyen Orient. Deuxièmement, elle était causée par le comportement de rois judéens eux-mêmes qui comptaient sur ces empires selon leurs temps pour être protégés et maintenus dans leur position de rois. Pour ces deux

raisons, les rois judéens se détournaient des instructions de Dieu en rompant l'alliance que Yahvé avait traitée avec son peuple.

De la même manière, pour des raisons d'intérêt égoïste de vouloir rester longtemps au pouvoir, la classe dirigeante du Congo s'appuie sur les puissances occidentales avec qui elle pille les richesses du pays. En effet, ces puissances occidentales orientent et influencent le choix de chef de l'état congolais en préférant celui qui représenterait le mieux leurs intérêts. Pour cette raison, les grandes puissances assurent la sécurité du chef au pouvoir et ses associés. En retour, ces puissances occidentales tirent bénéfice des ressources naturelles et pétrolières du pays. Cette mainmise sur les richesses du pays, que les puissances occidentales, de connivence avec le chef de l'état congolais, ont maintenue depuis la présidence de Mobutu, constitue la cause majeure de guerres, de la destruction sociale, et de la pauvreté du peuple en RD Congo.

La ressemblance des causes et effets de la dévastation sociale en Judée occasionnée par les règnes de rois au temps de Jérémie avec ceux de la destruction sociale du Congo, particulièrement depuis le régime de Mobutu, est établie dans cette étude. Ma lecture contextuelle selon Ukpong (avec les deux pôles du texte biblique et du contexte africain) tient compte du troisième pôle tel que utilisé par Draper. Ce troisième pôle joue un rôle important pour s'approprier le texte biblique. Le troisième pôle est le lecteur du texte qui dirige le dialogue du texte pris dans son contexte avec le contexte du lecteur. Ceci définie la structure et la méthode utilisées dans cette thèse. Mon utilisation particulière de la lecture contextuelle d'Ukpong considère avant tout les textes sur *semah* dans leurs contextes et le lecteur ou lectrice dans son contexte comme deux 'partenaires' qui dialoguent. En d'autres termes, les deux pôles se mirent dans une relation de deux face à face. De cela, l'actuel leadership du Congo reçoit un nouvel aperçu sur ce que doit être le niveau d'un leadership d'un pays ou d'une église. Dès lors les textes sur *semah*, pris dans leurs contextes, révèlent, à la situation du leadership congolais, une nouvelle façon de diriger et de gérer le pays ou l'église. Dans cette étude nous ne visons pas des solutions préétablies; mais plutôt une occasion de réfléchir sur nous-mêmes en vue d'un changement de mentalité en tant que dirigeant de notre pays ou église. La conclusion de cette étude consiste en un défit formulé à l'endroit de la classe dirigeante du Congo sur comment elle pourrait

redresser la situation sociale qui demeure désastreuse au Congo. Ce défit est un appel à un leadership formé moralement et académiquement de façon qui soit juste, honnête et authentique pour la République Démocratique du Congo (RD Congo).

Les termes clés: Draper; l'Afrique; la Bible; la Belgique; la guère froide; le Congo; la lecture contextuelle; la République Démocratique du Congo ; l'exile ; l'herméneutique ; l'inculturation; l'Independence ; Essaie ; Jérémie ; le royaume de Juda ; la justice ; le leadership ; Mobutu, l'oracle ; *semah*; le troisième pôle ; Ukpong ; Zacharie.

GLOSSARY[1]

ABAKO	Alliance des Ba-Kongo
AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo
BCE	Before the Common Era
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
CE	Common Era
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of the Congo
JMPR	Jeunesse du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NIV	New International Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
USA	United States of America

[1] Throughout, the present study utilises the standard set of abbreviations for use in Biblical Studies essays as approved by the Society of Biblical Literature. These conventions can be accessed at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~eslinger/genrels/SBLStandAbbrevs.html/>

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THE *SEMAH SEDAQAH* OF JEREMIAH 33:15 AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CONGOLESE LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Motivation for the Research

By birth, I am a Congolese national. Concerning my education, I have studied in Africa, both in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), and in Bangui, Central African Republic, where I completed my MTh degree. My relationships with people of different countries, ethnicities, tribes and families have provided me with diverse life experiences. The history of Portuguese explorers and missionaries who initiated the slave trade in the DR Congo has been a frustrating event which has severely affected people's identity (Church 1971:331-332). In addition, the lack of a re-educative process following the demise of colonial rule has had a direct effect on the country's current political leadership (van Rensburg 1981:415; Borel 1992:368-369). This explains the weakness of the current Congolese political leadership, fuelled by the complicity of the Congolese ruling class with the Western powers in the plundering of State wealth. Furthermore, from my reading, I have considered the evangelisation by Western mission organisations which planted churches in the DR Congo (Hastings 1998:146-157; Burke 2001:44-48). Finally, I have referred to my own experiences while working as a minister in the Scripture Union and the British Baptist Church in the DR Congo for sixteen years from 1988 to 2004, the year I began my doctoral studies in South Africa.

A leadership problem, whether for the State or the church, is clearly perceived in the Congolese community. The leadership, for the most part, does not witness to justice, fairness and peace, harmony or unity (van Rensburg 1981:416). Some church leaders offer positions to people of their own choice without taking into consideration the required ability for the task they have to take up. This lack of justice, righteousness and honesty is perceived by Katho (2003:5) as being due to the Congolese leadership's inadequate—or that at best—superficial knowledge of Yahweh. In my view, something deeper has to be considered as the root cause of this leadership's attitude. Among the Congolese leadership, the interest of the individual, one's ethnic group[2] or circle of influence counts more than that of people's welfare in the community (Boateng 2005:31). Such a reversal of values, I suspect, is one of the reasons associated with the social, political, economic and religious devastation in the DR Congo (Nzongola 2006:224).

From a social and political viewpoint, the crisis in the DR Congo began to worsen from the time of President Mobutu Sésé Seko. The latter took power on November 24, 1965 in a situation of conflict within the State leadership after Independence on the one hand, and external influences on the other (Kalb 1982:379). From the viewpoint of the Western powers,[3] the choice of Mobutu was confirmed when he asked the Russian Embassy to leave the DR Congo within forty eight hours (van Rensburg 1981:432). Despite the external influence in this choice, Mobutu seemed a most competent leader, one who stabilised the socio-political situation in the DR Congo of the time. Mobutu's military and political bravery, together with the socio-economic prosperity of that time brought with it such a sense of pride that no-one could advise him (van Rensburg 1981:433). Mobutu used his cleverness with dishonesty to get what he wanted, especially political power and control over State wealth (Procter 2002:850; Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4).

[2] From a cultural point of view, it can be understood by the fact that people were used to smaller units and defended the wealth and well-being of the in-groups against outsiders. What is required is the ability to see beyond one's tribe that God is the God of all people, a very difficult perspective to learn. As a consequence, people in the DR Congo have to learn to think and act in terms of a new reality, by considering the State as a whole (DR Congo) rather than a single tribe of people. In fact, this situation refers not just to the Congolese leadership and people, but to Africa as a whole, and even the world.

[3] It was particularly the United States of America intelligence community who played an important role in making Mobutu the head of State in the DR Congo (*cf.* van Rensburg 1981:432).

The way Mobutu administered the country was the root cause of the current social devastation of the State. The Mobutu regime allowed a socio-economic crisis to develop which progressively reduced a once proud people to conditions of extreme poverty (Nzongola 2006:225). His absolute power led to the decline of the economy of the State. Furthermore, his desire to accumulate wealth for himself resulted in the nationalisation measures of 1973-1975, leading to what is aptly called *zairianisation*—after Mobutu's new name for the country (Nzongola 2002:149; 2006:224).[4] While nationalisation would have been a way of developing and expanding the financial power of the State, instead it brought a destructive effect because of the *zairianisation* or transfer of State wealth to Mobutu (Nzongola 2002:149).

The Mobutu regime nationalised private enterprises for what it called its "short-sighted interest" (Nzongola 2002:149). Between November 1973 and December 1974, this policy was already causing economic decline within the country. As a result, most sectors of the State administration such as public health, national education and the public service gradually deteriorated (Biaya 1999:146). In addition, the generalised mismanagement of the State institutions due to corruption ruined the political and economic system which eventually became unable to maintain existing service delivery (Nzongola 2002:15). This devastating social situation in the DR Congo caused people to wish for Mobutu's departure from office. The situation gradually worsened, becoming a real struggle from August 1991 up to Mobutu's eventual dismissal on May 17, 1997.[5]

The ideology of Mobutu and his external supporters had created the image of a 'strongman' without whom the DR Congo could no longer be held together (Biaya 1999:145). This is what Mobutu had intended through the diverse external and internal alliances that he had contracted (Nzongola 2002:214).[6] This kind of

[4] *Zairianisation* consisted of confiscating "small and medium-sized enterprises owned by foreign nationals' (including Belgian, Greek, Portuguese, Italian, Pakistani and West African nationals) for the benefit of the Congolese ruling class, senior civil servants and merchants. President Mobutu announced that decree on November 30, 1973." (Nzongola 2002:149).

[5] In May 1997, '*l'Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo (AFDL)* (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo), a rebellious movement led by Laurent Désiré Kabila, took over the leadership of the State (Nzongola 2002:xii).

[6] "The current socio-political conflict and instability in the Great Lakes Region has intensified the Congolese crisis. Such a situation would have been unthinkable if the Congolese State institutions were

leadership in the DR Congo—whether of the State or the church—aroused my motivation to understand the profound reasons that lay behind such behaviour, and how one should propose a new way to restore competent leadership.

The study on *semah* or 'branch,' is designed to indicate the way the OT Prophet Jeremiah understood this key expression in the context of the Judean leadership problem (Brueggemann 2007:35). In this regard, I could point out its relevance for the Congolese leadership situation. The next section introduces the research problem which leads to the present investigation.

1.1. The Research Problem

The focus of this study is to examine Jeremiah's oracle on the "branch of righteousness" (33:15) or "righteous branch" (23:5) and then spell out its significance for the Congolese leadership situation. The central research question is thus as follows:

> How does the branch of righteousness (referring to a 'loyal leader' to come in the context of the Judean restoration) relate to the Congolese leadership renewal?

In addition, the response to this central research question depends on some other important questions that need to be addressed:

i. How is *semah sedaqah* used in Jeremiah's royal oracle in Jeremiah 23:5-6 and 33:14-16?
ii. What is the socio-political context of Jeremiah's oracle on *semah*?
iii. What is the broader use of *semah* in Jeremiah (23:5-6; 33:14-16); Isaiah (4:2; 11:1-2) and in the royal oracle in Zechariah (3:8; 6:12)?
iv. What is the link between the *semah sedaqah* and the Davidic kingship?

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functioning in a normal way as agencies of governance and national security, rather than a 'Mafia-type' organisation serving the selfish interests of President Mobutu and his associates, particularly his military generals" (Nzongola 2002:214).

v. How do these biblical texts speak to the Congolese context and the issues of leadership?

Responses to these questions will shed light on how to move forward on the subject of my concern in this study. The next section concerns the literature review on the issue.

1.2. Literature Review

This section consists of presenting the way four selected scholars understand the use of *semah* in Jeremiah's oracle. First, I will point out the comprehension of *semah* by the four selected scholars who have studied this image in Jeremiah's prophecy. Second, I will synthesise their main ideas. Third, I will analyse these ideas and put forward my own contribution to the work of the preceding scholars in OT studies.

1.2.1. The Comprehension of *Semah*

Many prominent scholars have already done research in this field. I underline, in this section, the views of four scholars who have studied *semah* in Jeremiah's prophecy. These are: William McKane (1996), Martin G. Abegg (1997), Walter Brueggemann (1998), and William J. Dumbrell (2002).

Concerning the 'loyal king' to come (33:14-16), McKane (1996:861) argues that it is Yahweh who will implement the promise of prosperity he made to Israel and Judah (29:10). Yahweh will sprout forth a 'righteous branch,' *semah saddiq* (23:5) or a 'branch of righteousness,' *semah sedaqah* (33:15). Contrary to McKane, Wessels (1991:234) citing Wildberger (1972:154) understands that *semah* is found in the texts after the Exile (Isa. 6:2). In Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12, the image dates back to 520 BCE. This said, McKane (1996:860-863) nevertheless asserts that the oracle on 'branch'[7] in Jeremiah 23:5-6 is originally from Jeremiah, especially during Zedekiah's time.

[7] Helmer Ringgren (2003:412), states "that the Targum translates *semah* as Messiah sprouting forth from the Davidic line. The one who will do what is right and just in the land" He goes on to indicate, "the way this text was re-interpreted in the Jewish even the Christian context" which is not the meaning

McKane (1996:861) further indicates that Volz adopts the reading of *semah saddiq*, 'righteous branch' in 33:15 as found in a few Hebrew manuscripts. On the other hand, McKane (1996:861) citing Giesebrecht notices the two adjoining occurrences of *sedaqah*, 'righteousness.' Some translations, such as the Peshitta, assimilate *semah sedaqah*, 'branch of righteousness' to *semah saddiq*, 'righteous branch' (*cf.* 33:15; 23:5). The oracle states that Judah will be safe and Jerusalem will dwell in security (v. 16). In Jeremiah 23:6, "Yahweh is our righteousness" is the name of the 'loyal king' to come. In this verse, Jerusalem appears instead of Israel (*cf.* "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" in Jer. 33:14). The change in both verses (33:16; 23:6) emphasises the prominent role that Jerusalem plays as the centre of social, political and religious life in Israel (Thompson 1981:490). These adjustments in 33:16 may be connected with the association of the priesthood and the Davidic king. It seems to present a particular intention in favour of the priesthood (33:14-22). This suggests a close relationship between the civil and priestly leadership at the time of the 'loyal king' to come in 23:5. These changes are connected with a shift of interest from an individual 'loyal king' who inaugurates an enduring Davidic dynasty (2 Sam. 7:16) (Brueggemann 2007:129).

For his part, Abegg (1997:815) claims that *semah* means 'growth' and is thus used as a figure for the growth of God's word (Isa. 55:10), righteousness and praise (Isa. 61:11), and Israel (Ezek. 17:6). In its metaphoric sense, *semah* means a springing or sprouting forth of salvation and desire (2 Sam. 23:5). It also means a 'bringing forth of righteousness' (Isa. 45:8; 61:11), fulfilment of prophecy (Isa. 42:9; 43:19), Israel's descendants (Isa. 44:4), healing, reconciliation (Isa. 58:8) and truth (Psa. 85:11[12], [etc…]). Moreover, in Isaiah 4:2, we read at that time, "the branch of the Lord will be pleasant and majestic." Most modern commentators have determined that the verse refers only to the restoration of the land (Watts 1985:50). Others have assumed a messianic interpretation for the passage, a determination that finds early support in the Targum, *Mesiha Adonay* meaning 'Messiah of the Lord' (1985:49). From the context of the Ancient Near East, *semah* denotes the Messiah or the Anointed One from the Davidic line (Jer. 23:5; 33:15). In this respect, Thompson (1981:490) holds that, in

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in Jeremiah's time. The targumic interpretations, in my view, are examples of contextualisation and actualisation.

the OT and the later rabbinic writings, there are two ways of understanding the Messiah:

i. The Messiah as a person to come (v. 5);
ii. The Messianic era will be a time during which the Judean leadership and people will be restored (v. 6).

Abegg (1997:816) holds that the Septuagint (LXX) translates *semah*, in the texts of my interest, as *anatolē* which means 'the rising, sunrise or east.' This *semah* is also commonly used metaphorically to denote a theophany, a manifestation of God.[8] Xavier Léon-Dufour (1973:354) confirms this view that through the Messiah to come Yahweh planned to fulfil the restoration of his people.

For Brueggemann (1998:206), there are two related promises in Jeremiah 23:2b-6. The first concerns the current Judean leadership which had dispersed the people. In this respect, Yahweh will bring his people back to their home land where they will prosper (vv. 2b-4). The second consists of the arrival of a 'loyal leader' who will restore everything in the Judean community (vv. 5-6). The issue, in this unit (vv. 1-6), is that the problem of being 'scattered' (vv. 1-2a) is sorted out by the verb 'gather' (v. 3). Together, the two verbs refer to the metaphor of sheep which means the Judean people. The gathering of the sheep (as in John 10:1-18) refers especially to the ending of the punishment of the Exile. It is only after the gathering that new 'shepherds' would be established, leaders who would do what is right and just in the community. Thompson (1980:601) sustains Brueggemann's view with regard to *semah* which refers to a 'legitimate ruler' to come who would rule over the people justly.

The gathering from the Exile would be God's own action. Nevertheless, the first fulfilment regarding the 'ideal leaders' will be human shepherds or leaders who are reconciled with Yahweh and committed to restore the community. A double image of Yahweh as shepherd, and that of human shepherd chosen by Yahweh, reflects a tension (also seen in Ezek. 34:23-24). The disaster of the Exile was perceived by

[8] As Abegg (1997:816) notes, "The epiphany is also the manifestation of Christ in the flesh as referred to in Christian tradition" *cf.* Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Matt. 10:17-23, 34-36; 24:8; Mark 13:8; Rom. 8:17-18; 2 Cor 4:16-17; I Thess. 3:3-5; Isa. 4:2; 11:1-2; Zech. 3:8; 6:12 and Luke 1:78 (Abegg 1997:816; Juel 2003:890).

certain Judean people as God having ended his history with them (Brueggemann 1998:206). In this devastating social situation, Jeremiah's promise holds together the power of God creating 'newness' in the community. A new community (in which God gathers the remnant of his people) is considered as a real historical possibility.

In the second promise (23:5-6), Brueggemann (1998:207) claims that it is the most explicit Davidic promise in Jeremiah's tradition (*cf.* also 33:14-16). The notion of a royal 'branch' or 'shoot' is more appropriately expected in the tradition of Isaiah (*cf.* Isa. 11:1-2). This promise is powerful and pervasive, as it is in the Jeremiah tradition. The promise suggests that God has not finally abandoned his commitment to the Davidic house. The Davidic possibility is expected in terms of a 'loyal leader' to come. He would practise social justice, righteousness as required in 22:3 and rejected in 22:13-14. Thompson (1980:490) confirms Brueggemann's view in relating the tradition of Isaiah and Jeremiah in terms of the time of a new social order in Judah (see Isa. 11:1-5 and 6-16; Jer. 23:6). During the time of this king to come (23:6), the people would be obedient in making public life possible.

Dumbrell (2002:147) discusses two chapters, Jeremiah 32-33, which conclude the Book of Consolation. This conclusion is about the promise of the Judean community restoration. The text in Jeremiah 32:1-5 records Jeremiah in confrontation with Zedekiah, the last Davidic king in Judah. Zedekiah is alone among the kings in this book who seeks the word from Yahweh, but lacks the will to respond. Hence, the word of the Lord through Jeremiah was beyond the king's understanding. In sustaining the view of Robinson (2001:183), Dumbrell (2002:148) understands that the Judean leadership and people were unable to obey God's instructions. For this to happen, it would require a change of heart. Due to their inability to change, the Judean leadership and people reverted back to their old ways of behaviour. The Exile had thus become inevitable.

A field bought by Jeremiah in Anathoth symbolises a return to normal life that would begin again in the land (32:6-15). The rest of the chapter, in two parallel speeches (vv. 16-25 and 27-44), is a meditation on this logic. Jeremiah prays "nothing is difficult to you" (v. 17), and Yahweh responds rhetorically: "is any thing difficult to me" (v. 27)? It suggests that although the Judean social situation was in a state of

devastation, Yahweh is above it. Jeremiah's supplication (vv. 16-25) appeals to Yahweh's dealings with the covenanted people. Yahweh (vv. 27-44), thus calls to mind Israel's earlier blessing, laments its present apostasy, and stresses the inevitability of divine judgment. The hope of a new future comes in vv. 36-44 with an illogical use of *laken*, 'therefore.' It indicates that, despite the past, Yahweh will ensure a future for Yahweh's people (Dumbrell 2002:147).

Jeremiah 33 adds only a little to the preceding picture. The Exile is inevitable, but there is hope of a Davidic reestablishment following Yahweh's metering out of punishment. Although Yahweh is sending his people away from their homeland, Yahweh will nevertheless bring them back from captivity (v. 26) (Brueggemann 2007:122). The chapter closes with a divine assurance that the Davidic dynasty in Judah will continue (v. 26). There is a new fixity of purpose in this chapter. Its new order (with its background in the unconditional promises to Noah in Gen. 8:21-22; 9:8-17) illustrates the indisputability of the new relationship between Yahweh and his people (Jer. 33:23-26). Jeremiah presents the message which earlier had been criticised. No one would expect that a new covenant would have better success than the old (Dumbrell 2002:147).

1.2.2. The Main Ideas of these Four Scholars

These four scholars have done some profound work on Jeremiah's prophecy, particularly on the interpretation of *semah*. Jeremiah speaks particularly of "righteous branch" (23:5) and "branch of righteousness" (33:15) from David's line. On this specific subject, they have converged towards a similar result.

Yahweh will implement the promise of prosperity made to Israel and Judah. The coming 'leader' from the Davidic line will execute social justice in the land. The people, under this leader's authority, will dwell in safety and security. The *semah*, referring to the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leader' (in germination imagery) is also used as a figure for the growth of God's word (Abegg 1997:815). Here, it is used in the metaphoric sense of a 'branch' sprouting forth the restoration of the socio-political and religious situation in Zion-Jerusalem. It also refers to the people's reconciliation with Yahweh as well as an indication of their inner healing (Abegg 1997:815). In this

respect, the promise on the restoration of Judah consists of the prosperity of the people and community. The promise of the 'loyal leader' to come consists therefore of the Judean State prosperity, reflecting as it does, good governance through a 'loyal leadership' from the Davidic line (Reimer 1997:758).

Some scholars argue that the passage (23:5) refers only to the restoration of the land, while still others assume a messianic interpretation for the passage (Lundbom 2004:171, 537). In my view, these two aspects are interlinked. The promise consists of the restoration of leadership and the return of social order to the land. Social restoration derives from a fair administration and management of the State by a 'loyal leadership.' This understanding of Jeremiah's oracle is the primary interest of this study. It denotes God's sovereignty in bringing forth a 'loyal leadership' in the community.

There are two related promises in Jeremiah's oracle. First, in 23:2b-4 the promise refers to the ending of Exile. The text presents a particular aspect of 'human leadership' ruling over the chosen people on behalf of Yahweh the 'true leader.' Despite an imminent disaster, there is hope for the people to regain their homeland (Couturier 2005:284). This hope consists of a restoration of the social order in Zion-Jerusalem. The new social order includes care for the people in contrast of what existed before the Exile. This promise ties in with God's power to create newness and an actual possibility (Robinson 2001:183).

Second, in 23:5-6 and 33:14-16, the promise is the most explicit in the prophetic tradition of Jeremiah. The promise of the 'loyal leader' is powerful and pervasive in Jeremiah's oracle. It is about a 'true leadership' to come who would witness obedience and make public life possible in the community (Nel 1997:132). The restoration of a valid way of life has become the expectation in the community. This promise is about the restoration of the Judean leadership, its people and society. For Jeremiah, the fulfilment of such a promise comes through a learning experience. The promise is that one day normal life would be resumed in the land. Although the Exile is inevitable (because of the attitude of Judean leadership and people) there is hope for a return to the homeland (Dempsey 2007:34). The divine providence is that a Davidic leadership would continue (33:26).

1.2.3. An Analysis of my Understanding of 'Branch'

The four selected scholars have pointed out the Judean socio-political and religious situation during the time of Jeremiah. Politically, Judah was successively submitted to Egypt and Babylon. The issue is to know the constraints that prevented the Judean leadership from serving Yahweh and developing public life in the community.

The 'branch' symbolises the raising up of a 'loyal leader' to come. It suggests a release of the current leadership from office. The sprouting forth of the 'loyal leader' brings hope in the midst of the people. There is restoration because of the devastating social situation created by the unfair rule of the Judean kings as well as the disaster of the Exile. The punishment Yahweh inflicted on his people opened a perspective of hope to the Judeans. The 'loyal leader' will come to establish justice, fairness, peace, harmony, unity and prosperity in the community. This contrasts to the way the current kings had ruled over the people.

The sprouting forth of the 'loyal leader' would remove insecurity and fear in the land. He would bring forth newness as a result of social order returning to the community. In society, the raising up of the 'branch' would bring forth unity, collaboration, harmony and reconciliation of the people with Yahweh and with one another. It would be also create a healing opportunity for both the people and society. It would be Yahweh creating newness among his people. He would provide his people with a change of heart. This would enable people to obey God's instructions. Thus, the promise on *semah* in Jeremiah (referring to the restoration of social life in the land) is of relevant to this study.

My understanding of *semah* embodies a political ideo-theological option referring to the lack of social justice in the DR Congo. This would influence the interpretive process. Jonathan Draper (2002:18) speaks of the third pole represented by the appropriative reader; while Gerald West (2009:250) speaks of the 'reader' who facilitates the text taken in its context to 'converse' with 'the context.' West says that 'the 'reader' plays a role of moderator between the text and the context' in the appropriative process (2009:252). This understanding allows me to 'moderate' the

dialogue between the texts on 'branch' in their contexts and the Congolese leadership context.

The new aspect of my contribution in African biblical studies consists of engaging the context of 'branch' and that of the Congolese leadership in conversation with one another (*cf.* West 2009:250). Justin S. Ukpong's contextual hermeneutics does not differ from that of Draper. Nevertheless, the latter brings clarity to Ukpong's approach when he specifies the existence of a third pole. West (2009:249-252) specifies that the third pole is a step in which an "appropriative reader" enables the context of texts and that of the reader to mutually dialogue. To achieve this purpose, I define in the next section the way the structure of this present study will be built.

1.3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study follows a contextual theoretical framework in that it foregrounds the Congolese leadership context as a locus of interpretation for Jeremiah's oracle on *semah* in the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah (Ukpong 2000:16).

My use of Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics follows some particularities. Ukpong focuses on two contexts as poles that determine the interpretive instruments in his contextual process. Draper (2002:18) brings one more pole to those of Ukpong. West (2009:250-252) highlights the role played by Draper's third pole in the interpretive process. He holds that the third pole is the supervisor that directs, fixes, even influences the choice of the interpretive process. West (2009:250) affirms that the appropriative reader shapes the interpretation because of her or his ideo-theological option on the biblical text. As far as my work is concerned, the third pole is of particular significance for this study, in that it highlights the use of the inculturation hermeneutics of Justin Ukpong. My particular option in this study therefore is towards social justice as it should have been applied by the State and church leadership.

The three prominent scholars, to whom I refer above, provide me with insights that allow me to engage my distinctive way of using Ukpong's contextual reading of biblical texts. Ukpong's contextual reading process focuses on the use of the biblical

text in its context and the reader in her or his context. The interaction of the two components is a key role player of the explanation of texts on *semah* (Ukpong 2001:18).[9] I adopt, in my case, the third pole of Draper which clarifies the role played by an 'appropriative reader' of the texts. In this regard, I am allowed to moderate the dialogue between the texts on *semah* in their contexts and the context of leadership in the DR Congo. I consider the two contextual poles as two sets of protagonists which mirror one another. In this process, the texts on *semah* and their contexts come first. The Congolese leadership situation is brought to the texts and their contexts in a mutual illuminating relationship. There is symmetry and similarity between the two poles being mirrored in each other, namely the Congolese leadership context being mirrored in texts on *semah* and their contexts reflecting the corresponding social problems that help in the appropriative process (West 2009:253). Ukpong (2001:25-26) says that the interaction of these two contexts concern any area, whether that be a religious or secular domain in the community.

In this research project, I will first discuss the socio-historical context of Judean leadership in Jeremiah's time. Second, I will analyse the texts on *semah* in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah. In focusing particularly on Jeremiah's texts, I will use a synchronic approach. This means that I have taken the Masoretic text as it is without exploring its origin, development or any change in its transmission process, from the oral preaching to its final text. In other words, I do not follow a rigorous study of the texts discussing the form, source and redaction criticism in order to discover the genesis of the text (Stuhlmacher 1979:19, 34; Adamo 2008:577). In this regard, I will pay special attention to the literary context of the texts under study (Adamo 2008:578). I will briefly include some questions regarding the historical context of texts (2008:578). Third, I will provide a synthesis of the Judean leadership during the time of Jeremiah. In these regard, the analysed context of the leadership in the DR Congo and the biblical texts in their respective contexts will be mirrored in each other to determine the appropriative process.

[9] "Ukpong's basic hermeneutic theory is that the meaning of a text is a function of the interaction between the text in its context and the reader in his or her context." This means "there is no absolute meaning of a text to be recovered." There are not two distinctive process of recovery of meaning and application in a context. It is one process in which "a reader should be critically aware" of her or his context interacting with the text (Snyman 2003:383).

I am aware that a strong emphasis on synchronic reading appears to de-contextualise the text of Jeremiah (as well as in the books of Isaiah and Zechariah) from their social historical context. Nevertheless, my third and fifth chapters will expand on the broad socio-historical context of Jeremiah's ministry. These aforementioned chapters fill the gap (with regard to the socio-historical context of Jeremiah's texts) caused by the use of my synchronic reading of the texts. For reasons of my particular focus on Jeremiah's oracle, I do not discuss the socio-historical context of Isaiah's and Zechariah's ministries. Nevertheless, the historical and literary contexts of the related texts under study in the book of Isaiah and that of Zechariah expand the socio-historical context of the 'branch' as focused on the book of Jeremiah (Ukpong 2000:17). This has prepared an expanded context for a contextual reading of the texts on *semah*. In this respect, I will first locate, in chapter three, the socio-political and religious context which elicited the oracle on *semah* in Jeremiah. Second, I will analyse, in chapter four, the texts on *semah* and their literary and historical contexts in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah. Third, through a contextual reading process in chapter seven, I will draw from a dialogue of the 'textual and contextual poles' (West 2009:250), a renewed vision of leadership in the State and church in the Congo. This process will engage texts on 'branch' and the current Congolese leadership context into dialogue. In this regard, I will set my work alongside modern OT scholarship, with special reference to the oracle of Jeremiah. In this, I trust to make a meaningful contribution to African biblical study.

1.4. Research Limitations

For reasons of economic constraint and the socio-political insecurity in the DR Congo, I was unable to conduct field research. As a result, I had to draw material for this study from published works concerning the State and church in Africa in general, and the DR Congo in particular (van Rensburg 1981:413-445; Hastings 1998:145-157). I have considered, as well, my own experience from the country and church. The relevance of the findings of this study is within the confines of the restoration of the current Congolese leadership situation. This situation worsened, particularly, during the last period of the Mobutu regime, from 1975 to the present day.

1.5. Research Ethics

This research project does not involve field work or interviews. When I share things regarding the life experiences of some people from my home church or State leadership, I maintain anonymity.

1.6. Outline of the Present Study

This study is presented in the following stages:

- **Chapter One:** I introduce my work in showing how this study is undertaken;
- **Chapter Two:** I discuss the inculturation hermeneutics of Ukpong, Draper and West. The focus is on its significance for the present study on *semah sedaqah* in Jeremiah's oracle;
- **Chapter Three:** I discuss the socio-historical context which elicited Jeremiah's oracle on 'branch';
- **Chapter Four:** I analyse the texts on *semah*[10] in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah. The focus is on the socio-political, cultural and religious implications of *semah*, in Judean leadership during the time of Jeremiah;
- **Chapter Five:** I synthesise the leadership and Davidic kingship in the context of Jeremiah's oracle;
- **Chapter Six:** I discuss the leadership situation in the DR Congo:
- **Chapter Seven:** Here by using an appropriative reading following Ukpong's model as clarified by Draper's third pole, I assume being a reader in the context (Draper 2002:18);
- **Chapter Eight:** Finally, I make some general conclusions through which I seek to provide some propositions that could improve the socio-economic development of the DR Congo.

[10] Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Isa. 4:2; 11:1-2; Zech. 3:8; 6:12 (Ringgren 2003:412)

CHAPTER TWO

THE INCULTURATION HERMENEUTICS OF JUSTIN S. UKPONG

1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the inculturation hermeneutics as a contextual method. Here, I will build upon Ukpong's hermeneutics (2000:16; Snyman 2003:383 citing Ukpong 2000a:24; 2000b:591), and developed by Draper (2002) and West (2009). It is hoped that through this work, a way of restoring the church and State leadership in the DR Congo will be found.

1.1. Preparation for Inculturation Hermeneutics

In preparation for inculturation hermeneutics, I will discuss in the next section both the traditions of hermeneutics and contextual approaches. These processes determine the way many scholars treat biblical texts (Draper 1991:242).

2. The Traditions of Hermeneutics

Western hermeneutics, as a science of text explanation, has its origins in the Greek approaches to literature, especially in Hellenistic Alexandria. As Fitzmyer confirms (1995:109-112) "Greek interpreters of the time liked a coherent text explanation, which they wanted consistent in style and grammar." Hence, they sought to define the principles of interpreting biblical texts.

From the eighteenth century onwards interpretation of biblical texts was assimilated to the secular classical model (Draper 2002:15; Adamo 2008:577). Interpretation now became a means of understanding the Scriptures in "their world in which they were

written" (Draper 1991:242). However, this interpretation should be made possible by the reader's ability to enter into the cultural world and mind of the authors that influences his or her reading of texts. As Draper (2002:16) further confirms, such a reading runs "a serious risk of self-deception."

Later authors such as Bultmann used a demythologisation process, by which they aim at making the transition from the culture of the text to the reader's culture (Fitzmyer 1995:115-6). This awareness of the difference in culture and the challenge to read the texts from the cultural (and socio-political) context of the readers had prepared for our current contextual reading.

2.1. Contextual Approaches

This section indicates some common approaches which are important in the contextual reading of texts. These are: rhetorical, sociological, psychoanalytic, and phenomenological criticism (Brown and Schneiders 2000:1159-60).

2.1.1. Rhetorical Criticism

As Brown and Schneiders can observe:

> The basic principle of rhetorical criticism is that texts must reveal the contexts of both the author, and of the reader (2000:1159).

The text is analysed in the way that the communicative aims were achieved in the world in which the text was written. The interpretation of the text thus reflects on the situation of its readers. This assumes that the interpretation of texts is aimed at influencing particular listeners or readers in any situation (Brown and Schneiders 2000:1159).

2.1.2. Sociological and Psychoanalytic Criticism

As Brown and Schneiders contend, "Sociological criticism seeks to investigate reading as an essentially collective phenomenon in which the individual reading is

part of a 'reading public' with particular socio-historical characteristics that influence the process of interpretation" (Brown and Schneiders 2000:1160). "Psychoanalytic criticism" emphasises on the influence of "personality and personal history" in the interpretive process (Brown and Schneiders 2000:1160).

2.1.3. Phenomenological Criticism

This approach places a particular accent "on the interaction of the reader with the text in the reading process" (Brown and Schneiders 2000:1160). In so doing, the text is 'actualised.' It implies that the text presents a 'potentiality' to address any particular situation of the reader.

2.1.4. Liberationist and Feminist Studies

Liberationist and Feminist studies have largely contributed to the contextual reading of biblical texts in both Testaments. They use a full hermeneutical range of methods of text interpretation. An interesting aspect of these studies is that they "work towards socio-cultural and religious change" (Brown and Schneiders 2000:1162).

2.1.5. The Interconnection between these Readings

The aforementioned readings have been a preparation for the inculturation hermeneutics that Ukpong names the contextual reading of biblical texts. Ukpong (2002:12) speaks also of the contextual methodology or inculturation hermeneutics. To explore this approach, first, I discuss the inculturation hermeneutics of Justin Ukpong. Second, I indicate its difference from other contextual readings. Third, I spell out its significance in my work. Finally, I indicate my distinctive way of using Ukpong's contextual reading.

3. The Inculturation Hermeneutics of Justin S. Ukpong[11]

In describing his method, Ukpong singles out four components: the interpreter or reader, the reader's context, the text and the conceptual framework.

3.1. The Interpreter

The interpreter or reader is the first element of Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics. He argues that the biblical texts should be read through a grid developed within the reader's socio-cultural context (Barton 1984:19-35; Ukpong 2000:16). Ukpong (1995:5) says that the reader has his or her ideological background which influences the interpretation. This is the factor which Draper (2002:16-8) "develops as the third pole of his contextual exegesis and as the final step." A reader is 'an inside actor' to the culture for which 'the appropriation of the text' is realised. This "inside reader should be both assimilated to the culture and able to challenge it as well."[12]

In my case, this understanding of the Congolese leadership's culture helps the reader to be aware of ideological-theological background that would influence the interpretation of texts on *semah*. As West can confirm:

> The appropriative process follows the choice made by the reader who 'engages' the text and the context into dialogue (2009:253).

In this respect, West (2009:258) further argues that the reader connects the text and the context through his or her "ideo-theological appropriation." Ukpong (2000:18) sees the interpretive process as an interaction between the text in its context and the context of the reader. However, the third pole is a factor that moderates "the appropriative" process of the text. This introduces the importance of the reader's context. As Draper argues:

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[11] A Nigerian biblical scholar, Justin S. Ukpong was educated in Nigeria, Canada and Rome. He is a Roman Catholic priest and lecturer in New Testament at a Roman Catholic Seminary in Nigeria.

[12] Grant LeMarquand, 2004. <http://www.tesm.edu/articles/lemarquand-siblings-or-antagonists.html/> [Accessed November 29, 2004].

> Contextualisation involves spending time analysing who we are and what our location in society and history is. As Africans, we recognise our specific location at the end of a long history of colonial domination, cultural dispossession and economic exploitation (2002:17).

3.2. The Context of the Reader

The use of the term 'context' refers to the surrounding socio-cultural situation of the reader. In my case, it is the Congolese leadership's socio-cultural situation. For example, John Mbiti (1969:108) recognises a collective reality that "defines the existence of an African." Mbiti asserts, "I am because we are." This concept is contrary to the Western world-view of individualism (Draper 2002:15). A Congolese leadership's personality is understood in a "collective context." This will impact on my reading of texts on 'branch' in this study. Adamo (2008:578) explaining Ukpong says:

> African cultural hermeneutics is the interpretation that makes the African social cultural context a subject of interpretation…This interpretation is contextual since interpretation is always done in a particular context.…It means that the analysis of the text is done from the perspective of the African religion, an African worldview, and culture (2002:17-32).

Every interpreter has his or her theological presuppositions due to culture or Western influence. The reader's socio-cultural background is always implied in the explanations of the texts (Draper 2002:18). However, Ukpong (2002:15) does not ignore but uses the Western methods in analysing texts.

3.3. The Text in Ukpong's Method

Some considerations are required in order to approach a biblical text by his method. For Ukpong, the text contains a threefold dimension: it refers to an old book which bears a very ancient and venerated text. The textual and literary contexts are of significance in the interpretive process. The contextual reading of the text brings about social change.

3.3.1. The Bible—A Book of the Past

Being an ancient document, the interpreter must pay attention to the historical context to explain the text. This implies that the analysis of such texts will explore the historical origins of these texts, which will prepare the contextual reading. It clarifies one of the poles of the contextualisation process (Ukpong 2000:17).

3.3.2. The Literary Context

After examining the historical context, a Congolese reader has to be attentive to the textual and literary contexts of the texts on *semah*. These literary aspects are: structure, rhetoric, poetic, narrative features and inner logic which are important to understand the text (Adamo 2008:578). This aspect of the analysis links the African exegete to Western ones. It does not depend on the reader's context but only on the context of the Oracle on 'branch.'

3.3.3. A Transformative Oracle

The Oracles on 'branch' have messages which could transform the readers' lives. This happens in the process of 'appropriation.' African (Congolese) exegetes and those from other developing countries commit themselves to focusing on social change in Africa (Ukpong 2000:17; Adamo 2008:579). They would use the analysis of texts on *semah* as a transforming instrument for the current Congolese leadership situation.

The Oracles on 'branch', as analysed in its socio-cultural context, are of significance for the current leadership situation in the Congo. Jeremiah's promise to the people of the time has a potential power to transform the mind of Congolese leadership for the better (Sugirtharajah 1991:438).[13] Ukpong (2000:17) recognises that the reader's context is a 'partner' to the contextual reading of a text. In entering into the text, it

[13] Sugirtharajah's approach adds an important dimension to the interpretative task; namely, it highlights the need 'for interpreters to have goals'. Liberation hermeneutics has forced interpreters to address themselves constantly to the question of specific goals. According to Sugirtharajah, interpretation is undertaken not primarily to solve intellectual queries: "the paramount concern of hermeneutics is to transform society" (1991:438-9). Here, I specify one can, through interpretation, propose a way to restore the community.

evokes a critical awareness about the current Congolese leadership situation. It provokes the reader to make appropriate reactions, to give responses and to make commitments about the situation.

Taking into account Mbiti's statement, "I am because we are" (1969:108), I am aware of the Congolese leadership situation today. I am involved in the struggle for social justice, peace and prosperity in the DR Congo. In undertaking this contextual reading, my concern is to contribute towards a fruitful reflection on how to restore the State and church leadership in the DR Congo. It would be done through the *rhema* from the texts on *semah*. This provides the Congolese leadership with a possibility to be transformed (Ukpong 1995:7).

3.3.4. Conceptual Framework

The fourth component is the African cultural framework with its basic cultural assumptions (Ukpong (1995:8). Ukpong (1995:8)[14] recognises some aspects of life which are common among all Africans. He focuses on four features of the African worldview:

i. There is continuity between the visible and invisible world;
ii. Africans believe in a divine origin of the universe;
iii. The African existence is defined in a community;
iv. Africans apprehend a concrete reality rather than an abstract one (Ukpong 1995:8; Snyman 2003:383).

3.3.4.1. The Nature of the Visible and Invisible World

Africans (Congolese) have a particular way to apprehend life in the world they live in. In Congolese cultures for instance, a person is considered as composed of a visible and invisible dimension (Okure 1998:10). Ukpong (2002:15) says that Africans do not separate matter from spirit, secular from religious. There is continuity from the

[14] Victor Turner (1974:34-35), states that "a root paradigm is a pattern of assumptions about the fundamental nature of the universe...These assumptions are usually unconscious but become visible in particular times of crisis"

living dead to the living. Bakongo people, in Lower Congo Province (the DR Congo), affirm '*bafua bena yeto kituadi*'[15] which means 'the dead are always with us' (Okure 1998:10).

This reality influences the way Congolese leaders assume their responsibilities in ruling over the State albeit sometimes also in leading the church. The leadership pays great regard to the spirit world as a source of authority and power (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3-4). In this regard, to get out of a difficulty, some leaders consult traditional healers to seek solutions to their problems. However, social problems often require hard work rather than consulting 'religious' or 'spiritists' (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004:4). In point of fact, in many cases the communication with the 'spirit world' presents a particular interest to the Congolese leadership.

3.3.4.2. A Divine Origin for a Two-dimensional Universe

Congolese believe in God whose presence is effective in his creation. The creation is understood as a system which relates God, the world and the rest of the cosmos (Ukpong 2000:17). The two dimensions are God and humanity on the one hand, and the living and living-dead on the other. As Okure can argue:

> Though God is the giver of life, the ancestors mediate this life. Bloodline establishes an unbroken chain of relationship between them and their descendants through the other living dead and elders of the clan (1998:12).

For the Congolese, life is no individual existence; it is a collective phenomenon. Life relates the living people and living-dead from the family (1998:12; LeMarquand 2004:23). This is quite the opposite to the Western conception of life as we can see in the following section (Draper 2002:15).

[15] This language is '*KIYOMBE*', one of the Bakongo ethnic group languages in the Lower Congo Province, DR Congo, but also in South-East of Congo Brazzaville and the North of Angola. *Kiyombe* language is my mother tongue.

3.3.4.3. The Communitarian Character of African Culture

Western philosophy as defined by Descartes *cogito ergo sum* states 'I exist because I think.'[16] It expresses people's particular thinking and being which are individualistic (Draper 2002:15). However, the being of the Congolese people, in their thought system is understood "by '*cognato ergo sum' [sic]* which means 'I am related by blood, I belong to a family therefore, I exist.'"[17] For this, a man or woman is not an isolated individual, but a community individual. Mbiti (1969:108) recognises that the communitarian character of the African culture defines people's 'existence in a community.' It expresses 'I exist within a community.' It implies that a leadership in the Congo acts as 'a network in a group.' For Ukpong, an African 'identity' is constituted by her or his 'belonging' to a group. This explains the way the individual leadership is assimilated with the rest of the team. It reflects also the way the leadership is considered in the Congo. The current difficulties in the Congo reflect from the consequences of the affected cultural identity of the Congolese leadership.

3.3.4.4. The Concrete and Not the Abstract

Congolese thought has a particular accent on the concrete realities instead of on the abstract (Ukpong 1995:9). The African way of thinking does not so much work with abstract concepts. It works with concrete examples, symbols and the importance of stories which relate to the concrete realities of life. This leads the African (Congolese) mind and heart to deeper reflection without any attempt to seize the thinking in clear cut concepts. This defines an aspect of the African being which determines her or his identity (Simpson and Weiner 1989:673). The issue of concrete and abstract impact on the way Africans (Congolese) understand or address several issues. It implies that the stories of good leadership will be more effective than abstract discourses.

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[16] Gamehacking, <http://www.gamehacking.com/sites/aboutces.php/> [Accessed May 26, 2009].
[17] Grant LeMarquand, 2004. Siblings or Antagonists? The Ethos of Biblical Scholarship from the North Atlantic and African Worlds, <http://www.tesm.edu/pubs/writings/Document.2004-03-02.4152592369/siblingsorantagonists/> [Accessed November 29, 2004].
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3.4. The Significance of Ukpong's Method in this Work

The inculturation hermeneutics of Justin Ukpong (as developed by Draper's third pole and highlighted by West) is of benefit to my thesis for four reasons. First, this approach has led me to find a way of doing a contextual reading of the Oracle on 'branch.' In my use of Ukpong, the two contexts of the texts and Congolese leadership are taken as two sets of partners which are mirrored by each other. They illuminate each other. Second, this method explores the historical and literary contexts as analysed following Western historico-critical tools, but I have approached the texts mainly from a literary than from a genetic point of view (Adamo 2008:577). This could be helpful, for Congolese scholars to understand my work about our common situation in our country. Third, the inculturation hermeneutics of Justin Ukpong is important to achieve the purpose I am aiming for in this present study. This method helps me to reflect on the current Congolese leadership situation (in the light of) the social and cultural implications of the 'loyal leadership' to come. Fourth, Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics helps me situate my work within the approaches in Africa since the 1930s, as will be described below.

3.4.1. From the 1930s to the 1970s—Comparative Studies

A real development took place in the methods of biblical explanation in Africa. There are particular aspects which characterise each of those methods. From the 1930s to the 1970s, some reactive and apologetic works are found and focussed on the way to legitimise religions and cultures in Africa. Their starting point was a biblical reading in response to a widespread negative judgment of traditional religions and cultures (in the Congo) by missionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Ukpong 2001:12). In response to that judgmental attitude, some other Westerners and Africans undertook research that sought to legitimise these religions and cultures (2001:12). This was done through comparative studies (Adamo 2008:579). From there on, African cultures and religions came to be recognised as a *praeparatio evangelica* which means 'a preparation for the gospel,' which is a fertile ground for the gospel (Ukpong 2001:14).

3.4.2. From the 1970s to the 1990s

The period, from the 1970s to 1990s, has been one of the most important times of biblical studies in Africa. During this time, the reactive method was replaced by the proactive approach (Ukpong 2000:7). The phrase 'proactive approach' means the way of dealing with the interpretation of the texts in taking positive initiative rather than being mainly defensive. It means that the approach proposes to Africans (Congolese) to take their own responsibility, instead depending on others. This reading uses the African context as a resource in the contextual reading process. In this regard, two main approaches are identified: first, inculturation and second, liberation (Ukpong 2000:7; 2001:14). The liberation movement seeks to address the issue of the oppressed, poor and marginalised people in society. This approach is used, especially, in liberation hermeneutics, Black Theology and Feminist hermeneutics (2001:14; Adamo 2008:579). The inculturation approach is expressed in two models (comparative and evaluative) that Justin Ukpong refers to the Africa-in-the-Bible studies (2001:14).

3.4.2.1. Liberation Hermeneutics

This reading proposes a socio-religious change in society (Fitzmyer 1995:92; Brown and Schneiders 2005:1162). The Bible is used as a resource for struggle against oppression, gender discrimination and marginalised people in society. God does not sanction oppression rather he is on the side of the oppressed.

3.4.2.2. Black Theology

Black Theology addresses the issue of racial discrimination as found in South Africa before 1994. Its starting point is the Black consciousness which raised a critical awareness of Black people's situation (Bennett 1982:174). Black people had to be aware that they possess abilities which inspire them to practise freedom as a major factor leading to be a full human being (Ukpong 2000:12; Hopkins 2002:29). In my view, the people must be healed from the past situation. It implies that the oppressors and the oppressed peoples must meet in face to face relationship for a deep spiritual reconciliation. This is the journey toward a healthy and healed human community

(Hopkins 2002:29). From then on, people can work together and apply democracy in all aspects to develop social sectors of the State.

The starting point is the recognition that the Bible contains a liberating message. So, all oppressive systems are opposed to the biblical message which is the love of God and of one's neighbour. Furthermore, God is always on the side of the oppressed to liberate them (Boesak 1984:149-160; Tutu 1979:166 cited in Ukpong 2001:20).

3.4.2.3. Feminist Hermeneutics

This contextual reading has its genesis in liberation hermeneutics which focuses on women's oppression. The oppressive biblical language "provokes an intense struggle against women's subordination in contemporary society and church life" (Ackerman 1997:63). In this respect, Feminist scholarship has committed itself to play a significant role in the interpretive debate of the Bible. As a result, a contextual model of biblical reading formulates Feminist hermeneutics (Ackerman 1997:65; Ukpong 2000:13). The challenge to contextual womanist reading is that the Scriptures and history of Christianity are interpreted in androcentric terms (Phiri and Nadar 2006:1-3). I remain sensitive to this as a necessary part of my work.

3.4.3. From the 1990s: Ordinary African Readers, Contextual Bible Study and Inculturation Hermeneutics

Since the 1990s, these methodologies have played an important role in the evaluative studies and go forward towards new models. One of them takes ordinary African readers[18] as key actors in the contextual reading process. They seek to fit their process in trained readers' methods of analysing biblical texts (West 1997:111). A contextual Bible study method plays an important role in the African (Congolese) situation (Ukpong 2001:23). In this method, a particular situation of racial oppression and poverty is taken into account, and the Bible is read against this specific situation. Liberation hermeneutics focuses on the Bible, race, class and gender. The

[18] As Adamo can state, "This is the latest approach to African biblical studies championed by two African biblical scholars, Professors Justin Ukpong and David T. Adamo *[sic]* advocate doing biblical studies with the ordinary people. By ordinary people they mean, the poor, the oppressed, the underprivileged, and the untrained in the art of biblical interpretation. They refer to the common people in the community" (2003:26-7).

inculturation hermeneutics focuses on the Bible and culture (1997:111). Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics does not only take ordinary readers as key role players, but also seeks to make their current socio-cultural context the subject of interpretation of the texts (Adamo 2003:27; 2008:578 citing Ukpong 2002:17-32).

3.5. My Procedure of Ukpong's Inculturation Hermeneutics

In his procedure, Ukpong defines four steps of his contextual reading of biblical text. They are as follows:

3.5.1. The Context of Texts and that of the Reader

The first stage of the contextual reading of the Oracle on 'branch' consists of establishing a corresponding link between the historical and literary contexts of the Oracle on *semah* in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah and the readers' Congolese leadership situation (Ukpong 1995:10; Adamo 2008:578). It requires an analysis of both the socio-cultural, political and religious context of texts and that of Congolese leadership. The appropriative reading is our goal in this study. It means that I as a reader appropriate the texts on *semah* in my life as well as to my understanding. Only then can I attempt to share such an appropriation with others, especially with the leadership in the Congo (Draper 2002:18).

3.5.2. Exploring the Context of Interpretation

The current Congolese leadership context presents different images which reflect in the Oracle on *semah* and its contexts (Ukpong 2002:22). Furthermore, these various features reflect several aspects of socio-political, cultural and religious life in the Congo. The better the two contexts are analysed the more they reflect in each other and provide the Congolese leadership with insight of ruling over the State or leading the church justly (Adamo 2008:579).

3.5.3. An Historical Analysis of Texts

The third stage consists of analysing the literary and historical contexts of texts on *semah*. Ukpong (2002:19-21) does not differ from Western exegetes by the way he does textual analysis. He differentiates from Western exegetes when he goes forwards to his contextual reading in the African (Congolese) perspective (Ukpong 1995:12). In my analysis of the texts, I focus on synchronic reading rather than on a detailed exploration of the historical or genetic dimensions of the texts.

3.5.4. Actualising the Social Implications of the Text

A contextual reading results from the interaction of the two contexts. In my use of Ukpong, it results from a mutual reflection which provides the Congolese leadership with insight of achieving social justice, peace, health and prosperity in society (Adamo 2005:125). The different images from the analysed current Congolese leadership are highlighted by the analysed texts on *semah* in its contexts (Ukpong 1995:12). The goal of this contextual reading of the Oracle on *semah* is to actualise the oracular message in the current Congolese leadership and community. This stage leads the reader to find what counts (from the analysis of the texts in its contexts) as response to the Congolese leadership situation. West (2009:250), highlighting the role played by Draper's third pole, says that an "appropriative reader makes" the text in its context and the reader's context to "mutually engage." This process aims at appropriating the message, relating it to a lived faith (Draper 2002:18), in order to show a way of restoring the leadership in the Congo.

Finally, I will develop some of the insights which have emerged from the 'appropriative process.' The new suggestions received from the texts in their contexts of the Oracle on *semah* challenge the Congolese leadership. In other words, the leadership commitment suggested in this work would promote a country's leadership standard. Indeed, 'the Bible is life-oriented' and its contextual reading leads the scholar to be transformed and to transform the community in the light of Scriptures (Ukpong 1995:13). This is the procedure of Ukpong's contextual reading as I apply it in this work. This contextual reading process builds the structure and describes the method used in this thesis.

3.6. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has essentially shown how I build my theoretical framework based upon the hermeneutical work of Ukpong. I have pointed out some contextual approaches as a preparation for the reading of *semah* texts in Jeremiah and related texts following Ukpong's model. I have described this method which takes into account the reader's context, and that of the texts on 'branch.' In Ukpong's contextual reading, the context is first of all that of the reader, and then the context of texts. Draper (2002:16) calls each of these 'poles' and goes further to identify the reader as the third 'pole' in the contextual reading process. West (2009:248) clarifies the third pole's role which is that of the reader who orders the texts and contexts to dialogue. In this regard, he argues that a reader brings his or her ideo-theological conception into the appropriative process. In support of these scholars I have more clarity to use Ukpong's contextual reading. I have defined a way of using Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics which is at the same time similar and different. It is similar because it 'engages' the text in its context and the reader's context in the interpretive process. My use of Ukpong's contextual reading is different because it is made clearer that the appropriative process is realised by me, the reader, by letting the texts and the present context mirror in each other following my particular concerns and commitments in reading the texts. The text and context are considered being symmetric in their face to face relationship of partners that illuminate one another. This will suggest to the Congolese leadership a new way of managing the State or leading the church.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JEREMIAH

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the socio-historical context of Judean kingship during the time of Jeremiah. An analysis of the rule of the Judean kings at that time is of particular significance to this study. The socio-historical context of both the Judean leadership and its people had motivated Jeremiah's oracle on the *semah*. *Semah* symbolises the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leader' to come from the Davidic line. A 'loyal ruler' was promised during the time that the Judean rulers were in office (Brueggemann 2007:129). It suggests a removal of the Judean kings from office. To point out the real problem that elicited the royal oracle, I discuss the kings' rule during the time of Jeremiah. This was from Josiah (640-609 BCE) to Zedekiah (597-587 BCE) on the Judean throne (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2005:1233).

As regards structure, I will first discuss the external socio-political influence on Judah. Second, I will point out the internal socio-political situation. Third, I will discuss the socio-religious situation during the period in question.

2. The External Socio-political Influence upon Judah

Interference by other great empires from outside Judah's socio-political and religious life was disturbing its public life, governance and running of Zion-Jerusalem, thereby ruining the efficiency of the monarchy of Judah. Judean leaders were influenced by those empires which had control over them. In Jeremiah's day, these influences were exercised successively by Assyria, Egypt, and Babylonia (Schniedewind 2004:150). As a result of such influences, the Judean leaders lacked freedom and personal vision in the running of Judah. The question thus arises as to what was the issue among the

leadership during the time of Jeremiah? In order to respond adequately to this question, it will be necessary to describe the external politics that impacted on Judean society. The focus of this present study is on the leadership during the time of Jeremiah. It was at this time that the inhabitants of the northern kingdom of Israel had already been deported to Assyria. The next subsection will survey the Assyrian influence on Judah.

2.1. Assyria

In 725 BCE, King Hoshea of Israel, encouraged by Egypt, attempted to ignore Assyrian demands for tribute. Assyrian soldiers had occupied Israel and began a three-year siege of Samaria, its capital city. When Samaria fell in 722 BCE, Shalmaneser—considered by the biblical historian as the conqueror of Samaria (2 Kings 17)—was to perish. As a result, Sargon, the successor to the Assyrian throne claimed the victory (Larue 1969:40-43; Boardman 1991:339-340).

Thousands of captive Israelites were deported to the Assyrian province of Guzanu not far from the Lake Urmia. Refugees from other parts of the Assyrian Empire were settled in Israel (Boardman 1991:340). A Chaldean chieftain (Merodach Baladan) was proclaimed king and held the Assyrian throne for ten years (Larue 1969:42).

Sargon was facing insurrection in Babylon. He had become busy in defending various frontier battles against the Syrians (Larue 1969:43). This difficult period in the Assyrian Empire gave opportunity for Judah to continue to enjoy its freedom, a period that lasted no more than that of Sargon's lifetime (Boardman 1991:339). The latter had his attention engaged more in Babylonia, in the east and north. Assyrian armies moved on Babylon. Northern Babylon threw open their gates in welcome. In 703 BCE, Merodach fled from Babylon. The city was ready to welcome Sennacherib, Sargon's son, to the throne (Larue 1969:43; Boardman 1991:340).

Political conquests led by Assyria had for some time been disturbing the socio-economic and religious life of kingdoms in the Ancient Near East. Israel and Judah were therefore weakened in many aspects by these external interferences (Schniedewind 2004:150-152). Furthermore, the Judean dependence on these external

powers weakened the leadership in Judah. Judah had become a vassal State to the Assyrians and had to pay its annual tribute (Larue 1969:40; Farisani 2008:71). After the Assyrian reign, Babylon took power over Judah within a short period. This was also a time during which Egypt exercised its influence upon Judah (Terblanche 2008:482). Babylon controlled Judah up to the fall of Zion-Jerusalem in 587 BCE (Terblanche 2008:483). The next subsection discusses the political influence exercised by the Babylonian Empire.

2.2. Babylon

Babylon[19] appears in biblical texts from Genesis to Revelation and is described not only as an enemy of Judah, but also as a symbol of an anti-God power.[20] In this respect, the socio-political influence of Babylon upon Judah gives the reason why the leadership and people during the time of Jeremiah turned away from following God's instructions. The Babylonian influence upon the people of Judea required them to adopt and worship their gods (Schearing 1992:586; Ackerman 1993:389). Here I will focus on the Babylonian control over Judah and its impact on the Judean leadership. Despite God's instruction to maintain the covenant Yahweh made with his people, Judah was overly influenced by the political system of the day. In my view, the Mesopotamian context of life had a substantial impact on the Judean leadership and people (Bottéro 2001:13, 15). The socio-cultural relationship between the Mesopotamian world and the Hebrew kingdoms is perceived in writings and some aspects of public life. As Larue confirms:

> From the research of archaeologists and linguists we have discovered the breadth of the cultural relationship between the Mesopotamian world and the Hebrew-Jewish kingdoms, discernible in writings such as the responses of wisdom writers to the problem of theodicy, in the structure of psalmody, in historiography and in legal precepts (1969: ix).

[19] As Moorey (1984:27) can state, "Babylon is the current southern region of Baghdad in Iraq. Any attempt to describe the material culture of Babylonia, from centuries 1200-600 BCE is handicapped by the absence of coherent archaeological sequences at the major excavated sites: Babylon, Kish, Nippur, Sippar, Ur and Uruk. Often the massive building operations of the later centuries obliterated vestiges of this whole period."

[20] Jer. 50:1, 8, 25, 35, 45; 1 Pet. 5:13.

In one sense, the resemblance between their cultures easily influenced the people of God, causing them to adopt a lifestyle related to the politics of the great powers of Mesopotamia. As Gray points out:

> The influence of Mesopotamian on Hebrew thought is apparent in the use, particularly in the poetic parts of the Old Testament, of the imagery and theme of triumph of cosmos over chaos expressed in creation, as in the Babylonian myth *enuma elish* 'when on high […]'. Life in Mesopotamia is well illustrated by legal rescripts from the time of Hammurabi and from his celebrated law-code. This, though not only code nor even the earliest, gives a very comprehensive picture of society in the Babylonian city-State in the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries BCE (1962:40-42).

A close relationship between the peoples of the Mesopotamian world was perceived, whereby Babylon and Assyria had interconnected reputations and cultures (Roberts 1987:379). The Bible does not distinguish between the Assyrian, Babylonian or Persian kings. This was probably due to their politics, based as they were on the Assyrian Empire (Bottéro 2001:15). Furthermore, the long reign of the Assyrian Empire inoculated its cultural influence in the minds of the people of the Ancient Near East. This influence was reflected from Babylon to Judah in many aspects of life (Farisani 2008:75). Hence, when the might of the Babylonian armies overwhelmed the small State of Judah, the latter was socially devastated. External influences exercised on Judah created such social dissolution that it contributed greatly to its political collapse (Larue 1969:47-48; Roberts 1987:377). This situation is described in the biblical tradition as a punishment by God for their sin of idolatry or immorality. Both were violations of the covenant Yahweh made with his people (Kaufmann 1972:401; Wessels 2008:734).

Both Babylon and Egypt tried to gain control over Judah. Necho of Egypt (610-594 BCE) united with the Assyrian Empire against the rising Babylonian power. Necho feared that the king of Babylon might eventually become a threat to Egypt. Josiah wanted to resist this Egyptian-Assyrian action in order to sustain Babylon (Bottéro 2001:17; Walsh and Begg 2005:185). With Josiah killed (609 BCE), it supposed that he wanted to maintain the freedom that Judah was enjoying. As Larue (1969:47) confirms:

> As the Egyptians reached Megiddo, king Josiah of Judah and the Judean army confronted them, perhaps in the hope of retaining a Judean freedom should the new Egyptian-Assyrian alliance prove to be powerful enough to defeat Nabopolassar. The attempt was futile, for despite the prediction of the prophetess Huldah that Josiah would die in peace (2 Kings 22:20), the young monarch was slain in battle.

Josiah's involvement with the Egyptian Pharaoh and the king of Assyria at Megiddo is described in both the books of Kings and Chronicles (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:20-3). As Herrmann summarises:

> Josiah's opposition to Pharaoh Neco, when Neco marches to battle against the Babylonians at Carchemish in 609 BCE, allies Josiah with King Nebuchadnezzar (II) of Babylon. After Pharaoh Neco kills King Josiah at Megiddo in 609 BCE, the [Judeans] place Jehoahaz on the throne in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:30). Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, who was himself placed on the throne by popular acclaim, apparently shared his father's anti-Egypt sentiments. As a result, the Egyptians replace Jehoahaz with Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz is taken to Egypt where he dies, apparently under house arrest (2 Kings 23:33-34). Jehoiakim remains the loyal vassal of Egypt, setting up a larger rivalry between Egypt and Babylon over control of the Judean throne (1975:290-291).

This political intrigue brought about the collapse of the Judean monarchy. Having been enthroned by the Egyptians, Jehoiakim kept a close dependence on Egypt. When the Egyptians failed to defeat the Babylonian army at Carchemish in 605 BCE, the king turned away from the Egyptians (Jer. 46:2) (Larue 1969:47; Zertal 2003:404). Finding the support of Egypt, Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonians in 604 BCE, thereby announcing Judean independence from Babylon (Zertal 2003:404). The king died before Babylonians took over Jerusalem, his eighteen-year-old son Jehoiachin replacing him on the throne (Herrmann 1975:291; Schniedewind 2004:149-150). The way Jehoiakim exercised politics led him into failure.

In 598 BCE, the Babylonians began the first siege of Jerusalem. Violent and destructive behaviour was felt in the villages south of Zion-Jerusalem. In 597 BCE, the Babylonians took over Jerusalem. The Judean leadership, including Jehoiachin and his family, were taken as captives to Babylon (Rhymer 1971:1; Schniedewind 2004:150). The rest of the people were left to restore life in Judah (2 Kings 24:8-20).

The victorious Babylonians changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah and placed him upon the Judean throne. Most of the people seem not to have accepted Zedekiah as their true king. Instead, they continued to ascribe this honour to Jehoiachin, waiting in hope for his return (Jer. 28) (Farisani 2008:71 citing Richards 1994:258). This underlines the Babylonian control over Judah. Jeremiah spoke out against this illusive hope of the people of Judah because the situation was allowed by Yahweh (Jer. 27) (Schniedewind 2004:151-2). Under Zedekiah's rule, the rebuilding of the city began and a new hope for the future grew among its inhabitants. Some became convinced that the exiles would soon return to Jerusalem (Jer. 28:10-16). But, there were those, including Jeremiah, who warned against this illusive hope. Jeremiah insisted that the period of Exile would be long (29:4-9). By the prophet writing to the exilic community, it provided a religious explanation for the political events of the day. As a result, this helped establish their own religious character (29:10-14) (Larue 1969:48; Schniedewind 2004:152; Claassens 2008:623).

The people of God who had been handed over to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would be tested and corrected in order to turn them back to God's instructions (29:11-14) (Nürnberger 2004:126). This underlines the sense of the Jeremiah oracle on the *semah*-image, suggesting the removal of unfair kings from the throne. Despite such punishment, there is a future for the people following their change of mind and heart through the learning experience of the Exile (Pakkala 2006:446).

Nebuchadnezzar faced a series of threats to his rule from both inside and outside the Empire. In 595 BCE, a revolt from the royal palace was quickly and efficiently suppressed. Judah's borders were under the threat of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, who continued to command attention in Zion-Jerusalem (Terblanche 2008:485). While Necho of Egypt died in 595 BCE, Psammetichus II succeeded him and led an expedition to Phoenicia. He later died in 589 BCE and was succeeded by Hophra who continued his nation's efforts to control Phoenicia (Larue 1969:48). Anti-Babylonian prophets in Jerusalem brought strong pressure to bear to elicit a revolt and urged Zedekiah to turn to Egypt for help. A coalition was thus formed consisting of Edom, Moab, Ammon and Tyre (Jer. 27:1-3). The king in Judah was advised to join in (Farisani 2008:71 citing Miller and Hayes 2006:469-470).

In 588 BCE, Zedekiah did not know that Babylonian armies had begun a long march towards Zion-Jerusalem. The city fell by the middle of 587 BCE as a result of Zedekiah's rebellion (Larue 1969:49; Terblanche 2008:485). Harsh events took place in Jerusalem (*cf.* Lam. 2 and 4), which are also recorded briefly in 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 39. As Larue (1969:49) summarises:

> Zedekiah, together with the nobles of Jerusalem, escaped from the city and fled towards Trans-Jordan, probably hoping to find shelter with Boalis, the king of Ammon (2 Kings 25; Jer. 52:7). Zedekiah was captured…one by one his family's members were brought before him and murdered in front of him and his own eyes blinded. Jerusalem was completely demolished, walls were torn down, the Temple was razed. Leading citizens were deported to Babylon and a remnant was left in Judah.

This stranglehold of Babylon on Judah is once again perceived when Nebuchadnezzar imposed Gadaliah (a non-Davidic family member) as successor to the Judean throne after Zedekiah (Herrmann 1975:291; Seitz 1985:79). This socio-political interference inflicted on Judah real damage. First, its leadership became very weak. Second, the socio-economic organisation was intentionally disturbed. Third, religious life deviated from following Yahweh (Ringgren 1979:297). The way in which Josiah and Zedekiah died, reveals the enormous external interference on Judean policy during the time of Jeremiah (Larue 1969:47, 49). Apart from this external influence on Judah, a further question arises concerning the Judean organisation and its socio-political domain. The response to this question in the next subsection points to the internal socio-political situation present in Judah.

2.3. The Internal Socio-political Situation within Judah

Internal social issues reflected the way Judean rulers were ruling the people of God. The political vision in Judah emerged from the prophetic, priestly and messianic movements (Hanson 1987:488). This means that the Judean kings were supposed to collaborate with Yahweh's leadership. This gives the leadership features in Judah particularly during the time of Jeremiah. He, like other prophets in Israel and Judah, represented God's leadership and played out Yahweh's politics (Nürnberger

2004:118, 172).[21] Brueggemann (1988:3-6) affirms that the prophets represented the kingship of Yahweh. The earthly king was expected to operate within the divine will, while the prophet was a mouthpiece of God alongside the king.

The divergence between the vision of Jeremiah and that of the kings, with regard to the just way of ruling over the people, was the prophet's struggle in his ministry (Johnson 2003:241). Kings were blamed by prophets for power abuse, social injustice, intrigues, corruption, the exploitation of the poor, military violence and idolatry (1 Sam 27; 2 Sam 11; 1 Kings 2) (Nürnberger 2004:123). The next subsection considers the background of the Judean socio-political situation.

2.3.1. The Background to this Situation

The Judean people were settled in the hill country of the Promised Land. This Southern part of Israel and the surrounding areas of the Ancient Near East had similar socio-political systems (Roberts 1987:379; Nürnberger 2004:74). Judah was in a noticeable position during the reign of David. David came from the family of Jesse, a tribe that lived and controlled Bethlehem. David occupied Hebron, which was the centre of the Southern hill country and the villages surrounding it. David managed to secure control over two major cities of the Southern hill country, namely Hebron and Bethlehem (Nürnberger 2004:94). In Judah, David had been anointed by the representatives of the people.

The rising kingdom of David allowed Israel in the North to send their representative to anoint David as their king as well. Two separate anointments of David by Israel and Judah suggest a division among the people of that time (Nürnberger 2004:122). This is particularly seen after the death of Saul at Gilboa, which left Israel and the whole of Palestine in a chaotic condition (Nürnberger 2004:122). The united kingdom of Israel was divided between the South and the North. Yahweh had promised to David a dynastic rule (2 Sam. 7:8) (McConville 2006:137-138). In Hebron, David was anointed king by the Judeans (1 Sam. 2:4). His leadership in Judah restored the

[21] As Nürnberger correctly points out, "In the Ancient Near East, the king was taken to be an agent of salvation because he was believed to be the representative of God on earth through whom God exercised his authority, maintained the cosmic order and channelled his blessings" (2004:118).

rupture between the Northern and Southern kingdoms. It is reported that David reigned over Judah alone for a period of seven-and-a-half years (2 Sam. 2:11; 5:5). After this time, David appeared before the assembly of the Northern tribes (Nürnberger 2004:94-95). They convened at Hebron and stipulated a covenant with David, anointing him king over Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-5) (Nürnberger 2004:121). This underlines the power of the people that is indispensable for good governance. Zion-Jerusalem became the capital and centre of the socio-political and religious life of Israel (Nürnberger 2002:174; Schniedewind 2004:93-94).

Solomon succeeded his father David and continued his socio-political system. Internal tensions among the people became a common reality. His rule was deemed oppressive due to the levy imposed on people's personal subsistence products. This said, Judah reached its golden age during Solomon's reign, albeit followed by their spiritual apostasy in the end (McConville 2006:152-153). By imposing the building of the Sanctuary in Zion-Jerusalem, under Jeroboam, a number from the tribe of Ephraim rose up to overthrow Solomon from the throne (1 Kings 11:26-31). This reaction was due mainly to the tribute that Israelites had to pay in order to support such building projects as the Sanctuary and the Palace in Jerusalem (McConville 2006:153). These projects rendered life hard (1 Kings 12:1-4).

When Solomon died in 925 BCE, Judah and Israel were divided into two separate kingdoms:

(i) The Northern Kingdom (Israel) under King Jeroboam;
(ii) The Southern Kingdom (Judah) under King Rehoboam.

These conflicts arose from internal tensions between Israel and Judah on the one side, and the people of Judah on the other (1 Kings 12:12-14). To sustain this:

> The stability of Judah was not only shaken by Egypt's invasion but also by the internal conflict created by Judean people themselves. In order to secure his control

> over Judah, Rehoboam distributed his sons to all Judean districts in the fortified cities and provided them with provisions and wives (2 Chron. 11:5-12).[22]

A similar situation continued in Judah during the reign of the kings who followed Rehoboam (McConville 2006:154). It means that the people of God were simply human, behaving like any other mortal being. Rehoboam showed a more nepotistic attitude in his exercise of power. He provided his sons with positions throughout the districts of Judah. These internal conflicts had not facilitated most of the kings improving the organisational policy in Judah (1 Kings 12) (Nürnberger 2004:123).

What would have been their vision in ruling the kingdom? In God's perspective, the earthly kings would have legitimated their authority through the prophets. Jeremiah, as the mouthpiece of Yahweh, constantly reminded the Judean kings to mend their ways (Nürnberger 2004:121). Such reminder was essential if they were to follow God's instructions and thereby maintain the covenant Yahweh made with his people. The next subsection discusses the social situation in Judah during the time of Jeremiah.

2.3.2. The Social Situation during the Time of Jeremiah

Jeremiah's life[23] is located at a time during which Assyria was facing serious widespread rebellions in Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, and Babylonia (Oates 1991:180). In Manasseh's time, Judah participated in rebellions against Assyria. These rebellions failed to overthrow the latter. As a result, Judah was reduced from a satellite to a vassal State (Walsh and Begg 2005:184). Assyria managed to secure its position regarding its political, economic and religious control over Judah. Manasseh, the Judean king, had no choice but to follow Assyrian policy. At that time, the Assyrian non-Yahwistic religion became a cultic tradition in Zion-Jerusalem (2005:184). This situation created conflicts among the Judean people because of their Yahwistic faith

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[22] Kingdom of Solomon, <http://moses.creighton.edu/simkins/student/aJudah01/solom.htm/> [Accessed July 28, 2005].

[23] As Brueggemann points out, "Jeremiah lived at the time of the turning points in the public life of the known world of the Near East. His ministry covered the struggles of the rising and falling of empires. He witnessed the fall of Assyria and observed the desperate attempts of Egypt and Assyria to hold on to cruel power and saw them fail at Carchemesh. He watched the relentless and haughty rise of Babylon as the new power before whom all trembled. He knew profoundly that everything was loose and being shaken and that the agent of such rising and falling was none other than *Yhwh*" (2006:10).

(Roberts 1987:377-378). This socio-religious policy continued through to the time of Amon (642-640 BCE), Manasseh's son. As a result, Amon was assassinated by his own people, only two years after he had succeeded his father on the throne (2 Kings 21:23).

Josiah (640-609 BCE), Amon's son, succeeded his father, being placed on the throne by the pro-Amon Judean people. The Assyrian leadership was busy with the Babylonian rebellion under Shamash-shum-ukin at the end of the seventh century BCE (Mitchell 1991:375). Egyptian influence in Syria-Palestine had become more evident. It had an impact on Judean policy as well. Ashurbanipal died in 627 BCE, after which Babylonia began a campaign to gain independence from Assyria. On Necho (610-594 BCE) did not interfere with Judah's internal affairs. Instead, he was advancing to assist the Assyrians against the rising power of Babylon (Walsh and Begg 2005:185). As a result, Judah had complete control over its administrative system and policy. This enabled Josiah to reform religious life in Zion-Jerusalem. This reform began with the discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple (Blenkinsopp 2005:101). This book has been identified with the law document which referred to God's instructions, *torah* (Deut. 17:18). As Boardman argues:

> Opinions have differed concerning what proportion of the existing Deuteronomy constituted the Book of the Law in Josiah's time: whether only parts, or substantially the whole. This question is associated also with that of the origin and authorship of Deuteronomy, concerning which views range from the time of Moses in the thirteenth century BCE to the post-Exilic period in the fifth or fourth century BCE (1991:388).

The Book of the Law was accepted as authoritative and was used in Josiah's religious reform (Rofé 2002:97-98). Its discovery led Josiah to impose upon the Judeans the practice of its instructions towards God. This turned the people back to Yahweh and restored their relationship with him (Nürnberger 2002:213-214). Josiah's reformation proved that even under Egyptian control over Judah, religion and socio-political life were still indistinguishable.

When Jehoahaz came to office (having succeeded his father Josiah in 609 BCE) his reign lasted only three months. Necho of Egypt did not approve of the Judeans' choice regarding their king on the throne. He therefore took Jehoahaz into Exile and replaced him with his brother Jehoiakim (608-598 BCE) (Schniedewind 2004:150). The pro-Egyptian Jehoiakim, taxed the Judean population in the form of silver and gold to pay tribute to Egypt instead of using the temple's treasury as did the previous monarchs (Larue 1969:47; Schniedewind 2004:151).

Under Babylon, Judah was a vassal State, which meant that its internal affairs were dependent upon and strictly controlled by the great Empire of the day (Wehmeier 2000:1437). An Egyptian victory stimulated the second revolt in Judah (590 BCE), and produced the strong hope that Egypt would soon liberate them from Babylonian control. In 595 BCE, Pharaoh Psammetichus II began a campaign against Nubia and prevailed in battle. To celebrate this victory, a festival was held during which Zedekiah made a pact with Egypt, offering it military support with the promise that Judah would break its alliance with Babylon (Ezek. 17:12-15). The Lachish Ostraca describe this diplomatic agreement between Judah and Egypt (Wiseman 1991:234).[24] When Egypt failed to defeat Babylon, the latter sacked Jerusalem. The economy of Judah, especially Zion-Jerusalem, was left devastated. Zion-Jerusalem was destroyed and its State and religious leaders executed and its citizens exiled. Politics in Judah declined rapidly as a result of these executions and the taking into Exile of the Judean leadership and upper classes by Babylon (Pakkala 2006:444).

A non-Davidic king, Gedaliah, was enthroned by the Babylonians to rule over Judah after Zedekiah was captured, blinded and taken to Babylon (Mitchell 1991:407; Wiseman 1991:235). He was a native official from Judah, who it seems already had held office under Josiah and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 22:12, 14; Jer. 26:24). We may assume from 2 Kings 25:24 that Gedaliah was submissive to the Babylonians and advised his compatriots to adopt the same attitude (Herrmann 1975:291). At that moment a real tension arose between the governorship of Gedaliah tolerated by Jeremiah but opposed by Ishmael and his group (Seitz 1985:79). Gedaliah's reign did

[24] Babylonian Domination, <http://moses.creighton.edu/simkins/student/aJudah01/babylon.htm/> [Accessed July 28, 2005].

not last long. It ended in his assassination by Ishmael, a Davidic family member, who tried to reinstate Davidic rule to the Judean throne. But Ishmael was opposed by the Judean population and officials who did not want another war. His plan failed and he too fled into exile in Egypt (Dumbrell 2002:103).[25]

These events affected the Judean people who were distressed and felt "sorrow and insecurity in their life" (Mavinga 2008:249). In this regard, some Judeans who had remained in the land preferred to take refuge in Egypt. Jeremiah was forced to go with them. This underlines a difficult time experienced both by those being brought to Babylon and those staying in the land (Seitz 1985:83-84).

2.4. The Socio-religious Situation of Judah during the Time of Jeremiah

The socio-religious situation defines some conditions regarding the religious beliefs of the Judean people and whether they were keeping a close relationship with Yahweh, their God (Rofé 2002:15-16). Israel's religion required the people of God to believe in Yahweh, whom alone they had to worship (Deut. 6:4) (2002:15; Blenkinsopp 2005:99).[26] The question remains as to why the Judeans often turned away from God.

In my view, it was due, first, to the Mesopotamian background of the people of God through their forefather Abraham (Gray 1962:40). Second, they maintained a close relationship with the surrounding cultures of their neighbours, such as the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians and Babylonians (Roberts 1987:379). These two aspects facilitated the Judean people through their kings, priests and false prophets, to run away from God's instructions (Hammond 1991:xv). These reasons underline the

[25] "Gedaliah chose Mizpah as the seat of government, probably in place of destroyed Jerusalem. He put under oath a number of soldiers, army commanders and other men from Judah who seemed to have been prepared to recognise his appointment by the Babylonian king, and required them to submit to Babylonian rule. A man of royal blood, Ismael ben Nathaniah, agitated against this policy, allegedly even with the support of the king of the Ammonites (Jer. 40:14). He gathered others together to kill Gedaliah. Although he had been forewarned, Gedaliah received Ishmael and his people in Mizpah. A banquet turned into a bloodbath. Ismael and his men slew not only Gedaliah, but also all the guests from Judah and Babylon" (Herrmann 1975:291).

[26] Deut. 6:4 is a call to hear (*cf.* also Deut. 5:1; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9), paralleled in the sapiential books (Prov. 1:8), introduces the command to love Yahweh alone. The phrase *shema' yishra'el Adonay elohēnū Adonay ehad* can be translated as 'listen Israel Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone.' It makes better sense that it is not only an affirmation of monotheism but also expresses an exclusive devotion to Yahweh (Blenkinsopp 2005:99).

struggle of Judeans to keep serving and worshiping Yahweh alone. To spell this situation out in more depth, I will discuss in the next subsection, first, the religious background of Judean people. Second, I will analyse the socio-religious situation in Judah during the time of Jeremiah.

2.4.1. The Religious Background of the People of Judah

Originally, Abram (later named Abraham) came from a polytheistic culture. The revelation of God [first to Abram (Gen. 12) and second to Moses (Exod. 3)] marks the starting point for Israelite religion. It is different from any other religion around (Pagolu 1998:16). A question however arises as to what was Abram's belief in the previous culture? In responding to this question, Bottéro (2001:15-17) asserts that the earliest people that we know of in Mesopotamia or in West Asia (3000 to 539 BCE) were all polytheists.

Experiencing the revelation of God, Moses wanted to understand more:

> Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM.[27] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exod. 3:13-14 NIV)

The present tense in Hebrew syntax is the same as the future tense. In this respect, God's address to Moses is also expressed as "I will be who I will be." This revelation of God to Moses was not so clear for the Israelites to understand who exactly God was (Pagolu 1998:24; Nürnberger 2004:75). Nevertheless, they had to learn of him through signs, interventions and miracles. They did not have an easy task because some miracles were performed by other gods (Nürnberger 2004:75). This happened in the *Asherah* fertility cult in Canaan and Mesopotamia where those attending were healed (Hadley 2000:1).

In spite of the difficult task to understand God's revelation, the Israelites had to learn to commit their concerns to Yahweh alone. The question arises as to what specific

[27] Lit: *ehyeh asher ehyeh*.

problems did the people experience that prevented them from committing to Yahweh alone? People had to practise an exclusive monotheism. Yahweh presents himself to Israel as the unique God. Such exclusive monotheism holds that either other gods simply do not exist, or at the very least, that they are false gods (Rofé 2002:15-16). God's people should therefore be devoted to Yahweh alone as expressed in the Israelite profession of faith.

Judeans were influenced for two reasons. First, they were influenced because of their cultural background in Mesopotamia where Abraham came from. Second, Judean kings were influenced by the Mesopotamian royal ideology which considered the king a successful and efficient leader. He was taken as a provider of prosperity for his people (Holtz 2008:370). Hammurabi was thus a powerful king who exercised his influence across the four quarters of the world. As Larue (1969:21) argues:

> Hammurabi controlled the major portion of the Mesopotamian world. In subsequent years battles were fought with people on the north and northwest borders of the kingdom, and scholars have suggested that some loss of territory may have resulted from these frontier struggles. Hammurabi, having demonstrated his skill as a military, economic and administrative genius assumed titles appropriate to his status: 'King of Sumer and Akkad' and 'Monarch of four quarters of the world.'

Nürnberger (2004:122) says that the core of Judean royal ideology refers to the Ancient Near Eastern idea of a divine cosmic order. It covers the socio-political and religious dimensions of the people's existence. A king was seen as the adopted representative of God alongside his people. Judean submission to external powers led the leadership and people to adopt the worship of their gods. Judeans were not supposed to contract alliances with other nations (Kaufmann 1972:266). This disposition had become even more difficult during the monarchy in Israel. The diplomatic relationship between Judah and other surrounding empires brought about a socio-political and religious struggle in Judah. Indeed, Samuel, in principle, opposed the establishment of a monarchy in Israel (Kaufmann 1972:262). A Judean king would be legitimised only as long as he was ruling over Judah on behalf of Yahweh. In this way, the king would rule the people justly (Nürnberger 2004:123).

The king was supposed to follow God's instructions. They helped the Judeans to keep the covenant Yahweh made with his people. The Mosaic covenant was a "suzerain-vassal" treaty (Barrick 1998:215; Linington 2003:63), in contrast to the Davidic covenant which refers to God's instructions as a governing document of the kingdom (2003:62). The Davidic covenant had a twofold aspect. First, one responded to David during his lifetime. Second, another was fulfilled after his death (Grisanti 1999:237-238). This covenant maintained an essential continuity and link with regard to God's promises made to the Patriarchs. This gives the basic root of the Israelite religion Judean people should have practised.

2.4.2. The Socio-religious Situation of Judah during the Time of Jeremiah

The socio-religious situation in Jeremiah's time referred to the above mentioned context. The weeping figure in Jeremiah's book reflects the person of God. It involves God in the fate of his people (Jer. 4:19-22) (Korpel 2009:92). Jeremiah complained about such a situation in Zion-Jerusalem. It was due to the fact that the Judean leadership and people had turned away from God's instructions (Korpel 2009:93). This situation was also caused by the socio-political and religious control of the great empires over Judah. Furthermore, the lack of a close collaboration between the prophets and kings brought about social devastation (Couey 2008:308). To maintain a right relationship with his people, Yahweh gave instructions to them. These instructions had to be practised by the people in order to keep their relationship with Yahweh, their God intact (Linington 2003:59). In the next subsection, I will first discuss the contract Yahweh made with his people; second, I will point out the conditions necessary to maintaining such a contract.

2.4.2.1. The Contract between God and Israel

Yahweh made a contract with Abram which is the starting point of the Israelite religion.[28] In this regard, Yahweh committed himself to sustain his people according

[28] "Abraham, a forefather of the Hebrew nation, is considered through his life (Gen. 11:26-25:10) as an example of outstanding faith in Yahweh. The covenant brought his name to be changed to Abraham to the father of a multitude of peoples. Abraham's faith was shown both by taking steps to appropriate this divine land-grant from Beersheba (21:33) to Dan (14:14). Moses' call to ministry was done through the theophany at the burning bush". Aaron was made a spokesperson alongside Moses when he addressed

to this Abrahamic contract. It was a contract relationship between Yahweh and Abram (Linington 2003:59). Israelite religion was built on this covenantal relationship which was God's initiative. God made a covenant with Abraham, and renewed it with Moses, David and so on. In the subsection which follows, I will consider this covenant, by pointing out the dilemma it caused to the Judeans in particular. God's covenant was unconditional on the one hand, but conditional on the other (Linington 2003:63).

2.4.2.2. An Unconditional Covenant

The contract Yahweh made with Abraham was without condition (Gen.12). This means that God's initiative to relate to his people was complete. In other words, his love for his people (Abraham) is not limited in any particular way (Procter 2002:1581). Yahweh's plan for his people would be accomplished despite the way they would behave. Fulfilment depends on God and not upon any woman or man (Linington 2003:59). Nevertheless, the people had to play their role in achieving God's purpose for them. As Anderson (1984:287) states:

> When a stronger person shows *hésed* [or devotion] toward someone who is in a weaker position (compare the Suzerain-vassal covenant), the motive does not arise from external legal obligation but from an inner loyalty or 'grace' intrinsic to the relationship itself. Thus, when the confession is made that Yahweh 'abounds' in *hésed* and faithfulness (Exod. 34:6), the meaning is that Yahweh, the Sovereign, displays constancy that is not bound by a law external to himself but by virtue of his free will, his 'grace.'

2.4.2.3. A Conditional Covenant

To keep the covenant and enjoy God's promises, Abraham or Israel had to obey God's instructions. In obeying these instructions, the covenant became complete and

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the Israelites and Pharaoh (Exod. 4:14-20). "The period of the Exile helped the people of God to concentrate on a few important religious values such as circumcision, which was a sign of membership as the people of God; and the Sabbath as a sign of obedience to the covenant (Jer. 17:19-27). Living among an unclean pagan nation, it became important for the people of God to preserve their purity and holiness. Even though the Judean people tried to maintain some religious values, nevertheless, the religion carried out considerable changes during the Exile" (Bruce 1980:1; Mavinga 2008:245-246 citing Hanson 1987:485).

unlimited (Anderson 1984:286; Procter 2002:1581; Linington 2003:63). These two aspects come together in the covenantal contract. The covenant Yahweh made with Abraham was, at the same time, both conditional and unconditional (Linington 2003:64). Certain conditions were required to keep the contract and achieve its assigned purpose. In fact, as Anderson confirms:

> The relationship is not characterised by caprice but the quality of constancy, steadfastness. Hosea, however, applies the word to Israel's relationship to Yahweh, suggesting that the people should display a constancy corresponding to Yahweh's covenant loyalty….Hence Yahweh scorned the existing forms of worship (1984:287).[29]

The people's obedience by involving them in the covenant was required by Yahweh. An unconditional contract sometimes has requirements. In this regard, the covenant that Yahweh made with his people follows a twofold aspect, consisting of un-conditionality and conditionality (Linington 2003:63-64). This leads to the son-ship imagery.[30] The king could grant a good servant a special gift that could refer to the land or dynasty (Weinfeld 1970:191; Chisholm 1991:267).

This covenantal context highlights Jeremiah's oracle on the *semah*. In fact, when the Judean leadership and people disobeyed, God punished them in order to turn them back towards him. The irrevocability of God's promises towards his people is confirmed by identifying himself with the fate of his people (Korpel 2009:92).[31] This underlines the link between the covenant and instructions (*torah*) as conditions towards its maintenance.

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[29] "For I desire steadfast love [*hesed*] and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6).

[30] Conditional and unconditional characterise the covenant Yahweh made with his people. It is unconditional because the covenant depends on Yahweh who initiated it and not on the people. It is conditional because the covenant depends on the people's obedience to the conditions that maintain it. In this respect, Yahweh can say: "I will be your father and you will be my son" or "I will be your God and you will be my people." This is the covenant formula (2 Sam. 7:14; Psa. 2:7) (Linington 2003:64).

[31] *Cf.* Jer. 4; 7:11; 13:27.

2.4.2.4. The Different Kinds of Biblical Covenants

The Bible presents us with different kinds of biblical covenants. The point is to recognise that these covenants are at the same time conditional and unconditional. Covenantal characteristics stress the links that exist between different covenants by underlining the role of the 'maker' and that of 'the recipient' (Linington 2003:59). The conditional dimension affects the Judean leadership and people when they fail to keep the privilege offered to David. Furthermore, the unconditional dimension leaves open Yahweh's providence to appoint a 'loyal leader' in order to dismiss the 'disloyal one' (Brueggemann 2007:36). This suggests that Yahweh was protecting his people when he referred to the promise he made to David (2 Sam. 7:12-17; Psa. 89:3-4; Isa. 42:1-2, 6). As a result, the social devastation in Zion-Jerusalem would be restored as a result of the leadership and the people's change of mind (Brueggemann 2007:46).

The Davidic covenant is fulfilled in the restoration process. The link between the different promises to the patriarchs highlights the covenantal characteristics. In his covenant with David, Yahweh presents a twofold promise. First, the one realised during his lifetime (2 Sam. 7:9-11a), and second, the promise that was fulfilled following his death (2 Sam. 7:11b-16) (Grisanti 1999:237). David's name had become great during his lifetime (2 Sam. 7:9). His many achievements made his name to be known (2 Sam. 8:13) (Grisanti 1999:237). In terms of the 'place' for the Judean people in this Davidic covenant, Mount Zion[32] is indicated. This is the place where the sanctuary was built and where Abraham went to offer Isaac, his unique son (Clifford and Murphy 2005:25).

Yahweh's promise to David includes not only permanence and security in the land, but also the rest as expressed in 2 Samuel 7:11b. *Menuha* meaning 'rest' expresses peace, wealth and prosperity in the land (Adamo 2005:127). It also refers to the victory gained against the nations living in the country. 'Rest' was also a 'peaceful time' which allowed David to move the ark to Jerusalem. It helped him consider building the sanctuary for Yahweh (Grisanti 1999:238). This 'rest' lasted from the lifetime of David to Solomon, but also foreshadowed the 'rest' to which Yahweh

[32] Gen. 22:2; 2 Chron. 3:1.

refers. It opens a new dimension of 'rest' which is peace and reconciliation with God and one another in the community (Nürnberger 2004:119).[33] The house of Israel promised by God (2 Sam. 7:11b-16), would play this important role.

After David's death, the 'house of Yahweh' became juxtaposed to that of the king's house. It underlined the king's role, consisting of bringing the people of God in the sanctuary. Furthermore, the sanctuary had been a dwelling place of Yahweh in the midst of his people. This presence of Yahweh among his people ensured the 'rest' and 'security' in the land. The presence of Yahweh consisted of God ruling over his people through human kings (Dumbrell 1980:40; Grisanti 1999:238). 2 Samuel 7 focuses its attention on the building of a sanctuary which symbolises the Davidic dynasty. It suggests the perpetuation of the Davidic line. In regards to this preset study, the sprouting forth of 'branch' (in the oracle on the *semah*) provides the leadership with adequate principles, moral virtues and intellectual education for a country's leadership. Israel's religion was a covenant religion related to a place where God had planted his name. Through the new covenant, God's permanence among his people enables the State or religious leadership to be efficient (Grisanti 1999:239).

2.4.2.5. The 'New Covenant' in Jeremiah's Prophecy

The announcement on a renewed relationship between Yahweh and his people has to be seen in conjunction with the royal oracle on the *semah*. The arrival of the 'loyal leader' arouses hope after the disaster of the Exile. The restoration of Zion-Jerusalem reflects the mind-change of the leadership and people of Judah. Yahweh intervenes to transform people's hearts in order to enable them to understand and observe his instructions (Robinson 2001:194-195).

The phrase, "days are coming" (in Jer. 31:31) corresponds to Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15 which uses the same phrase, albeit with some changes. The phrases "the days are coming" and "in those days and at that time," found respectively in Jeremiah 23:5 and

[33] "Judean kings should have been, as in the time of David and Solomon, the central religious figures. Priests, prophets and diviners would have played an associated role to that of kings in order to secure Judah and reconcile the people with Yahweh, their God" (Nürnberger 2004:119).

33:15, refer to the same future event in Jeremiah's prophecy. It is my contention in this study that this poetic oracle of Jeremiah, referring to 'the branch of righteousness' from David's line, is to be closely linked with the new covenant between God and his people (Robinson 2001:194). Here, I see two aspects of this new covenant. First, the new covenant recapitulates the Sinaitic together with the Davidic covenant. It gives a political base for Judean people which assures a new way of thinking, being and acting (Dumbrell 1984:164). Second, the *semah*-image symbolises the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leadership' to come. The latter will protect Yahweh's people and rule over them justly (Ellis 1987:68). Yahweh would be known, through his people as both distinctive and different. This leads us to consider God's instructions as the requirement to his people to maintain the covenant he made with them.

2.4.2.6. Covenant Clauses between Yahweh and His People

The Deuteronomistic language used by Jeremiah is explained by its belonging to the prophet's diction. McConville (1993:22-6,173-176) prefers a reading opposed to McKane and Carroll and believes that Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic history are not necessarily incompatible, since both use the same language. In my view, this is due to the prophetic message itself which takes into account God's instructions. It is perceived through the Josianic politico-religious reform based on the discovery of the Scroll of Deuteronomy (2 Kings 22-23). Holladay (1986:1-2; 1989:27-35) which offers a variation on the conventional reading of Kings and Jeremiah. He argues that as a young man, Jeremiah was a propagandist for Josiah. The prophet announced counter messages against the city and its citizens while he referred to Deuteronomy (31:9-13). While the language used in both books of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy is close, this does not necessarily mean that the book of Jeremiah was written by a Deuteronomistic writer. Indeed, Jeremiah's prophecy would have consisted of referring his message to God's instructions (McConville 2006:76).

The obedience to these instructions would ensure the maintenance of the covenant which Yahweh made with his people. But, the Judean leadership and people failed to keep this covenant. Because of this, the socio-political and religious situation deteriorated in Judah (Nicholson 1986:84). This situation elicited Jeremiah's oracle

on the *semah*. A 'loyal leader' would be coming to rule over the people justly (Stulman 2004:42).

God's instructions would help the people maintain the covenant that Yahweh made with them. These instructions would play a constitutional role in the rule of the Judean kings (Nicholson 1986:85; McConville 2006:85).[34] Without obedience to the constitution there would be no way of success in the public life of Judah. This is what happened during the time of Jeremiah.

2.5. Leadership and Davidic Kingship during the Time of Jeremiah

2.5.1. The Davidic Kingship in Jeremiah's Thinking

Two different standpoints appear in the books of Samuel which describe the origin of the Hebrew monarchy. The earlier standpoint shows a favourable attitude to the institution of kingship. It would have been designed by Yahweh himself for the well-being of the people (2 Sam. 7:8-12). The issue of the covenant consisted of a special relationship between Yahweh, David and the dynasty (Nürnberger 2004:121). The later standpoint shows a more critical attitude towards the monarchy. The kingship should witness Yahweh's leadership by obeying his instructions (2 Sam. 12:1-15; Jer. 14:8). This had been the issue in Jeremiah's oracle on 'branch.' This oracle announces a removal of the current Judean kings. The 'branch' of David who shall sprout forth would bring instructions to rule over Zion-Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:8-14) (Ringgren 2003:413).

The kingship is a specific leadership which would meet the requirements of God's instructions. In the Judean context, kingship assumed the responsibility of leading the people of God. Kings were responsible for reconciling the people back to God (McConville 2006:151). Therefore, the king was the representative of Yahweh alongside his chosen people. He was responsible for the social, political, economic and religious life of Judah. Such leadership, acting on behalf of Yahweh's rule,

[34] "The purpose of the covenant Moses introduced was the acknowledgement of new system of laws, which the liberation from slavery and the achievement of political independence made indispensable" (Nicholson 1986:85); "The *torah* is covenantal law, the divinely authorised social order that Israel must implement to secure its collective political existence as the people of God" (McConville 2006:85).

highlights Jeremiah's consideration of kingship (Nürnberger 2004:119). To assume his task, the king would have to collaborate with other leaders such as prophets, priests and "counsellors" (2 Kings 24:8) (Ackerman 1993:391).

To stabilise the social situation in the land, the leadership and the people would have to observe God's instructions. They are a *sine qua non* condition to promote public life in the community (Deut. 12:1-10). During the time of Jeremiah, the Judean kings relied on the external influences as a result of their search for political support (Wessels 2008:731). In turn, an external stranglehold prevented them to rule over the people justly (Nürnberger 2004:126).

The king had become unable to encourage the people to worship Yahweh in Zion-Jerusalem. Indeed, the people could no longer keep a reconciling relationship with Yahweh. The Sanctuary was no longer a "place of reconciliation" between the people and Yahweh (Nürnberger 2004:120). This explains Jeremiah's struggle for ministry among the Judean leadership and people.

God's instructions were central to the covenant Yahweh made with his people (Rata 2007:102). This suggests that the expectation of a 'loyal leader' had become a matter of urgency. The language of permanence in this promise contrasts with that of the Judean kings' mobility (McConville 2006:142). The promise to David had its "providential grant" (2 Sam. 7) in terms of a "royal authority in perpetuity." It is expressed metaphorically by the *semah*-image which refers to the coming of a 'loyal leader' (Ringgren 2003:412).

2.6. The Situation of the People of Judah during the Time of Jeremiah

Yahweh was patient with his people, even though they kept following the advices of false prophets. The discourse of blame directed against the country, its people, and the city of Zion-Jerusalem reveals that both the leaders and people were guilty before Yahweh.

2.6.1. The Corruption of the Leaders: The Prophets and the Priests

In general, the false prophets are identified in Jeremiah 23:9-40 as the ones who are to blame for the corruption and destruction of Jerusalem. However, in other texts of Jeremiah (18:11-12), it is the people themselves who are to blame because of their persistent refusal to listen to the prophets. From this, I see two types of prophets: false and true prophets serving among the Judean people. As Carroll can argue:

> I simply do not understand how readers can follow the arguments of Jeremiah 23.9-40 that 'the [seers in] Jerusalem' are to blame for the destruction of the people and then when they arrive at Jeremiah 25.1-7 not see the blatant contradiction that is entailed in the claim that the people's destruction is due to their not listening to the prophets (1999:77).

In my view, Jeremiah 25:1-7 singles out true prophets from false in 23:9-40. False prophets would have failed to convert the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Even so, they themselves turned away from God's instructions. Jeremiah and the other prophets tried in vain to remind the people of how to do right in their lives. In this regard, a close comparison of 23:22 with 25:3-7 underlines the role played by prophets like Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a mouthpiece of God among the leadership and people (Carroll 1999:77). False prophets were confusing the Judean people, rendering them unable to listen to the true prophets.

Carroll (1999:76) affirms that many different groups were accused of being the cause of Jerusalem's destruction. Among them were the kings, priests (Jer. 6:13; 23:11) and prophets (23:9; Isa. 56:10; Mic. 3:11), the wise and the people. All this happened because of Yahweh's wrath (2 Kings 24:19-20; 25:1-5). I have therefore described the socio-political, cultural, and religious context which elicited Jeremiah's oracle on the *semah*. The oracle announced the removal of the current rulers in Judah. They were effectively responsible for what took place in Zion-Jerusalem (Dempsey 2007:29).

2.6.2. The Culpability of the People

Yahweh is faithful to the covenant he made with his people. To remain in the covenant, people had to obey God's decrees. On many occasions, Judeans turned away from God. Jeremiah reminded and warned them about the risk they were running because of their evil behaviour. He proposed that they change mind and do right. But they did not obey the prophet's warnings. Instead, they continued behaving in their way (Jer.18:11-12). In this respect, in the conclusion of verses 1-4 in Jeremiah 25:1-7, Carroll (1999:76) holds it is the people themselves who are to blame because of their persistent refusal to listen to the prophets.

I indicate here that some kings, priests and prophets stayed firm and obeyed God's stipulations. They advised people to renew their ways before the Lord. Most of Judean leaders and people however condoned the spread of corruption, immorality and idolatrous worship which contrasted with the injunctions of the divine covenant (Deut. 12:1-5, 30-31; 18:9-12; 22:22-30; 27:20-23). As the people's hearts were away from the Lord, their offerings to God were pointless (Jer. 6:19-21). Harrison sums this situation up well when he writes:

> Offerings made to Him by an apostate people (6:20; 7:21-22) were as reprehensible as their sacrifices to pagan deities (7:30-31; 19:5), and had brought the entire covenant relationship to the point where the destiny of the chosen people now hung precariously in balance (1973:39).

The people of God in Judah were thus guilty before Yahweh, their God. As a result, punishment had become imminent. Firstly, the punishment took the form of famine in the land (Jer. 3:3; 14:1-6). Secondly, the disaster in Zion-Jerusalem had become a reality when the Babylonian armies amassed on the borders in preparation for attack as Jeremiah had announced (25:9; 52:1-30) (Brueggemann 2007:35).

3. Summary and Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this chapter that other powers interfered in the Judean socio-political and religious life. These powers were able to replace kings on the Judean

throne. Such political intrigue and subterfuge were characteristic of the Judean monarchy during the time of Jeremiah. This was due to both the attitude of the Judean kings and the conquest of Judah by the great powers. The Judean kings were seeking security and support in order to be maintained in office. In addition, the great powers intensified the internal conflicts among the Judean people in their process of conquering Judah. External influences on Judah had been able to replace a king who was enthroned by popular acclaim. Jehoahaz, who had been enthroned by the people after Josiah, was replaced with Jehoiakim by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Mattaniah (whose name was changed to Zedekiah) was put on Jehoiachin's throne while the latter with his family was sent into Exile in Babylon. The reasons for this kind of behaviour were that the great powers were choosing Judean kings who would be loyal to them. The general perverted behaviour of the kings, priests, prophets, and the people had caused Yahweh's wrath. False prophets prophesied in order to encourage them in their wrong-doing.

This context defined the socio-political and religious context which elicited Jeremiah's oracle on the arrival of a 'loyal leadership' that would exert a just rule over the people. This would take place after a learning experience of the people in the Exile. The next chapter will provide a close analysis of the oracle on the *semah*-image in Jeremiah (23:4-6; 33:14-16); Isaiah (4:2; 11:1-2); and Zechariah (3:8; 6:12). In particular, it will focus on Jeremiah's oracle.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ANALYSIS OF JEREMIAH 23:5-6; 33:14-16; ISAIAH 4:2; 11:1-2 AND ZECHARIAH 3:8; 6:12

1. Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of Jeremiah's oracle on the 'righteous branch' and the 'branch of righteousness' (23:5-6; 33:14-16). In addition, I will analyse the oracles on *semah* in Isaiah and Zechariah. These additional texts will seek to show the wide scope of influence that this image held in the life of Israel. To analyse the texts on *semah*, I have found it fruitful to read these texts as they stand. Whatever transformations of the texts that may have taken place, I hold that the Jeremiah's texts and those of Isaiah and Zechariah—especially the texts on *semah*—are best understood from within their respective ministries. Furthermore, I am not able to pinpoint the exact moment in Jeremiah's ministry and thereby reconstruct his precise words.

My analysis will be presented in three stages. First, after some brief remarks on my views on each book as a whole, I will indicate the main outline of the book and situate my selected texts both in the wider and more immediate context. In this regard, I will discuss the textual criticism of my selected texts and give my opinion on the choice of the version I use in this study. Second, I will provide a literary analysis of the immediate contexts in which I will give brief remarks on each textual unit. By so doing, I will successively provide a philological discussion, an analysis of significant words, and an explanation of the structure of each unit. I will then point out what each can contribute to extend the comprehension of *semah* in its aimed effect in Jeremiah. Third, I will discuss the historical context of selected texts. Finally, I will provide the social implications of the *semah* in Jeremiah's oracle corresponding to the same image in Isaiah and Zechariah.

A study of these texts will help to show that *semah* is not limited to Jeremiah but instead belongs to a wider prophetic tradition. I will nevertheless show in this study that the use of *semah* by these prophets corresponds in some way to that of Jeremiah.

2. An Analysis of Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16

2.1. Outline of the Book of Jeremiah

Chapters 1-25 contain the poetic oracles. The first is from the scroll dated 605 BCE. Couturier (2000:268 citing Podechard 1928:181-97) holds that this scroll is included in chapters 1-17, where, as far as we know, the oracles are set in their chronological order. Chapters 18-20 therefore seem to be a separate section of symbolic actions. Chapters 21-23 present the booklets on the kings and prophets. Finally, the Book of Confessions, from chapter 24 to 25, completes this first section.

The second section, chapters 26-35, contains Baruch's writing. It has as its specific theme the restoration of the people of Yahweh. These chapters contain a micro section, chapters 26-29, which deals with Jeremiah's disagreement with the false prophets. This forms a kind of apology to the true prophecy. Following this, chapters 30-31 are concerned with prophecies on the restoration of Israel. Chapters 32-33 unite the similar oracles[35] under Zedekiah. Finally, chapters 34-35 form an appendix on diverse matters (Couturier 2000:269).

The third section, chapters 36-45, refers to Jeremiah's biography by Baruch. It is supposed that the latter prefaced the prophet's work with a story of the scroll dated by 605 BCE. This introduces Baruch as Jeremiah's chief collaborator. He closes the scroll by a short oracle of hope, which underlines their collaboration. Baruch summarises the main points of the prophet's message (Brueggemann 2007:40), and sets it in the context of the day. Furthermore, he wrote a detailed history of the

[35] "Chapters 29-33 present 'the most important group of promissory messages,' where the 'editorial process has clustered most of the promises in the book.' These promises are a programmatic anticipation of restoration to the land. The primary promises of chapters 30-31 are referred to 'the Book of Comfort,' an allusion to 30:2. The term 'comfort' refers to the declaration of Isaiah 40:1, where 'comfort' is news of permission to go home. Jeremiah 30-31 is a prophetic narrative message which is illustrated in chapter 32 concerning the future of the land and the promises in chapter 33. The best known passage in this section is the 'new covenant' corpus in 31:31-34 that asserts *Yhwh's* readiness to restore the relation with his chosen people" (Brueggemann 2006:23; 2007:120-1).

prophet's sufferings during the last siege of Jerusalem (588-587 BCE). He indicates that Jeremiah stayed with Gedaliah before the latter was assassinated. The prophet was among those fleeing to Egypt, where he subsequently died (Brueggemann 2007:70). Jeremiah would have been witness to the evil way his people behaved (chapters 37-44).

Finally, the oracles against the nations (chapters 46-51) complete the section. Some scholars suggest that this last section is a late addition within which the long oracle against Babylon is supposed to be a late exilic composition (Couturier 2000:268).

I accept that the book I am referring to is from Jeremiah via such scribes as Baruch. The latter would have written some sections on behalf of the prophet. It would have been written with some allowance for minor editorial comments, pointing to Jeremiah as the original speaker, author, editor, reviser, and producer of the book as we have it today (Carroll 1996:117 citing McConville 1991, 1993). Carroll (1986:47), further points out that Jeremiah is seen as a poet in the first instance. Hence, the majority of poems in part one (chapters 1-25) are accepted as his work but the few in chapters 30-31 and 46-51 are more difficult to attribute. In my view, these difficulties are due to the change of circumstances and in some cases to the hand of the prophet's amanuensis. I do not ignore the complexity[36] of Jeremiah's book, but I will not focus on the details of the origins of the text.

My particular focus in this study will be on the selected texts regarding *semah*. Jeremiah's dynastic oracle in 23:5-6 does not present controversial positions among scholars as does the one in Jeremiah 33:14-16. We will now turn to the immediate literary context of 23:5-6 and that of 33:14-16.

[36] "The book of Jeremiah is well known for presenting many differences between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Old Greek version (LXX). The latter is shorter than the former by one fifth and differs in its arrangement" (Mavinga 2009:106-7 citing Steiner 1996:74; Shead 2002:15; Bogaert 2006:386).

2.2. Jeremiah 23:5-6

2.2.1. The Immediate Literary Context[37]

Jeremiah's oracle on the 'righteous branch' (23:5-6) is part of the larger unit in 21:12-23:8. It consists of a series of prophetic sayings on the subject of the monarchy. The unit of my interest belongs to the section 23:1-8 which comprises of three oracles on the individual kings organised in chronological order in the unit. Some commentators think that the section is one unit (Thompson 1980:485-6; Carroll 1986:443), while others such as McKeating (1999:119) and Lundbom (2004:165) consider it consists of three different units (*cf.* Couturier 2000:284). The oracle in verses 1-4 is about the irresponsible shepherds. It presents a threefold aspect: an indictment, judgment, and hope for a better future. Verses 5-6 deal with a specific oracle on the 'loyal king' to come whose name is a word-play on that of Zedekiah. Verses 7-8 describe a situation of restoration. This means that chronologically, the punishment preceded the restoration of Judah.[38]

The first doublet[39] describes a kind of a new exodus which took place when the people of God went out from Egypt to dwell in their homeland. This new event seems greater in significance than the exodus from Egypt in popular memory (Parke-Taylor 2000:55). It inaugurates a sense of hope following the disaster of the Exile. The second introduces the hope of a new Judean ruling class symbolised by *semah* or the 'loyal leader' to come. These duplications denote the special significance of these units. The different contexts of the duplicated texts help to draw out different possibilities of meaning (McKeating 1999:120).

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[37] I have dealt further with the immediate literary context, comparison and interpretation of both texts in 23:1-8 and 33:14-26 in Mavinga (2009:117-27).

[38] "The verses 7-8 following the dynastic oracle in the MT are found at the end of the chapter in the LXX, after v 40." Differences between the place of this text in the LXX and the MT show that "after Jeremiah there must have been still some editorial activity going on; an indication of the importance of these sayings in the early tradition of the text of Jeremiah." Thus, it is perceived that "there are some variants between the MT of Jeremiah 23:5-8 and its correspondent in the LXX." In the LXX, verses 7-8 are located at the end of the chapter after verse 40 MT. Moreover, being a part of the dynastic oracle, "Jeremiah 23:7-8 MT and LXX have duplicated texts in Jeremiah 16:14-15 MT and LXX" (Parke-Taylor 2000:55; Bogaert 2006:398).

[39] "The unit of verses 7-8 is a passage duplicated in 16:14-15, while the unit on the dynastic oracle verses 5-6 is duplicated in 33:14-16. The unit 16:14-15 is a short oracle or simply a fragment which has been placed here without a clear reason. The unit is about the return from Exile. It produces 23:7-8, with minor differences. The passage is probably inserted here to attenuate the threatenings of the preceding oracle" (Couturier 2000:280).

The literary context of the unit of verses 5-6 is complex to locate. It gives rise to four major issues. First, it seems that the oracle refers to King Zedekiah (Mattaniah), Josiah's son. Second, the oracle refers to the restoration of both Israel and Judah in relation to the reign of a 'loyal king' whose name is a word-play on that of Zedekiah. Third, the oracle relates to that in Isaiah 11:1-16. Fourth, the oracle is placed in a context that removes the Davidic kings, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin in Jeremiah 22:1-30 and follows up with the judgment of false prophets in 23:9-40 (Sweeney 2007:311).[40]

2.2.2. Textual Criticism of Jeremiah 23:5-6

The sections (23:5-6; 33:14-16) are parts of the book of Jeremiah in the Masoretic text (MT).[41] The second, 33:14-16, is lacking in the Septuagint (LXX). Nevertheless, this disposition does not concern this study for reasons already indicated above. The next subsection discusses the literary analysis of the textual unit 23:1-8.

2.2.3. A Literary Analysis of Jeremiah 23:1-8

In this subsection, I will first examine the philological aspects; second, the use of significant words or phrases and finally, I will discuss the structure of the textual unit.

2.2.3.1. A Philological Discussion

The 'oracle of Yahweh' formula is found in three units, verses 1-4; 5-6 and 7-8. The introductory formula of verse 2 suggests a judgment being soon announced. The term

[40] Some scholars think that "verses 1-4 and 5-6 were added to chapter 22 as a unit or that they were added separately. If they were added separately, verses 1-4 are appropriately added to the general array in chapter 22 as regards the kings of Judah; in particular the double use of 'shepherd' in verse 2 and 4 ('shepherds who shepherd') can be linked to the similar double use of the root in 22:22. Verses 5-6 are essentially a 'look, days are coming'. Another 'look, days are coming' is found in the following verses 7-8. One can observe at least that Jeremiah 23:8 MT gives a reading of a significant verb *yashav* meaning 'to sit on, to rule or reign' and not the adverb *shuv* which means 'again.' This particular term relates the section to the preceding dynastic oracle in 23:5-6 MT" (Holladay 1986:613; Lundbom 2004:165; Bogaert 2006:398).

[41] 'The Hebrew Bible, the OT in its modern editions, which I use in my study, is based on manuscripts which are relatively late (by tenth or eleventh centuries CE). "The most important witnesses are the Codex of Aleppo and the Codex Leningradensis. The former is used as the basis of the edition of The Hebrew University Bible, whereas the latter forms the basis of the third edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* edited by Ruddolf Kittel, and that of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia"* (van der Kooij 2003:729).

‘therefore’ *lākēn* which is often expressed by ‘woe…therefore,’ is used to announce judgment after an indictment for wrongdoing. In verses 3-4, the emphatic pronoun of the first person ‘I’ is related to the use of the emphatic second person ‘you.’ “‘If you’ (leaders) have dispersed my people, then ‘I’ (Yahweh) will assemble the rest of my people.” In a poetic form, the unit (vv. 1-4) describes, in narrative style, the behaviour of the shepherds of the time (Holladay 1986:443; Lundbom 2004:165). Furthermore, the use of the converse perfect introduces the imperfect in the unit, particularly, in verse 3 which refers to the oracle. It underlines the restoration of the Judean people following the disaster of the Exile. What Yahweh will do with the dispersed sheep is expressed in a judgment speech addressed to the shepherds (v. 2). Later, he will assemble them and bring them home again. This is a specific announcement of salvation, thereby producing a prospect of hope for a better future (Brueggemann 2007:36). It implies that Yahweh will take over the shepherding from the irresponsible shepherds (v. 3), and will appoint new shepherds who will shepherd responsibly (v. 4). The phrase *welo’yippaqedu* (*pqd*) can be translated as ‘they will not be missing or lacking.’

Verse 2b offers a word-play on the nuances of *pqd*. It expresses that while the shepherds have not ‘tended’ to the sheep, Yahweh is about to ‘attend’ to them for their evil. The double use of ‘shepherds who shepherd’ is of significance in both verses 2 and 4 (Holladay 1986:613). The phrase is related to the one in verse 3 *mikkol ha ‘arashot* which means ‘from all the lands’ (Holladay 1986:614; Lundbom 2004:169). The point at issue is that the shepherds have driven away the flock (v. 2) while in verses 3 and 8 it is Yahweh who has dispersed them. It means the responsibility of being sent away from their homeland “was incumbent upon the Judean leadership and the people themselves” (Lundbom 2004:168). In the MT, the *nipha’l* of *pqd* gives the sense of ‘be missing.’ This metaphoric sense refers to the sheep that will be mustered and accounted for. It means that ‘none shall be missing’; the repetition of *pqd* in these oracles suggesting that judgment will be over and the covenant Yahweh is renewed with his people and will no longer experience another painful situation (Lundbom 2004:169), “I will bring forth a rightful shoot from the Davidic line” (v. 5). This announcement gives hope about the arrival of a ‘loyal king.’

Verse 7 has *welō-yō'merū'ōd* which means 'and they shall no longer say.' Jeremiah 16:14 has a passive singular, 'it shall no longer be said.'[42] The phrase *asher he'elah wa'asher hebi'* translated as 'who brought up and led' (23:8) is found in 16:15 in a short form *asher he'elah* meaning 'who brought up.' Verse 7 has also *bene yisra'el* translated as 'people of Israel.' Nevertheless, the terms in verse 7 maintain their very close meaning, underlining the coherence of the verse within the unit. The 'people of Israel,' the 'house of Israel' and the 'sons of Israel' are all understood in the same sense. The 'children of Israel' or 'house of Israel' will be brought out of the land of the north where they were dispersed (vv. 7-8).[43] Verse 8 presents a phrase *hiddahtim* which means 'I have driven them.' Moreover, in the same verse, the phrase *weyasebu*, 'and they will dwell' suggests a reversal movement in which God brings his people back home. Therefore, they shall dwell in their homeland. Otherwise, Yahweh will restore the land and its people.

2.2.3.2. A Translation of Jeremiah 23:5-6

> *The days are coming declares YHWH and I will raise up to David a righteous*[44] *branch,*[45] *a king who will reign wisely and execute what is right, and fair in the earth.*

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[42] In both passages "the LXX reads *kai ouk erousin eti* which means 'and it could not yet be said' (*cf.* 3:16LXX; 7:32LXX). In 16:15LXX, the phrase *os anagēge* refers back to *ò anagagōn* in 16:14, but a translation for the phrase *asher he'elah* in 23:8 is missing in the LXX in most manuscripts, where *oz sunēgagen* probably represents *asher habi'*, 'who led.' The Vulgate follows the MT *qui eduxit et adduxit* meaning 'who brought up and led' (23:8). The same phrase is read in 16:15LXX, *ton oikon Israel* meaning 'the house of Israel' which is not found in Jer. 16:15MT in which we read *bene yisra'el*, 'people of Israel' as in 23:7" (Parke-Taylor 2000:72).

[43] "LXX reads *hapan to sperma,* 'the whole seed'; the same phrase is read in the MT without *kol* meaning 'whole'. Moreover, 'the seed of Israel in LXX seems to be understood as 'the seed of the house of Israel in MT. The same phrase in LXX, *exosen autous,* is translated as "he had expelled them". In the text duplicated with v 8, especially, 16:15 MT has a reading, *hiddiham* which means 'he had driven them". In v8 from the LXX, the phrase *kai apekatestesen autous* is translated as "and he has restored them"; while the duplicated text (16:15) with v 8 has a reading, *wahasibotim*, "I will bring them back" with a similarity of meaning in LXX, *apokatasteso autous"* (Parke-Taylor 2000:72-3).

[44] The apparatus Criticus indicates that this verse 5 has *saddiq* while the Syriac version and Targum have *dzdjkwt* which is *sedeq*. In contrast to this, Jeremiah 33:15 has *sedaqah.* From *saddiq* to *sedaqah* respectively in the first oracle and in the second, specifies a particular meaning of *semah* in how the 'descendant' is qualified respectively *saddiq* in himself and *sedaqah* as a determinative word of this descendant showing what he will be doing. This supports both texts (23:5 and 33:15) in the codex of Leningrad.

[45]The apparatus criticus indicates that the word *semah* in the codex of Leningrad is the same in the MT and in the Syriac version where *smh* is found meaning 'splendor.' In the Targum is found *msjh* which has the same meaning as *smh* of Jeremiah 33:15. This is translated in the Septuagint as ανατολην which

In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell in security, and here is his name which he will be called: YHWH our righteousness.[46]

2.2.3.3. Significant Words

In this section, I will focus on *semah* and its related adjective *saddiq* and noun *sedaqah* (23:5; 33:15). In the OT, of the twelve times the noun *semah* occurs, seven times denote a 'shoot' or 'growth' in a literal sense. In reference to God's care for the earth and its growth, Psalms 65:10[11] is not read as an image. Isaiah 61:11 reads that the earth brings forth and causes plants to flourish (Abegg 1997:815). Thus, God causes the righteous to 'sprout forth' to make justice and praise 'springs up' for the nations. The remaining images occur in poetic exhortations to obedience. In Ezekiel 17:9-10 for example, the vine symbolising Israel is in danger of having its new growth wither because the people have broken the covenant. Hosea 8:7 likens the stalk with no head to Israel's rebellion: it will produce no fruit. In Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15, *semah* expresses the sprouting forth of the 'loyal leader' to come, in David's line (Abegg 1997:816).

Verse 5 describes *semah saddiq*, 'righteous branch' which is a true or genuine 'shoot' from the Davidic line. In the LXX, we read *anatolēn dikaian*, which means 'righteous rising' where *anatolē* (a figure used of heavenly bodies) is used of *semah* as a future ruler (Zech. 3:8; 6:12). The comparison with an expression in Phoenician inscriptions and in Ugaritic texts suggests a ruler who will do people justice (Abegg 1997:816). Verse 6 reads *yiqre'ō* meaning 'one will call him.' His name will be *YHWH sidqenu*, 'Yahweh our righteousness' similar to the last Judean king's name *sidqiyyahu*, 'Zedekiah.' It is a play on words on this name or at best an allusion to it (Carroll 1986:446)[47]. The word 'justice' in 23:5-6 must be given its full meaning which

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means 'rising, sunrise, or east.' These different manuscripts and versions have similar meanings of the term *semah.*

[46]*YHWH sidqenu* is indicated in the codex of Leningrad that Septuagint translates as Ιωσεδεκ. The Greek text Symmachus translates as δίκαιωσον ήμας, Targum has *sadqenu* that the Latin version translates as *iustus noster* which means 'our just or equitable' as we find in 33:16c. These versions have the same meaning of this phrase as in the Codex of Leningrad. Therefore, I maintain them as they are.

[47] LXX has *kurios Iōsedek* which means 'the Lord is righteous' (Carroll 1986:446).

includes God's salvific presence and action (Couturier 2000:284).[48] It points back to a genuine kingship as chosen by Yahweh to realise the blessings deriving from the covenant. These blessings relate to the peace, social justice and prosperity of the people in society (Adamo 2005:125). Therefore, Jeremiah predicts the restoration of the Davidic dynasty which refers to political, religious and moral "obligations of the covenant" (Adamo 2000:284).

2.2.3.4. The Structure of the Unit

The repetition of the accusation (v. 2) is expressed in the second person and in a direct address which begins with the emphatic pronoun *'attem* meaning 'you for your part.' This stylistic device picks up the phrase 'disperse (my) sheep' from the first accusation (v. 2b). The judgment speech against shepherds in verses 2b-4 contrasts, through a word-play of *pqd*, 'tend or attend,' with Yahweh who is about to attend to the sheep. The unit 23:5-6 underlines how the dynastic oracle is being fulfilled. According to Holladay and others, this unit is poetry, contradicting Lundbom's proposal which states it is in prose (Holladay 1986:313; Lundbom 2004:165). The placement of this unit after verses 1-4 may be for chronological reasons. In fact, the use of *wahaqimothiy* meaning 'I appoint' suggests the removal of Judean kings, particularly, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (Holladay 1986:616).

The section 23:1-8 forms a unity. In reading the unit, there are links between individual kings (vv. 1-4) which present a chronological[49] order pointing to the 'loyal king' to come (vv. 5-6). This promise passes through the disaster of the Exile as a learning experience that turned back the Judean people to the covenant Yahweh made with them (vv. 7-8) (Parke-Taylor 2000:72). The unit itself presents the condemnation of the shepherds who dispersed the flock. Because of this, Yahweh sent them away to foreign countries. A return from the Exile of northern Israel is predicted in terms of a new exodus (23:1-8) (Lundbom 2004:165). Therefore, the three units are tied to each other and underline the history of the Judean kingship and people of the time.

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[48] Judg. 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Isa. 45:24; Psa. 103:6.

[49] "Or logical but the formulation is not yet approved. Maybe verses 1-4 imply that the present kings will be removed to be replaced by the 'loyal king' to come (vv. 5-6)." See Paul Decock, from my discussion with him on October 9, 2009 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

2.2.4. Conclusion on the Meaning of Jeremiah 23:5-6

The first unit (vv. 1-4) speaks of the condemnation of the Judean kings (shepherds) for having corrupted the 'flock,' the Judean people. The second unit (vv. 5-6) announces the 'loyal king' to come, the one who will restore social justice, righteousness, peace and prosperity to the land. The third unit (vv. 7-8) presents the terms, describing not only that God planned to expel the Judean leadership and people away from Judah, but also bring them back in order to dwell in the land and restore it (Parke-Taylor 2000:73).[50] The 'loyal leader' as announced in 23:5-6 brings appropriate solutions in the context of Judah after a generalised corrupt situation. It was caused by the leadership and people who aroused Yahweh's wrath. As a result, Yahweh sent them away to a foreign land for moral correction. The dynastic oracle (23:5-6), essentially brings hope to the Judean people (Brueggemann 2007:129).

2.3. Jeremiah 33:14-16

2.3.1. The Immediate Literary Context

Jeremiah 33 comprises eight oracles among which is located the dynastic oracle in verses 14-16. The same number of oracles is found in chapter 32 (Lundbom 2004:530). However, in chapter 33 there is no narrative but simply expanded oracle formulas and brief introductions that provide the oracles with a background (vv. 1, 4-5, 19, 23-24). Oracle 1 (vv. 2-3) addresses Jeremiah. It constitutes an introduction to oracle 2 (vv. 6-9) which predicts the restoration of Israel and Judah and their reconciliation with Yahweh. The focus is on the restoration of the Holy City after its destruction when the people were taken into Exile. The preceding section (vv. 4-5) is an introductory formula giving a background to the oracle of Restoration (Couturier 2000:291; Lundbom 2004:530).

The oracle of Restoration is received by Jeremiah while confined to the court of the guard (vv33:1-3). Oracles 2 through 8 address a broader audience of Judeans facing

[50] The position of 23:7-8 in the LXX, following 23:40, is not readily explained. However, Parke-Taylor citing Janzen makes the interesting proposal that the MT order of 23:1-8 was at one time 1-4, 7-8, 5-6 (Parke-Taylor 2000:73).

the destruction of the city. Judeans had been taken into Exile as prisoners. Afterwards, a 'rest' returned to the land. This collection is linked to chapter 32 by the phrase, '*a second time Jeremiah received the word of Yahweh while he was imprisoned'* (v. 1; *cf.* 31:1-2). The first revelation came to Jeremiah when Hanamel approached him with the request to buy his field. A second came when Yahweh promised to unveil hidden things to Jeremiah if he would but call upon him (vv. 2-3). Both revelations came when Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the guard (Lundbom 2004:525). Lundbom (2004:525) says that we have no reason to view the linking statement as simply "a literary device" which is of no historical value. This prejudges chapter 33 as "a repetition and re-edition of chapter 32." Lundbom (2004:526)[51] citing Weiser and Holladay indicate that these scholars take verse 1 as an historical notice which it must be. A similar statement occurs in 1:13.[52] It makes a strong connection[53] with the Book of Restoration (30-33).[54] The eight oracles constitute chapter 33 and unite it as a whole. These oracles are arranged in two groups of four, just as in chapter 32.

In the first group are two single oracles, verses 2-3 and 6-9, then a pair of similarly-framed oracles, verses 10-11 and 12-13. These first two single oracles refer to the Fall of Zion-Jerusalem. The third and fourth oracles announce the situation after the Fall of Zion-Jerusalem. In the second group are two other single oracles, verses14-16 and 17-18 and a pair of similarly-framed oracles concluding the collection and also the enlarged Book of Restoration, verses 20-22 and 25-26. The fifth oracle in verses 14-

[51] "The eight oracles have balancing formulas and key phrases which unite the section. The verses 1-3 concern the expectation of great and hidden things. The city and its people will be healed (vv. 4-9). This suggests the return of joyful sounds (vv. 10-11). This time will be a particular one for the return of pastureland (vv. 12-13). Indeed, a 'loyal leader' as a righteous 'leader' will rule over a righteous city (vv. 14-16). This Davidic leader is at the same time a king and a priest everlasting from the Levitical line (vv. 17-18). It means that the covenant with David and Levi remains intact (vv. 19-22). And finally, the seed (*zera'*) of Jacob (Israel) and David, even though, its line is cut off, Yahweh restores it in sprouting forth an 'loyal Davidic leader,' competent to apply and maintain justice, fairness or righteousness, peace or prosperity in the land" (Lundbom 2004:526-527).

[52] "The word of the Lord came to me again: 'what do you see?' 'I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north,' I answered."

[53] "'I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess' says the Lord."

[54] "The days are coming, declares the Lord, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the Lord." In fact, the phrase, 'I will surely restore their fortunes' (v. 26Q), makes an inclusion with a matching phrase in 30:3 (Lundbom 2004:526).

16 repeats the oracle in 23:5-6 with minor changes which the majority of scholars credit to Jeremiah (Lundbom 2004:527).

The main break in the chapter, so far as oracles are concerned, comes after verse 13, where the LXX omission begins. In spite of some other views on the section verses 14-26, the chapter nevertheless presents 'three superscriptions of oracles' which refer to Jeremiah in vv. 19 and 23. They introduce the section in the whole chapter. These three superscriptions[55] are:

(i) Verses 14-16 are a unit surrounded by verses 12-13 and 17-18 "this is what YHWH almighty says through Jeremiah" (v. 12).
(ii) Verses 19-22 "Jeremiah received the word of Yahweh" (v. 19).
(iii) Verses 23-26 "Jeremiah received the word of Yahweh" (v. 23).

These 'three superscriptions of oracles,' in my view, establish a coherent frame of chapter 33 which is part of Jeremiah's book. The date of the eight oracles on the restoration of Jerusalem and Judah is around 587 BCE, as indicated in 32:1 (Couturier 2000:291).

2.3.2. A Comparison of Jeremiah 33:14-16 with 23:5-6

Brueggemann argues that Jeremiah's oracle in 33:14-16 looks back to Jeremiah 23:5-6. Indeed, this oracle is a repetition of that oracle with some minor changes (1998:318).[56]

[55] It is not necessary to prove here that the section is a later expansion. "If there are later expansions, it does not mean there is agreement of scholars"; nevertheless, I indicate "a connection with the superscriptions in verses 19 and 23. From a compositional point of view, there are three identifiable segments in chapter 33" (Lundbom 2004:527 citing Parunak 1994:514).

[56] The section in "Jer 33:14-26 MT = 0 LXX has been recently studied characterising the longer version of Jeremiah's book. An eventual addition is supposed to be prepared by some revision of chapters 29-33 preceding Jer 33B. Nevertheless, we have no proof that this addition in the MT is due to the revisionist movement organizing the book of Jeremiah. Considering the most visible difference between the dynastic oracle in LXX and MT, Pierre-Maurice Bogaert argues that the concept of the Davidic offspring, *Iôsedek*, in LXX and *Yhwh sidqenu*, 'Yahweh our righteousness' in MT is, in this latter text, a preparation to the additional section in Jer 33B. Furthermore, Jeremiah 33B presents four oracles invoking the name of David (vv. 14-16, 17-18, 19-22, and 23-26) and bringing the expanded book of restoration to a close" (Bogaert 2006:399, 403).

In 23:5-6, *semah* is described as *saddiq* meaning 'just or fair.' This adjective expresses that the 'branch' sprouting forth from David's line has a genuine nature, being just and fair. Compared with 23:5, the term *wahaqīmōtî* means 'I will bring forth' to David *semah saddiq*, a 'rightful branch.' In 33:14-16, the oracle presents a 'determinative word,' *sedaqah*, meaning 'righteousness, fairness or justice.' It emphasises the way the 'loyal king' to come will act in the community. Moreover, Israel in 23:6 is substituted for Jerusalem in 33:14-16 which now is called by a play of words, *YHWH sidqenu*, 'Yahweh our righteousness.' It emphasises here that the restoration is not so much for Israel and Judah as for the holy city, Zion-Jerusalem. Both units infer the same assurance for the Davidic dynasty and the Levitical priesthood. The link is perceived between the restoration of Israel and the enduring validity of the institutions in the restored land (Couturier 2000:291; Diamond 2003:592). The oracle in 33:14-16 complements the one in 23:5-6. Both constitute two sides of the same coin; therefore, we can consider them as one oracle.

2.3.3. A Literary Analysis of Jeremiah 33:14-26

In this subsection, I will first undertake a philological discussion; second, I will analyse the significant words and finally, I will define the coherence of the unit.

2.3.3.1. A Philological Discussion

"See, time is coming, when I shall perform the good word…" (v.14) is a divine call to attention which is characteristic in the poetic oracle in 23:5-6 as it is in 33:15. The style moves and extends into a descriptive and narrative statement. Yahweh is performing a 'good word' spoken to Israel and Judah with regard to their future (29:10; 33:26) (Carroll 1986:637). The 'good word' refers to *semah sedaqah* or *semah saddiq* in 33:15 or 23:5. The verb *wahaqimothī* in *hiphi'l* perfect tense with converse *waw* gives an imperfect tense in the first person singular. It emphasises the causal action of sprouting forth of a 'true branch' by Yahweh himself. Yahweh says *'asmîah*

ledāwid semah sedaqah meaning "I will cause to sprout for David a true shoot of righteousness" (Parke-Taylor 2000:56; Hill 2007:160).[57]

"Those days which marked the time" (v.15) is a phrase which expresses a combined formula which is absent in 23:5. Nevertheless, it occurs elsewhere, for example, in Jeremiah 3:16, 17. "In those days…" (v.16), it is "a time during which Jerusalem would be called the throne of Yahweh" (v. 17). These formulas are common to the OT phrases and appear in Jeremiah, particularly in this dynastic oracle (33:15). The idea is to draw attention to the fact that Jerusalem shall attract Israel and Judah on the one hand, and all peoples on the other. The worship of Yahweh shall be the result of the restoration of Zion-Jerusalem (Lundbom 1999:314-5).

The adjective *saddiq*, 'righteous or rightful' insinuates an indirect criticism of the Davidic kings of the time (Reimer 1997:744). "Jerusalem will dwell in security" (v.16) is substituted for "Israel will dwell in security" in 23:6. The restoration of Israel and Judah starts from the holy city, Zion-Jerusalem. In other words, Yahweh's blessings overflow upon Israel, his people from Zion-Jerusalem. Zion-Jerusalem's security is that of Judah and its people (Lundbom 2004:540).[58]

The unit 33:17-18 declares a promise that Judah's royal and priestly lines will endure. "There shall not be cut off for David a man who sits upon the throne of the house of Israel" (v. 17). This promise is similar to that found in verse 18[59] and both are rooted in the unconditional covenant given to David (2 Sam. 7:12-16). Despite what one can understand from this priestly promise, in the context of restoration in Judah (Zion-Jerusalem being the centre of socio-political and religious life) Yahweh "would saturate priests' lives with abundance" (31:14). Furthermore, all the people would be

[57] Some Hebrew manuscripts add the phrase "he would rule over the people justly" (Parke-Taylor 2000:56).

[58] In 33:16, "the phrase *tiwwasha' yihudah weyirushalim tishkkon labetah* is translated as 'Judah will be liberated and Jerusalem will dwell in security.' This verse has 'Jerusalem' instead of 'Israel' in 23:6. Indeed, *beth yisra'el* and *beth yehudah* are referred to in 33:14 where the reference to *yisra'el* in 23:6 has been changed to *yerushalim* in 33:16. The Codex Sinaiticus substitutes *Yerousalēm* for *Israēl* in 23:6 (*cf.* 30:22LXX = 49:2MT). Some scholars suggest that the context of the rebuilding of Jerusalem (vv 6-13) may have influenced the text's development into a statement about the name of the city rather than Israel." In my view, the change of Israel to Jerusalem would have been for particular reasons due to the significance of Jerusalem in the context of the restoration of Israel (Carroll 1986:637; Parke-Taylor 2000:57).

[59] 'And for the Levitical priests, there shall not be cut off a man from before me who brings up the burnt offering and who burns the cereal offering and who makes sacrifice, all the days' (Jer. 33:18).

called "priests of Yahweh" (Isa. 61:6). It underlines not so much the state of reconciliation of the people with Yahweh as their reconciliation with one another in the community (Diamond 2003:592; Lundbom 2004:541).

In my view, the change is part of the second oracle itself as prophesied by Jeremiah in 33:16. Despite the mention of Israel in verse 14, Jerusalem is substituted for Israel in 33:16 reflecting the modification of 23:6. The mention of Jerusalem, as a socio-political, economic and religious centre, suggests in verse 16 a unified kingdom where the house of Israel and Judah would enjoy the Holy City, Zion-Jerusalem (Carroll 1986:637). This ensures a continuity of the Davidic covenant even after the collapse of the previous Davidic kings (Brueggemann 2007:56). The phrase *YHWH sidqenu* in 33:16 and 23:6 is characteristic of this. The first person plural suffix is in contrast with the first person singular suffix in Zedekiah's name, *sidqiyyahu*[60] meaning 'my righteousness is Yahweh.' The inference in this verse is that the holy city would witness rightful values as a result of a change of mind, thereby revealing a way of re-establishing the social order for all the cities and people in Israel (Thompson 1980:601).

2.3.3.2. A Translation of Jeremiah 33:14-16

> *The days are coming, declared YHWH that I will raise up a message of wealth that was addressed to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.*
>
> *In those days and at the alarm, I will spring up from David a branch of righteousness*[61] *and he will do what is right and just in the earth.*

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[60] Parke-Taylor (2000:57) says "that the name *Yōsedek* occurs elsewhere in the OT in the LXX only in Zech 6:11 (the father of Joshua, the high priest). With regard to 23:6, he cites Lipinski (1970:41-57) in claiming that *Yōsedek* is the exact equivalent of the name of Zedekiah, on the basis that the theophoric element in the name may come either at the beginning or the end, as in the case of Zedekiah's predecessor, Yehoyakin (52:31) and Kaneyahu (22:24)."

[61]The apparatus Criticus shows that the Codex of Leningrad has *sedaqah* while few Hebrew manuscripts have *saddiq* as translated in the Greek text of Theodotion and of Origen and Lucian's recension as well. In many Hebrew manuscripts is added והשכיל ומלך ומלך as found in verse 5 of chapter 23. This phrase means 'a king will reign and do what is good.' This declaration is repeated in 33:15 that could justify the present variant in many Hebrew manuscripts on verse 5 of chapter 23. This proves that the Codex of Leningrad is composed from another Hebrew manuscript.

In those days Judah will be liberated and Jerusalem will dwell in security, and this is how it will be called: YHWH our righteousness.

2.3.3.3. Significant Words

Semah saddiq or sedaqah means the 'righteous branch' or 'branch of righteousness.' These two related expressions characterise the dynastic oracle in Jeremiah. The natural gradation in the word group comprises both active and stative meanings. One suggests a person acting rightly; another being righteous (Reimer 1997:746). *Sedaqah* has to do with the declaration of right way to act in society. Sociological considerations refer to the understanding of righteousness. Theologically, righteousness refers to the image of God acting in the midst of his people. This is quite difficult to describe. It is rather perceived that *sedaqah* regularly deals with the conditions of keeping the covenant Yahweh made with his people (Reimer 1997:746). Therefore, the status of 'loyal leadership' determines the way an individual behaves in the community. In other words, the social justice (*sedaqah*) experienced in the community is reflective of rightful (*saddiq*) State leadership.

This is underscored in verse 17 *lo'-yikkaret ledawid*, 'there shall not be cut off for David.' It means that David 'shall never be lacking an occupant of the throne.' The phrase *beth-yishra'el,* "the house of Israel suggests the unified kingdom, Judah and Israel brought together" (v. 14) (Carroll 1986:637). The same idiom *lo'-yikkaret* used for the occupant of the throne in verse17 is also used of the appointment of priests in verse 18. The phrase *welakkohanim halewiyyim* means 'and for the priests,[62] the Levites,' underlines a noticeable moral value of *semah*, the coming king who will reign on the throne. At that time, things will be well and Levitical priests will be available in Jerusalem to take charge of the sacrifices in the Sanctuary (Parke-Taylor 2000:61). The 'true shoot' is perceived as 'a progenitor' of a continuing dynasty. The promise of Nathan to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 implies a throne that would be established for ever (Thompson 1980:602).

[62] This phrase mentioning the Levitical priests is typically Deuteronomistic. *Cf.* Deut. 17:9, 18; 18:1; 24:8; 27:9; Josh. 3.3; 8:33; and Ezek. 43:19; 44:15.

The verses 19-21 present a similar argument to that in 31:36 which proves the reliability and permanence of Yahweh's promises. It is described as a *berith YHWH* which means 'Yahweh's covenant' that could never be broken. Through the covenant, the promise of verse 22 is extended to include the whole nation (vv. 23-26) (Dumbrell 2002:147). The Hebrew term *mā'as*, 'were rejected' (v. 24), expresses the fate of Israel and Judah. They suffered disaster as a result of a divine discipline that would turn them back to Yahweh, through a change of mind. Yahweh once again chose (loved), *bāhar*, his remnant people (Thompson 1980:603). Yahweh would have mercy, *riham*, on them and their fortunes would be restored. This opened a new perspective for a better future. The remnant people of God, through the devastating situation due to the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, had opportunity to be renewed in their mind. This gave them hope for a better future in the land (Brueggemann 2007:36).

2.3.3.4. The Structure of the Unit

The internal structure of the unit of verses 14-16 is characteristic. "The days are coming said the Lord" (v. 14a). This expression referring to the future, ties the promise of the unit together. The Lord himself will fulfil his promise (v. 14b). The promise is addressed to the 'house of Israel' (v. 14c) and that of 'Judah' (v. 14d). The unit is tied together by the use of a conjunction ו and prepositions אל and על as well as the relative pronoun אשר (Rata 2007:71-72). "In those days' and at the alarm" (v15a), Yahweh will spring up "a branch of righteousness" (v. 15b). He will do people justice in the land (v. 15c). As a result, Judah will be liberated (v. 16a) and the capital city, Jerusalem, will remain in security (v. 16b). It will make its reputation (v. 16c), and will be named '*YHWH* our righteousness' (v. 16d) (Rata 2007:74). They have permanence in the royal line of David and the Levitical priesthood in the unified kingdom (Israel and Judah). Jeremiah 33:26 contains the phrase *ashūv eth-shevūtham* meaning "I will restore their fortunes" which provides a catchword link with 30:3; 33:7 and 33:11. "The days come, says the Lord, when he is bringing his people, Israel and Judah, back home. He re-instates them in the land, he gave their forefathers to possess, says the Lord" (Parke-Taylor 2000:61).

2.3.4. Conclusion on the Meaning of Jeremiah 33:14-16

This second dynastic oracle repeats the one in 23:5-6 and brings a new dimension which complements the first oracle. New aspects are added to the promise of hope. It consists first, of Jerusalem becoming again the centre of socio-political and religious life of the people (v. 16b). Second, the people will be re-united in terms of the house of Israel (v. 14c) and that of Judah (v. 14d). The 'loyal leader' to come, symbolised by *semah* (v. 15), will be interconnected with the priestly leaders in Zion-Jerusalem (vv. 17-18) (Rata 2007:71-72). It implies a collaboration of civil and priestly leadership in the restored community on the one hand; and on the other, the leadership will present an adequate moral standard (23:5). This actualises the new covenant among the leadership in ruling over the people justly. It will bring the people to the Sanctuary, the 'reconciling place' between Yahweh and his people.

2.3.5. The Historical Context of Jeremiah 23:5-6 and 33:14-16

While it is not possible to distinguish the original historical contexts of these two texts, I will nevertheless briefly give a description of the general historical context of the royal oracle in Jeremiah.

The Judean kings of the day had failed to rule over the people according to Yahweh's instructions. The section (21:11-23:8) gives the indictments against the Judean monarchy. It is clearly perceived through indictments addressed to named Judean kings: Jehoahaz (22:10-12), Jehoiakim (22:13-19), and Jehoiachin (22:24-30) (Diamond 2003:574). This socio-historical context elicited the oracle on *semah* (23:5-6; 33:14-16). The perspective of the dynastic oracle is that of the restoration of the people following the Exile. The key role-player is Yahweh renewing his covenant with his remnant people in providing them with a true leadership (Couturier 2000:284; Rata 2007:80). The promise (on the restoration of the Davidic dynasty) refers to the renewal of the socio-political order in relation to the religious and moral values reflecting obedience to God's instructions (Couturier 2000:284). Such restoration reflects on Zion-Jerusalem which symbolised the socio-political, economic and religious prosperity of the Judean people.

This new disposition is underlined in 33:16 when Israel in 23:6 is substituted for Jerusalem and is called by a metaphoric name (Parke-Taylor 2000:61). This new name symbolises the role of the 'loyal king' in terms of his moral qualities as a ruler of God's people. This is suggested by a close connection between the 'loyal king' and the Levitical priesthood (vv. 17-22) (Lundbom 2004:526). The fulfilment of an OT prophecy does not necessarily determine the date during which the oracle has been announced or written (McKane 1996:862).[63] It means that dating this oracle remains a problem. The last verses (vv. 23-26), give a disillusioned closing note when the hope of the people is stirred up. It may refer to a reminder by Jeremiah with regard to the past events the Judean people experienced (1996:862). Therefore, this repeated oracle in 33:14-16 should be dated in Jeremiah's time as referring to the prophet himself.

2.4. Summary

Jeremiah's oracle on *semah* 'sprouting forth' from the Davidic line consists of God's initiative and commitment in bringing social change to Judah. The 'loyal leader' would be 'upright' as an intrinsic moral quality which enables him to set up social justice in the community. The figure of 'shepherds' refers to the leadership in the Judean community (22:22). The most traumatising situation for the Judeans was the loss of their land (Wright 1997:824). This event was interpreted as being the end of Yahweh's history with his people. However, the promise of restoration opened a new perspective of hope after the disaster. A good leadership appointed by Yahweh would rule over them justly and remove fear and terror from the land.

[63] McKane (1996:862-3) asserts "that one should suggest that the long section in Jer. 33B is earlier than the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and gives no indication of date. He says that Streane, Peake and Rudolph locate the passage in Ezra and Nehemiah's time or later and Duhm in the Maccabean period. Considering the statement: 'David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel' (v. 17), McKane refers to Giesebrecht and Duhm who suggest that the text seems to ignore circumstances when the Davidic monarchy was 'cut off' in 587/586 BCE. The oracle does not deny the historical circumstances, but it predicts a restoration and then an unbroken continuance in the future. McKane cites Peake who asserts that the oracle was written at the time when there was no king. Duhm, on the other hand, McKane says that he dates Jer. 33B in the Maccabean period and supposes that a restoration of the monarchy is the background of v .17. Nevertheless, as the dynastic oracle usually refers to the exilic time, it should be difficult to relate it to the Maccabean period in the second century BCE."

The promise was made to the Judean people in the context of their struggle. It can be applied in any context in the world, or in Africa, and in particular, in the current leadership situation within the DR Congo. "The days are coming" (v. 5) when the leadership will be exercised by loyal leaders, those who are able to do people justice. Leaders who can maintain justice, *mishpat*, and fairness, *sedaqah*, are absolutely necessary for the restored community. Reimer (1997:758) affirms that the association of *saddiq*, righteous, with *mishpat*, justice, arises in two particular usages. First, the administration of social justice is assumed by a just leadership. Second, the association of the 'righteous' with the administration of justice ensures good governance. *Saddiq*, 'rightful,' especially, in the book of Proverbs, refers to governance of the State (Prov. 28:12; 29:2, 16; 31:9) (Reimer 1997:758). The righteous rule leads to safety, prosperity, contentment and joy. In that rule, the 'loyal leader' speaks up and judges fairly and defends the rights of the poor and needy.

The question arises as how leaders can collaborate with the current great powers without compromising their socio-political and religious values and commitments. What was wrong in the Judean leadership is also found in countries today, especially in the DR Congo. The external influence on leaders and State, and the internal conflict among the Judean people had compromised the good governance of the Kingdom. The 'loyal leader' to come will restore good governance to the nation and provide a new way of assuming responsibility in the State or church. This 'new leader' would be different from the preceding leaders and would be called 'Yahweh our righteousness.'

3. An Analysis of Isaiah 4:2; 11:1-2

3.1. Outline of the Book of Isaiah

The division proposed by Duhm, of First Isaiah (chapters 1-39); Second Isaiah (chapters 40-55); Third Isaiah (chapters 56-66) is accepted here. Dumbrell (2002:107-8 citing Childs 1979:325-34) argues that Isaiah (chapters 40-55) functions as a prophetic interpretation and elaboration of the traditions of Isaiah 1-39. Furthermore, he states that Isaiah 56-66 is an elaboration and application of Isaiah's message in

chapters 40-55. In this regard, every segment of the division has its own historical or thematic interest (Dumbrell 2002:107).

Chapter 1 gives an overview of Isaiah's book and an outline of his prophecy. First, it presents the focal point of the prophecy (1:2-3). Second, it discusses Israel's refusal to be God's people (1:4-9). Third, the chapter points out the problem of the perverted cult in Zion (1:10-17). Fourth, Isaiah (1:18-20) presents an offer of a conditional forgiveness if the people are willing and obedient, and then they will return to the Promised Land. Fifth, Isaiah (1:21-23) resumes the indictment against the rebelling people in 1:2-3. Sixth, Isaiah (1:24-25) deals with the threat of punishment of the Israelite people. Finally, in verses 25-31, a verdict is issued that reveals for the first time in the OT an emergence of two groups within the nation: the wicked who would be punished, and the righteous remnant who would be redeemed (Dumbrell 2002:109).

In the first section (1-39),[64] chapters 1-11 are supposed to be from the 'days of king Ahaz,' and chapters 28-32, from the time of Hezekiah. Isaiah addresses some warnings and indictments to the leaders in chapters 1-11 in the time of Ahaz. The social situation has become difficult in Judah and Jerusalem (2:1-5:30). He gives successively the "oracles against the nations" in 13:1-23:18; the "Apocalypse of Isaiah" in 24:1-27:13; the oracle in Hezekiah's rule in 28:1-33:24; the "judgment on Edom and joy for the redeemed" in 34:1-35:10. Chapters 36-39 provide an historical

[64] "Isaiah's prophecy is located in a very complex historical context. The prophet started his ministry at the death of king Uzziah (Azariah) (6:1) in 742 BCE. It was after Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, had accessed on the throne (745-727 BCE). Socio-political events define the historical context of the texts in Isaiah. These events impacted as well on the socio-religious domain in Israel from 'the eighth to the fifth centuries BCE.' It was especially the Assyrian control over the people of God. I do not focus on the re-reading and re-writing of the Isaiah's book which would have resulted over three and half centuries if I consider the book as it is today. To indicate the socio-historical that elicited the oracle on 'branch' in Isaiah's prophecy, I point out the socio-historical context of the first part of chapters 1-39. This part of the book is from the time of the prophet and refers to Judah. The following Assyrian kings were: Shalmaneser V (726-722 BCE); Sargon II (721-705 BCE) and Sennacherib (704-681 BCE). The prophet exercised his ministry 'in and around Jerusalem.' He announced many of his oracles between 742 and 725 BCE. It is nevertheless, difficult to date the oracles that refer to social justice and perverted practices in Zion-Jerusalem. Other oracles referring to the socio-political 'crisis' are located during the time of Ahaz (735-715 BCE) and Hezekiah (715-687 BCE). Assyria had conquered Israel in 733 BCE and Syria in 732 BCE. This time was marked political activities of Ahaz, the king of Judah who committed himself to Assyria as a loyal servant and vassal leader of Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings 16:7-9). Isaiah gave symbolic names to his two sons: Shear-Jashub which means 'a remnant will come back' and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz meaning 'loot in haste'" (Pelletier 1998:964-5; Jensen and Irwin 2000:229).

appendix, especially, Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (36:1-37:38); Hezekiah's sickness and his prayer (38:1-22); and the "Embassy from Merodach-baladan" (39:1-8) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233-348).

The texts of my interest, Isaiah 4:2 and 11:1-2, both belong to the section of chapters 1-11. The first is included in the unit 4:2-6 and the second in 11:1-9.

3.2. Isaiah 4:2

3.2.1. The Immediate Literary Context

Isaiah 4:2 is part of the unit 4:2-6 belonging to a shorter collection consisting originally of chapters 2-4. The collection ends on a note of hope which is to be fulfilled after Isaiah's lifetime (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233). The unit is about Jerusalem in the days of judgment. After the judgment the 'branch of the Lord' would sprout forth coming to restore the survivors of "the land and its remnant" (v. 2). The concept of remnant (v. 3) is expanded to include 'the remainder' in Zion and the separated portion in Jerusalem. To them is referred directly the adjective *qadōsh*, 'holy,' whereas, in the exalted phrases of verse 2, similar expressions are applied to the fruit of the land, not to the people (Watts 1985:50). The overriding concern of the unit, as well as that of Isaiah's prophecy, has to do with the people who would inhabit God's city (Watts 1985:50; Barker 2003:501).

The segment 2:2-4(5), describes the people, the land, and city. The people's situation has passed over to the other side of judgment. Nevertheless, it is connected with the unrelenting sequence of threat and disaster in 2:6-4:1. It may be noted once again how "these passages re-contextualise this dark event without erasing it. The worst has happened" (Blenkinsopp 2000:202). Now a better future opens up, even though the shadow of the past still hangs over the present. Isaiah 2:2-4 perceives Jerusalem as pre-eminent among the nations. The religious capital will attract even the gentiles of the world because of its high moral ideals embodied in Yahweh's instruction (*torah*) (2000:203). This looks to a time when Jerusalem's suffering has passed. Especially, when Judah would have abandoned its corrupt behaviour and come under the Lord's security (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233).

According to 4:1, Jerusalem will experience a severe shortage of men. It causes a dramatic reversal as rich women scramble to avoid what was considered a disgrace. Being unmarried and childless was perceived as disgrace (3:18-4:1). This imagery introduces verse 2 which is about the sprouting forth of the 'branch' of the Lord. The very trials Jerusalem has undergone would allow the Judean people to be reminded of their covenant with Yahweh and experience Yahweh's forgiveness (vv. 3-4) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233).

3.2.2. Textual Criticism of Isaiah 4:2

Verse 2 speaks of "the surviving remnant of Israel." The MT reads Israel rather than "Israel and Judah"[65]; the reason could be because Judah is part of Israel. Nevertheless, these chapters (dealing with the oracle on a 'loyal king') have separated Israel's fate from that of Judah and Jerusalem (Watts 1985:48). Thus, the sprouting forth of *semah* is of significance to bring both sides together in the Sanctuary. Therefore, restoration draws Israel and Judah around 'Zion-Jerusalem' as a result of the unified kingdom (1985:48).

3.2.3. A Literary Analysis of Isaiah 4:2-6

3.2.3.1. A Philological Discussion

The 'branch[66] of the Lord' (v. 2), in its metaphoric sense, refers to the 'loyal leader' to come in order to set up a better public life in the land. For the third time the phrase, "the day of the Lord," is presented in the chapter. It is only in this passage that this announcement is positive. The other two texts (3:18; 4:1) speak of destruction. The introductory phrase of the oracle *bayyōm hahū'* means 'in that day.' It uses an

[65] 'Israel and Judah' is read in 1Q Is[a] secundum The Dead Sea Scroll of St. Mark's Monastery, vol. 1, 1950.

[66] The LXX translates it as a light shining out, as it does in the Aramaic version. It means that the LXX takes the meaning of 'shining forth' rather than 'springing forth' from the ground, hence *epilampsei ho theos* (from *epilampo*, 'shine forth,' *cf.* Syr. *semha'* meaning 'brightness'). Other early Greek translations make the same translation, rendering *semah* as *anatolē* which means 'the east, rising of the sun, or another heavenly body in its ascendancy.' This is similar to the LXX at Zech. 3:8 and 6:12 translated as *anatelei*, 'shining or rising' (Blenkinsopp 2000:203; Barker 2003:501).

imperfect verb *yihyeh* meaning 'it will be.' Even though Hebrew syntax does not differentiate the present from the future, nevertheless, the 'loyal king' points to the coming days. Thus, the future is preferred instead of the present. The two major units of the section (vv. 3-4 and 5-6) are introduced by perfect verbs with converse *wāw, wehayah* and *wūbārā'* which means respectively, 'and it will be'; 'and [*YHWH*] will create.' In this unit, the use of imperfect and perfect verbs with converse *wāw* sustains the time viewed in the future. This is characterised by the announcement referring to the introductory phrase "in that day" (Watts 1985:49). Furthermore, verse 2 presents a synonymous parallelism of *semah,* the 'growth' with *peri hā'ares,* the 'fruit of the earth.' This parallelism indicates that *semah* is taken in both senses, literally and metaphorically. The 'branch' symbolises the growth of the plants and the sprouting forth of a 'loyal king' to come (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233).[67]

Verse 4 describes a repetitive parallelism *so'ath benōth-siyyōn we'eth-demē yerūshalam* meaning the "sexual materials of Zion's daughters and blood-guilt of the city" (Procter 2002:519). These materials symbolise the impurity of the people which has to be washed away by the Lord (Watts 1985:48; Jensen and Irwin 2000:233). These literary styles (the synonymous and repetitive parallelisms) in this section play a key role. First, they relate *semah* from its literal usage (germination of the plants) to its metaphoric sense (the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leadership') from the Davidic line. Second, they emphasise the process undertaken by the Lord to cleanse Zion and her daughters.[68] The 'daughters of Zion' represent the remnant of the people who are freed from the disaster of the Exile. The Exile was a process for the people to be cleansed with the holy city of Jerusalem (v. 4).

Verse 5 seems to recapitulate the Israelite history of the exodus. It is expressed in the phrase *'anan yōmam we'ashan wenogah 'esh lehavah lālah* which means 'a white cloud by the day and a sign of fire by night.' This refers to a new, different exodus from that of Egypt. The smoke and fire of the temple sacrifices would form a 'cloud'

[67] *Cf.* Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12.

[68] "The passing allusion to the purification of Jerusalem probably does not refer to the tirade against women in 3:16-26 but rather takes menstrual blood as a type of anything that renders unclean (*cf.* Lev. 12:1-2; 15:19-30). Some terms such as *sō'a,* 'filth' usually 'excrement' are named in Isaiah 28:3; 36:12 and 2 Kings 18:28; and these terms indicate a form of hendiadys with *dāmmîm,* 'the blood,' matching or washing, *rāhas* and *yādiah* which means 'rinsing' these last terms are used in cultic contexts (Ezek. 40:38; 2 Chron. 4:6)" (Blenkinsopp 2000:204).

over the temple during the day and a bright red sign at night. These signs were recognised as proof of Yahweh's presence (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233; Barker 2003:502). Verse 6 has the form of a repetitive parallelism, *tihēh lesel-yōmam mehorev wulemaheseh* meaning 'it will be a shelter and shade.' In this specific context, the 'loyal leader' to come will bring about social justice, peace and security as the means of hope for a better future in the community (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233).

3.2.3.2. A Translation of Isaiah 4:2

> *In that day the branch of YHWH will be pleasant and majestic, and the fruit of the earth will be pride and splendour for the escapees of Israel.*[69]

3.2.3.3. Significant Words

"In that day," is the first time in the book this formula has not announced bad news (v. 2). The prophet proclaims a future splendour of the 'shoot' planted by Yahweh. Nevertheless, it also suggests first the collapse of the Judean State. *Semah* is used as a metaphor for the sprouting forth of a 'loyal king' from the Davidic line (Watts 1985:49). It encapsulates hope for an eventual restoration (Jer. 23:5; 33:15-16; Ezek. 29:21). The grandeur of that time is pictured in the usage of words *lega'ōn,* 'a majesty'; *wūlethig'ereth*, 'and glory' or 'honour.' The word *lisevī* meaning 'a beauty' is also used in Isaiah (28:1, 4, 5).[70] The Hebrew word *wūlekāvōd* which means 'and for weight' has the connotation of 'importance and respect' (Isa. 4:2) (Watts 1985:50).

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[69] Apparatus Criticus points out that the Leningradensis Codex has the escapees of *Yishrael* (Israel) while 1QIsa[a] secundum, the Dead Sea Scrolls of St Mark's Monastery, vol. 1, 1950, adds *weyudah* (and Judah). Each of these variants gives the same fact about the people of God in both North and South kingdoms. Nevertheless, I choose the *lectio brevior* and *difficilior* of the Codex of Leningrad.

[70] Jeremiah describes God's land as *nahalath sevī* which means 'the inheritance of beauty.' Ezekiel speaks of Canaan as distinguished from the nations by its *sevī,* 'beauty' (20:6, 15). Daniel calls Israel's land *ba'eres-hassebī* meaning 'in the beautiful land in Zion' *lebar-sevī-qodesh* which means 'in the mountain of holy beauty.' The expression characterises the Holy Land and describes the future fulfilment of God's purpose for Israel in the land (Watts 1985:49-50).

The land of Israel can be called 'her majesty' as well as 'her beauty' (Nahum 2:3). The prophets spoke of Yahweh alone as Israel's *ga'ōn*, 'majesty' (Amos 6:8; Hos. 5:5; 7:10). Both words are used of Babylon as the pride and majesty of the Chaldeans (Isa. 13:19). Other texts call Yahweh alone *yishrā'el tig'ereth*, the 'glory of Israel' (Isa. 60:19; 63:15). This infers that the country will be the subject of praise in contrast to the long period of difficulty that Israel has erstwhile experienced. The promise is for *liphelētath yishrā'el* meaning the 'surviving remnant of Israel' (v. 2). The concept of remnant is expanded to include the remainder in Zion and the separated portion in Jerusalem (v. 3) (Watts 1985:50). The term *qādōsh,* 'holy' is applied directly to the people, while the exalted phrases of verse 2 are applied to the fruit of the land, not to the people. It expresses that those who remain are not simply 'escapees' but have been designated as 'holy,' as the Lord is (6:3). This is underlined in Exodus 32:32-33; Daniel 12:1; Psalms 69:29 (Jensen and Irwin 2000:233). Therefore, verse 3 has to do with the people who would inhabit God's city (everyone written down for life in Jerusalem). It explains why Jeremiah's new people are called *qādōsh*, 'holy' (Watts 1985:50).

3.2.3.4. The Structure of the Unit

The section (Isa. 4:2-6) is about Jerusalem in the days of judgment. "At this time" denotes that the planting of Yahweh's will flourish in Israel (v. 2). Second, the escapees of the disaster would come close to Yahweh, since they would have been cleansed (vv. 3-4). Finally, Yahweh would re-ensure protection to witness his presence among Judeans (vv5-6). The meter of the unit supports the recognition that verses 2 and 5 tie together. Both have dominant distich patterns, which announce the future of Israel and Zion on that great day. Verses 3 and 4 are in a distich meter. Verse 3 deals with the remnant and its place "in that day," while verse 4 picks up the theme of Yahweh's purifying action of the people and the city because of the broken covenant context; *cf.*1:15 and 3:24 (Watts 1985:49).

Three terms characterise the community of the survivors which creates a further link with and comments on the repeated threats of disaster in 2:6-4:1. The section of my concern here is marked by, first, the holiness of those living in the purged city. This symbolises a transfer of the remnant people to the 'holy city' (v. 2). The fulfilment of

this oracle was carried out by Nehemiah, governor of the province (Neh. 11:1-24) (Blenkinsopp 2000:203). Second, the new inhabitants of the city represent a specific status in the community (v. 3). This had been recorded in the annals of Zion-Jerusalem (Ezra 2:62; 8:1, 3; Neh. 12:22-23). Finally, a "book of living" (Psa. 69:29[28]; Isa. 4:4) or "book of remembrance" (Mal. 3:16-18) recalls a long history in the Ancient Near East (2000:204). Thus, the unit (4:2-6) is related through its literary style to the whole structure of the book. The image of *semah* (v. 2) is in a synonymous parallelism with the same image in the book (Blenkinsopp 2000:203).[71]

3.2.4. Conclusion on the Meaning of Isaiah 4:2

The Isaiah oracle on *semah* is used in both senses, literal and metaphoric as demonstrated above (4:2). It means that *semah* is perceived in the sense of the growth of the planting of Yahweh and of the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leader.' Being in a synonymous parallelism with the "fruit of the earth," *semah*, is an image of prosperity of the land. The sprouting forth of a 'loyal leader' to come will be defined in this context. It determines the particular way in which it exclusively depends on Yahweh promoting a sense of newness for the 'leadership' and the community. The majestic way a 'shoot' springs forth and opens, is for the escapees of Israel, a sign of new hope for a better future in the public life of the people.

The term *qadōsh*, which means 'holy,' underlines a particular favour received by the escaped remnant. The growth of the plants is an exclusive work of Yahweh. It reveals God's splendour in his creation as it is experienced by the coming of a 'loyal leader.' Therefore, those who remain are not simply 'survivors' but they are also designated as 'holy.' They take part in God's splendour of the coming 'leader.' Furthermore, they participate in many of the activities of restoring the land. In my view, these events would have taken place as follows:

i. The disaster has been an opportunity for the people to be cleansed from idolatrous acts. This allowed the return from the foreign land to Zion-Jerusalem (vv. 5-6).

[71] The use of the related verb *samah* in Isaiah also supports this broader connotation, literal and metaphoric senses of *semah cf.* Isa. 42:9; 43:19; 44:4; 45:8; 55:10; 58:8; 61:11.

ii. At that time, *semah Adonay*, 'shoot of the Lord' would be both pleasant and majestic.
iii. The survivors in Israel would enjoy prosperity in the land (vv. 2-3).
iv. Peace, well-being, health and security would be established through the 'loyal leader' (v. 6).

3.3. Isaiah 11:1-2

3.3.1. The Immediate Literary Context

My selected verses belong to the section 11:1-9 which evokes the 'loyal king' to come. The section is subdivided into three units. The first unit (vv. 1-3a) is about 'the tree imagery' whose 'branches' symbolise the Davidic kings who are removed 'in favour of' the arrival of the 'true king' (v. 1). It speaks of *ruah YHWH*, 'Spirit of the Lord' which comes upon the 'loyal leader' to empower him for office (v. 2). This 'leader' to come will be obedient to the Lord (v. 3a). The second unit (vv. 3b-5) gives the moral values of the 'loyal leader' to come. He will 'administer justice in favour of' the poor and needy (Watts 1985:169-70; Jensen and Irwin 2000:237-8). The third unit (vv. 6-9) speaks of social justice that brings about peace in the community. These social conditions reflect from good governance by the 'loyal leadership' who follows God's instructions (1985:168). Furthermore, the unit of verses 6-9 describes the effect on the creation as a whole. It sets off and relates to the preceding section by *wehāyāh*, 'and it will be' (v. 5). But, the text does not add the phrase "in that day" showing that the section relates to the immediately preceding description of 'branch' (Blenkinsopp 2000:263). In this unit, the 'loyal king' to come was expected to uphold justice and righteousness (Jer. 23:5-6; Psa. 72) in contrast to the rule of the previous Davidic kings (Watts 1985:169; Barker 2003:508).

The lack of justice or righteousness during the rule of the previous Davidic kings elicited the oracle on the 'loyal king' to come. It refers to justice, righteousness or other related qualities which occur at total of five times in the unit 11:1-9 (Watts 1985:169). This ideal requires a 'loyal leadership' bringing about a just order in which the poor and powerless can enjoy equal rights in the community. Because of

this, the use of the 'tree' imagery, so common to royal houses in the ancient Near East, unites the entire section (Watts 1985:170; Barker 2003:509).

Some scholars think that the passage 11:1-9 connects to 10:33-34, where the 'tree' imagery designates rulers. It would thus be in deliberate contrast to the present rulers and the one to come (Jensen and Irwin 2000:237).

3.3.2. A Literary Analysis of Isaiah 11:1-9

3.3.2.1. A Philological Discussion

The use of the 'tree' imagery *weyasā' hoter* meaning 'will emerge forth' suggests rulers from the Davidic line. But, from this time, a different ruler is raised up who would contrast with the previous ones. He would revolutionise the socio-political and religious life in the community. Verse 1 speaks about Jesse, David's father (Stromberg 2008:656). In the 'tree' imagery, the branches would refer to the historical kings. Isaiah prophesied about a 'loyal king' to come (Jensen and Irwin 2000:237).[72]

The literary style (poetry) of this section deals with a similar royal ideology to that within the book of Psalms and some other literary prophets. Most of verses 1-5 are written in repetitive parallelism emphasising what the 'loyal leader' to come would be and how he would deal with the community (Watts 1985:169). The section in verses 1-2 underlines the image of 'branch' as a symbol of the return to the Davidic dynasty. The "Spirit of the Lord" will empower individuals to render them efficient to their task. Verses 3-5 show that the 'loyal king' will have moral values and will "administer justice" to the poor and needy in the community. Verses 6-8 indicate the importance of social justice which leads to peace or prosperity in society. All these contribute to the "knowledge of the Lord" (v. 9) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:237-8).

[72] See Mic. 5:1 for a similar 'return to origins.'

In verse 2, two metaphors are used in parallelism, 'offshoot of the stump'[73] and 'sprout from the root' in a repetitive parallelism (v. 1). The metaphor of the stump is closely connected with the end of chapter 10 (vv. 32-34) (Jensen and Irwin 2000/2005:237). The metaphors used in Isaiah 11:1 refer to a person as indicated by the use of the masculine singular pronouns in the verse. These pronouns refer to an offspring of David's royal family, the Son of Jesse (Sollamo 2006:360).

Isaiah 11:1-9 focuses more on *YHWH* than on *semah* which is found solely in verse 2. The question arises how one could remove this impression of the emphasis on *YHWH* in disfavour of *semah*. In my view, the impression is removed when one considers that the emphasis is upon Yahweh's Spirit (v. 2), and the fear and knowledge of Yahweh (v. 2) which are all key expressions within the text (Watts 1985:170). Verses 4 and 5 become clearly directed and may be understood as being applied to Yahweh as a 'loyal king.' Therefore, these expressions refer to *semah* as well (1985:170). Righteousness and faithfulness were basic characteristics required of a 'loyal king' and respected by Yahweh, the God of Israel.

3.3.2.2. A Translation of Isaiah 11:1-2

> *And there shall emerge a branch out of the line of Jesse, and a shoot will grow out of his roots.*
>
> *The Spirit of YHWH will remain on him, Spirit of wisdom and reconstruction, Spirit of deliberation and power, Spirit of knowledge and fear of YHWH.*

[73] "The Septuagint translation only speaks of how the Lord of hosts will mightily confound the glorious ones; and the haughty in pride shall be crushed, and the lofty ones shall be brought low. And the lofty ones shall fall by the sword, and Lebanon shall fall with his lofty ones, apparently, this is referring to high and mighty men, perhaps including the kings. Against this background it is understandable that the translator did not use an equivalent for *geza'* which means 'stump,' but repeated the Greek word *riza* meaning 'root'" (Sollamo 2006:360).

3.3.2.3. Significant Words

The term *hoter*, 'branch' only occurs here and in Proverbs 14:3. The *hoter*, 'shoot' or *neser,* 'branch' does not spring forth from new ground (a new dynasty).[74] Nevertheless, it sprouts forth from an old stump or root. This implies that Jesse's offspring would take on new life (Watts 1985:171). Job (2006:24) uses the same words to picture the revival of an apparently dead tree. The term *hoter*' is used only here in its meaning 'shoot' or 'branch.' But *neser*, 'branch' appears only here in the royal Davidic literature. Daniel 11:7 designates a royal heir by the use of this term when Isaiah 4:2 uses a different word, *semah YHWH*, meaning 'branch of Yahweh.' On the other hand, the Middle Hebrew word *neser* which means 'blossom,' 'sprout' or 'offshoot' appears in the OT a total of four times. Three of these occur in the book of Isaiah (11:1; 14:19 and 60:21), and once in the book of Daniel (11:7) (Watts 1985:171; Sollamo 2006:360). Isaiah 11:1 has a perfect verb with converse *wāw yiphreh* which means 'he shall grow out' of his roots. This is a close parallel to *weyasā'* which means 'he shall emerge out.' Both verbs describe the 'branch' as being the symbol of a 'loyal king' sprouting forth out of the line of Jesse (Stromberg 2008:655-6).

Verse 2 has the phrase *ruah Yhwh* which means 'the Spirit of the Lord' (Schaper 2006:375).[75] Yahweh's Spirit is God's strength provided to human beings to enable them to achieve their purpose. The divine strength is often beyond them, as in the case of Moses (Num. 11:17), the judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29), prophets (Mic. 3:8), David (1 Sam. 16:13), and others. Under this condition, a 'leader' would represent a return to the charismatic tradition so long an ideal in Israel. The gifts mentioned describe Isaiah's experience with Ahaz and Hezekiah. They provide kings with wise hearts and insights that can bring them back to God's obedience (5:21; 9:5; 29:14) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:237; Schaper 2006:375).

[74]The Hebrew terms are rarer than the equivalents employed by the translator. The fresh growth is described in the Greek version, as *rabdos,* 'shoot' or 'branch' (Sollamo 2006:360).

[75] Isa. 11:1-2 LXX speaks of *rabdos* meaning 'the coming forth from the stump of Jesse' upon whom *pneuma boulēs* will rest. As a result, he will be filled with 'the spirit of the fear of Yahweh' (Schaper 2006:375).

Isaiah 11:3-5 gives a "model of kingly virtues which characterise the 'loyal leader' who should do people justice and care for the poor and needy" (Jensen and Irwin 2000:238).[76] Prophetic ideals have operated to transform expectations which spring from the dynastic oracle (29:18-19), although such idealisation has parallels in the royal psalms (Psa. 72:1-4, 12-14). Isaiah looked to the restoration of right judgment as a condition for an ideal future (1:26) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:238).

In verses 6-8, justice brings about peace in the community. This social condition depicts a return to paradise as an image of perfect restoration. Verse 9 attributes to the transforming power through the *de'ah eth-Yhwh*, 'the knowledge of the Lord.' This contrasts with the way the Judean leadership and people have behaved during the time of Jeremiah (1:3; 5:12-13; 6:9-10) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:237-8).

3.3.2.4. The Structure of the Unit

This section presents a unified structure. It reveals first, the source of the king's justice (11:1-3a). Second, it shows its working in the community (11:3b-5), where 'justice' and 'righteousness' or related words occur five times in these verses. Finally, verses 6-9 describe the effect on the creation as a whole.

This section employs the 'tree' imagery so common to royal houses in the Ancient Near East (Barker 2003:509). The king was expected to uphold justice and righteousness (Jer. 23:5-6; Psa. 72). The 'loyal leader' was to bring forth justice when the Lord's Spirit came on him (Isa. 42:1, 3, 4). The king's weapons against the wicked were the staff to discipline and the spirit to direct through authority. Yahweh's power is thus expressed through his 'instructions.' Genuine authority can only be exercised by the staff of God's mouth. The execution of a guilty person should only be effected by an orderly judicial process (the breath [or spirit] of his lips) (Watts 1985:172; Barker 2003:509).

[76] Isa. 11:3-5LXX has seven terms instead of six (using the repetition of fear of the Lord), and from this come the 'seven gifts of the Holy Spirit' essential to the religious or State leadership (vv 3-5) (Jensen and Irwin 2000:238).

3.3.3. Conclusion on the Meaning of Isaiah 11:1-2

Specific tree imagery is used in this oracle. The literary unit (11:1-9) presents two metaphors, 'an offshoot of the stump' and 'a sprout from the root.' Both refer to a male person because of the use of singular masculine pronouns in the verse. These pronouns refer to an offspring of the Davidic royal family, the son of Jesse. This 'loyal leader' to come is given power and wisdom to fulfil his task. Under this condition, the leadership would receive ability and competency to promote social justice, righteousness, peace, harmony and prosperity in the community. A wise heart and insight help a 'leader' to be competent to achieving his responsibility (Schaper 2006:375).

The Septuagint (LXX) translation underlines the same meaning as in the Masoretic text (MT) of Isaiah 11:1-2. The 'loyal leader' to come will receive strength, wisdom and insight to bring about fairness and unity in society. "Strength" makes for good counsel while "the fear of the Lord" expresses a favourite quality in wisdom tradition (Prov. 1:7). This enables leadership to administer social justice and righteousness in favour of the weak and lowly. The 'loyal leader' would exercise the transforming power through his *de'ah eth-Yhwh*.

3.3.4. The Historical Context of Isaiah 4:2

My selected verse belongs to the unit 4:2-6 which is part of a long section of chapters (1-11). We are told that the authentic words of Isaiah[77] are found mainly in this section which was probably written at the time of king Ahaz (Jensen and Irwin 2000:230). The unit of my particular interest (4:2-6) refers to Jerusalem on the day of the judgment of the Judean leadership and its people. More closely, the unit is part of a short collection of chapters (2-4) which ends on a note of hope in 4:2-6. The oracle

[77] "Isaiah was called 'in the year king Uzziah died' (Isa. 6:1), by 742 BCE. According to the chronology, it was shortly after the accession in Assyria of Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 BCE), who was followed by other able and vigorous kings (Shalmaneser V, 726-722; Sargon II, 721-705 and Sennecherib, 704-681 BCE). The period of Isaiah's prophetic ministry was overshadowed by the irresistible power of Assyria and its plans for a world empire. Isaiah's ministry was exercised in and around Jerusalem. Little is known of his personal life. Nevertheless, his devotion to the Jerusalem traditions, the literary quality of his compositions, and his contacts with the wisdom tradition suggest that he was from an upper-class family and was highly educated" (Jensen and Irwin 2000:229).

appears to refer to the time of Jerusalem's struggle and suffering after having left the Lord's special protection. Most of Isaiah's oracles may have been given during the times of the Judean kings such as Jothan (750-735 BCE), coregent with Uzziah [Azariah] (750-742) BCE), Ahaz (735-715 BCE) and Hezekiah (715-687 BCE). Conversely, the oracles that relate to social justice and pagan practices are difficult to date. Nevertheless, those that can be dated securely relate mainly to political crises that occurred under the last mentioned Judean kings (2000:230).

3.3.5. The Historical Context of Isaiah 11:1-2

Dating the poem in 11:1-9 has been a subject of a long-standing and inconclusive debate. Blenkinsopp (2000:263) citing Duhm asserts that the poem is a product of Isaiah's old age. Several recent commentators are in agreement with this idea. Blenkinsopp (2000:263) citing von Rad and Wildberger, agrees with Isaiah's authorship of 11:1-9. Furthermore, he contends that the section is contemporaneous with Micah 5:1-3[2-4]. Referring to Wildberger, Blenkinsopp (2000:264) reads the poem as a reaction to Isaiah's disappointment with Hezekiah when the latter failed to heed his warning during Sargon II's Philistine campaign. The important thing is that the unit 11:1-9 which includes the text of my concern, is of benefit to this study.

In my view, it should be clear that such matters are not easy to resolve by simply proposing dates on the basis of themes, even eschatological themes.[78] Prophecy has its time during which it is announced. Often, a prophecy that is announced will be fulfilled at another time. This makes the dating of any biblical prophecy difficult. Isaiah, coming before Jeremiah implies that the "imagery refers to the prophetic tradition."[79] As a result, this poem is of relevance to the present study.

[78] Barker (2003:509) asserts that scholars, such as Eissfeldt (1965), have suggested the Exile or even the postexilic period as the poem's original context. At that time, people hoped for a restoration of the monarchy.

[79] Paul Decock's view shared on September 17, 2009 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus.

3.3.6. Summary

Isaiah's oracle on 'shoot' concerns a new perspective which speaks of Yahweh's protection of Jerusalem after punishment. This perspective of restoration is introduced as the birth of a new king is announced. According to the texts I have analysed, Isaiah proclaims the future splendour of the 'shoot' planted by Yahweh. This *semah* is pleasant and majestic. Through the use of imagery, Isaiah expresses the reality of life in the restored community (4:2). In his description, Isaiah points out the fruit of the earth that will bring enjoyment and splendour. This particular advantage is for the rest of Israel who turn back to God's instructions.

The synonymous parallelism relating the *semah Yhwh*, 'shoot of the Lord,' which is pleasant and majestic, to the product of the country (which would bring enjoyment and splendour) opens a new perspective for a better public life in the land. The use of a literal sense of 'branch' substantiates the prosperity, whether of the land or the people. This new orientation of life is found in Zechariah's oracle (6:12). In Isaiah's oracle, 'restoration' follows the first creation of God which oversees the renewal of the socio-political order (11:6-8). Next, it extends to the order of re-creation in all aspects of public life in the community. The individual, the new leader, must incorporate (in interdependent relationship) other leaders and followers to act in the restored society. This kind of leader is able to restore aspects of life in the land, a restoration that brings in a just order by which the poor and powerless can enjoy equal rights with the wealthy and powerful. Moreover, at that moment, war and all manifestations of violence will be abolished (9:7).

This becomes a reality because of the 'loyal leader' to come receives the 'Spirit of the Lord.' The 'Spirit' of 'wisdom' and 'insight' would also remain upon him. This spirit of intelligence and understanding enables the coming leader to achieve the purpose of restoring the country. The image in Isaiah is the 'leader' that appoints 'leaders' to run the restored land and help them to become as he is. Genuine wisdom comes only from Yahweh. This brings us into contact with religious observance in Deuteronomy.[80] Israel, as the people of God, would be able to keep wisdom and understanding

[80] See Deut. 6:3-9; 13:4; 21:18; 30:2-10; 32:46-47.

through God's intervention in its heart. Following this, people would become effective in gaining knowledge, insight, science, and experience in building a stable country.

4. An Analysis of Zechariah 3:8; 6:12

4.1. Outline of the Book of Zechariah

Some references identify Zechariah as the author of the prophecy in the book. Certain texts (1:1; 1:7 and 7:1) mark the division of Zechariah's work into three sections (Jauhiainen 2008:504).[81] A prologue presents the prophet and his fundamental approach (1:1-6). A collection of eight night visions, followed usually by an oracle in which the vision is interpreted, applied, or even modified (1:7-6:15). An inquiry addressed to Zechariah is followed by a response which is actually a series of originally disparate oracles (7:1- 8:23) (Cody 2000:352).

Zechariah 1-8 is oriented towards the rebuilding of the temple and the subsequent role of Jerusalem; whereas, the section, Zechariah 9-14, is more complex. This section comprises of two collections (9:1-11:17) and (12:1-14:21) (Cody 2000:357). There is no real distinction made between a 'daughter' of Zion and the city itself. The oracle against abusers of confidence (10:1-3a) suggests the divine warrior. It is associated in the preceding section which describes forces causing fear in nature. The warrior

[81] "Zechariah, '*Yhwh* remembered', prophesied between 520 and 518 BCE. It is suggested that his prophetic ministry already ended when the Second Temple was inaugurated in 515 BCE. (Ezra 6:15). Even though Zechariah is not mentioned in connection with the event of the Second Temple, nevertheless, his message is appropriate to the re-construction of the Temple and re-dedication of the people's life. Zechariah is mentioned in a close relationship with his companion Haggai, and with the reconstruction of the house of God. I focus on the first part of Zechariah's book (chapters 1-8) which refers to the Persian control over Judeans under the leadership of Cyrus. The latter conquered the neo-Babylonian empire in 539 BCE and established a new policy which provided the conquered peoples with advantages. Cyrus released the remnant people of Judah to return to their homeland and re-establish their religious authorities and local cults. This Persian attitude of tolerance towards Judeans enabled the latter through Zerubbabel, and Joshua and his colleagues to organize social life in Zion-Jerusalem. The people would dwell in their homeland but will not completely enjoy its fruits. They would harvest the produce but it would be collected for the Persian royalty. They would be able to worship Yahweh, their God, but their bodies and possessions would stay enslaved (Neh. 9:36-37). Depression and lack of a clear future began to dominate the lives of the people. Persian control over Judean affairs seemed to perpetuate and therefore, there were no signs of social change in terms of well-being and social justice in the community. Zechariah (1:8) is situated in this historical and literary context. Haggai speaks of the reconstruction of the Temple and hope for socio-justice when God will rescue the people" (Andiňach 1998:1187).

symbolises God's agent providing nature with good things (Cody 2000:357). God's victorious followers in the unit (10:3b-12) are related to the preceding section by the use of the catchwords 'flock' and 'visit' (v. 3a). The destruction in Lebanon and Bashan (11:1-3) is briefly described as an example of a mocking lament which relates to the preceding unit (10:10). Finally, in this first collection bad shepherds and bad flocks are pointed out (11:4-17). The oracular tone takes a negative turn, against both shepherds and flock (Cody 2000:357).

The second collection (12:1-14:21) has five units which underline more clearly the restoration of Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem. Yahweh promises to Jerusalem victory over her enemies (12:1-9). Although the topic changes in the unit (12:10-13:1), nevertheless, the restoration focuses on the Davidic line and people of Jerusalem. The idols and prophets are removed (13:1-6). The oracle addresses all prophets without distinction (Cody 2000:358). However, the one who has spoken falsely will be 'pierced.' The sorting of shepherd and flock is the best process of renewal (13:7-9). This brings about the trial and exaltation of Zion-Jerusalem (14:1-21) (Cody 2000:358).

4.2. Zechariah 3:8

4.2.1. The Immediate Literary Context

The vision oracle, Zechariah 3:1-10, deals with Joshua and the high priest's office (Jauhiainen 2008:501).[82] Verse 8 introduces 'branch' and uses the 'tree' imagery already common at that time, where the image refers to an offspring from the Davidic line (2000:355).

The visionary scene at the beginning of this unit (3:1-7) is presented as a 'prophetic vision.' The first scene (vv. 2-4) is about 'Satan' opposing Joshua, the high priest. The adversary is rebuked, but only God obviously knows what he planned to say. "Joshua's guilt" whatever it was (true or not) has been "removed" (vv. 3-5) (Cody 2000:355). The link is characterised by a change. "Take off his filthy clothes" as a

[82] As Jauhiainen (2008:501) rightly asserts, "Zechariah 3 and 6 envisage a form of diarchy to the rise of the Zadokite priesthood as a political power in the postexilic Jewish community".

symbol of being cleansed and purified (v. 4). A clean turban is given to Joshua (v. 5) (Meyers and Meyers 1987:219). The second scene (vv. 6-7) begins with the prophet assuming a speaking part, which is linked to the first scene in the following unit (Meyers and Meyers 1987:218).

The first of the three major oracular units (3:8-10) contains the verse which introduces *semah*. The second, the so-called "Zerubbabel cluster," is included within the framework of the fourth vision (4:6b-10a) (Andiňach 1998:1186). The third is the oracular summation contained in the crowning scene (6:9-15). It means the oracle in this section (3:8) relates to the one in (6:12) in the context of the eighth night vision. These vision-oracles in the first (3:8-10) and third (6:9-15) visions are different from the oracular expansion of the first three visions (2:10-17). They are rather more abstract and appear not to allude to historical personages by name. Of the other three oracles (3:8; 4:6b-10a; 6:12), two (3:8; 6:12) are part of the central message and concern the two leaders, Joshua, the high priest and Zerubbabel, the governor (Meyers and Meyers 1987:222). The first oracle in 3:8-10 is taken as part of the vision. Then, it should be understood that verse 8 is the beginning of a process leading to the 'loyal leader' to come (Rogerson 2003:723).

4.2.2. A Literary Analysis of Zechariah 3:1-10

4.2.2.1. A Philological Discussion

The unit presents a large amount of imagery which characterises the visionary scene of the passage. The description of this fourth vision is set as a meeting of a divine committee. It is introduced by the phrase "or you are men" (v. 8). The oracle is expressed in symbolic language (Jauhiainen 2008:501). *Semah*, referring to Joshua and later to Zerubbabel (in chapter 4) characterises the vision-oracle (Jauhiainen 2008:502). Joshua, the high priest, and the figure of Zerubbabel are indicated as key role players for the leadership in Judean community after the Exile (Andiňach 1998:1186). The role played by the messenger is that of a 'mediator' between the prophet and the 'reality of God' (Andiňach 1998:1186).

In the section 3:1-10, the prophet uses a new term *sānip*, 'diadem,' instead of *misnepet*, 'turban.'[83] In Isaiah 62:3, *sānip,* 'diadem,' occurs in a synonymous parallelism with *'atereth tiph'ereth*, 'the crown of glory or splendour' (*cf.* Jer. 13:18). Here, it is clearly used to signify royal authority and power. It means that the non-priestly or royal symbol has been applied to the high priest, a usage that must be intentional and fully within the prophet's overall purpose, *cf.* 3:5, 14 (Meyers and Meyers 1987:351). In a poetic style, the unit portrays a ritual or cultic presentation for Joshua's expanded role in a newly defined office of high priesthood. It is expressed by some phrases such as "high priest" (v. 1); "diadem" (v. 5) and "render judgment in my house" (v. 7). (1987:213; Cody 2000:354).

The focus of the unit is on verse 8, especially, on the formula, *shema'na* meaning 'please listen.' It refers to Joshua and his friends. A causal particle *ki*, in the Hebrew syntax, introduces three clauses in the verse. The first clause is translated as 'for these men are of good omen'; or 'for these men are a sign.' The second *ki* serves as a subordinating conjunction that introduces a subordinating sentence in 3:8 (Petersen 1985:209). The phrase *eth-'aveddī semah* (my servant the branch) is made clear by the use of the second emphatic word *ki*. The introductory particle *hinneh* reinforces the message the prophet announces. Then, 'my servant the branch' is the direct object introduced by the prefix *eth* in verse 8. It is applied to the Davidide who is not excluded from this visionary scene but rather is included in terms of expected time to come. During this time, the city and its people would be restored (Petersen 1985:209; Meyers and Meyers 1987:352).

The pericope closes on a statement that people would call their neighbours to visit them under a vine and a fig tree (3:10). The symbol of things to come suggests, through Zerubbabel and Joshua, a 'loyal leader' to come. This expresses hope for a better future in the Judean context of life. It implies reconciliation of the people among them and with Yahweh.

[83] The NRSV translates the word *sānip* as 'turban.' I consider indifferently 'turban for diadem.'

4.2.2.2. A Translation of Zechariah 3:8

> *Please listen O High Priest Joshua, you and your associates who are settled before you, for you are men of good omen.*[84] *I am going to bring my servant, the 'branch.'*

4.2.2.3. Significant Words

In this section, I will analyse only two important words referring to the unit of my interest. *Mal'ak Yhwh* which means 'the messenger or angel of Yahweh' and *satān* meaning 'the accuser or adversary' highlight the understanding of the fourth vision in this unit. God's messenger or angel, through whom he speaks, presides over the meeting (3:1-5). In spite of this, the accuser or adversary opposes. In a forensic context, an accuser functions as a prosecutor (Cody 2000:355). In Zechariah's epoch, *satān* connotes only a trouble maker (or accuser, or adversary as indicated above). In this passage, the accuser has raised an opposition against Joshua, the high priest, but the accusation itself is not indicated. It may be directed at some acts only known to Zechariah's contemporaries. There were probably some persons who would have been hostile to Joshua. They would have claimed that he was unworthy of the high priest's office. It may simply be the fact that they lived during the Exile (Cody 2000:355). In any case, a ritually pure diadem was placed on Joshua's head under the supervision of God's messenger (v. 5). It symbolises Joshua's occupying the position of high priest under divine auspices (Cody 2000:355; Rogerson 2003:723).

4.2.2.4. The Structure of the Unit

This unit is a sequence of the night visions moving from the rebuilt city through the protecting presence of God to the city's sacral leadership (Cody 2000:354). The visionary scene is set as a meeting led by the divine leadership. God does not appear visibly in the night visions of the prophet Zechariah. Nevertheless, God speaks through a messenger and presides over the meeting. Joshua and his colleagues are told

[84] Apparatus Criticus indicates that the Codex of Leningrad has *hemmah* which means 'things to come,' while the Syriac version translates the same word as plural. I hold here the *lectio brevior* of the Codex of Leningrad.

of the specific form of Yahweh's action. Yahweh is bringing an individual, 'my servant the branch.' This metaphoric language lends a style of drama which expresses the immediacy of the arrival of 'the loyal leader,' *semah* (Petersen 1985:210; Meyers and Meyers 1987:355).

The enigmatic style of this passage does not make it easy to provide a meaning for the sign in a text. The text in its entity is in an imagery language. Nevertheless, these men are a symbol, behold I am bringing my servant, 'branch.' The most obvious symbolic character is expressed by 'branch.'

The clean, or ritually pure diadem placed on his head under the supervision of God's messenger (v. 5) suggests his ordination as high priest under divine auspices (Cody 2000:355). The divine oracle that follows (vv. 6-10) seems disparate and not united. Nevertheless, verse 7 describes the administration of the temple and the temple courts under the jurisdiction of the high priest. Joshua's responsibility made him a subject living in conformity with God's law. Therefore, the unit 3:1-10 contains a vision and oracle which have to do with Joshua and his office which is coherent.

4.2.3. Conclusion on the Meaning of Zechariah 3:8

In Zechariah's oracle (3:8), *semah* is used in its metaphoric sense as it is in Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15). Furthermore, *semah* is an epithet of 'my servant' from the Davidic lineage (Cody 2000:355). A 'loyal leader' would build the temple and sit upon the throne. In this oracle, the expected 'loyal leader' from and out of the Davidic line is first, Zerubbabel, Joshua and colleagues as 'branch.' They respectively were the civil and religious leaders with associates who would re-construct a type of posterity to the patriarchs. This posterity is now symbolised by the Davidic line and the priest-Levites (Gen 13:16; 15:5; 22:17) (Couturier 2000:291). The 'true shoot' symbolising a 'loyal leader' to come was an expected reality for a better future in Judah. Second, the sprouting forth of 'my servant the branch' fulfilled the arrival of the 'loyal leader' to set up the social order in society.

4.3. Zechariah 6:12

4.3.1. The Immediate Literary Context

Zechariah 6:12 is part of the unit 6:1-15 which concerns the four chariots, crowns and leaders. The night visions come to an end in 6:8. The section 6:9-15 seems to be an appendix. The final vision in 6:1-8 joins the first vision to form an *inclusio* around the collection with 1:7-17 creating the expectation of a great action of God. The scene is most likely the entrance to the divine committee. God's agents of judgment are symbolised by the four winds of heaven. The charioteers are pulled by variously coloured horses in order to move around to perform judgment. Zechariah 6:1-8 is closely associated with the first vision in 1:7-17 (Boda 2005:28). The final vision appears to depict the fulfilment of the anger of God expressed in 1:15 against nations already identified above as Babylon (2005:29). A prophetic piece follows the final vision in 6:9-15. A contingent of people appears having arrived from Babylon (6:9). They were a response of the community to the earlier prophetic cry in 2:10-17. A divine action is depicted in the prophetic vision in 6:1-8 (Boda 2005:30).

Verse 12 belongs particularly to the oracular material in verses 9-15. It shares some details with the first vision in 1:7-17. Despite people's behaviour, Yahweh would return to Zion-Jerusalem with mercy, the house of the Lord would be built (v. 16). A 'loyal leadership' is prepared in the last vision to set out the situation in Zion-Jerusalem (v. 12). I recognise here an efficient mission sent out throughout the earth. The ruler, on the throne, would play a priestly role (Cody 2000:356). Leadership had a specific task. It was the first fulfilment in terms of setting up the splendour of a better life in the land (2000:356). It was really a hope, not only for the Judean people after Exile, but for all nations.

4.3.2. A Literary Analysis of Zechariah 6:1-15

4.3.2.1. A Philological Discussion

The unit is the eighth vision (the last one) written in a descriptive and narrative style using symbolic language. It seems to be a reminder of the first in which four chariots

come out from between two bronze mountains. These mountains are mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. Presumably, they symbolise God's dwelling place. In the form of a narrative style, the prophet describes the vision in a mythically cosmic sense (Cody 2000:356). The number four in verses 2-3 is determined by the four winds (v. 5). The point is that the cosmic messengers head off in all four directions, over all the earth (v. 7). The description of the cosmic emissaries in this last vision underlines a troubling situation which stirs all the earth in a state of unrest making Judah's rise to freedom possible (v. 6). This antithetic imagery of the vision expresses the reverse state of the facts. In the first vision there is a contrast between peace on earth and God's anger (1:15). This results in the unrest on earth imminent in this last vision. This situation put God's Spirit at rest. The antithesis is that guilt and wickedness have been removed from Judah to Babylonia (5:11), God's wrath has all the more reason to be aimed in that direction (v. 8) (Cody 2000:356).

There are literary and grammatical uncertainties over the number of horses and the directions in which they go. The emphasis is placed on *el-'eres saphōn* which means "the land of the north" (6:8). Probably two chariots (black and white) are sent to this '*eres saphōn*, and according to *BHS*, upon their arrival the horses *henīhu eth-ruhī* meaning they 'have given my spirit rest.' The construction of the *hiphi'l* of the verb *nuhah*, 'to rest,' is followed by the preposition *eth* which introduces a direct object. It refers to the wrath that is regularly found throughout Ezekiel as well, with the term *hmthy* which means 'my wrath' rather than *ruhī,* meaning 'my spirit, wind or breath.' This close connection between *ruhī*, 'my spirit' and *kallōthī,* 'my anger' is demonstrated also in Jeremiah 49:36-37 (Boda 2005:28-9).

The phrase *semah-yisemah* translated literally as 'branch branching' is a cognate accusative which emphasises through repetition the certainty and significance of the action of 'branch' sprouting forth. This syntactic form 'branch branching' is found in Jeremiah 33:15, although here the reason for the flourishing growth is linked explicitly to Yahweh (Petersen 1985:276) "Yahweh would cause 'a branch of righteousness' to flourish out of David" (33:15). In this statement, the phrase "out of David" or "for David" is syntactically parallel to "from his place" or "out of his place." It implies that the formulations of Zechariah 6:12 are distinctly parallel to those of Jeremiah 33:15. Hence, I would expect Yahweh to be the source of the

luxuriant growth of the 'branch' as that is described, albeit in the enigmatic form in Zechariah 6:12 (Meyers and Meyers 1987:358).

4.3.2.2. A Translation of Zechariah 6:12

> *And tell this from him, thus Yhwh Sebaoth declares: Here is a man whose name is Branch, wherever he is, there will be a renewing up and he will reconstruct the Sanctuary of Yhwh.*[85]

4.3.2.3. Significant Words

In this section I limit my analysis to two components of the phrase 'bear royal majesty' which are: *nasā,* 'bear' and *hōd*, 'royal majesty' (v. 13). Both terms are well attested to in the Hebrew Bible. The combination of the two is unique and suggests great care in providing a new idiom to characterise the future legitimacy of the Davidic scion. The expression is the second in a series which delineates the role of the monarchic rule. The first, as we have indicated, denotes the dynastic legitimacy through the vehicle of temple building. The second is introduced in the two successive verbs, 'sit and rule.' Together, they provide the future 'loyal leader' with the proper authority and form part of the royal connotation of the term *hōd* which means 'royal majesty' in the Hebrew Bible (Meyers and Meyers 1987:359).[86] The term *hōd* often designates Yahweh's universal cosmic power. It would reflect on the Davidic kings' earthly power integrally related to Yahweh's rule throughout the world (Meyers and Meyers 1987:359). This disposition points to the coming era when the entire land and its leader are cleansed of all guilt. As a result, the leader will be "clothed with majesty" (v. 13) (Rogerson 2003:723).[87]

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[85] The Apparatus Criticus of *BHS* shows that the phrase '*ubanah eth-hecal Yhwh'* in the Codex of Leningrad presents a variant that we find in the Syriac and Greek versions of Septuagint as well. The coming king will restore the land and renew things in Israel. Because of this, I favour the Codex of Leningrad.

[86] "The corresponding Mesopotamian idiom, *pulhu/melammu*, conveys monarchic authority in the royal Akkadian inscriptions and finds echoes in seven biblical expressions of *hōd wehādār*. The Hebrew term *hōd* occurs apart from *hādār* seventeen additional times in the Bible and conveys a sense of royalty as it is used in both divine and earthly settings. In two late instances, *hōd* is followed by *malkūt* and expresses royal rather than divine majesty in a very direct manner (1 Chron. 29:25; Dan. 11:21)" (Meyers 1987:359).

[87] "The stone indicates maybe a precious stone fixed to the sacerdotal clothes as the sacred diadem in Exod. 28:36 and 39:30, bearing seven Hebraic letters like an inscription on a seal: 'dedicated to the

4.3.2.4. The Structure of the Unit

The unit presents two distinctive parts (vv. 1-8 and 9-15). Verse 1 indicates two mountains made of bronze, the chariots, and the winds in verses 5-6. These latter verses give a mythically cosmic tone to the vision. The point is that the cosmic messengers went out in all four directions, over all the earth (v. 7). Peace on earth (in the first vision) results from the people who remain obedient and pleasing to God instead of disobeying him and thereby arousing his anger (1:15). The unrest on the earth in this final vision would put God's Spirit at rest (v. 8) (Cody 2000:356). This could refer to the rise and fall of Babylon which, in the last stages, created freedom and the possibility of restoration of Jerusalem (2000:356; Rogerson 2003:724).

To the night visions which have come to an end with verse 8, the oracular section 6:9-15 is appended. In this unit, a crown is to be made for Joshua, the high priest. Verses 11 and 14 have the plural 'crowns' which suggests that a crown could have been made for the civil leader as well. The synonymous repetition of building (*wūbānāh*) the Sanctuary in verses 12 and 13, and the presence of the independent pronoun 'he' together form a sequence remarkably similar to both verses and in a chiastic arrangement. They relate to the personal pronoun in singular 'he' in both verses. Yet both verses use verbal repetition with a separate pronoun 'he' emphasising the importance of the subject and of what the subject, *semah* is going to realise (Meyers and Meyers 1987:358).[88] Verses 12 and 13 use personal pronouns with the verbs. Verse 12 is strongly related to verses 10 and 13 in the form of a chiasm. It implies 'a new leader' to come who would sprout forth from his 'shoot' and reconstruct the Sanctuary of the Lord (Petersen 1985:276). The synonymous parallelism in these two verses (12-13), ties in the builder of the temple with *semah*. The phrase *wubānah eth-keykal wehu'yibneh* meaning 'build he will build' expresses the immediacy of building the Sanctuary of Yahweh. The repetition is used to emphasise that the Sanctuary will certainly be built (1985:276). Verses 12 and 13, as in 3:8, indicate that

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Lord' (Isa. 35:8). In this case, the seven 'eyes' express the protective presence of God ensured for the priesthood and people. The stone could also mean the Sanctuary itself, placed before Joshua, and entrusted to his diligence, which the Lord himself realises sculptures (*cf.* 1 Kings 6:29; 7:36; 2 Chron. 3:7)" (Amsler 1988:1245).

[88] In verse 10, "the verb is followed by the pronoun at the beginning of the sequence, with the same verb without independent pronoun coming at the end of the sequence: *ūbā'ta 'atta…ūbā 'atā* which means 'you will go…and you will go'" (Meyers 1987:358).

the future civil leader is called 'branch.' He is then given a high status as a 'loyal leader' to come. The civil leader is identified as Zerubbabel (4:6-9), a 'branch branching' to rebuild the temple (v. 9) (Petersen 2003:723).

4.3.3. Conclusion on the Meaning of Zechariah 6:12

The oracle in Zechariah 6:12 is part of the unit 6:1-15 and is especially related to the verses 10 and 13 in a chiastic syntax as perceived in the Hebrew Bible *(BHS).* In this literary construction, the emphasis is laid on the importance of the subject, *semah* and of what *semah* would be doing. The 'branch' would branch out from his place and act in Zion-Jerusalem (v. 12). Otherwise, out from his place, the 'loyal leader' to come would be restoring everything in the community. This took place during the time of Zerubbabel with the rebuilding of the Sanctuary in Zion-Jerusalem. This would reflect on any other context that would need a 'righteous leadership.' The term *hōd* is a symbol of 'royal majesty.' Yahweh's universal cosmic authority could manifest itself in any earthly leadership if it would refer to Yahweh's rule throughout the world.

4.3.4. The Historical Context of Zechariah 3:8

The oracle is expressed in a typical visionary mode of Zechariah.[89] The contemporary world of Zechariah permeates the narrative of this chapter 3 in particular (Meyers and Meyers 1987:213; Cody 2000:354). A plausible context for this oracle (from the fourth vision) is the dedication ceremony for the rebuilt Sanctuary in 515 BCE (Ezra 6:15).

[89] "Zechariah is the son of Berechiah son of Iddo. It is normally assumed that he was a priest who was born in Babylon. A good proportion of the material in Zechariah 1-8 is in the first person singular: 'in the night I saw a man riding' (1:8). The OT writers, particularly Zechariah, saw the possibility of a national renewal in Judah as a gift from Yahweh through his servant Cyrus. Zechariah's prophecies are dated to the reign of Darius (521-486 BCE) and can be taken as an indication of a pro-Persian attitude in the book. That attitude is perceived as a hope and expectation of a reorganised national life in Zion-Jerusalem" (Rogerson 2003:721). "According to the chronological data provided by the book's editor, Zechariah's activity continued for a period longer than that of Haggai. The earliest date, preserved in Zech 1:1, places the beginning of his prophetic activity in the second year, the eighth month; the final date, in Zech. 7:1, places further activity in Darius' fourth year, the fourth day of the ninth month. On the basis of these dates alone, we learn that the editors of this book thought Zechariah functioned as a prophet for a period of at least two years" (Petersen 1985:110).

Why however, does verse 8 not mention the coronation of Zerubbabel? Some scholars think that the verse was subsequently introduced into the oracle after Zerubbabel had lost his place as a civil leader in Judah. The reason for its introduction would then have been the reserving a place for someone else divinely mandated as a civil ruler (Cody 2000:355). A serious glance at the text underlines the contrary of this viewpoint. The next subsection will spell out the absence of Zerubbabel's coronation in Zechariah's oracle, particularly in the units of my concern.

4.3.5. The Historical Context of Zechariah 6:12

The 'crowning' of chapter 6 constitutes a conclusion to the entire visionary sequence. The setting of the oracle may be the period following the re-foundation ceremony but prior to the date given in Zechariah 7:1. It could be as late as 519 or as early as 518 BCE (Cody 2000:356). Nearly all problems related to the rebuilding of the Sanctuary and community reorganisation would by this time have been resolved. Zerubbabel's place in the new community following the Exile is described when no one had been yet established as governor in Judah (Meyers and Meyers 1987:356).

Some scholars put forward their arguments in favour of a 'crowning' of Zerubbabel in this text (Cody 2000:356). In contrast to other theories, the identification of Zerubbabel as 'branch' is interpreted as implying that his 'crowning' had taken place (3:8; 4:6-10; 6:12). Zechariah 6:14 reads 'crowns' in plural which suggests that there was also a crown for Zerubbabel (Rogerson 2003:724). Furthermore, the metaphoric epithet 'branch' being applied to Zerubbabel, his anointment was not impossible (Cody 2000:356).[90] Another consideration is whether Joshua, the high priest, is crowned in his own right. The placing of the crown on his head could be a prophetic act symbolising the crowning of the 'branch' as a 'loyal leader' to come (Rogerson 2003:724). Even though Zerubbabel's crowning is not clearly celebrated, the

[90] "The night visions have come to an end with 6:8. To them the oracular section 6:9-15 has been appended. In this appendix, the contribution of well-equipped persons returning from the Exile was significant to restore public life in the community. In verses 12-13 as in 3:8, we have an oracular fragment, in which the future civil leader, called 'branch,' is given high status in the future, in the midst of a passage having to do with the religious leader alone. In verses 4:6b-10a, in the midst of a passage having to do with both the religious leader and the anonymous civil leader, the civil leader is identified as Zerubbabel and is given the role of rebuilding the temple, as 'branch"' (Cody 2000:356).

postexilic period shows Zerubbabel's civilian activities foreshadowing the social action of the 'loyal leadership' to come (see also Haggai 2:23).

4.3.6. Summary

The book of Zechariah is made up of two types of literature, namely visions and oracles. The enigmatic style of the book thus renders it difficult to explain. Zechariah's oracle commences with a "call to attention" 'please listen.' This is addressed to Joshua and his colleagues, "your friends who sit before you." The oracle points to "those men who are a sign." It means that these men symbolise, after the Exile, the 'loyal leader' to come. In society, following the Exile, Joshua and his friends would be the key role players for the social re-construction of Zion-Jerusalem. Joshua is told that Yahweh is bringing an individual, 'my servant.' This individual servant is named *semah*. Declaring this through an enigmatic form, Zechariah's imagery of a just and efficient ruler is called up by a metaphor (Jauhiainen 2008:501). As a result, the restored royal government, through Yahweh's providential intervention, would impact on the welfare of the State, together with the well-being and good conscience of its people. According to Zechariah, this situation was accomplished soon after the return from Exile, under Zerubbabel.

Referring to *semah*, the issue is that the same image is used once again by Zechariah at the end of the Exile. However, the image is now used in new circumstances in which the 'branching' of the 'branch' in linked with the purification of the people (3:1-10), and with the re-building of the temple (6:1-15). This suggests the importance of the reconciliation of the people with Yahweh. Furthermore, it underlines the significance of the Sanctuary as the centre of socio-political and religious life for David and Solomon. These social conditions are brought about by the 'loyal leader' who comes to promote newness in society. The setting up of social justice, fairness, peace and prosperity resolves the crisis of the people in the community.

5. The Socio-political and Religious Implications of *Semah* in the oracles of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah

This section will provide a discussion which enlarges the understanding of *semah* in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah. In this respect, the focus is on *semah* reflecting a social reality in public life in the Judean community and throughout the nations. Significant issues related to the promise of *semah* entail restoring several aspects of public life in the community. I will discuss first, *semah* as God sprouting forth 'an appropriate leader' to come. Second, I will point out hope for a better social order in the midst of hopelessness. Third, I will discuss *sedaqah*, 'justice or fairness' as divine power conferred on the loyal leadership in order to restore social life in the community. In this regard, *semah* is life-giving justice, peace, health and prosperity, it empowers civil and religious leadership to rule over the State and administrate God's Sanctuary.

5.1. *Semah* as God's Providence for an 'Appropriate Leadership'

This section gives a religious understanding of *semah* as a divine dynamic force bringing forth change within the Judean leadership as well as a social order in the community. While the sprouting forth of the 'branch' is in the first regard God's work, it nevertheless culminates in the actions of people in the community. It responds to the context of the royal oracle itself which itself results from the perverted leadership situation in Judah.

5.1.1. Jeremiah's Oracle

The rulers of the Judean community are criticised for the social disintegration and having caused the deportation of the people. Jeremiah 23:1 seems to contrast with 23:3 where Yahweh has caused the Exile. His initiative to discipline Judeans refers to the leadership's and people's responsibility. A general condemnation of the leadership (as described in Jer. 22:21-22; 23:1-2) contrasts with the future good rulers of verse 4. This contrast is reinforced by the images of the dispersed flock in verse 2 and the cared -for flock of verse 4 where not a single sheep is missing. It suggests not only the responsibility of the appointed leaders caring fully for the people, but also the

dismissal of the previous leaders for their wrong doing. The judgment of the leaders was harder because of their lack of showing a good example to the people. Nevertheless, it did not absolve the latter from punishment. Carroll (1986:444) argues:

> The blaming of the rulers for what happened in 597 and 587 BCE fits in the cycle, but that is in striking contrast to the poems such as Jeremiah 5:1-5; 9:2-6 which make the people themselves the ones responsible for what befell the community.

The devastating situation in Judah due to the disaster of the Exile was caused by the way the leaders and people behaved (1986:445).[91]

Jeremiah (23:5-6) resumes the subject of verse 4 and envisages the future in terms of good governance and security. They are more specific than verse 4, because they affirm the time to come. The phrase in Hebrew, *hinneh yamim ba'iym*, is translated as 'the days are coming,' when leadership would be exercised by a 'loyal leader' from the Davidic line (McKane 1986:560). What is significant here is the new departure being made within this setting of the future against the present. It is also a time of an expected 'loyal leadership' against the unfair Davidic dynasty who are dismissed from office (1986:560). The social and political issue here is that the Judean leadership is cut off, but there is hope for the future with a 'loyal leadership' being raised up.

In the context of Judean restoration, God being the subject of the verb *samah*, the expression of his commitment is important in Jeremiah's oracle. Despite the devastating social situation due to the Exile, the Judean people could hope for a better future. This is sustained by the metaphoric meaning of *semah* in Jeremiah's oracle. The literal sense of 'branch' is used as a figure for the growth of God's word (Isa.

[91]"Verse 4 disrupts the thought of verses 1-2 because instead of the leaders driving the flock away in verse 3, it is Yahweh who has driven them into Exile. In Hebrew, the verb *hiddahti* translated as 'I have driven away' involves Yahweh himself (23:8). From this, Carroll argues that the theologizing of the Exile in this manner allows for the possibility of return. He who drove out may also retrieve (Ezek. 34). Whereas, blaming the community's leaders is to make the people's fate a permanent one, it is Yahweh who will gather together all the exiles, restore them to their own land, and make them prosperous. This shows me that because of the way people have been behaving, Yahweh made a decision to punish them. The time of this punishment was to help them to renew their mind and be transformed to obey God's instructions. This restoration will be accompanied by responsible leaders who will be set over the community (Jer. 3:15), and these will maintain the welfare and unity of the people. Thus, the proper leadership is restored to Yahweh's flock" (Carroll 1986:445).

55:10). It implies righteousness and praise (Isa. 61:11), and peace among people (Ezek. 17:6[9]) (Abegg 1997:815).

5.1.2. Isaiah's Oracle

In Isaiah's oracle, God's initiative provides Judah with a 'loyal leader' who would restore public life in the community. This restoration refers to the physical and moral aspects of life. In other words, it covers the social and religious well-being of the community.

5.1.3. Zechariah's Oracle

In Zechariah's vision-oracle, God intervenes to restore the socio-religious order in the Judean community. Zerubbabel, a civil official in Jerusalem, and Joshua, a priestly leader together with their associates, constitute a sign of the 'loyal leadership' to come. It is a sign of Yahweh's providence in providing the Judean people with a 'loyal leadership following the disaster of the Exile. The rebuilding of the Sanctuary was perceived as a source of well-being for the Judean society. This socio-political, economic and religious restoration looks forward to the coming of the 'true leader' (McKane 1986:560).

In these three prophetic traditions, the use of the image of *semah* calls for hope, hope that 'a loyal leadership' is possible and will emerge through the Lord's doing justice and fairness in the land (Jer. 33:15; Isa. 4:2; Zech. 3:8) (Abegg 1997:816).

5.2. The Hope for a Better Social Order in the Midst of Hopelessness

The fulfilment of hope in people's social realities requires that they consciously understand that good leadership promised by God is indeed possible and that it is worth making an effort for. Hope generates power, energy, positive feelings, enthusiasm and motivation to participate in working on such a task. To address this issue, I will consider first, *semah* and the Judean hope. Second, I will discuss the land and hope of the Judean people.

5.2.1. *Semah* and the Hope of Judah

In the midst of the disaster and with the bad experience of the Davidic leadership, Jeremiah announces that there is hope based on God's promise. Kings were a sham, for they failed to witness to the true socio-political and religious values of their kingship (21:11-14; 22:1-3). Thompson (1980:488) holds that the expression "the days are coming," *hinneh yamim ba'iym*, is first general, and has no particular time reference. Instead, it is simply a call to be aware of an important announcement (*cf.* Jer. 7:32; 9:25; 31:31; […]). This leadership, although is cut off, is not dead. The 'loyal leader' is God's providence to restore social life in the Judean context.

Isaiah (11:1) declares, "a shoot shall emerge out of the Davidic line." This emergence is from David's family line; this 'loyal leader,' at the same time, rises up out of the Davidic roots. For Blenkinsopp (2000:263), this announcement concerns a form of *apokatastasis,* 'restoration' of the socio-political and religious order, both of which are connected and interdependent. This restoration would bring a just order in which the poor and powerless would enjoy equal rights with the wealthy and powerful. At the arrival of such a leader, war and all manifestations of violence would be abolished (9:7).

In 9:1, the first and the second part present a synonymous parallelism. This literary style emphasises what is announced in terms of restoration through the 'loyal leader' to come. Verse 1 presents some distinctive terms such as *hoter,* 'branch'; *geza,* 'stock'; and *neser,* 'shoot.' These terms have meanings very similar to that of *semah* and also refer to the arrival of the 'loyal leader' from Davidic line. As Carroll (1986:447) can state:

> Reading verses 5-6 as a celebration of Zedekiah's assumption of the throne (*cf.* Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-5 for the conventional oracle welcoming a new king) presupposes a historical occasion for this section, whereas, it is set in the future and rounds off the cycle. Its positive note contrasts with the other individual king elements in the cycle.

There is an arrival of a new leadership who will be efficient in contrast with the previous kings.

In the oracle from Zechariah, the expected 'loyal leadership' has a twofold position, royal and priestly: Zerubbabel from the Davidic line and Joshua of the priestly line. They were commissioned to restoring the Holy City, Zion-Jerusalem after the Exile. Although this had occurred, a 'loyal leadership' was a sign of things to come. It implies that hope for a better future remains a dynamic reality in the community (3:8-10).

In the unit 6:1-15, the literary construction emphasises the importance of the subject, *semah*, and its role in the community. The 'branch will branch out' from his place and act in Zion-Jerusalem (v. 12). Sprouting forth from the Davidic line, and at the same time out from it, makes the 'loyal leader' to come, distinct and efficient to promote socio-political and religious life in the community. The focus in this text is not so much upon social justice in the community, as it is on the forgiveness of the people's guilt in chapter 3. Zion-Jerusalem was the centre of socio-political and religious life in Judean community. From Zion, Yahweh overflowed his blessings upon his people. The building of the Sanctuary was a fulfilment of hope in Judah.

Isaiah (4:2-6) marks the end of a large section which underlines the suffering in Jerusalem (chapters 2-4). The end of the section (4:2-6) presents 'a note of hope.' *Semah* evokes, at the same time, the arrival of a 'loyal leader' and agricultural products signifying prosperity in the land (Watts 1985:49-50; Jensen and Irwin 2000:233). A 'divine ability' is promised to the leadership and people in order to help them fulfil their task (11:2) (2000:237).

5.2.2. The Land and Hope of the People of Judah

The concept of land is not clearly defined in terms of either 'earth' or 'land' (Wright 1997:519). Sometimes one sense is taken for another. Nevertheless, I consider in this subsection the term to mean land as it is used in Jeremiah's oracle. The land in which Israel lived forms one of the primary social environments. It constitutes an ethical focus of the Israelite life and that of the peoples described in the OT. The threat and promise of Jeremiah's oracle consists of the loss of land which is tied to the process of regaining the homeland. It symbolises the re-establishment of the covenantal harmony between Yahweh and his people. The land is a major theme in God's 'remembering.'

He remembers the Abrahamic covenant (Lev. 26:42a), the land (v. 42b), and the Sinaitic covenant (v. 45) (Craigie 1991:330; Wright 1997:519-523). Therefore, the Hebrew word *'ares*, 'land, earth or country,' has major significance in regard to the return of the people from the Exile as it did previously in the exodus from Egypt. The promise of the land is repeated throughout the narratives of the Patriarchs in Genesis. It is the goal of the exodus, finally achieved in Joshua-Judges.

One of the great judgments announced by the prophets was the loss of land. Jeremiah's promise of the future related to the 'loyal king,' which includes a specific mention of the land. The land is perceived as having Divine ownership, but upon which the people of God live. In the land, people's behaviour determines Yahweh's blessings to them. The good and fair rule of a State leadership leads to the social and economic growth of the community (Wright 1997:523). Such a situation requires the arrival of a 'loyal leader' to inaugurate a harmonious relationship between Yahweh and his people.

In Isaiah 4:2, the phrase "in that day," *bayom hahu* is a formula appearing for the first time in the book of Isaiah. The seer proclaims the future splendour of 'the shoot' planted by Yahweh. The *semah* of *Yhwh* will be pleasant and majestic. In verse 2, the *semah* is used particularly in its literal sense in contrast to the aforementioned texts of Jeremiah. The synonymous parallelism in verse 2 between 'branch' and the 'fruit of the land' suggests the use of both senses of *semah*. This said, the focus is on the metaphoric meaning of 'branch' in the verse. The literal sense refers *semah* to the survivors of Israel who would enjoy God's favour in the land.

The use by Isaiah of the related verb *smh* supports this broader connotation[92] as well.[93] If the product in the country is pride and splendour, the escapees from the disaster will enjoy this advantage. Hence, there is a real link between the majesty of a

[92] "The Targum renders *semah* with *messiah* translated in English as 'Messiah' and the LXX takes the meaning of 'shining forth' rather than 'springing forth' from the ground, hence *epilampsei ho Theos*, from the verb *epilampo* which means 'shine forth.' Similar to the previous versions, we read in the Syriac version *semha'* which means 'brightness.' Other early Greek translations make the same transition, rendering *semah* as *anatolé* which means 'the east, the rising of the sun, or another heavenly body in its ascendancy,' as LXX at Zech 3:8 and 6:12 translates as *anatelei*, rise up or grow up. This semantic shift will lead eventually to *anatolé* as a code name for the Christian Messiah in the current interpretation of gospels (Matt. 2:2; Luke 1:78)" (Liddell and Scott 1994:63).
[93] See in Isa. 42:9; 43:19; 44:4; 45:8; 55:10; 58:8; 61:11.

State leader and the prosperity of the country. Furthermore, it extends from the country's wealth to the prosperity of the people. Such a restoration focuses on the physical and moral needs of the people in the community.

5.3. Justice or Fairness as a Divine Power

The establishment of justice is the transforming power provided by God for the restoration of the social and religious life of the community (Johson 1998:87; 2003:246). In dealing with this issue, I first point out the close relationship between *mishpat*, 'justice' and *sedaqah*, 'fairness or righteousness'; second, how justice relates to *shalom*, 'peace.' In this regard, justice brings forth a 'loyal leadership' which people expect in a good society free of corruption.

5.3.1. Justice and Righteousness or Fairness

To restore social aspects of life, the coming 'leader' will maintain justice, *mishpat*, and fairness, *sedaqah*, in the land. *Sedaqah* as a 'determinative word' (Swan and Walter 1997:63)[94] of *semah*, 'shoot' is linked to *mishpat*, 'justice' and *shalom*, 'peace.' Consequently, it relates Jeremiah's prophecy to other OT prophets (Koch 1983:58). The link is found between *semah*, *mishpat* and *sedaqah* in Amos' prophecy. These 'determinative words' to *semah* are translated as 'social justice,' 'righteousness' or 'fairness.' They represent the highest values for Yahweh, as a mighty 'leader' who directed his people. Yahweh is viewed as righteous relating to men and women through a covenantal relationship (Reimer 1997:762). It means State and religious leadership can reflect and establish justice and fairness in the community. Both *sedaqah* and *mishpat* appear as spheres of power which already exist in advance of human actions. These two powers which men and women received from God will help them in their inter-personal relations. The capacity to practice *sedaqah*, 'fairness,' and *mishpat* 'justice' is "God's providential grant" (Reimer 1997:762). It empowers leadership and people to behave justly in any circumstance. In this way, *sedaqah* or *saddiq* are consistently related in Amos' prophecy to the

[94] This expression, from French grammar, expresses an English literary style which combines two nouns. In the case of *semah sedaqah*, the image of *semah*, 'the branch' symbolising 'the ideal leader' to come reflects *sedaqah*, 'justice, righteousness or fairness' in the community as a result of socio-moral restoration (Swan and Walter 1997:63-5).

issues of social justice. The *saddiq* is aligned with the poor and oppressed in Israel. The leadership and people divert right, *saddiq*, for a bribe and those in need, *ebyon*, for a gift of shoes (see Amos 2:6b; 5:12) (Koch 1983:58-9; Reimer 1997:763). Thus, corruption has to be fought in building a good society for all, free of social injustice and discrimination among the people.

The prosperity of the land depends on the administration of justice by the leadership. Under this condition, the exercise of power makes possible a truly moral action in the community. In the monarchy, the social order depended on the king, where *mishpat*, 'justice' and *sedaqah*, 'righteousness' were especially associated with the monarchy (1Kings 10:9; Jer. 23:5). The king was the 'intermediary' between God's *sedaqah*, 'righteousness or fairness' and *mishpat*, 'justice' on the one hand and the *sedaqah* and *mishpat* of the people on the other. This makes clear why the king's role and the rights of the people are central in Amos' prophecy (Koch 1983:60). Good leadership has therefore to be open to God's righteousness by practicing it. As a result, it should promote social development in organising agricultural activities for the well-being of the people the community.

The association of *saddiq*, 'righteous' with *mishpat*, 'justice' arises in two particular ways. First, the proper administration of *mishpat*, 'justice' is the domain of the *saddiq*, 'righteous' (see Prov. 17; 18; 24 etc). In this case, righteous refers to the arbitration of disputes, and the education of the individual for a successful and harmonious life (Prov. 11). Second, the association of the righteous with the administration of justice has to deal with good governance in the Judean context (Reimer 1997:758).[95]

[95] "The usage of the root *spt* in the OT is therefore greatly elucidated by a comparison with other Semitic languages. To arrive at the best meaning of justice in the OT, it is therefore important to pay close attention to every context in which it is used. Referring to justice in the OT, we distinguish, first, God as judge and guardian of justice; second, fairness of God's justice; third, God's justice in relation to the poor.' Explaining these points respectively: (A). 'God's universal judgeship is based on the fact that it is He who created the world and established equity and justice (Psa. 99:1-4). He is regarded as the source and guardian of justice because justice and righteousness are his very nature and attributes (Psa. 97:2). In several biblical passages, the two terms 'righteousness' and 'justice' are used as synonyms (Amos 5:24; Gen. 18:19). In the Israelite context, justice was central among the people of God because they were very much concerned with social relationship among themselves as a people covenanted to God and also among the nations surrounding them.' (B). 'The Israelites expected God's justice to be fair because it issued from God who is a righteous Judge (Psa. 7:11; 9:8; 119:137; 145:17). Those who were appointed to the office of judge, *dayyan* or *sopet*, or magistrate were expected to reflect God's holy nature (Exod. 18:21). Consequently, when executing justice, the judges, *sopetim*,

5.3.2. Justice and Peace or Well-being

Among the various uses of 'peace,' one of the more important aspects is that God's gift of *shalom* 'peace' follows the disaster of the Exile. In this case, the people's hope for a better future is an age of peace (Isa. 2:2-4; 11:1-9), or the advent of a 'loyal leader' to come (Jer. 33:15-16; Ezek. 34:23f) (Douglas 1962:956).

In many instances, *shalom* really signifies bodily 'health or well-being' and the related satisfaction. More commonly, *shalom* refers to a group, for example, a nation enjoying prosperity. This brings the thought of 'peace' (von Rad 1964:402). Peace is thus the harmony, unity, tranquillity, health and prosperity reflected in the social justice working within the community. *Shalom* is a gift from Yahweh. Naturally, the goods and values associated with *shalom* were always referenced in Israel to Yahweh, whether in prayer and supplication, or in recognition that they are God's gift (Adamo 2005:125). In Psalm 85, the author says that God's disposition to save his people is regarded as the cause of perfect earthly peace (vv. 8-10).

In the prophetic message announced by Jeremiah and the other prophets of doom who resisted the false prophets, the catchword upon which the conflict turns is that of *shalom*. The technical term *yinnabe' leshalom* meaning 'the peace which is prophesied' appears in this connection (Jer. 28:9). Thus, peace which is prophesied becomes a reality if it comes true. *Shalom* seems to have been the culminating point of the theology operating in some prophetic circles. The term therefore became the central discussion of different view-points. This is particularly apparent in Micah's message to Ahab against that of the false prophets announcing peace to the king (1 Kings 22:5-15). Jeremiah struggled during his ministry and was angrily resisted by

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were to be absolutely fair, realising that they were acting as agents or deputies of the holy God (Deut. 1:16-17; Exod. 18:21-23). In this light, the so-called judges, *sopetim*, of the book of Judges were appointed by God to act for him as administrators of justice in two ways.' 'In a military emergency, they liberated the Israelites by commanding military campaigns against the aggressive enemies who threatened their freedom and peace, *shalom*, as well-being, security or prosperity among the people.' (C). 'In several biblical passages, particularly in the Psalms and the Prophets, God is portrayed as having a special concern for the poor, especially, the widow, the fatherless, and the oppressed (Psa. 10:17-18; 82:1-8; *cf.* 109:16). Ownership of land and property, freedom and security, constituted the inalienable human rights endowed upon the poor by God. For this reason, passages which refer to justice, *mishpat*, of the poor are in actual fact referring to the rights of the poor (Jer. 5:28). Therefore, justice, *mishpat*, does not solely refer to moral norm, but also refers to basic human rights. This means God's justice aims at creating an egalitarian community in which all classes of people maintain their basic human rights" (Mafico 1992:1127-29).

these so-called prophets. In great affliction he asks Yahweh about the fate of those who promise *shalom 'emeth,* 'eternal or lasting peace,' to Jerusalem (Jer. 14:13)? False prophets proclaim "peace, peace" when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14). In Jeremiah 28, we read the story of a dramatic encounter between Jeremiah and these prophets (von Rad 1964:404).

Jeremiah and Ezekiel brought the battle between *shalom* and *'en shalom* to its supreme climax; the defeats of 597 and 587 BCE leading to a certain relaxation of tension in this respect. The promise of *shalom* 'peace' in a new and larger sense became one of the most important elements in their prophecy. Thus, Jeremiah can write to the exiles the wonderful statement that Yahweh had for them, thoughts of peace and not evil (Jer. 29:11). I here agree with von Rad (1964:404-5) who asserts that this is the basis of the later prophecies of salvation in Jeremiah. Other nations will tremble at the salvation which Yahweh will bring to Jerusalem (Jer. 33:9). The same theme recurs in Ezekiel culminating in the announcement of a covenant of peace which God will make with his people (*cf.* Ezek. 34:25; 37:26-28).

According to Isaiah's prophecy, 'peace' derives from the people's obedience to Yahweh, their God. A metaphoric style expresses a synonymous parallelism which underlines a spiritual dimension given to *shalom* in its link to *sedaqah* (Isa. 48:18). Similarly, the blessing of salvation promised to the sons of Jerusalem in Isaiah 54:13 is associated with that of *sedaqah*, 'fairness or righteousness' (Adamo 2005:124). The same conjunction of *shalom*, 'peace or well-being' and *sedaqah*, 'fairness or righteousness' is found in the prophetic depiction of the new city of God, "I will also make *shalom,* 'peace' your officer, and *sedaqah*, 'righteousness' your ruler" (von Rad 1964:405) .[96]

The analysis of justice related to fairness and peace underlines God's power to transform the social order of the community. Justice covers a large dimension, being God's power to enable covenantal leadership and for humankind to act on his behalf. The ethical monotheism of the prophets is perceived as the basis of the moral order throughout the world. They believe in the validity of righteousness, justice and peace

[96] Isa. 60:17 related to 32:17 shows that *shalom* is the result of *sedaqah*, fairness or righteousness.

as being, without exception, the supreme law for the entire world. From this point of view, Israel's privileges are shared out among the nations (Koch 1983:58 citing Wellhausen 1958:108). In other words, peoples of every nation are concerned with righteousness or justice, peace or harmony for a better social life in the community. This is of significance in this study.

6. Conclusion: A Call to the Church to be Prophetic

Jeremiah's oracle on a 'loyal leadership' to come, presents a twofold position of civil and priestly leadership installed by Yahweh. In this chapter, I have focused on the prophetic role to which the religious leadership is called through the example of Jeremiah. Jeremiah ministered to a corrupt society in Judah. He faced a short-sighted leadership of the day. He did not hesitate to teach, rebuke, warn and correct. His close relationship with Yahweh allowed him to predict what God was going to do with his stubborn people. The truth and determination in Jeremiah's life brought him close to death, threats and imprisonment (Jer. 26; 36-38). This suggests a real call to the church to exercise its prophetic role in society. Jeremiah's oracle on a 'loyal leadership' suggests a close collaboration within it. Under this condition, the leadership would be empowered and be efficient to play a key role to achieve any purpose in the community (33:23-24). This would unify the leadership and people in the church community with regard to their tribal diversity. Furthermore, it would improve people's efficiency to develop a morally educated community. Judah was a covenantal community, as the church is today. To lead such a community, leadership is called to follow God's instructions in order to keep the vision and determination in the task to be achieved (Rata 2007:82). These ethical principles of *religious* leadership would play an influential role in the community. The next chapter provides a synthesis on Judean kingship (leadership) in the context of the oracle of Jeremiah.

CHAPTER FIVE

A SYNTHESIS OF THE LEADERSHIP OF JUDAH DURING THE TIME OF JEREMIAH

1. Introduction

By synthesis in the chapter heading above, I mean highlighting the important ideas of the leadership of Judah during the time of the prophet Jeremiah. In particular, I will point out the way the Judean leadership behaved in ruling over the people during the period in question. This aspect is of benefit to establish a link with the present leadership situation in the DR Congo. In this regard, I will present two contexts for a contextual reading of the texts on *semah* under study. I will discuss what God required from the Judean kings and how they ruled over the kingdom. In addition, I will point out what had prompted Jeremiah's oracle on the 'loyal leader' to come. If a 'loyal leadership' was expected, it was essentially to fulfil what the previous rulers were incapable of achieving. From this, I will discuss first, the context of Judean kings. Second, I will spell out the role of the Judean kings. Third, I discuss the role of the prophet in Judah. Fourth, I will analyse the Judean leadership in Jeremiah's time. Fifth, I will discuss the social life in Jeremiah's time. Finally, I will spell out Jeremiah's response to the Judean situation.

2. The Context of the Kings of Judah

2.1. Definition

Considering the role of the king in its socio-cultural context, I will first discuss Israelite theocracy as a background of Judean kingship.

Yahweh ruled Judah through human kings as his representatives alongside his people. Judean kingship was God's cooperation with human leaders ruling over his people. This cooperation requires human leaders' obedience to Yahweh's instructions. The leaders' success was that of Yahweh himself. Furthermore, the king was seen as the adopted son of Yahweh, a view which was common in the Ancient Near East (Ackerman 1997:181; Nürnberger 2004:122). Egypt, at that time, held a similar conception. Pharaoh was a 'god' or his 'son.' The kings of Assyria and Babylonia were 'sons' and 'brothers of the gods,' or had been suckled by goddesses. There were also the consorts of *Ishtar* in certain cultic rites. Related to a deity, the Mesopotamian king was believed to have been chosen by the gods to rule justly, maintain the cult and do people justice (Kaufmann 1972:266). How therefore did this reality play out in practice in the Judean leadership? In the subsection which follows, I will show the way the old tribal structures affected the leadership in Judah.

2.2. The Founding of Kingship in Judah

The book of 1 Samuel gives us the first elements of the tradition that styles kingship as a 'state leadership.' Here, it is associated with the "leadership of God" called to rule over the Israelites (Nürnberger 2004:121). The tradition of Saul's election to this 'leadership' has been preserved in two passages. The first, found in 1 Samuel 7; 8; 10:17-27; 12, depicts the people's request for a king as a rejection of Yahweh's leadership. At the beginning, Samuel will not approve of it. But, at Yahweh's bidding, he finally acquiesces to the people's proposal "to conform to other peoples around" (1 Sam. 8:5). Following this, the king is chosen by divine lot. Samuel writes down the severe rule of the monarchy and warns people and king to be loyal to Yahweh (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2005:1231). The 'seer-judge' points out the way kings should act in ruling over the people (1 Sam. 8:11-18) and depicts how they take liberties in abusing people's rights. Another text (1 Sam. 9; 10:1-16; 11) represents the monarchy as a gracious gift from God. Samuel is commanded by Yahweh to anoint the Benjaminite Saul, who will deliver Israel from the Philistines (Nürnberger 2004:119).

2.3. The Role of the King in Judah

The role of a Judean king is suggested by its definition. Judean kingship would consist of a 'leadership' ruling over the people on behalf of Yahweh (Nürnberger 2004:121). The covenant formula underscores a close relationship between a king and Yahweh in Judah (2 Sam. 7:14). It implies that a Judean king was subordinated to Yahweh whom he had to honour. A Judean king was empowered by Yahweh in so far as he submitted himself to him and did justly. As God's associate ruler, a Judean king had the right to perform altar service and was charged with the maintenance of the altars and temple (Nürnberger 2004:123). Although Judean kings never bore the official title of 'priest,' they nevertheless had to facilitate priestly functions in Zion-Jerusalem. The royal Sanctuary was the centre of socio-political life in Judah (Nürnberger 2004:147). The role played by the Judean kings alongside God's people was different from that of kings of the nations surrounding Israel, namely, Egypt and Babylonia (Kirsch 2004:4).[97]

A Judean king had to rule over the people with justice to ensure peace, unity, prosperity and security in the land. He was to be the embodiment of Yahweh's leadership in ruling over the land. This had been fulfilled by the rule of Josiah in the seventh century BCE. Josiah reformed the state religion in centralising the cult in Zion-Jerusalem. He fully purged the Sanctuary from its pagan taint. Josiah enjoyed the power of ensuring that the nation lived in obedience to God's will (Kaufmann 1972:266; Kirsch 2004:5). The will of God through the ruler-ship of the king was appreciated by the way they obeyed Yahweh's instructions. Their obedience implied a good administration of justice in society (Nürnberger 2004:172).

[97] "The Egyptian cult was performed by priests in the name of, and as agents of, the Pharaoh. Mesopotamian kings always retained the title of priest. It was their prime responsibility to maintain the temples and their proper cults. The gods elected them to maintain the service which humankind was created to perform for the gods. This happened when Pharaoh Akhenaton discovered the idea of Monotheism. He did not appeal to men and women who were accustomed to worshiping many gods and goddesses. But, in the case where the prophet is also a king, the young pharaoh possessed the power to impose monotheism on an unwilling populace by royal decree" (Kaufmann 1972:266; Kirsch 2004:4).

The Davidic kingship was inseparably linked to Zion. The house of the Lord in Zion contained the signs of Yahwist religion such as the law document. The Sanctuary was a meeting place of the Israelites (in a very reconciling relationship) with Yahweh. Zion was the culminating point of the Israelite people following their history with Yahweh (Rata 2007:1-2).

Most of the Judean kings failed to fulfil their responsibility; this being particularly the case during the time of Jeremiah. This was due to two particular factors:

i. A self-seeking attitude on the part of the king to secure political power;
ii. External powers which were set on conquering Judean soil.

These two factors turned Judean kings away from following God's instructions. From Josiah's reign to the Fall of Jerusalem, under Zedekiah's reign, the socio-political, economic and religious situation worsened (Lowery 1991:172).

This raises the important question as to how we should understand the way Judean kings turned away from God's instructions? The answer to this question indicates some basic truths that brought about a self-centred attitude of Judean kings. In fact, the royal ideology gave authority to kings to remain in office until their death. This disposition suggested the way kings sought political support from the most powerful empires of the day. The way kings related to the external powers, was first to make certain of their personal protection rather than social justice and the care for the people in the community.

The issue (of kings' permanent position in the office) is that they were brought to hold a centralised power (Haviland 1996:334). Every centralised political system slowly pushes leaders to become short-sighted. Kings would first ensure their own personal authority, instead of focusing on the people they were given to lead. This perspective did not help the Judean kings to fulfil their responsibility in the midst of the people. They were not consulting Jeremiah as 'God's mouthpiece' in making decisions related to their rule over the people. The legitimacy of kings in Judah should have been based on the authority of true prophets as Jeremiah (Nürnberger 2004:121). Despite

Jeremiah's warnings, the kings did not turn back to Yahweh's instructions. Instead, their lack of openness to Jeremiah's advice turned them to rely upon foreign powers.

2.4. The Role of Prophet in Judah

The prophet or prophetess is generally a person who is trusted and who has to have a special power which allows him or her to announce God's will to the people. The will of God was announced through the teaching, correction, rebuke, warning and orientation of the people (Nürnberger 2004:152). During the monarchy, prophets were numbered in the hundreds and were found everywhere (1Kings 18:4, 13; 22:6). After the time of David, ecstatic bands ministered in Judah. These kinds of prophets are called in Hebrew the *bene nebi'im*, those who were learning from a major prophet. Some of these popular prophets had no other function except to 'prophesy.' The *bene nebi'im* acted as mantics and messengers. These prophets assembled around a major prophet, keeping unity, and learning from the leader (Kaufmann 1972:275). Prophets were the 'mouthpiece of God' and assumed God's leadership alongside the Judean people. Like 'men or women of God,' in many respects, prophets differed from the rest of the people in behaviour, dress, and speech. AS Kaufmann (1972:277) points out:

> Elijah champions the mantic function of Israelite prophecy; it is the duty of the Israelite to inquire of prophets of Yahweh concerning private as well as public matters. He defends this mantic function as a messenger of God. The mantic and the messenger are two sides of the same prophet. This sheds light on the conception that Israelite prophecy had its mantic and healing functions.

These qualities were not perceived as someone's own power, but solely as the favour of the all powerful of Israel. This is clearly in view when Elisha cured Naaman, an official in the Syrian Army. This event gave rise to the saying, "now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15 NIV). Therefore, Judean prophets had to testify to the power of Yahweh, the only true God of Israel. The prophet's leadership would have been related to the king in ruling over the people. For this, a prophet played a multifaceted role alongside the Judean leadership and people. This would reflect in all aspects of public life in the community.

2.4.1. The Political Role of Prophets in Judah

A prophet was a 'special sort' of leader in Judah alongside the people. Prophets' authority in Judah would ensure and legitimate kings' authority. 'Kings' referred specially to political and military power while 'priests' assumed religious responsibility for God's people. A Judean king was a 'representative of God' in midst of the people (Nürnberger 2004:119). A prophet was commissioned by Yahweh as 'his mouthpiece' alongside the king in ruling over the people. Although prophets acted as individuals, nevertheless, they were "partisans of a common ideology" in bringing Judean kings and people to obey Yahweh (Nürnberger 2004:121). Therefore, prophets appear as messengers of Yahweh, his mouthpieces speaking to the kings and people (2 Kings 20:13-18).

Prophets were not directly working in the courts of the kings' offices. Nevertheless, they addressed their messages to the kings by correcting, controlling, warning and sometimes even challenging their practices. The aim of the prophet was to remind kings to promote social justice and fairness in the community. Some scholars point out that the prophet's indictments were to draw a direct correspondence between sin and punishment. Punishment derives from wrongdoing by the people related to God in a covenantal relationship (Willis 2007:551). The issue here is that Yahweh punishes his people when they continue to turn away from his instructions. This reflects Jeremiah's struggle in his ministry. Finally, he prophesied God's revenge as an appeal for justice among the Judean people (Barton 1979:12; Shemesh 2003:89; Avioz 2005:435).

2.4.2. The True and False Prophets in Judah

The book of Deuteronomy indicates the difference between a true and false prophet (Deut. 13:12-19; 18:15-23). In the Bible, we find a number of examples that help us recognise false prophets in Judah. Such a case in point is the passage in 1 Kings 22, where Micah, son of Imlah is portrayed as a prophet who never compromises before Ahab (v18). Micah, is opposed by four hundred false prophets, headed by their major prophet Zedekiah, son of Kenaanah, who "predicted success to Ahab" (I Kings 22:17). As Kaufmann (1972:278) points out:

> During the age of classical prophecy, this dichotomy reached its climax. Beyond falsely claiming to speak Yahweh's word, the false prophet is a glutton, a drunkard, a liar, and an adulterer (Jer. 23:14; 29:23; Isa. 28:7); he is avaricious and prophesies only for money (Mic. 3: 5); he promises only what the people wish to hear, prosperity and peace.[98]

About false prophets, Yahweh said through Jeremiah that people should not have paid attention to what they were announcing (23:16). The true prophets were Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah who prophesied the truth in Judah.

2.4.3. The False Prophets against Jeremiah

In the Bible we find prophets teaching, correcting, rebuking, warning and promising victory. In some instances there are contradictory viewpoints on the same matter concerning the king, the army or the people.

How can one distinguish the true from the false prophet? The answer can be found when surveying certain stories in the Old Testament. One early case speaks of a seer from Bethel who prophesied falsely to a man to whom God had given other instructions. The man of God faced consequences for not obeying the Lord (1 Kings 13:18-22). Here, the inference is that the recognition of the false from the true prophet is directly related to the fulfilment of the prophecy. Jeremiah contradicted the sayings of Hananiah to the Judean people (Jer. 28:5-9, 15-17)[99]. The fulfilment of Jeremiah's words distinguishes the true prophet from the false (Motyer 1962:1041). This is one of the causes of Jeremiah's struggle in his ministry. Most of the people followed false prophets and Jeremiah felt real hostility from among the Judean people (Jer. 4:10).

In another difficult situation in Zion-Jerusalem, Yahweh asks a series of questions through Jeremiah (Jer. 8:4-5). These questions suggest that the Judean leadership and people are full of deceit. They refuse to be reminded of their sin and turn back to God (8:5). In my view, that Judean leadership and people were deluded. First, in their

[98] Mic. 3:5; Jer 4:10; 8:10-11; 14:13; 23:17; 27:14-20; 28-29; Ezek. 12:24; 13:10.

[99] "Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, 'Listen, Hananiah! The Lord has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. Therefore, this is what the Lord says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the Lord'" (Jer. 28:15-16 NIV).

illusion they thought that it was enough to have the law, even though they disobeyed it (8:8). Second, they were proud of the presence of the Sanctuary as the centre of their life and a symbol of God's presence living among them (7:1-8). Third, the contradictory encouragement of the false prophets led them to isolate the true prophet of the day (Lowery 1991:134). Jeremiah tried in vain to influence most of the leadership and people to turn back to God's instructions (25:8-14).

A question thus arises as to why this discussion is so important to this chapter? This discussion underscores a confusing situation within the Judean leadership. A misunderstanding prevailed among the prophets on the one hand, and Jeremiah, the Judean kings and people, on the other. This is perceived by the way Jeremiah reacts to the people's magic formula (Deist 2000:286). The presence of the Sanctuary in the midst of Judeans does not necessarily ensure the presence of the Lord alongside the people (7:4). Removing the Sanctuary from Zion was perceived as collapsing the Judean society (2000:287). Indeed, this was the reality the Judean people would undergo in the immediate future. Jeremiah's indictment announced a shameful situation in the Judean community (8:9).

Jeremiah complained about such false prophets who kept telling the Judean people that they would enjoy peace and prosperity in the country (14:13). They improvised prophecies without them coming from God. They said false things to the Judean people (14:14). The leadership and people were led astray by false optimism. Such optimism was false because it lacked faithfulness of God. The Judean ruling class was no longer able to change the way it behaved because of this false optimism. False prophets especially influenced the kings to be under the delusion they were ruling the people correctly. Such delusion blinded them and diverted their political action. They became unable to recognise what was wrong in their leadership. Furthermore, they could not turn back to God's instructions. As a result, the socio-political and religious situation worsened in Judah, reflecting as it did such bad governance. In the subsection which follows, I will give a brief survey of the way the Judean kings ruled over the people during the time of Jeremiah.

2.5. The Leadership of Judah during the Time of Jeremiah

Here, I will point to the situation of social justice in Judah and reference it to that in the DR Congo. I order to achieve this purpose, I will briefly discuss, the rulership of the last five kings of Judah from Josiah to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17; 2 Chron. 36:10). These reigns characterise fully Jeremiah's struggle for ministry in the context of the Judean leadership. Egypt and Babylon controlled Judah respectively during this period (Farisani 2008:71 citing Wood 1970:374-375). These external powers influenced many Judean kings and led them away from following Yahweh's instructions. How then, did kings rule over the people in Jeremiah's time?

2.5.1. The Reign of Josiah

Josiah succeeded Amon his father on the Judean throne in 640 BCE when he was an eight-year-old boy. He ruled over Judah for a total of thirty-one years (2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chron. 34:1), and "he obeyed God's instructions as his Father David did" (2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chron. 34:2) (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2005:1236). This phrase is often applied to kings who remained faithful to true Yahwism. Josiah would have begun to "seeking Yahweh" when he was sixteen years old (2 Chron. 34:3). Concerning his Yahwistic background Boardman (1991:383) says:

> Josiah grew up within the influence of faithful Yahwists; and indeed it may be that among his relatives there were those who preserved this faith, for example his younger contemporary, Zephaniah, who began a challenging prophetic ministry a few years later. Zephaniah was certainly a kinsman, being described as a great-great-grandson of Hezekiah (Zeph. 1:1), of whom Josiah was the great-grandson.

The way Josiah was committed to practise God's instructions led him to initiate a socio-political and religious reform in Judah. His reign is reported in the books of Kings and Chronicles. The first event that is specifically mentioned by both sources is placed in Josiah's eighteenth year of reign, 622 BCE. In all probability, when he was twenty-six years of age (614 BCE), an important document referred to as 'God's law' had been discovered in the Sanctuary (2 Kings 22:8; 2 Chron. 34:14). Without entering here into any discussion on the origin on the 'book of the law,' I will

nevertheless briefly discuss the main points of Josiah's reform during the time of Jeremiah. In Judah, politics and religion were closely tied up. The question thus arises as to how should one discern the political and religious dimensions of the reform? The sort of deities Josiah pulled down from the Sanctuary determined his reform dimension.

Eynikel (1996:8), citing Oestreicher, argues that a purification of the Sanctuary was required by removing the Assyrian 'state religion' which had been imposed on the Judeans while living under Assyrian control. Hadley (2000:58) argues that Josiah's reform was not so much religiously motivated as it was politically. He even goes as far as to say that the 'book of the law' was not discovered until several years after the reform had begun, and was only slightly relevant. This basic view, albeit with some alterations, has been followed by some scholars.

Nicholson (1967:9-17) agrees with a political motivation for Josiah's reform with its basis on the differences in dating the event in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Thus, 2 Chronicles 34:3 places Josiah's reform six years earlier during his reign, well before the discovery of the 'book of the law' in his eighteenth year (vv. 8, 15). In my view, this difference could be due to the dating of Josiah's reign which had needed a regent while he was still young (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2000:1236). Furthermore, the Chronicle wrote in a midrashic mode providing an interpretation of historical events.

Hadley (2000:72) cites Hölscher who, like Oestreicher, holds that Josiah's reform did not focus on cult centralisation in Zion. His concern consisted of removing "the Canaanite and Assyrian cult objects" from the Sanctuary, thereby seeking cultic purity. However, 2 Kings 22:3 places the discovery of the 'book of the law' in Josiah's eighteenth year, and thus records this discovery before the reform. The account (in 2 Kings 22-23:25) implies that the full extent of Josiah's reform was religiously motivated. It was prompted by the discovery of the 'book of the law.'

I agree with the dating of Josiah's reform which would have taken place in the eighteenth year of his rule (2 Kings 22:3). Jeremiah would have already begun his ministry some years before the reform. The king's reform was thus inspired by the

discovery of the 'book of the law.' This led to the removing of the Canaanite and Assyrian cult symbols from the State Sanctuary. As Ackerman (1993:391) can confirm:

> 2 Kings 21:7 describes how Manasseh erected an *Asherah* which stood there until destroyed by yet another reformer, Josiah (2 Kings 23:6). Josiah also removed from the Jerusalem Temple the vessels made for *Asherah* as part of her sacrificial cult (2 Kings 23:4) and tore down the structures within the Temple compound where women wove garments to be draped as clothing over *Asherah's* cult statue (2 Kings 23:7).

Josiah's removal of the cultic vessels made for *Asherah* suggests that his reform recovered a religious dimension. Its purpose was to ratify the Sinaitic covenant between Yahweh, the king and the people of Judah. Rather than being a new covenant, it was a renewal of the old. Zion-Jerusalem regained its socio-political and religious centrality in Judah (Dumbrell 2002:102). In this regard, Josiah's religious reform sought not only a cultic purity, but in the process, focused on cult centralisation. Therefore, Josiah's objective in his religious reform had a twofold aspect: it focused on purifying and centralising the cult in Zion-Jerusalem. It was, therefore, a political and religious reform (Nürnberger 2004:147).

Zion-Jerusalem was the centre of social life in Judah. The reform initiated by Josiah tried to renew the entirety of life in the community. The holy city witnessed God's presence alongside his people. His 'book of the law' and table of burnt offering symbolised that presence. From his dwelling place, Yahweh's blessings overflowed towards his people. As a result, they enjoyed social, political and religious well-being (Nürnberger 2004:120). This reform had promoted social justice, peace, prosperity and security in Judah (2004:120). Josiah's reign ended in 609 BCE, whereupon his son Jehoahaz succeeded him on the throne.

2.5.2. The Reign of Jehoahaz

Upon the death of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz was enthroned as king by the Judean people. This elevation was made by popular acclaim (2 Kings 23:30). After a brief three months, his reign was revoked by Pharaoh Necho, whereupon he was sent into

exile to Egypt. Necho replaced Jehoahaz with Eliakim. He changed his name to Jehoiakim, as king of Judah (Leslie 1954:110). Shallum, named Jehoahaz was preferred by the Judean people as king at his father's place. But, Necho was not satisfied with the people's choice of Jehoahaz, suspecting Jehoahaz to share his father's political predilections (Leslie 1954:111; Boardman 1991:392).

The way Necho overthrew a king chosen by the Judean people witnesses to the stranglehold that Egypt had on Judean policy. It compromised their freedom, social justice, peace and security in Judah (Seitz 1985:78). Jehoahaz's reign is well known for having been too short so that no one could appreciate its true value. Such a situation did not leave Jehoahaz time to organise the socio-political and religious life as he would have done it in Judah.

2.5.3. The Reign of Jehoiakim

Eliakim was enthroned as king in Judah by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. His name was changed to Jehoiakim. The Judean leadership and people were being subdued to Egypt. It suggests the complete control of Judean policy by Egypt. Judah was subsequently taken over by Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:7; Jer. 46:2) (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2000:1236), who had gained military and political control throughout the area (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2000:1236).

In 602 BCE, Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonian king. As a result, he was sent to prison in Babylon (2 Chron. 36:6-7) (Dumbrell 2002:103). Later, Nebuchadrezzar sent Jehoiakim back into office as a vassal king on the Judean throne. In 601 BCE, Jeremiah's prophecies were read by Baruch in the Sanctuary. When the reading was repeated in the presence of Jehoiakim, the latter destroyed the document by burning it (36:23). Jehoiakim was not interested in seeking social justice and peace in the midst of the people. He moved away from Yahweh's instructions (36:20-24) (Seitz 1985:79). In fact, as the king's rule was controlled by Babylon, the wisest way for him was to obey the Babylonian king rather than God's instructions. This contradicted what God required of a king in Judah. Jeremiah's indictment against evil kings, particularly Jehoiakim, condemned the way he behaved (22:13-23). Jehoiakim died while the Babylonian army was approaching to take over Jerusalem. His rule ended in

597 BCE after sitting eleven years on the throne (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2000:1236; Dumbrell 2002:103).[100]

2.5.4. The Reign of Jehoiachin

Jehoiakim's rule had prepared a bad social context with regard to Judah's external policy. His successor, Jehoiachin, faced the direct consequences of this. While representing Egyptian policy in Judah, Jehoiakim was involved in a conflict between the Egyptians and Babylonians. Jehoiakim's position in office depended on an Egyptian victory. A fiery battle ensued between the Egyptian and Babylonian armies, whereupon no clear victory was won by Nebuchadrezzar, who upon its close returned to Babylon. Jehoiakim thought that the Babylonians had failed to defeat Egypt. Later, the Babylonians came to take over Jerusalem and while *en route*, Jehoiakim died (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2000:1236). This course of action determined the circumstances in which Jehoiachin succeeded to his father's throne.

The best way the new king could have acted before the Babylonians began advancing to take over Jerusalem was to submit to them. Jehoiachin, his royal family and some Judean citizens were taken as captives to Babylon (Dumbrell 2002:103). It was a similar situation to that of Jehoahaz after he succeeded Josiah, his father. Having become masters of Egypt, the Babylonians controlled Judah and its kings. How could Judean kings assume their responsibilities while they were not free to organise the State? After Jehoiachin had been deported to Babylon, the victorious Babylonians placed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle on the Judean throne (Schniedwind 2004:149). They changed his name to Zedekiah. This latter was the last Davidic king on the Judean throne.

[100] "Nebuchadnezzar administered a severe defeat to Egypt at Carchemish in 605 (Jer. 46:2-12); but Neco was able to fight back and defeat him in 601", a defeat that was doubtless a factor in Jehoiakim's disloyalty to Babylon. "The seesaw turn of events mirrors the split in Jerusalem politics between the pro-Babylonian and pro-Egyptian parties. When Jehoiakim finally revolted against Babylon, there was speedy retaliation. The Babylonian Chronicles relate the surrender of Jerusalem on the 2d of the month of Adar, i.e., mid-March 597. Jehoiakim had already died, perhaps by assassination" (Wright, Murphy and Fitzmyer 2000:1236).

2.5.5. The Reign of Zedekiah

Enthroned by the Babylonians to replace Jehoiachin, Zedekiah could not achieve any purpose during his rule. The way Necho had treated Eliakim whose name was changed to Jehoiakim, Nebuchadrezzar changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah. This name change by the king of Babylon symbolised his control over Judah and her kings (Schniedwind 2004:149).

Insecurity was sensed in Judah, during the first exile in 597 BCE. It involved the deportation of the Judean leading class (including Jehoiachin and his family) who were taken captive to Babylon. A remnant of the people was left to restore life in the city of Jerusalem (2004:150). Did Yahweh still live in the midst of them or not? Had God ended his history with them? These questions would have created some doubt as to Yahweh's continued presence alongside his people. Some became convinced that the exiles would soon return to Jerusalem (28:10-15), while others, such as Jeremiah the prophet insisted that the period of exile would be long. Although times had become difficult, under Zedekiah's rule the rebuilding of the city began. A new hope for the future spread among the people.

As with Jehoiakim under the control of the Egyptians, Zedekiah aligned himself and Judah to support Pharaoh Hophra who came to attack Phoenicia. Meanwhile, Zedekiah and Judah were surprised by the Babylonian armies which began a long march towards Jerusalem (Farisani 2008:71 citing Miller and Hayes 2006:469). In this connection Boardman (1991:402) has argued:

> Though there is thus no indication of overt dissident activity on the part of Zedekiah at the beginning of his reign, and he is indeed said to have visited Nebuchadrezzar in Babylon in 594 (Jer. 51:59), he did, according to Kings, eventually rebel against the king of Babylon, presumably a few years later, for the narrative goes on to say that… Nebuchadrezzar brought his entire army to Jerusalem, which he besieged with the aid of a surrounding siege wall (2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:3-4 and 39:1).

Being a vassal leader of the king of Babylon, Zedekiah would have relied for security solely on the Babylonians. His subservient position under Babylonian power would not allow him to do what he wanted. As Dumbrell (2002:103) has pointed out:

> The indecision of this vacillating monarch and his inability to relate to the deteriorating political situation are clear from the book of Jeremiah. Eventually Zedekiah appealed to Egypt and revolted against Babylon in 589 BCE. After a long siege, Jerusalem fell in the middle of the year 587 BCE.

Zedekiah was arrested near Jericho and brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in Syria. There, his family members were brought to him and killed one by one before him. Finally, his own eyes were blinded. He was carried captive to Babylon where he remained a prisoner up to his death (2 Kings 25:6-7; Jer. 39) (Nürnberger 2004:126; Pakkala 2006:443; Farisani 2008:72-3 citing Wittenberg 1993:97). Zedekiah's rule ended in a tragic way in 587 BCE after sitting eleven years on the throne (2 Kings 24:18; 2 Chron. 36:11).

2.6. Social Life during the Time of Jeremiah

The social life of the Judean people during the time of Jeremiah is closely related to the rulership of the five kings discussed in brief above. The external control of Egypt and Babylon over Judah had prevented the Judean kings from improving public life in the community (Delamarter 2004:30). A question thus arises as to the prevailing social situation of the time in Judah?

During the time of Jeremiah, the social life in Judah depended on whether or not the kings had been close to the Sanctuary in Zion-Jerusalem. The corrupt and short-sighted kings of the time looked for their own personal advantage. As a result, they were unable to promote a good society for all (26:7-9, 20-23). Jeremiah's prophetic ministry thus focused on teaching, correction, warnings and rebuke as he witnessed firsthand the deviation of the Judean leadership and people away from God (Job 2006:62). Such a situation needed an intervention of Yahweh alone to sort it out. The Judean kings had become weak from having turned away from God's instructions. Jeremiah tried to remind them about the principles that would improve the country's leadership standard in Judah (22:15-16) (Brueggemann 2007:146). Jeremiah indicates that a king should defend the cause of the poor and the needy in ruling over the people justly (v. 16).

Any success the Judean kings may have had belonged to Yahweh alone. Social prosperity in Judah was defined in terms of blessings from Yahweh towards his people (Adamo 2005:125). Instead, disaster in the land was their lot as they turned away from God (Wright 1997:524).

Jeremiah's oracle on *semah* was as a direct result of the weak social situation in Judah. OT prophecy often relates righteousness to the issues of social justice (Amos 2:6b; 5:12) (Reimer 1997:763). The disaster resulted from the lack of social justice, peace and prosperity during the reigns of the last Judean kings (Rubinger 1977:87). Jeremiah and the Deuteronomist confirm that Yahweh cared for his people and led them through many struggles in order that they remain dependent on him. When the people became guilty before God, in spite of the privilege they enjoyed, Yahweh often submitted them to the surrounding nations. The Judeans had not kept the conditions that should have maintained their vocation and rights of being a chosen people of God (Rubinger 1977:88). Because of this, Yahweh initiated, following their punishment, the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leader' who would be wise and efficient to execute social justice in the community (23:5) (Abegg 1997:815).

2.7. Jeremiah's Response to the Situation

2.7.1. Jeremiah's Denunciation of the People

Jeremiah received his divine call and understood his mission. Although the prophet was commissioned to address to "the nations" (1:5), he had to prophesy especially to the Judean people (5:1-31). Furthermore, having been 'the mouthpiece of God,' he ministered alongside the Judean leadership and people (9:25-26; 12:14). The behaviour of the people no longer witnessed the value of their circumcision (Couturier 2000:277). The prophet tried in vain to plead with the people to repent. His message however often fell on deaf ears, for the leadership and people of Judah had become corrupt.

Yahweh and Jeremiah converse (5:1-6) about the "corrupt people" who did not change their minds during the difficult circumstances inflicted upon Judah (Couturier 2000:274). Not only the people accused of corrupt behaviour, but the "kings, priests

and prophets" (4:9), are found guilty of turning away from God's instructions in ruling over the people.

The prophet challenged most of the Judean leadership's practices of the day. Josiah ruled over the people with justice and righteousness as God's instructions required (2 Kings 23:25). The rest of the kings in Jeremiah's time, failed to achieve God's objective. The lack of social justice and honesty in caring for the poor and needy expressed the refusal of Judean leaders and people to respond to the love and protection they received from Yahweh. From the time of Amos (750 BCE) through to Jeremiah (627 BCE)and right up to the disaster of the Exile in 587 BCE, an almost unbroken line of prophets had tried in vain to bring the Judean leadership and people back to obeying God (Rhymer 1971:3). The leadership and people had committed themselves to other gods. Consequently, they had spread throughout Judah a disastrous social disorder, perversion of justice, and oppression of the poor. It is evident that the leadership and people had broken the covenant Yahweh had made with them (Nürnberger 2004:72, 119). Yahweh thus withdrew his protection and the Babylonians overwhelmed them. They were thus taken into exile, first in 597 BCE, and finally in 587 BCE.

The burden of Jeremiah's prophecy was a message of doom and destruction. He predicted a day of disaster was imminent when the leadership and people of Judah would no longer relax and enjoy life (16:1-2). Jeremiah aroused the animosity of his people all his life. He blamed them and in return, he was blamed as well (Couturier 2000:292). This misunderstanding between Jeremiah and the Judean people led the latter, including the prophet's own relatives, the priests of Anathoth, to plot the death of Jeremiah (Kaufmann 1972:410). Jeremiah's indictments would focus on reminders that would prevent the disaster. He insisted that the word from God through his mouth was true. He collided with the Judean authorities during the reign of Jehoiakim (Lowery 1991:172). After this prophecy of doom uttered in Topheth which was repeated in the temple court, a religious man, a staff member of the Sanctuary, struck him and put him into prison (19:14-20:3).

Later, another prophecy spoken in the temple court enraged the priests, prophets, and people. Jeremiah was put on trial for his life. But he was saved by some officers,

among whom Ahikam ben Shaphan is mentioned in Jeremiah 26:24 (Kaufmann 1972:411).[101] This attitude of the people against Jeremiah suggests a deep state of deviation from God's instructions by the Judean leadership. Sharp (2003:81-2) points to Jeremiah's announcement of punishment in Jeremiah 25:8-14. This text resembles the other texts addressing the different peoples around Judah. Carroll (1999:80) argues that this unit consists of "the destruction of the city and land" which presents the twofold theme of salvation and judgment. Furthermore, Jeremiah 25:8-14 presents some confusing Hebrew terms such as *ha'ares hazot*, 'this land' (v. 9), *kol ha'ares hazot*, 'this whole land' (v. 11), *hagoi haho,* 'that nation' (v. 12), and *ha'ares hahi,'* 'that land' (v. 13). Sharp (2003:82) thinks that the first two refer to Judah and the last two speak of Babylon. It suggests that something is different in Jeremiah's indictments towards Judah and Babylon.

2.7.2. Babylon as God's Servant

Jeremiah prophesied against the nations under the Chaldean influence (Leslie 1954:158).[102] Jeremiah knew well these nations to whom he handed a cup of wine (50:15-16, 19-24). The issue here is that the prophets were previously Yahweh's servants (25:4) to whom the Judean people did not listen. The rise of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BCE motivated Jeremiah's prophecy of doom, which consisted of the destruction of Jerusalem. This was fulfilled afterwards in 587 BCE (Couturier 2000:288). Carroll (1999:81) argues that Nebuchadrezzar is the servant of God, whom the people would have no choice but to accept when he devastates them and Jerusalem (25:9). Jeremiah as the 'mouthpiece of God' was not listened to by the

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[101] "When Jeremiah returned from Topheth where the Lord had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the Lord's temple and said to all the people, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Listen! I am going to bring on this city and the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words" (Jer. 19:14-15 NIV).

[102] "We note that not all nations are to drink of the cup. We do not have here any conception of a universal destruction. We feel the tension of the situation as, in the original words of Jeremiah the pertinent nations which are destined to come under the Chaldean sphere of influence" are singled out. "First heading the list comes Egypt (vv. 19-20a) with the Pharaoh, his servants and officials, and the Egyptian foreign population, that is 'the whole mixture of nations,' such as Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all the Arabians, the Lybians and the Cherethites (Ezek. 30:5), and such as are referred to later in relation to the Chaldeans, "all the foreign people [ha'erebh] in midst of her (50:37). Second comes the Philistine area (v. 20b), and Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod are included. Third comes the area to the south-east and east (v. 21), Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Fourth comes the Bedouin tribal area (vv. 23-24), the great north Arabian tribes, Dedan, Tema, and Buz, and the lesser tribes of the Arabian desert" (Leslie 1954:158).

people. Yahweh aroused his servant to come and make the people hear what they refused to hear.

The Chaldeans (who struck terror among the Judean people) were the instruments of Yahweh (Jer. 25:8-11; Hab. 1:5-6). Yahweh used them as devastating instruments to discipline his people. Babylon seemingly played the role of Yahweh's servant. Indeed, Yahweh appeared to abandon his people when he allowed Nebuchadrezzar to devastate Jerusalem (Brueggemann 2007:35). Nebuchadrezzar had a specific task to inflict punishment on Zion-Jerusalem and its people. Thus, the Judean leadership and people would be corrected and restored in their mind. Eventually, Jeremiah's message shifts from the judgment of the guilty people of Jerusalem to that of Babylon. As Carroll (1999:83) can state:

> At the same time a reading of Jer. 25:15-38 shows that the motif of the divine act of judgment against Judah-Jerusalem (the subject-matter of chapters 2-24) has been transformed into something approximating to the apocalyptic vision of the destruction of the nations.

The change of the prophetic message is the result of God's purpose in the process of punishing his people. Yahweh did not forsake his people while allowing Babylon to devastate the holy city. After the Babylonians had disciplined his people, Yahweh turned against them. This 'situation of reversal' relates directly to the change of mind of the Judean people. It implies the restoration of Judah which corresponded to the destruction of Babylon (Sharp 2000:433).[103] A French proverb states: "*le malheur des uns fait le bonheur des autres"* (Varrod 2002:600) meaning "bad things are disadvantageous to most people but often turn out to be favourable for some people." This brings hope to the people for a better future.

[103] "A full-judgment view is countered in the Jeremianic prose by an alternative interpretation of Jeremiah's function as a 'prophet to the nations,' a view in which Jeremiah presents the option of disobedience versus obedience to other nations as well as Judah. Any nation or kingdom theoretically may heed Yahweh's voice and be 'built' or 'planted' by Yahweh or refuse to obey and be 'destroyed' (12:14-17; 18:7-10; 27:1-11)" (Sharp 2000:433).

2.7.3. A Message of Hope to the People

Jeremiah's message of judgment becomes a message of hope for a better future for the people of God. Couturier (2000:274) argues that the announcement of the disaster of the Exile to the Judeans presents a twofold message (29:4-14). It not only points to a learning experience of the people, but also calls for hope for a better future. Such hope consists of a restoration of the people's mind and that of the holy city. Brueggemann (2006:173) says that Jeremiah's message of judgment arouses hope in circumstances of hopelessness. Despite the punishment, Jeremiah announces a hope for a better future for the people (Jer. 29). The oracle on *semah* symbolises the arrival of a 'loyal leader' in Judah (Nürnberger 2004:72).

Jeremiah claims that at the right time Yahweh would give his people a new covenant (31:31). This new covenant is different from the previous one he had made with their forefathers. The new covenant he intends extends and develops the previous ones. It was a salvation promise for the exiles (32:37-41), which focused on the renewal of relationship between Yahweh and his people. It implemented hope for a better future in the land (v. 44). Furthermore, it provided the Judean leadership with a new vision of managing public affairs. The restoration of people's minds brought about a real commitment to social change in Judah (Rom-Shiloni 2003:207).

This sort of leadership is God's creation. Yahweh would establish "shepherds" (23:4). This image refers to the leadership situation in the Judean community (22:22). It opens up a new perspective of leadership restoration through the learning experience in Exile (Mavinga 2008:244). These new leaders would be more efficient than the previous ones (Wright 1997:519; Pakkala 2006:446). Yahweh promised this to the Judean community, thereby ensuring that Yahweh would not end his history with his people. However, a 'loyal leader' would be coming to replace the current 'leaders.' He would sprout forth from David's line to restore public order and maintain it across the land (Wright 1997:23).

The restoration of people's mind and of Zion-Jerusalem coincided with the Babylonian destruction as prophesied by Jeremiah. It is quite evident that the destruction of the oppressor liberates the oppressed people. The basic point of Judean

liberation (after the disaster of the exile) is the renewal of Judah's relationship with Yahweh. This promise of salvation concerns those who survived the disaster in order to prosper and enjoy life back in their homeland (Nürnberger 2004:72). Jeremiah's message which had been announced to prevent the Exile was not accepted by the people. The Exile had been an opportunity for the people to learn about themselves and God's requirements to renew and maintain the covenant he made with them. It was Yahweh's way of providing his people with a new disposition of heart for both the leadership and the people. The change of mind required by the leadership in particular was a key requirement of restoring the Judean community (Robinson 2001:194). From the Exile onwards, it was God's means of sustaining hope for his people. It implied that the leadership and their followers would be empowered by God through 'hardship' in order to enable them to develop a good society.

3. Summary and Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the causes of the failure of the last kings of Judah. The abuse of power turned most of them away from following Yahweh's instructions. They had neither defended the cause of the poor, nor cared for the needy. The Judean kings did not act justly. Jeremiah's oracle is both a challenge and a message of hope and encouragement. In a similar way it speaks to the leadership in the DR Congo. The context of the Judean leadership during the time of Jeremiah motivated the oracle on *semah*. This sheds light on how to reflect of the restoration of the situation and leadership of the DR Congo. A number of questions should therefore be addressed:

i. What is the expectation of the Congolese leadership regarding the current social situation in the DR Congo?
ii. Does it expect that God could work through it?
iii. If it does, how could God intervene?
iv. What is the attitude of the people concerning their role in the matter?
v. How does the past history of the Congolese leadership and people impact on the current leadership situation?

The next chapter will address the leadership situation in the DR Congo.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LEADERSHIP SITUATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

1. Introduction

This chapter consists of a socio-historical analysis of the leadership situation in the DR Congo. In this regard, I will first discuss the background and socio-political situation to the Mobutu regime.[104] Second, I will analyse Mobutu's presidency from 1965 to 1974. Third, I will discuss Mobutu's governance from 1975 to 1997. Fourth, I will analyse the Congolese leadership in its context. Fifth, I will discuss the history of the prophetic role of the church in the DR Congo. Finally, I will discuss the prophetic role of the church from 1960 to the present day.

2. The Background of the Socio-political Situation to the Mobutu Regime

Since gaining Independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960, the first Republic of the Congo experienced a five-year period of disorder (Nzongola 2002:95-6). This unfortunate situation was due to a number of problems. First, the unstable state in which the Belgians left the country at that time. Second, a divided leadership that was unable to handle the new situation of the State. Third, lack of qualified leaders and personnel across most sectors of government and commerce. Fourth, the cold war taking place between the two super-powers of the day, the West and the so-called 'Iron Curtain' countries (van Rensburg 1975:488; Kalb 1982:55-7; Kelly 1993:45-7).

[104] President Joseph Désiré Mobutu was the second Congolese Head of State, after Joseph Kasa-Vubu, from November 24, 1965 to May 17, 1997. With his political ideology of the 'recourse to authenticity' in 1971, he changed his name and that of the country, respectively, to Mobutu Sésé Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Zabanga and Zaire (Nzongola 2002:149-150).

2.1. An Unstable State following Independence

Following Independence, a post-colonial struggle ensued. The national and democratic movement responsible for the achievement of Independence fell deeply into internal conflict. The situation was caused by poor leadership and the destabilising actions of the Belgian colonial authorities (van Rensburg 1975:488). The former colonisers transferred all 'data preparation' for work from the Congolese enterprises to Belgium. This situation intensified the incompetence of the new leadership who took over the former colonial enterprises. They became unable to pay off debts left by the colonisers (Nzongola 2002:88). The newly elected leaders soon neglected protecting the State economic assets as well. Instead, they began enjoying the material benefits left by the colonisers without referring to ordinary people's expectations of Independence (2002:88).

2.2. The Power of Tribal Leaders

The authority of some tribal leaders in many provinces became complex because it was orchestrated by the former colonisers. Soon after Independence, the new leaders lost control of the situation in the DR Congo. Under the pretext of protecting European lives and property, Belgium intervened militarily on July 10, 1960 (van Rensburg 1975:488; Kelly 1993:x). The following day, the Katanga Province declared its secession from the DR Congo. This was not coincidence. The intention of the Belgians was to disarm all non-Katangese soldiers and expel them from the province. They planned to retain for the Katanga Gendarmerie only those who were native to the Province. Belgium thus participated in the criminal action of the tribal power of Godefroid Munongo, a powerful interior minister during the first government (Nzongola 2002:99). Tshombe and Munongo were used as Congolese fronts in the West's mining interests in Katanga Province (2002:99). In this way, tribal leaders in some Provinces became divided from the central authority of the State due to the former colonisers' economic interests who wanted to continue exploiting these Provinces of the new State (2002:99).

2.3. The Lack of Qualified Personnel

The new State lacked qualified leaders and personnel in most sectors who could have promoted the development of the country. The number of Congolese University graduates and technocrats was only fifteen from 1956 to the accession to Independence in June 1960. This meant that the first leaders were incapable of organising and running such a vast State (van Rensburg 1981:431). There were no army officers, engineers, agronomists, or physicians. On July 8, 1960, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba appointed Victor Lundala as an officer in charge of the Congolese army. The latter lacked the necessary qualifications to manage a modern army to secure the new State (Hochschild 1999:300-6; Nzongola 2002:98).[105] Lumumba, for example, made a number of mistakes based on his lack of political ability and qualifications. As a result, he refused to examine carefully the well-founded rumours concerning Mobutu's ties to the Belgian and American intelligence agencies. In appointing Mobutu to a sensitive position, Lumumba had unwittingly chosen his own Judas (Nzongola 2002:98).

Briefly, this describes an inappropriate leadership in the early stages of Independence in the Congo. Because of this, the DR Congo became a landing ground where any external State—especially Western interests—could make plans to exploit the country's mineral wealth.

2.4. The DR Congo as a Bone of Contention between Two Super-powers

The disorder that followed Independence brought about external interventions in the DR Congo. The United Nations operated as a peacekeeping force. At the same time, tension resulted between Western and Eastern powers of the day.[106] The new State began facing serious problems due to the personal interests of these super-powers. This state of affairs was facilitated by a divided leadership in the early days of

[105] By July 1960, "the mutiny of Congolese soldiers against the Belgian officers had spread to other provinces. A series of clashes between these rebellious forces and Belgian civilians brought Belgian troops to the Congo to protect their nationals, and the wholesale evacuation of Belgians from the Congo had begun. This exodus left the Government, educational, medical and social departments without the necessary trained personnel to carry out the ordinary services" (van Rensburg 1981:431).
[106] Congo-Crisis, Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Crisis/> [Accessed June 22, 2009].

Independence. These divisions were exploited by the super-powers to intensify internal conflicts within the leadership (van Runsburg 1975:489). One of the important divisions within the Congolese nationalist movement was the ideological split between radicals and moderates (Nzongola 2002:96). The radicals seemed to be 'progressive nationalists' who wanted to create a new orientation for the nation. Independence was seen an occasion for social change. Rightly, they wanted to focus on the social and economic interests of the people. They planned a strong central government in a unitary State in order to fulfil such aims. They were emotionally committed to obtaining genuine political and economic Independence. However, they were not very clear on how to achieve these goals.

Among the radicals were Patrice Lumumba, Antoine Gizenga and Pierre Mulele (2002:96).[107] The moderates were generally 'conservative nationalists' in their political outlook generally. They were 'unitarists' or 'federalists' in their vision. The 'prominent moderates' were Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Moïse Tshombe and Joseph Ileo (Nzongola 2002:97).[108] By August 1960, the political divergence, caused through the country's internal conflicts, and orchestrated and intensified by the two super-powers became clear. As Kalb argues:

> While American policy makers were agonising about the likelihood of a Soviet takeover in the Congo, Premier Khrushchev was faced with a major decision about whether he should supply military aid to Lumumba, and if so, how much. Khrushchev had committed his prestige to a UN approach; for the past month his delegates had voted with the United States for compromise resolutions sponsored by the Afro-Asian group, hoping that the United Nations would respond to Lumumba's needs and make direct Soviet military aid unnecessary. Now, after the blow up in Leopoldville [now Kinshasa], it was clear that this approach had failed (1982:56).

Through developing divisions in the country's leadership, Western powers were seeking to get primary control over the DR Congo. This continues to the present day,

[107] The Katanga cartel of unitarist parties led by Baluba-kati was a member of the radical coalition. Although it was an ethnically-based political organisation, the Baluba-kati party earned its radical nationalist credentials from its fight against separatism and the secessionist movement in Katanga province. The most prominent Baluba-kati leaders were Jason Sendwe, Prosper Mwamba Ilunga, Alphonse Masengwo and Laurent Kabila (Nzongola 2002:96-7).

[108] The principal moderate leaders included Cléophas Kamitatu, Victor Lundaka, Justin Bomboko, Albert Kalonji and Joseph Mobutu (Nzongola 2002:97).

whereby external interferences sustained by internal conflicts are responsible for the current weakness in the Congolese leadership. As a result, Congolese policies focus on the personal interests of Western powers and that of the local ruling classes (Nzongola 2002:258; Kalb 1982:xxiv).

Why did these new leaders, coming from the same colonial system, become so quickly espoused to such a policy? In order to answer this question, in the subsection which follows, I will discuss the way this leadership was raised up and constituted the ruling class of the new State. I will further indicate three groups that are mainly the ethnic associations, the alumni associations, and the urban circles associations (Kalb 1982:xxii-iv).

2.5. The Ethnic Associations

Since its creation in 1950, the Bakongo Association, (ABAKO) is mostly composed of the Bakongo people. While originally setup to promote Bakongo culture, in 1956 it became a political party directed by Joseph Kasa-Vubu (Kalb 1982:xxii; Burke 2001:52). Kasa-Vubu was a key role player in seeking the Independence of the DR Congo. The '*Liboke lua Bangala'* initiated by Belgian ethnographers,[109] was another ethnic organisation which brought together the Bangala people. Solidarity within each of these ethnic organisations played an important role in appointing leaders in most sectors of the State (Kalb 1982:46).

2.5.1. The Alumni Associations

Other political leaders came from several Alumni organisations, comprising of former pupils from missionary schools during colonial rule. They supported each another to form the first ruling class of the new State (Burke 2001:52). In most cases, alumni associations had been part of ethnic organisations because of the specific location of schools in each State province.[110] Apart from these associations, other urban circles

[109] Congo-Crisis Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Crisis/> [Accessed June 22, 2009].
[110] Congo-Crisis, Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Crisis/> [Accessed June 22, 2009].

were founded, comprising of those who were born and had grown up and studied in the same town (Kalb 1982:xxiii).

2.5.2. The Associations of Urban Circles

Some Congolese politicians belonged to organisations of people who grew up in different towns of the country. They showed solidarity with each another to share the new State's leadership positions. Lumumba, the initiator of the organisation of Kisangani (former Stanleyville in the Oriental Province), created a circle to develop some personal skills among alumni (1982:xxiii).[111] Politicians who belonged to the same association were reluctant to accept others. They could not improve friendship or forge a sincere collaboration within their leadership. Each of these different groups focused on their own interests to the detriment of the rights of the general population (Kelly 1993:247). What then were the consequences of such circles of influence within the Congolese leadership of the day?

2.5.3. The Consequences of Associations within the Leadership

The association members had difficulties in cooperating with one another. No group member could share any inner project with another from the outside. This attitude among the leadership refers to the Congolese life which belongs to the root paradigm of Congolese culture. According to this root paradigm, members within a group maintain one another (Mbiti 1969:108; Ukpong 1995:8). The head of each association should be understood and obeyed because he is supposed to be more inspired than any one else in the group. Therefore, he is the wisest of the team. This often prevents members of the group from correcting or criticising the view point of the chief. As a result, coming from such associations, Congolese politicians found it difficult to collaborate with their colleagues from other political trends. They failed to practice democracy because of their lack of tolerance to consider and learn from other leaders.

In my view, such an attitude witnesses a wrong way to understand leadership collaboration principles. Considering the history of the Congolese people together

[111] Congo-Crisis, Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Crisis/> [Accessed June 22, 2009].

with their cultural background, something must have happened in their past (van Rensburg 1975:484). Should I recognise that Congolese leadership identity had been distorted over time? Or could I say that Congolese leaders do not know how to manage a State like the DR Congo? In this respect, I refer to the leadership in the African (Congolese) tradition. Adeyemo (2006:546) says that an African (Congolese) leader belongs to a community. He was a representative of the wealth of the whole family. He had to possess sufficient economic wealth in order to share with other members of the community. This meant that the Head of State in the DR Congo would have to learn to avoid having a particular group because his family would now be the entire Congo.

Congolese leadership seemed to be convinced that religion and politics are 'two sides of the same coin.' This connection is understood in such a way that 'spirits' bring power to those who are in leadership positions. The spirit world is perceived by some Congolese leaders as a source of power (Shutte 2001:21-3; Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3). President Mobutu Sésé Seko relied upon the 'evil spirit world' as a source of power, and through this imposed a self-centred and evil pattern of leadership upon the country (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4). The exercise of power requires leadership ability to achieve the purpose. Ability or skill could be developed from an inborn talent and be improved through training. Therefore, leadership has to develop its ability through training instead of relying on the 'evil spirit world.'[112] Current leadership that continues to rely on the spirit world deludes itself about its expectations for the country. Such a way of ruling a State cannot consolidate the leadership's authority. It means that the leadership will not lead in a way that ordinary people will benefit socially and economically. In my view, this twisted vision of the Congolese leadership is more from its distorted identity through the past oppression of the colonial system. Genuine leadership values (as they were previously found in the Congolese tradition) were affected over time (Adeyemo 2006:546).

The Congolese leadership's lack of technical training brought about its reliance on the Western powers and the 'spirit world.' It is especially due to the lack of an adequate

[112] The 'spirit world' comprises of a 'negative' and 'positive' level. I am here referring to the 'evil' use of the spirit world which develops self-centred a leadership and a commensurate misuse of power. Leaders usually use their power to manipulate people for their own interest. This has become common in politics, church, music and so forth in the DR Congo (Pype 2006:311-13).

education of most of the politicians following Independence. An educated leadership would have been capable of handling the socio-political situation in the DR Congo. In this regard, Lumumba and Mobutu received only a primary education which was insufficient to make them effective in their posts of Prime Minister and Head of State respectively (van Rensburg 1975:485; Kalb1982:xxiii). When Mobutu wanted to further his studies at secondary school (as he would have been clever enough to succeed) he was not a disciplined pupil, then expelled while in his second year (van Rensburg 1975:486). It is thus not surprising that the Congolese leadership was unable to manage the country. Such a puppet leadership in the DR Congo has to effectively manage both the internal conflicts and external interferences of Western powers (Skinner 2000:2133).

To underline the internal conflicts among leaders at the high level of State, van Rensburg (1975:489) reports that:

> In September 1960, Kasa-Vubu dismissed Lundala and appointed Mobutu Commander-in-chief of the Congolese Army. This appointment proved decisive for the Congo's future because the country gradually disintegrated. Katanga declared secession under Tshombe and South Kasai under Albert Kalonji, whilst the old personal and political antipathies between Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu exploded on September 5, 1960. Kasa-Vubu announced in a radio broadcast that he had dismissed Lumumba as Prime Minister and replaced him by Joseph Ileo, journalist and president of the Senate. Lumumba immediately drove to Leopoldville's radio station, brushed aside UN guards, took over the microphone, announced that he remained Premier and that he had dismissed Kasa-Vubu. Mobutu weighed his personal loyalty to Lumumba against doubts about his growing instability and decided to intervene to save the Congo from civil war. He shouldered both men aside and on September 13, 1960 in a military coup took over the government. With the support of other officers he radioed a message to the nation on September 14, that the army had neutralised the Head of State, the two rival governments and Parliament until the end of the year in order to 'cool' off the politicians, giving them time to consider the situation calmly.

I indicate that Moïse Tshombe, Albert Kalonji and President Kasa-Vubu were from the same political wing, the 'conservative nationalists.' The former colonisers manipulated Tshombe and Kalonji as they belonged to the Provinces where mineral resources were extracted. They were used against their friendship, President Kasa-

Vubu, in order to control the mining in Katanga and Kasai (van Rensburg 1975:488).[113] As a result, they declared the secession respectively of Katanga and the South of Kasai where the most important mines of the State were situated (1975:489). In my view, by September 1960, the dissension within the Congolese leadership was intensified both by its selfish interests and with the connivance of the former colonisers (Skinner 2000:2133).

The plot that brought about the assassination of Lumumba underlines the corrupt leadership of the Congo. The conflict resulted in a crisis at the highest level of State leadership. To sort the situation out, there were only two ways: either by reconciling Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu or removing one of them from the political scene (Nzongola 2002:108). This conflict between the opposing sides of supporters of Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba met Western expectations to eliminate the latter. In December 1960, while the office had already been held by Mobutu since September 13, 1960, the United States of America (USA) with the support of its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Joseph Kasa-Vubu and Mobutu assassinated Lumumba. This took place on January 16, 1961.[114] Lumumba was eliminated instead of Kasa-Vubu because of his belonging to the 'Eastern political wing' of the day.

A second conflict arose between the Prime Minister Moise Tshombe and President Kasa-Vubu. This conflict paralysed the political institutions and gave Mobutu the opportunity for his second *coup d'état* on November 24, 1965. As van Rensburg has pointed out:

> In an attempt to bring unity to the country, Tshombe was installed as Premier in July 1964. But almost immediately the controversial Tshombe started to fight for power with Kasa-Vubu, while Mobutu, assisted by the mercenaries brought in by Tshombe, had to fight the real battle against the rebels in Kwilu, Kivu and Stanleyville [now Kisangani]. After months of indecisive government, Kasa-Vubu dismissed Tshombe on October 12, 1964, and set up a minority government under Evariste Kimba. The

[113]Many such situations which individual Belgians were behind frustrated those who were nominally in charge of the country. These former colonisers continued acting with impunity above the law. For example, the plane carrying both, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, and President Joseph Kasa-Vubu, was forbidden to land at Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) on the instructions of the Belgian in charge of the airport (van Rensburg 1981:421).

[114]Congo-Crisis, Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Crisis/> [Accessed June 22, 2009].

> latter lost his first confidence motion, a defeat interpreted as a victory for Tshombe. Nevertheless, Kasa-Vubu persevered with Kimba and invited him to form another government. Once again there was a political breakdown which took the Congo to the verge of chaos. This was the atmosphere in which Mobutu, recently promoted to Lieutenant-General, decided to seize power once again. He acted peremptorily, dismissed Kasa-Vubu and proclaimed himself President, saying he would rule the country for five years (1975:491-2).

Kalb (1982:379) further notes that in October 1965, after a conflicting period in office, Kasa-Vubu dismissed Tshombe. A few weeks later, Mobutu deposed Kasa-Vubu in a bloodless *coup d'état*. Mobutu, weary of these conflicts, was helped by the US to name himself President for a term of five years he never re-considered again.

This is the way Mobutu reached the office of President in the DR Congo. It is my opinion that such a race for power and personal interests should have destabilised the social life of the DR Congo. In what follows, I will discuss the presidency of President Mobutu. I will particularly focus on his last period of office from 1975 to 1997. This period was the most difficult. It was during this time that the social life of the Congo was to all intents and purposes totally destroyed (Skinner 2000:2133). The leadership and people's corrupt behaviour (as adopted during the Mobutu regime) had intensified the struggle for power in the DR Congo.

To underscore this behaviour, I will first discuss, the way Mobutu ruled over the State from 1965 to 1974. Second, I will show how the socio-political situation worsened from 1975 to his dismissal in 1997 and up to the present day. This will provide us with an appropriate reader's context which will later be placed into dialogue Jeremiah's oracle on *semah*.

2.6. Mobutu's Governance during the Period 1965-1974

Western influences had helped Mobutu to accede to the office of President. He was encouraged to favour the USA by maintaining access to the Congo's massive copper, cobalt and other mineral reserves (van Rensburg 1981:427, 432). The choice of confirming Mobutu in office was strengthened (according to the CIA) when he expelled the Russian Embassy from the DR Congo (van Rensburg 1981:432).

Among the political leaders of the day, Mobutu seemed to be the most competent person to rule over the DR Congo as Head of State. He showed his abilities during the time of conflict following Independence and up to 1974. Nevertheless, while the country fell gradually, the Congolese people were ignorant of the existing conflicts within the State leadership which were intensified by both the Western and Eastern superpowers in 1960 (Nzongola 2002:165).[115]

The high economic level of the Congolese economy in 1974 had been a reality. Hence, the Congolese economy could afford to host the heavyweight boxing match, between George Foreman and Muhammed Ali. This was organised in Kinshasa on September 24, 1974 (van Rensburg 1975:507). In this regard, van Rensburg (1975:484) could remark:

> Today, the Republic of Zaire is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable African success stories of the past five years. The image of the former Belgian Congo in the world of 1974 is that of an increasingly stable country, destined by its vast mineral resources to play a key role in African politics. Zaire has overtaken Kenya as the Black African country with the greatest economic growth potential after Nigeria, and it is attracting foreign investment faster than any other developing country.

This proves that President Mobutu really did well from the beginning of his presidency until 1974. How then did the social, political and economic situation of the State slip into a state of despair and devastation? The Congolese prosperity of the time distracted Mobutu from being the good leader he had been. His head and heart became so full, he began to consider himself a 'god.' Further, he wanted the people to worship him as a 'god' or 'light' that would guide the nation (Kelly 1993:2).

In October 1971, Mobutu changed his name from Joseph-Désiré to Sésé Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Zabanga.[116] The name change showed how he considered himself as "a

[115] The Mobutu regime presented three distinct periods during which people were discovering the extent of Mobutu's political manoeuvring. In the period 1965 to 1975: people were highly confident of Mobutu. From 1975-1990, the people had already become weary of Mobutu's politics. Finally, in the period 1990 to 1997, the people's expectations and loyalties had deserted him in favour of the democracy movement (Nzongola 2002:165).

[116] Ubong E. Effeh, 2005. Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Study on How not to realise Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and A Proposal for Change, <http://www.law.northwestern.edu/journals/jihr/v3/2/Effeh.pdf/> [Accessed June 15, 2009].

mighty warrior who can never be defeated" (van Rensburg 1975:494; Young and Turner 1985:153; Kelly 1993:1).

Mobutu's new name brought him into conflict with Roman Catholic Christians because of the arrogance this name displayed. Cardinal Malula tried in vain to advise the President (van Rensburg 1975:494). The latter played a prophetic role in reminding Mobutu to reflect on his political ideology. Finally, on March 6, 1972, Malula was exiled to Rome in order to save him from any attempt on his life (Ngindu 1978:234; Biaya 1999:155).[117] Thus, Mobutu did not pay attention to the advice from the Archbishop of Kinshasa. His inflexibility disorientated his politics and consequently, the country continued fall into decline from that time to the present day (Nzongola 2002:165).

President Mobutu had become proud when things went well in some aspects of public life in the DR Congo. No one could advise him anymore (*cf.* Prov. 16:18). He became conceited (Biaya 1999:155). In May 1974, Mobutu broke down Congo's 'special relationship' with Belgium which had existed since the days of colonial rule (van Rensburg 1975:505). He began reducing the European economic and cultural influence over the Congo (van Rensburg 1975:505). In this way, Mobutu substituted himself for the coloniser of the Congolese people. By 1973, Mobutu confiscated foreign enterprises and farms and gave them to his loyal citizens. Foreign investors, who had been keeping the rural economy going, were supplanted by inexperienced local supporters of his regime (Nzongola 2002:148). This is the way Mobutu broke down the State. Indeed, as Kalb later confirms:

> Mobutu, alarmed by the collapse of both the production and the distribution systems, eventually asked the foreign businessmen to return; but most of them were unwilling to run the risk of losing their businesses a second time (1982:380).

Consequently, the programme of *zairianisation*[118] became the cause of the fall in price[119] of several minerals in the DR Congo. Both the sale rate and mining

[117] In the same way, Jeremiah was put into prison by Jehoiakim for having prophesied the truth (Jer. 26:8).
[118] *Zairianisation* means the 'nationalisation' by President Mobutu of foreign enterprises in unfair way by confiscating them for his short-sighted vision in 1973.

production dropped by about half in the first few months of 1974. This had been the direct consequence of Mobutu's programme of *zairianisation*. As a result, the country faced uncontrolled inflation and debt levels (Kalb 1982:380). Westerners tried to recuperate what they had lost during the *zairianisation* programme. As Borel claims:

> Private investment plummeted as Zaire started the *zairianisation* policies of the 1973/74 period and began to run into payment and foreign exchange problems in the late 1970s. This situation was aggravated by the two Shaba invasions of 1977 and 1978 (1992:372).

Gradually, industry began to run at a third of its capacity, while agriculture had been in steady decline since Independence. Apart from this situation, the organisational policy had become already rife with bribery and corruption. This particular reality had become generalised in most of the State's sectors. In fact, as van Rensburg notes:

> In 1974, internal political and economic stability and overseas interests and investment have wrought wonders to the economy of Zaire. Although bribery and corruption are still rampant, unemployment remains high and many similar socio-economic problems confront the rank and file of the population, progress has been made (1975:496).

This means that if in 1974, Mobutu had been viewed as the 'strong leader' to the Congolese people, it was because they did not realise what was really taking place. The general population really did not know the political issues present in the Mobutu regime. They only began reflecting on these matters when things in the State began to worsen and the future was becoming dark (Nzongola 2002:165). To survive, many people also became involved in corruption and social injustice. This means that the current social devastation in the DR Congo was occasioned by both the Congolese leadership and the people. As a conceited man, Mobutu was unable to humble himself and take the blame for his measures of *zairianisation.* The situation gradually deteriorated from 1975 to 1997. The people progressively lost confidence in Mobutu.

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[119] The price of minerals exploited in the DR Congo was fixed by western powers themselves who were buyers. When Mobutu nationalised Belgian, Greek, Portuguese, Italian, Pakistani and West African enterprises, Westerners could manage a way to get back what they had lost (Nzongola 2002:149).

2.7. Mobutu's Governance during the Period 1975 -1997

This period is special because it determines virtually the time during which the social situation worsened in the Congo (Biaya 1999:156; Nzongola 2002:153). In this section, I will first provide a brief socio-historical survey of the Mobutu regime. Second, I will discuss the Congolese leadership during Mobutu's presidency. Third, I will analyse the external sources of support to Mobutu's governance.

3. A Survey of the Mobutu Regime

Before discussing the current crisis in the DR Congo that resulted from the way the State had been run, I will briefly survey Mobutu's presidency. The rule of Mobutu is confined to the period November 24, 1965 up to May 17, 1997. During this time, Mobutu showed himself as the strongman, similar to King Leopold II of Belgium who owned the country from 1885 to 1908. As Leopold II, Mobutu owned the country and its wealth (Nzongola 2002:141). While Leopold II's regime was different to that of Mobutu, both leaders shared many similarities. They subdued the people by taking as their own the wealth of the country. To control his enormous property, Leopold II extended across it a military organisation (Katongole 2005:147-8). He used Congolese mercenaries who were trained by Belgian officers. In 1888, he incorporated them into a so-called 'public force,' an army for the Congo Free State. During the years that followed, this army developed and became the most important in central Africa. After 1890, the army required a large amount of the State's budget (Hochschild 1999:123). The military organisation ensured the security of the king's administration while exploiting the wealth of the DR Congo.

At Independence, the first rulers adopted a parliamentary regime from 1960 to 1965. Mobutu, during his term of office, adopted a presidential regime. The Kananga constitution gave the Head of State considerable more powers (Biaya 1999:146). In June 1967, the revised constitution reinforced this advantage. From that time onwards, the power to appoint and change ministerial teams rested solely with the Head of State as its chief executive (Mvuluya 2000:79). Later in 1974, a revised

constitution confirmed a new option with regard the Congolese nation. The *MPR*[120] was declared the "organised Congolese (Zairean) nation" (Nzongola 2002:141-2). This was an erroneous definition of a nation. A nation is a 'unified people' belonging to a country instead of a political party. A nationalist's consciousness arouses commitment to social development in the community (Nagi 2000:1939-40). In addition, a nationalist engages one's action to promote "political independence for the country" (Procter 2002:939). A true and genuine patriotism is the basis upon which a nation is consolidated.

The Mobutu regime was characterised by its ideology, 'Mobutism,' a 'doctrine' defining Mobutu's political line. The 'recourse to authenticity' (which consisted of a return to Congolese cultural values) became the central ideology of the Constitution from 1974 onward (van Rensburg 1981:435-8; Biaya 1999:146-7). This was the way in which Mobutu was able to subdue the people in order to control the wealth of the State. During the second period of his presidency from 1975 to 1997, apart from corruption, he resorted to force in order to have his way among the people, resulting in extrajudicial executions and violations of human rights (Nzongola 2002:141; 2006:225).[121] Under these conditions, it was difficult to promote the interests of the nation and develop the State. The international community never reacted to such dictatorship in the DR Congo. The diplomats argued that, in these circumstances, there was no alternative for Western powers because they needed to maintain their access to the mineral resources (van Rensburg 1981:427).

In spite of the way Mobutu ruled over the State, the international community was not concerned about the wrongs of his regime. The US White House and its Western allies obviously wanted him to remain the Head of State in the DR Congo. Indeed, he owed his rise to power and the longevity of his regime to their external sponsorship and backing (Nzongola 2002:141-2). Often, the international community cries out against an African regime that does not satisfy its interests. One can thus understand

[120] "*Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (*MPR*) a political party that President Mobutu founded in 1967 which became the only legal party from May 1970 up to 1990 when the Mobutu regime and its one-party ended to start a long transition of multiparty democracy" (van Baren 1991-92:370; Biaya 1999:146-7; Nzongola 2002:142).

[121] Etienne Tshisekedi, a leader of the opposition, said that "Mobutu's exercise of power lies on the fear that the Head of State is able to execute people" (Nzongola 2006:225).

the silence kept since the Independence of the DR Congo up to the present day (Nzongola 2002:142).[122]

The one-party system and its absolute power came to an end with Mobutu's speech on April 24, 1990 (Nzongola 2002:155; Gourou 2006:291). However, the country and its people were now facing the consequences of the long regime of Mobutu's presidency. Mobutu's presidency finally ended when he fled into exile on May 17, 1997, overthrown by Laurent-Désiré Kabila through the *AFDL*[123] movement (Gourou 2006:294). This is the way Mobutu's presidency ended after thirty-two years in office. In the next subsection, I will discuss the leadership in the Congolese context during that time.

3.1. The Congolese Leadership during the Mobutu Regime

After the background and survey of Mobutu's governance, several observations can be made. Mobutu's access to office was surrounded by several socio-political conflicts within the leadership. This was so from the Independence of the country to November 24, 1965. In this connection, Mobutu's *coup d'état* won the approval of nearly all sections of the population. Apparently the new Head of State and his associates seemed to stabilise public life in the DR Congo (Nzongola 2002:145). This suggests that President Mobutu was welcomed by the people of the time. Because of this, and in regard to what had been planned by Western powers in the DR Congo, Mobutu was seen as the best person to assume rule (Kelly 1993:248; Nzongola 2002:145). In spite of his violent attitude at the beginning of his presidency, people were convinced that it was a strategic way to bring about unity in the community

[122] "As long as the United States continued to protect Mobutu from his political enemies, he was very likely, as a result of that protection, to lack any credible opposition. Because of that, President Mobutu became one of Africa's longest surviving heads of State. He shifted his loyalties whenever he felt he could gain politically' (Kelly 1993:248); as a patrimonial ruler for whom the State and its resources were indistinguishable from his personal possessions, Mobutu rewarded and punished individual members of the ruling class at his own pleasure. New and younger members were recruited to high party and government jobs. But once appointed to any such post, they gradually rose up to become members of the 'kleptocracy.' In fact, the politics of authenticity, as political ideology and philosophy, legitimised a new interpretation of State power and built up a new hierarchy of national institutions leading to dictatorship and 'kleptocracy.' Such a comprehension of leadership did not promote social justice and human rights in the DR Congo" (Biaya 1999:151; Nzongola 2002:150).

[123] *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL)* which means 'Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo,' a rebellious movement led by Laurent Désiré Kabila to overthrow the Mobutu regime (Nzongola 2002:xii).

(Nzongola 2002:146). The military force which Mobutu used to bring the Congolese people together did not allow them to realise that a dictatorship had actually begun. Indeed, as Kelly points out:

> Mobutu was different from other tyrants embraced by the United States during the Cold War years. He was not a dictator when we found him. We helped him to become one. Perhaps that was why we had such difficulty parting with him. Over the years, he had turned himself into America's tyrant and we hated to let him go (1993:xi).

This implies that President Mobutu kept a close relationship with the US White House. It assured his security and helped him remain in power. Because of this, Mobutu felt free in his nationalisation programme, the so-called *zairianisation.* This consisted of supplanting foreign enterprises and businesses which previously had ensured the socio-economic life in the DR Congo (Nzongola 2002:149). No one could react against what Mobutu was doing for his own personal interest (Kalb 1982:384).[124] Furthermore, Mobutu could not have amassed such personal wealth during his term of office without the support of the US. As a result, he became one of the richest men in the world. Sadly, the DR Congo and its people had never drawn benefit from the country's wealth. Its economic decline took place at the same time as Mobutu swelled his overseas bank accounts (Kelly 1993:x; Nzongola 2002:158).[125]

In August 1980, a Central Committee was reorganised within the *MPR*[126] party. In that new party, the presidency was confirmed as the central organ of decision and control of all party activities. Being the Head of State and President of the party,

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[124] "America played a role of keeping" the DR "Congo under its influence" to draw interests from it. President Mobutu, as a Congolese leader was not prepared to promote social justice and development. Indeed, "one official explained in 1979, if we work with Mobutu and use our influence to change the system, well, you get your hands dirty in the process." In vain, "we tried to press for reforms, particularly, in the area of human rights" (Kalb 1982:384).

[125] "The neo-colonial situation in the Congo involved the uninterrupted exploitation of the country's resources by the metropolitan bourgeoisie in collaboration with the national ruling class. The essential reality of such a system resides in 'tension between dissatisfied people and the ruling class essentially conservative and concerned above all with the preservation of its acquired privileges.' The frequent use of the central bank as a *planche à billets* (banknote plate) to make up for budget deficits, or simply to provide Mobutu and his entourage with the cash they needed for various purposes, was a major cause of inflation and the constant fall in value of the national currency" (Nzongola 2002:126-7, 158).

[126] "*MPR* is an acronym for le *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* meaning 'the Revolutionary Movement of the People' the only party of the Mobutu regime founded in 1967, which became the only legal party on the 20 May 1970 up to 24 April 1990 when, bowing to internal and external pressure, Mobutu announced the end of the one-party regime" (van Baren 1991-92:370; Nzongola 2002:274).

Mobutu gained all the power he needed in order to become the owner of the country (Nzongola 2002:151). Mobutu and his closest associates were then strengthened in their position. Among their closest associates was Nguz Karl-i-Bond who played a significant role in that Central Committee as Prime Minister of the time (Kelly 1993:248).

In April 1981, while in Belgium, Nguz sent back to Mobutu a letter of resignation. He made several public statements there, condemning corruption in the DR Congo (Kelly 1993:6; Biaya 1999:161). He testified before the US Congress that he had been severely tortured during his imprisonment in 1977 in Kinshasa. He denounced Mobutu's regime of high level of corruption, declaring that the Head of State diverted funds from the Congolese treasury for his own personal use (Borel 1992:376; Kelly 1993:7). In spite of Nguz's behaviour against the regime, Mobutu forgave him and sent him as ambassador to Washington in September 1986. Afterwards, Mobutu named him successively foreign minister for the third time and Prime Minister for the second time (Kelly 1993:8).[127] In my view, Mobutu re-instated Nguz to prove that his accusations against his presidency were without substance. Through this means, President Mobutu wanted to be cleansed from Nguz's declarations against his regime. Otherwise, the return of Nguz to serve within the criticised regime would also mean that he had been part of the corrupt regime.

President Mobutu did not use his associates' abilities. He simply appointed them for his own benefit. As Nzongola has shown:

> Mindful of the attention he received from the West, Mobutu took care to be accompanied on his trips abroad by one of the managing directors of the State mining companies and/or the government of the central bank. These officials were expected to draw on numerous accounts their organisations maintained in foreign banks for any cash that the Congolese director might need for lavish entertainment, expensive gifts for influential friends and other forms of political corruption (2002:150).

[127] Biodata LDA M 86-13160 issued by the White House Press Office during Mobutu's December 1986 visit to Washington, D.C. In November 1991, Mobutu called upon Nguz to form a new government, thus making him Primer Minister for the second time.

Mobutu thus used his associates to withdraw the country's money so that he would not be seen as doing so. It had become difficult to account for the money he withdrew from the State treasury.[128] The way the Head of State was behaving, replicated at each and every level of the system where officials had access to public revenue (Kelly 1993:200). Consequently, several aspects of the State administration, which normally would have ensured security and promoted public life, collapsed. Indeed, the State had become unable to care for its civil servants who had long been struggling for survival (Nzongola 2002:158). Such corruption at the highest level of the State leadership thereby severely hindered the social development of the DR Congo.

Following Independence, the process of decolonisation had not taken place. The country had passed from Belgian colonisation to Western neo-colonisation represented by the local leadership (Nzongola 2002:127). Neo-colonisation become more costly to the Congolese people than it was previously under colonial rule (2002:126). The dependence of the Congolese leadership on Western powers prevented them from being efficient. They were unable to manage the State sectors and care for the people.

3.2. External Sources of Support for the Mobutu Regime

For much of its existence, Mobutu's regime was sponsored more from external sources than that produced from within the country itself (Nzongola 2002:160).[129] This sponsorship was not for the common good of the Congolese people. Nzongola (2002:160-2)[130] argues that the support to Mobutu's regime was "predicated on three

[128] "On September 15, 1981, Nguz told the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa that during 1977-79 alone Mobutu had withdrawn $150 million in foreign exchange from the Bank of Zaire and deposited it in his private accounts. In 1981, according to Nguz, *le Guide* had ordered the bank of Zaire to deposit an additional $30 million in Belgian francs to his private account. Nguz testified that Mobutu was also personally exporting substantial amounts of copper, cobalt, and diamonds from Zaire with the proceeds going into his foreign bank accounts" (Kelly 1993:199 citing Nguz 1982:144).

[129] Mobutu received support primarily from the United States, France, Belgium and some of their regional allies and clients such as Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and apartheid South Africa (Nzongola 2002:161).

[130] "Support that the Mobutu regime was always receiving was conceived in a larger strategic Western calculation favourable to its interests in central Africa in particular. In the article published in 1979, Jean-Pierre Alaux argued persuasively that, according to this great strategy, 'the ruin of Zaire, as that of other blacks elsewhere, is better for western interests than a strong and indispensable State likely to support the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. At the same time, a weak and disorganised State in Congo-Kinshasa would be unable to pose a threat to the French hegemony in Central Africa in particular and Africa in general" (Nzongola 2002:162).

major premises." The first premise concerned both Cold War politics and institutional racism in the US. This needed a strong man in the DR Congo to keep together what was a vast and multi-ethnic country and thus prevent the communist system from taking control (Nzongola 2002:160). The second premise was the moral commitment towards the US allies, in the context of the Cold War, in order to maintain a close relationship between the French ruling class and heads of State in francophone Africa. This disposal favoured their own "collaborating friendship," regardless of the way they neglected their own people (2002:161). The third and the most important premise was the need to use the Congo to "promote Western interests" in Central and Southern Africa. All of these premises were interdependent and played a key role in US and Western policy towards the Congo (Nzongola 2002:161).[131]

3.3. An Analysis of Congolese Leadership in its Context

In this subsection, I will discuss the way Congolese leadership behaved in exercising the high functions of State. Why did the State leadership abandon the people to extreme poverty? In other words, how can people become aware of their responsibility and be prepared to get good leadership in the DR Congo? To point out this situation, I will discuss the Congolese leadership in its context; its world-view; its understanding of the role of chiefs, and the way it assumes its responsibilities in the community at large (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3-4).[132]

While one can understand a Head of State of such a rich country relying again on Western powers to swell his personal bank account (Kalb 1982:389), something deeper should be considered here. This behaviour can be explained by Mobutu's personal interests and those of his close circle who needed to be protected in office

[131] "France was the regional power in Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and Chad). By supporting a trusted ally such as president Mobutu, whom France had used to further its strategic and economic interests in the region, French authorities were also sending a clear message to their other African allies that they would not be forgotten when the need arose. Towards the end of the Mobutu regime, France also provided the strongest external support to the Kengo government. This was due to the logic of personal ties the Congolese head of government kept with French officials, such as Mobutu's Prime Minister who lasted six years from 1980" (Nzongola 2002:162).

[132] "It is when religious belief motivates people to action that its relation to politics becomes most evident. Mobutu from the Congo, as other African politicians, paid great regard to spirit world as source of power. In fact, he cultivated spiritual sources of power throughout his career, yet no one suspected him of having been naïve" (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3-4).

(Kanza 1978:122-3; Kalb 1982:389).[133] To answer this, I will first discuss the profile of Congolese leadership. Second, I will spell out the current expression of Congolese leadership.

4. A Profile of Congolese Leadership

In the Congolese worldview of life, we conceive life in two dimensions, visible and invisible. The human being is perceived as a visible body and an invisible vital force. These two components unite a person (van Rinsum 2003:45). It is also believed that at death, the spirit of a person remains among the living and continues to influence life in the community (Triebel 2002:188). This means that people who have died do not cease to be with those who are still alive. Even though the dead are living beyond our existence, nevertheless, they continue to influence the visible reality. In this respect, as Ntedika-Khonde can state:

> The Bakongo people in Lower Congo Province believed in spirits so-called *bakisi.* The most venerated were the spirits (*nkisi*) *Khonde* and *Mbumba*. Bakongo people believed that men or women were able to avoid misfortune by obeying these spirits. And what men or women suffer comes from their own behaviour against ancestors or natural forces (2000:50).

The current Congolese leadership rely on such a 'super-natural presence' to support and protect their hold on power. These 'super-natural forces' not only ensure their hold on power and authority, but also, inspire, strengthen and protect them in their task of leading the community (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4, 8). It is admitted and well known that leaders are supposed to be wiser than anyone else in the group. In reference to Mobutu's rule, Katho can assert:

[133] "One of the conflicting points during the First Republic after the Independence of the Congo was the attitude of leaders at the Head of the State. Lumumba's ambition to become Prime Minister was not first of all to serve the new nation, but to get power to act, even over the Head of State. In fact, the provisional constitution voted by the Belgian parliament was based on the resolutions of the Belgian-Congolese Round Table Conference. According to this *Loi Fondamentale* (used as a provisional constitution for the Congo), Lumumba understood that the function of the Head of State was a nominal one, like that of a constitutional monarch. What he wanted as chief, was the power to act. He did not know that his associates were his enemies he never realised. Some of his chief associates were jealous, ambitious like himself, and vengeful as was discovered at the end of his life" (Kanza 1978:122-3).

> It was believed in the DR Congo that Mobutu's spirit world had been the *Prima Curia* which became a reference for the selection of his associates to power (2003:271-2).

It does not surprise anyone as far as Africa or the DR Congo is concerned. Very few political leaders in Africa or the DR Congo rely on moral values in their leadership (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3).[134] Such a leadership could only with difficulty be corrected in the way it behaved. Indeed, in this context, leaders thought that they were more inspired to guide, and conduct the people (Biaya 1999:156). Because of this, customary chiefs were more susceptible to dictatorship than to democracy.

In African culture, the chief is the first representative of the wealth that belongs to the community. He is the guarantor of the land and stands surety for the community. His role is to supervise or oversee the entire tribe or grouping without necessarily caring directly for the individuals. Everyone cares for her or his own family in following group instructions (Adeyemo 2006:546). Each of the group members has to act within the community. They not only affect one another, but the invisible also impacts on the visible dimension of reality. The concept of spirits as 'invisible realities' have negative consequences upon the Congolese leadership. Indeed, a leader thinks that his authority or power derives from the invisible world he represents in the visible reality (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:60).

Although this understanding helps the people to get confidence in their leader, it does not automatically make leaders part of the people in the community. A genuine leader cares for the people in referring to them first (Adeyemo 2006:546). The chief in this case feels part of the people from whom he receives power or authority. Power refers to the leader's ability to bring change to society (Wrong 2005:592). A power deriving from the 'evil spirit world' can make leaders self-centred and think only of maintaining their position of authority and power. As a result, they often do not care for the people and develop the community. 'Politics' is an 'art' that a leader should develop in order to help him or her sort out problems in the community. It implies that

[134] "The late President Joseph Mobutu cultivated spiritual sources of power throughout his career. He lavished attention on the spirit world and consequently, he showed a Machiavellian talent for his political manoeuvres. Indeed, his political action focuses on his own success, security and wealth rather than serving the State and nation" (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3).

there is no need to rely on the 'evil spirit world' to consolidate one's authority in the community. The reliance on the 'spirit world' causes leaders to manipulate people instead of caring for them (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4). Good governance requires a moral education in the sense of the true qualities of the leadership. Competent leadership is required in order to lead the people justly and develop society.

The thought system in Congolese culture is understood as *cognatus ergo sum*, which has something to say in Congolese (African) cultures. The phrase in the Bakongo culture, *mutu yi mutu mubatu* means 'a man or woman exists because of others in the community' (Draper 2002:15). In the Congolese community, people are related to one another in sharing values in an equal manner (Boon 1996:31). This philosophy consolidates power, peace, respect and unity within a community. As Mbiti (1969:108) can state: "I am because we are." This 'corporate personality' of Congolese leadership and people is close to that of the people in the OT.[135] However, the oppressive events which the Congolese people have experienced over time has affected up to now the leadership in the DR Congo (Hastings 1996:102). It implies that the improvement of the Congolese leadership has to deal with the factors that have alienated it (Lamont 2006:171). To shed light on this, I will single out the disastrous situation which depersonalised the Congolese leadership. The next subsection discusses the context of leadership in the DR Congo and the way Western culture interfered with it during colonial rule.

4.1. The Current Expression of Congolese Leadership

In this subsection, I will consider the 'spirit reliance' of most Congolese leaders. By so doing, I will point to some main tendencies that determine the way it behaves (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:60). Furthermore, I will underscore some aspects that go back to the past history of the Congolese people. In particular, I will look back to the slave

[135] "As described in the Hebrew Bible, the 'corporate personality' of the people in the Old Testament is close to that of the African (Congolese) people. Employing comparative material from the ethnography of African (Congolese) societies, I can argue that early Israel could be understood as a segmentary society (divided into tribes). Her political organisation was established by multi-graded groups which were supposed to be politically and religiously of equal rank and similarly classified. Even though, the people seemed to be unified because of their reliance on Yahweh alone, nevertheless, each member of the Israelite people drew his or her identity from a tribe (community) as belonging to it" (Overholt 1996:95).

trade and the colonial period (Hochschild 1998:123-4). These oppressive systems were intensified by the Mobutu regime during his thirty-two years as President. As a result, people's cultural values and morality (which are required for a good leadership) were affected.

Some destructive forces impacted on the Congolese leadership. Here, I will refer first to the Portuguese explorers and missionaries who started trading slave in the Congo, and second, to Belgian colonisers who oppressed the people of the DR Congo.

Fitzgerald (1967:300) argues that the socio-political and economic organisation that the Belgian colonisers established in the Congo purposefully divided the traditional unity of individual tribal groups. The Congolese people were appointed in such a way that they remained ignorant about the administration of the colonial rule (Hastings 1998:146). Such ignorance has been a 'destructive force' for the Congolese because they were out of national structures of authority for more than half a century. Furthermore, in order to extend colonial power and authority, certain ethnic groups and large tribes were purposely divided and their customary leadership disorganised (Fitzgerald 1967:299). Local leaders were used to subdue their own people to the colonisers. Thereafter, the vision, self-confidence and identity of the Congolese people, especially the leaders, was affected.

In the next subsection, I will refer to some specific historical events that resulted in the purposeful division of certain groupings, as well as the disorganisation of the customary chiefs, and the distortion of the identity of the Congolese people.

4.2. The Divisions of Some Groupings during the Period of Colonisation

No one can occupy someone else's area without disturbing him or her. This happened when the Portuguese explorers, missionaries and Belgian colonisers arrived in the DR Congo. As Church has noted:

> The Portuguese slaving began in 1436 and ended only about 1885, the old Congo State having been conquered in 1665. A study concludes that 13.25 million slaves were taken. Many were also captured by Arabs from the eastern parts of the Congo

> Basin, but numbers are more difficult to assess; they might be more or less than those taken by the Portuguese (1971:332).

This situation disturbed the people not only in their day-to-day living, but also by the way they assumed their responsibilities (van Baren 1992:369).[136] They were also disorientated in their organisational policies. In 1885, the Congo had become the personal property of the Belgian monarchy. As a result, the Congolese people ceased working for themselves. They responded to the orders of King Leopold II through his administrators and solely dealt with his personal interests (Hochschild 1998:120). The same situation was experienced at the time of the Belgian colonisation from 1908 to 1960. Colonial structures and administration lead to the division of the State into different provinces; the purpose of such an administration being to exploit the wealth of the country (Church 1971:333).

In building houses, roads and railways, the Congolese people endured cruel, even sadistic methods of penalising tax defaulters (Church 1971:333). When it was time to revise the administration in order to replace the Leopoldian concession system, the colony, in 1914 was divided into four provinces to facilitate the settlement of a monopolistic basis of trade and industry (Fitzgerald 1967:300). These four provinces were: Congo-Kasai, Equator, Oriental and Katanga. Some other changes were made later in 1925, when colonisers re-divided the Congo into seven provinces including Ruanda-Urundi. These provinces kept the same subdivisions until 1933 (Fitzgerald 1967:300).

These divisions of the Congolese soil, seeking to centralise colonial power, affected the cultural structures of the local people. The *Kongo* ethnic group was divided between the current Lower Congo Province of the DR Congo, northern Angola and southern Congo Brazzaville. Moreover, the *Bakusu* tribe was divided between the

[136] Apart from the slave trade undertaken by Portuguese explorers and missionaries which disturbed families, "the Belgian colonisers devised a system of political administration which relied heavily on customary authority. In so doing, colonisers often upset previous forms of cultural organisation and relations. In Kivu Province, for instance, one ethnic group (Rundi migrants from Burundi) which had been given grazing land on a rent basis by another (*Furiiru*), were granted chieftainship on the very land they occupied on a rent basis. A similar phenomenon occurred in Kasai Province (*Lulua* and *Luba*). In both cases, the end of colonial rule brought about bloody conflicts. Worse was where chieftainship did not exist, colonisers created it and consequently provided an additional source of resentment against the invaders of the other tribe" (van Baren 1992:369).

Oriental and Katanga Provinces. As Fitzgerald (1967:301) has noted, these things were done for the benefit of Belgium. However, since 1921 they faced serious difficulties in re-uniting groups previously dispersed. Such divisions dispersed the powers of customary chiefs with regard to their leadership task. They lost self-confidence and competency as perceived today in several aspects of life in the community.

How did these events impact on the customary chiefs of the time? To respond to this question, I will discuss in the next subsection the way these local chiefs were treated during the period of colonial rule.

4.3. The Colonisers and Customary Chiefs in the DR Congo

The Western invasion of the Congo was a painful experience. Colonisers said that they were bringing "civilisation" to the "Dark Continent" (Borel 1992:368).[137] Had they not anything to learn from the Congolese people of the time? To establish their authority and set up their administration, the Belgian colonisers devised a system of political administration that relied on the customary chiefs (Borel 1992:369). Moreover, in order to subdue the local people through these customary chiefs, the colonisers partially recognised their authority and appointed them as 'civil servants.' This new status allowed the customary chiefs to be satisfied and feel closer to the colonisers than to their people in the community (Fitzgerald 1967:301). As a result, the colonisers not only subdued the people, but also the customary chiefs were alienated. They were representatives of their peoples alongside the colonisers on the one hand, and ensured that the people obeyed their colonial masters on the other. They had become facilitators of the colonial power just as vassal leaders of the system. Most of the time, they had to give reports to the colonisers and sometimes they played the role of informers, even betraying their people to the colonial authorities. This is how the people became alienated from their own land and their human identity distorted. This has been costly, up to now, to both the State and church

[137] "This view must be seen in the context of the *Aufklärung* in Europe which emphasised the importance of science and of people using their own reason, rather than religion and tradition". See Paul Decock from my discussion with him, October 3, 2009 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

leadership in the Congo. In fact, these 'paid informers' became more dangerous than any other enemy of the people.

A Bakongo proverb says: *ulembo die yaku imbeniaku* meaning 'the one who is sharing a meal with you is your enemy.' This is a call to discernment while selecting one's collaborator in that culture. It points to the way Joseph-Désiré Mobutu behaved while betraying the country's first indigenous politicians to Belgium and the US (van Rensburg 1975:487). Such behaviour has been generalised among the Congolese people today, especially the church and State leadership. It has become a struggle to establish harmony among leaders. Indeed, some leaders betray one another in order to seek favour from the chairperson. This way of behaviour is increasingly found in most communities in the DR Congo, whether in the church or State. Indeed, colonisers had purposely inoculated the Congolese people with the disease of self-hatred while setting up their colonial power structures. This produced a political culture which is now difficult to correct within the leadership.

4.4. The Affected Identity of the Congolese Leadership

A large problem among many Congolese is that they do not realise they need to recover their sense of identity. Cultural values which refer to moral qualities of leadership have also been affected. This is shown by the lack of self-confidence, honesty and patriotism of the Congolese leadership and its people. If the Congolese people ignore what is going wrong in the State and just hope that things will go well by themselves, then they are dreaming. This attitude reflects a state of alienation on a national scale. How can people recognise that their identity has been affected? In other words, how can people escape from their situation if they do not feel the need of that? These important questions will lead me to indicate some evidences of an affected identity.

The past events experienced by the Congolese people are sufficient to understand that they have been severely wounded, depersonalised and their self-identity destroyed (Gray 1999:140). This is seen by the way leadership, for example, behaves within a team be it in the church or State. The Congolese leadership, in its sphere of responsibility, experiences reluctance, mistrust, suspicion and the lack of self-

confidence. This results in conflicts within the leadership and occasions its incompetency. The Congolese leadership presents this poorest of features to the world. The Congolese leaders spend more time and money on their personal security than serving the nation and developing the State. Universities and schools are not maintained and developed. Most leaders therefore send their children abroad to study. This situation explains the mismanagement of public affairs by the State leadership in the DR Congo (Katho 2003:272).

This way Congolese leadership rules over the State underlines the fact that it does not have the moral qualities required for good leadership. Even in the African tradition, leadership would have been better than it is experienced in the DR Congo. In African tradition, leaders are expected to possess sufficient economic wealth so that they can provide for the people in their community. This underlines the principles of moral behaviour needed for good leadership in the African tradition which no longer exists (Adeyemo 2006:546). Leaders were supposed to practice *bumutu* (*Bakongo* culture), *ubuntu* (Zulu culture) which means, putting people first and doing them justice (Adeyemo 2006:546; Bediako 2006:3).

The past oppressive events in the DR Congo have caused a disastrous situation to befall its people. Furthermore, the lack of a process of decolonisation has maintained people in their distorted understanding of leadership and self-identity.

4.5. The Lack of a Process of Decolonisation in the DR Congo

To develop any nation, its mentality (mindset) is considered a key factor. The process, in the case of the DR Congo, depended on the way the former colonisers were disposed to re-instate the rights and privileges of the colonised people. Indeed, more than seventy-five years of foreign power in the Congo impacted the people severely. Such a situation would need an adequate process of decolonisation to rehabilitate a people who up to now remain victims. For many years they had been working for other people's interests. Consequently, their genuine vision was affected, becoming unable to manage public affairs in the community. No process had been put in the Congo with regard to the decolonisation of people's mind.

The Independence of the Congo had become a frustrating event to the former colonisers. They lost their positions of authority and power in the colony. Decolonisation would have been a meeting of two kinds of people opposed to one another in their feelings. The one group was extremely happy and satisfied, the other frustrated at having lost power, authority and position in the former colony (Fanon 1966:27-8). This mutual incompatibility could not facilitate the process of decolonisation.[138] The new leaders of the DR Congo, although in the same rank as their former colonisers, were still far from the required level of knowledge and experience of leadership. The process of decolonisation would consist of reconciling the Congolese people with themselves in order to help them recover a new mentality free from that 'inoculation of their minds' by their former colonial masters (Fanon 1966:28; Lamont 2006:178-9). Furthermore, a mutual reconciliation between the Congolese and the Belgians would have been an absolute necessity. Yet, Lumumba, the Prime Minister of the time, without taking into account other leaders' viewpoints, ordered the Belgians to leave the Congo. This unduly complicated the process of decolonisation.

The former colonisers had also experienced a crisis of identity. They tried to recover what they had lost in another way. This explains the way they continue imposing control on the former colony. Western powers, besides Belgium, always had an eye on the DR Congo because of its vast mineral resources. Their lust for wealth remains a key signifier in the crisis that presently besets the country. The stranglehold of the Western powers on leadership and mineral resources in the DR Congo prevents the social organisation of the State. In this respect, the Congo seems not to be a sovereign State. Different groups from the outside world meddle in the DR Congo for a variety of reasons, be they humanitarian, political, or economic. The Congolese leadership likes this because it benefits them personally. Mobutu had followed this way as do those who are presently in office. Because of this, the country simply moved from colonisation to neo-colonialism which is costly to the Congolese people (Boateng 2005:31). This brings a struggle for social life and development in the DR Congo (Biaya 1999:150).

[138] Even though the process of decolonisation would have depended firstly on the former colonised people themselves; nevertheless, the presence and contribution of those who owned the country and exploited it for so many years should have shown the way to deal with many issues concerning the new State.

5. A Brief History of the Prophetic Role of the Church in the DR Congo

This section will discuss the history of the Christian presence in the Congo region and its current situation. I will particularly focus on the prophetic role of the leadership of church up to the present day. In Israel, prophets had to fulfil their prophetic role among the people of God. In the same way, I will discuss the church leadership's (from missionaries to the current leaders) prophetic role among the local people in the DR Congo. A crucial question that will be raised concerns whether the church leadership has exercised their prophetic responsibility, and secondly, what was their relationship with the colonial power in the Congo? To address these questions, I will consider the church and its leadership which goes back to when the church was first planted in the Congo region. In this regard, I will focus on the Roman Catholic and Protestant Church leadership in the DR Congo (Biaya 1999:149-50). These two denominations have the most qualified church leadership that usually relates to the State authority. I will first discuss the prophetic role of church leadership in the Congo from 1484 to 1885 (Hastings 1996:426-8). Second, I will point out their prophetic role among the people when the country belonged to Leopold II from 1885 to 1908 (Nsangi 1981:58; Hastings 1996:431). Finally, I will spell out the church leadership's prophetic role within the Belgian Congo from 1908 to 1960 (1996:436-7), and then up to the present day.

5.1. The Prophetic Role of the Church during the Period 1484-1885

The religious background of the DR Congo goes back to pre-colonial Christianity in the *Kongo* kingdom. This is the same background that is shared by northern Angola and southern Congo Brazzaville (Hochschild 1998:8). Explorers and missionaries from Portugal were the first Europeans who came down the west coast of Africa as far as the *Kongo* Kingdom. Did they play a prophetic role? Missionaries had already begun evangelising by 1491, after Diego Cao, an explorer, had visited the Kingdom in 1484. In returning to Portugal, Diego Cao invited some *Kongolese* to go with him (Hildebrandt 1990:61). The next year, those who went with him returned to the *Kongo*. In just one year they had been Christianised and were able to speak Portuguese. Manikongo, the king of the *Kongo*, received presents from the king of

Portugal. Being impressed, Manikongo asked for missionaries to minister in the *Kongo* (1990:62-3). The first Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in 1491.

When the missionaries came, their work was accompanied by trade, even the slave trade. Hildebrandt (1990:61) and Isichei (1995:63-7) assert that Portuguese clergy harmed more Bakongo people than Christianising them. The Portuguese were more involved in the slave trade than in missionary work. The king of the *Kongo,* who had become a Christian, protested against such behaviour. Some missionaries sustained the king in his protestation. The king of the *Kongo* called for the help of the Roman Catholic Pope as well as the king of Portugal but his request remained unanswered (Nsangi 1981:51; Hastings 1994:248; Isichei 1995:160).[139] The way missionaries failed to play their prophetic role desolated the kingdom and distressed the *Kongolese* people of the time. The issue was that these 'European prophets' sent to the *Kongolese* were agents of the king of Portugal through the system of *Padronado*. In this respect, the prophetic role of the church was practically ruled out and missionaries were part of the offending system (Nsangi 1981:51-2).

Leadership in the *Kongo* had been successfully established several years before the Portuguese arrived. The people had a good organisation of the kingdom. Manikongo's election, for example, was held by a clan leaders' assembly (Hochschild 1998:8). A rebellious movement (which could have been sustained by some missionaries) led to the destruction of the kingdom in 1665 (Hastings 1994/1996:103).[140] A social disorder created by the wrong way missionaries behaved did not reflect their prophetic role within the church and society. As a result, the kingdom knew local prophetic reactions through women due to that oppressive situation. A most

[139] I indicate here that "the missionary work had been entrusted by the Pope to the King of Portugal (system of padronado)." This means that "the Pope had no power in these areas." As a result of this bad experience with kings; "the Pope eventually set up a new body independent from political powers to take responsibility for missionary work, the famous Propaganda Fide, but only in 1622. The Portuguese kings held on to their 'rights' as solely responsible for missionary work in their territories until the last century! It was clear that missionary work was subordinated to politics and especially wealth!" It seems "the Capuchins were representing the Propaganda Fide approach for they were reporting the events from Africa to the Pope and the church leaders in Europe" (Nsangi 1981:51; Hastings 1998:146-7).

[140] "On October 30, 1665, the army of the *Kongo* engaged in battle with that of the Portuguese of Loanda at Ambuila, and the *Kongo* was totally defeated. Among the dead, was the King and his son, the Provinces' Dukes of Mbamba, Mbata, Nsundi, Kundimba, and Mpemba, ninety-five titleholders in all, as also the Capuchin Franscesco of Sao Salvador, who had accompanied his king against the orders of his prefect. Effectively the kingdom of *Kongo* as it had existed since the time of Afonso I, together with its Christianised ruling class as it had developed in the course of the seventeenth century, was so shattered that it never recovered" (Hastings 1994/1996:103).

remarkable woman was Kimpa Vita (Ndona Beatrice) who received a prophetic ministry in August 1704 (Hastings 1998:152-3). She was a noble woman and "traditional healer" (Hastings 1998:146). She believed that she was possessed by the spirit of Saint Anthony and of a traditional healer. She destroyed all religious symbols from the Roman Catholic Church. She identified Jesus as one from the *Kongo* kingdom (Thornton 1984:147-67). Such a reaction shows, to some extent, a revolt against the teachings and behaviour of the church leaders.

The missionaries did not prepare local church leadership early enough, except for Henri, the son of King Afonso. The latter entered the church and was chosen for theological training in Portugal. He returned as an ordained church leader to the *Kongo*. In addition, as Hildebrandt (1990:62) asserts:

> Afonso became the king of the *Kongo* and established a Christian kingdom. More missionaries came to the *Kongo*, but their work never seems to have taken real root among the people. Nevertheless, Afonso sent many of his people to study in Portugal as priests and government officials.

King Afonso prepared church leaders for his kingdom. His son went to study in Portugal and became the first Bishop (Henri) of the *Kongo* kingdom. Sometime later he went to minister in Tunis, North Africa, before returning to Portugal in 1529 (Isichei 1995:147-52).[141]

The sixteenth century saw the start of leadership training in the *Kongo*. This process however was not continued. During this period, missionaries were not completely focused on their missionary task as indicated above. After 1543, social organisation in the *Kongo* began to gradually break down. The traders and missionaries from Portugal kept trading in slaves from the southern *Kongo* kingdom and sending them to Brazil (Hochschild 1998:10). This behaviour disturbed the *Kongolese* and other people around them.

[141] African Christianity, A History of the Christian Church in Sub-Saharan Africa, <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAAKongo.html/> [Accessed April 03, 2006].

The *Kongolese* people had been wounded through these distressing events. Furthermore, it had been tragic to watch the twenty-year-old young woman, Kimpa Vita, and her son burnt at the stake for "doctrinal heresy" in 1706 (Hastings 1998:147). Such a killing was not without its consequences on the people's psychology. In spite of these oppressive circumstances, Christian mission in the *Kongo* was the first major missionary enterprise in Africa. While it disappeared, it was not overwhelmed by Islam. It seems to have simply faded out (Hildebrandt 1990:63). Despite the weak context and purpose of the Christian evangelisation conducted by the Portuguese missionaries, the word of God continued to impact people's lives. This can be seen in the moral values of the Bakongo people. In this regard, the church prophetic role had had some positive effects.

5.2. The Prophetic Role of the Church during the Period 1885-1908

This period is important for the history of the Christian church in the DR Congo. The slave trade (related to missionary work in the *Kongo* Kingdom) had stopped when Leopold II owned the Congo (Nsangi 1981:55). A foundation of Christianity had been laid in the Congo during the Portuguese missionary work. Nevertheless, this Christianity would need more training in order to develop local church leadership (Biaya 1999:150).

In 1886, King Leopold II promoted Christian missionary work in the Congo through the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Malines. The latter suggested a priestly training for Africans in Belgium. The Scheutist missionaries and Jesuits (ministering in China and India) were interested to be in charge of the project and to turn their attention to the Congo as well (Nsangi 1981:55). Several Protestant missionaries ministered in the Congo as well. Missionaries assumed all the responsibilities in churches being planted (Nsangi 1981:58). It was not easy to know what was really from the church because of the close relationship between missionary contract and the State administration of the day. Borel (1992:369) argues:

> Constitutional monarch of Belgium, Leopold II became the sole authority, the sole owner of his vast territory in Central Africa. He was responsible to no one but himself, from 1885 to 1908.

Most of missionaries had become agents of King Leopold II in order to sustain his interests. Any organisation working in the Congo had to consolidate the political system of the Monarch. The missionary work developed when the country became the Belgian Congo in 1908. During the period 1885-1908, the church leadership seemed to have little interest in church planting (Nsangi 1981:58-9).

5.3. The Prophetic Role of the Church in the Belgian Colony during the Period 1908-1960

During this period, the Western colonisers allowed Christian missionary work in the Congo. Missionaries kept a close relationship with the colonial administration. Nsangi (1981:59) referring to Jacques Meert argues that missionaries, planting churches in the Congo, received financial support from the colonial power. Furthermore, the political, economic and religious 'powers' were interconnected. The church's prophetic role among the Congolese people had been a bit distressing because of some church leaders. The way church leaders treated indigenous people in the Congo had become similar to that of the colonisers. Borel (1992:369) argues that Congolese people experienced one of the most "brutal and ruthless forms" of colonial rule ever found on the African continent. What people learnt from their educators affected their personal ethics for generations to come. The ruthless forms of colonisation impacted several aspects of Congolese people's life. Psychologically, those who had undergone education during the colonial rule had become insensitive to other people's problems. This implies that the educative programme from the period of colonial rule needs to be revised in present-day Congo (Nsangi 1981:60).

For a period of seventy-five years, the 'Congo Free State' and the later Belgian Congo did not involve Congolese people in its State administration. Moreover, colonial politics which surrounded the church, impacted on several aspects of the church leadership of the day. In turn, the church produced the same standard of leadership which was unable to help that of the State. This is well explained by a French proverb which states: "*tel père tel fils or telle mère telle fille"* (Varrod 2002:998) meaning "the father's behaviour is reflected in his son, like that of the mother is in her daughter."

Regarding missionary education, it is argued that, in their education and writings, Roman Catholic missionaries put a particular accent on culture, but rarely addressed social and political issues. In this regard, Lado (2002:35) referring to Ela argues that "the religion" we received from "white people" was not acceptable because it taught love for the neighbour while it used the oppressive principles of the colonial system. In this case, the church's prophetic role had been weakened. Congolese church leaders were often subordinated to missionaries who continued leading the community. Most of them assimilated this missionary leadership standard. Missionaries did not help local church leaders to improve the socio-economic development of the church (Nsangi 1981:60).[142] The Roman Catholic Church had defined norms that determined how a local church leadership should be autonomous but at the same time related to the Holy See in Rome. Missionaries led and controlled the church community for more than half a century (Gray 1999:150). The Roman Catholic Church prepared local leaders who steadily replaced Belgian missionaries in the planted Churches (Biaya 1999:148). Protestant missionaries led churches they planted up to the Independence of the Congo in 1960. No qualified pastors were prepared to lead the Protestant community in the Congo (1999:150). The Roman Catholic community kept its leadership standard as well as the unified structure of the church. Isolated Protestant communities were ministering in a scattered order that missionaries continued leading up to the time of Independence. This context of the church impacts on the current leadership crisis in the Congo (Biaya 1999:150-1).

Missionaries of both denominations did not train or involve indigenous Congolese leadership on how to be in charge of local churches. On the contrary, the 'gospel message' they taught the Congolese people that poverty was the sign of a true Christian. Being 'poor' is a *sine qua non* condition to see and enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:3). Such teachings and preaching did not help Christians to take responsibility for managing their social lives and that of the church or State. Furthermore, some interpretations of biblical texts from both denominations had not often been for the good of Congolese people (*cf.* Gen. 9:18-29). Hence, the story of

[142]Christianity in Africa South of the Sahara Homepage, Roman Catholic Mission 1890-1960, <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SSAColonialRCC.html/> [Accessed April 03, 2006].

the three sons of Noah had been misinterpreted to explain the suffering of the Congolese people (Mitchell 1962:500). The curse laid on Ham, the father of Canaan (Gen. 10:6), was applied to the Congolese who could not expect a better social life (Clifford and Murphy 2005:17). Poverty and conflicts among Christians are perceived as normal for the aforementioned reasons. Serving the Lord is, for Congolese priests or pastors, synonymous with the struggle for survival or normal social life.

Some of these 'erroneous interpretations' underline the way missionary societies sustained the colonial system in the Congo. A 'religious mentality' and a reading of the Bible had been developed which needs to be corrected. Strawn (2000:543) recognises that this kind of interpretation among European missionaries encouraged the growth of racism even within the church. The message had affected and alienated the people of the Congo. As Lado, citing Magesa's syllogism, can argue:

> Christianity reflects colonialism; Independence implies struggle against colonialism and its effects; then, Christianity must be destroyed (2002:35).

This implies that the church was too closely associated with their colonial rulers. The church's prophetic message, during colonial times, tended to be 'otherworldly' and little involved with social issues. Despite the imbalance between the spiritual and the socio-economic dimensions in the interpretation of the biblical message, the churches still played an appreciable prophetic role before 1960 (Burke 2001:47-9). This is seen through the church leadership which was well prepared to take over its responsibility after the Independence of the Congo (Burke 2001:48).

5.4. The Prophetic Role of the Church during the Period 1960 to the Present Day

This subsection will discuss the church's prophetic role which determines the current church leadership standard. In this regard, I will first point out the role it plays alongside the current political system. Second, I will underline the church's prophetic role among the people of the DR Congo.

5.4.1. The Prophetic Role of the Church alongside that of the State

The church leadership after Independence had been able to replace the missionaries in leading the church in the Congo. This was seen when the church leadership began to resist Mobutu's political ambitions. Mobutu tried to overwhelm the church by his political ideology and his recourse to authenticity (Biaya 1999:149). The church leadership defended its doctrines against the veneration of ancestors as assigned by Mobutu's politics of the time. The youth section of the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (*JMPR*)[143] was imposed as an activity in all educational institutions on January 5, 1972. Ngindu, referring to the refusal of the Permanent Committee of Congolese Bishops, can thus argue:

> It is not authorised to commit episcopacy and religious superiors in this precise form within schools or seminaries which purpose is to train priests, monks and nuns to whom political activity is forbidden both by the Holy Office and by the Vatican Council II. The reason for that is: 'Churchmen' are held to belong wholly to all men and women (1978:232-3).

On January 12' 1972, the church weekly *Afrique Chrétienne* published an article on the subject of authenticity. It noted that what was at stake was "our greatness and dignity as a free people." Therefore, there was no question of "disinterring" from the night of the past an "original African philosophy" which was of no relevance to our social situation (Ngindu 1978:233). These statements were falsely attributed to Cardinal Malula, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kinshasa. Just as Jeremiah was treated, in the context of his ministry during the time of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:8), Malula was expelled from his residence. The publication of *Afrique Chrétienne* was suspended. The director and editor responsible of the Journal were closely questioned (Ngindu 1978:233). To save his life, Malula fled Kinshasa for Rome, "at the invitation of the Holy See" (Ngindu 1978:233).

[143]"*JMPR* is the acronym of the Youth section of the Mobutu political party which is the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*. That Youth section was made obligatory in any educational institution, even in private institutions for religious training such as seminaries, novitiates, scholastic schools or Theological schools" (Ngindu 1978:233).

To return to Kinshasa, the Pope charged his Apostolic Nuncio to negotiate the situation with President Mobutu on February 25, 1972 (Nsangi 1981:81 citing Arnold 1972:50-1). The external support of the Holy See had seen benefit in the church leadership in Kinshasa by negotiating with Mobutu's regime. Most of the church leadership in the DR Congo are well-trained and would be able to handle the current situation in the country. Even though the priests, pastors and religious should not, on principle, take on political responsibilities, nevertheless, they have to exercise the church's prophetic role alongside that of the ruling class as did Jeremiah in Judah. This is argued well by de Haes, who in citing Cardinal Malula can state:

> The church, as the body of Christ, cannot resign from its spiritual task. It has to serve freely, efficiently, but also in truth, the permanent requirement of progress and development (1999:45).

This implies that the church leadership has to make pronouncements constantly, despite political decrees and human institutions made by scientists and technicians of the State. In this respect, Malula focused on a personal and collective development. This strong position taken by the church leadership did not please the Mobutu regime. Cardinal Malula knew well the cost of defending human rights and being the voice of the voiceless, of those who could not ask for truth, justice and rights for a better life (de Haes 1999:46). Therefore, he had to speak with insistence, but without compromising himself because it was the Lord speaking through him. As a church leader of the time, Cardinal Malula had shown a clear position of the church against the political ideology of the Mobutu regime. Nevertheless, as a Bakongo proverb says: *nlembo mosi wusukulanga zizi ko* meaning 'one finger cannot wash one's face.' It means that defending the advantages of the Congolese nation does not concern only one or two church leaders, but it should be a matter for the church as a whole.

The conflict between the church and State of the time revealed the true prophetic role played by the church leadership in the DR Congo. What however were Mobutu's expectations in trying to overwhelm the church authority? In this regard, as Ngindu (1978:235) indicates:

> On June 24, 1973 during his public speech before 200,000 *MPR* militants, President Mobutu declared that differences with Cardinal Malula were definitely over. All that we ask for our bishops is that they should be on the side of authenticity with us.

What did Mobutu mean by being "on the side of authenticity" with Cardinal Malula? A statement by the General Secretary of the *MPR* appearing in the French daily newspaper, *Le Monde* on June 30, 1973, clarified Mobutu's hidden ideas:

> The church had to submit to *MPR* discipline….Its submission may not be superficial but it is a constitutional duty (Ngindu 1978:235).

Mobutu wanted to keep the church in his ideological stranglehold in order to manipulate everything in the DR Congo. In fact, he had never applied the State constitution in ruling over the people. Furthermore, after Independence in 1960, the church and State became separated in their organisation in contrast to the former colonial system. In this connection, Burke can argue:

> The colonial period had one system of collaboration between the civil and religious authorities. That collaboration certainly bore fruit; but it bound the church too closely, through its official representation, to the colonial regime (2001:63).

President Mobutu's attitude did not try to develop a way of working together with the church leadership that would help to improve his standard of leadership. On the contrary, he wanted to re-install the colonial system which 'subdued' the church to the political ideology. Mobutu's reliance on Western powers had determined his political ideology inside the State (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:61). His philosophy of "recourse to authenticity" was simply a way to manipulate people and set up his authority and power (Biaya 1999:166). Mobutu attempted to substitute himself as a 'Congolese Messiah' by seeking to establish the *MPR* political party as a church and himself, the founder, its Messiah (Biaya 1999:166).[144] Because of his 'self-centred' political

[144] "The Archives which Mother House in Namur (Belgium) have news clipping from the Kinshasa paper *Salongo* dated on December 6, 1974. The headline for a speech given by the State Commissioner for Public Affairs reads, From now on the *MPR* must be considered as the Established church, with its Founder as the Messiah. The speech presented Mobutu as a prophet and declared that all religious images had to be removed from public places and replaced with a portrait of the President. No religious instruction could be given in schools, except the required course explaining 'Mobutism.'" (Burke 2001:63); "The politics of authenticity, which was to facilitate the national integration process,

vision, he did not seek to develop the State's sectors in the DR Congo. To overcome the situation, the church in the Congo must be committed to development projects since it has realised the State's 'resignation' to improve the country's health and social life. These particular actions of the church, in contrast of those of the government, should have led to his immediate removal. Indeed, Mobutu's leadership never prospered anyone other than himself. In this respect, the church prophetic actions remained successful while the State organisation continued towards ultimate failure.

The Mobutu regime did not succeed in its task of completely overwhelming the church. This was due to the strong position taken by the church leadership against the cultural and political "philosophy of the recourse to authenticity" and its effects (Biaya 1999:149). The church in the DR Congo is now in a real struggle for social justice and development in the Congo. This struggle was intensified by Mobutu's presidency (Nzongola 2002:141). As de Haes (1999:44) in referring to Cardinal Malula maintains, the church tries to fight social injustice, corruption and works to promote development that derives from inside Congolese society. The church has to provide skilled people with positions in order to improve the standards of church leadership (Lado 2002:34).

The church statutes should provide its leaders with sufficient guidelines to properly lead and administer church affairs. Beyond these rules is the leadership's conscience and moral education. Such consciousness was witnessed by Cardinal Malula at a difficult time during the Mobutu regime (Biaya 1999:150). Some bishops however did not hold a strict position against Mobutu's decision to disturb the church order. This means that they were available to assimilate the Mobutu ideology. As Ngindu can write:

> On March 8, 1972, Monsignor Lesambo, the chairman of the Episcopal Conference of Zaire, decided on the closure of the seminaries to avoid the setting up of *JMPR* Committees. The Archbishop of Kananga, however, accepted the formation of *JMPR*

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functioned as a process of cultural homogenisation by implementing the anthropology of a 'Father of the Nation' and a sacred Nation. This process ended in the sacralisation of the power and of the individual in power" (Biaya 1999:166).

> Committees in two of the major seminaries in the ecclesiastical province of Western Kasai in Kananga (1978:234).

Other church leaders kept quiet and left intact Mobutu's ideology of trying to overwhelm the church. Mobutu declared on April 6, 1973 that he never had problems with Protestants and *Kimbanguists* (Ngindu 1978:234). But the Roman Catholic Church leadership, being sustained by the Holy See in Rome, felt free to react against Mobutu's political ideology (Ngindu 1978:235). Mobutu's reaction fits well with the *Bakongo* proverb which states, *muivi kazolanga ndiandi muivi ko* meaning 'no thief likes another thief.' Mobutu would have liked to have been left unchallenged in his supported position by Western powers. This was not to be, even the church leadership found itself in a similar position. This prevented Mobutu from completely overwhelming the church's authority through the application of his political ideology. Although some church leaders who did not completely support the church's prophetic action, its role did not fail. This implies that the church's prophetic role was successful in relationship to the State's policy during the Mobutu regime.

5.4.2. The Prophetic Role of the Church in Relation to the Congolese People

This subsection presents the prophetic role played by the church leadership in relation to the people of the DR Congo. As we have seen earlier, the oppressive events experienced by the people had frustrated, depersonalised and severely affected their identity (Lado 2002:34). Despite this situation, the church in the Congo had been organising healing and teaching services. This had been bringing Christians to the self-reconciliation and forgiveness. The church's prophetic action among the people had prevented them from violence, especially, against the poor leadership of the State (Love 1994:37).

The church's commitment to development projects has ensured the health, social and religious life of the Congolese people. This has provided the people with moral values which promote positive social change in society (Selinger 2004:534). Such a strong value system (in such a devastating social reality as the DR Congo) has been the struggle of the church. Lado, citing Pénoukou can thus state:

> Congolese people perpetuate their conscience alienation which hinders their morality and consciousness to develop society (2002:38)

The church leadership in the DR Congo has and continues to play a significant role as 'good shepherds' for the Congolese people (Ngindu 1978:235-6; de Haes 1999:47). The government had resigned its responsibilities for healthcare services, educational needs, social support, justice, and so forth. In this respect, church leadership had given proof of honouring its responsibilities by responding to the needs of the poor in the DR Congo (Lado 2002:36; Selinger 2004:532). Indeed, churches have become almost the only source of social assistance to Congolese people. Church leaders in the DR Congo also provide efficient school educational programmes to Congolese children. Moreover, they are committed to ensure healthcare for all Congolese people (Lado 2002:39).

Individuals are promoting private schools that try to respond to the educative needs of the Congolese youth. In this regard, the Roman Catholic Church leader in Kinshasa, Archbishop Frédéric Etsou, up to January 2007, was congratulated for his efforts in sustaining the educational policy of the DR Congo. He had strengthened the projects of his predecessor Cardinal Malula who was the first to begin promoting and developing schooling in the post-Independence era.[145]

Church leaders do their best to express God's love in promoting quality schooling to ensure that Congolese children have access to education. The Government of the DR Congo is almost absent in this matter. The church leadership witnesses its commitment to the struggle for preparing a 'loyal leadership' for the future. The church is more sensitive and determined than the government to supply people's needs in the DR Congo. The church is committed to the struggle for good governance in managing a good society for all Congolese (de Haes 1999:44).

[145] Since 1993, Cardinal Etsou was the only one fighting against all to sustain the educational policy in the DR Congo. In 1994, Archbishop raised the alarm: 'stand up the Roman Catholic Schools,' and recently, in November 2005, Frédéric Etsou issued an appeal for educational responsibilities Congolese teachers and lectures should assume to save the situation of the Congolese youth. See Jimmy Kapalayi, a primary school pupil, reading a speech at the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Episcopacy of Cardinal Frédéric Etsou, Church leader in Kinshasa, November 7, 2005.

The church's prophetic role in society has also been its involvement in the struggle for social change in the community (Vumuka-ku-Nanga 2004:54). The church leaders have been sensitive to work for the needs of all the people (de Haes 1999:45). The Nobel Peace prize laureate, Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, was among the key role players with regard to the struggle for freedom and social justice in South Africa. He claimed that there were levels of poverty in the country that were "totally unacceptable." He complained that there were people in South Africa who did not have anything to eat and thus went to "bed hungry." Leaders cannot allow such things to take place (Tutu 2006:5). The prophetic role of the church should be to challenge the State to take their responsibilities seriously. As long as the church has to look after the needs which are actually the responsibility of the State, the church has not yet succeeded.

The struggle for social justice in the DR Congo requires an individual and collective liberation (Lado 2002:38). It is the awareness of leadership and people that engages them in the struggle for social change. The lack of responsibility of the State leadership has abandoned the people as sheep without shepherds. This has made them victims of several kinds of violence in society (de Gruchy 2006:5).[146] People's struggle for survival has brought about sexual abuse and violence against women and children. The spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic does not have an adequate organisation to be effectively contained. On the contrary, in the DR Congo, HIV and AIDS is often hidden and the information cannot be shared even among those it concerns (Ntsimane 2006:7). A climate of rejection created around people with HIV and AIDS prevents those infected and affected receiving help from the community. What then should the State and churches organise in order to give special attention to people with HIV and AIDS? This is a call for responsibility to the church leadership in the DR Congo (de Gruchy 2006:4).

The Churches prophetic role among the people is remarkable despite the difficult social context of the DR Congo. Its basic foundation is an effective church leadership committed to the source of justice. As de Haes (1999:46) citing Malula can argue:

[146] "There is no doubt that religious people have gift to contribute in health and healing. They need to work arm in arm with the government. Religious communities have experience, expertise, networks, discipline, training, motivation, and a focus on life that make them natural contributors to care, compassion and love" (de Gruchy 2006:4).

> Churchmen or women must be more than any human-being, functionally and profoundly converted to Christ, brief genuine Christians. Moreover, their thoughts, feelings, affections and speaking must reflect from their being and show the right way to behave. This witnesses their profound motivations to loving and seeking what is excellent to the church and State.

This underlines the church's prophetic role in the current struggle for social justice and development in the DR Congo (Selinger 2004:534).[147]

6. Summary and Conclusion

The State leadership has been discussed in the first part of this chapter. The failure of good leadership was and still is due to Western interference in Congolese policy over a long period of time. The past colonial rule had impacted people who have now a special need to improve their leadership standard.

The Independence of the DR Congo on June 30, 1960 was not adequately prepared to take responsibility to manage such a country. This is demonstrated through several problems during the first Republic of the Congo, from 1960 to 1965. The lack of an effective and proficient leadership in office brought about disorder in every sector of the State. One of the reasons for this was that the majority of politicians came from different associations (ethnic, alumni, and urban circles). They lacked unity to improve mutual confidence to deal with their new situation.

The conflict within the State leadership gave opportunity to Western powers to interfere and fulfil what they planned. By actively supporting Mobutu they found him appropriate to respond to their needs. In fact, no one can reach such a high office without Western support. The way that Mobutu ruled over the State gave proof of a self-centred leadership. His leadership worked for his own self-interest and those of the Western powers. This witnesses clearly that at its Independence, the DR Congo

[147] "The recognition of religion as a significant element in social identity construction is to be welcomed. But it remains rooted in the Western tradition which regards religion as a personal force, inspiring individuals to make decisions based on historical faith, not on the role of religion in its social capacity" (Selinger 2004:535).

passed from the colonial to the neo-colonial system, a move which is costly to the Congolese people today. As the country had been owned by Belgian colonisers, President Mobutu owned the country with his Western allies and local associates. His mismanagement of the State had devastated its administration. This especially characterised the second period of his presidency from 1975 to his dismissal on May 17, 1997.

At Independence, the churches could not rely on a clear tradition of prophetic leadership. However, after Independence and stimulated by a new approach of the relationship of the church to the world, a more prophetic profile of the church began to be developed. This prepared the church leadership to play a significant role to defend itself against the political ideology of the Mobutu regime. However, the church leadership in the DR Congo needs to be more efficient to affect and influence the moral values, so that a good State leadership and people can be developed in the DR Congo. The next chapter consists of a contextual reading of the oracle on *semah* in the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah. A 'conversation' of the texts on *semah* in their contexts with the reader's context of the leadership in the Congo will be provided, mirroring each other.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A READING OF JEREMIAH [AND RELATED PASSAGES] IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE DR CONGO

1. Introduction

This chapter is the culminating point of my perspective as a reader who is concerned about the quality of Congolese leadership. This interpretive process of texts under this present study seeks to redress the current Congolese leadership situation. In so doing, such an interpretation adopts a particular approach to relate the two contexts of my interest in interpreting the texts on *semah*. In this respect, I want to challenge some aspects of the socio-cultural behaviour that the Congolese leadership and people have assimilated over time. These aspects are interconnected and have implications for one another. The texts of Jeremiah, connected with those of Isaiah and Zechariah on *semah* are read within the religious as well as socio-political view.

Many important issues will arise from the analysis of both the Judean and Congolese leadership contexts. In this respect, I will first establish the link between the contexts of the Judean and Congolese leadership (Snyman 2003:383 citing Ukpong 2000b:591). The focus will be on social justice and collaboration within the Congolese leadership. Second, I will describe the way in which the Judean leadership was restored following the disaster of the Exile, and shed light on how a similar restoration could affect the present Congolese leadership situation (Snyman 2003:384). In this process, I will undertake an interaction between both aforementioned contexts which hopefully will provide the current Congolese leadership with a new way of thinking, acting and being (Ukpong 1995:5).

2. The Link between the Contexts of the Leadership in the Kingdom of Judah and the DR Congo

This section underlines specific issues that motivated Jeremiah's oracle on *semah*. This Hebrew metaphor symbolises (in the Judean socio-political and religious context) the sprouting forth of a 'loyal leadership' from the Davidic line (Abegg 1997:816). The announcement of the arrival of 'a loyal leader,' in the context of the Judean kingship, suggests a leadership problem. How do these issues relate to the current Congolese leadership situation? The response to this question singles out similarities between the past Judean leadership context (eliciting the royal oracle through Jeremiah) and that of the current Congolese leadership situation. In so doing, I will prepare a common ground for a dialogue between the two contexts. This is done in two related stages. First, I will point out the causes of failure of the Judean leadership while highlighting those of the current Congolese leadership situation (Dumbrell 2002:141; Henderson 2002:191-192). Second, I will spell out the way the Judean leadership was restored following the devastating social situation of the Exile (Robinson 2001:196).

2.1. The Failure of the Leadership in the Kingdom of Judah and the DR Congo

Similarities in their socio-political and religious contexts help to bring together the two contexts and put them into dialogue. This contextual reading pays special attention to three poles of analysis of texts. The third pole (being the process of appropriation), is for me a process of learning, enlightenment and conversion before I can make others experience it (Draper 2002:16). The Judean kingship during the time of Jeremiah experienced a stranglehold of both Egyptian and Babylonian control over the kingdom. As a result, Josiah was killed by the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco in 609 BCE. The foreign control over Judah had been costly to both the kings and people of the Judean kingdom. The Judean kings could be dismissed and replaced at will with one that was more submissive to the ruling empire of the day. Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin were respectively replaced by Eliakim (Jehoiakim) and Mattaniah (Sedekiah). A general social devastation in public life elicited Jeremiah's oracle on

how Yahweh will treat his stubborn people. In such a hopeless situation, people clung to false hopes, following the sayings of the false prophets of the day.

The story of Judah resembles that of the DR Congo where the State leadership was under Western control. This has been the case since the Congo gained Independence on June 30, 1960 from its erstwhile colonial masters, Belgium. Western powers, represented particularly by the United States of America CIA, supported the new ruling class of the DR Congo to assassinate Lumumba on January 16, 1961. Later, the West directed a bloodless *coup d'état*, overthrowing President Kasa-Vubu in preference to Mobutu Sésé Seko. Mobutu was nothing more than a puppet President who did not develop the social situation of the State. He plundered the country's wealth and facilitated Western powers to take control over the State mineral resources. The country became his personal property.

This leadership crisis in the DR Congo has created a hopeless situation among the people. Some leaders and people still think that things are going fine in the country, while for others there is no clear way to sort the situation out. While many were swinging emotionally between false hopes and hopelessness, the role played by some true prophets headed by Cardinal Malula of Kinshasa brought about hope for a better social situation. Indeed, God continues to hold out a future according to his promise of empowerment for life, whereby he can provide new possibilities for his people. The call to hope in the midst of hopelessness is expressed by the leadership's and people's commitment to social justice in the community.

2.2. The Failure of the Leadership in Judah during the Time of Jeremiah

In this subsection, I want first, to briefly indicate the socio-political struggle due to external influences in Judah during the time of Jeremiah. Second, I will point out the personal attitude of kings who were seeking political support from the most powerful empire of the time. Third, I will discuss the lack of collaboration within the Judean leadership in Jeremiah's time. Fourth, I will again refer to the cultural background which would have allowed the Judean leadership to easily assimilate Babylonian politics. These four selected reasons are at the root of the Judean leadership's failure to rule effectively over the kingdom (Tarzi 2002:186; Nürnberger 2004:118).

Jeremiah's ministry saw five kings successively sit on the throne in Judah. They were enthroned whether by the people's common assent or imposed by the external powers of the region. Apart from Josiah who ruled over the people with justice,[148] the Judean kings in Jeremiah's time did not obey God's instructions in ruling over his people. Successively, these five kings were Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (Couturier 2000:266). Johoahaz and Jehoiachin were enthroned by the Judean people, but Egypt and Babylon preferred to replace them respectively by Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. The external socio-political and religious influence on Judean leadership prevailed over its organisational policy in Judah (Rhymer 1971:23).

The personal attitude of kings, who were relying on the most powerful empires, turned them away from justice and fairness in the community. Hence, in seeking their selfish outcomes, the Judean kings neglected their responsibilities over the people (Roberts 1987:383). The cooperation among autonomous individuals and States for mutual benefit is natural, but in circumstances when individuals follow their own personal interests, it necessarily damages the interests of the entire community (Tarzi 2002:187). Indeed, the overt reliance of the Judean kings on the most powerful empires of the day brought about the debacle in terms of the social disorder of the Judean community.

From what precedes, I will argue that when a king turned away from God's instructions, he became proud and self-centred so that he followed his own political line. In other words, his self-understanding often centralised his authority which developed a personal 'political culture' and brought about social destruction (Kamrava 1989:228). Moreover, this behaviour resulted in the leadership's incompetence to run the public affairs of the community. This refers specifically to the loss of socio-cultural values with regard to the leadership of a genuine political system (1989:228; Mugambi 1999:17). It means that culture is central to a leader's insight to influence politics whether for good or bad. In the Judean context during Jeremiah's time, this 'political culture' resulted in the kings no longer maintaining a close collaboration with the prophet as part of Yahweh's leadership (Henderson 2002:191).

[148] *Cf.* 2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chron. 34:2.

Among others, these four selected reasons disoriented the social, political and religious life of Judean society. The Judean kings relied on the external policy makers. They became full of their own conceit refusing to listen to the advice of Jeremiah. Hence, the Judean kings became socialised into Babylonian politics and assimilated its political goals and values. These were in conflict with the basic values of the Yahweh's covenant people (Tarzi 2002:188). Similar reasons for the socio-political and religious failure can be underlined in the current Congolese leadership context.

2.3. The Failure of Leadership during the Mobutu Regime

This subsection underlines four reasons, among others, that caused the failure of Mobutu's leadership in the DR Congo. These reasons are similar to those that had caused the failure of the Judean leadership. They reflect the incompetence of the Congolese leadership up to the present day. The socio-political struggle of the DR Congo was due first, to the interference of the Western powers on the country's wealth. Second, it was due to the Head of State and his associates who plundered the country's resources in connivance with the DR Congo's former colonial masters and Western powers (Katongole 2005:148). While one can blame the Western powers for being responsible for the current social situation in the DR Congo, the devastating situation was mainly caused by the fact that the money from the mining industry was not being used for the improvement of the country, but for personal enrichment.

This kind of 'political culture' which developed over time, determined the model of Congolese leadership. Because of the numerous advantages drawn by the Congolese Head of State, every subsequent politician attempted to gain power in order to reach office (van Rensburg 1981:420).[149] This strong desire for power and position by some leaders within the Congolese leadership created conflict among them and their respective political parties. This prevented the ruling class from planning and

[149] This was clearly perceived during the presidency elections in the Congo, opposing Joseph Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba (in 2006). When Mr Joseph Kabila won the election, Mr Jean-Pierre Bemba would not accept defeat and work in Kabila's government. He preferred going into exile in Portugal. What is important to indicate here is that it looks as though not much has changed. "Although Congo remains one of the richest countries in the world in terms of natural, mineral and cultural resources, the Congolese people, whether under Mobutu's Zaire, or under the DRC of the Kabilas, have continued to live under the grip of massive poverty, military violence and regimes as disempowering as King Leopold's rubber terror. This is not just true of the Congo, but of great number of African countries" (Katongole 2005:148).

organising the major goals which would achieve the development of the State. The church leadership, represented by Cardinal Malula, tried in vain to remind the State leadership about the just way of ruling over the State (de Haes 1999:43). An interpersonal conflict arose in the community's leadership and produced polarisations, factions and mutually distrusting groups (Tillett 1991:3-4).[150] Moreover, this inter-unitary conflict subverted the appropriate objectives in favour of less relevant sub-goals, and led the leadership towards a lack of collaboration among them (Furnham 2005:408). Up to the present day, this lack of harmony among the Congolese leadership has effectively weakened its effectiveness so that it consistently fails to improve the social situation of the DR Congo.

What is at the basis of such behaviour among the Congolese leadership? It is quite difficult to reconstruct genuine Congolese cultures as they had existed before Western oppressors came (Boon 1996:31-32). Nevertheless, some aspects of life in Congolese culture, intertwined with Western influence, are now reflected in the current Congolese leadership (Ela 1988:24). These influences are perceived by the way the Congolese leadership relates to the external powers in order to plunder the country's wealth. Indeed, the Congolese ruling class are appropriating the wealth that should belong to the people in the same way as the country's colonial masters did in the past (van Rensburg 1981:427). This way of behaviour refers to the selfishness which has infected the Congolese leadership's mindset over the years. Indeed, the Congolese understanding of 'leader' had been so affected in comparison with true African (Congolese) leadership values (Boon 1996:67). Traditional leaders in African (Congolese) tradition were committed to act justly towards the people. The "moral sensitivity" of the *Kongolese* leadership in the fourteenth-century for example, promoted a good public life in the community (Boon 1996:70-71). One of the destructive factors of the current Congolese leadership is its reliance on the "spirit world" (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4; Pype 2006:302-303). More and more of its leaders rely upon supernatural forces to receive 'power' in order to be successful in politics. The problem of course is located in the methods they utilise in ruling over the people. They believe in the "evil spirit world" as a source of power which brings success (Shutte 2001:21-23; Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3; Pype 2006:300). This concept of

[150] "Leadership conflict arises when within it people focus on their individual interests which are incompatible to the common good in the community" (Tillett 1991:4).

leadership based on 'reliance of spirits' uses the people as their means of success. This is clearly seen in the way Congolese State leadership uses people for its own personal interests instead of caring for them (Katongole 2005:148; Pype 2006:296).

What then is the relationship between this concept of 'spirit world' and politics in the current Congolese leadership context? The Congolese leadership relies on the 'spirit world.' They seek it as a source of personal power and not to search for God or to effect any change in their moral lives. This is reflected in the cultural understanding of leadership in the current African (Congolese) context (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3).[151] It is believed that a leader who relates to the 'spirit world' receives power and authority to achieve her or his objectives. Indeed, leaders (the Head of State, his associates or customary chiefs) are usually respected because they are believed to be in contact with the 'spirit world' (Adeyemo 2006:546). It is even suggested that a leader's power comes from the supernatural forces which interact with the visible world. There is continuity between the invisible and visible world (Okure 1998:10; Ukpong 2000:16-17; LeMarquand 2004:23).

Spirits and socio-political life in the DR Congo are thus interconnected realms of power. This was clearly shown when the colonial powers (Belgium) related to missionary ministries in the colony on the one hand, and to the local customary system on the other. The colonial masters solely aimed at establishing and centralising power in the DR Congo. While many local people thought that things were fine, they did not realise what was taking place around them (Katongole 2005:146-147).

The colonial masters appointed customary chiefs as public servants to sustain and re-enforce their power (Borel 1995/1996:460). Today, the State leadership employs customary chiefs as the means of submitting the rural population to its political ideology. Moreover, such customary chiefs are seen as the key persons interacting with the 'spirit world.' As a result, they sustain the power of politicians in order for

[151] "Religion and politics are related to some degree, even though there is not yet consensus among scholars on the meaning of these terms. Nevertheless, the nineteenth-century anthropologist E. B. Tylor is referred by Ellis and ter Haar as the one who defines religion as a belief in the existence of an invisible world, often thought to be inhabited by spirits that are believed to affect people's lives in the material world. This justifies the interaction between religion and politics in Africa in general, and the Congo, in particular" (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:3).

them to remain in office. In turn, they receive financial support from the State leadership. This determines the way Mobutu and his associates subdued the people through their reliance on the 'spirit world' (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4). It is quite difficult to describe how Congolese leadership deal with spirits. Nevertheless, the selfishness and lack of moral sensitivity of the State leadership better explains what the 'spirit world' is about. In my view therefore, although the State leadership in the DR Congo could have been competent to rule over the people, their corrupt minds prevents them from implementing good governance.

How could such a mindset be adjusted towards a right way of thinking, acting and being? An answer to this question is suggested through a contextual reading of the texts on *semah* as analysed in this study. Indeed, as God did in the context of the Judean leadership, he would intervene in the hearts and minds of the Congolese leadership and people (Robinson 2001:194). God writes his instruction upon the Congolese people's being and 'sprouts forth' a 'loyal leadership.' The latter would be competent and honest to run public affairs. God's availability to 'sprout forth,' for the DR Congo, a 'loyal leadership' must meet the commitment of the people to work out their own social situation (Lado 2002:36).

3. An Interactive Reading of the *Semah* Texts with the Context

This section consists of a contextual reading of texts under study and the Congolese leadership situation. In this regard, I will consider the *semah* texts in the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah.

3.1. The Royal Oracle in Jeremiah 23 and 33

The royal oracle in Jeremiah 23:1-8 is introduced by an announcement of a judgment on the Judean kings for their corrupt behaviour which had characterised their rule. A narrative prose section stands alongside a poetic oracle which at times parallels, supplants, or explains the royal oracle. The narrative prose "clusters around formal statements of accusation and hope" (Jer. 22-23) (Brueggemann 2007:35). This challenge consists of practicing social justice in the community. It concerns also the interdiction to harm the poor and needy in society. This emphasises a right use of

power in Judean community (Jer. 22:3, 15-16). In Jeremiah's time, violence against the poor had been a key issue addressed in Judean society (Jer. 6:6; Amos 4:1). Jeremiah's message in 22:3 (on the message against crimes in Judah) is also found in Jeremiah 22:17. Jehoiakim is accused of such crimes. Jeremiah 26:20-23 indicates clearly that Jehoiakim had killed the prophet Uriah (Maier 2008:27). This evokes the Judean leadership context which elicited Jeremiah's oracle on *semah*. This metaphor symbolises the sprouting forth of the 'loyal king' in the Davidic line (23:1-8).

In similar fashion, the Mobutu regime is blamed for having intensified corruption and mismanagement of the State in the DR Congo. For thirty-two years, Mobutu and his associates sought to own the entire country and its resources. They acted exactly in the same way as King Leopold II of Belgium did for nearly twenty-five years. This was followed by fifty-two years of colonial rule when the country became the Belgian Congo. The current leadership in the DR Congo is strongly influenced by the leadership model of that time (Nzongola 2002:224). These three periods of ruthless rule resulted in a kind of 'leadership culture' in the DR Congo. This sort of leadership, whether in Judean or Congolese society, maintained an excessive standard of living on the part of a few. Its extravagant consumerism was determined by its desire to amass large wealth while the rest of population experienced extreme poverty (Brueggemann 2006:168). Lane (1996:61) argues that such a negative experience can arouse the 'power' and 'capacity' which 'provokes' hope in the life of oppressed people. Such experiences of life can thus "generate a movement of hope" among people.[152] Despite the current country's leadership level, this negative experience can nevertheless generate hope for a better future in the DR Congo.

The section 23:1-8 comprises a threefold oracle in 23:1-4; 5-6 and 7-8 (Carroll 1986:443-449). In the first unit (vv. 1-4), Yahweh addresses shepherds who destroyed

[152] Lane (1996:61, 64, 66) says that "such experiences include the awareness of human historicity and the contingency of life as well as the realities of suffering, injustice and death itself. The experience of evil, the reality of suffering and the omnipresence of death bring the individual to the limits of life….It is at this juncture that the base of hope for a better life begins to assume a religious colouration by affirming the presence and the existence of a transcendent dimension to life itself….The act of hope concerns trust and self-surrender to the direction implied within the experiences of self-transcendence. Hope is about allowing ourselves to be drawn in the direction of self-transcendence in the expectation that we will not be disappointed and in the belief that there is a source animating the movement of the human spirit." It is therefore a positive attitude that brings about hope in a hopeless situation. Despite the weak and corrupt leadership in the Congo, there is hope for a 'loyal leadership' that would set up social justice in the State.

and dispersed the flock of his pasture (Carroll 1986:444). The leaders had failed to help people to act justly in society. This would have been the leadership's responsibility in Judah. In this connection, Yahweh would himself show them the right way to behave. The leaders' deeds had been evil. Human 'evil' as a result of wrong doing arouses 'evil' from God (Jer. 1:14-16; 11:9-17). The phrase "provoke [God] to anger" plays a significant role in the book of Jeremiah as it does in the Deuteronomistic writings (Willis 2007:551). The shepherds are the inattentive Judean leadership (kings and their associates). The sheep are the poor people of Judah who will have come from the learning experience of the Exile. Yahweh used the disaster to be an educative programme for his people. He kept the covenant he made with them (Jer. 24:7) (Robinson 2001:196). He gave them a hope for a better future. At the end of their punishment, salvation is seen in Yahweh intervening in favour of his people (Lundbom 2004:169-170).

The same evaluation could be made of the current Congolese leadership, particularly from the Mobutu regime up to the present day. The lack of social justice in the Judean community in Jeremiah's time resembles that of the Congolese society (Henderson 2002:195; Katongole 2005:151). A ruthless and short-sighted leadership has been ruling over the State. The shedding of innocent blood, as well as corrupt and evil actions characterise the abuse of power of the Congolese ruling class (Katongole 2005:148). This selfish way of ruling over the State has ruined the social values among people of the DR Congo.

A short-sighted 'consumerism' of the State leadership in the Congo does not lead to security, peace and prosperity. Rather, it brings social devastation to the community. Corruption and mismanagement have marked the presidency of Mobutu in the DR Congo (Nzongola 2006:224). In Zion-Jerusalem, an experience of a "destructive disorder" had characterised the life of the community (Brueggemann 2006:170). With the arrival of the 'loyal leader,' however, peace deriving from social justice will bring about harmony, security, unity and 'life-giving' to people in the community (Nzongola 2006:169). Lane (1996:61) says that this "cluster of positive experiences can stimulate the response of hope within the life of the individual."

Apart from war in the North-Eastern Congo, we have natural security in the rest of the DR Congo that could allow the leadership and people to work hard and sort out the problem. In this respect, these positive experiences could arouse joy in people and commit them to "a movement of self-transcendence" (Lane 1996:61). This is of relevance for the Congolese leadership and people to be individually engaged in a movement that promotes public life in society. This creates friendship and love. Furthermore, this experience is 'selfless love,' reconciliation, unity and collaboration. This would empower and enable the leadership and people of the DR Congo to work for a better social life in the community. Hence, if positive experiences of life can encourage "a movement of hope" (Lane 1996:61), they can also generate hope in the midst of society. These experiences bring about a motivation among people who could work out their social situation to improve their "human existence" which would be "worthwhile" (Lane 1996:61). True hope must inspire commitment and action to realise hope. This is a call to action for the Congolese leadership and people who often have nothing but empty hope.

Congolese nationals who are living outside the country have developed an Afro-pessimism. Their attitude derives from Westerners who have lost confidence in all investment projects in the DR Congo. Apart from this negative expectation of things, the people living in the DR Congo have an empty hope. They think that everything will be done without their serious commitment. This attitude dates back from the time of Independence. This wrong understanding of Independence was expressed by the song the Congolese people were singing at that event.[153]

Jeremiah had argued against a false hope of Judeans. He aroused a true hope derived from the learning experience of the Exile (chapters 27-29) (Stulman 2008:7). Moltmann (1975:45) would say (if I adjust his words) that hope aroused by the promise of *semah* does not depend on the Judeans' behaviour, but on Yahweh's actions. However, the issue is very complex as it also requires human cooperation. Hope is the power that affects human behaviour. The promise of the 'sprouting forth'

[153] *Kimpuanza* that means in the *Bakongo* language 'Independence' and in *Lingala* language *dipanda* means 'Independence.' The Congolese people sung: *moso matuzolele mafuete vangama, moso matuzolele mafuete vangama, moso matuzolele mafuete vangama mudiambu dia dipanda.* The song means that for the sake of the Independence whatever everyone will wish to have will be realised. This song expresses a typically empty hope based upon the misunderstanding of Independence.

of the 'branch' implies God's action within the Davidic line. Moltmann (1975:44) says, "the story of God's hope will be fulfilled in the whole world." Relying on God's promise the Congolese have reason to hope for a 'loyal and efficient leadership' for the State and church. Despite the current devastating social situation in the DR Congo, there is still hope. Lane (1996:59) says that hope arises from discouraging situations. It is a "reaction" to the hard circumstances of life. Hope "assumes" positively its difficult situation "for change." Hope is then a response to "negative experiences of life" (Lane 1996:59). Real hope expresses itself in a realistic action towards an envisaged goal, which in the case of the DR Congo is the establishment of a good society for all.

Today, the Congolese ruling class does not refer to the Constitution in its exercise of authority (Nzongola 2006:224-226). Similarly, a lack of obedience to God's instruction was the root cause for the collapse of Judean politics. There was a link between the king, his exercise of justice and the divine justice. When the king disregarded God's instructions, he became unable to fulfil social justice among the people (Reimer 1997:760). Indeed, justice is God's power given to a Judean king to empower him to assume justly his leadership. Furthermore, his administration of justice ensured good governance over the kingdom (Reimer 1997:758). During Jeremiah's time, the administration had become weak, as indeed it is in the DR Congo today. It had become difficult for Judean kings to solve their leadership problems since they continued relying on the more powerful empires of the day (Boda 2005:27). As a result, the kings failed to practice social justice in the community.

An experience of failure does not necessarily lead to hope. Often it leads to despair. In this regard, Lane (1996:60) says that "despair takes place when hope is disappointed and becomes lost." This takes place when a person realises that she or he is no longer able to achieve his or her purpose. However, when an experience of failure presents an 'element of life' upon which one could build his or her existence, there is hope. In this respect, the experience of failure can develop a 'conviction' of hope. The self-confidence of leadership and of people is an indispensable factor in 'the life' and 'activity' of hope. Applied to the Congolese leadership and people, its loyalty and self-confidence would be the result of the country's standard of leadership in the DR Congo.

The Judean leaders should have gathered the people instead of dispersing them (Jer. 23:1-2). The Congolese ruling class, due to social injustice (added to the mismanagement of the country's wealth) has reduced a very rich country to that of abject poverty. Mobutu's reliance on Western security and the 'world of spirits' turned him away from considering the State Constitution during his presidency (Kelly 1993:247; Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4). The 'spirit world' is considered by some African (Congolese) leaders as a source of power which distracts them from caring for the people (2004:66-68).[154] The 'spirit world' represents not only the continuity of the Congolese leaders' power, but also the force which maintains them in office at the expense of the people. The struggle for social justice, rather than the determination to stay in power, should be that which motivates leaders. Such motivation should be demanded of them by the people (Lane 1996:62).

Jeremiah's message 'on judgment' reveals what was happening among the Judeans. The prophet focused on the leadership's behaviour. The leadership was using its position for its own selfish interests. It used its office 'to feather its own nest' and "to form alliances for personal gain" (Brueggemann 2006:170). This prevented the Judean leadership from doing people justice as it does today in the DR Congo. The Judean leadership did not recognise their responsibilities towards the people. They knew very well that their power came from God and was by the popular acclaim of the people, but they often ran away from God's instructions (Boda 2005:22). In order to turn back to a right exercise of power, the Judean kings and people were sent into Exile for a learning experience. A fair exercise of power requires leadership 'reconciliation' and collaboration (Wilmore 1979:26). The disaster of the Exile brought the Judean leadership and people to think of returning to their homeland. Many remembered who Yahweh was and turned back to him. In contrast, the current suffering in the DR Congo does not concern the ruling class (Nzongola 2006:228). How could those who are responsible of social devastation in the Congo become

[154] "Some of the best documented cases of politicians cultivating spiritual power have been recorded in the Congo-Brazzaville. Throughout the history of Congolese nationalism, just about every political leader of substance has cultivated a reputation as a master of esoteric forces and created a personality cult based partly on traditional religious beliefs. In the same way, to manipulate the people, Mobutu from the DR Congo, cultivated spiritual sources of power throughout his career, yet no one suspected him having been naïve" (Ellis and ter Haar 2004:4, 68).

concerned about their wrongdoings (Shutte 2001:viii; Nzongola 2006:229)?[155] In the Judean situation, all were concerned with the suffering of the Exile. In the DR Congo, the State leadership is not concerned with the current suffering of the people. If the Judeans were longing to return to their homeland, most of the Congolese people, however, 'expect' to leave their homeland and settle abroad where they hope to find "better conditions for life" (Mavinga 2008:257-258). In both Judah and the DR Congo, it is nevertheless evident that human misery and suffering was/is caused by bad governance and mismanagement of public affairs.

How can one understand the way it took place in the Judean leadership context, as well as in the current Congolese leadership situation?

The Judean kings relied on their Egyptian or Babylonian ruler to be maintained in office. In turn, they had become vassal leaders to the imperial systems of the day. They were thus subdued by these empires so that they became unable to organise and manage the kingdom as expected by Yahweh, their God. This is the reason why Judean kings failed and were dismissed from their positions. Moreover, they were sent away from their homeland into Exile. In the same way, President Mobutu was dismissed and sent away into Exile in Morocco, where he subsequently died. Yet, the current Congolese leadership has not learnt from these circumstances and historical events. It takes time to change people's ideas.

In spite of the experience of the preceding kings, Zedekiah, the last Judean king, did not take into account Jeremiah's advice. Jeremiah (37:14-28) is portrayed as "an assertive and genuine prophet who staked out his own claims before he delivered God's word of judgment to the king" (Dempsey 2007:70). Jeremiah gave advice to Zedekiah saying that his submission to "Babylonians would mean life but to resist them would mean death" (vv. 17-18). This statement, which is primarily applied to Yahweh alone, is now being referred to the king of Babylon as God's instrument to

[155] Shutte (2001:viii) has argued the way "African and European ethical ideas can complement each other. He offered his philosophical interpretation of the key African ethical idea of *UBUNTU* and demonstrated the way this essentially communitarian idea can be reconciled with the idea of individual freedom that is central to European ethical thought. This would be corrective to the careless and manipulative way African State leadership are running public affairs". Hence, the Congolese leadership rely on their tribal groups and external political mentors (Nzongola 2006:229).

punish his people. The way the rule and life of Zedekiah and his family ended witnessed the truth of Jeremiah's prophecy (Dempsey 2007:71).

The Judean kings' obedience to God's instructions brought blessing to the dynasty. Their disobedience resulted in the lack of social justice in the community. Consequently, Yahweh's judgment fell upon the monarchy (in terms of a disaster in the holy city and dynasty) (Jer. 22:4-6) (Brueggemann 2007:35). The failure of the Judean kingship resulted in the oracle on *semah*. The metaphor refers to a 'loyal leader' Yahweh would bring forth to restore the social situation in Judah. It was one of the more positive notes that would come out of the bitter experience of judgment, where Yahweh would bring restoration to his people (23:5-6) (2007:36). A remnant people "preserved" and "loved" by Yahweh "constituted a new community with hope" for a better future (Brueggemann 2007:129). The "basis of hope" in Jeremiah's prophecy refers to the covenant and the conditions Yahweh gave to maintain it (Brueggemann 2007:129).

In the second unit (vv. 5-6), Yahweh announces what he is going to do. The fulfilment of his initiative comes at the right time. He would raise-up a 'righteous branch.' The days of this 'loyal leader' would be characterised by solidarity, peace and security. The mention of both Judah and Israel indicates that the kingdom would be reunited, as it was formerly under King David (Lundbom 2004:175). This is of relevance for the Congolese leadership and people who are in dire need of being united. United, they would be able to work hand-in-hand to develop a good society for all, free of corruption. These conditions of life characterise the governance of the "new leader" (Jer. 23:3-4). This rule took place after the learning experience during the Exile when Yahweh gathered a remnant of his people (Lundbom 2004:176).

The hopeless situation in the DR Congo could be sorted out in the same way as it was in Judah during the time of Jeremiah (Robinson 2001:182). God's initiative to intervene in the Judean situation did not depend on the will of the Judean people. The socio-religious crisis in Judah had often been addressed by Jeremiah. He expressed it through a metaphor which relates a twofold theme: punishment and hope (Brueggemann 2007:37). This suggests that God's judgment is not an end in itself.

Stromberg (2008:655) holds that the 'sprouting forth' of the 'branch' from the Davidic line is a "signal" to the peoples of the world.

This promise holds good for all nations, including those in Africa and the DR Congo in particular. This story brings hope to the Congolese people in terms of God providing the DR Congo with a 'loyal and efficient leadership.' The story of the arrival of a 'loyal leadership' to replace the current weak and corrupt ruling class in the DR Congo brings hope. The 'loyal leadership' comes to reorganise the social situation in the State. God initiated this process during the socio-political and religious struggle in Judah. It was the way he removed the current kings (Boda 2005:24).[156] The similar dismissal of the current State leadership in the DR Congo seems to be requested by the people's complaints. They are longing for the appointment of a 'loyal leader' who would justly rule over the State. In the Judean context, it was, for a great part, God's providence bringing the expected solution to Zion-Jerusalem. The promise of the 'sprouting forth' of a 'loyal leadership' in the DR Congo is a call for a response from the Congolese people. The hope for a better social life should inspire the people to repentance, love of God and their neighbours, as well as a strong commitment to constructive actions to build a good society for all. This would enable the transformation of the Congolese people and society. A 'loyal leadership' in the DR Congo will drive societal transformation.

Jeremiah 33:14-26 underlines the link between the Davidic and priestly leadership as a result of the collaboration in the restored community (Diamond 2003:592). This collaboration strengthens the unity of the nation and consolidates peace and security in the community. This disposition of leadership is of relevance for the current Congolese situation. Jeremiah announces the beginning of social restoration in terms of a promise. It is expressed as a 'sprouting forth' of a 'branch'. This 'branch' has some specific characteristics. Being 'just' in itself, the 'branch' has the ability to do 'justice' (Jer. 23:5; 33:15). The causal action expresses, in the aforementioned verses, a 'sprouting forth' of a 'loyal leader' thereby underlining God's providential action (Dumbrell 2002:142). The internal literary coherence of this section and its syntactic

[156] Jeremiah has announced Judean kings' dismissal. "They will be sent away from their home land into the Exile and their land will be devastated" (Jer. 25:11; 29:1-7) (*cf.* Dumbrell 2002:142; Boda 2005:24).

change suggests Jerusalem as the central point from which the Judean restoration was made (33:16) (Carroll 1986:636; Lundbom 2004:537-544). "Jerusalem will be the throne of Yahweh" (Jer. 3:17).[157] The Holy City, Zion-Jerusalem is identified as a twofold representative; the throne of Yahweh on the one hand, and the presence of the king on behalf of Yahweh on the other. Moreover, the oracles in verses14-26 refer to royal and priestly offices (Carroll 1986:638). In order to maintain social change in society, people must be involved, both civil and religious leadership have to collaborate in solving social and societal problems.

From this, I will argue that the prosperity (social development) of the capital city of a State reflects the country's standard of development. In this way, the Congolese main city, Kinshasa as it is today, presents a devastating social situation. It reflects a corrupt community showing negative features of the entire country (Iyenda 2001:233-237). Kinshasa has become the most insalubrious of the towns on the African continent. Through this feature, Kinshasa reflects the social injustice, insecurity and corruption resulting from the mismanagement of the State (2001:234-5).[158]

To restore the social situation in the DR Congo, the leadership and people should be conscientised as to what has gone wrong. Furthermore, they should interrogate and understand what true State leadership means. Kalungu-Banda (2006:9) holds that a true State leadership attracts people not by ideology, but by caring for them.

Jeremiah 33:14-16 refers to the promise about the restored relationship between Yahweh and his people (*cf.* Jer. 31:31-34) (Robinson 2001:193). The introductory phrase, "the days are surely coming, says the Lord" refers to the specific time of God's intervention. Indeed, through such a new relationship, Yahweh will restore his people. This will be a better covenant than that contracted at Sinai. The latter was written on tablets of stone while the new covenant will be established in people's hearts. Good instructions within people's hearts will be an attitude, a way of life that speaks of justice, fairness, and loving kindness (Dempsey 2007:36). This new way of

[157] "In those coming days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety, and be called Yahweh our righteousness" (Jer. 33:16 NIV).

[158] Life in Kinshasa, the capital, and in the largest cities in the DR Congo, is characterised by inequality, poverty and unemployment. The mismanagement of the ruling class has damaged the country's infrastructure. The feature of Kinshasa reflects poverty, insecurity and insalubrious of the all country (Iyenda 2001:233-235).

‘seeing,’ ‘being’ and a ‘new sense of purpose’ would define an adequate standard for the Congolese leadership.

Jerusalem (instead of Israel in Jer. 23:6) is called in Jeremiah 33:16 “Yahweh our righteousness.” This underscores a particular process concerning the restoration of Judah after the disaster of the Exile. It further suggests that the Davidic monarchy and the Levitical priesthood had become interconnected institutions. In my view, it does not mean that the State leadership would gain control over religious affairs or *vice versa*. Nevertheless, both aspects of leadership have to cope with a difficult socio-political and religious situation in Judah following their return from Exile. This would consolidate and improve the current Congolese leadership if the State and the religious leadership could work in close collaboration. Although the issue of a close collaboration between civil and priestly leadership is difficult, nevertheless, it would be needed in order to enhance social change in the community (Kouzes and Posner 2001:90-1). This would allow leaders to share viewpoints and learn from one another. The Congolese leadership’s liberation consists firstly of a ‘major’ moral challenge (Kungua 2003:124-6). The collaboration of ‘civil’ and ‘priestly’ leadership would arouse growth and learning experiences among both the leaders and people in the DR Congo (Kouzes and Posner 2001:90).

A close collaboration among leaders must reflect the required justice and solidarity that would impact on the country’s social development. This is relevant in the current socio-political struggle in the DR Congo. It would bring leadership and people together in order to cleanse and heal them from the past oppressive influences that have contaminated their minds (Kungua 2003:125).[159] Under this condition, the Congolese leadership and people would improve their unity in building a good society, free of selfishness and corruption. Leadership, in any case, is a close collaboration with others involved in the same public or private business (Kouzes and Posner 2001:84).

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[159] “Neo-colonialism, as experienced in the Congo, involves the uninterrupted exploitation of the country’s resources, but this time in collaboration with national ruling classes. The primary mission of the latter is to represent and maintain the interests of Western powers that had placed them in office” (Turner 2007:31 citing Nzongola 2002:126).

3.2. The Royal Oracle in Isaiah 4 and 11

Isaiah 4:2-6 refers to the warning about the judgment of the Judean leadership and people. Even though they are judged and will be sent away into Exile from their homeland, there was still hope for them. A 'loyal leader' was promised whose arrival would set up a just rule (v. 2) (Watts 1985:49). Several occurrences from *semah* were of relevance for the Judean community after the disaster of the Exile (Watts 1985:50). If the later readers applied this text to the return from Exile in Babylon, in my view, it would have been seen as a prophetic reference that was fulfilled when the people of Judah returned from Exile. The story of this promise is still of significance for the current Congolese leadership situation. The figurative sense of 'branch' which refers to the arrival of the 'loyal leadership' arouses hope in the current Congolese situation as it did in Judah at the beginning of the Exile (Barker 2003:501). Isaiah's message in this respect was announced by the prophet himself (Jensen and Irwin 2000:230).

The metaphoric sense of the 'sprouting forth' of the 'branch' is built upon OT prophecy, utilising a metaphoric sense. It suggests that the 'loyal leader' to come will be a symbol of prosperity, peace or well-being in the land. The verb *samah* expressing the literal imagery is associated first of all with the life of plants (Watts 1985:51; Ringgren 2003:410). The figurative sense applied to the 'loyal leader' suggests that he will be qualified to manage a better social life for the people. Yahweh causes every sort of tree to grow from the ground, *adama* (Gen. 2:9) as his creative act. The connection of both senses (literal and metaphoric) regarding 'branch' suggests first, God's providence in the growth of plants and people, even their healing (Ringgren 2003:410).[160] Second, it suggests that the 'loyal leadership' brings justice, fairness and fertility to the land. Justice and prosperity in any State derives from its good governance, freedom of corruption and lack of violence against women and children in building a good society for all.

[160] "The *hiphil* forms of the verb *samah* are used several times in the literal sense. Ezekiel describes Zedekiah as a vine that Nebuchadnezzar, portrayed as an eagle, plants and that 'sprouts' forth with branches but then stretches out its roots toward another eagle, Egypt (Ezek. 17:6). This disloyalty can only lead to disaster; the vine is pulled up by its roots, and its sprouting shoots wither where it once grew forth, *smh* (vv9-10). In a more general (metaphoric) sense, *samah* refers to the growth of hair (Lev. 13:27; Judg. 16:22) or of healing skin (Isa. 52:8). In a purely metaphoric sense, *samah* can also be said of people. One person dies, and another springs forth from the earth (Job 8:19), which asserts that the generations are like leaves sprouting forth on trees: one dies and another matures, *gāmal*" (Ringgren 2003:410-11).

The Prophet Isaiah (4:2b) has something to say to the current Congolese leadership. It has to organise and intensify agricultural activities in an already fertile soil in the DR Congo. Instead of importing food from Europe at the expense of the social condition of the people, the State could develop agriculture and farming in order to ensure the food security of all the people (Tarzi 2002:187). The Congolese leadership and people have to work according to the promise that Yahweh made to his people. God promised his servant Israel that he would "pour water on the 'thirsty land' so that Israel's descendants shall spring up like willows by flowing streams" (Isa. 44:4). God's glory is to deal with a prosperous, loyal, and hard working people who are competent in transforming their social life (Stuhlmueller 2005:336). The DR Congo has already received several blessings in terms of its topography, presenting a major water system and a warm tropical climate. This provides the country with ample rain all the year around. But, the government has never setup fisheries or agricultural enterprises in order to improve the economic life of the people (Rondinelli 1989:77). Furthermore, the fertility of the soil, almost everywhere in the Congo, as well as its rich mineral resources can never fully explain why the people have remained in such extreme poverty (Rondinelli 1989:78). This is a call to the current Congolese leadership to be fair and honest in administering public affairs in the country. Nothing must prevent the central government from setting up public enterprises to provide the people with their needs (Rondinelli 1989:78-79).

In the Judean context, the leadership and people were guilty of the devastating situation in the community. A feminine imagery expresses the prostitution of the leadership and people of Jerusalem. In fact, the filth of the daughters of Zion expresses the sexually offensive items, thereby symbolising their moral and social corruption. The phrase "daughters of Zion-Jerusalem" is a feminine image referring to the Judean escapees from the disaster. It suggests that they will be cleansed with the Holy City, Zion-Jerusalem (v. 4). This means that the moral restoration of the people will reflect on the restoration of their city or country (Carroll 1997:74). In a similar way, the leadership and people of Kinshasa must be cleansed of their corrupt minds. Moral and social corruption is evident among the State leadership. Its selfishness is displayed by the way it plunders the country's wealth with the connivance of the Western powers (Nzongola 2006:225-226). To enable the Judean leadership to restore Jerusalem and its people, Yahweh turned them back to him through the learning

experience of the Exile. In other words, the leadership's mind change is a primary requirement of the social restoration of the State or church in the Congo. Mind change enables leadership to impact people's social lives in promoting development in the community (Rondinelli 1989:79; Kalungu-Banda 2006:11).

The 'stump' or 'shoot' from the tree was cut down as a consequence of the disaster in Zion-Jerusalem. This imagery of the trees being cut down symbolises the dismissal of the Davidic kings who enslaved the people. They achieved this through their selfish desire to build and sustain their royal power through the external support of Egypt and Babylon (Watts 1985:170-172). In this connection, they caused a socio-religious devastation in Judah intensified by the disaster of the Exile. The socio-political and religious issue here is that, although the kingship was to be cut off, there was still hope for a better future for the people (Watts 1985:171). Yahweh will 'sprout forth' a 'loyal ruler' who will rule justly. Applied to the Congolese leadership situation, it will be God's providence that will bring to an end the despotic and corrupt presidency of the current State leadership in the DR Congo. God has already intervened in dismissing President Mobutu on May 17, 1997 (Nzongola 2006:226). Nevertheless, a 'loyal leadership' for the DR Congo is still expected. Such will emerge forth from an appropriate moral education with the knowledge of the Lord (Isa. 11:9). This leadership will acquire an adequate standard that will enable it to organise and manage the State or church (Bidwell 2006:19). In the Judean context, the promise of a 'loyal king' to come was drawn from particular themes related to the royal ideology in Zion-Jerusalem. It gave hope to the Judean people for the restoration of the monarchy. This constitutes hope for the many survivors of the current social crisis in the DR Congo.

What kind of hope is needed in the DR Congo? Today, as in Judah during the time of Jeremiah, there are as many futile forms of hope as there are sound. In Judah, the false hope of the kings was based on the Egyptian or Babylonian power upon which they relied for political support. Empty hope is expressed when people do not engage in productive actions that build a good society for all (Katongole 2005:148). Hope for a better future implies that the leadership and people are to be creative and active in performing social change within society. The Congolese leadership and people must act against a passivity which has encouraged corruption within the community

(Nzongola 2006:230). It is God's work to enable the Congolese leadership to administer a new social order which is based on the principles that govern the State, church and community (Reimer 1997:757-9).

3.3. The Royal Oracle in Zechariah 3 and 6

Expressed in a dramatic literary style, the oracle in Zechariah 3:1-10 is introduced by the phrase "behold, there is a man." In metaphoric language, the prophet refers to Joshua, the high priest, whose role is indicated in the leadership to restore the community (1987:213). It suggests first, that a special accent be placed on Zion in the restoration process. Second, it calls for a real collaboration between the civil and priestly leadership in the community (Carroll 1997:71). The literary style in Isaiah 62:3 places in parallel the terms "diadem" and "crown of splendour" (*cf.* Jer. 13:18). There is a similarity between these royal symbols which are applied to the high priest.

It was not unusual in Judah (Zech. 3:5, 14) that a religious leader be part of the political leadership (Jauhiainen 2008:502). The fourth vision in Zechariah 3:1-10 is related to that in Zechariah 6:1-15[161] and describes a crowning ceremony dating back to 518 BCE under King Darius (Love 1999:19; Jauhiainen 2008:501). In my view, this suggests a close collaboration between the civil and religious leadership. The rise of the priestly leader as the political ruler alludes to 'a loyal leadership' ruling over the State following the Exile. It does not necessarily involve the priestly leadership in politics but, it could participate as 'an advisory capacity' alongside the State leadership (Jauhiainen 2008:503). The high priest's influence in the Sanctuary (Zech. 3) may impact on the people and may function better as a counsellor to the State leadership (Zech. 6) (2008:503).

The socio-historical context of the fourth vision (3:1-10) is for the dedication of the rebuilt temple. It underlines a leadership collaboration in this concern (Ezra 6:15). Civil and religious leadership collaboration improves the country's leadership level as

[161] "Solutions are offered for the use of *semah* referring to Joshua and Zerubbabel as it appears in Zechariah 4. Nevertheless, it is only an indication of a majority view of scholars. This view states that Zechariah 3 and 6 envisage a form of diarchy, a shared rule of the high priest and a Davidic king. Thus, these chapters testify to the rise of the Zadokite priesthood as a political power in the postexilic Jewish community" (Jauhiainen 2008:501-502).

it impacts on the public life of the community (Meyers and Meyers 1987:220).[162] In this respect, the night visions (3:1-10) describe the purity and holiness established in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem (Carroll 1997:71). Joshua had largely contributed, along with Zerubbabel, to the rebuilding of the Sanctuary (Meyers and Meyers 1987:220). A close collaboration failed between President Mobutu and the church leadership in Kinshasa, represented by Archbishop Malula (Biaya 1999:149). The latter tried in vain to advise the Head of State to focus on a personal and collective development for the DR Congo, instead of manipulating the people and building selfish authority and power over them (de Haes 1999:45).

The phrase "please listen" (v. 8) is the focus of the unit which refers to Joshua and his colleagues. Through literary imagery, the prophet speaks of men who are a sign, which Yahweh will bring forth as "his servants." One of these servants is named 'branch.' It is an announcement regarding the 'loyal leader' Yahweh is 'sprouting forth' from the Davidic line (v. 8; Jer. 23:5; 33:15) to restore public order in Zion (Rogerson 2003:723). It seems to be the same 'shoot' (from which the previous leadership was cut off) on which the 'new leadership' is 'sprouting forth' (Jauhiainen 2008:507). But, the 'loyal leader' to come has a great ability to collaborate between the civil and religious leaders in building a good society for all (Meyers and Meyers 1987:219-220). Such collaboration could improve the State leadership standard. This sustains the *bumutu* (Bakongo culture) or *ubuntu* (Zulu culture) values which consists of promoting the leadership and people's common life in the DR Congo (Shutte 2001:viii). The Congolese leadership can learn from Nelson Mandela's example as a good State leader in Africa. He had shown a way to promote reconciliation, social justice, peace, and democracy in South African society (Kalungu-Banda 2006:11-12).

As with Jeremiah's oracle to the nations (chapters 50-51), Zechariah 6:5-7 culminates in an apocalyptic vision of judgment and wrath. It suggests the way in which all

[162] "Darius's political and economic policies with regard to Yehud (Persian Empire) brought about organisational changes. First, the restoration of the Sanctuary was a politically strategic ploy from the viewpoint of the Persians which brought the role of chief priest to the fore. Joshua was an important administrator, along with Zerubbabel, of that project and also was soon to resume the full responsibilities of a functioning high priesthood, once the temple was restored. Second, the Yehudites, like other imperial subjects, found themselves required to deliver tribute, or a regular tax revenues, to the empire for the first time after 522 BCE Zerubbabel as governor and titular Head of the government would have been charged with that responsibility as well as other responsibilities in a civilian administration…" (Meyers and Meyers 1987:220).

parties must submit, either in willing obedience or face divine judgment (Brueggemann 2007:45). A reversal in situation was that the guilt and wickedness shifted from Judah to Babylon (Zech. 5:11). It was God's wrath that aimed in that direction. Similarly, I can see how the effective independence or liberation of the Congolese State can come about when God himself would, in some way, intervene as he did in the Judean context (Robinson 2001:194). It would be a kind of 'revenge' taken out on the Western powers for their oppressive attitude towards the people of the DR Congo. In addition, the same 'revenge' would be taken out on most of the Congolese leaders who have plundered the country's wealth with the connivance of the Western powers (Nzongola 2006:230). The Congolese people will shift from their hopeless situation to a restored one which provides them with hope for a better future. This will require a radical change of mind. In other words, the State leadership would be aware of what is wrong in its governance (Maluleke 2001:27 citing Bediako 1992:1; Baitu 2007:56).[163] The Congolese State leadership would adopt a new way of managing the State and caring for the people. This would bring about unity, collaboration, and security based on honesty of the leadership and people in the DR Congo (Nzongola 2006:228). Under this condition, the leadership in the DR Congo would promote a good society for its people, free of social injustice and corruption. It would require a true leadership to govern the State as the servants of the people.

In the Judean context, a 'loyal leader' to come would serve people in the community. It is perceived in the literary construction of the unit Zechariah 6:12-13 in which the builder of the temple is linked to the image of 'branch.' This symbolises the 'loyal leader' to come who would be available to serve the people. By rebuilding the temple as the centre of the socio-political and religious life of Judah, the new leadership would show their commitment to restoring the social and economic life of the community. Moreover, the temple had been the dwelling place of Yahweh alongside his people. From Zion, the Judean leadership and people would meet Yahweh in a reconciling relationship. Zion had been a 'meeting place' of the people with Yahweh, their God. The people had opportunity to meet Yahweh at Zion in order to be reconciled with him.

[163] "The term 'governance' denotes the total organisation of the State or church is concerned with the maintenance or establishment of social, political, economic, cultural and religious order, the means that support the system of rights and obligations of all' citizens or members of the State or church" (Baitu 2007:56).

Zechariah was told to collect silver and gold from those newly arriving from Exile. Some manuscripts speak of crowns instead of one crown in the MT (6:11). In my view, several crowns were made for crowning Joshua and Zerubbabel, and all those who played a significant role in rebuilding the temple of the Lord (v.14). Nevertheless, the crowning ceremony would have focused on Joshua, the high priest, instead of Zerubbabel, the governor. This might be due to the emphasis placed on the collaboration between the religious and State leadership in ruling over the people. Therefore, the term 'crowns' is in the plural. The metaphoric epithet 'branch' in being applied to Zerubbabel (6:12) suggests that he was crowned as governor of Jerusalem. A good relationship between the religious and State leadership is of relevance for the current Congolese situation. It would bring about a social set of standards for developing honest behaviour in public life in the community. The Congolese leadership, in contrast to the colonial model which was re-enforced by the Mobutu regime, would learn more in terms of honesty and uprightness in running public affairs and in ruling justly (Cone 1982:549).

In particular, there are two negative characteristics of the colonial model from which an honest leadership in the DR Congo must turn away. First, there is the abuse of power, whereby the current Congolese leadership does not take seriously the rights of the people. Second, there is selfishness, which leads the State leadership in the DR Congo to transfer the country's money to its personal bank accounts abroad. This model of leadership reflects the colonial system. This way of behaviour must be eradicated, if the people of the DR Congo are to experience justice, peace and development.

The presence of the *torah*, God's instruction among the Judean leadership did not help them change their minds. Yahweh had to intervene, first, in sending his people into Exile. Second, he placed his instruction upon their hearts (Robinson 2001:193-195).[164] By enabling his people to obey him, this was the only one way the Judean leadership could experience a change of mind (Jer. 31:33).

[164] I indicate here that the heart and minds of the people can be considered in the singular or plural. According to the texts referring to the heart or mind change, such change consists of the understanding of the people of new principles of social life in the community. Because of this, it is the heart of the whole community which is involved in such change. Nevertheless, social change is sustained by individuals among the people who already have had a change of mind (Robinson 2001:193-6).

It is not impossible for God to restore the Congolese leadership and people. The next subsection spells out the way the new covenant in Jeremiah's oracle could address the current Congolese leadership.

4. A 'New Covenant' in Jeremiah and the Congolese Leadership

The 'New Covenant' passage in Jeremiah (31:31-34) meant a lot, not only to the Judean people but also later to the Qumran community. Moreover, this passage is important not only to those during Jeremiah's day, but also to the church (Robinson 2001:181). Many churches consider this passage to be part of the 'gospel seed' of OT prophecy (Robinson 2001:182). How then is the new covenant linked to the theme of *semah*?

The providential characteristics of *semah* which depends on God's initiative to 'sprout forth' a 'loyal leadership' in Judah is similar to his initiative to make a 'New Covenant' with his people. God's intervention calls for the people's action or obedience in order that they participate in the achievement of God's plan in the community. In the *semah* theme, God's intervention within people's hearts ensures a sound form of hope which calls for people's constructive action to transform their existing conditions of life.

Many issues arise from the 'New Covenant' passage of Jeremiah 31:31-34. In particular, matters of scholarly concern include its dating within Jeremiah's ministry, and its probable Deuteronomistic source. In this present study, I will not discuss these issues, because my focus is essentially the recovery and restoration of the Congolese leadership. Robinson (2001:189) citing Holladay (1986:9) argues that the 'New Covenant 'in Jeremiah constitutes a fresh opportunity for Yahweh to restore his people and their land. This new occasion could be of relevance for the Congolese leadership situation. It opens up a new perspective of hope for the people of the DR Congo, that a 'loyal leadership' will be appointed to rule the State or lead the church justly. The 'New Covenant' speaks of Yahweh setting up a new relationship with his people after the disaster of the Exile. The introductory phrase in verse 31 refers to the days after Judah's return from suffering and Exile. In other words, they first must go

through the Exile before they will be ready for the 'New Covenant' (Dumbrell 1984:176; Robinson 2001:194).

Similarly, the Congolese leadership must be aware of its responsibility in the current social crisis in the Congo. A renewal of consciousness and repentance for bad governance are at the base of leadership restoration (Rondinelli 1989:78). In this connection, God will intervene to bring about peace and prosperity (Adamo 2005:125). Yahweh's 'New Covenant' with his people, means he will set up a new relationship between himself and his people. In other words, the Judean people, especially its leaders, received the promise of a new understanding of themselves and of God. Jeremiah (31:33b) says that Yahweh will place his instructions upon their hearts. This suggests a restoration of people's service to Yahweh and the community in Zion-Jerusalem. The interior, *qrb,* is used in connection with the land represented by its city, Jerusalem (Jer. 6:1) (Robinson 2001:194). In its first meaning, the 'interior' of Jerusalem (6:1) suggests the oppressions or difficulties in her interior (6:6). The phrase, "the interior of Jerusalem," means in "the Sanctuary" as a dwelling place of Yahweh. The context of some texts on the "interior" (Psa. 55:11-12; Jer. 6:1; 17:1) makes this clear (Robinson 2001:194). The instruction is therefore given or written on people's minds and hearts to bring them back to obey and serve Yahweh, and thereby restore justice, peace, unity or solidarity, and prosperity among people in the land (Robinson 2001:194-5). The connection between the 'interior' of Jerusalem and the hearts of the people (Jer. 6:1; 17:1) refers to the restoration of the people's minds and that of Jerusalem representing the entire State. Prosperity and security therefore derive from social justice, peace, collaboration in the community. The rights of the people would be set up by the 'loyal leader,' symbolised by *semah* in the land (Abegg 1997:815).

The words 'interior' of Jerusalem and 'heart' of the people are in a singular form. The singular here expresses the corporate mind, the intention and will of the people which are at stake (Robinson 2001:195). This means the renewal of the mind of the leadership reflects the restoration of the State or church they are ruling over or leading (Dayton and Engstrom 1985:13). Yahweh says that he will be their God and they will stay his people (Jer. 31:33d). This is a covenantal formula which underlines the close relationship that exists between Yahweh and his people. The 'New Covenant' plays a

key role in renewing this relationship (2001:197). From the beginning to the end, the process of Judean social and moral change was God's initiative to which people should have responded. This defines the agreement between God and his people based upon their reciprocity in relationship. Thus, "I am your God, and you are my people" (Jer. 31:33d).

The *torah* is understood as the instruction of a parent and has some similar themes to those contained in the Wisdom literature. There are important instructions that people had to remember from the 'Book of the Law' (Robinson 2001:195).[165] Human beings tried in vain to inculcate God's instruction upon their sons' hearts. Now, Yahweh is *writing* his instruction upon their hearts. This is challenging not only to the Congolese leadership but also to the people. The focus is on the Congolese leadership of the church and State.

The instruction Yahweh is going to write upon people's hearts does not prevent them from setting up a re-educative process (Jer. 24:7). In the context of the DR Congo, such a programme would ensure people's inner healing, deliverance and reconciliation because of their past oppressive history which distorted their identity (Ela 1989:24-5).

4.1. What Does Reconciliation Mean?

The issue of reconciliation is complex and requires several approaches (social, psychological, political and religious) in order to deal adequately with it. Furthermore, it is difficult to reconcile people as they often do not know their point of conflict with others (O'Leary and Hay 2000:85; van der Merwe 2003:270-271). Nevertheless, when people stay together, they come to a common understanding of the elements of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a term close to that of forgiveness. It could be argued that forgiveness may at times be a contributing factor towards achieving reconciliation, but not a *permanent* contributing factor (O'Leary and Hay 2000:86).

[165] "My son do not forget my *torah*, but let your heart keep my commands…write them upon the tablets of your heart" (Prov. 3:1-3; 7:3NIV). "Hear, O sons […] I give you good precepts; do not forsake my *torah*…let your heart hold fast my words…keep them within your heart" (Prov. 4:1-4, 21). "Keep your father's command and do not forsake my *torah* (instructions). Bind them upon your heart always" (Prov. 6:20-21 NIV).

Forgiveness, like reconciliation, is not an easy concept to understand. The moral or spiritual dimension of forgiveness shows that there is not true reconciliation without forgiveness. But, forgiveness does not necessarily imply reconciliation. In this respect, reconciliation and forgiveness derive from God intervening in the midst of people in making peace among them. Negative feelings in people's hearts should be replaced by re-constructive thoughts and acts (O'Leary and Hay 2000:87 citing North 1998:20).

In theology, the relevance of reconciliation or forgiveness is about sin before God, but people are an 'inherently social community' around God and cannot "flourish in isolation" (Clements 2004:135; Hill 2004:159). Such reconciliation is unique, efficient and profound because it is initiated by God transforming the people's minds (Robinson 2001:195).[166] The reconciliation within the leadership of the DR Congo does not necessarily concern a theological dimension. Nevertheless, it requires humaneness and courage (Meyer 2004:3).

For nearly five centuries,[167] Portuguese explorers, missionaries, and Belgian colonisers oppressed and frustrated the Congolese people (van Rensburg 1981:413). For a long time, Congolese customary chiefs were manipulated into building colonial authority and power in the DR Congo (Borel 1992:369). This explains the way the leadership's vision was gradually affected over time. They were no longer able to organise social life in the community. This stems from two sources: personal and positional power (Boon 1996:69). Before Western exploiters came to the DR Congo, individuals had power, based on their abilities, expertise, and knowledge. Most of 'traditional leaders' had power to reward or punish in order to maintain social justice, peace, health and prosperity in the community (1996:31; Furnham 2005:412). Besides power and wealth, the Congolese customary chiefs of the time were expected to have knowledge. In this regard, the Masai proverb says, 'when an elder died, a whole library was buried with him' (Adeyemo 2006:546). Elders were repositories of the African (Congolese) history and its cultural values. Furthermore, they were expected

[166] "The use of singular expresses here the corporate mind, intention and the will of the people which are being restored." (Robinson 2001:195). This means the renewal of leaders' mind reflects on the social conditions of the State, church and the people they lead.

[167] "This epoch goes from the coming of the Portuguese explorers and missionaries in 1484 up to the time of the 'Congo Free State' owned by Leopold II, the king of Belgium from 1884/5 to 1908; and the colonial period of the Congo from 1908 to 1960" (Hochschild 1999:7, 61).

to have 'spiritual' knowledge as well. As a result of such knowledge, the Congolese leadership was expected to have wisdom to resolve communal conflicts. Therefore, a leader was regarded as a problem solver and peacemaker (Adeyemo 2006:546).

This argument suggests that the bad governance of the State or church did not derive from the Congolese cultures in and of themselves. Rather, it was due to a corruption of African (Congolese) leadership culture through the colonial experience (Fitzgerald 1967:301-302). Indeed, the political norms in behaviour institutionalised, first through colonial power, and second, through the Western powers partnership with the Congo, have become a kind of 'new culture' over time (Katongole 2005:148). These enduring norms within the leadership, gain legitimacy and establish permissible limits as normal behaviour to the detriment of social justice, peace, and solidarity in the community (Tarzi 2002:187). In this connection, the Congolese leadership and people need an urgent reconciliation with themselves in order to bring them back to moral values linked to their current education which could determine a country's leadership standard (Nzongola 2006:230).

4.2. A Re-educative Process for the Congolese Leadership

God's anger in Jeremiah's and Isaiah's prophecies is expressed first by the imagery 'of the cup' to be drunk. Second, it is indicated by 'the image of the treading of the wine press.' This image is common in the prophetic tradition about God destroying the enemies of his people as 'a redeemer' of Israel (Gen. 49:9-12; Jer. 25:15-29; Isa. 51:17-23; 63:1-6). Third, the image of the *yōm Yhwh*, 'the day of the Lord' is that of God's 'revenge' (Decock 2009).[168] God redeems his people after judgment or punishment which is a training experience that usually turns his people back to a right way to behave. In a similar way, the suffering of the Congolese people should have helped them draw lessons on moral values that could determine the country's leadership level. The current social behaviour of the Congolese leadership and people has stemmed from painful events of the Western powers over them. The experience of the relationship with the West has produced among the people of the DR Congo a kind of leadership which does not practice *ubuntu*, putting people first (Boon 1996:69;

[168] Course work taught by Paul Decock on October 5, 2009 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

Adeyemo 2006:546). The interaction between both Western and Congolese cultures created a real mutation of people's minds. Western civilisation tried to assimilate the Congolese people. In this regard, as Senghor argues:

> 'Assimilate' means 'to make similar. Civilisation assimilates different people'…. It is not quite true that a civilisation can assimilate a given people; we must still keep the definition that to assimilate is not to identify, to make identical. What is true is that the same people can assimilate a civilisation…..It will be objected that only what is similar can be assimilated. But is this not self-contradictory? If to assimilate means to make similar, what is similar has no need to be assimilated (1976:50).

I underline here a confusing situation created by Western colonisers and missionaries in the minds of the people of the DR Congo. To assimilate Western civilisation, Congolese people, particularly the leadership, tried to become similar to Westerners. Effectively, they never became fully assimilated, due to their personal and genuine identity having lost its specificity in looking like Westerners, but not the same as Belgians (Senghor 1976:50). This situation created internal conflicts in people's mind. Even though they were well-educated, they lacked the cultural and moral values which define the qualities of good leadership. People's cultural values had been affected so that they needed to reconstruct their history in order to be healed from past circumstances (Bufacchi 2003:31). In this regard, a 're-educative process' requires the decolonisation of the mind (Maluleke 2001:28). Although a 'change of mind' is first a sign of God's intervention in people's hearts, the re-educative process is taken as a re-construction of a people's story in order to be liberated. Such a process will play a key role in decolonising the Congolese leadership and its people (de Haes 1999:50). The next subsection proposes a re-educative process that the Congolese leadership and people would need.

4.3. A Proposal for a Re-educative Process

Proposing such a process raises several issues regarding the people's expectation of a 'loyal leadership' in the Congo. I will nevertheless focus on a threefold process of re-education. The point will be to provide a process as it emerges from a reading of the *semah* texts. Lado (2002:33) holds that affecting people's identity was the greatest sin the colonial powers had committed in Africa (Congo).

Referring to its period of colonial rule, Katongole (2005:147) states that the DR Congo was the place where the greatest crimes made by Europeans in Africa took place. This difficult period of history was initiated by Portuguese explorers and missionaries in 1484. It continued when the Congo was owned by King Leopold II of Belgium in 1885 (Hochschild 1998:123). The same conditions of life continued when the country became the Belgian Congo from 1908 up to Independence in 1960 (Borel 1992:369). The situation left by the colonisers worsened through the despotic regime of President Mobutu (Kelly 1993:7).

Several of these past events have been costly to the people of the DR Congo. Ela (1989:24-25) recognises that Africans were 'uprooted' from their cultural values. Today, they live "in a pattern borrowed from others." This implies that there is a need to 'rediscover' the humane way that Africans care for one another. Ela further thinks that the desire by Africans to recover their 'affected' identity turns them towards ancestor worship (Ela 1989:25). In this connection, the restoration in the DR Congo should be understood as a 'renewal of the mind' in order to promote a renewed interest in the productive activities of a community. Such an action will bring about a 'renaissance' in Congolese society. The leadership's mind adopted over time should be renewed and its set of moral values recovered in order to establish a just rule. In contrast of this, it is not surprising to find in the DR Congo a "short-sighted" State leadership (Katongole 2005:146-148). A weak and affected leadership in the DR Congo has brought about social injustice, unfairness and internal dissention. The way to mismanage the State had been intensified during the Mobutu regime (Mvuluya 2000:78-79).

While Mobutu seemed intent on maintaining a tribal balance of leadership within the government, he nevertheless aroused internal conflict by opposing individuals against one another. Hence, he used certain of his associates as informants to establish what was happening among his leadership (van Rensburg 1981:416). In this regard, Mobutu's associates became suspicious of one another. Mobutu's associates could do nothing but submit to their 'commander in chief' so as to keep their position. Consequently, leaders became suspicious of one another, thereby losing the ability to work together in office. Whereby, a social collaboration which would be the strength of the State or church leadership, the Congolese leadership ability to behave correctly

broke down (Nsangi 1981:151-157; Bufacchi 2003:31). Furthermore, it aroused within the leadership a real withdrawal which weakened the government's competency to achieve economic and political independence in the DR Congo (2003:32). This underlines an identity crisis within the country's leadership. Its restoration will require the Congolese leadership to be aware and committed to the right way of ruling over the State or leading the church (Tarzi 2002:190).

4.4. The Recovery of the Congolese Leadership Identity

The recovery process of the affected identity of the leadership and people requires a healing in several aspects of life. A reconciliation process could also be perceived as a decolonisation process in the social, political, economic and religious aspects of public life in the DR Congo (Fanon 1967:27-29). The focus is on the reconciliation of the people among themselves, with the former colonisers and with the Western allies involved in Congolese politics. Maluleke (2001:28) citing Tutu (1978:366) argues that a recovery process for the African leadership identity should be planned. This would empower the leadership in the DR Congo to reach a country's leadership standard in order to achieve the purpose of ruling over the State justly.

4.5. The Consciousness of the Congolese Leadership

If the State leadership becomes conscious of what is going wrong in the way it is administrating public affairs in the DR Congo, it would mark the beginning of a change of mind. Below this level of conscious awareness there are moral values which lead and guide a true leadership towards an administration of justice in the community. This implies an inner healing of the leadership and people from their corrupt minds; corruption being a key factor that hinders the development of a good society for all.

The leadership's and people's awareness of the present social situation in the Congo should allow them to take it seriously (Maluleke 2001:27-28). In someway, this is the starting point for an inner healing of the leadership and people. The true development of social, economic, political and religious life depends on this mind change. For this reason, the mind change required of the leadership and its people is a key issue to be

addressed (Lado 2002:33-34). It determines a way of restoring the current leadership situation that prevails in the DR Congo (de Haes 1999:50-51).[169] This is sustained by what Pope John Paul II calls a deeper moral attitude of any leadership taking responsibility to mend the way it has ruled over the State and managed the country's wealth (O'Leary and Hay 2000:7). Anyone willing to be a leader must know the requirements of a good leader. Good leadership humbles itself by recognising and honouring the people it leads. Mungazi (2005:1) recognises that one such requirement for true leadership is to respect those values that make one an efficient leader in the community. The social situation in the DR Congo will never find a workable solution without the participation of every citizen (Kalungu-Banda 2006:10-11).

Re-training the Congolese leadership would arouse its consciousness in being responsible for the devastating social situation of the State. Furthermore, the State leadership should take responsibility and stop plundering the country's wealth. In this regard, the leadership has to give up its "short-sighted" conception in managing the State (Nzongola 2006:232). Under this condition, the State leadership should work hard to promote sustainable technical and social developments that offer employment opportunities to the people. The main achievement would be a social justice, peace, healthcare, and collaboration within the leadership.

4.6. A Re-training Process for the Congolese Leadership

Although the leadership of the DR Congo is in dire need of being morally redressed, it needs (with regard to the coming generation) to reform the educative programme from the primary school to University. Apart from their moral education, Congolese learners need to be taught about things that concern their country, its cultural values, as well as its socio-political and economic concerns (Nsangi 1981:152). Leadership should be morally and politically trained and capable to develop the community. Kamrava (1989:233) states that State leadership has to educate itself and its people. In this regard, external influences should no longer manipulate the Congolese leadership as they do today. The Prophet Isaiah (11:6-9) speaks of the importance of moral

[169] In reporting Malula's sayings, de Haes (1999:50-1) summarises that the church leadership and Christians in the DR Congo are all responsible for the current situation that prevails in the country. We have to take a constructive action instead of giving warm, lovely speeches. We have to be converted and transformed.

training which does not exclude other disciplines and areas of learning for the people. For Isaiah, such training provides people with "the knowledge of the Lord." This helps the leadership to acquire moral values that lead them to promote social justice, peace and prosperity in the community (Jensen and Irwin 2000:238).

A leadership re-training process should focus on its moral ability to be 'loyal' and efficient in managing the public affairs of the State. While this is difficult, it is not impossible to change attitudes and behaviours that have become so deeply "entrenched over the years" (Katongole 2005:148; Nzongola 2006:229). A capable leadership is required to reverse this mindset and rule over the State justly. Leadership is more an attitude of being and vision of acting in promoting a willing collaboration of all in the process of State development (de Haes 1999:43).

The Congolese leadership needs to redefine the norms and limits to its diplomatic agreements, especially those which do not include the good of the people in the DR Congo. Leadership has also to manage its behaviour and that of its international partners in pursuit of the interests of the State in order to improve social development in the DR Congo (Tarzi 2002:187). It is such leadership re-training that could provide it with appropriate clues for this country's leadership standard.

4.7. Reconciliation among the Congolese Leadership

Why do I think of the reconciliation of the leadership in the DR Congo after more than forty-nine years of Independence? It is necessary because first, the leadership crisis in the DR Congo is related to the former colonial rule and was intensified during the Mobutu regime (van Rensburg 1981:416). Second, the lack of a process of decolonisation after Independence failed to prepare an adequate leadership to manage a country the size of the DR Congo (1981:415). Third, the lack of an efficient leadership perpetuated the social disorder of the DR Congo.

Malamba (2003:70) referring to Ela argues that the devastating social situation in the DR Congo is due to the conflicting tensions among its leadership. This has caused a socio-political and economic impasse which prevents the further organisation and development of the State. The social situation is taking a tragic turn which requires an

urgent solution from the Congolese themselves (de Haes 1999:50; Nzongola 2006:232). The DR Congo and its State leadership are still subjugated in many ways to Western control over the State.

Leadership here is taken as being representative of the people. It bears the responsibility for the devastating situation in the DR Congo. Its lack of commitment in the fight against social injustice proves its complicity in the matter (Nzongola 2006:228). The unfair way that the Congolese ruling class governs the State creates untold social division. The church's prophetic role moderated by Cardinal Malula tried in vain to reconcile the ruling class with the people of the DR Congo. The church in South Africa has fulfilled what the Mobutu regime failed to do in the DR Congo (van der Merwe 2003:270).[170] The reconciliation of the leadership consists of the fight against neo-colonialism which devastates the State through the Western stranglehold on the DR Congo. In this regard, reconciliation would extricate the State leadership and people from their corrupt practices. To eradicate corruption in the Congo, the State leadership has to play a key role in reversing the system that had been built up over the years (Kalungu-Banda 2006:11). If corruption is eradicated among the leadership, discipline will come down to the people they lead in the community. This implies that the Congolese people have to find their own solutions to the problems that prevail in the country (Turner 2007:11).[171]

In my view, the reconciling key point between the former colonisers (related to Western powers) and the Congolese ruling class consists of fair diplomatic agreements which should favour the interests of the DR Congo (Oyeshile 2004:294).

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[170] "In South Africa, the apartheid era presented the church with the challenge of fighting the fundamental source of division, apartheid. In many aspects, this battle for justice was one that built the legitimacy of the church as a political actor with real power to promote social change. It is therefore not surprising that the task of overcoming social divisions and (re) building relationship in a democratic South Africa is something that is now seen by society and by church leaders as a key part of the church's role" (van der Merwe 2003:270).

[171] Turner (2007:11) citing Braeckman of *Le Soir*, "the most influencial journalist writing about the Congo, discusses "State failure" not a reality on the ground but a *concept qui tue* (an idea that kills) that is, an academic notion that supposedly determined America's decision to back the invasion by Rwanda and Uganda. Citing Marina Ottaway who is in charge for International Peace, the latter argues: many of the states that emerged from the colonial period have ceased to exist in practice. […] The problem is to create functioning states, either by re-dividing territory or by creating new institutional arrangements such as decentralised federations or even confederations'. The United States and other outsiders should be wary of assuming a 'colonial role.' In this regard, Ottaway advises African countries (the DR Congo) to find solutions on their (its) own. Apparently, the USA and Britain should continue to aid Rwanda and Uganda as they 'found solutions' by carving up the Congo."

This means that reconciliation in the Congo should focus on the leadership of the DR Congo as direct partners of the West. The former colonisers know the country and its people well, hence, they could possibly help find a way to sort out its problems, especially those related to the West. Before President Mobutu had nationalised foreign enterprises, Belgian cooperation sustained several public sectors in the Congo. This implies that the State leadership must realise its need to learn from its former colonial masters (Kamrava 1989:233-4).

4.8. The Prophetic Role of the Church

Despite the weaknesses of the church due to the complexity of the socio-political and cultural context in which it has to play a prophetic role, the church has been efficient in its task. The prophetic role of the church in the Congo is defined in a similar context as that of Jeremiah alongside the Judean leadership. Indeed, Jeremiah was not often consulted by the Judean kings in looking for directive advices to be successful in their rule. Often, Jeremiah only intervened among the kings when things were going wrong. In a similar way, the church leadership in Kinshasa represented by Cardinal Malula was not consulted during the difficult times of the Mobutu regime. These church leaders used their wisdom to prevent the political ideology imposing itself on the church as a whole.

Who are the key role players in reconciling the leadership, its people, and its Western partners? In South Africa, church leaders have recognised the contribution of several disciplines in the reconciliation process. Some leaders, nevertheless, argue that the church is the best qualified to deal with the issue (van der Merwe 2003:270).[172] The church must play its role in promoting peace, social justice, unity, and leadership collaboration in the community. The church's prophetic role is also to teach the leadership in the DR Congo to lead the people to action rather than commanding them. This would better impact the people's lives and community (Kalungu-Banda 2006:54). In this regard, the DR Congo needs to find church or State leaders of the

[172] Rev. Charity Majiza believes "that the term reconciliation is a very Christian or biblical term. He does not think it belongs to the secular world. At the same time, he is not advocating a position that this is to be clearly monopolised by the Churches but he thinks that the depth of it could be missed if it is not looked at from its roots." Interview given by Rev. Charity Majiza, General Secretary of the SACC (van der Merwe 2003:270).

stature of Archbishop Joseph-Albert Malula, Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, or Former-President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, who would be able and qualified to address the current conflict in the Congolese community (de Haes 1999:41-42; Gish 2004:xi; Kalungu-Banda 2006:9).[173]

No church, no matter where it is located, lacks a righteous remnant within it. In my view, the church should contribute by providing a new dimension of reconciliation which is deeper than that derived from social science, psychology or the other disciplines (Lamont 2006:178). Nevertheless, such disciplines are absolutely necessary to help the Congolese leadership and people to realise their need of reconciliation. A reconciled leadership would recognise its weaknesses to grasp and identify the current socio-cultural, economic, political and religious issues that subjugate the DR Congo and its people (Lamont 2006:175). The leadership's illusive ideas on its role (added to its ignorance of political issues) has in part brought about the current crisis in the DR Congo. A true State leadership has to grasp the situation of its country and bring change to bear. Such a leadership influences the people with regard to their commitment to social change in the community (van der Merwe 2003:270-271). Reconciliation among the Congolese leadership opens a healing process of the people and their society. It requires a dialogue between the religious and State leadership. Sharing different experiences and visions among leaders would occasion leadership self-training, healing and empowering. In mentioning the work of the Muslim academic, Farid Esack, van der Merwe (2003:271), believes that there is no neat distinction between the religious and secular. Instead, he recognises the existence of spiritual elements in all human activity.

With regard to reconciliation, some African theologians think there is an interconnection between the religious and African cultural values (Ukpong 1984:502-503). Westerners differentiate the two aspects of reconciliation (one secular and another religious) (Adamo 2008:577). Africans (Congolese) take the reconciliation as a *bumutu* or *ubuntu* situation (as reflected from Bakongo or Zulu culture) (Boon 1996:32; Shutte 2001:23). A question thus arises as to when the concerned are

[173] In describing Cardinal Malula, de Haes (1999:41-2), affirms that this late church leader had a strong personality. He was able to understand complex situations and initiated several humanitarian projects and activities in the DR Congo.

religious, what is the best process to reconcile people? Whatever could be the process, the Congolese leadership need an efficient solution in order to achieve reconciliation within itself.

A contextual reading of the texts on *semah* (in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah) has dealt with the consequences of the lack of harmony within the Judean leadership during the time of Jeremiah (Wessels 1991:236; Willson 2008:71). The promise of a 'loyal leader' to come suggests a learning experience from the Exile. To enable his people to assume properly their task, Yahweh reconciled his people with himself and one another (Willson 2008:71). Thus, God's intervention is able to reconcile the leadership with itself in order to bring about an adequate standard of leadership in the country. This process determines the struggle of the church for its prophetic role in the DR Congo as it has been for Jeremiah in Judah.

5. Summary and Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I will underline the main points arising from my contextual reading of the *semah* texts in Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah. The appropriative reading is realised by confronting the *semah* texts with their contexts in Judah and the leadership context in the DR Congo. The Judean leadership failed to rule over the people of God justly. The leadership and people had been subjugated to different internal and external political empires of the day. Through these external influences, the Judean leadership, in particular, was torn between the two great powers: Egypt and Babylon, who were fighting to gain control over Judah because of its geo-strategic position in the Ancient Near East. In this struggle between the conquering forces of Egypt and Babylon, the leadership and people of Judah swung either one way or the other. Such changes, divided the Judean people from inside because of the political and military alliances of the Judean kings with either Egypt or Babylon. The premonitory picture for the Judean leadership situation reflected on most Judeans. This situation brought about the fall of the socio-political and religious system in Zion-Jerusalem. In view of this, Jeremiah announces the 'sprouting forth' of a 'loyal leader.' He would be different from any previous leader and would be adept at restoring social order to the nation and thereby impact the lives of the people in the community.

The way the holy city was rebuilt and her remnant people restored is of relevance for the Congolese leadership and society. The Bible declares: "what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9 NIV). This not only explains the similarity of socio-political issues in the two contexts, but more importantly, that the two socio-political situations could be restored in similar ways.

Today, the Congolese people have an opportunity to migrate to other countries of the world. Instead, in my view, first it should be important to learn what is wrong with the Congolese people and their social political, economic and religious system. Second, they should reflect on how to learn from other organisational policies. This could show them a way of improving their country's standard of leadership. The Judean people, for example, found themselves in the service of a pagan ruler to learn submission to a foreign government. They also found opportunity to profoundly re-think and be reminded about their covenanted relationship with Yahweh their God. They were like Joseph in Egypt, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah in Babylon, and Esther in Persia, who had all been in foreign and pagan employment. They acquired not only knowledge and ability, but also a particular experience which helped to restore Zion-Jerusalem.

As Léopold Sédar Senghor has said: *En m'ouvrant aux autres Paris m'a ouvert à la connaissance de moi-même* meaning 'in entering into another culture, the new culture allows for a new understanding of oneself.' The Congolese people must learn from the cross-cultural interaction during their Diaspora which is an opportunity that provides them with appropriate clues on a right way to manage public affairs.

In foreign countries, a tension is presented between two worlds. Whether or not, the diasporic people are solely seeking better social lives abroad, the point is that the Congolese people have to reflect on the real problems regarding their home country. They can take their situation to heart and commit themselves to look for appropriate ways to sort it out. It requires sacrifice and commitment to offer oneself as an instrument that can restore the social situation in the home country. In the Judean context, there was Daniel whose discipline during the Exile led him to abstain from the regular food and drink of the palace in order to avoid compromising his commitment to Yahweh.

Through similar sacrifices the Congolese people can obtain hope, because they are not alone in their struggle for freedom and social development for a better public life. God is at work, as a leader of his people. God himself is committed to restore the social situation and its sectors in the DR Congo. God is affected by our suffering. Although there is punishment, it will turn to a learning experience for his people. The 'New Covenant' in the book of Jeremiah puts together the work of God and humans in order to restore the mind of the Congolese leadership and its people. The people should express their faith in God and his commitment to the Congolese people to deal with the corruption that is endemic in the country. The Congolese people should enjoy the providential arrival of a 'loyal leadership' who will be able to heal those who have been affected in their identity. Such a 'royal leadership' will rule the State with humility and justice. This is the hope for a better future.

Despite punishment in Zion-Jerusalem, following the Exile, God restored peace, harmony and social order to the community. This was the result of the earning experience the people went through during the Exile. The story of the promise and challenge of a 'loyal leadership' for the Judean people concerns also the nations including Africa. An exercise of power based on the administration of justice is a key factor of reconciliation and collaboration of the leadership and people in Africa, in general, and in the DR Congo, in particular. Despite what appears a hopeless situation in the DR Congo, there is hope for a better future. The DR Congo is a monument to the disaster caused by its hard past history. In this regard, the leadership and people of the DR Congo need to develop a 'conviction of hope,' as well as a self- and mutual-confidence in their collaboration. Under this condition, the leadership and people of the DR Congo should be able work out their social situation and develop a good society for all.

Through the contextual reading of the *semah* texts, I see Yahweh, the God of Israel saying: "I am the Lord, the God of all humankind. Is anything too hard for me?" (Jer. 32:27). This rhetorical question suggests that through the devastating social situation in the DR Congo, God has punished his people enough. The act of punishment is an act of commitment on the part of God inspiring hope in the people. This is a true hope not a vain hope as it is expressed by the Congolese people since gaining their Independence. This attitude of the people was due to the lack of the decolonisation

process. The Congolese leadership and people need a real self-reconciliation but also a reconciliation with their former colonisers. This would build a strong collaboration with them that would impact on the people's mutual relationship in the DR Congo. The same collaboration between the State and religious leadership would encourage and build, within the leadership, a moral conscience and humanist personality that is indispensable for the development of good leadership. This will improve the country's standard of leadership which will be committed to achieving social justice in the community. Thus, the Congolese leadership and people will be empowered to develop a good society for all, free of short-sighted behaviour among the leadership and people in the DR Congo.

Through this perspective, the current social crisis in the DR Congo will be a time of expectation and re-birth, as a just leadership is raised up to restore a new DR Congo in which the people will feel at home.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

1. A Brief Overview

To understand the socio-cultural, political and religious context that elicited the oracle on *semah* I have analysed it in two stages. First, I have detailed the socio-historical context of Jeremiah's prophecy, shaped as it was by the socio-political intrigues inside the Kingdom of Judah and by external influences. Second, I have analysed the literary and historical contexts of texts on *semah*. This context of texts and that of the Congolese leadership have been mirrored in each other. Through an "appropriative reading" I have engaged the two contexts in dialogue (West 2009:250). In a particular way, by using Ukpong's interpretive process as clarified by Draper (2002) and highlighted by West (2009), I have developed a distinctive procedure of engaging in this dialogue. Although the analysis of textual and contextual poles has raised several issues, my "appropriative reading" dealt with the real core of the Congolese leadership change. Such a reading has been determined by my choice and my socio-political-theological view. The restoration of the leadership is also that of the people and society in the DR Congo.

A contextual reading of the oracle on *semah* can show to the Congolese leadership a new way of thinking, acting and dealing with the people in the community. It is a challenging address to the Congolese leadership with regard to its way of ruling over the State. To achieve this leadership standard in the Congo, I further emphasise some prior steps that merit consideration. First, the Congolese leadership has to be transformed appropriately into that *semah*. This has given a new insight to the current leadership of the DR Congo on how to be an upright leadership. Second, I underline the necessity to be freed from the colonial influences which are at the core of the

leadership failure in the DR Congo. Third, in spite of the past and indeed current poor experience of the people of the DR Congo, there is a twofold possibility:

i. There still is hope for a better future;
ii. The Congolese people need to maintain a responsible hope for a better future.

2. The Transformation of the Congolese Leadership

The contextual reading of the *semah* texts in this study with the Congolese leadership situation suggests a way of improving the country's standard of leadership. This is possible through inner healing, self-reconciliation and reconciliation with those within the leadership of the DR Congo. This process refers to the past history which impacted on the Congolese people over time. It is essentially the people's experience of the external powers that controlled the DR Congo for nearly five centuries. Further, from the time of Independence in 1960, up to this present day, the Congolese leadership adopted a colonial leadership model that has been of no relevance of benefit to develop a good society for all in the DR Congo. In this connection, Western control over the DR Congo for so many years has turned the minds of the Congolese people away from their own cultural values that determined a good leadership.

The story of the promise of a 'loyal leadership' in Judean context speaks of Yahweh 'sprouting forth' this leadership. This implies that God brings hope instead of hopelessness to his punished people. Despite his people's unfaithfulness, God remains committed to favour his people. He sent them on a learning experience in the Exile. Next, Yahweh put his instruction in the people's hearts in order to transform their minds. In a similar way, a suffering 'Exile' of the Congolese people in their homeland could serve as a learning experience that could bring them back to the cultural and moral values that define a good leadership in the DR Congo.

2.1. The Identity of the Congolese Leadership and its Liberation

An effective restoration of the Congolese leadership goes together with the inner healing from what has affected its mind. The leadership restoration would be possible only with inner healing, reconciliation with self, and liberation from the destructive

ways of managing the country's public affairs. Some aspects of the corrupt leaders' behaviour have been inherited from the colonial rulers, as well as from the Mobutu regime. In this regard, social development will only be possible in the DR Congo when the leadership and people recover their identity which has been severely affected over time.

Restoration takes place first in the mind of the leadership. The mind reflects the way in which a person thinks, feels about the self, and recognises its role and tasks. Furthermore, the mind leads people to conceive projects that could bring about socio-development in society. In this respect, the mind represents a basic factor of consciousness indispensable for the establishment of good leadership in the DR Congo. The leadership's mind change will determine its commitment to develop a good society for all, free of corruption and violence against women and children. Under these conditions, and with the participation of the people, the hope for social change could be a reality in the DR Congo.

2.2. The Hope for a Better Future in the DR Congo

A good leadership, efficient to resolve the current social situation in the Congo is a key point of our hope. This process, leading to a better social situation, is part of the leadership's and people's restoration expressed in terms of the 'New Covenant' in Jeremiah's oracle on *semah*. This would play a key role in the process of restoring the social conditions of the people in the DR Congo. The expected 'loyal leadership,' would restore good governance in the DR Congo, reflected through the restoration of social justice, peace, harmony, unity and solidarity. God initiates the change of mind of the leadership and people in the DR Congo. As a result, the leadership and people become empowered and committed to sort out the social problems in the community.

To fulfil this hope, the leadership and people in the DR Congo have first, to turn back to the principles that govern the State or church. Second, the Congolese themselves have to unify and work out their own collective destiny. This destiny relates Congolese people to one another. It does not matter to which province, ethnic or tribal group, or family they belong to. They need only to work together in order to

develop a healthy social situation within society. This has been shown through the appropriative reading of *semah* texts with their contexts in this study.

The contextual reading presented here sheds light on the current Congolese leadership which is challenged to rule over the people justly. The way Jeremiah warned the leadership and people in Judah is similarly expressed to the Congolese leadership and people. Zion-Jerusalem and its people were in a state of collapse because of their corrupt behaviour. Similarly, the devastating social situation in Kinshasa reflects the corrupt behaviour of the ruling class since the country's Independence from Belgium. This discouraging situation can also arouse hope for a 'loyal leadership' in the DR Congo. Indeed, the current negative experiences of the Congolese people are still surrounded by several 'possibilities of life,' all of which arouse hope for a better future. These 'possibilities of life' include human, cultural and spiritual resources of the people of the DR Congo. Second, there are the country's rich natural and mineral resources. In order to benefit from these, moral education, honesty, and a commitment to work for the common good in the DR Congo is required. There is a call for a real commitment of the Congolese leadership and people to change their mind and work out their socio-situation regardless of the past. The metaphor of *semah* (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-16) 'sprouting forth' is a symbol of hope. The text in Job 14:7 sustains this powerful promise of the 'shooting forth' of the tree. If a tree is cut off, there is still a possibility that it may sprout forth again. The current weak leadership of the DR Congo opens up a new perspective of hope for the 'sprouting forth' of an efficient, honest, morally-educated leadership.

3. Further Research

Further research could be undertaken in several areas that are not explored in this study. Apart from the focus on a way to free the Congolese leadership from the colonial mind (decolonisation), a particular emphasis, for example, could be placed upon the reconstruction of the country or on the moral re-educative process of the Congolese leadership and people.

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